

THE STILLWATER CATHOLIC

SERVING ST. FRANCIS XAVIER AND ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST PARISHES

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The Food Backpack Ministry *Making a Difference in Many Children's Lives*

It was two Middle School teachers who originally identified the need – children here in Stillwater were in want of nutritional food on the weekends while away from school.

“For me, getting involved here isn't a choice,” says Pepper Keeling, who leads the Food Backpack Ministry. “There just can't be hungry children and capable adults not helping fix that issue.”

The Food Backpack Ministry exists solely to benefit children who would, for many different reasons, not have food to eat. Middle School teachers and counselors work together to identify children in need.

“They are very discrete with the children,” Pepper says. “They will also send home extra bags if the children have siblings at home who are not school age yet.”

The backpacks contain a variety of nonperishable items that can generally be consumed without a microwave or stove. Items might include tuna and cracker kits, market street meals, Vienna sausages, granola bars, applesauce, puddings, bags of cereal, fruit snacks, and chicken salad.

Pepper's husband, Philip, helps her coordinate the program, and their six children and other parish members pack the bags. Volunteers also deliver the bags to the Middle School every Thursday before noon. School counselors call the children into the office at some point during the day to place the bags in their backpacks.



Pepper Keeling, Food Backpack Ministry Leader, with her husband, Philip Keeling

JUNE 2017

continued on back cover

Stewardship

Don't Take a Vacation From Stewardship This Summer

Everyone deserves a vacation.

After nine grueling months of school, kids get to enjoy the summer to relax and regroup before beginning a new grade. Employees, after diligently working long hours and dealing with stressful situations, deserve time away from the office to enjoy their favorite getaway.

No one would argue that we need to mentally refresh our minds and bodies from time to time so that we can come back rejuvenated and ready to do our best.

Taking a break from some things, however, is not a possibility.

Take stewardship, for example. Imagine saying to yourself, "Well, this month I think I will not pray, not share any of my talents with anyone in need, and I will hoard my treasure." What would doing this accomplish? You certainly wouldn't feel refreshed, rejuvenated and ready to be at your best. Instead, feelings of greed, selfishness and spiritual unrest may occur. Stepping back from being a good steward just doesn't make sense.

So, now that summer has arrived in full force and our leisure time each day has increased, how can we remain good stewards?

It is likely that the regimented opportunities available during the school year are no longer available. Youth ministry and parish religious education formation may also be on summer break.

So, where do you turn? How can you keep your faith alive?

First and foremost, don't stop praying. The slow-paced days of summer are a perfect time to quiet ourselves for a few moments and try to reconnect with God. Why not take a moment of your free time each day to read the Gospel or a spiritual reflection while lounging in a hammock?

Next, try to participate in an outreach program over the summer. Think of the life of Christ – everything He did on Earth was an act of service. Now, think of the gifts God has bestowed on you. He wants you to share them with others like He did, and summer gives us the time to do just that.

If you like working with kids, you can volunteer at the Vacation Bible School by helping to decorate, organize or being a team leader for the younger children.

If you are handy with tools, you may call Habitat for Humanity to see how you can help build a home for a family in need.

Or, if you are musically inclined, you can share your singing or instrumental gifts with a local nursing home. Maybe you are good in the kitchen. If so, you could offer your culinary skills to a local soup kitchen or food bank.

If you are a strong student, you could offer tutoring services to neighborhood kids to help prepare them for the next school year.

No matter what gift God has given you, there is a way to share it.

Getting paid for volunteering sometimes happens. And, if you have a summer job while on break, you'll get a paycheck for sure. Have you ever taken an opportunity to think about sharing the first fruits of your check?

As a young adult, returning a portion of your paycheck to God is an important thing to consider. Giving a portion back to Him is a way to say "thanks."

Whatever you do this summer, don't take a break from being a good steward. Remember that the time God gives you is a gift. What you do with it – whether on vacation or not – is meant to give Him glory.

Time Is Limitless... Or Is It?

Dear Parishioners,

Some years ago, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI encouraged Catholics to renew their devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus during the month of June. In thinking about that, it made us realize that we all like to measure time – not necessarily in minutes and hours, but certainly in terms of what happens at particular times of the year. In the Church, we celebrate so many occasions that measure time – Easter, Christmas, Corpus Christi, Pentecost, Ordinary Time, the feast days of our saints, and much more, all of which give us that sense of moving forward.

In our own lives and the lives of our families, we mark birthdays, anniversaries, Baptism days, and more dates than we can possibly remember. These dates commemorate or remind us of a point in time. Time is also one of those gifts from God that we attach to the idea and life of stewardship.

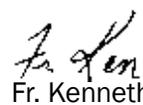
We are fond of saying that time is the one thing given to all of us in equal amounts. However, we all know that is not necessarily true. Does a mother with several children have the same amount of time as a person with no family? Does a company manager who is expected to be available seven days a week have the same amount of time as someone who works a 9-to-5 job?

Our point is that time is a valuable commodity, whether we feel like we have a lot or very little. God, on the other hand, is timeless. The Lord sees things in an eternal view, while we tend to look at it in shorter measures. The question is really “What do we do with our time to serve others and to increase our relationship with God?” We have said many times that each of us needs to set aside time for both of those purposes – to serve and to pray. There is a reason it is called “prayer time.” Prayer should be a part of our lives, as much as eating, sleeping and working.

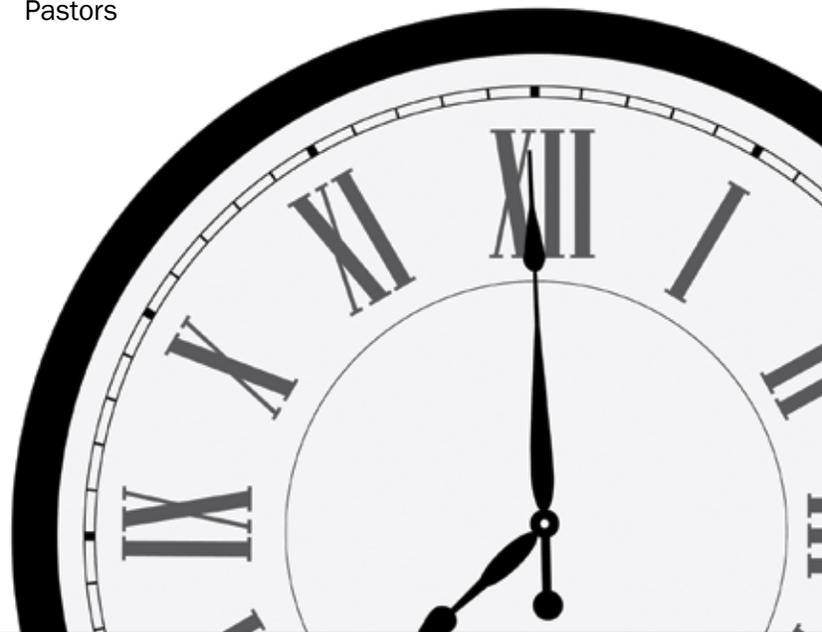
Another thing that June brings to mind is how life slows down for most of us. Young people are on summer vacation from school. Families and individuals take vacations. Unfortunately, some see it as a time to take a bit of vacation from worship. We can see it in declining Mass attendance and in the reduced number of activities within ministries and organizations.

We all mark time. We all know that it is limited, and can be fleeting. That is why even countries celebrate special days that mark time – throughout the summer season, Americans celebrate Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day. How do we mark time as individuals, as families, and as a parish? That may say more about our understanding of stewardship than anything else. Maybe now, as summer is upon us, is the perfect time to concentrate *more* on our spiritual habits, rather than less.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

 
Fr. Kenneth Harder and Fr. Kerry Wakulich

Pastors



Witnesses to Service: Celebrating

Faithfulness. Dedication. Generosity. Those are words that could describe so many in our parish community, from our clergy and staff, to our selfless volunteers. However, in a special way, those words characterize Deacon Paul Govek and Deacon Tom Haan, who celebrated 20 years of ordination to the diaconate this past April

Deacon Paul and Ann Govek, originally from Wisconsin, and the Haans – Jan from Iowa and Deacon Tom from Indiana – have been in Stillwater for 38 and 39 years respectively.

As with many who are called to become deacons, the journey for the Goveks and Haans was gradual, as they became more involved in parish life and felt God's calling.

"I said, 'If we're going to this Church, we're going to be active,'" recalls Jan, who was raised Protestant, but became Catholic shortly before she and Deacon Tom were married.

"We started getting more active, it was a gradual process," says Deacon Tom, who credits the example of other

deacons they knew with his initial interest. "We got more and more interested in it and decided to try this diaconate thing."

For the Goveks, who have been married nearly 48 years, and the Haans, who celebrated 50 years of marriage recently, the decision to become ordained was one they made as a couple, as it was a choice that would greatly affect both of them.

"There needs to be communication and understanding of what a commitment it takes for the whole family," Ann says.

Over the years, both deacons and their wives have been involved in a variety of different ways. Both deacons assist at Masses, and other liturgical celebrations when a priest is unavailable.

Deacon Paul, a retired product design engineer, also trains the liturgical ministers, serves as RCIA Coordinator, is an advocate for the marriage tribunal, and visits the sick and homebound. His wife, Ann, enjoys organizing the an-



Deacon Dick, Deacon Tom and Deacon Paul assist Fr. Kerry Wakulich at Mass

g Deacon Paul and Deacon Tom



Deacon Tom and Jan Haan, Deacon Dick and Pat Berberet, and Deacon Paul and Ann Govek

nual Lenten Ladies Retreat, an opportunity for the women of Stillwater to come together to build their faith and community.

Deacon Tom, a college professor who taught agricultural engineering, primarily serves the sick, elderly and homebound, visiting people in their homes, the hospital, and assisted living and nursing homes. He also served as the RCIA Director for 15 years. His wife, Jan, also sings in the choir, and has served as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and lector.

The deacons share the ways they've grown closer to God and the Church through their years of service.

"Over the years, I've become aware of the needs of the people of God and tried to take a leadership role in their spiritual formation and their understanding of the Catholic Church," Deacon Paul says. "I've grown in recognizing each individual as a member of the body of Christ and seeing each person for who they are."

"Being a deacon has definitely helped me grow in my relationship with the Lord," Deacon Tom says. "It was just a gradual process in coming to understand this is the way we wanted to live. Jan and I both, we've both gotten very involved."

Ann and Jan also share the gift that it has been to have their husbands play special roles in their families' special moments, from First Communions and weddings, and even funerals.

"I've loved being present as Paul has ministered the Sacraments of Marriage and Eucharist to our children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews," Ann says.

"My [non-Catholic] mother even asked Tom to do her funeral when she died," Jan says. "I've always felt that was a huge blessing for our family."

Both Deacon Paul and Deacon Tom hope to be remembered as humble servants who gave to both God and His people.

"I hope that people will remember me for faithfulness and willingness to serve the people of God," Deacon Paul says.

"It's my belief that God has to work through me, because on my own, I probably wouldn't be able to do much," Deacon Tom says. "I try to be a good example, and I hope my example kindles or rekindles people's desire to grow closer to God and the Church."

Having a front row seat, and often making sacrifices of time to support their husbands' service, Jan and Ann hope that parishioners will realize that the role of deacon often includes more than what meets the eye.

"I would want people to know that Deacon Tom will be there as much as he can for them, but he does have to make time for family things, as well," Jan says. "If they don't have time off to rejuvenate, then they get burned out."

"There is behind-the-scenes stuff that deacons do, that nobody knows about," Ann says. "They're not out on the street corners telling people all the things they do – they just get the job done."

And as Deacon Tom points out, deacons aren't "cookie cutter."

"There are different ways to be a really effective deacon," he says. "We all have different talents, and it really works out well for us here and we focus on different areas."

"There is no shortage of things for us to do," he adds with a smile.

Thank you, to Deacon Paul and Ann, and Deacon Tom and Jan, for their many years of service to our parishes. Your witness of selfless devotion to God, your families and our parish community is an inspiration to all. We look forward to many years of praying and working together, with you, for God's glory!

This Month's Update on Our Parish Project

For this issue, we thought that a series of photos would be more informative than typical text to provide an update on our building project. Titles with the photos below provide explanations. All photos were taken on May 9, 2017. More aerial photos can be found at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/arena5/albums/72157654663689701>. Aerial videos can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCewW7b74Gy10gGoZ6x8bquA>.

As always, please pray for the successful completion of this project.



Photo 1, aerial view of church site looking north, by Andy Arena and drone. Note on right side and bottom dirt work and soil stabilization (white lime) for drives and parking lots.



Photo 4, aerial view inside nave looking north, by Andy Arena and drone.



Photo 2, aerial view of church facility looking east, by Andy Arena and drone. Note brickwork underway on west face of nave and transept.



Photo 5, aerial view inside nave looking south, by Andy Arena and drone.



Photo 3, aerial view of church facility looking west-northwest, by Andy Arena and drone. Note brickwork on east face of nave and parish hall.



Photo 6, HVAC units for ground source heat pump installed in mechanical room in education wing, by Larry Hoberock.

continued on next page



Photo 7, finished wall paint, installed lighting, and HVAC supply diffusers, east classroom looking east, by Larry Hoberock.



Photo 9, finished wall paint in teen lounge, looking west, by Larry Hoberock. Note stage area (center) is darker blue than remaining blue walls.



Photo 8, finished ceiling and wall paint in gym, looking southeast, by Larry Hoberock.



Photo 10, finished wall and fur-down ceiling paint in parish hall, looking north, by Larry Hoberock.



Photo 11, Sign on temporary main electrical room showing that the building is electrified, by Larry Hoberock. (In addition to having competence, our construction supervisors have a sense of humor.)

THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF STILLWATER

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St. Francis Xavier

Sunday Mass

Saturday Vigil, 5 p.m.

Sunday, 8 a.m., 10 a.m., 1 p.m. (Español)

Daily Mass

Tuesday - Thursday, 8 a.m., Friday, 12:10 p.m.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Wednesday, 5:45 - 7 p.m.

Saturday, 3 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

St. John the Evangelist

Sunday Mass

Saturday Vigil, 6 p.m.

Sunday, 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 5 p.m. during semester

Daily Mass

Mondays at 12:10 p.m.

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, 5:10 p.m.

Wednesday, 12:10 p.m. & 9 p.m. during semester

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturday, 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Change Service Requested

The Food Backpack Ministry *continued from front cover*

"At this time, we give out about 37 bags per week, and we pack 300 bags at a time," Pepper says. "This school year alone, we gave out over 1,700 bags of food to children."

Pepper first became involved with the program eight years ago when she was watching TV and saw a report on a backpack program for children in need. She immediately felt inspired to launch a similar program for children here in Stillwater and found that such a program existed, but a program coordinator was needed.

"I am honored and humbled that the church allows me to be a part of this program and coordinate it," Pepper says. "I know this program has touched many children and perhaps made their life of adversity a little better."

Volunteers are always welcome, and the most helpful way that faith community members can support the pro-

gram is through donating funding, which is 100-percent tax deductible. For the average cost of \$175 a year, a young member of our community will not go hungry.

"Many backpack programs use the regional food bank to get their food," Pepper says. "We don't. We use donated funding to provide the food for the program. Of course, 100 percent of every dollar donated goes straight to the program."

Over the past eight years, Pepper has had the opportunity to work with many amazing and kind parish members. She is grateful for all the people who are working together to support the young members of our community who are in need.

"I just simply couldn't do it without all of their help," Pepper says. "I would like to personally thank everyone who has given funding to this program, also. All of them together make a difference in many children's lives."

*If you would like more information, connect with Pepper Keeling at 405-742-7676 or peppervold@yahoo.com.
All donations may be sent to the parish office.*