



ST. DONATUS



ST. ALEXIUS



ST. FRANCIS DE SALES



STS. PETER & PAUL



OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS



ST. PAUL'S



Resurrecting the markers

Project lifts gravestones in St. Paul's Cemetery

As November begins, the Church starts the month by remembering those who have passed away, and members of Parishes on the Prairie are taking extra steps to making sure those who have gone before are not forgotten.

Ken Gieske and John Lahr are a couple of volunteers who have been going out to St. Paul's Cemetery east of Sauk Centre and raising headstones before they sink into the changing ground.

"This is all part of the process to make the cemetery a better place," Gieske said.

Other volunteers have included Mike Felling, Mike Merten, Dan Krousey and Joe Eibensteiner.

The project started about six years

ago when Lahr noticed some gravestones sinking into the ground. He enlisted the help of the St. Paul's Cemetery Board, where Gieske is now a member, in order to preserve the stones before they could be further neglected or lost.

Naturally, the process is more difficult than simply lifting the gravestone out of the ground. The team often uses a reciprocating saw to carve around the stone so they can find the edges. In some cases, the grass has grown over a marker so much that one can read the words from the nameplate in the grass roots when they are pulled up.

While the settling earth can be one factor in a gravestone's sinking, Gieske also blames the grass and dirt that blows into the cemetery, particularly with all the nearby fieldwork.

Headstones from front

“You see how dirty the snow in the wintertime can be,” he said. “That’s dirt that settles in. ... It’s like sidewalks; you have to trim away, and eventually, the grass is higher than the sidewalk.”

At first, the team used to lift the gravestones with special crowbars, but those were so labor-intensive that Gieske wanted to find an easier way. After finding nothing useful online, he built a special rig with four downward prongs which could latch onto the underside of a gravestone. Gieske mounted the rig on the front of a lawn tractor, and part of its connection is a trailer jack that can lift the stone out of the ground with the rig and move it out of the way.

“The tractor works if the ground is soft enough,” Gieske said. “We take what we call a spear along the sides of (the stone), digging down far enough so we can get the hooks in underneath it.”

With bigger stones, Gieske has to be careful lifting them so they do not crack or disintegrate. Older headstones can be difficult, too; in some cases, instead of pouring the concrete into a mold and adding a nameplate, people would just pour concrete into a hole in the ground, which makes it harder for the rig to get a grip.

Even with the difficulties, the tractor makes the job safer as well as easier.

“Some of those stones are heavy,” Gieske said. “If you’re trying to reach underneath them with your hand to flatten the soil out, and if the stone would drop on you, that’d be really tough.”

Once the gravestone is out, the team fills the hole with sand so the stone will



John Lahr (left) and Ken Gieske

sit level and even with the ground when it is put back.

Although many of the team members are members of the Sauk Centre Knights of Columbus, the project is not an official Knights of Columbus project; but the team is looking into that possibility.

“Some of the other councils have different projects they do,” Gieske said. “This would be one I’d like to see happen, where we could get some of the younger Knights involved. We could have a good handle on something where we could say, ‘We were part of it.’”

Gieske would also like to see the project expand to Calvary Cemetery to the south.

“Not too many of those have been lifted,” he said. “Some of them are quite a

ways down.”

For now, when the weather permits, the team lifts gravestones on the last Saturday of each month.

Some of the stones the team has lifted belong to people they know.

“The other ones I’ve found interesting are with the name Tillmann ... and Capser,” Gieske said. “Tillmann and Capser are two of the big names from the start of the city (of Sauk Centre). ... Some of the other ones that are interesting are the earliest ones (that are) in German.”

Lifting gravestones is also a way to check for any markers or monuments that need additional maintenance. While walking through St. Paul’s Cemetery recently, Gieske noticed one long gravestone

for a brother and sister; its concrete had broken in three pieces, and it appeared the brother’s marker was facing the wrong way.

Other improvements are planned for the cemetery, like a posted QR code that will help people search for a specific gravesite. Of course, raising the gravestones is the first step in helping people find their loved ones’ resting place in the meantime.

“You want to say you left a place better than it was when you came,” Gieske said. “I know John (Lahr) feels that is important to get these (gravestones) so they look good again for people. We get plenty of comments on how the cemetery looks good (and) well-kept, so that’s a big part of it.”

A Letter From Our Pastor

Purification through Purgatory

On Nov. 2, we celebrate All Souls Day. This month, we remember our loved ones who have passed away, and we also remind ourselves to pray for all the souls in Purgatory.

If somebody's in Heaven, there's no need to pray for them because they already have every eternal happiness. If somebody's in Hell, there's no use to pray for them because it is impossible to leave; they have rejected God. Those in Purgatory have an imperfect love of God; they are detached from the residue of this life and perfected by purification of the soul.

The doctrine of Purgatory has Biblical roots, most famously in 2 Maccabees 12:42-46. Judas Maccabeus and his army prayed for atonement of the sins of their fallen members, which was hailed as "a holy and pious thought."

Purgatory is also alluded to in 1 Corinthians 3:14-15, which says, "If the work stands that someone built upon the foundation, that person will receive a wage, but if someone's work is burned up, that one will suffer loss; that person will be saved, but only as through fire."

Even Jesus referred to Purgatory in Matthew 5:25-26 when He said, "Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny."

To understand Purgatory, the Catechism of the Catholic Church says it is first necessary to understand sin's double consequence:

"Grave sin deprives us from communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the 'eternal punishment' of sin. On the other hand, every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the 'temporal punishment' of sin." (CCC 1472)

The Catechism continues by clarifying the temporal and eternal punishments of sin follow from the nature of sin itself, not from vengeance on God's part. Additionally, heartfelt acts of charity can attain a complete purification of the sinner; for



instance, if someone is martyred for the Faith, the Church has always counted it as a complete detachment from this world, and so that person goes straight to Heaven.

We, as the Church on Earth, can help the souls in Purgatory by our prayers, especially by receiving a plenary indulgence for one of them. A plenary indulgence is remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, whose guilt has already been forgiven; in other words, the sin has already been forgiven, but the soul needs to be cleansed in order to go to heaven.

A plenary indulgence for someone in Purgatory can be obtained every year from Nov. 1-8. A person must visit a church or oratory on All Souls Day or visit a blessed cemetery to pray for the faithful departed. The general requirements of indulgences

must be met as well, including praying for the intentions of the Holy Father, going to Confession within 20 days of the indulgenced work, worthily receiving Holy Communion on the same day or within a few days, being in the state of grace when the indulgenced work is completed and having a complete detachment from all sin, even venial sin.

All of us intentionally striving to grow in our Catholic faith should make at least one effort to obtain a plenary indulgence for someone we believe is in Purgatory. Sometimes, if I pray for somebody who might already be in heaven, I'll add to my intention, "or for anyone else in Purgatory who needs it." In Confession, one of my favorite penances to give is for someone to say prayers for people in Purgatory who are there because of impatience, addiction, stealing, etc. People have been very welcoming of that penance.

While the fires of Hell consume a soul, the fires of Purgatory refine it like gold or silver in a crucible. When a silver or goldsmith looks into purified precious metals, when it is done, they will see their own reflection; likewise, we are made in God's image and likeness, and Purgatory purifies us so we can reflect His glory.

In our Father's hands,

☺ Fr. Greg Raffel

Breakfast in Elrosa

Celebrating Stewardship

Thank You Dinner for our
Parishes on the Prairie ACC

Join us on
Tuesday, Nov. 19

Join us for a night of fellowship and fun as our Area Catholic Community comes together to celebrate stewardship and thank all parishioners who have given of their time, talent or treasure. We look forward to seeing everyone there!

6 p.m. — Social Hour

6:30 p.m. — Dinner, followed by a short program

Dinner is on us! Drinks are cash only.

Text or call 320-429-8450 and leave a message with your name and number of people attending the dinner. If you would like a ride to Padua or could give someone a ride, please leave a message on the RSVP number and we'll reach out to you.

Breakfast

from page 4

“People wouldn’t believe that many eggs, but we did it; we cracked them,” Harry said.

It takes about 500 pounds of potatoes to make the breakfast, plus days of preparation to have them hot and fresh when the event is underway. First, Harry picks them up from a potato farm in Long Prairie; the potatoes are boiled on the Friday before the meal and then peeled the day after.

The breakfast served 1,057 people last year, 421 of which were takeout meals and 80 of which were bought by a parishioner who takes them to the veterans at the Eagle’s Healing Nest in Sauk Centre. This year, 70 meals have already been bought for the Nest.

The concurrent bake sale is facilitated by the Parish Council of Catholic Women. Parishioners are asked to bring \$15 worth of baked goods or a \$20 donation.

Last year, the breakfast raised over \$11,000. The proceeds from the annual event go toward the Saints Peter and Paul Church general fund.

Saints Peter and Paul holds two breakfasts per year, the other benefitting Catholic Aid. The latter is usually held in the fall while the other is in the spring, but they switched places this year. The new date is fine with Harry because there is no deer hunting Nov. 3.

“Normally, you always hit a year when you have deer hunting, and that always reflects in your kitchen help,” he said. “I always have to check when deer hunting is every spring when we set our date. ... It has been 18 months since we had (our last breakfast), so we hope everybody is still in gear to sell tickets and come. We’re ready to feed them.”



Saints Peter and Paul annual fundraiser to be held Nov. 3

Come Sunday, Nov. 3, Parishes on the Prairie will rise and shine to the smell of the Ham and Egg Breakfast and Bake Sale at Saints Peter and Paul Church in Elrosa, the church’s largest annual fundraiser. Because the breakfast has been moved from the spring back to the fall, it has been a little longer than usual since the last one, but the breakfast leaders, Harry and Carol Zenzen, are ready to feed however many show up.

“It’s been awesome for us,” Harry said. “Any time you can quadruple your popula-

tion size when you drive into town, you’re doing something right, and we’ve been praised many times for our breakfasts. ... We’re hoping for a good turnout.”

The fundraiser has been held for at least 30 years by Harry’s estimation. The previous leaders, Frieda Roelike and MaryAnn Wander, founded the fundraiser, and Harry and Carol Zenzen took over about 10 years ago, with Jan Arceneau and Bonnie Heinze joining their committee about 5 years ago.

“I know we’re the lead-

ers of it, but it’s about all the people who participate,” Harry said. “They’ve hung in there with us, (and) most of the food is donated by parishioners.”

The Saints Peter and Paul kitchen will be full of volunteers the day of the breakfast, with the first showing up at 6 a.m. to turn on the coffeepots and set up the church basement. At the height of the dinner, there can be 25 to 30 people in the kitchen and serving meals.

“Seeing the turnout in help is the best,” Harry said. “It’s fun to work with everybody.”

The breakfast runs from

9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Nov. 3, and tickets are available in advance and at the door; children 4 years old and under can eat for free. Besides the titular ham and scrambled eggs, the breakfast’s menu includes fried potatoes, applesauce, cheese, cinnamon bread, regular and chocolate milk and coffee.

In 2023, the breakfast went through about 265 pounds of ham, and volunteers cracked 2,604 eggs.

Breakfast page 5





UPCOMING EVENTS

Memorial Mass (All Souls' Day)

Saturday, Nov. 2 at Our Lady of the Angels Church
Mass at 9 a.m.

We will honor by name those who have celebrated funerals or have been buried from St. Alexius, Our Lady of Angels and St. Paul's Church within the last year. Parishioners, family and friends of the deceased are invited and welcome to attend this Mass.

Annual Ham and Egg Breakfast and Bake Sale

Sunday, Nov. 3 at Sts. Peter and Paul Church from
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Join us for ham, scrambled eggs, fried potatoes, applesauce, cheese, cinnamon bread, chocolate and white milk and coffee. Tickets available at the door. Adults \$10, children ages 5-12 \$6, children ages 4 and under eat free.

Family Bingo

Sunday, Nov. 3 in the basement of St. Alexius Church at 1 p.m.
Join us for an afternoon of bingo and family fun.

Approximately 20 games with cash and meat package prizes. Light meal and beverages provided for a small fee. All proceeds to benefit the St. Alexius Youth Group in hopes of purchasing a soft-serve ice cream machine. If you have questions, please contact Christina Rousslang at 330-980-0475.

Knights of Columbus Meeting

Tuesday, Nov. 12 in the basement of
St. Paul's Church Rosary at 6:30 p.m.
Meeting at 7 p.m.

Searching Souls meets on Mondays each month at 6:30 at the Centre for Christ. Videos are presented followed by small group discussions to grow together in our Catholic faith. Follow the Searching Souls Ministries Facebook group to see what is happening! Call 320-761-3590 for more information.
Monday, November 12th Bishop Neary's study on the Eucharist. Session 3 Eucharist as Communion
Monday, November 25th Bishop Neary's study on the Eucharist. Session 4 Eucharist as Mission.

St. Theresa/St. Margaret Mission Group

Thursday, Nov. 14 in the basement of St. Paul's Church at 1 p.m.

Lord, Teach Me to P.R.A.Y.

Wednesday, Nov. 13 in the Margaret Shelby Theatre at
Sauk Centre High School from 7-8:30 p.m.

Despite Deb's lifelong belief in God, the sudden loss of her children, Kaylie and Tyler, shattered her understanding of faith and left her feeling lost and alone, questioning God's presence in her suffering.

Through this painful journey, Deb realized that she had faith, but not a personal relationship with the Lord. Deb will take you through the highs and lows of her journey and share what she did to find the Lord, know Him and trust in Him. Deb's story is a powerful reminder that a strong foundation built on faith can lead to a life filled with hope and purpose. With her guidance, you'll learn to confront your own challenges and open your heart to the incredible blessings that await you. Sponsored by Parishes on the Prairie ACC Faith Formation. Shirts and books will be available for purchase. For more information, visit kthumblehearts.org or debhadley.com, or visit KT Humble Hearts – Deb Hadley on Facebook.

Crafts with Christina

Saturday, Nov. 16 in the basement of St. Alexius Church from 1-4 p.m.
For students in grades 4-12. Crafts to be made will be determined. Consider making some handmade Christmas gifts for those you love. Please bring a friend. All are welcome. Spend time with friends, have conversations, share in good times and listen to music. We will begin with prayer and enjoy beverages and goodies throughout the afternoon. To RSVP and if you have any questions, please contact Christina at 320-980-0475.

Baptism Class

Monday, Nov. 18 in the meeting room at St. Paul's Church at 7 p.m.

Liturgical laundry

Ministry handles sacred linen washing

It is a time of Eucharistic revival in the Church, and behind every Mass are the volunteers who support every element of the liturgy, no matter how small. The linens used at Mass might not attract much attention, but they are important in ensuring no particles of the Eucharist are lost, and the people who clean the linens must handle them with more care than the average load of whites.

The care of these linens has also helped volunteers in their relationship to Jesus in the Eucharist.

“Because you have to do it a certain way and there’s a process, it really brings to mind the preciousness of the fact that there could be remnants of the Eucharist (or) the Precious Blood,” said Amy Poepping, a member of the linen ministry for St. Paul’s Church in Sauk Centre. “It makes you more aware He’s really there and He deserves our honor (and) glory.”

Poepping has been involved in the linen ministry for about 5 years, starting at the encouragement of Sandy Theisen. She and her husband, Paul Theisen, were very involved in



Amy Poepping

ministry at St. Paul’s.

“(Sandy) was a sweetheart lady who did everything for the church,” Poepping said. “When I was still a young mom, I went to her house, and she was (cleaning linens) one day and I asked her what she was doing.”

The ministry interested Poepping, so when her children grew up and she got more free time, she volunteered to help when the annual stewardship renewal came around.

“I was scared to do it because it’s so important,” she said. “I wanted to make sure I did it right. ... It’s not a difficult job; it just requires a lot of responsibility.”

Because the linens likely contain remnants of one or both species of the Eucharist, they need to be treated with more care than everyday fabric. These linens include the finger towels used by the priest when he washes his hands at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist; purificators, which are used by the priest and extraordinary ministers when using and purifying the sacred vessels; and corporals, which are placed under patens to

potentially catch fragments of the Eucharist. There are also corporals used in ministry to the homebound; these often are not as intricate as the ones used in church, but they receive the same level of care.

First, the linens are gathered in a bag in the sacristy. They are usually washed once a week, but there are times where there are more or larger liturgies than usual — particularly during Holy Week and Christmas — when the linens will need to be handled more frequently.

“I was scared to do it because it’s so important. It’s not a difficult job; it just requires a lot of responsibility.”

– Amy Poepping

Poepping page 8

Parish Office: 304 Sinclair Lewis Ave.
Sauk Centre, MN 56378
(320) 352-2196
parishesontheprairie.org

Weekend Mass Schedules

Saturday

4:00 p.m. St. Paul's, Sauk Centre
6:00 p.m. Our Lady of the Angels
Sauk Centre
8:00 p.m. Sts. Peter & Paul, Elrosa

Sunday

8:00 a.m. Our Lady of the Angels,
Sauk Centre
8:15 a.m. St. Alexius, West Union
10:30 a.m. St. Francis de Sales,
Belgrade
10:30 a.m. St. Paul's, Sauk Centre

See our website for a full listing
of daily Mass & confession times.

Poepping from page 7

Poepping collects the linens and takes them home, where they are soaked in cold water overnight to dissolve any particles. After rinsing the linens, they are placed in the washing machine, and the water from the previous steps is poured into the ground; it cannot be poured down the drain.

The soaking process typically takes care of any stains, including ones from the Precious Blood.

"I've never had, say, an obvious stain I've needed to keep working to get out," Poepping said. "I know Sandy used to use holy water if she needed a wrinkle to come out. I try to follow Sandy's example."

Starch and similar products are not used during the washing process, as that hurts the linens' absorbency. Of course, no other laundry is washed with the linens either.

Once the linens are cleaned and dried, Poepping irons them, folds them, brings them back to St. Paul's and puts them away.

Washing liturgical linens is a sacred undertaking, and Parishes on the Prairie is looking for more people to help with the ministry.

"It's not an overwhelming, demanding thing, but it is important and needed," Poepping said. "I encourage people to reach out and volunteer. It's behind the scenes; it's not known that it's happening, and, in some ways, there's a niceness to that, too. ... It's kind of between Him and I."

