



ST. PETER CATHOLIC CHURCH

Monthly Newsletter



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DECEMBER 2024



ST. PETER CATHOLIC CHURCH

JOIN US FOR THE ST. NICHOLAS EVENT AND ST. PETER CATHOLIC SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

A SEASONAL CELEBRATION OF COMMUNITY AND CATHOLIC EDUCATION

St. Nicholas, hot chocolate, candy canes, cookies, and doughnuts – what more could a person ask for? The Dec. 8 Masses at St. Peter Catholic School gymnasium will include all this and a school open house from 9 to 10:45 a.m.

The open house is geared toward 3- and 4-year-olds and kindergarten students and their families. But everyone is welcome to come check out the school during this time. Families can tour the younger child classrooms, meet the teachers, and learn more about the programs at the school.

“We want to use this opportunity to show people our school and all the great things we are doing here,” says Principal Curt Feilmeier. “This gives families a chance to consider their child’s education for the following or coming years.”

There are about 300 students attending St. Peter Catholic School, with 30 faculty members – including four School Sisters of Christ the King. The students learn much more than academics, as the teachers have physical, spiritual, and social goals for students. The spiritual goals include worship, personal growth, service, and evangelization.

Families who want to learn more about St. Peter Catholic School can visit any time, and older students can shadow a peer for a day.

Mr. Feilmeier has spent 30 years in Catholic education. This is his third year here and ninth in the diocese. He’s proud to be at St. Peter Catholic School and is excited to share the gifts of the school with the community.

“St. Peter Catholic School has been serving the families in our parish since 1991 and continues to serve the parish through Catholic education, fulfilling our mission to ‘build a Catholic culture where families and children can grow spiritually, academically, and in service of neighbor to prepare for the Kingdom of Heaven,’” he says.

In the school’s 30-plus-year history, many students have received the sacraments, grown in faith, and learned about reading, writing, science, math, and more.

“This school has provided a generation with the foundations to live a Catholic life, be and become disciples, and share the Good News,” Mr. Feilmeier says.

St. Nicholas is truly for everyone. In that spirit, everyone is invited to the open house.

“We also welcome all parish members who support our school mission to walk the halls and check in on the school, see the classrooms, the artwork, and more,” Mr. Feilmeier says.

For Mr. Feilmeier, the mission at St. Peter Catholic School ultimately goes far beyond eighth grade.

“It’s preparing them for heaven, to be saints, to be prepared for a Catholic life,” he says.

So, be sure to attend the St. Nicholas events and open house at St. Peter Catholic School on Dec. 8, and learn more about the blessings of a strong Catholic education in our community!



*For more information, contact Principal Curt Feilmeier at
Curt.Feilmeier@cdolinc.net or 402-421-6299.*

A Letter from Our Pastor

Christmas:

THE ETERNAL GIFT EXCHANGE

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

If you are like me, you will experience multiple gift exchanges over the next month. Finding the perfect gift to bring a smile to someone can create many differing emotions within us. For some people and some cultures, gifts are the highest expression of their love.

Christmas is an eternal gift exchange of God's love for the world. Jesus exchanged the Kingdom of Heaven for earth out of love for us. Or as St. Athanasius wrote on this exchange, "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." This is the greatest gift we will ever experience.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us. Christmas is the mystery of this marvelous exchange" (526). So how do we allow Christ to form in us?

To truly prepare for this eternal gift exchange, let us take the following to heart:

- **Prayer:** Begin and end each day with prayer. Reflect on the significance of Jesus' birth and thank God for the gift of His Son. Spend time in prayerful contemplation of the Nativity scene by reading scripture and ask for the grace to appreciate the miracle of Christ's incarnation.
- **Attend Mass:** Of course, attending Mass on Christmas Day is essential. The Eucharist is a profound way to

commemorate the birth of Jesus, receive His blessings, and be united as a faith community.

- **Family Devotions:** Incorporate the true meaning of Christmas into your family celebrations. Share the story of Jesus' birth with your children and encourage them to contemplate its significance. Together, create a manger scene to remind everyone of the central event.



Remember, the essence of Christmas lies in the miracle of God becoming man. Let us open our hearts to the love and hope that Jesus brings, and may we share that love with others. As we celebrate this beautiful season, let us keep our faith at the forefront, and may the joy of Christ's birth fill our homes and hearts.

Wishing you all a blessed and meaningful Christmas. May the gift of Christ be felt in your lives and homes.

In His Mercy,

Fr. Eric Clark

Fr. Eric Clark,
Pastor



ST. PETER CATHOLIC CHURCH

COMMUNITY MEMBERS ENGAGE IN UNIQUE PILGRIMAGE OPPORTUNITY IN VISITING CHURCHES AND SHRINES, LEARNING AB

St. Thérèse of Lisieux once said, “The world is thy ship and not thy home.” This reminds us that our life is a journey to heaven, and we must navigate our course in the way of Christ to reach our heavenly home with God. When viewed through this lens, life becomes a pilgrimage — a journey to a holy place that often brings about personal transformation. Making a pilgrimage to a sacred place on earth can remind us of the true purpose of our daily lives.

In late September, 25 parishioners joined Fr. Clark on a pilgrimage to holy sites in the northeastern United States and Canada. Over the course of this journey, they visited about a dozen sites and learned about North America’s early saints and the devotions of the first settlers.

“We initially planned a pilgrimage to Lebanon and Italy, but with the unrest in the Middle East, we started to look at other options,” Fr. Clark says. “I have been to many of these places in Canada, so I

wanted to show people that we don’t have to go to Italy to see beautiful churches or places where saints walked. We can see them right here.”

The trip began with a flight from Omaha to Albany, N.Y. From there, the pilgrims boarded a bus and visited their first holy site: the North American Martyrs Shrine. This shrine honors three Jesuit missionaries — St. René Goupil, St. John LaLande, and St. Isaac Jogues — who brought the Gospel to Native Americans and lost their lives in the process.

“Oftentimes, when we think of missionaries, we think of priests and religious as the primary missionaries,” Fr. Clark says. “But of these three martyrs, only St. Isaac Jogues was a priest. The others were lay missionaries. Their mission was to spread the Gospel by supporting the priests, reminding us that we are all called to be missionary evangelists.”

The group then traveled to Montreal, where they spent several days exploring Catholic sites in the



St. Anne de Beaupre



Eating on the St. Lawrence River



Oratory of St. Joseph in Montreal

“It was a wonderful experience for all and it was a gift to accompany them and see the Holy Spirit moving in their lives.” — Fr. Clark

NORTHEAST U.S. AND CANADA ABOUT THE SAINTS

area. They celebrated Mass at Notre Dame, the minor basilica, visited Mary, Queen of the World Cathedral — a quarter-scale replica of St. Peter’s in Rome — and toured St. Joseph’s Oratory, home of St. André Bessette. Known for his gentle devotion, St. André helped many experience renewal and healing. The pilgrims particularly loved the Votive Chapel, which honors the various patronages of St. Joseph and houses St. André’s crypt.

From there, they visited Our Lady of Good Help Chapel, home of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys, who established Montreal’s first school and rallied settlers to build the chapel. This site became a destination for sailors giving thanks for Mary’s protection over their sea voyages.

Next, the pilgrims traveled 30 minutes from Montreal to the burial site of St. Kateri Tekakwitha, where they celebrated Mass at her tomb. “Visiting this site and celebrating Mass here was special for us, as our diocesan church camp is named for St. Kateri, and many of our pilgrims help with that camp,” Fr. Clark says.

A brief stop at the Shrine of Our Lady of the

Cape in Trois-Rivières was followed by a visit to Quebec City, where the group attended a French-language Mass at Notre Dame Cathedral and prayed at the tomb of St. François de Laval, Quebec’s first bishop. “It has been 350 years since the founding of Quebec City, so they received permission from Rome to have a Holy Door,” Fr. Clark says. “Our pilgrims were able to pass through this door and go to confession. We received a warm welcome here; people were surprised and moved by Americans on pilgrimage in Canada.”

In Quebec City, they also visited the Ursuline Monastery, founded under the leadership of St. Marie of the Incarnation, canonized alongside St. François de Laval in 2014.

The next stop was the Shrine of St. Anne de Beaupré, known for miraculous healings and the



At Mary, Queen of the World Cathedral — Rex and Karen Largen, Fr. Clark, Jeff Runyan (Encounter Travel)

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Blake Vajgrt teaching on the spiritual life of grandparents



Going through Holy Door at Cathedral in Quebec City for indulgence



Fay Fayad



The image portrays Mary as a 16-year-old Jewish girl nursing the Baby Jesus who holds a scroll open to Genesis 3. Additionally, we see Mary's foot crushing the head of the serpent.

Behind Mary stands St. Joseph, looking lovingly at Mary and Jesus. And beside them stands St. Peter as a 2-year-old toddler, holding the keys to the kingdom which are protected under Mary's mantle.

The next time you enter our church, take a moment to appreciate the beauty of the painting depicting Our Lady, Protector of Life. This custom painting, displayed prominently in the narthex, was commissioned by Fr. Clark in 2023 after the image came to him in prayer.

"We wanted to have an image of Mary as the protector of life and of the Church since we are a few blocks away from Planned Parenthood," Fr. Clark says. "One of the beautiful traditions of Mary — especially in Spanish art — is showing her maternal care by feeding baby Jesus."

OUR LADY, PROTECTOR OF LIFE

UNIQUE PARISH PAINTING INSPIRES REFLECTION ON THE BLESSED MOTHER'S ROLE IN OUR LIVES

Armed with the idea of this image and a desire to portray Mary as the Mother of Christ and of the Church, Fr. Clark commissioned renowned artist Neilson Carlin to bring the image to life.

"He was recommended by other artists," Fr. Clark says. "He did the painting of the Holy Family for the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia."

Over the course of five months, Carlin created this beautiful image for us.

When you view the painting, be sure to notice the many elements that speak to Mary's role in our lives, not only as Catholic Christians but as Nebraska Catholics in particular.

The image portrays Mary as a 16-year-old Jewish girl nursing the baby Jesus, who holds a scroll open to Genesis 3. The scroll bears a reference to Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers." It is through Mary that Christ came into the world to break the chains of sin and death. Additionally, we see Mary's foot crushing the head of the serpent.

Behind Mary stands St. Joseph,

looking lovingly at Mary and Jesus. Beside them stands St. Peter as a 2-year-old toddler, holding the keys to the kingdom, which are protected under Mary's mantle.

This image conveys the depth of Mary's intimate relationship with Christ and His Church. Mary offered her "yes" to Christ, who then used her as the vessel through which He would come into the world to save us from our sins. Her role, however, didn't stop at the Incarnation. Quite the contrary — she continues to serve as a mother to us all, a loving protector, nurturer, and guide, drawing us closer to Christ.

In an effort to speak to our hearts as Nebraskans, Fr. Clark asked the artist to place the four figures under an Eastern Cottonwood tree, with a prairie in the background. This element emphasizes that Mary's maternal love and protection are specific and personal to each of us.

"We are familiar with many images of Mary," Fr. Clark says. "But for centuries, parishes, monasteries, and convents would commission a particular image of Mary that would show her role in their community. Mary comes to meet

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OUR LADY, PROTECTOR OF LIFE *continued from page 6*

us where we are — on the Nebraska prairie — to protect us.”

This image has been hanging in the narthex since March, and Fr. Clark encourages all of us to take a closer look next time we pass by. Spend time

contemplating the meaning behind each element in the picture. Spend time in prayer, considering Mary’s role in the Church and in your own life, and thank her for her “fiat” — the “yes” by which she gave Christ her all!

“Parishes, monasteries, and convents would commission a particular image of Mary that would show her role in their community. Mary comes to meet us where we are — on the Nebraska prairie — to protect us.” — Fr. Clark

COMMUNITY MEMBERS ENGAGE IN UNIQUE PILGRIMAGE OPPORTUNITY *continued from page 5*

enduring devotion to St. Anne held by French Canadians. St. Anne and St. Joachim are the parents of Mary and grandparents of Jesus. “Many pilgrims said this was their favorite place to pray,” Fr. Clark says. “It’s nestled in the mountains by the river and the shrine is beautiful. Blake Vajgrt gave a talk on the importance of grandparents, which resonated because all of our pilgrims have grandchildren.”

The final day included a Mass at the Augustinian Monastery, where the group learned about Blessed Catherine of St. Augustine, who was dedicated to providing physical and spiritual care for the sick.

The witness of the holy missionaries, and the men and women who answered God’s call in North America’s early days, inspired the pilgrims as they

learned about the saints’ faith and devotion.

“We know that our life is a pilgrimage here on earth,” Fr. Clark says. “Any time we go on an adventure, there should be a spiritual component. Seeing people who left the comforts of their own culture and country to teach, evangelize, and provide health care shows us what heroic virtue is. Experiencing this in the fellowship of other believers strengthens us to have one heart and one mind as the early Church did. Living, praying, and sharing meals together truly bond us.

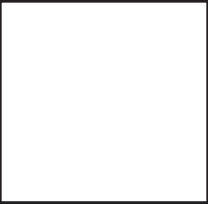
“With time for prayer, reflection, and talks, this pilgrimage was more of a spiritual encounter and faith formation,” he adds. “It was a wonderful experience for all, and it was a gift to accompany them and see the Holy Spirit moving in their lives.”



At the Notre Dame Basilica in Montreal



ST. PETER CATHOLIC CHURCH



4500 Duxhall Dr. | Lincoln, NE 68516
402-423-1239 | www.saintpeterlincoln.com

MASS SCHEDULE:

Saturday: 4:00 p.m.

Sunday: 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m.

DAILY MASS

Monday-Friday: 6:30 a.m., 8:15 a.m., 5:30 p.m.

Saturday: 8:15 a.m.

CONFESSION

Monday: 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.

Wednesday: 4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Friday: 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.

Saturday: 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday 30 minutes before each Mass

Christmas Wish list

Item:	Price:
Pascal Candle	\$500
Incense	\$200
Flag Pole and Stand	\$145
Saint Books for Confirmation Study	\$250
Recording Microphone	\$500
Parish Office Printer, Copier, Scanner	\$359
Funeral & Special Event TV	\$1500
Floor Buffer	\$1500
Tuition Assistance (K-8)	\$3000
School Lobby Cross	\$500
Virtue in Education Year Subscription	\$750

**SEE BULLETIN INSERT OR GO ONLINE
FOR COMPLETE LIST OF ITEMS**

All donations are welcome, no matter the amount.
Please scan here to donate online or you can drop
off a check with the donation item in the memo line.



Christmas MASS SCHEDULE

Tuesday,
December 24th
4p.m., 6:00 p.m. and
10:00 p.m.

Wednesday,
December 25th
8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m.
and 11:00 a.m.

Holy Day- Solemnity
of Mary, Mother of
God
Wednesday,
January 1st
6:30 a.m., 8:15 a.m.
and 5:30 p.m.