St. Luke
St. Teresa

PARISH NEWSLETTER

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2026

Join Us for the
PICNIC HOMECOMING
A Celebration of Community and Fellowship

As we continue to celebrate the centennial year of St. Teresa, we look forward to the Picnic Homecoming Celebration, taking place this Aug. 29 on the school grounds. Mass will be celebrated at St. Teresa at 4 p.m., allowing parishioners to join the festivities earlier. Kevin Bouse and his wife, Ginny, chair the team that has been working hard to plan and coordinate the event.

"It works out because there's no school the day before, so the grade school kids help us," Kevin says. "We set up, and they help us, and some of the parents who can take off work. We've got volunteers from 6 years old to 86 years old working. Actually, there's a lady who's 94."

Parishioners work together to get the tents up and ready for the big day.

Kevin's been coordinating this picnic for about 17 years. He relies on the many volunteers who step up to help. Each area has its own group or committee dedicated to that piece of the celebration. About 90 volunteers set up for the big day, and over 200 who are serving on the day of the event itself. A lot is going on, and parishioners won't want to miss it.

"We have a really good chicken dinner," Kevin says. "We do open the chicken dinner for early birds at 4 p.m. It's fried on the spot. We serve until 7 p.m. or till we run out."

Prices for the dinner and other items will be posted closer to the day.

"We have the Quilt Bingo," Kevin says. "They alternate cash and quilt prizes. You can choose to win cash if you want to skip the quilt rounds. We do a huge silent auction with lots of good stuff. We have several children's games and inflatables. There's a sandwich stand outside. We also have Big Six and poker for the adults."

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Join Us for the PICNIC HOMECOMING

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The celebration supports the parish and all its yearly needs, so the biggest competition is the raffle.

"We have a big $10,000 raffle," Kevin says. "Normally, we oversell. That means there'll be other prizes, on top of the $10,000 winner."

What would a picnic be without music? The band known as the Tenets will be performing —one of the members is a St. Teresa Grade School graduate.

"They've been doing our picnic for a couple of years," Kevin says.

All the volunteers, those who donate, and those who help plan the event are using their time, talents, and treasure to be good stewards of this parish community.

"It's cool because you have these little kids all working together with their adults," Kevin says. "My kids are in high school and college. They all know us. We start setting up around 8 a.m. We're done by 11 a.m. Then we all go to Cutter's to get free pizza and soda from a parishioner who owns it. We're all working towards a common goal."

With over a thousand in attendance, this celebration serves as an annual reunion as well. We invite all alumni to attend this year's picnic and renew connections with their St. Teresa classmates and our St. Teresa Parish community as we celebrate 100 years of our parish and school.

"The parents of the kids who graduated with my kids have a lot of volunteer spirit," Kevin says.

As Kevin notes, his dad forged longtime friendships with parents from Kevin's friends' classes.

"You're going to make really amazing friendships with people in the parish — my dad's lasted over 50 years," Kevin says. "I think people don't realize what a tight, long-term friendship you can start at the church."

St. Teresa students help carry materials to set up for the picnic.

Kevin hopes to see more younger parents joining this stewardship effort to continue the trend. Since volunteers are needed in many places, there are plenty of opportunities.

"It could be anywhere from helping sell tickets for kids' activities, to serving food, to collecting and selling bingo cards — just anything, really," he says. "If people have a specialty or area they want to work in, we can always work with that."

Volunteer shifts are typically two hours, but any availability is helpful.

"It's getting everyone together — summer's over, we're getting back into the swing of things," Kevin says. "People come back to town. We're tied together, working together."

To volunteer, contact Kevin Bouse by calling or texting 618-410-1047.

A Letter From Our Pastor

Avoiding Spiritual Drift

My Dear Sisters and Brothers,

By the time August arrives, many of us are caught between two seasons. Summer is still present, but signs of a busier time are beginning to appear. Vacations begin winding down, schools prepare to reopen, and routines that relaxed during the summer slowly start returning.

This transition happens every year, and with it comes a spiritual challenge that is easy to overlook. During the slower pace of summer, it can become easier to drift in our faith without fully realizing it. Prayer becomes less consistent. Mass attendance can become irregular while traveling. Parish involvement gets temporarily pushed aside. Most of the time, these changes are not intentional — they happen gradually.

That is why August is such an important time to pause and refocus. Stewardship calls us to live intentionally, not simply by habit or convenience. It reminds us that our relationship with God should remain steady in every season of life, including the less structured months of summer.

Living stewardship as a way of life means recognizing that our faith is not something separate from daily living. It influences how we spend our time, how we use our gifts, and how we respond to the needs around us. Even during busy or changing seasons, we are still called to remain faithful disciples.

This month provides a good opportunity to recommit ourselves to the practices that keep us grounded — daily prayer, regular participation in Mass, and involvement in the life of the parish. These simple habits strengthen our relationship with God and help us remain connected to the community of faith around us.

It is often in ordinary moments that God does His most important work in us. A consistent prayer life, faithful Mass attendance, and small acts of generosity may not seem dramatic, but over time, they shape who we are becoming.

As summer begins to draw to a close, let us take time to reflect on where we may have drifted and where God may be calling us to grow. May we move into the months ahead with renewed focus, grateful hearts, and a deeper commitment to living our faith each day.

In Christ,

Fr. Joseph Oganda, *Pastor*

Prayer Shawl Ministry Shares Talents and Praye

Praying for someone is a meaningful way to support and encourage someone. Whether they are in a tough situation or celebrating a joyous occasion, we can accompany our brothers and sisters through prayer. Each of us has been through highs and lows that have touched our lives in various ways.

For over 14 years, the Prayer Shawl Ministry has been creating and distributing shawls as a means of comfort and encouragement for those in need. The ministry began after Susan Evers learned of its existence in another parish.

"I started asking other people in other churches about it," she says. "I had an article in the bulletin asking if anyone would be interested. We had a meeting and decided we want to go ahead."

The ministry has been quietly serving our parish and community ever since.

"It's my hope that the Prayer Shawl Ministry can be expanded to include both parishes, that shawls will be available at St. Luke's and St. Teresa's on a regular basis," Susan says.

The members knit or crochet the prayer shawls on their own time, which are then blessed by one of our clergy members and then distributed. The shawls are given to those who "need to be wrapped in love and prayer," says Susan, whether they might be suffering from illness, experiencing grief or loss, or simply need a reminder of prayer. The group does not meet regularly — the members simply knit or crochet with their own materials and on their own time.

Cathy Volkman modeling one of the shawls she has made as a member of the ministry

"We wanted this to be a ministry that didn't depend on meetings because several of us involved are already going to a lot of other meetings," Susan says. "When a

Examples of the different sizes, colors, and patterns of the shawls

ers to Provide Comfort and Encouragement

> "It really touched my heart that there are people in our communities, churches, and elsewhere, willing to give their time and effort and talent to do something for someone they don't know."
> — *Susan Evers*

shawl is finished, they get them to me, bring them to the church, and then we attach a label to the shawl that says, 'made with love and prayer, from St. Luke Prayer Shawl Ministry.'"

Then, periodically throughout the year, Susan arranges for the shawls to be blessed at the end of Mass and distributed at the back of the church. Susan keeps track of who receives the shawls.

In addition to the full-size shawls, the ladies also make kid or baby-sized shawls. They have also been making "pocket shawls" — small three-by-five-inch rectangles with a cross in the middle. The pocket shawls have been given to veterans, school children, and the county sheriff's office detectives.

"Those are meant to be carried in your pocket, and we attach a prayer to them," Susan says. "The prayer is one of protection."

The group has decreased in participation and numbers in recent years, with only about four members currently serving in the ministry. Nevertheless, the women still manage to distribute many shawls. At one of the recent distributions on May 24, they presented 15 shawls to members of our community and congregation. Some of the shawls are allocated to the homebound who receive Communion from our Extraordinary Ministers who visit them, or to the rectory, so Fr. Joseph has some on hand when he goes to visit the sick.

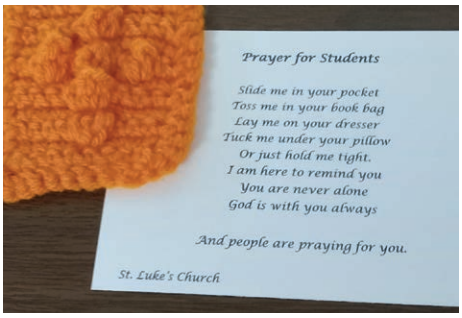
Knitting or crocheting a shawl, especially a full-size one, is no small task. The ladies pour in many hours to each individual shawl, giving of their time in a significant way.

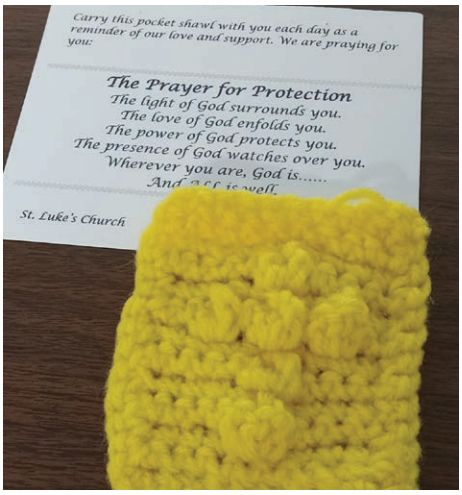
"The shawls we give to adults are about 20 inches wide and 60 inches long," Susan says.

When Susan's brother was in hospice, she went to visit him and brought with her a prayer shawl made by one of her fellow ministry members.

"When I presented it to him, he was so touched that people he didn't even know would pray for him," she says. "He died in April. To me, it really touched my heart that there are people in our communities, churches, and elsewhere, willing to give their time and effort and talent to do something for someone they don't know."

The ministry is open to anyone who wishes to get involved. For more information, contact Susan Evers at susan.evers@sbcglobal.net or 618-397-2295.





Pocket shawls with the prayers attached to them for our veterans, first responders/ military, or students

STEWARDSHIP OF TALENT

Sharing the Gifts God Has Given You

God has entrusted each of us with unique gifts. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul writes, "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord" (1 Cor 12:4-5). Every member of the Body of Christ has been blessed with gifts, abilities and experiences that can be used to build up the Church and serve others.

Stewardship invites us to recognize these gifts as talents entrusted to us by God. Some talents are easy to recognize. Others may be discovered only through prayer, experience and a willingness to serve. Regardless of how visible they may be, all gifts have value because they come from God.

At the heart of stewardship is the understanding that everything we have is a gift from God. The Church often speaks of stewardship through the sharing of our Time, Talent and Treasure — the Three Ts of stewardship. Time comes first because prayer is the foundation of the stewardship way of life. As our relationship with God grows, we become better able to recognize the gifts He has given us and discern how He is calling us to use them in service to others.

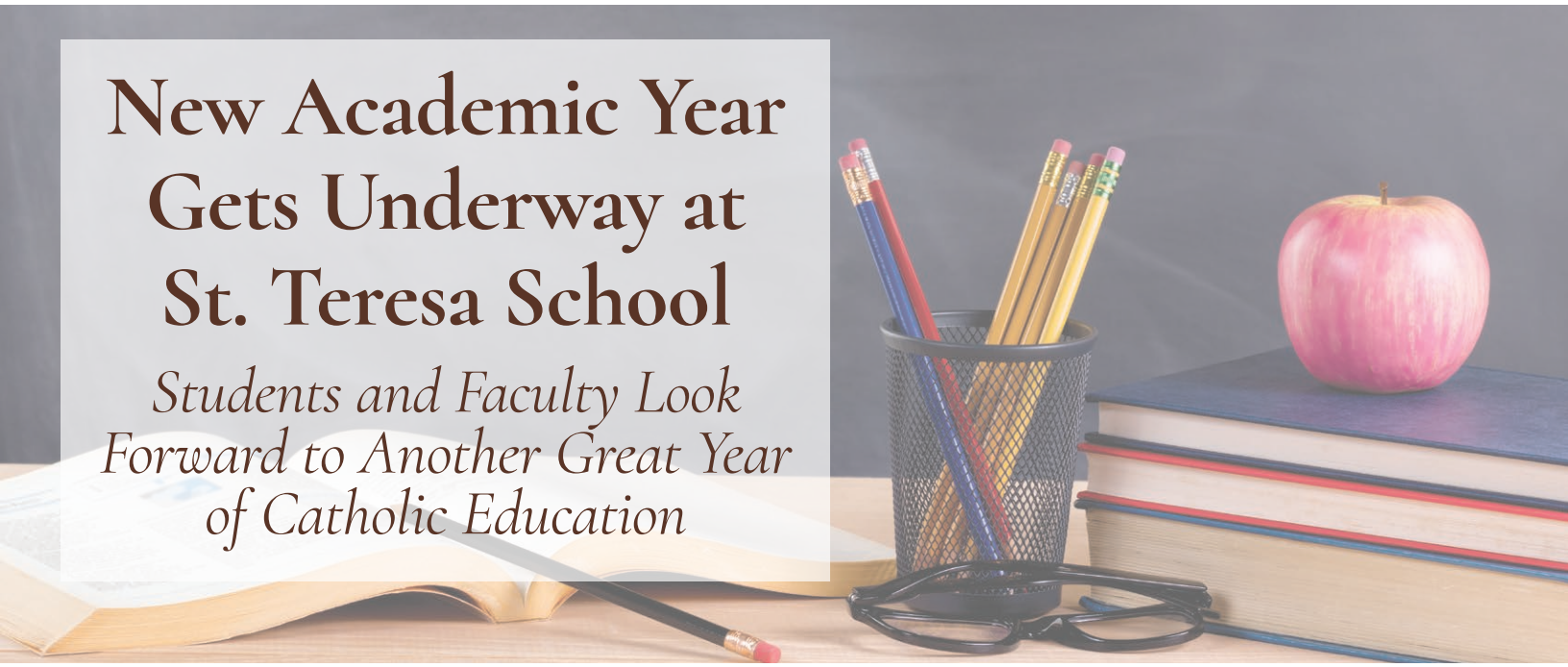
Stewardship of talent is not simply about filling a need or completing a task. It is about responding to God's invitation to use the gifts He has entrusted to us for His glory and the good of others. When we place our talents at His service, those gifts become instruments through which He works in the lives of others.

Some people are called to serve as catechists or in faith formation ministries. Others use their gifts through hospitality, music ministry, outreach, administration, pastoral care or countless acts of service that help build up the parish community. Some serve in highly visible roles, while others work quietly behind the scenes. Every gift matters because every gift contributes to the mission of the Church.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops reminds us in *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response* that stewardship is rooted in discipleship. The stewardship of talent challenges us to recognize the gifts God has given us and place them at the service of others.

As stewards, we are invited to reflect on the gifts God has given us and consider how those gifts can be used in ministry and service to others. No gift is too small, and no gift is without purpose. When we offer our talents back to God, He uses them to build His Kingdom, strengthen His Church and draw others closer to Christ.

"God has entrusted each of us with gifts that are meant to be shared in ministry and service to others."



New Academic Year Gets Underway at St. Teresa School

Students and Faculty Look Forward to Another Great Year of Catholic Education

As we prepare for another school year at St. Teresa's, there is plenty to celebrate and look forward to. From facility upgrades and new staff members to outdoor learning projects and student service initiatives, the school continues working to create an environment where students thrive in faith, academics, and leadership. Principal Nicole Green, celebrating five years at the school this upcoming academic year, has looked forward to the many exciting things that are happening both inside and outside the classroom.

"We don't sit stagnant too often," she says. "We're constantly looking at ways to improve or do better."

As this is the 250th birthday of the United States, the theme for the 2026-2027 school year is "One Nation Under God." Mrs. Green loves the start of the school year. Over the summer, the school gets quiet and lonely. It's meant to be full of life.

"We get a lot accomplished and spruced up all over the school, but we really look forward to that first week of school because the building feels empty without kids," Mrs. Green says. "We look forward to the buzz and excitement. We really love our back-to-school blessing and backpack blessing during open house. Everyone is eager to be back in the building."

Mrs. Green is proud of the lessons they teach in service to students of all ages.

"Service is super important," says Mrs. Green. "We have a very active Junior St. Vincent de Paul Society, a very active student council, and we really instill in the kids that service."

Over the past three years, the school has revamped its curriculum across all grade levels. There haven't just been changes in books, but also within the building itself, as nearly the entire school — except for the gym — has been repainted. This summer also brought a major facility project with the replacement of the school's boiler. This year, we are also welcoming some new staff members, and Mrs. Green can't wait to get them all acclimated.

> "I get to talk about Jesus every single day. It's putting Jesus at the center of everything that we do, and if you're putting Him first, then everything else falls into place."
> — *Nicole Green, Principal*

Last year, an outdoor classroom was added, including a butterfly garden. It's part of the Monarch Waystation program to help increase the monarch population. Mrs. Green also hopes for this to become a registered weather monitoring location.

"We want to continue to build on this outdoor classroom and add more learning opportunities," she says.

The Junior St. Vincent de Paul Society regularly organizes outreach projects, including birthday kits for families in need. Students also participate in coat drives, food drives, Advent Giving Tree collections, and projects for the homebound.

For Mrs. Green, Catholic education is deeply meaningful because faith is woven into every part of the day.

"I get to talk about Jesus every single day," she says. "It's putting Jesus at the center of everything

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St. Luke Catholic Church:
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St. Teresa Catholic Church:
https://www.stteresabelleville.org/

New Academic Year Gets Underway at St. Teresa School *continued from page 7*

that we do, and if you're putting Him first, then everything else falls into place."

There are a few moments that always stand out each school year — particularly Veterans' Day and Grandparents' Day. Mrs. Green loves seeing all the grandparents lined up, ready to come into school.

"It's that sense of community and legacy — grandparents passing on their faith to their grandchildren," she says. "The kids are excited about it, too."

Mrs. Green also loves inviting veterans into the school to be honored for Veterans' Day and having the chance to show them appreciation for their sacrifices.

One of the most beautiful parts of the school community is the compassion students show toward one another.

"We're just a family," Mrs. Green says. "We take care of each other. We look after each other. We make sure that we're super supportive of each other, no matter what the circumstances. Our kids pray for each other when times are difficult. They will stop and just say, 'Can we just pray for this person right now?'"

We wish all the students a safe and happy 2026-2027 school year!