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one@ourecma.com.

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Topic Articles

***Editor's Note:** This month we asked our writers, "What kind of spiritual homecomings have you experienced? Do they shape your life or help you find your way back to your spiritual roots?"*

Where Christ is Found Every Week

Written by:

Father Damian Richards

Every time there is a new Pope, I will organize a trip to Rome to see him. My last trip to Rome was at the beginning of Pope Francis' reign, about ten years ago. Of course, when you go on a pilgrimage to Rome, you tour more than just Rome. You tour the Italian countryside visiting and praying in churches that were built hundreds of years before America was discovered.

Such trips never fail to impress. The churches are on huge scales. St. Peter's Basilica in Rome was the largest enclosed space from when it was built in the 1500's until the Houston Astrodome was built in the 1960's. The artwork, classics which we have only seen in art books or online, are

right there for you to look at and admire. Architecture students and art students are seen everywhere, studying these great works of Western Art.

A sad side effect of such trips is that it makes the churches in western Kansas seem so very small and simple. Once I met a fellow pilgrim at an event in Victoria. She and her husband had accompanied me on a Pilgrimage to Rome to see Pope Benedict XVI. So, naturally enough, we visited for a bit.

We both noticed how simple St. Fidelis looked to us after seeing St. Peter's Basilica up close. Now, I have nothing but praise for the the Basilica of St. Fidelis at Victoria. It is a beautiful church. The parish

and town do a marvelous job keeping the building up and it is a wonderful testimony to the faith of the Volga Germans who settled Ellis County. But, when you have seen St. Peter's, St. Fidelis looks pretty simple and even small.

Knowing that she was from a small-town parish, I asked her if she had a similar feeling when she returned from the pilgrimage to her home church. I knew she had come from a church with 40 families in the congregation and that their sanctuary space could hold 50 people if everyone squeezed in. The entire building would have fit in a side chapel of St. Peter's, with room to spare.

"If that's what you thought of St. Fidelis, I'll bet your home-town parish seemed pretty

Where Christ is Found Every Week (Continued)

simple and bare after our trip to Rome," I said. "No, it didn't," she answered. "My hometown church is as beautiful as it ever was!" "Why is that?" I asked.

"Because my home parish is where I find Christ every week," she answered. This was the church where she was married, where her children received the Sacraments, where her family worshiped God every Sunday. This was where she went to ask for God's intercession and comfort when bad news hit

and where she went to give God thanks for the blessings the family had received.

Because of her home-town faith, her pilgrimage to Rome hadn't reduced the beauty of her simple country church. It had enhanced it. The glory of those grand European churches helped drive home to her the majesty of God and the faith of people who built such wonderful monuments of faith.

Her homecoming from her pilgrimage to Rome to her

own little country church reminded her that all of that majesty, grandeur and glory we saw in those basilicas of Europe is merely a small reflection of the glory of God that resides in a believer's heart.



Fr. Damian Richards, Pastor of St. Nicholas of Myra in Hays & St. Francis of Assisi in Munjor.

Come Like Little Children

Written by:
Esther Courtney

Matthew 18:3-5 (NIV) says, "...Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."

Proverb 22:6 (NIV) says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

2 Corinthians 6:2 (NIV) says, "...Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Have you ever watched little kids at play? They run freely around the

playground; they hold hands and skip with joy; they throw back their heads and laugh; they chase a cat or dog hoping to catch it; they look for someone or something to validate them, telling them they are truly worth it, that they are truly okay.

When Jesus said that we must become like little children in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, what did He mean? Jesus loved the little children. We know He did. He loved their innocence; He loved their happiness and joy and laughter and glee; He loved their trusting demeanor; He loved their honesty! He wanted them to sit on His lap and be close to Him. He wanted them to learn about

Him and share what they knew...maybe spread the Good News to those that couldn't be with Him in person. How did kids get so smart? Little kids react to how they are treated. Jesus treated them well!

Think back on your younger years. Were they good years? Were you carefree, able to be a child? Did you dream of what you would be when you grew up? Maybe you wanted to be an actor, a school teacher, an engineer or a doctor. Maybe you just wanted to be like your mom or dad. Do you remember? Has it been that long ago?

Do you want to go back to

Come Li le Children (Con nued)

those wonderful days and memories that somehow slipped away as you grew older and wiser (so you thought)? Maybe you don't want to go back that way at all! Guess what...it's later than you think! Perhaps it's time to think about your past and your future. Perhaps it's time to take inventory of your life and look and see what you have accomplished. Did you really think time would stand still until you were ready to make that commitment-- that commitment you promised to do a long time ago. It's later than you think!

How's your love life--pretty good? It seems you've done better than most these days. How's your family life--hectic but still good? Okay then, that's not so bad. Let's talk about your career--flourishing? Wow, okay! What

about your time with Jesus? (silence). I'm sorry--I'll speak louder--what about your time with Jesus? (say what?) Jesus. You know, Jesus.

The forgotten One. The One Who promised everything...the One Who gave everything one could ever want; the One Who held you in His lap when you cried and He cried with you; the One Who forgave you when you ignored Him in front of your buddies; the One Who was hoping to hear from you soon because it has been an awful long time; the One Who will never leave you now, tomorrow, next year or into eternity; the One that keeps His Promises. Hebrews 13:5 (NIV) says, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

That's the Jesus I'm talking about. What about you? Do you know this Jesus? Have you ever known Him? He's the One

Who loves His children no matter how old they are or how young they are...He loves little children and big children! He's the One Who gives us those gifts of Faith, Salvation, and Grace. He pours out His Mercy, Goodness, and Understanding. And do you know what? He's a Friend forever and ever. His Love goes beyond the stars. He never sleeps and He longs to hear our praise and thanksgiving simply because He made us! No one deserves it more than He does...this Jesus Who loves the little children!



Esther Courtney is an Elder of the Hays SDA Church.

Welcome Home

Wri en by:
Cheryl Glassman

This year marks 50 years since I graduated from high school. Time flies, doesn't it? My formative years, like many people's, were filled with many ups and downs, adventures and misadventures. I don't know too many people who were "perfect" when trying to

figure out where life would take them.

When I meet people from my past, it is always interesting to hear what they are doing, or how their career or life paths have changed. I imagine there will be quite a few of my classmates here for our 50th class reunion. Homecomings of this nature can be quite a bit

of fun, or, for some, bring back some not so good memories. It is up to each person how to perceive and be part of it.

There are many different types of homecomings. I remember when my daughter first moved to New York City. Her first homecoming or return home was filled with

Welcome Home (Con nued)

tears of happiness. When it was time for her to go back to her new home, we all were happy for her success, but sad to see her go. The cool thing was we knew at the end of that homecoming, we would be planning for another. Homecomings for our daughter have become more frequent.

Not long after, our son moved to the Little Apple. Even though it wasn't as physically far away, his work kept him from coming home very often. His homecomings were filled with happiness as well; but we knew his proximity would allow for us to visit him as we could. Then our son moved back to Hays... another homecoming.

There are such a variety of homecomings. One of the most wonderful homecomings was when our grandson was born and brought home. For me, every time I take a trip with my sisters-in-law or visit my daughter, as much as I love the adventure, home truly is a welcome site. My dad's neighbor is in his 90's. He has children who do not live close to Hays. When I see their vehicles parked at his place for school homecomings or

holidays, it makes me smile.

As we all grow a little older, our views change, and we might see a new light when thinking of coming home. A definition of homecoming I found is "where past and present are united to enjoy a time of reunion and celebration." Hmm...isn't that what Christian faith is all about? Now, I must say, contrary to some beliefs, I am definitely not a social butterfly. Attending my high school reunion will take a lot of mental effort. Sadly, I feel that way about other things sometimes - even attending church. But I know deep down even though it may not be what I think is needed at that moment, when I do attend an event, nine times out of 10 I feel better for it.

And - isn't everything we do kind of like the definition of homecoming? Especially our church or faith lives. My parents took me to church when I was a child. Now I attend or go to church because I want to. My "past" has brought me to a place where my "present" includes at least one visit to a church each week. It is at church

where I can "enjoy a time of reunion and celebration."

Mass includes this type of understanding of homecoming as well! We see old friends and meet new ones. We might sing songs from our distant past - or new songs we hear for the first time in the present. We hear readings from the bible - from the Old and New Testament and the Gospels. We listen and learn how these events from our church's past can help us in the present to become closer to Christ and to one another.

Faith, in particular, a religious faith or belief is a journey. A homecoming! Let us come home to a celebration of realizing God's love at the end of the day. Homecoming is a good way to express Christian life! As I close my eyes to pray at this moment, I smile. I think of God's unconditional love. And I say to myself, "welcome home."



Cheryl Glassman is the Director of Music at St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church in Hays.

"The church is not a select circle of the immaculate, but a home where the outcast may come in." – James H. Aughey

Leadership Interviews

Father Fred Back at St Joseph's Catholic Church

Written by:

Terri Braun

Although Fr. Fred Gatschet is the "new priest" at St Joseph's Catholic Church, Hays is a place that he is plenty familiar. It is a place that he traveled to as a child as it was his dad's hometown. Father reminisced about his childhood days saying that he and his 10 siblings thought that "going to heaven was going to Hays to visit grandpa."

He was raised in Manhattan, KS where he graduated high school and then attended K-State University. He graduated from there with two degrees, one in Spanish and one in Milling Science. When in Hays, he used the Spanish degree to help the Ellis County Sheriff's Department, the Hays Police Department, and the municipal and district courts translate when non-English speaking individuals came in.

Once he graduated from college, he wondered what he was going to do with those degrees. Growing up, thoughts of priesthood danced in the back of his mind, and he knew that his parents would be supportive of him if he chose to take this

avenue. So, after graduating, those "back of the mind" thoughts became a reality. And he has now been a priest for 32 years. He said that he has found peace in the priesthood.

From 2001-2013 he taught at Thomas More Prep-Marian (TMP): from 2001-2002 he taught part-time and from 2003-2013 he taught full-time. When he was given the assignment of Pastor at St. Joseph's parish, his teaching career ended, and he ran St. Joseph's parish from 2013-2019. For all those years (2000-2019) he was chaplain at the Comeau Catholic Campus Center. He was then moved to Salina in 2019 and today he finds himself and his two Siberian huskies, Cappy and Joaquim, once again in Hays.

He currently is pastoring at St Joseph's as well as teaching part-time at TMP. He said that he truly loves teaching and not only teaches the kids, but also likes to teach at the pulpit instead of just lecturing. Fr.



Father Fred Gatschet with his dogs, Cappy (left) and Joaquim (right).

Fred said that he takes his dogs to TMP with him at times and Joaquim is the social one as he "works the crowd" while Cappy is on the shy side and likes to hide under the desk. This held true even as Cheryl Glassman, ECMA President, and I spoke with him for this article!

Fr. Fred, welcome (once again), to Hays!

Terri Braun is Editor of ONE Magazine.

Ecumenical Events

October 1: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort)

October 3: Liver and Onions Drive Through, 5-7pm at Hays Baptist Church (1111 Fort)

October 3: Feeding Hays, 6:30-7:00pm-to go spaghetti dinner at St. Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd)

October 4-6: Tootsie Roll Drive (campaign for people with intellectual disabilities), be on the lookout for them!

October 8: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort)

October 8: Pet Blessing, 1pm, Bring your pet to the front of St. Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd)

October 10: Blood Drive, 12-6pm at St Nicholas of Myra (2901 E. 13th)

October 10: Give Fest by the Heartland Community Foundation (day of giving for registered non-profits), 12am-11:59pm, use heartlandgivefest.org on this day to donate

October 10: Feeding Hays, 6:30-7:00pm-to go spaghetti dinner at St. Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd)

October 10: Informational Meeting about Cold-Weather Shelter, 6:30pm at First Baptist Church (1111 Fort)

October 15: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort)

October 17: Laundry Love by First Call for Help, 4 -7pm at 27th and Hall St. Laundromat

October 17: Feeding Hays, 6:30-7:00pm-to go spaghetti dinner at St. Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd)

October 22: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort)

October 24: Feeding Hays, 6:30-7:00pm-to go spaghetti dinner at St. Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd)

October 26: Volunteer Training for Cold-Weather Shelter volunteers, 9am-12pm at First Baptist Church (1111 Fort)

October 29: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort)

October 30: Blood Drive, 12-6pm at St Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd)

Last month the First Call for Help's Laundry Love program washed and dried 55 loads of laundry completely free to clients! Thank you Sunflower Bank for sponsoring it!



On September 19, the Feeding Hays program fed 320 people with their drive through dinner! If you would like to volunteer to help with this much needed program, you can text or call Ben at 785-259-2851.

First Baptist Church had its annual block party on Sunday, September 15, at Massey Park, 17th and Allen. Food, fun and fellowship was had by all!



Congratulations to Rev. Cana Moore who was ordained on August 30 at Gorham Community Church! She is also the pastor for Hays Christian Church.