

CSS is US!

Essential elements of growth towards Heaven

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Our counselors at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Counseling Center of Catholic Social Services are great stewards of the perfect Farmer's creation. Any time you or anyone you know needs help understanding ways to improve their conditions to grow, whether it is with their soil, their water, their sun-shine, their fertilizer, or their pruning, our counselors have the ability to provide assistance. Just like the gardener in the parable of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9), we would like to provide the care you need to help you grow. Thanks for your continued prayers and assistance.

A helping hand at the holidays

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♦ **Adopt-A-Family.** Individuals, families and groups can adopt a family. Mostly gifts are purchased, but a food basket can be given. The maximum value of each gift is \$25 per person.

♦ **Good Angel Trees Program.** In Hastings, St. Cecilia and St. Michael parishes and in Doniphan, St. Ann parish gifts and food baskets are provided to needy families in the area. We meet with families to determine needs and wishes for Christmas. The items identified and put on an Angel Tree at these churches for parishioners to purchase. Families applying also receive a food basket either from the Good Angel Tree Program or the CSS Food Pantry. If you, your family or organization would like to assist in one of this year's Christmas Programs, call (402) 474-1600 in Lincoln or (402) 463-2112 in Hastings.

Visit our website at:
www.csssus.org



(S.A.G.)



Catholic Social Services
2241 "O" Street
Lincoln, NE 68510

Patron

The Quarterly Newsletter of Catholic Social Services Of Southern Nebraska

And she gave birth to her first born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

-Luke 2:7



A helping hand at the holidays Thousands served by CSS Christmas Programs

With the onset of winter and the holidays, December is always the busiest month of the year for our social service programs. In particular, the Catholic Social Services Christmas Programs provide gifts to thousands of individuals across southern Nebraska each year. Through our Hastings, Lincoln and Auburn offices, we provide gifts and food baskets for families, children and individuals who might otherwise go without during the holidays. Our ability to provide to those in need through these programs relies greatly on the generosity of our donors and volunteers. Our programs include:

♦ **KFOR Operation Santa Claus.** For years we have participated in Lincoln radio station KFOR's Operation Santa Claus. Clients fill out applications at our

office requesting specific items for their children. The requests are sent to KFOR, who place them on area "Giving Trees." The donated presents are delivered to our office, where clients can pick them up.

♦ **The St. Nicholas Toy Shoppe.** We work with coordinators at participating parishes to randomly select the age and gender of the child and a toy for children twelve and younger. The toys received are taken to the St. Nicholas Toy Shoppe in Lincoln. The Toy Shoppe will again be located at the CSS offices in the St. Joseph Center at 2241 "O" Street. The Toy Shoppe will be open on Monday, December 23rd from 9am-Noon and 1-4pm. Customers may pick out one new toy and one stocking-stuffer for each of their children. Last year, the St. Nicholas Toy Shoppe provided toys for over 3,000 children.

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The CSS St. Nicholas Toy Shoppe as it appeared last year just before it is opened to our clients to shop

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CSS is US!

Eye to eye

Fr. Christopher Kubat
Executive Director
Catholic Social Services



We recently helped a woman who had been homeless for almost a decade escape a violent situation. In her woundedness, she informed us that during her time on the streets, all she ever wanted was for someone to look her in the eyes and acknowledge her as a person, that she had dignity. Over and over, people would walk past or around her as they looked away, sometimes in disgust. Her prayers have been answered – as we look into her eyes we love Jesus who is present in her as she sees the face of Christ in us. In addition, she now has a safe place to live as we help her become independent once again.

I can only imagine the thoughts that were going through the mind of Joseph as he searched and searched for a place for the Blessed Virgin Mary to give birth to the Christ Child. Try also to imagine Mary's thoughts after each refusal. Finally they were allowed to stay in a cave fit only for animals. I often imagine St. Joseph clearing a place for Jesus and Mary. They were so poor, the infant Jesus was gently placed in a feeding trough for animals (Lk 2:7).

Indeed, the Son of God who is infinitely rich became poor in His humanity so that we who are poor in our humanity may become rich in heaven for all eternity (2

Cor 8:9). This is the reason for the Incarnation, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:1-14). Let us be reminded the two reasons the Son of God came to us as a man: to die on the cross for our salvation and to start the Church in which we find our salvation.

As we get set to give and receive presents this Christmas, let us remember the greatest gift ever given to mankind was the Son of God to all of us that first Christmas. It is Him who we encounter in each Sacrament, especially the Blessed Sacrament when we receive into our bodies and souls the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

After receiving such a gift so sublime, we are tempted to ask, 'How can I repay thee, O Lord?' The answer, of course, is to love our neighbor, which is evidence of our love of God (1 Jn 4).



As you gather this Christmas with family and loved ones, please consider helping us spiritually with your prayers and penances, materially with items around your home or farm not needed (including vehicles), and a cash gift according to your means so we can continue helping the many individuals and families that come to us in crisis

like that woman outlined above. Please know that we at Catholic Social Services will keep you, your family and intentions in our prayers at this most holy time of the year and beyond.

Fr. Christopher Kubat

Fr. Christopher Kubat
Executive Director





Social Services

Being an instrument of grace

**Curt Krueger- Director of Social Services
Eastern Sector of the Diocese**

“When God saw the world falling to ruin because of fear, he immediately acted to call it back to Himself with love. He invited it by his grace, preserved it by his love and embraced it with compassion.”

-St. Peter Chrysologus

There seems to be an awful lot of fear in the world right now. Obamacare, religious liberty, taxes, national debt, terrorism; all these and many more concerns occupy our hearts and minds. For the poor the fear is more personal- where will I get the food to feed my family? If my power gets turned off how will I stay warm? Does anyone care what happens to me?

At Christmas time we can be instruments of Christ’s love and compassion for those who are afraid. Christmas is a time of joy, the angel told the shepherds “I come to proclaim good news to you – tidings

of great joy to be shared by the whole people” (LK 2:10).

Share your joy with everyone around you this Christmas, especially the poor. Put together a sack of food from your pantry to help us feed the hungry; buy a toy for a child from the giving tree in your parish; Adopt-A-Family this Christmas; donate a blanket to help keep someone warm; simply smile and say a prayer for the person in front of you at the grocery store who is using their food stamp card.

Share the joy of Christmas with those around you and your joy will be doubled. Be an instrument of God’s grace for those who are afraid, preserve them with Christ’s love and embrace them with Christ’s compassion and you will have a truly blessed and merry Christmas. God bless you this Christmas season!



CSS VOLUNTEERS- FORMED BY THE HANDS OF THE ARTIST

Volunteering at Catholic Social Services is a work of art! It is always a work in progress but you can definitely see the beauty of the piece being formed. The best part of watching the work of art being created is knowing and seeing the Artist at work in the elements He is using in His artwork! The elements or material He is working with to make His work of art are those who bear His image. It is those who serve Him, the clay in the potters hands, those individual image bearers who He is adding to His glorious temple one stone at a time. I say all this as one who watches God at work in those who serve those in need of Him, the Artist! The volunteers at Catholic Social Services are a mosaic of talented, hardworking, members of the Body of Christ who work in so many ways to support God's work here, it makes me think of it as a work of art by the greatest artist of all times, God! “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). If you would like to learn more about the volunteer opportunities at CSS in the Lincoln area, call me at (402) 327-6230. In the Hastings area, contact Jill McMahon at (402) 463-2112.



-Bryan Dahlberg, Volunteer Coordinator-Lincoln



Counseling Services

Essential elements of growth towards heaven

Dr. Aaron Stratman
Director of Clinical Services

For me, one of the most relaxing places that I ever go is my grandparents' house. Now, my grandparents have passed away, but I have a lot of aunts, uncles, and cousins on my mom's and dad's side. I absolutely love being a part of my family, and I so enjoy having so many people who have loved and accepted me throughout my life. This past summer, my mom's family was having a reunion, and I was able to stay at my Grandma Stratman's farm thanks to my Uncle Rick, who now owns it. After Uncle Rick let me give the kids a ride on the big tractor, he showed me an antique he had in the barn—a manure spreader. After describing how it worked, I started to think about how to apply the concept to counseling.



When we think about how we grow in virtue and holiness, it seems that the process has some parallels to how plants grow. I have even begun asking people, "What do plants need to grow?" Initially, they usually get two of the five elements that I am proposing—sun and water. When I add that plants usually need dirt, fertilizer, and pruning to help them grow, it sets up the principles to help cope with the parallel experiences that occur in our lives.

First, in order to grow, we need to be planted in a family that provides us the opportunity to establish our roots. Not to say that my family is dirt! Instead, there

is both a firm foundation and room for growth. Certainly, we not only benefit from having attachments that surround us with love, but also from the affirmation to express our true selves and grow.

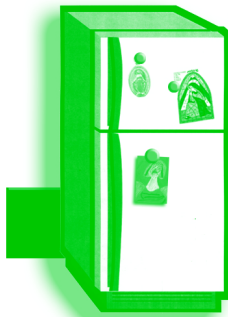
Second, the water from Baptism provides us with access to an infinite resource of nourishment. It connects us spiritually to the body of Christ and helps us to integrate the nutrients that we need to grow. It gives us God's indwelling spirit in our soul, and opens the door to our receiving grace. It also allows us access to the third thing we need—the Son. Without the water of Baptism, we would not have access to the Eucharist, to the Son. In addition to receiving the Son in the Eucharist, we also should get as much "Son-shine" as we can through Eucharistic Adoration. It can really help us grow.

The final two elements we need to grow are somewhat related through the concept of suffering. At many points throughout our life, we experience suffering that God allows to help us grow. When it happens to us, it feels like we are having manure (fertilizer) piled on us as if we were (you guessed it) following closely behind a manure spreader. And if you stop and

think about it from an agricultural standpoint, some fertilizer is better than other fertilizer. Some people's suffering is worse than others. However, just like a good farmer knows that the type of fertilizer he needs to make his crops grow depends on the vegetation he is trying to grow, God knows the type and amount of fertilizer that we can handle and that will help us grow to the most optimal level. God is a perfect farmer (see Genesis and the Garden of Eden). Finally, when we actively work to get rid of our bad habits or we ask others to help us actively get rid of our bad habits, we are engaging in the type of pruning that really allows us to bear good fruit and to grow closer to our ultimate destination.

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The Refrigerator Reference Series

Useful Tips To Help You And Your Family Live Our Catholic Faith

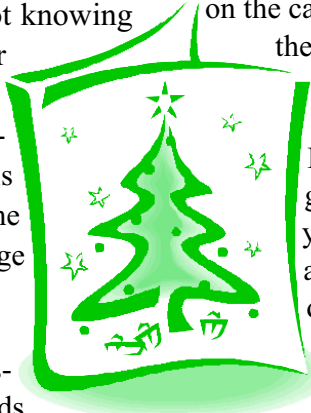
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Advent/Christmas 2013

You can send a message of hope to those we serve this Christmas

Each day, we encounter families and individuals who are struggling to get by. Imagine the anxiety they must feel, especially this time of year, not knowing if they will be able to provide for their family. Then imagine their joy when they receive an unexpected word of encouragement or prayer this season. Once again this year, we are offering you and your family the opportunity to send a special holiday message of hope.

take a moment to write a Christmas note to someone who will receive our help this year. You can write your note on the card below, cut along the dotted line, fold it along the solid line and send it to us in the enclosed remit envelope.



Be it words of encouragement, or a Christmas greeting or prayer, feel free to write whatever you would like. Some have even made their own additional cards and sent them to us. We will distribute these cards through our CSS Toy Shoppe and other Christmas programs. This is your chance to send a holiday message to someone who might not otherwise receive one, someone who may never know that someone else cares enough to think of them.

During the month of December, we will distribute Christmas food and gifts to thousands of people across southern Nebraska. Through our Toy Shoppe and Christmas Program, many children will receive what may be their only Christmas gift. Please

Catholic Social Services

of Southern Nebraska

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CSS is US!

First Friday Fish Fry a delicious way to support St. Gianna Women's Homes

One of the great Catholic traditions over the years has been the Lenten fish fry. Parish families gather for great food and fellowship, all in the name of raising funds for the parish. But you don't have to wait for Lent to enjoy a tasty fish dinner for a great cause. CSS holds a First Friday Fish Fry on the first Friday of each month outside of Lent. All net proceeds from our fish fry go to support our St. Gianna Women's Homes. Established under the patronage of St. Gianna, we serve women at risk for abortion and those who are abused. Staffed by the Marian Sisters, we serve women of all faiths and do not make any recommendations or referrals contrary to the Catholic faith.

Funds raised from our Fish Fry are allocated toward the support of this very important project. Choose a baked or fried entrée, sides, dessert and beverage for just \$10 a person or \$35 for a family! The CSS First Friday Fish Fry is held at our location at 2241 "O" Street from 5 pm to 7 pm on the first Friday's outside of Lent. Take out orders are also available; call (402) 474-1600 or visit our website at www.cssisus.org for more information.



2014 CSS First Friday Fish Fry Schedule:

- ◆ January 3rd
- ◆ February 7th
- ◆ No Fish Fry in March or April- support one of the many parish fish frys during Lent!
- ◆ May 2nd
- ◆ June 6th
- ◆ No Fish Fry on July 4th but look for details on our Liver & Onion Dinner to be held on July 12th!
- ◆ August 1st
- ◆ September 5th
- ◆ October 3rd
- ◆ November 7th
- ◆ December 5th

All this took place to fulfill

what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,

and his name shall be called Emmanuel"

which means, God is with us.

-Matthew 1:22-23



Catholic Social Services
of Southern Nebraska

Hastings office

In God's time, He will provide

Tom Schik
Director of Social Services,
Western Sector of the Diocese

About a month ago a young mom came to our Office in Hastings. She approached the front desk in tears asking for help. She and her family had never been in this situation before. She indicated that because of her medical problems her family desperately needed help.

Judy, our Support Specialist, heard the anguish in her voice and saw the painful tears she was shedding and sought to find a caseworker that could visit with her. Christine was available and took time to comfort her and listen to the details of her struggles.

After visiting with her new client, Christine discovered that this mom, her husband and two children were indeed in a tough spot financially because of her lost income. In exploring the family budget, one of the expenses that stood out was the \$300.00 a month spent on the rental of a refrigerator, washer and dryer. They had to choose between paying their rent or paying the rent-to-own company for their appliances.

The family agreed that if CSS could help them find good appliances to replace the rented ones, they would return them and apply the \$300.00 to their apartment rent. A quick check with our Thrift Store manager revealed that we didn't have any of the three appliances the family needed. We didn't panic. In God's time, He will provide.

Several days later, a donor called to schedule a pick up of a few appliances they wanted to donate to CSS. You guessed it. They were donating a refrigerator, a washer and a dryer. After picking up the appliances we checked them out. They worked perfectly and were in very good condition. We quickly scheduled them for delivery to our struggling family.

Christine continues to work with the family providing follow up to make sure they are on the road to recovery. In addition to the appliances we agreed to help the family with a food pantry to save their resources for rent and utilities. The family is struggling but slowly getting

back on their feet.

We thank the donor of the appliances and all of our donors for their support. Your donations of clothing, food, furniture, appliances, vehicles and money are a great resource to our caseworkers. These resources allow our staff to be creative in solving the daily struggles of families who come to CSS seeking help. In the Spirit of Christ's love, we direct your donations to those in need.

