

PRAY Loving God, in Jesus you come into the world to show us how to love. Help us catch on in our everyday relationships. Amen.

SPiRIT

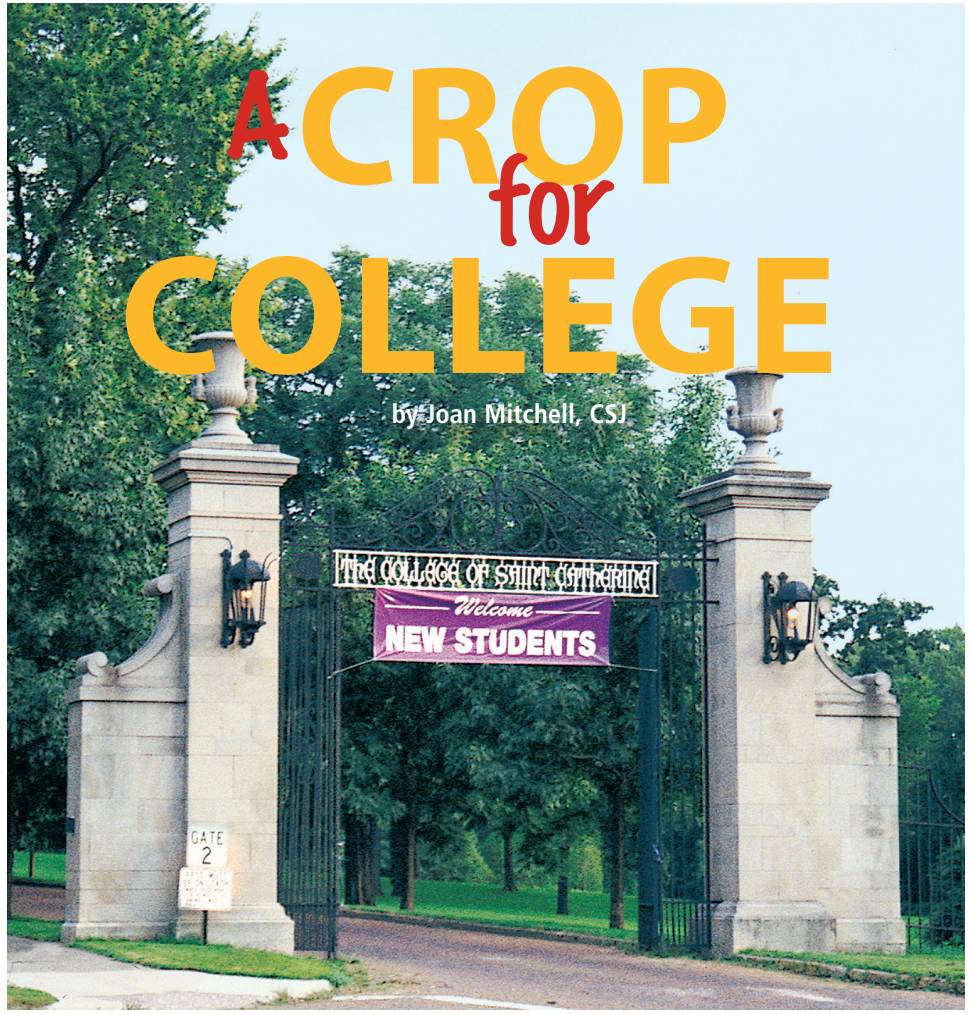
GIFTS What are mine?

Use the list below to identify your own personal gifts. Choose one gift that you want to use to serve a community of which you are a part. Write your gift on a slip of paper.

- ✓ sense of humor
- ✓ good cook
- ✓ listens well
- ✓ good runner
- ✓ makes fun for others
- ✓ good memory
- ✓ can organize people
- ✓ can build anything
- ✓ can organize things
- ✓ works well with little kids



- ✓ artistic
- ✓ athletic
- ✓ musical
- ✓ friendly
- ✓ team player
- ✓ energetic
- ✓ good thinker
- ✓ enjoys elderly folks
- ✓ strong physically



A CROP for COLLEGE

by Joan Mitchell, CSJ

The course was Written English my first year in college. "Write about what you know," my professor said. So I did. I wrote about the 30 acres of soybeans I had cultivated with such care the previous summer to earn my first-year tuition at the College of St. Catherine. Two semesters cost only \$400 then. Doesn't sound like much, but it would be like earning \$10,000 today.

Farmers don't cultivate corn and beans three times through anymore the way I had to. They use herbicides and don't believe in turning the soil over and losing the

moisture. Maybe they don't hang their dreams on small green plants shining with dew as they ride up and down the rows in the morning sun, but I did.

Dad lumbered up the back steps and puffed into the kitchen, home for supper. "The corn is in the ground, 500 acres planted," he announced, his face still cold and red from planting in the fields on this windy day. But wind-burned or not, his eyes were smiling, and he took my hands as if he were about to jig. "And, I planted your beans for college, too."

“Good,” said Mother, as she glanced at Dad, then continued stirring her gravy. “Let’s hope we get rain.”

So the corn is planted, I thought, and the beans, too. To me this meant working again in the fields, day after day, all day from the Monday after my high school graduation until the end of July. This year riding the tractor had a new purpose: this fall 30 acres of soybeans would be mine to pay for my first year of college.



On the Monday after I graduated, I headed for the tractor, filled its gas tank from our big red barrel and checked the oil. I had imagined working at the drive in and getting tips this summer, but Dad claimed 30 acres of beans could bring me much more money.

I walked around behind the tractor, stepped on the drawbar and then to the axle, swung up, and eased onto the cold metal seat behind the wheel. I always felt powerful driving this big machine. It started with a roar, and I drove off for the field.

The corn last planted had not come up yet, nor had my beans in the adjoining field. The spring weather was cool. What if the fields didn’t come up until July and I had to cultivate until September? I rolled down my pants legs, buttoned up my old army jacket around my throat, and pulled the earflaps of my hunting cap down to meet the jacket.

Dad followed me to the first field he had planted. The corn had sprouted and sprung up from behind a clump of dirt, or under an old corn cob, or just right up from the fine sandy soil. Yellowish, green leaves sprinkled the field in still faint long rows. “Go slow,” Dad commanded as he got me started. “The corn is small. If you don’t go slow, you’ll cover it.”

“Okay,” I answered, shoving the tractor into gear and starting the first round. Each corn leaf shone brightly in the morning sun. Sparkling drops of dew salted the leaves of every sprout. As the cultivator shovels turned over the soil, moist on the top but dry under the surface, bits of dirt clung to the wet sprouts.

Sometimes I plowed out a hill of corn or threw sod over the row of beans.

Often then I stopped, climbed down from the tractor, and tried to tuck the exposed roots of the corn back beneath the soil or remove the sod and lightly brush the dust from the small, shiny-leafed, bean plants.

Summer had arrived by the time we started through the corn the second time. The sprouts had grown ankle-height and deep green in the warmer sun. A little rain and the corn would be “knee high by the Fourth of July.” Cultivating went faster up and down the now distinct rows.

My hands developed hard calluses from guiding the steering wheel, and my insides were shaken from riding the bumpy fields, but St. Catherine’s would be worth it. I had so much time to think and figure. Thirty acres and an average crop should go at the least 10 bushels an acre at \$2 a bushel; that’s \$600, but even \$400 would do; it would pay the tuition. College, some new clothes, money for concerts—grow, beans, grow.

The beans were blooming, and every stalk of corn bent beneath the

A farmer cultivates a field of corn. Today many farmers use weed killers rather than turn up their soil and lose moisture.

tractor axle as the shiny cultivator shovels uprooted yellow-flowering mustard as high as the beans themselves. This was the last time through the corn and beans. The green plants drank in the late July sun.

Stopping in the middle of the cornfield, I shut the tractor off. Sitting in the warm silence, I could hear the corn grow, snapping and unwinding upwards. Tassels appeared scattered throughout the field. Another month and the corn stalks would be loaded with ears full of golden, dented kernels—if we got rain.

And the beans stood in long, full rows like low green hedges. Their pods were forming where the blossoms had been. *Maybe I can pay for some of my board and room, too,* I thought.

I had earned a vacation and in middle August left with our school drum corps for three days of marching and competition. Those three days were scorchers. The temperature hit a hundred plus the third day. The fresh tar on the city streets melted and stuck to our feet as we marched.

The drum corps returned home that afternoon. We went through Paynesville and Belgrade and rolled along the highway toward home. We spotted the water tower. Then I saw south of the highway our 105-acre cornfield that took two weeks to cultivate the first time.



SUNDAY GOSPEL

5th Sunday of Lent

Jesus is like a grain of wheat.

NARRATOR 1: Among those who went up to Jerusalem for the Passover feast were some Greeks.

NARRATOR 2: They approached Philip, Jesus' disciple from Bethsaida in Galilee, and made a request.

GREEKS: Sir, we want to see Jesus.

NARRATOR 1: Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip told Jesus about the request.

JESUS 1: The hour has come when the Son of Man will be glorified. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it will bear much fruit.

JESUS 2: Those who love their lives will lose them. Those who hate their lives in this world will keep them to life eternal.

JESUS 1: If people want to serve me, let them follow me. Where I am, there

also my servants will be. Those who serve me, the Father will honor.

JESUS 2: Now, my soul is troubled, yet what should I say—Father, save me from this hour? I have come for this hour: Father, glorify your name.

VOICE FROM HEAVEN: I have glorified it and I will glorify it again.

NARRATOR: The crowd standing around heard the voice and thought they heard thunder. Others thought an angel had spoken to Jesus.

JESUS 1: This voice has not spoken for my sake but for yours. Now has judgment come upon this world.

JESUS 2: Now will the ruler of this world be thrown out. I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

NARRATOR: Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death he was about to die.

John 12.20-33

OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

We live in Christ.

Both Lent and all of Christian life are about becoming more like Jesus. In his ministry Jesus gives his life to bringing good news to the poor and reaching out to outcasts and sick people. In his death he gives his life for us his friends. In his resurrection, God shows us the power of such wholehearted self-giving—new life.

Our baptism calls each of us to participate in the mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection. We act on our faith that giving ourselves in love and service as Jesus did will transform us and our world.

Jesus' death and resurrection is like the life cycle of wheat. When a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it enters a process of transformation. In this process, the warm and moist earth swells the seed until the life inside it bursts the hull and puts forth a sprout.

Actually then, a seed does not fall into the earth and die. The seed changes, germinates, and grows. A new sprout pushes above ground into light. At the same time roots spread out underground to find nourishment. With rain and sun, one grain of wheat grows into a stalk that heads out and produces 50 or 100 new grains of wheat.

QUESTIONS 1 What dreams hang on the crop of beans? 2 What unanticipated harvest does the field of beans produce? 3 What dreams have you planted in some way in your life? How are they growing? 4 How is Jesus like a grain of wheat? 5 What harvest does his death produce? 6 What is Jesus' hour? How is he glorified?

It was burnt.

The once-green cornstalks stood scorched and wilted, their roots choked in the parched sandy soil. The corn was gone, killed before ears could even form, and the beans, stunted, had developed only 10 pods instead of the 30 or 50 necessary for a 10-bushel yield. Rain came and broke the hot spell, but it fell on brown, crisp corn leaves and 10-pod bean stalks.

Dad always said he'd had two good years on the farm—1947 and next year. The year of my beans and dreams, I made only \$240 toward my tuition, maybe 40 cents an hour for a summer's hard work. What I didn't see then was that my beans produced another kind of crop—these words, this story—my first success as a writer. My field of beans gave me a future.



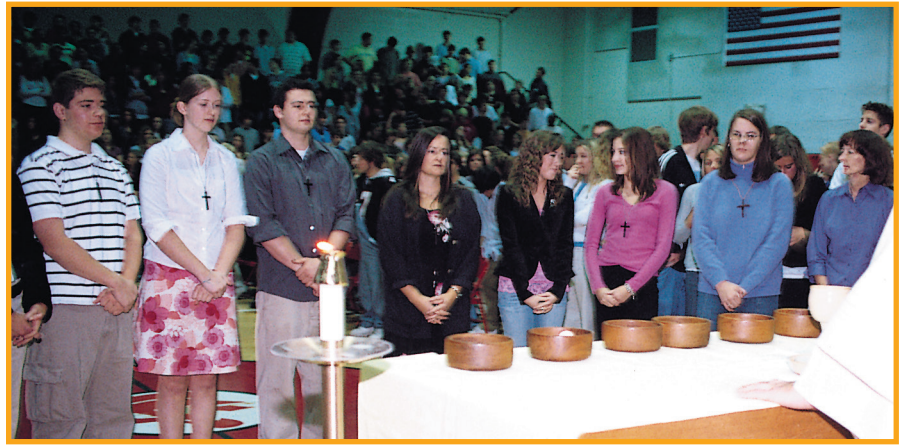
The vocation of humanity is to show forth the image of God and to be transformed into the image of God's son.

Catechism of the Catholic Church #1871

Christian life is also like the life cycle of wheat, a call to keep growing. All of us who believe in Jesus follow his way. Like a family, those who belong to the Christian community have signature characteristics such as those below.

Check ten statements most characteristic of you as a Catholic Christian.

- We gather to break bread and share it as Jesus asked us.
- We celebrate Christmas as Jesus' birth.
- We celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection at Easter every year.
- We wash new members in the waters of Baptism.
- We pray for those who die.
- We often read stories about Jesus from the bible.
- We keep the ten commandments.
- We forgive others as we expect God to forgive us.
- We share what we have.
- We visit the sick.
- We feed the hungry.
- We welcome immigrants.
- We educate the ignorant.
- We pray for each other.
- We bury the dead.
- We clothe the naked.
- We believe every human person is sacred, made in God's image.
- We believe we are social, meant to build the human community together.
- We try to love our enemies and make peace.
- We believe all life comes from God.
- We believe in giving of ourselves as Jesus did.
- We believe we live in the Spirit who urges us toward communion.
- We believe God loves us.
- We pray every day.
- We keep sabbath as a day of rest and reflection.
- We treat our neighbors as we want to be treated.



Catholics keep Sunday by gathering and celebrating Eucharist together. We assemble as the people of God and do as Jesus asked us at the last supper—to remember his self-giving death and life-giving resurrection, to eat the bread and drink the wine that he made signs of his love. From the beginning Jesus' followers gathered in homes to remember him. Actually Christians usually gathered in the evening because many were slaves who worked all day every day.

Keeping Sunday holy is one way the Christian community remembers who we are. A Sabbath is a pause, a time for rest and renewal. It is a time to see the wonders of creation in which we live and to appreciate having life from God. Sunday is a day for remembering our dignity as sons and daughters of God, adopted in baptism, not only students or employees.

For many teens and adults work gets in the way of keeping Sabbath. Employers can demand weekend work hours or long hours that make Sunday a day of sleep. Need for money can also keep us working long hours. Keeping Sabbath holy calls us to open ourselves at least each week to our transforming identity as baptized Christians.

Sabbath keeping is also Earthkeeping, caring for creation so Earth can continue to sustain

us. The Earth in the perspective of Catholic social teaching is more than a source of coal, oil, and great crops of wheat. Life is an intricate ecosystem into which we are intricately woven. In fact, we are the most fragile creatures in the systems, dependent on plants and animals for air and food, dependent on Earth for water.

FAITH in ACTION

- 1 Tally which statements most characterize your whole group or class. Select as a group two statements that should characterize teens but usually don't.
- 2 Journal: How and where am I planting my gifts as one of Jesus' followers?
- 3 When do I rest? How do I replenish myself?
- 4 Plant and grow a flower or vegetable to experience a relationship with another being.
- 5 Celebrate a grain of wheat prayer service to conclude your class. Light a candle. Each take turns holding the candle, while saying a short thank-you prayer for a personal gift and a statement about how you will use or plant this gift in the parish or school community.

EACH: I am thankful for the gift of...

I will plant my gift in the parish or school community by...

Conclude, by standing in a circle, holding hands, and praying the *Our Father* together.

GoodGroundPress.com