



Living Our Faith... Sharing Our Blessings

SAINT ANNE - SAINT CATHERINE COLLABORATIVE

Nourishing the Spiritual Lives of Local Nursing Home Residents

“As Catholics, we’re all supposed to be the hands and feet of Christ, and that’s what we’re doing through this ministry. We are being present to people in real need, allowing Christ to come through us to them. They end up giving love back to us in return. It truly is such a wonderful thing to do and such a spiritually enriching experience.” — Jeanne Masterman

Perhaps one of the greatest difficulties about aging is to watch one’s involvement gradually decline. Individuals who were once devoted Mass attendees and avid volunteers become less and less mobile, as old age and health issues become their reality. This is especially true for Catholics living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. No longer able to attend Sunday Mass and parish functions, it’s easy for these members to feel lost and forgotten — cut off from the faith community that they once served so faithfully. This is what makes St. Anne and St. Catherine’s Nursing Home Rosary Ministry so important, explains coordinator Linda Clarke, reminding local nursing home residents that their Church has not forgotten them.

“I feel that it is important for us as a faith community to reach out to those who are not able to come to church to pray the Rosary or attend Mass,” Linda says. “While the staff members at these facilities focus on the physical well-being of the residents,



Westford House residents and Nursing Home Rosary Ministry volunteers share in faith and fellowship during one of their weekly gatherings.

we help nourish their spiritual lives and let them know that their faith community cares about them.”

Consisting of three different teams, parish volunteers travel weekly to visit Bridges and Westford House in Westford, and the Life Care Center

STEWARDSHIP

Hannah, the Good Steward

What should we do when our prayers are answered?

Is there anything left to do after we have sincerely thanked God for His favors? If God were a human peer, we would probably try to reciprocate by granting Him a favor in return. But the truth is that God cannot be made greater by anything that we do for Him. Instead, God receives our thanks and tells us to “go and do likewise.” That is, He tells us to share with others the good that He has bestowed on us. And in doing so, we are really sharing God Himself. That is the definition of stewardship!

The Old Testament Book of Samuel contains one of the most poignant examples of stewardship in the entire Bible. The first chapter teaches us of an unhappy, barren woman named Hannah. Desperate in her barrenness, Hannah prays that God will give her a son, vowing that she will raise him to be a man of God.

Imagine Hannah’s elation when she was granted her prayer! When Samuel was born, her heart’s desire had come true! Imagine further the pang of motherly sorrow, as Hannah kept her promise to God by taking Samuel at a young age to be the servant of Eli, the high priest. The Book of Samuel tells us that once Samuel became Eli’s servant, Hannah saw her young son just once a year.

Indeed, Hannah knew that Samuel was truly a gift from God – an answered prayer. Hannah’s response is that of the Good Steward – with an attitude of both gratitude and sacrifice, she gave up her son to honor God. One imagines that Hannah probably struggled with this sacrifice during those first years. She probably did not know what God had in store for her son. Yet, through her faithfulness, God used him as a gift to an entire nation. Samuel would, in time, become one of the greatest prophets of Jewish history.

Sometimes it is difficult to understand the sacrifices we make in the name of stewardship, while the results may just be impossible to miss! However, He asks that we continue to be faithful in either case. God has undoubtedly bestowed gifts on all of us – at whatever the cost, we are to “go and do likewise.”



A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

March

— A Time to Take a Close Look at the Examples We Follow

Dear Parishioners,

This month of March is a significant time for us as Catholics. We are in the midst of Lent, and then we celebrate Holy Week, with Easter occurring just after the end of the month, on April 1. In addition, many may point to the month of March as a time we celebrate the Irish on March 17, the Feast of St. Patrick.

However, two days after that is the Feast of St. Joseph on March 19 — and for many in the world, that is more important. St. Joseph was, of course, the husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the foster father of Jesus Christ.

Everything we know about Joseph comes to us from Holy Scripture. It might be said that, in order to understand him completely, we must read between the lines. The Catholic Church has designated the month of March as the month of St. Joseph. Yet, there is not a single example of Joseph saying something that can be quoted in the Bible. We can assume he was a man of few words — in turn, we may consider that he speaks to us through his actions. It is also clear that he was a humble man. Many point to him as an example of what a good father is and should be.

St. Joseph provides an example to all of us. Think of some of his strengths — he was obedient; he put his own needs aside to assure that Jesus and Mary were cared for; he surely trusted in God, even when God's will may not have made complete sense to him.

Those traits give each of us some idea of what we need to do in life. Do we only embrace those parts of our faith that make sense to us or that we find agreeable? Do we put the needs of others before our own? Our lives are filled with crosses and challenges, but do we trust in the Lord as Joseph did? Do our actions show us to be good Catholics and Christians? What kinds of examples are we setting?



Lent and Easter are times for us to look closely at the answers to these questions. Joseph was a carpenter, a worker — and he obviously was not a man of wealth or prestige. By the time Jesus' public ministry begins, Joseph seems to disappear. Nevertheless, he was a man of royal origins. When St. Luke introduces him to us in Luke 1, he calls him "Joseph, of the house of David."

All of this leads us to know and believe that Joseph was someone we would classify as a "good steward." Who do we look up to? Do we seek to be like Joseph, or are our models more worldly and more successful in the eyes of others? St. Joseph is a wonderful example for us. We all need to

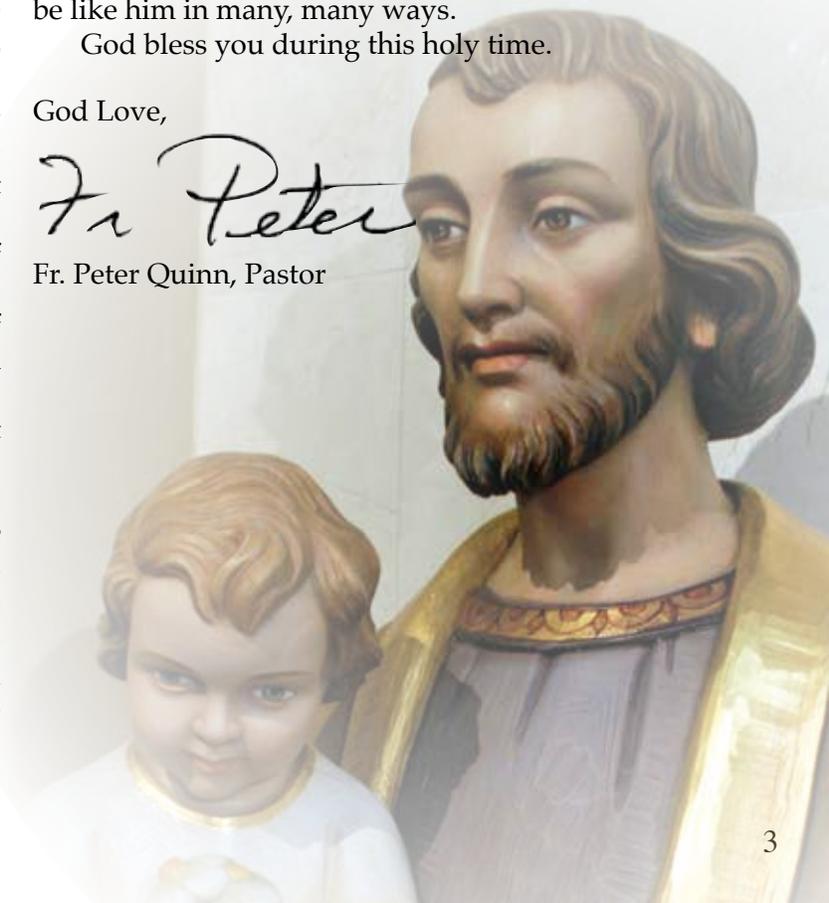
be like him in many, many ways.

God bless you during this holy time.

God Love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Peter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Peter Quinn, Pastor



Easter Basket Ministry Fills Gifts

With Love

It's a labor of love, for sure, and that's the message that the Easter Basket Ministry carefully places in each of the 250 or so Easter baskets prepared each year for children and teens in need.

Eileen Smith and Jean Struzenski have worked together for the past 10 years organizing the Easter baskets that are filled with goodies, toys and age-appropriate items that have been generously given by our parishioners.

The baskets are distributed shortly after Palm Sunday to children sheltered at Lazarus House and Capernaum Place. Baskets also are given to children served by the Cor Unum Meal Center, St. Vincent de Paul Society, and to the young fathers' group at St. Patrick Parish in Lawrence.

"Each basket gets a nice chocolate bunny, crackers and snacks, small toys, stuffed animals, small books, crayons and coloring books, and individual candies," Eileen says. "We take all the candy and count it out so each basket gets the same amount. It's all done with love. We make sure each kid gets a fair amount."

Starting with Ash Wednesday, Jean and Eileen have placed announcements in the bulletins asking parishioners for donations. As the items arrive at church during weekend Masses, the pair collect and begin

sorting them to make distribution easier.

The baskets going to Lazarus House and Capernaum Place are individualized with each child's name placed on a tag and each basket filled according to age and gender.

"We make sure we have things that are age-appropriate and that we think that the kids would like," Eileen says.

Items for teens might include snack items, appropriate books, and perhaps makeup or hair accessories for girls.

Each year, volunteer Hazel Thompson makes more than 200 bows for the baskets.

"When we assemble the baskets, she gets with the volunteers and shows them how to put them on the baskets," Eileen says. "She puts a lot into it."

None of this would be possible without donations from the people in our collaborative.

"You can get involved with the donations," Eileen says. "This wouldn't exist without the donations. With the two parishes collaborating, last year it made a huge difference for us. People make donations out of the goodness of their hearts."

Although the project takes time and effort, it has been a way to bring everyone involved closer to Christ.

"At the holiest time of the year, a child gets a basket made with love and this tells them they are valued," Eileen says. "We hope this helps the families know of Jesus' resurrection and His love. My family had eight kids and it was hard, but my parents made our holidays great. I hope the kids, when they grow up will remember the kindness of



Four years ago, this group of volunteers worked to assemble Easter baskets for local children in need. The project is still going strong, with about 250 baskets planned for this year. The women are (from left) Jean Struzenski, Cynthia Joachimpallai, Eileen Smith and Leah Smith.

the community reaching out with this expression of love, and it helps them to grow with Jesus.”

Although the children are excited about receiving the Easter baskets, their parents have perhaps a greater reaction.

“The parents see their children’s response to the baskets, and they cry,” Eileen says. “With the baskets, we provide something special that they can’t afford at this time. We pray about the project. We always hope and pray that families and young fathers can see the love of God in these Easter baskets. Mostly, we hope it will make them think about Christ, and maybe lead them to the Church.”

Between 25 to 30 volunteers will gather at 9 a.m. Saturday, March 24, in the lower hall of the St. Catherine’s parish center to assemble the baskets.

“We pray to God for volunteers and people always come through with donations and assistance” Eileen says. “We have an assembly line with items set out on separate tables, so when volunteers come in, they can grab a basket and fill it with appropriate items. We’re done in about one hour. A lot of times, students who are studying for Confirmation choose this as a service project. I talk to them when they come in about what the project means to the children.”

“The parents see their children’s response to the baskets, and they cry. With the baskets, we provide something that they can’t afford at this time. We pray about the project. We always hope and pray that families and young fathers can see the love of God in these Easter baskets. Mostly, we hope it will make them think about Christ, and maybe lead them to the Church.” — Eileen Smith

There always is a need for additional volunteers. Anyone interested in helping with the baskets may call Eileen Smith at 978-618-5956.

Holy Week Schedule

Holy Thursday — March 29

All celebrations at St. Catherine Parish

9 a.m. — Morning Prayer

7:30 p.m. — Mass of the Lord’s Supper

Adoration (*following Mass*) until 10:30 p.m.

10:30 p.m. — Night Prayer

Good Friday — March 30

All celebrations at St. Anne Parish

9 a.m. — Morning Prayer

1 p.m. — Children’s Stations of the Cross

3 p.m. — Stations of the Cross

7:30 p.m. — Solemn Service of the Lord’s Passion

Holy Saturday — March 31

All celebrations at St. Catherine Parish

9 a.m. — Morning Prayer

7:30 p.m. — Easter Vigil Mass

Easter Sunday — April 1

8 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Masses — *St. Anne*

7 a.m., 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Masses — *St. Catherine*

A SIGNIFICANT MOMENT IN OUR PRAYER

The Presentation of the Gifts

Occasionally, you might hear someone jokingly refer to “halftime” during Mass – the interval following the Prayers of the Faithful, as the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins. It can be easy, even tempting, to zone out as you sit, waiting for the collection basket to make its way to your pew.

But if you pay attention, you’ll have the opportunity to enter into something deeper – a significant moment in our prayer.

It’s mentioned by St. Justin Martyr, one of the earliest Christian writers, when describing the Mass in the second century, “Bread is brought up and wine and water...”

This practice, of people bringing up the gifts, has been part of our Catholic tradition from the very beginning. Although we might think of this action as being merely practical, in reality, it serves a much deeper spiritual purpose.

Each Sunday Mass, someone is chosen, whether the family of the person for whom the mass is being offered, or another member of the parish, to bring forward “the gifts” – bread, wine, and the collection of money that has been gathered moments before, from the generosity of the congregation. These gifts not only symbolize, but also in reality, are the work of human hands. The bread and wine are fruit of God’s creation, which, through the effort of human hands, are made into the gifts that we present to the Lord.

Certainly, the monetary collection that is presented to the priest also serves to represent our work and sacrifices. Sharing our monetary “treasures” is one of the ways that we embrace stewardship. It’s an opportunity to generously



give back to the Lord, from the fruit of our work.

In his book *What Happens At Mass*, Fr. Jeremy Driscoll, OSB explains, “...We should not think of the collection of money at this point as some sort of banal, dirty but necessary affair. Money is our work. Money is hours of our lives. And now, out of gratitude to the Lord, we give it away, we sacrifice it, for the work of the Church.”

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul instructs Christians to “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1).

The physical act of carrying the gifts forward to the priest is meant to serve as a tangible reminder of the fact that we are all called to stewardship. We are all

called to present to God our lives – our work, our talents, the struggles and victories of the past week – as an offering and gift to God.

Those who bring forward the gifts each week have the privilege and responsibility of remembering what their action represents – that we are called to give generously of our time, talent and treasure to God, who gives us His very self, at Mass. And for those sitting in the pews, tempted to “check out” for a few minutes, seeing the gifts being brought forward should serve as a powerful reminder to offer our lives back to God, through serving and honoring Him.

So next week during the presentation of the gifts, don’t be surprised if you start to notice a change in your heart and a desire to be even more generous with God in the coming week!

Collaborative Liturgy Commission Helps Set the Stage for Meaningful Masses



The Collaborative Liturgy Commission is charged with making sure every ministry that participates in the Mass works together to create a meaningful celebration of the Eucharist.

Whether we take the time to realize it or not, each element of the Mass is specifically chosen to help set a mood and a tone for the liturgical year. Elements like vestments, altar cloths, objects around the altar and music we hear help the faithful enter into the world created by the liturgical movement, which is meant to draw us deeper into our love for the Lord.

Not one detail of the celebration of the Mass is left up to chance. Rather, what you see and hear during the liturgy is the product of the efforts of the Collaborative Liturgy Commission.

"We are a group of people that come together to look at what we do with our liturgical space and worship and schedule," explains Music Director Kelly Clark. "We plan what we do seasonally and work with all of the liturgical min-

istries and tie it all together."

Four times each year, the Collaborative Liturgy Commission meets to discuss and plan the coming liturgical season. Representatives from each liturgical ministry gather with the pastoral team to talk about what needs to be done and break into smaller groups to make plans for special seasons like Lent or Advent.

"It's somewhat of an advisory committee, too," Kelly adds. "We'll look at the Mass schedule for Ordinary Time and the liturgical seasons. We'll send feedback to the pastoral staff and look at things in terms of planning."

Kelly says the intention of the Collaborative Liturgy Commission is to make sure each ministry communicates and works together effectively, as well as setting the appropriate tone for each season.

"The way that we look at our lit-

urgy is to present the most welcoming environment we can and invite people into an encounter," she explains. "Our overarching goal is to make sure that the liturgy itself is a vibrant experience for people when they come to worship, and that what we do is meaningful and helps people grow in their relationship with the Lord."

From that well of spiritual inspiration, the committee can then guide the feeling of the liturgy to reflect what's happening seasonally, such as the starkness of Lent or the joyful anticipation of Advent.

"If people have an interest in joining the Commission they can contact me and I can talk with them about it," Kelly says. "I would also hope that our parishioners know if they have questions, suggestions, or concerns about the liturgy that they're welcome to bring that to us."

While most committee positions are chosen by invitation, parishioners who have an interest in the committee may contact Kelly Clark at 978-320-4205 or KellyC@LWCatholic.org.

Saint Anne - Saint Catherine Collaborative
75 King St. • Littleton, MA 01460
978-486-4100 (St. Anne) • 978-692-6353 (St. Catherine)
www.LittletonCatholic.org • www.StCatherineParish.org

MASS SCHEDULE:

St. Anne Parish:

75 King St., Littleton, MA 01460

Saturday: 4:00 p.m.

Sunday: 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.

St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish:

107 North Main St., Westford, MA 01886

Saturday: 4:00 p.m.

Sunday: 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

Collaborative Weekday Schedule:

Monday: 8:00 a.m. Mass - St. Anne

Tuesday: 8:00 a.m. Mass - St. Anne

Wednesday: 8:00 a.m. Prayer Service - St. Anne

Thursday: 8:00 a.m. Mass - St. Catherine

Friday: 8:00 a.m. Mass - St. Catherine

Confessions:

Saturdays: 3:00-3:45 p.m. at both parishes

(or as requested)

Nursing Home Residents *continued from front cover*

of Nashoba Valley in Littleton. They come to visit, to form relationships with the residents, to pray the Rosary, sing songs of praise to the Lord, to distribute ashes on Ash Wednesday and palms on Palm Sunday. In the process, ministry volunteers end up receiving many blessings in return as they witness the joy and deep appreciation of the residents.

“If you were in a nursing home, you would want people to come and do things like this with you,” adds Jeanne Masterman, a coordinator for the Westford House team. “It gives us the opportunity to say the Rosary as a group, and we just get this wonderful, warm feeling inside. At Westford House we always end every session by singing ‘God Bless America’ together. It’s a song that they all know by heart and many of them sing that high note at the end. They always applaud afterward, and I think it’s because they’re just so happy.”

Though volunteers come with the purpose of

nurturing others, they can’t help but be inspired themselves by the fervency and joy with which the residents participate in the hymns and prayers. It’s heartwarming, shares parishioner Kathy McGourty, to see how much they still remember and cherish the old songs and prayers, despite often-impaired memories. It reveals the depth of their faith and encourages ministry volunteers in their own faith journeys. And that’s what this ministry is truly all about — ministering to those in need and celebrating the joy of being part of the Body of Christ.

“As Catholics, we’re all supposed to be the hands and feet of Christ, and that’s what we’re doing through this ministry,” Jeanne says. “We are being present to people in real need, allowing Christ to come through us to them. They end up giving love back to us in return. It truly is such a wonderful thing to do and such a spiritually enriching experience.”

Parishioners interested in joining the Nursing Home Ministries can contact (for Bridges) Sue Gormley at 978-320-4210 or SueG@LWCatholic.org; (for Life Care) either Linda Clarke 978-486-4977 or johnlindaclarke@gmail.com or Marie Medeiros 978-486-3015 or mariye16@yahoo.com; or (for Westford House) Jeanne Masterman 978-692-8416 or Jeanne.masterman@verizon.net.