



*Living Our Faith... Sharing Our Blessings*

SAINT ANNE - SAINT CATHERINE COLLABORATIVE

## Meeting Hidden Needs, One Visit at a Time: *The Society of St. Vincent de Paul*

Throughout the Gospels, Christ makes it clear that an intrinsic part of discipleship is helping those in need. Just as Jesus spent much of His earthly ministry personally comforting the poor and healing the sick, we as Catholics are each called to do our part to help our suffering neighbors; to seek out the hidden Christ by administering to those in need — be it financially, emotionally or spiritually. This, explains St. Anne parishioner Karen Smith, is precisely what the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) aims to do through its ministry of care toward those in need.

“As an international association of lay Catholic members, our mission is to provide person-to-person assistance to people who are in real emergency and crisis situations,” Karen says. “We assist by paying bills that have come up and offering resources to people who may not be aware of available services in both the local area and state. We seek always to provide personal care, offering hope to those in need.”

Relying entirely on donations from others, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is able to offer immediate relief to struggling individuals within their parish boundaries. This help can take many forms, Karen says, from paying off medical and utility bills, providing food, clothing or shelter, or assisting with transportation.

“Always traveling in teams of two or more, we personally go to anyone who needs assistance,”



*Some Society of St. Vincent de Paul members at their annual fundraiser, Walk for the Poor.*

Karen says. “We’re here to help people who are truly in need and often feeling very down and alone. We listen carefully to understand what their needs are and to show them as much caring and compassion as possible.”

For St. Catherine parishioner Tom Brown, this personal approach to outreach is what makes SVdP so important. It allows for a more holistic approach as ministry members seek to minister to the entire person.

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# The Society of St. Vincent de Paul *continued from front cover*

*“There are so many people who are struggling for many different reasons. Our group meets those hidden needs, helping others in confidence. By parishioners donating to us, our ministry is possible. Without these donations and the support of our pastor, we wouldn’t be able to accomplish anything. We are truly grateful for the amazing generosity of our community in supporting our fundraising effort for St. Vincent de Paul.” – Karen Smith*

“Writing a check for a utility bill or rent is really easy,” Tom says. “But the thing that we provide to our clients is that personal care and compassion. The compassion and understanding that we bring to these people — many of whom don’t have anyone else to talk to — in my opinion is much more important than the financial assistance that we bring. It becomes an indirect form of evangelization as we reflect Christ’s love to others.”

However, as Tom notes, this is only possible if ministry members are themselves closely united to Christ. That’s why another important aspect of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is the spiritual enrichment of its members.

“In order for us to effectively serve others, we need to first grow spiritually ourselves,” Tom says. “That’s why we spend the first part of each meeting in prayer and reflection. This helps us be less focused on ourselves and puts us in the right frame of mind when we are out there with clients.”

Parishioners can support the Society of St. Vincent de Paul by becoming either active or associate members. St. Anne’s Conference gathers the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m., while St. Catherine’s meets both the first and third Tuesday of each month from 7 to 9 p.m. Parishioners can also



*Some of St. Catherine’s St. Vincent de Paul Society members — (from left) Dan Towers, Katie Delea, Mary Anne Jordy, Alexis Downing, Amy St. Pierre, Ken Hyle, Margaret Towers, Tom Brown and Nick Johnson.*

donate funds online, through the St. Vincent de Paul envelopes in the pews, via the poor boxes located near the entrances at St. Anne, allowing the ministry to continue meeting the often hidden needs of our community.

“There are so many people who are struggling for many different reasons,” Karen says. “Our group meets those hidden needs, helping others in confidence. By parishioners donating to us, our ministry is possible. Without these donations and the support of our

pastor, we wouldn’t be able to accomplish anything. We are truly grateful for everything that our community has given us. They have been so very generous and we are so appreciative.”

In addition to their adult offerings, St. Catherine’s St. Vincent de Paul Conference also has a thriving youth ministry. Through events such as the annual *Christmas in the City*, this branch of the society allows high school youth to make a difference in their local community by providing outreach to those in need.

*For more info about the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, or to get involved, please contact St. Anne’s Conference president Karen Smith at 978-952-6944, or St. Catherine’s Conference president Tom Brown at 978-853-7141.*

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

# Resolve to Give Back to God in 2018

Dear Parishioners,

Another new year — 2018! There was a time in my life when this date (and others) seemed so far in the future. It is amazing how those dates start to pile up and stream by, isn't it? I have reached a point where measuring one's life by the years and dates is not as significant as many other things.

I recall reading somewhere, "The world around us asks, 'What does a person own?' But God asks, 'How does a person use what he or she has been given?'" This month of January is one filled with reminders of holiness — the feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph; the official end of the Christmas season; the Epiphany of our Lord; the Baptism of the Lord; and the return to Ordinary Time, which, as we know, is not "ordinary" at all.

At Epiphany we hear, "Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts" (Matthew 2:11), a reference to the Magi and their visit to the Christ Child. The example of the Magi kneeling before the infant Jesus and opening their gifts for Him is one we should all try to follow. Each of us is called to open our gifts before Jesus and offer Him what He needs. I heard a helpful suggestion once that if you have a problem with this thought, you should perhaps remove one of the Magi from your Christmas Nativity set and place it on your desk as a reminder.

During the Baptism of the Lord, God makes it clear when He proclaims from the Heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11).



God has given us the greatest gift He could give. He gave His only Son. When we think about the enormity of that gift of Jesus sent to save us, in addition to all the other blessings that God has entrusted to us, it is very humbling. God has given us so much. What do we offer him in return?

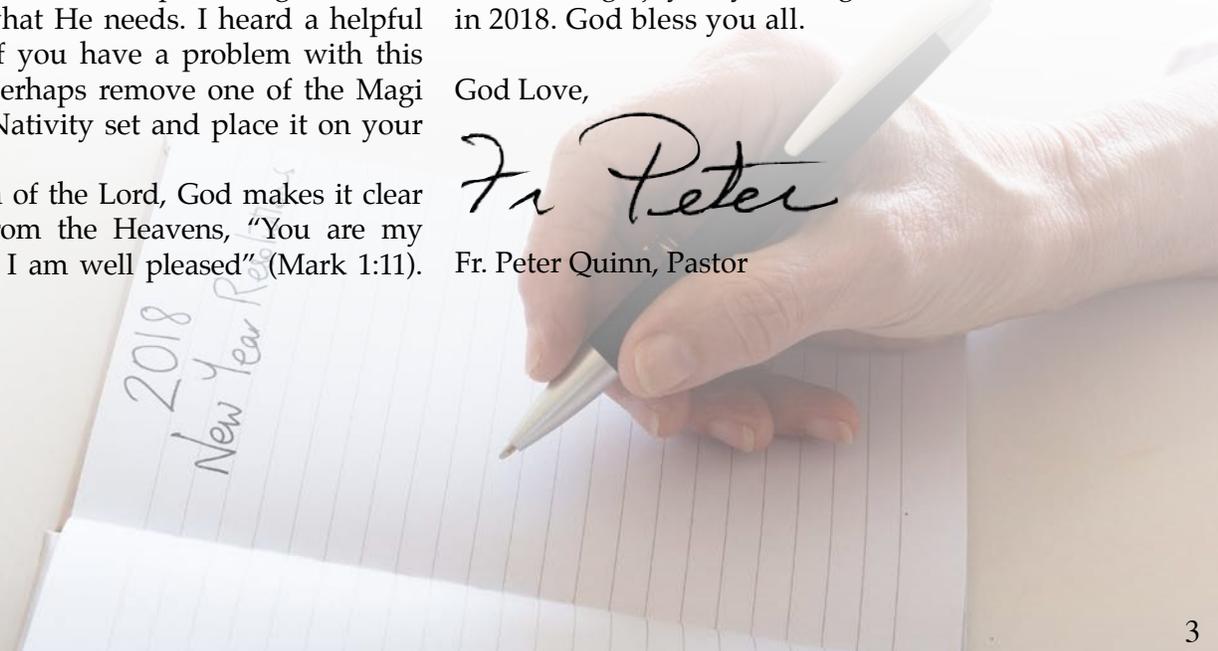
Making resolutions is common at this time of year. We will hear in scripture this month about how Jesus called the first apostles. The Lord calls us as well to follow Him. Let us resolve to try to do that better — all of us. That does not mean we have to leave our work and our families behind, but we do need to offer our service to Jesus and to one another. That should be

our top resolution.

In *The Theology of the Hammer*, Habitat for Humanity co-founder Millard Fuller wrote, "The only truly safe investment one can make in life is what is given away." First and foremost, God loves us and desires that we come to know him better. That should be our real resolution — to give ourselves to the Lord. May we all do a better job of committing ourselves to the Lord through joyfully serving our brothers and sisters in 2018. God bless you all.

God Love,

Fr. Peter Quinn, Pastor



# Make a Difference through the

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*We need to recognize truth, right and wrong, and morality.” – Deacon Bill Dwyer*

All life is sacred — and as Catholics, we have a responsibility to protect life and share the truth with others. The St. Anne and St. Catherine Collaborative Respect Life Ministry aims to educate people on pro-life issues encompassing every stage of life, support those facing difficult situations, and take a stand through public action.

“In our ministry, we work to protect the sanctity of life from conception to natural death,” says Kathy Lynch, who leads the ministry along with Deacon Bill Dwyer. “Everyone’s life should be respected, and everyone should experience the love of God. Every baby should be welcomed into the world. We try to make this happen by getting moms the support they need, and our elders the support they need.”

“We are called by our Baptism to be pro-life, to help one another and to be Christ for one another,” Deacon Bill says. “By virtue of our Baptism, we are each called to be priest, prophet and king. As priest, we pray for ourselves and we pray for others. As prophet, we share the good news and are not afraid to say that we belong to Christ. And through our kingship, we serve others just as Christ, the king of the universe, serves His people, and protects and cares for them.”



Ministry members meet each month to discuss their work, which includes education, advocacy and ministry to others. The ministry often organizes guest speakers for meetings, as well as the parish community. Education is an important aspect of Respect Life, and ministry members work to share information with both parishioners and the community at large.

“We have literature that we distribute at the churches, we hang flyers, and we sometimes show films,” Kathy says. “Often, people are misinformed and aren’t aware of the horrors and dangers

present in the overall issues.”

Ministry members also advocate for legislation that will respect life at every stage. Two years ago, the ministry — along with the archdiocese — fought legislation that would permit physician-assisted suicide. This past year, ministry members had a petition drive for a ballot initiative challenging the public funding of abortion through taxes. Regardless of the outcome, Kathy notes that action is an important way for Catholics to lead through example.

“When the government is put in the place of God, we need to take a stand, and be a force for

# Respect Life Ministry

positive change," she says. "God has a design and plan for life. We need to respect and follow his plan for creation."

"Sometimes, people think you need to stand on a soapbox in Times Square or at the beach in Ft. Lauderdale or at the Boston Common, but it's more about how we lead by example," Deacon Bill adds. "We need to recognize truth, right and wrong, and morality."

Prayer is also an important aspect of the ministry. The ministry supports the archdiocese's annual Holy Hour for Life, which is held each year at the same time as the March for Life. Last year, the parish held its first annual Mass of Remembrance for children who have died. This event was held at St. Catherine, and our hope is to alternate between the two churches in the coming years.

"The intention of the Mass is to remember those who have died, including aborted children and children who have been lost during pregnancy or infancy," Kathy says. "After the Mass, the sacrament of Reconciliation is available. People who attend the Mass and participate in the sacrament of Reconciliation often find that these bring great healing."

"I once listened to the very powerful witness of a woman who had survived an abortion," Deacon Bill says. "It inspired me to pray for expectant mothers, for all the women who have carried children, who have

lost children, and who are struggling to have children."

In addition to prayer, the ministry also offers support to the people behind these issues. Ministry members organize a baby shower collection each year, collecting baby supplies to donate to local pregnancy care centers. The ministry also offers referrals to those dealing with a crisis pregnancy.

"People in a crisis pregnancy may need financial, emotional, educational or spiritual help, and we're here to serve them," Kathy says. "Whether it's a single mother, parents or grandparents, we can refer them to places where they can get the help they need."

Through their work in this ministry, both Kathy and Deacon Bill have been able to grow in faith and in their appreciation for God's gift of life.

"It strengthens my understanding of the miracle and beauty of life," Kathy says. "The people in this ministry inspire one another in that message — that life is a gift."

"Working with the dedicated people in this ministry is truly rewarding, in seeing others in their faith journey and what they are called to do," Deacon Bill says. "This ministry has opened my eyes to all of our gifts, but most especially the gift of life — being ever more conscious of the hardships of others including their unexpected and unwanted journeys. I pray for life from conception to natural death, and all that is in between."

*If you would like to learn more about the Respect Life Ministry within our parish communities, please contact Kathy Lynch at [life.collaborative@icloud.com](mailto:life.collaborative@icloud.com).*



# Got Talent?

## Bring It to the Spotlight!

The word “talent” often conjures up images of stage performers in the spotlight, captivating awestruck audiences with their impeccable musical or acting skills.

While these talented performers are certainly deserving of applause, the majority of the population sits hidden in the shadows, staring on in amazement while feeling overlooked — and perhaps wishing to possess such talents themselves. But even when we feel overlooked and untalented, God knows better. As Christians, we are all called to dig deep and trust that we are specially blessed with valuable talents and abilities, even if our talents aren’t so obvious or don’t garner applause and accolades.

Along with “time” and “treasure,” “talent” is one of the “three Ts” of stewardship. Exploring our natural inclinations and preferences, especially when guided by the intricacies of our unique personalities, can unearth God-given talents.

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same spirit,” writes St. Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians. “There are different forms of service, but the same Lord.”

Some people have the gift of working peacefully with children. Equipped with patience and gentleness, they are able to guide young souls to the Lord. Yet, others shudder at the thought of a classroom full of

5-year-olds, and instead seek the quiet solace of behind-the-scenes tasks — cleaning the church, sewing altar cloths or stuffing envelopes.

Our interests and abilities are varied, and our volunteer options are endless, as we are called to give our talents back to God in loving service. Examine your heart and prayerfully discern your gifts, then direct those gifts towards serving the people of God.

H. Jackson Brown, Jr., author of *Life’s Little Instruction Book*, once said, “Talent without discipline is like an octopus on roller skates. There’s plenty of movement, but you never know if it is going to be forwards, backwards, or sideways.”

If our gifts of talent are not guided by the discipline of prayer, just like an octopus on roller skates, we will get nowhere fast! Yet, if we keep our eyes on the goal of heaven and serve the Lord joyfully, our efforts will produce a bountiful harvest. In the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians, “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will reap bountifully.”

The next time you sit quietly in the shadows behind a glaring stage spotlight, rest assured that your talents are no less impressive in the eyes of God, and will always be “applauded” when directed to the service of His people.

*Our interests and abilities are varied, and our volunteer options are endless, as we are called to give our talents back to God in loving service. Examine your heart and prayerfully discern your gifts, then direct those gifts towards serving the people of God.*

# Proclaiming God's Word: *The Ministry of Lectors*

As we strive to live out discipleship, it is important that we remember we are always setting an example for those around us, especially our younger parishioners. For St. Anne's parishioner Jackie Welham, the example of the lectors at Mass made an important impression on her — it was an example that would, in later years, illuminate Jackie's faith path in a profound way.

"I can remember being a teenager, going to Mass, watching and listening to the lectors, and at that time, I said to myself, 'I want to do that someday,'" Jackie recalls. "Many years went by without me thinking too much about it, but then several years ago, one of my friends signed up to be a lector, and I remember thinking, 'I would like to do that, I'm going to go do it!'"

Jackie has now served as a lector, proclaiming the Word of God at St. Anne's 10 a.m. Mass, for nearly five years.

Serving as a lector has helped Jackie to grow in her relationship with God through Scripture.

"I spend quite a bit of time going over the readings to prepare for Mass, Jackie says. "When you reread something many times, it begins to resonate with you," Jackie says. "You really do get to understand much better what's going on. And even though these words were written thousands of years ago, they're still applicable today. Sometimes a situation will arise in my life and scripture will guide me towards a solution."



*Pastoral Associate, Peg Hicks, is responsible for training lectors at St. Catherine's parish.*

"Every time I do a reading, I get a little different take on it," agrees Jack Mahoney, who has served St. Anne's as a lector for many years, since lay people first began serving in that role in the parish.

For many, the thought of proclaiming the Word of God in front of the whole congregation at Mass can be a bit intimidating. However, those who serve in this way assure others that there are many resources available to help them.

"I enjoy working with new lectors to develop their skills in public speaking, liturgical presence

and using microphones, as well as deepening their understanding of some of the contexts and meanings of Scripture passages," says Pastoral Associate Peg Hicks, who coordinates lector training at St. Catherine parish.

All of our lectors are provided with workbooks, which help them to understand the meaning and context of the passages, the pronunciation of difficult words, and more.

"After using the Workbooks to prepare, I feel confident going into the Mass to proclaim the Word of the Lord," Jackie says. "I gain an understanding

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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. Catherine

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

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

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

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

### **Confessions:**

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

(or as requested)

# Proclaiming God's Word: *The Ministry of the Lectors* continued from page 7

of who the speaker is, what audience is being targeted and the relevance of the message I am communicating."

Jackie hopes that her service will also help other parishioners to grow in their love of God's Word.

"I love when I'm lecturing, looking out at the people in the pews and every so often, I'll meet someone's eyes and I'll see them nod or smile," Jackie says. "I know that they're getting it and it's a wonderful feeling. I really hope that those hearing the reading, are more fully able to grasp its meaning."

"When I have the chance to be a lector, or to teach about Scripture, I can feel the presence of the Holy Spirit in the written words, and want to share that presence with others," Peg adds.

For Jack, serving as a lector has also helped him grow in his appreciation of the liturgy.

"Being a lector, keeps me involved — I feel privileged," he says. "I come to Mass and pay attention when someone else is reading, but when I have the opportunity to study the Word and to present it to the people, it gets me more

involved in my head, my emotions, everything."

"Serving as a lector helps me participate more fully in the Mass, because of my preparation, I have gained a deeper understanding of the scripture passages," Jackie adds.

Jackie encourages other who may be interested in this ministry to consider becoming involved.

"The more you get involved in the church, the more you want to be involved," she says. "[Serving as a lector], it's not hard, it's not as intimidating as people may think it is. It would be great to have even more lectors."

*For more information on this ministry, or to sign up for lector training, please contact Sue Gormley (St. Anne) at 978-320-4210 or SueG@LWCatholic.org, or Peg Hicks (St. Catherine) at 978-320-4209 or PegH@LWCatholic.org.*