



Living Our Faith... Sharing Our Blessings

SAINT ANNE - SAINT CATHERINE COLLABORATIVE

Altar Servers

Young Parishioners Participate in a Vital Ministry



The role of an altar server is an important one at Mass. And Jackie Butterfield at St. Anne and Kathy Mancini at St. Catherine make sure the servers are available and prepared.

"I get to bond with the kids as they get older," Jackie says. "I get to see them mature in the Church."

Those in grades three and up (for St. Anne) and grades four and up (for St. Catherine) are eligible and welcome to serve. Training sessions are held during the year and are conducted by senior altar servers. When they begin serving, they are placed with experienced servers so they can model the procedures.

"I get them serving as quickly as possible, so they can get hands-on experience," Jackie says. "The priests are very, very helpful and bring them right along and counsel them."

"My own daughter started serving at the altar as soon as she was able," Kathy Mancini shares. "The older servers were wonderful with the new servers – very patient, providing encouragement and understanding. Through the years, she became the mentor, working with children who saw her every week at Mass and wanted to emulate her. It's a powerful witness to our faith when our children take over their faith journey and start sharing it with others. The future of our Church lies in the hands of the young. Altar serving provides them with just one opportunity to be a part of the faith community and grow their faith."

The altar servers know that they are providing an important service to the church. There are several positions they can hold (such as cross-bearer or acolyte). They "set the table" for Mass and they serve the priest. They also escort the gift bearers to the altar during the offertory procession.

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“It’s a ministry of service to the Church, and they’re as important as Eucharistic Ministers and lectors,” Jackie says.

By assisting the priest during the most important part of the Mass, the Eucharistic Prayer and consecration, the servers’ prayerful presence brings them closer to Christ, and by doing so, helps deepen their faith.

“Being full participants in the Mass helps servers stay focused, and the priests are grateful for their assistance, making them feel they are doing something good,” Jackie says.

Maria Beck’s three teens, ages 18, 16, and 14, are all altar servers at St. Anne. They each started as servers in the fourth grade.

“I was teaching religious education, and I was always taught you want to give back to the Church,” Maria says. “I told them I thought it would be nice if they became altar servers, and they each agreed.”

As their mother, Maria has been able to observe how her children’s service has played a role in their faith and their growth. Maria has high praise for the training her teens received.

“In terms of knowing what to do, the training was good,” she says. “They knew what was expected of them.”

Although teens in general are not open about their feelings, as their mother, Maria, understands, her teens are reaching out to God. She believes the experience of serving plays a role.

“Their faith is there, and it comes out,” she says. “Overall, their serving is a positive experience. As with any teenager, as they get older, I hope to see them always stay engaged with their faith.”

“The Community of St. Anne and St. Catherine is such a vibrant and loving place.” Kathy adds. “I am always amazed at how our parishioners become engaged and connected to each other! That’s a wonderful launching point for our altar servers and all of our youth!”



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If you would like more information about altar serving, please contact Kathy Mancini (St. Catherine) at 978-692-6353, ext. 132 or Jackie Butterfield (St. Anne) at 978-320-4207.

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

November is a Time for Thanksgiving

My Dear Friends in Christ,

November seems to automatically bring us to thoughts of thanksgiving and Thanksgiving – it is both a time of year when we tend to think in terms of gratitude to God, and a time when we also formally celebrate our American holiday. My memories of Thanksgiving are filled with food, of course, but they are also filled with thoughts of family, a sense of togetherness and a sense of my faith.

But this is also a significant month in the Church from a number of perspectives. Nov. 1 is a Holy Day, the Solemnity of All Saints. The next day is All Souls Day, a day devoted to all the saints in our lives – living, not living, known, and unknown.

If your life is like mine, it is filled with people who had a profound effect on you – people I like to think of as my own personal saints. This month is a wonderful reminder to think of them, thank them, and thank God for making them a part of our lives.

Our Thanksgiving holiday falls on Nov. 23, and is a time for families and gratitude. Thanksgiving became official in the United States in 1863, and in his proclamation, President Abraham Lincoln made very clear Whom we needed to thank. “To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to



penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God,” Lincoln said. In other words, we all need to thank Almighty God for our many blessings.

Finally, November also brings us to the end of one Church year and the beginning of a new one. The Feast of Christ the King on Nov. 26 is on the last Sunday of the liturgical year. The First Sunday of Advent, on Dec. 3rd, is the start of the new liturgical year. From the beginning of the month when we thank God for the example of the saints and the saintly people in our lives, to the end of the month when we thank God for everything we have and

everything we are, November is a time to approach the Lord with a grateful heart. That is what stewardship truly is all about – about approaching God, about approaching each day, and about approaching all those with whom we come in contact with hearts filled with gratitude and love.

God Love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Peter".

Fr. Peter Quinn, Pastor

That is what stewardship truly is all about – about approaching God, about approaching each day, and about approaching all those with whom we come in contact with hearts filled with gratitude and love.

Lightening

FOR OUR GRIEVING

For a family facing the recent loss of a loved one, the funeral-planning process can easily become overwhelming. In the midst of great loss, a person is suddenly faced with numerous decisions – from selecting funeral homes, purchasing burial plots and coffins, to actually planning the funeral liturgy. Each one of these choices is important, helping us commemorate the deceased and begin the grieving process. Yet, having someone there to support and walk us through the process can make all the difference in the world.

“I myself was widowed on Nov. 27, 1997, when my husband died very suddenly of a massive heart attack,” says St. Catherine parishioner Diane Holmes. “And I remember only too well how

grateful I was when the woman who was in charge of the Music Ministry at the time came to my home to help me plan the music for the liturgy.”

For Diane, that offering of help made all the difference as she planned her husband’s funeral Mass. So when she later saw a blurb in the parish newsletter advertising a new ministry that would assist families with the funeral-planning process, Diane knew this was something she wanted to be part of. The Ministry of Hope, as it soon became known, is devoted to helping St. Anne and St. Catherine parishioners plan out the funeral services for their departed loved ones. Ministry members are there every step of the way, from the planning process to the actual wake, Mass, and burial, to offer



*Diane Holmes,
St. Catherine’s coordinator for
Ministry of Hope*

“It brings that caring aspect of the parish family to them, helping them through the crisis of mourning and loss. A lot of them don’t know where to start, and there are so many other things they are having to take care of during that time. This gives them a little bit of a lift and some direction. It gives them that comfort of walking through the process with someone, breaking it down and making it a bit more manageable.” – Susan Butterfield

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“It brings that caring aspect of the parish family to them, helping them through the crisis of mourning and loss,” says Susan Butterfield, ministry coordinator for St. Anne’s. “A lot of them don’t know where to start, and there are so many other things they are having to take care of during that time. This gives them a little bit of a lift and some direction. It gives them that comfort of walking through the process with someone, breaking it down and

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ING PARISHIONERS

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Ministry coordinators are contacted each time a parish funeral is scheduled. Then, a Ministry of Hope team is formed, typically of two members. Oftentimes, the team selected consists of parishioners who either knew or have connections to the deceased, making their involvement more meaningful to the family. Then, the team begins the actual process of assisting the family with the planning and, later, execution of the funeral services.

“We try to have the same team do the entire process – the family meeting, attend the wake, assist with the funeral process, and then go to the actual burial,” Susan says. “Sometimes, we will even conduct the wake or gravesite prayers if the priest is unable to be present.”

The goal of each Minister of Hope is to be a source of comfort and support for our grieving members. They walk the journey with the family, performing countless hidden jobs to ensure that the liturgy goes smoothly. Ministry

members also end up serving as a kind of liaison between grieving family members and other bereavement ministries, helping to further convey the love of the parish family.

“The Ministers of Hope are with the families from the very beginning, starting with expressing our sorrow over the loss and setting up a meeting all the way past the burial,” Diane says. “We usually wait a few weeks after the funeral and contact the family again. Another parish ministry knits prayer shawls or throw blankets, and we will deliver those items to them, as well.”

And in the process, each Minister of Hope is richly rewarded, knowing they are helping others during a time of intense need.

“This is an area where I know I’m able to make a real difference in a person’s life,” Susan says. “We see all kinds of situations. Sometimes, it’s someone very young or a person who died suddenly. It’s truly such a gift to be there for them during that difficult time –



*Susan Butterfield,
St. Anne's coordinator for Ministry of Hope*

to feel like I’m being useful. I feel like I end up receiving much more than I’m able to give.”

Parishioners who are willing to listen to and walk with grieving families during a most difficult time are welcome to join the Ministers of Hope.

*St. Anne parishioners may contact Susan Butterfield
at 978-486-4100, ext. 121 or SusanB@LWCatholic.org.
St. Catherine parishioners should contact Diane Holmes
at 978-692-4652 or diholmes2@verizon.net.*

Time:

The Foundation of Stewardship

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has told us that stewardship is part of discipleship and is a way of responding to God's call in every aspect of our lives. We refer to the three facets of stewardship as "Time, Talent and Treasure," and when we consider the importance of these three Ts of stewardship, the "time" component comes first by design.

When we talk about stewardship of time, we are referring to prayer time. Prayer is of the utmost importance in a disciple's life, and it serves as the fertile ground from which the gifts of talent and treasure blossom. Only by spending time in prayer each day and receiving the sacraments are we able to consistently and generously donate our talent and treasure to the Church.

When looking for examples of how to live our lives as disciples of Christ and as stewards of God's gifts, we can always turn to the great saints of our Church to guide us. And when it comes to the Stewardship of Time, the life of St. Damien is just one example of how prayer, or "Time (or Prayer, Service & Sharing)," is the foundation for our lives of stewardship.

Shortly after being ordained a priest, St. Damien volunteered to serve a colony of lepers isolated on the island of Molokai, Hawaii. From May 1873 until his death in 1889 (at the age of 49) St. Damien worked to restore within the lepers a sense of personal worth and dignity.

Although for some time St. Damien took the necessary precautions to ensure that he did not contract leprosy, he knew that physical touch was necessary to communicate his love and concern to those afflicted with the disease. He embraced the lepers, dined with

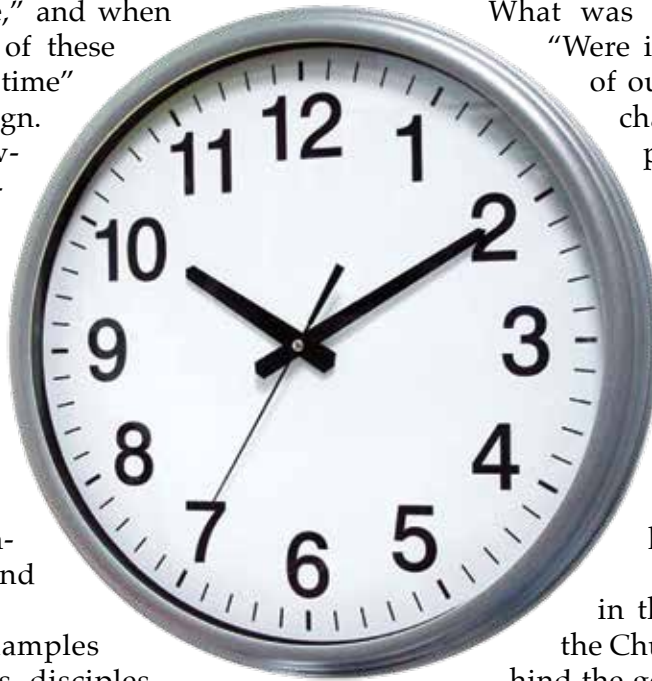
them, cared for them, and anointed them in the sacraments. With great humility and sacrifice, St. Damien offered his own life in order to save the lives of others.

From where did St. Damien draw his strength? What was the source of his inspiration?

"Were it not for the constant presence of our divine Master in our humble chapel, I would not have found it possible to persevere in sharing the lot of the lepers in Molokai," St. Damien wrote. "The Eucharist is the bread that gives strength... It is at once the most eloquent proof of His love and the most powerful means of fostering His love in us. He gives Himself every day so that our hearts as burning coals may set afire the hearts of the faithful."

St. Damien found his strength in the Mass, the greatest prayer of the Church. Prayer was the impetus behind the generosity of this faithful servant of God, and is the fuel that ignites every heart to flame in love. Without prayer, without the grace that flows from the sacraments, we are incapable of leading lives of service and responding to God's call!

How much time do you dedicate to prayer each day? One hour? Fifteen minutes? None at all? Before you consider joining a parish ministry or volunteering your talents in service, and before you discern your gifts of treasure to the Church, be sure that prayer is your foundation. Identify a prayer schedule that is manageable. This may entail arising 20 minutes early each day to offer your work to the Lord, or attending daily Mass once a week. Every prayer commitment is unique and personal. Yet, no matter what, this time offering, this dedication to prayer, is the key to serving the Lord with faithfulness, generosity and joy.



Children's Liturgy of the Word

Drawing Little Hearts to *God's Sacred Word*

If you walk into a Children's Liturgy of the Word session at either of our two parishes, you will find children, with their eyes full of wonder, watching the Gospel come to life in a "child-friendly" way.

"The Children's Liturgy of the Word has helped them develop their relationship with God," says Jackie Butterfield, who serves as Director of Faith Formation for Grades K - 6 at St. Anne's. "During the engaging sessions, the kids might act out a Gospel story, answer questions or play a faith-learning game. We try to take something from ordinary life and relate it to their daily walk with Jesus, such as how to be kind or care for God's creation."

The Children's Liturgy of the Word sessions are coordinated at St. Anne's Parish by Jackie, and at St. Catherine's by Nancy Martinez, along with the generous help of parent leaders and other volunteers. At St. Anne's, the sessions take place during the 10 a.m. Mass throughout the school year, and serve children in preschool through fourth grade. At St. Catherine's, the sessions are offered on Sundays during the 9 a.m. Mass



throughout the school year and once a month during the summer to two different age groups – 3-to-5-year-olds and 6-to-10-year-olds.

Before the Liturgy of the Word begins during Mass, the priest calls the children forward and blesses them. They then leave to attend the Children's Liturgy of the Word sessions in a designated location. The interactive sessions feature the reading of the Sunday Mass Scriptures from the children's lectionary, followed by activities and/or a reflective lesson.

"For example, when we taught the children about following

Christ, we had them make a pair of sandals with pipe cleaners that said 'walk with Jesus' on them," Nancy says. "We have also had them listen to a special meditation song which helped them understand the readings better. Our goal is to help them have an encounter with Jesus and the Gospel, at their level, that they will remember."

Further, the sessions can also serve as a means of catechesis and fellowship.

"It is a time for teaching the children," Jackie says. "For example, when we make the Sign of the

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– Jackie Butterfield, Director of Faith Formation at St. Anne's

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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)

Children's Liturgy of the Word *continued from page 7*

Cross before reading the Gospels, we make sure the children know how to do it, as well. During the sessions, the children also build relationships with their church friends, which is important for them."

More volunteers are always welcome to help out with this ministry.

"We can't have this service without the help of our volunteer leaders," Nancy says. "You don't have to be an experienced teacher, you just need to be willing to help the children understand the words of the Mass readings."



*If you would like more information on the Children's Liturgy of the Word,
please contact Jackie Butterfield (St. Anne) at 978-320-4207,
or Nancy Martinez (St. Catherine) at 508-982-7024.*