



Living Our Faith... Sharing Our Blessings

SAINT ANNE - SAINT CATHERINE COLLABORATIVE

God, Pizza and Beer and the Men's Group Offer Powerful Opportunities for Fellowship

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, is a major proponent of gathering and sharing in fellowship with one another. In recent years, he has emphasized the importance of both sharing our faith and understanding the faith of others. As he has stated, "The Church will have to initiate everyone — priests, religious and laity — into this 'art of accompaniment' which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other... reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life," (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 169).

This kind of gathering and faith sharing has been going on for many years in the Church. Two eminent authors and Catholics — C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien — were part of a group that gathered regularly in what was called the Rabbit Room, located in the back of a pub. There, they would talk, drink ale and discuss theology. And in our collaborative community, we have groups that take a similar approach to fellowship and faith sharing — God, Pizza and Beer and the Men's Group..

According to parishioner Gary McGrath, God, Pizza and Beer grew out of a men's Saturday morning faith-sharing group at St. Catherine's, which grew so large that it was losing its intimacy and sense of togetherness. God, Pizza and Beer now meets once a month, usually on the last Thursday evening in the Mezzanine at St. Catherine's Parish Center. Beginning at 6:30 p.m.



attendees spend a half hour socializing, having some pizza, and enjoying "BYO" beverages. Those present then spend an hour with some personal witness and sharing. The evening concludes at 8 p.m. with prayer. Though this grew out of a men's faith-sharing group at St. Catherine's, all men and women of the Collaborative are welcome.

The men and women who attend God, Pizza and Beer come from varied backgrounds and they all bring something unique to the entire group. One attendee of

continued on page 2

The God, Pizza and Beer and the Men's Group

continued from front cover

God, Pizza and Beer, a successful businessman, shared the following, powerful insight.

"I feel I have lived a very lonely life when it comes to my faith," he said. "I have lacked the courage to openly embrace my faith and to let it guide how I live. I didn't discover this until I was introduced to the men's faith sharing group and God, Pizza and Beer; [then] it was dramatically reinforced through a Cursillo. Previously, I could not define my relationship with Christ and I knew nothing about what my faith meant to me — just that it was there in the background. However, each week I learn something, and I gain confidence to embrace my relationship with Christ. I value the fellowship [of this group] as much as any relationships I've ever had, as for the first time in my life, I'm not lonely in my faith and my faith is no longer in the background; it's at the forefront of my life."

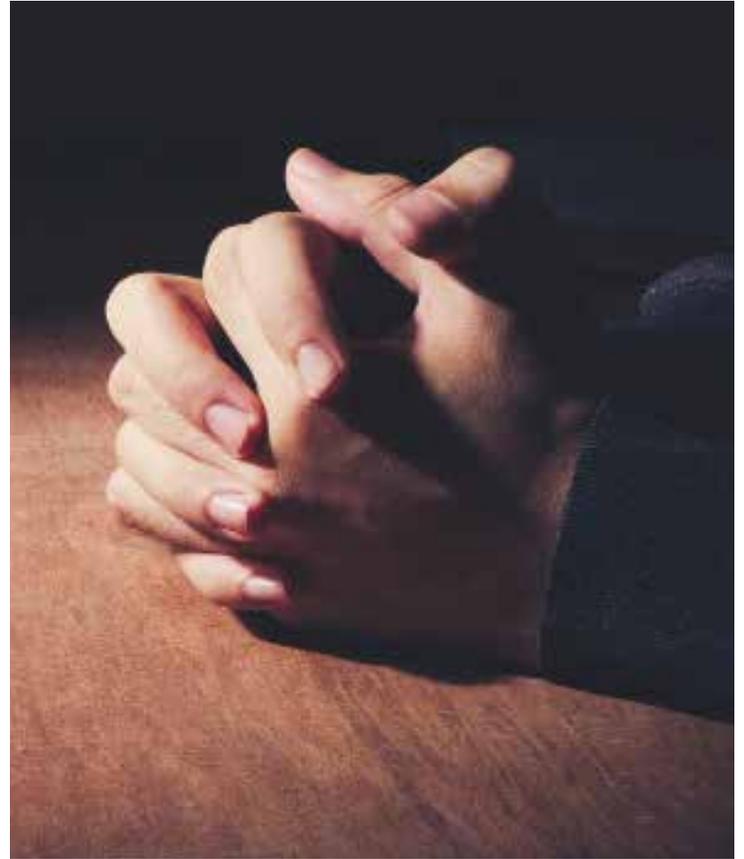
Similarly, beautiful experiences of faith and fellowship also take place through the Men's Group, which meets at St. Anne Parish on the third Tuesday of the month in the Parish Hall at 7 p.m. from Sept. through June. At their meetings, members enjoy a supper of pizza, beer and soft drinks, as well as inspiring discussions about the upcoming Sunday Mass readings. Together, as faithful Catholics, they share camaraderie, tell stories of faith, and pray for one another and their families.

"Many of us have been friends for a long time," says Russ Arena, who co-chairs the Men's Group along with Bob Stall. "It has been a great support to my faith over the years."

Taking their love for Christ to a deeper level, they serve our Collaborative family in creative ways.

"We are like handymen for the church, or 'jack-of-all-trades,'" Russ says. "We enjoy being able to use the skills and gifts that God has given us."

Recently, Men's Group members built a stage for an outdoor Mass that took place at St. Anne's. They also help take care of the Memorial Garden, and are planning to strip down and paint a statue located St. Catherine of Alexandria Cemetery. Further, each November, they put on a Veteran's Dinner at St. Anne's; this year it will be a spaghetti and meatball meal on Saturday, Nov. 10 after the 4 p.m. Mass. Each spring they organize a pancake breakfast after the Sunday morning Masses, bringing the blessing of fellowship to all parishioners. All men of the Collaborative are invited to participate in the Men's Group.



"I value the fellowship [of this group] as much as any relationships I've ever had, as for the first time in my life, I'm not lonely in my faith and my faith is no longer in the background; it's at the forefront of my life." — God, Pizza and Beer participant

If you would like more information about God, Pizza and Beer, please contact Gary McGrath at 617-901-4923. If you would like more information about the Men's Group, please contact Russ Arena at 781-858-1807 or Bob Stall at 978-314-0992.

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Living Through the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

Dear Parishioners,

Someone says to you, “ask me for anything you want, and I will give it.” You know very well this person can bring your desire to reality. What do you ask for? **Please pause and reflect on that question. What would be your response?**



That situation actually happened in First Kings 3:5-9. The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, “Ask what I should give you.” Solomon responded, “Give me, your servant, an understanding mind, able to discern between good and evil.” It pleased God that Solomon asked for this. Then God said, “Because you asked for this, not riches, or a long life, indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind like never seen before. I will also give what you have not asked — both riches and honor all your life. If you walk in my ways, I will lengthen your days.”

This was a transforming experience in Solomon’s life that touched him and others. It speaks powerfully of the importance of living life according to the wisdom of God — act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly before God. This attitude will, in turn, bear fruit in ways beyond your imagination.

Following the wisdom of our Lord Jesus brings about authentic joy and true happiness. Stephen Covey carries this wisdom into writing in his book, *First Things First*. So how do we discern what comes first? We all acknowledge how challenging and difficult life can be in our marriages, parenting and family life. The reason Jesus became flesh was to show us through His life and Gospel teachings how to put first things first, which leads to true joy and lasting happiness.

Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, a billionaire at the end of his 56 years of life, found a bit of wisdom that was similar to Jesus’ way of life. In an essay that

is supposedly attributed to Steve Jobs, he offers the following: *“I reached the pinnacle of success in the business world. In some eyes, my life is the epitome of success. However, aside from my work, I have little joy! Recalling my life, I realize that all the recognition and wealth that I took so much pride in, have paled and become meaningless in the face of my death... Treasure love for your family, love for your spouse, love for your friends. You will realize that your true inner happiness does not come from the material things of this world. I hope you realize when you have family and friends to laugh with, talk with, that is true happiness! There is a huge difference in being a human being and being human. Only a few people only ever really understand that.”*

This leads me to this prayer for our collaborative:

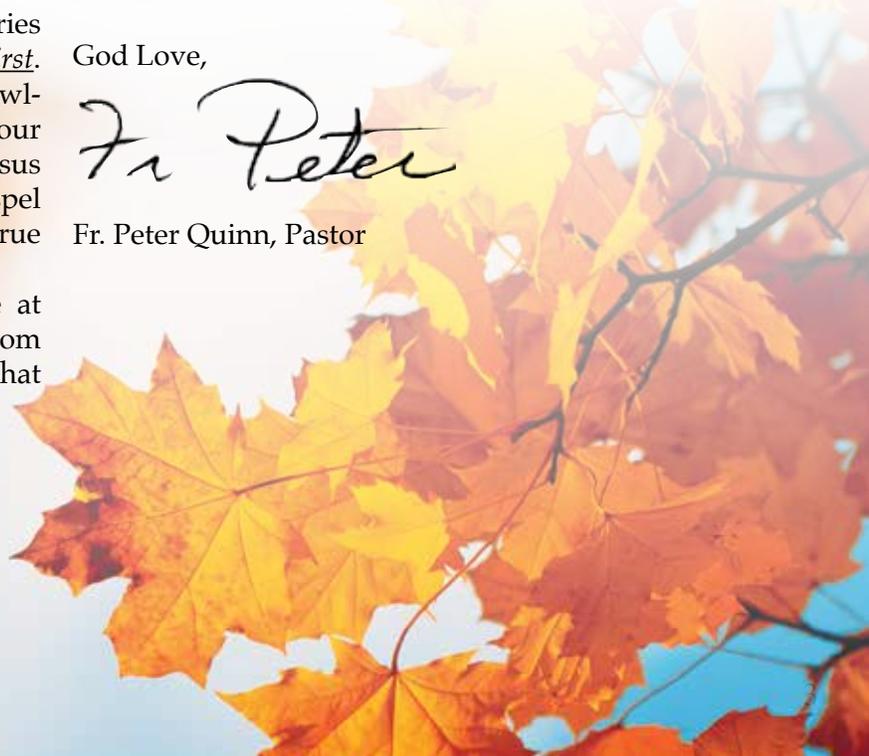
Lord, help us to live our lives through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, guiding and sustaining us to make those decisions that will produce true happiness and authentic joy in our lives and families.

I believe that is truly what the Lord Jesus wants for all us.

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



Peer Parent Bereavement Group Leader



Carson Sallet was just 17 months old when he passed away suddenly during a morning nap. His mother, parishioner Lynne Sallet, is helping other parents navigate the emotions of grief with the Peer Parent Bereavement Group.

Carson Sallet may have only been a toddler when he passed, but his legacy is one that has touched the hearts of many in our parish community.

"He was so full of joy," says Lynne Sallet, Carson's mom. "He always smiled. We took him to do so many things during his 17 months, so he had a full life, even though it was short. It is amazing that once your child is in this world, you can't imagine the world without them."

In 2012, Carson passed away from Sudden Unexplained Death of a Child. Lynne, who has a background in counseling, and her husband, Peter, channeled their grief into founding the Peer Parent Bereavement Group. As a non-denominational group for parents who have experienced the loss of a child, the Peer Parent Bereavement Group has provided a cathartic outlet for members of the community who are looking to connect with others who are also in the midst of grief.

"We have members who have young children who have died, but also parents of adult children who have passed," Lynne says. "Everyone is someone's child, so it doesn't matter if they were little or older, you've still lost your child."

Members of the group meet monthly to share what they're feeling and talk about their journeys through grief. Topics can vary from how to handle approaching holidays to responding to day-to-day questions from strangers like "how many children do you have?"

"No matter what the situation is, it's always helpful to be in the same room with people who get it, without having to explain what you're going through," Lynne says. "To be able to walk that journey together is incredible."

The Sallets, who are also parents to Joshua, 9, and Abigail, 5, wanted to make sure other parents of young children could attend bereavement group meetings without having to worry about childcare. To accommodate this need, Lynne says babysitting is an essential part of making sure the meetings continue.

"When we were looking for groups after Carson died, we were traveling to Boston and it would take us two hours to get there for meetings and oftentimes, when we got there it was just us and the group leader," Lynne says. "Carson died during his morning nap, and it was hard to leave my kids with someone. I always have an adult lead babysitter and we've also used some teens from the (St. Catherine)

ng Each Other through Grief With Love

St. Vincent de Paul Youth to volunteer.”

Babysitters who volunteer spend time with the children in the Parish Center basement during meetings. While their parents meet, children are afforded the opportunity to play and talk with others their age who have also suffered the loss of a sibling.

“One of the big blessings of the group is that the children are babysat with other siblings of children who have died; so the children know that they are not alone in their experience,” Lynne says. “Joshua’s a happy, well-adjusted kid, but he misses his brother and talks about all the trouble they’d be getting into if he were here, so it’s nice to have friendships with kids who feel the same way. One of our babysitting volunteers last year also had a social work background and would talk about naming emotions and where the kids feel them in their bodies. I keep hoping in the future we’ll be able to do a little bit more, even if it’s just partially to help them during that time to process.”

As the group grows, Lynne says she’s hopeful the group will become more peer-led with the occasional guest speaker. She says that with each other’s help, she’s confident those who choose to attend the Peer Parent Bereavement Group will find the strength to share their journeys together.

“I’m okay not being okay,” Lynne says. “I know that might sound trite,

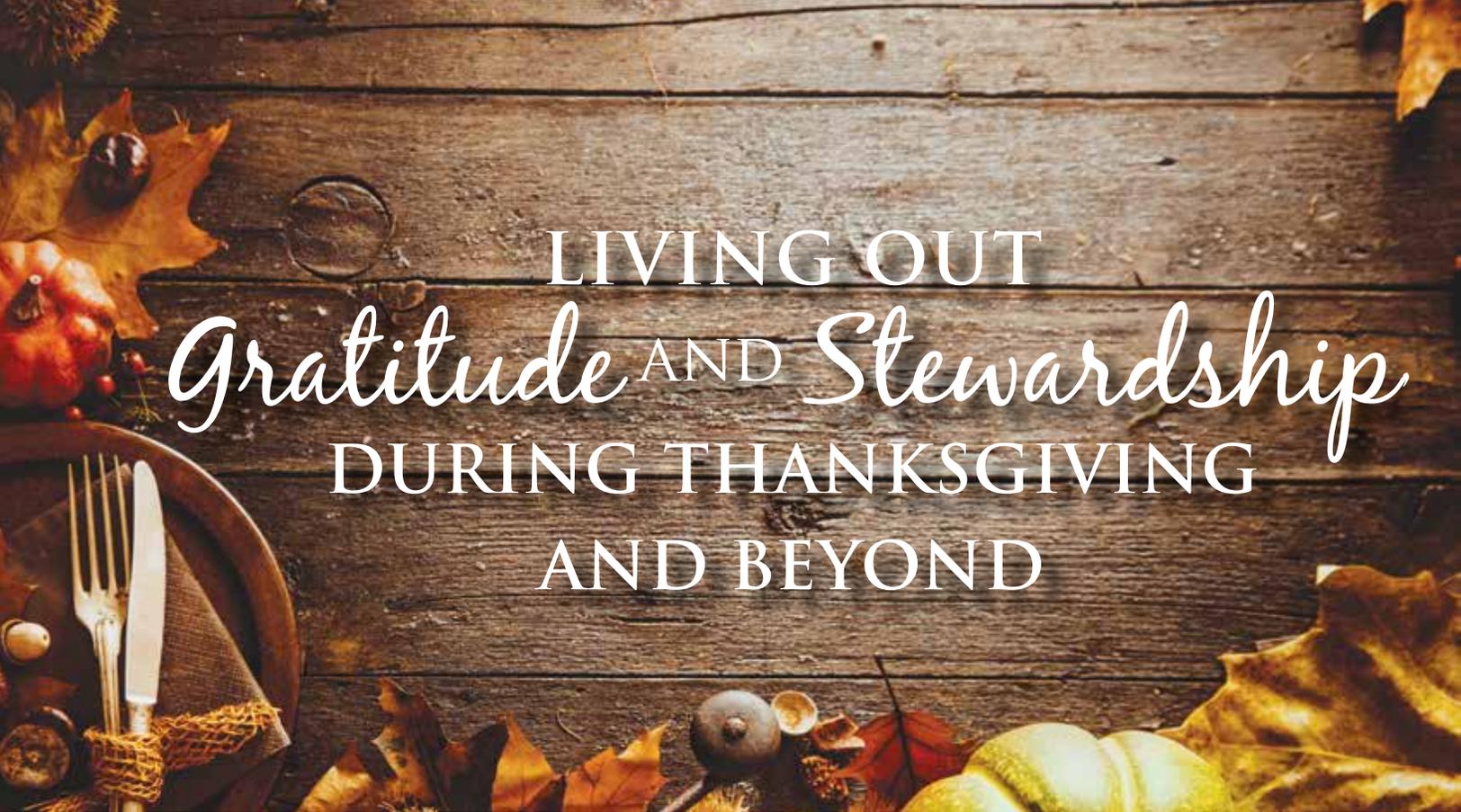


The Peer Parent Bereavement Group is giving hope to families who are dealing with the loss of a child. Parishioner Lynne Sallet started the group. Lynn is pictured here with her family (from left) Lynne, Joshua, Peter, and Abigail Sallet.

but I’m never going to not miss him. You do find joy and you do smile and laugh again. It takes time and some days are harder than others, but no matter what happens in life you find a way to move forward. It’s the journey of life and it’s helpful to have people to walk with you. I find power and strength in just being with others who have been through it. It’s a cyclical process — you don’t go through

the stages and then you’re done. It does get easier over time, but it can still hit you. Early on, I felt like I was standing on the seashore, and I could see the waves of grief coming, and I didn’t know how big they were going to be, and I tried to avoid or dodge them. But the key is, that you have to let the waves of grief hit you, let them move through you, and then the next wave will be easier to ride through.”

The Peer Parent Bereavement Group meets the third Friday of each month from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on the second-floor mezzanine at St. Catherine. Parishioners of the Collaborative who are interested in attending or volunteering as babysitters may contact Lynne Sallet at lynesallet@gmail.com.



LIVING OUT *Gratitude* AND *Stewardship* DURING THANKSGIVING AND BEYOND

Every November, as the holiday season fast approaches, we are filled with a deep sense of sentimentality and gratefulness for all the goodness of the past year. At the same time, we encounter many wonderful ways to give — to cheerfully share our own gifts — during this time of Thanksgiving.

It is with this spirit of gratitude that we can truly live out the stewardship way of life. This Thanksgiving, there are plenty of opportunities to do this in a direct way. Is there a new neighbor you haven't met, or someone who might be spending the holiday alone? Invite them over for Thanksgiving dinner. Perhaps you may volunteer at a soup kitchen, or you might donate a Thanksgiving meal to a family in need who wouldn't have one otherwise.

If you go shopping on Black Friday, make it a point the next day to donate old clothes that you or your family members no longer need. And as the winter draws closer, you might participate in — or even organize — a coat drive, and then gather a small group to go out into the community to give the coats away to homeless shel-

ters and those in need during the winter months. There are countless such opportunities to live in gratitude and thanksgiving — opportunities that go beyond just having a meal with family and friends on the fourth Thursday of November.

Of course, we must remember that this spirit of thanksgiving does not end after Thanksgiving, nor does it end following Advent and Christmas. We must always consider how to give, even as the sentimental glow of the holiday season fades after the New Year. In January, if there is space at your table, fill it. In February, if there is abundance in your closet, give away from that abundance. In March, if there are volunteers needed at Cor Unum (in Lawrence), rally a team and give of your time. We need a renewed spirit of stewardship and thanksgiving that lasts the whole year so that our giving becomes habitual, and not just seasonal.

This Thanksgiving, ask the Holy Spirit where He is calling you to give. And may the joy of the Thanksgiving season flow into our lives as good stewards, every day and throughout the entire year.

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Women's Book Club Deepening Faith, Creating Friendships

Have you ever read a book that changed your life—the kind of book that you couldn't put down and that stuck with you long after the final page? What if you could read a book like that and feel that it added to your faith life at the same time?

The Women's Book Club is tailor-made for the ladies of St. Anne and St. Catherine. The club is a place to relax, nurture friendships, recharge your spirit, and grow in your relationship with God. RCIA Coordinator Sharon Laronga, who leads the club, says women of the collaborative are invited to gather to read and discuss books that focus on spiritual growth and development.

"Over time, what I feel is that coming together and sharing our spirituality has helped the women

in the group to become more confident in their faith and their relationship with God, that then encourages them to go out and to minister to others," she says. "It's kind of a quiet way of helping people to learn that they can go out and minister and that they have what they need to do so."

The Women's Book Club is currently reading *Boundless Compassion: Creating a Way of Life* by Joyce Rupp. The book focuses on meeting the challenges of our broken world with the kind of love that Jesus demonstrated. Sharon says the group has read other books by Rupp in addition to titles by Fr. Ronald Rolheiser and Henri Nouwen.

"We've done some very obscure books that people

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The Women's Book Club is a vibrant group of lady parishioners who meet weekly to discuss faith topics and grow in their relationship with God. The group gets together each Monday at 9:30 a.m. in the St. Catherine Parish Center Mezzanine.

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: 7:30 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 11:15 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)

Women's Book Club *continued from page 7*

might not have heard of that we love, but we've also done others that are written by more popular authors," she says.

Members of the club share the responsibility of planning meetings, each taking turns organizing a meeting's discussion time. Sharon says this allows each member to put her own unique touch on their meeting.

"They'll do music and prayer and then lead the group in the discussion," she says. "They'll pick a song that's appropriate to whatever we're discussing. They really put some effort into what they're going to do and it's nice."

Sharon says friendships have grown beyond the room where the Women's Book Club meets. Members have helped each other through difficult times.

"Because of the sharing that goes on, the people get to know each other at a deeper level," she says. "So, they'll do things like driving another member to the hospital or being with them when they're struggling, and I think that's an important part of how the group develops."

"Over time, what I feel is that coming together and sharing our spirituality has helped the women in the group to become more confident in their faith and their relationship with God, that then encourages them to go out and to minister to others. It's kind of a quiet way of helping people to learn that they can go out and minister and that they have what they need to do so." — Sharon Laronga

The Women's Book Club meets Monday mornings from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. from October to December, and then from February to May, in the St. Catherine Parish Center Mezzanine. It is open to any adult woman. Parishioners with questions should contact Mary Eve Miller at 978-692-7651 or maryevewin8@outlook.com, or Karen McNamara at 978-486-3762 or the2macs@verizon.net.