



Living Our Faith... Sharing Our Blessings

SAINT ANNE - SAINT CATHERINE COLLABORATIVE

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Welcome to Our First Newsletter!

My Dear Friends in Christ,

Welcome to the first issue of our new monthly newsletter!

As our collaborative community continues to grow and develop stewardship as a way of life, we recognize the need for increased communication. Through this newsletter, we hope to share stories that will help us all to better understand who we are as Catholics and what we are doing as individual members of Christ's family. In upcoming issues, we will focus on what's going on in the St. Anne and St. Catherine communities, and how those activities and events are changing hearts and minds and helping parishioners grow closer to Christ and each other. Each article will ultimately focus on Christ at work within our community through the stewardship way of life.

Our hope is that this newsletter will be a successful means for ongoing education and formation

in our faith, and I pray it will be a vehicle through which you are informed and inspired to become more actively involved in the life of Christ and the parishes.

Another way I hope to improve our communication efforts is through a comprehensive survey that will be conducted in early 2018. Through the survey, I want to hear from you regarding our collaborative and our future. A survey will be mailed to each home, and then I will ask you to take the time to fill it out and return it as soon as possible. Your input will be very important, and it will give the Collaborative Pastoral Council and me a better understanding of your thoughts about our parishes.

This fall, we will conduct our first Annual Stewardship Renewal. The Renewal is the time each year when we ask each other to re-prioritize the way we use God's gifts in the Church. It is the



time we write down how we will become more devoted to Christ over the next year with our commitments of **time** (using my time on earth wisely; making time for personal prayer, family prayer,

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What Does Stewardship Mean?

What comes to mind when you hear the word “stewardship”?

Do you think of it as just another way to talk about money? Do you quickly dismiss it as a notion that has nothing to do with being Catholic?

Stewardship is actually a concept that is Scripturally based, and is absolutely vital to our life as Catholics. God tells us, in the very first book of the Old Testament, “Be fertile and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and all the living things that move on the earth” (Gen 1:28).

What does that mean to us today? It simply means that God is telling us, “This is yours, so take care of it.” One of the first things God tells us to do is to be good stewards of the gifts He has entrusted to us!

The Old Testament is not the only place where we can find references to stewardship. Indeed, of the 36 parables in the New Testament, more than half of them deal with time, talent, possessions, or money. Therefore, if Jesus spoke of stewardship that much, it should be a very important part of our lives!

As Catholics, we refer to the three facets of stewardship as “time, talent, and treasure.” Although these are three concrete ways to express and measure stewardship, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops tells us that stewardship is part of discipleship. Stewardship is a way of responding to God’s call in every aspect of our lives.

The Scriptures and Church traditions teach us one important point that cannot be overstated — that stewardship is primarily based on our

need to give in gratitude, not on the Church’s need to receive. Of course, both the Catholic Church and our collaborative parishes will always need money. However, we are not asked to give simply to defray costs and fund charitable programs. We are instead asked to remember our *need* to gratefully return a portion of our time, talent, and treasure to God, recognizing all that He has given to us.

It is important to remember that stewardship is a way of life, and not a program. True Catholic stewardship involves an ongoing call to live as followers of Christ. It takes time to find and define personal goals. You can begin by examining your personal commitments to the parishes. How do you live your faith in your daily life with your family and friends? How much time do you spend in daily prayer, going to Mass or being involved in parish ministries and activities? What percentage of your income should you give back to God every week? What talents do you have that could be used to strengthen our parish family?

The coming months will see us increasing and intensifying our education and communication on stewardship. We will be developing a better understanding of how stewardship is a way of responding to God’s call to discipleship. And with God’s help, changes will occur in each of our hearts as we devote ourselves to a stewardship renewal within our parish. Examine how you are currently responding to God’s call to stewardship. If God called you home tomorrow, would He proclaim, “Well done, my good and faithful servant”?

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Neighborhood Supper

“God Is in the Face of Everyone”

One Sunday, about a year after Kathy Emberley and her husband, Tom, had joined St. Anne, a little note in the parish bulletin spoke to Kathy. The note encouraged parishioners to become involved with the Neighborhood Supper ministry, which provides meals for our local community members.

“Serving others in this way really speaks to me and shows me God is in the face of everyone,” says Kathy, the ministry leader. “Also, I have always felt strongly about the fact that people deserve to be fed. This is something we all need to be concerned about.”

Since 1991, Neighborhood Supper, a nonprofit organization, has offered a free dinner for our community every Tuesday at the Congregational Church in Littleton. Five Littleton churches collaborate to provide the meal, and St. Anne’s ministry members serve every fourth Tuesday of the month.

“It is really nice opportunity for our town,” Kathy says. “It is not just for people who need a meal, but it is also definitely a social gathering for many people, especially the elderly who might not get out frequently or who live alone.”

Each fourth Tuesday, approximately 12 volunteers serve between 60 and 70 community members. Kathy arrives early in the afternoon to begin preparing the meal, and then volunteers set up tables and chairs.

Popular meals that are served include stuffed shells and meatballs, shepherd’s pie, chicken and broccoli alfredo, and grilled balsamic chicken sandwiches. The meals always include a vegetable or salad and a homemade dessert.

“St. Anne’s has always funded their own Tuesday dinner,” Kathy says. “Parishioners should know that part of what they put in the collection each week goes to this ministry to feed others.”

Then, beginning around 5:30 p.m., the volunteers plate the food in the kitchen and hand it directly to each individual present. Usually they serve food until 6:30 p.m. and then clean up afterwards.

“Truly, the people who come to Neighborhood Supper seem like they are having a good time!” Kathy says.



Neighborhood Supper ministry members serving dinner to faith community members in St. Anne’s Parish Hall

“Sometimes, we have time before serving the meal to socialize. If we aren’t very busy, we take a plate of food and sit down with everyone.”

Being involved with Neighborhood Supper doesn’t demand a large commitment, as volunteers only serve once a month for a few hours. Parishioners from both parishes are welcome to join the ministry.

“I cannot give enough thanks to the dedicated people who give of their time and energy to this ministry,” Kathy says. “They come at the end of a long day to serve, but more importantly to share their welcoming and joyful spirit with all the people who come in and eat.”

Kathy always felt welcome at St. Anne, but through serving with Neighborhood Supper, she began to feel like an integral part of the community and deepened her faith life.

“I don’t think you really take ownership of your parish until you get involved in something,” Kathy says. “Having that community feeling has made it possible for me to grow in my faith by doing things that directly serve others.”

If you would like more information about Neighborhood Supper, please contact Kathy Emberley at 978-486-4752.

Becoming the Hands and Feet of Christ

When it first began 12 years ago, St. Anne's and St. Catherine's High School mission trip consisted of just a handful of teens and adults. Seeing the massive destruction left behind by Hurricane Katrina, parishioners were anxious to do something – to bring comfort and relief to the storm's victims. Since then, however, the annual trip has grown to include approximately 150 teens and adults with a growing waiting list each year. And though the actual location and focus of the mission trip has gradually shifted from disaster relief to more of an outreach approach, it has consistently transformed lives through its three-pillar approach of service, faith, and fellowship.

"The goal of our mission trip each year is for the youth of our parishes to explore and enrich their relationship with Christ by developing a faith community – that's the whole reason we do this," says St. Catherine parishioner Frank Heitkamp, mission coordinator. "We do that by incorporating three equal pillars – service, faith and fellowship. Those three tenets are woven into everything that we do in this trip, making their faith come alive as they literally become the hands and feet of Christ."

Typically occurring the third week of July, the

teen mission trip is designed to take teens out of their normal environment and routine, helping them form new relationships and allowing them to assist those in need. Each day, work groups are sent out to their designated site which varies from building and maintenance projects, to working with local food pantries, to even assisting with summer camps for at-risk children. No matter the particular job, explains St. Anne parishioner Tom Emberley, a key part of the teens' service is actually interacting with service recipients, offering them that personal touch.

"We really encourage our kids to engage with the homeowners, because although, yes, they need those physical jobs done, they also crave that personal interaction," Tom says.

"A lot of kids come because of the fellowship, wanting to spend time with friends who are going on the trip," Frank adds. "They don't realize that when they go there and they start helping an elderly person and hearing their story, the lasting effect that will have on their lives. They actually have an interaction directly with the person which ends up making a lasting impact on our youth."

In between their service work, teens are surrounded by the beauty of our Catholic faith through daily Mass,



The 2017 High School Mission group preparing to leave for St. Mary's in Presque Isle, Maine.

Christ: Our High School Mission Trip

group prayer, and opportunities for private reflection. There are also plenty of opportunities for games and fellowship, allowing teens to share about their various work experiences and to further bond with one another. The result is a truly life-changing experience.

“The trip really engages our youth, making them more aware of the need to serve others,” Tom says. “It puts a face to our faith, reminding teens of our responsibility to reach out to others. And you get so much more in return. It’s not a qualifiable thing, but you get so much joy in knowing that you can make a real difference in others’ lives.”

This in turn allows teens to encounter Christ in a personable manner, sometimes for the first time ever.

“For some of these kids, it’s the first time that they’ve realized they can have a relationship with Christ outside of church,” Frank says. “A lot of them see church as the place where God resides, and they never realized that they can have an actual relationship with Christ in their daily life. But through this mission, I’ve seen them realize that Christ is with them in every aspect of their life – that He’s always available if they just seek Him out and listen for Him.”

Yet, teens aren’t the only ones who benefit from this mission. Adult volunteers can’t help but have their own faith life revitalized as they witness Christ’s work in the hearts and minds of our youth. And they get to be part of something that is truly changing lives.

“This trip has impacted and changed my life significantly,” Frank says. “It has made me feel part of a bigger faith community. I think it has helped me in the formation of my own faith and has allowed me to grow in my faith. It’s such a gift to see that on our 12th year, we were bigger than ever before – it shows that we are playing an important role in people’s lives. People see that what we are doing matters and they want to be part of it.”



Away from their typical routine and setting, teens are able to interact with new people and form lifelong friendships.



Each day teens are sent out in assigned work groups, assisting members of the local Presque Isle community.

Information about the 2018 High School Mission Trip will be posted to our parish bulletins and websites in the near future. For information about the trip, please contact Matt Edison at either 978-846-0615 or Matt.HighSchoolMT@gmail.com

The Blessings of the *Catholic Mass*

It is ironic that today, with all of the freedom of religion that we enjoy in the United States, many of us wonder why we must go to Mass on Sunday.

However, if we really understood what the Mass is and how we participate in the celebration, we would instead be asking why we are, as sinful human beings, blessed with the opportunity to participate in the holy Mass. If we simply understood and recognized that God's infinite goodness allows us to do so, we would be eager to go to Mass on Sunday and every other day of the week.

It is true, however, that all Catholics are obliged to "Keep holy the Lord's Day" by sharing in the Mass. But why are we obliged?

The Eucharistic Liturgy is the center of our faith. It is "the summit toward which all activity of the Church is directed" and it is "the font from which all her power flows" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 10). It does not exhaust the activity of the Church, but is most certainly her greatest work.

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is literally re-presented to the Father during Mass, and Christ allows us to join with Him in offering that sacrifice. Imagine our Lord and Savior dying on the cross for us right up the street. Imagine knowing that Mary is sitting at the foot of the cross with St. John, witnessing her Son giving Himself to the Father for the sake of all of us. Would we not run to be there? Would we not desire to share in His sacrifice, just as Mary did?

In addition to participating in Christ's sacrifice at every Mass, we also participate in the Lord's Last Supper. Imagine hearing Jesus as He says to us "take and eat, take and drink," and then tells us to go forth to spread the Gospel. Together, we become the one Body and Blood of Christ to be sent forth into a world much in need of Christ's healing.

Believe it or not, the Lord's Supper and Christ's sacrifice on the Cross are both really, truly happening at our parish, every time Mass is offered. Given such a gift, how can we not accept it?

At Mass, our prayers join with Jesus' sacrifice for



the good of all — those living, those who have died before us, and those yet to be born. We have the opportunity to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Think of all we miss if we aren't there!

We ought to joyfully head to Church each Sunday, eager to give God glory in the greatest way we can! Attending and actively participating in Mass every Sunday is our obligation as Catholics. But we should not allow the fact that our attendance is "required" to stop us from going. Nor should we allow our laziness to overshadow the amazing privilege and the many blessings that lay before us in the Mass.

The pope and the bishops direct us to participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy every Sunday because they know there is no better way to keep holy the Lord's day — giving God thanks for all He has done for us in the most powerful way possible. They know that, through the Mass, we gain the graces necessary to live our lives in this world.

Our ability to participate in the Mass is a wonderful gift, not a great burden. May Christ enlighten our minds and hearts to clearly see the wonders of the celebration, and give us great enthusiasm and eagerness to participate.

Imagine sitting at the table of the Last Supper as Jesus breaks open the bread, His body, and pours out His blood, and asks us to break open and pour out our lives with Him as He suffered and died on the cross. Would we not run to be there with Him? Can we be there with Mary at the foot of the cross?

Forming New Catholics to Be Love in the Heart of the Church Through RCIA

“In the heart of the Church, my Mother, I will be love.” – St. Therese of Lisieux

There’s nothing like being able to stand back and see the fruits of your labor bloom in God’s vineyard. For Sharon Laronga, watching RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) members receive their first sacraments and be embraced by Mother Church is when the guidance and support of the RCIA Team has come to fruition.

“What touches me the most is when I see people who have gone through the RCIA process become happily, actively involved in the Catholic community,” Sharon says. “It’s very rewarding!”

Sharon currently serves as coordinator for the RCIA process, which is a collaborative effort between St. Anne and St. Catherine. This dynamic, inspirational process is liturgically based, drawing lessons from the Sunday Mass readings along the Church’s liturgical cycle. It involves group discussions and fascinating presentations offered by a team of catechists on topics such as: *The Seven Sacraments; Images of God; A Walk Through the Mass; Christology; End-of-Life Issues; Prayer, Moral Decision Making; The Creed; A Tour of the Catholic Church*, and much more. Several sessions are devoted to the study of Sacred Scripture, with topics such as *An Overview of the Bible, Old Testament Prophets, Parables of Jesus* and the *Resurrection Narratives*.

Sponsors are also an integral part of the process. They walk alongside the catechumens or candidates as companions, introducing them to various aspects of faith and being models for them.

Amongst many other enriching faith formation materials, the RCIA process utilizes the *U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults*, which has been designed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

“The most important goal of the RCIA process is to deepen one’s relationship with God,” Sharon says.



Cathedral of the Holy Cross, the Rite of Election

Furthermore, the RCIA participants celebrate various rites, such as the Rite of Acceptance (for *catechumens*), the Rite of Welcome (for *candidates*), the Rite of Election, and the Rite of Sending. The *catechumens* also participate in the Scrutinies, which is a set of rituals of purification and enlightenment in preparation for Baptism.

The RCIA process culminates in helping our newly initiated Catholics discover meaningful ways to offer their time, talent, and treasure to the Church with love.

“Throughout the process, we help them learn about the Catholic Church so that they will be comfortable in it, as well as in whatever ministries God calls them to,” Sharon says. “My goal is to see them participating enthusiastically and meaningfully in our collaborative community after they have completed RCIA.”

The RCIA sessions, which begin on Oct. 1, meet from 10:15 to 11:30 a.m. on Sundays at St. Catherine. All who are interested are welcome to join at any time of the year. For more information about RCIA, or to volunteer to help, please contact Sharon Laronga at SharonL@LWCatholic.org or call her at 978-692-6353, ext. 127.

Saint Anne - Saint Catherine Collaborative
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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)

Welcome to Our New Parish Newsletter *continued from front cover*

and quality time with friends and loved ones); **talent** (using God-given gifts to strengthen the Church through service to parish ministries and other activities), and **treasure** (the wise and just management of my financial resources; giving a proportionate amount of my income to my parish and other charities).

As we strive to develop stewardship as a way of life at St. Anne and St. Catherine, the support and involvement of each individual parishioner is necessary to sustain the life of our parishes. All of us have a place here, and all of us have a role to fill in the life of the collaborative as we live our lives as disciples of Christ.

May the Holy Spirit renew and refresh all of us as we work together to build our collaborative family through the use of our time, talent, and treasure.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Peter Quinn, Pastor

