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ST. ANTHONY *of* PADUA

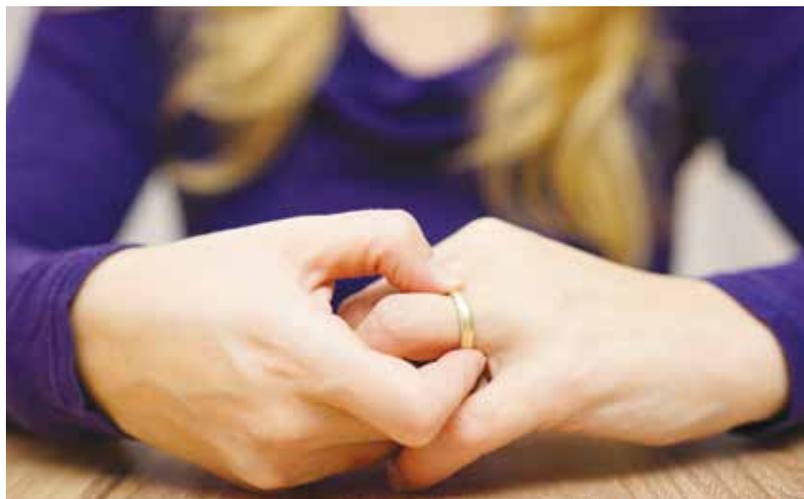
“We Want to Help You” *Demystifying Annulments and the Annulment Process*

Any cursory online search yields a wealth of myths and misinformation about the process of receiving an annulment in the Catholic Church. This can discourage individuals from receiving answers to their questions that a parish priest or the Office of Tribunal Services could offer.

“People can get caught up in urban legends about annulments regarding how much they cost and how long they take,” says Becky Donaldson, Office Manager for the Office of Tribunal Services. “A large part of my job is to ease those anxieties. We pride ourselves in reconciling people with the Church in a timely manner.”

A 2007 study commissioned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) revealed that only 15 percent of divorced Catholics have sought an annulment. Of those who have, 49 percent had the request granted.

“My intention is to encourage those who have been away from the Church because of marriage issues to gain the confidence to approach these issues and get them looked at,” Fr. Tom Donovan says. “There are many people out there suffering separation from the Church largely due to misinformation.”



An annulment, according to the USCCB, is when a Church tribunal declares that a marriage in the Church is actually invalid and lacks at least one of the essential elements required.

“While the Church insists on the indissolubility of the marriage bond, those who can show that an attempt at marriage lacked the character of a true Christian marriage have the right to pursue marriage that fulfills the ideals of Christian marriage,” Fr. Tom says, “that is a union that is faithful, fruitful and final, for the

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“We Want to Help You” *Demystifying Annulments and the Annulment Process*

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“People can get caught up in urban legends about annulments regarding how much they cost and how long they take. A large part of my job is to ease those anxieties. We pride ourselves in reconciling people with the Church in a timely manner.”
– *Becky Donaldson, Office Manager for the Office of Tribunal Services*

mutual good of the spouses and the raising of children, they can ask the Church to examine their relationship to determine if, perhaps, it was so defective as to be declared ‘null’ from the beginning. Such a ‘declaration of nullity’ can be used to allow former spouses to pursue marriage in the Church again.”

At the Office of Tribunal Services, Becky is the first point of contact for individuals seeking direction regarding annulments. Becky speaks with inquirers and then puts them in touch with a trained tribunal advocate who walks them through the process.

“A tribunal advocate is a liaison between the petitioner and the respondent and the tribunal office,” Becky says. “These people sit down with potential petitioners to figure out what type of case they might present, to help with forms and to answer questions.”

Each deanery has a list of tribunal advocates, and individuals can choose to speak with someone in their parish or someone outside their parish.

“I advise people to consult with an advocate sooner rather than later,” says Fr. Tom, a trained tribunal advocate. “When marriages and divorces are years or many years back, it is sometimes much harder to find the data and the witnesses to compile a successful case.”

Fr. Tom emphasizes that the diocesan tribunal operates on a donations-only basis, meaning there is no exchange of money for their services - or their decision. The tribunal’s expenses are supported by the Annual Catholic Services Appeal (ACSA), which funds the diocese and its ministries.

“The diocese provides vital services that would simply not be possible or financially responsible or efficient as a parish,” Fr. Tom says. “Support for the diocese and the work of people like Becky is the first part of our stewardship to the ministry of the Church beyond our walls.”



One common myth about annulments is that all cases require a full yearlong process with the input of witnesses and a long questionnaire. Catholics who were married outside the Church for instance, can often avail themselves to a relatively simple documentary process that can take a fraction of the time.

“While the full process is often necessary, it is not always,” Fr. Tom says. “The only way we can know is by sitting down with a potential petitioner and learning the specifics of his or her situation.”

Whatever questions or concerns individuals have, Becky encourages them to reach out to their parish priest or directly to her for further information that can debunk annulment myths and assuage anxieties about the annulment process.

“I have been in this position for 15 years, and I have gone through the annulment process,” Becky says. “I understand your fears and concerns. Our tribunal is user-friendly and pastoral. We want to help you.”

An information night will be held on Tuesday, July 26, at 6:30 p.m. in the cafeteria (church basement) at St. Peter’s Church (2600 Maine St.) for those who would like more information about the annulment process. Fr. Kevin Laughery from the diocesan tribunal will be on hand to talk about the services of the tribunal and an overview of the process. For more information about annulments and the annulment process, reach out to Fr. Tom Donovan at 217-222-5996 or Becky Donaldson at 217-698-8500, ext. 119.

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A LETTER FROM OUR PASTORAL ADMINISTRATOR

Stewardship and Discipleship Begin With Love

Dear Parishioners,

In John 13:35, Jesus says, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” So many times, the Lord calls us to love one another. This was one of the Gospel readings back in April. On that particular Sunday, Pope Francis gathered with a large group of teenagers, and the whole theme of his homily was built around that message. It is a message that is equally appropriate for all of us, young and old.

Pope Francis is well aware of modern technology and modern communication, especially with how it is so prevalent among today’s youth. He also said in that April homily, “Happiness cannot be bought; it is not an app that you can download on your phones, nor will the latest update bring you freedom and grandeur in love.”

The pope explained that “Love is the Christian’s identity card, the only truly valid ‘document’ that identifies us as followers and disciples of Christ.” Nevertheless, we must work to constantly renew this card, because if it ever expires, we cease being witnesses of the faith. If we are really followers of Christ, then genuine love needs to shine forth in our lives. As Pope Francis said, “Before all else, love is beautiful, and it is the path to happiness.”

Who among us does not want to be happy? We all strive for that, and the Lord gives us a formula for achieving it. It may seem simple on the surface, but we all know how difficult it can be. Love – the kind of love to which we are called by Jesus – is work. Lots of work. It takes effort, renewal, conversion, and persistence.

During his homily, Pope Francis completely captured the essence of stewardship, and of love. He declared, “Look to the Lord, who is never outdone in generosity. We receive so many gifts from Him, and every day we should thank Him... Let me ask you something. Do you thank the Lord every day? Even if we forget to do so, He never forgets, each day, to give

us some special gift. It is not something material and tangible that we can use, but something even greater, a lifelong gift. He offers us His faithful friendship, which He will never take back.”

Gratitude is, of course, at the very basis of stewardship. It is this thankfulness that should inspire us whenever we run up against one of life’s many roadblocks – those things that make it hard for us to love as we should. If we rely on the Lord, we can accomplish this love. As the pope said in closing on that day in April, “Loving in this way, you will be recognized as disciples of Jesus. And your joy will be complete.”

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Tom Donovan
Pastoral Administrator



“The Ability to Do What We Need to Do for God”

Sacramental Preparation for Our Young Catholics

At St. Anthony Parish, First Communion and Confirmation are, ultimately, about getting to know and worship one awesome, divine being – Jesus Christ.

“One of the things that I want to emphasize is that children should be sent to Religious Education not just to receive the sacraments, but also to develop their relationship with God,” says Director of Religious Education Bonnie Nytes. “The act of receiving the sacraments is really such a small part of the whole picture. It is so wonderful when children come to Religious Education classes to receive their sacraments, of course, but my dream is that they would embrace the whole of their relationship with God. The sacraments are so full of grace and they give us the ability to do what we need to do for God, but they are only pieces of this beautiful puzzle of our Catholic faith.”

In order to reach these spiritual goals and prepare their hearts and souls properly to receive these sacraments, St. Dominic Catholic School students as well as our Parish School of Religion, or PSR, students are formed carefully throughout the school year. Bonnie works with both groups of students from time to time. In addition, each day in Religion class, second-grade teacher Sharon Phillips teaches First Confession and Holy Communion preparation, while eighth-grade teacher Donna Miller teaches Confirmation preparation.



2016 Confirmation, St. Anthony Parish

After making their First Confession during Advent, second-grade students from PSR as well as our parish school continue to undergo catechesis through May, using a curriculum by Pflaum Publishing. Preparation includes learning the basic Catholic prayers, as well as how to behave in a truly respectful manner during Mass. Furthermore, parent meetings take place during the process so that the parents can be actively involved in their child’s preparation as their “first teachers” of the faith.

The children usually receive First Communion on the first Sunday in May at a special, separate noon Mass. Each year, Bonnie enjoys teaching the children a beautiful praise song in American Sign Language for them to sing together after they receive Jesus in the Eucharist.

“The heart of First Communion preparation is to help our students

grasp the idea that we believe in Christ’s Real Presence in the Eucharist, but it is a mystery of faith,” Bonnie says. “Because Jesus loves us so much, we receive Him so we can be as close to Him as we can possibly get. I have been here long enough now that the children I have prepared for First Communion, I am now preparing for Confirmation. It is so amazing to see how they mature in their faith! I am very blessed to see them grow up. This is my ideal job!”

Confirmation usually takes place in late April or the beginning of May, depending on the bishop’s schedule. Students in the eighth grade are given a preparatory program called *Less Talk and More Walk*, which includes activities they are expected to complete throughout the year. The program includes service projects, and a citywide retreat offered by a team from St. Louis. In addition, both

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Sacramental Preparation for Our Young Catholics

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PSR and parish school students use an enlightening and dynamic Confirmation preparation curriculum called *Decision*, as well.

“When young adults prepare for Confirmation, they are deciding that they want to become an active part of the Body of Christ, and be involved in the Church,” Bonnie says. “They take time to reflect on what their gifts and talents are, and how they can share them with God and others. During the retreat, they learn about the gifts of the Spirit that were given to them at Baptism, and pray to ‘stir’ them up.”

Let us pray throughout this upcoming school year for all of the children and youth at our parish who will be receiving these sacraments. May they be touched deeply by the infinite love and mercy of Christ, and find in Him a true friend.



2016 First Communion. St. Anthony Parish

If you would like more information on sacramental preparation, please contact Bonnie Nytes at 217-222-5996 or bon12_@hotmail.com.

DID *you* KNOW?

- *The Bordewick family donated the property for the original church.*
- *In 1959, the parish bought a new Chevrolet for Pastor Fr. Anthony to use.*
- *Graves in St. Anthony Cemetery were still dug by hand into the 1960s.*



STEWARDSHIP

A Need to Give

When the church needs a new roof or the local food bank needs donations, we jump at the chance to give for the sake of the need. It's part of our human nature – we identify a need, and we want to give of our time, talent and treasure to help.

But as a stewardship people, we are called to give of ourselves not simply because the Church has needs, but because each of us has a *need to give*. As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states in its pastoral letter on stewardship, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, "We need to give our money to individuals and families in need, to the Church, and to other worthwhile charitable organizations because giving money is good for the soul and because we need to return thanks to a loving God for all of the many blessings each of us has received" (67).

As fellow members of the Body of Christ, created in God's image, we should strive to go beyond simply co-existing with one another on earth. The life we live should be fueled by love for each other. This love should dictate how we live – by giving of ourselves.

Jesus Christ showed us the perfect example of this self-giving love when He died on the cross. His death was a completely selfless act. He gave of

Himself for our sake, offering us – through that gift – life everlasting.

As Christ's disciples, we follow His example, and we give of ourselves for the sake of others, out of love and an inherent need to give.

That's not to say that we gain nothing through our gifts. In fact, in His goodness, God sees to it that we do. Most of us have experienced what happens when we give of our time, talent or treasure. We feel as though we get more out of it than we give. If you speak to someone who serves at the soup kitchen or someone who has made it a regular practice to tithe to the Church, you are likely to find that he or she feels blessed to be able to give. As the U.S. Bishops point out, "To be a Christian disciple is a rewarding way of life, a way of companionship with Jesus, and the practice of stewardship as a part of it is itself a source of deep joy. Those who live this way are happy people who have found the meaning and purpose of living" (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, 21).

Find out for yourself. Get involved in a ministry. Make a commitment to put some money in the collection basket next Sunday. Don't wait to find out if there is a need – give of yourself right now. You will be richly blessed for doing so.



ST. ANTHONY of PADUA



The Stewardship of Military Service: Supporting Our Service Men and Women

Over the years, we've grown accustomed to associating stewardship with parish life. Yet, it is important for us to realize that stewardship is not limited to the realm of our church and parish ministries. God often calls us to give of ourselves through our professions, using our God-given talents not only for our own personal gain, but also for the betterment of humanity. This is true in a very literal way of the countless servicemen and women who sacrifice themselves daily for the safety of our country.

"These young men and women are often responding out of a sincere desire to invest their blood, sweat and tears to ensure our country's safety," says Fr. Tom Donovan, Pastoral Administrator. "We live in a very dangerous world. These people are willing to take personal responsibility to help make the world a place of greater peace and justice. They are literally devoting their lives to protecting others."

Having served as an Air National Guard chaplain for five years, Fr. Tom has seen up-close the courage and self-sacrifice required of our military men and women. Separated from their loved ones for long periods of time and frequently surrounded by violence and danger, Fr. Tom relates how he was faced with the task of "making visible the holy" to our servicemen and women.

"I was very proud to be part of that team, helping our servicemen and women realize that the people at home were still supporting them, working to make sure that they knew God was still there for them," Fr. Tom says. "Our job as an Air Force chaplain is to help people pick up the pieces, helping them make sense of all the



Fr. Tom Donovan feels honored to have been able to serve five years as a chaplain for the Air National Guard.

violence they have been called to witness and even participate in for the sake of our country."

Protecting our military personnel's right to religious freedom, the chaplain's job is to remind our troops of God's unfailing love for them, showing them that there is a "higher purpose" to what they have been called to do.

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"We need to take the time to recognize the military men and women within our own parish, taking the time to remember, thank and support them. It can be something as simple as parishioners taking the time to pray for our servicemen and women. It makes all the difference to our troops when they know they are cared for and appreciated." – Fr. Tom Donovan

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SUNDAY: 8:00 A.M. & 10:30 A.M.

CONFESSIONS: SATURDAY 5:15 - 6:15 P.M.

The Stewardship of Military Service *continued from page 7*

"I was there to remind them that the Church cares for them and that their sacrifice mattered," Fr. Tom says. "I always got a smile out of people's faces when I was able to say, 'I'm just a parish priest from Springfield, Ill., where about 500 families thought it was important enough for me to come and take care of you.'"

Not only are servicemen and women endangering their own lives to help ensure our safety, but they are also sacrificing precious time with their own families. During deployment, they are forced to miss out on the countless "everyday interactions" of family life.

As such, says Fr. Tom, it is important for us to realize that military service does not merely affect the enlisted individual, but rather the whole family.

"By leaving their loved ones, they are missing out on so many little parts of family life – things like taking their kids to school and just being present to the family," Fr. Tom says. "Because of this, there is a great sacrifice going on every day by the entire family."

Unlike many other parts of the world, we are blessed to live in a free and relatively safe country. This is only possible, however, because of countless

brave men and women, some of whom live within our own parish community. It is important that we take the time to thank our military and their families, supporting them in whatever ways we can.

"We need to take the time to recognize the military men and women within our own parish, taking the time to remember, thank and support them," Fr. Tom says. "It can be something as simple as parishioners taking the time to pray for our servicemen and women. It makes all the difference to our troops when they know they are cared for and appreciated."

If you are interested in helping or have ideas on how to better support our military and military families, please contact Fr. Tom Donovan through the parish office, 217-222-5996.

To learn more about stewardship at St. Anthony of Padua, please contact the Stewardship Committee at stanthonystewardship2015@gmail.com.