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ST. ANTHONY *of* PADUA

“Keeping God at the Center of Our Marriage” *Amanda and Michael Weiman*

Michael first noticed Amanda six years ago at Mass when she was home from college. His brother later asked Michael, “Why don’t you go talk to her?”

“It’s amazing to relive how God played such a vital role in our relationship,” says Amanda Weiman. “Not only did the Church bring us together, but our love grew stronger from our shared faith in God, and the morals and values that are ingrained in the Church.”

It wasn’t until years after Michael saw Amanda in Mass that they officially met. Amanda’s father suggested to Michael’s cousins, Aaron and Karen Weiman, that Amanda and Michael would make a good couple. They then arranged for them to meet while back home in Quincy.

“From the beginning, faith has always been the basis of our relationship,” says Michael Weiman. “In fact, both of our parents were married at St. Anthony, which made our wedding there even more meaningful.”

Amanda and Michael were raised in faith-filled families. Amanda’s parents became members of St. Anthony after their wedding in 1990, and Michael’s parents joined St. Dominic when they moved back to the Quincy area in 1998.

“With our shared faith in God, marrying outside of the Church was not an option for us,” Amanda says. “We knew that God brought us together, and there was no better place to start our lives as one than in His house.”

To begin their wedding planning, Amanda and Michael reserved a date at St. Anthony and spoke with Deacon Harry Cramer to discuss marriage preparation. Living in Kansas City also required Amanda and Michael to complete a few extra steps.

The couple admits that going into marriage preparation can be difficult, for with today’s busy lifestyles and work hours, it can be challenging to find the time to invest in the process, while it may also be easy to question the benefits of the preparation.



Amanda and Michael Weiman

How Can We Model the Faith for Our Children?

The Church has made it clear that parents are primarily responsible for the spiritual and cognitive development of their children in matters of the faith. As the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, states, “Husbands and wives find their proper vocation in being witnesses of the faith and love of Christ to one another and to their children” (Chapter 4, Section 35). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* further emphasizes this vocation, by pointing out that the moral education and spiritual formation of children is not only the right, but the responsibility, of their parents: “The right and the duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable... Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children” (CCC 2221, 2223).

But how can we as parents create an environment in the home conducive to spiritual and moral development? As busy adults, how are we to disseminate the knowledge and understanding of the tenets of the faith to our children in the way that a trained and experienced catechist can? Furthermore, how do we strike a balance between teaching our children in the home and not interfering with the faith formation and sacramental preparation they are currently receiving through their parish school or religious education program?

The answer to all of these questions is stewardship.

Indeed, it is important that we reinforce the lessons that our children learn in school and at religious education classes by talking to them about the faith, reading Sacred Scripture with them, and spending time in family prayer. And there are several authoritative resources online that can help parents in this task, including Catholic Parents OnLine – www.catholicparents.org – which links parents to numerous websites and documents that can help them in talking to their children about the faith.

But the best way that we can teach our children is by serving as a living example to them of how to live as disciples of Christ. If we want our children to grow up as strong Catholics and to display a lifelong commitment



to their faith, then it is important that we ourselves live a committed faith life. This includes an ongoing commitment to our own faith formation as adults and active participation in the sacraments. It also includes the giving back of our time, talent, and treasure in service of our community in thanksgiving for the gifts that God has given us.

Parenting can be a tough vocation, and children deal with many influences in their lives that exist in stark contrast to the values that their parents often hope to instill within them. Fortunately for parents, the stewardship way of life provides a simple and effective model for teaching our children in matters of the faith. By living as stewards of God's gifts and reaping the spiritual rewards that accompany this lifestyle, we are tangibly showing our children that sharing of our gifts and talents leads to a life of happiness and spiritual fulfillment. In doing this, we give them a good opportunity to follow in our footsteps and make their faith a top priority for the rest of their lives.

But the best way that we can teach our children is by serving as a living example to them of how to live as disciples of Christ. If we want our children to grow up as strong Catholics and to display a lifelong commitment to their faith, then it is important that we ourselves live a committed faith life.

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A LETTER FROM OUR PASTORAL ADMINISTRATOR

The Word of God: How Do We Hear It? And How Do We Respond to It?

Dear Parishioners,

A few short weeks ago, we completed our Christmas season. We are now in what we call Ordinary Time – but before long, we will begin Lent. This is one of those rare years when Ash Wednesday is in March – so, Lent does not, of course, begin in February this year.

The Gospel of John begins with the statement, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” We speak often of the Word in the Church. As most of you are aware, the first part of our Mass is called the Liturgy of the Word. What does that mean to us?

Basically, there are four parts of our celebration of Mass: Introductory Rites; Liturgy of the Word; Liturgy of the Eucharist; and Concluding Rites. My focus in this reflection is that second part – the Liturgy of the Word. The main parts of that are a First Reading, a Responsorial Psalm, a Second Reading, the Gospel, and a Homily.

We draw on Holy Scripture from the Bible for the readings. As Catholics, we do not consider that these readings are about God, or about the Church, or about our faith, or a history lesson, or a nice story from long ago. We consider them to be God speaking directly to us. Thus, our attentiveness to what is being proclaimed is important. Are we listening? Do we hear? And then,

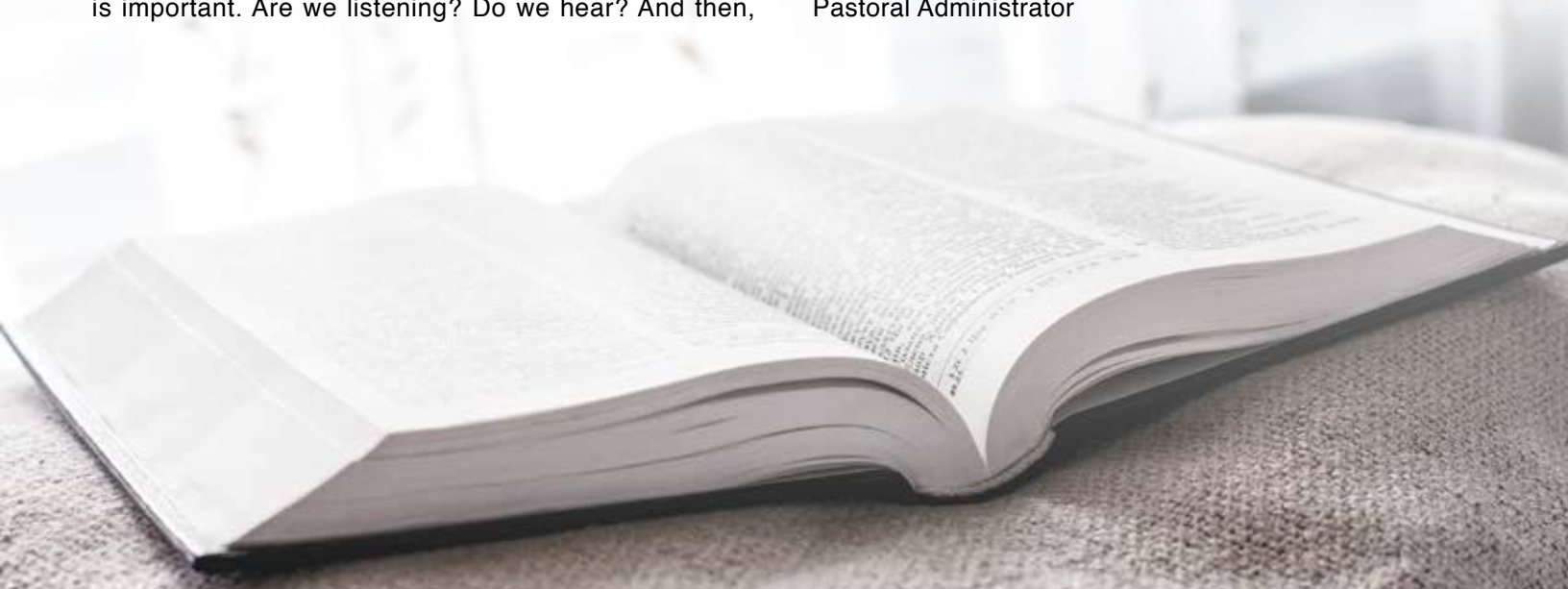
do we respond in our lives? All of those should be facets of how we approach the Word of God.

For us, the Word of God is the living Word. God is speaking to us as a community, and He asks us to be faithful to His Word. If we pay attention and truly listen, God can nourish our spirit, and Christ can be more real and present to us. The Homily, the Responsorial Psalm, the Profession of Faith, and the Intercessions develop the Word further and complete it. The Profession of Faith is our acceptance of God’s Word.

However, the question for us is, how do we respond to the Word? Does it change our lives? Does it bring us to the conversion necessary to live lives of stewardship and service? It is not easy, I know. Being able to listen, to hear and then to act requires time, practice, commitment, and a desire to fulfill all of this. That is one of my prayers for us – that we can hear the Word, and that we can bring it to life in our own lives and in the lives of others.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Tom Donovan
Pastoral Administrator



Exploring our Faith



Amanda and Michael Weiman on their wedding day at St. Anthony with Deacon Harry Cramer. Please see the Weimans' personal marriage preparation story, also featured in this newsletter.

MARRIAGE

“Practice Putting Faith at the Center of Your Relationship” *Preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage*

Freedom, in our secular society, is defined as having the unimpeded ability to do as we please. In marriage, we have the opportunity and receive the sacramental grace to bolster us in counteracting this self-centered misconception of freedom

“Marriage is conforming myself to Christ crucified for the good of someone else,” says Carlos Tejeda, the Director of the Office for Marriage and Family Life for the Diocese of Springfield. “I choose the good of my spouse and my children first.”

In our faith community here at St. Anthony, preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage is a process through which the parish supports engaged couples as they plan to enter into this lifelong hallowed covenant.

“We can get so caught up preparing for the day that we don’t prepare as earnestly for the life that follows,” says Deacon Harry Cramer. “In Marriage Preparation, couples consider some of the big questions

about children, paying bills and communicating. These conversations get at your personal values.”

When couples become engaged, their preparation begins with a call to the parish office to determine if the date for their ceremony is available. They will also schedule a meeting with Fr. Tom Donovan. Couples are asked to connect with the parish at least six months before their intended wedding date.

A few other meetings will follow to discuss the parish policies and the ceremony itself. Couples are required to attend one Marriage Preparation program such as Evenings for the Engaged or Engaged Encounter weekends.

“There are a variety of different options in terms of programs,” Deacon Harry says. “That’s nice because couples can find what works with their schedules.”

Couples are also required to take the FOCCUS test, which is designed

to help facilitate conversation on a variety of topics including communication, problem-solving, careers, parenting and finances, among others.

“They take the test online, and those results come back to the parish, and we have a subsequent meeting to discuss them,” Deacon Harry says. “You can see where there is compatibility or difference, and the couples can discuss.”

Deacon Harry and his wife, Cindy, have been working with engaged couples for over 25 years together through Evenings for the Engaged.

In Deacon Harry’s experience, some of the most important things that couples glean from Marriage Preparation are a better sense of each other and of their expectations for marriage going forward.

“They also develop a communication style that will be a good foundation,” Deacon Harry says. “Overall, I’ve always complimented

“A wedding is for a day, and a marriage is for a lifetime. We do want our wedding day to be special, and it should be, but we are not celebrating just us as a couple. We are celebrating that we have said ‘yes’ in a very specific way to God.”
— Carlos Tejeda, Director of the Office for Marriage and Family Life, Diocese of Springfield

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the Church for marriage preparation as a way to avoid problems later on.”

Couples that go through diocesan Marriage Preparation also have access to several resources that can support them in the early years of their marriage. These resources include access to Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University, a marriage enrichment retreat and Natural Family Planning classes.

“A wedding is for a day, and a marriage is for a lifetime,” Carlos says. “We do want our wedding day to be special, and it should be, but we are not celebrating just us as a couple. We are celebrating that we have said ‘yes’ in a very specific way to God.”

If Deacon Harry could offer engaged couples any advice on this stage of their relationship, he would suggest that they begin practicing their faith life together.

“Practice putting faith at the center of your relationships,” Deacon Harry says. “Develop friendships that will support you, and develop communication skills. Get involved in the Church, because there is a lot to support you in your parish.”



For more information about preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage at St. Anthony, please reach out to Deacon Harry Cramer at 217-224-1160.

Amanda and Michael Weiman

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“My advice is to keep an open mind and realize you will get out of it what you put into it,” Michael says. “For me personally, the preparation opened my mind to a new perspective and prepared us to have a strong relationship in good times and bad.”

Together Amanda and Michael opted to complete an Engaged Encounter weekend as their marriage preparation class.

“We enjoyed the experience,” Amanda says. “The weekend gave us time away from the stresses of life to focus on us and preparing our relationship for a lifetime commitment through Christ.”

The couple’s meetings with Deacon Harry, who officiated the wedding, gave him an opportunity to become acquainted with them.

“Our time with Deacon allowed him to get to know us and to give us tips on how to keep God at the center of our

marriage,” Michael says. “All of these steps have truly given us the foundation needed to have a long lasting union.”

The marriage preparation process brought Michael and Amanda closer together. They felt better prepared and ready to start their marriage.

“One of the greatest benefits of marriage preparation is that it facilitated discussion on topics that we hadn’t thought to talk about previously,” Michael says. “This brought even more trust and communication into our relationship.”

After four months of marriage, Amanda and Michael have already seen the fruits of a marriage focused on God and the grace of God working in their marriage.

“So much anxiety and planning go into a wedding,” Amanda says. “Do not lose sight of the end goal, being prepared to marry the love of your life, and the importance of keeping your relationship Christ-centered.”

Valentine's Day

The Feast of a Christian Martyr

Candy, flowers, romantic dinners, and excuses for wooing are the common traditions we associate with the once-pagan holiday known as Valentine's Day.

Dangling cupids, candy "message" hearts, and faux long-stemmed roses clutter every card store, waiting for that last-minute purchase.

The question is – how did this over-commercialized holiday really begin?

There are a few stories surrounding the history of Feb. 14 and St. Valentine himself, all dating back to the Roman Empire. The 14th day of February was a day set aside to honor the goddess Juno, queen of the Roman gods and goddesses. The following day, Feb. 15, began the feast of Lupercalia – a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as well as to the Roman founders Romulus and Remus.

As part of the festival traditions, there was a name drawing among the young people. The names of young Roman women were written on slips of paper and placed into a jar. Each young man would draw a young woman's name from the jar, and the two would be partners for the duration of the festival. Sometimes the pairing lasted an entire year, and often, the couple would fall in love and later marry.

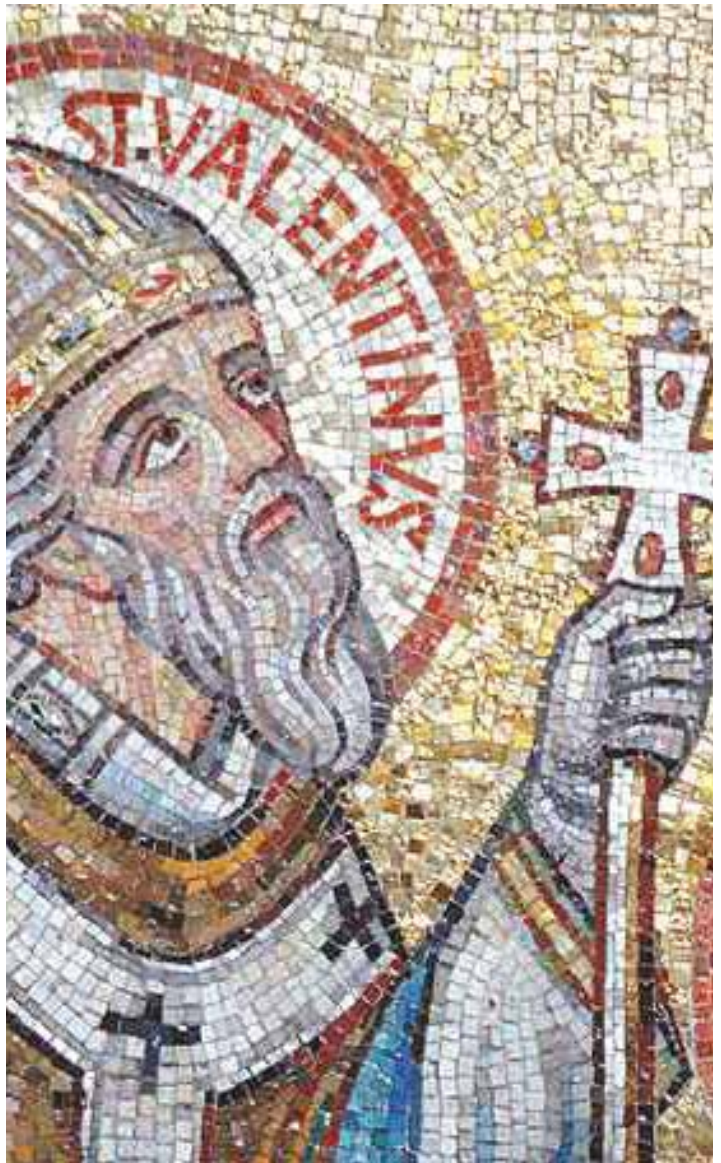
At the time, Emperor Claudius II was involved in many bloody and unpopular campaigns, and he was having a difficult time recruiting soldiers to join his military leagues. Claudius believed that soldiers were reluctant to join because they did not want to leave their loves or families.

With this in mind, Claudius decreed all marriages and engagements cancelled in Rome. During this time, St. Valentine was a priest in Rome, and he and St. Marius secretly married young couples. For this, St. Valentine was apprehended and dragged before the Prefect of Rome, who sentenced him to be beaten and then executed by beheading. He suffered this martyrdom on Feb. 14, around the year 270 AD.

Before his death, it is said that St. Valentine left a note for the jailer's daughter, who had become his friend, and signed it "From Your Valentine." Although the truth behind the St. Valentine's legend is murky, the stories certainly emphasize his appeal as a sympathetic, heroic and, most importantly, romantic figure. It is no surprise

that by the Middle Ages, Valentine was one of the most popular saints in England and France.

Over time, Feb. 14 became a time for lovers to exchange sweet messages, making St. Valentine the patron saint of lovers. The date was often commemorated with the sending of poems and simple gifts. During the Middle Ages, it was commonly believed in France and England that Feb. 14 was the beginning of the avian mating season, which added to the idea that the middle of February – Valentine's Day – should be a day for romance.



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Spreading Christ's Love and Joy Through the Greeting Card Ministry

As Catholics, we are called to a life of stewardship that gives meaning and has an effect on how we interact and communicate with other people. One of the unique ways we can share our time with others is by participating in the Greeting Card Ministry at St. Anthony's – sharing our time by remembering others' special occasions, writing out cards and mailing them. In this way, Christ's call for us to show charity takes concrete form as we build up the Body of Christ on earth by spreading God's love in relationships, friendships, and our daily exchanges with both acquaintances and strangers.

"We're all part of the We Care Ministry," says volunteer Giny Baker. "When I joined, they needed someone to take care of greeting cards, so at the time I was doing greeting cards for shut-ins or people at nursing homes. We then decided we needed greeting cards for congratulations, for baptisms, for Christmas – I work with sending out birthday cards right now."

Many volunteers make this ministry possible and allow greeting cards to be sent to parishioners who are homebound or at nursing homes



for Christmas or birthdays, as well as to families who are welcoming a baby in the Church at baptism and other moments of 'congratulations' such as special accomplishments.

"We are definitely being Christ's hands and feet by making the cards," Giny says. "The cards bring a lot of joy to them."

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"It's using a lot of different talents and, most importantly, we don't forget these people. They are parishioners and at one time were active – good, hard-working parishioners – so we want to let them know we haven't forgotten them." – Giny Baker

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SATURDAY: 4:00 P.M. & 6:30 P.M.

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

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

Spreading Christ's Love and Joy Through the Greeting Card Ministry *continued from page 7*

By remembering elderly or sick parishioners on their birthdays or Christmas, we remind them that they are still valued members of the parish though they might not be as active or involved as they once were.

"This ministry has worked out really well," Giny says. "It's using a lot of different talents and, most importantly, we don't forget these people. They are parishioners and at one time

were active – good, hard-working parishioners – so we want to let them know we haven't forgotten them."

By remembering baptisms and other special occasions for others, the Greeting Card Ministry is able to connect and celebrate with parishioners at all walks of life in our parish, allowing Christ and His entire Church to become part of that particular person's memories.

If you would like to make a difference in others' lives and connect people to the parish by sending greeting cards for special occasions, please contact the parish office at 217-222-5996 to get involved. All are welcome to attend the monthly We Care Ministry meeting on the fourth Thursday of the month at 6:30 p.m. in the St. Anthony's Quilt Room for a chance to learn more about this ministry and other ways to get involved.

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