



ST. ANTHONY *of* PADUA

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Slow Down and Spend Time *With Jesus*

Life is such a busy rush of activity. It is time for us to “stop and smell the roses,” as they say.

No matter what our state in life, it is often hard for us to find time to slow down. Yet, according to Deacon Denis Corbin — a deacon for the Diocese of Dallas who leads stewardship retreats throughout the country — it is vital that we do so.

“As we rush through life, it is easy for us to forget the need we have to simply slow down and spend time with God,” Deacon Denis says. “For many of us, even getting to Mass is a hustle. We’re rushing to get everywhere and to do all that needs to get done. But it is important that we spend some time simply being in the presence of God. Only then can we really deepen our relationship with Christ as His disciples.”

It is with this in mind that Fr. Tom invites all of us to join him for our annual parish retreat led by Deacon Denis. Open to every parishioner, the retreat will take place April 28-29 here at the church.

“It will provide you with the time we all so desperately need to be quiet and focus on our personal relationships with others and our relationships with God,” Deacon Denis says. “I find that with the way our lives are these days, sometimes we need to have permission to slow down and take time to simply be quiet and be still. Time with God and your fellow parishioners is vital to your spiritual growth. Take Father up on his invitation.”

What’s more, Deacon Denis says that, having attended and led an enormous amount of stewardship-oriented retreats, he has found himself spiritually fed through them. He is sure

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Deacon
Denis Corbin

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— Deacon Denis Corbin

Stewardship

Hannah, the Good Steward

What should we do when our prayers are answered? Is there anything left to do after we have sincerely thanked God for His favors? If God were a human peer, we would probably try to reciprocate by granting Him a favor in return. But the truth is that God cannot be made greater by anything that we do for Him. Instead, God receives our thanks and tells us to “go and do likewise.” That is, He tells us to share with others the good that He has bestowed on us. And in doing so, we are really sharing God Himself. That is the definition of stewardship!

The Old Testament Book of Samuel contains one of the most poignant examples of stewardship in the entire Bible. The first chapter teaches us of an unhappy, barren woman named Hannah. Desperate in her barrenness, Hannah prays that God will give her a son, vowing that she will raise him to be a man of God.

Imagine Hannah’s elation when she was granted her prayer! When Samuel was born, her heart’s desire had come true! Imagine further the pang of motherly sorrow,

as Hannah kept her promise to God by taking Samuel at a young age to be the servant of Eli, the high priest. The Book of Samuel tells us that once Samuel became Eli’s servant, Hannah saw her young son just once a year.

Indeed, Hannah knew that Samuel was truly a gift from God – an answered prayer. Hannah’s response is that of the Good Steward – with an attitude of both gratitude and sacrifice, she gave up her son to honor God. One imagines that Hannah probably struggled with this sacrifice during those first years. She probably did not know what God had in store for her son. Yet, through her faithfulness, God used him as a gift to an entire nation. Samuel would, in time, become one of the greatest prophets of Jewish history.

Sometimes it is difficult to understand the sacrifices we make in the name of stewardship, while the results may just be impossible to miss! However, He asks that we continue to be faithful in either case. God has undoubtedly bestowed gifts on all of us – at whatever the cost, we are to “go and do likewise.”

You’re Invited to an Evening of Fun!

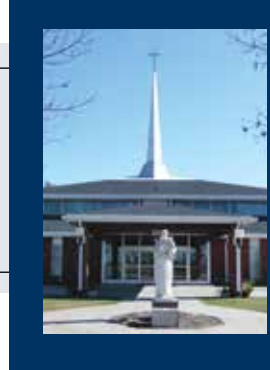
St. Dominic Trivia Night

*St. Dominic Trivia Night will be **Saturday, April 22**, at 6 p.m.
in the St. Dominic gym – doors open at 5:30.*

- \$125 per table, up to 10 players
- We will have a silent auction and 50/50
- Prizes: First Place gets money back for their table; Second Place gets \$50 Gene Grawe gift certificate; Third Place gets various small items donated from local businesses
- BYOB, and you can bring your own snacks
- Category is “general trivia”
- To reserve your table, please contact Tera Smith at 573-719-1272 or terarachelle@yahoo.com
- Proceeds benefit St. Dominic School

Come join in the fun!

ST. ANTHONY *of* PADUA



A LETTER FROM OUR PASTORAL ADMINISTRATOR

Give Thanks to the Lord, ***It Is Right and Just***

Dear Parishioners,

Every time I prepare my monthly letter to you in this newsletter, I am reminded how blessed I am. Being a priest truly is a blessing. While the job is not always easy — a pastor has many responsibilities — the rewards are equally humbling.

As we complete our preparations and then share in our celebrations of the Triduum and Easter, I am also prompted to think about the holiest things I do. By far, the holiest is celebrating Mass, and especially consecrating the holy bread and wine so Christ is present among us. The very word “consecration” literally means “association with the sacred.” To have that duty is incredible. I have never taken it for granted, and although it may appear at times to be somewhat automatic, it never is for me.

Almost all of us are familiar with the Mass, and with what we do and say leading up to the high point — the Eucharist. But I think we must guard against becoming too casual in our responses and what we say. That is what I work to avoid, but I believe you need to work just as diligently to make sure that you are listening, hearing, and being aware of what you are saying. For us as Catholics, the Mass is the most important sacred act in the Church.

I suppose I could write a whole series of letters or articles on the meaning of everything we say and do at

Mass, but I was thinking of one exchange in particular during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It is something we may say in sort of a habitual way, but I firmly believe each of us must truly consider what we are saying.

I say to you, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” and you respond, “It is right and just.” Think about what that means, because it is very much at the heart of stewardship. I am saying we need to thank God, show gratitude for everything we are and everything with which we are gifted — and you, at least in words, acknowledge that doing that is exactly what we need to do. The Mass is filled with statements and exchanges of that sort, and I would ask that we really think about what they truly mean.

Even the simple exchange between the Eucharistic Minister and you at the actual reception of the Host is heavy with meaning. We say, “The Body of Christ,” and you reply “Amen.” In that instance, “Amen” means “Yes, I do believe this is Jesus.” Like myself, you are blessed. Sometimes we just need to realize it. Happy Easter!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Tom Donovan
Pastoral Administrator





Building a Foundation of Faith

As parents, we should always strive to provide our children with a strong foundation in the Catholic faith.

“When they have that foundation, it becomes part of their life,” Sharon Phillips says. “It’s not just a subject, it’s a life lesson that we’re teaching.”

A veteran teacher who spent most of her 40 years in education in the public school system, Mrs. Phillips joined our faculty at St. Dominic School three years ago. But for her, coming to St. Dominic’s was less like a second career, and more like a calling from God.

“I had been retired for a couple months and I didn’t know what I wanted to do with my future,” she says. “I saw an ad in the newspaper and I thought ‘This is a God thing.’ I got this feeling like I was supposed to act on it right away, and I did. Within the week, I had the job.”

Having taught third grade for most of her career, Mrs. Phillips has now fallen in love with teaching second grade. She loves the openness of her second-graders, to the world in general, and especially to matters of faith.

“I feel like this is a real year of growth,” she says. “The kids start the year with everything being all about them and how it relates to their world. And

as they progress through the year, they start looking deeper inward, and outward to others.

“I love my second-graders,” Mrs. Phillips continues. “Their minds are open, they haven’t really formed their ideas to be cemented. They’re like a flower opening, they’re ready to learn, and when you include faith in that, they’re really ready to pick that up.”

For Catholic children, second grade is a big year, as they prepare to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist. Mrs. Phillips cherishes the opportunity to teach them about the importance of the Sacraments and hopes that her students will always appreciate the grace available to them.

“It makes me so extremely happy,” she says. “Their First Communion and First Reconciliation makes me feel very emotional – they’ll have that grace, and the grace will help them move further.”

“I encourage them to always take the opportunity to receive the Sacraments – that they become a real disciple of the faith, instead of just a recipient,” she continues. “I hope that they not only receive the Sacrament, but that one way or another they will someday share that with someone else.”

Of course, in addition to the “big days” of receiving Sacraments for the first time, there are also many

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ordinary days, and many beautiful moments within them. Mrs. Phillips tells the story of students who have come to tell her that they followed her example of praying a decade of the Rosary at home, in the car, and even at a sleepover with friends.

“Those moments make me so happy, so fulfilled – I felt like, maybe I did instill a habit,” she says, “Those are the kinds of things that really make me feel like, yes, God really put me here.”

Mrs. Phillips love being able to incorporate the faith in daily life and interactions, from the classroom to the playground.

“I try to bring it back to religion class,” she says. “They get it when you bring it back to a real-life situation. It becomes ingrained. You’re not just teaching a lesson – it becomes part of their life. God’s always knocking on the door and we have to open the door to Jesus.”

Mrs. Phillips emphasizes the importance of the parents’ role as their children’s first teachers, forming their children in the faith, from an early age. She mentions the value of reading Scripture, prayer, and going to Mass as a family.

“If the parents want the kids to internalize their faith, they have to see it all day long, in many different ways, in many different settings,” she says. “They say that kids are listening all day long, even when you don’t think they’re listening. What could be better than having them listen to you pray – not as a job or chore, but as a way of life?”

Teaching the faith to children, Mrs. Phillips has also found that her own faith has grown and been strengthened.

“It does increase my own faith,” she says. “I’ve always felt that when you teach something, you learn it better. It deepens my own faith by teaching it.”

She hopes that the faith that she shares with her students as young children will become part of the foundation that sustains them for years to come.

“I hope that they would be able to see how important my faith was to me and that somehow or other, I inspired them to keep their faith alive,” Mrs. Phillips says. “I would like to be able to have them tell me that they are still practicing their faith. I would absolutely love it if I would encourage another priest or religious sister or brother. That would make me joyous!

“I know how important my faith is and how much my faith has helped me get through things,” she continues. “For these kids to get that grace to help them start walking that path of faith – it means so much to me. I really try to help build as strong a foundation as I can when they’re 8 so that when they’re 18, they’ll know they can receive Christ in the Sacraments, that they can have the Holy Spirit and grace in the Sacraments, and they’ll always come back to that.”

For more information on forming your child in the faith, through our Parish School of Religion or in our Catholic school, please contact Bonnie Nytes, our Director of Religious Education at 217-222-5996, or St. Dominic School at 217-224-0041.

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First Communion Preparation Strengthens Faith of First Communicants and Their Families

“A few weeks ago, after church, we were talking about everything on the way home, and Noah really understood the Gospel message about how to be nice to others and how to be a good Christian. I think he is showing more interest because they talk at school about what is happening in the Mass, and the more he understands that – knowing it’s a sacrament and knowing what’s happening at the consecration – he really pays more attention now.” – Anna Benz



Edward and Anna Benz with their children – (from left) Noah (7), Adam (6), Brady (2), Emily (10 months), and Isaac (4)

Our commemoration of the Last Supper on Holy Thursday serves as a powerful reminder of how blessed we are as Catholics to share in the Eucharist at each and every Mass. As we receive Holy Communion, we unify ourselves to Christ and strengthen the bonds of His kingdom here on earth by sharing in this sacrament as a community of believers. How exciting and awe-inspiring will it be, then, to see so many children of our parish receive their First Communion on May 7!

Leading up to this big day, Anna and Edward Benz have enjoyed watching their 7-year-old son, Noah, prepare to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

“We’re happy to see him continue in his faith journey,” Anna says. “This will be his third sacrament now, and he is a little bit nervous but also very excited about it.”

Throughout the school year, Anna and Edward have been impressed with how well the second-grade teachers at St. Dominic School prepare their students for First Communion.

“The school has a really good Director of Religious Education,” Anna says. “And his regular teacher does a really great job preparing him for his sacraments, as well.”

As part of their preparation to receive the Eucharist for the very first time, the second-graders received the Sacrament of First Reconciliation last fall.

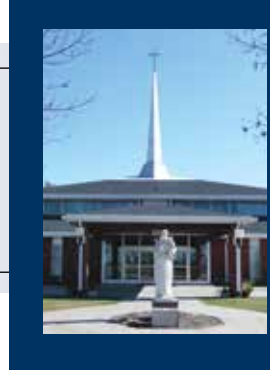
“[The First Reconciliation experience] was very good,” Anna recalls. “Noah was a little shy and nervous at first, but he was very excited that he had received a sacrament. The teachers had done a great job letting the kids know what to expect. It was a very proud moment for us as parents – it’s a sacrament I remember receiving as a child and I just thought, ‘Wow, Edward and I have made the choice to continue the Catholic traditions and sacraments in our family.’”

Raising their children in the faith and helping prepare them to receive the sacraments is of great importance to the Benzes, who both come from Catholic backgrounds.

“Edward and I always knew we were going to raise our kids Catholic, the way we were raised,” Anna says. “We both

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First Communion *continued from page 6*

felt it gave us a good base and foundation and moral view point. The faith is so strong in both our families. We're very involved in our church, and I think our kids have already seen that what you put into something is what you'll get out of it. With the more time and effort you put into something, you'll also receive benefits in one form or another."

Now that Noah has been getting ready for the memorable occasion of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ for the first time, he is also beginning to develop a new appreciation for Mass.

"A few weeks ago, after church, we were talking about everything on the way home, and Noah really understood the Gospel message about how to be nice to others and how to be a good Christian," Anna says. "I think he is showing

more interest because they talk at school about what is happening in the Mass, and the more he understands that – knowing it's a sacrament and knowing what's happening at the consecration – he really pays more attention now."

For all of the First Communicants' families, witnessing their children grow in the faith and learn about the incredible gift we are called to receive in the Eucharist provides a great opportunity to renew their own faith and commitment to the Church.

"[Helping prepare your child for First Communion] makes you take a second look at what we're really doing every time we go to church," Anna says. "It makes you slow down and remember that this is the Body and Blood of Jesus."

We invite all parishioners of St. Anthony to witness our children receive this sacrament at noon on May 7. We extend our congratulations to all of our First Communicants and pray that God continues to bless each and every one of them!

Lent and Holy Week Schedule

Sunday, April 9

3 p.m. – Penance Service at St. Peter Church

Tuesday, April 11

6:30 p.m. – Chrism Mass and Opening of the Diocesan Synod, Cathedral/Springfield

Wednesday, April 12

7 p.m. – Penance Service at Blessed Sacrament Church

Thursday, April 13

6:30 p.m. – Holy Thursday, Mass of the Lord's Supper

Friday, April 14

6:30 p.m. – Good Friday, Liturgy of the Passion and Death of our Lord

Saturday, April 15

8 p.m. – Holy Saturday, Easter Vigil

Sunday, April 16

Easter Sunday

8 a.m. Mass

10:30 a.m. Mass



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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.

Spend Time With Jesus *continued from front cover*

that if we take the opportunity to participate in this year's retreat, we will be blessed beyond measure.

"Each time I attend a retreat, I have needed time for introspection that I don't usually have as I'm hurrying through the busyness of life," he says. "It gives me time to appreciate God's giftedness toward me and helps me to fulfill my desire to be of greater service in the Lord's Kingdom."

This year's retreat will focus on what it means for us to live as Christian disciples in the world today. God calls each one of us to live for Him, to use the time, talent, and treasure to build the Kingdom of God here on Earth. It is a deep and challenging calling, but it offers rewards that know no bounds. Deacon Denis will lead us through a weekend in which we can take ownership of this call and grasp the goodness of the stewardship way of life in a deeper way.

"Take the time to focus on your walk with Jesus," Deacon Denis encourages. "Take time to reflect on how you're being a good steward and on the ways that you are falling short. Take the time to grow closer to Christ, the One we live for and to recommit to living the stewardship way of life."

If you are interested in joining us for the weekend retreat, please contact the parish office at 217-222-5996 or stanthonyparish@comcast.net to RSVP before April 19. We hope that everyone can join us!

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