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ST. ANTHONY *of* PADUA

Meet Our Office Staff: Ava Fessler and Janet Bick

Anyone who visits or calls the parish office is likely to see or speak with our parish secretary, Ava Fessler, and supporting office staff member Janet Bick. These women not only serve as the face and voice of our parish, but also work hard on many behind-the-scenes operations. Ava and Janet are truly the unsung heroes of the parish!

"They are our key personnel, and I can't compliment them enough," Fr. Tom Donovan says. "Ava is there from before I get up in the morning. Her office hours go until 3 p.m., but she is always there for however long it takes to finish whatever projects need to be done. She is tremendous! This year, we have also gotten some help from Janet, and she is great with people, knows how parishes are and knows how the offices work. She is a huge help, and great to have on board."

"What they do there is truly a ministry," he adds. "They take upon all these responsibilities you could never write into a job description."

Ava has been working at the parish for the past three years, and is a parishioner at St. Brigid in Liberty.

"I'm not a parishioner here, but everyone makes me feel like I am!" she says. "It's my second home, and a great parish to work for. I'm so grateful to have this job!"

She and her husband of 41 years, David, have three children – Bryan, Mary and Jodi – and 12 grandchildren. After working as a certified respiratory therapist and a certified weather observer, she went into office work, eventually coming to St. Anthony in 2014.



Ava Fessler with her husband, David



Janet Bick with her husband, Bob

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The Bible

The Textbook of Stewardship

Have you ever wished that life came with an instruction manual? What a valuable resource that would be! Whenever you find yourself running in circles, this instruction manual would give you step-by-step instructions on how to fix the problem and reroute your course.

Well, here's some good news. For those living a Christian life, there *is* such a manual – the Bible.

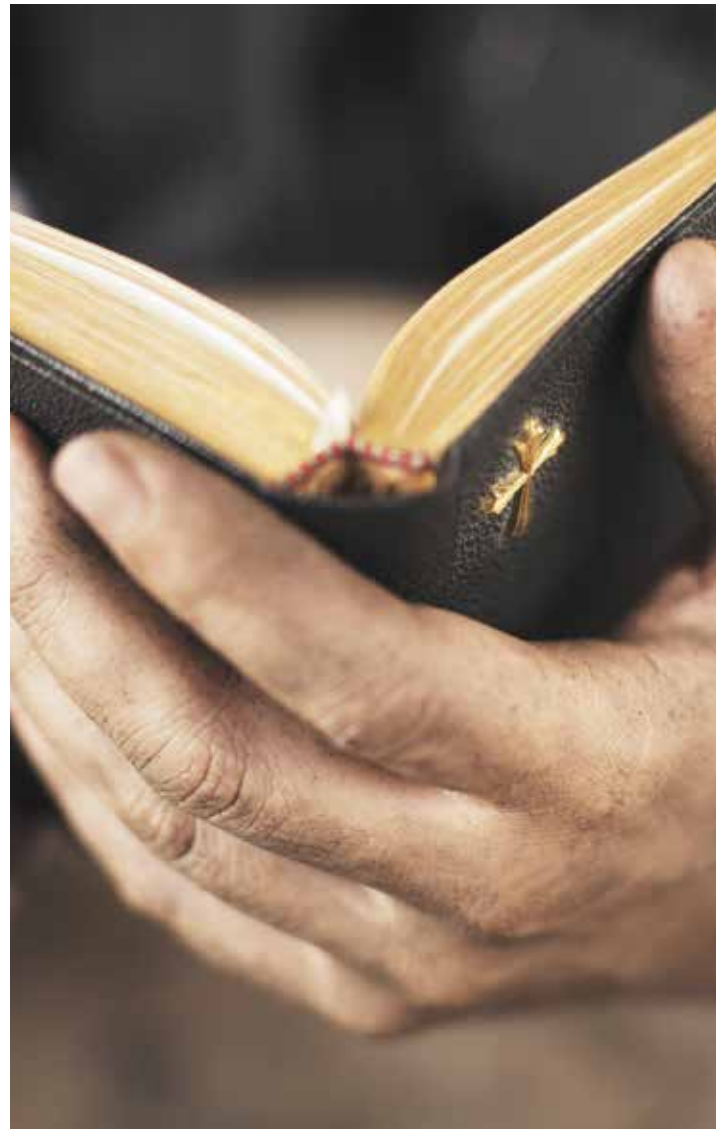
Sometimes referred to as the “textbook of stewardship,” the Bible is a bountiful resource for the present-day Christian. Written by anointed prophets and sages, this collection of divinely inspired parables, poems and letters is full of testimonials that express the blessings that come from true discipleship, expressed through lives of stewardship.

Stewardship is not a new concept. The Bible gives proof to this claim through passages such as the 26th chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy. We read Moses' words, as he tells the Israelites to offer the choicest portions of their harvest to God: “When you have come into the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you as a heritage, and have occupied it and settled in it, you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land which the Lord, your God, gives you, and putting them in a basket, you shall go to the place which the Lord, your God, will choose for the dwelling place of his name... ‘Therefore, I have now brought you the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, O LORD, have given me.’ And having set them before the LORD, your God, you shall bow down in his presence” (Dt 26:1-2, 10).

St. Paul briefly touches on the essence of stewardship when he said, “In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35).

Again, in St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, we read about living a life of Christian stewardship: “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:6-7).

While this is well and good, what does it mean for the present-day Christian? Why should it matter that the Bible alludes to stewardship in various passages? It shows us that Christians and Jews have struggled with and benefitted from the concept of stewardship for thousands of years. It ties the message of stewardship to the role of a Christian disciple. It gives proof that stewardship and discipleship go hand-in-hand. It offers encouragement to us, that stewardship is in fact a foundational component of the Christian life, a way of



life that one of the founding fathers of the Church – St. Paul – preached about and advocated.

The Bible is indeed the textbook of stewardship. It lays out the steps we must take to become true disciples of Christ. Reading and meditating upon God's Word is always a fruitful exercise. Those who regularly delve into Scripture often develop a deeper understanding of who God is, how and why He loves us, and how we can show Him our love in return.

As you strive to become a grateful steward and live the life of Christian discipleship, develop a love for Sacred Scripture. Allow God's Word to nourish your soul regularly, and watch as stewardship changes from a foreign concept to an integral component of your daily life.

ST. ANTHONY of PADUA



A LETTER FROM OUR PASTORAL ADMINISTRATOR

We Cannot Be *Part-Time* Christians

Dear Parishioners,

May is traditionally celebrated in the Church as the month of Mary, our Blessed Mother. As the Mother of the Church, she provides us with an example of what it means to be a servant of God and our fellow humans, as well as how to obediently fulfill the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

As Catholics, we are called to model the life of Jesus. That can be difficult, and there are certainly challenges to living as a disciple of Christ. But living stewardship and discipleship brings intense contentment and joy to those who take that risk. As we hear in St. Paul's letter to the Romans, "All things work for good for those who love God."

After Jesus Himself, we look to our Blessed Mother as an ideal steward and an example of what stewardship means. As the Mother of Christ, she lived her life and her ministry in a total spirit of faithfulness and service. She responded to the call to be a disciple. For us to be disciples, we also need to be good stewards of the gifts we have received. Our Church and our parish are gifts to us from God.

At no point in Holy Scripture does Jesus tell us that following Him is easy. We know it is not always simple and effortless. It requires dedication and commitment. Pope Francis has said on more than one occasion, "We cannot be part-time Christians and Catholics! We should seek to live our faith at every moment of every day."

I suspect that is how Mary lived her life from that moment she turned it over to God and His Will. So, let us vow together during this month of Mary to follow her example, and seek to be the kinds of good stewards that will make our faith community even stronger and more effective.

I pray that we all can find the strength to live and practice our faith as we should. This means being faithful

to the sacraments and looking for ways to help and serve one another. We have a great parish – let us make it even greater.

As we hear in Holy Scripture, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! May the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). Pray for me, as I pray for you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Tom Donovan
Pastoral Administrator

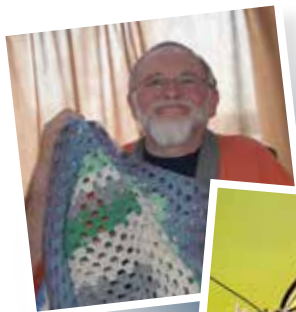


Going Above and Beyond at St. Anthony's

Learning About Stewardship Opportunities in Our Parish

Stewardship is an important – essential – part of parish life here at St. Anthony's. In turn, there are numerous parish ministries, which most everyone in our parish family is likely aware – from liturgical ministries like Eucharistic Ministers and lectors, to hospitality-oriented ministries, like greeting parishioners and visitors at Mass. But there are still numerous ministries that you may not yet know about – and one or more of these may be just the perfect way for you to become involved as a steward of our community.

To foster awareness of these opportunities, we are happy to include a ministry overview in this month's newsletter. If any of these ministry opportunities are of interest to you, please feel free to call the parish office at 217-222-5996 for more information. Also, we will be featuring these ministries in upcoming St. Anthony newsletters – so be sure to look out for future newsletter issues, where you can learn even more about the unique stewardship and service opportunities on offer in our parish community.



Prayer Shawl

Volunteers create specially made shawls, which are then provided to people who are suffering from illness. For more information on this wonderful ministry, please see the full Prayer Shawl Ministry feature in this newsletter.

Butterfly Committee – Bereavement

Volunteers in this important ministry are trained, and are available to sit with family and/or dying family members. In addition, they assist in funeral planning and provide aftercare.

Communion to Homebound

These volunteers visit the homebound after 8 a.m. Sunday Mass to provide Communion and prayer.

Cards

This ministry sends cards for parishioners (to note special events, such as births, promotions, graduations, etc.) and those with serious illness. Greeting cards are also sent to the parishioners in nursing homes for Christmas.

Birthday Cakes

The members of this ministry provide cakes to parish members in nursing homes and homebound.



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Word for Children

This ministry provides children's Bible study during 10:30 a.m. Mass on Sunday.

Nursery Services

A safe, supervised and fun environment for the little ones of our parish during the 10:30 a.m. Mass on Sunday. All volunteers are trained in Protecting God's Children.

Assistance to the Needy

Assistance is provided to those in need of food, transportation and prayer support.

Assistance to New Families

Provide new baby support including a card and meal or gift card for new parents.

Blessing of Expected Parents

Deacon Harry will bless the expected parents and provide support on the birth of the child.

Funeral Visitation Host at St. Anthony Parish

Provide support for grieving families in the family room during the visitation.



If any of these ministry opportunities are of interest to you, please feel free to call the parish office at 217-222-5996 for more information. We will be featuring these ministries in upcoming St. Anthony newsletters, so be sure to look out for those!

Spreading Comfort Through the Warmth of a Shawl

“It is nice to be able to make this product, pray over the recipient as you make this blanket or shawl for them, and the finally actually give it to that person. In the process, you are often able to get to know that person a little bit better and it deepens that bond. I didn’t realize when we first started how much comfort a prayer shawl can give to a person, but it truly does make them feel that connection with the parish and those who have made it for them.” – Jan Barnard

When a person is sick or suffering, few things feel more comforting than a warm blanket. And when it’s a blanket that has been carefully made by loving hands and heartfelt prayers, that warmth only grows, becoming a tangible reminder of God’s love.

“It made me feel really good to know that people were praying for me, because I sure needed a lot of prayers and still do,” says parishioner Alice Rakers, who received her prayer shawl just before undergoing surgery for ovarian cancer. “It is very comforting to know that people are praying for you and to think that they are making something out of love for you. When you hold that prayer shawl, you feel like you are physically holding the benefit of their prayers.”

Alice is one of roughly 230 parishioners who have been given prayer shawls over the years. First formed in 2006, St. Anthony’s Prayer Shawl Ministry was begun out of a desire to comfort those experiencing physical, spiritual or emotional difficulties. It was a way to concretely remind them of God’s and the parish family’s love and support.

“Our vision was to give comfort to those in need,” says Jan Barnard, ministry coordinator. “We wanted to give them to people suffering with things like medical problems or to those who have recently experienced a

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Prayer shawls and blankets are for any person in need of comfort and spiritual support. Here, one of our men in uniform holds a blanket handmade for him by one of the Prayer Shawl Ministry members.

If you are looking for a way to serve and bring comfort to our fellow parishioners, please consider joining this ministry of care. There is a place for you, no matter how limited your talents. And if you know of someone in need of a prayer shawl, please let us know. To learn more about this ministry, get involved, or add someone to the Prayer Shawl Ministry’s list, contact the parish office at 217-222-5996.

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Spreading Comfort Through the Warmth of a Shawl *continued from page 6*

loss. We thought this would be a good way to show them support and to provide them with comfort.”

Each prayer shawl or blanket is hand-sewn, crocheted, knitted, or even tied in the case of the sewing challenged. This enables each volunteer to create a gift that embodies their personal talents and expertise. Typically, the shawls are done at home on the volunteer’s own time, although Prayer Shawl Ministry members do occasionally gather together for prayer and work. This, says Jan, is a great benefit of the ministry because you can serve and give of your time easily amidst your other tasks and responsibilities.

“What’s great is you can do it any way that you are comfortable with,” Jan says. “We do have patterns that we can provide for people, and we have also had some make the simple tie blankets. So, it really is open to anyone who has the time and talent to share with us.”

Though the blankets can be made anywhere, such as while sitting in front of the TV or visiting with a friend, volunteers are encouraged to remember the recipient of the blanket in their thoughts and prayers throughout the creating process. Once the product is finished the



In addition to receiving prayers while the shawl is being made, each prayer shawl is also blessed by Father before being distributed to those in need of comfort

prayer shawls are also blessed by Father, transforming them into a holy channel of God’s grace.

For Jan personally, it’s been beautiful to witness the comforting effect of these simple gifts of love.

“It is nice to be able to make this product, pray over the recipient as you make this blanket or shawl for them, and the finally actually give

it to that person,” Jan says. “In the process, you are often able to get to know that person a little bit better and it deepens that bond. I didn’t realize when we first started how much comfort a prayer shawl can give to a person, but it truly does make them feel that connection with the parish and those who have made it for them.”

*Prayer Shawl Prayer
May God touch your hands with love.
May God guide your hook with compassion.
May God fill your yarn with His spirit.
And may your knitting or crocheting be blessed.*

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DAILY MASS: MON, TUE, & THU - 7:30 A.M.

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.

Meet Our Office Staff: Ava Fessler and Janet Bick

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“There is never a dull moment!” she says. “I love meeting people when they come into the office, and learn about them and their families. It’s a really nice atmosphere, and you don’t even realize how long you are here because the time goes by so quickly.”

Janet, who started working at the parish part-time in January, has been a St. Anthony parishioner for the past eight years. She and her husband, Bob, have two children – Chad and Angela – and one grandchild. Janet served as Principal of St. Peter Catholic School for 28 years, retiring two years ago.

“It’s been good because it has helped me to get to know some of the other parishioners better,” she says. “As a principal, I wasn’t able to spend a lot of time at my home parish. So, it has really helped to be able to get to know people!”

“I really enjoy just knowing that I am able to help out here at the parish,” she adds. “I’m looking forward to continuing in this ministry.”

As a parish community, let’s reach out and let Ava and Janet know how much they are appreciated here at St. Anthony.

“They are doing a ministry just as much as I or anyone else in the parish is – it just happens to be their job,” Fr. Tom says. “This is how they are fulfilling their stewardship obligations, and it’s important to treat them with the kindness and respect that they deserve.”

Ava Fessler with her husband, David
“They are doing a ministry just as much as I or anyone else in the parish is – it just happens to be their job. This is how they are fulfilling their stewardship obligations, and it’s important to treat them with the kindness and respect that they deserve.”

– Fr. Tom Donovan

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