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ST. ANTHONY *of* PADUA

The Men's Society Provides Great Example of Stewardship in Action

St. Anthony of Padua Church strives to uphold the Four Pillars of Parish Stewardship — Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. And in sharing generously of our time, talent, and treasure, we continue to grow in the stewardship way of life.

In the area of service, we strive to be servant ministers to the needs of our parish, the wider community of Quincy, and our Catholic Church. Not only do we strive to serve those who are hurting or in need, lost or alone, or suffering in any way, but we also give thanks to God for all the gifts we have received.

We are blessed with many organizations, ministries, and groups that provide service. One of the most exemplary of these ministries is our Men's Society, chaired by Elmer Maas.

"It is almost impossible to mention all the ways that the Men's Society helps the parish and St. Dominic School, or all the various ways they serve," says parishioner and Men's Society secretary Kenny Klauser. "What they do is a great example of stewardship in action and has been for many years.

"I retired six years ago and have become more involved in many things, especially the Men's Society," Kenny continues. "We basically oversee the buildings and grounds at both the parish and the school, both outside and inside. In addition, we run or are involved in numerous events at both locations."

However, in spite of all the work the Men's Society does inside and outside the parish and school facilities, they may be as well known for the many activities and events in which they are involved.

"We run numerous events for the parish," Kenny says. "For example, during Lent we hold six fish fries — three at St. Anthony and three at St. Dominic School. We help with two picnics a year — one in June and one in July. We help out at those

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We thank the members of this group for their continuous example of stewardship within our parish family!

Being a Good Christmas Steward

The Christmas season is fast approaching. We have already made our gift lists, and perhaps even checked them twice. First on the list is family, followed by friends, our children's teachers and coaches, and maybe even the mailman. Christmas inspires us to give our family and friends gifts of love and appreciation, in gratitude towards all they do for us during the year. The very idea of holiday gift giving – a display of love and gratefulness to those who have touched our lives – is parallel to the concept of stewardship. When we give to God, we are effectively saying “thanks” for all He has done for us.

Think of all God has done for you this year. How have His loving arms embraced you? Maybe He has answered a special prayer intention. Maybe He has created a job opportunity for an unemployed loved one. He may have helped safely bring a new baby into the family, or instilled peace during a particularly difficult time. God's blessings are countless, and the abundant gifts He bestows upon us are given freely out of

incomprehensible love – despite our unworthiness.

Think of the ways you respond to God's bountiful blessings. How do you choose to show Him your thankfulness? As we prepare for the coming of Christ during Advent, will we remember to add Jesus' name to our list? Uncle John wants a new drill, and Grandpa definitely needs a new cardigan – but what does Jesus want?

As we prepare for the coming of Christ during Advent, will we remember to add Jesus' name to our list? Uncle John wants a new drill, and Grandpa definitely needs a new cardigan – but what does Jesus want? It is His birthday we are celebrating, after all.

It is His birthday we are celebrating, after all.

The very first name on the list – above our spouse, children, relatives, and friends – should be God's name. As disciples of Christ, we are called to give God our “first fruits,” not our leftovers. We should joyfully place God first on our gift-giving lists, not out of guilt or as an afterthought, but out of love and appreciation.

Stewardship allows us to tangibly give a Christmas gift to God through our time, talent, and treasure. We give God gifts of time through prayer, such as spending time before the Blessed Sacrament or praying the Rosary. We can give our talents to God by way of simple charitable actions, such as bringing a meal to a hard-pressed neighbor, or watching a young mother's children so that she is able to prepare for her own family's Christmas celebration. And as for treasure, we can give God a portion of our income this Christmas by dropping an extra dollar in the collection basket. Whatever choices you make this season, make the decision to be a good Christmas steward.



ST. ANTHONY *of* PADUA



A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Reflections at the End of the Year

Dear Parishioners,

It seems as if we just finished Lent and Easter, and here we are at Advent and Christmas. To say this is a busy month for many is an understatement. Although December is a month of love, it can also be a difficult month for some. For those with families, it may be a month of travel as people rush to be united with loved ones, sometimes after a long period of separation.

There is no shortage of reminders as to what time of year this is. However, for us as Catholics, we may need to refocus to see where we are

in our faith lives. Were you aware that for us, December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception? In that regard, we celebrate a Holy Day of Obligation on Friday, Dec. 8. Advent begins on Dec. 3, and you may notice that we begin to wear purple as a sign of Advent. That color changes to white or gold beginning at Christmas.

Of course, this is also the last month of the regular calendar year, which may add additional tasks to our own schedules as we finalize things for the end of the year. However, there are many opportunities for us during

this month to share, to pray and to celebrate in a Christian way, and I would encourage you to make an effort to be part of these. Right here in our parish, much is happening along those lines, and a careful reading of the bulletin will alert you to the “when, where and what” of these upcoming opportunities.

As I indicated earlier, this can also be a difficult time for some. In the midst of our own celebrations and joy, we need to be aware of that reality and of those living with it. This is a time to reach out, and it is a time to show love.

This December, let our minds be focused on Christ, Who will be born for us at Christmas, and for Whose coming we must always be prepared throughout the year. This is a time to thank God and to pray. It is a time to reach out to love and live peacefully with one another. We need to remember that life continues after December, in spite of everything we feel we need to get done.

My prayers and blessings go out to each of you and your families. May God continue to watch over you. May the year 2017 end well for all of us!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Tom Donovan".

Fr. Tom Donovan
Pastor





Christmas Traditions

Recalling Christmases Past and Sustaining Christmases to Come

Christmas traditions — the activities we hold dear — are carried down through the years to make our Christmas celebrations more meaningful as we celebrate the birth of Christ. And here at St. Anthony, we have our cherished traditions from years past — and some new ones, too.

Raymond Stupavsky was 9 in 1942 when Fr. Cyrenas, our Franciscan priest, completed his hand-built crèche for our parish. The crèche, built to form a cave-like shelter, has been displayed in the church at Christmas, ever since.

“It’s made of all local materials — sticks, twigs, tree bark, a lot of clay and straw, and a little sand,” Raymond recalls. “The first time the people saw it, everybody really appreciated it and told Father what a great job he did. It took him quite a while to build it and people saw it as it was being built.”

Raymond doesn’t know where the figures for the crèche originated, however.

“They’re the only ones I ever saw, and they must be the original ones,” he says.

Fr. Cyrenas’ crèche was built in the midst of World War II, when everyone was experiencing shortages and rationing in not only gasoline and food, but also with building materials. So having such a hand-built piece for the church helped lift everyone’s spirits during those war years.

“This was a country church,” Raymond recalls. “There were hills and creeks east of the church, and that’s where he got his clay. He built it in the basement of his residence.”

There was no real fanfare when the crèche was first placed in the church.

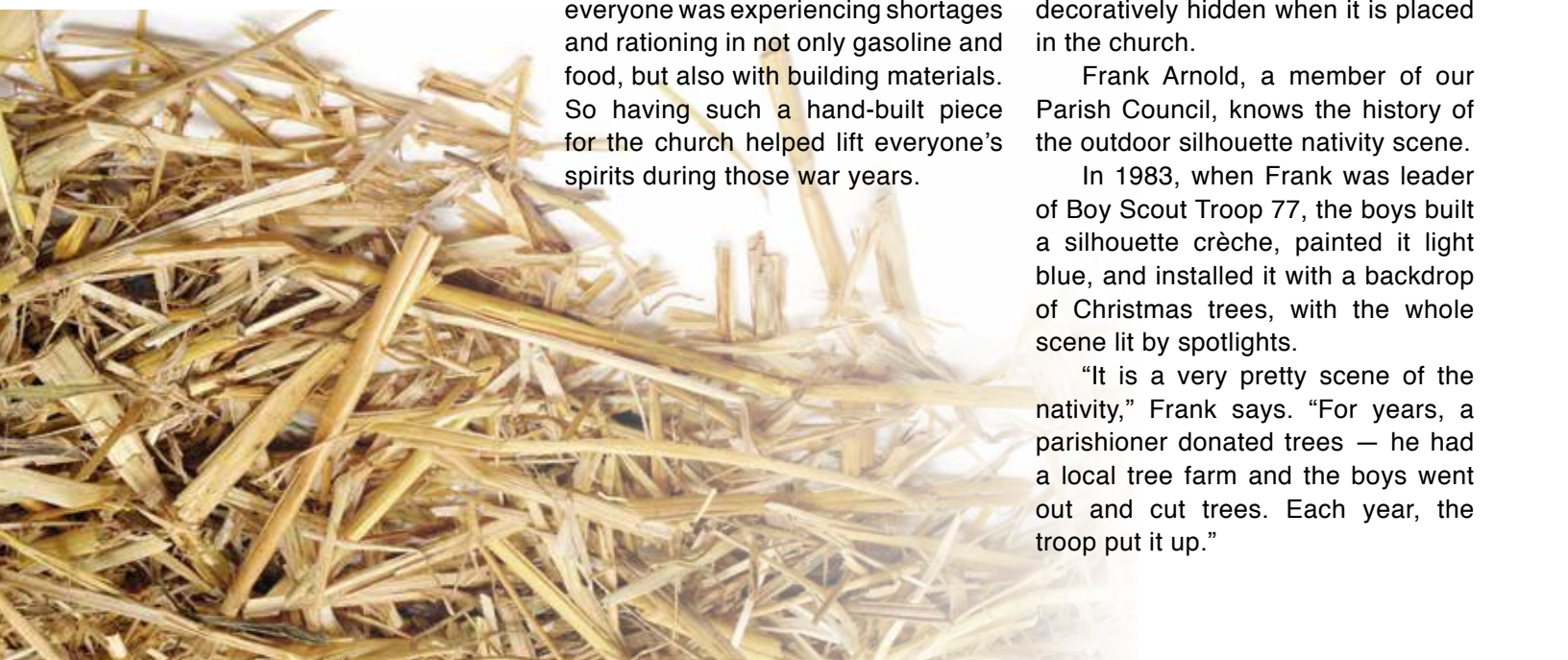
“I think we had something with Mass and Father blessed it,” he says. “It was kind of a local thing — the bishop didn’t come.”

Because the piece is so heavy, several men in the parish eventually built a two-wheeled trailer to move it. The crèche now is permanently mounted on the trailer that is decoratively hidden when it is placed in the church.

Frank Arnold, a member of our Parish Council, knows the history of the outdoor silhouette nativity scene.

In 1983, when Frank was leader of Boy Scout Troop 77, the boys built a silhouette crèche, painted it light blue, and installed it with a backdrop of Christmas trees, with the whole scene lit by spotlights.

“It is a very pretty scene of the nativity,” Frank says. “For years, a parishioner donated trees — he had a local tree farm and the boys went out and cut trees. Each year, the troop put it up.”





Now the outside crèche is put up by Troop 76, an activity the scouts have done for about 10 years. Troop 76 was combined with Troop 77 when St. Anthony's and St. Dominic's parishes merged. The scouts have continued as Troop 76.

Many of our parish traditions center around St. Dominic School. One is the Christmas program for the parents, which varies from year to year.

"They do the re-enactment of the birth of Jesus with the journey to Bethlehem, angels, shepherds, and wise men," Frank says. "An awful lot of parents with their own kids are those who participated in it many years ago. Another tradition is the Children's Mass at 10:30 a.m. Christmas Day. The children do all the activities in Mass. They perform the music, take up the collection, and bring up the gifts — everything that is normally done by adults. And again, this is something they have done for a number of years — no one knows how many."

Another tradition is the Twelve Days of Kindness during Advent,

when parishioners and the school children write Christmas cards to residents of local care homes.

"The kids sing carols at the facilities and present the cards to the residents," Frank says. "We also have giving trees decorated with ornaments bearing names. The parishioners take the ornaments off the trees, buy gifts, and return them to the church. The gifts go to the local care facilities."

A long-standing tradition here at St. Anthony is our Christmas Midnight Mass — a practice disappearing in many parishes.

"The choir does a special Christmas program that they begin practicing for in October, and that's a huge part of Midnight Mass," Frank says.

There are several families in the parish who decorate the altar weekly. These families do an exceptional job with the altar during the Christmas Season. The St. Anthony Men's and Ladies Societies work together to decorate the other areas of the church and grounds during Christmas.

A new tradition that began several years ago is one originated by the We Care Society. Throughout the year,

the ministry provides a welcome to new parishioners or food for those with health issues. But at Christmas, the group takes poinsettias to parishioners in care homes or those shut-in at their own homes. The poinsettias were distributed at the first of this month.

As for the poinsettias used to decorate our church during Christmas, they are placed in the vestibule for anyone to take home — another cherished St. Anthony tradition!





Focusing Our Hearts Heavenward: *The Origin and Beauty of the Nativity Scene*

Coming in various sizes and styles, each Nativity replica continues to focus our hearts on the true meaning of Christmas — to help us remember that Christmas isn't about the amount of gifts under the tree or the festive decorations, but rather about celebrating Christ's birth.

With all the commercialism surrounding Christmastime, it's far too easy for us to lose sight of the true reason behind the season. Overwhelmed by our endless to-do lists and the hustle and bustle of last-minute shopping, our focus quickly shifts away from the Christ Child's birth. And yet, hidden amongst the holly wreaths and garlands, the Christmas Nativity remains a tangible reminder of the Incarnation, pulling us back into time for a moment as we reflect upon the incredible gift of Christ's birth.

Interestingly, it was circumstances much like our own today which first led St. Francis of Assisi to recreate the Nativity scene nearly 800 years ago. Frustrated with the growing materialism and greed that seemed to pervade 13th century Italy, St. Francis wanted a way to visually remind people of Christ's humble beginnings — to show them that Christmas isn't about pomp and circumstance or material goods, but rather about unselfish love. Describing the idea to his friend Giovanni, St. Francis wrote, "I want to do something that will recall the memory of that child who was born in Bethlehem, to see with bodily eyes the inconveniences of his infancy, how he lay in the manger, and how the ox and ass stood by."

And so St. Francis' idea took form on Christmas Eve in 1223. This original Nativity scene was a living one, even including an actual ox and ass. Villagers were deeply moved by the silent display of humble beauty, and the Nativity tradition soon spread throughout Italy and surrounding Europe. It is a tradition that remains today in nearly every Christian church and in many homes. In fact, it's hard to imagine Christmas without a Nativity scene somewhere.

Coming in various sizes and styles, each Nativity replica continues to focus our hearts on the true meaning of Christmas — to help us remember that Christmas isn't about the amount of gifts under the tree or the festive decorations, but rather about celebrating Christ's birth. Many families have a tradition of hiding the Infant Jesus, only placing Him in the crib on Christmas morning. This helps build anticipation during the Advent season as we anxiously await the Divine's birth. Others go a step further, actually wrapping up the Christ Child to be opened as the very first gift of Christmas.

Yet, whatever your family's particular traditions, we hope that the Christmas Nativity continues to draw your heart heavenward this Christmas season — to center us all on the greatest gift ever given, our Incarnate Lord.

ST. ANTHONY of PADUA



Sharing God's Gift of Music with Joy

When you come to Mass around Christmastime at our parish, you enter into a world of jubilant melodies and heartfelt praise. After all, welcoming the most glorious Newborn King into our hearts is a cause for a major celebration.

"Christmas is my favorite time of the year," says parish musician Connie Vermeire. "I help provide the music for two of our Christmas Masses. I love traditional carols like 'Silent Night' and 'Away in a Manger.' They are so beautiful! These traditional songs bring back wonderful memories, and remind us what our faith is all about. They bring life to those who sing them."

God's graces are showered bountifully during this sacred season, and just the right music can bring them home to the heart.

"The parish is full at Christmastime because families are gathering and celebrating the holidays at Mass together," Connie says. "I think it is really important to have songs at Christmas Mass that people know and cherish. My hope is that some of those who don't come to Mass regularly would be inspired, with the help of our music, to come back to church on a more routine basis."

Along with several other dedicated musicians, Connie strives to touch souls with the Gospel message of salvation and hope.

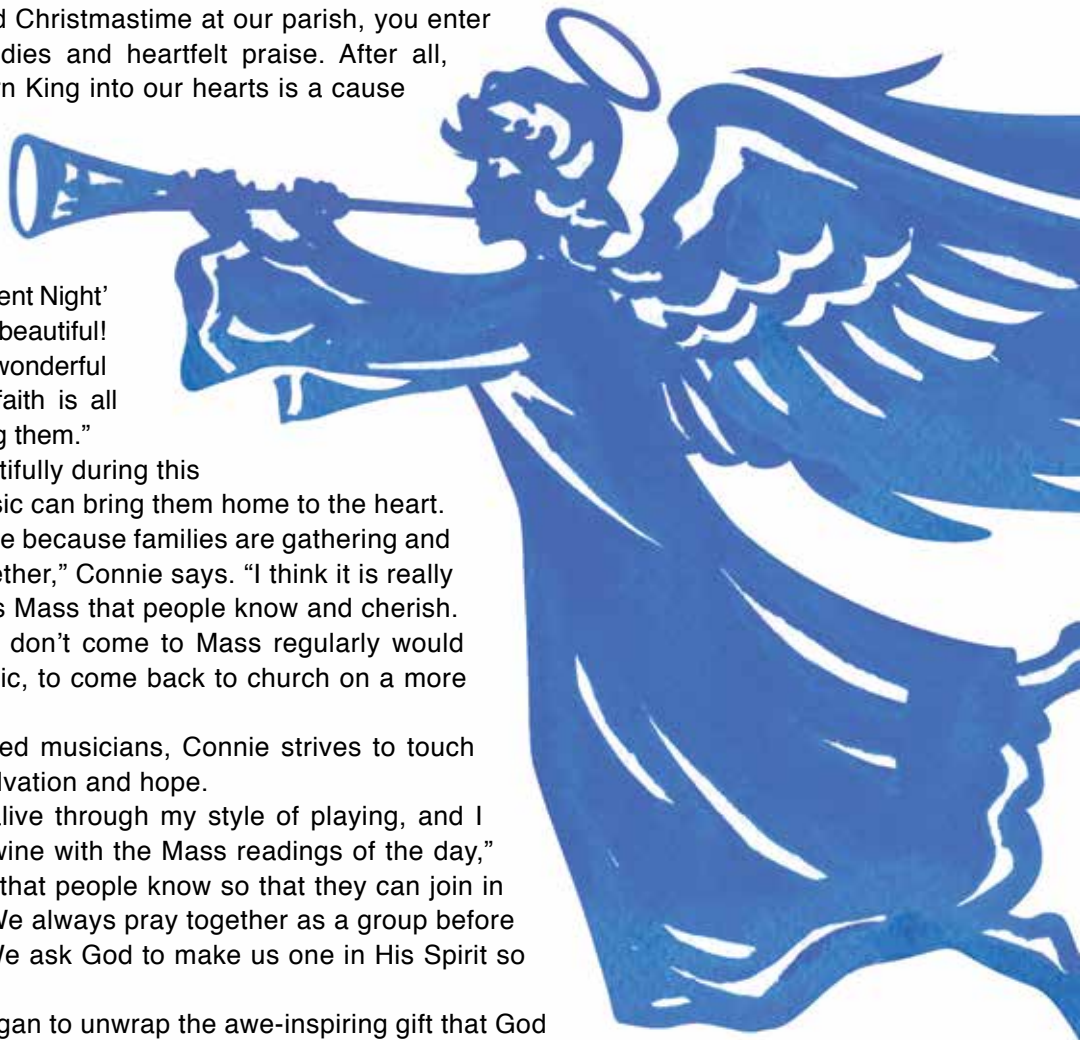
"I try to make the music come alive through my style of playing, and I always try to choose songs that entwine with the Mass readings of the day," Connie says. "We like to play songs that people know so that they can join in and feel like part of the community. We always pray together as a group before we go out into the church, as well. We ask God to make us one in His Spirit so that we are one in Him."

When Connie was young, she began to unwrap the awe-inspiring gift that God had given her, and to this day, she continues to discover the depth of its richness.

"Being able to play music is a gift that God gave me," she says. "I have been involved with music since the fifth grade when I began playing the piano and the trumpet. I started playing at my home parish in high school and college. I enjoy giving back to the parish community, and giving my best. I give the glory back to God!"

When Connie moved to Quincy and joined our parish about 25 years ago, she felt inspired to continue sharing her talents with our faith community. She enjoys helping bring out the musical talents that her brothers and sisters in Christ have to share, as well.

"As the Scriptures tell us, 'make a joyful noise unto the Lord,'" she says. "That is what I encourage our parishioners to do. As one of the musicians, I would really, really encourage anyone else who has a talent in music to come forward, and not to be afraid to use it!"



For more information about how to bring hearts to the Lord by helping with our parish's Music Ministry, please contact one of the musicians after Mass, or call the parish office at 217-222-5996.

ST. ANTHONY *of* PADUA

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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.

Christmas Liturgy Schedule

Fourth Sunday of Advent (Dec. 23-24):

Regular Sunday Schedule

Christmas Eve: 4:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Christmas Day: Midnight and 9 a.m.

Holy Family (Dec. 30-31):

Regular Sunday Schedule

New Year's Day: 9:00 a.m.

The Men's Society *continued from front cover*

in various ways with set-up and some of the basic tasks which have to be accomplished before, during and afterwards. In September, we have a chicken dinner, and we also offer pancake and sausage breakfasts at the parish. We have a stand at the Knights of Columbus barbecue, which is a huge event in the community. And we are very supportive of our Boy Scout troop and Cub Scout pack, as well as the PTO group at the school."

The Men's Society meets monthly, on the evening of the second Monday of the month. There are some 50 or 60 men involved, and normally there are 40 or more at each meeting. The purpose of the meetings is largely to plan and evaluate what needs to be done at the parish and the school.

"We take very seriously our responsibility for the upkeep of the buildings and the grounds," Kenny says. "We cut the grass and see that everything is neat around our buildings. In addition, we have done a lot of projects in recent years to improve the buildings, including being involved in the new roof on the school."

According to Kenny, the Men's Society has been an important part of the parish for more than 50 years. We thank the members of this group for their continuous example of stewardship within our parish family!



The Men's Society has been a part of the parish for more than 50 years

For more information, or if you are interested in becoming a part of the Men's Society, please contact Kenny Klauser at 217-223-7182 or our parish office at 217-222-5996.

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