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A Spiritual Time for Us: Lenten Preparations and Practices

As you most certainly know, Lent began on Ash Wednesday — this year, that day fell on Feb. 14. Most Catholics are aware that Lent is a season of penitence and penance. They may also be aware that Lent is the 40-day period in preparation for Easter, and it is one of the major liturgical seasons in our Catholic Church. They are likely to also be knowledgeable that in addition to the idea of penance, Lent stresses prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Here at St. Anthony, we offer opportunities in all those areas.

Of course, it all began with the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday is one of the most popular and important holy days in the liturgical calendar. Ash Wednesday comes from the ancient Jewish tradition of penance and fasting. The practice includes the wearing of ashes on the head. The ashes symbolize the dust from which God made us. As the priest applies the ashes to a person's forehead, he speaks the words: "Remember that you are dust,

and to dust you shall return." Alternatively, the priest may speak the words, "Repent and believe in the Gospel."

As Dr. Carolyn Woo writes, "Ash Wednesday Mass tends to draw a large attendance, right up there with Masses at Christmas and Easter." According to Dr. Woo, the former President of Catholic Relief Services, "Ashes and the intonation, 'Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return,' are reminders of our mortality and sinfulness and a visible marker of our remorse. These are intended to compel us to confront our reality with an intensity and urgency meant

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The Challenge of Discipleship

God calls us to give Him everything – our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole mind. This is the challenge of discipleship – a lifelong process of more fully placing our lives under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

The reason that God can ask such complete service from us is that He made us. Everything we have belongs to Him! This includes our intelligence, our physical ability, our artistic talent, our family, our finances, our government – anything we may typically think of as “ours.”

It takes courage to recognize that we are not the masters of our possessions and ourselves. Furthermore, as Christians, we believe that because everything we have is a gift from God, we are called to give Him thanks. We express our thanks by using our gifts to further His kingdom on earth. This is the basis for our understanding of stewardship.

We refer to “time,” “talent,” and “treasure” in order to differentiate between the various parts of our life that belong to God. “Time” is the duration of life that God has given us. “Talent” includes the special gifts or strengths God has nurtured in us. “Treasure” is what we have earned through our time and talent.

Even though we identify these three aspects of stewardship, they are still part of the same Gospel-based concept. And even when we focus separately on these

parts, it should not signal that one is more important than the other. Instead, focusing on each aspect one at a time helps us to better concentrate on that area in our lives.

Stewardship is, after all, an attitude. If our goal is to become better stewards, we must have a reason in our minds to do so. Here are the basics of a stewardship attitude:

“God made everything!”

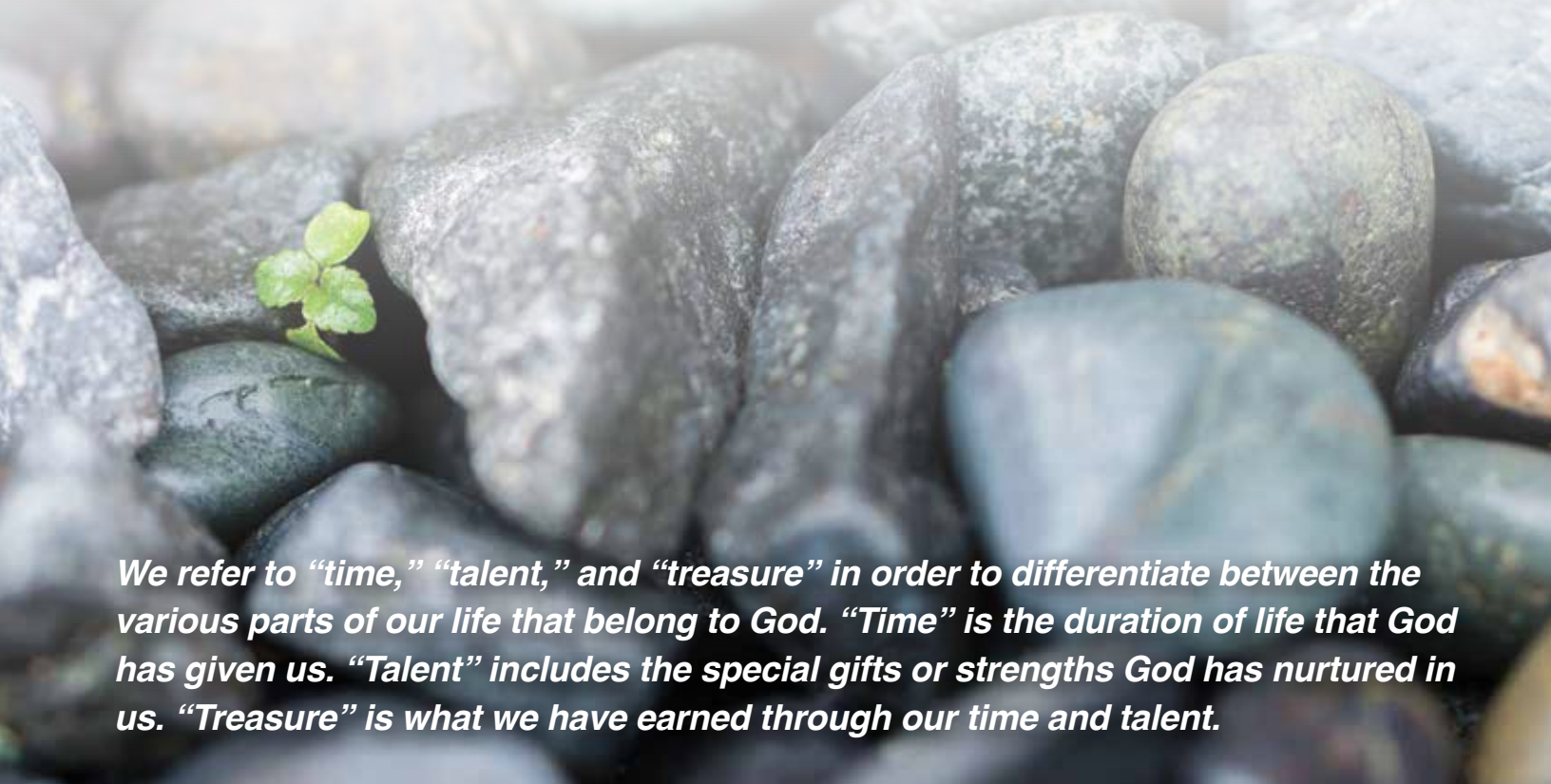
A wholehearted trust that God made all things is essential to understanding stewardship. Recognizing God as the Creator is one of the most basic, profound beliefs of Christianity.

“I am truly blessed!”

It takes humility in order to truly acknowledge God’s goodness. Every great triumph and every little pleasure is a blessing from above, and every strong character trait we possess is a gift from God.

“I believe I am to use God’s gifts for His glory!”

What better way to thank God for His goodness than by using our personal gifts to glorify Him? We are not the owners of our time, talent or treasure. But we are caretakers given the responsibility of spreading God’s kingdom on earth.



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A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

March — A Time to Take a Close Look at the Examples We Follow

Dear Parishioners,

This month of March is a significant time for us as Catholics. We are in the midst of Lent, and then we celebrate Holy Week, with Easter occurring just after the end of the month, on April 1. In addition, many may point to the month of March as a time we celebrate the Irish on March 17, the Feast of St. Patrick.

However, two days after that is the Feast of St. Joseph on March 19 — and for many in the world, that is more important. St. Joseph was, of course, the husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the foster father of Jesus Christ.

Everything we know about Joseph comes to us from Holy Scripture. It might be said that, in order to understand him completely, we must read between the lines. The

Catholic Church has designated the month of March as the month of St. Joseph. Yet, there is not a single example of Joseph saying something that can be quoted in the Bible. We can assume he was a man of few words — in turn, we may consider that he speaks to us through his actions. It is also clear that he was a humble man. Many point to him as an example of what a good father is and should be.

St. Joseph provides an example to all of us. Think of some of his strengths — he was obedient; he put his own needs aside to assure that Jesus and Mary were cared for; he surely trusted in God, even when God's will may not have made complete sense to him.

Those traits give each of us some idea of what we need to do in life. Do we only embrace those parts of our faith that make sense to us or that we find agreeable? Do we put the needs of others before our own? Our lives are filled with crosses and challenges, but do we trust in the Lord as Joseph did? Do our actions show us to be good Catholics and Christians? What kinds of examples are we setting?

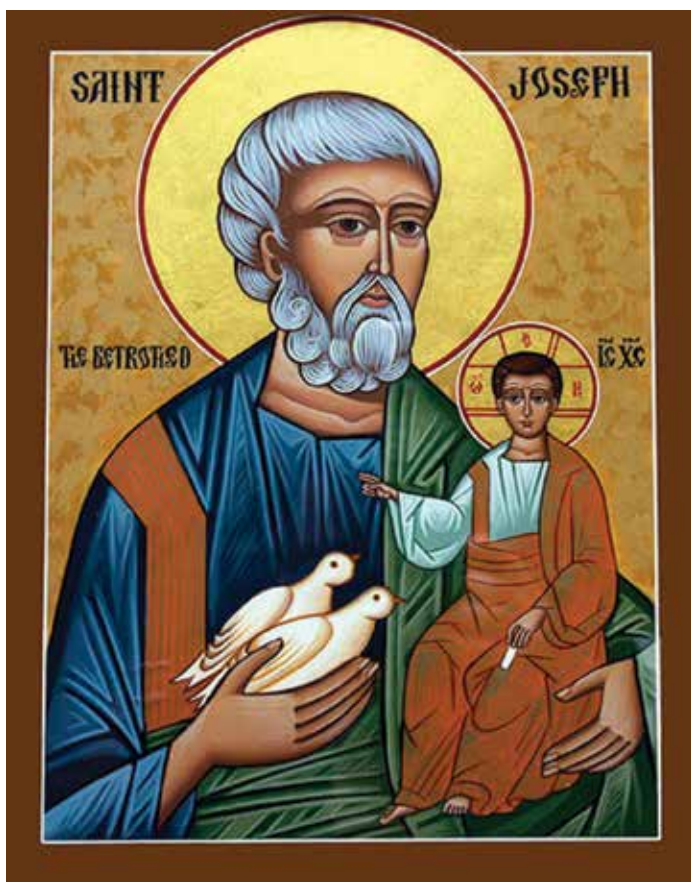
Lent and Easter are times for us to look closely at the answers to these questions. Joseph was a carpenter, a worker — and he obviously was not a man of wealth or prestige. By the time Jesus' public ministry begins, Joseph seems to disappear. Nevertheless, he was a man of royal origins. When St. Luke introduces him to us in Luke 1, he calls him "Joseph, of the house of David."

All of this leads us to know and believe that Joseph was someone we would classify as a "good steward." Who do we look up to? Do we seek to emulate people like Joseph, or are our models more worldly and more successful in the eyes of others? St. Joseph is a wonderful example for us. We all need to be like him in many, many ways.

God bless you during this holy time.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Tom Donovan
Pastor



Lectors' Role of Proclaiming the Word Draws Us to Understanding

When Cathy Carpenter serves as Lector at Mass, her intention is to help us fully engage in the Scriptures. But she also finds her reading leads her to a deeper understanding of the Word, as well.

"It makes me more aware of the sacred Scriptures," she says. "I can't say I'm unaware, but the fact that you're proclaiming the Scriptures as a reader — it changes you a bit. You think it's important, so no one has to look at the reading in their missal. They can sit, look at me reading and follow everything. They don't have to feel they can't understand me, or think 'I'd rather look at the words.' That's part of it. I feel in some way the lectors do as much proclaiming the Word of God as the priest does when he reads the Gospel."

Cathy has been serving as a lector since 1998 when she began serving during a weekday Mass. As other lectors retired, her duties increased in the daily Masses. Now, she reads for Sunday Mass about once a month. She has been gifted with the ability to "cold read," or read material well on first sight. Her regular use of the Bible

in her prayers has enabled her to be familiar with the Scriptures, as well as the particular phrasing in the texts.

"I always get to Mass on Sunday earlier because I want to make sure all the books are on the ambo," Cathy says. "If the deacon isn't there, I read the intercession prayers giving our specific intentions. I'm aware of where the readings [for that Mass] are coming from, and I'll read it over."

There are occasions when Cathy also reads the Psalms when they are not sung.

"The Psalms are also something that are meant for the congregation to sing, but I work to read it in that sense," she says.

The sanctity of serving as a lector begins for Cathy even before Mass begins. She generally chooses an appropriate dress and some jewelry for Sundays. Weekday Masses are usually more casual.

"I do try to show by my appearance that this is special," she says.

Cathy also believes that this message can begin during the opening processional.



Cathy Carpenter has been a lector since 1998, and she approaches her role as one of helping us to better understand the Scriptures.

"Some lectors don't take part in processing at the start of Mass," she says. "But I want to develop the idea that it's important for the readers to be recognized as part of Mass, as the people are who blessed to be one of those in the public part of worship to the Lord."

Overarching her reading is the intent to read with understanding.

"Otherwise, the people listening aren't getting the most out of the Scripture," she says. "I do try to always do that, to phrase things, and put it in terms of personal understanding. When I read the Scripture, regardless of whether it is at home or during Mass, I do try

"We all have our niches, and some may be unaware they have that talent, but they can grow in that talent. If you feel drawn to do something, even if you feel you don't have it, you should try." — Cathy Carpenter

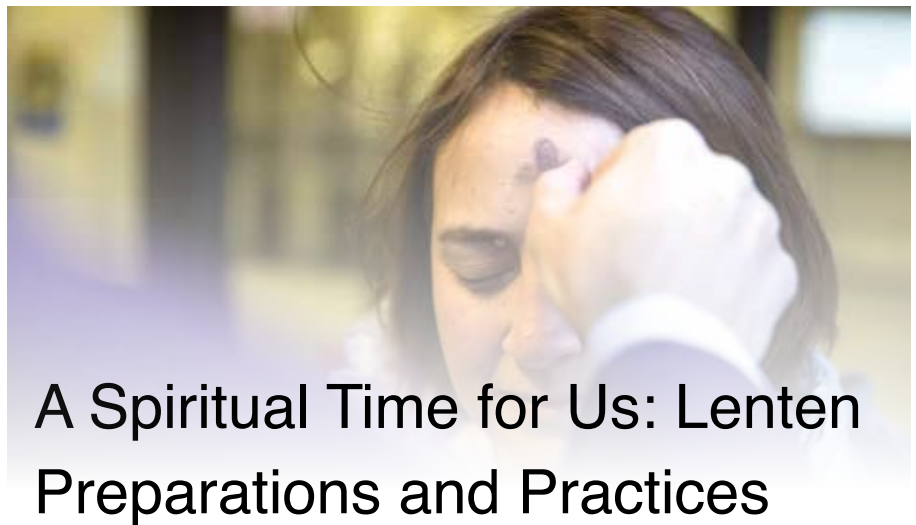
to think about ‘what is this Scripture trying to say to me?’”

If anyone is thinking of becoming a lector, Cathy is most willing to provide coaching.

She personally was drawn to becoming a lector partly out of a feeling there was a need for her to do so — but in some cases, a lector takes that step when a priest makes the request.

“We all have our own talents,” Cathy says. “I said, ‘I think I can do this,’ so I did. I don’t want to discourage anyone for trying to read. Some can’t do it, but it’s not that they don’t have the talent. We all have our niches, and some may be unaware they have that talent, but they can grow in that talent. If you feel drawn to do something, even if you feel you don’t have it, you should try.”

If you would like to learn more about serving as a lector in our parish, if you are interested in serving in this way, please contact Cathy Carpenter at cathycrc@comcast.net.



A Spiritual Time for Us: Lenten Preparations and Practices

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to change our hearts and then our lives... Lent revisits the promise that, when we fail to love and lose our way, God is there. We always have a way home. Ashes make it clear that now is the time for us to rekindle our desire for God.”

Fr. Tom Donovan would agree completely.

“Our attendance at Ash Wednesday services here at St. Anthony of Padua is always excellent — indicative, I believe, of a deep-seeded faith in many people,” he says. “Ash Wednesday from my perspective ‘speaks to our hearts,’ and thus we respond. All of Lent leading up to Easter is a spiritual time for us.”

“Sometimes as Catholics we hear, ‘Oh, Lent begins on Ash Wednesday,’ but people may not go much farther than that,” Father continues. “We want this Lent to be an energized Lent. We are suggesting a way to make it your ‘best Lent ever.’ In fact, we are inviting everyone to participate in a program called ‘Best Lent Ever.’”

Best Lent Ever is a free email program from Dynamic Catholic that is based on Matthew Kelly’s bestseller *Rediscover Jesus*. Each day, you’ll receive an inspirational email with a short video featuring Matthew Kelly and a member of the Dynamic Catholic team. Throughout Lent, they will guide you through each of the 40 chapters of *Rediscover Jesus* and share simple ways to bring Jesus into your everyday life. The program began on Ash Wednesday.

Remember — Lent is about far more than giving up chocolate! Join us on this incredible journey, and do more than give something up. Perhaps you might take something on instead, or in addition. It was St. Francis of Assisi who said, “For it is in giving that we receive.”

Fr. Tom Donovan makes a parallel comment.

“A gift is always greater when it is given away,” he says. “Life should be flowing through us and it is to be shared. God is bigger than His gifts, and that is our challenge, as well. Lent is an opportunity to do that. An important aspect of Lent is prayer. Lent is a time to develop and expand our prayer lives.”

Please be sure to check the parish bulletin for more on these wonderful Lenten opportunities. If you have any questions, please call the parish office or Fr. Tom Donovan at 217-222-5996.

Mass Reverence and Etiquette

Think about what you are teaching your children when you all wear your “Sunday clothes” to Mass. You are reminding them that Mass is a special celebration. After all, we are going to Jesus’ house.

For many of us, when we are invited to a wedding, one of our first considerations is “what am I going to wear?” We wouldn’t think of showing up at a formal event in our workout clothes. How many of us search for just the right outfit to wear to our annual office party or on a date? Compare that to how much thought we put into what we wear to Mass on Sunday.

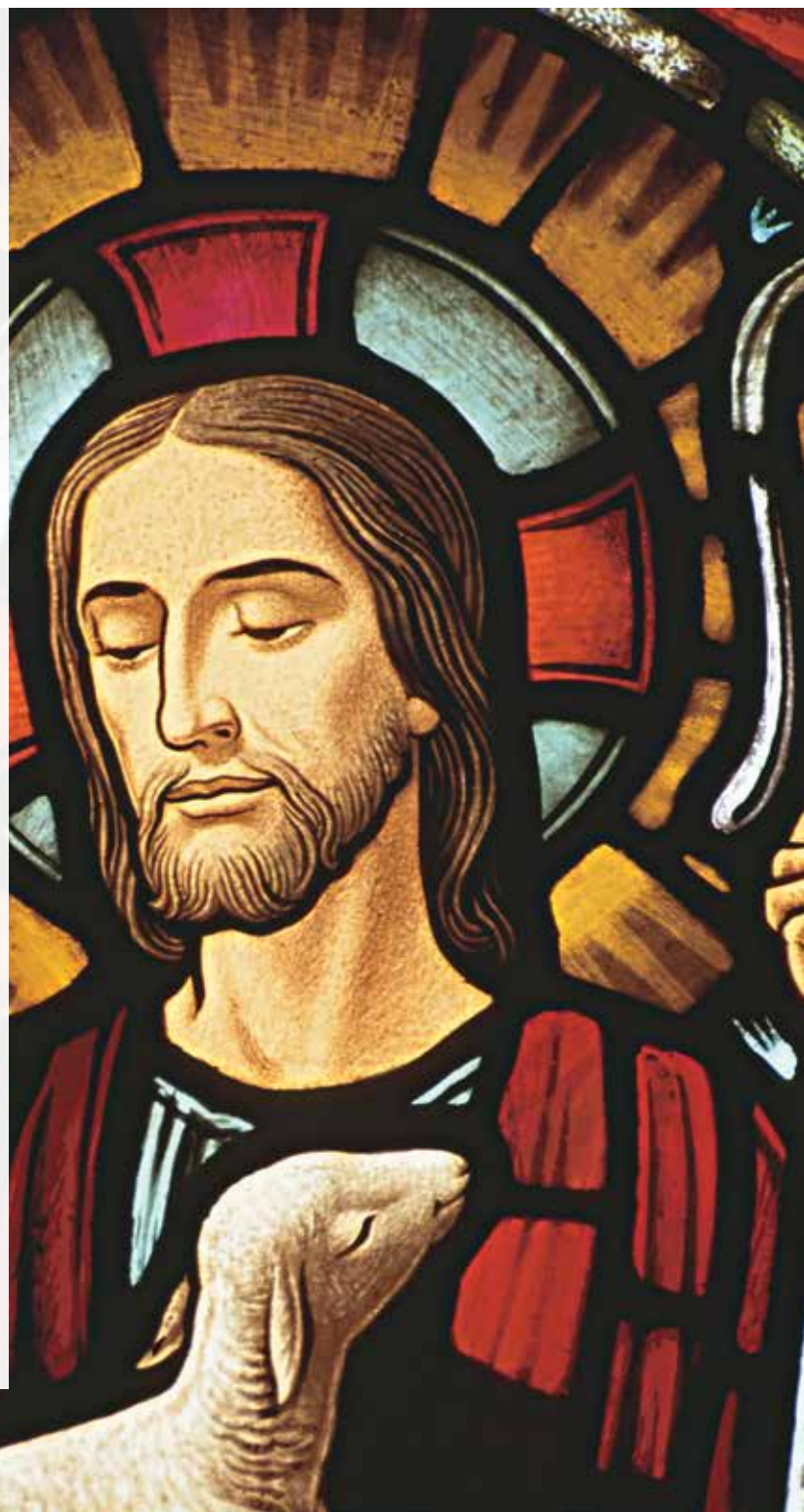
How we dress for an occasion indicates the importance that we place upon that particular celebration. At Mass, we encounter God through the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Dressing appropriately for Mass is one way that we show respect both for God and for our faith family. And this respect is important at all Masses – no matter what time of day or night.

Think about what you are teaching your children when you all wear your “Sunday clothes” to Mass. You are reminding them that Mass is a special celebration. After all, we are going to Jesus’ house.

Some people may quickly point out that Mass shouldn’t be a fashion show – a place to show off your finery – and they are right! We also know that some parishioners come to Mass on their way home from work, and they certainly should not feel embarrassed about arriving at Mass in their work clothes. And no one should ever stay away from Mass because of simplicity of clothing.

But one rule should apply in all instances – our attire at Mass should always be modest. Our clothing should never distract others from what we are gathered together to celebrate – the life, death and resurrection of our Lord.

The celebration of Mass is always a holy occasion and thus should be treated in the most holy manner – in body, mind and spirit.



ST. ANTHONY of PADUA



Celebrating the Healing Power of the Sacrament of Confession

Before Deacon Harry Cramer became fully initiated into the Catholic Church in the 1980s, he accepted the embrace of God's mercy through the Sacrament of Confession.

"It wasn't so much what I said during Reconciliation, or what the priest said to me that was so meaningful," he says. "It was the look on his face — I remember feeling a sense of warmth, love and peace. It was such a good experience and it really set me off on the right foot when it comes to the sacrament."

Having been ordained as a deacon in 2012, he now finds peace by going to Confession regularly.

"When I began preparing for the diaconate, we were asked by our team to go to Reconciliation every three weeks, so I made a habit of it," he says. "I have received so much healing from this sacrament."

At the service of the Church, he enjoys encouraging others to open their hearts to the extraordinary grace of the Sacrament of Confession, as well.

"I am very 'big' on this sacrament," he says. "I am a real believer in it. I try to work it into my homilies, and tell others about it."

To those who are trying to learn more about how to make a good Confession, Deacon Cramer has some helpful tips.

"It helps to refer to a good examination of conscience booklet, and take a thorough look at the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes," he says. "You should think about what you have done in your life, and pray about it. If you are concerned that you may not know how to go to Reconciliation, just reach out to a deacon or a priest for advice before you go. Also, the priests are always very helpful in Confession. Strive to be truly sorry for your sins, and try to make a change in your life to avoid those sins in the future."

Because the graces that Confession has to offer are so helpful on one's journey towards eternity, frequent reception of it is encouraged.



"About once a month is a good goal," Deacon Cramer says. "The Church wants you to go at least once a year, but they hope for more. When you commit a sin, it is a challenge to your relationship with God — a sort of barrier in your friendship with Him. If you don't go to Confession, it is easy to start spiraling more and more down into your sins. Reconciliation helps you return to the flow of grace and come closer to God again."

Over time, Deacon Cramer has seen what a beautiful source of mercy and spiritual help Reconciliation can be for those who need it most.

"I have seen so many people who were really struggling with challenges in their life, and I encouraged them to go to Confession," he says. "On more than one occasion, they say it has made such a difference and changed

their life. There have also been times when people were really, really sick, and they knew they were going to pass away, and I urged them to come to Reconciliation if they wanted to. Later, I saw them after they have met with Father, and I could tell that they are much more at peace. It is an amazing sacrament!"

When asked what he would say to someone who is intimidated to talk to a priest, Deacon Cramer assures him or her not to worry.

"When you confess to a priest, it puts everything in perspective for you," he says. "And when he gives you Absolution, you will feel so much better. It gives you an extra spiritual 'boost' to avoid sin and to strengthen you against the temptations that are out there."

If you would like more information about receiving Reconciliation at our parish, please contact the parish office at 217-222-5996.

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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.

Upcoming Events

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- MARCH 16 FISH FRY — ST. DOMINIC SCHOOL
- MARCH 18 SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION — ST. ANTHONY CHURCH, 3 P.M.
- MARCH 23 FISH FRY — ST. ANTHONY PARISH HALL
- MARCH 25 SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION — ST. PETER CHURCH, 3 P.M.
- MARCH 27 CHRISM MASS — CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, SPRINGFIELD, 6:30 P.M.
- MARCH 29 HOLY THURSDAY, MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, 6:30 P.M.
- MARCH 30 GOOD FRIDAY, LITURGY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD, 6:30 P.M.
- MARCH 31 EASTER VIGIL, 8 P.M.
- APRIL 1 EASTER SUNDAY, MASS 8 A.M., 10:30 A.M.
- APRIL 9 CONFIRMATION, 7 P.M.
- MAY 6 FIRST COMMUNION, NOON
- MAY 22 ST. DOMINIC SCHOOL GRADUATION (TENTATIVE)
- JUNE 23 ST. DOMINIC SCHOOL JUNEFEST, MASS AT 4 P.M., FESTIVAL UNTIL MIDNIGHT
- JULY 21 ST. ANTHONY PICNIC, MASS AT 4 P.M., FESTIVAL UNTIL MIDNIGHT

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