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ST. ANTHONY *of* PADUA

Liturgy of the Word for Children Helps Our Youngest Parishioners Learn about the Gospel

Jesus said, "let the little children come to me." So, when it comes to introducing our youngest parishioners to His Word, there is no better way to do it than in a way that they can understand.

The Liturgy of the Word for Children program is an opportunity for elementary school-age children to spend time together during Mass learning about the Gospel in an age-appropriate setting. This special liturgy is offered both at the 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Masses each Sunday. Ministry Coordinator Vicki Wittland assists the children during the 10:30 a.m. Mass and describes what children experience during their time there.

"We gather the children at the altar just before the first reading and take them back to the chapel," she says. "It's been very nice because the music will play as the children gather. Father is very supportive. The book with the liturgy is similar to the Mass, and he actually will hand it to one of the kids to carry back."

Inside that book is a version of that Sunday's readings and Gospel that is meant to be easier for children to understand. Vicki says the group will spend most of the time concentrating on that Sunday's Gospel before volunteers assist the children in completing a worksheet.

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Parishioner Donna Gail Says “Yes” to Serving Christ and His Church

“We’ve always believed that if we gave to the Lord, then He will provide. With all of my education and everything else, I truly believe it is because of Him — finding the means for the tuition, finding a good job, and being able to live the way I want to live. The Lord truly provides for us when we give generously to Him.” — Donna Gail

Never one to thrust herself into the spotlight, St. Anthony of Padua parishioner Donna Gail has long been marked by her quiet “yes.” Whether it’s leading the Rosary, serving as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, or sitting on a parish committee, Donna is seemingly always ready to help whenever a need is expressed — to lend a helping hand as a member of our parish family.

“The Church is our family,” Donna says. “Just like you step up and serve when asked in a family, I believe we are called to do whatever we can within the Church. And so I always try to say ‘yes’ whenever I’m asked to do something for the Church.”

Donna says that she first learned this from the excellent example of her own parents. Always careful to tithe, Donna’s father and mother worked hard to model the importance of faith through both their words and actions. And so as Donna grew into adulthood, it just seemed natural to follow in their footsteps, “helping whenever asked” and living out the faith in which she’d been raised.

“That’s just how I was raised,” Donna says. “From the time I was a small child, my parents and grandparents were always finding ways to give to the Church.”

It was her family’s way of trusting in the Lord’s providence and thanking God for His many blessings.

“We’ve always believed that if we gave to the Lord, then He will provide,” Donna says. “With all of my education and everything else, I truly believe it is because of Him — finding the means for the tuition, finding a good job, and being able to live the way I want to live. The Lord truly provides for us when we give generously to Him.”

And so, out of thanksgiving for her many blessings, Donna has joyously said “yes” to many parish ministries over the years. She served extensively on both the Finance Committee and Parish Council, regularly leads the Rosary before the 4 p.m. Saturday Mass, and faithfully brings Holy Communion to the sick. Donna was also previously a member of the Quincy Catholic Charities board, describing it as a “rude awakening” to the “great need” within the Quincy area.



When asked about her life of stewardship, parishioner Donna Gail says simply, “That’s just how I was raised.”

Though these “yeses” might require personal sacrifices, Donna says that these ministries have each brought great joy to her life, drawing her closer to Christ and more fully into the life of the parish. She is thankful to continue being able to serve her family, joyfully helping out wherever needed.

“I feel much closer to God and appreciate even more what He has done for me when I’m out there serving,” Donna says. “And so, for me, it’s just about continuing to pray and finding new ways to help the Church, my family, and the community — doing whatever I’m able to do in service of Christ’s Church.”

ST. ANTHONY *of* PADUA



A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Christ Becomes One With Us Through the Eucharist

Dear Parishioners,

Any of us who are old enough to remember the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001, had to have been marked by that experience. As I reflect on this solemn date in our country's history, I also faithfully reflect upon our celebration of the Eucharist. As Catholics, through the Eucharist, we are called to consciously be bread broken and wine poured out for others each day of our lives. We are called to become what we receive.

Throughout the calendar year, certain dates are commemorated to inspire us to remember and honor those who may have been lost. These kinds of days — like 9/11 — are testimony to the reality that we, as human beings, are consciously connected to one another. There are unfortunately some who would have us believe that we are independent, separated from those around us.

For us as Catholics, the reception of the Eucharist is the most intimate union with God Himself on this earth. It is through the Body of Christ that we are unified to God and one another, and reminds us that we are invited to be bread broken and wine poured out for our world.

We gather as a community around the table of the Eucharist. We receive the gift of Christ's Body and Blood

so that we may become the embodiment of God's love among us. As we receive Christ, we should recommit ourselves to following in Jesus' footsteps and reaching out to those around us with mercy, encouragement and compassion. By doing that, we reaffirm our identity as disciples and our Baptismal commitment to be His Body and Blood given for others.

Unfortunately to some, the Eucharist has been diluted to the point that it is viewed as merely a ritual or a symbol. As Catholics, we know that it is Christ's real presence among us — we are to accept that gift and personally become Christ's presence everywhere we go and in everything we do.

The very word "Eucharist" means "thanksgiving." When we live a Eucharistic life, it has everything to do with gratitude. Let us be thankful for the Eucharist and thankful for one another, and let us demonstrate that through the love that pours out of us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Tom Donovan". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Fr. Tom Donovan
Pastor



Questions and Answers

ABOUT OUR ANNUAL ST

Once again, it's time for our Annual Stewardship Renewal. Every year, someone asks, as you may have asked yourself, "Didn't we just have a Stewardship Renewal? Aren't we sufficiently 'renewed' by now?" Yes, we had a Stewardship Renewal last year, and we're going to have one next year, too! This is an annual occurrence – part of the rhythm of parish life at St. Anthony of Padua. Just as the Church proposes a time of spiritual renewal each Lent, we believe in the importance of a yearly examination of commitment. Is the Lord asking you to give more time, talent, or treasure to our parish this year? The following Q&A about our Stewardship Renewal should help you discern your commitments to St. Anthony of Padua this year.

Commitment Weekend is September 22-23. Don't forget to bring your Commitment Card to Mass!

I feel like my life is already too full with family obligations and work obligations. I barely even have time to relax. How can I possibly share my time and talents with St. Anthony of Padua?

We all have many obligations to our families, jobs, schools, and other endeavors. But we also all have the same number of hours in the day with which to accomplish these things. The issue is not how much time we have, but how we prioritize that time.

Before you fill out your Commitment Card, take some time to reflect on your priorities, and where God fits into your day-to-day life. Remember, living as true stewards of God's gifts involves giving back the first fruits of what He has given to us in thanksgiving, not the "leftovers."

I am happy with my current level of parish participation. Why do I need to keep filling out a Commitment Card every year?

As part of the renewal process, it is important that we consider our current level of participation in parish life at St. Anthony of Padua. Sometimes, the call to stewardship

involves the quality of service in addition to its quantity. In looking through the opportunities for ministry available at the parish, you may find yourself drawn to a new ministry you haven't tried before, or new ways to share of your time with God to enrich and enlighten your prayer life. So, even though your current level of parish participation might not change drastically, the ways in which you participate may evolve as you grow in living the stewardship way of life.

Even if you end up continuing to participate in the exact same ministries as you have in the past, marking and turning in a Commitment Card means you have reviewed your present ministries and recommitted yourself to them.



ST. ANTHONY *of* PADUA



STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL

I'm not very active in the Church and, frankly, feel like it may be too late to get involved. Why should I fill out a Commitment Card?

It's never too late to renew your faith life, and filling out a Commitment Card is a simple step through which you can immediately re-enter the life of the parish. Our parish community is not here to judge you, but to welcome and nourish you in your faith journey. Begin by checking the box that says, "Attend weekly Mass and Holy Days of Obligation," and take some time to discern additional ways in which God is calling you from that starting point.

I'm physically unable to attend Mass or be active in parish life at St. Anthony of Padua. Is there any reason for me to submit a Commitment Card?

Of course! Your prayers are just as important to the success of our parish community in carrying out its mission as ministry participation and financial contributions. Take a moment to look over some of the opportunities to spend quiet time with God listed in the "Stewardship of Time" section of the Commitment Card, and take a step towards growing in your relationship with Christ and His Church.

I'm reluctant to make a financial pledge for the year in case my circumstances change and I'm unable to fulfill it. Should I?

Your Commitment Card is not a legally binding contract; it is a pledge of intentions. Make your pledge based on what you are setting out to do to give back to God, and do your best to fulfill that pledge. If your financial circumstances change, your gift will likely change, as well, but it is still important to prioritize God first. Nobody is going to send the bill collector to your house if you can't fulfill your pledge due to a change in

your financial situation! But we've all got to start somewhere, and it's important that we begin our commitment by writing down our goals for giving back of our gifts to God.

I've expressed interest in a ministry in the past through filling out a Commitment Card, but nobody from the parish ever followed up with me about it.

While we do our best to consistently follow up with everyone who has shown interest in the opportunities for ministry at St. Anthony of Padua, we are human, and we sometimes fall short in our follow-up. If this has happened to you in the past, we sincerely apologize, and we encourage you to renew your interest in any activities in which you might like to participate by filling out a Commitment Card this year. Every year, we go into the renewal with every intention of making sure that everyone who has expressed interest is contacted with more information, and we will do so again this year.

I don't agree with everything that goes on at St. Anthony of Padua. I feel like when I fill out a Commitment Card, it condones the things I disagree with.

In filling out a Commitment Card, you are not making a pledge between yourself and St. Anthony of Padua; you are making a pledge between yourself and God. Disagreements occur in life. This is a part of being human, and we respect the opinions of each and every member of our parish family. But it is of utmost importance that each of us fulfills our discipleship of Christ by growing in our relationship with Him and utilizing the gifts He has given us to carry out His mission on Earth, regardless of disagreements or misunderstandings. Beyond helping the parish, filling out a Commitment Card expresses a devotion to spiritual growth and a strong belief in the Catholic faith.

Every parish family receives a special "Stewardship Package" in the mail that further explains our parish's vision of stewardship. It includes a booklet that describes every ministry in the parish, as well as your Commitment Card.

Stewardship

Living in Love

“**G**od is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him” (1 Jn 4:16). As Christ’s disciples, we are called to live lives of love. When asked which commandment is the most important, Jesus answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.” He immediately followed this command with, “Love your neighbor as yourself. No commandment is greater than these” (Mk 12:29-31).

The life of a Christian is, essentially, all about love! This doesn’t mean that Christ preached an abstract Gospel, or that we need to love simply because “it feels good.” The reality is quite the opposite. Indeed, Christ’s Gospel of love is one of dramatic action, and living in that love calls each of us to action.

What is this love, then, of which Christ speaks? How are we to live it out today?

Christ, the God who, as John tells us, “is love” Himself, came to Earth out of pure love for us. So that we might have everlasting life, Christ took the punishment for our sins. He, the Lord of all creation, was mocked, scourged and ultimately murdered on the cross to atone for the sins that we, His creatures, have committed. Now, that’s love! And it is the love that we are called to imitate throughout our lives.

Notice the selfless nature of Jesus’ act. He gained nothing in return for what He did, and He calls us to love in the same manner. How do we do that here and now? Do we die on our own personal crosses? The answer, in a way, is “yes.” We don’t necessarily die on the wood of the literal cross as Christ did, but we must die to self for the sake of others. That is the love of Christ, and that is the love He calls us to every day. If we want to truly love God, we must love others. God Himself showed us the reality of this need when he commanded that we love our neighbor just as we love Him. And then Christ explained, “Whatever you do to the least of those, you do to me.” If we are called to love God, then we are called to love our neighbor, for Christ resides in each one of us. It must be a love like Christ has shown us – one of selflessness. We should want for nothing more than the good of our neighbor.

There are many ways that we can show our love to others, particularly through prayer and service. Here at our parish, there are many ministries that offer us the opportunity to serve our neighbors. If we offer a little bit of time, we can help out in the parish office doing seemingly menial yet important tasks, such as stuffing inserts into the bulletins so that fellow parishioners are aware of news and events within the parish. Those of us with an aptitude for teaching may be called to serve others through RCIA or our Religious Education program. There is also always a need for more lectors and Eucharistic Ministers to aid the priest in bringing Christ to other parishioners at Mass.

These are but a few of the countless opportunities we have to serve our parish and local community. However we are called to do so, one thing is for certain: the love of Christ calls us to action. How will we show our love for God this year? Remember, “Whatever you do for the least of those, you do for me.”

There are many ways that we can show our love to others, particularly through prayer and service. Here at our parish, there are many ministries that offer us the opportunity to serve our neighbors.



ST. ANTHONY *of* PADUA



Sung From Our Hearts: *Music Unites Us in Prayer During the Mass*

Music is such an integral part of our celebration of the Mass. We often sing our responses and come together in the singing of the “Gloria,” the Psalm, the “Alleluia” before the Gospel reading and during the Eucharistic Prayer. Our voices raised in prayerful song bring us more closely together as a parish family. Whether we are strong singers or not, it doesn’t matter, because the singing comes from our hearts.

We sing in response to our cantor’s voice — but what does song mean to the cantor?

Debbie Davis grew up in a musical family, singing in our choir when she was a student at St. Anthony Grade School. And now, she continues sharing her gift of song when, as cantor, she sings during the 8 a.m. Sunday Mass.

She has been singing for Mass for about five years. She traditionally is accompanied by guitarist Bonnie Nytes, and is joined in singing by Paul Soebbing and Janis Foreman.

Although Debbie is a cantor, she is not a member of the choir that traditionally sings at Easter and Christmas.

Debbie began singing during Mass simply when there was a need for a singer.

“I was available, so I said, ‘why not?’” she says.

To Debbie, offering her singing talent during Mass is an act of stewardship.

“That, to me, is as important as giving money,” Debbie says. “We need to have our church here and available. People need to take care of the church, and that’s what I feel I’m doing. Also, along that line, I feel I’m getting more out of Mass when I put something into it.”

Bonnie chooses the music the two will perform.

“We get together and we get it taken care of,” Debbie says. “We’ve sung together long enough that we know what the other will do.”

As Debbie sings during Mass, she feels she is able to draw closer to Christ. Not surprisingly, the Consecration is the part of the Mass most dear to her. That feeling of



closeness to the Lord extends naturally for her to the congregation.

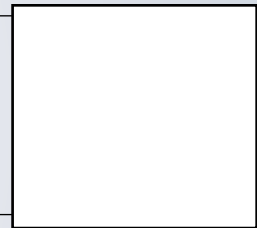
“It also helps me feel closer to my fellow parishioners,” she says. “They come to the same Mass, and we get to know them. They recognize me.”

So when we join in the singing at Mass, we are joining our voices with the cantors and musicians to become one family in prayer. And Debbie takes joy in that connection.

“I feel really good when I walk out of Mass, knowing I was part of that celebration,” Debbie says.

“We need to have our church here and available. People need to take care of the church, and that’s what I feel I’m doing. Also, along that line, I feel I’m getting more out of Mass when I put something into it.” — Debbie Davis

ST. ANTHONY *of* PADUA



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Return Service Requested

WWW.STANTHONYPADUA.ORG

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.

Liturgy of the Word for Children Helps Our Youngest Parishioners Learn about the Gospel *continued from front cover*

Pictures and activities help provide a visual expression of what the kids are hearing.

"I always tell myself, 'you don't know what they'll pull out of it' and it could be the tiniest little thing that gets into their brain and makes a difference maybe now and maybe later," Vicki says of what the children learn. "We try not to be strict about paying attention and we really try to not have anything where they might leave with a negative experience."

In planting those seeds of faith, Vicki says she and the volunteers will sometimes send extra worksheets home with the children in hopes that they'll later discuss it with their parents. She adds that the children aren't always talkative, but sometimes they will ask questions about

readings that can spark more conversation. This can help even the youngest parishioners get a feel for their developing faith community.

"Occasionally, a parent will come back and bring their child with them if they're shy," Vicki says. "They might come once just to see what it is themselves."

Volunteers are needed to make both sessions of the Liturgy of the Word for Children successful, and Vicki says the children get particularly excited when a parent or family member lends their time.

"The kids love when they're own parent is doing it," she says. "You can see that the child really likes that, and they love when they have their own connection to the teacher."

Adult parishioners who wish to get involved with the Liturgy of the Word for Children can express their interest by contacting Vicki Wittland at 217-223-3610 or vmwitt@comcast.net, or by calling the 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.