



ST. ANTHONY *of* PADUA

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Keeping God's House Beautiful: Church Decorator Ministry Members Prepare for Christmas

Royal blue, silver, purple and red — Christmas looks a little different each year at St. Anthony of Padua. But one thing that doesn't change is how hard the Church Decorator Ministry members work to make our church look beautiful for one of the most important days of our liturgical year.

"We really want to make sure the church looks different and special for Christmas," says Jackie Dreyer, who coordinates the ministry along with Vicki Wittland.

The group also decorates the church throughout the rest of the year with decorations they have on hand, as well as artificial flowers and fresh, locally purchased flowers.

Vicki and Jackie began coordinating the ministry a few years back, following in the footsteps of Winnie Huber and Trudy Stupavsky. There are about 10 other decorators who also pitch in at busy times.

Decorating for Christmas alone can take the group two or three days. Depending on the year, there may only be a few days between the last Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve. There are five Christmas trees to set up, as well as the Nativity scene to arrange.

"It's amazing to see the end product and how it all gets arranged," Jackie says.



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Stewardship and Hospitality for the Advent and Christmas Seasons

It's the Advent and Christmas season. You've extended invitations, planned the menu and decorated your home. You are ready to be hospitable. But what does it really mean to live the Stewardship of Hospitality?

The Bible tells us in 1 Peter 4:8-11, "Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. Whoever preaches, let it be with the words of God; whoever serves, let it be with the strength that God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and dominion forever and ever."

When we read Peter's words, we see that hospitality is more than good manners. We see that hospitality is part of what it means to be a faithful steward. So, during the hustle and bustle of Advent and Christmas, how can we be hospitable?

Open your home to strangers — The holidays can be an especially difficult time for people. This year, do something about it. If you're already expecting strangers, welcome them warmly. Decide ahead of time that showing love is more important than passing judgment.

Be truly cheerful — When you open your home for the holidays, you may be a happy host, but are you a cheerful one? Believe it or not, there's a difference. A happy person feels happiness. A cheerful person causes happiness.

Use your gifts to serve — Hosting and serving go together. You bake the turkey, pour the drinks and slice the pie. To some degree, this is expected and normal. What's not normal is for a host to truly serve — to look for the needs in others and the gifts in themselves and find even a small way to help.

Give God glory — When family, friends and strangers enter your home, it's an opportunity for them to see Christ in you. You never know what's going on "behind the scenes" in people's lives or how much an encounter like this might mean to them. So when you welcome and serve your guests, remember that your ultimate goal is to give God glory.

This month, let us remember that Advent and Christmas give us the valuable opportunity to reflect on Jesus' call to live as stewards and disciples of His Word — and that through hospitality, we can live out that calling.

Open your home to strangers *Be truly cheerful*
Give God glory *Use your gifts to serve*

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A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

A Steward's Response to the Ultimate Christmas Gift

Dear Parishioners,

Christmas is America's favorite holiday. Consider for a moment the amount of effort we put into the holiday — decorating our homes with ornate light displays, buying boxes upon boxes of presents, addressing Christmas cards and attending seasonal get-togethers. When taken all together, it staggers the imagination. Whatever might happen to be next on the list of “favorite holidays” — Valentine's Day, Halloween or Thanksgiving — it can't hold a candle to our investment in Christmas.

Don't get me wrong — I love Christmas, too. But I'm afraid that many of us somehow miss the main reason for our Christmas celebrations.

I've sometimes heard people say things like, “Getting everything ready for Christmas becomes so hectic, I don't want to do it every year. But, you know, Christmas is really for the children.” And occasionally, I've heard or read in a letter to the editor that Christmas is about the hope that a newborn baby brings to the world. Even in the early winter, when the days are short, we can celebrate babyhood, a new human life.

Both those sentiments are wrong because they're too limited. Of course, it's true that many of our Christmas customs are for the children — we might not get to hang our stockings to be filled by Santa Claus otherwise. And it's true that the birth of a baby, any baby, brings joy and hope to all those around. Yes, many of our Christmas celebrations are centered on the children, and the birth of a child offers a promise for the future.

At Christmas, we celebrate not just any baby, but a particular baby. We celebrate His birth not because it's cute to see a baby in a manger filled with hay and surrounded by farm animals — instead, we celebrate this birth because of Who this baby is and what He did as an adult, for *all* of us.

A human baby is certainly a wonderful creation, made in the image of God. But Jesus is more than that, not less, for He is God the Son who took on human nature in order to redeem us from the results of the sin into which we had fallen. He didn't stay a baby. He grew up and taught and preached and healed. Finally, He was put to death “for our sake” as the Creed affirms and rose from the dead. That's

why we celebrate His birth more than 2,000 years later. That's why normal routines are suspended for a few joyful days each year.

In response to the gift the Father gave us with the birth of His Son, we joyfully exchange gifts with each other, share with the poor, and offer our gifts of time, talent and treasure to the Church. God gives to us — and as stewards, we must do our best to faithfully use those gifts.

A joyful and blessed Christmas to all of you!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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

Fr. Tom Donovan
Pastor



Eucharistic Ministers of Holy Communion

Serving in Faith and by Example

“From my perspective, being in the church and watching the consecration and receiving Jesus is one way to grow closer. But the opportunity to be a Eucharistic Minister and giving the Body and Blood of Christ to the parish is very important. It draws you closer to Christ and they realize how important it is.” — Bill Anderson

When our Eucharistic Ministers of Holy Communion are distributing the Body and Blood of Christ during Mass, they are serving as examples to us of growing closer to our Lord by receiving Him and serving Him with reverence.

Bill Anderson is the parish contact person for those serving as lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, greeters and ushers. He provides the training to new Eucharistic Ministers, whether they are joining after the Stewardship Renewal or sign on at other times during the year.

“I try to make it convenient to them while their interest is piqued,” he says.

The Eucharistic Ministers help distribute Communion not only at Mass, but several also take the sacrament to parishioners in the hospital or who are homebound. Other duties also include helping distribute ashes on Ash Wednesday, and helping with the Blessing of Throats on St. Blaise’s feast day.

After new Eucharistic Ministers receive their training and have taken the Protecting God’s Children classes, they receive a three-year commission from the bishop.

There are several dozen Eucharistic Ministers available for all our Masses. Bill does not assign anyone to a particular Mass, however — the custom is that when a Eucharistic Minister arrives for Mass, he or she puts on a crucifix necklace

kept on hand, which indicates his or her readiness to serve. Eight Eucharistic Ministers are needed for most Masses.

“Now we can look and see if all the crosses are gone, we have the number we need at Mass,” Bill says.

The act of serving as a Eucharistic Minister is such that the minister undoubtedly grows closer to Christ. It is an experience that can evoke a sense of awe in a minister — older Catholics recall the days when one was forbidden from touching a consecrated host, and the consecrated wine was not

shared with the congregation. So the idea of a layperson distributing the Body and Blood of Christ remains impactful for many.

“From my perspective, being in the church and watching the consecration and receiving Jesus is one way to grow closer,” Bill says. “But the opportunity to be a Eucharistic Minister and giving the Body and Blood of Christ to the parish is very important. It draws you closer to Christ and they realize how important it is.”

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The impetus for parishioners to become Eucharistic Ministers often comes from watching others in that role.

“People try to figure out, ‘Where can I fit in? What can I do to help the parish and be a better Catholic?’” Bill says. “The example they see each time they go to Mass and see a fellow parishioner involved in the ministry — I think they look at the Eucharistic Ministers and say, ‘Can I do it?’ So they reach out and want to see if they can. The training gives them the knowledge and the confidence they need.”

The training takes less than one hour. The requirements to be a Eucharistic Minister are to be a practicing Catholic, having received the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, and to regularly receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. One should also observe Mass obligations for holy days, and practice fasting and abstinence during Lent.

The service of the Eucharistic Ministers also helps to teach the congregation by example regarding the decorum they practice during Communion and even in how they dress.

“Dressing appropriately is important to have the reverence for Holy Communion and the desire to grow in faith,” Bill says.

Anyone interested in becoming a Eucharistic Minister may sign up during the Stewardship Renewal, or may call Bill Anderson at 217-257-2108.

Advent/Christmas schedule and Activities

Masses:

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

Christmas: Midnight and 9 a.m.

Dec. 31 (New Year’s Eve): 4 p.m.

Jan. 1 (New Year’s Day): 9 a.m.

Reconciliation

St. Anthony of Padua: Saturday 5-6 p.m., and by appointment

City-Wide Confession

Dec. 15: 4 p.m. at St. Francis Solanus

Activities

St. Anthony Ladies Christmas Party: Dec. 1, at noon, in the Parish Hall

First Reconciliation: Dec. 5, 6:30 p.m. in the Church

Pancake and Sausage Breakfast: Dec. 8, 7:30 a.m. to noon, in the Parish Hall

Last Day of School: Dec. 20

Parish Office Hours Dec. 23 thru Jan. 3: 8:00 a.m. to noon

New Year’s Eve Dance: Dec. 31, 8 to 12:30 p.m., in Parish Hall Basement, \$10 per person, BYO beverages and snacks

Recognizing the Season of Advent, **We Can Create** *Faithful and Loving Traditions*

As the season of Christmas approaches, it is all too easy to get swept up in the frantic commercialism that tells us that Christmas is already happening — from now up until the 25th, and not a day more. To combat this misguided understanding, and to embrace what this time of year truly means, we might consider how to enter into the sacred quiet and careful preparation of the Advent season with our families.

Starting new Advent-centered traditions within our homes is a simple way to differentiate between the two seasons and embrace the grace that comes with this season of preparation. While hanging up the stockings, consider hanging up a stocking for Jesus. Family members can place their “gifts” for Jesus there. These can be sacrifices like giving up desserts during the week or committing to doing one extra chore for another family member. Advent can be as much of a time for fasting and almsgiving as the season of Lent — after all, both seasons are preparing our hearts for a great feast of the Church.

A similar activity is to create a manger bed for Jesus. For every good deed that a family member does, have them place a little straw in a small manger in a prominent

place in the house. By Christmas, there will be a fluffy bed in which the Christ Child can be placed.

If your parish has an angel tree or participates in a gift outreach, be sure that the whole family is included in the shopping by making it a family outing, or make a card for the child together. It's easy to see those activities as a quick good deed, but anything that helps emphasize that there is another person on the receiving end helps to make the act much more meaningful.

While there are lots of activities that can help to prepare our hearts to celebrate Christmas, nothing centers us securely in this season of Advent quite like participating in the liturgy already prepared for us. As you are able, go to any penance services or live nativities, or take part in service opportunities on offer in our parish. Spend some time with your kids in the adoration chapel or in front of the Blessed Sacrament, reminding them that the Christ Who dwells there in the monstrance is the same Christ Who came to this world as a tiny baby — for it will be there in the presence of Christ that we can truly sing, with hearts ready to receive Him, “Oh come let us adore Him, oh come let us adore Him.”

Starting new Advent-centered traditions within our homes is a simple way to differentiate between the two seasons and embrace the grace that comes with this season of preparation.



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A WORD FROM OUR YOUTH

This month, we speak with
Quincy Notre Dame student Parker Brown,
who shares his ongoing faith journey with us.

Name: Parker Brown

Age: 16

School: Quincy Notre Dame

Grade: 11th/junior

1. Tell us a little about your family.

I am the oldest of four children. I have a brother, Braden, who is in eighth grade; a sister Kaitlyn, who is in seventh grade; and a sister, Lydia, who is in fourth grade at St. Dominic School. We are thrilled we can attend Catholic schools to learn more about Christ's Holy Church. Both my parents are teachers and are very helpful when it comes to our curriculum.

2. What is something unique about you?

For seven years, I have felt Our Lord's calling to the priesthood.

3. What are some of your hobbies?

Some of my hobbies are, writing, playing Chess and reading.

4. How do you get involved with stewardship at St. Anthony Parish and/or your school?

I first started serving in fourth grade, which soon opened my eyes to the Mass. When I was a freshman in high school, I started as a Eucharistic Minister. Since my freshman year, I have joined many religious events at QND. I am involved in HAFOC, a Catholic youth group at QND; St. Joseph of Arimathea Society, a small organization at QND that helps with pallbearers at funerals for those who do not have family; and the Melchizedek Project, a small group of men at QND that are thinking about priesthood that get together.

5. What is one of your favorite things about St. Anthony Parish?

The accessibilities to the Holy Sacraments — especially the Sacraments of Penance and the Most Holy Eucharist.

6. How has St. Anthony Parish helped shape your life?

This parish has opened my eyes to the Holy Sacrifice of The Mass and the importance to the sacraments. With the help of Fr. Tom, this parish has taught me a lot on obedience to Christ and His Church teachings.



Parker Brown is a St. Anthony parishioner and student at Quincy Notre Dame.

"This parish has opened my eyes to the Holy Sacrifice of The Mass and the importance to the sacraments. With the help of Fr. Tom, this parish has taught me a lot on obedience to Christ and His Church teachings." — Parker Brown, Quincy Notre Dame junior

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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.

Keeping God's House Beautiful: Church Decorator Ministry Members Prepare for Christmas *continued from front cover*

While Jackie has no formal background in decorating, she visualizes what she thinks will look good, and Vicki helps make it happen.

"We work together well," Jackie says. "It's God's house and we want to make sure it looks beautiful."

Vicki and Jackie also make sure the vestibule is decorated throughout the year. They also keep fresh flowers or a plant on the altar and alongside the Blessed Virgin

statue. Of course, they keep the plants or flowers looking healthy during the week when they attend daily Mass.

Jackie encourages anyone to consider getting involved in this ministry — especially those who can help carry some of the heavier items, like the limestone pieces used to decorate.

"This brings out the creative side in you," Jackie says. "And it builds community because we are all working together to make the church look beautiful for God."

If you would like to get involved in the process of helping to make our parish look beautiful — whether for Christmas or throughout the liturgical year — please contact Jackie Dreyer at 217-222-5996 or Vicki Wittland at 217-316-9936.

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