

St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Welcome to Our New Parish Newsletter!

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Welcome to the first issue of our new monthly parish newsletter!

As our parish community continues to grow and develop stewardship as a way of life, we recognize the need for increased communication. Through this newsletter, we hope to share stories that will help us all to better understand who we are as Catholics and what we are doing as individual members of Christ's family. In upcoming issues, we will focus on what's going on in the St. Margaret Mary community, and how those activities and events are changing hearts and minds and helping parishioners grow closer to Christ and each other. Each article will ultimately focus on Christ at work within our community through the stewardship way of life.

Our hope is that this newsletter

will be a successful means for ongoing education and formation in our faith, and I pray it will be a vehicle through which you are informed and inspired to become more actively involved in the life of Christ and the parish.

Another way I hope to improve our parish's communication efforts is through a comprehensive parish survey that will be conducted this spring. Through the survey, I want to hear from you regarding our parish and its future. A survey will be mailed to each home, and then I will ask you to take the time to fill it



out and return it as soon as possible. Your input will be very important, and it will give the priests, deacons and ministry leaders of St. Margaret Mary a better understanding of your thoughts about our parish.

This fall, we will conduct an Annual Stewardship Renewal. The

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What Does Stewardship Mean?



What comes to mind when you hear the word “stewardship”?

Do you think of it as just another way to talk about money? Do you quickly dismiss it as a notion that has nothing to do with being Catholic?

Stewardship is actually a concept that is Scripturally based, and is absolutely vital to our life as Catholics. God tells us, in the very first book of the Old Testament, “Be fertile and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and all the living things that move on the earth” (Gen 1:28).

What does that mean to us today? It simply means that God is telling us, “This is yours, so take care of it.” One of the first things God tells us to do is to be good stewards of the gifts He has entrusted to us!

The Old Testament is not the only place where we can find references to stewardship. Indeed, of the 36 parables in the New Testament, more than half of them deal with time, talent, possessions, or money. Therefore, if Jesus spoke of stewardship that much, it should be a very important part of our lives!

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As Catholics, we refer to the three facets of stewardship as “time, talent, and treasure.” Although these are three concrete ways to express and measure stewardship, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops tells us that stewardship is part of discipleship. Stewardship is a way of responding to God’s call in every aspect of our lives.

The Scriptures and Church traditions teach us one important point that cannot be overstated — that stewardship is primarily based on our need to give in gratitude, not on the Church’s need to receive. Of course, both the Catholic Church and our particular parish will always need money. However, we are not asked to give simply to defray costs and fund charitable programs. We are instead asked to remember our *need* to gratefully return a portion of our time, talent, and treasure to God, recognizing all that He has given to us.

It is important to remember that stewardship is a way of life, and not a program. True Catholic stewardship involves an ongoing call to live as followers of Christ. It takes time to find and define personal goals. You can begin by examining your personal commitments to the parish. How do you live your faith in your daily life with your family and friends? How much time do you spend in daily prayer, going to Mass or being involved in parish ministries and activities? What percentage of your income should you give back to God every week? What talents do you have that could be used to strengthen our parish family?

The coming months will see us increasing and intensifying our education and communication on stewardship. We will be developing a better understanding of how stewardship is a way of responding to God’s call to discipleship. And with God’s help, changes will occur in each of our hearts as we devote ourselves to a stewardship renewal within our parish. Examine how you are currently responding to God’s call to stewardship. If God called you home tomorrow, would He proclaim, “Well done, my good and faithful servant”?

KEEPING JESUS IN THE CENTER OF LIFE WITH THE HELP OF OUR PARISH SCHOOL

When Dan Barton's 9-year-old daughter Hailie had a birthday party, he couldn't help but notice how well she and her friends were getting along. To Dan, it was a testimony of the beautiful friendships Hailie has been forming at St. Margaret Mary Catholic School.

"There was no bullying among them, which is such a big problem in schools nowadays," he says. "Seeing her play so nicely with them made me grateful that as Catholic parents, we have such a great support system through our parish school. We have a lot of backup. For example, in recent years, there have been students who had a mom or dad pass away, and the school community has really been there for them."

Dan and his wife, Denise, also send their son Chase, 7, to our parish school. Year after year, they continue to be truly pleased with the both the religious and academic aspects of St. Margaret Mary's.

"When it was time for Hailie to go to kindergarten, we started looking at different schools," Dan says. "When we visited St. Margaret Mary Catholic School, I was instantly impressed with it, and I still am. The school is phenomenal, both academically and religiously speaking. It successfully integrates the faith into what the children are studying, which makes them more apt to follow Catholic practices in their life."

Likewise, Steve and Kelly



Community and fellowship are important aspects of school life at St. Margaret Mary, for students like the Barton children and their families.

Odegaard, parents of four children, two of whom go to our parish school – Gabriella, 9, and Adrianna, 7 – had a first impression similar to the Bartons, and it's one that stuck.

"We wanted to choose a school with a strong Catholic identity, and as soon as we took a look at St. Margaret Mary's, we knew that would be the case," Kelly says. "We really try as a family to put Jesus in the center of our lives, and we wanted a school that would help us carry this desire out."

For the last several years, the Odegaards have been deeply satisfied with the ways that the school has built up their children's faith in Christ.

"Having our kids at such a good Catholic school has allowed them to keep Jesus in their daily lives," Kelly says. "From the prayers they say at school to the texts they read, their faith is supported at every turn. I enjoy going to the school Mass on Fridays with the kids. As a parent, it is so wonderful to hear the homily, and see that it reinforces what my husband and I are teaching our kids at home."

Time and time again, they have been pleased with the academic environment of the school, as well.

"We have been extremely impressed with every single teacher our kids have had – they are so caring and loving, and great at what they do," Kelly says. "We are also very happy with the curriculum they are using and the fact that they are really being challenged by it. This is really important to us."

They have also enjoyed the opportunity to network and associate with faithful Catholic school families.

"It's so great to not have to worry about our kids when they are at school," Kelly says. "As parents, we haven't had to deal with so many of the negative things affecting children in today's culture."

We highly recommend the school to all of our friends. We couldn't be happier there. Even though it is a real financial sacrifice to send your kids to a Catholic school, we feel that it is a sacrifice worth making. We accommodate our budget to be able to fit it in."

If you would like more information on our parish school, please call the school office at 847-658-5313 or visit www.stmmschool.org.



Families GROW



Sara Martinez is so happy to see her seventh-grade son and fifth-grade daughter growing in their faith through Gather.

For Janice Piemonte, a busy mom of three, the thought of having another meeting to attend was initially overwhelming.

“My first thought was, ‘Really? I don’t have time!’” Janice says. “Then I thought, ‘You know what, I’m not going to judge this. I’m going to experience it. It can’t hurt, so let’s give it a try.’”

Janice was not alone in her thoughts when, last year, the traditional religious education classes shifted to a family-based model with the inauguration of the *Gather* program. But it wasn’t long before Janice and her second-grade son were sold on the new program.

“I love it!” she says.

Sara Martinez, whose seventh-grade son and fifth-grade daughter attend *Gather*, was also a bit skeptical of the time commitment at first. But the transformation she has seen in her children over the past year has convinced her that this is the best way for her family to grow in their faith together.

“Now, my son wants to discuss the things that he’s learned in the sessions,” Sara says. “My daughter used

to ask, ‘Why do I need to go to religious education?’ Now she’s enjoying it. She wants to go, she wants to learn more.”

Gather meets every three weeks, with 11 sessions over the course of the year. Families can sign up for either the Wednesday evening sessions, which take place from 5:45 until 8 p.m., or the Sunday morning sessions, which take place from 10:15 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Both sessions offer programming for children in kindergarten through high school, with the Sunday morning sessions having an additional option for 3 and 4-year-old preschoolers. Childcare is also available for little ones, beginning at 18 months.

Each session begins with snacks and a time for families to sit and enjoy the company of other parishioners. This social time is followed by a short time of prayer with everyone gathered, followed by children going to their grade-based classes. For the parents, each session includes a speaker addressing relevant topics and helping them to continue their faith formation. All members of the parish are invited to join us for these presentations.

“The speakers have been outstanding,” Janice says.

“Every session, we come away with something we can work on as a family, or on a personal basis, or in the larger community,” Sara adds.

The parents are also empowered to continue their children’s spiritual development at home through resources and guides they can experience together, as a family, on their own schedule.

For many parents, the greatest benefit they have seen through the program is the opportunity for their children to see them prioritizing their faith, and continuing their own growth.

“I think it’s really important for our children to see that we’re involved in this, too – it’s not just us sending them, we’re doing this as a family,” says Ralph Melgosa, a father of four boys, who, along with his wife, attends *Gather* with his eighth-grade twins. “You don’t have to be preachy. You just have to show them, this is important to me.”

“It’s a way for you to grow and to have your child see you put an emphasis on the faith,” Janice adds.

ING TOGETHER *in Faith*

“It helps your child know that the faith is important to your family.”

Sara is also especially grateful for the way that *Gather* has provided her family with the opportunity to get to know others in the parish.

“I believe the way they designed the program is for the community to be stronger, and that’s what I like the most,” Sara says. “We get to know the other families and they’re families that share your values and your faith. Every time that I go, I feel that I’m part of something bigger and I’d never felt that before.”

Ellie Nelson, our Director of Religious Education, works alongside Teresa Chiappone, our Director of Young Adult and Youth Ministry to facilitate *Gather*. Ellie is very pleased with the impact she sees it having in the parish.

“It is my hope that from the oldest person there to the youngest person, that they would begin or renew or deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ,” she says. “We hope to give them deeper experiences of God, through coming here.”

As plans begin to unfold for the 2017-2018 school year, *Gather* volunteers are needed in a number of areas. From serving on the “Design Team,” coming up with topics and creative ideas for the *Gather* sessions, to catechists and aides in classrooms, to people willing to work with logistics and hospitality, there is a way for everyone who wants to become involved, to serve the children and families of our community.

Families who have not yet experienced *Gather* are encouraged to come and see what it’s all about.

“Be open minded,” Janice says. “Your children aren’t always going to be little, and they aren’t always going to be here to do this with you. It’s important, in these younger years, to do what you can to instill values and faith in your children.”

“All the tools you can get, all the people you can meet – it’s totally worth it,” Sara says.

Ralph encourages other parents, wherever they are in their faith, to be open to growing in their faith through the *Gather* program.

“Whether we’ve just started on our journey, halfway there, have lapsed on our journey and are just coming back, God meets us where we’re at, and desires to have



Janice Piemonte attends Gather with her second-grade son.

a relationship with us,” Ralph says. “Even if our kids just see us reaching, saying, ‘I’m not there yet, but I desire this,’ they’ll pick up on that. God is always going to be there for us. Every day is a new opportunity to learn more about your faith and grow stronger in your relationship with God.”

To register your child(ren) and family for next year, please visit our website at www.saintmargaretmary.org/gather

The cost to register is \$160/child, with a discounted rate of only \$30/child, for students in high school.

For more information on *Gather*, or to become involved as a volunteer, please contact Director of Religious Education Ellie Nelson at enelson@saintmargaretmary.org, or Director of Young Adult and Youth Ministry Teresa Chiappone at teresa@saintmargaretmary.org

AN OPPORTUNITY TO HELP OUR

As Catholic Christians, we are called to bring the light and love of Christ to all those we encounter. In the Gospels, the parables and commands of Jesus make it clear that we are asked to come to the aid of the less fortunate, and the New Testament letters reinforce this central tenet of our faith.

So, what exactly does it mean to “bear one another’s burdens”? Obviously, this kind of service in the world can come in many different forms according to the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Quite often, what people in our community need is simply a little help getting on their feet in the face of a daunting life challenge. Here in our parish, we are blessed to be able to serve many of these people through the St. Margaret Mary Conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Our parish’s St. Vincent de Paul Conference offers assistance to families in Algonquin and Lake in the Hills who are struggling to make ends meet. The type of aid provided varies depending on the specific needs of each individual or family, and



The St. Margaret Mary Conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society held a fundraiser at the Jewel grocery store last Christmas – (from left) Mark Minaglia, current St. Vincent de Paul President; Angela, a manager at the Jewel store; Mary Ann Watt; Julie O’Brien, St. Vincent de Paul Treasurer.

may include anything from paying off an outstanding bill to putting families in contact with another agency that may be able to better serve them. In all cases, respecting the privacy and dignity of the people who receive assistance is a top priority.

To receive services through St. Vincent de Paul, individuals or families contact the ministry. Two people from St. Vincent de Paul then visit the home of the person requesting assistance and determine how he or she can best be helped.

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Are you interested in learning more about the St. Margaret Mary Conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society? We are always looking for more parishioners to answer Christ’s call to service! Contact Mark Minaglia at minags2@aol.com for more information, or come to one of our regular meetings held on the first and third Mondays of every month at 7 p.m. in the Ministry Center. Also, be sure to check out the SVdP St. Margaret Mary Conference website at www.svdpalgonquin.org

FRIENDS IN NEED

The St. Vincent de Paul Society



Members of the St. Margaret Mary St. Vincent de Paul Society Conference during a fundraiser at the Jewel grocery store last Christmas – (from left) Sue Kuznieski, St. Vincent de Paul member; Jodi Gallagher, one of the managers of the Jewel store; Mark Minaglia, current St. Vincent de Paul President

Mary Ann Watt, a home visitor with this ministry, points out that this first step is often the most difficult for those in need.

“I think it’s hard for them to call us and ask for help and to let strangers into their home,” Mary Ann says. “So, we try and help however we can. Hopefully when we go into people’s homes, they will let us pray for them – and that is always my favorite part, when we ask God to bless them. Most of the time, we’re able to help.”

With each person who is served by St. Vincent de Paul,

the goal is to help him or her fully regain independence while maintaining a sense of dignity. And often, it is just an isolated bump in the road of life that leads someone to contact this ministry for assistance.

“I see people who at one time were really well off, and now they’re in this really bad place,” Mary Ann says. “Something happened – a sickness or whatever – and now they’re calling for help and they just need a boost. In those times, you recognize that the poor are all around us and we just don’t see it. So, it’s a

matter of listening to them and respecting them, knowing that they need to recover some of their dignity. We’re all created in God’s image.”

Out of respect for their dignity and in recognition of the equality of all of God’s people, those who receive aid through St. Vincent de Paul are referred to as “friends.” As Mary Ann points out, many of us have encountered difficult times in our lives when we relied on the grace of God and the goodness of others to give us a step up.

Parishioners who serve our friends in need with St. Vincent de Paul always find that the rewards of sharing their time and talent in this way are truly priceless. During her six years as a home visitor, Mary Ann has been grateful for the many blessings she receives through her work with this ministry.

“You spend your time and energy, and you go because you want to help and want to be a witness of Jesus’ love, mercy and compassion,” Mary Ann says. “He calls us to be that witness, so you go. But the amazing thing is you always end up more blessed by it than the people you help. When you’re spending time with someone who is in a bad situation, you’re just so happy to see them in a better place. It’s amazing that God keeps giving us this opportunity to be blessed. I’m getting more than anything I could ever give.”



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Our New Parish Newsletter *continued from front cover*

Renewal is the time each year when we ask each other to re-prioritize the way we use God’s gifts in the Church. It is the time we write down how we will become more devoted to Christ over the next year with our commitments of **time** (using my time on earth wisely; making time for personal prayer, family prayer, and quality time with friends and loved ones); **talent** (using God-given gifts to strengthen the Church through service to parish ministries and other activities), and **treasure** (the wise and just management of my financial resources; giving a proportionate amount of my income to the parish).

As we strive to develop stewardship as a way of life at St. Margaret Mary, the support and involvement of

each individual parishioner is necessary to sustain the life of our parish. All of you have a place here, and all of you have a role to fill in the life of the parish as we live our lives as disciples of Christ.

May the Holy Spirit renew and refresh all of us as we work together to build our parish family through the use of our time, talent and treasure.

Peace and Goodness,

Fr. Peter Sarnicki OFM, Conv.

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Monday - Thursday: 7:00 & 8:30 a.m. | **Friday:** 7:00 & 9:15 a.m. | **First Friday:** 7:30 p.m. in Polish

Saturday: 8:30 a.m., 4:30 p.m. (6:30 p.m. in Polish)

Sunday: 7:00, 9:00, 11:00 a.m. & 4:30 p.m. (1:00 p.m. in Polish)