

St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church

Touching Lives With the Parish Health Ministry

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Last July, Parish Health Ministry members had a powerful experience that reminded them just how critical their simple efforts really are.

"We were checking blood pressures after Mass one Sunday, when a lady came to one of our volunteers, Dr. Anne Majewski, explaining that she had chest pains," says Patty Bodden, Coordinator of the Parish Health Ministry. "With the help of other parishioners as well, we were able to contact the paramedics and get her treated as soon as possible."

In the end, the patient's life was potentially saved, thanks to God's grace working through our caring parish family.

"God was watching over her," Dr. Majewski says. "She came in just when we happened to be checking blood pressures. We want to reassure all of our parishioners that we are watching their backs."

Experiences like these continue to inspire the Parish Health Ministry members to do their work with generous, hopeful hearts.

"I started volunteering with this ministry about 12 years ago because



I have always liked helping people in the community," Patty says. "I am a nurse and I like to use my own skills to reach out to others, especially through health education."

The Parish Health Ministry's main outreach is to offer free blood pressure checks on one Sunday per month, for about 15 minutes, after the 9 and 11 a.m. Masses. They also educate others on what constitutes high blood pressure, and what they can do to manage it. Occasionally, they set up a table at our parish fairs with pamphlets and other health information.

"In the past, we have found people with high blood pressure, and let

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The Eucharist and Stewardship as a Way of Life

Just 25 years ago, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a pastoral letter titled *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. This document was an invitation to follow Christ Who gave of Himself for us. Each of us is called to serve our neighbors and to be stewards of God's creation and of all that has been entrusted to us. However, to truly understand stewardship, we must look to the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is the total gift of our loving Savior to us. Stewardship is our response to that gift.

Even the word "Eucharist" implies stewardship. The word "Eucharist" finds its roots in the Latin word *eucharistia*, which in turn came from the Greek word *eukaristos*, which meant, quite simply, "gratitude" or "thanksgiving." How fitting that we, who are called to be a stewardship people, celebrate at the focal point of every Mass an act of thanksgiving and gratitude — namely, the reception of Jesus' gift to us — the Eucharist.

In their pastoral letter on stewardship, the bishops speak of the Eucharist in this way: "The Eucharist is the great sign and agent of this expansive communion of charity... we enjoy a unique union with Christ and, in Him, with one another. Here His love — indeed, His very Self — flows into his disciples and, through them and their practice of stewardship, to the entire human race."

When we receive Christ's Body in the Holy Eucharist, we hear the minister say, "The Body of Christ." To this, we respond, "Amen" — which means in Hebrew, "Yes; it is so." This is the essence of stewardship. We should enter the Church for Mass out of "gratitude." We recognize the presence of the Lord in Holy Communion, and then we truly receive the Lord. What is left for us to do is the fulfillment of stewardship — that is, sharing what we have received in love of God and neighbor. Our entire experience speaks to stewardship — we are grateful; we recognize the real presence of the Lord; we receive the Lord; and then we share what we have received.

Christ's gift to us through the Eucharist is an invitation to us. We are called to give beyond what is convenient or what may be comfortable. We are called to forgive even when forgiveness may not be deserved; we

are called to love even when that love is not returned. We are called to love as God loves us.

The Eucharist is stewardship celebrated. The Mass is more than a ritual. It is an actual encounter with God, with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We need to respond to the Eucharist with our complete selves. What we experience in the Eucharist should, in turn, translate into our daily lives. We are committed to the Church, which is Christ's body. We show our love for His body by acts of charity and generosity. We spend time in prayer, expressing our gratitude and our love.

God's greatest gift to us is Christ's great love for us — this was shown when He was crucified on the Cross to pay the penalty for our sins and to give us eternal life. God's love for us is without limit, and He offers Himself to us in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Stewardship is how we respond to that gift.



A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

November is a Time for Thanksgiving

Dear Parishioners,

November seems to automatically bring us to thoughts of thanksgiving and Thanksgiving – it is both a time of year when we tend to think in terms of gratitude to God, and a time when we also formally celebrate our American holiday.

But this is also a significant month in the Church from a number of perspectives. Nov. 1 is a Holy Day, the Solemnity of All Saints. The next day is All Souls Day, a day devoted to all the saints in our lives – living, not living, known, and unknown.

Most of us have people in our lives who have had a profound impact on us – people we can consider our own personal saints. This month is a wonderful reminder to think of them, thank them, and thank God for making them a part of our lives.

Our Thanksgiving holiday falls on Nov. 23, and is a time for families and gratitude. Thanksgiving became official in the United States in 1863, and in his proclamation, President Abra-



ham Lincoln made very clear whom we needed to thank. “To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God,” Lincoln said. In other words, we all need

to thank Almighty God for our many blessings.

Finally, November also brings us to the end of one Church year and the beginning of a new one. The Feast of Christ the King on Nov. 26 officially begins the final week of our liturgical year, and the First Sunday of Advent is on Dec. 3. From the beginning of the month when we thank God for the example of the saints and the saintly people in our lives, to the end of the month when we thank God for everything we have and everything we are, November is a time to approach the Lord with a grateful heart. That is what stewardship truly is all about – about approaching God, about approaching each day, and about approaching all those with whom we come in contact, with hearts filled with gratitude and love.

Peace and Goodness,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Sarnicki". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Fr. Peter Sarnicki OFM, Conv.
Pastor

Come Follow Me: Fr. Witold Adamczyk

Growing up in Poland, Fr. Witold Adamczyk, OFM Conv., describes Catholicism as a “natural part” of his life. The faith literally surrounded him, an intricate part of the fabric of daily living. In fact, Fr. Witold never even met a non-Catholic person until he was in high school. From a very young age, he began altar serving and remained very close to the Church.

“I would go to Mass almost daily as a child and young man,” Fr. Witold says. “In our parish, we had a church that was just for our youth. It was close to our high school and each day there was a Mass specifically for the youth. Growing up, it was truly a very vibrant faith community.”

It was during those high school years that Fr. Witold felt increasingly called to the priesthood. Describing it as “God’s great mystery,” he couldn’t exactly explain what made him feel this call. It was just something that he knew deep inside his heart, even though he originally rebelled from it.



Fr. Witold Adamczyk, OFM Conv., fulfilling his calling to follow Jesus.

“I fought with myself,” Fr. Witold says. “I fought with God because I didn’t want to be a priest. But even still, I felt deep down inside that this was what God wanted for my life.”

Internally battling with himself, Fr. Witold’s objections fell away one day during a revelatory moment of prayer. He had recently finished high school and

was once again thinking about and resisting the priesthood. Finally, Fr. Witold decided to follow St. Francis of Assisi’s method of opening the Bible at random and seeing what God wished to convey through this Word.

“I ended up opening the Bible to the Gospel of John,” he says. “It was toward the end of his Gospel when the resurrected

“When I came here, I noticed almost right away that it was a very vital community. Everyone is very active in parish life. In Poland and Slovakia, everything is placed upon the priest. If the priest isn’t engaged in something, then it simply doesn’t exist. Whereas here, the lay people really take leadership in things and invite us priests to work alongside them. I find the people here to be very happy – happy in their Catholic faith and happy to be part of this church. It’s such a tremendous witness.” – Fr. Witold Adamczyk, OFM Conv.

czyk Embraces Christ's Invitation



Fr. Witold reclining on a fire engine during a parish event.

Jesus appears to His apostles on the Lake of Gennesaret. Jesus has just finished questioning Peter about his love when Peter turns and notices John, the beloved disciple. Peter basically asks, 'Lord what about him?' and Jesus responds, 'What concern is it of yours? You follow me' (John 21:20-22).

"When I read those words, I knew that this was what I needed to do – to follow Jesus because this is what he asks of me," Fr. Witold continues. "To this day, I find myself continuously coming back to that verse, seeing it as my own personal invitation."

Finally embracing the call, Fr. Witold then went through a lengthy process of discernment as to where he should enter the

priesthood. He considered first a Polish Marian order of priests and then the diocesan priesthood. Eventually, however, Fr. Witold was led by his love for both St. Francis of Assisi and St. Maximilian Kolbe to the Conventual Franciscan friars. This led him to spend 16 years serving in various parishes in Bratislava, Slovakia, following his completion of the novitiate and ordination.

Then, two years ago, Fr. Witold was reassigned to the United States, joining us here at St. Margaret Mary. Not knowing any English at the time, he jokes that he was like a little child at first, not speaking but only smiling and nodding at people. Yet, even still he was warmly welcomed by the

parishioners, and quickly felt at home. Fr. Witold was soon impressed by the dedication and enthusiasm of our parishioners for the faith, witnessing a spiritual life amongst the laity quite unique from what he experienced in Poland.

"When I came here, I noticed almost right away that it was a very vital community," Fr. Witold says. "Everyone is very active in parish life. In Poland and Slovakia, everything is placed upon the priest. If the priest isn't engaged in something, then it simply doesn't exist. Whereas here, the lay people really take leadership in things and invite us priests to work alongside them. I find the people here to be very happy – happy in their Catholic faith and happy to be part of this church. It's such a tremendous witness."

Since his arrival at our parish, Fr. Witold has become very involved in our Polish community and with our youth organizations. He has also grown steadily more involved in our English-speaking Masses and ministries as his own English has improved. And when not busy serving in his priestly responsibilities, Fr. Witold can be found riding his motorcycle or escaping for a quick getaway to a nearby ranch in Wisconsin to ride his beloved horses. Yet, in all things, both work and leisure-related, Fr. Witold continues to hold Christ's words to heart, striving always to follow Christ as a fisher of men.

Cross of San Damiano Holds

We are indeed blessed here at St. Margaret Mary to have a replica of the Cross of San Damiano within our sanctuary. It is a striking image that draws our gaze. But have you ever wondered about its significance?

The original cross hangs in the Santa Chiara Church in Assisi, Italy. It is an icon cross in the tradition of the Eastern Church that was carried to Italy by Serbian monks. As an icon, it depicts images of the persons who play a role in the meaning of the cross. It is meant to teach those viewing it and strengthen their faith.

Images included in the cross include Christ crucified, but a Christ both with His wounds, yet upright and strong. The five witnesses to Christ's crucifixion and to Him as Lord are placed at His sides. The three minor witnesses to the crucifixion are shown in smaller scale. Six angels are shown marveling at the crucifixion and gesturing for us to marvel with them. The patron saints of Umbria in Italy are depicted. At the top of the cross, a triumphant, risen Christ is depicted leaving the tomb and entering Heaven. The Right Hand of God is at the very top of the cross, showing that Jesus is being raised by the Right Hand of God the Father. Finally, two curious figures are harder to see on the cross, but they are still being studied for their meaning – a small fowl and what may be a cat.

“San Damiano Cross became the Franciscan cross,” Fr. Witold Adamczyk says. “It is our symbol – it is an expression of our spirituality and who we are as Franciscans. This cross is very important to us Franciscan Friars.”

St. Francis of Assisi heard Jesus speak to him in a little destroyed church of San Damiano near Assisi: “Francis, go and repair my house, for as you can see, it is falling into ruin.”

“Yes, it was this little church that St. Francis started to rebuild because of Jesus' words heard from the cross,” Fr. Witold says.

The Clarisse Sisters, or Poor Clares, were living at the original church of San Damiano when

Saint Clare was alive. When they moved to a new basilica in Santa Chiara in Assisi, they took the cross with them, where it remains and is revered to this day.

“This cross contains the whole Franciscan spirituality,” Fr. Witold says. “St. Francis was focused on three realities of Jesus' life – first, it was the Nativity, Jesus' humanity. Jesus on the cross is a Man, He is the flesh and blood. On the cross is depicted His mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. That was the reason why the first Nativity scene in Greccio and actually our tradition of Christmas Cribs began there.”

The second important reality for St. Francis was the passion of Christ, His suffering on the cross for us.

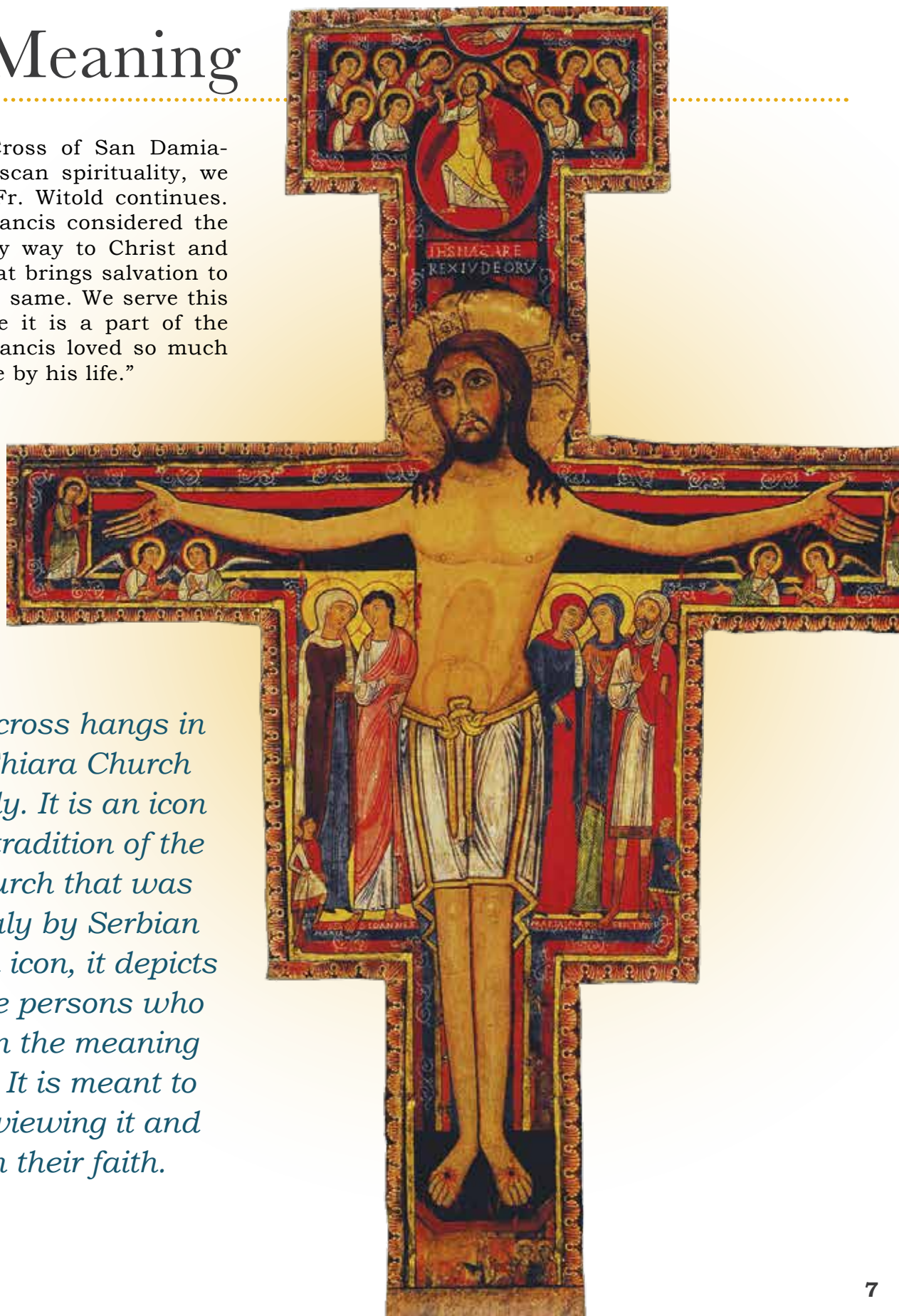
“Again, the Stations of the Cross are Franciscan tradition, as well,” Fr. Witold says. “But, all of that led, and leads us right now, to the most important thing – it is the Resurrection. Jesus has risen from the tomb, He conquered death. On the San Damiano Cross, Jesus is a man, Who suffers because He is crucified. But on this cross, Jesus is the King, the Conqueror, His eyes are open, He is already triumphant. This is very characteristic for Franciscan crosses. Jesus on the cross suffers, but at the same time, He wins.”

Fr. Witold, in turn, emphasizes the importance of the San Damiano Cross to the identity and community of Franciscan friars, and its role in their faithful efforts.

“So, as the Franciscan friars we came here, to this parish, to work for the Church, to serve people, and we can't deny our Franciscan identity because this identity impacts our life, our way of working and serving,” he says. “They are our values we brought to this community. All of that is in this cross. This is our path, and this is our personality. We wanted our parishioners to get to know that because it enriches all of us and because it would help people to understand and get to know us as Franciscan friars.”

Special Meaning

“Without this Cross of San Damiano and our Franciscan spirituality, we would be empty,” Fr. Witold continues. “But just as St. Francis considered the Church as the only way to Christ and as a community that brings salvation to all of us, we do the same. We serve this community because it is a part of the Church that St. Francis loved so much and wanted to serve by his life.”



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them know,” Patty says. “Afterward, they have either thanked us, or wished they had listened to our advice.”

In addition to Dr. Majewski and Patty, the ministry’s members include a few registered nurses, a former paramedic, and a nursing assistant.

“What we do is so important because we have pulled in some people who have really needed our help,” says JoAnn Lazansky, a former nurse who joined the ministry when it was first founded years ago. “It is a great thing the church has to offer.”

Now that JoAnn is retired, she finds that being

part of the Parish Health Ministry gives her a way to offer her talents to our parish family.

“It has helped me live out stewardship, and give back to our church community,” she says.

Recent efforts have demonstrated the ministry’s stewardship of health within our community. This October, the Parish Health Ministry hosted First Aid, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) machine trainings to our ushers so they can be of assistance if a health emergency arises.

The Parish Health Ministry has no meetings, and only involves a small, flexible time commitment. For more information on how to help out with this ministry or receive its services, please contact Patty Bodden at 847-658-3693.

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)