



01.2012

Saint Paul

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Preparing for a New Parish Family Member *Baptism Preparation*

Receiving the Sacrament of Baptism is an important event in the lives of all young Catholics, not to mention a proud day for their families.

“Baptism is the first sacrament,” says Bill Whibbs, who coordinates Baptism Preparation at our parish with his wife, Rosemary. “It’s the gateway, the portal into all of the other sacraments. So it’s important that the family understand the importance of the Sacrament of Baptism.”

Baptism Preparation is required by the Church for all parents who wish to have their child baptized. In our parish, this means taking a Baptism Preparation class led by Bill and Rosemary, which lasts for about an hour. This class, held on the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 p.m. in the parish office, covers what the sacrament is, what needs to be done, choosing an appropriate godparent, and what is expected about raising the child in the Church among other things.

“It’s an important ministry, and it’s more than just doing some formal education,” Bill says. “It’s a case of trying to get to know each other and opening that hand, extending it so they know there’s additional support.”

This is exactly what Bill and Rosemary strive to do in their class. Their goal is not only to inform parents about how Baptism works, but impart some knowledge of what the sacrament truly means and what the parents’ role will be in the life of the newly baptized child.

“My wife and I present this together,” Bill says. “She has a very specific section that describes the Domestic Church and how the Domestic Church is the home, and how all the initial instruction on faith takes place at home.”

What makes Baptism such an important sacrament? For one thing, it is the first Sacrament of Initiation, before First Communion and Confirmation, and therefore the first step in fully becoming a member of the Church.

“Baptism actually welcomes people into the Church itself,” Bill says. “It’s sort of the beginning of the ecclesiastical community.”



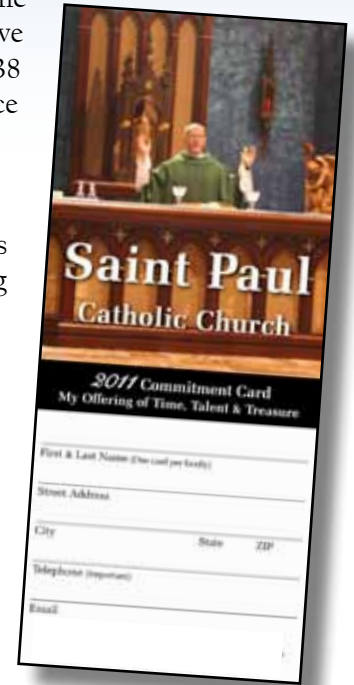
continued on page 2

Results of the 2011 Stewardship Renewal

Parish leadership concluded the 2011 Annual Stewardship Renewal in early December. The results are very encouraging, and show signs of growth within our parish community! Five hundred fourteen households participated by returning a commitment card; this is roughly 38 percent of all registered households, and is clear evidence that our parish is growing to embrace stewardship as a way of life.

Just a few of the outstanding results from the 2011 Stewardship Renewal include:

- All together, our parish families made 1,775 commitments to spend time in prayer, such as praying the Rosary, reading from the Bible, praying with family members and attending Eucharistic Adoration.
- Ninety families who weren't previously involved in parish ministries signed up for more than 67 of the parish's many ministries. Parishioners made 647 new commitments to join a parish ministry; this is a strong sign that parishioners are becoming more and more interested in active parish membership.
- The five most popular ministries to receive new commitments ("interested in joining") were Angel Tree, 48 new commitments; Parish Picnic Volunteer, 41 new commitments; Eucharistic Adoration, 34 new commitments; Reader, 30 new commitments; and Mailings & Bulletin Stuffing, 27 new commitments.
- The average annual offertory commitment this year was \$2,360.



While the statistics from our Stewardship Renewal are encouraging, the real effect of emphasizing stewardship can never be quantified, for two reasons. First, the spiritual benefits are inestimable. Secondly, even families who didn't return a commitment card this year are nonetheless impacted by the stewardship message and become more generous with their time, talent, and treasure.

Thanks to all parishioners who support St. Paul and make our parish a vibrant, faith-filled community!

Baptism Preparation *continued from cover*

In Baptism Preparation, Bill and Rosemary also stress the importance of belonging to and interacting with a Church community.

"It's important for people to understand that this is their family," Bill says. "As with any other family, the support and the love are there. It's important that they understand how accessible it really is, and should be. Physically, you're born into a family. Spiritually, with Baptism, you're born into the Church family, the ecclesiastical family. It adds depth to the whole idea of the family."

Bill and Rosemary have been coordinating this ministry for three years.

"We really enjoy it," Bill says. "It's neat working with these people and helping them get themselves ready to take off on this journey."

For more information about the Baptism Preparation program, call Bill and Rosemary Whibbs at 850-432-8965.

A Letter From Our Pastor

Start a New Life, Not Just a New Year

Dear Parishioners,

It's January and that means it's time for New Year's resolutions. At least, that's the widespread perception abroad in our culture. And so, I want us to reflect on resolutions for a few minutes.

Often, New Year's resolutions are intended simply to undo the harm we did to ourselves by overindulging in food and drink between Thanksgiving and the end of the year. Some resolutions are changes we know we should make, but aren't really committed to making, and, so, they don't last very long.

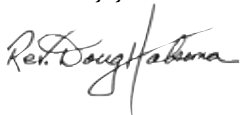
So, looking at this in broader terms, when should we make a resolution to eliminate a sinful practice from our life? That question has a simple answer – the moment we realize we're engaging in a sinful practice. In other words, as soon as we realize we're doing something wrong, we should stop. It doesn't matter whether that sin is as "large" as cheating on your spouse or as "small" as sharing vicious gossip — we should stop immediately when we recognize it's a sinful behavior.

Now, I admit that making the changes we need in order to grow closer to Christ is easier said than done. All too often, we fool ourselves into thinking we can make all the changes we need under our own strength and on a convenient timetable. For real change, we need guidance and we need help – a new life, in fact. St. Paul addressed this when he wrote to the Romans (6:4), "We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life."

In other words, we need a new life, not a new year. We find this new life in union with Christ within His Body, the Church. The Church can provide you with guidance. She has 2,000 years of accumulated wisdom and experience, beginning with God's own revelation. The Ten Commandments provide a brief, incisive outline for ethical behavior. Help comes from God's grace, available to us in the sacraments and through prayer.

A new life means we have new priorities and a new viewpoint when we look at every aspect of the way we live. It affects the use of the time we have, the talents God has given us, and the treasure with which He has blessed us. With God's grace and guidance, lived in union with the Church, we find that "in newness of life" we can "cease doing evil" and "learn to do good." That's a resolution worth making. Happy New Year!

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Doug Halsema
Pastor



"We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life."

– Romans 6:4

Paul

Fraternus Program Ligt Young M



If you happen to be around the St. Paul Ligt around 8 p.m. on a Sunday night, you might be greeted by the unexpected sound of 40 young men huddled up yelling, call and response, “Ave,” followed by a roaring cry of “Maria!”

Since the fall of 2008, the Fraternus boys youth program has been meeting every Sunday night during the school year from 6-8 p.m. Each of these “Frat Nights” – short for Fraternus Nights – is a microcosm of what the program is all about: fellowship through sports and team-building activities, mentoring in the virtues, and prayer.

Each Frat Night begins with a time for the boys to get warmed up playing football, Frisbee, and other activities, while Christian rock music in the background sets a fun and inviting atmosphere. After things get started with the Fraternus Prayer, everyone participates in a team-building game — including the captains, the men who lead the group.

“It’s really important for the captains to be right in the thick of things, participating and letting the boys know they’re there for support,” says Andy Chambers, this year’s Fraternus Commander.

After a short snack break, the evening switches gears with everyone migrating to the Giri room. Once there, one of the captains shows a short movie clip which demonstrates one of the seven main virtues and gives a five-minute talk called the “King’s Message,” in which he discusses how the clip portrays the virtue and ties it into the boys’ lives. From there, the group breaks up into squads based on age and led by a captain.

“Squad time is the ‘meat and potatoes’ of Frat Night, that’s why we give it 45 minutes,” Andy says. “The boys see consistency out of the men talking about living the virtues in their lives. The boys’ friends are there and their captain is there, and there is just a lot

of trust. They can really break down that virtue, talking about how they have overcome troubles with it in their lives.”

When squad time wraps up, the group gathers as a whole again to discuss upcoming Fraternus excursions and parish events and to receive a challenge for living the particular virtue in the following week. The evening concludes with night prayer, the *Salve Regina*, and the Ave Cheer.

The Ave Cheer is indicative of the

“At the high school level when they’re facing in the peer pressure conveying to us that they’re falling tough and they really bond together of the older guys even pledge to go to adoration to

– Andy Chambers, Fraternus Commander

lights the Fire of Faith in Men's Lives



ethos of Fraternus: Catholic boys and men embracing their Faith with both fervor and joy. Fraternus takes the fire and passion inside of young men and focuses it in the right place, in their relationship with our Lord.

“So many boys are excited about it and are talking about it and are just craving it,” Andy says. “When they get started, they have a lot of input, but it keeps getting better as the squads move on from year to year. At the high

they're talking about the adversity for sex and drugs, they're really falling back on their faith; that it's to pray for one another. Some get together at their houses or to go pray together.”

Fraternus Commander

school level when they're talking about the adversity they're facing in the peer pressure for sex and drugs, they're really conveying to us that they're falling back on their Faith; that it's tough and they really bond together and pray for one another. Some of the older guys even pledge to get together at their houses or to go to Adoration to pray together.”

In addition to weekly Frat Nights, the program also includes several excursions and a weeklong summer camp. Each of these provides momentous experiences for the boys in which they can push themselves physically and spiritually and grow closer to their peers, captains, and, above all, to God.

Participating in the Fraternus experience has made an enormous difference in the lives of the boys and their families.

“Teachers tell us that they see a difference in these boys and the parents see more respect and a richer prayer life,” Andy says. “It truly is changing their

hearts and their lives. It's not like a light switch that gets turned on when they come and turned off when they leave; it's like a light in their lives which just keeps getting brighter and brighter each time they come back.”

All boys at the parish in grades six through 12 are invited to participate in the Fraternus program.

“If you have not experienced Fraternus, we just ask you to try it once,” Andy says. “There is no pressure to come back. Just come out to any Frat Night in the school gym and enjoy the fellowship, the music, the games, and learn about your Faith. I promise you'll go away having had a great time. It's not for everybody, but it's definitely going to change your heart.”

For more information please call the parish office (850-434-2551) or visit the Fraternus Web site at fraternus.net.

Our Goods Are the Lord's

The Finance Council



(standing, from left)
Stephen Burgess, Mike Eddins, John St. Amant, and Brian DeMaria
(seated, from left)
Fr. Doug Halsema, Ginny Stevens and Michelle Sweeney

A parish Finance Council isn't flashy, but in a parish like ours, it is crucial.

"St. Paul is a fairly large parish," says Finance Council Chairman Brian DeMaria. "Therefore, it's important that we address all financial matters quickly, accurately, and efficiently. It's an important element to have multiple people giving views on decisions that the pastor has to make."

Since 1983, every Catholic parish has been required under Canon Law to have a finance council. In 2004, our bishop requested that this council be set up in collaboration with the Pastoral Council.

Our parish's Finance Council is made up of 10 members appointed by Fr. Doug, who acts as the council's president. These members include our parish business manager, John St. Amant, and several parishioners.

"The current members have diverse backgrounds, which provide perspective in dealing with the many needs of our parish and community," Brian says.

The purpose of the Finance Council is to advise and assist Fr. Doug in the administration of our parish's goods.

"Our guiding principle in decision-making is to treat the goods of St. Paul Parish as the Lord's; to further the teaching of His Word, promote evangelization, and care for our St. Paul family and our local community," Brian says. "In doing so, the council strives to use prudent fiscal judgment in making its recommendations.

The members of the Finance Council come together for six meetings each year. During the meetings, they review the parish's financial statements, budget, insurance, and financial

procedures. They also discuss any financial matters brought to them by Fr. Doug.

"It gives the pastor a sounding board for ideas and concerns that other parishioners have through the council, who are parishioners themselves," Brian says.

The council members vote on the matters that they discuss, then use a majority vote to make their recommendations to the pastor.

"There are mixed viewpoints and very strong feelings about what should be done and how money should be spent," Brian says. "Therefore, it's very important to get all the different views."

"It has made me feel like I've been more participatory in the day-to-day running of the parish. And having a knowledge of what goes on behind the scenes does give one a feeling of ownership in the parish community."

– Brian DeMaria, Finance Council Chair

Brian has been a member of the Finance Council since 2007, and he has acted as Chairman since 2010. His service in the group has opened his eyes to the important role that it plays in our community.

"The participation in the council definitely made me aware of the enormous responsibility that St. Paul has in terms of obligations to its parishioners and the community, as well as the diocese," Brian says. "It's a fairly extensive organization with a lot of commitments of money and goods and talent, and in the council we look at all those things throughout the operation of the church."

Brian's time with the council has also served to strengthen his relationship to our parish family.

"It has made me feel like I've been more participatory in the day-to-day running of the parish," Brian says. "And having a knowledge of what goes on behind the scenes does give one a feeling of ownership in the parish community."

For more information about the Finance Council, contact Chairman Brian DeMaria at brian32504@cox.net.

Stewardship

The Four Pillars

You've heard about the three "Ts" of stewardship, but what about the four "Ps"?

The three "Ts" — time, talent and treasure — describe the personal gifts we offer to the Church. The four "Ps" are the "four pillars" of parish stewardship described by stewardship pioneer Msgr. Thomas McGread. They are the hallmark of a stewardship parish: hospitality, prayer, formation, and service. Let's take a look at each of them to understand how we can improve in each area.

Hospitality

Christian Kindness

"When I was a stranger, you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35). The Gospel teaches that whenever we welcome the least of our brothers or sisters, we welcome Christ Himself. That is why the first mark of a stewardship parish is hospitality. Being friendly is one of the first ways we can be Christ-like toward others.

Modern Catholic parishes are often so large and have so many Masses that many parishioners don't know one another. To create a sense of community, be sure to smile and greet others as you enter and exit the Church. Let's try harder than ever to be a welcoming community.

Prayer

Heart-to-Heart with God

"Do not become so involved in the work of the Lord that you forget the Lord of the work," a seminary professor once taught. In other words, don't get so caught up with parish projects and the like that you forget to draw aside to

spend time with God in prayer. Every great saint has taught that prayer is the most essential component in the life of a Christian. Through prayer, we nurture our most important relationship — the one that will last for all eternity.

A healthy prayer life should include communal prayer such as Mass, as well as personal prayer and family prayer. The two biggest obstacles to prayer are lack of time and lack of understanding of how to pray. We have to schedule time for prayer just as we would for an important appointment. And we have to learn from others how to pray. Many saints have written spiritual books that describe different methods of prayer.

Formation

Continuous Conversion

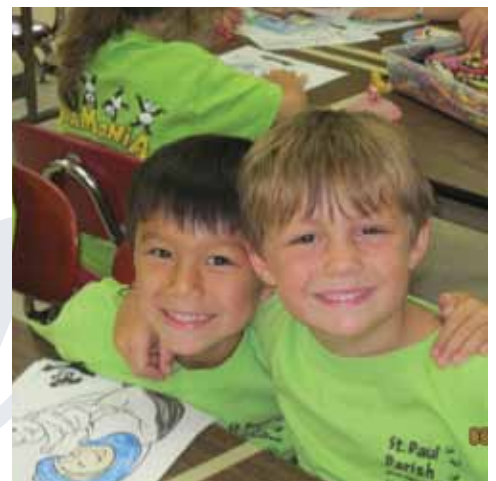
Pope John Paul II always emphasized ongoing conversion. From childhood through adulthood, our whole life must be a process of drawing closer to God. He never stops calling us forward to learn more and to examine ourselves more deeply.

Very often our society values material things more than interior virtues. But as personal experience shows, when we finally acquire the car or house or "toy" that we wanted so badly, it doesn't really satisfy. On the other hand, we don't tend to desire spiritual virtues with the same kind of longing, but when we actually have them, we find them far more rewarding than material things.

Service

Love in Action

"Amen I say to you, whatever you did to the least of my brothers, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). This scripture was



continued on back cover

Address Service Requested

The Four Pillars continued from page 7

one of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta's favorites. Each time she picked up a poor and hungry child, she knew she was ministering to Christ. While we may not view ourselves as saints, we too are called to such heroic service right within our own community. As Blessed Teresa said, "To be a saint is not the privilege of a few, but the duty of everyone."

We have many service opportunities right here within our own parish. If you have the willingness to serve and take the initiative to find where you are needed, you'll find that there is no end to the families and individuals who truly need help. How can you reach out to them in love?



Liturgy Schedule

Saturday Vigil: 4:30 p.m. | **Sunday:** 7:00, 9:00, 11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m. | **Daily Mass:** Monday-Saturday, 8:30 a.m.
Confessions: Saturdays, 9:00 a.m., 3:30 p.m. - 4:15 p.m., 1st Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m., and by appointment
Eucharistic Adoration: Thursday 9:00 a.m. until Friday 7:30 a.m.