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Saint Paul

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Serra Club of Pensacola Supports and Promotes Vocations



The Serra Club focuses its efforts on promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life. The Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee is blessed with many wonderful men who have devoted their life to the priesthood – such as our new bishop, Gregory Parkes (pictured above), who was ordained here at St. Paul in 2012.

Photo courtesy of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee

Vocation to the priesthood is a vital aspect of the Catholic Church. Around the world, thousands of laypersons support and promote these vocations through their local Serra Clubs. These clubs operate under the umbrella of Serra International, an organization formally recognized by the Church as the global lay apostolate for these vocations. Founded in 1935, Serra has chartered over 1,000 Serra Clubs in 46 different countries.

The Serra Club of Pensacola was founded in 1977 under Bishop Gracida. Members give support to seminarians and raise awareness for vocations through many different venues.

“We try as much as we can to support vocations in any possible way,” says club member and St. Paul parishioner Jim Daigle, “We do this in prayer, in financial help, and in personal ways.”

Prayer is one of the biggest ways that club members support priestly vocations. Apart from individual prayer, the club holds a Holy Hour every third Tuesday of the month at St. Mary Catholic Church from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. The club also sponsors prayer days through the 31 Clubs program, held at different parishes throughout the Pensacola area.

“At the parishes, we put a calendar on the wall and we ask people to sign up for

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Stewardship

New Year's Resolutions and Stewardship

The beginning of the year is a popular time for personal re-assessment. The earth has finished one more revolution around the sun, and swings low over the cold January horizon, just like last year. The days are shorter, and an evening of introspection seems more inviting. Somehow, when we take down the old calendar and tack up the new, we sense an opportunity to make a fresh start.

To make the best of this opportunity — which, truthfully, exists in June just as it does in January — it is useful to make firm commitments. It's even more useful to write them down. These resolutions, kept in a desk drawer or on the refrigerator door, are a “hard copy” of our best intentions for self-improvement. They're signposts that redirect our lives towards good, and towards God.



New Year's resolutions are often focused on personal health — losing weight, relaxing more, or smoking less. It is certainly important, of course, to take good care of our bodies. But Christianity offers us a fuller concept of self-improvement. St. Paul reminds us that both the body and the soul need an exercise program. In fact, every aspect of our persons — physical, mental, spiritual, emotional — can benefit from an annual self-audit.

Some people have taken to heart this multi-faceted concept of the self, and each year make one resolution for each area. For instance, one could resolve to join a Rosary prayer group to work on spirituality, or take a continuing education course to build mental skills. Still, others use the three theological virtues — faith, hope and love — to guide their resolution-making process.

By now you may have discerned a similarity between New Year's resolutions and stewardship commitments. First, we use a similar method to think about stewardship, by breaking it down into more specific concepts — time, talent and treasure. Second, to become better stewards, we write down our commitments. We record our good intentions to clarify exactly what they are — and to remind us of our commitment on the evenings when the Rosary group interferes with a bowl game.

Any serious commitment shares the same components — it is specific, and it is written. From marriages to mortgages, treaties to trades — serious resolutions are spelled out, both literally and figuratively.

But even more important than the methodology of a commitment is the heart of the person who makes it. Even the most well-written job descriptions are useless unless there is someone to do the job well! Let us pray that this new year is a time of grace and wisdom for those of us who seek to recommit our lives to our family, our parish, and our God.

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A Letter From Our Pastor

Have a Stewardship “Epiphany” this New Year

Dear Parishioners,

Another Christmas has come and gone, and as wonderful as the Advent season and Christmas are, things can get a little hectic in even the most organized households. Cards, decorations, shopping for gifts, and attending holiday parties can be stressful. But once we make it past New Year’s Day, things finally settle down a bit.

In January, though, we still have another big feast to celebrate — Epiphany.

For most of us, Epiphany is just an afterthought of Christmas, the day we observe the arrival of the wise men in Bethlehem. And we’ve all heard homilies explaining how that odd word Epiphany comes from the Greek meaning “showing forth,” because the child Jesus was shown forth to the Magi (who were Gentiles) as the Savior of all people, not only the Messiah of the Jews.

This is true, but the Epiphany has a stewardship message for us as well.

After all, the Magi did not come just to gawk at the baby Jesus. They came because they knew he is someone special. “Where is the newborn king of the Jews?” they asked (Mt 2:2), although he’s not the sort of king who lives in palaces. As St. Matthew relates it (2:11), “They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” They came to worship, and part of that worship included offering gifts to the newborn Lord.

Jesus certainly welcomes all who come to visit Him, even those who come out of mere curiosity. But when we really



meet Him, our instinctive response is to worship because we recognize that His character is unlike anyone else we’ve ever met. Although Jesus, being God become man, is not limited, for most of us our meetings with Him take place at Mass or other public services.

But meeting Jesus and worshipping Him calls forth an additional response, and so we, along with the wise men, open our treasures. And what are they? They are our Time, our Talent, and our Treasure.

We can all find symbolic meanings in the Magi’s gifts. Gold, of course, represents Treasure. And because even today, frankincense is the chief ingredient in the incense used at

Mass, it can stand for the gift of the Time we offer in worship and prayer. Finally, it takes effort and knowledge to transform the raw gum from tree sap into the forms used in perfumes, so myrrh is a fitting symbol for our gift of Talent.

As we begin this new year, let us take a moment to reflect on our place in the Epiphany narrative. Are you willing to undertake the journey to find the King? What treasures will you offer him in 2013?

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Doug Halsema
Pastor

Family from Sister Parish Attends St. Kateri Canonization at Vatican

by Roberta Duncan

*The article below is written by Roberta Duncan, a Native American from St. Paul's twin parish and school,
St. Michael, located in St. Michaels, Arizona.*



*(above) Roberta and Ron Duncan with their children, Chrissa and Caleb, at the canonization of St. Kateri Tekakwitha
(left) Eight pilgrims in their Native American clothes gather in front of their hotel in Rome*

Our family — my husband Ron, our two children, Caleb and Chrissa, and myself — made a very special trip to the Vatican, and enjoyed many fantastic, marvelous and faith-filled experiences. We had the opportunity to see many basilicas and churches, and heard many stories about courageous saints. We also saw many wonderful pieces of Catholic art, and we were able to learn about our Catholic history. And, of course, we went to the canonization of St. Kateri Tekakwitha, who was canonized with six others. This pilgrimage was led by Bishop James Wall, from the Diocese of Gallup — of which St. Michael's, our home parish in Arizona and sister parish to St. Paul in Pensacola, is a part.

I was honored and blessed to attend Kateri Tekakwitha's canonization as part of the pilgrimage. Attending this momentous occasion increased my faith, and there was certainly great excitement in the air at the canonization Mass.

Being Navajo, I relate to St. Kateri and feel comfortable praying for her intercession because she is Native American.

I talk to her about my concerns and about our Navajo Nation's many problems and needs.

Our Lord knows our necessity for a Native American saint. We have many social, spiritual and physical troubles. Canonizing Kateri Tekakwitha is very timely. St. Kateri Tekakwitha stands for hope, courage, strength, truth, faith, trust, peace and love in our Native American communities. We now have a saint to look up to, and she is an inspiration for us to become more holy.

St. Kateri is already at work. After several years of planning, the first Office of Native American Ministry in the Gallup Diocese opened on Nov. 1, 2012. The mission of the Southwest Indian Catholic Ministries is to provide resources for evangelization, faith formation and catechetical efforts in parishes and missions throughout the diocese where there are communities of Catholic Native Americans.

I am appreciating more and more how truly special and blessed we are to have a Native American saint in heaven — in heaven! Imagine that! She made it! I, a Native American, have a chance, too! St. Kateri stood for fortitude — she did

Serra Club of Pensacola continued from cover

whatever day they choose,” says Pat Remich, president and charter member of the Serra Club of Pensacola. “On that day of every month, they go to Mass to pray particularly for vocations.”

Last year in Pensacola, the Serra Club joined with the Knights of Columbus and the diocesan Council of Catholic Women for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. The Serra Club hopes to continue commemorating this day of prayer in the years to come.

Members of the club also support the seminarians who have answered the call to their vocations. During Holy Week for the the past eight years, the club has hosted luncheons with the seminarians — additionally, each member of the Serra Club “adopts” a seminarian, praying for and personally encouraging them as they follow their vocational path.

“We do things like send them cards at the holidays and so forth,” says Jim. “This helps to keep their spirits up, and they know we’re there for them.”

The Serra Club of Pensacola has also made various efforts to raise awareness for vocations. For example, each year the club sponsors an essay contest for Catholic schools in the area, to encourage children and families to think positively about the call to priesthood and religious life. Another effort is the College Connection for Catholics, which helps Catholic students keep in contact with their faith while they are in college. Through this program, the club provides encouragement and information about Catholic parishes and activities in their area.



The members of the Serra Club of Pensacola attend a luncheon with several priests of the diocese and Bishop Gregory Parkes

All members of the parish are encouraged to pray for vocations and to join the Serra Club in their mission.

“The more people we can get into the Serra Club, the more people are praying for vocations and the seminarians,” Pat says. “It’s always necessary to have seminarians studying for the priesthood. Without priests, we don’t have the Eucharist. Without the Eucharist, we don’t have our religion!”

To learn more about the Serra Club of Pensacola, or to contribute in any way, please contact Jim Daigle at 850-432-7879.

St. Kateri continued from previous page

not have it easy, although I guess no saint did. But through it all — ostracization, persecution, being misunderstood and ridiculed — she stood firm and remained strong in her Catholic faith. St. Kateri accepted her present circumstances as our Lord’s will. She didn’t complain or fight back. Instead, she waited for the Lord to make His move, and was faithfully quiet, prayerful and hopeful. Some might say she was aloof, but that is part of the misunderstanding. I’ve read all I could about St. Kateri before I went to the canonization, each time learning a little bit more about her. I often put myself in her circumstances — especially when I’m feeling confused about my Native American heritage and my Catholic faith. My heritage and faith can sometimes clash, and I long for someone to talk to about these clashes and the confusion I sometimes feel while trying to balance the two. St. Kateri must have felt the same way, and she has

paved the way for those of us who feel this way. She was able to take the best of both worlds and glorify God with her faith, hard work and virtuous life. She is now there for Native Americans in heaven — ready to help us Catholic Native Americans with our many questions.

So to address our specific connection to St. Kateri, I would say that she is Native American, and I am Native American. She is Catholic, and I am Catholic. She is a woman, and I am a woman. She had a deep faith in the Trinity, Mary, past saints, and our Catholic faith. I share this deep faith with her — maybe not in the exact same way, as no one ever has the same relationship as others do with Christ, Mary, past Saints, and our Catholic faith. But each of us is on a journey to a deeper relationship with all of these.

St. Kateri pray for us!

A Saint for Life:

St. Gianna Beretta Molla

As disciples of Christ, the Lord of Life, we are called to respect and defend the life of every human being from conception until natural death.

In today's world, a pro-life mindset is not only largely unpopular, but sometimes even dangerous.

However, the facts remain the same — the gift of life determines our humanity, and as Catholic Christians we are responsible for its protection. With the strong examples of people such as St. Gianna Beretta Molla, we are able to witness the value of being a people of faith, a people living to build up a culture resting on Christ's values — a culture of life.

From early childhood, Gianna lived an exemplary Christian life. She attended daily Mass with her mother and her brothers, and was a faithful member of Catholic Action, a lay apostolate dedicated to worldwide evangelization. Gianna often wrote beautiful prayers to the Lord, promising to follow His will no matter the consequences.

As a teenager, Gianna understood the importance of obeying God's will and made a series of resolutions to always follow His guidance. "I wish to die rather than commit a mortal sin," young Gianna once wrote. Yet, at the time, Gianna was not aware of what God had in store for her life.

Throughout her life, Gianna constantly prayed, "O Jesus, I promise You to submit myself to all that you permit to happen to me, make me only know your will." As her life progressed, Gianna would live such prayers in a radical way.

In 1961, as the mother of three and pregnant with her fourth child, Gianna was diagnosed with uterine cancer. To



preserve her health and life, doctors suggested Gianna undergo a radical hysterectomy — a surgery that would undoubtedly save her life, but consequently terminate her pregnancy. Gianna decided to wait for God's direction. Doctors removed portions of the tumor, but knew that full eradication would take a full hysterectomy. But Gianna was determined to keep her uterus intact, determined to give birth to her unborn baby. Knowing the serious dangers ahead, Gianna instructed her husband a few days prior to delivery, "If you must decide between me and the baby, have no hesitation: choose — and I demand it — the baby, save him."

As it turned out, Gianna's tumor had progressed so far that a few days after she delivered her fourth child, she passed away — a martyr for her child! Caring for the life of her unborn child meant the loss of her own life, but such knowledge never weakened her respect for life in the least. Gianna knew that her child's life was just as valuable as her own, and she needed to care for both of them. Gianna ultimately lost her life because she wasn't willing to sacrifice her child for her own sake. What a strong woman!

Though this seems radical, we are all called to respect the lives of the unborn just as Gianna did, and Gianna's fate only secures for us the reward we will receive if we work to build a culture of life, just as she did. On April 24, 1994, Gianna Beretta Molla was beatified by Pope John Paul II, and in May 2004, she was declared a saint. Because St. Gianna lived as a defender of life, she now enjoys eternal life with the Almighty God! Let us heed her example and build a culture of life!

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The Dillons: Coming Home to the Faith

For Casey and Rachel Dillon, the path to the Catholic Church was also a journey home.

Rachel was raised in a non-religious family, and moved from California to Gulf Breeze with her family at a young age. Casey, who was born in New York, was baptized Catholic, but stepped away from the Church as a teenager before he could be confirmed. The two met eight and a half years ago in college, at the University of West Florida.

“We went on a cross-country road trip and fell in love, and were basically inseparable after that,” says Rachel. “We have been together ever since.”

However, both Rachel and Casey felt as though there was something missing.

“For me, in my life I felt like I was always searching for something and didn’t know what it was or where to find it,” Rachel says.

“We had jobs, we had a house and all that stuff,” says Casey, “But we were pretty lost.”

Two years ago, all of that changed. Casey’s grandfather, who was in his 80s and had been a devout Catholic his whole life, was visiting the Dillons for the winter.

“We wanted to go to church with him, to keep him company so he wouldn’t be alone,” Rachel says. “We went, and Fr. Michael gave the homily. It was so powerful and moving — Casey’s grandfather said it was the best he had ever heard in his life! So after that, we kept going to church with him.”

“Within weeks, we had a conversion with Christ — he just came into our lives and we were seeing everything in a completely different way,” Casey says. “By that Christmas, I had decided that I wanted to come back to the Church, and Rachel decided she wanted to do RCIA and enter the Church.”

“I was baptized at the Easter Vigil,” Rachel says. “Becoming Catholic was like coming home.”

The ACTS retreat at St. Paul deeply influenced the Dillons during their conversion process. During Lent, Casey went on the retreat, and afterwards he encouraged Rachel to go as well.

“I was confirmed that April, and then I went on my first ACTS retreat in May,” says Rachel. “Going on the retreat and seeing how other women live out their faith was really an inspiration. It’s been one of the biggest blessings in my life. It called me to a deeper conversion for sure — it made me want to be involved in the parish.”

Casey and Rachel, who are both teachers, are also involved in many parish ministries and activities. Casey is a sacristan and participates in Eucharistic Adoration. He is also a third-degree knight for the Knights of Columbus and is on the ACTS Core Team. Both Casey and Rachel are very involved with the St. Paul Youth Group, and volunteer for many youth ministry trips and events, such as the Steubenville Youth Conference in Atlanta.

Becoming an active member of the parish community has helped to root the Dillons in their newfound faith.



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“After you leave and then you come back in, you realize, what were we even thinking?” Casey says. “All these people enjoying the faith in same way — you want to be with them, you want to surround yourself with these kinds of people.”

“Having a parish community is overwhelmingly wonderful,” Rachel says. “Not having come from a church background, I never understood what that was. I’m constantly humbled by the way people just offer to pray for you, and come out and support you. I had never seen anything like the love and support I feel from people in our parish.”

Becoming Catholic has changed the Dillons’ lives in ways they never could have expected.

“Everything we’ve learned really adds to the fullness of the faith, and it’s beautiful,” Rachel says.

“Just the belief in Jesus Christ has made us look to God for all the answers, and that’s where our rock is,” says Casey. “Catholicism is the truth. There are other truths, but this is such a fullness. If you’re really paying attention to the Church of Christ and the faith that abounds in the Church, it’s like a beacon.”

Our Apologies!

In the December 2012 issue of St. Paul’s newsletter, we included a photo of parishioner Rick Danner with a caption that stated: “Rick Danner on his ordination day.” The caption should have said, “Rick Danner on his Candidacy Day.” We apologize for the error.

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.