



11.2012

Saint Paul

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Funeral Sacristans: Giving Their Care and Support

We all know that on Halloween, children dress up in the dark of night and collect candy around their neighborhoods. But as Catholics, we also know that not many days after this tradition, we celebrate a feast of light — All Souls' Day. On this day, we remember all the loved ones we have lost who now rest with God in eternal life. It is also a good time to take a moment to appreciate a group who assists and supports grieving family members during a difficult time — the Funeral Sacristan Ministry.

The ministry has four active volunteers along with several substitutes. These volunteers offer invaluable support to bereaved families.

“The ministry has been a part of the parish since about 1981, and I was the first main sacristan,” says Dorothy Marshall, who has been a funeral sacristan for 40 years. “We assist the families and try to be there to give

them comfort. We greet the other guests and give them our sympathy and listen to them.”



Dorothy Marshall, one of our Funeral Sacristans at St. Paul

The sacristans take care of many details during funerals, and work with funeral home representatives in order to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

“We come ahead of time to set up,” Dorothy says. “We put out a table for the guest book, set up Holy Water, and put out a white pall cloth — when you are baptized, you wear a white garment, so it’s symbolic. We set up the Mass and put out the gifts of

water and wine. We try to do the funeral with great respect and dignity. The Blessed Mother was assumed into heaven because the human body is dignified; it has the spirit of God in it. The spirit of God is within us.”

The sacristans also provide invaluable support for the family during the funeral Mass itself. For example, they bring the gifts up to the altar, or do readings if family members are unable to do so themselves.

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Stewardship

Approaching Advent from a Stewardship Point of View

Advent ignites the ecclesiastical year of the Church, and is traditionally set to begin on the Sunday closest to the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle. Advent encompasses four December Sundays of penance, anticipation and joyful preparation. Commonly denoted by its distinctly purple motif, Advent's symbolic hues point to the royalty of Christ and the penance our souls require as we await His earthly arrival.

Every third Sunday during Advent, characterized by its striking rose color, is set aside as a time for rejoicing and merriment — a festive celebration of Christ's imminent coming. Advent's rich tradition within the Catholic Church incorporates several symbolic expressions of faith that describe the significance of Christ's coming. Seasonal mainstays — such as the family-oriented practice of lighting the Advent wreath, St. Lucia crowns and Advent calendars — help us physically express the sacred nature of Advent.

The mystery and beauty of Advent, characterized by contrite hearts and holy anticipation, is in no way limited to the Christmas season. Indeed, Christians all over the world should remain in a preparatory frame of mind until Christ returns to Earth in splendor. Ever since His glorious Ascension, Christians everywhere have been on watch, waiting for Jesus to return and take us home. As St. Paul explains in his letter to the



Thessalonians, “Therefore let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay alert and sober. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (1Th 5:2, 6).

As stewards of our parish community, we are vocationally called to spread Christ's message to the world. Much like John the Baptist, it is our responsibility to announce Christ's coming to all of humanity. We must invest ourselves, evangelically, in the mission of Christian conversion. We must not do so with force or propaganda, but with love and education. When we live with Christ's arrival firmly in mind, truly desiring His immediate presence, Christian stew-

ardship becomes second nature. Just as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* so eloquently explains, “When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming” (CCC 524).

As the dawn of Advent breaks upon us, let us appropriately prepare our hearts, with stewardship firmly in hand, for the arrival of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

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— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

A Letter From Our Pastor

The Year of Faith is Underway

Dear Parishioners,

The Year of Faith, as proclaimed by Pope Benedict for the Church throughout the world to celebrate, began on Oct. 11 and will conclude Nov. 24 of next year, on the Feast of Christ the King.

The start of this Year of Faith coincided with the anniversaries of two great events in the life of the Church — the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the 20th anniversary of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) explains on its website, “The upcoming Year of Faith is a ‘summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the One Savior of the world’ (Pope Benedict XVI Apostolic Letter, *Porta Fidei* 6). In other words, the Year of Faith is an opportunity for Catholics to experience a conversion – to turn back to Jesus and enter into a deeper relationship with him. The ‘door of faith’ is opened at one’s Baptism, but during this year Catholics are called to open it again, walk through it and rediscover and renew their relationship with Christ and his Church.”

The major themes of this special year are the very foundation of our faith. We focus on our belief in the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and in the Paschal Mystery, regarding the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus. We also seek a deeper personal encounter with Jesus, who is the light of faith. Finally, we make a renewed commitment to Mass and the Eucharist.


The Year of Faith is a time to reflect on the gift of our faith, and deepen our knowledge and understanding of the teachings of the Church. It is an opportunity to read, reflect and pray with the Scriptures, and to nourish and strengthen our faith through the Eucharist. It also is a time for us to help open the door of faith for others by caring for our neighbors.

Here in our parish, we will be offering many special opportunities for all of us to grow in our faith during this Year of Faith. Please keep an eye on the bulletin for announcements on these opportunities and please take advantage of them. I promise that you will be glad you did.

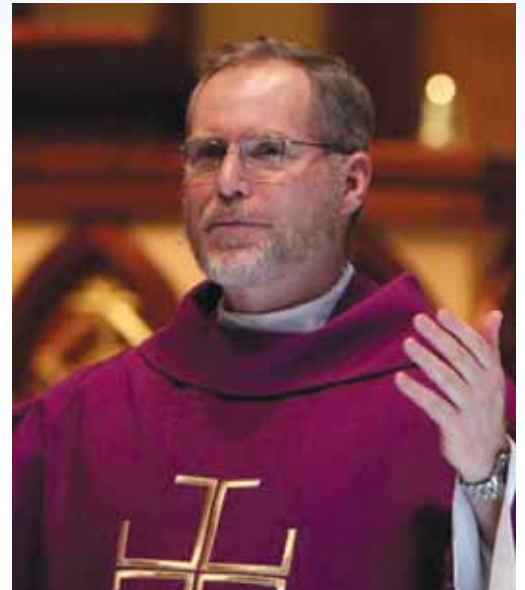
If you would like to read and learn more about the Year of Faith, the USCCB website at www.usccb.org is an excellent resource.

With God’s grace, let us make this Year of Faith a season of great blessing for our parish, for our diocese and for the Church throughout the world.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Doug Halsema
Pastor



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Feeding the Hungry of the



Rachael Maiellaro, Jane Busey, Bob Kane, and Daryl Ann Scichilone preparing a meal at St. Paul before heading to the Alfred-Washburn Center



Jane Busey and John Schwab enjoy sharing their culinary talents as members of the Outreach Ministry



Jane Busey and Rachel Maiellaro are elbow-deep in pasta

The holidays, while a joyous time for many, are often difficult for others. And as Catholics, we often give help to the needy and homeless during these times. But it is also important to offer such assistance to those in need throughout the entire year. St. Paul's Outreach Ministry recognizes this need, providing hot meals for those in need on the first three Wednesdays of each month.

Parishioner John Schwab first initiated the Outreach Ministry's efforts in December 2009. John was a volunteer at the St. Vincent de Paul Society's Alfred-Washburn Center, and he was inspired to get the parish involved when he made a key discovery.

"I asked around, and at the time the only Catholic church providing meals was St. Ann in Gulf Breeze," he says. "Of all the churches in Pensacola, there was only one? That's when I went to Fr. Doug, so we could get more Catholic Christians involved in supporting the homeless. Now it's progressed to where we're serving three meals a month."

The Outreach Ministry includes a core group of about seven people who provide constant support for the meal efforts, including preparation, cooking and serving. Since there are no cooking facilities at the Alfred-Washburn Center, the meals are prepared prior to being brought there. The ministry serves between 110 and 130 people each week.

"In our core group, we have a few who really enjoy cooking," says John. "There are others who just like to be part of that effort, supporting. We have a lot of fun. And, I thought I was a pretty good cook, but I learned a lot from these guys! One of our members volunteered during the Haiti earthquake, so he's used to serving large amounts of people."

The Pensacola Community

In addition to the ministry members, many other parishioners also donate their time to volunteer as their daily schedules allow. Since most volunteers aren't able to serve the meals on Wednesday during the day, they help by preparing and cooking meals beforehand.

Even though the ministry does not serve meals on Thanksgiving Day, the volunteers get into the spirit of the holiday while preparing and serving the meals.

"Since Thanksgiving is the third Thursday, we'll be cooking the day before, but we'll do a different meal since the turkey dinner is prepared on Thanksgiving Day by other organizations," John says. "We usually try to make something special — something that they haven't had before. We also try to do special meals for Easter, the Fourth of July, and Christmas."

Those who volunteer at the Alfred-Washburn Center with the Outreach Ministry find that they enjoy an experience unlike any other.

"There's a great deal of personal spiritual growth for the people that support the homeless," says John. "The people that do it thoroughly enjoy it, and they continue to come back. It's a pleasing, humbling and rewarding ministry. The people we help at the Washburn Center love us because everything we cook is from scratch. They understand that we take a lot of time, and we do it out of love for them. It's with great thanks."

If you would like to get involved in the Outreach Ministry's efforts to feed the hungry, please contact John Schwab at 850-549-3376.



(above and below) Volunteers serve a meal at the Alfred-Washburn Center



Parish to Thank Dedicated Volunteers with Special Mass and Reception

What is the secret to developing a thriving stewardship community here at St. Paul? In a word, volunteers.

“Volunteers are critical for the life of the parish,” says Diane Wilkinson, the Pastoral Council chairperson. “From liturgical ministries, to service ministries, to leadership ministries — all of our ministries rely almost entirely on parishioners stepping forward and volunteering.”

As the parish continues in its initiatives to grow through stewardship, the number of parishioners actively giving their time and talents in St. Paul’s 68 different ministries is higher than ever.

“Over the years, we’ve had different mechanisms to try to facilitate people volunteering, but we’ve had particular success with the Stewardship Renewal process,” Diane says. “With the ministry guide and all of the follow-up opportunities, it has really helped us grow.”

With an increasing number of parishioners sharing their time and talent in remarkably generous ways, the parish leaders decided to host its second-ever Volunteer Appreciation Mass and Reception, which is currently scheduled for later this month. In the fall of 2010, the Faith Engaged Steering Committee hosted a similar event, honoring around 120 parishioners who had been nominated by other members of the parish for their service and volunteerism. This fall, another 50 have been chosen.

The Appreciation celebration is currently slated to be held on Sunday, Nov. 25, beginning with the 11 a.m. Mass.

“During the Mass, our celebrant will recognize our volunteers and invite them and the entire congregation to the reception,” says Christy Arnold, the chairperson of the Volunteer Appreciation festivities. “During the reception, we will celebrate with food, drinks and cake.”

As the parish celebrates the contributions of its most generous volunteers, it does so knowing that their service is first and foremost done for God and His glory.

“All of us who give of our time and talents in service through the various ministries don’t do so for recognition or awards,” Diane says. “As I have grown in my faith, it has become very important for me to recognize that all I have has been given by God and it is therefore important for me to reflect that in the way I give back. Nevertheless, we still think it is wonderful to celebrate and applaud those who do give so much!”



Praying for the Holy Souls in Purgatory

Many Catholics are aware that the Church dedicates the first two days of November — the Solemnity of All Saints on Nov. 1 and the Feast of All Souls on Nov. 2 — to commemorating and praying for the souls of the faithful departed. But did you know that during the entire month of November, the Church places a special emphasis on praying for the souls in purgatory?

The Church has always taught us to pray for the souls of those who have passed on from this life. Even in Old Testament times, prayers and alms were offered for the souls of the dead by those who thought “well and religiously concerning the resurrection” (*Liturgical Meditations*, The Sisters of St. Dominic). And in the early days of the Church, St. Paul further emphasized the importance and responsibility of not only remembering our brothers and sisters who have passed away, but actively praying for them: “For the Lord himself ... will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will first rise” (1 Thess 4:16).

Because of the very state of the holy souls in purgatory, we as earthly brothers and sisters in Christ are closely connected to those who passed on from this life. We share in the peace of knowing that salvation will one day be obtained, but are simultaneously suffering in separation from God. The Church also teaches that we have the opportunity to play a big part in helping these souls through their period of purgation, so that they may soon enjoy eternal glory with the Lord. As Bishop Donald W. Wuerl points out in *The Teaching of Christ*, “Their communion with the faithful on earth is not thereby broken. The living can bring comfort and alleviation to those in purgatory by their intercessions, by ‘Masses, prayers, almsgiving and other pious works which, in the manner of the Church, the faithful are accustomed to do for others of the faithful.’”

This month, please make a special effort to offer prayers for your deceased friends and loved ones, and all those who have passed away in the grace and friendship of God. Offering a Mass for someone who has passed away is an especially fruitful way to honor the memory and bring comfort to a holy soul in purgatory.

Prayer for the Holy Souls in Purgatory

O Lord, who art ever merciful and bounteous with Thy gifts, look down upon the suffering souls in purgatory. Remember not their offenses and negligences, but be mindful of Thy loving mercy, which is from all eternity. Cleanse them of their sins and fulfill their ardent desires that they may be made worthy to behold Thee face to face in Thy glory. May they soon be united with Thee and hear those blessed words which will call them to their heavenly home: “Come, blessed of My Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Amen.



Save the date for Nov. 14!

St. Paul Parish invites you and your family to attend our Thanksgiving Fellowship Supper. Enjoy turkey and all the fixings - as well as fun and fellowship with other parishioners! We hope to see you there! More details in the weekly parish bulletin.

Address Service Requested

Funeral Sacristans continued from cover

Dorothy also assists family members with what to do during the Mass, since their minds are otherwise occupied.

“I sit in the front and have them follow me, so they know when to sit and stand,” Dorothy says. “It’s a cue for them.”

Dorothy views the ministry’s service as a simple act of love and service to God.

“It’s a very good ministry — people feel really comfortable knowing that there are other people

that care,” she says. “It’s an act of love to be there for anyone who is suffering and hurting. This is one of the Corporal Acts of Mercy, to bury the dead. I’m glad to be there and ease them through what they’re going through. It makes me more in tune to realize that there is life and death, and a new life after death.”

Parishioners are invited and encouraged to volunteer with this very special ministry. Please contact Dorothy Marshall at 850-438-9188 for more information.

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— Dorothy Marshall

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.