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Saint Paul

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

“Lead by Example” Jim and Susan Zettler

An active faith is contagious. That is what Jim and Susan Zettler are discovering as they grow closer to the St. Paul community, both the church and the school, and that is how they hope to inspire their children.

“When you are on fire with the faith, that trickles down to your children, and they want to be a part of it!” Jim says. “As a parent, you lead by example. When my kids see that I am steadfast even when life is busy and things come up, that is an example.”

Jim and Susan met when Susan brought her puppy into the clinic, and Jim was working instead of her regular veterinarian. Both raised in active Catholic families, they describe meeting at a time when they were on parallel searches for a deeper and more connected faith life.

“When Jim and I met, we were strong in our faith, but we were lackadaisical in our practice,” Susan says. “We had both been searching for that engaged faith, and we were led to each other. Getting together redoubled our faith!”

They were married at Jim’s hometown parish in Mississippi and remained members at St. Paul, which had been Jim’s parish since 2001. With two children – Mallory, in fourth grade, and Hayden, in third grade – attending St. Paul School, Jim and Susan soon found themselves heavily engaged in school life and consequently in parish life.

“It was definitely the school that got us more involved at St. Paul,” Susan says. “I was



The Zettler family – Jim and Susan with (from left) Jami, Mallory and Hayden

a room mom and a school volunteer. I ended up on the School Advisory Council. The more we did, the more we met people, which makes you more bonded with the church and the community.”

The impact of their children’s Catholic education also plays an important role in the Zettler home, and along with their evening prayers as a family, they bond together over faith-based homework.

“They have their homework for religion class, and we all share in that together,” Susan says. “It helps us to be teaching them and guiding them in the way that

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Jim and Susan Zettler *continued from front cover*

Jesus wants us all to go.”

School involvement led to church involvement, and Jim and Susan found that the more involved they became, the more they wanted to do for the parish family.

“I have been on the Stewardship Committee for two years, and I am also head Welcome Steward for the Sunday night Mass,” Jim says. “These commitments have helped me take more ownership of the parish.”

At the church, Susan and Jim also enjoy welcoming new families and helping them discern what they are interested in and making them feel a part of parish life.

Their children now help Jim greet parishioners at Mass on Sunday night and hand out bulletins. Alongside his father who is a den leader, Hayden enjoys being involved in Cub Scouts, of which faith and service is a key component.

“St. Paul is getting even better at offering more and more ministries for younger children and families,” Susan says. “There is Discipulus and Fraternalis and several different ministries for different ages.”

As a couple, Jim and Susan also believe in taking the time to continually strengthen their marriage and enjoy spending time together on trips they have taken to the Caribbean.

“We love spending time together and seeing the beauty of God’s creation,” Susan says. “These trips are a good time for us to reconnect. We spend time talking about our faith and our goals.”

In light of their ever-growing inter-connectedness with the parish and the school, the Zettler family thanks Father, who first invited them to commit to ministry. They also thank all the teachers and volunteers at St. Paul School whose generous giving offers yet another example of active faith for our children.

“The more we’ve become involved, the more we feel a part of the parish family,” Jim says. “We are invested in the parish and have had friends who move back to this area because this community tugs at their hearts! Thank you to everyone who comes together to build this community.”

“When you are on fire with the faith, that trickles down to your children, and they want to be a part of it! As a parent, you lead by example. When my kids see that I am steadfast even when life is busy and things come up, that is an example.”

— Jim Zettler



Jim Zettler with his son, Hayden



Mallory Zettler receiving her First Communion



Celebrating the Joy of Christ's Resurrection

Dear Parishioners,

There are many aspects of the Easter celebration that bring joy to the Christian. Not only do we rejoice in Christ's resurrection, as He conquered death, but we also rejoice because of the eternal reward we gain through it. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (654) puts it, "The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life."

This new life that we speak of is a life of abundance and freedom found not only in our current existence, but also in our eternal life in heaven with God. In a beautiful mystery, Christ's resurrection is the source of our own future resurrection. In his Letter to the Romans, St. Paul wrote: "For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection" (Rom 6:5).

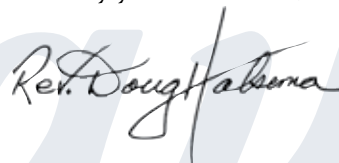
When Christ overcame the grave, He opened the gates of heaven that had never been opened before. Through His resurrection, we have the opportunity to be united with God in eternal bliss and happiness. What greater grounds for thanksgiving can there be than this Easter hope? We should sing with joy about this promise from God!

But how can we best express that joy? How can we thank God for the greatest gift that we could ever be given? We can join in worship, praising God in our words and deeds, and

share the Good News of His victory with our family, friends and neighbors. Most importantly, we respond to His graciousness with a gift of our own – a gift of our very self. When we give our time, talent and treasure to God and to others in service, we make a concrete gesture of thanksgiving in return to the One who is most deserving of our love.

This Easter season, let us live out Jesus' reassurance that "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world" (Jn 16:33). Despite the challenges of our daily lives and the struggles we may be going through, Christ has won for us eternal victory, giving us a hope for a better tomorrow and peace that will never end. That, my brothers and sisters, is reason to rejoice.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Doug Halsema
Pastor

The Journey

Everyone's faith journey is a little different. Some are born into their religion, some find their faith through a life-altering event, and some spend their lifetime searching until they find exactly what they are looking for. Such is the case with parishioner Erin Parsons who, in recognizing that there was something missing in her spiritual life, kept searching until she finally found that missing element within the Catholic Church.

Originally from Tuscaloosa, Ala., Erin always had a feeling that there was something out there which would satisfy her longing for a spiritual home. Her parents came from different faith backgrounds – her father was Lutheran and her mother belonged to the Church of Christ – and while Erin and her sister attended church with their mother, they were never baptized in that faith.

"I think my mother, too, felt like there was something missing," Erin says. "So even though we attended church,

I never really had a faith base and, especially in my latter years, that was something I always longed for. A lot of protestant faiths now have contemporary services, but that was not what I wanted. I wanted structure and tradition."

And while Erin was searching, God was actually showing her the way, revealing himself a little at a time. In fact, God wasn't just working on her, but on other people in her life, as well. When she began dating Benton, an old friend that she had known from high school, they often talked about religion. Interestingly, Benton had been raised a Catholic and, like Erin, he grew up in a household where his parents were from different faith backgrounds. As their relationship progressed, they both knew that they wanted to find a faith that would work for both of them. But because Benton was in the military and they were in a long-distance relationship, they hadn't quite worked it all out when they decided to marry.

"From the beginning we both knew that faith was something we wanted to center our family on, but we just hadn't decided which one," Erin says. "I remember one time looking at Benton's dog tags and where the religion is stamped it said, 'No Pref' – and that broke my heart. I even had a discussion with his mom and knew it concerned her, too. Both Benton's mom and his grandmother were very devout Catholics. In fact, when we visited his grandmother at the Little Sisters of the Poor Retirement Home in Alabama, the sisters told me that Benton's grandmother still insisted on kneeling during



Parishioners Benton and Erin Parsons have been married for four years.

"I absolutely love everything about the... me more about history and religion than... happy that not only am I doing this for... my sponsor, it has renewed his faith and... together." –

PARSONS

to Catholicism

Mass. Later I attended her funeral Mass – which was my first Catholic Mass – and someone handed me a pocket rosary along with a small pamphlet with prayers. Then a few months later, I watched Benton’s father go through the RCIA program to become a Catholic, and I loved everything about the experience. I knew I wanted more.”

With that desire, things started to fall into place when Benton was assigned to Pensacola, Fla. where, for the first time since they married, Benton and Erin found themselves living in a place for longer than six months. They purchased a home, started visiting different parishes, and finally found their church home here at St. Paul. And last fall, Erin began taking RCIA classes.

Designed to give those interested in Catholicism a thorough foundation of the teachings of the Catholic Church, the RCIA program is a time of discernment where even the fears, doubts and questions are part of the process. But for Erin, it was a perfect fit, and she had no doubt that she was exactly where God meant her to be.

“I absolutely love everything about the RCIA process,” Erin says. “The program has taught me more about history and religion that I could have ever imagined. I am so happy that not only am I doing this for me, but because Benton is my sponsor, it has renewed his faith and we have

been able to take this journey together. Sometimes we sit on our back patio and have deep conversations about what we learned or discussed in class.”

Incredibly, in the wonderful way God works, at the same time Erin will become a Catholic this month during the Easter Vigil Mass, her sister will be doing the same in Mobile, Ala. And to make it even more special, on that evening Fr. Doug will validate Erin and Benton’s marriage in the Catholic Church.

In thinking back on her faith journey which was all about searching for something that was missing, Erin shows us how the search can be an important part of the journey. But with perseverance and an open heart, it is possible to find exactly what you are looking for.

“My sister and I have found what our mother always wanted for us,” Erin says. “And I finally have what I have always been longing for – a strong faith foundation, a church home, and a sense of belonging. And I can’t wait to participate in the sacraments and to be able to go up for Communion with Benton.”



Erin and Benton Parsons. Erin is currently enrolled in the RCIA program.

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Erin Parsons

Teaching By Example

The Importance of Prayer in a Child's Life

“I want to be just like Mom!”
“I want to be just like Dad!”

Perhaps nothing lifts a parent's heart like hearing these words. While certainly affirming, such words also remind us of the great responsibility that comes with parenthood.

Children often examine the lives of their parents when making decisions that will affect their own lives. For example, a young boy may dream of becoming a physician one day, just like his father. Or a young girl may hope to become a veterinarian, just like her mother. Could the same be said about their parents' faith lives?

Just as children learn traits and values from their parents, they should also learn the importance and great joy of developing a personal relationship with Christ. And the foundation of such a relationship is prayer — conversation with God.

How should we go about teaching our children to pray? There are several methods, but none works as well as teaching by example. Begin teaching the importance of prayer by praying openly with your spouse. This teaches children that prayer is meaningful and important, and not just a ritual. Also, pray with your children — in the morning and in the evening. Show your sons and daughters the importance of beginning and ending each day in prayer.

While a fortunate dilemma, it's a dilemma nonetheless — Catholics face the challenge of discerning which prayers to use, considering the thousands available. A good rule of thumb is to start simple — maybe an Our Father or Hail Mary, and then move into something more complex — Hail, Holy Queen or Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel, among



others. Begin with prayers your children can pick up fairly quickly. Not only will this show them that praying can be fun and easy, but shorter prayers are also usually easier to understand.

Teach your children the importance of spontaneous prayer, rather than just prescribed prayers. Spontaneous prayer is any prayer that is created at the same time it is offered. Another way to think of spontaneous prayer is “praying in your own words.” Structure spontaneous prayers according to the ACTS acronym — Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. In layman's terms, this means beginning each prayer with words of adoration, such as “You are the Lord God Almighty. I love you.” Move into a period of contrition, asking God's forgiveness for the sins you have committed. Then give words of thanksgiving, thanking God for the gifts He has given. Finally, spend time sharing with God your heart's desires. These intentions can be personal or on another's behalf. Following this format ensures that spontaneous prayer “covers all the bases,” and doesn't become just a mental wish list. While God wants to hear and grant our wishes, He also expects words of adoration, contrition and thankfulness.

The best time to begin praying with your children is right now. The sooner they learn about prayer, the sooner they can begin cultivating their own relationship with Jesus. Many parents even pray with their children before birth, hoping their unborn son or daughter can hear their words in utero. Remember, there is no better way to teach one's children about the value of prayer than by example.

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Offering Women Faith-Based Fellowship Opportunities

The Women's Study Group

at St. Paul

When Tristan DeSorbo converted to Catholicism, she began to search for an intimate study group that would help her learn more about her newly-adopted Catholic faith, provide an opportunity to join in the St. Paul parish community, and fulfill her need for a comfortable and familiar small-group study environment. She found all of that and more in the Women's Study Group.

"I was raised Baptist, and we always had Sunday morning Bible study, and I really liked that," says Tristan, who leads the Women's Study Group. "So within the Catholic Church, I was looking for something that would give me that small group discussion time. Through the Women's Study Group, I was able to meet other parishioners that I wouldn't have met or become close to just attending Mass. That was advantageous for me because I was just beginning in the Church. It's something that helps you to become part of the community that wouldn't happen if you were just attending Church. You get to really know people."

The Women's Study Group gathers every third Thursday of the month at 7 p.m., at different group member's homes. All women of the parish are invited to join the group, which offers fellowship, faith-based discussion, and the opportunity to learn about many varied topics related to our Catholic faith.

"Primarily, the Women's Study Group is here to provide women a way to fellowship with fellow believers, and to strengthen our faith, however you may need it – whether it is the unit of study that you really want to learn about, or maybe it's the camaraderie," Tristan says. "Maybe you really want to be around other Catholic women. We feed off of each other. It's great because it's casual in the sense that it's very comfortable. People can talk freely as little or as much as they want. We've become close-knit, but we always welcome new women!"

One of the things that Tristan likes most about the Women's Study Group is the fact that the group members are able to offer suggestions and choose the topics they study.

"We want people to be able to come and have some say in what we're going to study, and that makes it better for them as they are more in tune with the topics we choose," Tristan says. "We're picking books of study that are specifically going to help us grow in faith. If we are studying about a saint, we try to take what we learn and apply it to our lives. I would say the benefits of the group are two-fold



Women's Study Group ministry leader Tristan DeSorbo with her husband, Mike, and son Jackson.



A few members of the Women's Study Group at a recent session

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– whatever book of study we're doing is going to impact our faith, whether it's about a saint or learning about the pope. And the other part is learning from each other. Each woman has a different point of view, so we help each other. Each of our different perspectives adds to the group and helps us all to learn and grow.”

For Tristan, being a part of the group for over 10 years has allowed her to truly deepen her relationship with Christ, both through the topics the group studies and her relationships with other holy women living out their faith together.

“We support each other in prayer, and that is so important,” Tristan says. “Each of the women is a witness because of their life and their faith, and that is reassuring and comforting. You always believe God is there and that everything is going to be okay. But when you see other women walking in faith through hard times, to see it on a human level, in real time and in real life, that gives me more confidence and makes God more real.”

For more information on the Women's Study Group, please contact Tristan DeSorbo at 850-474-9863, or via email at tristan_raenne@hotmail.com.

Liturgy Schedule

Saturday Vigil: 4:30 p.m. | **Sunday:** 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.,
most Sundays during 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. Mass, 1st Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m., and by appointment
Eucharistic Adoration: Thursday 9:00 a.m. until Friday 7:30 a.m.