



03.2015

Saint Paul

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Ushering in a Desire to Serve

Ushers are a familiar and welcoming sight at nearly every Catholic parish. Yet, how much attention do we pay to these volunteers who are not only present every Sunday, but also actively participate in the celebration of the Mass? It might be easy to take for granted these dedicated volunteers who assist with our liturgical celebrations while not being the primary focus of attention.

“They’re always looking for good, dependable people to help out,” says James Hodge, Head of the Welcome Stewards Ministry, of which our Ushers Ministry is a part. “It’s one thing to be asked to help with the collection at Mass; it’s another to take the next step to agree to be in the ministry. There’s a lot more involvement to being one of the people behind the scenes to help run the Mass.”

Ushers have many duties and responsibilities, such as helping people find seats, assisting the physically disabled or elderly, answering any questions that a parishioner or visitor may have, taking up the collection, handing out bulletins and other materials, and making sure that the pews are tidy and the church is ready for the next Mass.

And perhaps most importantly, they stay observant and alert in case someone requires their assistance.

“They really get to know and understand the people,” James says. “They spend time speaking to people and introducing



Usher John Armentrout processing down the aisle with Mallory Richardson and Lindsay Middleton

themselves to people they don’t recognize. Mostly, they are available to talk to, greet or assist people if need be.”

There are about 20 ushers who serve regularly. So why are these volunteers so dedicated to giving of themselves in this ministry?

“I began the ministry of the greeters at the same time I began in the ushers, so I was trying to get some consistency and bridge the gap between the two ministries, and understand why we needed two ministries to complete those two tasks and figure out how we could get everybody to work together a little better,” James says. “And I enjoy being an usher and working with the other guys involved in the ministry.”

But that is just part of what motivated James to become an usher. His real inspiration came from attending the Global

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Ushering *continued from front cover*

Leadership Summit in Chicago and listening to one of the speakers, a senior pastor of a Protestant church, who spoke about a man he knew who had lost his grandson. The man happened to be traveling at the time and went to a church overseas, where he broke down emotionally. The pastor asked whether anyone at the church had reached out to him, but the man said that no one had.

“It’s very easy to go to Mass and just focus on being in Mass for yourself, but having someone hurting that bad sitting next to you and you not knowing or acknowledging this kind of hit home,” James says. “But one way I could help that not happen in my parish is to make sure I make myself more available and accessible and at least offer them a warm, smiling face, and when I see someone in that situation, tell them at least that we’re praying for them. I want to make sure they understand that they’re not alone and there are people that

care for them. I thought that stepping up and becoming one of the people that helps to welcome people in, I could have an impact on making sure that kind of thing didn’t happen at our parish.”

Through their service, James and the rest of the ushers certainly do their part in making themselves available to any needs that parishioners and visitors to our parish may have.

“I continue to be impressed with the dedication of the folks we do have,” James says. “The head ushers are willing to be there every week or find a substitute if they can’t be there. It’s a great group to be involved in and I’m extremely thankful for the opportunity. I get a huge amount of enjoyment from being more involved in the ministry.”

For more information, or to get involved, please contact James Hodge at 850-380-7591 or simply talk to one of the ushers after Mass.



(From left) Ushers Tony Renbarger and John Armentrout taking up the collection at Mass



(From left) Mike Louy, head usher for the 9 a.m. Sunday Mass, and Tony Renbarger passing out handouts to parishioners at Mass

“I want to make sure [those going through a difficult time] understand that they’re not alone and there are people that care for them. I thought that stepping up and becoming one of the people that helps to welcome people in, I could have an impact on making sure that kind of thing didn’t happen at our parish.”

— James Hodge, Head of the Welcome Stewards Ministry

A Letter From Our Pastor

The Joy of Lent

Dear Parishioners,

Have you ever thought about the joy in sacrifice that Lent provides? Most of us don't delight in sacrifice; in fact, in our daily lives we often do our best to avoid challenges and practices that push us outside of our comfort zones.

In Christianity, there is a beautiful irony between joy and sacrifice, and we are presented with a wonderful opportunity to embrace this in a unique way during Lent. In his 2014 Lenten message, Pope Francis shared, "Lent is a fitting time for self-denial; we would do well to ask ourselves what we can give up in order to help and enrich others by our own poverty."

While giving up sweets in favor of healthy snacks for Lent is a common and noble endeavor, the goal of Lent should not only be a spiritual excuse to lose weight! In choosing acts of self-denial, we are saying "no" to things in order to get into the practice of saying "no" when inclined towards sin, ultimately deepening our faith and our relationship with the Lord. Victory can be found when we deny ourselves and pick up our crosses and hardships in order to grow closer to Christ!

Therein lies the joy. When we grow closer to God by denying our will, we say "yes" to a life of abundance with Him. Our God is a benevolent God; He will not hold back His grace from those who honor Him and choose challenging things to grow and give Him glory. Christ even tells us Himself, "Blessed



are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Without question, Lent is a time for conscious penitence and for spiritual preparation for Easter. And, it is important to remember that God loves us whether we make Lenten changes or not. At the same time, Lent provides us an opportunity to make God a greater part of our life, and to take our faith to new levels. Stewardship is a God-centered way of life — a spiritual way of living that, above all, acknowledges God's presence in all we do.

Lent is a time for each and every one of us to do more than simply deny ourselves; we need to welcome God

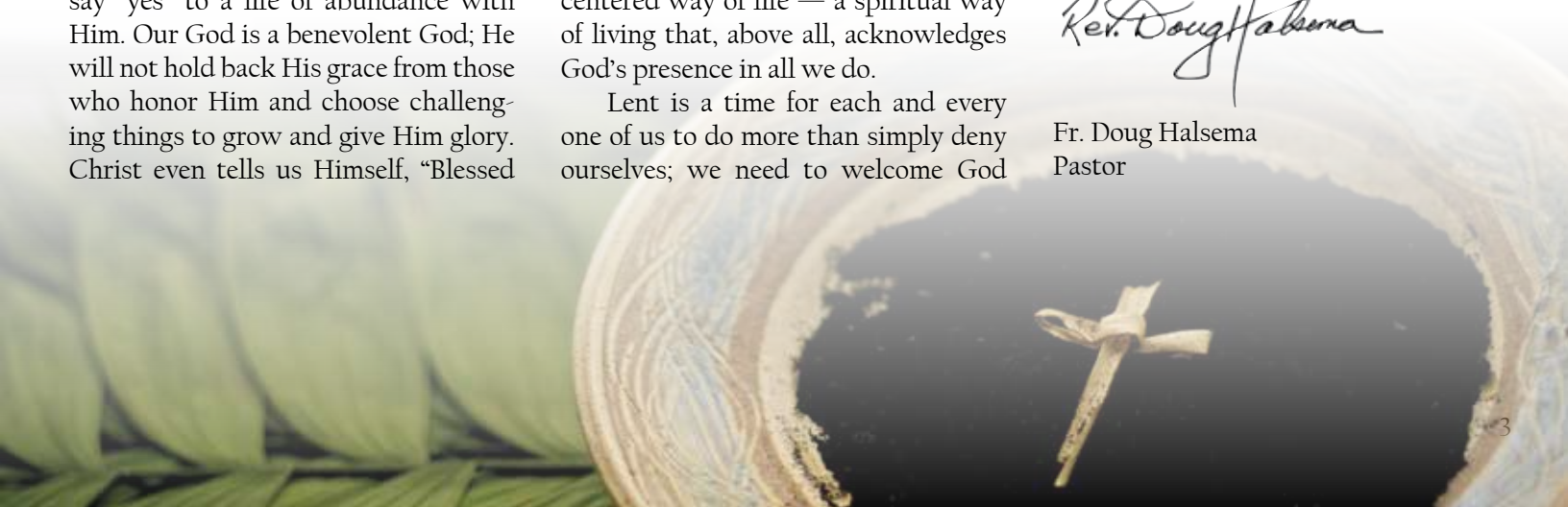
into our lives in greater ways, so that when we get to Holy Week and Easter, we have an even greater appreciation for the sacrifice the Lord made for us. Talk about pure joy!

May you and your loved ones enjoy a holy and joyous Lenten journey, and a blessed Easter.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rev. Doug Halsema".

Fr. Doug Halsema
Pastor



Living the Principles of Matthew 25:40

Feed My Sheep

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40).

John Schwab, founder of the Feed My Sheep outreach ministry here at St. Paul, lives this passage every day through his work with Feed My Sheep.

With the help of Fr. Doug Halsema, John founded the Feed My Sheep outreach ministry in December 2009. John saw a need when he realized there were many Protestant churches working with the homeless at the Alfred-Washburn Center, a facility in Pensacola, supported by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, that offers meals, shower and laundry facilities, clothing, and other support for the homeless in our area. At the time, there were no Catholic churches helping to provide meals, so

John thought it was a great time for St. Paul to get involved.

“We created the ministry that would kind of replicate what a lot of the Protestant churches were doing at the time, which is providing meals at the Alfred-Washburn Center,” John says. “I checked with Fr. Doug and asked if he would be interested in doing this and he was very supportive. We started slow, serving one meal a month. For the first few months, it was just my neighbor and I. Then Fr. Doug asked us if we could do it twice a month. Some of the Protestant churches were bowing out, so we told him we would do it. We went on an advertising campaign and got more and more people to help. Now we are doing three meals a month.”

John and his core team of 10 volunteers from St. Paul come together the first three Wednesdays of every month to prepare, transport and serve

hot meals to close to 150 patrons. The budget for the food is provided by St. Paul Parish, and John and another team member do all the shopping, always looking for sales and special deals to stretch their budget. John has nothing but positive things to say about his team of volunteers.

“We’ve been very blessed with people who have supported our mission from the beginning,” John says. “Fr. Doug does a fantastic job of supporting us, financially and in many other ways. Our core group are magnificent folks who are dedicated to the job. The beauty of it is nobody cares who gets the credit. Everybody offers input and suggestions here and there and all of us are able to work together very well. But we don’t care who gets the credit — this is God’s work, not our work. I mean that in all sincerity. The people who come in to help are transformed by the ministry.



25 Through Service to the Homeless My Sheep

We all do it for our own reasons, but we are dedicated and it transforms our relationship with Christ, our Church, and the homeless. We are all called to this ministry, and all participate. It's a great group of people to work with."

Feed My Sheep is always looking for more volunteers. John says that the work they do is often hard work, but it's God's work, and the benefits far outweigh the energy volunteers put into it.

"If you can't see Christ in the people that you serve, you aren't do-

ing it for the right reasons," John says. "I'm humbled every time I go through it. You can't be around these people without stopping to thank God for the countless blessings we have every day. You have to see Christ where He may be found, and you certainly find Him in that arena every day. I'm also humbled by the character and the strength of my companions who do this every day in all of the churches around Pensacola. The Alfred-Washburn Center provides a wonderful service to the community. It gets the homeless out

of the streets and gets them to a place where they can be fed and bathed and clothed, and respected. They are nothing to fear — they are just people who have fallen on hard times. I always say, 'There but for the grace go I.' It makes you so thankful."

For more information on Feed My Sheep and the wonderful work this outreach ministry is doing for the homeless in our area, or to find out how you can help, please contact John Schwab at 850-549-3376, or via email at schwabjohn@yahoo.com.

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A Real Family Gathering

ST. PAUL PARISH PICNIC



Like any family, our parish family here at St. Paul grows closer when we get together. And there is no better opportunity for our entire parish to come together than the annual Parish Picnic!

“The picnic is important because it is the only event each year where most of the parishioners come together at one time,” says Louise Videau, Chair of the Parish Picnic. “There is no other event that all of us come together at one time! It is great to see how large our church family really is!”

The St. Paul Annual Parish Picnic has moved to the spring this year and will be held on Sunday, March 1, after the 11 a.m. Mass. The theme this year is “Spring into Action at St. Paul!” As always, the picnic will include a traditional picnic lunch, desserts, music, entertainment, Bingo and children’s games.

This event is a way for St. Paul Parish to thank all the volunteers and parishioners who make our parish a vibrant, wonderful place to be, so there is no cost for parishioners to attend.

“The picnic is a great way for the priests to let us know that they appreciate all the parishioners do for the parish,” Louise says. “It is their gift to the parishioners to thank them for all they do for the church.”

The annual Parish Picnic is also a great opportunity for parishioners to volunteer their time in service to our parish family.

“Parishioners should volunteer to help with the picnic because they will also enjoy the feeling of helping to put on this major event,” Louise says. “Helping with the picnic is an easy way to start getting involved in our parish and a way to keep in contact with the other parishioners. The picnic cannot go on without the help of about 150 people each year.”

Those who wish to volunteer can go to the parish website at www.stpaulcatholic.net, and navigate to “Parish Picnic 2015” under the “Events” menu. There is a volunteer signup link on this page. You may also email picnic chair Louise Videau at picnic@stpaulcatholic.net. When we give our time in service of others, we are blessed even more in return.

“Our whole family has worked hard at making our Parish Picnic a success,” Louise says. “Yes, it is a challenge sometimes to fit the picnic preparation time into our busy schedules, but what I really want you to know is how much our family has enjoyed serving our parish through the Parish Picnic. It is truly a service to our parish to have the opportunity for all the parishioners to gather together for one day each year, have fellowship, and celebrate our Catholic faith together.”

In order to buy the right amount of food, St. Paul requests that everyone fill out a family food RSVP form that is available online from the St. Paul website. Click on the Parish Picnic link under “Events” to RSVP.

Northwest Florida Guild of the Catholic Medical Association

Helping Medical Professionals Live the Catholic Faith



Clergy and altar servers after the White Mass, a Mass held specifically for all medical professionals of North West Florida. Deacon Dr. Bill Whibbs, President of the Northwest Florida Guild of the Catholic Medical Association, is pictured on the far left.

Ever since she was in fourth grade, Dr. Diane Wilkinson knew she wanted to become a doctor. Her father was a doctor, and she remembers hanging around his office as a child and watching him interact with his patients.

“I just enjoyed seeing him help other people,” she recalls. “The medical field is all about serving others, and that drew me to the profession.”

After graduating from pediatric residency in 1991, Dr. Wilkinson was drawn to Pensacola for the Catholic hospital, Sacred Heart.

“Part of the hospital mission is to serve the poor and the underserved in the area,” she explains. “I think that’s important, because the faith life has to be part of who you are. Whether you’re talking about what you’re doing professionally or with your family or in your neighborhood, it has to be a part of your very being.”

Together with Deacon Dr. Bill Whibbs, President, and Dr. Mark Kummer, Vice President, Dr. Wilkinson formed the Northwest Florida Guild of the Catholic Medical Association. Serving as Secretary Treasurer, Dr. Wilkinson says that the guild helps all members — regardless of their specialty — implement Catholic teaching into their profession.

“The goal of the guild is to help physicians and other affiliated health care team members practice medicine in solidarity with the Catholic Church,” she explains. “By being servants to others in helping them on their path to wellness and honoring their dignity as a person, medical care is

ultimately connected to Christ’s care for us.”

The Catholic Medical Association is a nationwide association, with many local participating segments, or guilds. The Northwest Florida Guild is just one of many chapters that help physicians grow in the spirit of Christ in their personal and professional lives.

On the first Saturday of every month, the guild members meet for 8:30 a.m. Mass and hold their monthly meeting, where they discuss various medical topics that pertain to Catholic teaching, such as end-of-life issues or medical ethics.

“For example, some members have had to make decisions about the use of artificial birth control,” Dr. Wilkinson explains. “That’s an issue they have to wrestle with, and how they’re going to approach that in their practices. Presentations and cases on topics like that provide guidance, information and practical advice for those members of the guild.”

The Northwest Florida Guild has grown to have about 20 members. All medical professionals are invited to join, but a degree is not required to attend a meeting. If you are interested in becoming a member or would just like to learn more, please contact Dr. Diane Wilkinson at 850-516-0924, or by email at babydocmom@gmail.com.

“Come to a meeting or two and see what we’re all about,” she encourages. “Membership in the guild can help people understand more about their faith and the implications of their faith in their medical practice.”

“The goal of the guild is to help physicians and other affiliated health care team members practice medicine in solidarity with the Catholic Church. By being servants to others in helping them on their path to wellness and honoring their dignity as a person, medical care is ultimately connected to Christ’s care for us.” — Dr. Diane Wilkinson



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Holy Week Schedule

March 29, Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday Brunch and Easter Egg Hunt following 9 a.m. Mass

April 2, Holy Thursday Of the Lord's Supper

Mass at 7 p.m. with Eucharistic Adoration following until midnight

April 3, Good Friday

Stations of the Cross, noon and 7 p.m.

Celebration of the Lord's Passion, Veneration of the Cross, 3 p.m.

April 4, Holy Saturday

Blessing of the Easter Baskets, 2 p.m.

Easter Vigil, 8:30 p.m.

April 5, Easter Sunday

Easter Mass

7 a.m., 9 a.m., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.

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.