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Saint Paul

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

The Driscoll Family: Generosity and Faith

Peter and Jennifer Driscoll first met in Pensacola back in the late 1980s while they were both serving in the Navy. Now, they have once again settled in Pensacola and are raising their family here. Peter, who retired from active duty in 1996, grew up in a Catholic family as one of eight children. Jennifer, who retired this past January, was

one of four girls in an Episcopal family. After they were married, Jennifer began to take interest in joining the Catholic Church, and she later converted to Catholicism.

“Because we were raising the children Catholic, she came to Mass with us, and she kept hearing messages she wasn’t hearing in the Episcopal Church,” Peter says. “There was just something pure to the Catholic faith.”

The Driscolls have six children, four boys and two girls ranging in age from 6 to 20 years old. Two of the children are in college, one attends Pensacola Catholic High School, and three attend school at St. Paul.



The Driscoll family: (Top, from left) Patrick, Jennifer, Katie, (middle, from left) Peter, Helen, Auggie, and Billy (front).

Coming from larger families themselves, Peter and Jennifer hope that being a part of a large family will have a positive impact on their children’s lives.

“I’ve got four boys sharing a bedroom right now, and I think later on that’s going to serve them well,” Peter says. “They’re going to have to learn to get along with each other. I

think they get a sense of the importance of family and how they’re connected to one another. I think it makes some good memories for them, and these ties will bind them together for life. I’ve always said that one of the greatest gifts we’ve given them is that they have siblings. One day, hopefully in another 50 years, they’ll have each other.”

Peter and Jennifer are very involved in parish life. At the school, they volunteer their time with the PTA, as well as during field trips and various school functions. At the church, they have assisted the Stewardship Committee with maintaining the parish grounds, and are also involved with the Pro-

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Christ is Risen: Let Us Rejoice!

Christ redeemed mankind and gave perfect glory to God principally through the paschal mystery. By dying, he destroyed our death. By rising, he restored our life. The Easter Triduum of the passion and resurrection of Christ is thus the culmination of the entire liturgical year.

We celebrate the saving work of Christ through a series of seasons. Through Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and Ordinary Time, we celebrate the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus — who is, of course, the center of our lives as Christians. All of our liturgical celebrations point to Him and, in truth, they all point ultimately to the paschal mystery — Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection — which is celebrated as the highest feast of the year!

During Advent, we prepare through prayer to celebrate the birth of Jesus, who was born of a virgin to bring about the salvation of all. In the Christmas season, we celebrate the miraculous incarnation. The Son became a man out of complete love for us so that, through His passion, death, and resurrection, we could gain eternal life.

The Ordinary Time in the Church serves as a period of time for us to reflect on the fullness of the Christian mystery. We concentrate on the lives of the saints, who pointed us to Christ through their examples. They lived as witnesses of the Gospel, and we are all called to do the same.

Lent prepares us to celebrate the Lord's Paschal Mystery. We spend 40 days fasting and praying, just as Jesus did in the desert those many years ago. We prepare to walk the road to Golgotha with our Savior in a very real way during Lent. Jesus fasted in the desert for 40 days, tempted by Satan. When he emerged, strengthened in His Spirit, He proclaimed, "The Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the Gospel." He was preparing to live His public ministry, which preceded His passion, death and resurrection. In the same way, we rejoice in the paschal mystery. During the Easter Triduum, we celebrate that for which Jesus came to Earth! His mission has been fulfilled, and He has made possible the salvation of the world!

What a cause for celebration! Because of Jesus' selfless act, we are made adopted sons and daughters of the great high priest! We can now, by no merit of our own, enjoy eternal life with God in heaven — the life for which we were originally created.

In an effort to celebrate the high point of the Christian mystery, the Church has designated time — during what we call the Easter Triduum — for us to reflect upon each of the most significant aspects of Christ's salvific act.

On Holy Thursday, we celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper. Here, we celebrate the institution of the priesthood and the first celebration of the Eucharistic meal.

Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and giving it to His disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." He then took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father."

After celebrating the Eucharist with His disciples, Jesus went out to the Mount of Olives to pray and prepare for the gruesome events that would follow.

On Good Friday, we celebrate the crucifixion of Jesus. Our Lord and Savior was put to death for our sake. But there is a beauty in this suffering, for even though Good Friday is commemorated as a solemn celebration, it is truly a cause for great joy. Through Christ's passion and death, He entered into the realm of sin, only to conquer it three days later!

On Holy Saturday, as we await the glorious resurrection, we commemorate Christ's descent into hell. Christ descended to hell to deliver the souls of the just who had died before His coming. Scripture tells us that He went into the depths of Hades so that the dead might hear the voice of God and so that all who would hear Him would live. Yet again, every action of Jesus is aimed toward the salvation of mankind, which we see, in the great Easter celebration!

He has risen! He has conquered sin and death — rising from the dead, Christ has brought new life to all who believe! "We bring you the Good News that what God promised to the fathers this day, He has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus from the dead" (Acts 13:32-33), so that "as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

We are called to share this good news with those around us, for Christ has risen so that all may find newness of life in Him. Let us rejoice!



A Letter From Our Pastor

Easter — the Holiest Time of the Year

Dear Parishioners,

We are halfway on our Lenten journey of faith. It may be hard to believe, but Easter will be here very soon — on March 31. For us Catholics, Easter is the holiest time of the year. Because of the commercialization and popularity of Christmas, we may sometimes lose sight of that fact.

Unlike Christmas, however, there are no bright lights, no decorated houses and stores. There are no bumper stickers proclaiming “Keep Christ in Easter,” because Easter is all about Christ.

Celebrating Easter in March may seem early to us. But in the 500-year period from 1600 to 2100, Easter occurs on March 31, as it does this year, more than on any other date. (Next year, it is on April 20.) The earliest date possible for Easter is March 22, and the latest is April 25. These facts are secondary to the real significance of Easter nevertheless.

St. John Chryostom called Holy Week “the great week” of the year, and Easter Sunday the “queen of all holy days.” The word “Easter” is significant in that it stems from the direction found within it — the East. It is in the east that the sun rises — it refers to the spring sun which brings new life. Just as that sun brings life, Jesus Christ brought and brings us new life. Easter celebrates Christ’s victory over sin, death, and the devil, as well as the promise of our justification and everlasting life.

Holy Week is an excellent opportunity for Christian growth. It offers tremendous potential for satisfying spiritual hunger. We are given several opportunities during this week to spiritually grow, as the potential is there to be exposed to God’s Word and Sacrament. In other words, we grow in Holy



Fr. Doug confirms candidates and catechumens during the 2012 Easter Vigil.

Week not by imitating Christ’s last days — we grow as the Holy Spirit works through the Gospel and Sacrament that we hear and receive during these days. This Holy Week, make an effort to taste and see that the Lord is good!

Easter is a time for us to commemorate the holiest of occasions for us as Catholics — the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a time for reflection, renewal, and rebirth, and a time to reaffirm our faith.

As we finish our preparations for Easter, and as these preparations culminate with Holy Week and finally the joy of Easter Resurrection itself, we might attempt to reach for the Lord and deepen our faith by following these three simple steps:

- To reach for and gain a more profound understanding of who the Lord is and was.
- To strive to love the Lord and all those around us in a more cherished way.
- To make the effort every day through stewardship to truly be a disciple and follow the Lord more closely.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Doug Halsema
Pastor

Religious Education Teaching Children the Foundations of the Faith

Religious education is an important tool for Catholic children of all ages, from which they learn the foundations of the faith while also preparing for various sacraments and feast days. The Religious Education program here at St. Paul numbers 120 children, in both the kindergarten through fifth grade program and the EDGE program for sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders. The programs' meetings take place on Wednesdays from 6:30 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.

"We have about seven young leaders, and our two main leaders are Emily and Martin Hanley," says Director Berdina Clarke. "We also have younger people that help them. The youth respond well to all of them. We are also very blessed to have Fr. Michael visit us on many nights, and occasionally Fr. Doug, as well."

This past November, 50 second-graders made their first Sacrament of Reconciliation, in preparation for their First Communion on April 28.

"We are trying to make sure that the children have a clear understanding of the Eucharist — that they will be receiving the Body of Jesus, that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ," Berdina says. "Their teacher, Celine Hansford, has taught the sacraments here at St. Paul for over 10 years. She is very knowledgeable and very thorough."

Additionally, the program ensures that the children know all the basic Catholic prayers, including the Act of Contrition. The children also craft special banners that are displayed at the First Communion reception.

"The banners have their name and the cup and the host, and it's personalized to them," says Berdina. "They usually make them with their parents."



Education: Foundations of Their Faith

The program also helps prepare children for the different seasons and feast days within the Church calendar. The children are currently participating in Lenten activities and preparing for the coming of Easter.

"We will do the Stations of the Cross, and also have a Reconciliation service for the children," Berdina says. "We hope that we can give them a deeper understanding of Lent. For Easter, we'll help the kids prepare for Holy Week, and teach them about Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday and Good Friday. Sometimes, the children do a reenactment of the Last Supper or some of the events that took place of Good Friday."

The Religious Education program will also be kicking off the new year with various service projects in the coming months.

"Our children love to participate in service projects for the community, so we always try to do service projects during

the year," says Berdina. "We've participated in the Angel Tree program, and in the past we also collected childrens' slippers for the local children's hospital. We are thinking of having a youth coat drive this year, and delivering the coats to the low-income schools in the area. We also collect items like jeans and toiletries for the Alfred-Washburn center, and our EDGE group collects baby items every year."

Berdina hopes that the Religious Education program helps to root the children in their Catholic faith.

"I think it's really important for the kids to understand their faith, and the faith basically is a foundation — a solid foundation for their entire life," says Berdina. "I know for myself, I was a cradle Catholic, and I learned so much growing up about the traditions of the Church and the teachings of the Church, and I carried it with me all my life."

Holy Week Schedule

Thursday, March 28

Mass of the Lord's Supper, 7 p.m.

Good Friday, March 29 —
the Passion of the Lord

Stations of the Cross, 12 p.m. and 7 p.m.

The Lord's Passion (with Veneration of the Cross), 3 p.m.

Saturday, March 30

Easter Vigil, 8:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday, March 31 —
Resurrection of the Lord

Mass times at:

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

A Look Back at Catholic Schools Week 2013

St. Paul Catholic School recently celebrated the gift of Catholic education during Catholic Schools Week, which ran from Jan. 27 through Feb. 1.



Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Respond to the Call to Serve God and Others

We see Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at almost every Mass, where they exercise their special call to service — assisting the priest in distributing the Precious Body and Blood of Christ when he cannot do it alone. However, even though it is a very visible ministry, it is also humbling. St. Paul's 120 Extraordinary Ministers take much devotion and care when they carry the Blessed Sacrament to their fellow parishioners.

"I think it definitely starts with the way we celebrate the liturgy, with us setting the standard for how we celebrate Mass, and to handle the Eucharist with care and intention," says Fr. Michael Nixon, who helps to facilitate the ministry's training and upkeep. "From there, all the other liturgical ministers can learn from that. Handling the Eucharist like that is a pretty amazing thing. Most of the people that do come have a good sense of reverence already, but we also teach them how to keep the reverence — how to distribute to a large amount of people while also realizing what you're doing."

Each weekend, about 40 Extraordinary Ministers — ranging in age from 17 years old to the elderly — serve at the four Masses. All newcomers to the ministry undergo a yearly training process, and the parish also offers refreshers for those who are already in the ministry.

"We have an upkeep for people who are already there, to remind them of what we're doing and why we're doing it," Fr. Michael says. "As a ministry, it's really important, and it's kind of ongoing. The formation is definitely happening all the time."

This ongoing formation is facilitated by Becky Siegel, who is the communication assistant for the Extraordinary Ministers. Becky informs the members of the ministry about the latest updates and information from the bishop and the diocese, so that they are aware of any changes that occur.

An Extraordinary Minister herself, Becky feels very blessed to participate in the Mass in such a special way.

"It's so daunting to be that close and actually hold the Body or the Blood of Christ," Becky says. "The awe of being able to hold the Blessed Sacrament and distribute Holy Communion — it's very humbling. It's a beautiful ministry that helps you deepen your relationship with Christ."

Becky also encourages all parishioners to consider ministry service at St. Paul.



"I would encourage everyone, as a part of this Year of Faith, if you're not already involved in a ministry, to pick one or two and get involved," she says. "You get so much out of it, and everything you do comes back to you tenfold. If you're thinking about becoming an Extraordinary Minister, don't hesitate for one minute. This is a beautiful part of the Mass, and it's so sacred and it's thrilling to be a part of it."

For more information and to get involved as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, please contact Fr. Michael at 850-434-2551, ext. 104, or Becky Siegel at 850-516-9890.

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The Driscoll Family continued from front cover

Life Committee. They have also been able to inform their older children through Faith Formation classes.

“With the older kids, we try to connect current events to a topic or theme,” Peter says. “Sometimes, you have to go back to the basics with things.”

One of the Driscoll family’s older daughters reads at Mass, and their high school-aged son is an altar server. The younger children hope to participate in aspects of parish life as they get older.

The Driscolls believe that participating in these many parish ministries has helped them to develop

their spiritual life, and hopefully has also helped others to develop their own.

“It’s an opportunity to put things into practice,” Peter says. “You can always tell yourself, I don’t have time to do this or money to do that — but when you think about it, you do have time, you just might have to dig a bit deeper. It’s also a way to meet people, and you are able to put your faith into action. Maybe your gift, of either money or time, will impact someone else’s life.”

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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.