

St. John the Apostle

PARISH NEWSLETTER

"A Key Part of Our Faith, Our Beliefs and Our Practices"

Ministry of Sacristy Care and Altar Linens

The stewardship of a successful parish is dependent upon people – people who are willing to seriously perform tasks that fulfill what we believe as a Church and who often work and labor anonymously and without the notice of others. As a Church, we view many things as sacred and worthy of special care and attention.

As the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has said about our Mass, our liturgies, and our practices, "Whatever is set aside for use in the liturgy takes on a certain sacred character both by the blessing it receives and the sacred functions it fulfills" (*Care and Cleansing of Altar Linens*). Included within that category are the cloths and items used in consecration, as they come in contact with Jesus Himself through the Eucharist. The Bishops continue, "Thus, the cloths and sacred vessels used at the altar in the course of the Eucharistic celebration should be treated with the care and respect due those things used in the preparation and celebration of the sacred mysteries."

Anyone who has been trained as Minister of the Eucharist is taught and understands the importance of this admonition. However, we have a ministry here at St. John the Apostle that is also involved in



this proper care – the Ministry of Sacristy Care and Altar Linens. Most of us may not notice or be aware of the special linens used in our Mass, and we are probably even less aware of the specific care and consideration they receive.

Marilyn Waller serves as the coordinator of this ministry, and one of those who serves as a member is Victoria Schell. Victoria notes her appreciation for the importance of the ministry, and how it is an important part of her own stewardship.

"I became involved with the Ministry of Sacristy Care and Altar Linens because of stewardship, really," she says. "I noted the need in the ministry booklet and I felt I needed to do something, so it was more my need to do than the Church's need for me. It may seem to be a simple ministry, but it, like many other things in the Church which may seem

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Stewardship: The Four Pillars

You've heard about the three Ts of stewardship, but what about the four Ps?

The three Ts – Time, Talent, and Treasure – describe the personal gifts we offer to the Church. The four Ps are the Four Pillars of Parish Stewardship described by the renowned pastor Msgr. Thomas McGread. They are the hallmark of a stewardship parish – Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. Let's take a look at each of them to understand how we can improve in each area.

Hospitality *Christian Kindness*

“When I was a stranger, you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35). The Gospel teaches that whenever we welcome the least of our brothers or sisters, we welcome Christ Himself. That is why the first mark of a stewardship parish is hospitality. Being friendly is one of the first ways we can be Christ-like toward others.

Modern Catholic parishes are often so large and have so many Masses that many parishioners don't know one another. To create a sense of community, be sure to smile and greet others as you enter and exit the Church. Let's try harder than ever to be a welcoming community.

Prayer *Heart-to-Heart with God*

“Do not become so involved in the work of the Lord that you forget the Lord of the work,” a seminary professor once taught. In other words, don't get so caught up with parish projects and outreach efforts that you forget to draw aside to spend time with God in prayer. Every great saint has taught that prayer is the most essential component in the life of the Christian. Through prayer, we nurture our most important relationship – the one that will last for all eternity.

A healthy prayer life should include communal prayer such as Mass, as well as personal prayer and family prayer. The two biggest obstacles to prayer are lack of

time and lack of understanding of how to pray. We have to schedule time for prayer just as we would for an important appointment. And we have to learn how to pray from other people. Many saints have written spiritual books that describe different methods of prayer.

Formation *Continuous Conversion*

Pope John Paul II always emphasized ongoing conversion. From childhood through adulthood, our whole life must be a process of drawing closer to God. He never stops calling us forward to learn more and to examine ourselves more deeply.

Very often our society values material things more than interior virtues. But as personal experience shows, when we finally acquire the car or house or “toy” that we wanted so badly, it doesn't really satisfy. On the other hand, we don't tend to desire spiritual virtues with the same kind of longing, but when we actually have them, we find them far more rewarding than material things.

Service *Love in Action*

“Amen I say to you, whatever you did to the least of my brothers, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). This Scripture was one of St. Teresa of Calcutta's favorites. Each time she picked up a poor and hungry child, she knew she was ministering to Christ. While we may not view ourselves as saints, we too are called to such heroic service right within our own community. As St. Teresa of Calcutta said, “To be a saint is not the privilege of a few, but the duty of everyone.”

We have many service opportunities right here within our own parish. If you have the willingness to serve and take the initiative to find where you are needed, you'll find that there is no end to the families and individuals who truly need help. How can you reach out to them in love?

A Letter from Our Pastor

Give Thanks to the Lord, It Is Right and Just

Dear brothers and sisters,

Every time I prepare my monthly letter to you in this newsletter, I am reminded how blessed I am. Being a priest truly is a blessing. While the job is not always easy — a pastor has many responsibilities — the rewards are equally humbling.

As we complete our preparations and then share in our celebrations of the Triduum and Easter, I am also prompted to think about the holiest things I do. By far, the holiest is celebrating Mass, and especially consecrating the holy bread and wine so Christ is present among us. The very word “consecration” literally means “association with the sacred.” To have that duty is incredible. I have never taken it for granted, and although it may appear at times to be somewhat automatic, it never is for me.

Almost all of us are familiar with the Mass, and with what we do and say leading up to the high point — the Eucharist. But I think we must guard against becoming too casual in our responses and what we say. That is what I work to avoid, but I believe you need to work just as diligently to make sure that you are listening, hearing, and being aware of what you are saying. For us as Catholics, the Mass is the most important sacred act in the Church.

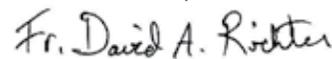
I suppose I could write a whole series of letters or articles on the meaning of everything we say and do at Mass, but I was thinking of one exchange in particular

during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It is something we may say in sort of a habitual way, but I firmly believe each of us must truly consider what we are saying.

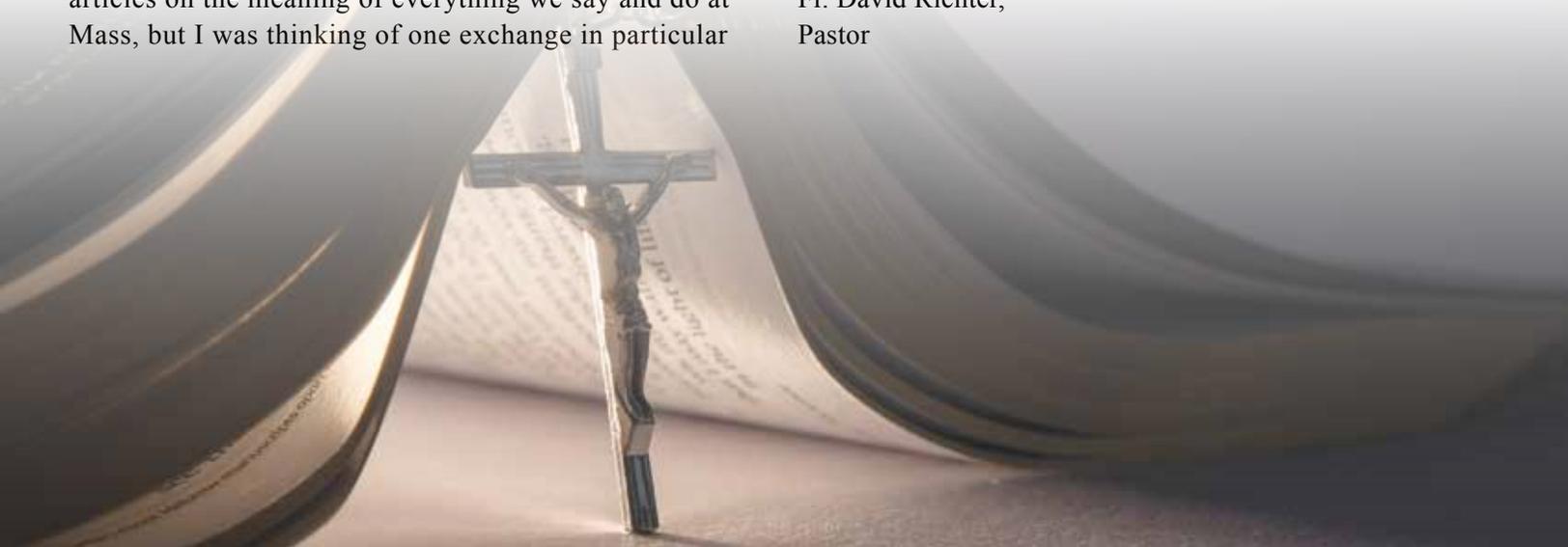
I say to you, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” and you respond, “It is right and just.” Think about what that means, because it is very much at the heart of stewardship. I am saying we need to thank God, show gratitude for everything we are and everything with which we are gifted — and you, at least in words, acknowledge that doing that is exactly what we need to do. The Mass is filled with statements and exchanges of that sort, and I would ask that we really think about what they truly mean.

Even the simple exchange between the Eucharistic Minister and you at the actual reception of the Host is heavy with meaning. We say, “The Body of Christ,” and you reply “Amen.” In that instance, “Amen” means “Yes, I do believe this is Jesus.” Like myself, you are blessed. Sometimes we just need to realize it. Happy Easter!

Yours in Christ,



Fr. David Richter,
Pastor



"A Very Close Camaraderie"

When her husband died almost nine years ago, parishioner Doris Gilles felt lost and out of place. Not only was she parted from her best friend, but suddenly, her entire social world changed as she adjusted to being alone amidst couples and families.

"After you have lost your husband, if you are invited with another couple you kind of feel out of place," Doris says. "You just feel kind of lost without your mate. You don't do a lot of socialization unless you are a social bug, and I'm not one of those."

Faced with this dilemma, Doris felt inspired to found the St. Monica Guild, a social ministry for St. John the Apostle widows. Focused on "consoling rather than giving council," the St. Monica Guild offers comfort and

solace simply by providing fellowship for parish widows. In the process, close friendships are formed as the women come to know and support one another.

"We are from all different walks of life and we've become such a close-knit group," Doris says. "We have about 15 women who come regularly, and over the years we've formed a very close camaraderie."

Gatherings occur the second Monday of each month at a member's home, a local restaurant, or the church and typically include a lunch or afternoon tea. Members take turns hosting the event, determining its time and location each month.

"Our group is really a social one," Doris says. "I guess we comfort and console one another just by being together. We

"The St. Monica Guild has brought me so much closer to the church through my connection to the other women. It allows us to support one another more outside of the gatherings. Also, if we know of someone within the faith community who has been widowed, we try to reach out to them and invite them into the group. It takes time to get out of the fog from losing someone and we all do so at a different pace. We just want all widows to know that they are welcome." – Doris Gilles



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Life" The St. Monica Guild

have a short prayer to St. Monica that we say, pray the blessing over our lunch, and then just have a fun time. Sometimes we'll even have a door prize drawing or some sort of game."

For Doris, the St. Monica Guild has filled a gap in her life, connecting her further to the Church and reminding her that she is never alone. It has made the parish feel even more like home, helping her become more involved in other ministries over the years. The Guild has also become a way to reach out to newer widows, offering support and comfort from women who have been there before.

"The St. Monica Guild has brought me so much closer to the church through my connection to the other women," Doris says. "It allows us to support one another more outside of the gatherings. Also, if we know of someone within the faith community who has been widowed, we try to reach out to them and invite them into the group. It takes time to get out of the fog from losing someone and we all do so at a different pace. We just want all widows to know that they are welcome."

Parishioners can support the St. Monica Guild by spreading the word. New members are always welcome to come and enjoy the fun and sisterhood it provides. Look to the bulletin for additional details on the next St. Monica Guild gathering, or contact Doris Gilles at 701-839-4449.

Ministry of Sacristy Care and Altar Linens

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unimportant, is a key part of our faith, our beliefs, and our practices. I feel good about serving in this way."

Once the linens are used in the Mass, they are placed in a special receptacle in the sacristy – a *sacristy* is a room for keeping vestments (such as the alb and chasuble) and other church furnishings, sacred vessels, sacred altar linens, and possibly even parish records. On a rotating basis, members of this ministry remove these linens and launder them under specific instructions for their care.

There are, for example, particular linens and cloths used for special purposes. Included in these are corporals, purificators, lavabo towels, and other cloths. The Vatican, our Bishops and our diocese have issued instructions on the proper care and handling of these linens and cloths.

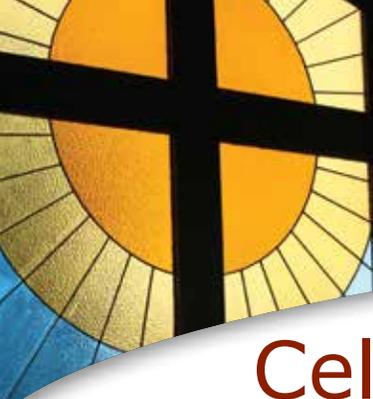
"I learned early on that this was not just a case of doing some laundry," Victoria says. "A good example is the purificators."

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops describes purificators as follows: "Purificators are customarily brought to the altar with chalices and are used to wipe the Precious Blood from the lip of the chalice and to purify sacred vessels. Whenever the Precious Blood is distributed from the chalice, poured into ancillary vessels, or even accidentally spilled, purificators should be used to absorb the spill" (*Care and Cleansing of Altar Linens*).

"The purificators may be stained with the Precious Blood of Christ," Victoria says. "We have instructions on how to clean them correctly. In fact, whatever water we use for the purpose is to be poured into a sacrarium, not down the drain, or onto the ground or grass, not onto concrete. Also, there is a specified way to iron and fold them in preparing them for use again."

As Victoria notes, this seemingly simple task contributes to the holiness and the sacred nature of what we do as Catholics. This wonderful ministry could use additional volunteers to serve in this way.

If you would like more information or to express interest in this ministry, please contact the parish office at 701-839-7076 or Marilyn Waller at 701-839-1249.



Celebrating the Easter Vigil, the “Mother of All Vigils”

As the sun wanes on Holy Saturday, the universal community of the faithful will gather for the Easter Vigil, the pinnacle of the liturgical year. As sung in the *Exsultet*, the Easter Proclamation, “this is the night.” This is the night when Christ triumphed over sin and death and “rose victorious from the underworld.”

During the Easter Vigil, the Church awaits and then celebrates Christ’s resurrection with a sacred liturgy that draws upon rich symbolic traditions to highlight our transition from death to life, from darkness to light.

The very atmosphere in the church space as we gather on the evening of Holy Saturday prepares us for the Easter Vigil. Tangible signs throughout the church represent Christ’s entombment. The holy water fonts stand empty, the tabernacle lies devoid of Christ’s presence and the sanctuary lamp is fittingly extinguished.

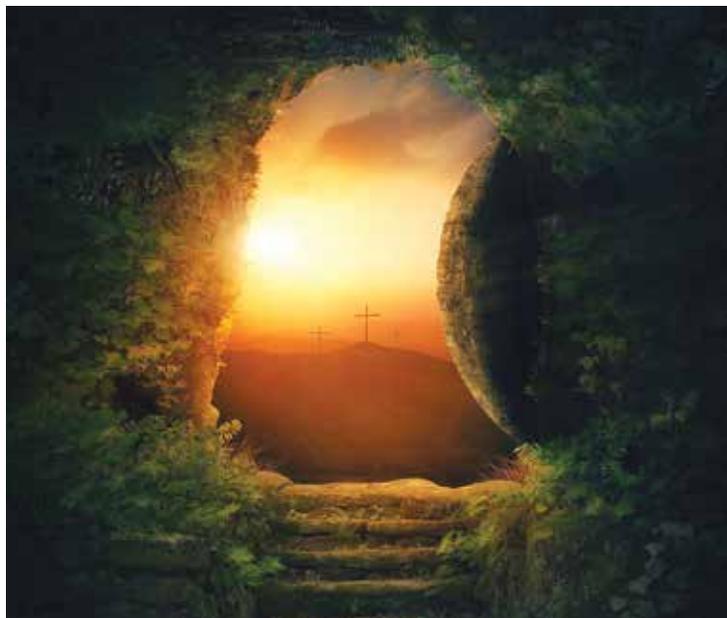
According to the Church’s rubrics for the liturgical year, the vigil should take place during the night, and its unique four-part structure sets the celebration apart from all other liturgies.

With the church shrouded in darkness, the celebration begins with the Service of Light, during which the faithful gather outside around a blazing fire that draws the community together.

During the Service of Light, the Paschal candle, the central sacramental of the Easter Vigil liturgy, is brought forward. The candle represents Christ, the light of the world, and the faithful process into the church following the candle, which brightens the darkened space. At this time, the candles held by the community are lit from the Paschal candle, and the Easter Proclamation is sung.

Following the Service of Light, the Liturgy of the Word is proclaimed, and passages from the Old and New Testament show God’s intervention throughout salvation history. We sing the *Alleluia* for the first time since the commencement of the Lenten season.

Then, in the Liturgy of Baptism, we welcome the candidates and catechumens who have prepared in a particular way throughout the Lenten season to enter the Church. Alongside



the new members of the community, we renew our own baptismal promises during this holy night.

Lastly, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Christ – in His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity – becomes present in the consecrated bread and wine. The Blessed Sacrament is once again in the tabernacle, and the sanctuary lamp is illuminated.

As we anticipate the Easter Vigil, the “turning point of the Triduum,” we can prepare ourselves for this sacred liturgy by renewing our Lenten resolutions and our desire for complete conversion to Christ. We can read the Liturgy of the Word for the Easter Vigil, meditating on Christ’s loving and powerful actions on the behalf of His beloved people.

With the transition from the 40 days of Lent into the 50 days of the Easter season, we can find small daily ways to celebrate this time of rejoicing. Perhaps we will light a symbolic candle each evening, welcoming the light of Christ, or decorate our domestic churches with signs of the Resurrection from white linens to spring greenery.

Throughout these blessed weeks of the Easter season, the Paschal candle is illuminated at the beginning of each liturgy as a tangible reminder of our ongoing faith journey and our daily turning from the darkness of sin to the light of Christ.

Reaching Out to the Elderly as One Faith Community

As Catholics, we are encouraged to share our faith and to help others around us to grow in their relationship with God. Through two important ministries, St. John parishioners are able to reach out to the elderly residents of Trinity Homes and include them in our faith community.

“We are a part of these ministries to help care for the spiritual needs of the Catholic residents of Trinity Homes,” says parishioner Gladys Weeks. “It gives the residents the opportunity to be active in their faith, which has been and still is very important to them.”

In conjunction with three other Catholic parishes, the Mass Ministry provides an on-site Mass every Thursday. St. John’s seven Mass Ministry volunteers serve on the fourth Thursday of each month.

“We set up the altar for Mass, and make sure there is someone to serve as an altar server and lector – Luther Hanson from Trinity Homes acts as our organist,” Gladys says. “We have parish volunteers go to the residents’ rooms to remind them of Mass, help them get to Mass, and then return them to their rooms after Mass.



“After the [Thursday] Mass, two Eucharistic Ministers take Holy Communion to residents who were unable to attend Mass,” she adds. “We also have ministers who take Holy Communion to the residents on the Sundays of Lent and Advent.”

For the past two years, the ministry has invited Trinity Homes residents to the parish for a special Mass and brunch in the spring. In addition to helping these residents to practice their faith, the

ministry also includes residents as a part of the parish community.

“This ministry helps us to focus on eternity and be aware of the spiritual needs of the residents,” Gladys says. “It also provides interpersonal relationships and conversations between the residents and the volunteers. We all grow and prosper from our time together.”

A second ministry, the Rosary Ministry, also helps to meet the

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— Gladys Weeks



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Sacrament of Reconciliation

Wednesday - Friday: 8:30 AM - 8:50 AM
Saturday: 3:45 PM - 4:45 PM
Sunday: 9:30 AM - 10:15 AM

Weekend Liturgies

Saturday: 5:00 PM Mass
Sunday: 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM Mass

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Reaching Out to the Elderly as One Faith Community *continued from previous page*

spiritual needs of the Trinity Homes residents. Volunteers from this ministry pray the Rosary with residents on the first Wednesday of each month.

“We saw the interest in this devotion to the Rosary as we would see residents carrying the rosary with them,” Gladys says. “We believed a group gathering would be appreciated by the residents.”

During the school year, fourth-grade students from Bishop Ryan Catholic School join the ministry volunteers in leading the Rosary. The Rosary is followed by a social where the students and the residents can interact.

“The students gain confidence in being with the elderly, and the residents very much enjoy the youth,” Gladys says. “In the month of May, we have the traditional crowning

of the Blessed Mother, which is led by the students. Each resident is given a rose at the conclusion of this event, along with a greeting card from the students. By involving the students, we feel that they are learning at an early age to serve the Lord – through consideration of the elderly, giving of their time, and practicing their own faith.”

Through service in these ministries, volunteers have been able to grow tremendously in faith.

“Knowing that we are being servants of the Lord has helped us to grow in our own faith,” Gladys says. “By providing so little of our own time, we have been able to provide joy in helping others and realize that our crosses are small by comparison. We feel that we are gaining much more than we are giving.”

All parishioners are welcome to participate in the Trinity Homes Mass and Rosary Ministries. For more information, please contact Gladys Weeks at 701-839-5582 or Donna Wachinski at 701-839-1374.