



Living Our Faith... Sharing Our Blessings

SAINT ANNE - SAINT CATHERINE COLLABORATIVE

Always Talk to God:

Our Prayer Chain and Prayer Line Ministries

God reveals His perfect and infinite love for us most visibly in His Son, Jesus Christ. In turn, a steward makes God's love visible by imitating Jesus. The more deeply one grows in love for God, the more one grows in heart to see stewardship as a way of life, a way of love, imitating God's love for us. Stewards see all good things as gifts from God, and they respond in gratitude with the gift of self.

As good stewards, we embrace what are called the Four Pillars of Stewardship — Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. We all should be aware of how important the Pillar of Prayer is to our personal lives and the lives of our faith communities. Just think about how integral prayer is to our liturgies and services!

As part of our focus on prayer, we are so blessed to have ministries that offer prayers for others. St. Anne offers a Prayer Chain Ministry, and St. Catherine is equally blessed with their Prayer Line Ministry. As Holy Father Francis stated just a few years ago, "In the face of so many wounds that hurt us and could lead to a hardness

of heart, we are called to dive into the sea of prayer, which is the sea of the boundless love of God, in order to experience His tenderness."

"We have had this ministry at the parish for more than 20 years," says Karen Smith, who coordinates the Prayer Chain Ministry at St. Anne. "I have been involved in it from the beginning. When I first came to the parish, I contacted the office as I wanted some prayer intentions to be said. I was told that there was no particular structure for that, so I decided to do something about it. Prayer has always been a part of my life.

"For me, prayer has always been the answer," Karen adds. "When I am in distress in any way, I always talk to God. I pray all the time and almost everywhere. Our prayer ministry is a great way for me to be a good steward and it also provides many others a chance to be an important part of the parish, even when they may have limited time or mobility."

Although established in each parish independently, the two prayer ministries are remarkably similar.



continued on page 2

Prayer Chain and Prayer Line Ministries *continued from front cover*

"I feel everyone needs prayers," says Barbara Sinopoli, who coordinates the Prayer Line Ministry at St. Catherine. "Because of my role in the ministry, I carefully look at all the prayer requests which are submitted. Many of them go straight to my heart. The challenges that others have in life make me aware of how blessed most of us are. Yet, as I stated, we all need prayers."

In both ministries, prayer requests are submitted, and then they are distributed to the members of the prayer ministries.

"At St. Catherine, we have a prayer box in the back of the church for prayer requests and intentions," Barbara says. "We check that box on a regular basis. When a prayer request is made, we distribute it to our almost

20 participants. They can pray on their own time and in the way in which they are most comfortable. Requests can also be made to me or to the parish office."

"The process at St. Anne is similar," Karen says. "Prayer requests can come to me or to the office. We have some 40 participants in the ministry, and the requests are distributed to them. Like St. Catherine, our people determine when to pray based on their own personal schedules. The beauty of a ministry like this is that people can participate and be involved on their own. Some of our people are homebound, but this allows them to be part of a ministry and to plan in their own way when and how to pray. It really is a flexible way to be a good steward."

For St. Anne's Prayer Chain, please contact Karen Smith at 978-952-6944 or k.quilt@verizon.net, or call the parish office at 978-486-4100. For St. Catherine's Prayer Line, please utilize the box at the back of the church, call Barbara Sinopoli at 717-575-8768, the parish office at 978-692-6353 or email prayerline.westford@gmail.com.

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A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

You Are Not Alone!

Dear Parishioners,

On January 31, I received the call that my grandnephew Michael (28 years old) died. He over medicated himself trying to find peace as he struggled with depression. His younger brother, Mark, offered this hope-filled reflection about his brother.



“Michael, I miss you so much. Ever since I was young, I always looked up to you. You were my hero. I wanted to play the sports you played, and I wanted to do everything the way you did. You were kind, witty, intelligent, and had so much potential. You gave me advice whenever I needed it, and you always asked me if you could help me if I was down. We loved our house at the Cape, and we loved having the deep thoughtful conversations that we had. Like most brothers, we had more than our fair share of arguments and disagreements, but we always seem to show our true love for one another on the other side. Like many people, you had a difficult battle with depression, anxiety, and addiction. I can’t imagine the struggles and pain you went through day in and day out, and I wish I could’ve done something to take your pain and sadness away. Everyone goes through struggles in life, and many people feel alone, anxious, different, broken, ashamed, fearful, hopeless, and filled with regret. YOU ARE NOT ALONE. There is nothing worse in life than to feel that way. Many people feel like they are so flawed, worthless, and disgusting that no one would understand who they are and what their story is. This is simply not the case. Needing help with mental illness and addiction is nothing to be

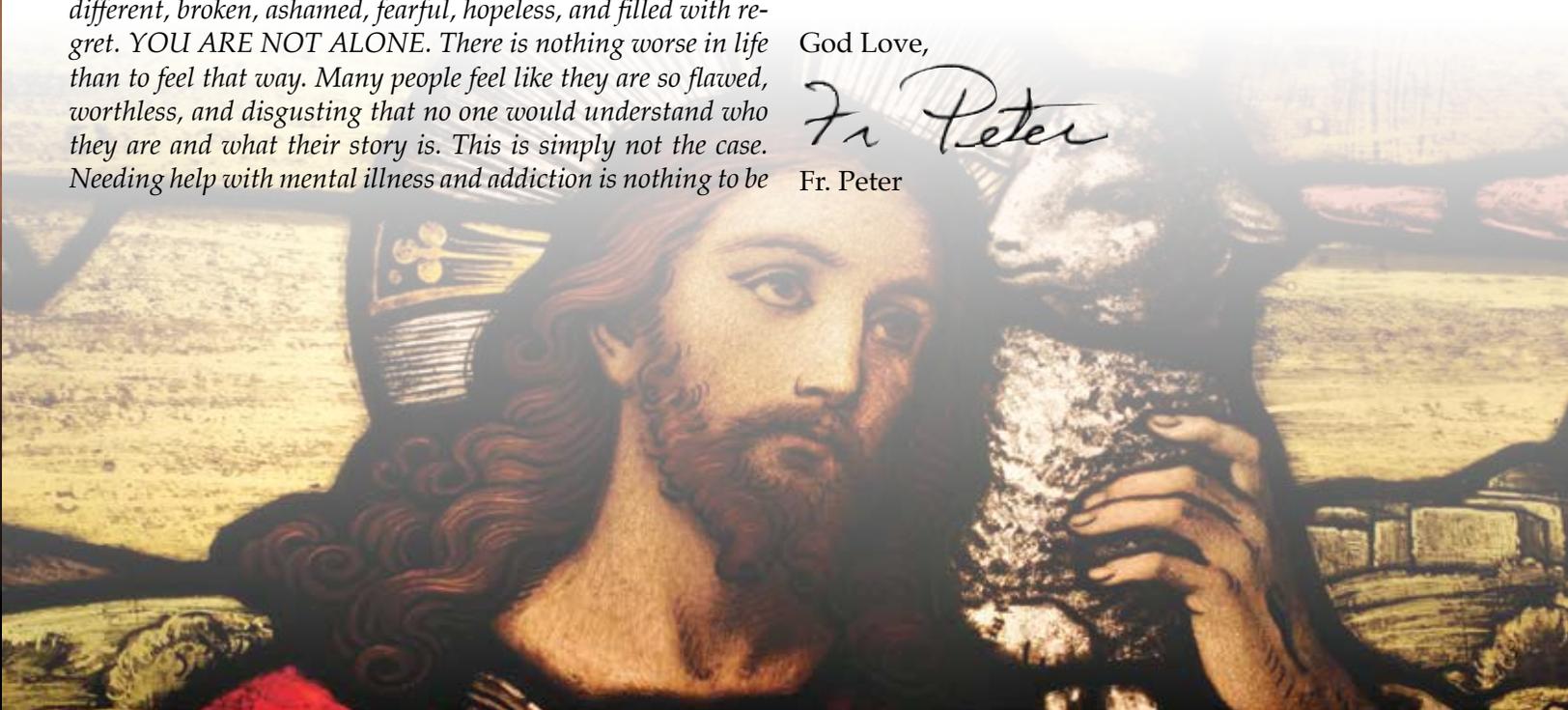
ashamed about. There is always someone you can talk to, someone who could understand. It’s the invisible scars, the invisible trauma, the invisible burden on someone’s shoulders, the daily psychological torment that you can’t see that often hurts the most. No one is invisible, and no one deserves to suffer alone. No one is an inherently flawed and permanently broken human being. EVERYONE is worthy of love and belonging. There is NO mistake that cannot be forgiven. You always told me to put myself in someone else’s shoes, to see the common humanity in someone else’s struggle. You told me to give people the benefit of the doubt. Michael, I’m heartbroken, still waiting for you to walk back through the door, like nothing ever happened. Michael, I love you so much, and I hope to God I get to see you again someday.”

As we journey toward Easter’s new life — Mark’s love for his brother reflects Jesus Christ’s loving kindness, support and acceptance of us!

Wishing you Christ’s hope in your own struggles and a love-filled Easter season.

God Love,

Fr. Peter



Praying in His Presence: *The Hidden*

It was at a retreat, when St. Anne's parishioner Patrick Bell had an eye-opening experience during Eucharistic Adoration.

"The priest who was leading adoration knelt down in front of the altar and he echoed the words of St. Thomas from the Gospel, 'My Lord and My God, I firmly believe You are here, You see me, You hear me,'" Patrick says. "Our faith teaches us God is present in the Eucharist — Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity — and if I really believe, that He's indeed right there. Wow! I can go pay Him a visit!"



St. Anne and St. Catherine parishioners have the opportunity to spend time in prayer with our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, twice each month at Eucharistic Adoration.

"It's very easy to take for granted, we don't really realize what a gift it is," says St. Catherine's parishioner Lorraine Ward. "Adoration is a hidden gem — when you think about it, Jesus is hidden in the Eucharist."

Both Patrick and Lorraine have experienced the power of spending time with the Blessed Sacrament, exposed during Eucharistic Adoration, and realizing the gift that it is. They work to coordinate opportunities for other parishioners to have the same experience.

Eucharistic Adoration is available twice a month at St. Anne's, on the First Tuesday of every month from 8:30 a.m. until noon, and on the fourth Saturday of the month from 2 p.m. until 3 p.m.

Both Lorraine and Patrick have experienced a transformation of their prayer lives since they began praying in adoration.

"My prayer life has been totally different," Lorraine says. "When I first got into adoration, I used to sit and rattle off a lot of prayers and that was fine - but then I realized that I needed to sit and listen, and that was a challenge for me.

"Now, I try to take time to sit and just be quiet," she adds. "I want to hear Him. I don't hear His audible voice, but He comes across in other ways."

"I've started to be a little more intentional about my prayer life, realizing that I can bring questions or petitions or things to our Lord and see what comes of it," Patrick says. "It's probably a combination of intentionally taking that time to step out of the busy world to have a quiet moment and doing that in the Presence of our Lord."

They have also come to appreciate the importance of stepping away from the noise of life to listen to God in prayer.

"Christ did this all the time - He stepped away and went into the desert," Patrick says. "If it's good for Him, how much more important it is for me? Especially between pressures at work and busy family life, there are just constant demands on our time and resources, and I find that by taking that moment away, it makes me able to go back out into the world and face those things with a spirit of charity and joy."

"It's so noisy and so busy in the world, and if you don't make the time, you won't take the time," Lorraine adds.

Patrick and his wife often bring their children —

A Gem of Eucharistic Adoration

who range in age from a year to 5 years old — along with them to adoration, even if they are only able to spend a few minutes with the Lord.

“I hope that by bringing them along when they’re younger, maybe they’ll start to discover the beauty of this gift a little earlier in their lives,” Patrick says. “We want to expose the breadth and the beauty of the Catholic faith to our kids.”

For those who are daunted by the thought of spending an hour in silent prayer with the Lord, Patrick encourages them to give it a try.

“Be patient with yourself,” he says. “Nobody starts to develop their prayer life and says ‘I’m going to pray for four hours today!’ Start small and let it build from there.”

Patrick also emphasizes that prayer isn’t something that just “happens” but rather, it’s something that is chosen and prioritized.

“You have to decide to make it a priority,” he says. “With our friends, it’s always fun to get an email or a text, but nothing beats in person, face-to-face time. With all of our relationships, you have to be intentional and make it happen or it doesn’t happen. The same is true with our spiritual life.”

Patrick recalls a story of St. John Vianney, which sums up the encounter with God in Eucharist Adoration.

“St. John Vianney saw this peasant who would come and spend time with the Blessed Sacrament, and he asked the peasant one day, ‘What do you pray about?’” he says. “The man said very humbly,



Adorers spend time in the Real Presence of Christ in Eucharistic Adoration.

‘Oh, I wouldn’t even know what to say. I just look at Him and He looks at me.’ That’s it! It can be as simple as that.”

“It’s okay if you’re hurting and you can’t manage to find the words you’d like to find or can’t stay focused because something’s troubling you,” Lorraine says. “You’re there with Jesus and He takes that all in. He knows you’re hurting and He comforts you.”

“I believe there are so many graces God desires to shower upon you if people would give it a try,” she adds. “Just go and pour your heart out to Him, if you’re having a bad day or going through an emotional time — just go. Let Him be your best friend. You may not see it right away, but the more often you go to Adoration, the more graces you’ll receive.”

If you would like more information on Eucharistic Adoration, please contact Lorraine Ward at 978-692-6828 or stjoseph3@comcast.net.

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 and introduce yourself to people sitting near you. 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 set aside time to spend 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 can learn much about 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 passage 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 collaborative. If you have the willingness to serve and take the initiative to find where you are needed, you'll find that there is a multitude of ways in which you can help. How can you reach out to others in love?

A Powerful Way to Serve: *Embracing Stewardship as a Eucharistic Minister*

“Why do parishioners think that they’re not ‘good enough’ or ‘holy enough’ to become involved? If not you, then who?” These words, spoken during a Sunday homily, reverberated in parishioner Carol Bartalussi’s brain. Having been a faithful churchgoer at St. Catherine’s for over 20 years, Carol admits that she had struggled with these same thoughts — feeling unworthy to be involved in the sacred Mass. And yet upon hearing them, she felt deeply convicted, knowing that she was being called by God to do something more.

“I knew then that I was being called to do more and I wanted to become more engaged in the Mass,” Carol says. “I felt that distributing the Lord’s Body and Blood to His people would be quite humbling and rewarding, and so I decided to sign up for the next training class.”

Soon, Carol was caught up in the beauty of this privileged ministry, which allows her to look parishioners in the eye and reverently give them Christ’s Body and Blood. And in the process, she has been



Lynn and Derek DeLorenzo both enjoy volunteering as Eucharistic Ministers at Sunday liturgies, seeing it as a “simple way to be helpful.”

given a much greater understanding and appreciation of the Mass, in which she now plays an even greater role. Carol also shares that she has come to better know our priests and parishioners through her role as a Eucharistic Minister.

This has also been the case for St. Anne parishioner Lynn DeLorenzo, who has been serving as a Eucharistic Minister of the parish since 2007.

“I love sharing those few seconds of eye contact with so many members of my parish as they approach the altar to receive Christ each week,” Lynn says. “It’s a lovely way to connect, no matter how brief. So much of Mass time is spent looking at the back of heads, and this is a nice change from that. We live in a very small suburban community and I love getting to know such a variety of people in this way. For those of us who are parents, we too are often limited to the pool of

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Saint Anne - Saint Catherine Collaborative
75 King St. • Littleton, MA 01460
978-486-4100 (St. Anne) • 978-692-6353 (St. Catherine)
www.LittletonCatholic.org • www.StCatherineParish.org

MASS SCHEDULE:

St. Anne Parish:

75 King St., Littleton, MA 01460

Saturday: 4:00 p.m.

Sunday: 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.

St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish:

107 North Main St., Westford, MA 01886

Saturday: 4:00 p.m.

Sunday: 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

Collaborative Weekday Schedule:

Monday: 8:00 a.m. Mass - St. Anne

Tuesday: 8:00 a.m. Mass - St. Anne

Wednesday: 8:00 a.m. Prayer Service - St. Anne

Thursday: 8:00 a.m. Mass - St. Catherine

Friday: 8:00 a.m. Mass - St. Catherine

Confessions:

Saturdays: 3:00-3:45 p.m. at both parishes

(or as requested)

Embracing Stewardship as a Eucharistic Minister

continued from page 7

people we meet through our children and their experiences in school. I feel like I've gotten to know more members of my church through this ministry, and for me that makes my personal Mass experience so much more rewarding."

Both women describe their role as Eucharistic Ministers as deeply spiritual and fulfilling. For in distributing our Eucharistic Lord to others, they can't help but draw closer to Him in the process. Oftentimes, as with Carol, it ends up leading to involvement in other ministries, such as bringing Communion to the sick and homebound. Best of all, because this ministry takes place during a time when we are already present at Mass, it's easy to fit into an already busy schedule.

"Our lives get so busy that it's sometimes hard to make time to serve in a ministry, but this is a simple way to be helpful when you're already at Mass," Lynn says.

By saying "yes" to the call to serve in this way, members are able to grow in their understanding of God and become better stewards of the gifts He has given them.

We invite any confirmed Catholic in good standing with the Church to consider joining this ministry. Trainings occur every couple of months and parishioners may schedule themselves to serve through the sign-up sheets. For more information, please contact Sue Gormley, Pastoral Associate, at SueG@LWCatholic.org or 978-320-4210.