



Living Our Faith... Sharing Our Blessings

SAINT ANNE - SAINT CATHERINE COLLABORATIVE

Passing the Faith to the Next Generation: The Catholic Grandparents Association

The world is changing more quickly than ever before. And while there are certainly benefits to be noted in this rapid progress, the moral fractures within society are also obvious in a number of spheres. Today, due to dual-career families, single parent families and parents incapable of caring for their children due to addiction, and a variety of other reasons, grandparents are often stepping in as caregivers. In addition, unprecedented numbers of young people are falling away from the Catholic faith and organized religion in general. For the faithful who carry the cross of watching their loved ones — especially children and grandchildren — leave the Church, there is often a feeling of discouragement and hopelessness.

However, there is a group of grandparents who hope to answer the call of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI to become “the teachers of wisdom and courage.” Founded by Catherine Wiley, a Catholic grandmother living in Ireland, the Catholic Grandparents Association (or CGA) began nearly 10 years ago. The organization’s mission is simple — empowering grandparents to share the faith with their families and entrust them to God in prayer.

There are many branches of CGA all across the globe, and this past fall, a branch was founded at St. Anne and St. Catherine. Jeanne Rodwell, a parishioner



The Catholic Grandparents Association is an opportunity for grandparents to come together to share stories and ideas, and pray for each other and their families.

at St. Catherine and grandmother of 12, saw the need for this type of ministry.

“The CGA exists to promote the role of grandparents and to support and value them in the mission of passing on the faith and keeping prayer at the heart of family life,” Jeanne says.

The group meets on the second Sunday of the month, at 12:15 p.m. in the mezzanine at St. Catherine.

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Hospitality: The Cornerstone of Stewardship

Matthew's Gospel tells of Christ as He reveals a profound truth about hospitality: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." That is, I used to be a stranger, but you fixed that when you welcomed me. It's a classic example of before-and-after. All it took was a change of heart.

The dictionary defines "hospitality" as "the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way."

A Christian worldview can refer to hospitality as "Christian kindness."

We see the effects of hospitality – or the lack thereof – time and time again throughout the Bible. Christ speaks of hospitality in Matthew's Gospel when He says, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me." (Matthew 25:35). The Old Testament told of the Israelites, as they wandered the desert for 40 years in search of hospitable environs. Even the Holy Family spent ample time searching for shelter before the birth of Our Lord.

It is safe to say that hospitality is, and most likely has always been, of great importance to people everywhere. There is no doubt that in ancient times, the distant lights of an inn or tavern struck a chord of hope within weary travelers' hearts.

Indeed, hospitality's meaning has not diminished at all over the years, decades and millennia.

Christians view the presence of hospitality as meaning the difference between calling others "guests" and "strangers." Guests

are welcomed with open arms and warm smiles, but strangers aren't. Guests feel the genuine love present in a hearty welcome, but strangers don't. Guests often return for second or third visits, while strangers might not.

As a parish, do we find ourselves surrounded by guests, or burdened by strangers?

Hospitality is, in many respects, a mindset. The same person may be treated as a guest at the church just down the road, but as a stranger here.

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Stewardship holds hospitality as an immensely important concept. Remember the "three Ts" of stewardship – Time, Talent, and Treasure? Well, there are also "four Ps," the Four Pillars of Stewardship – Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. Hospitality is mentioned first. Why? If not for hospitality, none of the other pillars will ever take hold. Hospitality is the cornerstone of stewardship, because it opens the door to a person's heart and allows them to receive joy, grace, and love.

Hospitality must become second nature, if stewardship is to truly take hold within a parish. So, when a stranger visits one of our parishes, welcome them as a guest and be prepared to make a friend.



A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

A Prayerful Way to
Deepen Our Relationship with God

Dear Parishioners,

In reading the Gospel of the third Sunday of Easter (Luke 24:35-48), the first line especially captured my attention. The verse “The two disciples recounted what had taken place on the way...” awakened me to a foundational message in our faith lives that God is ever present in each experience we encounter in our daily lives. The Lord’s presence in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup is indeed a sacramental reality that we celebrate at every Eucharist.

However, do we exhibit the same understanding that the Lord is with us in the ordinary events of life? For many of us — including myself — oftentimes the Lord’s presence can escape us because we are not as attentive, or we are preoccupied with some issue, causing us to miss the deeper meaning of what is going on underneath.

In faith, we proclaim that the God of love and life desires to be in communion with us all the time, just as one lover holds the other lover in their mind and heart throughout the day. St. Ignatius of Loyola stressed that his members be especially faithful to one spiritual practice, and that was the *Examen*. In the *Examen*, we are “recounting” what has taken place in our daily lives just as the disciples did in Luke 24:35-48. He believed that praying the



Examen — which is an awareness exercise — each day would open their hearts and deepen their awareness of the presence of God in their daily lives. He believed the *Examen* to be an extraordinary way to strengthen their relationship with the Lord Jesus *and* with those with whom they ministered or served.

The *Examen* consists of five simple steps that can be prayed anywhere and anytime. It is recommended as a beautiful prayer for ending a person’s day. I have found the prayer to be life-giving and it helps in connecting my daily life to God’s presence and will for me. There are many forms of this prayer.

Hopefully you will be enlivened in your own prayer life with the Lord Jesus by reflecting on the five areas of the *Examen*. Please consider cutting out the *Examen* on this page in the hopes that it may deepen your relationship to the Lord Jesus and with others in your life.

God Love,

Fr. Peter Quinn, Pastor

THE EXAMEN

- *Find a quiet place, remember you are in the presence of God.*
- *Name one moment from your day for which you are grateful.*
- *In your imagination, retrace the steps of your day, what you did, whom you encountered, thoughts and feelings you experienced.*
- *Tell God the things you feel good about and those that you regret.*
- *Ask God to help you to be your best self as you look forward to tomorrow.*

— St. Ignatius of Loyola



Dan Lawson (far left) has made significant contributions to the college trip over the years.

College Mission Brings Young Adults in Service, Faith

Over the years, our parish has developed a tradition of reaching out to others in their time of need. Since 2005, St. Anne and St. Catherine parishioners have come together to organize mission trips across the country.

“It’s what we are called to do — ‘that which you do for the least of my brothers, you do unto me’ — the boss told us to do that!” says parishioner Todd Westerhoff. “We’re called to share our faith and to be the light. We need to personify the behavior that we hope the rest of the world will exhibit.”

The first several mission trips brought groups of youth and adult volunteers to the suburbs

of Gulfport, Miss., where they helped with Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. After five years, the parishioner response to the mission trip was so great that the number of volunteers exceeded that which could be housed by the host church. In 2011, what had been one trip split into three trips — a middle school trip, a high school trip and a college trip — in various U.S. locations.

The college mission trip exists in its current iteration thanks to Eileen Lawson and her son, Dan, who laid groundwork and facilitated the trip for many years — now, Todd and fellow parishioner Kathy McGourty facilitate the trip. The college trip



Kathy McGourty is currently one of the college trip’s co-leaders, along with Todd Westerhoff.

is a special experience that brings participants together in a family-like atmosphere.

“The college trip is a weekend trip with two days of service,” Todd says. “We stay at Rivier College in Nashua, and we usually work with the local Habitat for Humanity to help with one of their building or renovation projects. We’ll set up shop on Thursday night, work on Friday and Saturday, and then return in time for Mass at St. Catherine on Sunday. We help people during the day, and we have different faith sharing and fellowship activities at night.

“It’s typically 25 people, from college age up to about 10 years out of college, but there is no age limit” he adds. “We’re basically just one big family. We’ll go on the



This year’s college trip participants.

Mission Trip

Adults Together and Fellowship



Eileen Lawson (at right) ran the college trip from 2013-2017.

trip together and then we won't see each other for a year — but the next year, it's like we haven't missed a beat."

Many of the college trip attendees had participated in the high school trip, where they got to know one another, which increased the camaraderie and spirit of service present in the college trip.

"We get new people every year, but we've got this incredible continuity at the core," Todd says. "Most of the people coming on the trip have a real love of serving and helping other people. They know exactly what they are getting into and that's exactly why they are here. It's the grace of God — there is a feeling of joy and happiness that you get on these trips that you can't put into words."

Todd, who has attended 12 trips over the years, is grateful for the opportunity to grow and serve alongside his fellow parishioners and friends.

"We receive so much grace from serving others — you truly get



Trip attendees have the opportunity to grow and serve alongside fellow parishioners and friends.

back more than you give!" he says. "The very first trips to Mississippi grew into a big movement in our collaborative, and it has changed

hundreds of lives. I count myself as one of those! I am so fortunate that I made that decision to go on my very first trip."

This year's college mission trip will take place from June 14-17. For more information on future trips, please contact Todd Westerhoff at twesterh@sisoft.com or Kathy McGourty at mcgourtykathy@comcast.net.

Acting as Christ's Hands and Feet: *The Adult Mission Trip*

We often hear about our youth living such busy everyday lives — from school, sports and extracurricular activities, to balancing time with friends and family. Yet, it is much the same for adults.

"We get into our own little world of stress and what's important to us," says Barbara Smith, the Coordinator of our Adult Mission Trips. "I think that when you go out and put yourself in the position of serving others, it changes your reality and makes you think outside of yourself. Service gives us that perspective that we need on life. It gives us that reality check."

Although this is only the second year of the Adult Mission Trip,

the heart of this ministry began a number of years ago, when Barbara was involved with the group of teenagers who traveled to serve in the southern U.S., after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina nearly 13 years ago. The Youth Mission Trips, which became annual events, included many parent and other adult volunteers, who helped to coordinate and serve on mission. However, as many of their children graduated and moved on, Barbara noticed a new need.

"I started thinking, 'These adults enjoyed this service work and the community they built, I need to find something for them to do!'" Barbara says. "When your kids go to college, where's your

place in the Church? One of the most important things that's come from our mission trips is the sense of community, not only among the kids, but also among the adults."

With this in mind, the Adult Mission Trip was born.

This year, the group will spend the last weekend in June serving a community in need, in Maine. They will be involved in various service projects, helping those who are elderly and/or living in poverty. Coordinating with Catholic Charities and other local groups, our mission trips address needs in the community, and come together to make a difference in the lives of others.

"Last year, we came in contact with this guy who was building a gym for recovering drug addicts, and we helped him build, clean and paint the walls of the gym," Barbara says.

"We're coming not to look down on the people but to work alongside them and support them in whatever needs they have," she adds. "As much as we look to see Christ in them, we also want them to see Christ in us. We are His hands and His feet here on earth. That's our job here, to do what He would do. I hope they never feel judged or even pitied. We come because we want to do what Christ would do, if He was walking among us."

The trip is open to adults of all



The trip is open to adults of all ages, single people and married couples alike.

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Parishioners also have the opportunity to grow in their faith and build relationships with fellow parishioners.



For many, the mission trip is a chance for people to feel connected with others, bringing Christ to those they serve.

ages and includes everyone from young adults, to people in their 70s; single people and married couples alike. There is work for both skilled and unskilled laborers — for anyone who wants to help.

“We have lots of different jobs, for lots of different people,” Barbara says. “When people recognize the gifts and the blessings they’ve had in their lives, they want to give back to other communities.”

In addition to service, the mission trip also provides opportunities for its participants to grow in their relationship with God and sense of community. While the days are filled with work, the evenings are spent in prayer and reflection, along with plenty of socializing.

“Everything has to start in prayer, for ourselves, for our teams, for the people we’re going to work for,” Barbara says. “Sometimes, we just have to stop and prioritize what is the most important thing because we get so caught up in the craziness of life. We try to make people aware of how to bring Christ into everyday life.

“That bond between people

[who have gone on a mission trip] is really unique,” she adds. “You’re all in there together, working on whatever project you’re doing and when you finish, it’s like, ‘Wow, we did this!’”

Barbara has found that the experience of participating in mission trips has had a profound impact on the way she lives her life.

“I’ve learned so much,” she says. “You think you’re going to

help someone else, but you realize how much they’re helping you. My life is so much more in perspective than it used to be. When you’re in tune with God and you’re open to these things, your life changes. It really is a blessing.

“There’s a fulfillment that you get when you’re serving someone else,” she adds. “You walk away with so much more than what you put into it.”



Coordinating with Catholic Charities and other local groups, our mission trips seek to find needs in the community, and come together to make a difference in the lives of others.

For more info on our Adult Mission Trip, contact Barbara Smith at 508-517-7849 or bsmithuml@gmail.com.

Adults are welcome to join the trip last minute, as long as space is available at the retreat center.

The cost is approximately \$200 for the weekend, and includes lodging and meals.

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)

The Catholic Grandparents Association *continued from front cover*

Members gather and share their stories, along with ideas of how to pass on the faith to their families in ways that will be positively received.

“No one is judgmental, it’s private,” Jeanne says. “The conversations are so interesting and lovely.”

“We’ve talked about family traditions that you could create, like making an Advent wreath with your grandchildren,” she adds. “There are a lot of different ways, a lot of little things. People talk about things they’ve done.”

The grandparents also take time to pray with one another for their various intentions.

“Prayer is the most important thing,” Jeanne says.

In the spirit of CGA, Jeanne reminds other grandparents that feeling guilt over the past has little value — instead, moving forward prayerfully will reap the greatest benefit.

“All you can do is be an example of a churchgoing grandmother or grandfather and love them,” Jeanne says. “God doesn’t want us to feel guilty — you’ve done the best that you can. He wants you to continue to do the best you can, to show your love to your children and grandchildren and to be there for them.”

Above all, Jeanne hopes that her example will encourage her children and grandchildren to grow in their faith.

“I hope the memory and example I give my family is my faith,” Jeanne says. “I just want to be a good person, to be an example for them and hope that they can share the faith and the hope that I have. That’s my hope for all of them.”

“[I want] to make them curious,” she adds, smiling. “What makes her tick? Why is she so happy all the time?”

For more information on the Catholic Grandparents Association, or to become involved, contact Jeanne Rodwell at 978-877-6493 or jeannerodwell@yahoo.com. All are welcome.