



BLESSED TRINITY PARISH

A Letter from Our Pastor

Dear Parishioners,
The following expression by Madeleine L'Engle has stayed with me since first hearing of it:

***"It is a good thing to have
all the props pulled out
from under us occasionally.
It gives us some sense of
what is rock under our feet
and what is sand."***

Our lives, our world and even our Church are constantly changing due to the circumstances in which we live and the nature of the human person. Sometimes there is gracious kindness, hope and compassion that seems to be dominant and active around us. Other times, it seems, sadly, that greed, power, violence, self-centeredness are the active forces in our world.

As we experience these changes in our world, in our Church, and in our Parish, we are called to examine what is "Rock" under our feet and what is "Sand". Is our faith founded on the promise of Jesus to be always with us, no matter the circumstances? Or are we frustrated and disappointed that our Church and Parish are not the same as they once were and not the way we want them?

Is it the "Rock" of our Faith in Jesus Christ or our personal and emotional attachments to maintaining what we once experienced that we must choose? That is exactly where we need God's gift of the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us discern.

The attitude of Faith we choose to address this reality is critical for us individually and as a Community of Faith. To fulfill the mission entrusted to us by the Lord, our faith-filled response calls us to be hope-filled missionaries into the future.

Lord, help us as a community to follow you into the future with ever deeper hope and trust in where you want us to go. Lord, show us the way you desire us to be a Community of Faith in Mission together here, now and in the future.

God Love,

Fr. Peter



Renewal and Commitment—Always "In Season!"

by Debbie Rhodes



"Everything on earth has its own time and its own season." Ecclesiastes 3:1

Like many churches throughout the country, our Annual Stewardship Renewal took place during the month of October. For churches like Blessed Trinity Parish, this renewal has a season of its own. That season is typically about four weeks long and happens sometime in the fall usually before Thanksgiving. Even though our "stewardship renewal season" has passed, it's not over. In fact, it's never "over" when it comes to renewing our commitment to stewardship of all blessed and entrusted in us!

Stewardship should be a part of everything we do throughout all the seasons. It is a spiritual discipline and a way of living that helps us to manage what God has entrusted to us and to teach others the true joy of giving as a response to God's generosity. We are called to be good stewards of all that we have: stewards of time, stewards of the gift of our talents, stewards of resources, stewards of relationships, stewards of the people in our Community of Faith—in other words, everything!

What might it look like if we experienced "seasons of stewardship" instead of one "stewardship season"?

Look at agriculture, we reap the harvest in one season of the seeds that were planted and nurtured in previous seasons. Our liturgical church year is also a succession of seasons that begin with the birth of the Christ child at Christmas, lead us through Christ's ministry to his death and resurrection, and culminates with Christ the King Sunday. Likewise, "seasons of stewardship" have a beginning (the annual stewardship renewal), but the succession of seasons spans the entire year, and in turn our entire lives.

What might our personal "Seasons of Stewardship" look like?

Winter: A season of reflection. The winter months are a good time for taking stock and to earnestly discern how God may be calling you. What have we been blessed with? Are we using our God given gifts? Are we living a God-centered rather than self-centered life? Not unlike a New Year's resolution, do we need to turn over a new leaf when it comes to fully living a life a stewardship?

Spring: A season of awareness. Spring is a time of awareness as the beauty of God's creation begins to come out of hibernation and shows signs of growth and rebirth. This is a time to generate an awareness of all that God has entrusted into our care. We are reminded at Easter of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us. How do we show our gratitude for the new life we have been given in Christ, for his mercy and love? Are we mindful of what that means in our daily lives?

Summer: A season of family time and faith. It's so easy for us to use the summer months for rest and relaxation—not only in our personal life, but also in our spiritual life. While traveling, taking vacations and spending quality time with our family can interrupt our routine of worship and connection to the parish, summertime can be an opportunity to refocus on what it means to be a part of the Blessed Trinity Parish family. God has granted each of us the privilege of being part of a wonderful, caring, and vibrant faith community. What part do each of us play as part of

this family? This is a good time to reflect on what priority God and His church play in our lives. Are those priorities sometimes “seasonal?”

Fall: A season of new beginnings, of renewal and commitment. So here we are back to fall and the time when we typically focus on stewardship. If we have been in tune to stewardship the seasons prior, then during this renewal season we are better prepared to reflect on the past year and the year to come. Are we truly embracing stewardship as a path to discipleship? Are we ready to grow in our commitment?

Stewardship and our commitment to it never go out of season. You can renew your promises and commitments at any time during the year. Certainly, God’s gifts never stop being poured out, so in turn, we should never have reason to stop thanking Him and responding with our lives.

To find out more about stewardship or one of the many ministries at Blessed Trinity Parish, please **contact Debbie Rhodes at 978-320-4212 or email DebbieR@BlessedTrinityCatholic.org**. We look forward to hearing from you and helping you discern what God has in store for you!



Inspired by the focus on Stewardship in the fall and reflecting on her own journey, parishioner, Karen Duggan McNamara, felt called to extend this personal invitation.

*Dear Fellow parishioner,
Please read this letter with an open heart. To say that we are all in this together is an often used and often trite saying but in so many ways it IS true. You and I are a member of our Blessed Trinity family. We are valued by all who serve us in the parish. Far more important, we are each SO, SO loved by God.*

To experience that love more fully, as with any other love in your life, means communication. Have there been times, when you carve out a little quiet time to pray, and you “feel” God’s presence and love? Or maybe there are times when you show a genuine concern for someone you encounter, and you feel that presence

working through you as you say or do the right thing. God’s grace is always floating around helping us cope when we are open to it.

There is yet another dimension of God that we can experience. When we are fully present to God in the company of others... when we pray with others. Our Catholic Christian faith tells us that at Mass, God is present in the Word (our readings and gospel), the assembly (all of us, clergy and lay, together), in and through the priest (as he reads the words “this is My Body... this is My Blood”), and of course in the Eucharist itself.

I invite you to pause here and think about that for a minute or so... what does it mean to you?

For me, and many of us at Mass, it means so much to pray with others. “God is here,” as one of our hymns tells us. When we are “tuned in” to

the readings, gospel, and homily, we each “hear,” both literally and in a deep, personal way, something new and meaningful. That is true of all great literature. There’s more meaning each time you read or hear it, not because it has changed but because the reader is in a different place. How much more so when God’s Holy Spirit is alive in you, in the reader, and in the assembly? You may hear something that is SO relevant to what is going on in your life.

And, after Mass, you might run into someone that is SO glad to have seen you.

We want you back to share this experience with you and to experience your unique representation of God’s love with us.

Hope to see you soon.

A fellow parishioner, Karen

Leave To Serve - Disciples in Our Community

by Rich Chenell

Often times when we see or hear something on a regular basis, we don't really pay attention to it anymore. For example; entering St. Catherine's through any of the three entrances, there are rugs that say, **"Enter to Worship."** On the other end of each rug and facing in the opposite direction to be read on the way out, it says, **"Leave to Serve."** I remember saying to myself the first time I saw it, "Wow. This is cool." And, until writing this article, I've walked over them without looking at them for the last bunch of years. (If you've never noticed it, take a look the next time you are there).

Another thing that is a "regular basis" type of thing that might go unnoticed is at the end of Mass every week. It's the final blessing. We might not hear it because we are packing up

to go or because it's said every week and don't really hear it anymore. It's when either Fathers Peter or Joe, or Deacons Bill or Luc say, **"Go forth to love and serve God, and to love and serve one another."** Blessed Trinity being a Stewardship Parish that has over 40 ministries, "going forth" to serve, is exactly what that blessing is about.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Stewardship defines a Stewardship Parish as one that "...seeks through regular participation in the celebration of the Eucharist to spiritually form the lives of its parishioners. Parishioners are invited, encouraged, sent forward and given the opportunity to become actively engaged and involved. This invitation, opportunity and involvement then tends to

facilitate a real-life experience and sense of hospitality, prayer, formation and service within the parish community, while recognizing that 'Stewardship is the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God's gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor'."

With so many ministries, there are countless Blessed Trinity parishioners that **"Leave to Serve."** I will highlight two of those ministries that are mentioned by Jesus in the Bible; visiting those in prison and visiting the sick. I spoke with some of our Blessed Trinity parishioners that are in the Prison Ministry and the Hospital Eucharistic Minister Ministry. I chose these two ministries because they bring Christ to those that are not able to receive the Eucharist without disciples bringing it to them.

Prison Ministry - *"I was in prison and you came to me."* Mt 25:36a

Visiting someone in prison can be daunting. *"I remember being a bit nervous going into the prison the first time,"* said Steve Cullen. Steve has been a member of the Prison Ministry for the last nine years. *"I can honestly say that my fears were quickly relieved because I've met some of the most faith filled and spiritual men I have ever met in my life, in prison. Hearing people share difficult stories from their childhood or challenges they've faced in prison was tough to hear, but to see how they found hope in Jesus is inspiring,"* he said.

Deacon Bill Dwyer has been a member of the prison ministry since 2002 when Chris Lowe, who was a parishioner at St. Catherine's back then and is now the pastor at St. Michael's Church in Lowell, asked Deacon Bill if he had two hours a month to spare. After prayerfully considering the request, Deacon Bill said, *"The Lord touched me, and I said 'yes.'"*



When asked what he's found most fulfilling over those 20 years of visiting prisoners, Deacon Bill said, "Hearing a call from the Lord to follow him can be both exciting and unknowing as we try and discern God's plans. Yet, we are called to simply trust and bring the love and hope of Jesus Christ to those on the 'inside.'" He continued, "Men and women in prison wear two 'scarlet letters'—the first from society, because their sin is very public as they have been sentenced/punished for what they did; the second they carry their own letter trying to forgive themselves for the shame and hurt they brought to themselves, their families, the victims and others by their sins. But, each night brings its own rewards and encounters with the Lord, both for the visited and for the visitors," he concluded.

The prison ministry isn't just for men and, sometimes, it's not a ministry that some would consider on their own. Dianne Walsh felt guided into trying it. She received an email from Steve Cullen that was meant for her husband, Mike, asking if he would consider the prison ministry. "I told him twice that he had the wrong email address and forwarded his emails to Mike. The third time he emailed, still thinking it was Mike, I realized that God might be trying to tell me something. So, I emailed back and said, 'If you take girls, I'd like to try.'"

That was four years ago and Dianne is still going to prison. "There are a lot of things I love about the prison ministry—sharing faith with the men behind the wall; seeing their witness and how they try to live a Christian life in horrendous circumstances; reminding them that they are not forgotten and sometimes sharing a little of outside life in our parish to help them feel part of something. They are well read, those who read, and for those who don't read, the others read to them. They talk in depth about the readings and the gospel. Many have lived Cursillo in prison, they participate in Alpha, and a number of them have been baptized and confirmed while in prison. They want the peace that knowing Jesus brings to us all," Dianne said.

Hospital Eucharistic Minister Ministry - "I was sick and you visited me." Matthew 25:36b

Carolyn Stall has been a Eucharistic Minister for over 25 years and has been bringing our Lord to patients in Emerson Hospital through the Holy Eucharist for the last three years. "I absolutely love going into the hospital and bringing communion to those who are facing a health issue, feeling very vulnerable and are in need of prayers and reassurance that someone cares," she said. "I can't tell you how many wonderful moments of grace I have experienced being able to share some time with the patients, pray with them and offer our Lord to them. The patients are most appreciative, even some who may have been away from the church are touched by the visit and prayers. It is beautiful to feel the Holy Spirit give you the courage and just the right words to say. I truly feel that I am the hands and feet of Christ in those moments," added Carolyn.

I also was a Eucharistic Minister at Emerson Hospital for three years. Initially I thought, "Who am I to be bringing Jesus to patients?" But, it takes only a couple of visits to see how thankful those that are in the hospital and can't go to church are to be able to receive Jesus through Communion. And, it's not just the patients; some nurses and staff also receive it.

I've had the honor of bringing the Holy Eucharist to patients on holidays like Thanksgiving, Easter and Christmas. There is an amazing feeling that comes from bringing our Lord to patients who want nothing more than to be home with their families for the holiday. For many, there is a sadness at the beginning of the visit that turns to joy by the end of the visit after spending some time talking about our faith, praying together and sharing Communion, especially on the Holy days.

So, the next time you go to Mass, pay attention to the final blessing. And, the next time you go to St. Cath-

"But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mt. 20:26-28

erine's, make a point to look at the rug in whatever entrance you enter through. And, whether attending Mass at St. Anne's or St. Catherine's, "Leave to Serve" God and one another.

If you'd like more information on either of these ministries, contact information is below:

Prison Ministry – Deacon Bill Dwyer – deaconbilldwyer@gmail.com

Hospital Eucharistic Minister Ministry – Carolyn Stall – cstall@stalladvisors.com

Peace and God bless you.

Try Alpha! Build a Solid Foundation!

by Diahne Goodwin



In Fr. Peter's letter to us in this issue of the newsletter, he challenges us to discern what we choose to make our foundation...Is it the "rock" of faith in Jesus Christ or is it in something else, something less stable. When we worship and put our faith in Jesus, he heals, restores and builds us up. If we worship or put our faith in other things, we often find that those very things can take from us or break us down.

But sometimes that faith can feel, well, rocky...What if doubt creeps in—especially during those times of hurt or disappointment or despair over world events—and makes it challenging to find sure footing? What if you are not sure you even believe in God, let alone Jesus...?

Maybe you are comfortable in your faith but don't always feel close to the Lord; that there is something more, beyond the comfort of traditions, prayers and practices... Is Jesus truly your Rock?

Maybe you feel sure of your footing in the solid rock of Jesus, but long for a way to share this with others, to invite them in the same beautiful relationship with Jesus you have.

If any of the above resonates, it might be time to come explore for yourself. or invite a friend or family

member to explore with you, some questions of life, faith, and meaning at Alpha. Alpha is an experience where you can gather in a friendly, judgment-free zone and explore some of those big questions....Is there more to life than this? Is there a God? How can I have faith?

**ALPHA IS ON THURSDAYS
BEGINNING JANUARY 19**

6:30 - 8:30 PM

and meets weekly for 11 weeks.

Can't make the first meeting? No problem, just come to the next one.

- Enjoy some great food, great talks, and great small group conversations.
- No pressure, no cost, no upfront commitment required.

Some remarks from some past guests:

"Alpha helped me refocus on my relationship with Jesus."

"I experienced being filled with the Holy Spirit!"

"My faith has taken on new importance and is starting to give my life new meaning."

"I feel more desire to spend time in prayer and connecting."

"The people at my table helped me discuss some topics where I had doubts."

"[I felt] the joy and feeling Jesus loves me."

"I feel blessed to be a member of Blessed Trinity – the Spirit is alive here!"

Don't just take their word! Here are some endorsements from a few prominent Catholics you may have heard of:

Fr. Mike Schmitz: *"There are not that many [easy entry] things you can invite a person to when you are Catholic.... But when you take them to Alpha, you know it will propose Christ..., and it will be excellent and fun. So my advice is to try Alpha because Alpha is phenomenal"*



Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, who has served as the Preacher to the Papal household at the Vatican since 1980: *"Alpha is a wonderful method to introduce people to a first knowledge of faith in a way that is very appropriate to modern man."*

Learn more or sign up: <https://www.blessedtrinitycatholic.org/alpha>

or email: Alpha@BlessedTrinityCatholic.org

**COME AND SEE FOR YOURSELF
WHAT IT IS ALL ABOUT ON JAN 19.**



Prayer: A Powerful Gift to Give and Receive

by Sue Gormley and Chris Banks

At every Mass, after the Profession of Faith, the lector or deacon leads us in the Prayers of the Faithful or Intercessory Prayers. During these prayers we remember the sick and our loved ones who have returned home to the Lord. The beautiful prayers that we offer when we are gathered together at Mass can and should be continued by us when we leave church and are sent forth to serve.

When someone is suffering and we want to help, we don't always know what we can do. As Saint Mother Theresa often said, **"Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love."** Praying for others is something that we can all do and it is powerful!

Parishioner JoAnne Wall, has been praying for her daughter, Robin, who has been battling breast cancer. *"I prayed as Robin went through all the exams leading up to her first operation that God would guide the hands of her surgeon to be successful in removing the tumors. I prayed that God would give my daughter the strength and courage to face the challenges ahead of her, and to never lose hope. Unfortunately, neither her first nor second surgery were successful. Throughout all of this, Robin stayed positive, had a good attitude and was able, as difficult as it was, to take things in stride. Although God didn't answer my prayer to have the tumors successfully removed, He did answer my prayer to give my daughter courage and strength. Recently Robin had a successful third operation and completed months of radiation treatment. I know God will once again answer my prayers to keep my daughter strong and safe, and to guide her medical team to do their very best to help her."*

Many of us feel hesitant to ask others to pray for us, but God urges us to seek out others who will help us carry our burdens by their prayers. When Zonia Urizandi's husband, Gilberto, was ill, she did not hesitate to ask for the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, after which both Zonia and Gilberto felt comforted and strengthened. At Blessed Trinity Parish, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is offered on the second weekend of the month at all of the Masses (Sat. 4:00 pm, Sun. 8:30 and 10:30 am). If you or someone you know is going for a medical procedure, is ill, or is in a weakened state due to advanced age, consider receiving this sacrament at Mass or call the parish office at 978-320-4220.

Zonia also requested prayers for Gilberto from the parish Prayer Ministry at prayers@BlessedTrinityCatholic.org. The Prayer Ministry is a great ministry because prayers can be offered at any time and in any place that is convenient for you. People

who travel extensively can pray during their flights or in their hotel rooms. Caregivers can pray while their children or elderly parents are napping. Parishioners who are homebound or who don't like to go out at night or during the winter can offer prayers from the comfort of their homes. God hears all of our prayers no matter when or where they are offered.

Throughout Gilberto's years of illness, when Zonia cared for him at home, when he was moved to a nursing home, and finally when he was diagnosed with a malignant tumor and was under the care of hospice, Zonia knew that many people were praying for her and Gil and she felt the strength of all these prayers.

Zonia prayed for her daughter Maggie's recovery from a near death situation and her prayers were answered. Maggie, has vasculitis, an autoimmune disease, which causes inflammation of the blood vessels, and bleeding in the lungs and kidneys. Last summer, Maggie was hospitalized in the ICU for several weeks and required multiple transfusions. During her illness, Maggie received the Anointing of the Sick and many people prayed for her recovery. Maggie shared a beautiful experience that occurred when she was critically ill. She felt the presence of her father and grandmother on either side of her bed, as well as guardian angels, keeping watch over her. Another time, when Maggie was having a procedure, and was in incredible pain she prayed for the Lord's mercy and she felt the comforting presence of her deceased father-in-law, Ted, and the sensation of his hands on her shoulders. Eventually Maggie was able to come home from the hospital, although weak and taking many medications. She has been slowly regaining her strength and has returned to work.

Our departed loved ones can and do pray for us. Many people with serious illnesses or who come close to death, have experienced the presence of their loved ones by their side. In Thessalonians we read, *"We do not want you to be unaware, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep."* (1 Thess 4:13-14) Some people have even experienced visits from the Blessed Mother or Jesus.

In March 2016, when Chris Banks was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma she was very weak and unable to walk. She had been through months of testing before the diagnosis, so when she and her husband finally heard the diagnosis, they



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 Permit 66

Saint Anne Church
75 King St.
Littleton, MA 01460

Saint Catherine Church
107 N. Main St.
Westford, MA 01886

CURRENT MASS SCHEDULE:

Weekend Schedule:

Saturday 4:00 pm – St. Catherine Church (live streamed)

Sunday 8:30 am – St. Anne Church

Sunday 10:30 am – St. Catherine Church

Weekday Schedule:

Mon & Tues 8:00 am – St. Anne Church

Thu & Fri 8:00 am – St. Catherine Church

Reconciliation:

Saturday 3:00 pm or by appointment

St. Catherine Church

Fr. Peter Quinn 978-320-4201

Father Joe Rossi 978-320-4202



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were relieved... now they knew what the course of treatment would be. During the following months of chemotherapy, Chris received the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick on two occasions and had numerous people praying for her. These prayers helped Chris and her husband get through many hard times. When the first chemotherapy infusion weakened Chris further, her doctors had little hope for her recovery. Chris prayed that God would give her the strength to endure. Chris recalls waking up in the hospital one night in agony. She began to pray to Jesus for help and something amazing happened. ***"I was with Jesus, and he was standing with his back to me. I knelt behind him and reached for a small loose string on his robe. I reached for it, and I felt Him say, 'You can take it, because I have enough for all the people in the world.' Then I heard him say, 'You will be alright.' At that point I knew I would be okay whether I lived or died. I was safe and loved and at peace."***

Chris thanks God every day for the medical care and healing she received, as well as the support of all the people who prayed for her and her family. She has been in remission for 6 years. When she finds herself taking life for granted, (as most of us occasionally do), she thanks God for his unconditional love and care. We never know what God has planned for us, but Chris knows that whatever comes next she is never alone and she is loved.

Joanne, Zonia, and Chris are all extremely grateful to those who offered prayers on their or their loved ones' behalf, and now they are "paying it forward" by offering prayers for others. Joanne, as a member of the Blessed Trinity Prayer Ministry offers prayers in response to the weekly email requests she receives. Also, as a Confirmation Catechist she not only prays for her students but teaches them how to pray for others. Zonia, attends daily Mass, prays with the rosary ministry and attends Eucharistic Adoration, offering prayers for all who are in need. Chris too offers her prayers at daily Mass and Eucharistic Adoration for the sick and deceased. When she visits the nursing homes each week she prays for the residents and staff and when she serves on the Ministry of Hope she prays for peace for families grieving the loss of a loved one. Who will you pray for today?

