

Do not be afraid.  
Open wide the doors  
for Christ.  
Pope Saint John Paul II



## BLESSED TRINITY PARISH

# *Open Wide the Doors - A Time for New Beginnings.*

*by Diahne Goodwin*

The end of June brought the reality that at times over the past year seemed unreachable. We are now able to gather together again, in person, with very minimal restrictions. The few months leading up to that point gave us a glimpse of hope and possibility, yet, like the frustrating pursuit of Tantalus of Greek mythology, still out of reach. The joy of being able to gather more closely, see another's face and smile is something that will not be soon forgotten!

Over the last month or so we have slowly begun to re-engage in person with our family, faith, work and school communities. However, responding to this regained freedom has been a transition in itself, balancing the enthusiasm for spending time with those people and activities we have missed with the reality that we are still mourning the loss of many along with the real fact that risk is not 100% gone and the need to respect and care for those still vulnerable has not gone away. It is a time of new beginnings, but is it a time for going back to normal, to the way things were before? Do we even know what normal is anymore?

The Oxford dictionary defines normal as "conforming to a standard, usual, typical or expected; the usual, average or typical state or condition." The word comes from the Latin word *normalis*, which described something made with a carpenter's square. Something built this way would be normed to have angles that were perfectly aligned and fit a general pattern. This meaning eventually gave us the broader sense of fitting a pattern, standard, or average. So what is our normal? What are we going back to? Is it what we have done and thought before the pandemic, our routines and habits and even rules?

I'd like to suggest that in a world and time of constant change and uncertainty, even beyond the major disruption of a global pandemic, that we attach ourselves less to the "way we did it before," and seek not a new normal but the normal. That normal can be found in the work of someone who knew a little about carpentry - Jesus of Nazareth, adopted son of Joseph the carpenter. What if we chose to focus moving forward on the pattern designed and perfected by Jesus? In this time of beginning anew, we have an opportunity to boldly embrace the norm given to us by our Lord, to love more deeply, to live and grow as disciples and to go out and share that love with others.

On the day of his installation, Pope St. John Paul II invited all to not be afraid and to "Open wide the doors for Christ." The wide open doors allow us to be both welcoming, actively receiving all who knock, and missionary, forming and sending us out to reach, serve and share the Good News beyond

## *St. Catherine's Cemetery Adding "Cremation Only" Section*



As more and more people moved into the Forge Village and Graniteville areas through the late 1800s (many of Roman Catholic faith), they needed a place to celebrate Mass, so the St. Catherine mission church was founded in 1892. With the increasing Catholic population, a need arose for a formal cemetery, as before the founding of the St. Catherine's Cemetery many burials were handled by the family of the deceased in undocumented ways, some of which is considered the "Old Section" of the St. Catherine's Cemetery that contains many unmarked graves.

Established in 1894 and originally started as a 60 grave burial grounds, St. Catherine's Cemetery is located on Pine Ridge Road in Westford. There have been several expansions, two in just the last 15 years, with 50% more land still available for additional expansion.

Having to bury a loved one is never easy but knowing that they will be laid to rest in a beautiful place like St. Catherine's Cemetery can be very comforting during such a difficult time. As with all early American cemeteries, the St. Catherine's Cemetery was designed for casket burial plots only. With the rising number of cremations, the Cemetery Committee started looking into ways to meet today's need for interment of ashes, while also trying to reduce the cost of burials. The committee, consisting of eleven people, (most who have loved ones interred there), initially explored adding a columbarium, but the costs were prohibitive. As an alternative, they decided to add a "Cremation Only" section.

Located at the back of the cemetery, the cremation only section is a 60-foot space that consists of 225

graves. Each burial plot is one-third the size of a full casket grave and will accommodate two urns. Along with the two-thirds smaller size of a standard burial plot, the cost of a cremation plot is also two-thirds smaller at \$500, compared to \$1500 for a casket grave.

"We went with cremation only graves due to the increased demand for cremations and the all too frequent hesitation to bury family members' cremated remains due to cost. Our hope is the affordable rate will encourage more interments, thereby following Catholic teaching to treat a cremated body as if it was a physical body with respect and reverence by not separating ashes into jewelry or trinkets," said Dave LeBleu, a committee member and also the Finance and Operations Officer of the Blessed Trinity Parish, which consists of St. Catherine's Church in Westford and St. Anne's Church in Littleton. This section will feature flat grave markers only, "resulting in a clear field appearance that is quite reverent and peaceful looking," added LeBleu.

There were other factors to take into consideration when discussing the topic of adding a cremation only section. "More people are opting for cremation especially during the pandemic when many gatherings had to be postponed. The newest expansion of the cemetery with smaller plots and flat markers being used as memorials will give the area a more simple and natural look," said another committee member Mary Eve Miller. "Loved ones can be returned to the earth among friends and family with the peace of mind knowing it's consecrated ground which the parish is committed to maintaining," she concluded.

If you would like more information or are interested in purchasing a cremation only or casket burial plot in St. Catherine's Cemetery, please contact the St. Catherine's Cemetery Committee. Their contact information is:

**St. Catherine of Alexandria Cemetery**  
**2 West Street • Westford, MA 01886**  
**Dave LeBleu: (978) 320-4220 X125**  
**Mary Collins: (978) 320-4220 X115**  
**Fax: (978) 392-0644**

## A LETTER FROM FATHER PETER - *Life's Dash*

Recently at a funeral I heard one of the best remarks of remembrance (eulogy) given by a family member highlighting the faith life of her mother. They were a six children family. Dad, at the age of 40, suffered a life-long debilitating illness. Mom cared for him for the next 42 years while raising her children with loving and patient devotion. The Mom was a living witness to God's loving presence and power to her children. The daughter used this poem by Linda Ellis to capture the six children's admiration, love and gratitude for their mother. Hopefully we will be proud of the way we have lived our DASH!

God love, *Fr. Peter*



### The Dash by Linda Ellis

*I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend.  
He referred to the dates on the tombstone from the beginning...to the end.  
He noted that first came the date of birth and spoke the following date with tears,  
but he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.*

*For the dash represents all the time that they spent alive on earth.  
And now only those who loved them, know what that little line is worth.  
For it matters not, how much we own, the cars...the house...the cash.  
What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.*

*So, think about this long and hard.  
Are there things you'd like to change?*

*For you never know how much time is left, that can still be rearranged.  
If we could just slow down enough to consider what's true and real  
and always try to understand the way other people feel.*

*And be less quick to anger and show appreciation more  
and love the people in our lives like we've never loved before.  
If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile,  
remembering that this special dash might only last a little while.*

*So, when your eulogy is being read, with your life's actions to rehash...  
Would you be proud of the things they say about how you spent YOUR dash?*

## *Open Wide the Doors* continued from page 1

our doors. To open wide our physical doors again, we can also open wide our hearts and embrace our call as disciples, loving God and others as Christ taught us. Let us return to worship and the Eucharist with joy and gratitude. Let us celebrate and never take for granted the power of the relationships we have through our Faith Community and rejoice in being able to gather again. Let us also grab the opportunity to recognize that our doors also include the digital doors, that offer connection and outreach in ways that weren't always obvious before. Let us each open the doors of our hearts wide enough to see and serve those in need, the lost and the forgotten. Each one of us has a role in holding the doors open. We are a new parish with two churches and an online presence. We have a lot of doors to keep open! Let us not worry about defining a new normal or returning to the old normal, but let us begin anew and embrace the enduring normal, the only one that is always sure and true, the standard of love given to us 2000 years ago, in Jesus Christ.





## Open Wide The Doors to Christ



"Open wide the doors to Christ!" These words, spoken by Pope John Paul II in 1978, were also the theme for the great Jubilee year of 2000. Wherever Pope John Paul II traveled, he would often use these or similar words. These words are also an invitation to all of us, not only from the Holy Father, but also from our Heavenly Father to open our hearts to Jesus Christ and his great love for us.

As we all know, our parish faced tremendous challenges for over a year as we did our best to navigate the pandemic. As the pandemic restrictions were recently lifted, the State of Massachusetts state of emergency was terminated, and Cardinal Sean reinstated the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, we have fully returned to worship together. But have we really? We've "opened wide the doors", but does everyone feel welcome? Is everyone coming back? And by everyone, we mean not only those who were away because of COVID-19, but even those who left before the pandemic.

A group of staff, council members (Pastoral Council, Finance Council and Stewardship Council) and volunteers met in mid-May to ponder these very questions. The group discussed ways that we could extend a sense of welcome to our parish family. The group felt that there was so much to celebrate - not just the start of loosening COVID restrictions, but also that we are now one - Blessed Trinity Parish. The results of that meeting were several undertakings with a goal of reaching out to everyone in the Blessed Trinity Parish family.

The first task was to try to literally reach out - to all 3,857 families. An army of volunteers stepped forward and began making phone calls. This was a huge task - and is still ongoing. The reason behind the phone calls? Just to let everyone know we're thinking of them and to let them know we are here for them. Cleaning up the parish database was a secondary, but also a very important reason, for this effort. (If you did not receive a call or email, we may not have your current contact information. Please call the Parish Office at 978-320-4220 if you were not contacted.)

The second task was to plan a social gathering. With summer here, the planning committee voted unanimously to hold a Parish Picnic on June 26th, with June 27th as a back-up date in case of rain. The 4:00 p.m. Mass was held at St. Anne Church on June 26th with the picnic immediately following in the field behind St. Anne's. The theme of the picnic was "missed celebrations" - everyone had something to share! We do have so much to celebrate!

At the request of Deacon Bill Dwyer, Landings was also resumed. Deacon Bill felt that Landings would be especially timely to help those who may have been away from their faith (or from the Church) - for whatever reason - to re-connect with their community. (See page 5 for more information on Landings.)

The "Open Wide the Doors" planning group felt there was another aspect of celebration that needs to be acknowledged. The many lives lost when strict pandemic restrictions were in place. Lives were lost due to COVID and many other reasons, and many parishioners did not have the opportunity to be with loved ones before death or have a funeral in the church. They deserve to celebrate their loved ones in community with all of us. An event is being planned for September 18th when we can pray together, learn more about the grieving process and enjoy the support of other members of our Faith Community.

Yes, we can finally say, "welcome back to church!" "Open Wide the Doors!" From our time apart, we learned that the church is not a building. However, we appreciate more what it means to have a place where we can worship together, and walk with the Lord together. Psalm 122:1 states, "I rejoiced when they said to me, let us go to the house of the LORD."

So unless you're someone who needs to stay home for health reasons, the doors are wide open! Yes, over the past year we've all witnessed the power of our online world. But we've also seen its limitations. No loving couple gladly accepts a "long-distance relationship" as ideal. Neither should a loving parish family. Families aren't meant to be separated. Healthy families live together, laugh together, cry together, and help each other. Parents with grown children love when the adult kids get together—and those parents are only fully satisfied when everyone's present. We must be faithful during this season to reach out to those who can't safely join us. But all who are able should seek to gather for our life-giving (parish) family reunions. The doors are open!

**WELCOME  
BACK TO  
CHURCH**

## Landings Program - Safe Harbor

Picture if you will, those special moments seen on TV, where for the first time in many, many months – grandparents and grandchildren get to hug, say hello and be connected again. We witness love, tears, and a welcome home. No matter who you are .....we echo this hope for our faith community to welcome those we have not seen for a very long time with love, tears and a hug.

If you are a Catholic or know a Catholic who has been away from the Church, know we are thinking about you and them. We invite you to be an active part of us again. We offer you a safe place, a "Landings" place to be listened to, a place for understanding and healing, and a place to ask questions and update your faith as an adult. During the six-week Landings program, a group of active Catholics, some "returnees" themselves, join with returning Catholics to share and explore our faith together.

Landings is a safe harbor to explore your faith and future within the Church. In a supportive and confidential setting, you can ask questions, discuss issues, and share past and present doubts and difficulties. You can expect an opportunity to be reintroduced to the love of Christ in a no pressure, open and non-judgmental environment.

We will welcome you. We recognize the step you are considering is a sacred moment. It is our desire to honor that. Some see this as a journey back to their spiritual home; others are looking for reconciliation with God and the Church. Whatever your reason for being away YOU are welcome here. If you are interested and want more information, email [landings@blessedtrinitycatholic.org](mailto:landings@blessedtrinitycatholic.org) or contact Deacon Bill Dwyer 978-394-4664

## Newsletter Ministry *continued on page 7*



There was a time that reading a newspaper or newsletter was a time to relax and unwind and to find out what is happening around us.

But, in this day and age of technology and instant media, most things are available online and on your phone. Almost anything can be accessed anywhere and at any time of the day, which can be convenient, but can also add to the hectic-ness of life.

Sitting here reading this right now, whether it's on the porch with a cup of coffee, by the pool while catching a few rays, getting up on a restless night to read something comforting, or wherever it is, isn't it nice to have something in your hands that a committee took the time and dedication over a three month period to publish that you can read at your leisure?

Yes, you could also be in those same places reading something on your phone but picking up the newsletter helps you to slow down and relax. I bet many of you are thinking, "How can that help me to relax?". Well, how many times have you been reading something on your phone and it rings or a text message pops up? Or, you are reading something on your computer and you get a notice that you have a new email and rather than continuing to read, you say to yourself, "I'll just take a quick look at that email."? The next thing you know, that call, text or email leads you into something else, and then something else, and you never go back to what you were initially reading. That can't happen when reading a hard copy of the newsletter. All you can do is go onto the next article or point of interest once you are done reading the one you are currently on.

There are other advantages that the quarterly Parish Newsletter has over technology devices. You won't find a lot of what's inside on the internet. The newsletter contains local stories about parishioners, information about our ministries, opportunities with how you can become more involved in our Faith Community, and many other topics and points of interest that you won't find by searching Google. And, during the pandemic when churches were closed and even when they opened again but many people were still not comfortable



# The Assumption of Our Lady

- Sue Gormley

On August 15th, we will celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A solemnity is a feast day of the highest rank celebrating a mystery of faith such as the Trinity.

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is also a **Holy Day of Obligation**, one of six days (besides Sundays), when Catholics in the U.S.A. are obliged to attend Mass. Although we say "obliged," it is really an amazing privilege to be able to hear the Word of God and to receive Jesus' precious Body and Blood, a privilege that Catholics today still die for in many parts of the world.

Some may wonder what is the difference between Jesus' Ascension and the Assumption of Mary. Jesus ascended into heaven 40 days after Easter, by his own power, in the presence of his disciples. Mary, was not "raised from the dead" nor "brought back to life," but was assumed into heaven, not by her own power, but by the power of God. The Catechism explains: The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of His Body (974).

Although Mary's Assumption into heaven is not referenced in the Bible, it was common belief in the early church. Karl Keating of Catholic Answers explains: The doctrine of the Assumption of Mary began with a historical event to which Scripture alludes and that had been believed in the Church for 2,000 years. It was passed down in the oral tradition of the Church and developed over the centuries, but it was always believed by the Catholic faithful.

Archaeology has revealed two tombs of Mary, one in Jerusalem and one in Ephesus. The fact that Mary lived in both places explains the two tombs. But what is inexplicable apart from the Assumption is the fact that there is no body in either tomb. Why did no city claim the bones of Mary? Apparently because

there were no bones to claim! In the early Christian centuries, relics of saints were jealously guarded and highly prized. Yet here was Mary, certainly the most privileged of all the saints ... but we have no record of her bodily remains being venerated anywhere.

One might ask, "**Why was the Blessed Mother Mary's body assumed into heaven?**"

One practical reason could be to prevent theft or desecration. People, even very spiritual people, sometimes do strange things. When I was on pilgrimage in Italy and visiting the church of San Domenico, I was distressed to see the head and right thumb of St. Catherine of Siena on display. Where was the rest of her body? I learned that she had died in Rome and her head and thumb were smuggled to Sienna, while one of her feet ended up in Venice. The tour guide explained that the remains of saints had to be kept in locked cases because theft of body parts was common as people believed relics of saints brought healing miracles to the church where the body part was located.

A more recent example of this was the 1973 theft of the heart of St. Andre Bessette from St. Joseph oratory in Montreal. To get at the heart, thieves had to pick three locks open a steel door and an iron grille then chisel the urn off its marble pedestal. A demand for \$50,000 in ransom was made, which the church refused to pay. In 1974, an anonymous tip led police to recover the missing heart.

Other than protecting the Blessed Mother's sacred body from Christians seeking miracles, and not wanting to allow her body to decompose naturally in the ground, one might wonder why she was assumed into to heaven.

We know that: Mary was chosen by God to be the mother of his only begotten Son, Jesus; Mary was





conceived in the womb of her own mother without the stain of original sin, (the Immaculate Conception), was “full of grace,” as announced by the Angel Gabriel and recognized to be the “mother of my Lord” by her cousin Elizabeth; Mary was present at key moments in Jesus’ life: his birth, his presentation in the temple, throughout his “hidden life,” at the first miracle at

Cana, at significant moments in his public ministry, at his crucifixion and at Pentecost. She could truly say of Jesus, “this is my body, this is my blood. Thus, Mary had a unique role in the history of salvation and enjoys a place of honor among the Communion of Saints



**Mary’s Assumption shows us our destiny in Christ.** In her, assumed into heaven, we are shown the eternal destiny that awaits us beyond the mystery of death: a destiny of total happiness in divine glory... Mary teaches about life. By looking at her, we understand better the relative value of earthly greatness and the full sense of our Christian vocation (Pope John Paul II, Homily at St. Peter’s Basilica, Rome, Aug. 15, 1997).

**Mary’s Assumption reveals the power of love.** Taken up into heaven, Mary shows us the way to God, the way to heaven, the way to life. She shows it to her children baptized in Christ and to all people of good will. She opens this way especially to the little ones and to the poor, those who are dear to divine mercy. The Queen of the world reveals to individuals and to nations the power of the love of God whose plan upsets that of the proud, pulls down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the humble, fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich empty away.

**Mary’s Assumption tells us that death is not the end.** Although every human being is destined to die, death is not the last word. Death—the mystery of the

Virgin’s Assumption assures us—is the passage to life, the encounter with Love. It is the passage to the eternal happiness in store for those who toil for truth and justice and do their utmost to follow Christ.

Mary’s Assumption completes her work on earth and invites us to join her in eternity. In 2017, Pope Francis spoke to 20,000 pilgrims in St. Peter’s Square on the Solemnity of the Assumption:

*... she brings a new ability to overcome with faith the most painful and difficult moments; she brings the ability of mercy, to forgive each other, understand each other, support one another. ... We ask her to keep us and support us so that we may have a strong, joyous and merciful faith. May she help us to be holy, so that we might meet with her, one day, in Heaven.*

The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is more than just an obligation for Catholics. It is a truth of our faith that is rich and full of meaning. Every feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary leads us closer to Christ her Son.

## Newsletter Ministry *continued from pg 5*

going to Mass, the Parish Newsletter was an excellent way to fill in the gaps and keep parishioners connected to things in our faith community that we couldn’t get from the recorded or live streamed Masses.

The Parish Newsletter ministry is looking for help. With the Stewardship drive coming up soon, there will be a lot of information going out and a lot of talk about sharing your “Time, Talent and Treasure”. If one of your talents is writing and you’d like to share your time, the Parish Newsletter committee is looking for a pool of 10 to 12 people to write articles for the newsletter. If you have a faith topic you’d like to write about, they would love to have you share your time and talent. If you’d like to write an article but don’t have a topic, the committee has topics they’d like parishioners to hear more about. If one of your talents is producing publications and you have time to share, the committee would love to have you join the team.

If you’d like to help people slow down and relax and would like to contribute to the Parish Newsletter, contact Angela Burke at [aburke@acprint.com](mailto:aburke@acprint.com).



**Blessed Trinity Parish**  
**2 West Street • Westford, MA 01886**  
**(978) 320-4220**  
**office@blessedtrinitycatholic.org**  
**www.blessedtrinitycatholic.org**

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**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*

### A/V Help Needed

The A/V ministry is looking to build their team of volunteers to help operate cameras for the livestream masses over the summer. It's not hard to do and the ministry leaders will train any volunteers before the Mass they are serving at. If you think you could sign up on occasion, please reach out to Brian O'Neill and Sean O'Donnell - blessedtrinityavministry@gmail.com. Anyone high school age or older is welcome to participate!!!

## Landings Program - Safe Harbor

"I always knew that something was missing within myself, that missing piece was my faith and the church. I deeply wanted to return to my faith and the church but I didn't know how. The Landings program provided me with an atmosphere that was welcoming, understanding, positive and supportive. The witnessing, stories and discussions were motivating and inspiring, all of which grew my desire to re connect with my faith and the church. Joining the Landings program was the first step, participating in the program and building relationships with those in the group made my journey a positive experience, completing the program allowed me to find that missing piece within myself and reconnect fully with my faith and the church."

