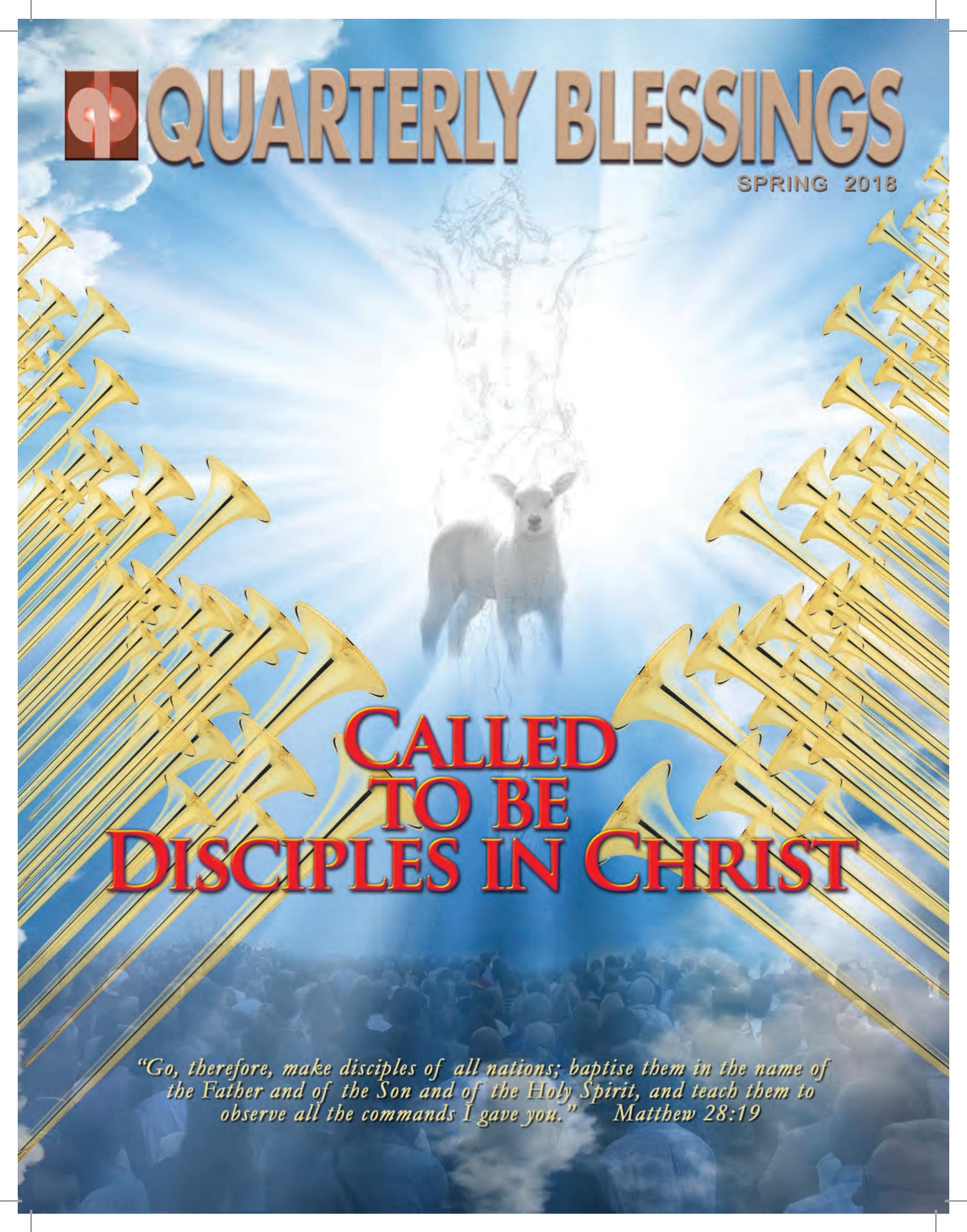




QUARTERLY BLESSINGS

SPRING 2018



CALLED TO BE DISCIPLES IN CHRIST

"Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you." Matthew 28:19

Disciples of Christ

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1Cor 1:3).



As disciples of Christ, we are called to holiness! Holiness is not something to be obtained it is something to be lived. It is when God’s Grace is fully active in our life. We are called to holiness in our daily lives and within a community of fellow believers.

A challenge from Pope Francis:

“To go out of ourselves and to join others is healthy for us...many try to escape from others and take refuge in the comfort of their privacy or in a small circle of close friends...the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others...true faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in a community, from service, from reconciliation with others.”

All Christians without exception are called to the fullness of life and to the perfection of charity. All are called to holiness, as Jesus tells us, *“So be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect”* (Mt 5:48).

Holiness involves the whole person: the human person is neither an angel (pure spirit) nor an animal (Pure Body), we are body and spirit and in order to be truly healthy and holy, both spirit and body must be cared for.

◆ Each of us is personally called to holiness, a **discipleship of integrity**, and whether there are others present or not, I am always called to live with integrity. (See 1Cor 6: 19-20)

◆ We are called to **discipleship in family**. Our siblings when we were younger seemed more like crosses to carry than graces to share, but they were our help to overcome our own weaker tendencies.

Spouses are meant to be gifts to each other, the laying down in surrender to my beloved, because I know God has called me to walk towards heaven with him/her. However, in our secular world the spouse is either seen as someone to please me or someone who restricts my personal freedom.

Children are not possessions of ours. They are entrusted to us for a time, but ultimately they return to their heavenly Father and that is our mission. Our holiness is helped by them especially when we witness their trustful innocence. (See Eph 6:1-4)

◆ We are called to **discipleship in business life** – each Christian man and woman is called to be a light to the world that lives in darkness. We are meant to bring peace and honesty to our places of work. To take what we have received from Christ and share with those who so badly need it. (See Mt 5:14-16)

◆ We are called to **discipleship in spiritual life** – you and God... Becoming God-like... Prayer... transformation.

◆ We are **disciples of mission**: the Church is first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way toward God; anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Each of us should find ways to communicate Jesus wherever we are.

May your discipleship be beautiful and joyous,

Fr. Dermot Dunne

Fr. Dermot Dunne
Pastor



Spiritual Training

By Cindee Mace and Nancy Slade

Would you like to deepen your relationship with God and dig further into His Word? We are so blessed here at St. Stephen to have so many bible study classes from which to choose, with wonderful leaders to answer questions and facilitate the sessions. There are studies throughout the week at various times to meet your needs.

Personally, I am a member of the Divine Mercy Cenacle Tuesday morning group and I can say without hesitation that each week I leave with a new nugget of truth or better understanding of scripture, the Catechism, and St. Faustina's Diary. My favorite part of this study is the discussion portion where we answer questions and share our thoughts as a group.

Being a member of a bible study is a great opportunity to not only become better informed about our faith but also to meet other people and form lasting friendships.

Here is a list of Adult Faith Formation topics - these are listed in the bulletin each week as well so you can find the one that piques your interest and fits your schedule.

Divine Mercy

Led by Stephanie McClain, 4:15pm on Sundays.

Led by Grace Persaud, 9:15am on Tuesdays.

Groups meet in rooms 4 and 5. They are continuing to study *St. Faustina's Diary* using Brian Thatcher's *Cenacle Formation Manual, book 3*.

Tuesday night Bible Study

Led by Bob Robens, 7pm room 10.

The current topic is *Follow Me: Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John*. Study set fee is \$25.

Tuesday night YOUNG ADULT Bible Study

Led by Bill Cardenas, 7pm on the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays.

The next topic is Isaiah: In the Bible, the primary role of the prophet is to speak for God, to see and hear as God sees and hears, and then to pronounce words of correction and hope. In Isaiah, we encounter God's accusation against Israel; the holiness of God; hope for a messianic king; oracles against foreign nation; prophecies of restoration; and challenges for exiles returning to their homeland.

Wednesday morning Catholic Moms Sharing

Led by Valerie Kelley, 9am.

The group will be studying a variety of topics relating to growing their knowledge of the faith and supporting their role as Catholic wives and mothers.

Wednesday and Friday morning Bible Studies

Led by Jeanne Glogowski, 10am.

We will be studying Revelation in the spring and Joy to the World during Advent. Revelation revisits a volatile period of history through apocalyptic, symbolic writing. It contains letters to seven churches of Asia Minor that urge faithfulness to Christ. Powerful visions of God and the victorious lamb in

heaven are unveiled as God and the lamb achieve the ultimate and absolute victory over evil, culminating in a new heaven and a new earth with a new Jerusalem as home to God's holy people. Joy to the World is a study of the birth of Christ as recorded in two of the Gospels: Matthew and Luke.

Thursday morning Bible Study

Led by Nancy Slade, 10am.

Future topics include:

Celebrating The Mass: In this study, you'll come to love the Mass more deeply by understanding the history of the Mass, especially its roots in scripture.

Paul's Letters from Prison: Paul's Letters from Prison includes a study of Philipians, Colossians and Ephesians, and three additional lessons from 1 & 2 Thessalonians. In these letters of encouragement, correction, and

instruction written from prison, Paul lovingly inspires and challenges us to greater discipleship.

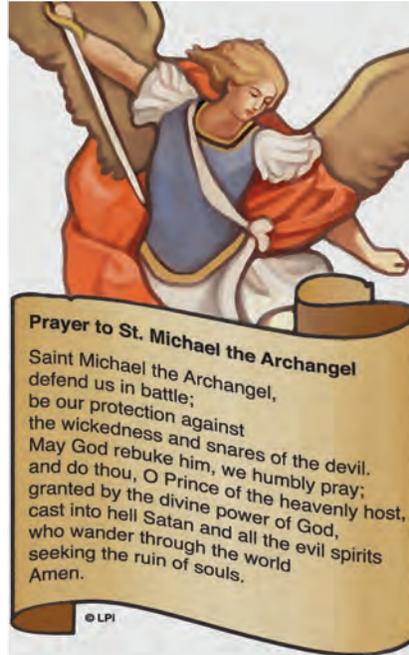
Israel's Story Part 1: Explore Old Testament history, theology, and stories, from the creation accounts of Genesis to the fall of the Northern Kingdom and its prophets. It will provide participants with a good overview of how ancient Israel understood its relationship to God, its history, its beliefs, and its hopes.

Mary, Jesus' Mother and Ours: Six episodes from Mary's life in the Gospels of Luke and John: the annunciation, visit to Elizabeth, the birth of Jesus, the encounter in the Temple, the wedding at Cana, and Jesus' death on the Cross, along with some areas of Mary's life not explicitly covered in the Gospels - her birth free of original sin, her assumption into heaven, and her maternal role in the family of Jesus' followers.

Thursday Night Adult Bible Study

Led by Bob Ward, 7pm

The current topic is *Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible* and future topics include *First Corinthians: The Church and the Christian Community*. ✚



Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel
Saint Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle;
be our protection against
the wickedness and snares of the devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray;
and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host,
granted by the divine power of God,
cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits
who wander through the world
seeking the ruin of souls.
Amen.

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A Soldier's Call

By Tony Weilbacher

I am truly blessed to have been a member of the Voices of St. Stephen for the better part of two years now. My time here in this wonderful place has led me to great friendships and the satisfaction of providing my gifts and talents in service to our Lord and His Church. This has also been the eighth choir in which I've been over the last twelve years, the result of moving every two to three years. I'm a soldier in the U.S. Army, the free world's premiere defense force committed to defending the values that make this nation great. In the same way that I've answered the call to serve our nation, I've also answered the call to serve our wonderful church through the ministry of music.

But it was not always this way. Twelve years ago, you would find me slipping into the furthest back pew to attend Mass only to exit in the same fashion at the end. I wouldn't even stop for doughnuts on the way out (trust me, this is a testament). This is not to say that there's anything necessarily wrong with this, but the fact was that I'd been playing the guitar and singing for about fourteen years at that point. I had these gifts and talents and a Church that could use them, so why didn't I? I was forced to answer this question on a hot desert Sunday in July 2006 when I attended the Catholic Mass on Camp Liberty, a forward base located in the deserts of Baghdad, Iraq while serving a combat tour.

(note for note) into a computer software program that produced music that was rudimentary at best. Not only did it require a tremendous amount of time and effort, but it wasn't very inspiring to hear – the kind of inspiration that adds to our wonderful liturgy.



So on that warm Sunday in July 2006, it all came to a head: Mass was in full swing, and right in the middle of the Offertory Hymn, the computer completely stopped working. An awkward silence fell over the Mass as the priest continued with the liturgy. Those in a ministry might tell you that they had some “calling” to

serve; this was clearly mine. Immediately after Mass, I introduced myself to the Music Director and offered to form our first choir, one that added live music to supplement the liturgy. And the rest was history.

Since that day in Iraq more than a decade ago, I've continued to seek out the music ministry whenever and wherever the military sends me every two to three years. I even volunteered to serve as the Music Director during my last tour in Afghanistan in 2013. I have found tremendous satisfaction, humility, and lifelong friendships while using the gifts and talents that God gave me in service to Him and His Church. And it all began with a personal calling. Do you hear your call? ✠



The chapel was meek – nothing but a fabricated structure made of plywood only big enough to hold about fifty people. It wasn't expansive by any means in the way of the typical ministries and committees that we have in a more robust parish. But it had a volunteer Music Director who played the French horn as part of the Infantry Division's Band also stationed on Camp Liberty. This wasn't the ideal situation for a Music Director; the French Horn isn't designed to provide the same level of accompaniment as a piano, organ, or guitar. So he resorted to manually converting every single piece of music

Tony has been a parishioner at St. Stephen since October 2015. He and his lovely wife, Kat are natives of the beautiful island of Guam and were recently blessed with their first child in September 2017.



The Memorial Program

By Gary Opala

We have built our beautiful new house of worship and Family Life Center, and now we have to furnish it and pay the mortgage.

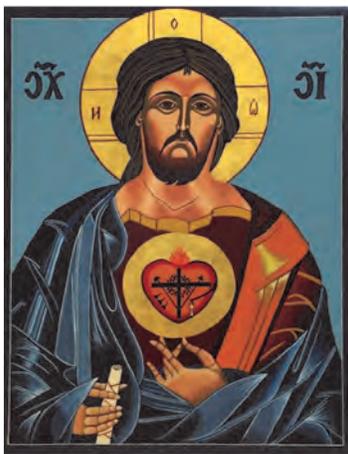
When Father Bob asked me to head up the Memorial Program several years ago, I borrowed a technique commonly used in Corporate America entitled “Best Practices.” Before setting up the program, I spent about a year studying what other churches and Catholic schools in Florida had done recently in establishing their Memorial Programs. It was also helpful to talk to individuals at these various churches and schools to find out what worked best, and at the same time avoid any pitfalls. As always, I found that our sisters and brothers at other parishes and schools were more than willing to help and provide valuable information. I guess that is why the Catholic Church means “Universal” because wherever you travel, you find members of your larger Catholic family that are always willing to help and make you feel welcome and at home.

A partial list of the parishes and schools studied includes St. Mark the Evangelist, St. Catherine of Sienna, St. Jude in Boca Raton, St. Anne in Ruskin, St. Bernadette in Port St. Lucie, St. Timothy in Tampa, St. Anthony Catholic School in San Antonio FL, and Corpus Christi in Temple Terrace. From this information that was gathered we were able to develop the Memorial Program we have at our parish today, with a few tweaks along the way, the last couple of years.

If you are like me, a little “long in the tooth” as they say, then you probably grew up with many statues in the various parishes you belonged to. However, when I attended an ordination at the newly remodeled Cathedral of St. Jude in St. Petersburg a couple of years ago, I noticed that there were no statues in the Cathedral. This change in our new modern church has been difficult for some of us to accept.

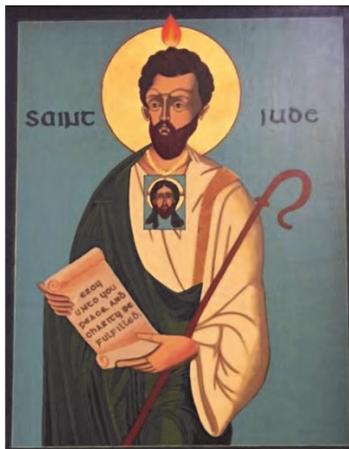
An “Icon”, from the Greek word for “image”, is a religious work of art, most commonly a painting, originating from the Eastern Orthodox Church, Oriental Orthodoxy, and certain Eastern Catholic Churches. Christian tradition dating back to the early Church identifies St. Luke the Evangelist as the first icon painter. St. Luke’s portrait of Mary is reported as the original icon, which has been recreated throughout the centuries. This tradition is much more common in our Western Catholic Church today. Icons provide the opportunity to

display the image on the altar for remembrance during a special Saint’s day or day of veneration.



Our Lady of Czestochowa
Our Lady of the Miraculous Metals
Sacred Heart of Jesus
St. Daniel
St. Faustina – Divine Mercy
St. John Bosco
St. Jude
St. Michael the Archangel
St. Stephen
St. Teresa of Calcutta

All of these Icons have been totally funded with exception of St. Faustina which has been partially funded, so there is still an opportunity to contribute there. There is no list of icons, but instead parishioners are



welcome to pledge through the Memorial Program to commission an icon toward a particular Saint or special devotion. In addition to the icons, only one of the Stations of the Cross, Station 6 – “Veronica wipes the face of Jesus” has been pledged through the Memorial Program, so all the remaining stations are still available.

Generous parishioners and friends of St. Stephen Parish have already pledged towards many items in our Memorial Program, and we are currently at over 60% of our goal. However, there are a number of items in our new church, and Family Life Center that are still available, so I am hopeful that more will step forward to donate to the St. Stephen Memorial Program. Special blessings are available at no extra cost. If would you like more information on the Memorial Program, or would like to donate to one of the items, contact Gary Opala at 813-541-8288 or Denise@StStephenCatholic.org and 813-689-4900 ext. 3060 or stop by the parish office. †

Gary Opala and his wife Cathie have been members of St. Stephen since 2001. They served as Major Gift Chairpersons for the Building Our Future Together campaign. Gary was on the original formation team, and Continuation Committee of CRHP, served on the Parish Council as chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, and currently serves as Memorial Program Chairperson.



Putting on the Armor of God

By Janet Swilley

Paul wrote the verses in *Ephesians 6:10-20* while he was in prison and in chains. The dark forces and their attacks couldn't keep him quiet. God gave us the armor we need for the spiritual battles we face every single day and He also gave us directions on how to use it. Let's look at the verses in *Ephesians 6:10-18*.

(NAB) Ephesians 6: v10) Finally, draw your strength from the Lord and from his mighty power. v11) Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil v12) For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens.

Step 1 - Put on the full armor of God.

v13) Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground.

What is the Armor of God?

The Belt of Truth

The Breastplate of Righteousness

The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace

The Shield of Faith

The Helmet of Salvation

The Sword of the Spirit

Prayer

Step 2 - Put on the Belt of Truth

v14) So stand fast with your loins girded in truth,

Your truth is Integrity. Without it, you lose the battle. Stand firm in the truth of the gospel; the good news of Jesus Christ.

Step 3 - Put on the Breastplate of Righteousness

v14) clothed with righteousness as a breastplate,

The breastplate protects the vital organs. A soldier with a breastplate goes boldly into battle. When the devil attacks you with lies, guilt, accusations he wants to get into your heart and mind. He wants to do that with impure things such as filthy magazines, immoral movies and engage you in temptations of the flesh.

Keep your heart pure before God.

Step 4 - Put on The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace

v15) and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace.

Stand firm and step forward without fear. Focus on the battle at hand. Prepare and proclaim the peace of Christ. Peace is an easy thing for the devil to steal. He will throw discouragement and doubt at you.

Don't stumble. Keep your peace.

Step 5 - Put on the Shield of Faith

v16) In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Satan has a specific function, and that is to kill, steal and destroy. The shield moves in every direction of attack and protects you from all the fiery attacks directed at you; not just some, all. The devil is looking for a crack in your armor. A tiny spark can turn into a big fire.

Feed your faith. Starve your doubts.

Step 6 - Put on the Helmet of Salvation

v17) And take the helmet of salvation ...

Satan's target is your mind. He lies and wants us to doubt God and our salvation. The most important thing to have at all times is assurance of your salvation. The helmet protects our minds. If your mind is wounded it doesn't think straight.

Put on the mind of Christ.

Step 7- Put on the Sword of the Spirit

v17) ...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Nothing can defeat God's word. Memorizing scripture and using it to defeat Satan like Jesus did in the wilderness in Luke 4:1-13 is exactly what we have to do too.

Trust the Word and be hungry for it.

Step 8 - Prayer

v18) With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit.

God has a plan for your life and Satan does too. You have to choose which one you will follow each day. God has given us specific instructions in His Word to stand on and win the battle every day. The battle is real. It's intense. So, determine to be just as intense in your desire to be in God's Word and you will win the battle.

Pray in the Spirit.

When I put on your full armor, forgive me when I am unprepared, too busy, trying to fight in my own strength. Thank you for not letting me fight alone. I trust that you are working on my behalf and believe that your power protects me.

I trust in the powerful name of Jesus. Thank you for your protection, provision, forgiveness and saving grace.

The enemy has no authority over my life. I will put on the armor of God daily to guard against the attacks of lies and deception, to protect my mind and heart from temptation. I will be steady in my faith, to take your peace with me and remind myself, I am a child of God and you will protect me as I trust in you and stay prepared and alert in a world of darkness. Always remembering James 4:7, "stand strong, I am never alone, you love me and you fight for me." In Jesus' Name, Amen. ✠

Janet Swilley serves as a Lector and an active member of the Pastoral Parish Council and the Adult Choir.



**HELMET OF
SALVATION**

**BREASTPLATE OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS**

**BELT OF
TRUTH**

**SHIELD OF
FAITH**

**SWORD OF
THE SPIRIT**

**PUT
ON
THE**

ARMOR OF GOD

**EPH 6:
14-17**

SHOES OF PEACE

©AMEN Designs

Students Discuss Their Faith

By Nicki Gallagher

Young people now have the means to easily communicate with their peers and share with each other more details about their lives. The internet allows young people the opportunity to open up about their friendships and their everyday activities. Has this culture change of openness and sharing extended to young people's faith, and have they been moved to have discussions with their peers about their faith? Do their discussions touch on the relevance of faith in their daily lives? In December, I was privileged to have the opportunity to listen as several St. Stephen Catholic School students gathered to explore these topics. It was impressive to hear their personal faith-related stories and see their emotional reaction to fundamental issues regarding their faith. Four 7th grade students led the discussion with several 5th and 6th grade students and they centered on the following discussion questions:

- ★ *How does your faith and love for Jesus help you to be a good friend?*
- ★ *Jesus defended the timid and the weak (1 Thes 5:14). Have you ever had a friend that was afraid to act and you encouraged him to act?*
- ★ *Our faith requires us to love thy neighbor. How can we love someone who hurts us? How do we make peace with that person?*

My initial observation was that the students were very comfortable discussing their faith with one another. I heard threads of their faith in almost every sentence. Their response to solving difficult situations always referred back to considering what Jesus would do in a similar situation.

"Jesus would give someone a second chance, so should we. I feel better when I forgive." They talked about seeing what friends look like inside and not just outside, and of the need to leave matters in God's hands and allow Jesus to help us forgive. Students shared their observation that children who do not believe in God react differently to adverse situations. The students commented that something was missing in children who do not have faith, as they did not have Jesus to turn to when they need help. They were firm in recognizing that Jesus forgave those who nailed him to the cross, so should we forgive. Reflecting on the persecution of Jesus was significant to the students as they made decisions regarding difficult situations. It was clear that their faith taught them forgiveness and unconditional love.

The conversation turned to the topic of bullying. The group's focus was on how bullying could be eliminated if we all accepted our differences. *"God made us all unique for a reason. He hand crafted each of us, made each of us special. When a friend is annoyed by another student, the friend is not weak. The friend needs direction and a reminder that God wants us all to live in peace."* The students talked about giving each other advice based on teachings from the Catholic religion. When we are sad, students suggested we think about how Jesus died just for us and our salvation. One youngster commented that being sad is a waste of time and it is far better to think about your blessings than your difficulties.

The conversation was lively and moved quickly from one student to another. The students continually cited ways in which their faith guided them with their friends, their challenges and their daily responsibilities. I was especially



fond of the term used by several of the students in response to conflict among fellow students: “*Hug it out.*” Students mentioned the religious artifacts that are always visible in the classrooms and hallways of the school, and that the statues, bibles and crucifixes are constant reminders of their faith and the positive values they believe in. The Sacraments of Communion and Penance, as well as retreats, were named as ways to ask for forgiveness, strength and guidance. I enjoyed hearing the students converse about how their faith guided them with competitive sports. They stand firm in their belief that they are playing for Jesus and this belief commands good sportsmanship. The students specifically mentioned their teacher, Mr. Wiles, and Coach Green who lead with meaningful prayers before each game.

Through their conversations, I was able to feel and see their relationship with Jesus. They seem to know Jesus personally. They welcome Jesus into their lives daily as they acknowledge there is still much to learn about Catholicism and their faith.

As I listened to these students, it was apparent their family, their school and the church of St. Stephen are playing a major role in forming these young people to be good citizens and Disciples of Christ. During the ninety minutes that the students met, they conversed with each other about their faith with confidence and ease. They were respectful of the subject matter as well as respectful of each other.

Thank you to the students who participated in the discussions. You serve as an inspiration to all young people as you serve the Lord through your words and your actions. ✚

Nicki Gallagher is the Development Coordinator at St. Stephen Catholic School.



Guests of the Quarter

By Heike House

Many individuals serve our Church community in a vast number of ways. And our church certainly has something suited for almost everyone. Each member of this family has found such a niche.

Meet the Johnson family; Jeanine, Mark, Noah and Alex.



If you attend the 9:30 Mass, you most likely have already met them, although perhaps not by name. Jeanine and Mark have been married for 33 years, and have been members of St. Stephen Church since its beginning, when it was still at the storefront (now Beef O’ Brady’s) on Bell Shoals Road. Their sons, Noah and Alex were both baptized at St. Stephen.

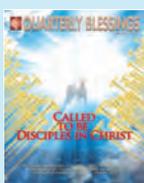
Dad is a U.S. Army veteran, originally from St. Petersburg, FL. Formerly a Captain for United Airlines; he is now enjoying his retirement by providing flight training at Plant City Airport. On Sunday mornings you will see him serving as usher for Mass.

Mom is from Minnesota. A former elementary school teacher for many years, she serves as Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) and, occasionally usher, when needed.

Noah and Alex are also active at St. Stephen. Noah serves as usher. He is currently attending the University of South Florida for which he has earned several sports and academic scholarships. He is an accomplished pianist, and loves fishing and a variety of sports.

Alex currently resides in Boise, Idaho where he is employed as a customer service member at a local funeral home. He is an accomplished violinist, having performed at Carnegie Hall, New York City and with the United States Orchestra during the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China. A former altar server at St. Stephen, Alex serves as an usher when he visits home, and is finding his service niche in his Idaho parish.

Altar server, reader, EMHC, usher, singer, or a member of any one of our dozens of other ministries; there is room for all within our Church family. Find your own niche! Thanks to the Johnson family for helping to set a great example! ✚



About the Cover

The cover concept conveys the call to build an army for Christ. The trumpets symbolize the proclamation of Christ to the world and the battle sound found in the book of Joshua. The Lamb of God symbolizes the sacrificial atonement for all, as the transparent St. Stephen’s Crucifix looks downward to the people. The prophetic subtext is taken from the book of Jeremiah 4:5 that calls on the faithful to come and assemble before marching into the cities with the Gospel message. Rick Taucedo

Our Crucifix

Fr. Curtis Carro

Our parish commissioned the carving of a Crucifix to be hand-made in a 500-year-old woodworking town of Oberammergau, Germany. Oberammergau is also famous for producing the Passion Play every ten years. The next showing will be in 2020 over several months; spring through fall. For generations, pilgrims have traveled to this town to experience, in amazing detail, the performance of the Passion of the Lord.

Our Crucifix is, right now, being carved by the grandfather of the Albl Woodshop, a family owned and operated woodshop for many generations. The grandfather is particularly gifted in carving human faces and is using the Shroud of Turin as a guide. The cross itself will be nearly 15 feet tall; if Jesus' body were upright in person, He would stand nearly 8 feet tall. The sizing was calculated based on the enormous size of our church

and takes into account being suspended more than 30 feet above the Altar.

We expect the Crucifix to be delivered this spring. After a blessing, the Crucifix will for generations to come, be suspended above our Altar, to capture our attention and raise our gaze to the paschal mystery of our redemption. Imagine the thousands of people each week who will find comfort, solace, and perhaps at times, scandal at the profound love the Lord has for us, His people. The Crucifix for us is a sign of Christ's self-gift which makes a marriage of His Church to Himself – we become one. Imagine the responses to such a gift which will be elicited from the hearts of those moved by this art piece. †

Fr. Curtis Carro is our parochial vicar at St. Stephen. We also thank all parishioners who have memorialized this crucifix which will inspire St. Stephen Parish for years to come.



Fr. Dermot's Update

The Crucifix which will be in the main sanctuary is progressing wonderfully. We are hopeful that the Crucifix will be with us by the Easter Season. We want to thank the anonymous donors for participating in the Memorial Program, who have provided our faith community with this awesome reminder of the love that Jesus Christ has for each one of us.

May the Lord continue to fill your hearts with love and your souls with peace on our Lenten journey towards the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. †



Called To Be Disciples

By Ted Russell

When you ask someone “*What is Church?*” they may respond, “*Church is where we gather to hear the Word of God.*” A Catholic may say, “*Church is where we receive the precious body and blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.*” Sacred Scripture offers us many images of the Church. As disciples of Christ we are members of the *Body of Christ* (1 Corinthians 12: 12-26). With its many members, the Church has a diverse set of functions like the human body. Another image describes the *Bride of Christ* (Ephesians 5: 25-27), reminding us how much Christ loves His Church. Still another image likens the Church to the *flock of God* (1 Peter 5:2). In this sense, the Church provides a solace of protection and spiritual nourishment. As we ponder these images from Sacred Scripture, we see that the church is a marvelous place - there just isn't another institution like it!

Sacred Scripture also mentions that Jesus warned his disciples that they would be engaged in spiritual battle. Some people may feel uncomfortable when describing Jesus' Church in the context of conflict or even spiritual warfare. After all, don't we worship a Jesus who exemplified the saying, “turn the other cheek?” Although Jesus never drew a sword, He is quoted in Scripture as saying, “*Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword*” (Matthew 10:34). Two thousand years ago Jesus knew that Christians were going to be engaged in a spiritual conflict because of the divisions between sin and the truth of the Gospel. Even today, Sacred tradition reminds us that as disciples of Christ currently living on earth - we are members of the “*Church Militant.*”

The Jewish leaders of Jesus' time were a militaristic lot. Many were expecting a military-type Messiah who would defeat the Romans and establish a political kingdom under the command of the likes of King David. They anticipated a warrior-king. Jesus knew that the Jewish leaders intended to come and make him king by force (John 6:15), but He wanted nothing to do with their war. Instead, Jesus engaged in a spiritual battle; opposed to a religion espoused by the Pharisees and scribes based on false doctrine, hypocrisy and self-righteous rules. Jesus proclaimed a Gospel of forgiveness and offered a vision of eternal life to everyone who believed in Him. In response, the religious leaders accused Jesus of being a blasphemer, and even admonished Him of driving out demons by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons. Jesus warned His disciples that the world would hate them because of Him (Matthew 10: 22). Going forward, Jesus knew that His Church would be engaged in spiritual warfare.

There are three places in Sacred Scripture that illuminate the metaphor of spiritual battle worth examining. In Matthew 16: 18, Jesus says: “*...I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.*” How are we to understand this image? Many would imagine the Church being

in a defensive posture. Now, consider the opposite metaphor – that of the Church being on the offensive! In Jesus' time gates were structures that were designed to protect a city. Jesus is using imagery of the devil and his minions being hunkered down, hiding behind the gates in a defensive mode. Who is attacking them? The Church of Jesus Christ! His disciples – indeed His Church is in this fight!

The second text can be found in 2 Corinthians 10: 3-5. The Apostle Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are engaged in a spiritual battle: “*for the weapons of our battle are ... enormously powerful, capable of destroying fortresses. We destroy arguments and every pretension raising itself against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive in obedience to Christ.*” Remember, Paul's battle is one involving attitudes and ideas. Sacred Catholic Tradition teaches us that when Christ comes at the end of time, evil will ultimately be destroyed.

Until His second coming, the disciples of Jesus' Church have been called to fight the good fight. The Church is reassured that one day it will be victorious over evil in this world.

So how can we confront a culture that is becoming more and more intolerant of Christians? Daily we hear or watch the news reports of Christians being persecuted around the world. The Apostle Paul challenged the Church to stand for the truth, while tearing down the web of deceitfulness and lies that non-believers hide behind. Scripture reminds us that Christianity has always been radically different from the secular world. The Church will only distinguish itself by embracing the Beatitudes - gentleness, meekness and even loving our enemies! The Gospel calls us to be bold and courageous, while at the same time kind and gracious. We are not called upon to back down, give up or cower in silence. We must not resort to retaliatory action, gossip or slanderous speech. As disciples of Christ we have the means to engage in this spiritual battle. With the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the tools at our disposal are more powerful than bullets or terrorist bombs - we have **grace** weapons! The Gospel of Christ is the Word of God that can change hearts and lives!

The third passage that provides an image of the disciples of Christ who are engaged in spiritual battle can be found in Ephesians 6: 10-17. This image provides a portrait of the Christian soldier. The Apostle Paul's Christian disciple is not dressed up in a business suit or even casual dress. As disciples of Christ, Sacred Scripture calls each of us to put on the armor of God, the belt of truth, the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit.

We have been commissioned to take the Gospel to the world - through **our example!** When others see our witness, they will say: “*You are different. What makes you different? I want some of that!*” The Apostle Peter would say that when others come to you, attracted by your life and example, you give them a reason of the hope within (1 Peter 3:15). Today, **we**

We are called to be reconcilers in a divided world. We must remember we are in a life's battle against sin and the evil one.

are the Church – we are called to be the disciples of Christ. What a privilege to engage in this spiritual battle in a secular society that seems to hate God. We are called to be reconcilers in a divided world. We must remember we are in a life’s battle against sin and the evil one. May God protect us with His grace and help us to be committed to fight the good fight! We have a Savior who was victorious on the cross. We have a Savior who conquered the grave. Remember, the battle has really already been won! God wants us to overcome the enemy’s darkness with the light of the Gospel, carrying the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith - all the while looking to that day when

we will stand in glory with Jesus, our Conquering King. Amen!! ✚

Ted Russell is a member of the Parish Pastoral Council. He has faithfully served the St. Stephen community in many capacities, for over 20 years.



Prayer for Lent

I want to be completely transformed into Your mercy and to be Your living reflection, O Lord. May the greatest of all divine attributes, that of Your unfathomable mercy, pass through my heart and soul to my neighbor.

Help me, O Lord, that my eyes may be merciful, so that I may never suspect or judge from appearances, but look for what is beautiful in my neighbors' souls and come to their rescue.

Help me, that my ears may be merciful, so that I may give heed to my neighbors' needs and not be indifferent to their pains and moanings.

Help me, O Lord, that my tongue may be merciful, so that I should never speak negatively of my neighbor, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all.

Help me, O Lord, that my hands may be merciful and filled with good deeds, so that I may do only good to my neighbors and take upon myself the more difficult and toilsome tasks.

Help me, that my feet may be merciful, so that I may hurry to assist my neighbor, overcoming my own fatigue and weariness. My true rest is in the service of my neighbor.

Help me, O Lord, that my heart may be merciful so that I myself may feel all the sufferings of my neighbor. I will refuse my heart to no one. I will be sincere even with those who, I know, will abuse my kindness. And I will lock myself up in the most merciful Heart of Jesus. I will bear my own suffering in silence. May Your mercy, O Lord, rest upon me.

You yourself command me to exercise the three degrees of mercy. The first: the act of mercy, of whatever kind. The second: the

word of mercy – if I cannot carry out a work of mercy, I will assist by my words. The third: prayer – if I cannot show mercy by deeds or words, I can always do so by prayer. My prayer reaches out even there where I cannot reach out physically.

O my Jesus, transform me into Yourself, for you can do all things.

(From the Diary of St. Faustina, paragraph 163; © Marians of the Immaculate Conception, used with permission)



Saint Sidebar

By Jeanne Glogowski

The Humor and Loves of St. John Paul the Great. Born Karol J. Wojtyla on May 18, 1920 in Wadowice, Poland just 50 km outside Krakow, Pope John Paul II has quickly become a favorite saint all over the world. Ordained a priest on November 1, 1946 after surviving the terrors of the Nazis in his homeland, he was elected Pope in October of 1978 following John Paul I's short papacy.

"*Saint Now*" was the call heard from the crowds outside his window as he lay dying in 2005. He was canonized on April 27, 2014, only 9 years after his death; the process occurring three times faster than the previous fastest canonization of a saint—27 years! His feast day is celebrated on October 22 and he is the patron saint of World Youth Day.

There are hundreds of stories about the humor and playfulness of John Paul. He practiced poverty to the point that he might show up at Mass without shoes as he had given them away to the poor on his way to the church. Then he had to borrow shoes from the sacristan to celebrate Mass. His housekeeper learned that to get him to wear 'new' clothes she had to dirty them, wash them, and repeat multiple times to make them look worn so he wouldn't give them away as soon as he got them. He wore his undershirts until they looked like rags and would just say "*mend them*" rather than allow new ones to be purchased for him.

When John Paul's friends visited him at the Vatican, as they would leave he would dress in a black hoodie and sit in the back seat of the car reading a newspaper so that the Vatican guards never realized he was escaping the grounds!

At age 64 he still loved to go skiing in the Italian Alps. He only had to stop once he had his hip surgery. While still a cardinal, he was once asked if it wasn't unbecoming to be skiing as a cardinal. His quick retort was "*it's only unbecoming for a cardinal to ski badly.*"

John Paul was the most travelled Pope in history covering over 775,000 miles in 104 trips to 129 countries. A joke that his staff was fond of is "*God is in all places, but the Pope has already been there!*"

The five loves of John Paul are documented in the book and audio CD entitled "*Saint John Paul the Great*" by motivational speaker Jason Evert. His first love, as many know, has to be young people. As Pope, when he came to Denver to visit the youth, a half million people attended making it the largest gathering ever in the entire state!

During his priestly years under Russian occupation, the teens called him 'uncle' when he went camping with them to

help hide his identity as the Russians spied on him for 20 years, even tapping his phones. They would sing together, and 'uncle' would read C.S. Lewis to them around the campfire. In an interview, John Paul said his two responsibilities to young people were "*canoeing and skiing!*"

His second love was married couples; thus his writing of "*The Theology of the Body*" stresses the beauty of the body. He said we have a "*call to love the body as God loves us.*" He is quoted as saying "*it is necessary to understand the soul of a woman*" and there is "*nothing wrong with sexuality, it's the abuse of sexuality that is troublesome.*" John Paul even had the loincloths removed from many statues in the Vatican when he became Pope as they had been covered up during Michelangelo's time.

His third love was the Eucharist as is famously known. His staff would have to detour around Catholic churches when he visited other countries because his tight schedule of events would be disrupted if he saw a church since he insisted on stopping to spend time with Jesus at each and every one.

His fourth love was mothers. He lost his mother when he was only eight years old so he understood their great value, saying "*the future of the world is with the mothers, we need you the most.*" He stayed close to Mary his entire life and was rarely seen without a rosary in his hand. One of his prelates stated, "*She is the only one he listens to around here!*"

John Paul taught us, "*To pray a Hail Mary is giving your mother a rose, to pray a rosary is giving your mother a bouquet, total consecration is giving her entirely of yourself.*"

His fifth love was the Cross. All those who suffered, he loved most. He would greet every handicapped person sitting in the front at his audiences so his staff learned to never seat more than 30 people there so as not to delay Mass. He visited many leper colonies saying, "*in their weakness, they had power.*"

'*Offer it up*' is something Catholics always hear as they grow up. It comes from the writings of St Paul. John Paul said we are "*called to love with a special intensity when you suffer.*" During his travels, his very last trip was to Lourdes where he told the suffering, "*I'm praying for all those who trust in your prayers.*" ✚

Jeanne is an adult Religious Education instructor, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, and involved in Bible study, Divine Mercy, and several other ministries. She loves to read and practice tai chi.



Gift of the Sacraments

By Meredith Gosda

When I was 23, I went on a Catholic pilgrimage to Spain and walked the *El Camino* (The Way) to Santiago where the bones of St. James are kept at the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral. The route is about 300 miles, and I walked about 150 of them. The days were long, and it was not an easy route. Most of the time my feet were blistered, I smelled pretty bad, and was constantly hungry. On my journey, walking about 20 miles per day, I realized there were three things that I desired most; A warm shower, a hot meal, and a place to sleep.

Our life here on earth can be filled with hardship and struggle, which so often reminds me of the *El Camino*. We need food for the journey, we desire to be clean and have order, and we need rest. Similarly in the spiritual life, we need food for the journey and we need rest; a kind of rest that we cannot find in iPhones, vacations, or success. Jesus says, *"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"* Matthew 11:28-30.

It is through the sacraments that God gives us that rest we seek. We so often look for the answers to our hearts desires in things that will not satisfy. But Christ satisfies! He gives us the sacraments for spiritual nourishment and rest. In the Eucharist, he sustains us. We come broken, hungry, and weary, and then each Sunday we are filled and fed by Christ Himself! Before Baptism we were stained by sin, but through the washing of the water we were made clean, marked for God's purpose. In Confirmation, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit and sent out as apostles. God shows us His love for us through the sacraments, because in giving them to us He is providing strength, order, and food for the journey.

God chooses to work in our lives in a way that we understand. God *chose* to make the sacraments visible. Their physicality is a visible sign that a spiritual reality is taking place: In baptism, there is water; in the Eucharist, bread; in confirmation, laying on of hands. God uses ordinary, material means to communicate His love and grace to us because we are not only spiritual beings but physical beings that move, talk, eat, and walk. God could have chosen to save us in a variety of different ways. But he chose the way most *fitting*. The way in which God enacts salvation is through Christ, His Church, and His sacraments.

As Catholics we are blessed to have Christ's presence here with us on earth. His promise that he "will be with us always" is seen in the reality of the sacraments. If you are asking the question, *"am I being spiritually fed in the Catholic Church?"*

The answer is "yes!" Come to Christ and meet Him in the sacraments. So often the Catholic Church is misunderstood, especially when it comes to the role of the priests. Some people see the sacraments as "works," or as a way of earning salvation. It is really quite the opposite. There is a phrase, *ex opere operato* which means "out of the work having been worked." Meaning, we have faith that it is Christ who is the one administering the grace through the sacraments; we have faith that Christ shows up in the sacraments simply through the "work" being done (prayers being said, action being performed, etc.). We do not rely on the goodness of the priest, or the perfection of the deacons, or the beautiful sanctuary of the Church for the grace of the sacrament to prevail. We rely fully on God's goodness and grace in the sacraments.

There is a line in one of my favorite children's books The Chronicles of Narnia, where the children call on the lion, Aslan for help. However, when Aslan, the Christ-like figure, arrives and saves them he replies, *"You would not have called to me unless I had been calling to you,"*

This is prevenient grace. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says we experience faith in the Eucharist first by prevenient grace (CCC 2670). Any movement we make towards God is a result of God already calling out to us. He desires to draw us to Himself, and He does this through the sacraments. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us faith, and it is by our faith that we receive the graces that flow out of our faith in Christ. Thus, the Eucharist is the ultimate gift to the

Church. We must not look away from the Church when we become dry or lethargic in our faith. We must turn toward the gifts and treasures God gives to us in His Church through the sacraments! For in Christ we will find the rest we seek.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" Matthew 11:28. ✠

Meredith Gosda will be graduating from Notre Dame this summer. She is a lover of coffee, good arguments, and all things Catholic. Hoping to be the patron saint of dance parties and good adventures!



"You would not have called to me unless I had been calling to you," said the lion." – C.S. Lewis, The Chronicles of Narnia

From Cradle to Church

By Heike House

I am a “Cradle Catholic.” Born and baptized in Hamburg, Germany, we immigrated to America when I was just over a year old (yes, I do still understand German, though my speaking is not what it once was). I began my education in a Catholic school in Chicago, and we went to church every Sunday. By the time I was in second grade, we were living in the suburbs where I made my First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

I remember always wearing a veil or handkerchief on my head for Mass, and it brings back fond memories when I occasionally catch a glimpse of a young girl or an elderly woman, at Mass with her head covered. I also remember the Communion rail where I would kneel to receive the Host on my tongue, never in my hand. And it seemed that the church was always filled with the warm scent of burning incense and many candles. I guess I’m telling my age, but that’s okay. I’m proud to be a senior!

It was not long after my First Communion that my father had a falling out with the church and we no longer attended Mass. Naturally, as I grew up, I too fell away from church. It wasn’t until I met my husband, 25 years later, that things changed again. Mike (a.k.a. Robert, Bob, Rob, but that’s another story) was raised in a strict Catholic family, in Ohio. When he grew up and moved out on his own, he also fell away from the Church.

Life happened and we bought a house. Our house was a mere three blocks in either direction from two Catholic churches, so one Sunday, we decided to venture into St. Joseph’s. I was taken aback by all the changes that had taken place since being away from church for so long. Oh the pews where still there, but where was the railing? The priest was on the wrong side of the Altar! I could actually see and understand what the priest was doing and saying; it was not in Latin! And our prayers were not the way I remembered them either. Why were the people accepting Communion into their hands? It was a lot to take in, and it took me awhile to warm up to all the changes.

“St. Joe’s” wasn’t a very big church, but we felt comfortable there so we began to attend more regularly. Did I mention that Mike came from an extremely musical family. Eventually, he joined the choir (four squeaky old ladies, one barely audible man and a pianist; they really needed a strong male voice!).

Because I did remember my upbringing, I did not take part in Communion. It had been too many years since my last

confession (reconciliation). As much as I really longed to take Communion, I would not go to confession, because I no longer trusted in that Sacrament. Not until we moved to Florida and St. Stephen Church when my yearning became overwhelming, did I finally attend reconciliation. It was glorious to fully participate in the Mass again; to take Communion with the Lord. I felt new! I felt whole!

I wonder if there are others who may have a similar story?

My friend, Marci recently reminded me, “Every time you step out the door it’s an opportunity to reach out to others. Do you put on your disciple hat when you walk out the door?”

For me, the answer is “maybe.” Oh, I’d like to think of myself as a good disciple, most of the time, but I know I need to put forth a more conscious effort. I smile at the passing stranger during my day, I try to be helpful to my friends and neighbors, and occasionally, I will even invite someone new to join us for Mass. This, however, does not make me a good disciple.



What is a disciple anyway?

DISCIPLE: Those who accepted Jesus’ message to follow him are called his disciples. Jesus associated his disciples with his own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to the disciples and gave them a share in his mission, his joy, and his sufferings. - [The Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)

Looks like I need to try harder. Who will join me? ☩

Heike House is currently the managing editor of the *Quarterly Blessings* magazine, and enjoys singing in the Adult Choir.

We Are Called

By RJ Milbrandt

Brothers and sisters, it is a time of great trouble for us. A time of unrest for our religion. A time when we no longer feel safe in our own world. In 2017 alone, as many as 141 Christians were persecuted in the Middle East alone, with Pakistan holding the record last year, with killing 76 Christians in one year. Over 634 churches were attacked in the Middle East. The devil is trying to destroy the church of the Lord. On October 13th, 1884, Pope Leo the XIII was performing Mass when he turned pale and collapsed. Those by his side rushed to help him, and the pope saw the devil in front of God, saying “Give me a century, and I will destroy your imperishable Church.”

This is problematic. However, now is not a time for a call-to-arms, rather, it is a time for us to strengthen our faith-together, with the persecuted ones in our prayers. Luke 21:12-13 “Before all this happens, however, they will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony.”

Let this passage fuel us, for throughout all of our years, we will be tried. Whether we live or die, we will join Christ Jesus in eternal life. These people, who lay their lives down for Christ, will join him, for it says in the book of Revelation 12:11 “They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; love for life did not deter them from death.” We shall be with the fallen in heaven once more, for “Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” Matthew 5:10.

During this Lenten Season, another pressing matter comes to mind: discipleship. We have a problem on our hands that must be resolved. The Catholic population has doubled in people coming into the Roman Catholic Church, but there are not enough priests out in the world to take care of all the churches. We need more priests. In 1970, there were 419,728 priests on a global scale. However, in 2012, there were 414,313 priests. This priestly population has neither increased nor decreased since, remaining at a steady pace. However, as I mentioned before, the population of Roman Catholics has doubled since 1970. So the question must arise: have you thought about discipleship? And it does not just involve men. Young ladies and women, have you too thought about discipleship? For you can become nuns or religious sisters in Christ. Have we thought of becoming Franciscans? How about deacons? We grow in Christ on a day-to-day basis, but eventually, we will reach a point where we can no longer grow by just going to Mass every day. There will come a point when God will call us, and when He does, will we be willing to listen to His plan for us? Hebrews 3:15 “...Oh, that today

you would hear his voice: ‘Harden not your hearts as at the rebellion.’”

I am a devout Roman Catholic, deeply religious. And like some of the deeply religious, I have heard the Lord’s voice, calling me to vocations. I asked the Lord and the almighty God, one day, “What is it that you want me to do?” And I got an answer: vocation. When I heard it, I had already had plans in store for my life. I was going to become an animal forensic scientist, get medical degrees, and help animals who are in need, living or deceased. However, once the Lord has your ear, there is no going back. Once you have heard that call, once you have given yourself over to the Lord, you have to follow that path. I had these thoughts before in my life, but I was in elementary school at that time, and I pushed it into the back of my mind with science. But now, God was calling me back.



And I was in denial for a week. But Jesus was working on the path already, and much like what he said to Peter, He said to the doubts in my mind, Matthew 16:23-24 “He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.” Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wishes to come after

me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me”” and it gave me strength. The strength I needed to call up the office of vocations, take a trip to Saint John Vianney seminary, (It is a very enlightening experience.), and ultimately ask, is this me? I didn’t get to choose my answer. Instead, God chose it for me. Seeing how becoming an altar server brought me this close to God, and with God telling me to go into priesthood, I ultimately have no other choice but to serve. And that is what discipleship is: to serve. Not just God, but the rest of mankind as well. Deny yourself! We do every time we go to Mass, when we say the Lord’s Prayer. “Your will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven” is the same way of denying yourself. Give up your will, and hand it over to God. Pick up your cross! Jesus died for our sins, but we still get physical and mental pain. Use this pain to better serve God. As Jesus went through pain, share in it to become a child of God. Follow Jesus! We go to Mass. Great. Good start. But what else can we do? Start going to morning Mass, or join the Knights of Columbus or the Columbiettes. Become a Eucharistic minister, or, if you hear His voice, follow His footsteps and become a priest.

Let us continue this season with hope, prayers for the continuity of Christianity everywhere, for the discipleship of all Christians, and for peace to be obtained. Blessed be God forever. †

Movies For Lent

By Jeanne Glogowski

There are so many movies available for our families to watch. Here are some you may enjoy. Your Lenten Movie Watching Guide:

The Shack by Lionsgate

Summary:

The Shack is the story of one man's redemption after the loss of his daughter, Missy, during a family camping trip. Sometime after the tragedy, Mack discovers a mysterious envelope in his mailbox, though there are no tracks in the snow to reveal how the note got there. Mack is invited to "the shack" where Missy was killed. His visit there is to be life-changing as he will meet three people, the God of our Trinity. This begins Mack's fantastical spiritual journey in which the members of the Trinity will help him deal with his grief and weakened faith.

Review:

I have heard the book "The Shack" was life altering for many who read it, even believers who already felt they were good Christians. The movie closely follows the book and makes a powerful statement about our relationship with God. However, some Christian writers call it 'light heresy' in how it presents the three persons of the Trinity. Book or movie, this story is a good conversation starter around questions of forgiveness and faith, especially for those who question if God abandons us in times of tragedy. It is worth watching, but with an open mind as this will not be like the catechism of your youth.

Details:

Dove Rated 'Faith Friendly' for Ages 12+
MPAA Rating: PG-13
Run Time: 132 minutes Genre: Drama
Theatrical Release: March 2017 DVD release: May 2017

Let There Be Light by Atlas Distribution Co.

Summary:

Kevin Sorbo stars as Sol Harkens, a life-long atheist who is world-famous for debating Christians. Divorced from his believing wife after the death of their oldest son, he is a weak father to their two remaining sons. A car crash leaves him clinically dead for four minutes, but upon revival he reveals a heavenly message... "Let There Be Light." He looks for the meaning of this mysterious message while re-engaging with his family who share their forgiveness, love, and faith.

Review:

Opening scenes awaken us to the reality of the challenges facing Christians in today's America. An enlightening film, you will be moved to ask what more you can do as a Christian so that the world will 'know we are Christians by our love'. Definitely watch this one!

Details:

Dove Rated 'Family-Friendly' for Ages 12+
high in integrity & faith
MPAA Rating: PG-13
Run time: 100 minutes Genre: Drama
Theatrical Release: October 2017
(Ratings courtesy of Dove.org) †

PRISON MINISTRY

By James and Omaira Green

"I was... in prison and you visited me." "... 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:36, 40).

Those Scriptural words resonated so loudly and deeply to me and my wife, Omaira. We started our spiritual journey to minister to the men incarcerated at the Falkenburg Road Jail eight years ago. Initially, my wife and I were apprehensive and nervous about serving the inmates. After our first meeting with the inmates, all our inadequate feelings dissipated very quickly. We realized that these forgotten and lost souls were craving for the Sacred Word and Sacraments to nourish them spiritually; allowing them to walk more closely with Jesus! The rewards and gratification that we received as ministers cannot be measured, quantified or calculated in any way. Our primary role and responsibility, as ministers, is to proclaim the Sacred Word by reading Scripture and showing relevance of the



Sacred Words to their individual lives. The call or mission is to, hopefully, renew their minds and transform their lives, so that when they do leave and re-enter the world they will experience happy, fruitful and productive lives, gravitating to those values that are positive.

The inmates that attend our Catholic meetings are eager, sincere and genuine to receive the sacred word. The inmates volunteer their spare time in search of changing their lives through spiritual grounding.

Omaira and I have witnessed, so many times over the years, the transformation of the inmates', attitudes, behaviors and actions. Seeing the Holy Spirit descend upon the inmates and us, as ministers, is incredibly rewarding.

The Office of Prison Ministry provides the training. You can avail yourself to this training by calling: (727) 344-161 ext. 414 or email: prisonmn@dosp.org †

James and Omaira Green have been parishioners of St. Stephen Catholic Church for the past nine years. They moved to Florida from Massachusetts after retirement. James is a member of the Men's Club and they are both Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) serving the homebound and the prison ministry.

Just for Fun

Are you enjoying our “Just for Fun” page? Please let us know what else you might like to see here. We especially want to hear from our youth!

Do you have a special friendship with someone? We would love to share your stories right here! Send your stories and photos to: QB@ststephencatholic.org

It’s a digital world! Formed.org is a great resource to Study, Watch, Listen, and Read all things Catholic. There is something for every age group! Sit down with your children and watch a delightful short story about Thomas and [The Suitcase](#). It’s sure to start an interesting family conversation.

Plug in your ear buds and enjoy an Audio Book or Audio Drama complete with music and sound effects. [The Trials of St. Patrick](#) is an excellent one! If you prefer to read it yourself, there are more than a hundred books from which to choose; fiction, nonfiction and youth.

Make a big batch of popcorn and select from dozens of movies to enjoy for family night. There are selections in Spanish, as well!

All for free. Simply log on to formed.org and sign in with parish code: VMZPPF. Check it out!

Suited for Discipleship

Complete the crossword below

Across

2. Honesty
4. Soul
5. Teachings of Christ
7. Strip of leather worn at the waist
8. Coverings for the feet
9. Armor covering the chest
11. The Creator
12. Tranquility
14. Saber

Down

1. Strong belief in God
3. Hard protective hat
4. Redemption
6. Guard
10. A solemn request
12. Protective covering

Suited in Armor Solution

Across: 2. Truth, 4. Spirit, 5. Gospel, 7. Belt, 8. Shoes, 9. Breastplate, 11. God, 12. Peace, 14. Sword

Down: 1. Faith, 3. Helmet, 4. Salvation, 6. Shield, 10. Prayer, 12. Armor

Created with TheTeachersCorner.net [Crossword Puzzle Generator](#)

Also, be sure to download the St. Stephen app to your phone. With one touch on your phone you have access Mass times, daily readings and prayers, bulletins (both current and past), church staff, and so much more.

For iPhone users, text 555888, then type in “stephenf1”

For Android users, text 555888, then type in “stephenf2”

St. Stephen Catholic Church

10118 Saint Stephen Circle
Riverview, FL 33569

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QUARTERLY BLESSINGS

Our mission is met each quarter, when one person reading the *Quarterly Blessings*, who is not actively involved in the church, becomes inspired to participate in any one of the many wonderful spiritual and fellowship activities happening at St. Stephen.

Comments, suggestions and contributions for this publication are encouraged and always welcome. Please email us at QB@ststephencatholic.org. Any photos submitted to the *Quarterly Blessings* will gladly be returned upon request.

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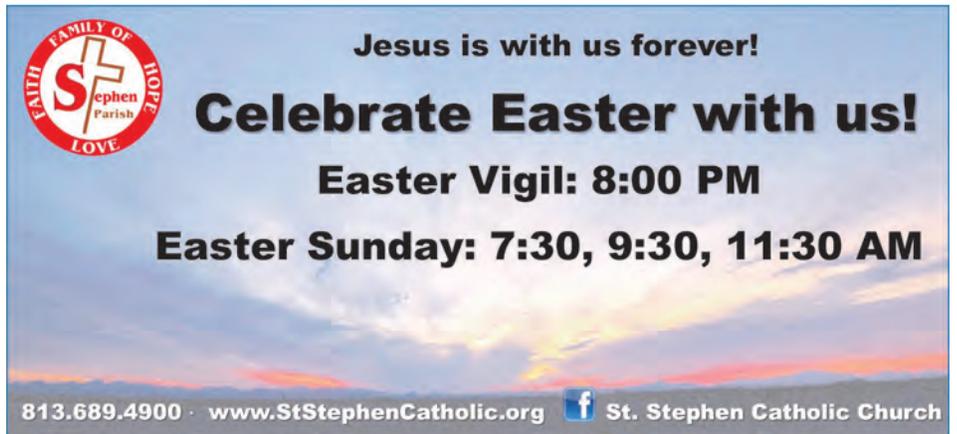
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Jesus is with us forever!

Celebrate Easter with us!

Easter Vigil: 8:00 PM

Easter Sunday: 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 AM

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Guests of the Quarter

The Johnson Family

Learn about them inside!

It takes many individuals within our parish to help make it flourish, though they often go without notice. Sometimes the individuals make up a whole family.

Do you know of any individuals or families who should be recognized? It is our hope that, by featuring the Guest(s) of the Quarter, we might all get to know one another better.

Who in our parish, would you like to see as future Guest of the Quarter? Submit your suggestion, along with your story and a photo to QB@ststephencatholic.org and remember to include your name, so we can give proper credit for your ideas!

