

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CATHOLIC PARISH



Serving the Hidden Christ *The Society of St. Vincent de Paul*

Throughout the Gospels, Christ makes it clear that an intrinsic part of discipleship is helping those in need. Just as Jesus spent much of his earthly ministry comforting the poor and healing the sick, we Catholics are each called to do our part to help our suffering neighbors. And this, explains current President Barbara Christoff, is what the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is all about – administering to the hidden Christ here on earth.

“Our purpose is to help those in need, doing the work of God here on earth,” Barbara says. “We get to go out there and present ourselves to those who are in real need as someone who truly cares for them.”

Relying entirely on donations from parishioners and parish ministries, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is able to offer immediate relief to individuals struggling within our parish boundaries. This help can take many forms, from paying off medical and utility bills, providing food, clothing, or shelter, to assisting with funeral expenses. Yet, beyond that, the Society works to care for the entire person by providing personalized care for struggling individuals and families.

“The thing that is really different about us is that we actually go in for one-on-one visits,” Barbara says. “We don’t just pay a bill. We come there to listen to them, to pray with them, and then to help them. People are so grateful for this. A lot of times, these people have already contacted other places and they are so thankful for that listening voice. It helps them know that we are truly concerned and to make them feel Christ’s love for them.”

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Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul during one of their monthly meetings.

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ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Being a Good *Christmas Steward*

The Christmas season is fast approaching. We have already made our gift lists, and perhaps even checked them twice. First on the list is family, followed by friends, our children's teachers and coaches, and maybe even the mailman. Christmas inspires us to give our family and friends gifts of love and appreciation, in gratitude towards all they do for us during the year. The very idea of holiday gift giving – a display of love and gratefulness to those who have touched our lives – is parallel to the concept of stewardship. When we give to God, we are effectively saying “thanks” for all He has done for us.

Think of all God has done for you this year. How have His loving arms embraced you? Maybe He has answered a special prayer intention. Maybe He has created a job opportunity for an unemployed loved one. He may have helped safely bring a new baby into the family, or instilled peace during a particularly difficult time. God's blessings are countless, and the abundant gifts He bestows upon us are given freely out of incomprehensible love – despite our unworthiness.

Think of the ways you respond to God's bountiful blessings. How do you choose to show Him your thankfulness? As we prepare for the coming of Christ during Advent, will we

remember to add Jesus' name to our list? Uncle John wants a new drill, and Grandpa definitely needs a new cardigan – but what does Jesus want? It is His birthday we are celebrating, after all.

The very first name on the list – above our spouse, children, relatives, and friends – should be God's name. As disciples of Christ, we are called to give God our “first fruits,” not our leftovers. We should joyfully place God first on our gift-giving lists, not out of guilt or as an afterthought, but out of love and appreciation.

Stewardship allows us to tangibly give a Christmas gift to God through our time, talent, and treasure. We give God gifts of time through prayer, such as spending time before the Blessed Sacrament or praying the Rosary. We can give our talents to God by way of simple charitable actions, such as bringing a meal to a hard-pressed neighbor, or watching a young mother's children so that she is able to prepare for her own family's Christmas celebration. And as for treasure, we can give God a portion of our income this Christmas by dropping an extra dollar in the collection basket. Whatever choices you make this season, make the decision to be a good Christmas steward.

As we prepare for the coming of Christ during Advent, will we remember to add Jesus' name to our list? Uncle John wants a new drill, and Grandpa definitely needs a new cardigan – but what does Jesus want? It is His birthday we are celebrating, after all.



A Letter From Our Pastor

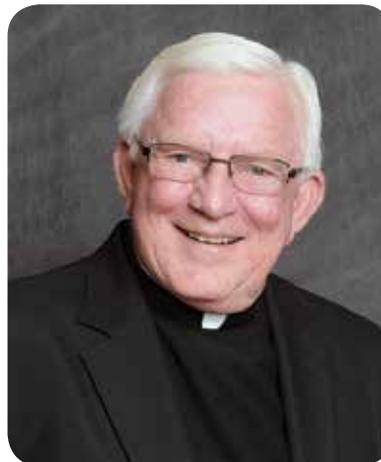
Reflections at the End of the Year

Dear Parishioners,

It seems as if we just finished Lent and Easter, and here we are at Advent and Christmas. To say this is a busy month for many is an understatement. Although December is a month of love, it can also be a difficult month for some. For those with families, it may be a month of travel as people rush to be united with loved ones, sometimes after a long period of separation.

There is no shortage of reminders as to what time of year this is. However, for us as Catholics, we may need to refocus to see where we are in our faith lives. Were you aware that for us, December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception? In that regard, we celebrate a Holy Day of Obligation on Friday, Dec. 8. Advent begins on Dec. 3, and you may notice that we begin to wear purple as a sign of Advent. That color changes to white or gold beginning at Christmas.

Of course, this is also the last month of the regular calendar year, which may add additional tasks to our own schedules as we finalize things for the end of the year. However, there are many opportunities for us during this month to share, to pray and to celebrate in a Christian way, and I would encourage you to make an effort to be part of these. Right here in our parish, much is happening along those lines, and a careful reading of the bulletin



will alert you to the “when, where and what” of these upcoming opportunities.

As I indicated earlier, this can also be a difficult time for some. In the midst of our own celebrations and joy, we need to be aware of that reality and of those living with it. This is a time to reach out, and it is a time to show love.

This December, let our minds be focused on Christ, Who will be born for us at Christmas, and for Whose coming we must always be prepared throughout the year. This is a time to thank God and

to pray. It is a time to reach out to love and live peacefully with one another. We need to remember that life continues after December, in spite of everything we feel we need to get done.

My prayers and blessings go out to each of you and your families. May God continue to watch over you. May the year 2017 end well for all of us!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Michael Holmberg".

Rev. J. Michael Holmberg
Pastor

Treadway Family Strives for Actions

It's often a joke among parents, "Do as I say, and not as I do." It can be easy to forget how important our example is, especially when we have little ones watching our every move. But for parishioners Christie and Jacob Treadway, it's important to them that their actions speak even more loudly than their words, especially when it comes to service and living their faith.

"We want to lead by example," Christie says. "To me, I think it's really important to our children to see mom and dad participating."

The Treadways have been parishioners at St. Vincent de Paul for the past six years. Originally hailing from Dallas, Jacob grew up Catholic. Christie was raised Methodist, in Colleyville, and converted to the Catholic faith after she and Jacob got married.

"I fell in love with the Catholic faith," Christie says. "It was what I wanted to do."

The four Treadway children have been raised Catholic, and after moving into the area and discovering St. Vincent de Paul Parish, it didn't take long for the family to realize it was the community they'd been looking for.

"The parish itself is very warm and welcoming," Christie says. "We really liked it and decided we'd stay here and call this one 'home.'"

Christie and Jacob quickly found ways to become involved, knowing their example would shape their children's experience. They started by signing up for Spirit of Hope, a project that gives them the opportunity to sponsor a local child during the holidays.

"We love that foundation, it's so wonderful," Christie says. "You get to see the joy on the child's face. It's a good way to give back to our community and see what good can be done, in giving to our own community."

"It's really good for our children to see what is going on," she adds. "It gets them thinking, 'How can we change things and make things better?'"

The family also enjoys being involved with the Fish Fry and the Ulster Project, a ministry that brings Irish students to the U.S., giving them a chance to see Catholic and Protestant unity in action. And Christie serves as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, while their two youngest are altar servers.



to Speak Even Louder Than Words

“We try to put as much out there as we can, and say, “These are things that are very important,”” says Christie, “We try to keep them firmly grounded.”

From service and Mass involvement to religious education, praying, and going to Confession as a family, the Treadways find that the more they do together, the easier it is to stay close to God.

“Keeping everybody together gives everybody accountability,” Christie says, “When the kids are involved, it makes a big difference.”

Jacob and Christie hope that their children – Zachary, 20; Nicholas, 16; Benjamin, 13; and Kaitlyn, 11 – will take these lessons to heart and integrate their faith into their own lives and decisions. For Christie, there are few things more rewarding than knowing that her high school students encourage their friends to attend Sunday Mass and stand up for their faith on the football field.

And just as Christie and Jacob seek to model the faith for their children, they also hope to engage in the parish

community, so their children are surrounded by examples of other people who choose to prioritize the faith.

“It takes a village, and I’m very firm on that,” Christie says. “My community is my neighbors and my church, and it takes all of us working together.”

Christie encourages other families to find ways to become active and involved, building and participating in the parish community, remembering that kids learn from how you lead.

“Just go do anything that gets you involved,” she suggests. “Have fun, take your kids to the functions. This is our community.”

“We want to lead by example. To me, I think it’s really important to our children to see mom and dad participating.” – Christie Treadway

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

continued from front cover

To begin this process, individuals in need typically begin by contacting the parish office and leave a voicemail on the Society’s extension. Once this message is received, ministry volunteers will contact the person, performing an initial screening. Finally, two ministry members will travel to the person’s home in order to meet with them and personally assess the level of need.

Barbara initially got involved in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul eight years ago. Having recently become “empty nesters,” she and her husband were looking for a new way to become involved in the parish that would allow them to use their gifts for others. She had no idea, however, the full impact that this ministry would have on

her own life as she literally became the hands and feet of Christ to others.

“This ministry has helped me and my husband appreciate what we have so much more,” Barbara says. “After a while, you think you’ve heard everything, but then you will go to the next visit and their story even tops the one before. It’s truly opened my eyes because even though we live in a very nice area here in Arlington, there are still a lot of people who have experienced loss of income due to layoffs, or the sudden death of a family member, or unexpected medical bills. Just in our little parish boundary, we made about 170 different visits this year as far as helping people. So there is a great need, even though we tend to think that everybody is okay.”

Parishioners can support this ministry by becoming either active or associate members, or through their financial support. For more information about the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, please contact the parish office at 817-478-8206 or see the weekly bulletin for ministry updates.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception

December 8

When it comes to Catholic trivia, there is one simple question that often evokes an incorrect response: “What is the Immaculate Conception?”

More often than not, this term is believed to designate Christ’s conception within Mary, through the power of the Holy Spirit. A good guess, no doubt. But it is 100 percent incorrect!

The term “Immaculate Conception” describes the state of Mary’s soul within the womb of her mother, St. Anne. It has nothing to do with a special type of generative conception by her parents – Mary’s body was formed in the usual manner by her mother and father.

Instead, the term “Immaculate Conception” describes how Mary was preserved from the stain of original sin from the first moment of her existence.

Every person since Adam and Eve has been born with the stain of original sin, which can be washed away in the cleansing waters of Baptism. Yet, this fallen state never touched the soul of Mary, the new Eve. She was conceived with original sanctity and innocence, escaping all faults, depraved emotions and passions, and remained sinless. She was not exempt from the temporal penalties of Adam, however — including sorrow, physical illness and death.

The belief in Mary’s Immaculate Conception has been held by the Church throughout history, though only officially declared a dogma in 1854 by Pope Pius IX. Highly devoted to the Blessed Virgin, Pius IX hoped the official definition would draw emphasis to the already existing belief, thereby inspiring deeper devotion to Mary. This dogma finds its roots in both Scripture and Tradition, and remains consistent with reason and the teachings of our early Church fathers.

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated every year on Dec. 8 and is one of the few declared Holy Days of Obligation on the Church calendar. All Catholics are obligated to attend Mass on this day.

Why not make this liturgical feast a special day of devotion? Bring a rose to place before an image of the Blessed Virgin in the church sanctuary, or arrange a little altar at home for your children to decorate. Recite the Magnificat and discuss the Church’s teaching on the Immaculate Conception.

Once this beautiful feast is brought alive in our hearts and in our homes, we will never again mistakenly answer that “tricky” question: “What is the Immaculate Conception?”



The Magnificat

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for He has looked with favor on His lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is His Name.
He has mercy on those who fear Him
in every generation.
He has shown the strength of His arm,
He has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich He has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of His servant Israel
for He remembered His promise of mercy,
the promise He made to our fathers,
to Abraham and His children for ever.*



FAITH AND SCIENCE

Can They Mix?

There have long been scientists who claimed that their work was “incompatible” with faith in God. But as our world has become increasingly polarized, more and more people seem to believe that there must be a disconnect between faith and reason. For many scientists – and secular scholars in other fields, as well – religion and academics are deemed mutually exclusive. If something cannot be proven empirically, they posit, it is foolhardy to stake one’s life on it. And yet, this is exactly what we as Catholic Christians do – every time we say the word “amen,” in fact, we are declaring that we believe Church teachings to be an absolute truth.

So is all this to say that the Church really is “anti-science,” as some of its detractors claim? Certainly not! In fact, most people – Catholics and non-Catholics alike – would probably be very surprised to know just how many Catholic thinkers have played a major role in the development of modern scientific thought.

Most of us are familiar with some of the earliest scientific advances made by famous Catholic scholars like Copernicus, Galileo, Descartes, and Leonardo da Vinci. But fast-forward to the 19th century – when countless innovations in modern science began kicking into high gear – and the contributions made by Catholic scientists are astounding! For example, the Mercalli scale used to measure earthquakes was developed by an Italian Catholic volcanologist, Giuseppe Mercalli, at the turn of the last century. You may also remember some of the laws of Mendelian inheritance from your high school biology class – Augustinian friar and botanist Gregor Mendel first discovered these recessive and dominant “factors” (which would later come to be called genes) in the 1800s, becoming the founder of genetics.

Of course, these are just a few of the more widely known examples. Those who work in the specific fields of physics

and cosmology have several priests to thank for the incredible advances made in this area of study over the last century. Fr. Georges Lemaître was a Catholic priest living in Belgium during the first half of the 20th century. A professor of astronomy and physics at the Catholic University of Leuven, Fr. Lemaître was the first scientist to propose the Big Bang theory – which he referred to as the “primeval atom” or the “Cosmic Egg” – and the theory of the expansion of the universe. Fr. Lemaître’s brilliant and meticulous research won over even the most skeptical scientists in his field – reportedly, upon hearing Fr. Lemaître present his theories at a conference in California, Albert Einstein declared, “This is the most beautiful and satisfactory explanation of creation to which I have ever listened.”

For Fr. Lemaître, who served as president of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences from 1960 until his death in 1966, balancing the worlds of priesthood and cosmology research was not always easy. Sometimes, Catholic believers misunderstood his quest to discover the origin of the universe as a desire to put limits on God. On the other side, secular scientists questioned his ability to formulate theories of the universe objectively, suspecting that he was seeking to manipulate his scientific finds to fit them within Church teaching. In reality, Fr. Lemaître always advocated for a strict separation between science and faith, claiming that the Bible was not intended to be read as a science textbook and that “God could not be reduced to a scientific hypothesis.” For this Catholic scientist, although faith and science may have each answered separate questions, they were certainly not incompatible.

In contrast to Lemaître’s careful separation of questions of science and faith, another famous physicist priest takes the opposite approach. Fr. Michal Heller, professor of philosophy at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków, Poland, and member of the Vatican



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MASSES

Saturday Vigil: 5:30 p.m.

Sunday: 9 a.m., 10:45 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

Weekdays: (M/Th/Fr) 8:45 a.m. in the chapel
(Wed) 6:00 p.m. in the chapel

Holy Days: 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Tuesday Morning Prayer: 8:45 p.m. in the chapel

Confessions: Saturday: 4-5 p.m. in the chapel

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Observatory staff, seeks to bring together the fields of science, philosophy, and theology. In an interview with *The New York Times* upon his receipt of the acclaimed Templeton Prize for science and religion in 2008, Heller explained: “I always wanted to do the most important things, and what can be more important than science and religion? Science gives us knowledge, and religion gives us meaning. Both are prerequisites of the decent existence.” Fr. Heller, whose current research focuses on general relativity and quantum mechanics, strives to study the known elements of science within the context of a universe that has an (empirically) unknowable God as its creator.

In a similar way, yet another scientist priest of the past century successfully reconciled science and faith in his life’s work. Fr. Stanley Jaki (1924-2009) was a Hungarian Benedictine priest who held doctorates in theology and physics, and authored over 40 books in these fields – and in the history of science – during his lifetime. Fr. Jaki is perhaps best known for

his claim that modern science and cosmology were only made possible through the Christian understanding of creation that took root in medieval Europe. Fr. Jaki believed that faith and science must work together, and he warned against the tendency of modern society to seek omniscience through scientific study, thus letting science take the place of God.

Certainly, the list of Catholic scientists who have deservedly become renowned in their fields of study is longer than most people probably imagine. Still today, scientists like astronomer Fr. George Coyne, former director of the Vatican Observatory and current professor at Le Moyne College in New York, continue to make significant contributions to the study of modern science worldwide. Contrary to those who may try to claim that faith and science are incompatible, the Church has proven over the centuries that understanding the science behind how our world works absolutely can – and *should* – go hand in hand with the pursuit of fully knowing and serving our God.

Are you interested in learning about the Church’s teachings on the relationship between faith and reason? The papal encyclicals *Humani Generis* and *Fides et Ratio* provide in-depth explorations of this important topic.