

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CATHOLIC PARISH



St. Vincent de Paul's Greeters Offer Welcome as We Celebrate the Liturgy

Don McGrath recently visited with a young family who recounted their journey of relocating to the area and seeking a place of worship. They attended multiple churches before walking through the doors of St. Vincent de Paul and promptly feeling embraced by our community.

"We have so many families here at St. Vincent who are here because they were greeted and made to feel welcome," says Don, Coordinator of the Greeters. "For example, that young family is now registered here because of our friendly and outgoing greeters."

The Greeter Ministry consists of men, women and families who volunteer their time to welcome parishioners and newcomers alike to celebrate the liturgy together.

They exchange warm handshakes with everyone and open doors and assist the elderly.

"Our greeters certainly serve the community, as evident in the parish survey held in 2016," Don says. "The ministry scored highest in the liturgy area with scores of 60 percent excellent, 32 percent good, seven percent fair and one percent as needing improvement. We make a bigger impact than you might think!"

It was Don who first considered the impact greeters could have on creating a sense of hospitality at our parish. Don and Janice McGrath, Don's wife of 59 years, joined St. Vincent in 1976, when the parish's first Mass was held in the old Knights of Columbus warehouse on Arkansas Lane.

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St. Vincent de Paul's Don McGrath greets Harold Moore.

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Stewardship *Hannah, the Good Steward*

What should we do when our prayers are answered? Is there anything left to do after we have sincerely thanked God for His favors? If God were a human peer, we would probably try to reciprocate by granting Him a favor in return. But the truth is that God cannot be made greater by anything that we do for Him. Instead, God receives our thanks and tells us to “go and do likewise.” That is, He tells us to share with others the good that He has bestowed on us. And in doing so, we are really sharing God Himself. That is the definition of stewardship!

The Old Testament Book of Samuel contains one of the most poignant examples of stewardship in the entire Bible. The first chapter teaches us of an unhappy, barren woman named Hannah. Desperate in her barrenness, Hannah prays that God will give her a son, vowing that she will raise him to be a man of God.

Imagine Hannah’s elation when she was granted her prayer! When Samuel was born, her heart’s desire had come true! Imagine further the pang of motherly sorrow, as Hannah kept her promise to God by taking Samuel at a young age to be the servant of Eli, the high priest. The Book of Samuel tells us that once Samuel became Eli’s servant, Hannah saw her young son just once a year.

Indeed, Hannah knew that Samuel was truly a gift from God

– an answered prayer. Hannah’s response is that of the Good Steward – with an attitude of both gratitude and sacrifice, she gave up her son to honor God. One imagines that Hannah probably struggled with this sacrifice during those first years. She probably did not know what God had in store for her son. Yet, through her faithfulness, God used him as a gift to an entire nation. Samuel

would, in time, become one of the greatest prophets of Jewish history.

Sometimes it is difficult to understand the sacrifices we make in the name of stewardship, while the results may just be impossible to miss! However, He asks that we continue to be faithful in either case. God has undoubtedly bestowed gifts on all of us – at whatever the cost, we are to “go and do likewise.”



A Letter From Our Pastor

Resolve to Give Back to God in 2018

Dear Parishioners,

Another new year — 2018! There was a time in my life when this date (and others) seemed so far in the future. It is amazing how those dates start to pile up and stream by, isn't it? I have reached a point where measuring one's life by the years and dates is not as significant as many other things.

I recall reading somewhere, "The world around us asks, 'What does a person own?' But God asks, 'How does a person use what he or she has been given?'" This month of January is one filled with reminders of holiness — the official end of the Christmas season; the Epiphany of our Lord; the Baptism of the Lord; and the return to Ordinary Time, which, as we know, is not "ordinary" at all.

At Epiphany we hear, "Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts" (Matthew 2:11), a reference to the Magi and their visit to the Christ Child. The image of the Magi kneeling before the infant Jesus and opening their gifts for Him is one we should all try to follow. Each of us is called to open our gifts before Jesus and offer Him what He needs. I heard a suggestion once that if you have a problem with this thought, you should perhaps keep one of the Magi from your Christmas Nativity set and place it on your desk as a reminder.

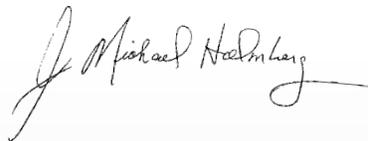
During the Baptism of the Lord, God makes it clear when He proclaims from the Heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). God has given us the greatest gift He could give. He gave His only Son. When we think about the enormity of that gift of Jesus sent to save us, in addition to all the other

blessings which God has entrusted to us, it is very humbling. God has given us so much. What do we give in return?

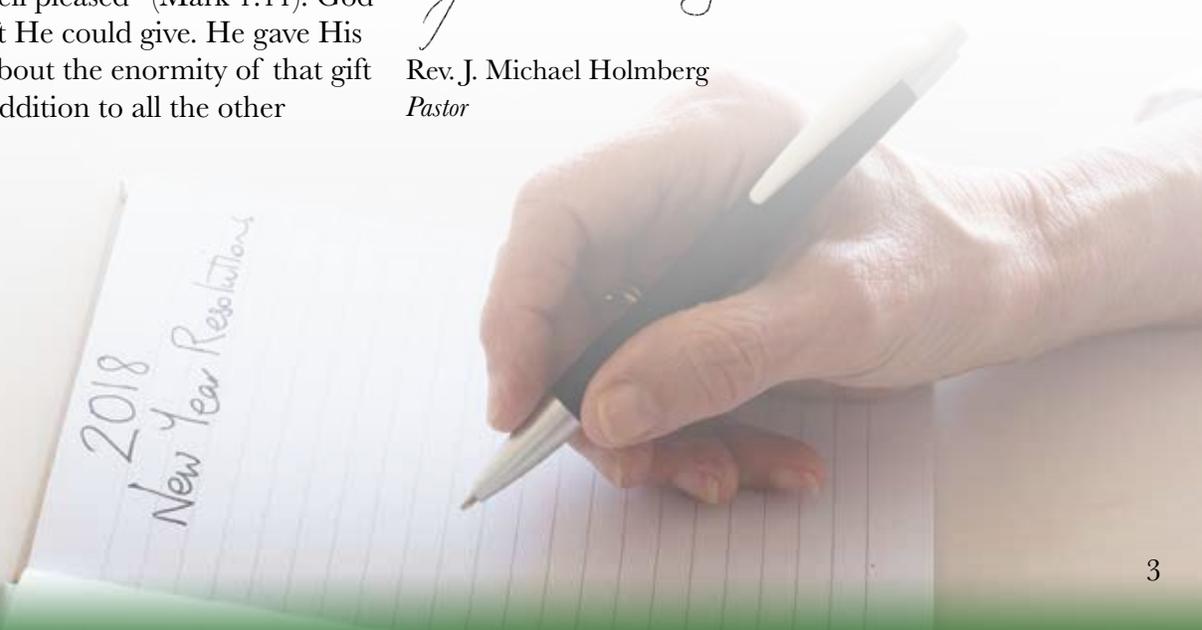
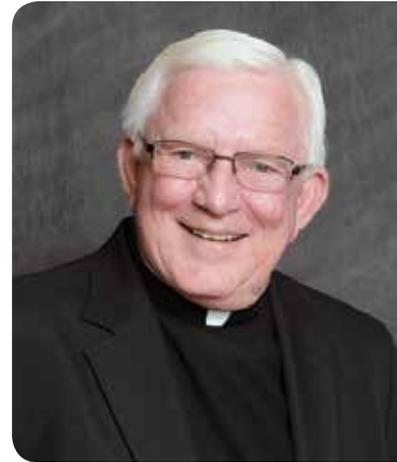
Making resolutions is common at this time of year. We will also hear this month about how Jesus called the first apostles. The Lord calls us as well to follow Him. Let us resolve to try to do that better — all of us. That does not mean we have to leave our work and our families behind, but we do need to put our service to Jesus. That should be our top resolution.

In *The Theology of the Hammer*, Habitat for Humanity co-founder Millard Fuller wrote, "The only truly safe investment one can make in life is what is given away." First and foremost, God wants us. That should be our real resolution — to give ourselves to the Lord. May we all do a better job of that in 2018. God bless you all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Rev. J. Michael Holmberg
Pastor



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Questions & Answers About Our

Commitment Weekend is January 27-28. Don't j

Once again, it's time for our Annual Stewardship Renewal. Every year, someone asks, as you may have asked yourself, "Didn't we just have a Stewardship Renewal? Aren't we sufficiently 'renewed' by now?" Yes, we had a Stewardship Renewal last year, and we're going to have one next year, too! This is an annual occurrence — part of the rhythm of parish life at St. Vincent de Paul. Just as the Church proposes a time of spiritual renewal each Lent, we believe in the importance of a yearly examination of commitment. Is the Lord asking you to give more time, talent, or treasure to our parish this year?

How do I use my Commitment Card?

Your Commitment Card allows you to make commitments to prayer, parish ministries, and offertory giving. It is designed to be used by the whole family.

Time Section: Except for the ill and homebound, everyone should be able to check "Come to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days." Try to check at least a few other items. Daily prayer should be a priority for every person trying to grow closer to God.

Talent Section: You can either sign up for new ministries or re-commit to your current ministries. Be sure to write your first name next to the ministry! This is especially important if the card is being used by more than one person.

Treasure Section: Clearly print how much money you plan to give each week or month to our parish. Try to take a step toward giving five percent of your income to St. Vincent de Paul.

My age or physical limitations prevent me from being active in the parish. Should I still turn in a Commitment Card?

Yes! The first section of the card — Stewardship of Time — is the most important because it allows you to make commitments to *prayer*. Even if you can't join a ministry or make it to Mass on Sunday, you can still pray for our parish. Your spiritual support has tremendous value in the eyes of God.

One time I turned in a card, but no one ever called me when I signed up for a ministry.

If this happened in the past, please forgive us! And don't give up on filling out your Commitment Card! We have a very good plan to call every person interested in joining a new ministry. If for some reason the ministry leader does not call you within four weeks of turning in your card, let the parish office know.

**HOSPITALITY:
WELCOMING
CHRIST**

St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Parish

My offering of Time, Talent & Treasure

First & Last Name (One card per family)

Street Address

City State ZIP

Telephone (Important)

Email

Our Annual Stewardship Renewal

Don't forget to bring your Commitment Card to Mass!

How much should I give?

Your gift is entirely dependent on how much God has given you. At St. Vincent de Paul, we ask that you give five percent to our parish, one percent to the diocese, and four percent to other charities. Why a percentage of income? First, because the tithe (10 percent) is a scriptural benchmark that the Church has honored for centuries (see Malachi 3:10). Secondly, we give a percentage of income because it is a common-sense standard by which everyone can equitably support the parish. Most of all, we give because we believe God comes first in everything, even finances.

What if I can't fulfill my financial pledge?

While our pledge is not a "contract," we should all make a good-faith effort to fulfill it. Of course, if your financial circumstances change — if you lose your job, for instance — then the amount of money you give the Church will change, too. Likewise if you get a raise or bonus. The biggest reason many people don't fulfill their pledge is that they attend Mass at another parish when they go on vacation, attend a wedding, etc. If you're out of town, just make up for the missed Sunday when you write

your next check to the parish. Using your envelopes is a good way to see which Sundays you missed.

I don't even go to Mass very frequently. Why turn in a Commitment Card?

Because this is your chance to turn over a new leaf! Why not make a commitment to God to come to Mass every Sunday, and then write down that commitment? Even if that's the only commitment you make, take a step forward. Jesus Himself is waiting for you!

What happens if I don't return my Commitment Card?

We will mail you a reminder letter that includes an extra Commitment Card (in case you misplaced yours). Make every effort you can to participate. Our Stewardship Renewal is a very important annual event in the life of our parish. You and your family are part of what makes St. Vincent de Paul a great community! Most importantly, your commitments are actually promises to Christ Himself. All of us are called to give back to God a portion of what He has given us.

**HOSPITALITY:
WELCOMING CHRIST**
St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Parish

STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL



STEWARDSHIP OF TALENT *Serving In Ministry*

Following the example Christ set for us, we strive to offer ourselves in service to others. Every day, we have the choice to serve or to sit back, to get involved or be self-involved. This year, is God calling you to do more for others through service? As the pages of this book attest, there are dozens of opportunities throughout the year to serve others, educate our children, reach out to the needy, and much more. Your participation is welcome. Let's work together to build a welcoming community as we serve God and one another.

FAITH FORMATION

Our children learn about God and prepare for the sacraments, thanks to the hard work of Faith Formation Catechists. Will you use your gifts to help our young people grow in their relationship with Christ?

PARISH LIFE

Our parish has a lot of ministries and means by which you can serve others, from ushering to cooking to community outreach. What means of service are you most attracted to? Where is your conscience stirring, inviting you to get involved in our parish ministries to serve God and His people?

STEWARDSHIP OF TREASURE *Generous Financial Support*

Christian discipleship requires that we put Christ first in every aspect of our lives, including our finances. Are you grateful to God that you are employed? Do you recognize the blessings the Lord has bestowed on you financially? How will you commit to giving back to the Lord a portion of your income? As you discern the amount of your gift, remember that God calls us to give from our "first fruits," not from our leftovers. Ask for the grace to put God first in your finances.

At St. Vincent de Paul, we give to God according to the scriptural "tithe", which literally means 10% of one's harvest or income. Each family is encouraged to break up the tithe as follows:

5 % to St. Vincent de Paul
1% to the diocese
4% to other charitable causes

If you're unable to give the full biblical tithe right now, assess what percentage you can give, and then move up by 1% or 2% increments each year until you can reach the full 10%.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

If you know you should increase your level of giving, but find it difficult to do so, challenge yourself: "How much do I spend every month on entertainment and eating out? Does my spending reflect the priority of God in my life?"

GIVING A PERCENTAGE

Why should we determine the amount of our gift based on a percentage of income? We give the tithe (which means 10% of one's harvest or income) because it is a Scriptural benchmark that has been honored since the early Church (see Malachi 3:10).



Every parish family receives a special "Stewardship Package" in the mail that further explains our parish's vision of stewardship. It includes a booklet that describes every ministry in the parish, as well as your Commitment Card.

Understanding the Role of Sacramentals in Our Faith

Most Catholics are familiar with the idea of sacraments in the Church, of which there are seven. Sacraments are the foundation of the spiritual life for an individual and the Church. Sacraments are sources of grace — God’s very presence in our lives and unmerited favor from God. They are signs of God’s love, and these signs make present what they signify. Although a person benefits — receives the gift of grace — from the sacraments regardless of whether he or she is well disposed to them, one must cooperate with what the Spirit is doing in the sacrament to receive its full benefit.

Sacramentals are different. These are also sacred signs that can build holiness, but they do not work on their own. One must be aware and fully conscious of the sacred action. Sacramentals sanctify us to get the most benefit from the Sacraments (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1667). Sacramentals are given to us to make holy certain actions in life and life’s circumstances. There are many such sacred signs that are reminders to us of God.

The sign of the cross is perhaps one of the most fundamental of these signs, and for Catholics, this invocation is done at the start of every sacred action and prayer. Holy water is a sacramental, as it reminds us of our Baptism. By dipping our fingers into holy water and making the sign of the cross, we are combining two foundational symbols of the Christian life and the Paschal Mystery — the passion, dying and rising of Christ — and bringing them to life in us.

The exchange of peace in the Mass — and at other Catholic rites — is another example of a sacramental. By making some kind of meaningful sign of peace, we are giving the peace of Christ to another person. The chalice and other sacred vessels at Mass also are

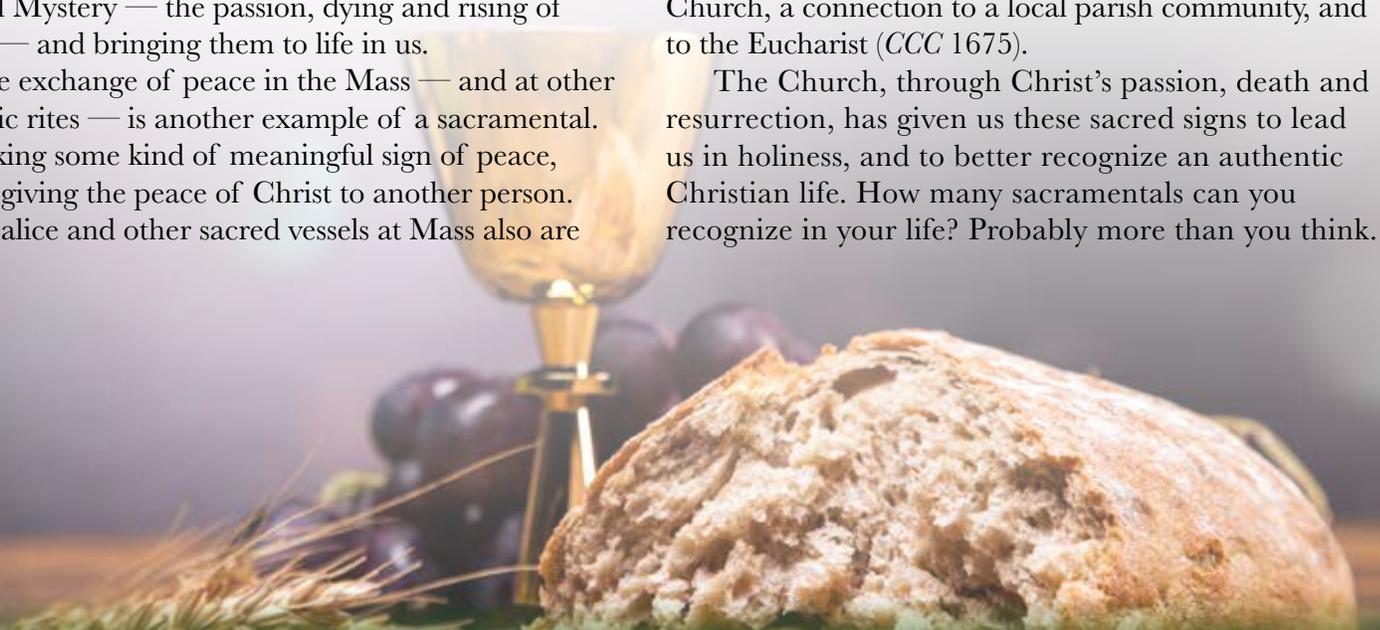
sacramentals, as they remind us of what they are to contain — the very Body and Blood of Christ.

It might be helpful to organize the types of sacramentals into categories, as author Michael Pennock lists in *This Is Our Faith: A Catholic Catechism for Adults*:

“Actions (blessings; genuflections; the sign of the cross; bowing one’s head at the name of Jesus; church processions); Objects (candles; holy water; statues and icons; holy pictures; blessed ashes; palms; rosaries; relics; incense; vestments; scapulars; church buildings; crosses; religious medals); Places (the Holy Land; Rome; Fatima; Lourdes; the National Shrine in Washington, D.C.; and other places of pilgrimage; chapels, retreat centers, and even Catholic cemeteries); Prayers (short prayers we say throughout the day; grace before and after meals; prayers at rising and going to bed; praying the rosary, praying a host of other traditional Catholic prayers and devotions); Sacred Time (liturgy; holy days; feasts of saints; your saint’s name day; special days of prayer; fasting and abstinence; retreats, etc.)” (*This Is Our Faith: A Catholic Catechism for Adults*, 176-177).

“Sacramentals...prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it” (*CCC* 1670). In a word, sacramentals, through the prayer of the Church, bring us to holiness in Christ. All devotions of piety, including sacramentals, should point us toward the liturgy of the Church, a connection to a local parish community, and to the Eucharist (*CCC* 1675).

The Church, through Christ’s passion, death and resurrection, has given us these sacred signs to lead us in holiness, and to better recognize an authentic Christian life. How many sacramentals can you recognize in your life? Probably more than you think.



Honoring the Holy Eucharist Through the Altar Angel Ministry

Stewardship comes in many creative forms, and through the hands of many different faithful stewards. For Barbara Davis, a member of the Altar Angel Ministry, it means honoring Our Lord by quietly and reverently caring for all that touches His Most Precious Body and Blood at the altar.

“By serving with this liturgical ministry, I feel I am being a good steward of my faith, as well as of the Eucharist,” Barbara says. “We are taking good care of the sacred items that are used for Mass. Basically, without our help, Mass could not be celebrated properly. I enjoy doing my part.”

Altar Angel Ministry members mainly clean and take care of the purificators and liturgical towels. Julie Boyd, who coordinates the ministry, schedules one member per month to do the cleaning duties on a weekly basis. After picking up the linens after the last Mass on Sunday, they bring them home, and wash and press them, returning them by Friday. They wash them after Holy Day and special occasion (such as weddings) Masses, as well.

“Since these linens have consecrated wine and particles of the host on them, we can’t just throw them in the washer,” Barbara says. “We have to pre-soak them and pour the remaining water into the outdoor soil instead of down the drain. Once you understand the process, it is easy to do. It gives me peace to know that these items are being handled correctly. It is just a little step, but it reminds you that these are sacred, holy items.”

Over time, Barbara has found that this ministry has been a blessing to her, as well as to her husband, J.C., who likes helping her with it when he can.

“I like doing it because it is a ministry I can do at home, with a spirit of prayer,” she says. “It is a simple ministry — there are no meetings and it doesn’t take a lot of time. It is not something you have to do every week, all year long. Even though we work ‘behind the scenes,’ it is a very helpful ministry that gives you a rewarding feeling. It is a task you feel special doing because you know it is so important.”



Members of the Altar Angels honor Our Lord by quietly and reverently caring for all that touches His Most Precious Body and Blood at the altar.

There are currently about eight people involved who serve as members of the Altar Angels Ministry. For more information on how to help with this beautiful ministry, please contact Julie Boyd at 817-675-4225 or Barbara Davis at 817-480-4022.



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

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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

St. Vincent de Paul's Greeters Offer Welcome as We Celebrate the Liturgy Together continued from front cover

Nearly 25 years later, Don thought about how becoming a more welcoming parish would engage current parishioners and help build our community.

"I therefore volunteered to form a Greeter Ministry," Don says. "I'd like to invite everyone to serve as a greeter. I even recruit people I see who are enthusiastic and come to Mass early."

One unique way greeters can ascertain if individuals are new or visiting is when they enter the main doors of the church and pause before the glass covered stream.

"I always tell people that when you attend Mass at St. Vincent, you can walk on water!" Don says. "We thank them for worshiping with us, let them know all the good things we have here at St. Vincent and ask them to check with our parish office."

Each year, Don and Janice host a Christmas party for our greeters, their spouses and prospective greeters.

"It is a perfect occasion to thank them for their dedication to the ministry and for the fine job they are doing for our parish," Don says.

Everyone is welcome to help create a warm environment at St. Vincent de Paul by serving as a greeter. Currently the ministry has about 30 greeters, and many of them are especially dedicated and serve at multiple Masses.

"Our goal is to have a greeter at each of the three doors before the Saturday Vigil and Sunday Masses," Don says. "Think of the passage from Matthew 25:35 that says, 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.'"

*For more information about our parish
Greeters Ministry, please contact
Don McGrath at 817-944-1940.*