

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CATHOLIC PARISH



SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Providing Graces in Times of Great Need

Most of us have witnessed a Baptism or attended a Confirmation Mass. It's also not uncommon to have shared in a couples' celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, or perhaps been present at a priest or deacon's Ordination Mass. And as practicing Catholics, we regularly have the opportunity to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. However, there is one of the seven sacraments with which many Catholics may be less familiar — the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.



Linda and Charlie Reilly with their granddaughter, Emma Horton, who also received the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick as a child, before undergoing surgery for a rare illness

Some might recognize the sacrament under a different name, such as “Extreme Unction” or “Last Rites.” Today, it is celebrated with greater frequency than in times past, including anytime someone is seriously ill or approaching surgery, advanced in age, as well as when a person is nearing death.

“Years ago, you felt like it was the ‘dreaded’ sacrament,” says parishioner Linda Reilly. “Over the years, I’ve come to know that isn’t true.”

Linda and her husband, Charlie, both received the sacrament for the first time last year, when it was offered at a Mass they attended.

“It was something that the pastor had presented to the parish — a group anointing,” Linda says. “He explained it so well. And Charlie and I both decided we were getting older and we decided we were going to do

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LIVING OUT *Gratitude* AND *Stewardship* DURING THANKSGIVING AND BEYOND

Every November, as the holiday season fast approaches, we are filled with a deep sense of sentimentality and gratefulness for all the goodness of the past year. At the same time, we encounter many wonderful ways to give — to cheerfully share our own gifts — during this time of Thanksgiving.

It is with this spirit of gratitude that we can truly live out the stewardship way of life. This Thanksgiving, there are plenty of opportunities to do this in a direct way. Is there a new neighbor you haven't met, or someone who might be spending the holiday alone? Invite them over for Thanksgiving dinner. Perhaps you may volunteer at a soup kitchen, or you might donate a Thanksgiving meal to a family in need who wouldn't have one otherwise.

If you go shopping on Black Friday, make it a point the next day to donate old clothes that you or your family members no longer need. And as the winter draws closer, you might participate in — or even organize — a coat drive, and then gather a small group to go out into the community to give the coats away to homeless

shelters and those in need during the winter months. There are countless such opportunities to live in gratitude and thanksgiving — opportunities that go beyond just having a meal with family and friends on the fourth Thursday of November.

Of course, we must remember that this spirit of thanksgiving does not end after Thanksgiving, nor does it end following Advent and Christmas. We must always consider how to give, even as the sentimental glow of the holiday season fades after the New Year. In January, if there is space at your table, fill it. In February, if there is abundance in your closet, give away from that abundance. In March, if there are volunteers needed at the soup kitchen, rally a team and give of your time. We need a renewed spirit of stewardship and thanksgiving that lasts the whole year so that our giving becomes habitual, and not just seasonal.

This Thanksgiving, ask the Holy Spirit where He is calling you to give. And may the joy of the Thanksgiving season flow into our lives as good stewards, every day and throughout the entire year.

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A Letter From Our Pastor
NOVEMBER:

A Time of Faithful Celebration and Sharing in Thanks

Dear Parishioners,

As I look over the calendar for November, my mind is filled with thoughts of thanksgiving. These aren't just thoughts about Thanksgiving Day, although I look towards it with happy anticipation — more than that, they are thoughts filled with a variety of reasons for why we should be thankful.

The month begins with a great celebration that should be a day of thanksgiving for all of us — All Saints' Day. This is a great feast celebrating the great company of Christians now in heaven — a company we shall eventually join, whether or not we're formally canonized, if we remain faithful to Christ.

And the communion of saints — the sharing of spiritual goods by those in heaven to us who are still in our pilgrimage — is a great cause for thanksgiving. We read the lives of the saints to be encouraged and inspired by their examples. Plus, we are strengthened by their fellowship in the Body of Christ, and we are aided by their prayers.

And then, the very next day, we celebrate All Souls' Day. Although this day commemorates all the faithful departed who are being purified in Purgatory, it is natural for us to concentrate on the members of our own family and our friends who have died. While we pray for them, that they may soon experience the joys of heaven, at the same time we also are thankful for the love they gave us and for the faith they passed on to us.

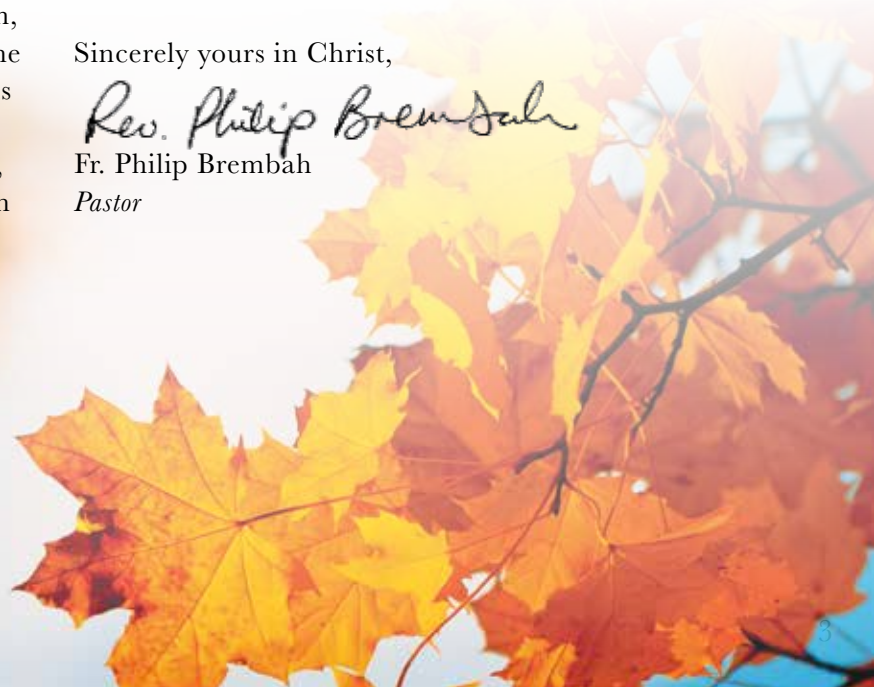
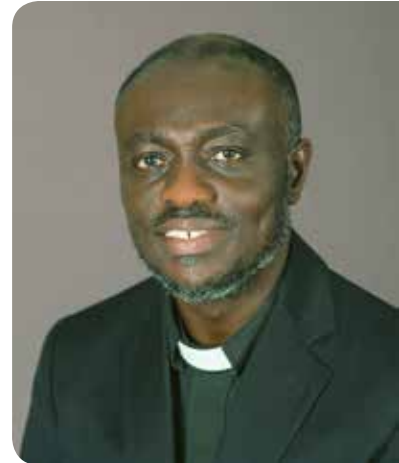
Then, later in the month comes Thanksgiving Day, the national holiday celebrating all the things for which

we are thankful. The fact that it comes toward the end of autumn reminds us that it was originally a harvest festival. For Christians today, it's a wholesome reminder that we should thank God for everything we receive, especially the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. Why not participate in the Church's Great Thanksgiving, the Holy Eucharist, on Thanksgiving Day? It's the ultimate way to give thanks.

A reminder — while much of our attention this month may be drawn to the often contentious goings-on in our country, we need to remember that God is in charge of the universe, even though He has given us free will. If we trust in His loving care, demonstrated by returning to Him a portion of the time, talent and treasure He has entrusted to us, we can withstand the troubles of life. It's a good principle to follow in this month of thanksgiving.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Philip Bremsah
Fr. Philip Bremsah
Pastor



Prison Ministry Showing God

Who is deserving of God's love and mercy? The automatic answer should be "everyone," but have you ever really thought about that? What about people who have committed a crime, who are serving time in prison? Are they as equally deserving as someone who has never spent time incarcerated?

Our faith teaches that if we take the time to visit those who are in prison, we just might find the face of Jesus looking back at us. Once a prisoner in this world Himself, Jesus' mercy doesn't stop at the cell door. The women of the St. Vincent de Paul Prison Ministry have taken this idea to heart by serving as mentors through the Life Connections Program, or LCP, at the Federal Women's Prison at Carswell.

The LCP is an effort on behalf of the Federal Bureau of Prisons that prepares inmates to be rehabilitated back into the community in a holistic fashion. Through a multi-faith team of spiritual guides, participants in the program spend 18 months working on personal growth as they navigate their time in prison and take a hard look at the life choices that landed them there.

"The LCP members can come from anywhere in the country," says Prison Ministry coordinator Maureen Vega.

"The first woman I mentored came from Alabama. We've had some from the midwest. They apply and are accepted and then are moved to Carswell for the program. When they're in the program for nine to 10 months, they're eligible for a mentor."

Mentors from St. Vincent de Paul spend the second and fourth Tuesday evening of each month visiting with their assigned prisoner. A typical visit includes time spent talking, going over what the women recently learned through the LCP workbooks, and praying together.

"We sit with them for an hour and they just need to know that somebody cares about them and that God loves them," says ministry volunteer Mary Curl. "We might talk to them about how things are going in class or they might want to talk about families or something that's bothering them at the moment."

Maureen says working with the women in the program is a great way to extend the Works of Mercy to often forgotten members of our community in addition to showing ministers that no one is beyond the reach of God's love.

"They're just women who have made poor decisions who are working on keeping the faith and finding hope for every day," she says.



Members of the St. Vincent de Paul Prison Ministry gather as they prepare to minister at the Federal Women's Prison at Carswell. The women spend time twice a month praying and talking with inmates who are enrolled in the Life Connections Program.

's Love through Mentor Program

"I can't get over how the women in this program maintain a hopeful attitude," Mary says. "It's very difficult but they do, and they look upon this program as an opportunity because they want to change the way they live. They know they've made mistakes and they want help to rebuild their lives and not make those same mistakes when they leave. It's very rewarding to see that."

The ministry is currently looking for more female volunteers to help mentor the women enrolled in the LCP. Volunteers carpool together to make the 40-minute drive easier and spend time in prayer before heading to the prison. Maureen says those that might have reservations

about spending time within the walls of a correctional facility need to consider the needs of those behind them.

"It's a very joyful group that comes home on Tuesday nights in the car and everyone has a sense of satisfaction for what they've been able to do," she says. "The message we want to leave is just try it. Have faith and confidence that if God is pushing you to do this, He thinks that you can do this. It's a very hard place to be. Those of us who aren't in prison, we struggle with faith just in the context of our normal life, but the incarcerated are so powerless and to see the struggle just reinforces that we have to be hopeful that all things with God are possible."

If you would like to learn more about the Prison Ministry, or to serve, please email prisonministry@svdp.org.

Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick continued from front cover

it. Father came to each one of us individually and we received a beautiful blessing, a beautiful anointing and we felt really good about it."

While a good experience, the couple didn't give much thought to having received the sacrament until several months later.

"I didn't think about it again until Charlie was diagnosed with the worst lymphoma you can get and something came over me," Linda says. "I said, 'We're going to take this one day at a time and we're not going to let an illness sap the joy out of our lives,' and I know it was the grace from that sacrament. It had to be. It was a shock, but then, there was grace, and we were able to see that illness through and he's completely cured. We were so blessed."

Anointing of the Sick, along with Reconciliation, is a Sacrament of Healing. Although the healing may take

different forms — sometimes physical, sometimes mental, emotional, or spiritual — the sacrament is always an opportunity for the person to have an encounter with God, the Divine Physician.

"God has a plan for each one of us and if we accept the blessings with joy, we are going to experience more joy that we could've ever thought," Linda says. "Faith gets you through and once you're through, you realize you have even more faith."

She encourages her fellow parishioners to be anointed as well, and feel the power of God's Presence and love.

"We are never alone, He is always with us," Linda says.

"It's a very comforting sacrament, and very powerful," she adds. "I think it's really important and the grace you get from the sacrament lives far beyond the date you receive it. It's a blessing and a boost of extra grace, you don't even realize."

If you or a loved one would like to receive the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, please contact the parish office for more information on when it will be offered at Mass, or to schedule a visit to someone who is hospitalized — 817-478-8206.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL



The Sign of the Cross: *A Powerful Prayer Tradition in the Catholic Church*

Along with the history of our faith come many customs and sacred rituals that become even more beautiful when we delve a little deeper into their origins and meanings. Certainly, such is the case with one of the most visible outward signs of our Catholic faith — the Sign of the Cross.

Since we say and make the Sign of the Cross so often, it may easily become a rote, perhaps even thoughtless, action. However, it is important to remember that the Sign of the Cross is much more than a simple gesture. Even in its most basic form, the Sign of the Cross — accompanied by the spoken or unspoken words “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” — is a prayer, a creed stating our belief in the Holy Trinity, the dual nature of Jesus Christ, and the dependence of our salvation on His crucifixion and resurrection.

In addition, making the Sign of the Cross is an indication of a willingness to take up our own cross and suffering for the sake of Christ. The prayer is considered one of the greatest weapons against Satan and all demons, and an added strength against the temptations of the flesh.

In the Roman Catholic Church today, the Sign of the Cross is typically made with either three fingers or an open hand touching first the forehead, then the chest, followed by the left shoulder and then the right (in the Eastern Church, the right shoulder is touched before the left). The concept of making a sign, or “setting a seal,” upon the forehead of those who place their faith in the Lord appears in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible — see Ezek. 9:4 and Rev. 7:3, 9:4, and 14:1.

Early versions of the Sign of the Cross were traced on the just the forehead, using the thumb and forefinger held together in the shape of a tiny cross. We still see this version of the blessing performed during Baptisms (with the cross traced on the infant’s forehead) and on Ash Wednesday (with the cross traced in ashes on the foreheads of the faithful). Similarly, when the Gospel is read during the Liturgy of the

Word, the priest or deacon leads the congregation in forming this small cross on the forehead, mouth, and chest, indicating a willingness to keep the Word of the Lord in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts.

There is no doubt that our early Church fathers were strong believers in the sanctifying power of the Sign of the Cross. A second-century ecclesiastical scholar, Tertullian, and a third century saint, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, both wrote about the necessity of performing the Sign of the Cross at one’s waking and one’s lying down, at entering and leaving a room, at mealtimes, and more. St. Augustine also referenced the importance of marking the cross on the faithful’s forehead during the administration of the sacraments.

It is likely that the sign transformed from the tiny cross on the forehead to the larger, full-body cross used today sometime in the fifth century, when heretics began questioning both the dual nature of Jesus Christ — fully human and fully divine — and the unity of the Holy Trinity. Believers in these crucial Church doctrines began forming the cross with three extended fingers (representing the Trinity), keeping the ring finger and little finger pressed down into the palm (representing Christ’s dual nature), and tracing a cross on their entire upper body so there could be no mistaking the gesture.

Today, the Sign of the Cross figures predominantly in our prayer life as Roman Catholics. We commonly perform it upon entering a church (with the holy water as a reminder of our Baptism); at the beginning and end of the Catholic Mass, a Benediction, or the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament; when opening and closing our personal prayers; at mealtimes; and when passing by a Catholic Church (in recognition of Christ, present in the tabernacle).

Now, each time we cross ourselves and proclaim, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” let us do so with an increased awareness of the rich history of the Sign of the Cross and the abundant graces that come to us through this powerful prayer tradition!

Meet Heather Keating

Living Out Stewardship of Love is the Greatest Gift

We often equate stewardship with words like “service” and “responsibility.” But for long-time parishioner Heather Keating, stewardship is ultimately about love.

“I firmly believe that love is the greatest gift that we can give one another, and that we have been charged to do so,” Heather says. “Stewardship, then, is our chance to show love to Christ and one another through service of time, talent and treasure. I believe it goes beyond just serving our parish community and should extend out into our daily lives in all the places we go.”

This stewardship of love was first taught to Heather by her own mother, who worked at St. Vincent de Paul throughout Heather’s childhood. This made a deep impression on Heather, showing her that service to others and involvement in her parish is what made her happiest.

“My mother’s influence is what led me to change my college major from Business to Education,” Heather says. “I realized that it is so important to make a difference by serving our youth. Their young hearts are most impressionable and most vulnerable. We need to show them early on in life what it means to have a heart like Jesus.”

This passion for serving youth would later lead Heather to become involved in Vacation Bible School, where she first met her husband, Karl. Today, VBS continues to hold a “special place” in the hearts of the entire Keating family, with everyone pitching in to make it come alive for the youth of the parish each year.

“We now look forward to the fun we have each summer preparing for and participating in VBS,” Heather says. “The girls love that they get to spend extra time with Aunt Kim and Uncle Mark decorating the stage. And Karl is really getting the hang of my decorating style after 13 years of doing this together.”

Heather also puts her teaching skills to use regularly as a catechist for her daughters’ programs, helped start a Mommy and Me group at the parish, and has participated in Retrouvaille as a way to strengthen her marriage during hard times.

Born out of her own love for Christ, Heather says that stewardship has only amplified the love in her life. It literally led her to Karl, has strengthened her

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Heather Keating and her girls at Vacation Bible School, a ministry which holds a special place in the Keating family’s hearts.



Karl and Heather Keating with their three daughters, Katie (11), Emmie (9) and Sadie (7).

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

Meet Heather Keating continued from page 7

marriage and family life tremendously, and has developed lifelong friendships. It's given her a "safe place" to raise her daughters, forming them in stewardship much like Heather's own mother formed her.

"Seeing my own children desire to be good stewards is a true blessing," Heather says. "The girls play an active part in most of my endeavors. I'll never forget their tiny hands helping to pack food for Kids against Hunger. They love 'helping' me teach, and there is truly nothing better than spending time together decorating for Vacation Bible School."

Heather is grateful for the opportunities she's been given to serve in our parish community, and to be able to put her faith into action, lovingly serving others as Christ Himself would do.

"It gives me great joy to be able to serve not only at church, but in my girls' schools," Heather says. "Nobody should have to go at this life alone, and time after time, the relationships I've forged through my church family have been fulfilling and meaningful. I feel like they are a true gift from God."

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— Heather Keating