

# ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CATHOLIC PARISH



## Ushers Provide Welcome With Open Arms Into Our Community

**F**or over 30 years, Alan Van Scotter has been helping people feel at home at our parish. As an usher, he has been living out the call to hospitality in a beautiful way.

“I have been captain of the Usher Ministry for about 12 years,” Alan says. “I enjoy doing it because I feel it is a way to serve our parish community. I enjoy helping people.”

Without our parish ushers, Mass just wouldn’t be the same at St. Vincent de Paul. Ushers serve a dual role as ministers of hospitality

and ministers of order. They take attendance, arrange for the collection to be taken and the offertory gifts to be brought forward, seat people, and assist those in need during an emergency. In general, they help things run smoothly by maintaining order in the liturgy, while helping everyone to feel more welcome and comfortable at our parish. There is a separate Welcoming Ministry that provides hospitality to those who come to our parish as well, but their function is separate from the Usher Ministry.

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# ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

## Ushers continued from front cover

Recently, the ushers have been called upon to offer more security at our parish as well, and have been especially trained in this area. More adult parishioners are asked to step forward and volunteer to help with this effort.

Young adults and teenagers are more than welcome to serve as ushers, as well. *Confirmandi* can earn Confirmation hours by doing so.

“It is a good experience for the *confirmandi* because it can teach them about team work, because the ushers work as a team,” Alan says. “Participating in the Usher Ministry helps them to become socially involved with the other parishioners at our church as well, and teaches them what it means to be an active part of our faith community.”

Hospitality is one of the Four Pillars of Stewardship. As Catholics, we should all feel a desire to grow in hospitality and embrace those who enter our parish doors. As St. Benedict once said, “All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ... All humility should be shown in addressing a guest.”

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*Parishioners who would like to be an usher may indicate their interest on their stewardship renewal cards, or contact Alan Van Scotter at 972-672-8506.*

## *A Letter From Our Pastor*

# Where Are Our Priorities?

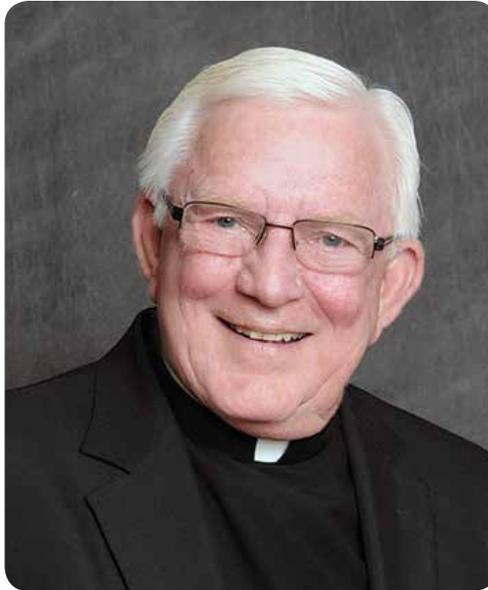
Dear Parishioners,

I am in hopes that you are aware that we are completing and will continue to celebrate the holiest time of the year in our Church. Easter Sunday, April 1, is the high point of the year for us as Catholics. We will, of course, continue to celebrate this holy time until Pentecost Sunday, which is May 20 this year. That is correct — our Easter season continues until then.

St. Paul provided some sage advice. He said, “think of what is above, not of what is on earth” (Colossians 3:2). Regardless of your opinions on what happens after resurrection, we can agree that it will be something “above” this life. Paul might be asking us if we put God first in all things. Life can become very encumbered with possessions, money, power, and even our egos.

Our goal should be to put God at the top of our lists. If that is not what we do, we may need to adjust our priorities. If we have not moved in that direction during Lent or in the past, now is the time to do it. We must constantly strive to not allow earthly things to become our gods.

It was St. Gregory the Great who said, “God made us to be the gardeners of paradise.” Some stewardship people have maintained that God has given each of us a garden — and when we are judged, we only hear one question, “What have you done with the garden I gave you?”



What have we done? What are we doing? First, we must recognize and acknowledge that we are all gifted, admittedly in different and varied ways. Despite what we see as our gifts or how we measure them, we need to ensure that we are using them in ways that serve God and others — ways that show good discipleship and stewardship on our parts.

Were you aware that the month of April is dedicated to the Holy Spirit in the Church? The term “spirit” translates from the Hebrew word *ruah*, which means “breath.” Truly, as Catholics, the Holy Spirit has been breathed into each of us,

and is part of the garden we have received. Do we turn to Him? Do we rely on Him for strength? Do we even grant that He is part of our very being? We should. We need to, as St. Paul advised, “think of what is above, not of what is on earth.”

May God bless you in all you do, and strive to do!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Michael Holmberg". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rev. J. Michael Holmberg  
Pastor

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## BILL AND LIZ SANCHEZ *Place*



*Liz and Bill Sanchez with their 5-year-old daughter, Susanna*

**J**ust 10 years ago, Bill and Liz Sanchez probably could not have imagined what their life might look like today. A decade ago, Illinois native Liz was living in Korea, teaching English and looking for a job that might bring her back to the United States. When she landed a job at the University of Texas at Arlington, it felt like everything was falling into place. The next several years were whirlwind of change as she joined the Catholic Church, married Bill, faced a dangerous medical condition, and became a mother!

Bill and Liz met at the university, where Bill works in the IT department for the English Language Institute. When the couple began talking about marriage, Liz decided to learn more about Bill's Catholic faith by taking RCIA — Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults — classes.

"I grew up American Baptist," she says. "Where I grew up, we thought Catholics were very different [than Protestants]. But everything I learned in RCIA, I thought, 'That sounds right.' I was already a Christian, and I really love the Church history. It all made sense."

Following Liz's initiation into the Catholic Church, the couple was married. Soon after, Liz became pregnant and the couple's faith was put to the test when doctors discovered that she had brain cancer. The surgeons at Methodist Hospital were faced with a critical situation — to save Liz's life, they would have to perform surgery to remove her brain tumor while she was still just six months pregnant.

Throughout the ordeal, the couple leaned heavily on their faith, and Liz found herself turning to the traditions of the Catholic Church.

# *Faith at the Center of Their Lives*

“When the priest came to perform the Anointing of the Sick before the surgery, I just felt so comforted,” she says. “And after the surgery, when my brain was still in the clouds, I prayed a Rosary. That was something I had never done before. I’ve always prayed to God, but it surprised me to find that I was holding on to the faith tradition of the Rosary, especially when it hadn’t been suggested to me or anything — I just found myself doing it.”

To this day, Bill credits the power of prayer for the successful surgery, which saved the lives of his wife and daughter.

“There was a lot of prayer coming from her family, my family, and our friends,” he says. “And I think it really made a difference in the outcome.”

Following her recovery, Liz decided to stay home with their daughter, Susanna, and began looking for ways to get involved in the various ministries here at St. Vincent de Paul. When she and Bill inquired about sponsoring an RCIA candidate, they discovered that the parish was looking for another RCIC — Rite of Christian Initiation of Children — catechist. Liz stepped in to fill the need and soon found that teaching the faith to children came naturally for her.

“I taught RCIC for three years, and I felt comfortable doing that because I’m a teacher,” Liz says. “I know the Bible stories, I like telling them, and I can talk about the Bible with no problem. Teaching the faith traditions of the Catholic Church is so cool because I just learned them. When you teach something, though, you also really have to dig in and learn a lot more, so that has made a huge difference.”

While Liz isn’t teaching RCIC this year, she has loved being able to share her gifts for teaching and storytelling with our Vacation Bible School and plans on continuing to help out with that program again this summer. This past year, she has also enjoyed serving in the Food Cart

Ministry by picking up the donated food items from the parish on Mondays and delivering them to local charities.

Whenever little Susanna has a school holiday on a Monday, Liz brings her favorite helper along to assist with the food deliveries.

“I grew up in the church and my parents [served] so much that there was no question that I wanted to have my daughter see and be a part of ministry,” she says. “Just experiencing the community outreach and being God’s hands for our neighbors, showing love by example — for me, it’s the only way to go.”

As Liz began participating more in parish life, Bill also started seeking out ways to help out that would fit around his work schedule, and serving as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion has proven very rewarding.

“I really like it,” Bill says. “I feel like it’s a helpful thing to do — people need and want to take Communion. The sacrament is so special, and it feels even more rewarding now that I’m participating in it and get to see people partake in it. I’ve always been on the receiving end, and I like being on the giving end now. I’ll definitely keep doing it as long as I’m needed.”

Both Bill and Liz feel blessed to have a warm and welcoming faith community that has been here for them through these eventful last few years.

“I find the parish very friendly,” Bill says. “The people here are really nice and very welcoming. I think it is one of the friendliest Catholic churches I’ve ever been to. St. Vincent de Paul is just a great church — we’re very happy here and have had great experiences here.”

“I’ve met some great, great people here and fallen into a good group of friends,” Liz says. “We found that we just fit right into the puzzle here.”

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## “Transformed by the Sacred Liturgy” *The Celebration of the Paschal Mystery*

In a limited way, the liturgy can be compared to a story or a film – upon a first reading or viewing, we might understand the basic outline of the narrative, yet through every subsequent encounter, the story further unfolds before us, becoming richer and more complex.

Often, inquisitive children teach us about how to understand a story or the Mass. As a child inquires about the priest’s green vestments, the foregrounded wreath or the presence of palm branches, we might pause to recall the symbolism undergirding the rich rituals of the liturgy.

There is a sense of the sacred in the liturgy, but its rituals and ceremonies can appear as empty pantomimes when divorced from their meaning. Far from empty signs, the liturgy is the celebration of the Paschal mystery, of Christ’s passion, death, resurrection and glorification by which He “accomplished the work of our salvation” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1067).

From the Greek *leitourgia*, meaning public service or worship, liturgy in the Christian tradition refers to the communal participation of the people in the work of God, and God is always present and at work in the liturgy, acting in and with the Church through the sacraments.

Annually, the Church’s liturgical year is structured around the Paschal mystery, which we observe every Sunday. We begin each year with a season of anticipating Christ’s birth,

*“If we are transformed by the sacred liturgy, then we, as believers, can help transform the culture.”*

– Archbishop Alexander Sample, Diocese of Portland, Ore.



and following a celebration of Christ’s Incarnation, we gradually enter a period of preparation for the Easter Triduum, for His passion, death and Resurrection. The year closes with a period of ordinary time – a time to grow in our faith and in living out the Gospel.

Daily, the Liturgy of the Hours unifies the Church Militant in prayers said by the clergy and increasingly by the laity. As the liturgical calendar structures our year, the Liturgy of the Hours structures our day, offering us an opportunity to consecrate each present moment to Christ.

Ultimately, the liturgical life of the Church “revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments” (*CCC* 1113), for we receive God’s grace to fortify us in our spiritual lives and as His disciples through the sacraments, particularly the Holy Mass.

The Mass nurtures us spiritually, inviting us to reflect on the Paschal mystery and to lift our hearts to God as individuals and a community through spoken and sung prayer.

The Mass moves us corporeally, drawing us to sit as we listen to the Word, to stand as we unanimously profess our faith, and to kneel as the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Mass inspires us apostolically, sending us out to proclaim the Gospel and to share Christ with our brothers and sisters.

Though the “source and center” of all prayer, the liturgy and a sense of the sacred has, in some ways, become marginalized in the American Church. Once robust parishes are seeking to rebuild, but they frequently overlook the connection between the empty pews and the decentralization of the liturgy, which was underscored by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

“I am convinced that the crisis in the Church that we are experiencing today is, to a large extent, due to the disintegration of the liturgy,” Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote in his autobiography *Milestones*.

Something in the simplicity of the child’s experience of the liturgy teaches us to return to what we might call the basics of the faith – meaning a love for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the sacraments and the rituals of the Church. Only through the liturgy are we nurtured on our stewardship journey and inspired to proclaim the Gospel.

As Archbishop Alexander Sample from the Diocese of Portland, Ore., writes, “If we are transformed by the sacred liturgy, then we, as believers, can help transform the culture.”

# *Not Alone on the Journey:* THE STEPHEN MINISTRY

**W**e all have those moments that change everything. Maybe it's the death of a loved one, a surprise job loss, or the doctor's words confirming your worst fears. Whether moments of tragedy, or even "normal" transition, the journey of life can sometimes feel lonely.

Here at St. Vincent de Paul, we don't want you to struggle alone. Since 2005, our Stephen Ministry has been an important part of supporting those in difficult circumstances. Through Stephen Ministers — lay pastoral ministers — we provide one-on-one help and support for those in need.

"Stephen Ministry is a confidential lay ministry that allows someone who is trained to walk with a person who is going through a difficult time," says Marilyn Dietrich, our Director of Adult Ministry and RCIA, who also serves as the Referrals Coordinator for Stephen Ministry.

As Marilyn puts it, the Stephen Ministers are the 'after people.' As the ministry's handbook states:

"After the phone call you hoped you'd never get, after the divorce papers are signed, after the funeral when everyone has left and emotions are hard to hold in. After the doctor says, 'I'm sorry, there's nothing else we can do.' After the nursing home director shakes your hand and says, 'Welcome to your new home,' after you find a pink slip with your final

paycheck, after your friends and family have heard your story just one too many times."

Those who think they might benefit from the help and support of a Stephen Minister can reach out through the parish office and will be paired with a same-gender Stephen Minister who will meet with them, face-to-face, each week, to listen and help them process the struggles they're facing. The meetings are confidential and continue for however long the "care receiver" and Stephen Minister determine is beneficial.

"We don't judge, we don't condemn — we show up," Marilyn says. "There's no silver bullet, we're not going to say, 'Well, I can fix that problem right now!' We will listen and will walk with you for as long as you need to be walked with."

The role of Stephen Ministers is one of support, walking alongside a person in their pain, sharing God's love.

"We are not counselors, we are not therapists," Marilyn says, clarifying that Stephen Ministers do go through extensive training. "We are the caregiver and God is the cure-giver. We are a caregiver who will walk with you through this period in your life."

Above all, Marilyn hopes that Stephen Ministry will be an opportunity to know God's help and healing in their lives.

*continued on back cover*

# STEPHEN MINISTRY



*Stephen Ministry is designed to help people going through difficult transitions in their life, by providing a listening ear and prayerful support.*



# 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

## Not Alone on the Journey: The Stephen Ministry

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“I hope people come away with the truth that someone cares for them, they are loved by God, and because they are loved by God, they are worthy of being helped,” Marilyn says. “St. Vincent de Paul Parish cares for people.”

This month, a new group of Stephen Ministers, who have recently completed training, will be commissioned to serve in the parish.

Marilyn encourages those who think they might benefit from the support of a Stephen Minister to reach out for help.

“Take that leap of faith,” she says. “Sometimes God is telling us to do something, and I think it’s time to say, ‘Yes, God, thank You for showing me this.’ People have come in

overwhelmed by a situation and looking for some way to get through it. It’s about getting through it — not avoiding it, not going around it, but getting through it, and coming out whole in the end.

“I still have people who come back to me and say, ‘I’m so glad I came to you or I’m so glad I had a Stephen Minister,’” she adds. “If you recognize yourself having some of the life struggles we’ve talked about, please give yourself the gift of seeking a Stephen Minister. Needing someone to talk to as you go through a difficult situation is not a sign of weakness. It’s a sign of wanting to ask God for help, through the services of Stephen Ministry.”

*For more information on the Stephen Ministry, or to confidentially explore whether this ministry may be the right fit for you, please contact Stephen Ministry Referrals Coordinator Marilyn Dietrich at 817-478-8206, ext. 213. Stephen Ministry is open to anyone. A person does not need to be a parishioner or even a Catholic to reach out for help and support through this outreach.*