

The Concept

Newsletter of Immaculate Conception Parish

A Letter From Our Pastor

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Embracing Changes Within Our Parish and Diocese

Dear Parishioners,

This is certainly a time of many changes in the Diocese of Cleveland. Our Church has re-positioned itself in many areas of the diocese in order to better serve people and to evangelize in the best way possible. I would venture to say that there is no Catholic in the diocese who has not been affected in one way or another by the changes taking place.

Our parish is no exception to these changes. The closing of our grade school and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Grade School in order to form one, inter-parochial school is a big change for both of our parishes. We regret the loss of our own school tradition, but at the same time, we wholeheartedly embrace the adventure of beginning an inter-parochial school with our cluster partner parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Mater Dei Academy will open this August at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish campus.

The Bishop also encouraged both of our parishes to strengthen our outreach in our respective communities. Besides very active St. Vincent de Paul conferences in both parishes, we began the Society of Mother Theresa at Immaculate Conception two years ago, which is now preparing over 3,000 meals each month and delivering those meals



to people in Lake County from Wickliffe to Painesville. This year, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish began a community meal every Monday evening for anyone from our area.

In February, our parish staff said goodbye to Fr. Lou Pizmoht

after more than eight years of service to our parish. We recently welcomed Fr. Joseph Mecir as our new parochial vicar. Fr. Joe's parish of Sacred Heart in the Slavik Village area of Cleveland closed in May. Fr. Joe will be applying for a new pastorate as they become available. Next month, we will welcome Mrs. Diana Lipfird to our parish as a pastoral associate. Diana will be working primarily with the RCIA and Senior Ministry, including visitations to the homebound.

So as you can see, many changes are taking place in our parish and cluster. We will be doing another survey in our parish later this year, similar to the survey we did in 2006. Through the survey, we hope to serve our parishioners needs in the best way possible.

In Christ,

Fr. Troha

The Concept

Being Alone With God in Adoration

Community life, conversation, meals with others, and communal worship at Mass are all essential to the Catholic faith journey on a parish level. But some of the most important, life-changing, and intimate encounters with God have also taken place in a very different setting: while individuals were alone.

Moses stood alone before the burning bush.

Elijah was by himself when God passed by in a whisper.

John the Baptist lived as a recluse, surviving on locusts and wild honey.

And, of course, Christ Himself went into the desert for 40 days of solitary prayer in preparation for His ministry.

For over 20 years, parishioners of Immaculate Conception have grown closer to God in a similar way: through silent, often solitary, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

“The Mass is wonderful, and the center of our Faith, but after you leave on Sunday, you may not have a chance to spend time on your own with Christ,” says Dennis Lann, who coordinates the volunteers for Eucharistic Adoration with his wife, Stacey.

An hour of Adoration each week allows you the time and space to be apart, and alone, with God. Many parishioners have taken advantage of this opportunity throughout the years.

“This is the largest ministry in the parish,” Dennis says. “We have hundreds of people involved for 168 hours a week, with every hour covered by at least one person, and many of them have been involved for years.”

Most volunteers commit to an hour per week, but substitutes are also available to step in when volunteers are out of town.

If you’ve never spent an hour with our Eucharistic Lord before, you may wonder what you should do, or how you’ll make it through 60 long, silent minutes.

“It can be hard at first to sit still for an hour,” Dennis admits. “But if you feel you need to do something, you can always pray the Rosary, or read the Scriptures or spiritual books. But as time goes on, you get more

comfortable; you’d be surprised at how long you can just sit there quietly.”

In particular, men are needed to sit with Christ in the Eucharist during some of the overnight hours. While committing to coming to the church at 3 a.m., for example, is surely a sacrifice, Dennis points out that doing so would be a meaningful symbol for the men of the parish.

“The men are the ones who abandoned Christ when He suffered, but the women stayed,” Dennis says. “So there’s a special reason for why men should be willing to volunteer. When Christ asked if His apostles could sit with Him for an hour, I have no doubt that He was also calling the men of the parish to do this.”

Being there with Christ when the whole world seems asleep is an opportunity for intimacy with God.

“Especially during the overnight hours, there is such a closeness and a personal relationship that you feel,” Dennis says.

Anyone, though, is welcome to stop by at any time, day or night, whether someone is scheduled or not, for as long or as short a time as you wish.

If you want to sign up to commit for an hour, if you need a substitute, or for more information, please call Dennis or Stacey Lann at 440-975-1740.



The Bible

The Textbook of Stewardship

Have you ever wished life came with an instruction manual? What a valuable resource that would be! Whenever you find yourself running in circles, this instruction manual would give you step-by-step instructions on how to fix the problem and re-route your course.

Well, here's some good news. For those living a Christian life, there *is* such a manual: the Bible.

Sometimes referred to as the "textbook of stewardship," the Bible is a bountiful resource for the present-day Christian. Written by anointed prophets and sages, this collection of divinely-inspired parables, poems and letters is full of testimonials that illustrate the blessings that come from true discipleship, expressed through lives of stewardship.

Stewardship is not a new concept. The Bible gives proof to this claim through passages such as the 26th chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy. We read Moses' words, as he tells the Israelites to offer the choicest portions of their harvest to God: "When you have come into the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you as a heritage, and have occupied it and settled in it, you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land which the Lord, your God, gives you, and putting them in a basket, you shall go to the place which the Lord, your God, chose for the dwelling place of his name... 'Therefore, I have now brought you the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, O LORD, have given me.' And having set them before the LORD, your God, you shall bow down in his presence (Dt 26: 1-2, 10).

St. Paul briefly touches on the essence of stewardship when he says, "In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and

keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35).

Again, in St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, we read about living a life of Christian stewardship: "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:6-7).

While this is well and good, what does it mean for the present-day Christian? Why should it matter that the Bible alludes to stewardship in various passages? It shows us that Christians and Jews have struggled with, and benefitted from, the concept of stewardship for thousands of years. It ties the message of stewardship to the role of a Christian disciple. It gives proof that stewardship and discipleship go hand-in-hand. It offers encouragement to us, that stewardship is in fact a foundational component of the Christian life, a way of life that one of the founding fathers of the Church – St. Paul – preached about and advocated.

The Bible is indeed the textbook of stewardship. It lays out the steps we must take to become true disciples of Christ. Reading and meditating upon God's Word is always a fruitful exercise. Those who regularly delve into scripture often develop a deeper understanding of who God is, how and why He loves us, and how we can show Him our love in return: important topics of discussion for any steward-in-the-making.

As you strive to become a grateful steward and live the life of Christian discipleship, develop a love for Sacred Scripture. Allow God's Word to nourish your soul regularly, and watch as stewardship changes from a foreign concept to an integral component of your daily life.

The Concept

Living Up the Golden Years *The Seniors Ministry*

If you're going to get old, you might as well "live it up!" This is exactly how many of our parish seniors feel, and they find much of their fulfillment through our Seniors Ministry.

"Our parish used to have a 50+ Club, but it disbanded," says Parish Business Manager Ron Felter. "Therefore, I saw a need to offer something to our seniors in its place, and something more inclusive. A little more than a year ago, our parish initiated the Seniors Ministry, which offers more than just recreational activities to seniors, but also

educational, informational and catechetical activities. In the future, with an aging population, there will be even more of a need to reach out and try to help them with various programs."

Columbia Ranally is an active participant in many of the Seniors Ministry activities. She says that she was initially attracted to the ministry because of the sense of fellowship that it provided.

"Most of us like to go because we are a community, and sometimes at Mass we don't have a chance to visit," Columbia says. "At Seniors Ministry events, we can speak with each other more. Many of us are widows, and it is very pleasant to be able to share



a meal with others. We like to be with each other as a group and have fun together."

The Seniors Ministry honors our older parishioners and reaches out to them in creative ways. One of its main objectives is to provide information on different issues that affect the lives of seniors. On the first and third Wednesday of every month at 1 p.m., the ministry holds a meeting at our parish for our seniors with prayer, a snack or meal, and a guest speaker. Interesting presentations are given on topics such as senior and hospice medical care, and home safety issues. Parish Catechetical Leader Wm. Christopher Hoag gave a talk on the forthcoming changes in the celebration of the Mass, and a member of the local police department spoke on safety issues. The presentations cover a wide variety of issues that are of interest to seniors.

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The ministry also offers computer classes, given by one of our parish school teachers. Field trips are arranged for the seniors as well, such as visits to historical churches of Cleveland. Later this month, the ministry is sponsoring a three-day trip to Washington, D.C., which will be attended by Fr. Troha, to visit the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Next September, the seniors will travel to Carey, Ohio, to visit the Basilica and National Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation.

In addition to the social aspects of the ministry, Columbia says that the opportunities for group prayer and faith formation have really helped foster her spiritual growth.

“Being involved in the Seniors Ministry has helped my faith life because I have been able to pray with others and learn more about what we believe,” she says.

In all, the Seniors Ministry is helping our seniors live life to the fullest, and our parish just wouldn’t be the same with it – or them. It provides a perfect way to honor the older people in our community, who have given so much of their time and talent to their families and our parish over the years.

“We would like to invite any seniors to attend, even if it is just on a one-time basis,” Ron says. “It is a great chance for them to enjoy fellowship with other seniors.”

There are no fees or dues to attend Seniors Ministry events. Our parish facilities are wheelchair accessible, and all are welcome. Don’t miss out!



Prayer for Seniors

*All praise and glory are yours,
Lord our God.*

*For you have called us to serve you and
one another in love.*

*Bless those who have grown
old in your service
and give them courage and strength in
their faith.*

Lead us all to eternal glory.

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
Your Son, who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God,
forever and ever.*

Amen.

The Concept

On a Pilgrimage to Meet Christ *The Easter Vigil*

When the New Fire was kindled during the Easter Vigil at our parish this year, it spoke of much more than just a beautiful liturgy – it was a sign of the majesty of the Resurrected Christ; a reminder of His ineffable mercy. The Paschal Candle, donned with nails, bore a light leading our catechumens and candidates, who were preparing to surrender their lives to the Catholic Church, their newfound spiritual mother on Earth. After receiving this light and coming into full communion with the Church, they would radiate His light and presence to the world around them.

“It was a great pleasure to watch our catechumens and candidates experience the Rites of Initiation,” says Wm. Christopher Hoag, Pastoral Minister and Director of RCIA. “Each person had his or her own unique journey to the Vigil, and their journeys blended into one pilgrimage toward Christ.”

At the Easter Vigil, two adults and three children made this marvelous “pilgrimage” towards Christ and received the Sacraments of Initiation. One mother, Victoria Check, and her daughter, Ariana Starr, entered the Church with an interesting story.

“Ariana will not be 7 years old until later this year,” Wm. Christopher says. “Therefore, the initial plan was to only baptize her and then have her receive the re-

maining sacraments with her peers as she gets older, since full initiation is usually performed on those who have reached age 7 or older. However, she was very adamant about receiving full initiation this Easter Vigil because of her enthusiasm for the Church.”

Another gentleman, Don McGee, completed his Sacraments of Initiation after more than 60 years as a Catholic!



A heartfelt welcome to all of our new parish family members! Congratulations on “coming home” to Immaculate Conception at the Easter Vigil:

*Don McGee - Candidate
Andrew Proctor - Catechumen
Victoria Check - Catechumen
Ariana Starr - Catechumen
Salvatore DeMaria - Catechumen
Kathryn DeMaria - Catechumen*

On Pentecost Sunday, our faith community was blessed to receive Sarah Clark into full communion as well, a research scientist who used her talents to research theological truths, which increased her interest in the Church.

“Although I grew up as a Lutheran, ever since I was a teenager I was very interested and curious about the Catholic Church,” Sarah says. “I did a lot of reading on my own to learn about it. A few of the things that convinced me I should enter the Catholic Church were its strong devotion to Mary and its reverent liturgies. I felt that Mary didn’t have enough of a place of prominence in the Lutheran church. I especially love the Latin Mass.”

Truly, the New Fire that was kindled and blessed in our church vestibule this Easter bears testimony to something incredible: to the hope that is alive within our parish walls.

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick Not Just for the Seriously Ill

Fifteen-year-old Annie did not think much of her doctor's announcement that she needed to have her tonsils removed, especially after he explained that the surgery was routine and she would heal up just fine.

But the day before her surgery, when she saw her parish priest seated on the couch in her living room, ready to give her the Anointing of the Sick, Annie started to panic. "Am I going to die?" she asked, figuring that only on death's doorstep would she receive the Anointing of the Sick.

"No," Annie's father said, with a half-chuckle. "Father is here to give you the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, not the last rites!"

It may surprise many of us to find out that the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is not just given to someone at the point of his or her death. In fact, drawing on a verse from Mark's Gospel, Caesar of Arles, one of the Church

Fathers, directs us: "As often as some infirmity overtakes a man, let him who is ill receive the Body and Blood of Christ; let him humbly and in faith ask the presbyters for blessed oil, to anoint his body, so that what was written may be fulfilled in him: 'Is anyone among you sick? Let him bring in the presbyters, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he be in sins, they will be forgiven him.' See to it, brethren, that whoever is ill hasten to the church, both that he may receive health of body and will . . . obtain the forgiveness of his sins" (*Sermons* 13:3 [ca. A.D. 522]).



Does this mean that every time we feel ill – even with the slightest bit of a cold – we should seek a priest and ask him to give us the sacrament? Definitely not; the sacrament of which St. Mark speaks is reserved for the seriously ill. Yet, Caesar's remark does indicate that we should seek the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick more often than many of us do.

A sacrament is an outward sign of an inward reality, and, as the *Code of Canon Law* tells us, this beautiful sacrament works first and foremost to heal the sick person's soul – forgiving the individual of all of his or her sins – but also, if it is God's will, to heal him or her of physical illness (*Canon* 1004).

Through the simple rites of this sacrament – a short reading from the Scriptures, reception of the Holy Eucharist, and anointing with oil – God grants many graces to the sick person who receives it. May we all seek to receive the sacrament whenever we are in need of those particular graces.

Immaculate Conception

Catholic Church

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Mass Schedule

Saturday

5 p.m. Vigil Mass

Sunday

8 a.m., 10 a.m., and noon

Monday through Thursday

7:45 a.m. in the rectory chapel

Friday

Tridentine Mass in the church, 7:30 p.m.