

SAINT PETER

CATHOLIC CHURCH



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A Letter from Our Pastor

January 2012

What Treasures Will You Offer God in 2012?

Dear Parishioners,

On Jan. 8, we celebrated the feast of Epiphany, commemorating the day when the Magi journeyed to Jesus and greeted Him with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. It is a feast that, I believe, is important for us to contemplate – especially as we strive to live our lives as good stewards of God's many gifts.

The feast of the Epiphany, with which we conclude the Christmas season and enter into Ordinary Time, bears great meaning for us today, so I want to turn your thoughts to the story of the Magi.

They were men from the East, likely magicians and astrologers – definitely Gentiles – who traveled a long distance to find the Savior. God had shown them a sign of His presence in the star, and they devoted themselves to finding Him.

When they finally found the Christ Child, they had an encounter with the Lord. Scripture tells us, "They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then, they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh."



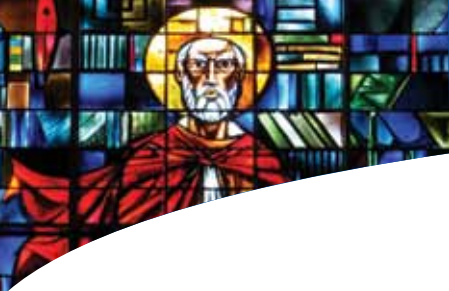
They offered the Christ Child the gifts of themselves and their trades.

Christ came to save all people – Jews and Gentiles, alike – and He wants every one of us to live as His disciples, to encounter Him in the depths of our souls, to turn our hearts to Him, and, just like the Magi, to offer Him our gifts in humble adoration and gratitude for who He is and what He has done.

As a stewardship parish, we talk a lot about our gifts of time, talent, and treasure. Through such gifts, we are able to essentially offer the Lord ourselves – to recognize the many gifts He has given us in all areas of our lives and to give them back to Him in gratitude and humble service.

Notice the gifts of the Magi: gold, of course, represents treasure. And because even today, frankincense is the chief ingredient in the incense used at Mass, it can stand for the gift of the time we offer in worship and prayer. Finally, because it takes effort and knowledge to transform the raw gum from tree

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A Saint for Life: St. Gianna Beretta Molla

As disciples of Christ, the Lord of Life, we are called to respect and defend the life of every human being from conception until natural death.

In today's world, a pro-life mindset is not only largely unpopular, but sometimes even dangerous.

However, the facts remain the same – the gift of life determines our humanity, and as Catholic Christians, we are responsible for its protection. With the strong examples of people such as St. Gianna Beretta Molla, we are able to witness the value of being a people of faith, a people living to build up a culture resting on Christ's values – a culture of life.

From early childhood, Gianna lived an exemplary Christian life. She attended daily Mass with her mother and her brothers, and was a faithful member of "Catholic Action," a lay apostolate dedicated to worldwide evangelization. Gianna often wrote beautiful prayers to the Lord, promising to follow His will no matter the consequences.

As a teenager, Gianna understood the importance of obeying God's will and made a series of resolutions to always follow His guidance. "I wish to die rather than commit a mortal sin," young Gianna once wrote. Yet, at the time, Gianna was not aware of what God had in store for her life.

Throughout her life, Gianna constantly prayed: "O Jesus, I promise You to submit myself to all that you permit to happen to me, make me only know your will." As her life progressed, Gianna would live such prayers in a radical way.

In 1961, as the mother of three and pregnant with her fourth child, Gianna was diagnosed with uterine cancer. To



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preserve her health and life, doctors suggested Gianna undergo a radical hysterectomy – a surgery that would undoubtedly save her life, but consequently terminate her pregnancy. Gianna decided to wait for God's direction. Doctors removed portions of the tumor, but knew that full eradication would take a full hysterectomy. But Gianna was determined to keep her uterus intact, determined to give birth to her unborn baby. Knowing the serious dangers ahead, Gianna instructed her husband a few days prior to delivery, "If you must decide between me and the baby, have no hesitation: choose – and I demand it – the baby, save him."

As it turned out, Gianna's tumor had progressed so far that a few days after she delivered her fourth child she passed away – a martyr for her child! Caring for the life of her unborn child meant the loss of her own life, but such knowledge never weakened her respect for life in the least. Gianna knew that her child's life was just as valuable as her own, and she needed to care for both of them. Gianna ultimately lost her life because she wasn't willing to sacrifice her child for her own sake.

What a strong woman!

Though this seems radical, we are all called to respect the lives of the unborn just as Gianna did, and Gianna's fate only secures for us the reward we will receive if we work to build a culture of life, just as she did. On April 24, 1994, Gianna Beretta Molla was beatified by Pope John Paul II, and in May 2004, she was declared a saint. Because St. Gianna lived as a defender of life, she now enjoys eternal life with Almighty God! Let us heed her example and build a culture of life!

Helping Parishioners in Their Grief

The Bereavement Ministry

Marty Venvertloh has been St. Peter's Parish Nurse for more than 20 years, and much of her ministry during that time has included spending time with the sick, the convalescing, and those who are preparing for death. So when former pastor Fr. Dan Bergbower identified the need for a Bereavement Ministry within our parish community approximately seven years ago, Marty jumped at the opportunity to facilitate it.



“My ministry deals with holistic wellness of body, mind and spirit, and when I coordinate grief sessions, we often talk about not only our spiritual loss, but how it affects us physically and mentally,” Marty says. “We can't take the pain away. It is something that each individual has to go through on his or her own, and we can't put a timeframe on it. But as terrible as it feels, it is important to identify health issues that people experience when they have a loss. There is a real tie-in with nursing to help people work through it, and you can identify when someone has symptoms of emotional or physical tension, and help refer them to the proper channels.”

One of the primary ways the Bereavement Ministry accomplishes this mission is through a semi-annual, four-week bereavement program called “A Time to Grieve, a Time to Heal.” Each year, approximately six weeks before Thanksgiving and six weeks before Easter, Marty sends a postcard to parishioners who have lost a loved one within the last year, inviting them to attend the sessions in an effort to offer them support, give them a venue in which they can share their thoughts and feelings, and let them know about different ways they can approach the grieving process. Marty also advertises “A Time to Grieve, a Time to Heal” in the weekly bulletins of all the parishes in the deanery, making this a truly community-driven event.

“The sessions are a little bit of everything,” Marty says. “There are some videos that have a spiritual component with them, so we use the videos and talk about the four seasons: how you need the winter stillness that, on the outside, looks

to be cold and dormant, while on the inside, the roots are being nourished and there is life, even though it looks bleak. There is also so much in Scripture that supports this, so I encourage people to bring and share what has helped them in the grieving process, and they do share a lot of different things: poems, Scripture passages, experiences they have had. Most of the

groups have been small, which is wonderful, because people feel comfortable about sharing. There are some house rules at the outset: you cannot take anybody else's grief home with you and make it your own. You have to leave it at the sessions.”

In addition to the grief sessions, St. Peter's Bereavement Ministry coordinates and participates in many activities throughout the year that honor the faithful departed, and help provide healing for their families. On Dec. 28, the ministry organized a Mass of the Innocents at the church, which commemorates children who have passed away before or after childbirth. At the Mass, parents and loved ones had an opportunity to write the names of their lost children in the Book of the Innocents, and included personal messages. Similarly, the ministry facilitates a Mass of Remembrance on the Feast of All Souls, Nov. 2, at which names are read aloud from the parish Book of the Dead, and parishioners are offered votive candles to take home in memory of lost loved ones.

The Bereavement Ministry also participates in an annual, community-wide balloon release each year around Easter.

“We actually invite the entire city to come to the balloon release, and we read the names of loved ones and remember them in prayer,” Marty says. “This is held outside at one of the local cemeteries, and we have a different minister every year from a different religious denomination.”

Marty says that offering comfort to others during this difficult but potentially beautiful time in their lives has greatly helped her in her own understanding of the relationship between death to this life and eternal glory with God in heaven.

“Our souls are the same – our bodies are transient, but our souls when we were born are the same souls that leave our body

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Parish School Preview Catholic Schools



As the Christmas and New Year holidays fade into memory and classes resume at St. Peter Catholic School, our students and teachers can take solace in the fact that Catholic Schools Week is just around the corner.

Each year, the National Catholic Educational Association provides a theme for Catholic schools around the country to rally behind as we celebrate the wonderful gift that Catholic education is to our children and to our community at large. This year's theme is "Faith, Academics, Service" – citing three pillars that St. Peter upholds every day.

"Catholic Schools are an extension of the what the children are learning at home and in the parish," says St. Peter principal Janet Bick. "We're there to help teach our children that learning, faith and service are a way of life. We are nurturing these young people so they can become our leaders in the Church and in the community – so that they can pass that on to others and to their children. Now is the time to teach them how to live their faith and to see the importance of attending

Mass, of serving others, and of being the best they can be, so that they can continue that as adults."

Catholic Schools Week begins on Sunday, Jan. 29 and concludes Friday, Feb. 3. Throughout the week, the school and the parish together will celebrate with a number of important activities. This year, the school's new Leadership Council, which has representatives from each fifth-, sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade class, made several suggestions about activities to the administration. Many of these ideas were enthusiastically accepted and will be incorporated into the festivities.

The celebration will kick off with students participating in all the weekend Masses, and at a Grade School Association-sponsored pancake breakfast on Sunday.

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Prepares to Celebrate Schools Week



On Monday, the students will be invited to wear pajamas, and will get to kick back and watch educational movies in the afternoon.

On Tuesday, the entire school will participate in a special Mass celebrated by the bishop with all the Catholic schools in the city.

On Wednesday, the school will participate in its regular weekly Mass at 8:30 a.m., and parents will be invited to visit the classrooms afterwards.

On Thursday, the students will dress as whatever they would like to be when they grow up. It will also be "Music Day," during which they will learn about all the different instruments and be treated to a special concert by the hand-bell choir, led by music teacher Sara Reeder, and a performance by our new parish music director, Scott Fitzgerald.

The week will conclude on Friday with the students wearing their favorite sports shirts, participating in an electronics "show and tell" in the morning, and the annual eighth-graders versus staff volleyball game in the afternoon.

Throughout the week, the entire school will participate in a service project, collecting food items for Catholic Charities.

"On Friday, we'll make a human chain passing all the items from the classrooms to the gym as a way for the students to see just how much we've done," says vice principal Cindy Venvertloh. "The pile will be really big again this year, and the kids will get to have a great sense of accomplishment at what they've done together."

Our parish school is a vital part of our parish community. Accordingly, the entire parish is welcome to attend and participate in several of the week's activities. For further information, check the parish bulletin.

Please join with St. Peter School in celebrating the unique gift of Catholic Education!

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The Spirituality of Stewardship Following in the Footsteps of the Saints

The word “stewardship” has long carried with it the negative stereotype of a financial obligation to the Church. For many, stewardship means “giving my time and money to the Church in support of its work, lest it is unable to survive and thrive.”

Indeed, stewardship does often require sacrifice of some kind. But the reality is that stewardship is not simply some guilt-laden obligation or “bill.” Stewardship is in no way comparable to a tax payment or a charitable networking opportunity at work. Instead, stewardship is a spiritual way of life – an active response to Christ’s invitation to unreservedly “come after me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt 4:19). Stewardship is about how we respond to God’s call to discipleship, and there are many different ways we can respond to the call. Because of this, we can live the stewardship way of life simply by making small choices in our daily lives, under normal, everyday circumstances.

Nowhere in Christian history is there a more archetypal example of the variety of ways we can respond to God’s call than in the lives of the saints. The saints represent a wide cross-section of individuals – old and young, rich and poor – living in different times in human history. Some were called to the religious life, living lives focused on spirituality and material simplicity, and spending their days peacefully praying and helping to form the tenets of the Faith. Others were individuals focused on charitable outreach, dedicating their lives to feeding



the hungry and clothing the naked. Still others faced great adversity and challenges to their faith, and ultimately suffered death and martyrdom in loyalty to Christ and His Church.

In spite of their differences, the one thing that all of these individuals share is that they responded to God’s call to discipleship by utilizing the unique talents that God had given them in ways that were conducive to their individual personalities, and actively influenced the circumstances presented to them in their respective days and times. Con-

templative spirituality, charitable giving, great courage – all of these roads have led to canonization and, ultimately, eternal life with God in His glory. We are all called to do the same.

As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states in its pastoral letter on stewardship, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, “The challenge, then, is to understand our role—our vocation—and to respond generously to this call from God” (43). When thinking about the spirituality of stewardship, take some time to discern your talents, and how you can best respond to God’s call by naturally and effectively using the gifts He has given you. God has provided many roads to the Kingdom of Heaven, and in the saints, we see examples of the many roads that have been taken. By choosing the one that is best for us, we can live stewardship as a spiritual practice and a way of life, and answer His call to discipleship.

Bereavement Ministry *continued from page 3*

at whatever age,” she says. “Our bodies get tired, but the souls of our loved ones are in heaven and have not changed; people suffering a loss still have that loved one, and they’ll be together again. I really gain comfort from helping people understand that and being with people at that time in their lives, and the more faith you have, the more you will understand that it is just a beautiful time. It’s part of life, and we will all experience it, and if I can help a few people understand it a little more deeply, than I think the Bereavement Ministry is accomplishing its mission.”

There are numerous volunteer opportunities within the Bereavement Ministry umbrella – from serving in liturgical ministries at funerals, to helping with funeral luncheons, to helping set up and facilitate the “A Time to Grieve, a Time to Heal” sessions. If you would like more information about St. Peter’s Bereavement Ministry, or would like to volunteer, please call Marty Venvertloh at 222-3155, or contact her via e-mail at m.venvertloh@cospq.org.

Building Community is in the Cards

Seniors' Cards and Games

No matter where you are in life, it is important to have a group of peers who can offer support, not to mention show you a good time.

That's why Alden and Joyce Shipp volunteered to organize the Seniors' Cards and Games group, an opportunity for seniors to get together each week for games and fellowship.

"We just have a good time," Alden says. "We are always having people inquire about it. It's in the church bulletin, so people are always aware of it. I think we're growing. The group we have now is very dedicated. Unless they are out of town, they're usually there every week."

And that is essentially what the group is all about – getting together and enjoying each other's company. Group members meet every Thursday in the Martha Jane Room from 1 to 3 p.m. The game they play is cribbage, an old English card game that is played by two to four players.

The group started about a year-and-a-half ago with less than 10 people, and that number has grown to around 15. The majority of these members are St. Peter parishioners, and all are retired. The Seniors' Cards and Games group is one of the things they do to be involved and build community in our parish.

"It gives that age group something else to do among people of common interest and faith," Alden says. "I know that seniors are extremely busy. There's probably a few people that play that are not involved in other areas of the parish and community, but I would say that for the most part they are involved in other things in the parish."

There are also some people in the group that are not members of St. Peter, and even some who are not Catholic. Because of this, the group provides an opportunity for evangelization, simply by giving witness to the Catholic lifestyle.

"Evangelization is more than converting people to a Christian faith," Alden says. "All the people in our group are of the Christian faith. I think only time will tell whether or not they see what goes on with us – the way we behave, the way we act. And we talk a lot about various religious matters. We do talk quite a bit about church issues. My wife and I encourage people to participate in other functions in the church, and I know some of them do. We're evangelizing in that respect."

Regardless of where they are from or to what church they belong, the members of the Seniors' Cards and Games group know the value of coming together for friendship and fun.

"The group does things together as a parish group," Alden says. "It's a chance for fellow parishioners to get together to share time and have a good time."

For more information about Seniors' Cards and Games, call Alden and Joyce Shipp at 217-222-7355.





St. Peter Catholic Church

2600 Maine Street
Quincy, Illinois 62301

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New Mass & Reconciliation Schedule

Sunday Masses

Saturday: 5 p.m.,
Sunday: 8, 9:30 and 11 a.m.

Weekday Masses

Mon-Sat: 8:00 a.m., except for
Wednesdays during the school year:
8:30 a.m.

Reconciliation

Saturday: 7:30-7:50 a.m.,
3:30-4:30 p.m. or by appointment

What Treasures Will You Offer God in 2012?

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sap into the forms used in perfumes, myrrh is a fitting symbol for our gift of talent.

What the Magi teach us is that such gifts of self are necessary responses to an encounter with Christ. When we meet Christ and allow Him to change our lives, we are brought to our knees, just like the Magi were, in awe-filled adoration. After all, He is the Lord of lords. He is the giver of all good gifts, the One without whom we would have nothing; the One without whom we would be nothing. And so, like the Magi, we are called to offer Him our lives as His disciples; as His grateful stewards. We give Him our time, our talents, and our treasure, serving Him through those gifts. And then, as we, like the Magi, "depart by another way," having changed our lives and committing ourselves to Christ, our lives will bear

witness to Christ, calling others to encounter Him and making disciples of all nations.

As we begin this New Year, let us take a moment to reflect on our place in the Epiphany narrative. Are you willing to journey to the Lord, to encounter Him in a deeper way than ever before? He is here. He wants us to come to Him. Look for Him in the scriptures, in the lives of others, in the Mass, and, in a particular way, in the Eucharist. He will change your life!

Rev. Msgr. Leo J. Enlow, V.F.
Pastor