

SAINT PETER

CATHOLIC CHURCH



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February 2012

A Letter from Our Pastor

Preparing for Lent as Good Stewards

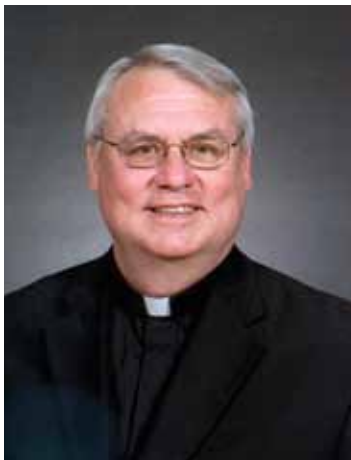
Dear Parishioners,

Sometimes I get questions along the lines of “Do I have to go to Mass every Sunday?” or “Do we really still have to abstain from meat on every Friday during Lent?” or even “Are we required to tithe our income to the Church?” You may have been asked those questions by other Catholics. Perhaps you’ve even asked similar questions yourself.

By the way, the simple answers to those questions are “Yes;” “Yes;” and “No.” However, the tithe (10 percent) is the biblical guideline for giving. In some places in past times it was required, and even today many Catholics find following that practice to be a great spiritual blessing.

But my major concern when I hear such questions goes beyond the correct answer to the specific inquiry. The more important matter to my mind is, why do people want to do as little as possible in their Christian lives?

Certainly we need the laws of the Church to teach us what our duties are to God, to other Christians in the Body of Christ, and to ourselves. But as we grow in our understanding of the

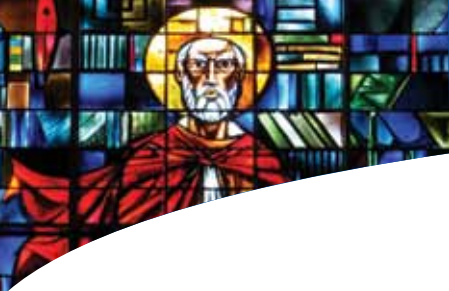


Faith and develop a more mature spiritual life, we should go beyond, “How little can I do and still avoid hell?” or to put it another way, “How little can I do and still get to heaven?” We have to ask ourselves, “Is that where I want to go?”

We know from the Our Father, the prayer Jesus Himself taught us, one characteristic of heaven. In that prayer we pray, “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” God’s will is always done perfectly in heaven. If we don’t want to do God’s will, He won’t force us to go there – and you’ll realize you have chosen the alternative.

My point is, let’s do away with minimum Christianity! Instead of asking, “How little can I do and stay out of hell?” let’s begin asking, “How much can I do for God, who created me, who redeemed me, who pours blessings out every day? How much do I love God, who loves me enough to die for me?” The psalmist asked, “How can I repay the LORD for all the good done for me?” (Ps 116:12) Let’s make that question our own and make it our goal to live maximum Christianity!

continued on back cover



Good for the Giver



Stewardship in Nature

The Sea of Galilee stays fresh and healthy because it "gives away" all its water through the Jordan River. When all that water finally drains into the Dead Sea, it just stays there, becoming stagnant and lifeless. Human beings are the same way. Giving of ourselves is one of the main ways we stay spiritually healthy.

If you don't give it away, you can't keep it. But if you give it away, it will increase.

How's that for a riddle? The best answer, if you haven't already guessed it, is love. But the beauty of this paradox is that there can be a number of different answers. Another one might be artistic talent. Ask any artist, and he or she will tell you that his or her skill for drawing or painting decreases after a few weeks or months of inactivity. But the more one paints, the more one's talent grows.

If you hoard it, you'll lose it; if you share it, it stays healthy. We even see this concept illustrated in nature. For example, the Sea of Galilee teems with fish and other wildlife. However, all the water in this beautiful reservoir is constantly being drained through the Jordan River, which stretches about 60 miles, providing the only fresh water for all of Israel. It finally drains into the Dead Sea – which, unlike Galilee, has no outlet. Consequently, it is stagnant and totally lifeless, continually evaporating into thin air.

The point, in a nutshell, is that the good steward takes care of his or her gifts by giving them away. By doing so, you don't have less left over; rather, you have more!

There is a story that when Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta was visiting one of the hundreds of convents she had founded, the

Superior of that convent told her, "Mother, we don't have enough time to do our work with the poor; there's just not enough hours in the day." Blessed Mother Teresa responded, "Then you need to pray more." When they added another full hour of prayer each day, they somehow found that they had enough time to do even more for the poor in that city.

The difficulty with this idea – that by giving we receive – is that it's still a struggle to give. At the very moment of giving, it looks for all the world like we'll have less left over. This is especially true when it comes to money. Mathematically, after you write a check to a charity or to the parish, you end up with less money to spend on other things. And yet, the immaterial value of our sacrifice is immeasurable. This is why Jesus speaks so frequently in the Gospels about the spiritual benefits of giving to others. We do have more after we give, but it is simply more of something else – and something better.

When we emphasize stewardship at St. Peter, it isn't primarily to increase "volunteerism" or to swell our budget. Rather, our first aim is always the "good of the giver." It's not because the parish has needs, but because we have a need to give. In the end, the model Steward is Jesus, who indeed gave all, even His very life, so that we may have everything.

Adult Servers Offer Support to Mourning Families

The death of a loved one can be extremely difficult to face. It is during these times of mourning that we most need the support of those around us. At St. Peter Parish, one group of parishioners is dedicated to being there for families during funerals by assisting the priest in his liturgical duties.

John Ley volunteers as a Funeral Mass Server at St. Peter. He and the other men in this group serve at parish funerals much in the same way that altar servers do at weekend Masses. John sees this service as a unique opportunity to lend his support to fellow members of his parish family.

"I've always felt it an honor and a privilege to serve any Mass," he says. "In this particular case, it's a corporal work of mercy, to bury the dead. I feel that here you are able to bid farewell to a person who has been a member of our parish family. I see that as fairly important to be able to do that."

John has been a Funeral Mass Server since the group was established about seven years ago. The primary function of this ministry is for adults to provide the services necessary to assist in the Mass and other funeral ceremonies. These services include helping the priest on the altar during the Mass, greeting the casket when it arrives in the church, and processing in and out of the church with the casket. However, this is not the group's only function.

The other, and perhaps more significant role of the Funeral Mass Servers is to offer their support to those who are mourning the loss of someone close to



"It reminds me that when I'm seeing that person, the body is there but the spirit is in heaven, and I'm serving for another saint in heaven." — John Ley, Funeral Mass Server

them. The families and loved ones of those who have passed away are very grateful that these men are able to present this service to them.

"Anytime you're a part of the service, the family really appreciates you being up there," John says. "That appreciation that they show is quite rewarding."

Those in mourning are not alone in benefitting from the group's service, however; the ministry also positively affects the Funeral Mass Servers themselves. This final Mass is one of the most important parts of the funeral, since it is the very last time the family is able to

celebrate the Mass and pray with their loved one, and John is also blessed by his participation.

"It reminds me that when I'm seeing that person, the body is there but the spirit is in heaven, and I'm serving for another saint in heaven," John says. "We talk about all the saints in heaven, but here each one could be another saint in heaven."

For more information about the Funeral Mass Servers at St. Peter or to become involved, please call John Ley at 217-224-1810.



Teaching the Faith to Our Sunday



Carrie Lavery first became acquainted with St. Peter's Sunday School ministry seven years ago, when she brought her then-12-month-old son to participate in the program during Mass. Carrie quickly fell in love with the ministry, and soon began volunteering with the program. Today, she serves as the facilitator for this faith formation opportunity for preschool children, and she says that it has become a fundamental part of her parish stewardship.

"I just believe that it's a foundational program for our children," she says. "It just helps them to build those first building blocks of their faith. It also allows families to attend Mass together without entertaining a toddler. The children get to learn about God and their faith in this program, and it allows the adults to fully focus on worship in Mass, so it's just been a great thing."

The Sunday School ministry, which takes place during the 9:30 a.m. Mass on Sundays, is held in the church basement, and is available for children ages 1 to 5. The program offers age-appropriate lessons and activities for the children that

teach them about the Catholic Faith while their parents celebrate the Mass.

"Often, at that age, they're not getting the lessons that are being taught at Mass," Carrie says. "What I love about Sunday School is that it coordinates with the readings that week, but it brings them down to their level, so it's a simplified version of what they are getting at Mass. It includes stories or activities that resonate with them and that they can grasp, so they are actually learning something."

Carrie cites a recent example from Advent, when the ministry utilized a classic holiday symbol to illustrate to the children the true reason for the celebration of Christmas.

"We colored candy canes on a piece of paper, and when we flipped it over, the kids recognized the candy cane as a 'J,'" Car-

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— Carrie Lavery

Our Youngest Parishioners in School



Carrie explains. 'J' is for 'Jesus,' so it was talking about some of the symbols of Christmas and what they represent in the Catholic Faith. Jesus is the reason for the Christmas story, and the reason for the holiday. Sometimes they are very simple activities, because their attention spans don't last much longer than that!"

Sunday School is that it reads the readings that week, but at their level, so it's a story that they are getting and that they can grasp, learning something."
Teacher, facilitator

completed the diocesan Protecting God's Children training program, as well as junior high students who take this opportunity to participate in outreach as part of their preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Sunday School is open to anyone with young children at any time during the 9:30 a.m. Mass, and there is no registration or payment required. Childcare is also available during this time for children under the age of 1. The Sunday School ministry is staffed by a team of volunteers who have

For Carrie, volunteering with this ministry has helped her to find an extended family amongst her fellow Sunday School volunteers, and it has also helped her to grow in her own faith formation.

"When I'm teaching, I'm spending a lot more time looking at the readings of that week, and I'll go and get the background on that Scripture reading," she says. "So I'm deepening my own faith by learning more about what it means in teaching someone else, rather than just hearing it. There's something so simple about teaching little children, and bringing any little bit of information about Jesus that you can share with these kids is worth it. It gives me joy as a teacher and mother just to be able to share that with them, and to know that anything they learn about Jesus can take them one step further in their faith."

All adult parishioners are welcome to serve as volunteers for Sunday School. If you're interested in more information, simply stop by on a Sunday Morning and see what the Sunday School ministry is all about. You can also contact Carrie Lavery at 217-228-0426 or clavery3@hotmail.com.

Lenten Practices: *Penance and Abstinence*

To many Catholics, the practices of fasting and abstinence during Lent are as much a part of our Faith as is our sacred liturgy. Catholics know that when Lent arrives, it's time to say goodbye to meat on Fridays and hello to fish sticks and bean burritos. It's almost as if our Lenten obligations were hardwired into our respective biological clocks at the moment we were baptized.

If there is one thing Catholics are good at, it's abiding by the laws of tradition, and the tradition of fasting and abstaining from meat during Lent draws its lineage from the early days of the Faith.

But why, exactly, do we fast and abstain from meat during Lent? And what are the Church's guidelines for this tradition?

In November 1966, the United States Council of Catholic Bishops issued a pastoral statement on penance and abstinence. The statement outlines the scriptural significance behind fasting and abstinence and directs the faithful on when it's encouraged and appropriate to do so.

According to the statement, there are four main points the Church wants to make about the tradition of penance and abstinence:

1. All humans are sinners.
2. Penance and abstinence are ways to turn away from sin and back to God.
3. The Church is constantly in a stage of ongoing renewal and penance.
4. Advent, Lent and the vigils of certain feasts are the primary penitential seasons of the Church. The statement makes clear that the practices of penance and abstinence are tools created to help lead us to Christ, not stringent laws designed to cause discomfort and pain. Fasting, abstinence and penance help us to reflect on, and in some way understand, the suffering and selflessness our Lord experienced during His passion and death.

Traditionally, Catholics must abstain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday (which falls on Feb. 22 this year) and Good Friday (April 6). And, because Christ died on a Friday, the Church asks us to also abstain from meat on all Fridays during the season of Lent. Lent is also a time of penance. In prepara-



tion for Jesus' death and resurrection, the Church encourages all Catholics to seek forgiveness from sins and to renew their spirits in accordance with the Father's spirit. The overarching goal of all Christians is to become "one with the Father," and penance and abstinence help us attempt to do that.

But Lent isn't just about what we aren't "allowed" to do. The Church encourages us all to seek ways to alleviate the pain and suffering of others – just as Christ lifted the burden of sin from the spirit of humankind – "by special solicitude for the sick, the poor, the underprivileged, the imprisoned, the bedridden, the discouraged, the stranger, the lonely, and persons of other color, nationalities, or backgrounds than our own." (Pastoral Statement on Penance and Abstinence)

This Lent, as the world prepares for the anniversary of Christ's death and resurrection, take on a few Lenten practices of your own. In addition to abstaining from meat on Fridays and Ash Wednesday, find a way to share the love of Christ with others through gifts of time (prayer), talent (actions) and treasure (monetary offerings). The life of a disciple, as outlined in the Gospels, requires a renewed heart and a penitent soul. Seek to understand this Lent, in some small way, the magnitude of our Lord's suffering and love.

Coffee and Donut Sundays, Delighting the Parish for More Than 20 Years

Are donuts and coffee capable of bringing a parish community together? At St. Peter they certainly are.

For more than 20 years — from September through May — St. Peter has hosted a coffee and donut reception after each of the Masses on the first Sunday of the month.

Each year, two parish couples chair the “donut ministry.” They alternate months, ordering the donuts, setting up and serving the donuts, coffee, and juice, and coordinating volunteers. This year’s co-chairs are Mike and Viv Schwartz and Dave and Kathy Harmon.

On average, the parish consumes around 30 dozen donuts between the three Sunday Masses. The chairs can decide where to order from, but generally the donuts come from Daylight Donuts, County Market or Hy-Vee.

Providing coffee and donuts may seem like a strange thing for the parish to be engaged in, but after participating for more than 20 years, Mike is convinced it is a great idea.

“We put it on so that everyone can have an opportunity for fellowship,” Mike says. “The coffee and donuts get people to come down — get them mingling and talking and meeting new folks. It gives us all a little something to do together as a church after Mass. It’s a really good thing.”

Every other month, the parish also hosts a blood drive on the first Sunday, which coincides with the coffee and donuts. So, blood donors can build their strength back up over coffee, donuts, and fellowship with fellow parishioners.

Hospitality — providing a place of fellowship for the entire parish, especially the new members and visitors — is what makes the ministry so important.

“Most folks stick around and sit for a while,” Mike says. “We’ll take refills of coffee around, or they’ll come back up. People get to talking, meeting new folks and sharing. It’s a great chance for people to get together with friends that go to the same Mass or see folks they haven’t seen in a while. It does a fine job of bringing people together.”

The next time coffee and donut weekend rolls around, stop by for a tasty donut, a cup of coffee and some quality Christian fellowship with fellow parishioners. You will be glad you did!

Anyone interested in volunteering to help serve in this tasty and important ministry can contact Mike and Viv at 217-224-7441 or the parish office at 217-222-3155.



Bill and Barb Dietrich serve during a past Coffee and Donuts.

*“People get to talking, meeting new folks and sharing. It’s a great chance for people to get together with friends that go to the same Mass or see folks they haven’t seen in a while. It does a fine job of bringing people together.”
— Mike Schwartz, Coffee and Donuts ministry co-chair*



St. Peter Catholic Church

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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

Preparing for Lent *continued from front cover*

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, which comes on Feb. 22. As you plan your Lenten rule of life, why not be as generous toward God as you can be? I'm not suggesting that you shed all your other obligations and spend all day every day in the church. What I am suggesting is that you respond to God's blessings, with gratitude, as fully as possible rather than as grudgingly as possible.

After all, Lent is the season when we especially strive to combat sin in our lives. And as the American bishops reminded us in their pastoral letter *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, "Sin causes people to turn in on themselves; to become grasping and exploitative toward possessions and other people; to grow accustomed to conducting relationships not by the standards of generous stewardship but by the calculus of self-interest: 'What's in it for me?' Constantly, Christians must beg

God for the grace of conversion: the grace to know who they are, to whom they belong, how they are to live—the grace to repent and change and grow, the grace to become good disciples and stewards."

Let's use this Lent to ask God to remove our attitude of "What's in it for me?" and to replace it with the grace to become good disciples and stewards.

Have a blessed and holy Lent.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Msgr. Leo J. Enlow".

Rev. Msgr. Leo J. Enlow
Pastor