

From the Deacon's Desk

Anointing of the Sick Mass:

We will have Anointing Masses Saturday and Sunday, October 14th and 15th at our regular weekend Mass times. Those being Anointed can either sit up in the front (if unable to move well), or anywhere in the church by an aisle seat. At the proper time after the homily, Fr. Fred and Deacon Jerry will come around to lay hands on you and anoint you.

When people are sick or suffering – especially for a long time or with a terminal disease – they become discouraged, depressed, angry and afraid. Anointing of the Sick can give people the grace, strength and encouragement to bear their illnesses with hope and abandonment to God. The sacrament also assures people that they are not alone in their suffering, that God is with them and the Christian community is praying for that individual. Anyone who is suffering from chronic illness, disease, or prolonged pain is encouraged to be anointed, and it may also be appropriate for people suffering emotional and psychological pain. Even if people are not in need of Anointing, it is a good practice for a faith community (especially younger members of the church) to see and witness what the Anointing of the Sick looks like.

The actual anointing of the sick person is done on the forehead, with the prayer "Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit", and on the hands, with the prayer "May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up". To each prayer the sick person, if able, responds: "Amen."

Whole Community Catechesis:

Last Sunday was our first Whole Community Catechesis gathering and we had over 100 people; parents with families, adults both young and older, and those without children who attended. We had a wonderful breakfast after the Sunday morning Mass, and the Eucharistic table flowed-over into the community fellowship table. After the breakfast, students and kids went off with their catechists and I stayed and lead the adults in a presentation and discussion of Halloween and All Saints and All Souls Day. Although most people think of Halloween as a purely secular celebration, Halloween actually began as a vigil for All Saints and All Souls Day. The word itself (Halloween) has as its root word "Hallow" which means "To Make Holy." We discussed how all three celebrations fit together in the church's understanding, and then we talked at length about the connection between all the Saints and all the Souls which includes you and me.

The saints, both living and deceased, are God's holy people sharing God's holy gifts. In God's wisdom God has spread out the gifts of the Spirit over the whole community. No one member of any Catholic community has all the gifts needed to effectively be the body of Christ here on earth. In any Catholic community, we need to find and name the individual gifts and talents of those within the community, and effectively call those forth in order to be the body of Christ that God intends us to be.

While we usually think of saints as being deceased and canonized, it was common in the early centuries of Christianity to refer to living Church members as the saints of God. All of the baptized faithful are among God's holy people, and are all part of the communion of saints. Catholicism has a beautiful understanding that we are all connected as a community of believers, and we are all interconnected. To get to heaven someday, I need you and you need me. We get to heaven together. In biblical theology, God calls individuals to be part of a community, and God saves the community, not individuals. This belief is so strong in the Catholic tradition that there is no such thing as a solitary (non-community connected) Catholic.

We have a powerful sense of the family of God, and that family is made up of those still alive here on this earth, and those alive with God in the next world. There is no separation between us and them. We still are all one family in faith. That is why Catholics often have pictures and statues of important members from our family tradition. Just as one sees various pictures of loved ones in one's home, so too Catholics hold up images of important faith members from our Catholic tradition, with the Blessed Mother having a place of prominence among all the Saints. My mother and father were great people of faith, and because we are still connected and alive under God (me on this earth and them in heaven) I still talk to them and ask for their help and assistance. Human death does not terminate the reality that we still are God's holy family.

Come join us for a wonderful breakfast and the faith discussion session from 10:45 until 12 noon on the first Sunday of each month. Our next topic for discussion in November will be Thanksgiving and Gratefulness as being the beginning of prayer and our relationship with God.

Living the Eucharist: October 9 through November 13

After last year's Alpha Program, parishioners were asking what was next. As a way to pick up where Alpha left off, every year we will try to promote an Alpha 201 type of program and focus on something specifically Catholic for Catholics.

We will also do Alpha again beginning in Lent 2018 for those who did not participate in Alpha last year, and the Whole Community Catechesis program once a month is also a great way to continue on in your spiritual journey into adult Catholicism.

Living the Eucharist will occur on the following Mondays: October 9, October 16, October 23, October 30, November 6, and November 13. All sessions will begin with a pot luck at 6 pm (bring a dish to pass) and the presentation and group discussions will be from 6:30 until approximately 7:30/8:00 pm. The three primary presenters will be Fr. Fred, Joe Frankenfield, and Jerry Green.

Living the Eucharist is a dynamic, parish-based program designed to help revitalize parish life and mission through a more profound experience of Sunday Mass. It helps the entire parish—adults, teens, and families—grow in their Catholic faith and live more fully as missionary disciples of Jesus.

We Catholics are always in need to renew our experience of the Sacrament of the Eucharist as a mystery to be **believed**, a mystery to be **celebrated**, and a mystery to be **lived**.

Living the Eucharist renews and heightens parishioner involvement in the Sunday Eucharist, helps parishioners connect the celebration of the Eucharist more closely with the mission of Jesus Christ and the Church, and inspires them to live more intentionally as missionary disciples of Jesus during the week.

Living the Eucharist will have a similar format as the Alpha program and have a meal, followed by a presentation and group discussion. **There are many goals in the Living the Eucharist program:**

- Learn about the true meaning of the Mass.
- Better understand the rituals and symbols of the Eucharist.
- Discover new ways to make the Sunday Mass come alive during the week.
- Grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ together with your fellow parishioners.

Since we will once again provide free meals for both Alpha 2018 and Whole Community Catechesis, we are asking that those who want to participate in Living the Eucharist bring a dish to pass.

The Theology of Anointing of the Sick:

Suffering and illness have always been among the greatest problems that trouble the human spirit. Jesus understood and shared in that suffering with us, but his passion transformed pain and death into the glory of the resurrection. Our life in him helps us grasp the mystery of suffering more deeply and bear our pain with greater courage.

Although Christians have always anointed and prayed for the sick, our celebration and even our understanding of the sacrament has changed throughout history. Today, many Catholics are not sure what the sacrament is, when it should be celebrated, and who should participate. As a result, some people who would benefit from the sacrament do not request it, avoid it, or only ask for it when the fear of death is near.

The history of the sacrament originated in the healing ministry of Jesus. In the first century and in Jesus' culture, sickness was often associated with sin. People who were ill suffered not only from the illness but also from the pain and guilt of isolation. As Jesus healed, he touched people with God's healing love, freed them from the pain and guilt of isolation, and restored them to their rightful places within the community.

The early Christians, knowing that the spirit of Christ was among them, continued his healing ministry. In James 5:14-15 we read, "Is anyone among you sick? They should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise them up. If they have committed any sins, they will be forgiven."

By the Middle Ages, perhaps due to the high mortality rate and the emphasis on the terrors of hell, the sacrament of the sick lost its association with healing, lost its communal dimension, and became a means of purifying the soul. The prayers emphasizing forgiveness and personal salvation, lead to it being seen as "last rites." Although there is an option for "last rites" within the Anointing of the Sick sacrament, this was not the original meaning of the sacrament.

The Second Vatican Council in the early 60's reclaimed the original character of this sacrament. Today, it emphasizes the concern of the Church for anyone sick and suffering, and the mental and physical healing power of Christ.

The anointing of the sick is a sacrament of the Church in which the priest prays, lays hands and anoints the sick person with blessed oil. It may be preceded by the sacrament of reconciliation and followed by the Eucharist.

The sacrament may be repeated if the person suffers from a different illness or injury, or if the same illness or condition becomes more serious. Elderly people may be anointed if they have become weakened even though no serious illness is present.

Anyone who is dangerously ill due to sickness, injury or old age may be anointed. The sacrament is for anyone with serious mental or emotional illness as well. The rite states clearly that a person should be anointed at the beginning of illness, or before surgery whenever a serious condition is the reason for the surgery. The anointing may be repeated if the same illness or condition becomes more serious.

Although some of our sacraments can be celebrated privately when absolutely necessary, the best way to celebrate a sacrament is publically, when the whole community is present in prayer. **The Anointing of the Sick will be celebrated on Saturday and Sunday, October 14th and 15th at our regular weekend Mass times.**

October is Respect Life Month:

We are called to uphold the dignity of life from the moment of conception to natural death. This includes respect for the unborn, the disabled, the elderly, the prisoner, the poor, the post abortive and the vulnerable. **On Sunday, October 1 at 5:30 pm, Bishop Cistone will celebrate a Respect Life Mass at the Cathedral of Mary the Assumption.** All are welcome.

The Bishop will also celebrate a special **Mass of Remembrance for the Unborn** (“Let the Little Children Come to Me”) **with a candle lighting to honor all babies who have died in their mother’s womb.** Parent and families grieving the loss of an unborn child, whether very recently or many years ago, are encouraged to attend. The Mass will be held at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Midland on October 19 at 7 pm.

Other events which promote Respect Life Month are the **Rachel’s Vineyard Weekend Retreat** for those trying to heal from an abortion on November 10 through 12 2017, and a **Physician Assisted Suicide Workshop** on October 25 from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm at the Center for Ministry.

For more information on any of these events, please contact the parish office.

All Saints and Souls Day Celebration & Pictures of Departed Loved Ones:

As we move into the beginning of the end of the liturgical year, we celebrate All Saints and All Souls Day.

All Saints Day is a solemn celebration in the Roman Catholic Church and is a Holy Day of Obligation. This year All Saints Day is Wednesday November 1 (Mass will be celebrated at 7 pm) and the very next day on Wednesday November 3 is All Souls Day. The beautiful reality about Catholicism is that we believe that death does not divide the one family under God. Some of God’s people are still alive on this earth (you and me), and some of God’s people are alive in the next world with the Lord. All Saints and All Souls Day celebrate the reality that we still are all God’s one family.

As a way to remember and celebrate All Saints and All Souls Day, I’d like to invite you to bring pictures of your departed loved ones to display in church throughout the month of November. The pictures and photos will remind us of those members of our family who have gone before us in faith to live with the Lord. Similar to last year we will put the display up on tables near the white northwest wall of the church. Please remember to put your name on the back of the photos so we can return them to you at the end of November. **Please bring in your pictures to me sometime before the weekend of October 28 and 29.**

Eucharistic Minister & Lector Workshop:

I have scheduled meetings for all Eucharistic Ministers and Lectors the last week of November. Eucharistic ministers will meet with me on Monday, November 27 at 7 pm in the church, and Lectors will meet with me on Thursday, November 30 at 7 pm in the church. If for various reasons those days are bad for you, I’ll schedule make up sessions for those who need them.

Overall we do liturgical ministry fairly well, but there is always need for polishing and improving our ministerial presence. This will be an informal meeting where everyone will be encouraged to participate.