Our Mission Statement

Inspired by our patron Francis of Assisi, we seek to proclaim the reign of God by growing in Holiness through our experience of Christ in word, sacrament and one another, offering Hope to those who hunger for human dignity, and extending Hospitality to all.

Weekend Mass:
Saturday: 5:30pm
Sunday: 7:30am
9:30am
11:30am
5:30pm

Daily Mass:
Monday - Friday: 9:00am
St. Mary of the Angels Chapel
The deadlines for the bulletin have all been moved up this season so I write these words on the day before Christmas Eve, with a sense of anticipation and light. The big tree in the church, as of now, has yet to be decorated; when it’s lit, especially in the dark church, it’s a magnificent sight. Every year a member of our parish donates this tree to us, so we are grateful.

We are now in a new year, we celebrate this weekend the Epiphany of the Lord which tells the story of the arrival of the magi from the east. They come to pay homage to the newborn Christ child, and already within the story there is the shadow of a threat, as Herod is suspicious of their asking about a newborn king, and responds with the massacre of all male children under the age of two.

The Christ child from His birth will walk in the shadow of threat and death as he announces the good news of God’s kingdom of justice, peace, mercy, and reconciliation, and He will go to the cross and die for that kingdom. In so many ways, the message of the Christ has always been and still is under threat, anytime we do not see and respond to the radical message of the gospel in our times.

A very fine book recommendation: “A Book of Uncommon Prayer: 100 Celebrations of the Miracle and Muddle of the Ordinary” by Brian Doyle. The description on the back cover begins this way: “Prayers for cashiers and good shoes; for shorter sermons and better senators; prayers for the bruised, foolish, glorious, stumbling, brilliant Church; for chaplains and mathematicians; for idiot authors and muddy dogs..” The preface is titled, “Prayer for the Idiot Author That He Doesn’t Totally Punt in the Pages That Follow.” What I love about this book is that the 100 prayers are all about the everyday and ordinary, that they are not necessarily “proper” or pious, but are rooted in the everyday stuff and happenings of life. And isn’t that where God meets us?

Blessings on your week!

Steve

Handicapped parking spaces are designated for those persons who have gone through the state mandated process and have obtained a permit to park in designated spaces from the DMV. The spaces, or the hashed out areas between the spaces, should not be used for convenience parking or for the temporarily infirmed unless a temporary permit has been issued, and is displayed. The guidelines for obtaining a permit may be found on the NC DMV website. The penalty for violations are fines up to $250. As you are walking past these spaces, perhaps take a moment to say a short prayer of thanksgiving for your good health, and a prayer for the continued strength and courage for those who face physical and medical challenges, some unseen, necessitating their (legal) use of the spaces.

Franciscan Fellowship

Join us for coffee and donuts.

January 6 after 9:30 and 11:30am Masses. Hosted by the Secular Franciscan Order

January 13
Welcome event for new parishioners after 9:30am Mass in Clare Fellowship Hall

Inclement Weather Policy

If there is a cancelation or delay at TFS due to inclement weather, daily Mass will also be canceled. The schedule of the parish offices and other programs and events may or may not be affected. Please check the parish website, call the parish office, or check WRAL or WTVD for information concerning all cancelations and delays.

As always, please make the safest decision for you and your family before deciding to attend any event.
First, St. Francis will be welcoming and sponsoring a refugee family who will be arriving to US soil at the RDU airport on January 17. This family of 7 (Mom and Dad and 5 children) are from the Democratic Republic of Congo and have been living in a refugee camp for many years. Through our partnership with a Wake County refugee resettlement organization called U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), we will provide support for this family over the next year as they transition to living and working and going to school in the US. This is the second refugee family we’ve sponsored.

As we prepare for the arrival of this new family, there are a number of ways you can be part of this ministry, like donation of household and food items, setting up their apartment, and providing short-term support in this family’s transition. We have a core group of parishioners excited to work on behalf of our parish, but we’d love to have more help. You can find out what’s needed and further information at this sign-up link. You can also contact Aggie Dalton at aggiedalton@gmail.com if you are interested in helping. According to the United Nations, there are globally around 68.5 million people who have been forcibly displaced. Less than 1% of refugees worldwide actually receive resettlement. This ministry is a beautiful invitation to reach out in solidarity to our brothers and sisters around the world who have lived with a great deal of persecution, trauma, displacement, and instability and welcome them “home.”

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Another way you can nurture a spirit of welcome to migrants is by providing care and support to Eliseo Jimenez, an undocumented man who since October 2017 has been living in “sanctuary” at one of our neighboring churches, Umstead Park UCC off of Glenwood Ave. Eliseo’s story, like so many others in his situation, speaks of the dreams of coming to the US as a young man looking for a better life and refusing to be separated from his family, including his children who are US citizens. It’s not clear what Eliseo’s legal future is, but there is nothing ambiguous about his faith in Christ, his sacrificial love of his family, and his hopes and dreams for a better tomorrow. There are opportunities to support Eliseo by being a host, meal provider, or translator at UPUCC. In order to do this, one must attend a training. If this is something you are interested in, contact me, trevor.thompson@stfrancisraleigh.org.

Finally, we encourage everyone to continue to pray and advocate for migrants. There has been much in the news in the last few months about a caravan of migrants arising from Central American countries. We believe that while countries have the right to protect and secure their borders, immigrants who come to the United States and particularly those who are undocumented, are a particularly vulnerable population who have often fled violence and persecution and are often seeking safety, family reunification, and economic opportunity. Given the trauma many have endured, community efforts to accompany, assist, and stand in solidarity are vital. Our moral tradition calls on all people of faith and goodwill to stand up in defense of life and human dignity—regardless of one’s immigration status; it is a fundamental calling for us as Catholics. Too often in our contemporary culture, we fail to encounter migrants as persons, and instead look at them as others. We do not take the time to engage these people in a meaningful way, but remain aloof to their presence and suspicious of their intentions. During this National Migration Week, let us all take the opportunity to become more aware and deepen our solidarity, prayer, and advocacy for them as children of God who are worthy of our attention and support.
Faith Formation Ministries

2019 Formation Summer Offerings
To register, visit https://www.stfrancisraleigh.org/formation-camps-2/
Registration Opens Early Spring 2019!

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
June 24-28
9:00am-12:30pm
For rising grades Pre-K 4 through rising 5th
Team Leaders: rising 6th and up
Each day at ROAR, kids will explore God’s goodness and celebrate a ferocious faith that powers them through this wild life. We’ll bring the bible to life with Wild Bible Adventures, experience jaw-dropping discoveries at Imagination Station and venture into an African adventure that engages the whole herd. This summer, St. Francis will be buzzing with excitement through activities that teach children that that God accompanies us along life’s adventures!

MERCY CAMP
A Social Justice Camp for Middle School
Led by our High School youth
June 17-21*
Our popular Mercy Camp gives our youth an understanding and appreciation of the Corporal Works of Mercy. By engaging in small and large group activities, prayer, discussion, community outreach and lots of fun, our youth are drawn into fuller participation in the life and work of the Church. Youth will partner some of our parish ministries and other community ministries.
* Please note that we will have 1 larger camp this year.

ST. FRANCIS INN SERVICE TRIP
Open to Rising 11th Grade through Rising College Freshman
June 24 - 28
St. Francis Inn, a ministry of Holy Name Province, is a community composed of religious and lay people called to minister with the Franciscan spirit to the poor, homeless, alienated and forgotten of inner city Philadelphia. Spend a week at the St. Francis Inn ministering with the staff, helping to provide basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and realization of self-dignity to those whom they serve. The Inn ministers through a soup kitchen and thrift store.

MISSION: MERCY
Open to Rising 10th Grade through Rising College Freshman
July 29 - August 2
Following our Franciscan tradition of serving others, teens will have the opportunity to take part in daily service projects, have meaningful prayer experiences, and spend time growing in love lived in service. This weeklong onsite overnight experience will allow teens to dive deeper in their faith by witnessing and working side by side with those who face daily challenges.
We invite all parishioners to join us for our Open House to see what makes the Franciscan School and the St. Francis of Assisi Preschool so special. The Education Ministry Open House will showcase the many talents and accomplishments of your parish schools. Please stop by after the 11:30 Mass on January 27 for a chance to tour and learn more about our parish schools. The Open House for both The Franciscan School and the Preschool will begin in Clare Fellowship Hall.

**The Franciscan School**, a National Blue Ribbon School since 2011 offers excellent academics through a challenging, faith-based curriculum for children in grades K-8. In addition to traditional subjects, students have the opportunity to study advanced math concepts, Spanish, religion, music, art, and performance art, along with enrichment opportunities and electives available for middle school students. The curriculum includes the integration of technologically advanced tools for learning, including SMART Boards in every classroom, iPads and Chromebooks. TFS offers before-school and after-school care and challenging 6th -8th grade athletics in a competitive league. Facilities include two state-of-the-art science labs, an award winning LEED-certified middle school, St. Mary of the Angels Chapel, and Assisi Community Center that houses a regulation-size gym.

The Franciscan School challenges students to excel in the classroom and in service alongside the many ministries of the Catholic Community of St. Francis of Assisi. Applications for new students in grades K-8 are now being accepted for the 2019-20 school year. For more information about The Franciscan School or to schedule a tour, please contact Lura Tysiac at 919-847-8205x469.

**The St. Francis of Assisi Preschool** offers a variety of innovative programs for children ages 2-5 years. Children in the Preschool participate in specials such as Music and Movement and Spanish and engage in age-appropriate faith formation, and monthly service opportunities. Current research supports the importance of high-quality early education programs in the future success of children in their education, career options, and overall health. St. Francis Preschool strives to provide such an experience for students. Through the use of the Diocese of Raleigh Early Childhood Curriculum, we work to improve skills in all areas of a child’s development: spiritual; social, emotional; physical; and intellectual. Investing in early childhood education now can bring high returns in the future!

Preschool registration for the 2019-20 school year begins January 28 for current students, siblings, and staff. Registration for preschool alumni is February 4. Registration for parish families begins February 11. Registration for all others begins February 20.

For more information or to schedule a tour of the preschool, please contact Jennifer Stephens at 919-847-8205x262.

Registration forms can be found online at www.preschoolatstfrancis.com. To register to attend Open House for either school on January 27, please visit www.franciscanschool.org.
Athletics:
Mark your calendars now! Registration for the High School Boys & Girls Basketball League is now OPEN! The league runs from February through May, and is open to parishioners and non-parishioners of the community. The boys league is for grades 9-12. The girls league is for grades 8-12. For more information, watch for updates on our website at www.stfrancisraleigh.org/high-school-basketball-leagues-2/.

Camp Francis: Registration will be available in January. We have lots of really cool opportunities in athletics, technologies, arts, and various enrichment areas! We have several new opportunities this summer for all age groups. Kids can join us for half day or full day. All camps have min. and max. number of students so camp availability is based on enrollment. For more information visit http://www.stfrancisraleigh.org/camp-francis/.

Parent Child Classes: Registration is now open for Winter and Spring classes! Are you looking for a fun filled activity to do with your young child? Want to learn sign language to better communicate with your infant or toddler? Want to learn some new signs with your toddler and incorporate them with song? Want to connect with your toddler or preschooler with music? Check out Community Life’s Parent Child Classes. All Parent/Child Classes are located in the Cupertino Room of the Assisi Community Center. For more information, visit our website: https://www.stfrancisraleigh.org/parent-child-classes-2/

January Collection Envelopes
January 6 Weekly
January 6 Mortgage Sunday
January 13 Weekly
January 20 Weekly
January 27 Latino Ministries/Latin America
January 27 Weekly

Kathleen Owen, Director of Parish Life

What do you get when you put the eldest of 7 kids of a NC sharecropper with a feisty Scottish woman who was the baby of the family? Drama! That’s what you get! My parents met during WWII – dad enlisted after Pearl Harbor and mom was drafted (after three deferments) by the Royal Air Force of Britain. It must have seemed like a fairy tale at the time. The ‘Big Yank’ as my mother’s family still calls my Dad, whisking the fair lass off to America.

And it was good a lot of the time, but there were times when the stresses of life – babies, jobs, moving, finances – got the best of them. There were some spells when, as a kid, I didn’t feel very certain that they would stay together. And to this day, I try to avoid raised voices and arguments.

But divorce does happen. Adults and kids alike are thrown into situations that are scary, frustrating and – at times – dangerous. But there is a safe place for kids to be able to gather, share their fears and learn coping skills to help them through the process.

DC4K provides your children with a safe and neutral place to gain an age-appropriate understanding of separation and divorce. They will learn how to process and share their feelings. DC4K is designed for kids 5–12 years of age.

For 13 weeks, your children become involved in a fun, caring group that meets near you. The weekly session topics help your children learn that God’s love strengthens them and helps them turn their sadness to hope and their anger to joy. Each session is filled with motivating and exciting activities. Games, crafts, role playing, discussion times, journaling, and activity books help your children process the divorce and move forward in their lives. The music, snacks, read-aloud stories, exercises, and Bible verses teach your children to relax and rest secure in God’s love. The Kids Like Me and Stories from the Bible video dramas present stories of children just like your children, who are experiencing divorce-related problems and have found help and encouragement.

The ParentZone provides helpful articles to assist you on your single-parenting journey. Uplifting messages encourage you. Inspiring articles written from personal experience guide you. So check out the DivorceCare4Kids and DivorceCare offerings here at St. Francis. Visit https://www.stfrancisraleigh.org/DC4Kids-and-adults/. It can only help!
This Week and Beyond...

Jan. 5/6
Used Cell Phone Drive
Did you get a new cell phone for Christmas and wondering what to do with your old one? The Knights of Columbus will be conducting an after-Christmas used cell phone drive. This will benefit InterAct of Wake County, a resource for victims of domestic violence. (www.interactofwake.org). There will be a drop-off box in the Stewardship Center to collect used cell phones, chargers, and accessories. For additional information, contact Joe Azzopardi at webmaster@kofc9709.org.

January 5/6
Caring Casseroles
Are freezer friendly dinners that volunteers provide the first weekend of each month. These casseroles will be given to our Feed the Need families when an extra meal is needed. Please consider making a casserole for a family in need.

January 7
Men's Ministry
Join us at 7:00am in the Padua Room of the Assisi Community Center. Fr. Steve K. will continue his review of What Do You Seek? The Questions of Jesus as Challenge and Promise by Michael J. Buckley, S.J. No need to buy the book, just come and enjoy fellowship!

January 9
50+ GROUP Game Day - BUNCO
We invite all those 50 years of age or older to join us Wednesday, January 9 at 12:00noon in Clare Fellowship Hall for an exciting game of BUNCO. Participants need not be members of the 50+ Adult Group to attend, play and enjoy Game Day – so bring your friends! No gaming skills are required to play BUNCO and the outcome is left entirely to the roll of 3-dice – just roll and keep tally of your points (GOAL = 21 points). Cash prizes will be awarded to the most wins, losses, and BUNCOs. Dessert and drinks will be served.

January 9
Good Grief Support Group
We invite you to join us for the January meeting, 10:00am in Anthony Hall, Room 402. The topic will be “Finding a Balance.” Please join us. For more information, contact Marlys Varga at 919-247-8307 or Marsha Riely at 678-570-3220.

January 10
Contemplative Prayer Sessions
Join with new parishioner Nancy Jones and the Thursday Centering Prayer Groups, as she leads six contemplative prayer sessions. Following the existing morning or evening times of Centering Prayer, experience a new way to meet the Divine in Holy Silence. These six sessions are available to anyone interested as follows: Thursday evenings on January 10, 24, and February 14; Thursday mornings on January 17, 31, and February 7. For questions, please contact Nancy at prayerfulheart3@gmail.com. Come, rest in the warmth of God’s Love!

January 14
St Vincent de Paul
SVdP is helping our neighbors find transportation and raising money through tax deductible vehicle donations. If you have a vehicle to donate for details contact Tom Nolan at 508-827-6155 or email tnonlan7205@gmail.com. If you have any questions about SVdP, contact Cathy Smith at smithtcr@gmail.com. Meetings are in the Padua Room of the Assisi Community Center and begin at 6:45pm.

Jan 13 – April 14
DivorceCare
Find help and healing from separation and divorce through Divorce Care. Most people will tell you that separation and divorce are the most painful and stressful experiences they’ve ever faced.

DivorceCare for Kids (DC4K)
A safe, fun place where your children can learn skills that will help them heal. DC4K groups blend, games, music, stories, videos and discussion to help kids process the divorce and move forward. Sign up now for our Sunday sessions – one for adults and one for children ages 5-12 at www.stfrancisraleigh.org/DC4Kids-and-adults/.

January 12-20
Novena for Life
A novena is a period of sustained prayer over nine days for a particular intention. The St. Francis Knights of Columbus are sponsoring a Novena for Life from January 12 to 20 to pray for a culture of life and civilization of love in our community, nation, and world. The novena will begin with the 11:00am Mass for Life (Bishop Luis Rafael Zarama, celebrant and homilist) at the Holy Name of Jesus Cathedral on Jan 12 and will end with a Rosary after the 9:30am Mass at St. Francis on Jan 20. All are welcome to participate and are encouraged to pray in their homes on each of the nine days of the novena. Prayer for Life cards will be handed out by the Knights before and after all Masses this weekend.

January 30
GriefShare
Our next 10 week series will start on Wednesday, Jan. 30 at 7:00 - 9:00pm in Anthony Hall Room 403 (the library). Many grieving people find they are only beginning the work of healing when friends or family have returned to their daily life routines. Too often people, including Christians, tend to stuff their grief instead of allowing it to do the God-given work for which it is intended. Don’t allow fear of what others may think to keep you from what could help you. You will find encouragement, comfort, and help in grieving the death of a spouse, child, parent, sibling, other family member, or friend. No matter what the cause of your loved one’s death, this is an opportunity to be around people who understand what you are feeling. You will learn how to recognize the symptoms of being stuck in grief and that you do not need to live in bondage to certain emotions. You will learn valuable information...
about facing your new normal in life and renewing your hope for the future. Note: March 6 is Ash Wednesday and we will not meet that day. For more information contact Marlys Varga at marlysvarag@hotmail.com.

Through January 31
Cultivating Nonviolence, Harvesting Peace
We live in troubled times. Day after day, news brings great uncertainty and often anxiety for those of us committed to living the Gospel and its call to peace and justice, truth, and integrity. As the world spins in turmoil, with violence and anger not only tolerated but also accepted and even lauded, we call upon the grace of God to help us weather the storm. But what if that storm continues to rage inside us? How are we called to respond to the turbulence? How do I live in peace when the world is awash in violence? Come and explore answers to these questions and more, Thursday evenings at 7:00pm for 8 weeks. For more information or to register, please contact Ben and Gladys Whitehouse at Gladys.whitehouse@gmail.com or whitehouse-ben5@gmail.com.

February 9
St. Francis Feeds - Breakfast
at Oak City Outreach Center, an outreach center to the hungry and homeless of downtown Raleigh. On the second Saturday of every other month, volunteers from our parish provide the food, serve the breakfast meal, and visit with guests in the dining room of this wonderful center. Families and groups are welcome! http://www.bit.ly/breakfastatOCOCfebruary2019

Wednesdays, through – May 29
Homework Helpers
The Hispanic Family Center, a program of Catholic Charities is dedicated to helping low income Hispanic families in need by empowering them to become more integrated in the community and improving their quality of life through programs of education, health, job training, etc. One such program is an after school program called Homework Helpers that helps struggling elementary children with their homework and daily lessons. Their parents, often burdened with heavy concerns like poverty, illness, and poor English skills, often are not able to provide the help their children need with their school work. If you would like to help these children do better in school, we would love to have you. All are welcome! Below is a link for more information and to sign up. The ability to speak Spanish is not required, but it does help sometimes. www.bit.ly/homeworkhelpers2018.

PSALM 98
Everyone come out from hiding, Dance, sing and celebrate! With song and movement Stand before the Lord! Let the earth, The universe with all its wonders Stand in joy before the Lord Who is our loving Judge. The Lord’s verdict is “Holiness”; His truth is that we are loved.

Fr. Steve K.
Volunteer Opportunities

Visitation Ministry:
Visitation Ministry needs volunteers. Could you visit someone who is in the hospital or nursing home? Your smile can make the difference between an ordinary day and a great day! Contact Sharon Holland at hollandbozo@yahoo.com.

Eucharist Ministry to The Meadows
Would you consider volunteering on Saturday at The Meadows? There is a need for volunteers with the Eucharist Services. This is a great opportunity for families. For information, please contact Andrea McVerry at amcverry@yahoo.com.

Eucharistic Ministry to Springmoor:
If you enjoy sharing the Eucharist and the whole experience of mass, please consider sharing it with those who can no longer come to the table at Mass. Eucharistic Ministry to Springmoor is in need of additional volunteers. To volunteer for the EMs to Springmoor, please contact Janice Horner at 484-949-1417.

Transportation Ministry:
The Transportation Ministry is also in need of volunteers. This ministry provides transportation to parishioners who have no means of getting to church for weekend liturgies. For each ministry, you only need be available once each month.
To volunteer for the Transportation Ministry, please contact Stephanie Smith at 919-302-0080.

Caring Casseroles:
It's that time of year when families are getting ready for the holidays. Please remember that some of our families are facing challenging circumstances and could use your help. Consider making a freezable casserole (not frozen) to help someone who is caring for a loved one who is ill, someone who is between jobs, someone who just needs to feel the care and love of our parish as they rise to meet the challenges of life. For more information, visit https://www.stfrancisraleigh.org/caring-casserole/.

Stephen Ministry:
For those who have suffered a loss or who are going through a difficult time, Winter can be a time of painful loneliness and emptiness. If you are smiling on the outside but full of pain on the inside, and the joy of Spring seems far away, help is available. Our Stephen Ministers are ready to provide confidential, one-to-one Christian care. They will listen, care, encourage, and pray with and for you. For more information, please contact: Kathleen.owen@stfrancisraleigh.org.

Small Group Opportunities

AA Meeting: The Daily Reprieve Group of Alcoholics Anonymous meets Mon. thru Fri. at 7:00am in the LaVerna Center (log cabin across from the Chapel.) Enter thru the garage.

Al-Anon Meetings: Sun. 7:00pm, LaVerna, lower level.

Always God's Children: LGBT people, family, and friends are invited to this support group to discuss issues of personal concern in a confidential, welcoming place. Meets January 6 at 3:15pm in Anthony Hall Room 403.
Visit www.stfrancisraleigh.org/LGBT.

Adult Open Play Nights: Assisi Community Center Gym.
Visit http://stfrancisraleigh.org/adult-open-play to contact the ministry leaders for each of our adult open play nights.

Alzheimer's/Dementia Caregivers Support Group:
The first Wednesday of the month, 1:00-3:00pm in the Padua Room of the Assisi Community Center and the third Wednesday of the month, 7:00-9:00pm in Anthony Hall Rm. 405. Linda Tucker, ltucker40@nc.rr.com, 937-478-9537.

Centering Prayer: Thursdays, 9:35am or 7:30pm in St. Mary of the Angels Chapel.

Community Garden: Saturday mornings, 10:00am.
Call Pat or Paul Kelly at 919-413-8833, email mpmkelly@hotmail.com, or just drop by.

Divorce Care: Tuesdays, 7:00 - 9:00pm in the Cupertino Rm. of the Assisi Community Center.
Confidential, co-ed healing from separation and divorce.
Contact Bill Morgan at dejanuts@yahoo.com.

Job Connections: We provide tools and advice on how to stay motivated and on target. To enroll, contact Mary Horner at SFA.JCM@gmail.com.

Men’s Ministry: Breakfast at 7:00am, Padua Room of the Assisi Community Center. Visit https://www.stfrancisraleigh.org/mensministry/ for details. Check the website for the next meeting.

Peace Pole Prayer: Join us after the 9:30am Mass on Sundays to pray for peace in the world and our country. Meet in front of Clare Hall for a few minutes of prayer.

Prayer Shawl Ministry: Clare Hall Room 201, Jan. 10, 12:00noon-2:00pm. Contact Cindy Cardello, 919-846-8825 or Diane Rotunno, 919-844-7153 for details.

Rosary Ministry: Mondays, 7:30-8:30pm, St. Mary of the Angels Chapel.

50+ Adults Group: Monthly potluck luncheons throughout the year and monthly game days, September through May in Clare Fellowship Hall. Contact Gene Schulz, 919-562-0477.

Women’s Ministry: Contact Kathleen Owen at kathleen.owen@stfrancisraleigh.org or 919-847-8205x241.
Looking Ahead to Next Week

Retrouvaille: Married Singles Lifestyle describes couples that may have lost the sense of closeness they once had as marriage partners and are living more like roommates. Retrouvaille teaches couples how to survive times like these in their marriages. This program has helped many couples experiencing difficulty at all levels of marital distress from disillusionment to deep misery. For confidential information or to apply to attend the program beginning with a weekend on February 15, 2019, call 800-470-2230 or email retrouveillenc@msn.com or visit the web site at www.retrouveill.org.

Telling Our Christian Stories

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When we were growing up, my siblings and I would often ask our grandmother to tell us stories about our mother when she was young. We liked listening to our mother tell those same stories from her perspective. The stories varied in some details, but it always felt like a veil was lifted on the past and we had some sense of where we came from along with some insight about our mother’s personality.

She, of course, did the same thing for my daughters, making them giggle at the story of my getting into her perfume bottle when I was three. Such stories connect us with the people we know. Old friends trade stories of shared experiences; young companions learn about the world from the stories of their elders and even from the stories their friends tell them about their lives.

In Acts 10:36, Peter appeals to his listeners by telling the story they know so well. He even appeals to their shared experience as he says, “You know….” Stories connect us to one another and open the door to understanding each other a little more and a little better. In his story, Peter marks the baptism of Jesus as the beginning of his ministry. Our story in the Christian community begins with baptism as well. In verse 38, Peter records that Jesus went on “doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.” What would the story of our lives after baptism tell people about us? Would someone like Peter tell people that we went about doing good and loving God and neighbor? +

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 42:1–4, 6–7
Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased.

Acts 10:34–38
You know…what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached.

John answered them all, saying, “I am baptizing with water, but one mightier than I is coming.”

A Word from Pope Francis

Being holy is not a privilege for the few, as if someone had a large inheritance; in baptism we all have an inheritance to be able to become saints....Thus we are all called to walk on the path of holiness, and this path has a name and a face: the face of Jesus Christ.

—Angelus, November 1, 2013

Reflection Questions

• Can I proudly tell the story of my Christian life after baptism, or do I feel shame instead?
• If I can’t take pride in the story of my life, what can I do to change the narrative?
Just Why Am I Catholic?

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

What is it that makes one Catholic? I admit that I never really thought much about Catholic identity until I was asked to write about it. Why am I Catholic?

The most honest answer? Because my mom and dad were. That's why I speak English, why I'm an American, why I like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches—and why I'm Catholic. But while I can't change my parents or my mother tongue, there are things (like my religion) that I can change. So why do I stay Catholic?

I'm Catholic and stay Catholic because of the Incarnation. While Jews, Christians, and Muslims all believe in the God of Abraham, Christians believe that "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14). And while all Christians believe in the Incarnation, for Catholics the Incarnation changes everything.

The Incarnation—God becoming one of us—gives Catholics a special insight into created things. We believe that creation is a window to God. I learn who God is through created things. This is the heart of what we believe about the sacraments.

The Things of Life

We believe that all creation is good. The Incarnation means that the very stuff of this earth has been taken up into the kingdom of God. "Things" are not a hindrance to prayer but are the very instruments of our salvation. We are not afraid to use things in our worship: bread and wine, water and oil, candles and incense—even dust and ashes! We aren't afraid to drink alcohol at Mass (or at other times, for that matter).

The Incarnation means that God is not far away, shrouded in mystery. If Moses could say: "For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the Lord, our God, is to us?" (Deuteronomy 4:7), how much more we who believe in the Incarnation! We have a God who is very close to us, who experienced human pain, joy, work, and good friends.

Because I am a Catholic I am called to develop a spirit of wonder and awe in the presence of the ordinary things of life. Think of the grain of wheat falling into the ground and producing stalk and blade. As St. Augustine said, "Where can you find a greater miracle than that?" Catholics care for creation. Ecology, respect for all created things, saving the planet for our children—these are not peripheral to Catholic identity but at its very heart.

Ongoing Work

I have two parting thoughts. First: Although you might have been baptized Catholic as an infant, being Catholic is not something that happens all at once. We grow into it, and we have to work at it. It's like being married. You get married with the exchange of vows. But being married—growing into a married identity—happens over time. You have to work at it—or else, goodbye marriage! Similarly, we have to work at "being Catholic."

Second: When I was ten, I decided to become a priest. I asked my pastor, a Franciscan, what I had to do. He directed me to the Franciscan seminary and I became a friar. I was a Franciscan before I even knew there were other kinds of priests: Redemptorist, Jesuit, Benedictine, and so on. Today, I wouldn't trade being a Franciscan for anything. And if I talk about how wonderful the Franciscans are, I don't mean to imply that there is something wrong if one is a Jesuit or a Redemptorist. And while I am proud of being a Catholic, I don't mean to judge others. One thing Catholics believe is that God loves variety.

PRAYER

Lord, give me a shepherd's heart so that I can show your love and compassion to someone in need.

—From Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time, Rev. Warren J. Savoy and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 14-19

Monday, Weekday:
Heb 1:1-6 / Mk 1:14-20

Tuesday, Weekday:
Heb 2:5-12 / Mk 1:21-28

Wednesday, Weekday:
Heb 2:14-18 / Mk 1:29-39

Thursday, St. Anthony:
Heb 3:7-14 / Mk 1:40-45

Friday, Weekday:
Heb 4:1-5, 11 / Mk 2:1-12

Saturday, Weekday:
Heb 4:12-16 / Mk 2:13-17

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Centering Prayer Alice Stanford 919-781-5860
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EMs to the Homebound Pat Spencer 704-608-1678
EMs to the Magnolia Glen Jacob House 919-449-7634
EMs to the Meadows Andrea McVerry amcverry@yahoo.com
EMs to Rex Hospital Edward Gilmartin edward.gilmartin@gmail.com
EMs to Springmoor Janice Horner 484-949-1417
Prayer Line Ministers Jackie Adamo 847-8205x268
Prayer Shawl Ministry Cindy Cardello 919-846-8825
Dianne Rotunno 919-844-7153
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