



A Letter From Our Pastor

## Enjoying the Different Pace of Summer

I am writing this the day after my 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday. It was a busy day for me, filled with warm greetings and even the surprise of a concelebrating priest at 5:30 Mass – my good friend and traveling buddy, Fr. Don Zeiler, Pastor of St. Gabriel Parish in McKinney. We had both attended a Presbyteral Council meeting in the afternoon and were scheduled for dinner at the home of mutual friends in Plano, so he stopped by just to “hang out” for a couple of hours and wanted to concelebrate the Mass.

We will be spending lots of time together next week (June 13-21) leading our mutual pilgrimage to Italy – “Italy for Rookies and All Stars.” You probably saw that trip advertised around the parish during



the spring months. We fly into Rome and will then immediately board our tour bus and head to Assisi. After a night there, we head to Rome via Cascia, where we will visit the Shrine of St. Rita – that stop has me particularly excited after the awesome musical performance of “A Rose in Winter” on the evening of May 21 in the church! In Rome, we will see all the sights over the course of four days and then head to Pompeii, Positano and the Amalfi coast. We fly back from Rome on June 21.

The following weekend I continue my weeks off by spending a weekend with my siblings in Lake Jackson, south of Houston. We are all getting “up in years” now – 76, 74, 69, 62 – so we need to take advantage of such opportunities when they present themselves. Then, I will

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# THE TRAITS OF THE CHRISTIAN STEWARD

Each day, we strive to live stewardship in our lives, recognizing our roles as “God’s co-workers” in His creative, redemptive and sanctifying work. But in our quest to live as disciples of Christ, many obstacles often arise.

One of the most prevalent roadblocks in living stewardship is understanding the traits that make up a good Christian steward. Surely, it would be much more convenient if we had some sort of “stewardship profiler” who could lay out the necessary steps to becoming a good steward, like on one of those television crime dramas. Unfortunately, it more often feels like living stewardship is a lifelong journey that we will never fully comprehend.

Fortunately, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ pastoral letter on stewardship, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, gives some insight into the characteristics that make up a good Christian steward. It may not have the powers of a stewardship “profiler” or “mentalist,” but it certainly gives us some tangible things to think about.

The Christian steward should display some of the following traits:

## INSIGHT

Before the disciples could live what we know as the stewardship way of life, they needed a flash of insight, or a certain way of viewing the world and their relationship to it in a fresh light. This “divine grandeur,” more than anything else, is often what sets people on the path to Christian stewardship (*Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, 39).

## JOY

Christian stewards are often presented with difficult obstacles, but they should remain joyful in the face of challenges to their lives of stewardship. Like Paul, the good steward is able to say, “I am filled with encouragement, I am overflowing with joy all the more because of all our affliction” (2 Cor. 7:4). Only by serving with a joyful spirit will stewards fully reap the rewards of their service, both in this life and the next.

## CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

Stewards are fully conscious of their accountability in sharing of their time, talent and treasure. As caretakers of the gifts that God has given them, they have the opportunity and responsibility to use them to their fullest potential to spread God’s Kingdom on Earth (40).

## GENEROSITY

Christian stewards are generous out of love as well as duty. They should display a desire to share with and care for others based on the sacramental graces they have received. And they are also cognizant of the many warnings that the New Testament presents to those who fail in charity and authentic love (40).

Indeed, living as a Christian steward is a lifelong journey with many ups and downs along the way. But if we strive to consciously incorporate each of these characteristics into our giving of time, talent and treasure, we will find that the profile of a good Christian steward will become much clearer with each experience of service.



## Free to Forgive

### *Healing Hurts with the Grace of God*

Phil Taken and his wife, Renee, have been helping to prepare couples for marriage for nearly 20 years. Now, in the Year of Mercy, they hope to bring, what they refer to as the “secret sauce” to successful relationships, to a broader audience at St. Rita’s.

“For me personally, it was a major life-changing event,” says Phil, of when he first learned this “secret,” “Even though I was a cradle Catholic, it was a conversion experience for me and it really brought me back to the Church as a young person.”

So, what exactly is “it”? The program, Healing Hurts with the Grace of God, focuses on something that many of us have heard of before – the importance of forgiveness. However, according to Phil, there are a lot of things that make this program unique.

“The concept is different than anywhere I’ve ever seen,” he says, “We’ve heard of forgiveness all our lives, but have never understood it in this way.”

Not only does the program explain the idea and Scriptural basis of forgiveness and healing, but it also gives participants tools and a method to invite the Holy Spirit to bring them healing and help, in finding forgiveness and peace.

“Forgiveness is for the person who has incurred the hurt,” Phil says. “They’re the one who needs to forgive the offender. It doesn’t justify the offender’s action at all, but [the person who has been hurt] needs to forgive and heal so they’re not dragged down.

“We challenge people, any hurt you’re carrying around, old hurts, contemporary hurts, stuff you’re carrying around is coming out in some way in your other relationships,” he continues. “Think about your other relationships – spouse, children, friends – you can be a much more loving life-giving person if you’re free of those hurts.”



*Phil and Renee Taken enjoy sharing with others about the power of forgiveness.*

And as difficult as dealing with hurts in our life can be, the Healing Hurts with the Grace of God program is designed to show you that you’re not alone.

“At the end of the day, you need God’s grace [to forgive],” Phil says. “You just can’t do it on your own.”

Phil encourages anyone who is interested – married, single, Catholic, or non-religious – to attend the program on Sept. 15, at 7 p.m. in the St. Rita Dining Hall. There is no cost for the program.

“If you’re struggling, if you’re frustrated, if you have a hurt, or you’re struggling in one or more relationships, come and be open to the Holy Spirit,” Phil says. “Maybe it clicks for you at the program, maybe two weeks later, but come absorb the content. Come and be open for the Holy Spirit to work in you.”

*If you would like to register, please contact Ms. Susan Podkrash at 972-934-8388, ext. 6514 or [spodkrash@stritaparish.net](mailto:spodkrash@stritaparish.net). If you have any questions about the program, please contact Phil Taken at 214-520-4264 or [philtaken@gmail.com](mailto:philtaken@gmail.com) or visit [www.stritaparish.net/healing-hurts-with-the-grace-of-god](http://www.stritaparish.net/healing-hurts-with-the-grace-of-god).*

## “Helping People Was Always Important to Me” The St. Vincent de Paul Society

St. Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) was known for his devotion to the poor. In fact, he became known in France as “The Apostle of Charity” and the “Father of the Poor.” However, it was Blessed Frédéric Ozanam (1813-1853) who was the moving force behind establishing the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Along with other students at the Sorbonne in Paris, Blessed Frédéric committed himself to the poor. He and some other students founded what was originally known as the Conference of Charity “to serve the poor.” From those beginnings developed the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which now includes more than 800,000 members in 140 countries. We are privileged to have our own conference here at St. Rita.

In the Diocese of Dallas, St. Vincent de Paul Society conferences – the name given to a chapter – exist in more than half of the parishes. Each conference has its own leadership and elects its own President. The President of our St. Rita Conference is currently Robin Caldwell, who was elected to a three-year term last October.

“My wife and I joined the parish in 1998,” Robin says. “I had this feeling that I needed to become more involved, and I especially felt



*At Christmas, the St. Vincent de Paul Society raises funds to purchase toys for kids in need.*

I needed to do something that provided service. Helping people was always important to me, especially helping those in need. The St. Vincent de Paul Society was a perfect way for me to fulfill that desire. I am proud to be a member, and equally proud of the good work we do with the poor. At the invitation of a friend, I attended a meeting in 2004, and I have been a member ever since.”

As a reflection of the whole family of God, members – who are

known as Vincentians – are drawn from every ethnic and cultural background, age group and economic level. Vincentians are united in an international society of charity by their spirit of poverty, humility and sharing, which is nourished by prayer and reflection, mutually supportive gatherings and adherence to a basic Rule.

Organized locally, Vincentians witness God’s love by embracing all works of charity and justice. The So-

# to Me, Especially Helping Those in Need” Paul Society at St. Rita



*Some of the members of St. Rita's St. Vincent de Paul Conference.*

ciety collaborates with other people of good will in relieving need and addressing its causes, making no distinction in those served because, in them, Vincentians see the face of Christ.

“Here at St. Rita, our members live out the same ideals that originally motivated the founders,” Robin says. “All of our work is done by vol-

unteers. St. Rita's St. Vincent de Paul Society helps the needy within our parish boundaries. When an individual or family requests assistance in paying rent, utilities or other necessities, two members of the Society visit their homes and determine their need. They and the entire group then discuss the case at the weekly meet-

ing and decide how to address their immediate financial need and work with the family to improve their life situation. The group maintains the parish food pantry for supplying food to those in need. Volunteers are also needed for support of our members, including communications, computer and organizational tasks. We meet for one hour on Thursday evenings at 6 p.m. in the new Pastoral Center. The real focus of our meetings is prayer and spiritual reflection.”

The St. Rita St. Vincent de Paul Conference has 20 members at this time.

“One of our biggest needs at this point is people and recruiting new members,” Robin says. “I feel that being a Vincentian is the epitome of a stewardship way of life. We are being disciples of the Lord, we are being stewards of the Church, and we are helping those in need. It is a great way to grow spiritually. Our relationship with St. Rita and its members is a real blessing. They are very supportive of our efforts. We would encourage in particular younger people to get involved.”

*If you would like to learn more about the St. Rita St. Vincent de Paul Conference, just attend a meeting or call our St. Vincent de Paul hotline at 972-232-1393.*



# St. Rita

catholic community

## Getting to Know "Summertime" Saints



St. Christopher



St. Joseph of Cupertino



St. Brendan the Navigator



St. Adjutor  
of Vernon

School is out, and summer is now in full swing. The days are longer, warmer and filled with plenty of fun summertime activities.

This summer, as we take family vacations, get together for barbecues, spend time by the pool, and enjoy all of the usual summertime activities, we can also take the time to reflect on some of the saints who are associated with the summer.

Family vacations are perhaps the most iconic of all summertime activities. Although there is no patron saint of vacations, there are a number of saints associated with traveling. One of the most popular is St. Christopher. According to his story, St. Christopher was an extremely tall and strong man who served Christ by helping people cross an especially dangerous river. That is why many people wear St. Christopher medals while traveling – to ask for his blessing and protection.

For those of us who are taking road trips this summer, there is St. Frances of Rome, the patron saint of cars and drivers. While St. Frances died well before cars were invented, her story says that her guardian angel went ahead of her when she traveled at night and lit the road with a lantern to keep St. Frances safe.

There are also saints we can look to when traveling by plane. St. Joseph of Cupertino was a Franciscan friar who is said to have frequently and miraculously levitated off the ground during intense prayer sessions. Because of this levitation, he is recognized as the patron saint of air travelers. St. Therese of Lisieux is also associated with aviators and flying.

If you are going on a cruise this summer, you can ask for the intercession of St. Brendan the Navigator, an Irish monk who founded the Clonfert monastery and monastic school, and is the patron saint of mariners and sailors. He and his brothers sailed the Atlantic Ocean and evangelized on a number of islands, and may have even reached the Americas.

Another favorite summer activity is swimming. Whether you choose a pool, a lake or the ocean, seek the intercession of St. Adjutor of Vernon, a knight who was captured in the First Crusade. His captors tried to force him to give up his faith, but St. Adjutor escaped by swimming to his freedom. For this reason, he is the patron saint against drowning, and for drowning victims, sailors and swimmers.

The summer is also a time of amusement and enjoyment. One of the biggest national celebrations of the summer is the Fourth of July. For this type of summertime activity, we look to St. Barbara, the patron saint of fireworks.

There are also a number of saints with feast days during the summer. The feast day of St. Anne, the mother of Mary and grandmother of Jesus, is celebrated on July 26. July 31 is the feast day of St. Ignatius of Loyola, who is also associated with stewardship. These are just two of the many saints whose feasts we celebrate this summer.

No matter what kinds of activities we choose to enjoy during the summertime, let us remember to honor the saints who have gone before us, and give their intercession for us as we walk through our own journeys of faith.

# Bereavement Ministry:

## Experiencing the Comfort of God's Mercy

Many of us have either experienced loss or watched someone close to us experience a loss. These can be times of intense suffering, pain and searching. However, comforted by the hope of God's mercy, it can also be a time of great spiritual growth as we are drawn into a deeper reliance and intimacy with our Lord.

For Steve Niles, parishioner and Facility Manager at St. Rita, the loss of his first wife led him down a path of both grief and service that he never would have expected, but has only been possible through experiencing God's mercy and grace.

"When you are going through grief, it's a journey you take alone, no matter how loving and supportive your friends and family are," Steve says. "You depend on your faith, and that's what you lean on. In my case, that's what I did and that's what helped me."

After losing his wife in 2007, Steve started to get involved in the Bereavement Ministry in 2009 as a means of further coping while also helping others. Finding his own "place for his grief to rest," says



*Having experienced loss himself, Steve Niles helps facilitate the Bereavement Ministry, a support group aimed at helping individuals who are suffering with the loss of a loved one.*

Steve, led him to volunteer of his time, sharing his own grief journey with others who found themselves suffering from similar losses.

"What I've learned is that when you go through the grief process with others, others want to know that what they are experiencing is normal, and that they will survive."

"Everyone has a story, and everyone's story can feel like it's 'the worst.' The Bereavement Ministry is

about how we move forward while grieving the loss of a loved one. As Christians, it's all about how we help each other. Ultimately, it is about getting a different perspective on Christ's love and love for each other – it's about helping individuals."

These weekly meetings are designed first and foremost to provide peer support for those who are grieving. The class follows the *New Day Journal* workbook, which is designed to provide grieving individuals with the necessary tools for coping, to point them toward additional spiritual resources and, finally, to help them accept the reality of loss. The group meets for eight weekly sessions, generally in the fall and spring, and is led by Diocesan trained facilitators.

"For me personally, this is still my ongoing therapy," Steve says. "It is as therapeutic for me after all these years, as it is for others. I now help the bereaved understand the grief process, and that their grief journey will result in a new life, far different than before. It's how the Holy Spirit works."

*If you have experienced a loss, either recently or in the past, and need support please consider contacting Steve Niles, who can be reached at [sniles@stritaparish.net](mailto:sniles@stritaparish.net) or 972-934-8388, ext. 6581.*



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**Weekday Masses**

*Monday-Friday, 5:30 p.m.*  
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**Weekend Masses**

*Saturday, 5:30 p.m.*  
*Sunday, 7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 10:45 a.m.,*  
*12:30 p.m. (Bilingual), 5:30 p.m.*

## Enjoying the Different Pace of Summer

*continued from front cover*

have some days to myself, including my 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary of priestly Ordination, before returning to work on Saturday, July 2.


Of course, this will be all in the past and old news by the time you read this. But you know I like to be appropriately transparent with you. As you read this, Fr. Josh will be getting ready for some time away from duty. He will be attending a conference at Notre Dame, which the diocese has asked him to attend July 11-15. Then, he is taking time off to be with his family and enjoy some recreation with them July 18 through Aug. 5.

Now you know why we really had to reduce our daily Mass schedule for the summer! We had 31 open spaces for Masses and Confessions, all of which were graciously filled by an assortment of priests, and even

one Auxiliary Bishop! We thank you for your patience with us this summer.

May you and your families enjoy the different pace of summer and may it provide you with a needed break from the ordinary routine of the rest of the year. Be safe, and don't forget to look up Mass times for wherever you might be on the weekends! We'll still be at St. Rita at 5:30 Saturday and Sunday, as well as at 7:30, 9:00, 10:45, and 12:30 on Sunday morning/afternoon!

God bless you,



Fr. Bob Coerver