



St. Rita

catholic community

A Letter From Our Pastoral Administrator

Men in Christ: Still Spiritually Necessary

Dear Parishioners,

Most men learn how to be men by watching their fathers, or by being influenced by “father figures,” to borrow that psychological term. There are, believe it or not, habits and values unique to the masculine character shared among men from generation to generation. There is something one could call the “wisdom of manhood,” a characteristic genius identifiably masculine. It’s a wisdom that defines manhood, wisdom rooted in the nature of men.

Of course, there is feminine genius as well, ancient sororal wisdom unique to generations of mothers, daughters, and sisters. Both patriarchs as well as matriarchs mark the history of salvation by their particular service as either men or women of God and not as genderless machines. The Church, of course, teaches that both men and women “were created in the image and likeness

of the personal God,” and that in each of the two sexes “the power and tenderness of God, with equal dignity” is expressed “though in a different way” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2334-2335). There is, in the Church’s mind, gendered wisdom that is essentially a part of the symphony of creation. “Male and female He created them,” so our story goes (Gen. 1:27).

Yet, these natural wisdoms are often ridiculed, discarded, and sometimes openly attacked. Women, of course, labor under remarkably heavy and destructive stereotypes. Even in this supposedly enlightened era of ours, women seem still to be valued not because of the dignity of their being but as objects.

But of course, men too are constantly harassed by stereotypes and false images. Often men are subjected to a cultural iconography

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Men in Christ: Still Spiritually Necessary

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branding them either as “thugs,” “studs,” or some sort of predator. One particularly powerful and sinister cultural image today is the “male buffoon.” On television and especially in advertising the male character is very often depicted in comical and subtly derisive terms. The principal images for fatherhood and masculinity in our culture are Homer Simpson and Peter Griffin – wholly disastrous models for young boys and young men to emulate. A good man is very hard to find in pop culture – almost impossible – and this influx of bad male stereotypes has had an effect. A young man having grown up giggling all his life at shallow male characters will certainly be able to have a good laugh, but he might also have no idea about being a real man. And this is no insignificant problem.

There is a great need among men for spiritual renewal. It is not alarmist nor is it an exaggeration to say there is something of an existential and spiritual crisis among

men today. It is urgent that men of faith, as well as men struggling with faith fight to recover the “wisdom of manhood” which is so much part of our nature and heritage. In the Church, there is a critical need for strong, committed, and godly men. Not discounting other wars against other categories of people, one can say, in many ways, that the culture is at war with men. Therefore, men need to fight back by discovering the masculine genius given by God. Men need to re-commit to holiness and to all the virtues of their better nature – God calls for this re-commitment and our children desperately need it.

At St. Rita, there are opportunities for men to pursue holiness within a context shaped primarily by and for men. The Knights of Columbus and the St. Rita Men’s Christian Leadership Group, for instance, offer an opportunity for men to grow in fellowship and holiness. Explore these opportunities and find where God may be calling you.

Because it is important, the strength and holiness of men. Whatever the shallowness of cultural discourse, whatever the cultural fear, it’s important today that men stand up as men, and act as men for the good of their families and the good of society. Believe it or not, manhood still matters. And in the Church, we still celebrate that, and still support it.

God’s call has gone out to every man to be a man for Christ, good and strong. The only question is whether you will answer God’s call. The choice is yours.

pax,
Fr. Joshua



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St. Rita Parish Pastoral Council Nominations!

The St. Rita Parish Pastoral Council is looking for new members! The three-year term for four of the 12 council members is drawing to a close at the end of the calendar year, and new candidates are needed. You may nominate someone you know, or you may submit your own name for consideration. Four new members will be chosen by the current Pastoral Council by means of a carefully conducted discernment process overseen by the Pastoral Administrator, for terms beginning in January 2018.

The Pastoral Council serves as the hub of St. Rita's Leadership Councils. It serves in an advisory capacity to the Pastor, identifying needs of the parish, providing feedback on behalf of parishioners, helping the Pastor create/implement his vision for the parish, collaborating with other councils and ministries, and assisting in the implementation and evaluation of various parish project initiatives.



(From left) Lucia Ontiveros, Tony Ruggeri, Nicholas Romich, Jean Brierre, Gary Billeaudeaux, Wade Vache', Mary Fimian and Mike Leshar. (Not pictured – pastoral council members Amy Mentgen, Maureen Blasé', and Bob Kowynia, in addition to Deacon Denis Corbin and Fr. Joshua Whitfield)

Recent Pastoral Council agenda topics and projects have included:

- Expanding the Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLOW) to include Sunday Masses
- Refurbishing the Changing Room in the narthex of the church
- Establishing a committee to evaluate and improve the church sound system
- Supporting the Financial Literacy Program by joining St. Rita parish resources with Catholic Charities and St. Vincent de Paul
- Evaluation of parish attendance trends
- Helping create use guidelines for the new Parish Commons
- Serving as a communication liaison to the Finance Council, Stewardship Council, School Advisory Council, Care Ministries Council, and the St. Rita Fine Arts Committee

We live in exciting times, and as the parish pivots away from an era of campus construction to a deepened focus on building spiritual renewal, the Pastoral Council will play a critical role helping the Pastor create and implement a visionary program of new initiatives. Please consider the possibility of recommending persons to serve on the Parish Pastoral Council, or throwing your own hat into the ring for consideration as a possible council member. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Leshar at 908-672-4120 or mlesher@vt.edu.

If you (or someone you know) are looking for spiritual growth and are enthusiastic about the future of our parish, nominations can be submitted at: www.stritaparish.net/pastoral-council-nomination-form.

Sharing the Sacred Treasure of

For a couple of years, Carol Duncan's friend encouraged her to try attending Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults classes, or RCIA. It took some time, but finally, Carol listened and gave it a try. And her entire life, her heart and her soul, have never been the same since. This Easter, Carol came "home" to her most merciful spiritual mother on earth, the Roman Catholic Church, and she isn't looking back.

"I was raised and baptized in the Baptist church," Carol says. "The friend who invited me to attend RCIA ended up becoming my sponsor. I had such a good experience that I wanted to share it with others. I had a wonderful sponsor, and I learned a great deal in RCIA – not just about the Church, but also about myself and my faith. I knew I was making a good decision to become Catholic."

Now that she is a fully initiated Catholic, Carol is choosing to share this sacred treasure of faith with others who are hoping to join the Church.



Incensing of the altar

By serving as a sponsor in RCIA herself this year, she is "letting her light shine," and testifying to the peace that comes from pursuing the Truth.

"The opportunity to go through RCIA class last year, with Fr. Joshua teaching, and with the support of my sponsor, was one of the most profoundly moving experiences I have had in my entire life," Carol says.

Consequently, Carol has come to believe some beautiful ideas about the call to evangelization, as well.

"I believe that sharing my newfound faith with other people isn't just something I want to do – it is something we are all obligated to do as Christians," she says. "We have a responsibility to bring people to the Lord and to His Church. There is a tremendous reward in doing so, and it is an important part of the growth process of the Church. Not everyone



Candidates receiving Confirmation

RCIA

Faith Through the RCIA Process



Catechumens being baptized

was born into a Catholic family. They may have been seeking for the Truth for years, and when they finally come to the realization of where they need to be, it is our duty to help guide them.”

Carol has vibrant hopes and dreams in her heart of approaching her mission as an RCIA sponsor.

“I am most looking forward to fulfilling the commission we have been given by the Lord to share the

Good News with others,” she says. “I am especially looking forward to being there for an RCIA candidate or catechumen throughout the entire process of joining the Church. I am also excited about continuing my personal faith learning experience, as well.”

Our RCIA sponsors exemplify the hospitality and outreach that comes with a life of stewardship. At our parish, people wishing to become Catholic either choose their own sponsor, or are assigned sponsors who accompany them on their faith journey.

“I believe that the most important goal of the sponsor’s ministry is to help those who desire to become Catholic by being a friend to them and walking the journey along with them,” says RCIA

Coordinator Susan Podkrash.

If you would like more information about RCIA, please contact Susan Podkrash at 972-934-8388, ext. 6514, or email her at spodkrash@stritaparish.net.

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– Carol Duncan

Good Stewardship of Our Social Media

When we are talking about the idea of stewardship and how we care for the tools and gifts we have been given, it is not often that we stop to have a conversation about how we are caring for and using the gift of social media to positively spread Gospel values. However, this is an appropriate topic for us to consider when we are talking about the many young people, as well as adults, who gather online on a frequent basis. Therefore, it is important for us to think about how we are using the amazing gifts of technology.

Remember that there are many ways to share the Gospel without writing out its words. Gospel living has to do with the positive way we approach this life and bring God's light and love to others – and it couldn't be easier than sharing an uplifting status on Facebook, a Tweet of gratitude to a friend, or a beautiful image of God's inspiring creation on Instagram. What a great way to build the Kingdom of God!

If you are frequently online – especially on Pinterest – there is a popular acronym that you may have already come across. While it is used in many different contexts, it seems very appropriate to follow as we find ourselves posting statuses and pictures on various social media sites. The acronym is **T.H.I.N.K.**, and it invites us to consider what we are saying and sharing, and whether or not it should be said!

Is what we are posting:

True? Are we sharing factual information or a rumor that we heard, and if we think our information is factual, what is our source? Is it trustworthy?

Helpful? Is the information we are sharing something that can be useful to another person? We don't need to over-examine all of our content to consider its "educational factor," but is the content we are posting going to help someone learn about us, learn about a place or an activity, think about the world, reflect on life, engage us in laughter, and so forth?

Inspirational? There is certainly no requirement to be a poet or an artist, but social media has become a wonderful outlet for positive self-expression. "Positive" is the key word – are we posting to

inspire others about the good in our world, or are we posting to cut someone down or to simply rant?

Nice? Have we considered the feelings of others when we include them in a status or post a picture of them? Will they be embarrassed? Are we using social media to humiliate and intimidate others, or are we using it to try to better the world and the lives of others?

Kind? What a great tool to compliment, show gratitude, and build the self-esteem of those you care about!

People often speak of social media in a negative way because of the content they see posted. **T.H.I.N.K.** is a great way for us to remind ourselves that we can be good stewards of our own social media use. Remember that there are many ways to share the Gospel without writing out its words. Gospel living has to do with the positive way we approach this life and bring God's light and love to others – and it couldn't be easier than sharing an uplifting status on Facebook, a Tweet of gratitude to a friend, or a beautiful image of God's inspiring creation on Instagram. What a great way to build the Kingdom of God!

Boy Scout Troop 838: Proudly Forming New Leaders

For more than 45 years, Troop 838 has been preparing Scouts to become active members of both St. Rita Parish and the wider community. Consisting of approximately 80 Scouts from more than 20 schools across the Dallas area, this youth organization allows young men between ages 11 and 18 to develop into confident and well-rounded leaders – men who truly embrace the stewardship mentality of “giving back” to God and the community.

“We like to call our program ‘boy-led and adult-advised,’” says Scoutmaster and St. Rita parishioner Scott Dunkerley. “The mission and purpose of the Boy Scouts is to provide an environment where boys can develop their own personality, leadership and, ultimately, find their niche. It’s a very broad program where they can be successful on many different levels.”

Having been a Boy Scout himself, Scott decided to get involved in the program once again when his oldest sons were old enough to join. He saw it as a great opportunity for them to grow in their father-son relationships, while also helping his boys continue cultivating their God-given talents. Yet, in the subsequent years Scott’s involvement has become much larger than that of his sons, allowing him to witness countless youth blossom into confident leaders.

“This maturation process from a younger participant myself to an older leader and parent has been truly incredibly,” Scott says. “There is very little that young people do at this stage in their lives that is a true accomplishment that will live with them forever. And it’s been awesome for me to witness these boys understand that and to help them accomplish something that they truly will be proud of for the rest of their lives.”

The Boy Scout program is designed to teach youth citizenship and good character, provide them with opportunities for physical fitness, and to cultivate leadership. This is done through a host of activities such as camping, hiking, canoeing, snow and water skiing, backpacking, and firearms training. The boys also work to earn merit badges on a wide variety of topics and perform annual service hours. Best of all, the boys play a part in the actual planning and leadership process, through the organization and execution of Troop events.

“We provide an extremely diverse opportunity to our young people,” Scott says. “We do the traditional Scouting things like camping, but then also do things like a water-skiing or snow-skiing trip. And it’s all boy-led, meaning if they want to try to do something new, all they have to do is present the idea to us and work with us to find ways to make it possible.”

Ultimately, each member is working to achieve the program’s highest rank, Eagle Scout. To do this, however, the boys must first earn a certain amount of merit badges, maintain the Scout spirit, and demonstrate leadership within the troop specifically through planning, executing and completing an Eagle project. Considered the pinnacle of the program,

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Boy Scouting teaches young men to have respect for God, our country, and each other in a truly life-changing way.



Members of Troop 838 enjoy a traditional campout.



One of the benefits of our Boy Scout Troop, says Scoutmaster Scott Dunkerley, is that it affords boys with many diverse experiences, such as their snow-skiing trip.

12521 Inwood Road
Dallas, TX 75244

Weekday Masses

*Monday-Friday, 6:25 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday & Friday (Only when School
is in session), 8:00 a.m.*

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.*

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this project requires tremendous amounts of collaboration and effort on the part of the Scout, showing him the value of hard work and service for others.

“Though each Eagle project varies, many of them are associated with the Scout’s place of worship,” Scott says. “For example one of our Scouts is currently redoing all of the signs around St. Rita Parish. It’s a great opportunity for them to plan, execute and design a service and then actually see the finished project.”

Beyond its committed members, you can also tell that something special is going on here at Troop 838 through the faithfulness of its volunteers. At any given meeting, you’ll see close to 30 adults present, and every Scoutmaster from the past 20 years continues to remain involved in the Troop in some way.

“They may not be running it or owning a lot of responsibility, but they still come around and are supporting the program,” Scott says. “Some of them had their sons come



Through each experience and outing, Boy Scout Troop 838 continues to foster a spirit of leadership and confidence in its young members.

into the Boy Scouts more than 20 years ago, but they’re still involved because they recognize that there is something special here.”

If you would like more information about Boy Scout Troop 838, please visit our website at www.troop838.com, or contact Scoutmaster Scott Dunkerley at either 214-215-4944 or sdunkerley@cisco.com.