



St. Rita

catholic community

A Letter From Our Pastoral Administrator

The Way of Jesus: An Invitation to Holy Week

On Ash Wednesday, the Church bid her faithful to “follow the Lenten observances” so that they “may be worthy to come with minds made pure to celebrate the Paschal Mystery” of Christ. Throughout these weeks of Lent, the people of God have been obedient in prayer, fasting and in self-examination. Here, at Saint Rita, we turn with the whole Catholic Church in every age and throughout the world toward Jerusalem, to that city of peace, to that lonely path trod by the Lord. With countless saints and angels we follow the way of Jesus to Calvary, to the Cross, like those holy women and like John—they who saw the world tremble and the sky darken and the death which Jesus called his “glory.”

All of God’s people are invited to follow this path of salvation. The Church’s ancient liturgies rehearse our redeeming story, making it present to us for our deification. In this holy week the Church’s faithful are brought into this story. Saint Augustine said, “All the events, then, of Christ’s

crucifixion, of His burial, of His resurrection the third day, of His ascension into heaven, of His sitting down at the right hand of the Father, were so ordered, that the life which the Christian leads here might be modeled upon them, not merely in a mystical sense, but in reality.” In the mystery of this holy week, we find and behold the man from Galilee who died for us. We find that in walking with him on his path during this holy week, he too walks with us on our paths. In this holy week we discover that he not only walks with us, he also guides us into a new life of resurrection and glory. This is what it means to be “illuminated,” to employ an old wonderful term used by countless fathers and mystics. To follow Jesus to the Cross, to see him crucified and to wish to be crucified with him, is to see God and to learn the truth of all true things. As Saint Maximus the Confessor taught, “The one who knows the mystery of the cross and the tomb, knows the reasons of things.”

Inside

- 2 Mother’s Ministry Retreat Ad
- 3 The Most Welcoming Parish Around
- 4 “An Expression of Discipleship”
The St. Rita Stewardship Council
- 6 Supporting St. Rita School Through Fundraising Events

continued on back cover

Retreat for Women

Relationships: Helping Women Find Faith and Friendship

*All women are invited to join us for a day of discussion, encouragement,
and fellowship as we explore the various relationships in our lives.*

- Seeing your body as an instrument for God
- Finding companions in the saints
- Technology: The good, the bad, and the ugly
- Being who you are meant to be
- Developing meaningful friendships
- Your relationship with Jesus
- Mary: Your beautiful, loving, generous, and caring mother
- Growing closer to God with Scriptures

For more information contact
Alli Whitfield whitfield.allison@gmail.com

Sponsored by St. Rita's Mothers Ministry



Saturday, April 8, 2017
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
St. Rita's Dining Hall

Register online today at
www.stritaparish.net
\$15 registration

Lunch provided

The Most Welcoming Parish Around

It's usually a little awkward to go somewhere new, especially when you don't know anyone. It can be a challenge to meet new people and feel connected in a new place. And while many hope to find a "home" in the Church, for some, an experience at a new parish can often feel as uncomfortable as visiting anywhere else.

"We have an established parish and what we've found is that new families and individuals joining our parish were not feeling engaged as quickly as we would've liked," says Mindy Hatzmann, a staff member who also serves on the Stewardship Council. "With our stewardship efforts, we knew that hospitality should be a priority and we needed to refocus."

"Our goal is to make St. Rita the most welcoming parish around," adds parishioner Kim Wade.

And thus, the Welcome Ministry was born.

Kim, who serves as ministry leader of the newly formed Welcome Ministry, converted to Catholicism 30 years ago, and noticed that Catholic churches sometimes struggled in the aspect of hospitality.

"I think it's easier for Catholics to come to church to fulfill and obligation and leave without much interaction," Kim says. "Protestant churches generally have welcoming people and they make an effort to try to create an environment where people want to come back. We're a large parish and there are people who can come to Mass and then leave without really having much interaction with anybody."

This is something that the Welcome Ministry has set out to change. Although in its infancy, the ministry has already established several important pieces that have begun to transform the parish community and engage new parishioners in the life of our Church.

Each month, approximately 20 new parishioners register at St. Rita's. Part of the new Welcome Ministry's mission is to reach out to our new parishioners with a phone call, ensuring they receive a Welcome Packet and gift bag, as well as answering any questions or helping to connect them with any ministries in which they would like to become involved.

"They're always very happy to have a welcoming call," Kim says. "It impresses them that we are a welcoming community."

The Welcome Ministry also teams with existing ministries to invite newly registered parishioners for a complimentary breakfast, following Sunday Mass, at either the Hispanic or Knights of Columbus breakfast in the dining hall. Not only



The newly formed Welcome Ministry hopes to engage new parishioners in our community.

do new parishioners have the opportunity to meet both longtime members as well as others who have recently joined the parish, but ministry leaders from various parish organizations are also present to welcome new members and help them find ways to become connected and involved in the church.

"We want to try to make (St. Rita's) a warm and welcoming parish in all aspects," Kim says. "I hope that they feel very welcome and that it will encourage them to join a ministry or participate in the some function of the church that they might not have otherwise."

Mindy reminds fellow parishioners that hospitality must be at the heart of our efforts as a parish.

"If people are not here on campus and in the pews, they are not going to receive that call to discipleship," she says. "We need to be welcoming and inviting and hospitable. Hospitality has to be there first."

"We're trying to bring new parishioners into the fold, so they can make use of all the wonderful things St. Rita's have to offer," Kim adds. "We are a Catholic community, we need interaction with each other, and we can love and support each other just by being friendly and open to making new friends."

The Welcome Ministry hopes to grow and expand their efforts within the parish, so if you are interested in learning more or becoming involved, please contact Kim Wade at wmkimwade@gmail.com.

"An Expression The St. Rita Stew

The introduction to the 1992 U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, titled *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, serves as a wonderful description of why stewardship is such an important part of living as an intentional disciple of Christ Jesus:

"Stewardship is an expression of discipleship, with the power to change how we understand and live out our lives. Disciples who practice stewardship recognize God as the origin of life, the giver of freedom, the source of all they have and are and will be."

Over a decade ago, our parish decided to reinforce our dedication to stewardship here at St. Rita by forming a Stewardship Council. This group of about a dozen parishioners seeks to help the church reach out to parishioners and introduce them to what it means to lead a life of active stewardship.

Kevin Powers, longtime member of the Stewardship Council, is happy to be part of



Renewal Weekend 2016

the group that is working to keep stewardship central to parish life.

"Stewardship is part of the disciple's response," Kevin says. "It's being able to model a life of following Jesus, and to share our lives and our skills with others. The council utilizes the U.S. Bishops' letter on stewardship as our framework and point of reflection

and discernment of the principles of Christian stewardship formation. We also look to the principles of the late Archbishop Murphy, because he was at the forefront of the stewardship movement and was an advocate of living out the Christian stewardship life."

As Kevin emphasizes, while sharing of one's treasure with

"We're trying to model stewardship as a way of life and to serve the needs of the parish through the four cornerstones of parish life – service, formation, prayer, and hospitality. We strive to address and work with the parish leadership, the priests and lay people to provide fulfillment in those four areas." – Kevin Powers

of Discipleship" *Stewardship Council*

the Church is certainly part of the equation, good stewardship is first and foremost a sharing of one's time and talent in service to God's people.

"Most people default to stewardship being financial, and that really is not what [the Stewardship Council] is about," he says. "We're trying to model stewardship as a way of life and to serve the needs of the parish through the four cornerstones of parish life – service, formation, prayer, and hospitality. We strive to address and work with the parish leadership, the priests and lay people to provide fulfillment in those four areas."

In its first years, the Stewardship Council was in a discernment phase, seeking to learn how they could best support parish life. More recently, their mission has become more hands-on in helping to develop the practice of stewardship at St. Rita. The council meets regularly with ministry leaders to provide them with tools to engage and connect with their ministry community and build their membership base. The Stewardship Council also organizes an annual stewardship renewal weekend – typically held in August – and gives people the chance to get involved

with activities through the parish's "text to connect" application.

While the renewal weekend is always a success, the Stewardship Council's ultimate goal is to provide parishioners with ongoing opportunities to jump into service with the parish throughout the year.

"What we want to be mindful of is to stretch beyond one weekend and help people participate in ministries as they're ready and meet them where they are," Kevin says. "A concrete example of that is the recently formed Welcome Committee that regularly reaches out to newly registered parishioners and invites them to become involved and connect with us. We want to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to connect with St. Rita every week. So we use ongoing spotlights to give parishioners information and insight into a different ministry at each Mass, and it creates continued awareness."

Reflecting on the time the Stewardship Council first formed up until today, it is encouraging to see the increase in dedication to active discipleship and stewardship that has taken place at St. Rita. The council looks forward to continuing

to help the parish spread the message about the beauty and rewards found in the commitment to share of the time, talent, and treasure that come from God's abundant blessings.

"The council is evaluating our next steps," Kevin says. "It's a growth experience – we're constantly trying to strengthen and build upon our relationship with the parish community. One of the ways parishioners feel connected is if we're able to provide good formation to individuals, couples and families; if we're able to provide a prayerful way for them to converse with God; if we're able to provide a way for them to meet the needs of others; and if we're constantly welcoming them through hospitality. What matters is that the community is constantly growing and engaging to provide hospitality to others and service to people in need."

Are you interested in helping to build our faith community by serving on the Stewardship Council? We're always looking for new members! Call Kevin Powers at 214-557-5891 for more information.

Supporting St. Rita School



Amy Straus, Barb Louviere and Brooke Yeskie organized a book fair in 2016.

Over the years, parishioners, alumni families, grandparents, and school families have generously supported St. Rita Catholic School through a variety of giving programs and activities. As a result of their support, the school has a proud heritage of excellence in Catholic education that dates back over 50 years.

"We love having alumni, alumni families and parishioners come out to support our fundraisers – it is a blessing for us," says Director of Development Susan Lynch. "Our fundraising helps supplement activities such as field trips, or allow

us to add technology and programs that our teachers want to offer but the school wouldn't otherwise have in the budget. It's also a great way to give more children the opportunity to have a Catholic education – a number of these programs keep tuition as affordable as possible, so more families can afford to send their children to St. Rita."

The school started off the year with the Annual Gift Campaign, sponsored by the Advisory Council. This campaign in particular helps to bridge the gap between school tuition and the actual cost to educate each student.

"By the end of the six-week campaign push, 98 percent of our families had participated through a pledge, a donation or a pledge to pray for the school," Susan says. "To date, the campaign pledges and donations total over \$200,000."

September brought the St. Rita Golf Classic, an annual tradition hosted by the Booster Club and the Dads Club. Over 112 golfers participated in this afternoon of fun and fellowship, raising over \$20,000 for the school. For the past three years, tournament chairmen Dave Piotrowski and Marlon Cortez have chaired the event and its success resulted in the construction of a sport court and the purchase of

new uniforms for the cheerleaders and for various school sports teams.

The Parents' Club – which sponsors many successful fundraisers across the year – organized a new event this year. The first-ever St. Rita Bowl-a-Palooza.

"The night included not only bowling, but also a silent and live auction, music by a DJ and a raffle for \$10,000 in Visa gift cards," Susan says. "Many guests formed bowling teams with names such as 'Livin' on a Spare,' 'Lucky Strike,' 'Pin Pals,' and 'The Holy Rollers.' The event was made possible thanks to the creativity and hard work of the chairwomen, Ashley Civello and



Patricia Kamara and Ashley Civello co-chaired the Bowl-a-Palooza event this past year.

Through *Fundraising Events*



Parishioners, family and friends enjoy the 5K and Fun Run in spring 2016.

Patricia Kamara, and their team of amazing volunteers.”

The school’s annual Book Fair was held in November, which supports not only our school library, but also that of our sister school, St. Mary of Carmel. Chairwomen Barb Louviere, Brandie Koch and Amy Straus planned a week highlighting the magic of books. Several special events were offered around the theme “Reading is Magical,” including a magic show by parishioners Helen and Joe Drakely. The Parents’ Club also brought some Christmas cheer in December by offering Santa photos on campus,

thanks to the work of Sarah Shaw, Amy White and Melonie Koeijmans.

This spring, the school held a successful Online Auction during Catholic Schools Week, and will be launching the Advisory Council’s annual Endowment Fund after Easter.

“The Endowment Fund was established in 1990 to ensure the future financial security of our school, and has contributed over \$117,000 to our school budget

in 2016, helping keep tuition affordable for more parish families,” Susan says. “Donations to the Endowment Fund are welcome year-round, and are a great way to honor a student, teacher, family member, or other loved one.”

Finally, the Parents’ Club will be hosting the annual St. Rita 5K and Fun Run on Saturday, April 22. The run is open to everyone in the parish and community, so feel free to invite friends and neighbors to come with you! This event is a great way both to support the school and to build fellowship.

“Volunteering at fundraising events is a great way for families – especially new families in our parish and school – to meet people and start friendships,” Susan says. “We rely on a number of volunteers to make all this happen! I made some lifelong friendships by getting involved and getting to know people. It’s a great way for people to bond and feel a part of the St. Rita community.”

If you would like more information about these events, or to learn more about volunteering opportunities, please contact the school office at 972-239-3203, or Susan Lynch at slynch@strita.net.

12521 Inwood Road
Dallas, TX 75244

Weekday Masses

Monday-Friday, 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday-Saturday, 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.

The Way of Jesus continued from front cover

And so at Saint Rita, we will follow the Lord. We will keep this Holy Week. Come and see. Join us on this journey to the Feast of Feasts.

A Prayer for Holy Week

Heavenly Father, you gave your only-begotten Son so that whoever believes in him would not die but live forever. For my salvation, your Son Jesus died for my sins on the Cross. He bid me to follow him, and to take up my cross as a disciple. Give me the grace of your Holy Spirit that I may in this holy week give you such time, honor, and devotion in following your Son's Passion. Illumine me as I follow your Son this week, and grant that I may have something of that heavenly light. By your light, may I not only hear of your Son's resurrection, may I also experience it in my heart. In the Name of him who suffered for me, Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Pax,

Fr. Joshua

