



MARCH 2020

# ST. PETER CATHOLIC CHURCH

*Monthly Newsletter*

## NEW OUTDOOR CLASSROOM AT ST. PETER SCHOOL: *LEARNING IN GOD'S CREATION*

Most days at most schools, preschool and elementary students get their fresh air during recess, and sometimes during gym class. But St. Peter School has a new way to get students more fresh air – an outdoor classroom and the early childhood Nature Explore program.

Sister Mary Michael, the school principal, says connecting students with nature is “all the rage in education today.” She believes that while some of this trend may pass, the blessings of connecting to God’s creation in nature will always remain.

“God moves slowly in creation and yet so beautifully and powerfully,” she recently wrote in her blog.

Before winter set in, some classes had the opportunity to try the classroom. Stumps are used for chairs, and they work well for small-group work. Sr. Mary Michael says the outdoor classroom may sometimes be used in the winter, especially during a beautiful, light snowfall.

Most of us, students included, spend a lot of time looking at a phone or a computer screen. While



technology definitely has its place, Sr. Mary Michael says lessons that don’t need technology can be taken to the outdoor classroom.

“The outdoor classroom is an antidote to too much screen time,” she says.

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## **OUTDOOR CLASSROOM** *continued from front cover*

Of course, a pleasant change of scenery or environment may certainly help the whole class refocus.

“The closeness to God’s creation in the outdoor classroom draws hearts, mine included,” Sr. Mary Michael says.

The fresh air is good for students and teachers alike, she added.

Sr. Mary Michael says the Holy Spirit is the mastermind behind this project – she brought the idea to fruition.

“The outdoor classroom and Nature Explore program will help our children love and know the Lord and be immersed in good dirty – clean – fun,” she says.

*As we look forward to incorporation of the Nature Explore program components and certification, the following are under development:*

- *St. Isadore’s Farm – including an old tractor for imaginary play.*
- *St. Joseph’s Workshop – with real tools including wrenches and mallets.*
- *St. Martha’s Kitchen – have you ever made a mud pie with sifted dirt, then garnished with dandelions?*
- *Sand area – with seats that double as a cover to keep it clean.*
- *Digging area – complete with child sized rakes and shovels. We might occasionally bury a treasure chest.*
- *Art area – with a weaving wall and a transparent wall for painting and experimenting.*
- *Music area – with a variety of sound producing materials.*

*If you’d like to donate toward the components, the St. Joseph Workshop has been funded, but the other areas are in need. Classrooms to support the program are needed as well. Please contact the school at 402-421-6299 or email [sr.mary-michael@cdolinc.net](mailto:sr.mary-michael@cdolinc.net) with questions.*

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

### **LENTEN MEALS**

March 6, 13, 20; April 3

*Sponsored by Knights of Columbus and the Boy Scouts; 5-7 p.m.*

### **STATIONS OF THE CROSS**

5:30 p.m. in the church every Friday during Lent

2:30 p.m. with the school on Fridays during Lent *(except for March 13)*

### **SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION**

March 17

### **TRIDUUM (HOLY WEEK) SERVICES —**

#### **APRIL 9, 10 AND 11**

- Holy Thursday, Mass of the Lord’s Supper — April 9; 7:30 p.m.
- Good Friday, Liturgy of the Lord’s Passion — April 10; 7:30 p.m.
  - Easter Vigil — April 11; 8:30 p.m.
- Easter Sunday Masses — April 12; 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m., and 11 a.m.

### **FIRST HOLY COMMUNION**

April 25



*A Letter from Our Pastor*

## A STEWARD'S GUIDE TO LENTEN COMMITMENTS

Dear Parishioners,

Making a Lenten commitment is simple. Keeping it is the difficult part! The Lenten commitments we make ourselves are frequently a lot like New Year's resolutions – they sound good, but we don't get far into the new year before they've been broken and then abandoned.

If you are like me, you approached Ash Wednesday with the intention of doing better than you did last year. But as Lent continues, our enthusiasm may wane, and it seems harder and harder to keep our commitment. And then we begin to wonder, "What's the point?"

Often, we realize we've already broken our commitment in some way – perhaps we decided we'd pray a decade of the Rosary every evening, but we were too tired one night or simply forgot. Maybe we slipped up and ate a cheeseburger on the first Friday in Lent, even though we know that all Fridays in Lent are days of abstinence from meat. So we conclude that we just can't keep a good Lenten commitment and give up trying to make it a special season in any way.

If you're tempted to give up, **don't do it!** Just pick up where you left off, ask God for forgiveness, and begin again. Our Lenten commitments should challenge us, and we can grow spiritually. We can even benefit from our failures if they help us better realize how much we need God's grace.

After all, nothing worthwhile is accomplished without discipline and structure. Whether it's a football player in training, a musician practicing or a medical student mastering the intricacies of the human body, hard work, discipline and even frustration will be part of the process. Only those who keep at it will master the skills those activities demand.



The spiritual life follows the same principles. Spiritual growth requires hard work, discipline and practice. Making our wills conform to God's will is the result of repeated efforts over a period of years.

It is true that sometimes we must reevaluate our Lenten commitments. If we are aware we're consistently failing in some way, we may need to modify how we approach our commitment. Above all, the key to success is our steady, day-to-day observance of prayer, fasting and almsgiving all through the season.

But when we do fail, we should remember the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). He had failed miserably. Suppose he had concluded, "I've blown it. I rejected my father and my home. There's no way I can go back." He'd have given up in despair. But "coming to his senses," he decides to return home in penitence, to be a servant. When he arrives home, he is welcomed with joy and restored to his position.

This parable sets forth the pattern we should follow when we fail in our Lenten commitments. Begin our observance again, and keep up our Lenten journey, eventually arriving at the joys of Easter. God our Father will welcome us. Then we will indeed be ready to celebrate.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Craig Doty,  
Pastor



## A RECAP OF OUR 2019 STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL *Creating an environment*



*Parishioners Zach and Laura Kane shared their stewardship witness with parishioners in the week prior to the 2019 Stewardship Renewal.*

Thanks to the success of our 2019 Stewardship Renewal, parishioner John Kuchta says it's apparent that we are on the right path here at St. Peter Parish! So far, Stewardship Council has received approximately 435 commitment cards back from parishioners, totaling in 3,860 commitments to time spent in prayer or formation; 1,766 offerings of talent to parish ministries; and 368 offertory commitments with an average pledged amount of \$3,023. This reveals a greater sense of ownership amongst parishioners, enabling us to continue growing and making a difference as a faith community.

"I think the most profound thing for me is seeing that there is a very large constituency of people in the parish who believe that St. Peter Parish belongs to them and that it's their job to create an environment where we

can all get closer to God," John says. "Our job moving forward as members of the Stewardship Committee, then, has been to continue promoting and urging ministry leaders to involve these new volunteers – to help make sure that nobody remains out in the cold or not responded to when they have pledged to a particular ministry."

Not only has the Stewardship Renewal been a great tool for generating new ministry volunteers, but it's also helped produce new leadership. A big part of this, John says, is the simple fact that people are now being asked to serve. They're consequently more aware of needs of the parish and feel more welcomed to join.

"It's simple, really," John says. "If you ask people to serve, you will have some people say 'yes.' But if they aren't asked, many people won't



*The Stewardship Retreat is yet another way to extend hospitality to parishioners and invite them to participate more actively in the parish.*



## RENEWAL

# Environment Where We Grow Closer to God

volunteer. So just by simply asking people to volunteer, I think, it has caused a number of parishioners to step up and volunteer who probably wouldn't have otherwise."

And though it will be some time before people are formally asked again through Stewardship Renewal, John says it's never too late for parishioners to get involved and say 'yes' to the call. Nor is it ever too late to extend hospitality to others and invite them into a higher level of participation.

"If you made a commitment for the 2020 year and haven't gotten going yet, then let's get back on track," John says. "If you haven't joined or started, let's go ahead and start. That's one of the things I'm really big on – making sure people feel welcomed and invited to join in, not only in ministry life, but also in their own personal prayer and religious life."

***"I think the most profound thing for me is seeing that there is a very large constituency of people in the parish who believe that St. Peter Parish belongs to them and that it's their job to create an environment where we can all get closer to God."***

— JOHN KUCHTA

*If you would like more information about the Stewardship Council and its endeavors, please contact John Kuchta at 402-730-8833 or [jkuchta@solutiononenow.com](mailto:jkuchta@solutiononenow.com).*

## HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR 2019 STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL

This month, we are happy to share with you some of the results of our 2019 Stewardship Renewal at St. Peter.

- There were 435 commitment cards received, from 48 percent of active households.
- There were 3,860 prayer commitments – the stewardship of time – from 93 percent of participating households.
- Some of the prayer commitments included: Attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Days, 388 commitments; Pray for the sick, the lonely and the deceased, 317 commitments; Pray for our priests and sisters, 257 commitments.
- There were 1,766 ministry commitments – the stewardship of talent – from 77 percent of participating households. Of these, 367 were new ministry commitments, while 1,399 were re-commitments to parish ministries.
- Some of the ministry commitments included: PCCW (Parish Council of Catholic Women), 122 commitments; Perpetual Adoration, 112 commitments; Knights of Columbus – Council #10510, 106 commitments.
- There were 368 offertory commitments – the stewardship of treasure – from 85 percent of participating households. The average pledge was \$3,023.



# Stewardship of the Cross

The liturgical year is such a gift to us. As we turn the pages of the calendar, reflecting on the life of Christ, we have the opportunity to consider the most sublime events in the history of mankind. Of these events, perhaps none is more beautiful and worthy of contemplation than the one we are about to commemorate — Jesus' sacrifice of Himself for us on the Cross.

It is fitting and, at the same time, paradoxical. It is fitting that God should do it, because only an infinite God could rid us of the infinite debt we owed by our sin. It is paradoxical that He not only did it, but wanted to do it out of pure love for us, His lowly creatures. What is Jesus trying to show us? Even more staggering, what is He really asking when He exhorts us, in turn, to take up our cross and follow Him?

Jesus freely gave His life for the Church, and He calls us to do the same. Some of us may, in fact, give our entire lives for the Church. But for most of us, this giving takes place by a series of daily actions, both large and small, of Christ-like, sacrificial love — specifically, by giving our time, talent and treasure for the good of the Church. Yet, by joining these actions with His, we have the chance to participate in that very same sacrifice. This month, let us take the time to examine our hearts and actions in light of Jesus' as we journey with Him toward the Cross.

## **Jesus gave Himself unselfishly and excessively.**

Consider the manner of His sacrifice — one drop of Christ's blood would have been more than sufficient to

save the entire human race, and yet Our Lord Jesus chose to shed every last bit. From start to finish, Jesus showed us by His passion that He wanted to do more than what was merely sufficient. If there was more He could give, He gave it. He never stopped to count the cost or to look for what He could get in return.

## **Jesus made His sacrifice a supreme act of love for the Church.**

Counter-cultural even to this day, Jesus actually upheld sacrifice as desirable — the most perfect way to show our love: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn. 15:13). In His infinite wisdom, Jesus now offers this path to us as the way to holiness: "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk. 9:23).

## **Jesus gave Himself willingly and even joyfully.**

"No one takes [My life] from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again" (Jn. 10:18). At the first Eucharist, Jesus even went so far as to say, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you" (Lk. 22:15). Needless to say, the Passover sacrifice to which Jesus referred was not a symbolic one, but was in fact His very Body and Blood He would give for us through the sacrifice of the Cross.

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts more like Yours.

## **A LENTEN STEWARDSHIP PRAYER**

*"O my God, teach me to be generous: to serve You as You deserve to be served; to give without counting the cost; to fight without fear of being wounded; to work without seeking rest; and to spend myself without expecting any reward, but the knowledge that I am doing Your Holy will."*

— ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA



## FRIDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

### *GATHERING IN FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP*

In the Gospel, Jesus makes clear that He does not intend for our spirituality to be an individual endeavor – “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). Instead, He promises us to be present in a special way every time we choose to experience prayer, worship and faith formation in community. Here at St. Peter, we are blessed to have a Bible study group that offers parishioners an additional opportunity to learn and grow in their faith together.

Jean Bouc has been attending the Friday Morning Bible Study at St. Peter for almost 20 years. In that time, she has watched the group evolve from small meetings in people’s homes to the current gatherings

of 15 to 20 people in the parish meeting room. While the Bible study is open to all parishioners, it has traditionally been made up of women, largely due to its schedule – which is tied to the school calendar – and the babysitting that is offered during the meetings.

According to Jean, the Bible study participants represent a wide range of ages and backgrounds.

“We have stay-at-home moms, a couple of doctors, several retired teachers, and more,” she says. “Everybody gets a chance to lead, and it’s great to have such different perspectives on things. We are able to feel and hear and understand what women are going through in different stages of life.”

This year, the group is using Bishop Barron’s

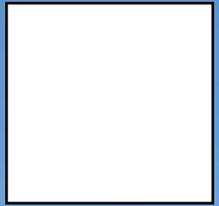
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*In addition to their regular meetings, the St. Peter Friday Morning Bible Study group gathers for two brunch celebrations each year. Here, members gathered for their 2020 Epiphany brunch.*



# ST. PETER CATHOLIC CHURCH



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## MASS SCHEDULE:

**Saturday:** 4:00 p.m.

**Sunday:** 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m.

### DAILY MASS

**Monday-Friday:** 6:30 a.m., 8:15 a.m.

**Saturday:** 8:15 a.m.

### CONFESSION:

**Monday-Friday:** 6-6:15 a.m., 7:45-8:00 a.m.

**Saturday:** 3-3:45 p.m.

## FRIDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY *continued from page 7*

*Word on Fire* series, reading his studies entitled *Conversion: Following the Call of Christ* and *Seven Deadly Sins, Seven Lively Virtues*. These materials help guide the group in their study of Scripture.

Making time to read and learn about the Bible is a great way to develop a closer walk with Christ.

"Studying Scripture enriches our lives and helps us understand more fully what we experience at Mass," Jean says. "It's a way to open yourself up more fully to Christ, the Lord and Spirit around us. The more you study, the more you want to study and know, because ultimately, we are longing to get to heaven and be with God."

In addition to the valuable faith formation that takes place in a Bible study, the women in this group also experience a rewarding fellowship. Prayer intentions are offered at the beginning of each

gathering, and may also be recorded in a prayer book. By praying with and for one another, the participants find themselves fostering deep friendships.

"We have a bond with one another," Jean says. "We meet Christ in the faces of other people, and when you look around the room at Bible study, you see Christ in the room and you can feel the Holy Spirit there. His presence is amongst us."

Thankful for the blessing this group has been in her life for so many years, Jean would encourage any parishioner interested in joining the Bible study to come give it a try.

"There is no commitment and no burden of homework," she says. "Come join us – it's a lot more fun to have people to journey with us! If you want to learn a little bit more about Christ and yourself – come and share. It's a very enriching part of a life."

*The St. Peter Friday Morning Bible Study is open to everybody, including parishioners from other churches and non-Catholics. The Bible study group meets on Fridays from 9 to 11 a.m. in the downstairs meeting room. In addition, babysitting is provided in the bride's room across the hall. For more information, please contact Deb Placek at 402-432-4614, or Jean Bouc at 402-420-7478.*