



# The Grateful Heart

Living Stewardship as a Way of Life

March 2016

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*A Letter From Our Pastor*

## Make Prayer and Hospitality Pillars of Your Lenten Journey

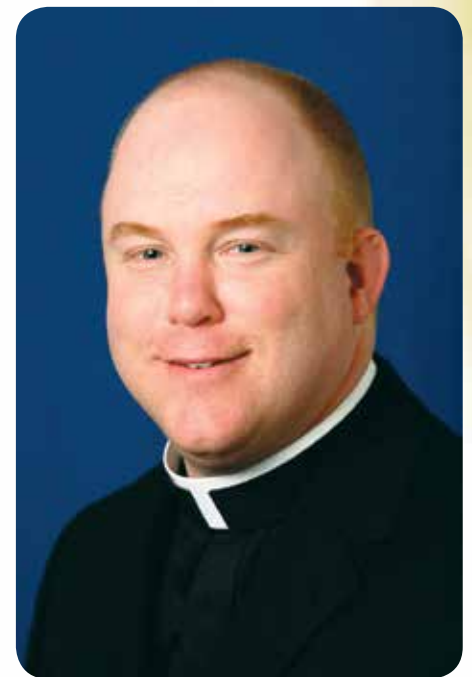
Dear Sacred Heart Families,

In the coming weeks, we will conclude our Lenten observance, experience Holy Week, and celebrate the joy of Easter. Of course, I hope that you have made some effort to make this Lenten season special and significant, but if you have not, it is never too late to accomplish that goal.

With thoughts of Lent, Easter and the Year of Mercy at the top of my mind, I offer a couple suggestions to help carry you to the end of your Lenten journey.

As you know, prayer is foundational to stewardship, as it is one of the Four Pillars of a stewardship parish — along with hospitality, formation and service. With this in mind, here are some suggestions on how you might make your prayers even more consequential.

Pick someone to pray for, perhaps even someone you don't get along with. Just pray for them. You do not have to tell them you are praying for them, but the exercise is good for you, and for them, as well. If possible,



find a time this month to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, especially if this is something you do not normally do. Pray every morning shortly after you get up, and again each evening before you turn in. It does not have to be a long prayer, but it does need to be done consistently.

In terms of the pillar of hospitality, there is also much we can

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## Amy and Mike Billquist

### *A Stewardship Journey of Joy and Gratitude*

When we turn to Scripture, there are a number of passages that speak directly to living a life of stewardship. But perhaps none speak to the heart of stewardship more than a key reminder from St. Paul, to always maintain our spirit of gratitude, no matter our personal circumstances or struggles – “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

For Sacred Heart parishioners Amy and Mike Billquist, these words have become a sort of theme for their own spiritual journey.

“To me, stewardship is a way of living,” Mike says. “It’s living and recognizing God like in that verse, saying you should rejoice in what He gives you – you try to live in the way that He wants us to. I always think back to history and the disciples, spreading the word by living out the Gospel. Stewardship for me has been that – striving to be that example to others.”

For the Billquists, this understanding of stewardship began here at Sacred Heart of Jesus parish 11 years ago. Born into traditional Catholic families, they each strayed away from the faith during their teenage and young adult years.

“It wasn’t until we started having kids that we began feeling pulled more toward the faith,” Amy says. “Only when we became parishioners at Sacred Heart and our daughter was starting kindergarten did we really become involved in the parish community.”



This involvement marked the beginning of a dramatic change for the Billquists, opening their eyes to the depths and beauty of their Catholic heritage. Through parish programs such as Christ Renews His Parish, or CRHP, they began hungering for more knowledge, seeking to better understand and share their faith.

“I began realizing all the things about my faith that I had never really paid attention to in my childhood,” Mike says. “For example, I realized that I hadn’t been confirmed, causing me to go through RCIA and get confirmed.”

Over the years, the Billquists, along with their children Lindsay and Stephen, have become active members in our parish community. Mike currently serves as the Usher Ministry Lead while Amy continues with her weekly Eucharistic Holy Hour and assisting with the annual Angel Tree program. Amy was also instru-

mental in beginning the Grateful Heart newsletter, serving as the project’s original publisher and manager. Most importantly, the Billquists continue to serve as grateful witnesses to others, rejoicing in the Lord despite life’s struggles.

“I just feel that God has blessed us so abundantly and not just us – everybody,” Amy says. “He has given us all so much and asks for nothing in return. Stewardship is just simply me giving the only thing that I can, the first fruits of everything that He has blessed me with – my family, my time, my money, my house, *everything*, in my own inadequate way.”

Rejoicing isn’t always easy; we all have individual trials we must face whether it is loss, illness, or financial struggles. Two years ago, Amy was diagnosed with a severe case of strep throat that affected her brain, causing a number of side effects including

## Amy and Mike Billquist

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memory loss.

“This experience has been huge in our faith, because throughout the stages of the illness, we’ve had to really trust in God and rely on Him,” Amy says.

Through her illness, Amy has learned firsthand that it’s not the amount of or how “important” your offering is that matters – all that matters is that we give the Lord the best we have with joy and gratitude.

“I think people rely too much on their humanness, saying, ‘I don’t want to cantor because I’m

not good enough,’ or, ‘I can’t read because I’m not a strong enough reader,’ she says. “What they need to realize is that anything you do for God is a gift – He just wants to see us involved.”

By taking that step, despite their weaknesses and daily struggles, Mike and Amy have seen their lives become transformed. They’ve gained a sense of community, knowing that someone “has their back” and is always praying for them. Amy adds that stewardship has transformed their outlook from a more “ego-

centric” one to a more outwardly focused perspective.

Mike echoes his wife’s sentiments.

“Like the Bible verse, I’ve learned to always look for that opportunity to see God and what He puts out there for you,” he says. “It can be easily forgotten or overlooked as you enter the struggle of secular day-to-day life. But if you have faith, you can recognize every little small detail that He has placed there, allowing you to remember and rejoice in Him.”

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## Make Prayer and Hospitality Pillars of Your Lenten Journey

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do in this area, both as a parish and as individuals and families. Here is a suggestion that involves hospitality – one that is also connected to gratitude and even the Year of Mercy. Many of us spend time at a computer. It is a way for us to stay connected to those who are close to us, and to the world around us. Why not begin and end each week emailing someone a note of thanksgiving? Again, it does not have to be lengthy, but when we think about it, each of our lives is filled with people to whom we should be grateful.

Just send that someone a note thanking them for something specifically, or in general. By starting and ending each week like that, our minds are in the right place for prayer and for having the attitude that Christ asks us to have.

I thank you for all you do, for our parish, for the Church, for one another, and for me personally. I am blessed. Like most, I may not express it often enough. I pray for you, and I ask you to pray for me during this holy time.

Peace,

Fr. Pat



## A HISTORY OF

# LENT

*and Lenten Practices*

As we share in the Lenten journey, we proceed through a season of preparation, sacrifice and penance, culminating in Holy Week and the joyous celebrations of Easter. And while the liturgical season of Lent offers us a time for solemn reflection, it is also widely welcomed each year as an opportunity to be drawn ever closer to our faith.

But just how did this penitential season come to be? And how did the reverent hallmarks of Lent – such as fasting and prayer – become so deeply ingrained in our observance of this season?

To understand the Lenten season, it is important to understand the word “Lent” itself, which is derived from two Anglo-Saxon terms: *lencten*, meaning “spring,” and *lenctentid*, which is the term for both “springtide” and “March” – of course, Lent often falls throughout most of the month of March, and during the transition into (and renewal of) the spring season. In Latin, the corresponding term for “Lent,” *quadragesima*, refers to its dating from the 40<sup>th</sup> day before Easter.

This brings us to another hallmark of the Lenten season – its length of 40 days. However, Lent was not originally observed for this length of time. During the first three centuries of the Christian era, Easter preparations consisted of three days of fasting and prayer. In some places, this preparation was extended into the entire week prior to Easter – which we now observe as Holy Week. There is also some evidence that, in Rome, Easter preparation was as long as three weeks.

In its early form, Lent was an intense period of spiritual and liturgical preparation for catechumens who were to be baptized at Easter. At the time, many members of the community observed this period of preparation alongside the catechumens. But, as time passed and more people were baptized as infants, the connection between catechumens and Lenten preparation gave way to a focus on the themes of repentance and

fasting during Lent for *all* Christians.

It was not until the fourth century – upon the legalization of Christianity – that Lent developed into its current length of 40 days, which mirrored the length of Jesus’ fast and temptation in the desert, as chronicled in Luke 4:1-13.

Yet, interestingly, the Lenten observations of fasting and prayer did not always take place for 40 *consecutive* days. For instance, in Jerusalem, fasting was observed for 40 days, Monday through Friday, but not on Saturday or Sunday – thus, Lent lasted for a total of *eight* weeks. In Rome and the West, fasting took place for six weeks, Monday through Saturday, with Lent being observed over *six* weeks. The practice of fasting for six days over the course of six weeks eventually prevailed, with Ash Wednesday being instituted to account for 40 fasting days prior to Easter.

And as the length of Lenten observance developed over time, so did the observance of fasting itself. At first, some areas of the Church abstained from all meat and animal products, while others made exceptions for certain foods, like fish. And while a person was to only have one meal a day, a smaller repast would be allowed so that manual laborers could maintain their strength throughout the day. Eventually, eating meat was allowed throughout the week, save for Ash Wednesday and on Fridays.

In fact, two of our most common and beloved Lenten and Easter traditions – the Shrove Tuesday meal and Easter eggs – developed from these early Lenten observations. Initially, abstinence from dairy products was observed during Lent, with dispensations given if pious works had taken place. Eventually, this particular rule of abstinence was relaxed entirely. Today, pre-Lenten pancake breakfasts, Easter egg decoration and egg hunts remain as enjoyable seasonal opportunities for fellowship and fun within our parish families!

## **“Whoever Follows Me Will Not Walk in Darkness, but Will Have the Light of life” (John 8:12)**

### *Your Brothers in Christ Ministry*

For us as humans – and, for that matter, as Catholics – the concepts of light and darkness can be meaningful and significant. We tend to associate light with God, whether it is a burning bush or a pillar of fire of magnificence beyond our imaginations. In the Psalms, we hear “The Lord is my Light and my Salvation.” Our Lord Himself tells us, “I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Here at Sacred Heart of Jesus, we have many opportunities to seek the Light. One example is a spiritual experience called Christ Renews His Parish, or CRHP. This spiritual renewal process was developed for Catholics not long after the completion of the Second Vatican Council, and Catholic parishes throughout the United States have since embraced it. It has offered a way for us to break from our hectic lives, to share our faith, and to become closer to God.

Parishioners Jeff Boor and Dan Lickel took advantage of a CRHP weekend more than a year ago. It was a wonderful experience for each of them, and it had a deep affect on their faith lives. Having sought and found the Light, they wanted more. As a result, the ministry of Your Brothers in Christ evolved last year.

“We are a men’s group which is organized for fellowship and learning and sharing,” Dan says. “Regardless where someone may be on his faith journey, we want to provide a place of comfort and fellowship. Any man of faith

18 or older is welcome to become a part of our ministry.”

“We expand and share our faith using a variety of ways and venues,” Jeff adds. “We have all heard about staying on the path to God and being a light for others. We basically meet every other week. Our meetings may involve a guest speaker, reading and discussing Catholic books and articles, a DVD presentation followed by small group discussion, a social event, or just an evening of prayer and fellowship. In addition, we try to have a couple service opportunities every month.”

There is a well-known Proverb from the Book of the same name, which reads, “As iron is sharpened by iron, one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17). Thus, as our men today proceed on their faith journey, they may reap the same benefits through meeting, prayer, sharing, fellowship, and interaction. This is why it is so important to come together in God’s name as brothers in Christ.

“What we have tried to organize is a ministry which has appeal through a variety of approaches,” Jeff says. “Men are welcome to be a part of something which may appeal to them, or to seek the light through everything offered. Currently, we have about 20 core members, and as many as 40 others who participate when they are able, or when something is particularly interesting to them.”

And as Dan notes, “We would be blessed to have you as a part of our group.”



*“We are a men’s group which is organized for fellowship and learning and sharing. Regardless where someone may be on his faith journey, we want to provide a place of comfort and fellowship. Any man of faith 18 or older is welcome to become a part of our ministry.” – Dan Lickel*

*Any man who thinks he might be interested to give Your Brothers in Christ a try is encouraged to call Dan Lickel at 913-667-3355, or Jeff Boor at 913-633-0792.*

## “The Friendships, the Fellowship, and the Service Have Become Very Important to Me”

### *Our Sacred Heart of Jesus Knights of Columbus Council #2408*

Here at Sacred Heart of Jesus, every ministry – every opportunity to serve in recognition of our gifts – is truly a blessing. This is most certainly the case with our Knights of Columbus Council #2408 – one of more than 15,000 Councils with almost two million members located throughout the world. Fraternity and charity are the two key hallmarks of the Knights, who in the past decade alone have donated \$1.475 billion to charity and given as good stewards almost 700 million hours of volunteer service.

All the good works done by the Knights of Columbus are based upon their four core principles – Charity, Unity, Fraternity, and Patriotism. Our Council here at Sacred Heart is an excellent example of what it means to give.

“Although I was initially hesitant to become a Knight, I do not regret it now,” says Grand Knight Mark Dunn. “The friendships, the fellowship, and the service have become very important to me, and they have deepened my faith, and my ability to be a good disciple.”

Mark notes the many ways that the Council is involved in and serves the parish community.

“Some of the things we do are more obvious, like the Fish Fries during Lent on Fridays, our annual poker tournament, the free throw tournaments we sponsor for the kids, the breakfast with Santa, and the Tootsie Roll Drive,” he says. “The Tootsie Roll Drive is a good example of the charitable works of our Council and of Knights throughout the U.S. It was begun more than 30 years ago to assist people with intellectual disabilities. Literally millions of dollars have been raised to improve the quality of life for those people.

“Many other services we perform and charitable activities are not so obvious,” Mark continues. “We participate in the Relay for Life, offer support to two local pregnancy centers, help with the diocesan food drives, and provide hundreds of bags of toys each year to children in homeless



shelters throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area.”

The Holy Father Pope Francis recognizes the valuable contribution the Knights make to the life of the Church. Speaking to a group of Knights recently, the pope said, “On this occasion I also wish to express my gratitude for the unfailing support which your Order has always given to the works of the Holy See.” Founded by Fr. Michael McGivney at St. Mary Church in New Haven, Conn., the Knights have existed and grown for more than 130 years. Catholic men were drawn to the Knights because of the order’s emphasis on service with virtue to the Church, to communities, to families, and to our United States.

The Knights of Columbus is not just a fraternity in name. It is a brotherhood of Catholic men who each play a part in improving the world around them. They stand together in faith, dedicated to upholding the principles they cherish. Catholic men aged 18 and above are eligible for membership. Our Council welcomes and invites more men who are interested in service and in being active in the parish and the community through the Knights!

*“Although I was initially hesitant to become a Knight, I do not regret it now. The friendships, the fellowship, and the service have become very important to me, and they have deepened my faith, and my ability to be a good disciple.” – Grand Knight Mark Dunn*

*For more information or to learn how to become a member, please contact Membership Chairman Kyle Parks at 620-285-5112 or email him at [kyleparkspt@gmail.com](mailto:kyleparkspt@gmail.com).*

## Longtime Dedicated Staff Member Retires

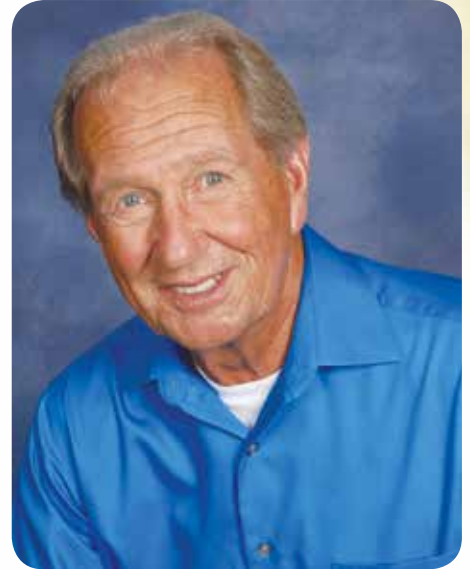
### *Director of Operations, Julie Krause, Shares Her Clinton Experience*

For almost 18 years, I've known Clinton Long, and have had the pleasure of working side by side with him for the past 12 years at Sacred Heart. Bringing his 30-plus years of facility management knowledge and expertise to Sacred Heart in 2004, he led the Building Committee through the construction of the Parish Church and School addition. He was instrumental in creating and implementing security and safety protocols for the parish and school, and he oversaw the overall maintenance and management of our campus.

The best phrase I could use to describe Clinton would be "good and faithful servant." You could often find Clinton on the roof replacing an A/C compressor, pushing snow at 4 a.m., mowing our acres of grass, switching out a ballast, setting up tables and chairs for an event, or even in the kitchen on a Lenten Friday rolling out hot cross buns or making macaroni and cheese. He cared for our campus like it was his own. And while we will miss seeing him every day in the office, he won't be far away, as he'll remain active within our Sacred Heart community.

Congratulations, Clinton on your retirement, and when you pass the parish offices on your way to Starbucks or the golf course, give us a honk – or better yet, stop in!

P.S. – So, for those that have Clinton's cell phone number plugged into your phone for those "late night" emergencies, best to press "DELETE"!



## A Look Back and Our Parish Mission... and a Birthday Celebration!

This past Feb. 23, our parish community shared in formation and fellowship during our Parish Mission. But we also shared in a special birthday celebration for Fr. Pat!

We thank all who attended the Parish Mission!



## HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

### **March 24** *Holy Thursday*

7 p.m. (Mass of the Lord's Supper)

Parish Adoration immediately following 8:30-10 p.m., Meeting Rooms 1 & 2

### **March 25** *Good Friday*

7 p.m. (The Lord's Passion & Veneration of the Cross), Start of the Divine Mercy Novena

### **March 26** *Holy Saturday*

7 p.m. (Easter Vigil)

This is a celebration in which our parish community welcomes our RCIA candidates and catechumens as they receive full communion into our faith. Reception immediately following Mass in MPC.

### **March 27** *Easter Sunday Mass Schedule (note time changes)*

Mass Times: 7:30 a.m.; 9:30 a.m.; 11:30 a.m.

With humble hearts, the following contributions have also been made — Photography: Jennifer Mullinax Photography & John Beal; Graphics: Rhodelander Graphic Design

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