



# ST. PETER CATHOLIC CHURCH

*Monthly Newsletter*

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**MARCH 2022**



## *St. Monica's Ministry:*

### **Praying for the Conversion and Return of Our Loved Ones to the Church**

Many of us are familiar with the sadness of having a loved one leave the faith. When struggling with how to love and help them, here at St. Peter, we look to the example of St. Monica, who prayed unceasingly for her son, St. Augustine, to return to the Catholic faith. Kayla West leads the St. Monica Ministry, through which parishioners come together to pray for the conversion of our loved ones.

"Our purpose is threefold," Kayla says. "We pray for those we love to return to the Church, we learn how we can best love them, and we have community and support in longing for our loved ones to return."

Kayla began the ministry in the last year at the suggestion of Fr. Clark. The group began by reading *Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church* by Brandon Vogt. Once a month, the group meets, initially reflecting on the book, with time to pray together and share in discussion. Members are encouraged to commit to a weekly Holy Hour to pray for conversion, outside of the meetings.

"One of the major points is that we can't save anyone ourselves," Kayla says. "Our loved ones aren't projects to work on. We can get so focused on bringing them back that we forget to love them as a person. If that person doesn't know that we and God love them, it doesn't matter what we say."

At some points, we may be called to have honest conversations with our loved ones who have left the faith, but Kayla points out that it's important to pray for others to come into their lives who could be that key influence, as well.

"Our group is named after St. Monica, who prayed for St. Augustine to return to the Church, but it was also the accompaniment of St. Ambrose that helped in his conversion," Kayla says. "We pray for an Ambrose to come into the lives of our loved ones and also discern who we are called to be the Ambrose to."



*(From left) Maryann Boumann, Kayla West, Margaret Aldridge, Donna Harrison (standing behind), Bonnie Damrow, Sue Ruigh*

Members make an effort to share one another's burdens by praying for each other's loved ones.

"The universal Church is a family and our parish church is a family," Kayla says. "Even if it's someone else's sister or nephew or son or daughter, that person is my family too. We're not complete until everyone is in communion with that family. The Lord wants each and every soul and everyone needs to know how deeply loved they are."

Kayla has found a lot of hope and inspiration from the others in the group.

"They have so much wisdom to share in this community they are forming," Kayla says.

Recently, a member had her son ask to go to Mass with her after he met with a priest while in the hospital. It was a reminder to everyone that God is working in their loved ones' lives.

The members of St. Monica's Ministry do not simply desire their fallen-away loved ones to come back to church, but rather to experience the joy and love of a relationship with Christ. Driven by this hope, they focus on building loving relationships, being faithful in prayer, and supporting one another through prayer and fellowship.

*St. Monica's Ministry meets on the third Tuesday of each month from 7 to 8 a.m.*

*To learn more, or for information about upcoming meetings, please contact Kayla West at 316-201-7140 or [kayla-west@cdolinc.net](mailto:kayla-west@cdolinc.net).*



*A Letter from Our Pastor*

## *The Joy of Lent*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

**H**ave you ever thought about the joy in sacrifice that Lent provides? Most of us don't delight in sacrifice; in fact, in our daily lives, we often do our best to avoid challenges and practices that push us outside of our comfort zones.

In Christianity, there is a beautiful irony between joy and sacrifice, and we are presented with a wonderful opportunity to embrace this uniquely during Lent. In one of his Lenten messages, Pope Francis shared, "Lent is a fitting time for self-denial; we would do well to ask ourselves what we can give up in order to help and enrich others by our own poverty."

While giving up sweets in favor of healthy snacks for Lent is a common and noble endeavor, the goal of Lent should not only be a spiritual excuse to lose weight! In choosing acts of self-denial, we are saying "no" to things in order to get into the practice of saying "no" when inclined towards sin, ultimately deepening our faith and our relationship with the Lord. Victory can be found when we deny ourselves and pick up our crosses and hardships in order to grow closer to Christ!

Therein lies the joy. When we grow closer to God by denying our will, we say "yes" to a life of abundance with Him. Our God is a benevolent God; He will not hold back His grace from those who honor Him and choose challenging things to grow and give Him glory.



Christ even tells us Himself, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Without question, Lent is a time for conscious penitence and spiritual preparation for Easter. And it is important to remember that God loves us whether we make Lenten changes or not. At the same time, Lent provides us an opportunity to make God a greater part of our life, and to take our faith to new levels. Stewardship is a God-centered way of life — a spiritual way of living that, above all, acknowl-

edges God's presence in all we do.

Lent is a time for every one of us to do more than simply deny ourselves; we need to welcome God into our lives in greater ways so that when we get to Holy Week and Easter, we have an even greater appreciation for the sacrifice the Lord made for us. Talk about pure joy!

May you and your loved ones enjoy a holy and joyous Lenten journey.

In His Mercy,

Fr. Eric Clark,  
Pastor



## *Formation Opportunity* **Embracing Ways to Grow in O**

**H**ow we choose to spend our extra time can either help us grow in faith or pull us away from our faith. Parish Catechist Blake Vajgrt asks us to use this season to grow in our faith.

“Our Lord loves you deeply, and He wants to bring you to who you are called to be,” Blake says.

With St. Peter as the patron of our church, Blake and Kayla West, Parish Secretary, have put together a discussion guide for *The Search* found on FORMED.ORG, hosted by acclaimed Catholic author, speaker, and TV host Chris Stefanick. It is designed for small groups to do virtually anywhere. Materials will be at the parish and accessible through the website at [www.saintpeterslincoln.com](http://www.saintpeterslincoln.com).

“It never hurts to know our story,” Blake says. “Together as we go through *The Search* this Lent we’ll all see how every human heart is searching for something.



*The women’s Friday morning Bible study*

Ultimately, we only find what we are searching for when we find God.” Over the course of seven sessions, the study will walk through some simple concepts of who we are and where we are going while encouraging people to go deeper sharing in reflection and discussion. The parish has some standing groups that meet routinely during the school year. For men,

there’s an opportunity to join That Man is You! on Saturday mornings from 6:30 to 8 a.m. For women, there’s an opportunity to join the Women’s Friday Morning Bible Study that meets on Fridays from 9:15 to 10:45 am. This is an excellent way to connect with others of faith, grow, and be challenged. If small groups aren’t your thing, Blake recommends that everyone commit

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*“The Lord wants to grow in relationship with you. This all will route us to the highest good — that is, God Himself.” — Blake Vajgrt*

# *Opportunities in Our Parish*

## **Our Relationship with the Lord**

to just picking up their Bible each day and doing some reading. Start with going through the weekday Mass readings. It is also helpful to have the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on hand as a reference.

“It doesn’t take a lot of effort,” Blake says. “It just takes dedicated effort. If you have questions about things you come across, reach out to me or Fr. Clark.”

While Blake hopes to add more programs here at St. Peter Catholic Church, he would also like to see parishioners make use of already-accessible formation tools in order to be more formed in the faith. For instance, you might consider listening to Fr. Mike Schmitz’s Bible in a Year podcast or exploring the many Catholic media options made available through our parish subscription to FORMED.org.

“The Lord wants to grow in relationship with you,” Blake says. “This all will route us to the highest good – that is, God Himself.”

With all the options available to parishioners,

Blake recommends choosing a topic you enjoy learning about, either start to study it alone or create a small group with which you can meet. There are almost countless potential topics – from learning about Mary to learning what the Church says about environmental topics.

“The more we know God, the more we love God,” Blake says. “The more we love Him, the more we want to know of Him.”

Blake says we don’t have to take on all formation opportunities at once – it just takes small steps to grow in faith. We should use this year – and particularly, this Lent – to take those small steps.

Our parish plans to study together *The Search* this Lent, provide a 1st Peter Bible Study for groups to go through during the Easter Season, and increase the understanding of charisms, God-given spiritual gifts, after giving a Spiritual Gifts Inventory at Pentecost, with some formation on charisms this summer.



*First Penance/Holy Communion Parent prayer discussion*

*Be sure to refer to the bulletin for more information on the First Peter Bible Study and other Faith Formation offerings.*



## *The Story of the Annunciation of the Lord*

The Feast of the Annunciation, now recognized as a solemnity, is one of the most important in the Church calendar. First, it celebrates the actual Incarnation of Our Savior – the Word made flesh in the womb of His mother, Mary. Second, it is a principal Marian feast. Two other feasts honoring Our Lord’s mother, the Assumption (Aug. 15), and the Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8), are celebrated as Holy Days of Obligation in the United States. New Year’s Day, Jan. 1, is observed as a Solemnity of Mary.

The feast of the Annunciation was first celebrated around the fifth century. It is the reason why we celebrate Christmas on December 25. Christmas comes exactly nine months after the Archangel Gabriel invited the Virgin Mary to be the Mother of God, an event we commemorate on March 25.

The biblical account of the Annunciation is in the first chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke, which describes the news given to Mary that she was to become the mother of the Incarnation of God, records the “angelic salutation” of Gabriel to Mary, ‘Hail, thou who art highly favored. The Lord is with thee’ (this is the origin of the repeated

“Hail Mary” prayer of the Rosary) and Mary’s response to God’s will, “Let it be done to me according to thy word.”

Her exultant hymn, the Magnificat, found in Luke 1:46-55, has been part of the Church’s Liturgy of the Hours, at Vespers (evening prayer), and has been repeated nightly in churches, convents, and monasteries for many centuries.

On this special day, we reflect upon the incarnation of Jesus Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary as the antecedent to the explosion of joy, caroling, gift-giving, eating, drinking, love, and family unity that surrounds the birth of the Savior. With the incarnation, God has become one of us. From all eternity God had decided that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity should become human. Now, as Luke 1:26-38 tells us, the decision is being realized. The God-Man embraces all humanity, indeed all creation, to bring it to God in one great act of love. Because human beings have rejected God, Jesus will accept a life of suffering and an agonizing death: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13).

Mary has an important role to

play in God’s plan. From all eternity, God destined her to be the mother of Jesus and closely related to Him in the creation and redemption of the world. We could say that God’s decrees of creation and redemption are joined in the decree of Incarnation. Because Mary is God’s instrument in the Incarnation, she has a role to play with Jesus in creation and redemption. It is a God-given role. It is God’s grace from beginning to end. Mary becomes the eminent figure she is only by God’s grace. She is the empty space where God could act. Everything she is she owes to the Trinity.

Together with Jesus, the privileged and graced Mary is the link between heaven and earth. She is the human being who best, after Jesus, exemplifies the possibilities of human existence. She received into her lowliness the infinite love of God. She shows how an ordinary human being can reflect God in the ordinary circumstances of life. She exemplifies what the Church and every member of the Church is meant to become. She is the ultimate product of the creative and redemptive power of God. She manifests what the Incarnation is meant to accomplish for all of us.

## *The Welcoming Ministry:* **Fostering a Warm Spirit of Hospitality and Belonging**



*The New Parishioner Breakfast on January 22 was enjoyed by all who attended!*

Although the St. Peter Welcoming Ministry is a new one at our parish, 26 parishioners already have committed to working through the ministry to make sure that all newly registered parishioners are welcomed to our parish family in Christ.

“The ministry held its first ‘Call Party’ at the beginning of January. Every new household from 2021 was called and welcomed to the parish,” says parish manager Katherine Norman. “They were invited to Mass and breakfast with our priests, parish staff, ministry leaders, and fellow parishioners. New parishioners enjoyed a few ‘get-to-know-you questions’, as well

as a tour of our facility. We had a great turnout and the event was a success. We will have to do it again!”

Stewardship, of course, is the framework within which the Welcoming Ministry functions, with Hospitality as the first of the Four Pillars of Parish Stewardship – and thus, one of the objectives of the new ministry. By reaching out to new parishioners, the Welcoming Ministry wants them to know they are joining a parish family.

“Hospitality fosters a sense of belonging and belonging leads to believing,” Katherine says. “Our parishioners understand that stewardship is a way of life and that

getting involved in the parish is one way to return the gifts God has given you. As new parishioners get involved at our parish, they feel at home and start the process of continuous conversion.”

Since the start of the new year, the members of the Welcoming Ministry have continued looking for ways to welcome new parishioners. However, parishioners who are not ministry members can also offer hospitality to others.

“All parishioners and guests should feel that they belong and this happens when all parishioners seek the face of Christ in one another,” Katherine says.

*Anyone is welcome to join the new Welcoming Ministry. Those interested in becoming involved may contact Katherine Norman at 402-450-9484.*



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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, Wednesday & Friday: 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.*

*Saturday: 3:00-4:00 p.m.*



*Join us each Friday for  
Stations of the Cross, followed  
by our Lenten dinners!*

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### Stations of the Cross

Fridays at 2:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

**March 4**

Boy Scout Spaghetti Feed

**March 11, 18, 25 and April 1, 8**

Knights of Columbus Lenten Meal