

OUR LADY

Star of the Sea

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Sacraments Helping Inmates Cope on Death Row

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With nearly 400 prisoners in the state of Florida awaiting their fate on death row, prison ministries like Kairos exist to remind them that God still offers His mercy and love.

In the state of Florida, nearly 400 prisoners await a court-appointed fate on death row. Some are guilty. Some claim innocence. Every one of them is deserving of Christ's love.

For Don Barnhorst and Terry Starkey, the men confined within the walls of Florida State Prison and Union Correctional Institution have become unlikely companions in a journey of faith that sometimes leads to friendship and even conversion. Both tell a story of the transformative power of the sacraments as they seek to remind those so acutely in need of God's mercy that no one is out of His reach.

"Many of them just want someone to listen to them," says Don, who visits men in solitary confinement every week. "That's the biggest gift I can give to them – a smile on my face and an ear willing to listen to them. Many of these kids, for the first time in their lives, have an opportunity to sit back, take stock of their lives, and think of what they can do to turn their lives around. Most of them are young kids who just got into trouble."

Don says many of his visits consist of offering Communion and fellowship to Catholic inmates. He also schedules confessions with a

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Sacraments Helping Inmates Cope on Death Row

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priest if the inmate is looking to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Terry, a parishioner who volunteers with the non-denominational ministry Kairos, says Reconciliation can be a powerful experience for many of the inmates he encounters.

“The beauty of the Church is the sacraments, and one of them is Reconciliation,” he says. “When you see prisoners go through it, it’s even more magical – the transformation after confession of the newly incarcerated is amazing.”

Through Kairos, prisoners are given the opportunity to participate in a retreat similar to Christ Renews His Parish. Terry recalls seeing one inmate in particular experience a conversion that changed him fundamentally.

“One gentleman five years ago was a ‘lifer’ for murder,” Terry explains. “The first day there, he was the biggest, baddest, meanest, tattooed, muscle-bound prisoner. You couldn’t touch him. But by the end of the weekend, he became a softie.”

Terry says prisoners like the one he describes often go on to evangelize to their fellow inmates and create a small community of believers that meets weekly to continue the Kairos experience.

Like Terry, Don says seeing prisoners receive the Eucharist has inspired a reverence within him.

“The most striking factor that I’ve learned is a greater reverence for the Holy Eucharist,” Don says. “The reverence of these men makes me feel shameful that I’m ever not in complete awe to receive Communion.”

Throughout their combined years of service within the walls of Florida’s prisons, both men say their perspectives on capital punishment have come to reflect the sentiment held by the Church rather than the State.

“We need to pray hard for its end,” Don says. “Men are now making decisions that God should. The death penalty is evil for so many reasons. It usurps the power of God and sometimes kills men who could be innocent.”

Terry adds that the death penalty leaves little room for spiritual growth and compared it to the Church’s stance on abortion.

“I used to be a big supporter of capital punishment, but I think it’s against our faith,” he says. “We shift sometimes and we grow. I’m glad to have that conviction. It’s like ending a life before birth. It’s the same.”

Don Barnhorst and Terry Starkey say that, although prison ministry isn’t for everyone, those who may be interested in volunteering their time are invited to contact Don at 904-285-9009 or Barnhorst@aol.com, or Terry at 904-992-4800 or twstarkey@aol.com. Terry says there are multiple ways to help that do not have to include visiting prisoners, including letter writing and cooking for Kairos weekends.

Holy Week Schedule

Holy Thursday

Thursday, April 13 - 7 p.m.

Good Friday

April 14

Passion of the Lord - 3 p.m.
Stations of the Cross - 7 p.m.

Blessing of Easter Food

Saturday, April 15 - 9:30 a.m.

Easter Vigil

Saturday, April 15 - 8:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday

April 16 - 7 a.m.; 9 a.m.;
11:30 a.m.; 5:30 p.m.



A Letter from Our Pastor

Give Thanks to the Lord, It Is Right and Just

Dear Parishioners,

Every time I prepare my monthly letter to you in this newsletter, I am reminded how blessed I am. Being a priest truly is a blessing. While the job is not always easy — a pastor has many responsibilities — the rewards are equally humbling.

As we complete our preparations and then share in our celebrations of the Triduum and Easter, I am also prompted to think about the holiest things I do. By far, the holiest is celebrating Mass, and especially consecrating the holy bread and wine so Christ is present among us. The very word “consecration” literally means “association with the sacred.” To have that duty is incredible. I have never taken it for granted, and although it may appear at times to be somewhat automatic, it never is for me.

Almost all of us are familiar with the Mass, and with what we do and say leading up to the high point — the Eucharist. But I think we must guard against becoming too casual in our responses and what we say. That is what I work to avoid, but I believe you need to work just as diligently to make sure that you are listening,

hearing, and being aware of what you are saying. For us as Catholics, the Mass is the most important sacred act in the Church.

I suppose I could write a whole series of letters or articles on the meaning of everything we say and do at Mass, but I was thinking of one exchange in particular during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It is something we may say in sort of a habitual way, but I firmly believe each of us must truly consider what we are saying.

I say to you, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” and you respond, “It is right and just.” Think about what that means, because it is very much at the heart of stewardship. I am saying we need to thank God, show gratitude for everything we are and everything with which we are gifted — and you, at least in words, acknowledge that doing that is exactly what we need to do. The Mass is filled with statements and exchanges of that sort, and I would ask that we really think about what they truly mean.

Even the simple exchange between the Eucharistic Minister and you at the actual reception of the Host is



heavy with meaning. We say, “The Body of Christ,” and you reply “Amen.” In that instance, “Amen” means “Yes, I do believe this is Jesus.” Like myself, you are blessed. Sometimes we just need to realize it. Happy Easter!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Keith Brennan
Pastor



The Pastoral Council Plays an Essential

Here at Our Lady Star of the Sea, we are blessed to have a pastor who is dedicated to helping all of us parishioners grow closer to the Lord. Indeed, Msgr. Brennan does a wonderful job of nurturing our spiritual growth! And working with him are both staff and volunteer parishioners, who faithfully help make his pastoral vision for Our Lady Star of the Sea a reality. You may already know some of them – the parish office staff, our deacons, and the directors of various ministries, to name just a few. One group, however, may be less visible, as their work tends to take place behind the scenes. This invaluable group of parishioners is the Pastoral Council, and their primary purpose is to work with Msgr. Brennan to fulfill the parish mission.

Our Lady Star of the Sea did not always have a pastoral council – in fact, it was just three years ago that our Parish Council transitioned into the Pastoral Council. While the name change may not sound very significant, the differences between a parish council and a pastoral council are vast. With the parish council structure, a group of parishioners met monthly with the pastor to act more or less as a “sounding board” – the pastor might bring concerns or questions to the council members, and their feedback served as a representation of the church’s parishioners as a whole. In contrast, a pastoral council is asked to provide thoughtful, research-based recommendations on issues raised by the pastor.

Michael Lenahen, council Chairman from 2014 to 2016, explains exactly what this transition to the Pastoral Council entailed.

“Msgr. Brennan asked us to consider the change to a Pastoral Council during the 2014-2015 year,” Michael says. “He asked us to read a book by Mark Fischer called Making Parish Councils Pastoral, and we thought [becoming a Pastoral Council] just seemed right and gave us more of a purpose. Now, the council is a consultative body involved in the planning process – we assist the pastor in carrying out the pastoral mission.

“With the Pastoral Council, Monsignor can put his hand on the pulse of the parish by asking a group of us to look into a particular topic,” Michael continues. “There are three steps outlined in Fischer’s book – investigate, ponder and recom-



Monica Begeman, current Pastoral Council Chair (2016-2018)

mend. So Monsignor will pose a question – for example, he might ask about the best way to communicate with parishioners – and a group of council members researches the topic, talks with parishioners, and comes back to him with a written report. Whether the recommendations are implemented or not is up to the pastor, but the odds of him taking a recommendation after months of study is more likely than just asking about something at a Parish Council meeting.”

Since the group first began operating as a Pastoral Council, many of the ideas researched by council members have already been implemented in the parish. When Msgr. Brennan asked how Our Lady Star of the Sea could become more visibly Marian, many parishioners’ suggestions involving the preschool, the celebration of feast days, the reciting of the Rosary, and church statuary were quickly brought to fruition. A group that investigated the planning of building and grounds last year produced a pages-long recommendation that can act as a guide to the parish over a long time period. And these are just a couple of the projects the council has worked on in the last two years!



al Role in the Parish Planning Process



Michael Lenaben, former Pastoral Council Chair (2014-2016)

Monica Begeman, current (2016-2018) Chair of the Pastoral Council, appreciates the added value that the three-step Pastoral Council process brings to parish planning.

“We are here to provide Msgr. Brennan with anything he could possibly need to move us closer to God,” she says. “This new process – having an active committee that truly has an outlined problem or suggestion to go out and see what the best alternative might be – makes it easier for him to make decisions about what is best for the parish based on specific feedback.”

By helping with the parish planning, the council is ultimately working with the pastor to fulfill the pastoral mis-

sion. Often, this focuses on ways to increase the spiritual growth and participation of parishioners.

“The first step in what we have to do for all of our projects is to investigate if it’s a pastoral reality and fits in with what Monsignor is doing with the church,” Monica explains. “That includes bringing in more adult faith formation and ways that people can participate better in the liturgy. Everything we do is to bring people closer to God in some way.”

Monica, who also serves on the School Board and helps with faith formation – in addition to her work as the school’s Admissions Director – has found serving on the Pastoral Council to be extremely rewarding.

“From my own experience, I think participating in any way in service to your community brings you closer to the people you work with – your church family – and it helps you be a better servant of God,” she says. “On the Pastoral Council, we’re able to gather with one another and build friendships. I’ve seen that for many young adults on the council, it’s been a good way to get started in serving. And for the more business-minded, a role like this offers them the opportunity to serve the parish in a way that is comfortable for them and is definitely needed.”

Michael also enjoyed his time on the council, and now that his two-term limit has ended, he greatly misses serving in this capacity.

“I would serve a lifetime on the council if I could!” he says. “The work of the Holy Spirit in this group is amazing. I’m excited to this day about the success of this transition to a Pastoral Council, and I really credit Msgr. Brennan for that.”

Parishioners are encouraged to contact our Pastoral Council members with any concerns or suggestions they might have. The council members are listed on the parish website, and on the church bulletin board (the board closest to the water fountain at the back of the church). Each year, new members are brought onto the council through a formal nomination process, and members are encouraged to reach out to parishioners throughout the year to encourage their participation on various committees.



A Look Back on Our 2016 Stewardship Renewal

As we celebrated the Jubilee Year of Mercy in 2016, the members of the Our Lady Star of the Sea parish community enjoyed the chance to commit – whether for the first time or once again – to living out the Stewardship Way of Life. Through the Annual Stewardship Renewal, we all had an opportunity to take stock in how we might become more involved within parish life as a prayerful, faithful people.

This month, we are happy to share with you the results of our 2016 Stewardship Renewal at Our Lady Star of the Sea.

- We received 454 Commitment Cards, from 21 percent of active households.
- There were 2,152 Prayer Commitments, or commitments to Stewardship of Time. This was 94 percent of participating households.
- The “top three” Prayer Commitments were: “Attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day,” 402 commitments; “Spend at least 15 minutes a day in personal prayer,” 325 commitments; “Pray for the sick of our parish,” 303 commitments.
- There were 1,595 Ministry Commitments, or commitments to the Stewardship of Talent. This was 75 percent of participating households.
- Of these Talent commitments, 453 were new ministry commitments, 1,142 were re-commitments to parish ministries, and 63 families who were not previously active in any ministry signed up to become involved.
- The “top three” Ministry Commitments were: Christ Renews His Parish, 180 commitments; Eucharistic Ministers, 110 commitments; Eucharistic Adoration, 100 commitments.
- There were 389 Offertory Commitments, or commitments to the Stewardship of Treasure. This was 86 percent of participating households.
- The average Offertory pledge was \$3,041.

These results demonstrate that parish involvement and the Stewardship Way of Life are of increasing importance to the Our Lady Star of the Sea community. We hope to see this involvement grow as we continue to share in the stewardship journey.

If you didn't fill out and return a Commitment Card for the 2016 Stewardship Renewal, we ask that you consider the ways that you might return your gifts to God and become involved in parish life. There are so many wonderful opportunities waiting for you!

Thank you for your participation in the 2016 Stewardship Renewal. We are so happy that you are a part of our parish family at Our Lady Star of the Sea!

Time

Spending Time with God in Prayer

Prayer is the beginning of stewardship. Only when we spend time with God in prayer are we spiritually prepared to offer ourselves in service to others.

Please check the circle next to your commitments to prayer:

- Attend Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days
- Attend weekday Mass at least once a week
- Adore the Eucharist once a month
- Spend at least 15 minutes a day in personal prayer
- Pray together with my loved ones
- Read the Bible for at least one hour a week
- Pray the Rosary at least weekly
- Go to Reconciliation every other month
- Schedule time for a spiritual retreat
- Invite a friend or acquaintance to Mass
- Pray for the sick of our parish

The gift of my time, talent and treasure is the right size:

- When I can no longer make any excuses for the size of the gift (large or small).
- When I can honestly state that the gift is sacrificial as I offer it in thanksgiving to God.
- When I can honestly state that in the giving of my gift, I am being honest with God and with self.

Talent

Using My Talents in Parish Ministries

You can read about each of the ministries listed below in the Ministry Catalog. When you sign up, the ministry leader will call to explain how to get involved.

Write the first name of the family member who wishes to join or is active in each program on the lines. You may write multiple names for the same program.

	Currently Active	Wishes to Join
Liturgical Ministries		
Altar Servers	_____	_____
Eucharistic Ministers	_____	_____
Eucharistic Ministers to the Sick and Homebound	_____	_____
Lectors	_____	_____
Ministry of Hospitality	_____	_____
Ushers/Mass Greeters	_____	_____
Sacristans	_____	_____
Music Ministries		
Cantors	_____	_____
Chancel Choir	_____	_____
Grace (Youth Adult Contemporary Ensemble)	_____	_____
Youth Ensemble	_____	_____

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**Our Lady Star of the Sea
Catholic Church**

2016 COMMITMENT CARD

First & Last Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone (Important) _____

Email _____



RCIA: Welcoming the Newest Members of the Church

Since last August, 12 candidates and catechumens have been preparing to fully enter the Catholic Church through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, or RCIA, process. Through RCIA, adults are able to discern, learn about their faith and begin their initiation into the Church.

RCIA involves several distinct phases – Inquiry, Catechumenate, Purification and Enlightenment, Initiation, and Mystagogia. RCIA classes are open both to those who have not been baptized (catechumens), as well as to those who have been baptized in another Christian tradition, or who were baptized Catholic but did not receive Confirmation and First Eucharist afterwards (candidates).

Candidate Casey Stamps, who was baptized and raised Protestant, recalls how faith didn't fully "click" for him until he attended Mass for the first time.

"My father went to RCIA and converted to Catholicism when I was about 15 years old – he started bringing me to Mass with him," he says. "I had always gone to Sunday School and things like that, but I don't think I really connected with God until I went to Mass. Something resonated in me, and it really helped me to spiritually connect with Christ."

Over the years, Casey never forgot that connection, and last year he finally realized he needed to take the next step.

"When other Protestants today ask me why I'm doing this, it always comes back to the sacraments for me," he says. "In the Protestant churches, there is an abstract idea of faith, which I have, but



The Rite of Election – (front row, from left) Michael Wigg, Jonathan Williams, Lance Moore, Bishop Estevez, Holly McQueen, Kelly Nelson, Lane Nelson; (second row, from left) Casey Stamps, Sr. Lucy Clynes, DW, Charles Bradley, Gary Mitchell, Ty Morgan

I needed something more than that. The sacraments are something concrete that bring it all together for me."

Catechumen Kelly Nelson, who is going through RCIA along with her husband, is also looking forward to being able to fully participate in the Church through the sacraments.

"I'm most excited about being able to participate in Communion and receive the Eucharist," she says. "I'm also looking forward to really getting involved in the community. I don't want to just show up on Sundays – I want to partake and give back and really follow through with this commitment."

For the candidates and catechumens, the parish community has been a huge support throughout this process.

"We have a wonderful RCIA team who comes each week to answer questions or make suggestions – they are very present to these people on their

journey," says RCIA Coordinator Sr. Lucy Clynes. "We have a curriculum that we follow, but we also have clergy and parishioners share their involvement in the parish and diocese, so that people understand the importance of being involved in the life of the Church."

"Since I began the process, I have felt my heart change so much," Kelly says. "I can't get over how amazing and welcoming all the parishioners have been. I have been so touched by the parishioners I have met who have shared their stories, and how their faith has helped them to overcome challenges. Sharing their stories has really helped those of us going through the process, and it has really stayed with me how generous these parishioners have been by opening up and helping us."

"I went to Ash Wednesday Mass, and someone came up to me asked me if I

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RCIA: Welcoming the Newest Members of the Church

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was converting,” she adds. “He just happened to notice that I was there and wasn’t able to take Communion, and he approached me and wished me luck and wanted to congratulate me. And that is how everyone is here! At first, entering the Church was a little intimidating, because it’s a huge commitment, but I have been so pleasantly surprised and have felt so welcomed.”

After Initiation, the candidates and catechumens enter into the final phase of the process, Mystagogia. This phase, which is meant to last indefinitely, is a time for the initiates to enter into the life of the Church, both through the sacraments and through the community.

“Easter is not the end of the journey, but the beginning of the journey,” Sr. Lucy says. “Getting involved is so im-

portant, as is learning more about the faith. They don’t need to be a walking Catechism, but they should be a walking desire of the faith.

“This also has an effect on the congregation, because through the candidates and catechumens, they are able to see what it means to be a part of the faith community,” she continues. “It reminds us that we all need to be undergoing constant conversions, and looking to the Lord. These folks coming into the Church have such enthusiasm, and it reminds everyone of the best parts of what it means to be Catholic.”

“God is always reaching out for us,” Casey says. “All we have to do is open up to Him.”

RCIA welcomes parishioners who would like to get involved as a sponsor. For more information, please contact Sr. Lucy Clynes at 904-285-2698, ext. 240.

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Saturday Vigil - 5:30 p.m. | Sunday - 7:30 a.m.; 9:00 a.m.; 11:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Daily (Monday to Saturday) - 8:30 a.m. | Wednesday - 7:00 p.m.

Sacrament of Reconciliation: Wednesdays from 6:00-6:45 p.m.

Saturdays from 4:00-5:00 p.m.