

OUR LADY

Star of the Sea

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Drawing Near to the Savior: Bible Study Opportunities at Our Parish

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Barbara Jackson has been leading our parish Bible studies for a decade, and by doing so, has encountered the Lord in a powerful way. By being well acquainted with the words of Christ, she has come to know Him as her Personal Friend, Eternal Savior, and King.

“It has been so wonderful to be part of the Bible studies,” Barbara says. “It has helped me to understand the Scriptures better and draw closer to God. When you study His Word, you realize that there is so much depth to it. The more you study it, the more you realize you have to learn. It opens up a whole new way for you to honor and glorify God, and gives you great back-up knowledge of your faith.”

Importantly, she has found that by entering into the life of the Scriptures, one can enter into the significance of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass all the more.

“As Catholics, we hear the Scriptures during Mass, but they can seem a bit disjointed,” Barbara says. “When you do an in-depth study of the Bible, however, you get the whole picture and you can understand what the readings are really trying to say.”

Currently, there are three Bible studies that take place at our parish. These are held at various times and days, from September through May. The study which is led by Barbara is open to both men and women from our parish, and takes place every Tuesday after the 8:30 a.m. Mass in the Browning Center. Recently, they have been covering *David the King* by Bishop Robert Barron.





Drawing Near to the Savior: Bible Study Opportunities at Our Parish *continued from front cover*

“We are studying the life of King David, and about how he was a ‘man after God’s own heart,’” Barbara says. “Ultimately, the goal of our study is for each of us to discover what will make us a man or woman ‘after God’s own heart’ as well.”

The second study takes place on Thursdays at 9:15 a.m. in the Browning Center, and is led by Patricia Henry and Cathy vanBrederode. They are presently studying *Conversion: Following the Call of Christ*, also by Bishop Robert Barron.

“I have enjoyed studies so much, and they have taught me so much about the Bible,” Patricia says. “What we are learning about now is so interesting. We have a really wonderful group. We are such good, close friends. We are concerned about each other’s lives, and we pray for one another.”

Alicia Russi leads the third study, which takes place on Tuesdays from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the Cultural Center. This group is working through two studies simultaneously — *Opening Your Heart* and the other features a group of studies titled, *Walking With Purpose*. They are powerful, life-changing studies designed by Lisa Brenninkmeyer,

“Both are fantastic personal studies during which you read Scripture and ask yourself meaningful questions,” Alicia says. “Then, you get together in small groups and discuss what you are learning. These studies give you practical ways to put Scripture to use in your everyday life, and offer you a chance to talk with other women who are trying to live out their faith, as well. They give you encouragement and strength, and a place to talk about your faith.”

Furthermore, this study includes monthly videos offered on evenings at various times throughout the year — see parish bulletins for further details.

Regarding the studying of God’s word, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* sheds some beautiful light, explaining, “In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, ‘but as what it really is, the word of God.’ ‘In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them.’ God is the author of Sacred Scripture. The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 104-105).

As we approach the sacred season of Lent, consider getting involved in a Bible study or small faith-sharing group. It may be an ideal way to deepen your friendship with Our Lord, who died on the cross for you, and longs to embrace you through His Word.



Please see the parish bulletin for further information or contact the parish office at 904-285-2698.



A Letter from Our Pastor

Preparing for Our Lenten Journey and Prioritizing the Gift of Time

Dear Parishioners,

Lent begins on Wednesday, Feb. 14, Ash Wednesday. Most of us are aware that Lent is a time of prayer, penance and giving alms. So, it would seem that Lent is a perfect time for stewardship. As we examine our lives and try to find ways to deepen our relationship with God, it is good to remember that whenever we give our time, talent, or treasure, we are living as better stewards.

For each of us, our relationship with God should be the first priority. God has given us the precious gift of time, so we need to thank Him for this gift by using it wisely. Stewardship of time is about how we spend every minute of every day. Most of us probably feel that we do not have enough time for all the things we hope to accomplish or achieve. However, each of us is given the same amount of time — 24 hours in a day, seven days in a week. So, how do we choose to use our time? We need to prioritize this gift of time, which means putting the most important things first.

If deepening our relationship with God is our first priority, then time spent in prayer, at Mass, in our personal lives through reading Holy Scriptures, and meditating on God's Holy Word should be paramount. Our second priority might be our relationship to our family. We need to spend time building a strong family unit filled with respect and love for life. And perhaps our third priority should be our relationship with our parish and

our community of faith. Finally, we must spend time supporting others in their faith journeys and ministering to those in need.

We must remember that first requirement for our Lenten journey — prayer. Our Catholic faith is full of prayer forms and traditions that are available to us all. Find a prayer form that works for you, and truly cultivate your prayer life in order to connect and build a real, personal relationship with the Lord. We all need to carve out time during Lent by dedicating time to prayer. Perhaps it is only 10 minutes each day for quiet reflection on Holy Scripture. Or it may be something more substantial — perhaps a reflective weekend retreat.

We might consider Lent our own personal Stewardship Renewal season. Fasting, prayer and almsgiving should be what we try to do the entire year. But we must make an intentional effort to practice these during the 40 days of Lent. After all, 40 days comprises just over 10 percent of the year — and that is remarkably close to our stewardship tithe of 10 percent, isn't it?

God bless you in all you do, and especially during this holy time of Lent.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Keith Brennan
Pastor



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Palmer Academy Celebrated Catholic



During our celebration of Catholic Schools Week at Palmer Catholic Academy, we were marking not only our 20th school anniversary, but also our 20th celebration of Catholic Schools Week.

Palmer Catholic Academy's celebration of Catholic Schools Week Jan. 28 through Feb. 3 has been a week full of prayerful activities and fun activities that not only mark the school's 20th anniversary, but also its 20th celebration of Catholic Schools Week.

The week's activities all came together to show what makes Catholic education unique, so beautifully illustrated in the theme "Catholic Schools: Learn. Serve. Lead. Succeed."

The week began on Sunday, Jan. 28, when the students celebrated Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish by attending the 9 a.m. Mass in their school uniforms. The students presented notes to the parishioners thanking them for their support.

"We had a table outside the church with information for the parents," says Monica Begeman, business logistics and admissions director. "We do that every year. Since our school is not on the same campus, we sit in the back of the church to do our 'walking open house.'"

On Monday, Palmer Catholic Academy literally rolled out the red carpet to Celebrate Our Students.

"We rolled out the red carpet for the students when they came in, with balloons, and we lined the hallways with the students' murals to celebrate Catholic Schools Week," says Sarah Chagas, math support faculty. "Also, the students had no homework."

The students also brought in cereal for Souper Bowl, in exchange for a dress-down day.

"They fill the pantry with a food drive each year," Mrs. Chagas says.

As part of Palmer Catholic Academy's tradition for Catholic Schools Week, on Monday, the Pre-K, K, and fifth-grade parents were invited to bring in a picnic lunch to enjoy with their children in the school courtyard.

On Tuesday, to Celebrate Our Nation (Catholic School Supporters) the students wrote "thank you" notes to their parents, thanking them for sending them to Catholic school. Our parents also received short performance videos, some with songs, that were emailed to parents as a "thank you." First and fourth-grade parents joined their children for their picnic lunch.

On Wednesday, it was a Celebration of Students, Faculty and Staff, when the teachers had their own dress-down day and a special luncheon.

"Our middle school students had recess, which is something they always ask for," Mrs. Chagas says. "Some of the older kids also paired with the younger students to read. They also had a project to fill in blue and white hearts stating the reasons they love our school."

"Our diocese also promotes open houses for all Catholic schools during the week, so there have been billboards around Jacksonville announcing open houses," Mrs. Begeman says.

"We gave presentations on the registration process and gave tours of the school."

During Thursday's, Celebration of Volunteers, the second-grade students had a picnic with their parents.



Catholic Schools Week...and Anniversary!

“Since the second-grade students are readying for their First Eucharist in May, we gave them their own day for a picnic with their parents,” Mrs. Chagas says.

During the Friday Celebration of Vocations, the parents were invited to attend the Children’s Mass at the school. It was a big day for the preschool students as they took a field trip to the main campus for the school Mass and a tour of the school.

“The Palmer students have made videos in their media class for the seminarians, priests and deacons, thanking them for helping the students grow,” Mrs. Chagas says. “They were invited to come see them.”

The celebration continued Saturday, Feb. 3 and Sunday, Feb. 4, when our students attended Mass at St. John Paul II Mission Church to present information about Palmer Academy.

Throughout the week’s celebration the message has been clear what is valued in Catholic education.

“Most parents want to provide their children with an amazing academic education,” Mrs. Chagas says. “It also helps them grow in their faith, and helps them be better people, so they can go out and serve like Christ did. Most people selecting Catholic education want that for their children.”

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— Mrs. Sarah Chagas

Both Mrs. Begeman and Mrs. Chagas point to a comment made in an article in the January 2018 issue of the *Jacksonville Magazine*:

“Parents of students in Northeast Florida’s Catholic schools frequently comment on the satisfaction and confidence that comes with sending their children to a school where students are free to pursue objective truth without the artificial constraints of political correctness or aggressive secularism.”

If you would like more information about Palmer Catholic Academy, please call Mrs. Begeman at 904-543-8515, ext. 145.

CCW Fashion Show — Feb. 3, 12:00 - 2:00 p.m.
in the Cultural Center

Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14
Mass Times are: 7 a.m., 8:30 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Stations of the Cross — Fridays during Lent at 7 p.m. in the Church

Fish Fry — Friday, Feb. 23 at 4:45 p.m. in the Cultural Center

Healthy Living Health Fair — Feb. 24-25
in the Cultural Center

Upcoming Parish Events





The Challenge of Discipleship

God calls us to give Him everything – our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole mind. This is the challenge of discipleship – a lifelong process of more fully placing our lives under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

The reason that God can ask such complete service from us is that He made us. Everything we have belongs to Him! This includes our intelligence, our physical ability, our artistic talent, our family, our finances, our government – anything we may typically think of as “ours.”

It takes courage to recognize that we are not the masters of our possessions and ourselves. Furthermore, as Christians, we believe that because everything we have is a gift from God, we are called to give Him thanks. We express our thanks by using our gifts to further His kingdom on earth. This is the basis for our understanding of stewardship.

We refer to “time,” “talent,” and “treasure” in order to differentiate between the various parts of our life that belong to God. “Time” is the duration of life that God has given us. “Talent” includes the special gifts or strengths God has nurtured in us. “Treasure” is what we have earned through our time and talent.

Even though we identify these three aspects of stewardship, they are still part of the same Gospel-based concept. And even when we focus separately on these parts,

it should not signal that one is more important than the other. Instead, focusing on each aspect one at a time helps us to better concentrate on that area in our lives.

Stewardship is, after all, an attitude. If our goal is to become better stewards, we must have a reason in our minds to do so. Here are the basics of a stewardship attitude:

“God made everything!”

A wholehearted trust that God made all things is essential to understanding stewardship. Recognizing God as the Creator is one of the most basic, profound beliefs of Christianity.

“I am truly blessed!”

It takes humility in order to truly acknowledge God’s goodness. Every great triumph and every little pleasure is a blessing from above, and every strong character trait we possess is a gift from God.

“I believe I am to use God’s gifts for His glory!”

What better way to thank God for His goodness than by using our personal gifts to glorify Him? We are not the owners of our time, talent or treasure. But we are caretakers given the responsibility of spreading God’s kingdom on earth.

The Finniss Family: Finding Community and Growing in Faith

Since becoming parishioners in 2009, the Finniss family has grown greatly both in faith and in fellowship. By making the effort to get involved, they have been able to get to know their fellow parishioners and have grown in their relationship with God.

“Serving — in any capacity — benefits the community as a whole, as well as the individual,” says Matt Finniss. “It builds a stronger sense of fellowship at the parish level, while also providing opportunities to strengthen your own faith and to share that faith with others.”

Matt and his wife, Alexis, met in law school at Wake Forest University. Both raised in Catholic families, both Matt and Alexis moved around several times in their youth. Alexis grew up in Annapolis, Md. and moved to Atlanta during high school. Matt attended the first three years of high school overseas and moved to northern Virginia during his senior year of high school. The pair were married in 2003, and now have four children — Ryan, 10; Delaney, 6; Mackenzie, 3; and Caroline, who is almost 2.

In 2009, the family moved to Florida from Charlotte, N.C. Their parish involvement helped them to adjust to their new surroundings and truly become a part of the community.

“Stewardship has given us the opportunity to meet fellow parishioners that we may otherwise have never met, and made what can feel like a large parish a very welcoming place for our family,” Matt says. “Prior to joining Our Lady Star of the Sea, and even the first year or two here, our parish involvement was really limited to attending Mass each week. Becoming more engaged and seeing the level of involvement and participation by fellow parishioners has made us feel like much more a part of the parish community.”

Although life with young children is busy, Matt and Alexis have made an effort to stay involved, even if only through smaller commitments. They currently serve on the parish’s Vocations Committee, and Alexis is involved with the Welcoming Committee, the Ministry of Mothers Sharing, and the Catholic Book Club. Matt is involved with *That Man Is You!*, a program focused on developing men’s



The Finniss family

faith, particularly in their roles as husbands, fathers and grandfathers. He also serves together with their son, Ryan.

“Ryan and I attend Nocturnal Adoration and usher together,” Matt says. “Ryan also recently began altar serving.”

Matt notes that participating in parish ministries has also helped them to strengthen their faith and their appreciation for the sacraments.

“This is particularly true with respect to the Christ Renew His Parish program, which put both of us on a path towards increasing our involvement at the parish and further developing our faith,” he says.



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The Finniss Family *continued from page 7*

Matt and Alexis encourage others to take the leap to get involved, since it has opened up so many opportunities for them to grow and share the gifts that God has given them.

“We are all blessed with different gifts from God, and one of the ways we can express our love for God and our gratitude for those gifts is to share them with others,” Matt says. “We are called to love and to serve — which can take many forms — but all help to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and to make our parish and local communities better places to worship and to live. Sharing these gifts, whether in the form of time, talent, or treasure, also helps to counteract a culture that is often focused on self.

“Serving may encourage others to take a step further along in their faith journey they may not have otherwise taken,” he adds. “We certainly continue to be inspired by the ways in which so many of our parishioners live their faith and dedicate themselves to supporting various ministries and activities at our parish.”

“We are all blessed with different gifts from God, and one of the ways we can express our love for God and our gratitude for those gifts is to share them with others. We are called to love and to serve — which can take many forms — but all help to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and to make our parish and local communities better places to worship and to live.” — Matt Finniss

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.