



OUR LADY

Star of the Sea

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Divorce and Loss Ministry *Imitating Our Merciful Father in the Parish Community*

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Scripture gives us the image of a merciful Father for God. This image not only conveys truths to us about who God is, but it also provides comfort and consolation for us as we travel on our own spiritual journeys, which at times can be marked by hardship, difficulty or darkness. As a Catholic community, we are called to imitate our Merciful Father, creating ministries, programs and environments where mercy and healing are shared through acts of kindness to each other. One of the ways we can do this as a community is by making sure all members of our community are being ministered to through Church resources.

At Our Lady Star of the Sea, the new Divorce and Loss Ministry is designed to offer spiritual consolation for those who are separated or divorced. It also seeks to foster compassionate hearts by providing knowledge for anyone with interest in learning more about what it is like to be separated or divorced, and who may want to encourage friends, family members or parishioners carrying the burden of separation or divorce.

"It's a very important ministry so that we don't neglect a group of people who may be hurting and really needing parish love and support," says Coordinator Forrest Yanke. "It's really important when people go through a divorce that they have support – there are so many types of loss involved in addition to a spouse, from the loss of dreams, to loss of lifestyle, to the loss of the idea that this marriage was forever, to the loss of status in community. There's a lot of healing that needs to take place."



Divorce and Loss Ministry Coordinator Forrest Yanke is looking forward to offering a 12-week course at Our Lady Star of the Sea called "A Catholic Divorce Survival Guide for Healing; Helping You Find Peace, Power, and Passion After Your Divorce." This course is designed to offer support and healing for those who have experienced separation or divorce.



Teaching Children to Live a Life of Stewardship

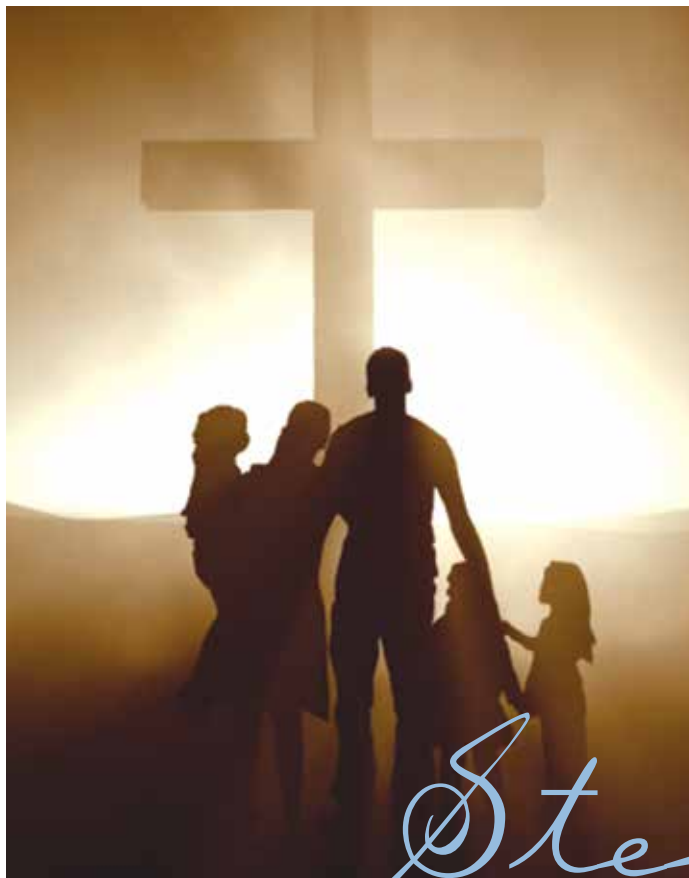
How old do you have to be to practice stewardship? Can a 5-year-old embrace stewardship? How about a 10-year-old?

Although there is no guideline to what the right age is to begin to live a life of stewardship, God's call certainly extends to each of His children – even the young ones.

It is especially important to show children that they are not too young to share their time, talent and treasure to help build God's kingdom.

Sharing Your Time

A young child can share of his time in a variety of ways appropriate to his ability. For example, during the day, a child can pray for a loved one that is hurt, or say prayers with his parents or siblings. He can participate in Mass each Sunday, and even take time from his day to thank God for a veteran who has served our country.



Spending time being virtuous – such as being patient, generous and kind – is also a great example of sharing our time for love of God.

Sharing Your Talent

Using God-given talents to glorify God can also be performed by both young and old. An elementary school-aged child can easily clean her room or perform chores such as raking leaves, doing laundry, or taking care of pets. Making cards for people who are sick or who have had a death in the family are other concrete examples of being a faithful steward.

Even using our talents – such as playing a musical instrument or football – to the best of our abilities to give God glory is an example of being a good steward.

Sharing Your Treasure

Although children do not have the same type of treasure to share as adults, instilling the importance of sharing finances is an important lesson.

If a child receives an allowance, he can return a portion of it to the Church in the collection basket. If he gets money for his birthday, he can give a small portion of it back to God in thanksgiving. Little ones can even share things like their Halloween candy with their siblings or friends as a way of demonstrating generosity.

The Most Important Lesson

Above all, the most important lesson to teach our children is why we share. We don't share because we "have to." We don't share because our parents tell us to. We share our time, talent and treasure with God because we are thankful for the blessings He has given us and we want to thank Him for His generosity.

Teaching these lessons at a young age will allow a lifetime of good stewardship to follow for even the youngest of God's children.

Stewardship



A Letter from Our Pastor

A New Year, New Challenges, New Opportunities

Dear Parishioners,

It is a new year, and it is my prayer for all of you – and for me, as well – that we can take new steps on our faith journeys, and seek new ways to live out discipleship and stewardship.

Pope Francis once commented on his perspective of our modern approach to life. He said, “Certainly, possessions, money and power can give a momentary thrill, the illusion of being happy, but they end up possessing us and making us always want more, never satisfied. I have learned that the most important thing is to put Christ in your life, place your trust in Him, and you will never be disappointed.”

The pope has been called “the world’s parish priest.” As we pray for one another in this New Year, may we all ask the Lord to help us appreciate Pope Francis’ approach to life, his simple way of seeing things, and his very basic way of appreciating things. I would hope that we see this year as a time for opportunity, a time to deepen our relationship to Christ, and for that matter to one another.

If we really wish to change our lives and the lives of others, there are two easy ways to do it. We are blessed with many opportunities in this parish to pray, but as much as it is important for us to take advantage of those, we also need to develop a strong personal prayer life. Recall the young Samuel, who was not quite sure what to do with his life, or what direction to go. When he finally settled on that one important prayer, “Speak, Lord, for I am listening,” Samuel gave us the hint as to what we need to do. Prayer is a two-way street, and part of that is taking the time to listen to God.

The second important way is to exude joy. Christ certainly called us to do that. Pope Francis has had much to say about joy, as well. The Holy Father says, “Joy cannot be held at heel; it must be let go. Joy is a pilgrim virtue. It is a gift that walks – walks on the path of life, that walks with Jesus... proclaiming joy, lengthens and widens that path.” We must seek that joy and then we need to share it. That is truly our call. Joy translates quite easily into “love your neighbor.”



Yes, there may be challenges ahead in 2017, but we must focus on the opportunities, and then exert the effort to benefit from those opportunities. Happy New Year!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Keith Brennan
Pastor





Parishioners Accompany Jesus Through

In his encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, St. John Paul II writes, “The Church was born of the paschal mystery. For this very reason the Eucharist... stands at the center of the Church’s life.” As Catholics, we have the wonderful opportunity to experience Christ fully present in the Eucharist. Here at Our Lady Star of the Sea, our monthly Nocturnal Adoration allows us to adore and accompany Christ through the night.

“God is with us everywhere, so we don’t have to be in a church or sacred place in order to spend time with God – but we also have the opportunity to have the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar before us,” says

ministry leader Jay Anderson. “You really have to believe in the Eucharist to get up in the middle of the night and go all the way to church for adoration. You can do the same prayers and meditation in your living room, but to go to the church and spend an hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament is something special.”

Nocturnal Adoration at Our Lady Star of the Sea began in 1998, and is part of a worldwide movement known as the Nocturnal Adoration Society, which is based in New York City. Jay had his first experience with Nocturnal Adoration as a child, when he accompanied his father to adoration.

“When I was a kid in Pennsylvania, I used to go with my father,” he says. “I vividly remember walking through the snow in the middle of the night with him, going to spend an hour with the Blessed Sacrament. Years later, I decided to start the group here at Our Lady Star of the Sea.”

At our parish, Nocturnal Adoration takes place on the first Friday of each month, starting at 8 p.m. on Friday and concluding at 9 a.m. on Saturday morning. Ministry participants initially sign up to join one of 12 groups, and each group is assigned to a certain hour of the night. Each month, the groups rotate so that over the course

“The feeling that you have at the end of the hour – you just feel so good! It is an opportunity to do something positive once a month, and while it can be considered a ‘sacrifice,’ it’s not tough at all. You’re only robbing yourself of an hour of sleep – not of any time away from your family, or any obligations or activities.”

– Jay Anderson





h the Night with Nocturnal Adoration

the year, they have prayed during every hour of the night.

The first hour of Adoration always begins with Benediction, and the final hour is concluded with Benediction, as well. The ministry provides a prayer book for the groups, which formats each hour into call and response prayer, Scripture readings and silent meditation.

“Many of the prayers include taking turns standing up, kneeling and sitting – I’ve found it really helps to keep people awake and focused,” Jay says. “There is also an opportunity during each hour for people to share any special prayer intentions they might have.”

One of the most unique things about Nocturnal Adoration at our parish is the youth and young adult hour, from 8 to 9 p.m. While it is geared to the youth, parishioners of all ages are welcome to the hour and often attend.

“It has really been a refreshing change, and about 20-40 people show up on any given Friday night,” Jay says. “It’s been really great to see the young people jumping into it.”

The format of the hour is similar to the other Nocturnal Adoration hours, and also includes music, collective prayer, and a reflection or witness story. Each month, a different theme is chosen for the hour, such as mercy, healing, anticipation, and dying to self/living in Christ.

“No matter what the theme is, it is always relevant to everyone – in different ways, of course, but God has this amazing way of weaving it all together,” says parishioner Jill Alderfer. “For example, last month our theme was anticipation. We asked someone to do a reflection, and he used St. Augustine’s quote about being restless until we rest in God several times – and he had no idea that we’d be playing Audrey Assad’s ‘Restless’ immediately following his reflection. Things like that happen every time!”

Through Nocturnal Adoration, participants are able to guarantee some time spent aside each month for reflection with the Lord. Since it takes place through the night, this

is the perfect way for busy people to both give back to God through prayer and receive countless graces.

“We have no meetings, no dues, no obligations that come with it – nothing other than the commitment to spending an hour with Jesus in front of the Blessed Sacrament,” Jay says. “The feeling that you have at the end of the hour – you just feel so good! It is an opportunity to do something positive once a month, and while it can be considered a ‘sacrifice,’ it’s not tough at all. You’re only robbing yourself of an hour of sleep – not of any time away from your family, or any obligations or activities.”

“[Nocturnal Adoration] always draws you in more closely to the awe and mystery of what we’re sitting with – the reality of Christ being present, accessible and humble,” Jill says. “It’s practically impossible to leave the Church wishing for just a little more time with Jesus, or without a better perspective on whatever is going on in our lives.”

All parishioners are welcome to join in on Nocturnal Adoration – whether they sign up with a group, or make a personal commitment to attend a specific hour. For more information, please contact Jay Anderson at 904-476-4146.





Looking at New Year's Resolutions Through the Lens of Stewardship

Each January, we all step forward into the New Year with new ideas, goals and resolutions. But after the initial sparkle of the New Year has faded, it can be easy to forget our once-fervent resolutions. However, we might find that it's a bit easier to keep our New Year's resolutions if we look a bit beyond our physical selves. By also involving our spiritual lives, as well as the lives of others, we can add a lot more meaning to our resolutions.

Renowned Catholic author Matthew Kelly says, "We're all trying to be better versions of ourselves," and that's basically what any resolution is about. Stewardship is essentially the same thing – if we embrace living a stewardship way of life, we become better versions of ourselves. We can use our time and talent to make improvements in our lives, in the lives of others, and in the life of the parish. It all comes down to one basic point – if we acknowledge that everything we have is a gift from God, then we are supposed to be good stewards of those gifts, use them for the benefit of others, and return our talents tenfold to the Lord.

One idea to help incorporate stewardship into your New Year's resolutions is to make two distinct resolutions each year – one at the beginning of the liturgical year, and one at the beginning of the calendar year.

We can think of the first Sunday of Advent as the Church New Year, and we can make our own spiritual resolutions at this special time each year. Then, for the new

calendar year, we can make resolutions for our health and well-being. In both cases, we can commit to these promises much in the same way we make our commitments during our annual Stewardship Renewal. We can make these resolutions, write them down, and share them with someone. Once you've written it down and shared it, you are now holding yourself accountable.

We are both physical and spiritual beings. Taking care of the physical side of things is a good start, but if we ignore the spiritual side, what kind of progress are we truly making? Even if you already regularly pray, you can add five more minutes to your prayer time each day to take a step forward in your faith. Even if you read the Bible once a week, you can take a spiritual leap and make it twice a week. One way to make a good resolution is to consider joining or increasing your involvement in one of the parish's prayer, faith formation or outreach ministries.

Making resolutions requires us to truly reflect on the areas in our lives that we'd like to improve, while also ensuring that our priorities are in order. Remember, there is no need to take a giant leap all at once. So, as we begin a new calendar year, remember that even the smallest steps forward in faith can go a long, long way as you continuously renew your relationship with Christ.



It all comes down to one basic point – if we acknowledge that everything we have is a gift from God, then we are supposed to be good stewards of those gifts, use them for the benefit of others, and return our talents tenfold to the Lord.



“An Opportunity to Celebrate the Gift of Our Catholic School” Catholic Schools Week at Palmer Catholic Academy

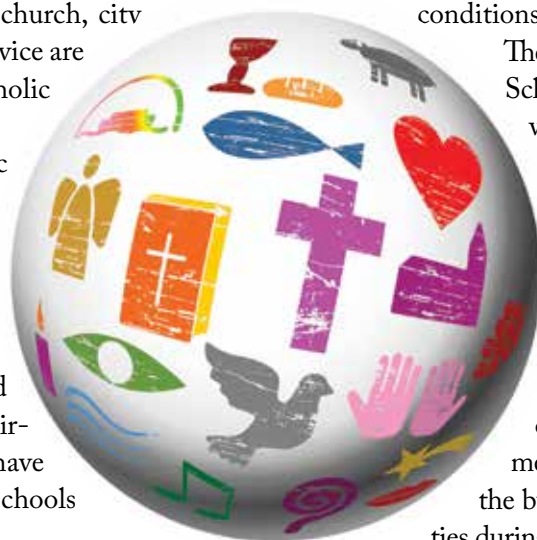
National Catholic Schools Week is the annual celebration of Catholic education in the United States. This year, it takes place from Jan. 29 to Feb. 4. The theme for the National Catholic Schools Week 2017 is “Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service.” The theme encompasses several concepts that are at the heart of a Catholic education. First, schools are communities – small families in their own right, but also members of the larger community of home, church, city and nation. Faith, knowledge and service are three measures by which any Catholic school can and should be judged.

Catholic schools offer academic excellence and faith-filled education for students nationwide. And while some Catholic schools face the challenges of declining enrollments and school closures, the good news is that there is a strong demand and enthusiasm for Catholic schools. Thirty-two percent of Catholic schools have waiting lists for admission and new schools are opening across the country.

Palmer Catholic Academy points out the following: “As we believe in the importance in sharing a common faith in Jesus with students, families, and the greater community and as we encourage a loving family environment in our school community, Catholic Schools Week offers us an opportunity to celebrate the gift of our Catholic school. It also presents us with ways we can thank those who make our school possible — our parents, our faculty and staff, the people of our parish community, our clergy, and especially our students.”

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education at the Vatican has this to say about Catholic Schools: “The Catholic school forms part of the saving mission of the Church, especially for education in the faith. Remembering that

‘the simultaneous development of a person’s psychological and moral consciousness is demanded by Christ almost as a pre-condition for the reception of the befitting divine gifts of truth and grace’, the Church fulfills her obligation to foster in her children a full awareness of their rebirth to a new life. It is precisely in the Gospel of Christ, taking root in the minds and lives of the faithful, that the Catholic school finds its definition as it comes to terms with the cultural conditions of the times.”



The specific details of the plans for Catholic Schools Week are still in development, but we will keep in mind that part of our goal as a Catholic school is all about discipleship and being a disciple of Jesus, as we are all called. During Catholic Schools Week, we will make an effort to celebrate and to thank all the people to whom we should show our gratitude. Also, we will open our hearts and our school to our faith community. The members of our community should watch the bulletin for a listing of specific opportunities during Catholic Schools Week.

The academy will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2017. Mrs. Linda Earp, our founding Principal, has been with us from the beginning.

“Our Palmer Catholic Academy is blessed with a remarkably talented and dedicated group of teachers,” she says. “They are inspired by our ministry to teach the Lord’s children in a Christ-centered environment. We feel that by providing our students with a firm basis in their Catholic faith and beliefs, it will carry them through their entire lives by becoming stewards of the Church and their community. Catholic education provides more than just the educational foundations that children need. It instills morals, values, and overall Christian character in each and every student.”

If you would like more information about Catholic Schools Week at Palmer Catholic Academy, please call 904-543-8515.



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Divorce and Loss Ministry *continued from front cover*

Seeking to provide that support, the Divorce and Loss Ministry starting this January will be offering a 12-week course called “A Catholic Divorce Survival Guide for Healing; Helping You Find Peace, Power, and Passion After Your Divorce,” inviting parishioners who have gone through or are going through a separation or divorce to experience healing, community and help on their journey. This course will include a DVD series with renowned Catholic speakers, small-group discussions and an opportunity for sharing if desired.

“I think as people continue their own prayer lives, God is always reaching out and wants to love us and give us mercy, peace, joy, and hope – all the fruits of the Holy Spirit,” Forrest says. “[This course] provides a safe place for people to be understood, listened to, and to find Christian support

through other members. It allows people to regain a sense of their identity as a single person, as a person in Christ, and to know that they are not alone and that they will get through this.”

With plans to offer this course each spring and fall at Our Lady Star of the Sea, the next session will begin on Monday, Jan. 16, from 6:30–8 p.m. The cost is \$25 per person. If you would like to get involved in this ministry as a volunteer, or if you have questions about signing up for the course, please contact Forrest Yanke at 850-866-2115 or afyanke@bellsouth.net.

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.