

OUR LADY

Star of the Sea

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Pastoral Council Offers Wonderful Opportunity for Growth in Discipleship

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While our Pastoral Council works closely with Msgr. Brennan by advising him on matters throughout the parish, there also is a “two-way road” in place that allows an exchange of ideas and information with parishioners that is helping to build discipleship among us all.



The Pastoral Council, made up of 12 parishioners, serves in an advisory capacity to Msgr. Brennan, as do several other parish committees. The group meets once a month on the third Thursday to review projects and ideas affecting the parish. Options are discussed and the group gives Msgr. Brennan its recommendations.

“He can accept it or adjust it,” says Monica Begeman, Pastoral Council Chair. “The Pastoral Council really does a great job taking the thoughts he has, our suggestions and the needs of the parish, and reviewing and analyzing them. This gives him great feedback so he can make decisions for the church.”

During the meetings, Msgr. Brennan leads the discussion. Sr. Lucy, pastoral associate, sometimes will sit in, as will our parochial vicars.

“There are a number of committees that each of us in the Pastoral Council serve on, and we can bring in members from those committees to a meeting,” Monica says.

The Pastoral Council is one of several committees that Msgr. Brennan has on hand to provide him feedback and support regarding his decisions for the parish.

“He gets great input from these committees,” Monica says. “We are one of the committees who he has to help him for upcoming events and activities.”

We have the opportunity to join in discipleship with the additional outreach and input that takes place in the interactions among Pastoral Council members and other parishioners.

“In my opinion, many who serve on the Council are active participants in ministries throughout the parish,” Monica says. “We talk with parishioners with our outreach. We also bring to the Council our links to parishioners. We don’t engage just with the Council members, ourselves, but with parishioners with whom we attend Mass.”



Experiencing the Wonderment of the Season Through the *Advent Day Retreat*

Though lyricists and poets often write about the “magic of Christmas,” this time of year might often seem more hectic than anything else. Lost in the commercialism that surrounds the holiday, we’re pulled in a hundred different directions — shopping, cooking, and attending numerous gatherings and celebrations. In the process, says Dr. Carol Razza, Professor of Pastoral Counseling at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, we’re in danger of losing the wonderment of the Advent season altogether.

“Advent is a time of pregnancy in our Church — a time when we should be bursting with anticipation and growth,” Dr. Razza says. “As Catholics and Christians, it’s so important that we not lose our sense of wonder. There should always be an anticipation and excitement about who we are, and Advent helps remind us of this.”

Dr. Razza hopes to help remind Our Lady Star of the Sea parishioners of these truths through the Advent Day Retreat she will be facilitating at the parish on Saturday, Dec. 1. A perfect time for “pulling away and stepping back,” Dr. Razza plans to remind parishioners of the wonderment and joy of our Catholic faith, beginning with a reflection on the Annunciation in Luke’s Gospel.

“Our world has, unfortunately, done a very good job of distracting us,” Dr. Razza says. “So as Catholics, we get confused, wondering what is truly from God because we’re not immersed in the Word. This day retreat is designed to help



Dr. Carol Razza renowned author and professor of Pastoral Counseling at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, will be offering a day retreat to parishioners on Dec. 1, helping them recover their wonderment for the Advent season.

us pull away from what the world says Advent is, allowing us to not only hear the truth, but more importantly, to *experience* it. And when we experience the truth of who God is, it’s very hard to go back to the trappings of the world.”

The retreat will begin Saturday morning with 8:30 a.m. Mass and will conclude at 3:30 p.m. There is no cost and lunch will be provided. Throughout the day attendees will have opportunities for Scriptural teaching and reflection, private prayer and fellowship, all with the intent of spiritually rejuvenating parishioners so that they can more fully enter into the joyful anticipation of Advent.

“We’ll reflect on things like Mary’s *Magnificat*: ‘My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior’ (Luke 1:46-47),” Dr. Razza says. “This leads us to ask ourselves, ‘Does my spirit truly find joy in God my Savior? Do we truly, in all that we are, praise the goodness of the Lord?’ Advent is such a good time to revisit these questions and look more closely at our lives because that’s what brings others to Christ — to ask ourselves, ‘How do I put on God in the morning so that everyone sees Him?’”

Dr. Razza hopes that the Holy Spirit will guide the retreat, enacting a lasting transformation in the lives of those that attend — and that by setting aside time for prayer and reflection, participants will then be strengthened to go out and spread the true magic of Christmas to others.

To register for the upcoming day retreat, please call the parish office at 904-285-2698.



A Letter from Our Pastor

Stewardship Possibilities are Endless at *Christmas*

Dear Parishioners,

When I think of December, the first thing that comes to mind is Christmas. While that may seem to be the obvious topic, there really are a number of other possibilities. I could think of *Advent*, a season of preparation. I could think of the *Immaculate Conception*, as we celebrate God's gift to the world in Mary. I could think of *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, whose popularity has spread far beyond the Hispanic community. Of course, December also holds the first day of *winter*. And because December marks the end of the calendar year, I might be developing my resolutions for the New Year!

But instead, I think about Christmas. It is when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Babe in the manger in Bethlehem, who is the eternal Son of God made man.

The basic truth of Christmas — celebrating the birth of Jesus the Messiah, God Incarnate — is plenty of reason for us all to rejoice and worship. But we've piled such an additional load onto our Christmas observance that worship may be lost in the shuffle.

Think about what weight Christmas has to bear. We have to put up the decorations, or make travel plans to visit relatives. There is also the Christmas dinner to plan and cook. And

then, we still have Christmas presents to buy. No wonder the Christ Mass becomes an afterthought!

Yet, we still have a wonderful opportunity this season — an opportunity to combine our Christmas activities with our stewardship commitments. Treasure, although challenging, is the simplest. Shouldn't the most expensive Christmas present we give be the one to Jesus, Whose birthday we're celebrating? Risen and glorified, He needs nothing we have. But His Body, the Church, continues Jesus' mission here on earth and always needs additional resources.

Time and Talent may be a little more complicated, but can't we spend a little more of our time in worship and prayer? Maybe you can attend Mass each day of the Christmas Octave. Have your family gather for prayers together in the morning or at dinner, in preparation for Christmas Day and through the Christmas season.

And there are so many opportunities to share our Talent! Help decorate the Church. Cook or bake for someone who is shut-in. Invite someone who will be alone to share Christmas dinner with your family. Offer to work in a soup kitchen. The possibilities are endless.



With a little planning, we can make this hectic time one of real blessing both for ourselves and others. Pray for me that I can keep Christmas properly, and I'll pray for you. And by the way, have a merry Christmas!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Keith R. Brennan
Msgr. Keith Brennan
Pastor



Celebrating Service at the CCW Welcome Social

On Nov. 8, our Council of Catholic Women hosted its Welcome Social. Many women took part in this event, and those who give





Grace and Fellowship and Installation of Officers

*Welcome Social and Installation of Officers. We thank all who
of their time and talents through the CCW.*





The Empress of the Americas: **OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE**

On Dec. 9, 1531, while on his way to Mass, a humble 55-year-old man named Juan Diego climbed a hill just outside Mexico City. On this hill, a woman of incredible beauty and grandeur appeared before him, requesting that a temple be built in her honor. She asked Juan to speak to the bishop on her behalf, and identified herself as the ever-virgin Mary, Mother of the True God.

The bishop, in turn, asked Juan Diego to request a sign from the Lady to be sure that the vision was authentic. The Lady commanded Juan to pick roses he found nearby, and arranged them in his tilma — a cloak made of poor-quality cactus cloth. She then instructed him to take the roses to the bishop. Upon unfolding the cloak before the bishop, the fresh wet roses fell out, leaving a life-size figure of the Virgin Mother just as Juan had described her! Without hesitation, the bishop built a shrine in her honor, and it remains the most frequently visited Catholic church in the world, aside from the Vatican.

Take a moment to admire the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It mirrors the woman spoken of in Revelation 12:1, “A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet...” Yet, the image can only be properly



understood when investigated against its historical backdrop.

Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to the predominately polytheistic Aztecs, who still practiced human sacrifice. The woman on the tilma is depicted as Indian in ethnicity, with dark complexion, hair and eyes. Contrasting with Aztec iconography, in which gods were always portrayed with open eyes staring straight ahead, Our Lady looks down in humility, identifying her humanity. Yet, her royalty is simultaneously revealed, as she is carried on the shoulders of an angel — for in the Aztec Empire, kings,

queens and dignitaries were carried on the shoulders of servants.

Our Lady also stands on the moon, eclipsing the sun. This reveals her power over the Aztec gods of the sun and of the night. Although she is not a god, this glorious Lady has come to announce a God who is most powerful. The bow that is visible around her waist is an Indian symbol of new life and fecundity, and its high placement just above her stomach reveals that she is with child.

Although the rough cactus cloth on which this image is found should have deteriorated within 20 years, no signs of decay can be seen even today. The image is scientifically inexplicable. The stars on the mantle were found to be exactly as the stars of the winter solstice appeared before the dawn on Dec. 12, 1531. Infrared studies have revealed that the image was not painted, because the paint did not penetrate the cloth fibers.

Although a devotion to her is commonly associated with the Hispanic ethnicity, she was declared by St. John Paul II to be the Empress of the Americas, or the patroness of the entire continent. In the words of St. John Paul II: “To you, O Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, belong all the love, honor, glory and endless praise of your American sons and daughters!”

Take a moment to admire the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It mirrors the woman spoken of in Revelation 12:1, “A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet...”



Council of Catholic Women Provides Community for Parish Women

Community is an important part of our Catholic faith, and here at Our Lady Star of the Sea, women have the chance to come together through the Council of Catholic Women, or CCW. The CCW bring together parish women of all ages, empowering them to reach out to others, grow in faith and make lasting friendships. Now in its third year at our parish, CCW has 63 current members who participate in a variety of activities.

“The Council of Catholic Women acts to support, empower and educate all Catholic women in spirituality, leadership and service,” says CCW Communications Coordinator Nicole Williams. “We are a very diverse group of women, from young to old, gathering to support one another in an effort to attain the highest standards in cultural, civic and charitable activities in adherence to the fine traditions of our Catholic faith.”

CCW membership is open to all parish women, and has also been expanded to include women from other local parishes that do not have a CCW affiliation. The ministry hosts a variety of activities and community outreach events for members — members are kept abreast of these events and activities through a quarterly e-newsletter. Every year begins with a Welcome Social and Installation of Officers. At this past year’s social on Nov. 8, members also were able to raise funds for those affected by the recent hurricane.

“Through the generosity of our members, in a 50/50 drawing, we managed to send \$70 in gift cards to the members of parishes in the Panhandle who are struggling to recover from the devastation of Hurricane Michael,” says CCW Chair Leah Tahiry.



Members checking in at a CCW event

Ministry members also enjoy social events such as themed Bingo nights, and a Spring Dinner and Membership Meeting. The CCW also sponsors activities for the greater parish community — for example, this past October the ministry hosted a breakfast for parish children who were participating in their First Reconciliation, as well as their parents. One of CCW’s most popular parish events is the annual Fashion Show — this next year’s will be held at Jacksonville Beach’s Ribault Garden Center on Feb. 2, 2019. Proceeds over expenses from the event will also go towards supporting parishes in the Panhandle.

Members of CCW are also encouraged to volunteer in parish ministries or at local organizations.

“Many of our members belong to other ministries, and all are encouraged to attend and participate in their initiatives,” Leah says. “One example is Family Fun Day — CCW Vice-Chair Carole Bayer was very active in this event. Community members of our Council are volunteers at B.E.A.M., Mission House, Mayo Hospital and Clinic, Gabriel House and many others.”

Coming up in December and January, the CCW will host its first Bingo with a Theme night on Dec. 6, and will be participating in the parish Ministry Fair on Dec. 8. On Jan. 5, our CCW council will hold an Epiphany celebration in conjunction with the St. Paul CCW council, followed by another fun Bingo with a Theme night on Jan. 24.

Wonderfully, CCW members have been able to grow in their faith through this ministry.

“It allows us to connect with our fellow sisters of faith and embrace the amazing spiritual growth together,” Nicole says.

If you would like more information about the Council of Catholic Women, please contact ministry Chair Leah Tahiry at 615-823-0711 or leahptahiry@gmail.com, or Vice-Chair Carole Bayer at 904-860-5000 or bayer4jax@gmail.com. Membership information is also available in the parish bulletin, as well as on the parish website — olsspvb.org/council-of-catholic-women-ccw — and is also posted in the entryway of the church.



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Pastoral Council *continued from front cover*

Pastoral Council members usually serve a two-year term, but can serve an additional term. Parishioners can be nominated by others or can nominate themselves for a seat, usually beginning in March. The sitting Pastoral Council members interview nominees and make recommendations to Msgr. Brennan for his choices, which he makes over the summer. The Pastoral Council calendar begins in August and runs through May.

Monica, who is in her fourth year as a Council member and third as Chair, says serving has greatly deepened her faith life.

“Serving on the Council has given me a better appreciation for the life of service that all priests give, especially those with a parish,” Monica says. “It’s like being a parent. It’s a 24-7 assignment. They’re constantly in service out of love and the desire to be in service. All of our religious sign up for this; it takes great dedication and commitment.”

Advent Schedule

Anointing of the Sick Mass
Saturday, December 15 at 2:00 p.m.

Advent Penitential Service
Wednesday, December 19 at 7:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve Mass Times:
*4:00 p.m.; 4:15 p.m. (Cultural Center);
7:00 p.m.; 10:00 p.m.*

Christmas Day Mass Times
8:30 a.m.; 11:00 a.m.

Anyone interested in making a nomination for the Pastoral Council should watch for upcoming announcements in the bulletin.

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.