



SAINT TIMOTHY
CATHOLIC CHURCH



A Time to Reflect: Fr. Richard Leonard Will Present Our Parish Mission

It's always a good time to take a look at our own lives and reevaluate how we can grow as followers of Christ. As we gear up for the season of Lent, consider attending our parish mission, given by visiting Jesuit priest Fr. Richard Leonard.

"Parish missions are a time for us to reflect on where we have been, where we are and where we are going in responding to Christ's mission to change the world for the better," Fr. Richard says. "I pray that this mission will allow us to focus on the issues that confront us as Christians in the contemporary world, and offer practical direction about how we can live more deeply our lives of faith."

Fr. Richard hails from Australia, and grew up in a family where he had four uncles who were priests, as well as several other relatives who belonged to religious orders. However, it wasn't until his second to last year of secondary school when, on a senior retreat, he had a quiet religious experience that led him to seriously consider the priesthood. He attended his diocesan seminary for four years before discerning that he did not

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Fr. Richard Leonard

January 2018

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Parish Mission *continued from front cover*

have a vocation as a diocesan priest. Fr. Richard then went to university, and backpacked across Europe after receiving his degree. Upon his return, he applied to join the Jesuit order — he entered the noviceship in 1987, was professed in 1989 and ordained in 1993.

“I love being a Jesuit and a priest, and am grateful every day for my vocation,” he says.

Fr. Richard will be preaching and/or presiding at our vigil Mass on Saturday, Feb. 10 at 5:30 p.m. and again at all Sunday, Feb. 11 masses. He will begin the mission on Sunday, Feb. 11 at 7 p.m. and continue on Monday, Feb. 12 at 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. and Tuesday, Feb. 13 at 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. He will give the same mission in the morning and evening to accommodate parishioners who can only attend either during the day or in the evening.

“Lent should be our annual journey to renewing our Easter mission with Christ in the world,” Fr. Richard says. “So, at its heart, it should be about companionship with God and with one another; making the best choices so that we can avoid sin and choose life — and, along with Jesus, find God’s presence and nourishment when we enter the deserts of our life.

“So, the first day will be about Mary and the saints as our companions in faith,” he adds. “The second day will be all about choosing life and staring down the destructiveness that limits us living out our baptism. And the third day will be about finding God in our personal deserts.”

Sunday’s topic, “A Sane Approach to Catholic Tradition and Devotion,” will look at our Church’s Tradition through the eyes of Mary, and explore its richness and how it is responsive to the needs of today. Monday’s topic, “Nine Steps to Making Better Choices for My Life,” will help us to practically apply the best of our Christian spirituality to the choices we make at home, work and in the wider community. On Tuesday, Fr. Richard will explore how we can hold to our faith in tough times.

“Our faith in God is easier when everything is going well,” he says. “But what about the times in our lives when it is challenged, undermined and threatened by the things that happen to us, or those we love? This critical session will help us see how we can hold to a God who walks with us in the ‘valley of tears.’”

Fr. Richard Leonard has degrees in arts and education, as well as a master’s degree in theology. He did graduate studies at the London Film School and has a Ph.D. from the University of Melbourne. He directs the Australian Catholic Office for Film and Broadcasting, is an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Catholic University, has been a visiting scholar within the School of Theater, Film and Television at UCLA, and a visiting professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Fr. Richard has served on juries at the Venice, Berlin, Warsaw, Hong Kong, Montreal, Brisbane, and Melbourne International Film Festivals and has lectured on faith and culture all over the world. He has been published in *America* magazine, *Eureka Street*, *U.S. Catholic*, is a regular columnist with *The Tablet* and is a regular guest on ABC Radio. He is also the author of nine books.

Be sure to keep an eye out for more information about our parish mission, including official times. All are welcome! For more information, please contact the parish office at 813-968-1077.

A Letter From Our Pastor

Resolve to Give Back to God in 2018

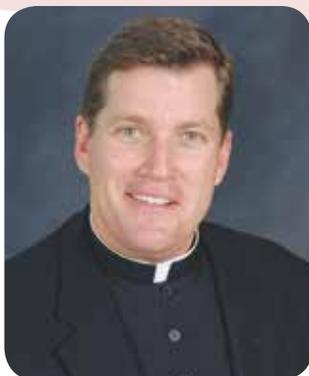
Dear Friends in Christ,

Another new year — 2018! There was a time in my life when this date (and others) seemed so far in the future. It is amazing how those dates start to pile up and stream by, isn't it? I have reached a point where measuring one's life by the years and dates is not as significant as many other things.

I recall reading somewhere, "The world around us asks, 'What does a person own?' But God asks, 'How does a person use what he or she has been given?'" This month of January is one filled with reminders of holiness — the official end of the Christmas season; the Epiphany of our Lord; the Baptism of the Lord; and the return to Ordinary Time, which, as we know, is not "ordinary" at all.

At Epiphany we hear, "Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts" (Matthew 2:11), a reference to the Magi and their visit to the Christ Child. The image of the Magi kneeling before the infant Jesus and opening their gifts for Him is one we should all try to follow. Each of us is called to open our gifts before Jesus and offer Him what He needs. I heard a suggestion once that if you have a problem with this thought, you should perhaps keep one of the Magi from your Christmas Nativity set and place it on your desk as a reminder.

During the Baptism of the Lord, God makes it clear when He proclaims from the Heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11).



God has given us the greatest gift He could give. He gave His only Son. When we think about the enormity of that gift of Jesus sent to save us, in addition to all the other blessings which God has entrusted to us, it is very humbling. God has given us so much. What do we give in return?

Making resolutions is common at this time of year. We will also hear this month about how Jesus called the first apostles. The Lord calls us as well to follow Him.

Let us resolve to try to do that better — all of us. That does not mean we have to leave our work and our families behind, but we do need to put our service to Jesus. That should be our top resolution.

In *The Theology of the Hammer*, Habitat for Humanity co-founder Millard Fuller wrote, "The only truly safe investment one can make in life is what is given away." First and foremost, God wants us. That should be our real resolution — to give ourselves to the Lord. May we all do a better job of that in 2018. God bless you all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Kenneth J. Malley". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a printed name and title.

Rev. Kenneth J. Malley
Pastor

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a black pen and writing on a white notepad. The notepad has the words "2018 New Year Resolutions" written vertically in cursive. The background is a soft-focus image of a hand writing on a notepad.



Investing in the Future of Our Church



Ralph and his parents with Bishop Lynch



Ralph and some of his friends and fellow seminarians



Seminarian Ralph D'Elia processing with his fellow seminarians during his graduation from St. John Vianney College Seminary, 2015.

Each year, St. Timothy parishioners have the special opportunity to help contribute to the Annual Pastoral Appeal (APA) for the Diocese of St. Petersburg, Fla. Supporting over 50 different diocesan-wide ministries and programs, this important fund allows our parish family to support the larger Church, impacting generations to come.

“It’s really an investment in the future of our local Church,” says seminarian Ralph D’Elia. “The money that the APA raises goes to so many incredible causes — Catholic education, Catholic Charities, tuition assistance for kids who otherwise wouldn’t be able to attend Catholic schools, priestly formation, and the list just goes on. This is something that’s going to make a great difference in individuals’ lives down the road.”

Now in his fifth year of priestly formation, Ralph is one of the many beneficiaries of APA. While his parents were not practicing Catholics during his childhood, Ralph says his parents still played a huge role in his formation. He says they taught him and his siblings the importance of faith, and the family prayed together daily. His maternal grandparents were devout Catholics and their Christian example made a huge impact on young Ralph. He can remember praying the St. Michael prayer with his grandmother on the way to school and frequently visiting the local adoration chapel with her. Then later, at Ralph’s request, he began attending Mass each Sunday with his two grandparents, mesmerized by the beauty of the liturgy.

“I was always so captivated by the experience of the Mass,” Ralph says. “It was so different from what I had experienced at the non-denominational church with my family. I would ask my grandparents many questions, eager to learn as much as I could.”

Though Ralph didn’t realize it at the time, this was the beginning of his priestly calling. As the years progressed, Ralph would feel a growing desire in his heart to truly become part of the Catholic faith, culminating with him and his entire family entering the Church his sophomore year of high school.

“I began praying the Rosary with my grandparents and one of my intentions was that my family would return to church,” Ralph says. “And then during my soph-

Church: The Annual Pastoral Appeal

One more year my parents announced that they were going to start going back to church — the Catholic Church. From that point forward, we started going to Mass together on Sunday. We registered for RCIA. My brothers and I received our first Holy Communion, Confirmation, and I began altar serving.”

Despite these early signs, however, it would still take Ralph several years before he would fully recognize and embrace his priestly vocation. He graduated from high school and began studying Political Science at the University of South Florida with the intention of becoming a lawyer. Ralph also worked at his uncle’s law firm and began assisting with various political campaigns. But while his life seemed set on a path, Ralph couldn’t ignore his growing feelings of discontent.

“I began to realize that if I didn’t ask the Lord what He wanted me to do, then I wasn’t going to be happy,” Ralph says. “And when I started to do that, it slowly became clear that the Lord was calling me to the priesthood. I would hear this appeal in my heart when the priest was celebrating the Mass.”

Once again drawn in by the Mass, Ralph began an intense period of discernment leading him to officially enter the seminary in fall 2013. He then spent two years studying pre-theology at St. John Vianney College Seminary in Miami before being invited to continue his formation at the Pontifical North American College in Rome, where he will be ordained to the transitional diaconate on Sept. 27, 2018.

Now nearing the end of his formation, Ralph is deeply grateful to all the donors who have made his priestly studies possible. It has allowed him to be more fully focused on his formation, giving it his all so that he can strive to become the best possible priest.

“What I’ve learned over the years is that seminary formation requires a total gift of self,” Ralph says.



Ralph and his grandparents in St. Peter’s Square following Easter Mass, 2016.

“Thanks to the financial aid that I receive through APA, I’m able to give myself fully to my priestly formation, because you can’t fully be invested while holding a part of yourself back. Without this funding, I would have to worry about paying for things like health insurance, tuition and lodging. So, it really has been crucial to my priesthood journey.”

Best of all, adds Ralph, those funds generously given just keep on giving. In the case of seminarians like himself, it ensures that we receive priests who are truly formed and prepared to give of themselves to the people of our diocese. And in the case of other diocesan ministries, it ensures that we as a Catholic Church are better equipped to meet the needs of all God’s children.

“As a seminarian, I feel blessed to personally experience and see the work that APA does, the lives that it touches, and the dividends that it pays down the road — to see how that money is spent and the lasting impact that it is making on our Church,” Ralph says.

To learn more about the Annual Pastoral Appeal and the ministries, services and programs that it funds, please visit www.dosp.org. Parishioners can also look for additional information in the mail and through parish bulletins, detailing how you can personally contribute toward APA.

Prayer: Come to Know the Lord



We make constant reference to the “three Ts” of stewardship, recognizing that to truly live as a stewardship people, we must give God the first fruits of our time, talent, and treasure. It is easy for us to see the concrete reality of the latter two. If we are to give God our talents, we must first recognize with what talents He has blessed us, and then use those talents for His greater glory. And as we continue our stewardship path, we know very well that our money is something concrete. When we recognize it as a gift from God, we know that we are to give a certain amount back to Him. It is easy for many of us to understand what it means to give God our talent and our treasure.

But what does it mean to give God a portion of our time? This idea is much harder to grasp, and yet giving to God the first fruits of our time is just as important as the other two. And if we understand this idea and implement it properly, our stewardship of time will serve as the very foundation from which our stewardship of talent and treasure bear fruit.

When we talk about stewardship of time, we are referring to prayer time. Prayer is of the utmost importance in a disciple’s life, and in the Diocese of Wichita’s The Pillars of Parish Stewardship, it is also one of the four pillars of stewardship.

Does this mean that in order to be true disciples, we should say the Our Father three times a day or pray a daily Rosary? Not particularly. Of course, we must not discount the merits of prayer, as the Church in her wondrous wisdom has given us certain prayers to help guide our lives. However, the disciple’s deep life of prayer involves even more.

St. John Chrysostom explains, “You should not think of prayer as being a matter of words. It is a desire for God, an indescribable devotion ... the gift of God’s grace” (Hom 6). That is, if we look at prayer as a mere regimen that we must follow every day, then we do not see to the heart of it. The reality is that prayer will take on different forms

for every one of us. One person may have a deep devotion to the Rosary, and in praying it, he is closely united to the Lord. Another person might feel deeply connected to Him through constant conversation – in the car on the way to work, before bed at night, or at other hours throughout the day. Meanwhile, for another person, a daily or weekly hour of silence before the Lord in Eucharistic Adoration is the best place for him to offer the Lord his heart. No matter how we choose to pray, we must get to the root of it all. If we are to truly give God our time, it must be a gift of ourselves. It must come from the heart and not take the form of mere word repetition. If we offer an Our Father without meditating on the words, it can simply become recitation.

The point of prayer is to get to know the Lord. If we are committed to living as His disciples, we must be on personal terms with Him. The first disciples didn’t know what it meant to pray the Rosary. And until the Lord taught them the Our Father, they couldn’t pray that either. But they were definitely true stewards of their time. They walked with Jesus, talked with Jesus, and ate meals with Him. He was their best friend, and the more they got to know Him, the more they longed to serve Him.

The same holds true for us today. We can walk with Him, talk with Him and sit with Him, just as they did. And He wants us to do this, too. St. John Chrysostom proclaims, there is nothing more worthwhile: “For prayer unites us to God as His companions” (Hom 6). How can we serve Him if we don’t know Him? If we truly desire to be a servant people, we must talk to Him whom we wish to serve. We must get to know Him. Then, most assuredly, we will fall in love with Him. We will undoubtedly desire nothing more than to serve Him.

Recognize Jesus as your best friend and spend time with Him as such. He is the Lord, the Creator of the Universe, without whom we would cease to exist. Bring Him your cares and concerns, your excitement, your worry, your fears and your frustrations, and allow Him to comfort you. He is there, and He wants to speak with you.

Growing in Our Feminine Vocation: Women of Grace

Roughly eight years ago, St. Timothy parishioner Lisa Marinik came across EWTN's show *Women of Grace*. Almost instantly, Lisa was struck by the founder Johnnette Benkovic's heartfelt teaching on the Holy Spirit and her description of authentic femininity.

"Listening to her words, I felt called to surrender to the Blessed Mother, who herself gave her fiat — her 'yes' — to God," Lisa says. "I felt a spiritual nudge and ordered the facilitator kit to learn more about Women of Grace. As a former corporate trainer, I was impressed with the quality of the content, design and multimedia approach to the study. And after praying on it, I felt a heartfelt 'yes' to facilitate the series for the women at St. Timothy."

It would still take several years and much prayer before God's timing would be right for Lisa and her fellow facilitator, Diane Tousignant, to act upon these promptings. Yet now, four sessions later, Women of Grace continues to bless St. Timothy parish women, transforming their concept of the Church, Blessed Motherhood, and authentic feminism much like it did Lisa eight years ago.

"This program has truly been such a joy to me," Diane says. "I just finished my eighth time facilitating it, and yet I still learn something new every time I go through it. Then, too, I've seen the transition that the women go through from the first session to the conclusion — to witness their growth and the closeness that they form with one another. Each time, there is tremendous healing that occurs amidst a great deal of sharing."

Describing it as a "foundational study for women," Diane explains that Women of Grace is meant to affirm women in their understanding and vocation as women of God. This is done through small-group gatherings over a nine-week period in which women are able to enjoy fellowship, sharing, and prayer, followed by a video presentation.

"It's meant to deepen participants' appreciation of their God-given feminism," Diane says. "It essentially



Isabelle Liberatore, Tampa Area Regional Coordinator (standing) with (from left) Diane Tousignant, Johnnette Benkovic, author and founder of Women of Grace, and Lisa Marinik.



The fall 2017 Women of Grace study group.

deepens your walk with the Lord and greatly increases your understanding of the Catholic faith. It also fosters a personal relationship with Mary as our example of Christian womanhood."

"It's such an important ministry for women in our parish because it allows them to be renewed and become more deeply rooted in faith," Lisa adds. "Women of Grace is an invitation to step out in faith while increasing awareness of Scripture, the sacraments and

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Women of Grace *continued from page 7*

becoming a spiritual mother first to our families and then to the parish.”

Women of Grace will become open to a new group of women starting Jan. 18. Gatherings will occur weekly on Thursday evenings from 7-9 p.m. in the St. Barnabas room in the Parish Center and a donation of \$50 is requested to cover the cost of program materials. Particularly leading up to the Lenten season, this provides a unique opportunity for women of all different stages and walks of life to grow in their faith journey — to draw deeper from the well and to embrace more fully their particular stewardship callings.

“This is a powerful way that women can really grow in their faith, bringing them into a deeper relationship

with Jesus and His Mother,” Diane says. “Our stewardship is a giving of yourself. It’s giving of your time, talent, and treasure — but you have to feed yourself first before you can truly give to others. I see this as a way for women to fill themselves, learning about who they are called to be, so that they can then reach out to their families and the community.”

“For me, Women of Grace has been like a spiritual oasis in a secular world,” Lisa adds. “It deepens my faith and I’m so grateful for the many new friends that I’ve made through Women of Grace. Together, we learn how to help each other shine in what can be a dark world at times. We enhance our active listening skills and help each other discover our unique talents.”

Please look to the parish bulletin for further information on how to register for Women of Grace or contact Diane Tousignant at womenofgrace@sainttims.org.

Mass Schedule

Saturday Vigil: 5:30 p.m. • Sunday: 7:30, 9, 11 a.m. & 5:30 p.m. • Daily: Mon-Sat 9 a.m., Wed 6:15 p.m. • Holy Days: 9 a.m. & 7 p.m. Vigil: 7 p.m.