



SAINT TIMOTHY
CATHOLIC CHURCH



Marriage Ministry Helping Pave the Road for Successful Unions

Marriage is like a road. At times, it's a smooth, well-paved highway on a sunny day with no traffic. At others, it can feel like a bumpy, narrow path on a stormy night when no one in the car is sure they're heading the right way.

Before couples at St. Timothy jump into the driver's seat, Deacon Peter Burns and the Marriage Ministry help make sure they're well prepared for the road ahead. With help from clergy and married couples who have been there and lived to tell the tale, the Marriage Ministry approaches marriage preparation from practical, spiritual and emotional perspectives, making sure couples feel well-prepared when the big day arrives.

"One of the things that happens up front is an initial interview to get to know the couple – it helps us assess where the couple is on their journey," Deacon Peter says of the first step in the marriage preparation process. "That assessment lets us make sure that the couples are in a good



position to get married and that there's no impediments to their marriage."

But future married couples shouldn't panic about the "impediments" part, says Deacon Peter. This is simply the Church's way of helping couples prepare for any future struggles.

"Our job is not to try to berate couples, but take them where they are and help them encounter Christ, help them in their faith, challenge them where they need to grow, and affirm the strengths that are there," he says.

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17512 Lakeshore Rd
Lutz, FL 33558
www.sainttims.org



How Can We Model the Faith for Our Children?

The Church has made it clear that parents are primarily responsible for the spiritual and cognitive development of their children in matters of the faith. As the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, states, “Husbands and wives find their proper vocation in being witnesses of the faith and love of Christ to one another and to their children” (Chapter 4, Section 35). The Catechism of the Catholic Church further emphasizes this vocation, by pointing out that the moral education and spiritual formation of children is not only the right, but the responsibility, of their parents: “The right and the duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable... Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children” (CCC 2221, 2223).

But how can we as parents create an environment in the home conducive to spiritual and moral development? As busy adults, how are we to disseminate the knowledge and understanding of the tenets of the faith to our children in the way that a trained and experienced catechist can? Furthermore, how do we strike a balance between teaching our children in the home and not interfering with the faith formation and sacramental preparation they are currently receiving through their parish school or religious education program?

The answer to all of these questions is stewardship.

Indeed, it is important that we reinforce the lessons that our children learn in school and at religious education classes by talking to them about the faith, reading Sacred Scripture with them, and spending time in family prayer. And there are several authoritative resources online that can help parents in this task, including Catholic Parents OnLine – www.catholicparents.org – which links parents to numerous websites and documents that can help them in talking to their children about the faith.

But the best way that we can teach our children is by serving as a living example to them of how to live as disciples of Christ. If we want our children to

grow up as strong Catholics and to display a lifelong commitment to their faith, then it is important that we ourselves live a committed faith life. This includes an ongoing commitment to our own faith formation as adults and active participation in the sacraments. It also includes the giving back of our time, talent, and treasure in service of our community in thanksgiving for the gifts that God has given us.

Parenting can be a tough vocation, and children deal with many influences in their lives that exist in stark contrast to the values that their parents often hope to instill within them. Fortunately for parents, the stewardship way of life provides a simple and effective model for teaching our children in matters of the faith. By living as stewards of God’s gifts and reaping the spiritual rewards that accompany this lifestyle, we are tangibly showing our children that sharing of our gifts and talents leads to a life of happiness and spiritual fulfillment. In doing this, we give them a good opportunity to follow in our footsteps and make their faith a top priority for the rest of their lives.



The Word of God: How Do We Hear It? And How Do We Respond to It?

Dear Friends in Christ,

A few short weeks ago, we completed our Christmas season. We are now in what we call Ordinary Time – but before long, we will begin Lent. This is one of those rare years when Ash Wednesday is in March – so, Lent does not, of course, begin in February this year.

The Gospel of John begins with the statement, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” We speak often of the Word in the Church. As most of you are aware, the first part of our Mass is called the Liturgy of the Word. What does that mean to us?

Basically, there are four parts of our celebration of Mass: Introductory Rites; Liturgy of the Word; Liturgy of the Eucharist; and Concluding Rites. My focus in this reflection is that second part – the Liturgy of the Word. The main parts of that are a First Reading, a Responsorial Psalm, a Second Reading, the Gospel, and a Homily.

We draw on Holy Scripture from the Bible for the readings. As Catholics, we do not consider that these readings are about God, or about the Church, or about our faith, or a history lesson, or a nice story from long ago. We consider them to be God speaking directly to us. Thus, our attentiveness to what is being proclaimed is important. Are we listening? Do we hear? And then,

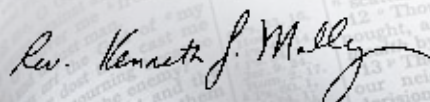


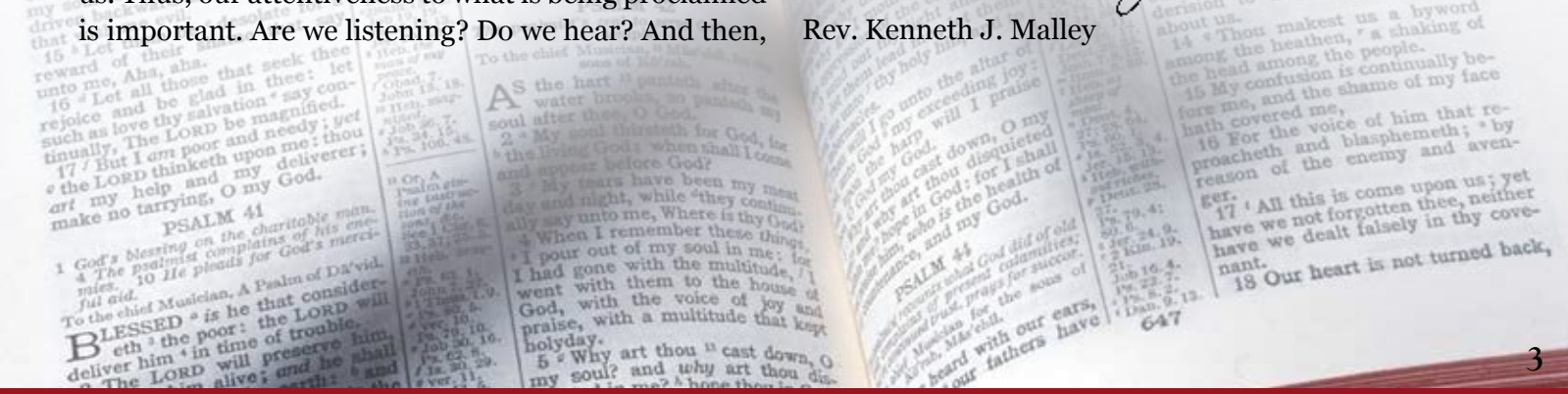
do we respond in our lives? All of those should be facets of how we approach the Word of God.

For us, the Word of God is the living Word. God is speaking to us as a community, and He asks us to be faithful to His Word. If we pay attention and truly listen, God can nourish our spirit, and Christ can be more real and present to us. The Homily, the Responsorial Psalm, the Profession of Faith, and the Intercessions develop the Word further and complete it. The Profession of Faith is our acceptance of God’s Word.

However, the question for us is, how do we respond to the Word? Does it change our lives? Does it bring us to the conversion necessary to live lives of stewardship and service? It is not easy, I know. Being able to listen, to hear and then to act requires time, practice, commitment, and a desire to fulfill all of this. That is one of my prayers for us – that we can hear the Word, and that we can bring it to life in our own lives and in the lives of others.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Rev. Kenneth J. Malley





HOUSEKEEPER

The Role of t

Inspired by St. John Paul II's words, "Do not be afraid to give your time to Christ," St. Timothy parishioner Mary Bratton felt increasingly called to serve the Lord through the Sacristans Ministry. Attracted to its behind-the-scenes nature, Mary saw becoming a sacristan as a unique way to use her time and talents for God's glory.

"I really feel like it was a calling to serve the Lord," Mary says. "I wanted to show my appreciation to the Lord for the blessings He had given me. I knew how important the sacristan's work was to the Church, and I wanted to be close to the Lord's house."

Lovingly referring to this ministry as "housekeepers for the Lord," Mary explains that the sacristan is responsible for preparing the Church for the Holy Banquet of the Lord. This is done through countless hidden ways – from setting the altar, caring for the linens and sacred vessels, and maintaining and cleaning the vestments, to ordering the supplies needed for each Mass, such as unconsecrated hosts, wine and incense. This is all lovingly performed by approximately 26 volunteers who rotate in these duties roughly every six weeks.

"I find it truly beautiful how this ministry serves in the Lord's house," Mary says. "As a sacristan, we take pride in the beauty of the Lord's linens and house. The other thing that is beautiful about this ministry is that many of our volunteers flow into other parish ministries."

Though the role of the sacristan is primarily one of hidden service, Mary has been amazed by the blessings she has received in the process. While busily preparing for each Mass, Mary has personally gained



*Sacristans at work –
(from left) Evelyn Mancine, Mary Bratton, and Cleone Clark.*

a much deeper understanding of and appreciation for the liturgy.

"I've become more aware of the seasons and special feast days because I have to be prepared for them, having the correct colors and lectionary ready," Mary says. "In many ways, it really took becoming a

If you are interested in becoming another one of God's housekeepers or have further questions about the Sacristans Ministry, please contact Mary Bratton at 813-789-3638. New volunteers are always welcome, and the rewards of this ministry's quiet service are truly immeasurable!

Prayers for the Lord the Sacristan

sacristan – working behind the scenes – for me to truly understand the liturgy and what is going on in it, even though I am a cradle Catholic. It has really been such a journey.”

Serving in God’s house has also made Mary feel more “connected” to our Lord as she performs her simple, yet meaningful tasks. Even things like ironing the corporals and purificators with their small, red embroidered crosses helps remind Mary of Who she

is serving. This, in turn, has led to a “holy longing” for Christ and the Mass, making her everyday living increasingly Christ-centered.

“What I think is so beautiful about this ministry is that we reverently care for God’s house so that the congregation can pray, repent and petition in a clean temple,” Mary says. “In the process, I feel truly connected to the Lord – I don’t know how else to explain it other than that holy longing.”

Marriage Ministry Helping Pave the Road for Successful Unions *continued from front cover*

So, once the interview is complete, the practical and catechetical phases of marriage preparation begin. Deacon Peter says this is the time when couples get to look at what the Church teaches about marriage and what God expects of us.

“What does the Church teach about marriage that makes it different from what society teaches?” he says. “It really comes down to a couple things – living in union with God as a part of that relationship and holding up the Trinity as a model, and the image of Christ laying down His life for the Church. Our job description is not only to get to heaven, but also to bring our spouse with us, as well.”

When it comes to approaching those everyday issues that often become marital roadblocks, Deacon Peter says that this is where the practical part comes in. Diocesan-led surveys help identify important relationship and personality aspects like finances,

sexuality, and roles and responsibilities. The results of these surveys are often looked at during sessions with one of four married couples, who volunteer as peer counselors for the engaged couple.

“They’ll spend four or five sessions with the couples as they go through the process. They’re a great resource and their role is mentoring,” Deacon Peter says.

In his years of helping engaged couples travel the path to marital bliss, Deacon Peter – himself a husband, father and grandfather – says he’s learned something universal about building a more perfect union.

“It’s always a work in progress,” he says. “Every couple has their stuff to work on. It’s just who we are, and we really have to lean on God to work with us. God wants to heal us. He wants us to turn to Him, again and again. We know that we are doing something truly divine when we genuinely forgive.”

For more information on the Marriage Ministry, please contact the parish at 813-968-1077. Engaged couples should allow six to eight months for marriage preparation.



A History of Lent and Lenten Practices

When we approach the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday, we look toward a season of preparation, sacrifice and penance, culminating in Holy Week and the joyous celebrations of Easter. And while the liturgical season of Lent offers us a time for solemn reflection, it is also widely welcomed each year as an opportunity to be drawn closer to our faith.

But just how did this penitential season come to be? And how did the reverent hallmarks of Lent – such as fasting and prayer – become so deeply ingrained in our observance of this season?

To understand the Lenten season, it is important to understand the word “Lent” itself, which is derived from two Anglo-Saxon terms: *lencten*, meaning “spring,” and *lenctentid*, which is the term for both “springtide” and “March” – of course, Lent often falls throughout most of the month of March, and during the transition into (and renewal of) the spring season. In Latin, the corresponding term for “Lent,” *quadragesima*, refers to its dating from the 40th day before Easter.

This brings us to another hallmark of the Lenten season – its length of 40 days. However, Lent was not originally observed for this length of time. During the first three centuries of the Christian era, Easter preparations consisted of three days of fasting and prayer. In some places, this preparation was extended into the entire week prior to Easter – which we now observe as Holy Week. There is also some evidence that, in Rome, Easter preparation was as long as three weeks.

In its early form, Lent was an intense period of spiritual and liturgical preparation for catechumens who were to be baptized at Easter. At the time, many members of the community observed this period of preparation alongside the catechumens. But, as time passed and more people were baptized as infants, the connection between catechumens and Lenten preparation gave way to a focus on the themes of repentance and fasting during Lent for all Christians.

It was not until the fourth century – upon the legalization of Christianity – that Lent developed into its current length of 40 days, which mirrored the length of Jesus’ fast and temptation in the desert, as chronicled in Luke 4:1-13.

Yet, interestingly, the Lenten observations of fasting and prayer did not always take place for 40 consecutive days. For instance, in Jerusalem, fasting was observed for 40 days, Monday through Friday, but not on Saturday or Sunday – thus, Lent lasted for a total of eight weeks. In Rome and the West, fasting took place for six weeks, Monday through Saturday, with Lent being observed over six weeks. The practice of fasting for six days over the course of six weeks eventually prevailed, with Ash Wednesday being instituted to account for 40 fasting days prior to Easter.

And as the length of Lenten observance developed over time, so did the observance of fasting itself. At first, some areas of the Church abstained from all meat and animal products, while others made exceptions for certain foods, like fish. And while a person was to only have one meal a day, a smaller repast would be allowed so that manual laborers could maintain their strength throughout the day. Eventually, eating meat was allowed throughout the week, save for Ash Wednesday and on Fridays.

In fact, two of our most common and beloved Lenten and Easter traditions – the Shrove Tuesday meal and Easter eggs – developed from these early Lenten observations. Initially, abstinence from dairy products was observed during Lent, with dispensations given if pious works had taken place. Eventually, this particular rule of abstinence was relaxed entirely. Today, pre-Lenten pancake breakfasts, Easter egg decoration and egg hunts remain as enjoyable seasonal opportunities for fellowship and fun within our parish families!

"I Love Being Among the First to Meet and Greet People When They Come to Mass"

The Ministry of Hospitality/Ushers at St. Timothy Catholic Church

The characteristics of a stewardship parish involve the foundation of the Four Pillars of Stewardship – Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. And since our St. Timothy Catholic Church has established a goal of being a stewardship parish, we are making efforts to develop each of those four pillars.

With this effort in mind, hospitality is something on which we need to focus. The Lord reminded us in Matthew 25:35 "When I was a stranger, you welcomed me" – Jesus teaches that whenever we welcome one of the least of our sisters and brothers, we welcome Christ Himself. Parishioners of a stewardship parish seek to see the face of Christ in one another. We must seek out and welcome new members to the parish family. A stewardship parish is a welcoming parish. One of the key groups who fulfill the idea of hospitality is our Ministry of Hospitality/Ushers.

"I think I have been an usher since the beginning of the parish, more than 30 years ago," says Joe Matta, one of the leaders of the Ministry of Hospitality/Ushers. "I remember ushering in the storefront when we had our Mass there, and then in various school facilities. And now that we have a beautiful permanent home, it is even better. I get great joy out of being an usher. I love being among the first to meet and greet people when they come to Mass at St. Timothy. It gives us an opportunity to be welcoming and hospitable, especially to people new to the parish or visiting, but it is also good to see those from our community who have been here for some time."

As Joe notes, for each of the weekend Masses, there is an usher coordinator and four assigned ushers.



"We basically work in teams of four and we are assigned to a Mass for a month at a time," he says. "All told, we have 75-80 parishioners who are involved in the ministry. To be an usher, we expect someone to be 16 years old or older, but we always need younger people. There are a lot of us 'old guys' doing it, and as everyone knows, our parish is much more diverse than that."

Most Rev. James Patrick Keleher, Archbishop Emeritus in Kansas City, Kan., says this about the importance of hospitality: "It is that sense of welcome that people, and fellow believers, are seeking when they come to church. Everyone wants to belong and feel a part of the faith community no matter what their language, race, financial means or any other status indicator. In actuality, hospitality is not something that is delegated to a particular group in a parish, but rather is part of the job description of each and every person in the assembly. When understood in a community

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this way, then that welcoming environment is present not just at the doors of the church, but up and down every aisle, from choir loft to sanctuary, and in every pew and every person. True hospitality is living and active and a hallmark of a community of faith. It can have a powerful affect on all present.”

“I am not sure if people understand all that our ushers do or are capable of doing,” Joe says. “Of course, we warmly welcome the people of God to each liturgical celebration, as well as perform various duties. We are responsible for assisting with seating, taking up the collection, directing the Eucharistic procession and distributing the parish bulletins and other materials after Mass. We are also trained in emergency

procedures, so that as ushers, we can deal with some of the unfortunate things that may occur at Masses. Training is provided for these and other procedures we experience.

“We would welcome anyone who wishes to serve in this great stewardship ministry, and I especially encourage younger people to consider it,” he concludes.

If you would like more information, or if you are interested in serving in this way, please contact Joe Matta at 813-833-8649 or Deacon Peter Burns at the parish office, 813-968-1077.

• **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.