



SAINT TIMOTHY CATHOLIC CHURCH



Meet Retired Educator and Coach **LEO HAGGERTY** *Leading by Example in Faith and Service*

Few people in the world influence the lives of youth as much as teachers do. As a high school history teacher *and* coach for 45 years, parishioner Leo Haggerty has surely encouraged and inspired countless young people in his lifetime. Following his retirement from teaching at the end of August, Leo has already begun to dive even deeper into parish life here at St. Timothy. Like the many students he served over the years, we are blessed by Leo's strong example of faith and joy.

Even when his vocations as a husband, father, teacher and coach were keeping him busy, Leo has always made time for parish involvement. Over the years, he has served as a Eucharistic Minister, lector and usher. As Leo likes to put it, he has "done everything but serve the Mass!" He is also a longtime member of our Knights of Columbus and



Leo Haggerty and his wife, Barbara, both had long careers in education.

Men's Group and greatly enjoys participating in the fellowship and community service of both organizations.

Of course, service comes naturally to Leo and his wife, Barbara, who both had long careers in education — Leo in high school and Barbara in elementary school. For this couple, teaching was a true calling.

"You couldn't call it a job, because you just got up and enjoyed being in the classroom with the kids, watching them learn and grow," Leo says. "In fact, I even talked my wife into teaching Religious Ed. We did that for a couple of years, and I also was the youth minister for the middle school for a while. Working with kids keeps you young."

Outside the classroom, Leo continued to be a role model to his students as a football and basketball coach.

continued on page 2

December 2020

In this Issue

- 3 Remaining in Christ
- 4 Fr. John Lipscomb Follows the Winding Road of God's Call
- 6 Begin the Journey Home for Christmas
- 7 The Men's Club: Embracing Faith, Family and Fellowship

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Meet Retired Educator and Coach Leo Haggerty

continued from front cover

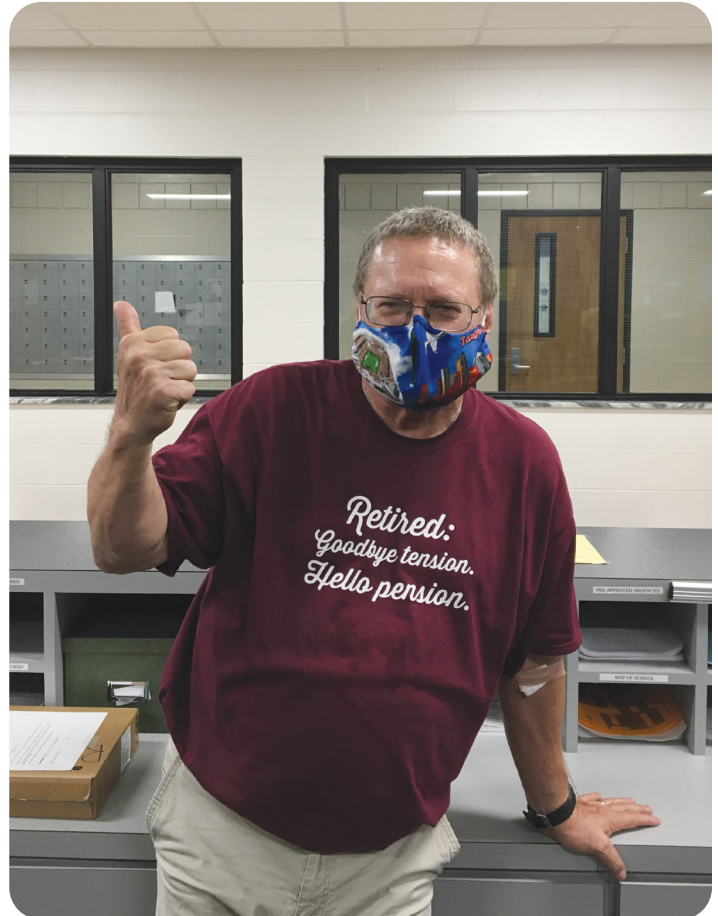
“Coaches and teachers are sometimes the surrogate father for these kids,” he says. “So you try to point them in the right direction and give them some good advice, and be there as a shoulder to lean on when some of them screw up — and they will, because they are kids.”

In addition to the many children Leo and Barbara mentored in their teaching careers, the couple had four children of their own. Leo was also an NFL scout and the managing editor of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers magazine, and currently teaches the theory of football at the University of Tampa. He is grateful for the abundant blessings in life that have helped him keep faith front and center.

“There are numerous occasions when I’ve felt blessed,” Leo says. “There were times when we first started out where I didn’t know how we were paying the bills for the month and then — boom! — a check arrived. The Lord works in mysterious ways. You’ve got to have faith, and you have to trust that what is coming down the pike is for the good.”

Now that he has retired from teaching at Gaither High School, Leo is looking forward to spending more time with his three grandchildren and, of course, more time at St. Timothy. Not even a week after officially retiring, he had already joined our Thursday Morning Bible Study. Leo is also happy to be able to attend daily Mass on weekdays now. He prefers to bike to those Masses, a routine that gives him “40 minutes for the body and 30 minutes for the soul!”

Having experienced firsthand the great beauty to be found in nurturing an active faith life, Leo would encourage all parishioners to jump in and participate fully in our parish community.



Leo Haggerty retired this year after 45 years as a high school teacher and coach.

“Being Catholic isn’t just an hour on Sunday, so get involved,” he says. “There is so much you can get out of what you put into the Church. It’s just something that you’ve got to believe in. You’ve got to trust — and more than anything, you need to give that example to your kids so that they have a firm foundation in the faith.”

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— LEO HAGGERTY

SAINT TIMOTHY

CATHOLIC CHURCH

A Letter From Our Pastor

Remaining in Christ

"REMAIN IN ME AS I REMAIN IN YOU...REMAIN IN MY LOVE" — JOHN 15:4,9

Dear Friends in Christ,

A happy and blessed Advent to you all! I pray that this holy season of grace is a time of blessing for you and your loved ones. Advent is one of my favorite liturgical seasons. It's a season filled with hope and joy as we anticipate the celebration of the birth of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ at Christmas! After a long and difficult 2020, we need all the hope and joy we can get!

Many Catholics think of Advent as a time to prepare our hearts for Christmas, and thinking this, you would be right.

But there's more to Advent than just preparing for Christmas. In fact, for us Catholic Christians living in the 21st century, the primary purpose of Advent is about preparing our hearts for Christ's glorious return at the end of time! We are an 'advent' people awaiting the return of Christ the King. One of the tenets of our faith is our belief in the Second Coming of Christ at the consummation of the world. That is why the first part of the Advent season has little to say about Christ's birth in Bethlehem, but rather a lot to say about being vigilant and prepared as we await the glorious return of Christ. The first half of the Advent season focuses our attention not on the past, but rather it engages us to look forward to the future glory that awaits us. Notice the Scripture readings for the first weeks of Advent. There's no mention about a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes. There's no reference to the little town of Bethlehem. We hear nothing about shepherds tending their flocks in the fields, no host of heavenly angels singing 'Glory to God in the highest,' no magi from the east bearing costly gifts for a newborn king. What we do hear is a strong dose of prophetic literature from the likes of Isaiah, John the Baptist and Christ Himself about being prepared and vigilant for the coming of the Lord on an unknown day and at an unknown time. Stay awake...



be vigilant...be prepared! The first part of the Advent season challenges each of us with the question: What am I doing today to prepare for eternity?

Advent is a season highlighted by themes of hope, joy and peace, but it does have a penitential dimension to it as well. It's not as intense as our Lenten pilgrimage, but it is definitely present. The same spiritual disciplines that drive the Lenten season, such as prayer, fasting and almsgiving, can also be applied to the Advent season. How can we use this

season of Advent to make more time for personal prayer, spousal prayer, family prayer? How can we use this season of Advent to practice greater self-discipline and mortification? How can we use this season of Advent to be good stewards of our time, talent and treasure to bring the light of Christ to others? This penitential nature of the Advent season is one of the reasons the primary liturgical color is violet, and why it is also highly encouraged for the faithful to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation and make a good confession sometime during the weeks of Advent. What better gift could we give the Christ Child than a pure heart and clean soul!

When the rose-colored vestments are worn on Gaudete (Rejoice) Sunday, we know that the celebration of Christmas is drawing near and it marks a significant shift in focus for our Advent pilgrimage. No longer are we looking primarily to the future second coming of Christ, we now begin to look to the past to remember the great saving event of the Incarnation and Christ's first coming among us as a tiny babe born in Bethlehem two millennia ago. You notice this shift in our liturgical readings. Beginning specifically on Dec. 17, our liturgies are dominated by the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah and the accounts of Christ birth recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. It is during these final days of Advent

continued on page 6



FR. JOHN LIPSCOMB FOLLOWS THE



*Fr. John Lipscomb loves serving our community
at St. Timothy Catholic Church.*

Many people spend years discerning their path to heaven, or “vocation.” Others feel strongly from a young age that they are called to marriage, priesthood, religious life, or serving God as a single person. And some say “yes,” answering God’s call for their life and vocation, later realizing that His plan brings more twists and turns than they could’ve ever anticipated.

Raised in Jacksonville as the son of a Baptist minister, Parochial Vicar Fr. John Lipscomb came to know and love Jesus from a young age. He credits both his appreciation of Scripture, as well as his voracious seeking of truth to the influence and example of his faithful parents.

“I was very blessed,” Fr. John says. “[My parents] gave me two great gifts growing up — the first was a love for the Scriptures, and the other was a love for the truth.”

However, as he got older, young John felt that something was missing in his practice of the faith. His girlfriend — who would go on to become his wife of now 52 years — introduced him to the Episcopal Church, and something resonated within John. Not long after, at the age of 15, he felt God calling him to become a priest, a vocation that would not preclude him from marriage, in the Episcopal tradition.

“I found within the sacramental life of the Episcopal church that missing piece,” Fr. John says. “It was the Eucharist that brought me into the Episcopal Church.”

John and Marcia (Marcie) were married at the age of 18 and went on to complete college together, followed by John’s time in seminary and ordination to the Episcopal priesthood in 1975. The couple, who had two children, served in several different parishes and dioceses, as a military chaplain in the reserves, and abroad, doing mission work in Haiti.

Winding Road of God's Call

In 1995, Fr. John was elected Bishop in the Episcopal Church of southwest Florida. However, it was during that time that he began to sense the Lord leading him in a different direction, and in 2007, he resigned from the House of Bishops.

"I really struggled for several years with the direction the [Episcopal] Church was taking, in what seemed to be a denial of both the authority of Scripture and the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the life of the Church," Fr. John says. "I had become more convinced that the reconciliation of the Church, the reunion of the Church, was of primary importance to the mission of the church, and when it looked as if the ecumenical work we were engaged in was not going to be approved, I realized I had to make a personal step."

In 2007, both John and Marcie were received into the Catholic Church by Bishop Lynch — however, there was no guarantee that he would be able to become an ordained priest in the Catholic Church.

"It was both a joy and a sorrow," says Fr. John, of being initiated into the Catholic Church, becoming a layperson again. "To be away from the ability to celebrate the Eucharist was very painful, but I realized I could be more faithful to my vows as a bishop in the Episcopal Church, by being a layman in the Catholic Church. Painful as it might have been, it was the only way I knew how to remain faithful in my walk with Christ."

However, in 2009, with the Holy Father's approval, John was ordained a Catholic priest and has been serving the Church since.

Today, the Lipscombs are blessed to have both of their children and their spouses, as well as their eight grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren in the Tampa area. In addition to serving part-time at St. Timothy's for the past 10 years, Fr. John is the Spiritual Director at Bethany Center, the diocesan conference and retreat center. His favorite parts of ministry continue to be celebrating the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, having the opportunity to teach on Scripture, prayer and spirituality, and providing spiritual direction, aiding others on their particular journeys of faith.

"It's just a joy to be able to do the things that I feel like I was called to do as a priest to begin with," Fr. John says. "I'm glad I had the opportunity to serve as a Bishop in the Episcopal Church, but frankly, I love serving as a priest in the Catholic Church a whole lot more. I'm delighted to be back in a parish."

For Fr. John and Marcie, despite all the ups and downs, challenges and surprises, they have found that following God's will is where true joy and fulfillment are found.

"My father would often say, 'You have to follow the truth because where the truth is, there God is,'" Fr. John says. "For me, this has been a journey of pursuing what I believe to be the fullness of the Truth, that Jesus Christ is Lord of our lives."

*Thank you, Fr. John, for all the ways you serve our parish and Catholic community in Tampa.
To connect with Fr. John Lipscomb at the parish office, please call 813-968-1077.*



Begin the Journey Home for Christmas

Christ was born the son of a poor carpenter. This was by no means an accident. His birth was the culmination of salvation history, as it profoundly revealed the glory of God. Infinite power and wisdom took the form “of a servant, coming in human likeness” (Phil 2:7) — not as a warrior, but a poor and vulnerable babe.

Every aspect of Christ’s birth, from the three kings to the swaddling clothes, carries meaning. The proclamation of the angel, therefore, is also important: “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (Lk 2:10). This message, meant to be for “all the people,” was announced to a group of shepherds in a field out in the middle of nowhere. This too was not accidental.

The shepherds, who received a personal invitation to greet Christ at the manger, reveal that God’s love extends beyond boundaries of distance and transcends social classes. Unlike persons of this world who yearn to gain recognition with those of influence, wealth or beauty, Christ cries out to the lowly in society — to the shepherds in the distance. He reaches out in love, desiring a relationship with every single person, no matter their status. This is the “good news of great joy for *all people*” — Christ was born for us all.

Christmas is the perfect time for distant shepherds to begin the journey home. The angel’s greeting extends to all those who feel estranged from the Church or numb to God’s love. Those who have fallen away from the faith can be comforted by these words: “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news



of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for *you* who is Messiah and Lord” (Lk 2:10-11).

Be not afraid. The Christ Child awaits your arrival. Begin the journey back to Christ by drawing near to His body, the Church. Through prayer and the sacraments, you will discover the great joy that accompanies a relationship with God. Take a moment to ask the Lord to bring peace to your heart and guide you in love towards Him. Please join our parish family for the final preparations of Advent, as well as the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses.

You have read this entire article and have received a personal invitation to begin the journey. Accidental? Not a chance.

Remaining in Christ *continued from page 3*

that we earnestly begin to prepare to remember and celebrate the birth of Christ our Savior.

I pray that these days of Advent are a time a grace and blessing for you and your loved ones. This is a good opportunity to reflect on how you and your family have entered into the Advent season thus far. If you’re not satisfied with your engagement in the Advent season to date, there’s still plenty of time left to make the most of this holy season. Take advantage of the opportunities that will manifest themselves in the coming days. If you want to have

a blessed Christmas, have a blessed Advent. I look forward to my first Christmas here at St. Tim’s and to celebrate Christ’s birth with this wonderful faith community! A blessed Advent and joyous Christmas to one and all!

Pax Christi,

Fr. John Blum, Pastor

THE MEN'S CLUB: *Embracing Faith, Family and Fellowship*

From hosting parish Bingo and Lenten Fish Frys and supporting each other in prayer, to inspiring our teens to embrace their Catholic faith, the Men's Club has one main mission — to foster a greater appreciation for the “three Fs.”

“The main reason I am involved in our parish and the Men's Club is because I value the ‘three Fs’ – faith, family and fellowship,” says Doug Funsch, who currently serves as President of the Men's Club. “Being involved helps me grow in these three areas.”

The Men's Club meets on the first Monday of every month at our parish, beginning with a meal at 6:30 p.m. The supper is prepared by one of the club's 12 board members, who take rotating turns cooking a variety of meals, such as chicken and rice, baked beans, chicken Parmesan or pig roast. The meeting follows from 7 to 8:30 p.m. and usually features a guest speaker.

“I get speakers to come in and give talks about interesting topics that especially pertain to men,” Doug says. “We have had doctors



“The main reason I am involved in our parish and the Men's Club is because I really value the ‘three Fs’ – faith, family and fellowship,” says Doug Funsch, who currently serves as President of the Men's Club.

come in and talk about men's health concerns, such as cholesterol levels and prostate issues, and law enforcement personnel speak as well. We even had Tino Martinez, a famous professional baseball player, come and sign autographs for us.”

When it is all said and done, the guest speakers give a good dose of inspiration to those who attend.

“Many of our guests tell stories about their lives and their Christian faith,” Doug says. “They give us some great insight into our lives. Usually,

continued on back cover

“Participation in our Men's Club is an ideal way to strengthen your faith. I really see myself growing spiritually as I interact with other parishioners at our events. The other men in the club have become like family to me. It is a great support group for men, especially in today's world. It is very helpful to get together with like-minded people.” — DOUG FUNSCH



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The Men's Club *continued from page 7*

if we don't have a speaker scheduled, about 40 to 50 men show up for our meeting, but if we have a good speaker lined up, up to 200 men will attend."

The Men's Club is dedicated to service in a meaningful way, as well. In addition to running Bingo and Lenten Fish Frys at our parish, they also set up committees that give back to our parish family and the local community.

For example, they organize toy drives around the holidays, cook for needy families in honor of Thanksgiving Day, and support the Youth Group in their fundraising efforts.

"Being part of the Men's Club helps us apply our Catholic faith to real life," Doug says. "We do a lot in addition to our meetings. We grow in fellowship as we help the community."

Doug encourages other men to become active with the Men's Club.

"Participation in our Men's Club an ideal way to strengthen your faith," he says. "I see myself growing spiritually as I interact with other parishioners at our events. The other men in the club have become like family to me. It is a great support group for men, especially in today's world. It is very helpful to get together with like-minded people."

All of the Men's Club events are family-friendly, and open to the entire parish. Any male parishioner who is 17 or older is automatically part of the Men's Club. There is no fee to join.

For further information about the Men's Club, please contact Doug Funsch at 813-732-7428, or see upcoming parish bulletin calendars regarding their events.

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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 p.m. • Holy Days: 9 a.m. & 7 p.m. Vigil: 7 p.m.