



SAINT TIMOTHY  
CATHOLIC CHURCH



## Getting to Know Our New Parish Manager, Donna Jackson

*"WHEN WE'RE WORKING IN THE CHURCH, IT'S ALL SERVING"*

St. Timothy is pleased to welcome Donna Jackson as our new Parish Manager. Donna joined us in the parish office in September and has thoroughly enjoyed the first few months of getting to know the "ins and outs" of the parish. Reflecting on her path to this new role, Donna can see the hand of God at work!

One day earlier this year, as Donna was helping with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, former Parish Manager Cindy Vinal mentioned that the parish was still looking for someone to replace her in the office following her retirement. Donna went home, talked with her husband, and began to pray about the opportunity.

"It was divine intervention," Donna says. "I felt a lot of peace. The only thing I can say is that God has put me here, and every day I pray and surrender to Him to do the work. There is a lot that goes into it that you can't really see, so hopefully, I am following His lead."

Donna brings a myriad of work experiences to the Parish Manager position. Early in her



*New Parish Manager Donna Jackson,  
with her husband, Jason*

career, she worked with a company where wonderful work mentors taught her the ropes of finances, payables, and bookkeeping. Later, she moved to the Human Resources department.

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January 2021

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## New Parish Manager *continued from front cover*

Next, she worked as an office manager for an IT company and was then promoted to the contract compliance team. In all of these positions, Donna had the opportunity to hone various skills that are now serving her well in the role of Parish Manager.

Of course, being on staff for a parish is a ministry in and of itself, bringing into play not only work-related experiences but also a love for the Catholic faith and Church.

"I've been a parishioner here for about seven years, and just stepping out of my comfort zone with ministries and having a spiritual director have helped bring me where I am," Donna says. "Being able to pray through and discern that it was time for a change and that this is where I'm supposed to be — all of that just brought me here."

Of all the skills Donna relies on in performing her tasks at St. Timothy, flexibility is certainly one that comes in handy every day.

"I'll come in with an idea about what I'm going to work on that day, and then something else comes along and derails that," Donna says. "In this role, I have to roll with it to see what is most important, what needs attention, and how I can best serve the community. It's really surrendering to where God needs us to be. When we're working in the church, it's all serving."

As she settles in at the parish office, Donna is thankful for the support and guidance of our seasoned staff and volunteers. She is also excited to be working alongside our new pastor, Fr. John Blum.

"Everybody has a background, gifts, and talents, and it's really great how we can blend them and work together," Donna says. "And I get to learn from Fr. Blum what direction he is considering for the parish and help make that come to fruition. I have faith that this is exactly where God needed him to be at this time. He's going to shepherd us."

When she isn't hard at work in the parish, Donna enjoys spending time with her family — husband Jason, two sons, and two granddaughters — and cheering on the Tampa Bay Lightning!

With gratitude that God has led her to this new opportunity at St. Timothy, Donna is looking forward to serving all of our parishioners and visitors.

"The people here are amazing," she says. "It's my parish family, and I want nothing but to give back. As a Parish Manager, you have the responsibility of serving every single person who walks onto this campus. I just hope that I can continue prayerfully surrendering to God in order to lead the way I need to in the church and in the ministry."

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*— Donna Jackson*



# 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,

One of the great feasts in the Church's liturgical calendar is the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. The traditional date of Epiphany is Jan. 6, but in recent times it has become for us a "movable" feast, this year falling on Sunday, Jan. 3. We commemorate on Epiphany the arrival of the magi from the East bringing their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh as they come to adore the newborn King, Christ the Lord. "Epiphany" is a Greek word meaning "manifestation," and thus it signifies the manifestation of Christ, the Son of God, as Savior of the world.

While we focus the great feast of Epiphany on the Adoration of the Christ Child by the Magi, our Orthodox brethren focus their celebration of Epiphany around the Baptism of Jesus. This is another essential "epiphany" event, where Jesus is manifested as the Son of God. The voice of the Father declares Jesus to be His Beloved Son and the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove. The Orthodox celebrate Epiphany on its traditional day of January 6th, and one of the largest Orthodox Epiphany celebrations in the Western Hemisphere takes place right in our own "backyard" at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Tarpon Springs. The famed tossing of the white cross into the local bayou with eager young men ready to dive in the waters after it is filled with significant Baptismal imagery.

Our own celebration of the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord is celebrated this year on January 10th. It's interesting to note that it is the feast of the Baptism of the Lord that officially brings to a close our Christmas season. The great Solemnity of Christmas is too important a feast day to contain in just one 24-hour period. So the Church literally "stretches" the day of Christmas over an eight-day period known as the Octave of Christmas, culminating on New Year's Day, which for us is the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God. The tra-



ditional 12 days of Christmas culminate on January 6th with the Solemnity of Epiphany, and the celebration continues right through the Feast of the Lord's Baptism.

Returning to Epiphany, one of the great traditions on this feast is to bless homes with a special Epiphany blessing. This is a great way to bring our faith into the home and to ask for God's special blessing on our families as we begin this new year. This blessing should be done at a time when all the members of the household can be present, with the father or head of the household leading

the prayer and blessing. Here's how it works:

Using a piece of chalk, write on the outside of the door you use as a main entrance: 20 + C + M + B + 21

The numbers "20" and "21" stand for the current year, 2021. The "+"s symbolize the cross of Christ and remind of Jesus' redemptive mission of sacrificial love to save us. The letters "C", "M" and "B" have two meanings. They stand for the three magi, or wise men, who according to tradition are named Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. The letters also signify the Latin phrase *Christus Mansionem Benedicat* ("Christ Blesses This Home"). As you "chalk your door," include this prayer:

Lord God of heaven and earth, You revealed Your only begotten Son to every nation by the guidance of a star. Bless this house and all who live here and all who visit. May we be blessed with health, kindness of heart, gentleness, and the keeping of your law. Fill us with the light of Christ, that our love for each other may go out to all. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Pax Christi,

Fr. Blum



## St. Timothy's Youth Ministry Mentors:

# *Walking Alongside Our Teens*



*Mentor Mary Heston and her group of 11th and 12th-grade girls help each other grow in their faith and find fellowship with other Catholic young people.*

The teenage years are often a confusing and overwhelming stage in the journey of life. Today's youth are faced with more challenging situations and decisions than perhaps ever before. As their parish family, it is our job to step up and walk alongside them, teaching our young people about our faith and empowering them to live a life of Christian discipleship. Here at St. Timothy, a dedicated group of parishioners has answered the call to this role, saying "yes" to serving as Youth Ministry mentors.

The role of the mentors includes facilitating a weekly small group—which takes place at Life Teen youth group—and staying connected with the teens in their group throughout the week. Sometimes, mentors are also invited to help with the large group presentations, or in sharing their witness.

Parishioner Mary Heston has been involved as a Youth Ministry mentor, supporting youth in our parish, for the past seven years. She works with a group of 11th and 12th-grade girls who have already been confirmed, helping them to grow in their love of Christ and the Church, while building a sisterhood that empowers them to live out their faith.

"For me, it looks like, 'How can I keep them actively engaged and thinking about their faith and desiring to come?'" Mary says.

In addition to gathering at Life Teen, her small group has a GroupMe chat where they connect during the week, reflecting on different Scriptures, challenging one another, and sharing prayer requests. This form of connection fosters the friendships within the group, providing invaluable support in following Christ in everyday life.

# Mentors on the Journey of Faith

"We really try to engage with each other, creating a sisterhood, so when we come on Sunday, we are prayerful and open and vulnerable, because that's when the Holy Spirit can come in," Mary says. "Our work during the week in GroupMe allows for Sunday sessions to be so open and transparent with each other — so that, when on Sunday, they could do homework or go out with friends or do something other than this, they choose to join us instead."

Mary knows the impact that the mentors can have on teens from personal experience, as both of her children went through the program. She recalls times when her son would reach out to his mentor while going through a difficult time, and the impact that had in providing support and encouragement from somewhere other than the family unit.

"As a mother, when my children tell me things that make them vulnerable or sad, I absorb their hurt and their pain but as a mentor, I don't necessarily absorb those things, so I can respond differently," she says.

For Mary, not only has serving as a mentor been an opportunity to serve our youth, but it has also given her a chance to grow in her relationship with the Lord and understanding of the faith.

"Those teenagers ask such thoughtful questions and I have my work cut out for me," she says with a smile. "I have to look stuff up, I have to read the Bible, and dive in. I

have learned more in my time as a mentor from them than I think they'll ever learn from me. I think that's how God intended it, because He wanted me to grow."

Mary encourages other parishioners to consider whether God may be calling them to serve as Youth Ministry mentors in our parish.

"For me, it's always been where my heart has longed to be," Mary says. "I know God has graced me with the gift of compassion and empathy for teenagers, for what they go through on a day-to-day basis. They are the people I love the most and they are the ones I want to serve."

"If you ever wonder what it's like, stop by and join us for a night," she adds. "Come see if it fits into what you imagined. It's probably going to be even better."

At the end of the day, the role of the mentors is to be a faithful adult, providing encouragement and guidance in living the abundant Christian life, to which all of us are called. It's Mary's hope that, with the right foundation, they will continue to stay close to the Church for years to come.

"I want them to have that fire for Christ, for serving others, for creating a sisterhood or brotherhood in Christ," Mary says. "I'm encouraging them to be brave and open about their faith, doing it here, so they have the courage to ask and seek that community when they've left us."

.....  
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— Mary Heston

*Youth Ministry mentors are needed for both the middle school (Edge) and high school (Life Teen) Youth Ministry programs. If you would like more information on how you can become involved in serving our young people as a Youth Ministry mentor, please contact Youth and Young Adult Minister Justin Lantz or Youth Ministry Assistant Jen Linder at 813-542-5968.*





# The Patron of Catholic Schools in America

## **St. Elizabeth Ann Seton**

**A**s the first American-born canonized saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton's entrance into history was guided by Divine Providence. Born on Aug. 28, 1774, just months after the Boston Tea Party, Elizabeth's childhood witnessed pivotal events in the formation of our country — the Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence, and the American Revolution. At the time of the foundation of the new Republic, in a society predominately hostile toward Catholicism, a flower blossomed that would forever change the shape of education in the United States.

Elizabeth Seton was born into a wealthy Protestant family in New York City. Her life, although materially blessed, was not without suffering. Elizabeth's biological mother died when she was only 3, and her younger sister, Catherine Josephine, died at the age of 2. A spark of faith, however, was visible even in her early childhood. When questioned about her sadness concerning her sister's death, Elizabeth simply responded, "Kitty is gone up to heaven. I wish I could go there too."

Elizabeth grew into a beautiful woman, courted lavishly by handsome young men from prominent New York families. At the age of 19, she met a charming New York financier, William Seton, and the couple was wed in 1794. They remained in high society until her father-in-law's passing, which left them to care for William's seven younger siblings, along with three children of their own. Consequently, the Seton finances crashed.

The couple traveled to Italy — it was here that William's health failed him, and he died in December 1803. Providentially, Elizabeth was left in the company of a strong Catholic family where she witnessed the practice of the faith. In a



letter to her sister, Elizabeth wrote, "My sister dear, how happy would we be, if we believed what these dear souls believe, that they possess God in the Sacrament, and that He remains in their churches..."

After an eight-month stay, Elizabeth returned to America, and she began to investigate Catholicism more deeply. She was besought by Protestant friends who hoped to dissuade her. At this time, Elizabeth prayed repeatedly, "If I am right, Thy grace impart, still in the right to stay. If I am wrong, oh teach my heart to find the better way."

In 1805, after much interior struggle, Elizabeth became Catholic. Abandoned entirely by her family and friends, she resolved her financial difficulties through teaching.

In 1807, Elizabeth was invited to establish a Catholic school for girls in Baltimore. The task was daunting, and Elizabeth labored intensely, explaining how "from half past five in the morning until nine at night, every moment is full — no space even to be troubled." After winters spent in continual hardship and sacrifice, the school flourished and, within years, Mother Seton planted the seed from which sprang the parochial school system — along with hospitals and orphanages.

Before her death in January 1821, she was the active mother of five — although two of her daughters died young — and the spiritual mother of a full-fledged religious congregation known as the Sisters of Charity. She was canonized in 1975, and her feast day is celebrated on Jan. 4.

Thanks to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the Catholic parochial school system remains vibrant and active. And as we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, we are thankful for the sacrifice of this loving wife, devoted mother, foundress and all-American saint.

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## The St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store Reopens *Providing Valuable Service to Those in Need*

**T**he onset of COVID-19 has brought about many changes for our lives — changes that have presented real challenges. The St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store in the Hillsborough District has also experienced challenges from the pandemic but the result is the store has rebounded from its quarantine closing in March, and is again serving those in need and is close to operating in the black.

Cindy Vinal is president of the St. Vincent de Paul Conference at St. Timothy Parish. She — along with other conference members from St. Timothy, Christ the King Catholic Church, St. Paul Catholic Church, and St. Mark Catholic Church — has worked to revitalize the store as the quarantine began to lift. This work meant the store was able to open on Aug. 20. The store works with an all-volunteer staff with limited hours.

“The Thrift Store shares a building with the District Food Pantry,” Cindy says. “Its purpose is to provide clothing to the local homeless population, furniture and household items to local families in need, and financial assistance and referrals when possible. Through the sale of donated items, the store is able to financially support the Food Pantry and help those in need. Over the past few years, the face of retail brick and mortar stores changed dramatically, and the Thrift Store was no different. Faced with declining sales and a lack of volunteers, there was discussion about closing it down.”

Early in the year, the conferences began to work on refurbishing the store. In February, they began to make some changes and were seeing progress. Then, COVID-19 restrictions forced it to close for five months.

“It was a blessing,” Cindy says. “Once the quarantine began to lift, an assortment of dedicated volunteers took advantage of the store closure to clean, reorganize and re-decorate the store. Items that were deemed not sellable were donated to other agencies or recycled. Everything else was sorted, priced and staged.”

The store is open Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. The store accepts donations of gently used clothing, toys, household items, small appliances and



*Careful arranging shows some of the furnishings for sale at the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store that reopened in August.*



*Living room sets and other furniture items are among those offered at the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store.*



*Clothing, neatly sorted and tagged, awaits shoppers at the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store. The St. Vincent de Paul Conference at St. Timothy is among those helping with the store.*

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# SAINT TIMOTHY

## CATHOLIC CHURCH

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## St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store *continued from page 7*

small furniture items on Saturday. Large furniture can be donated with prior agreement. Electronics or items in disrepair cannot be accepted.

"Sometimes we get walk-ins, and we get referrals from other conferences, especially for families in need of furniture and household items," Cindy says. "Some of the families, through COVID-19, have been evicted and lost a job, or are renting a room and they need furniture. We provide what we can. A conference might send someone and we give them what they need, and the conference will give us the money to cover it."

Cindy is proud to say that St. Timothy Parish has provided more volunteers than any of the other parishes work-

ing with the store. Our youth group, Knights of Columbus, and members of our Men's Club have all worked at the store. Cindy is always putting out a call for volunteers.

"Some come and love it, and some don't return," she says. "It isn't for everyone. I think with COVID a lot are afraid of outreach. We mask, sanitize, but it is kind of scary."

Working to help the Thrift Store has enabled Cindy to live out stewardship.

"Oh, absolutely," she says. "I've been blessed. I'm retired and I'm comfortable and have the time to give back. This is something I can do. I'm in reasonably good health and I have time I never had. It's what I should be doing in gratitude for everything God has done for me."

*There are several ways we can help the Thrift Store. One way is shopping. The money made through sales helps fund the Food Pantry, and covers rent and utilities for those in need. Another way to help is to volunteer at the store. Anyone interested may email Cindy Vinal at [cmvinal914@gmail.com](mailto:cmvinal914@gmail.com), or go to the store — Cindy prefers to talk first with prospective volunteers.*

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