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Preparing for a Lifetime of Faith

It can be a little nerve-wracking to try something new. But Youth Faith Formation Coordinator Jonathan Harris and his team felt confident this summer, as they decided to embark on an innovative adventure in preparing our youth to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. And it seems their leap of faith has paid off!

In years past, our young people have prepared to receive this Sacrament of Initiation in a yearlong series of weekly Confirmation preparation classes. However, this summer, we started a confirmation retreat and are happy St. Pius Church joined us. The retreat was offered Aug. 1-5, leading up to their Confirmation, which took place Sunday, Aug. 6 at the 9 a.m. Mass.

The weeklong retreat included opportunities for the youth to grow in their faith and knowledge of the sacrament through talks given by Fr. Kastl, Bishop Konderla, and others. They shared their faith with their peers in small-group settings, and had the opportunity for prayer and receiving the sacraments. They also learned the value of putting their faith into practice by participating in various service projects throughout the week. The final day of the retreat included an overnight session at Camp Christian, where the youth were joined by their sponsors, for a day of fun and spiritual growth.

Matthew Schwarz and Gabriela Zambrano are two high school juniors who attended the retreat and were confirmed last month.

“Going into the week of the Confirmation retreat, I wasn’t looking forward to it at all,” Matthew says. “I thought, ‘We’re going to sit and be bored to death, and they’re just



Youth from St. Anne's and St. Pius prepared to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation during a weeklong retreat.

Preparing for a Lifetime of Faith *continued from front cover*

going to preach at us. But it was amazing. I wasn't bored the whole week. It was a real life-changer for me. It was a very good experience."

"When you make it a week long in the summer, it's so intense and it makes you think so much deeper," Gabriela adds. "I loved it."

Jonathan hopes that the experience will help teens to form lasting relationships with the Lord, and each other, motivating them to continue to stay involved in the Church after Confirmation, and it seems that it's already having an impact.

"The idea is that these experiences often push the students to be more involved, coming to church and youth group," Jonathan says.

"Before I went to that Confirmation retreat, I never felt like I wanted to go to youth group, or do any of that – it just didn't interest me," Matthew says. "But after [the retreat], I started to go. Before I would go to church on Sunday, but I felt like I wasn't fully there. Now, I feel like I'm fully paying attention to what's going on in the Mass."

"Confirmation is just the beginning of your faith," says Gabriela, who hopes to stay involved with youth ministry, and maybe become a leader in the future.

By giving the teens a chance to step out of their everyday routine, they're able to begin investing in a relationship *with* God, more than just memorizing facts *about* Him.

"Our goal is to not only share the teachings of the Church and the faith, but also to have hands-on things that help them to better understand those teachings," Jonathan says. "It pulls them out of that routine and puts all their focus on their spiritual growth for these days."

"I didn't have any other classes to worry about," says Matthew, who attends a Catholic high school. "I just concentrated on this and the things they taught me really stuck with me – it didn't just go in one ear and out the other."

The ultimate goal of this type of retreat experience is

to help young people be open to receiving everything that God has for them in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

"God gives graces abundantly, but He will only give you the graces you're open to receive," Jonathan says.

"You might be content in your faith, but there's so much God has to offer you," adds Matthew of his realizations during the week. "He makes your whole life a lot better. You really do see how He changes your life."

Matthew and Gabriela both encourage their fellow parishioners to continue to pray for them and their peers as they begin this part of their journey, as fully initiated members of the Church.

"These days, there are so many opportunities to get away from God, so many things that lead you away from Him," Matthew says. "Pray for us to stay on track with God."

"We all need prayers – prayers are so important for us," Gabriela says. "Confirmation is the beginning and there are still going to be temptations. I want all of the people in my Confirmation class to go out and do great things, and follow God and bring Him into the world and into our lives."



Youth were challenged to deepen their relationship with God and incorporate their faith into their daily lives during a number of inspiring talks throughout the week.

If you would like more information on youth ministry here at St. Anne, or to become involved, please contact Jonathan Harris, our Youth Faith Formation Coordinator at, jharris@stanneba.org or 918-251-4000.

A Look Back on Our Parish Feast Day Celebration

Thank you to everyone who came out to celebrate our parish Feast Day! We offer our thanks to Heather Quintero for heading up this awesome event. If you are interested in helping with next year's celebration, please contact Heather at heather.mq32@gmail.com.



Questions and Answers About Our Annual Stewardship Renewal

Just as the Church proposes a time of spiritual renewal each Lent, we believe in the importance of a yearly examination of commitment. Is the Lord asking you to give more time, talent, or treasure to our parish this year? The following Q&A about our Stewardship Renewal should help you discern your commitments to St. Anne this year.

***Commitment Weekend is September 16-17.
Don't forget to bring your Commitment Card to Mass!***

I feel like my life is already too full with family obligations and work obligations. I barely even have time to relax. How can I possibly share my time and talents with St. Anne?

We all have many obligations to our families, jobs, schools, and other endeavors. But we also all have the same number of hours in the day with which to accomplish these things. The issue is not how much time we have, but how we prioritize that time. Before you fill out your Commitment Card, take some time to reflect on your priorities, and where God fits into your day-to-day life. Remember, living as true stewards of God's gifts involves giving back the first fruits of what He has given to us in thanksgiving, not the "leftovers."

I am happy with my current level of parish participation. Why do I need to keep filling out a Commitment Card every year?

As part of the renewal process, it is important that we consider our current level of participation in parish life at St. Anne. Sometimes, the call to stewardship involves the quality of service in addition to its quantity. In looking through the opportunities for ministry available at the parish, you may find yourself drawn to a new ministry you haven't tried before, or new ways to share of your time with God to enrich and enlighten your prayer life. So, even though your current level of parish participation might not change drastically, the ways in which you participate may evolve as you grow in living the stewardship way of life.

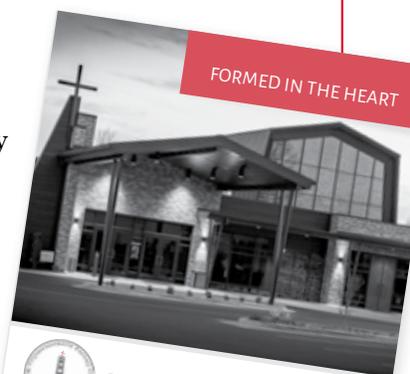
I'm not very active in the Church and, frankly, feel like it may be too late to get involved. Why should I fill out a Commitment Card?

It's never too late to renew your faith life, and filling out a Commitment Card is a simple step through which you can immediately re-enter the life of the parish. Our parish community is not here to judge you, but to welcome and nourish you in your faith journey. Begin by checking the box that says, "Attend weekly Mass and Holy Days of Obligation," and take some time to discern additional ways in which God is calling you from that starting point.

I'm physically unable to attend Mass or be active in parish life at St. Anne. Is there any reason for me to submit a Commitment Card?

Of course! Your prayers are just as important to the success of our parish community in carrying out its mission as ministry participation and financial contributions. Take a moment to look over some of the opportunities to spend quiet time with God listed in the "Stewardship of Time" section of the Commitment Card, and take a step towards growing in your relationship with Christ and His Church.

Every parish family receives a special "Stewardship Package" in the mail that further explains our parish's vision of stewardship. It includes a booklet that describes every ministry in the parish, as well as your Commitment Card.



ST. ANNE CATHOLIC CHURCH
2017 COMMITMENT CARD
My offering of time, talent & treasure

First & Last Name (use one card per family)

Street Address

City State ZIP

Telephone (important)

Email address

Liturgical Ministers Serve Our Parish Before, During and After Mass

As Catholics, we are a community of believers, and that community plays a part in our celebration of the Mass. Here at St. Anne, our liturgical ministers dedicate their time to serving God and their fellow parishioners at Mass. Whether the work is done behind the scenes, in the front of the church, or among the congregation, each minister plays an important role in the most holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Liturgical ministers serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, altar servers, sacristans, ushers, and greeters. Extraordinary Ministers, lectors, altar servers, and ushers serve throughout the course of the Mass; greeters ensure that parishioners and visitors feel welcome, and sacristans prepare the church, book, altar linens and holy vessels both before and after the Mass. All of this assistance allows both the clergy and congregation to prayerfully focus on the sacrament.

Throughout their time as parishioners at St. Anne, Tom Hufnagel and Mena Evans have taken on several roles as liturgical ministers, including serving as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

“It’s a gift to be able to partake in the Body and Blood of Christ – God Himself – and it’s also a gift to be able to give it to the people of St. Anne, to be part of such an important sacrament,” Mena says. “Honestly, sometimes when I stand up there, I wonder, ‘Am I worthy of being able to give this to others?’ It’s just such a special part of the Mass.”

“For me, it’s a just a great honor to give out the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ,” Tom says. “After I give out communion, I get on my knees and thank God for



letting me do this. There’s no greater honor I could have in the Church, and to be trusted with that responsibility is just awesome.”

For Tom, serving as an Extraordinary Minister was a natural segue into getting more involved. Not long after he started as an Extraordinary Minister, he saw the need for ushers at the 5 p.m. Saturday vigil Mass, which he regularly attends. He volunteered to serve, and shortly afterwards, he also volunteered to serve as a sacristan.

“You’re going to Mass anyway, and when you’re there you have the time!” Tom says. “It’s all part of the Mass, so if you’re already going to be there, it’s a great way to serve. Father can’t do everything, and serving also shows the community as a whole that it’s easy to get involved, and easy to be a part of the parish.”

Mena also serves as a lector and as a greeter. Reading at Mass as a lector has brought her to a deeper understanding of Scripture.

“We have a handbook for lectors, and the information about each reading in the handbook really helps you to put your mind in the right place,” she says. “It helps me to focus on the message that is being delivered through the reading.”

Mena also enjoys reaching out to other parishioners as a greeter. She notes, though, that hospitality extends not only to our parish, but to our entire community.

“I really enjoy welcoming both parishioners and guests into the church,” she says. “As greeters, we are one of the first impressions that people get of our parish. We welcome everybody and want to make them feel at home. Christ is in all of us, so hopefully they can see that in our faces and smiles when we greet them.”

If you would like more information about becoming a liturgical minister, please contact the parish office at 918-251-4000.

Adult Faith Formation: The Way of a Disciple

In our adult lives, we are constantly seeking out new ways to better ourselves. We look for advancement opportunities in the workforce, read self-help books designed to make us more effective communicators, or browse Pinterest for the newest parenting tips. Yet, sometimes we forget to form ourselves in the most important area of all – our faith.

“Just as we adults are constantly seeking advancements and further knowledge in our career paths, we need to be continuously moving forward in our faith journey,” says Pastor Fr. Gary Kastl. “If we want to be more than a flabby or kind of nominal Catholic, we have to be willing to engage and to receive teachings which help us truly understand our faith and what it means to be a follower of Christ.”

Though many of us attended formal religion classes in school or through CCD programs as children, faith formation isn’t meant to be limited to a particular period in our lives. Rather, it’s an ongoing process of deepening one’s understanding of and relationship with Jesus Christ – an essential part of our discipleship calling.

“Faith formation is an integral part of stewardship, in that stewardship is a disciple’s response,” Fr. Kastl says. “Yet, to be a disciple presumes that you are first studying from the master. The more that we as Catholics study and pray to gain the different attributes of Christ, the more sharpened we become in our discipleship calling. It awakens an understanding of our



various vocations and helps us use all of our gifts for His glory. So, in essence, faith formation is also stewardship formation because it enables us to become more authentic disciples.”

Here at St. Anne, we are blessed with a wide variety of adult faith formation opportunities, each

designed to help us continue developing in our discipleship journey. This fall, for example, we are excited to introduce for the first time That Man is You! Designed exclusively for men, this interactive program helps men effectively combat the pressures and temptations of modern-day society, building them

St. Anne is happy to provide access to its parish-wide subscription to FORMED. Through this free resource, parishioners have access to Catholic e-books, talks, enlightening programs, and uplifting films. To gain access, all parishioners need to do is register at FORMED.org using the case-sensitive code P86N6P and their email address.



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Adult Faith Formation: The Way of a Disciple

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up as spiritual leaders of their families and society. This is done in an environment of Christian brotherhood where iron can sharpen iron (Proverbs 27:17).

St. Anne will also be offering ALPHA once again this year, both during the fall and spring. Each 11-week session allows people to come together and discuss the big ideas of our Christian faith in an open and non-judgmental environment. This is done by sharing a meal together, enjoying fellowship, and finally engaging in some form of faith discussion based on a video presentation.

“ALPHA is a great opportunity for people to invite friends and family members who are either far away from or don’t have the faith actively involved in their lives,” Fr. Kastl says. “But it’s also for parishioners who

are just wanting to more powerfully encounter Jesus Christ.”

Finally, for parishioners wishing to delve more deeply into the faith from the comfort of their own homes, St. Anne is happy to provide access to its parish-wide subscription to FORMED. Through this free resource, parishioners have access to a plethora of Catholic e-books, talks, enlightening programs, and uplifting films. To gain access, all parishioners need to do is register at FORMED.org using the case-sensitive code P86N6P and their email address.

“This way, there is something for everyone, no matter how busy they are,” Fr. Kastl says. “Even if you can’t physically get to the church, there are still opportunities to engage in and learn about the faith.”

For a full calendar of this year's adult faith formation opportunities, please check the parish bulletin or visit the parish website, <http://stanneba.org/>. Parishioners can also contact the parish office at 918-251-4000 for more information.