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Reaching Out to Our Neighbors Through ESL Classes

For Ann Marie Neuok, teaching English as a Second Language is a way for her to serve as the hands and feet of Christ.

“The Gospel tells us to take care of our neighbor, and that’s the way I see it,” she says. “I serve whoever needs to learn English — anybody! I have taught people from China, Vietnam, Venezuela, Colombia, Sri Lanka, Poland.”

With the help of several volunteer assistant teachers, Ann Marie provides free ESL classes for adults at our parish each week. Beginner classes take place on Mondays from 5-6:30 p.m., while intermediate and advanced classes take place on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:30-8 p.m. Throughout the different levels of classes, students learn vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, and common conversational and slang terms. Students also use these classes to prepare for the TOEFL, or Test of English as a Foreign Language, which measures the English-language ability of non-native speakers.



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Hospitality: The Cornerstone of Stewardship

The dictionary defines “hospitality” as “the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way.”

A Christian worldview can refer to hospitality as “Christian kindness.”

We see the effects of hospitality – or the lack thereof – time and time again throughout the Bible. Christ speaks of hospitality in Matthew’s Gospel when He says, “When I was a stranger, you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35). The Old Testament told of the Israelites, as they wandered the desert for 40 years in search of hospitable environs. Even the Holy Family spent ample time searching for shelter before the birth of Our Lord.

It is safe to say that hospitality is, and most likely has always been, of great importance to people everywhere. Modern hotels and hostels often use the image of a pineapple to advertise their special brand of hospitality. There is no doubt that in ancient times, the distant lights of an inn or tavern struck a chord of hope within weary travelers’ hearts.

Indeed, hospitality’s meaning has not diminished at all over the years, decades and millennia.

Christians view the presence of hospitality as meaning the difference between calling others “guests” and “strangers.” Guests are welcomed with open arms and warm smiles, but strangers aren’t. Guests feel the genuine love present in a hearty

welcome, but strangers don’t. Guests often return for second or third visits, while strangers don’t.

As a parish, do we find ourselves surrounded by guests, or burdened by strangers?

Hospitality is, in many respects, a mindset. The same person may be treated as guest at the church just down the road, but as a stranger here.

Matthew’s Gospel tells of Christ as He reveals a profound truth about hospitality: “When I was a stranger, you welcomed me.” That is, “I used to be a stranger, but you fixed that when you welcomed me.” It’s a classic example of before-and-after. All it took was a change of heart.

Stewardship holds hospitality as an immensely important concept. Remember the “three Ts” of stewardship – Time, Talent, and Treasure? Well, there are also “four Ps,” the Four Pillars of Stewardship – Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. Hospitality is mentioned first. Why? If not for hospitality, none of the other pillars will ever take hold. Hospitality is the cornerstone of stewardship, because it opens the door to a person’s heart and allows them to receive joy, grace, and love.

Hospitality must become second nature, if stewardship is to truly take hold within a parish. So, when a stranger visits our parish, welcome them as a guest. Perhaps one day, they’ll pay us a second visit.

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A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Where Are Our Priorities?

Dear Parishioners,

I am in hopes that you are aware that we are completing and will continue to celebrate the holiest time of the year in our Church. Easter Sunday, April 1, is the high point of the year for us as Catholics. We will, of course, continue to celebrate this holy time until Pentecost Sunday, which is May 20 this year. That is correct — our Easter season continues until then.

St. Paul provided some sage advice. He said, “think of what is above, not of what is on earth” (Colossians 3:2). Regardless of your opinions on what happens after resurrection, we can agree that it will be something “above” this life. Paul might be asking us if we put God first in all things. Life can become very encumbered with possessions, money, power, and even our egos.

Our goal should be to put God at the top of our lists. If that is not what we do, we may need to adjust our priorities. If we have not moved in that direction during Lent or in the past, now is the time to do it. We must constantly strive to not allow earthly things to become our gods.

It was St. Gregory the Great who said, “God made us to be the gardeners of paradise.” Some stewardship people have maintained that God has given each of us a garden — and when we are judged, we only hear one question, “What have you done with the garden I gave you?”

What have we done? What are we doing? First, we must recognize and acknowledge that we are all gifted, admittedly in different and varied ways. Despite what we see as our gifts or how we measure them, we need to ensure that we are using them in ways that serve God and others — ways that show good discipleship and stewardship on our parts.

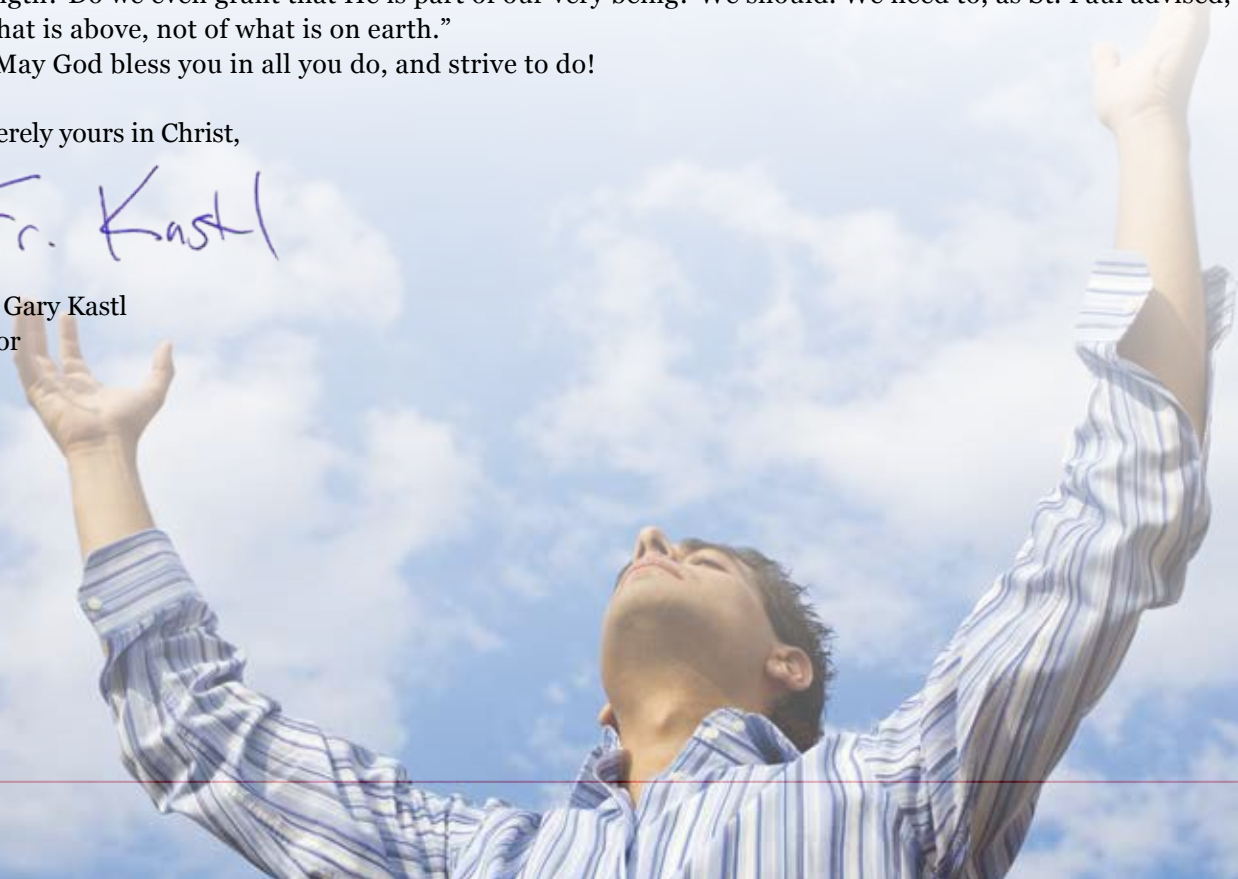
Were you aware that the month of April is dedicated to the Holy Spirit in the Church? The term “spirit” translates from the Hebrew word *ruah*, which means “breath.” Truly, as Catholics, the Holy Spirit has been breathed into each of us, and is part of the garden we have received. Do we turn to Him? Do we rely on Him for strength? Do we even grant that He is part of our very being? We should. We need to, as St. Paul advised, “think of what is above, not of what is on earth.”

May God bless you in all you do, and strive to do!

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Rev. Gary Kastl
Pastor



Becoming A Man After God's

Deacon Steve Creed recognizes one of the major changes we face today, as people of faith navigating a turbulent world.

“Society today is attempting to blur the differences between men and women,” he says. “They would prefer men and women would be exactly the same — and of course, they’re not and they weren’t intended by God to be the same. We are men created in God’s image, and women are created in God’s image — each of us has our own tasks to do. That Man Is You! helps us discover what God wants us to do through Biblical teachings. It gives us a platform with other Catholic men who are there because of their faith, and because they want to be a better follower of Christ.”

It was with this vision that Deacon Steve brought the That Man

Is You! program to St. Anne’s last September. The group of men meets every Thursday morning at 6 a.m. They watch a 30-minute DVD series, followed by small-group discussions of the topic and how it applies to their lives. Each course runs for 13 weeks at a time, with one session in the fall and one session in the spring. The group is currently participating in a course focused on helping participants become “A Man After God’s Own Heart.”

“The purpose of the first year is to teach men Biblical principles with respect to being a man who practices his faith and takes the role, both in his family and his work, that God intended men to have,” Deacon Steve says. “All of the topics are designed to help men fulfill their roles within their family, at work, being a Christian leader, in their prayer life,

and in their life of worship, at the church.”

The group varies in age and stage of life, from single men in their early 20s, to middle-age fathers, and retired men in their 80s. The variety of experience creates a dynamic of sharing, learning and growing together, seeing the world and faith through similar, yet distinct, points of view.

“All of it is designed towards men, in whatever stage of life, following God, rather than following secular society,” Deacon Steve says. “It’s a tremendous support. You’re probably never going to have a problem that someone else hasn’t already had. It allows the group to say, ‘Oh I had that, I know how it feels. Here’s what I did. Try this.’ We’ve experienced a lot together.”

The camaraderie and fellowship that men experience in the group is quite unique, according to Deacon Steve.



That Man Is You! provides an opportunity for men to build strong friendships based on common faith.

“One of the things that we learn is how to put our lives back in the order that God intended them to be — putting God first, your family second, and your job and your personal time after that. If you give yourself to God first, everything else falls into place.”

— Deacon Steve Creed

Own Heart: **That Man Is You!**

“We’ve developed tremendous friendships within the small-table groups,” he says. “Those friendships have allowed us to talk about things we never would have talked about before, and that’s important.”

For many of the men, participating in the group has had a great impact on their faith and relationship with God, as well as other significant relationships in their lives.

“One of the things that we learn is how to put our lives back in the order that God intended them to be — putting God first, your family second, and your job and your personal time after that,” Deacon Steve says. “If you give yourself to God first, everything else falls into place. The men who have come have learned to put God first and their lives have, for the most part, been changed by it. We’ve seen men grow in their faith, and we’ve seen men grow in their relationship with their wife and those they work with, because it teaches us to live a life like Christ.”

Deacon Steve encourages any man who is interested in growing in his faith with the support of other men, to consider joining the next session of *That Man Is You!*, which will begin early next fall, and likely be held in the evening.

“I think that every man can benefit from attending a course such as ‘A Man After God’s Own Heart,’ because it will increase his spirituality,” Deacon Steve says. “It will help him be not only a husband, but a friend to his wife. It will teach him how to listen to his kids, rather than just instruct them. It will help him in his career, because he’ll understand what it means to be a leader, someone who leads by example as Christ did.

“This series helps in your spirituality tremendously,” he adds. “Everywhere this has been done, the parish has grown exponentially, because they have men who are not afraid to get up and do something for God.”



That Man Is You! is an opportunity for men to gather and grow in faith and leadership.



The men who participate in That Man Is You! range in age and stage of life, and share their experience of faith together.

For more information on That Man Is You!, please visit paradisusdei.org/that-man-is-you/ or email Deacon Steve Creed at Deaconsteve@stanneba.org. Registration for the fall session will begin in August.

The Blessings of the Catholic Mass

It is ironic that today, with all of the freedom of religion that we enjoy in the United States, many of us wonder why we must go to Mass on Sunday.

However, if we really understood what the Mass is and how we participate in the celebration, we would instead be asking why we are, as sinful human beings, blessed with the opportunity to participate in the holy Mass. If we simply understood and recognized that God's infinite goodness allows us to do so, we would be eager to go to Mass on Sunday and every other day of the week.

It is true, however, that all Catholics are obliged to "Keep holy the Lord's Day" by sharing in the Mass. But why are we obliged?

The Eucharistic Liturgy is the center of our faith. It is "the summit toward which all activity of the Church is directed" and it is "the font from which all her power flows" (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy 10). It does not exhaust the activity of the Church, but is most certainly her greatest work.

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is literally represented to the Father during Mass, and Christ allows us to join with Him in offering that sacrifice. Imagine our Lord and Savior dying on the cross for us right up the street. Imagine knowing that Mary is sitting at the foot of the cross with St. John, witnessing her Son giving Himself to the Father for the sake of all of us. Would we not run to be there? Would we not desire to share in His sacrifice, just as Mary did?

Believe it or not, the sacrifice of Calvary is really, truly happening at our parish, every time the Mass is offered.

Our participation in Mass gives us the strength and the graces we need to live our lives as Christ's disciples.

So, what does this mean for us?

This means we have a front row seat to the sacrifice of Calvary. Given such a gift, how can we not accept it?

We also have a chance to join in Jesus' sacrifice by offering our own prayers and petitions. As an example, what better gift could we give deceased loved ones than the offering of prayers for their souls in purgatory?

Most importantly, we have the opportunity to receive the Eucharist, followed by quiet time, when we offer sincere thanks and allow God's graces to fill us. Think of all you are missing when you do not properly prepare yourself to receive the Holy Eucharist.

We ought to joyfully head to Church each Sunday, eager to give God glory in the greatest way we can! Attending and actively participating in Mass every Sunday is our obligation as Catholics. But we should not allow the fact that our attendance is "required" to stop us from going. Nor should we allow our laziness to overshadow the amazing privilege and the many blessings that lay before us in the Mass.

The pope and the bishops direct us to participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy every Sunday because they know there is no better way to keep holy the Lord's day — giving God thanks for all He has done for us in the most powerful way possible. They know that, through the Mass, we gain the graces necessary to live our lives in this world.

Our ability to participate in the Mass is a wonderful gift, not a great burden. May Christ enlighten our minds and hearts to clearly see the wonders of the celebration, and give us great enthusiasm and eagerness to participate.

Imagine our Lord and Savior dying on the cross for us right up the street. Imagine knowing that Mary is sitting at the foot of the cross with St. John, witnessing her Son giving Himself to the Father for the sake of all of us. Would we not run to be there? Would we not desire to share in His sacrifice, just as Mary did?

Visiting With a Best Friend: Adoration and Exalt at St. Anne

Consider the various activities we do that take an hour, like watching a movie or going to the gym. Why not spend an hour with Christ? Gail Hobbs found her life transformed when she did.

“Adoration has given me a hunger to learn more about Christ,” says Gail, St. Anne’s Adoration Coordinator. “I have a desire to read and study the Bible. I seek to decipher what He wants in my life and not to follow the ways of the world.”

Some parishioners may have attended Adoration as a child with their families — for others, like Gail, visiting with Christ in the Eucharist is a spiritual practice they learned as an adult.

“The first time I went to Adoration was on a Cursillo weekend,” Gail says. “I had a very powerful experience that weekend and felt that it was due in part to a group of ladies praying for me in the chapel. It taught me the power of prayer.”

Think of Adoration as a time to visit with a best friend. Sit with Him, talk with Him, or even just listen.

“Building a relationship takes time,” Gail says. “Give Him your worries, your struggles and your joys. It



is a good time to have your Bible and read Scripture. Sometimes, you’ll find clarity regarding something you’ve had trouble understanding.”

Through visiting Christ in Adoration, Gail also found consolation when her husband died.

“For seven years, I adored Jesus with my late husband,” Gail says. “When he passed away, there was no place that I wanted to be other than before Christ in the sacrament. I didn’t have to grieve alone, and for that hour I felt peace.”

At St. Anne, parishioners have regular opportunities to visit with Christ during Eucharistic Adoration, which takes place Monday through Friday in the chapel from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m.

Many parishioners sign up for a regular weekly hour to spend with Christ. There are two individuals for each day who coordinate Adoration on that day. If for some reason an adorer cannot make the scheduled hour, he or she can reach out to the coordinators.

“We prefer to have people sign up for an hour because we always have to have someone with Jesus,” Gail says. “There are also people who come in just whenever they can, which is wonderful.”

Parishioners also have an opportunity to lift their voices and worship Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Exalt takes place every Wednesday from 6 p.m. until 7 p.m., following the 5:30 p.m. Mass.

“People go to Mass, and then they stay for Exalt, which is an hour of praise and worship while the Blessed Sacrament is exposed,” Gail says. “Confession is offered during that hour.”

Gail knows firsthand the transforming power of Adoration. She has a simple suggestion for parishioners. “Give Adoration a try,” she says. “He’ll take care of you. He will change your life.”



St. Anne’s parishioners adoring Christ in the Blessed Sacrament

If you would like more information about Adoration and Exalt at St. Anne, reach out to Gail Hobbs at gghobbs4@gmail.com or 918-760-3742.



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Reaching Out to Our Neighbors Through ESL Classes

continued from front cover

Language, which measures the English-language ability of non-native speakers.

Ann Marie creates her own curriculum for the ESL classes, and also uses various supplementary materials.

“The Oxford Picture Dictionary gives a great start at understanding English, and it’s also written in some other languages, which helps them to understand what’s going on,” she says. “We also use SRA materials, which are out of date, but their teaching methods are beautiful. It teaches using sight words and meaning of words, so I am an avid user of these methods all the way through the advanced level. I also have many other books and reading materials that I use for comprehension that are of interest on the adult level.”

Ann Marie — who is a retired elementary school and elementary ESL teacher — has seen how English language skills have been instrumental to her students.

“I have one student who has just completed her chaplain certificate,” she says. “She had a very difficult time with English, so I would often help her, especially with her writing skills. She has now succeeded and is actively looking for hospital work.

“I also have many students who continuously come back,” she adds. “They might not be able to attend class for a while because of an evening job, and I might not see them for weeks or months, but they still come back. To me, that’s the highest compliment they could give me.”

In the future, Ann Marie hopes that the program will continue to grow and attract more students. The relationship she and her fellow teachers have forged with their students is a powerful one indeed.

“If they need help, I will take them to the doctor, or to the immigration offices, or to citizenship appointments,” she says. “If they have needs of coming and going, I will make myself available to help them with things like that. My other teachers are doing that, as well. I have a really good crew of people who are helping us to grow this program.”

If you would like more information about ESL classes, please contact Ann Marie Neuok at 918-640-8153 or amnsfo@gmail.com.