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The Bridge: Creating a Place for Parents Every Sunday Morning

Have you ever heard a phrase come out of your child's mouth and thought, 'Oh, wow, that's me'? Or maybe you've seen him or her try to do something and noticed that they become frustrated at the same moment that you would? Our children watch our every move, even when we don't think they're paying attention. Isn't it quite crucial, then, that the behaviors we're modeling are Christ-like, and will help them on their path to salvation?

That's why The Bridge was launched. Called "a place for parents," The Bridge is a weekly meeting place for moms and dads who want to provide their children more from Faith Formation by being deeply formed themselves.

"Our hope as parents is that we will become the bridge for our kids to Christ and to heaven," says Drew Fenton, parish missionary. "It's a place for parents to support one another, pray for each other, and to grow in their faith with each other."

Held on Sunday mornings during the children's Faith Formation classes, parents are encouraged to stay at church during the hour and enjoy coffee and snacks with a side of learning and fellowship.

"We're currently running through a series that addresses the story of salvation," Drew says. "It's more to do



As coordinator of The Bridge: A Place for Parents, Drew Fenton invites parents of St. Anne to stick around after dropping off their kids on Sundays to enjoy some formation of their own. Drew says he and his wife, Allie, hope The Bridge will become a place for parents to gain confidence in helping their children grow in their faith.

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The Bridge *continued from front cover*

with the foundational blocks of the faith as we spend time getting to know each other by sharing testimonies.”

Coordinated along with his wife, Allie, Drew says The Bridge was created to fulfill a need the couple saw within the parish to help parents better explain and instill the faith to their children.

“We all send our kids to Faith Formation very intentionally because we want them to grow up with a strong faith and relationship with Jesus, but there is a crucial need to be well formed ourselves because we will always be their primary teachers,” he says. “It just seemed like a perfect opportunity. When we’re here on campus already, there’s that hour that we said, ‘Let’s get together as parents and grow in community, grow in faith, be able to pray for each other, because learning about and modeling what it means to truly be a Christian begins at home.’

“We recognize that a temptation for all parents is to look to the Church to give their kids the tools and confidence to have a vibrant faith,” he says. “But in reality, the Church spends so little time with them compared to the time they’re at home with mom and dad. It is essential for mom and dad to be forming them every day. That’s where

the real success will come from. Mom and dad have to lead by example by being able to walk the walk, not simply talk the talk. That’s what makes the deepest impact on young minds.”

“Our greatest desire is to see parents gain the tools and confidence themselves to teach their kids, rather than solely depending on the Church to take care of that,” Drew continues. “We’re trying to tap into our resources to come together to share our stories and our successes and failures, and tap into the resources of the great body of Christ. You have to be strong before you can strengthen the others. The parish wants to pay attention to that fact and help in that process, and be a place of strength and hope in this amazing and often crazy journey of raising a family rooted in the Catholic Church.”

Childcare is provided in the nursery during meetings for those with very young children.

*Please contact Drew Fenton at
dfenton@stanneba.org or 918-251-4000
for more information.*

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

Dec. 24, Christmas Eve

4 p.m. – Vigil Mass

6 p.m. – Musical Prelude

6:30 p.m. – Vigil Mass

9 p.m. – Rosary

9:30 p.m. – Musical Prelude

10 p.m. – Vigil Mass

Dec. 25, Christmas Day

9 a.m. – Morning Mass

SOLEMNITY OF MARY

Dec. 31, New Year’s Eve

5 p.m. – Vigil Mass

Jan. 1, New Year’s Day

9 a.m. – Mass

11:30 a.m. – Mass

5 p.m. – Mass

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

The Magic of Christmas

Dear Parishioners,

We are entering my favorite season of the year. I have always loved the magic of Christmas. There are so many opportunities to open us to the Lord's love. First, this holy time must be rooted in the Church's season of Advent. These weeks call us to prepare for the remembrance of Christ's arrival more than 2,000 years ago, but also for the coming of Christ in our lives today. During Advent, we celebrate the Patronal Feast of the United States, the Immaculate Conception, and the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who is patroness of the Americas. Mary is a sign of how we are called to bring the love of Christ to others.

The basic truth of Christmas, celebrating the birth of the Messiah, is plenty of reason for us to rejoice and worship. But secular society has piled so much onto Christmas that worship can get lost in the shuffle.

Maybe, though, we can combine our Christmas activities with our stewardship commitments. Treasure, although challenging, is the simplest. Shouldn't the most expensive Christmas present we give be the one to Jesus whose birthday we're celebrating? Risen and glorified, He needs nothing we have. But His Body, the Church, continues Jesus' mission here on earth and always needs additional resources.

Stewardship of our time may be a little more complicated, but can't we spend a little more of our time in worship and prayer? Drop in to the church and offer a prayer of thanks for the gift of God's Son. Maybe you can attend Mass each day of the Christmas Octave. Have your family gather for prayers together in the morning or at dinner, in preparation for Christmas Day and through the Christmas season.

And talent? There are lots of possibilities. You can help decorate the Church. Or perhaps you might cook or bake for someone who is homebound or a shut-in. Invite someone who will be alone to share Christmas dinner with your family. Offer to work in a soup kitchen. The possibilities are endless.

Yes, with the arrival of Advent in late November and the December preparations for Christmas, this time is meant to point us to Christ. With a little planning, we can make this hectic time one of real blessing both for others and ourselves. Pray for me that I can keep Christmas properly, and know that you are remembered in my prayers each day.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Kastl

Rev. Gary Kastl
Pastor



LENTEN OPPORTUNITIES

Thanks to two different ministries here at St. Anne's, we have the opportunity to make our Lenten journey one of fellowship and spiritual care for others.

The Lenten Suppers have been a tradition for about seven years, when simple, meatless meals were served to parishioners at the conclusion of the Lenten Friday Stations of the Cross.

"Our parishioners have always prayed together at the Stations of the Cross at 6 p.m. on the first six Fridays of Lent," Deacon Tom says. "On Good Friday, we pray outdoors at 3 p.m. About seven years ago, we started providing the Lenten suppers in an effort to continue our fellowship with one another after we prayed the Stations of the Cross together."

The suppers also serve to enable parishioners to get to know others, as well as meeting those belonging to the parish organizations who take turns



The Knights of Columbus help prepare a Lenten Supper after Stations of the Cross on a Friday during Lent.

preparing the meals.

"Several organizations have provided the dinners in the past, such as the Knights of Columbus, Boy Scouts, Women's Ministry, the Young Adults, and the All Saints School teachers," Deacon Tom says. "The meals themselves are meatless and very simple – for example, baked potato and salad, or vegetable lasagna and fruit. The Boy Scouts always treat us to grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup. We have a donation jar, and the donations generally exceed the cost of purchasing the food. These suppers provide an excellent opportunity for us to all continue our fellowship."

After the suppers, everyone is invited to watch a religious movie at St. Francis Hall at 7:20 p.m.

"The movies are suitable for all the family, and upcoming titles will include *Alison's Choice*, a pro-life film; *God's Not Dead 2*; *Miracle From Heaven*," Deacon Tom says. "During the mov-

ies, we serve popcorn and decaf coffee. We have a brief discussion after each movie. These are well-received by all."

During Lent 2017, Deacon Tom will work to change up the groups preparing the suppers.

"It's a particularly good way for the members of the organization to serve God and their parishioners," he says. "Anyone interested can contact me, and I'll start contacting the groups in January to get the schedule."

The second Lenten organization, the Lenten Missionary Disciples, is a group of parishioners who set out between the Sunday Masses during Lent to share the love of Christ and an invitation to visit St. Anne's.

"Jesus sent out His disciples to spread the Good News of the Gospel, and sent them in teams of two," Deacon Tom says. "One represents the love of God, and the other the love of neighbor. We knock on doors of our neighbors within a half-mile radius of

When a Lenten Missionary team finds no one at home when they knock on a door, they leave one of these door hangers that invites the home occupant to St. Anne, and offers information about our parish.



ES HELP OUR JOURNEY

the church, and we give them a warm smile, and a brochure describing our parish, some of our organizations, and the Mass times. We tell them of Jesus's love for us all. We answer any questions they may have, and we then ask if we can pray for any of their intentions. To conclude our short visit, we invite them to our church, and we bless them. We then go to the next house or apartment or trailer, praying a Hail Mary. Mary's guidance and protection is of the upmost importance. She intercedes with her Son to direct our entire effort."

In the two years of the organization's work, the members have knocked on 1,500 doors and talked to about 500 persons who answered the knock.

"Our efforts while we are talking with the people we meet, are prayed for by the parishioners back at church

in front of the Blessed Sacrament," Deacon Tom says. "They pray for the opening of hearts to Jesus. We don't know how many have come to church from our invitations, but if only one person comes each year, this can amount to 1,000 new Christians in successive generations. We also invite our neighbors to our annual Health Fair each spring. This group of Lenten Missionaries is very dedicated to bring the Good News to all people."

The 2015 and 2016 teams consisted of Elaine and Mike, Emilie and Arnold and son, Leonardo and son, Penny, Veronica, Cheryl, Shawn, and Peggy and Brenda and Deacon Tom.

"Nearly all of our neighbors who opened their doors to talk to us were very kind and open-minded," Deacon Tom says. "A few even invited us in to

sit down and have a drink of tea! Many already said they have a church they attend, and considered attending St. Anne. We located several fallen-away Catholics that were interested in enrolling in RCIA! All in all, the great effort was very worthwhile."

The routes the teams take each week are carefully planned beforehand, with specific streets targeted for the visits.

There is some training the Lenten Missionaries receive before joining a team. If the conversation grows more deeply into an interest in the Church, the teams can arrange to have a priest or deacon make a follow-up call.

If anyone is interested in joining the Lenten Missionaries, please contact Deacon Tom, or arrive at the church between the Sunday Masses.



Cheese, please! Our Scout troop prepares the traditional grilled cheese sandwiches with tomato soup during the Lenten Suppers.



Members of the Ministry of Compassion pitch in to prepare one of the Lenten Suppers.

For more information about these wonderful Lenten opportunities, please contact Deacon Tom at 918-289-6964 or tmoyes@aol.com.

A Modern Model of Sainthood *St. Teresa of Calcutta*

In the dark final years of the Cold War, a small woman — standing at barely five feet tall — offered a living counternarrative to the inhibiting fear undergirding our daily lives and our foreign affairs. Instead of living in fear, Mother Teresa acted out of love. Instead of withdrawing and isolating herself, she gave tirelessly to others.

Many of us harbor a personal connection to this saint, for we lived during the height of the media coverage of Mother Teresa's work and her friendships with Pope St. John Paul II and the beloved Princess Diana.

Long before she received the name Mother Teresa and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu was born on Aug. 26, 1910, in Skopje, Macedonia, the crossroads of the Balkans. The youngest of three children, Mother Teresa was raised predominantly by her mother after her father's death, when she was about 8 years old. Dranfile (Drana) Bojaxhiu, Mother Teresa's mother, undoubtedly became a strong influence on her daughter's vocation, since Drana herself was a devout Catholic and known for her prayer life and her charity.

Agnes attended a Catholic primary school and, following the example of her mother, became active in their parish and sang in Sacred Heart's choir. As a young person, Agnes enjoyed reading about the lives of the saints — while immersing herself in the stories of these holy men and women, Agnes first felt the stirring call to become a missionary.

At the age of 18, Agnes traveled to Dublin, Ireland, to join the Sisters of Loreto. She became Sr. Mary Teresa, named after St. Thérèse of Lisieux, and began to learn English. Within a few months of arriving in Ireland, she left for India.

In India, Sr. Mary Teresa lived at the Loreto Entally community in Calcutta, where she served as an educator and taught at St. Mary's School. After her final profession,



she became Mother Teresa and, a few years later, began serving as the school's principal.

On an ordinary day, Mother Teresa received an extraordinary call. While on a train ride to her annual retreat, Mother Teresa felt what she would describe as Jesus' thirst for souls. Soon, Jesus called her to found the Missionaries of Charity, an order devoted to serving the "poorest of the poor."

The order formally began on Oct. 7, 1950, and has grown from one woman tending the sick and dying in the streets of Calcutta to over 4,500 religious sisters helping the poor in over 130 countries

around the world. Additionally, the order grew to include the Missionaries of Charity Brothers, the Missionaries of Charity Fathers and the Lay Missionaries of Charity.

Though externally Mother Teresa joyfully and indefatigably served the poor for nearly 50 years, during the majority of this time, she experienced a "dark night of the soul," an extensive period of not feeling God's presence or hearing His voice. Other saints, notably St. John of the Cross, similarly experienced a dark night of the soul. Despite this spiritual struggle, Mother Teresa continued her work joyfully throughout her sickness and until her death on Sept. 5, 1997.

Pope St. John Paul II beatified Mother Teresa in 2003. Fittingly, this year, a pontiff who has underscored the importance of social justice celebrated her canonization. On Sept. 4, 2016, Pope Francis canonized Mother Teresa, the "Saint of the Gutters," at the Vatican.

St. Teresa of Calcutta offers us an example of ceaseless prayer and selfless service. She is a modern model of sainthood that we can emulate in our daily lives starting with how we serve and treat the other members of our family, our faith community and all those with whom we interact on a daily basis.

St. Teresa of Calcutta, Pray for Us!

Got questions about life



ALPHA: *Being a Good Steward of the Faith*

It is impossible to be a good steward without first becoming a true disciple of Christ. The two go hand-in-hand, with one shaping who we are, while the other guides how we live our lives. Yet, Christ makes it clear in Scripture that discipleship isn't merely about our own personal belief in Him. It's something that must be acted upon and shared, spreading the Good News to others (Mark 16:15).

"I always think of stewardship as a product of discipleship," says parish missionary Drew Fenton. "First, we are Christ's disciples and then we become a good steward. To be a disciple is to make a personal, internal commitment to Christ and His Church. Then, when it comes to responding to that calling you have embraced, it leads to stewardship."

Yet, says Drew, although many of us love the concept of evangelization, when the "rubber hits the road" we often feel embarrassed and inadequate for the task. How do we preach the Gospel in an increasingly secular world? How do we find a way to communicate God's love and mercy without sounding judgmental or overbearing? This is why Drew is so excited about Alpha, which is coming to St. Anne's in 2017.

"I feel like this opportunity gives us a simple and practical way to fulfill our calling to evangelize," Drew says. "It's intending to be an evangelizing tool, serving as a warm, inviting and non-judgmental place for people to ask questions, express differing opinions, and to learn about what the faith is really all about."

Seeking to build an atmosphere of trust and community, Alpha always begins with food and fellowship whether it be light refreshments, like coffee and cake, or sharing a meal together. "Food brings people together," Drew says. "Some of life's greatest moments are around the table with others."

Next, Alpha transitions into a brief presentation centered on the "big questions" of life and faith, followed by small-group discussion — an opportunity to share thoughts and ideas in an open and loving environment.

"The goal is simply to gather together and talk about what really matters in life," Drew says. "Everyone is searching for authenticity and truth. Alpha allows for both, making evangelization possible. Alpha is truly the Kerygma — the story of Jesus and our salvation. It is essentially the Good News!"

Because of its unique style and purpose, Alpha is a great way to invite family, friends, and coworkers to experience the faith. However, Alpha isn't just for evangelizing people outside of or fallen away from the faith — it also enables faithful Catholics to delve deeper, receiving tools that will better enable them to evangelize in their daily lives.

"It really is designed to benefit everyone," Drew says. "It gives you the tools to better evangelize. It's also a great thing to invite non-believers to. Alpha is a safe place to invite them — a place where there is no pressure and you can be yourself."

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Though the dates for the launch of Alpha have not yet been set, the program will be at St. Anne's in early 2017. There is no fee for the course and all are welcome to attend.

"We're not only looking inward with what we have been blessed with, but we are seeing the command to turn around and give to others," Drew says. "Only in this case, we're giving the faith itself. So, in a sense, we are being good stewards of the faith we've been given."

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– Drew Fenton

If you would like more information, please look out for future bulletin announcements or contact Drew Fenton at 714-904-1346.

Alpha is an opportunity to explore life and the Christian faith in a friendly, open and informal environment.



Alpha

#TryAlpha