



In This Issue:

2

Stewardship
Becoming Fishers of Men

3

What Is the Real
Purpose of Our Lives?

4

Amanda Smith Found
a Warm Welcome
— and Home —
in the Catholic Church

6

Mass Reverence
and Etiquette

7

Monthly Event Looks at
Faith “To Be Continued”

A Blessing for Our Faith Community: *Welcoming Fr. Matt Gerlach to St. Anne*

This first week of July, we are blessed as a faith community to welcome three new figures to our parish — namely our new pastor, Fr. Matt Gerlach, and his two cats, Huck and Jameson.

“I am a cat lover, and God willing, they’re coming with me to St. Anne,” Fr. Matt says. “They are both boys, for I always say that only boys live in the rectory.”

Fr. Matt grew up in Tulsa and has actually been serving as the pastor in the parish where he was raised, St. Pius.

“This is a bittersweet move for me, as I have enjoyed being in this community where my vocation began,” Fr. Matt says. “This is where the seeds of my vocation were planted and nurtured by this school and community.”

The first seeds of his vocation were sown in his family, and Fr. Matt’s parents, who are now in their 80s, are still active members of St. Pius. Fr. Matt also began serving Mass in fifth grade.

“I credit my parents’ fidelity for my receiving the call to the priesthood at an early age,” Fr. Matt says. “I thought about it during my Catholic education in middle school and then in high school at Bishop Kelley.”

Another pivotal moment in Fr. Matt’s journey to the priesthood came when a parishioner suggested that he might have a religious vocation.

“It was very impactful when my name came up, and other people saw that potential



Fr. Matt Gerlach in Rome

continued on back cover

Stewardship *Becoming Fishers of Men*

Whether you hold a high-profile position, such as parish council president, or have more of a behind-the-scenes role as a coordinator of a parish ministry, God has called you – as a parish leader – to help build His Church.

This challenge is just as important as the call of any other Catholic leader, including the earliest disciples.

When Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee, He urged a group of fishermen, “Come follow me.” Jesus promised if they laid down their nets and followed Him, He would make them fishers of men. These men were among His original disciples, and they knew Christ’s call was so important that they left their secular occupation to follow Him.

Just as He did with the fishermen, Jesus calls each of us today. He is not necessarily asking us to leave our secular careers, but He is asking us to put Him first in our lives and to share His message of love with others.

God truly wants us to serve Him and to build His Church through the secular occupations we have chosen. It is through the Church that new disciples are born, and it is in the Church that disciples continue to mature. Forming disciples of Christ is the most important work that can be done on earth, and each of us has been called to play an active role in this work.

So, how do we go about building the Church? Where do we find the plans?

Some people mistakenly think that building the Church – in particular, building our own parish or diocese – is no different than building a successful business. Indeed, the purpose of building the Church is to change hearts – a goal that only God can accomplish.

Secular society has not prepared us for this work. However, the Holy Spirit – sometimes referred to as the “Architect of the Church” – has the plan. In order to implement this plan, we must become good listeners. We must open ourselves to the workings of the Holy Spirit as He transforms us and guides us to carry out God’s work and to serve as His instruments on earth, building the Church together with Him.

This is where spiritual exercises, such as retreats, come into play. A retreat offers the individual an opportunity to spend time alone with the Lord, allowing God to draw the person deeper into the mystery of who He is, who we are and what He is doing in our

lives. Stewardship retreats can offer parish leaders the opportunity each year to spend time with the Lord as He directs them in the ways of discipleship. As leaders, we must take time to meditate on the Scriptures and allow Jesus to open up His Word to us. Then, as we grow deeper in our understanding of what God wants of us, we can exclaim, just as the first disciples did on the road to Emmaus, “Our hearts are burning within us” (Lk 24:32).

God has placed an extremely important call on the lives of all parish leaders, no matter how big or small the role. It is vital to understand how we, as parish leaders, can best answer His call. What, in particular, is the Lord calling each one of us to do? He most likely is not asking us to drop our nets, but to pick them up and become “fishers of men.” We must discern how we can most effectively cast our nets for Him.



A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

What Is the Real Purpose of Our Lives?

Dear Parishioners,

As most of you know by now, this will be the last time I will be writing to you in this space, as I step aside as pastor here to focus on my duties as President at Bishop Kelley and pass the torch to Fr. Matt Gerlach. This has been a time of reflection for me as I think of my vocation and on my role and purpose as I leave this amazing parish. Do you ever think about your purpose in life? As a priest, I certainly do. There are days and times of frustration when I think, “What am I really supposed to do? What does God want me to do? Why am I here?” For eons, philosophers have considered these very questions and written about them.

But the truth is that we, as Catholics, already know the answers.

When we consider the many facets of life in our parish community, there are numerous activities and endeavors that go beyond attending Mass. From fundraising efforts, to social outreach/service, childcare and more, there are many ways in which we serve our community.

Yet, as we undertake these important pursuits — both within and outside of the parish — we must always remember that our ultimate goal is salvation. After all, the only

reason we exist, the only reason our Church exists, is the same as the reason Jesus joined us and became a part of us here on earth — He came to save humanity.

We use the term the “body of Christ” to describe the Church with Christ as the head. We are all parts of that body, and the parts of the body must move in the same direction as the body itself — it simply won’t function if the parts are moving in different directions. We are all in this together.

When our lives are complete, we do not base our success or failure on how much money we have, or whether or not we are famous. Nor does our success or failure depend upon the difference between health and sickness, or pleasure and pain, or even being nice or nasty. Rather, it is the difference between being saved and not being saved.

I often think of my family members who have already crossed the bridge of salvation, and as a priest, I deal with that issue with others on a very regular basis. Sometimes, I wonder if they ever fully realized that salvation was the answer to so many of our questions in life.

I am surrounded by memories of

those who have gone before, as are almost all of you. We are apt to use the term “the communion of saints” in many ways in our Church. Someday, we will know more about the “communion of saints” and how it all works. In the meantime, we pray for everyone who has gone before us, hoping they have made it home.

So, in closing, I want to thank you for all you have done for me and St. Anne parish during my time here as your pastor. I will never forget it, and I am grateful to have been able to serve this remarkable faith community. Pray for me as I will continue to pray for you!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Gary Kastl
Pastor



Amanda Smith Found a Warm Welcome-

“Everything makes sense here. I love the participation, and I just want to keep learning and keep trying to find ways to be active in the parish community. I want to find ways to help and reach out, and once I find my place, I want to try my best to make sure it’s always a priority.” — Amanda Smith

Since joining the Church at this year’s Easter Vigil Mass, Amanda Smith has found that she now looks forward to Sunday Mass all week long! Receiving the Sacraments of Initiation at St. Anne brought Amanda the sense of peace and belonging that she had spent much of her life seeking.

Amanda’s family did not go to church regularly while she was growing up, although she often attended her grandmother’s Baptist church. And while she had no formal faith formation as a child, her experiences of worship with her grandmother left an impression.

“I wasn’t baptized before, but I always had God in my heart,” she says. “I always considered myself a follower of Christ, but I didn’t have a good understanding of everything.”

When Amanda married her husband, Daniel, she knew that he was a practicing Catholic, but she didn’t really know much about the Church. Since she wasn’t Catholic, the couple received premarital instruction and married in her grandmother’s Baptist church. Throughout this time, Amanda had always maintained a personal prayer life. As the years went by, however, Amanda found herself seeking a faith community to call her own.

Just over two years ago, Amanda and Daniel moved from their home in Muskogee to Broken Arrow. At the time, Amanda was staying home with their young daughter, Mia, and expecting their son, Finn. She began to pray in earnest about finding a church, and Daniel, who had always attended Mass regularly, told her how much he enjoyed the pastor and the community at St. Anne.

Led by prayer, Amanda decided it was time to find out more about the Catholic Church.

“One of Daniel’s cousins suggested that I find a RCIA — Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults — class and just



The Smith family — Daniel and Amanda with their children, Finn and Mia.

check it out,” she says. “So I emailed [RCIA coordinator] Dana Funk and got started, and the whole journey was so eye-opening. I just felt really at home at St. Anne. Any other church I’d been to, I felt I had to sit on my hands because I was so uncomfortable, but at St. Anne, I felt so welcome and comfortable. I really felt our Lord’s presence there.”

Once she began attending the RCIA classes, Amanda’s enthusiasm grew even more.

“I liked how excited Fr. Sean and Fr. Kastl would get when they were up there teaching,” she says. “They were so gracious when people would ask questions that were hard to answer. I’ve learned more about the Christian faith in general during those six months than I had in 28 years of life. In a lot of classes, they would mention something and I would come home and do independent research, and I’m still doing that as well.”

After all of the classes and preparation, Amanda found the experience of receiving the Sacraments of Initiation at

— *and Home* — in the Catholic Church



Amanda and Daniel Smith with Fr. Kastl after Amanda joined the Church at the Easter Vigil Mass.



Fr. Kastl baptizes Amanda Smith at the Easter Vigil Mass as Amanda's RCIA sponsor, Becky Thornton, looks on.

the Easter Vigil Mass both overwhelming and comforting at the same time.

“I tried not to cry [during the Mass], but I cry a lot now, and so I definitely cried,” she says with a laugh. “I just felt relieved. I had everything washed away — it’s like you get to start new. I felt at home and I felt really calm after that.”

Moving forward in the faith, Amanda hopes that she and Daniel will give their children a strong foundation in the faith so they can have the tools in life that she feels she missed out on during her own childhood and early adulthood. She loves seeing their daughter, Mia, come home from her Religious Education classes full of questions and interested in learning more about the faith.

Amanda is thankful for the sincere welcome she has received from all parishioners, and especially the tremendous support of Dana Funk, Fr. Kastl and

Fr. Sean, who helped with and presided over the Smiths’ marriage convalidation ceremony. She plans on becoming more involved in parish life, perhaps helping on the next RCIA team.

Reflecting on the life-changing journey she has made here at St. Anne, Amanda feels particularly blessed to be a part of our warm and vibrant faith community.

“Everything makes sense here,” she says. “I love the participation, and I just want to keep learning and keep trying to find ways to be active in the parish community. I want to find ways to help and reach out, and once I find my place, I want to try my best to make sure it’s always a priority.

“I have changed, my life has changed,” she continues. “I have something to look forward to every week. I wouldn’t willingly miss Mass — that is my special time with God.”

Mass Reverence and Etiquette

For many of us, when we are invited to a wedding, one of our first considerations is “what am I going to wear?” We wouldn’t think of showing up at a formal event in our workout clothes. How many of us search for just the right outfit to wear to our annual office party or on a date? Compare that to how much thought we put into what we wear to Mass on Sunday.

How we dress for an occasion indicates the importance that we place upon that particular celebration. At Mass, we encounter God through the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Dressing appropriately for Mass is one way that we show respect both for God and for our faith family. And this respect is important at all Masses – no matter what time of day or night.

Think about what you are teaching your children when you all wear your “Sunday clothes” to Mass. You are reminding them that Mass is a special celebration.

After all, we are going to Jesus’ house.

Some people may quickly point out that Mass shouldn’t be a fashion show – a place to show off your finery – and they are right! We also know that some parishioners come to Mass on their way home from work, and they certainly should not feel embarrassed about arriving at Mass in their work clothes. And no one should ever stay away from Mass because of simplicity of clothing.

But one rule should apply in all instances – our attire at Mass should always be modest. Our clothing should never distract others from what we are gathered together to celebrate – the life, death and resurrection of our Lord.

The celebration of Mass is always a holy occasion and thus should be treated in the most holy manner – in body, mind and spirit.



Monthly Event Looks at Faith “To Be Continued”



“To Be Continued is an opportunity to think a little more deeply about what His hope is for this world, where God can come in and bring what He wants to into our lives. It’s an opportunity to think more deeply about what we as Catholics do on a regular basis so that we can then do those things more deeply.” — Fr. Sean O’Brien

When you’re watching your favorite television show, is there anything more frustrating than seeing the words “to be continued” appear on screen? Those three little words mean you’ve got to wait at least another week to find out what happens to your favorite characters, and the sense of frustration those words can provoke is often accompanied by an audible groan.

But in our faith, the words “to be continued” can be a beautiful reminder that God isn’t finished with the story of our lives yet. “To be continued” can mean

that we never stop becoming the people that Jesus has called us to be.

“We are on a journey and if we stop on that journey then we are really going backwards,” says our Associate Pastor, Fr. Sean O’Brien. “Continuing is essential for the spiritual life. By continuing we do God’s will, by continuing we receive Jesus in our hearts more, and by continuing we go forward as disciples out into the world. If you’re not going forward, you’re going backwards, as they say.”

On the first Saturday of each month, parishioners are invited to attend the faith formation series *To Be Continued...Pursuing Constant Conversion in the Love of Christ*. Hosted by Fr. Sean, the mini-retreat style event includes discussion of some of the key foundations of Catholic spiritual life such as the sacraments, grace, the Holy Spirit and devotions.

“*To Be Continued* is an opportunity to think a little more deeply about what His hope is for this world, where God can come in and bring what He wants to into our lives,” Fr. Sean says. “It’s an opportunity to think more deeply about what we as Catholics do on a regular basis so that we can then do those things more deeply.”

Beginning immediately after the 8 a.m. Saturday Mass, *To Be Continued* includes refreshments and a time for socializing before participants hear the day’s message from Fr. Sean. Participants are then invited to spend time in prayer and discussion before being dismissed around noon.

In August and September, the event will include guest speakers who will share and discuss their experience with different facets of Catholic spirituality and religious life.

“We’ve got a Father who is presenting on Carmelites, and then another on Benedictine spirituality, and Ignatian spirituality,” Fr. Sean says.

To Be Continued is open to parishioners of all ages and any fellow community members they’d like to invite. Those who wish to take part in the series can sign up in the Welcome Center or contact the parish at 918-251-4000.



ST. ANNE CATHOLIC CHURCH

301 South 9th Street
Broken Arrow, OK 74012

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Broken Arrow, OK
Permit #104

Return Service Requested

Welcoming Fr. Matt Gerlach to St. Anne *continued from front cover*

in me,” Fr. Matt says. “If you see a devout man at church, ask if he has ever thought or prayed about a vocation. The voice of others has been a consolation and encouragement for me.”

After one year of community college, Fr. Matt began seminary at St. Meinrad in Indiana. He was ordained on May 24, 1996.

“I remember being surrounded by this affirmation from my family and the community that humbled and overwhelmed me,” Fr. Matt says. “I have been a priest for a wonderful 22 years now.”

For a short time, Fr. Matt served as a chaplain at the University of Tulsa. Afterward, he enjoyed being connected with the full sacramental life of a parish community.

“In that capacity at the university, I wasn’t able to celebrate all the sacraments, such as Baptisms,” Fr. Matt says. “I enjoy celebrating all the sacraments with the

people of God and being with people of all ages.”

In addition to his affinity for cats, Fr. Matt also loves playing the piano and singing. He is looking forward to bringing his musical talents with him to St. Anne, a parish he has a little history with.

“I attended Mass at St. Anne with my sister as she was raising her children here even before the church was built,” Fr. Matt says. “I remember sitting in those folding chairs for Mass. In a way, I’m getting back to those roots of mine.”

Let us join together in offering Fr. Matt a warm welcome and in praying for all the involved faith communities during this time of transition!

“Pray for me and for all our priests,” Fr. Matt says. “I am very much excited to be a part of the St. Anne community and the school. I am a product of Catholic schools in this diocese, and it is a blessing to be now ministering in this community.”

“Pray for me and for all our priests. I am very much excited to be a part of the St. Anne community and the school. I am a product of Catholic schools in this diocese, and it is a blessing to be now ministering in this community.” — Fr. Matt Gerlach