

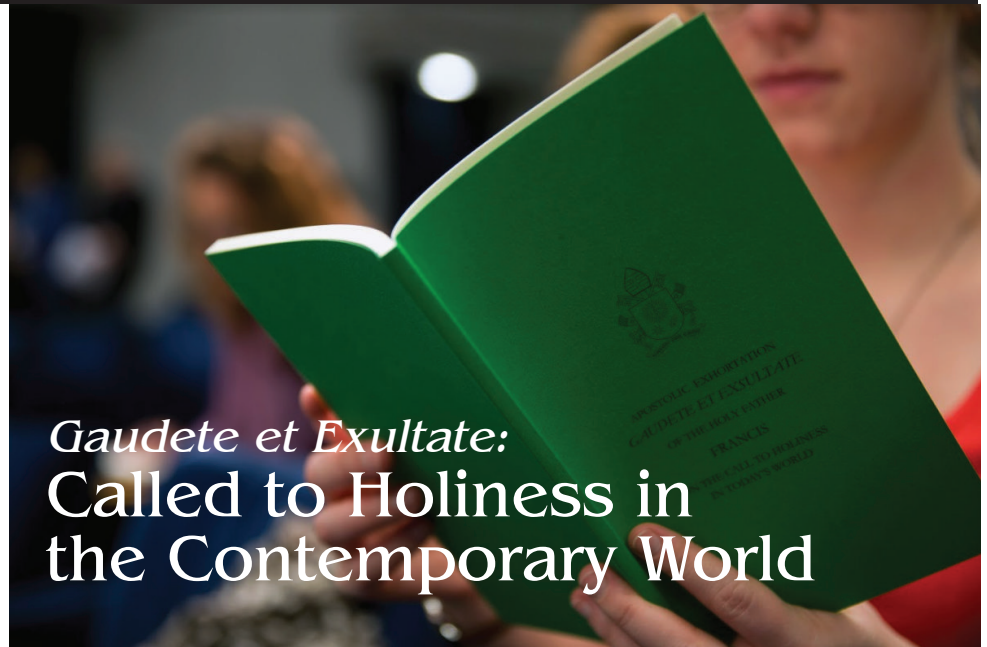
Last Monday, Pope Francis released an Apostolic Exhortation in which he aims to “repropose” the universal call to holiness – which he says is the mission of life for every person. Entitled, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, or “Rejoice and be Glad,” is Francis’ third Apostolic Exhortation. It is subtitled: “On the call to holiness in the contemporary world.”

The 44-page exhortation explains that holiness is the mission of every Christian, and gives practical advice for living out the call to holiness in ordinary, daily life, encouraging the practice of the Beatitudes and performing works of mercy.

Francis mentioned the holiness “in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in the elderly who never lose their smile. In their daily perseverance I see the holiness of the Church militant. Very often it is a holiness found in our next-door neighbours, those who, living in our midst, reflect God’s presence. We might call them ‘the middle class of holiness.’”

Francis said that all Catholics that, like the saints, “need to see the entirety of your life as a mission,” and explained that this is accomplished by listening to God in prayer and asking the Holy Spirit for guidance in each moment and decision. “A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness,” he stated, explaining that this path has its “fullest meaning in Christ, and can only be understood through him.”

Using the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Francis wrote that “holiness is nothing other than charity lived to the full.” As a re-



sult, the measure of our holiness stems not from our own achievement, but “from the stature that Christ achieves in us.” Therefore, Pope Francis said, to walk the path of holiness requires prayer and contemplation alongside action; the two cannot be separated.

Gnosticism and Pelagianism

The Pope also touched on what he calls the “two enemies of holiness” – modern versions of the heresies of Pelagianism and Gnosticism, saying that these lead to “false forms of holiness.” In the modern form of Gnosticism, Francis said, one believes that faith is purely subjective, and that the intellect is the supreme form of perfection, not charity. This can lead Catholics to think that “because we know something, or are able to explain it in certain terms, we are already saints,” he said, when really, “what we think we know should always motivate us to respond more fully to God’s love.”

In contemporary Pelagianism, he said the common error is to believe that it is by our own effort that we achieve sanctity, forgetting that everything in fact “depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy”. The pope explained that “the Church has repeatedly taught that we are justified not by our own works or efforts, but by the grace of the Lord, who always takes the initiative,” and that even our cooperation with the gift of divine grace is itself “a prior gift of that same grace.”

Some may be asked, through God’s grace, for grand gestures of holiness – as can be seen in the lives of many of the saints, Francis said – but many people are called to live the mission of holiness in a more ordinary way, and in the context of their vocation. However large or small one’s call seems, Francis said that acts of charity are always undertaken “as good stewards of the manifold grace of God”.

The Pope offered several practical recommendations for living out these “small gestures.” In addition to the frequent reception of the sacraments and attendance at Mass, he said that in the Beatitudes Jesus explains “with great simplicity what it means to be holy.” He also said that a way to practice holiness is through the works of mercy, though he warned that to think good works can be separated from a personal relation-

Called to Holiness

Continued from page 1

ship with God and openness to grace is to make Christianity into “a sort of NGO.”

The saints, on the other hand, show us that “mental prayer, the love of God and the reading of the Gospel” in no way detract from “passionate and effective commitment to their neighbors.” The Pope highlighted several qualities he finds especially important for living holiness in today’s culture, including: perseverance, patience, humility, joy, a sense of humor, boldness, and passion. Boldness and passion, he said, are important in order to avoid despondency or mediocrity, which he said can weaken us in the ongoing spiritual battle against evil.

In the journey toward holiness, “the cultivation of all that is good, progress in the spiritual life and growth in love are the best counterbalance to evil,” he said, emphasizing that the existence of the devil is not a myth or an abstract idea, but a “personal being that assails us.... Those who choose to remain neutral, who are satisfied with little, who renounce the ideal of giving themselves generously to the Lord, will never hold out” against temptation, he stated.

“For this spiritual combat, we can count on the powerful weapons that the Lord has given us: faith-filled prayer, meditation on the word of God, the celebration of Mass, Eucharistic adoration, sacramental Reconciliation, works of charity, community life, missionary outreach,” he listed.

About the importance of prayer on the path to holiness, the Pope said that though “the Lord speaks to us in a variety of ways, at work, through others and at every moment... we simply cannot do without the silence of prolonged prayer.... Naturally, this attitude of listening entails obedience to the Gospel as the ultimate standard, but also to the Magisterium that guards it,” he stated, “as we seek to find in the treasury of the Church whatever is most fruitful for the ‘today’ of salvation.”

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, president of the United States bishops' conference, praised the Exhortation in a statement released last Monday, saying: “Pope Francis is very clear – he is doing his duty as the Vicar of Christ, by strongly urging each and every Christian to freely, and without any qualifications, acknowledge and be open to what God wants them to be – that is ‘to be holy, as He [Christ] is holy’. The mission entrusted to each of us in the waters of baptism was simple – by God’s grace and power, we are called to become saints.”

*By Hannah Brockhaus for the Catholic News Agency
For the complete text of the Pope’s Exhortation go to vatican.va.*

Tap Into Life

Join our former Deacon Intern, the now Fr. Tom Nguyen for Tap into Life, a Franciscan Approach to Theology, this Sunday April 15th at the Solanus Casey Center. Fellowship will start at 6 PM, and Fr. Tom will start his talk at 7 PM. Discussion will follow. Please spread the word and bring a friend!

Tap Into Life is currently refiguring its future plans, so this gathering would be an important one to attend. Tap Into Life is now held at the Solanus Casey Center at 1780 Mt. Elliott. RSVP by emailing Fr. Tom at: TapIntoLife@thecapuchins.org

IHM Chapel Concert Series

Join the Immaculate Heart of Mary sisters for a chapel event featuring the brass septet - the Adrian Chamber Brass, and a full brass choir at the IHM Motherhouse Chapel on Sunday, April 22nd, at 3:00 p.m. The Adrian Chamber Brass had a long history as a quintet, and for the past several years has added players to become a brass septet. Dr. Richard Barber, Gary Griffin and Howard Stuke continue as founding members, while Ted Adams, Paul Stanifer, Cary Vincent and David Welling have joined over the past few years as professional musician friends of the Adrian Chamber Brass. The admission is free will. The IHM Motherhouse Chapel is located at 610 W. Elm Avenue • Monroe, Mich.

Breaking Silence: Confronting Race, Power, and Privilege

Join Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Patricia Chappell and Anne-Louise Nadeau from Pax Christi, USA on Saturday, April 21st, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. for a workshop on race, power and privilege. This free event focuses on how racism became embedded into the fabric of American life and learn the skills we need to begin dismantling this disease that has sickened us all. Gather for prayer, learning, and dialogue.

The workshop is offered by the Weber Retreat Center in Adrian, Michigan. To register go to weber.adriandominicans.org or call (517) 266-4000. The center is located at 1257 East Siena Heights Drive in Adrian, Michigan 49221-1793.

Widowed Friends

Widowed Men and Women are invited to join us at Mass on Sunday, April 29th, at St. Malachy Parish, 14115 14 Mile Rd., at 2:30 PM. After Mass, we will enjoy refreshments and conversation in the social hall. For information call Sandy at (586) 991-7374. Widowed Friends is a “peer” support group. For further information about Widowed Friends, visit their website at widowed-friends.org

Newman Connection

Choosing a college is one of the biggest decisions a student will make in his/her life. Some choose easily by going to the college that is closest to their home or perhaps an alma mater of their parents. Some find it more challenging and weigh all of the options.

Either way, the Catholic Newman Connection supports students throughout this process by connecting them to the campus ministry of their chosen college, uniting with them in prayer, and helping them grow in their faith, creating a community of Catholic students nationwide. If you are headed to college, or are in college now, go to newmanconnection.com. Get connected, unite in prayer, and grow in faith.

All Things Considered

With his new Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis has laid out a beguiling vision of holiness – not as a matter of heroic achievement or extraordinary mystical experience, but rather as something worked out in the concrete details of everyday life.

Ultimately, as Francis sees it, becoming saints is a matter of showing the same mercy to others that God shows to humanity. As he has directed in past addresses: *“Be a saint by carrying out your work with honesty and competence and by offering time in the service of your brothers and sisters!”*

With our Holy Father’s new letter fresh in our thoughts, I am struck that, this Sunday here in our parish, we have some excellent examples of just how approachable sanctity can be.

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Let’s begin with **Paula Medina Zarate**, a retired teacher from Panama. In September 2012, Zarate traveled from Central America to Detroit at the invitation of a Detroit-based Capuchin friar, who had once ministered in her hometown parishes near Panama City.

At that time, she had little or no knowledge of who **Solanus Casey** was. In fact, when she first saw his above-ground tomb, she thought it was a table!

The Capuchins explained how pilgrims come to Casey’s tomb to pray for healings. So, Zarate, who did volunteer work in her parish back in Panama, scribbled the names and needs of 14 of the sick and troubled people she knew and left these requests atop the tomb.

Zarate then said she felt a force and heard a voice as if it came from her right side. “And the voice said: ‘What do you need for you?’”

“I got back down on my knees and I placed myself on the tomb,” said Zarate. “I asked for mercy for myself, for the condition for my legs and my arms.” Since birth, Zarate had suffered from a genetic skin condition called Ich-

thyosis. Her miraculous cure that followed almost immediately made her the primary proof leading to the beatification of Solanus.

This ordinary woman, whose first thought was to minister to the needs of others, ended up being ministered to herself.

Paula will Skype with some of our Religious Education students this Sunday morning with her friend and our parishioner **Blanchy Kaminski** serving as translator.

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Another path to sainthood comes wrapped in the service of others. And, as Pope Francis reminds us in his exhortation, this does not have to be of extraordinary proportions. *“It often comes in ‘passionate and effective commitment to [our] neighbors.’”*

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While we have seen many saintly persons in our parish over the past 102 years who have served the causes of justice, education and charity, the one group with the most “staying power” has been the members of our St. Vincent dePaul Society.

When I arrived here as pastor in 1986, our local SVdP conference consisted of five *very* elderly gentlemen, two determined parish secretaries and two street-smart Dominican sisters. Together they steadfastly provided the immediate needs of charity for those who came to our door each day – in a rapidly deteriorating part of town.

The task was overwhelming. At some point in the early 90’s, I remember asking **Pat Sperti** to step in as a relief pitcher. That eventually led to a reorganization of the SVdP here using **Roger Playwin** as a coach who would rebuild our team.

Since that time, our Ambrosian Conference of the SVdP Society has stepped up to the plate in countless ways – week in and out – year after year.

We are now in a rebuilding sea-

son for our SVdP. Three new couples or individuals from our parish with new energy and ideas would go a long way in augmenting the great work that is already being done. Since the 90’s, the demographics of this side of town have once again changed. Parishes that used to have thriving SVdP chapters now have ceased to exist – but the needs of the poor have remained.

We now need fresh and talented team members with a willing heart to devote some of their time in becoming saints.

It’s interesting to note that in the history of the SVdP, the motivation for joining the Society has first been personal – it’s a way for achieving your personal holiness. Service to the needy is seen as God’s gift to you in order

to help you achieve your sainthood.

It’s precisely what Pope Francis says in his new exhortation. That is that the path of holiness is not necessarily one of epic proportions. Most of the time sainthood is simply doing good for others over and above doing something just for yourself.

And, ask Paula Zarate about the blessings that can come your way when you put your thoughts and time at the disposal of someone you serve!

The SVdP Society has always placed a premium on person-to-person contact. Therefore face-to-face meetings with those needing assistance is built into their approach. And that is always done in teams of two.

Don’t think you are up to this type of encounter? Then consider something in the administrative or phone intake that is so essential to the SVdP organization. Our SVdP president, **Randy Rennpage** or any of our recent past presidents, including the most recent, **Liz Witherell**, or **Bob Jogan** can be your recruiting agent.



Paula Medina Zarate with Blanchy Kaminski

WE GP

A newly organized and highly motivated grass-roots group that deserves our parish attention, refinement and potential assistance is called **WE GP**.

By their definition they are “*a community based organization committed to resisting any attacks on civil and human rights; and to promoting local, state and national policy and legislation that are in line with our guiding principles of social equanimity.*”

WE GP provides opportunities for passive social engagement and community building as well as active opportunities for political engagement.

Currently, WE GP is working on building a coalition to collaborate on an April 20th gun violence vigil in Grosse Pointe in solidarity with the national day of action on the 19th anniversary of Columbine. They hope to bring together a diverse group of people of many ages around the ideas of ...

1. Coming together as a community to honor all lives lost to gun violence, and especially the lives of all children (especially acknowledging that while mass school shootings that impact mostly white communities draw attention, black and brown communities have faced/face gun violence disproportionately).

2. Coming together as a community to send a message that we are ready and willing to do more to protect our children, who should not live/go to school in fear.

3. Coming together as a community in solidarity with the victims, the families and the loved ones of those impacted by gun violence.

This event will be on Friday, April 20th at neighboring St. Clare of Montefalco Parish from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

WE GP hopes that other like-minded partners would lend their efforts and skills in planning an impactful event on Friday, April 20th. Help them reach out to the officials in our electoral district. The GPPSS and several other community groups welcome you to join WE GP in their planning and coalition building.

Post Diakonos

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. *1 Peter 4: 10 (King James Bible translation)*

A Motor City Psalm for Easter

Do not let your parts be troubled
For an all-knowing God is the Lord
It is God's warrant that we seek, God's promise that gives us life
Our bodies are perishable, they rust and chip and flake
But from almighty God have we been given
An eternal lifetime warranty

The wind blows where it wills
But your good spirit, O Lord
Has become for us a wind-shield
And all that would harm us you wipe away
Not intermittently – but always

When our hearts were hardened and we turned from you
Believing that we could not be turned over
Your goodness shone forth, a radiator to block our former ways
You saw us as we truly are, and desired that we be catalyzed
And converted through your saving power

Our enemies pursue us, they afflict us as on a rack
But on your pinions we are lifted up
We have become your instruments
You gauge our thoughts that we might live aright
Let us cluster within your loving care

Yours is the glory, yours the power
You raise us up, you lower us again
Do not be remote from us
At the thought of losing your protection
When we cry out – answer our alarm

Let me never tire of praising you
May I never exhaust or muffle songs to your name
May our prayers be carried on high
Beams that pierce the darkness

Fr. Robert Wotypka

Stewardship Moment

An underlying lesson from all three readings this weekend is that the Risen Christ has wiped away our sins, not only for individuals, but throughout the world and its history. The terrible power of sin has now been reversed and our coming to perfection through the love of God is part of the Easter experience. As stewards of God's love we are called to participate in Christ's redemptive activity.

The stewardship questions for us are many: How do we resist injustice at home or in the workplace? How do we confront violence in our language and attitudes? How do we bring Christ to others?

The Buzz

“You are witnesses of these things.” These are the final words in the Gospel passage from this weekend’s liturgy. Who are the witnesses, and what are “these things”?

This line from Luke immediately follows the famous story of the risen Jesus and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The two have returned to Jerusalem to tell other disciples what happened to them. Jesus suddenly appears and they all think it’s a ghost. He starts by wishing them peace. Then seeing their incredulity, He tells them to touch Him for proof. (*As with the Thomas story, it doesn’t say they took Him up on this!*) So He asks if they have anything to eat. They give Him some baked fish, and He eats it. Not the typical actions of a ghost or any other spirit-only being.

The risen Christ is completely real . . . and completely different. He is no longer bound by biology, time, space . . . burial wrappings, tombs with big stone barriers, or anything else – including death itself. Yet He’ll eat some dinner with them.

To whatever extent the disciples were with Jesus during His life and ministry, few if any were strong enough to witness His crucifixion. None of them witnessed His actual resurrection. So why would He say, “You are witnesses of these things”?

It’s because they have experienced first hand the presence of the risen Lord – at the same time both totally real and totally different – and have a true relationship with Him. They are changed because of it (see what it did to the former “denier” Peter in the first reading) and are to continue His mission to the world in communion with Him in His freed-up, risen life.

“You are witnesses of these things” means you and me too. When we say “Amen” and join Him for a bite and a swig at the ‘supper of the lamb’, we say amen to being witnesses. If you were on the stand and swore an oath to tell the truth, what could you truthfully testify about your first-hand experiences and relationship with Him? This weekend of Easter is a good time to prayerfully go over our testimony. Perjury or “taking the fifth” are not options.



More on dining with the risen Lord ... today, our parish neophytes (newly initiated adults) gather for the first time after their Easter Vigil sacraments. The period of such post-Easter gatherings is technically referred to as *Mystagogia*. Fr. Tim and I also plan on having dinner with our newly initiated as an informal way of helping them “unpack” their experiences.

The process of mystagogy is to take some time to unfold the many layers of meaning of the “mysteries” they experienced in celebrating initiation welcoming/sacraments at Easter. Every year I am surprised and awestruck by the power of God’s direct encounter with adults in the Church’s celebration of its sacramental life. Once again, others testify to us that the risen Lord is truly alive here.



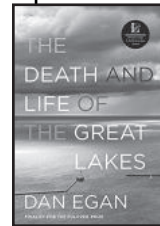
Another meal where I know the risen Lord was present occurred yesterday at our 39th annual hosting of a dinner for needy seniors at the St. Patrick’s Center down in the Cass Corridor/Cultural Center of Detroit. Search out a volunteer who went and helped and ask for their reflections. You’ll be on holy ground.



Finally, I want to start asking early for anyone willing to help in just over a month at all three of our Pentecost masses by reading a few lines of the first reading in another language. We’ve been doing this for a number of years, and it has become a well-received mode of proclaiming the Word on that very special Solemnity. See me in church or give me a call at 822-2017 anytime for more info.

Chuck Dropiewski

Marcellina’s Book Club



The Great Lakes hold 20% of the world’s surface fresh water and provide sustenance, work and recreation for millions of Americans. But they are under threat as never before, and their problems are spreading .

In the Death and Life of the Great Lakes, author Dan Egan paints a portrait of an ecological catastrophe happening before our eyes – blending the epic story of the lakes and the ways we can restore and preserve them.

We are in the process of connecting with the author to see if he can pay our book club a visit at a date to be announced. Pick up a copy of the book and get a head-start in reading this important work which was one of this year’s twenty Notable Book Honorees by the State Library of Michigan.

The Beehive

is the parish weekly bulletin of the St. Ambrose Catholic Community Detroit/Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan

Pastor: Rev. Timothy R. Pelc
Assistant: Rev. Robert Wotycka OFM, Cap
Assistant: Rev. Mr. John Maksym
Pastoral Minister: Charles Dropiewski
Religious Education: Kelly Anne Woolums
Minister of Music: Norah Duncan IV
Office Manager: Pamela Moffitt

Sacramental Celebrations

Masses: On the Lord’s Day –

Saturday Vigil - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday - 8:30 and 11:15 a.m.

Baptism: Arrangements for both adults and infants to be made by contacting the rectory.

Penance: As announced and by appointment.

Marriage: Couples should contact the rectory office a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed date to make arrangements.

Funeral: Normally celebrated within one week after the deceased’s passing.

Directory

Parish Office: 15020 Hampton

Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan 48230

Tel: (313) 822-2814 **Fax:** (313) 822-9838

Email address: stambrose@comcast.net

Religious Education: (313) 822-1248

Pastoral Ministry: (313) 822-2017

Ark Scheduling: (313) 822-2814

Parish Website: stambrosechurch.net

Liturgy Schedule for the Coming Week

Monday, April 16

8:30 - Morning Prayer

Tuesday, April 17

8:30 a.m. - Mass - Lois Moore; Claire Weston; Rev. John Haney

Wednesday, April 18

8:30 a.m. - Morning Prayer

Thursday, April 19

8:30 a.m. - Mass - Ambrose and Geraldine Forbes; Deacon Dan Cole

Friday, April 20

8:30 a.m. - Mass - Geraldine Baker; Joan Convery, Lee Beard, Jim Forbes

Saturday, April 21

St. Anselm, bishop & doctor

4:00 p.m. - Mass - For All People

Sunday, April 22

Fourth Sunday of Easter

8:30 a.m. - For All People

11:15 a.m. - For All People



Scriptures for the 3rd Week of Easter

Monday, April 16

- Acts 6: 8-15
- Ps 119: 23-24, 26-27, 29-30
- Jn 6: 22-29

Tuesday, April 17

- Acts 7: 51-8: 1a
- Ps 31: 3cd-4, 6ab, 7b, 8a, 17, 21ab
- Jn 6: 30-35

Wednesday, April 18

- Acts 8: 1b-8
- Ps 66: 1-3a, 4-7a
- Jn 6: 35-40

Thursday, April 19

- Acts 8: 8, 26-40
- Ps 66: 8-9, 16-17, 20
- Jn 6: 44-51

Friday, April 20

- Acts 9: 1-20
- Ps 27: 1, 4, 13-14
- Jn 6: 52-59

Saturday, April 21

- Acts 9: 31-42
- Ps 116: 12-17
- Jn 6: 60-69

Sunday, April 22

- Acts 4: 8-12
- 1 Jn 3: 1-2
- Jn 10: 11-18

Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 21st and April 22nd

4:00 p.m. – Saturday – Celebrant: Fr. Pelc **Lector:** Bern Degnan
Eucharistic Ministers: Thomas Bennert, Della Cimini, Karen McShane, Elizabeth Puleo-Tague, Matthew Strong, Mary Urbanski
Altar Servers: Daniel & Eleanor Bernas

8:30 a.m. – Sunday – Celebrant: Fr. Bede **Lector:** Norman Cure
Eucharistic Ministers: Colleen Drummond, Joan Jackson, Maggie Jackson, Steve Linne, Chris Walsh
Altar Servers: Erica, Corey, & Carrigan McGraw

11:15 a.m. - Celebrant: Fr. Pelc **Lector:** Michele Hodges
Eucharistic Ministers: Anne Billiu, Pat & Michael Mocerì, Sue & Roger Playwin, Darryl Swiatkowski
Altar Servers: Dominik & Malvina Lubanski

Your Envelope Speaks . . . the Inside Story

To operate, each week our parish requires a *minimum* of..... \$10,100.00

On Sunday, April 8, 2018

in envelopes we received \$6,079.00
 in the loose collection \$619.00
 in electronic donations \$1,390.00
 in children's envelopes..... \$6300
 for a total of..... **\$8,091.00**

Under budget for the week..... **\$2,009.00**

Number of envelopes mailed 800
 Number of envelopes used..... 151

“Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ But they were startled and frightened...” – LUKE 24:36-37

We have many opportunities to “see the face of Jesus” in others and to “be the face of Jesus” to others. Do we take that opportunity to provide “peace” to those we encounter or are we afraid of what others will think of us and do nothing? Pray for the strength to live a “God-centered not a self-centered” life.

Our Sick

Please pray for those who are seriously ill or who are hospitalized: Pat Blake, Karen Culver, Ann Sullivan Kay, Josephine Marino, Donald Miriani, Bonnie McKenna, Mary Myers, David Schumacker, Matthew Elias, George Buccer, Emilie Kasper, Arthur Stoyshin, Anna Noto Billings, Vilma Rivers, Vilma Marone, Eileen O’Brien, Martha Luna, Dan Urbiel, Dina Engels, Liz Linne, Donna Barnes, Maurice and Betty Greenia, Alexandra Cullen, Charmaine Kaptur, Darby O’Toole, Alexandra Billiu, Frank Gregory, and Jeri Krueger.



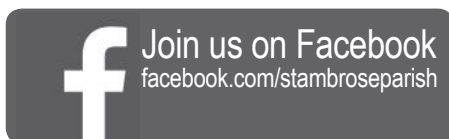
Epiphany Education Center Auction

IHM Sisters Marie Cyril Delisi and **Alice Baker** spent decades of their careers at St. Ambrose Academy. Upon their retirement, they remained in the area and continued their urban ministry under the auspices of Epiphany Education Center, which provides free after-school tutoring, one-on-one.

Cyril and Alice have just turned over the reins of Epiphany Center to **Roslyn Taylor**, a professional educator who serves there on a part-time basis and coordinates the work of all the volunteer tutors.

Let’s continue to support the good work started by our IHM friends. One way is through their Silent Auction which will be held at an annual fund raiser on April 28th at Sacred Heart Activities Center near Eastern Market.

To arrange a donation of an auction item, call **George Bush**, who is one of the Center’s tutors, at (313) 640-8295. The better and more interesting the auction item, the more revenue it produces for Epiphany Center, so be creative and generous in your giving.



† St. Vincent de Paul

Society of



Neighbors helping neighbors.®

Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic lay organization, leads women and men to join together to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to those who are needy and suffering in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul.

As a reflection of the whole family of God, members, who are known as **Vincentians**, are drawn from every ethnic and cultural background, age group, and economic level. Vincentians are united in an international society of charity by their spirit of poverty, humility and sharing, which is nourished by prayer and reflection, mutually supportive gatherings and adherence to a basic Religious Rule.

Organized locally, Vincentians witness God's love by embracing all works of charity and justice. The Society collaborates with other people of good will in relieving need and addressing its causes, making no distinction in those served because, in them, Vincentians see the face of Christ.

How does the Society differ from other charities? The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is composed of women and men who seek their personal holiness through works of charity. In this essential way, the Society differs from charitable associations or agencies whose principal objective is not the spiritual advancement of their members but the doing of good for someone else.

In his Circular Letter of December 12, 1915, Vicomte Hendecourt, President-General wrote: "The Society has two aims: to do a great deal of spiritual good to its members through the exercise of charity, and to do a little spiritual and temporal good to a few poor families in the name of Jesus Christ. If it did not continually seek to combine these two aims, it would lose its *raison d'être*."

The present SVDP Rule states that "the Society is open to all who wish to live their faith by loving and serving their neighbor." But the Vincentian call or vocation involves much more than just "loving and serving." In fact, "loving and serving their neighbor" is the third goal. When Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and his companions formed the Society, they developed a plan which we know as the Rule.

There are three basic goals for members:

That each member pursue holiness with the support of friends in the Conference through prayer together and acts. Pursuing holiness is basically learning how to live a Christian life based on the Gospel and answering our Baptismal call by being involved with a community of friends in the Society. Vincentians grow in holiness through mutual friendships with other Vincentians and find Christ not only in them but also in those we serve. Ozanam said: "The principle of true friendship is charity, and charity cannot exist in the hearts of many unless it spills over externally and is nourished by good works." Ozanam felt that being involved in charitable works is the best link for nourishing these friendships.

Ozanam was also "Incarnational" in that he saw the risen Christ and his wounds in the poor person who comes with problems. When members undertake to serve those in need in the spirit of Vincent and Frédéric through the Society, they have available to them centuries of experiences in preparing themselves for this sacred work. The Vincentian way of meeting Christ in the poor is true to the Gospel, and stresses particular values and virtues. The Vincentian way invites each member to love the poor and to serve them effectively.

Members join the SVdP not because they are perfect in their faith, but because they seek to develop faith by living it both individually and communally with other members.

Progress, not perfection, is what is desired in a member. The Society is for people who acknowledge the need to improve their living of the Gospel life.

The membership of a parish SVDP Conference needs to be as diverse as possible, so as to reflect the community in which it is located and those they serve. Efforts are made to attract people from all ages, races, cultures, ethnic groups, and walks of life to reflect the whole family of God.

Members of the Society are united in the same spirit of poverty and sharing. There is no distinction regarding wealth, position, social status, or ethnic origin in the Society. Members form throughout the world, with those they help, one and the same family.

The Society's has nearly 100,000 trained volunteers in the United States and provided 17.5 million hours of volunteer service in 2016, helping more than 20.9 million people through visits to homes, prisons and hospitals at a value of more than \$1 billion dollars of labor. But that misses the point.

"Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace – A soul generated by love."

— Martin Luther King Jr.