

St. Leo's

PARISH COMMUNITY



AN INSIDE LOOK AT OUR LITURGY COMMITTEE

ENSURING A MEANINGFUL WORSHIP EXPERIENCE FOR ALL

The word “liturgy” comes from the Greek *leitourgia*, meaning “work of the people.” So while we normally think of liturgy as a worship experience, we are also reminded that all of these experiences — including the Holy Mass and other ceremonies celebrating the conferral of sacraments — invite God’s people to participate in the work of His salvation. While every visitor and parishioner here at St. Leo’s takes part in the work of the liturgy, there is also a group of people helping “behind the scenes” to bring life and beauty to our worship experiences in a special way — the Liturgy Committee.

Our Liturgy Committee is made up of four individuals who serve together with Fr. Don Buhrman and the parish staff to ensure that every Mass and sacramental celebration at St. Leo’s is not only liturgically correct, but also spiritually fulfilling.

“We strive to provide uplifting experiences including liturgies, celebrations of the sacraments and prayer experiences,” Fr. Don says. “Committee members discuss the music ministry of our parish and facilitate the church environment to make sure it is beautiful and inviting. We meet once a month and talk about the past liturgies of that month and what went well and what could have gone better, and then we



St. Leo's Liturgy Committee — (from left) Fr. Don Buhrman, Rhonda Riha, Kristen Schutte, Fr. Mark Maresh (not pictured — Chris Riha)

continued on page 5

JANUARY 2020

Inside

- 2 Teaching Children to Live a Life of Stewardship
- 3 Start a New Life, Not Just a New Year
- 4 St. Leo's Parishioners Have Opportunity to be FORMED in the Faith
- 6 The Patron of Catholic Schools in America
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
- 7 Meet Carol Woodward
Embracing Parish Family Life with Her Whole Heart

TEACHING CHILDREN TO LIVE A LIFE OF

Stewardship

How old do you have to be to practice stewardship?

Can a 5-year-old embrace stewardship? How about a 10-year-old?

Although there is no guideline to what the right age is to begin to live a life of stewardship, God's call certainly extends to each of His children — even the young ones.

It is especially important to show children that they are not too young to share their time, talent and treasure to help build God's kingdom.

Sharing Your Time

A young child can share of his time in a variety of ways appropriate to his ability. For example, during the day, a child can pray for a loved one that is hurt, or say prayers with his parents or siblings. He can participate in Mass each Sunday, and even take time from his day to thank God for a veteran who has served our country.

Spending time being virtuous — such as being patient, generous and kind — is also a great example of sharing our time for love of God.

Sharing Your Talent

Using God-given talents to glorify God can also be performed by both young and old. An elementary school-age child can easily clean her room or perform chores such as raking leaves, doing laundry or taking care of pets. Making cards for people who are sick or who have had a

death in the family are other concrete examples of being a faithful steward.

Even using our talents — such as playing a musical instrument or football — to the best of our abilities to give God glory is an example of being a good steward.

Sharing Your Treasure

Although children do not have the same type of treasure to share as adults, instilling the importance of sharing finances is an important lesson.

If a child receives an allowance, he can return a portion of it to the Church in the collection basket. If he gets money for his birthday, he can give a small portion of it back to God in thanksgiving. Little ones can even share things like their Halloween candy with their siblings or friends as a way of demonstrating generosity.

The Most Important Lesson

Above all, the most important lesson to teach our children is *why* we share. We don't share because we "have to." We don't share because our parents tell us to. We share our time, talent and treasure with God because we are thankful for the blessings He has given us and we want to thank Him for His generosity.

Teaching these lessons at a young age will allow a lifetime of good stewardship to follow for even the youngest of God's children.



START A **NEW LIFE**, NOT JUST A NEW YEAR

Dear Parishioners,

It's January and that means it's time for New Year's resolutions — at least that's the widespread perception in our culture. So, I want us to reflect on resolutions for a few minutes.

Often, New Year's resolutions are intended simply to undo the harm we did to ourselves by indulging in food and drink between Thanksgiving and the end of the year. Some resolutions are changes we know we should make, but aren't really committed to making — thus, they don't last very long.

Reflecting on this in broader terms, when should we make a resolution to eliminate a sinful practice from our life? That question has a simple answer — the moment we realize we're engaging in a sinful practice. In other words, as soon as we realize we're doing something wrong, we should stop. It doesn't matter whether that sin is as "large" as cheating on your spouse or as "small" as sharing vicious gossip — we should stop immediately when we recognize it's a sinful behavior.

Now, I admit that making the changes we need in order to grow closer to Christ is easier said than done. All too often, we fool ourselves into thinking we can make all the changes we need under our own strength and on a convenient timetable. For real change, we need guidance and we need help — a new life, in fact. St. Paul addressed this when he wrote to the Romans (6:4), "We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life."

In other words, we need a new life, not a new year. We find this new life in union with Christ within His Body, the Church. The Church can



provide us with guidance. She has 2,000 years of accumulated wisdom and experience, beginning with God's own revelation. The Ten Commandments provide a brief, incisive outline for ethical behavior. Help comes from God's grace, available to us in the sacraments and through prayer.

A new life means we have new priorities and a new viewpoint when we look at every aspect of the way we live. It impacts the use of the time we have, the talents God has given us, and the treasure with which He has blessed us. With God's grace and guidance, lived in union with the Church, we find that

"in newness of life" we can "cease doing evil" and "learn to do good." That's a resolution worth making.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Donald A. Buhrman
Pastor



ST. LEO'S PARISHIONERS HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO

Everywhere you turn, there is something begging for your attention. From your phone or tablet, to your laptop or TV, there is more content than ever before, available right at your fingertips. It's easy to spend hours researching on the Internet or let time slip away binge watching your favorite show on Netflix. But what would your life, and your relationship with God, look like if you spent some of that time learning about your faith?

For St. Leo's parishioners who want to grow closer to God, it's easier than ever through our new parish subscription to FORMED.org.

FORMED is a streaming service that allows users unlimited access to online video, audio and electronic book content, 24-7, wherever you are. From an audio Bible and to studies on prayer, to movies about the lives of the Saints, FORMED has something for everyone — young and not so young, those who have been studying the faith

for years, and those who have just become curious about who Jesus is. Whether you're looking for something to listen to on your commute to work, or would just like to access more Catholic materials on your tablet, FORMED is a tool that allows you to grow in your faith, for free, on your own schedule.

"Everybody could peruse the material that's on there and find something that would be helpful," says Fr. Don Buhrman. "From someone who's had a Catholic education from grade school, high school, college and beyond, to somebody who's never participated in anything — there are materials available for everyone and there are materials for children, too."

For many people, the journey of learning about one's Catholic faith stops when they finish faith formation, as a child or teenager. But FORMED provides resources that allow that journey to continue.

"Continual faith formation is important because we're continually converted into a more intimate relationship with God, with Jesus, with the sacraments," Fr. Don says. "Conversion isn't a one-time thing — it's a process of growth and development, and if we don't continue to grow and develop conscientiously, then the tendency is that we become stagnant."

In addition to growing in their own relationship with God, learning more about the faith also empowers people to understand and share their faith with others.

"My hope would be that people would be able to talk about their faith more confidently and



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BE FORMED[®] IN THE FAITH

openly,” Fr. Don says. “That’s what evangelization is about — sharing our relationship with Jesus. Hopefully this would boost the confidence of Catholics in their relationship with the Lord, so they can witness to Jesus, not in a condescending way, but in a confident way.”

Parishioners are encouraged to log on and explore the variety of resources on a wide range of topics, all available through your parish subscription at no cost to you. Fr. Don hopes parishioners will visit FORMED.org and utilize the resources available, whether on their own, in a small group in their homes, or with their families.

“I just want to encourage people to check it

out,” Fr. Don says. “This is available to you; the parish pays for it. Take advantage of this. We’re investing in the people by investing in programs like FORMED.”

To access our St. Leo’s subscription to FORMED:

1. Visit FORMED.org
2. Click on “Sign up”
3. Click “I Belong to a Parish or Organization”
4. Enter the access code: FPH4JQ
5. Enter your name and email address.
6. Click “Sign up” and follow any additional instructions

Enjoy and please tell others!

AN INSIDE LOOK AT OUR LITURGY COMMITTEE *continued from front cover*

plan for the next month or so.”

At the beginning of each meeting, the committee spends some time reading the Roman Missal and Church guidelines for upcoming liturgical celebrations.

“Parishioners who choose to serve on the Liturgy Committee learn a lot about the workings and the significance of the liturgy — what it takes to celebrate liturgies well,” Fr. Don says. “[Committee members learn about] the mechanics and practicalities, of course, and also the theology behind it. Like many of our Parish Council members, Liturgy Committee members often say, ‘I didn’t know there was so much going on in the parish!’”

As a pastor, Fr. Don is particularly thankful that this great group of people can serve as his sounding board while helping the parish to plan and implement meaningful liturgical experiences.

“The benefit to me as a pastor in having these helpers is that they give me perspective on what is working in this local parish community,” he says. “Pastors have to figure out how to graciously adjust some things while respecting the parish history. So it’s not only about respecting

the guidelines of the Church, but also receiving immediate feedback if what we have done is improving the experience here.”

In creating uplifting worship experiences in our parish, the ultimate goal of the Liturgy Committee is to inspire all parishioners and visitors to live as intentional disciples of Jesus. As Fr. Don reminds us, the word “Eucharist” comes from the Greek for “thank you.” When we come together to celebrate the Mass, we are coming before the Lord in gratitude for His many blessings.

Thanks to our parish Liturgy Committee, the worship experiences at St. Leo’s offer a beautiful opportunity for us to participate in the great work of God’s salvation.

“When we gather for Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we’re all working together to give praise and glory to God,” Fr. Don says. “We’re all working together in support of one another.”

Are you interested in joining our parish Liturgy Committee? If so, please call the parish office at 308-382-4753 or Chris Riha at 308-381-7006.

THE PATRON OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN AMERICA

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

As the first American-born canonized saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton's entrance into history was guided by Divine Providence. Born on Aug. 28, 1774, just months after the Boston Tea Party, Elizabeth's childhood witnessed pivotal events in the formation of our country — the Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence, and the American Revolution. At the time of the foundation of the new Republic, in a society predominately hostile toward Catholicism, a flower blossomed that would forever change the shape of education in the United States.

Elizabeth Seton was born into a wealthy Protestant family in New York City. Her life, although materially blessed, was not without suffering. Elizabeth's biological mother died when she was only 3, and her younger sister, Catherine Josephine, died at the age of 2. A spark of faith, however, was visible even in her early childhood. When questioned about her sadness concerning her sister's death, Elizabeth simply responded, "Kitty is gone up to heaven. I wish I could go there too."

Elizabeth grew into a beautiful woman, courted lavishly by handsome young men from prominent New York families. At the age of 19, she met a charming New York financier, William Seton, and the couple was wed in 1794. They remained in high society until her father-in-law's passing, which left them to care for William's seven younger siblings, along with three children of their own. Consequently, the Seton finances crashed.

The couple traveled to Italy — it was here that William's health failed him, and he died in December 1803. Providentially, Elizabeth was left in the company of a strong Catholic family where she witnessed the practice of the faith. In a letter to her



sister, Elizabeth wrote, "My sister dear, how happy would we be, if we believed what these dear souls believe, that they possess God in the Sacrament, and that He remains in their churches..."

After an eight-month stay, Elizabeth returned to America, and she began to investigate Catholicism more deeply. She was besought by Protestant friends who hoped to dissuade her. At this time, Elizabeth prayed repeatedly, "If I am right, Thy grace impart, still in the right to stay. If I am wrong, oh teach my heart to find the better way."

In 1805, after much interior struggle, Elizabeth became Catholic. Abandoned entirely by her family and friends, she resolved her financial difficulties through teaching.

In 1807, Elizabeth was invited to establish a Catholic school for girls in Baltimore. The task was daunting, and Elizabeth labored intensely, explaining how "from half past five in the morning until nine at night, every moment is full — no space even to be troubled." After winters spent in continual hardship and sacrifice, the school flourished and, within years, Mother Seton planted the seed from which sprang the parochial school system — along with hospitals and orphanages.

Before her death in January 1821, she was the active mother of five — although two of her daughters died young — and the spiritual mother of a full-fledged religious congregation known as the Sisters of Charity. She was canonized in 1975, and her feast day is celebrated on Jan. 4.

Thanks to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the Catholic parochial school system remains vibrant and active. And as we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, we are thankful for the sacrifice of this loving wife, devoted mother, foundress and all-American saint.

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MEET CAROL WOODWARD

Embracing Parish Family Life with Her Whole Heart

For Carol Woodward, our parish family has been a source of strength, encouragement and inspiration over the course of many years. It has also provided a beautiful way for her to live out the stewardship vision, and offer her talents generously to Our Lord.

“St. Leo's is a very friendly, welcoming community and I have loved being part of it,” Carol says. “It is a really active, spiritual place, and I have lots of friends here.”

Carol finds profound spiritual nourishment by going to daily Mass several days a week and participating in a Bible study group on Thursday mornings.

“Daily Mass really helps me grow in my faith and gives me a lot of peace,” she says. “There are so many nice people that come. I also enjoy

getting together with other parishioners to study the Catholic faith and hearing their insights. We go through various Scripture studies, watch videos on faith topics, and cover specific Catholic books. I have made some wonderful friends through the study.”

Carol cared for the sick and suffering by working as a Registered Nurse for 60 years, as well serving as our Parish Nurse. Now retired from both positions, she is grateful to God for having allowed her to fill them.

“As Parish Nurse, I would make sure that someone from our parish checked in on our hospitalized parishioners every day,” she says. “I loved visiting the sick, praying with them, and asking them how they were doing. I also liked to call or visit those who



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came out of the hospital, and make sure they were doing all right. It was a corporal work of mercy, and a great way to be a steward of my talent of nursing.”

Throughout the years, she touched many hearts with the infinite love and mercy of Christ.

“The sick were thrilled when we came to visit them,” she says. “We may not have done much for them physically, but our visit validated them as people and showed them that the parish cared about them.”

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— Carol Woodward



MEET CAROL WOODWARD *continued from page 7*

When working as our Parish Nurse, Carol also started the monthly Golden Gems senior meals at our parish, which are still active today. The meals involve a monthly potluck lunch, for which the parish provides the meat dish.

“A lot of older people really enjoy coming to the senior dinners because they can't get out very much and they don't have a lot of contact with other people on a regular basis,” Carol says. “It

is a valuable ministry for them. It lets them know they are not forgotten.”

Most importantly, Carol lives out the call to stewardship by being a faithful mother to her four children and grandmother to her two grandchildren. Her husband, Bob, passed away four years ago. Two of her children go to our parish — her son, Steven Woodward, and her daughter, Kathleen Niece, along with her husband, Michael.



LITURGY SCHEDULE

Daily Mass: 9 a.m., **Saturday:** 5 p.m., **Sunday:** 8 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

Confession: Saturday 4 - 4:30 p.m. **Adoration:** First Friday of the Month, 9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Abide Adoration: Fourth Sunday of the Month, 7 - 8 p.m.