

St. Leo's

PARISH COMMUNITY



PREPARING FOR FOREVER: *Marriage Preparation at St. Leo's*

The dress. The flowers. The menu. There are usually a million things to accomplish between “Will you marry me?” and “I do.” But for couples preparing to be married at St. Leo's, we hope to help not only in preparing for the details of the big day, but also in supporting couples as they plan for a marriage that will last a lifetime.

“This is a lifelong commitment, and I hope and pray that the couple, through the process of preparation, not only feel the emotion of love and attraction for the other person and not only the affection and friendship for their spouse, but that they also feel a sense of trust that whatever life throws at them as a couple or whatever their spouse throws at them in the relationship, that they can trust and rely on God to help them continue this commitment,” says Fr. Don Buhrman. “As the vows say, ‘Through good times and bad, in sickness and health, until death do us part.’ I want them to go into this marriage with their eyes wide open. I want to have them know what they're getting into and prepared for what might come at them in marriage.”

There are several aspects of marriage preparation for engaged couples, or those seeking to validate their marriage that has already



Steve and Karla Schneider serve as a lead couple for St. Leo's Marriage Preparation Program.

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PRAYER: BECOMING MORE GENEROUS WITH OUR STEWARDSHIP OF TIME

A professor stood in front of a class, and in his hand was a big glass jar. He put six big rocks in the jar, with the rocks up to the edge. He then asked his students, “Is the jar full?” And they replied, “Yes.”

The professor told the students, “No, it’s not.” Then, he pulled out gravel and put it in the jar. He then asked, “Now is it full?” The students once again replied, “Yes.” The professor responded, “No, it’s not.” He reached down and pulled out sand, which he poured into the jar with the same responses. Then, he reached down again for a pitcher of water, and poured water in, all the way to the brim. Then he asked, “Now is it full?” And the students replied, “Yes.”

The professor then asked, “Okay, what lesson do you learn from this?” The students responded, “No matter how many things you’ve got in the jar, there’s always room to put a little more in.” The professor told them, “No, that’s not the lesson. The lesson is, if I didn’t put the big rocks in first, they would have never fit!”

Most Catholics can appreciate this story — in particular, how it can apply to our own prayer lives. Essentially, every person has to decide what the “big rocks” are in his or her life. And, for us Catholics, prayer should be one of those big rocks in the jar.

As Catholics, we know that prayer is important, and we know that we can and should always pray more. Yet, connecting with God in this way often slips through the cracks of our busy lives.

Stewardship spirituality is about trying to become ever more generous with our Time, Talent, and Treasure. And there is a reason why “Time” is first in line. Time in a stewardship context refers to the time we spend with God in prayer. We need to take time to talk to God and take time to be quiet and seek to listen as He expresses His love for us and wants us to know His inspiration in our life.

There are many different forms of prayer — from weekly prayer, such as the Mass, to daily

personal prayer. A daily Rosary is one of the most universal spiritual practices that can enrich the lives of Catholics around the world. Even if the decades are spread out throughout the day, or even if you pray just one decade a day, you will find yourself growing closer and closer to the Lord each time.

Morning and night prayer are also important disciplines to maintain. Set aside a comfortable place in your home where you can find silence. Maybe focus on a spiritual image and take time to center yourself with Scripture or some other kind of spiritual reading.

For many, spending large portions of the day in silent prayer may not always be possible. But make it a priority to find those moments of quiet throughout the day, and to find ways to incorporate prayer in the midst of your busy schedule. When you get into a vehicle, pray — before a meal, after a meal, if you’re faced with a tough decision. Just pray!

Ultimately, the bottom line is this — just as in any human relationship, communication is a central aspect of a vibrant relationship with God. Prayer is fostering this communion of love with God. He loved us into existence and He wants us to enter into a loving conversation with Him. We’ve got to talk to Him. And we have to listen to Him. He will take care of everything if you just trust Him. He’s knocking at the door and waiting for us to open it in prayer.



A Letter From Our Pastor

TAKE VACATIONS FROM WORK OR SCHOOL, NOT FROM GOD

Dear Parishioners,

By now, many schools across America have let out for the summer. In almost no time, camp programs for younger students will be underway. Meanwhile, many older students are ready to trade their homework and notebooks for seasonal jobs until it's time to return to class in a few months.

Whether or not we're directly involved with schools — as students, teachers or parents — we find that the calendar for the school year also impacts our lives at work, at church, and in our leisure time. And although some people are on vacation at any time of year, summer traditionally retains its place as *the* vacation season.

Vacations, no matter when or where we take them, provide us with a wonderful opportunity to refresh our lives by following a totally different daily pattern. Whether it's a day trip to the beach or hiking in the mountains, an excursion to the big city or a road trip out to the country, a visit to relatives or friends, or even a quiet and relaxing week spent at home, a vacation offers a break from our daily routines. We get to spend our time the way *we* choose.

A vacation also provides a good opportunity for us to make some permanent changes in our use of time. When we're free from the demands



of everyday life, this is a perfect chance to try something that is not part of our regular routine, such as spending a few minutes a day in prayer or meditation. “Try it — you’ll like it!” as the old commercial said. It may have some lasting, positive results in fostering a stronger spiritual life.

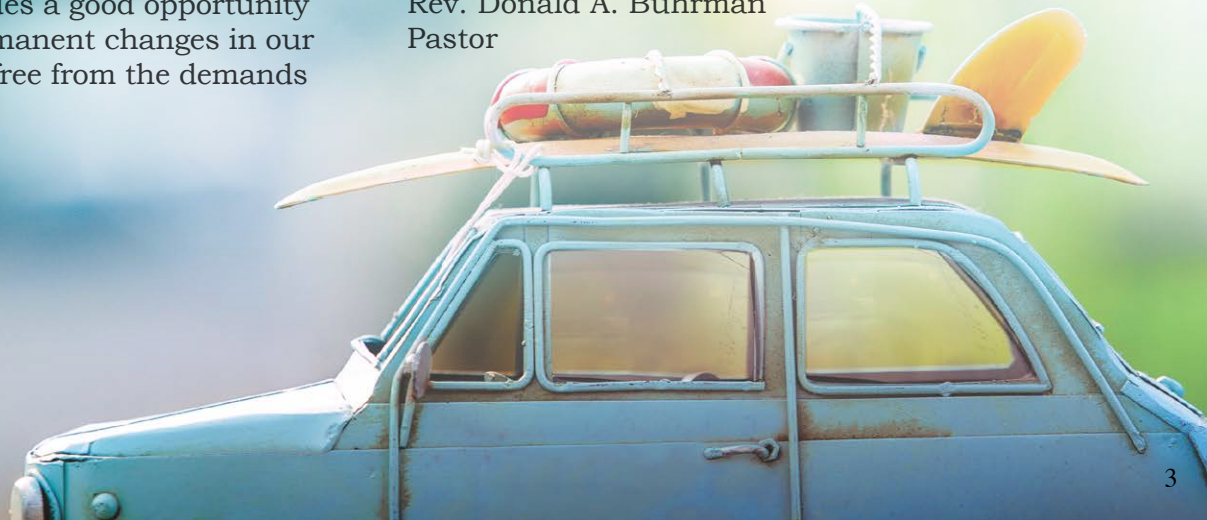
Importantly, we must also remember that this is a time of year when our parish will be welcoming visitors who are on vacation themselves — whether they are visiting family, spending time in the area, or just happen to be passing through on the way to their next destination. So, let us all uphold the Stewardship Pillar

of Hospitality and provide a warm welcome to those visiting our parish.

Be sure to worship at Mass wherever you happen to be each Sunday. You’ll come back from vacation refreshed both emotionally and spiritually.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Donald A. Buhrman
Pastor



BRINGING CHRIST TO C THROUGH THE HO

“Our mission is to visit the person, whether they’re in a care facility or at their actual home, and bring them the Body of Christ. However, in doing that we’re also called to become ambassadors of Christ’s Church. We’re like a bridge, connecting the person we are administering to with the entire parish community.” — Norbert Wenzl

When a person is sick or homebound, it’s easy for them to feel disconnected from the Church. Physically prevented from attending Mass or parish events, they can feel forgotten or alone, separated from the community they once served faithfully. This is why, says ministry coordinator Norbert Wenzl, it’s so important that we continue bringing them Holy Communion through St. Leo’s Homebound Ministry.

“Our mission is to visit the person, whether they’re in a care facility or at their actual home, and bring them the Body of Christ,” Norbert says. “However, in doing that we’re also called to become ambassadors of Christ’s Church. We’re like a bridge, connecting the person we are administering to with the entire parish community.”

This ministry of care is open to any adult parishioner who has been previously trained as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. Volunteering in a scheduled rotation, ministers are commissioned

just before the conclusion of the 8 a.m. Sunday Mass. They are then sent out to their designated homebound parishioners, quite literally bringing Christ and the love of His Church with them.

“It’s a really special moment when Father calls the ministers forward and actually gives us a blessing within the context of the Mass,” Norbert says. “It symbolizes that it’s not only him sending us forth in this ministry, but rather the entire faith community.”

In this way, Homebound Ministers are able to truly become the hands and feet of Christ, bringing His Body to those who oftentimes suffer greatly — be it from physical ailments or loneliness. “That’s why,” says Norbert, “ministers try to bring as much love and care as possible into their visit with each homebound parishioner.” Ministers spend time talking with them, bring them parish bulletins, share tidbits from the priest’s homily at Mass, and

invite them to pray for upcoming parish events — all in the hopes of making the homebound individual feel more connected with their faith community.

“Sometimes, we are the only social outlet that these people get outside of maybe an occasional visit from a family member,” Norbert says. “So they truly look forward to this time each week.”

“Yet, the sick and homebound aren’t the only ones who benefit from the ministry,” says Norbert, “for ministers often receive far more themselves through the great reverence and joy demonstrated by those they’ve come to serve. It rejuvenates their own faith, reminding them of how incredible of a gift



Tasked with bringing our Eucharistic Lord to homebound parishioners, ministers simultaneously serve as a bridge between the homebound individual and the parish community.

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OTHERS

HOMEBOUND MINISTRY

the Eucharist truly is — making them feel good knowing they are doing something for a brother or sister in need.”

“We go there to try and bless the homebound parish members with our presence, but in return I think we receive just as much as they do,” Norbert states. “Their joy, graciousness, welcome, and general hospitality is truly inspiring. Hopefully, they see Jesus Christ in me just as I’m able to see Him looking back at me when I minister to them.”

Parish homebound numbers are continuously changing — therefore, the Homebound Ministry relies on fellow parishioners to help notify them when someone is in need of receiving Holy Communion. Please call the office at 308-382-4753 if you know of someone unable to attend Mass. Better yet, says Norbert Wenzl, please consider becoming a Minister yourself, helping us bring Christ to those in need. For more information about or to get involved in the Homebound Ministry, please contact Norbert at 308-383-7829.

PREPARING FOR FOREVER:

Marriage Preparation at St. Leo’s *continued from front cover*

been celebrated in the court system. Couples begin by meeting with Fr. Don and completing an assessment instrument called *Fully Engaged*.

“The goal and the purpose of *Fully Engaged* isn’t to determine whether or not a couple should get married,” Fr. Don says. “Rather, it’s designed to enlighten them about the strengths and weaknesses of their relationships so we can review their relationship and highlight and affirm the strengths, and in areas where there might be weakness, to support or nurture those areas, through continued education and discussion.”

From there, engaged couples will be paired with a “lead couple” — a married couple who has gone through training and will come alongside the engaged couple to help them prepare for life together.

“Lead couples are parishioners who have been married for a number of years,” Fr. Don says. “Statistics show that there’s a benefit to having other couples who are married meet with these young couples and talk with them about life experience.”

Dr. Steve and Karla Schneider have served as

a lead couple at St. Leo’s for the past three years. They enjoy working through the topics covered in the *Fully Engaged* workbook with engaged couples — topics relevant to building a strong and lasting relationship, from finances and sexuality, to what it means to have a Catholic marriage.

“A lot of things we bring up, they hadn’t talked about or thought of talking about,” Karla says.

“It’s really good, it outlines and goes through all kinds of things for the couple to visit about,” Steve adds. “It gets them thinking, gets them visiting, as they’re coming up on their nuptials and marriage.”

Through the process, those involved in preparing couples for marriage hope that the engaged couples will be empowered to embrace the sacrament fully and live out their vows in the years to come.

“My job is to try to make sure your eyes are wide open when you get married, because love is blind,” Fr. Don says with a smile.

“I hope that couples feel more knowledgeable about what they’re getting into and that they’ll have peace about their relationship,” Karla adds.

If you are engaged and planning to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage at St. Leo’s, please contact the parish office at 308-382-4753 to set up your initial appointment with Fr. Don Buhrman.

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF SACRAMENTALS IN OUR FAITH

Most Catholics are familiar with the idea of *sacraments* in the Church, of which there are seven. Sacraments are the foundation of the spiritual life for an individual and the Church. Sacraments are sources of grace — God’s very presence in our lives and unmerited favor from God. They are signs of God’s love, and these signs make present what they signify. Although a person benefits — receives the gift of grace — from the sacraments regardless of whether he or she is well disposed to them, one must cooperate with what the Spirit is doing in the sacrament to receive its full benefit.

Sacramentals are different. These are also sacred signs that can build holiness, but they do not work on their own. One must be aware and fully conscious of the sacred action. Sacramentals sanctify us to get the most benefit from the Sacraments (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1667). Sacramentals are given to us to make holy certain actions in life and life’s circumstances. There are many such sacred signs that are reminders to us of God.

The sign of the cross is perhaps one of the most fundamental of these signs, and for Catholics, this invocation is done at the start of every sacred action and prayer. Holy water is a sacramental, as it reminds us of our Baptism. By dipping our fingers into holy water and making the sign of the cross, we are combining two foundational symbols of the Christian life and the Paschal Mystery — the passion, dying and rising of Christ — and bringing them to life in us.

The exchange of peace in the Mass — and at other Catholic rites — is another example of a sacramental. By making some kind of meaningful sign of peace, we are giving the peace of Christ to another person. The chalice and other sacred vessels at Mass also are sacramentals, as they remind us of

what they are to contain — the very Body and Blood of Christ.

It might be helpful to organize the types of sacramentals into categories, as author Michael Pennock lists in *This Is Our Faith: A Catholic Catechism for Adults*:

“*Actions* (blessings; genuflections; the sign of the cross; bowing one’s head at the name of Jesus; church processions); *Objects* (candles; holy water; statues and icons; holy pictures; blessed ashes; palms; rosaries; relics; incense; vestments; scapulars; church buildings; crosses; religious medals); *Places* (the Holy Land; Rome; Fatima; Lourdes; the National Shrine in Washington, D.C.; and other places of pilgrimage; chapels, retreat centers, and even Catholic cemeteries); *Prayers* (short prayers we say throughout the day; grace before and after meals; prayers at rising and going to bed; praying the rosary, praying a host of other traditional Catholic prayers and devotions); *Sacred Time* (liturgy; holy days; feasts of saints; your saint’s name day; special days of prayer; fasting and abstinence; retreats, etc.)” (*This Is Our Faith: A Catholic Catechism for Adults*, 176-177).

“Sacramentals...prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it” (CCC 1670). In a word, sacramentals, through the prayer of the Church, bring us to holiness in Christ. All devotions of piety, including sacramentals, should point us toward the liturgy of the Church, a connection to a local parish community, and to the Eucharist (CCC 1675).

The Church, through Christ’s passion, death and resurrection, has given us these sacred signs to lead us in holiness, and to better recognize an authentic Christian life. How many sacramentals can you recognize in your life? Probably more than you think.

SAVE THE DATE!

Friday, November 1
Saturday, November 2
in the Parish Hall

St. Leo's Parish Community

*Annual
Parish Retreat
To Be a Christian Steward*

SUMMER FUN AND FAITH: TOTUS TUUS

Family vacations. Barbecues. Swimming. There are so many things to love about summer — and for the children and teens of St. Leo's, our Totus Tuus program just might be at the top of that list! Each summer, they have the opportunity to learn more about their faith in an engaging and fun-filled environment.

"It's a different way to learn about their faith," says Jodi Stauffer, our Director of Children and Family Ministries. "The kids love it and they really seem to engage in it."

Hosting Totus Tuus is a team of young adults who volunteer to spend a summer serving children and youth in the Diocese of Grand Island.

"There's something about the way they're teaching that connects with the kids," Jodi says. "They learn about our devotion and love for Mary."

There are two separate programs for our youth, based on age. The program designed for children going into first through eighth grades will take place during the daytime, beginning Monday, July 22 through Friday, July 26. The high school program will take place in the evenings, beginning on Sunday, July 21 through Thursday, July 25. The programs will take place at St. Leo's, in the parish hall and youth room.

The programs vary each day, including opportunities for Mass and Reconciliation, going deeper in understanding the faith, small groups, and opportunities to share stories of faith. Each day is also filled with plenty of fun and action, games, skits, and more.

"It ignites their prayer life and personal prayer," Jodi says. "The kids get to engage in daily Mass, which I think is neat — they are the servers, they do the readings and they really get to participate in daily Mass, which is really a cool thing to introduce to children."

According to Jodi, one of the most powerful parts of the week is getting to see the witness of the young adults who serve on the Totus Tuus team.



Totus Tuus is an opportunity for children and youth of all ages to grow in their faith while having a lot of fun with friends.

"The kids really listen and take in all that those college-age kids dish out," Jodi says. "I think that age group, they're close enough — they're not parents, they're the 'big kids.' They're the mentors and they really get into it."

"That's why I think it's such a meaningful thing for children and our youth to go through," she adds.

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TOTUS TUUS *continued from page 7*

“They see people closer to their age who have such a deep faith and that’s exciting for them to see.”

There are many ways for members of the parish to become involved and serve during the week, even without children in the program. People are needed to serve as “host families” for the Totus Tuus team and to provide lunches for them each day during the week. Families are also needed to welcome the team into their home for dinner each night, for an hour or two, before the evening session begins. In addition, chaperones are needed during the lunch hour, as well as volunteers willing to grill hamburgers and hot dogs for the family picnic on Wednesday

night, July 24.

Jodi hopes that parishioners will encourage their children and youth to participate in Totus Tuus this summer.

“If I wanted my child to be a professional basketball player, I would put them in all sorts of basketball camps,” Jodi says. “If I’m trying to get my child to heaven, I’m going to try to do as much as I can to make sure they have every experience where they can encounter Christ.

“I guarantee you’ll benefit from sending your children because they’ll come home with so much they want to share,” she adds. “And the parents will learn right along with their kids.”

If you would like more information, or to register for Totus Tuus, please visit our parish website at www.saintleos.org/totus-tuus. The cost is \$10 per student and \$25 maximum per family.

In addition, scholarships are available as needed.

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.