

## *The Giving Tree: A Beautiful Opportunity to Share the Christmas Spirit*

Gift-giving has long been a beloved tradition of the Christmas season, as children eagerly anticipate their presents on Christmas morning. It oftentimes seems as if our culture would have us get swept up in the consumerism of buying gifts — but participating in the Giving Tree Ministry through our parish helps us to keep this tradition grounded in the true spirit of Christ.

Linda Buckley organizes the Giving Tree Ministry alongside Principal Beth Meece and Ann Marsh. Planning begins in September and the team reaches out to partner organizations such as Anna's House, Clinton Young Elementary, St. Philip Neri, St. Patrick, Perry Senior Citizens Service, Rise Learning Center, and St. Vincent de Paul.

"There's great need close to home," Linda says. "This is stewardship — this is serving others and



honoring your Advent promises. It corresponds with what the school kids are learning."

The students get involved in a number of ways. The National Junior Honor Society volunteers to wrap gifts. Families get involved by buying gifts and helping to deliver gifts.

"There are many families that do this every year and it's kind of a tradition for them," Linda says.

The partner organizations reach

out to those that they serve to find out what their needs are so that these gifts truly make a positive impact. Ann Marsh creates gift tags based on these needs and puts them on the Christmas tree in the narthex for parishioners to take beginning on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1. Gifts should be under \$50 and can be returned wrapped or unwrapped with the gift tag attached by Dec. 14 and 15. The overflowing gifts are a sight to behold.

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# Thanksgiving:

## A SECULAR HOLIDAY WITH SACRED SIGNIFICANCE

**T**hanksgiving is a cherished holiday in the United States, celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November each year. While it may not have religious origins, Thanksgiving holds a deep significance in the Catholic Church and serves as a perfect example of living the stewardship way of life. As Catholics, we can find spiritual meaning in this holiday and apply the principles of stewardship to our Thanksgiving celebrations.

### Thanksgiving and Stewardship

Stewardship is a core principle in the Catholic faith, emphasizing the responsible and generous use of time, talent, and treasure for the service of God and others. Thanksgiving aligns with this principle in several ways:

- **Gratitude to God:** Thanksgiving encourages us to express gratitude for the blessings we have received. In the Catholic faith, acknowledging and thanking God for His gifts is a fundamental aspect of stewardship.
- **Sharing with Others:** The act of sharing a meal with loved ones and providing for those in need echoes the spirit of stewardship. Just as stewards share their resources with others, Thanksgiving prompts us to share our abundance with family, friends, and the less fortunate.
- **Acknowledging God's Creation:** Thanksgiving often centers around a feast featuring the fruits of the earth. This feast reminds us of our role as stewards of God's creation and our responsibility to care for the environment.

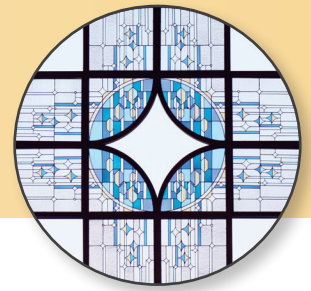
### Living Stewardship on Thanksgiving and Beyond

Here are ways Catholics can live the stewardship way of life on Thanksgiving:

- **Gratitude and Prayer:** Begin your Thanksgiving celebrations with a prayer of thanksgiving, acknowledging God's providence and expressing gratitude for His blessings. Encourage everyone to share what they are thankful for during the meal.
- **Sharing with Others:** Reach out to those in need by volunteering at a local shelter, donating food, or participating in charitable initiatives. Sharing your time, talent, or treasure is a practical application of stewardship.
- **Family and Community:** Thanksgiving is an excellent time to strengthen family bonds and build a sense of community. Welcome those who may be alone or in need, extending the spirit of stewardship to your own household and beyond.
- **Gratitude Journal:** Encourage family members to maintain a gratitude journal throughout the year. Documenting daily blessings reinforces the stewardship principle of recognizing and appreciating God's gifts.

Thanksgiving may be a secular holiday, but its significance in the Catholic Church is profound. It provides an opportunity to express gratitude to God, share blessings with others, and practice stewardship in daily life. As Catholics, we can embrace the principles of stewardship on Thanksgiving by focusing on gratitude, charity, and environmental responsibility. This holiday serves as a beautiful reminder that living the stewardship way of life is not confined to the church walls but can be incorporated into our everyday lives, enriching our faith and our relationship with God.





A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

## **“What’s in It For Us” May Surprise You**

Dear Parishioners,

**Y**ou already know that our parish is committed to living as intentional disciples of Christ through the holistic practice of stewardship. What you may not know is that one of our inspirations and mentors is the late Msgr. Thomas McGread of the Diocese of Wichita.

Who was Msgr. McGread?

Msgr. McGread was a humble, servant priest who created a model for how stewardship should be practiced — both here and in many Catholic parishes across the country. What began simply with Msgr. McGread applying his stewardship principles at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Wichita — where he served as pastor for 31 years — has become a way of life for our parish family and for Catholics around the nation.

With such an incredible blueprint from this visionary priest, how could we go wrong?

We have truly embraced stewardship here at St. Jude, and for that, I am blessed and grateful. From the beginning, however, the question “What’s in it for us?” had to be on our minds as our efforts to educate parishioners and promote the stewardship way of life were introduced.

At first, “What’s in it for us?” seemed to center on what people were willing to do to give back to God as part of practicing their faith and living as disciples of Jesus Christ.

While this is important, there is so much more to it.

The truth is, “What’s in it for us?” is really about “What’s in it for you?”

“What’s in it for you?” perhaps is best explained as one simple principle — cultivating a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.

When Christ calls us to discipleship, He is also calling us to be faithful stewards of our time, talent, and treasure. Our gratitude for these gifts is best expressed through giving a portion of each back to God. Thus, stewardship becomes a way of life that is also the way to holiness. Our relationship



with Christ is what we get in return.

Our efforts as a parish to promote the spiritual benefits of active stewardship are designed to foster a deeper relationship with God for all of us. Membership in a parish family should encourage, support, and celebrate that relationship with the living God, first and foremost. Everything else flows from that.

If we are not focused on our relationship with God, then what will define our spirituality?

If we have embraced the blessings of stewardship as a practical way of being the disciples we are called to be, we will in turn know a deeper relationship with Christ.

We celebrate Thanksgiving this month, which truly is a stewardship holiday since stewardship begins with an attitude of gratitude. I am truly thankful for all that is done here at St. Jude, and for the many parishioners willing to do so much.

In closing, let me share one final thought to help you realize the gift that our parish is to each and every one of us. Be grateful for all you have.

Be generous in giving something back to God.


Be faithful stewards, and you will have done both.

That is what’s in it for you, and in turn, that is what’s in it for us!

And don’t forget — God has been doing this for centuries. We’re just the latest and most fortunate recipients.

Happy Thanksgiving, and may God bless you and your family.

In Christ,

  
Fr. Peter Marshall  
Pastor

## A LOOK AT THE *Enhancing Our Experience of*

**W**hen it comes to our experience of Mass, there is one ministry that most people do not think about, but everyone notices if something goes wrong — the AV Ministry. The members of this ministry work hard to make it easy for everyone to participate in Mass. They manage everything from the big-screen slide shows, the microphone volume, and the livestream of Sunday Mass, Holy Days of Obligation, and special Masses.

Leader Andy Pacholski has seen the AV Ministry evolve and improve. He has witnessed firsthand how this behind-the-scenes ministry helps bring our community together in prayer.

“The AV Ministry exists to support our coming together at Mass,” Andy says. “The biggest positive that I see us offer is that everyone is on the same page, looking up, responding, and praying together.

“I have been to Masses without the large screens with the responses and song lyrics, and one thing I notice is that most people are looking down and do not respond to the priest with as much enthusiasm,” he adds. “There is a noticeable difference when the congregation is looking up and projecting their voices as they respond and sing.”

But there is much more to this ministry than simply

turning the mics on and clicking through the slide show. There are 32 audio inputs requiring balance to ensure a comfortable and quality sound. The team must also account for the types of instruments being played, the number of choir members, and the various microphones within the sanctuary. Additionally, they must adjust the balance of the sound to the number of people in the pews — settings suitable for large crowds will overwhelm smaller Masses.

Yet, when the AV Ministry is doing its job well, it won't even be noticed.

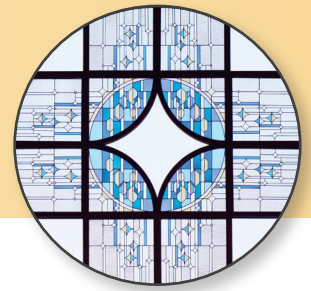
“Our goal is to never distract from Mass but assist in providing a positive experience for those who attend,” Andy says.

To further serve our parish, the ministry livestreams Mass by simultaneously operating three cameras to ensure that every aspect of the Mass is recorded and the people at home feel truly connected to the Holy Sacrifice. Even since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Masses that are uploaded to our parish's YouTube channel get hundreds of views.

“By streaming the Masses, we are doing online evangelization,” Andy says. “I am not sure who is watching



*(From left) Kurt Kramer, Mac Kramer, and Andy Pacholski*



# THE AV MINISTRY

## *the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*

our Masses or why, but I do know that each week we get hundreds of views, and I trust that this service is reaching those who may not be Catholic but are growing in interest or are helping our parishioners grow in faith as they enter into Mass.”

The AV Ministry prides itself on being a crucial part of St. Jude's hospitality efforts. To build the Kingdom of God here on earth, hospitality is the pillar of stewardship that focuses on welcoming people into the kingdom. When people come to Mass, they are literally entering into heaven as Christ makes Himself present in the Eucharist.

Thus, the AV Ministry helps set the stage for us to better recognize Christ and more deeply enter His Holy Sacrifice.

“Being a part of the AV Ministry has changed the way I participate at Mass,” Andy says. “Having the perspective from the AV booth has taught me a lot about the Mass and liturgy. I have had to learn the small details of what is

happening during the liturgy, the traditions, and the substance of the Mass in order to understand and anticipate what is going to come next to prepare the correct audio and visual effects for each moment of the Mass.”

The AV Ministry is always in need of more stewards to assist at each weekend Mass. There are two levels of participation—you can serve as an operator who manages some of the less technical parts of the ministry, like controlling the slideshows, or you can be a programmer who is more proficient in the technical skills to troubleshoot any malfunctions with the soundboard and livestream.

Either way, hands-on training, and thorough mentorship are provided to those who would like to help.

**If you are interested in serving the parish in this way, contact Andy Pacholski directly at 847-366-1995.**

## **The Giving Tree** *continued from front cover*

“It's pretty amazing,” Linda says. “It's really gratifying to see the generosity of our own parishioners and the satisfaction when it's all done. As part of the team, I get to see everyone doing something that makes them better. It's a very physical reminder of serving others.”

Linda encourages parishioners to make the Giving Tree part of their Advent practice, rather than it being another task to check off a busy holiday list.

“Put yourself in their shoes when you are shopping,” Linda says. “Then think about them opening the gift you gave them on Christmas morning and pray for them.”

Last year, so many parishioners participated that we ran out of tags and this year we are increasing to about 300 gift tags. Once gifts have been returned to the parish, volunteers are needed to sort the gifts and deliver them to the partner organizations. Gift cards are also needed as they are often a good choice for seniors who don't have as many material needs.

“This is one of those ministries that fills you up,” Linda says. “The gifts are wrapped with so much care and given a personal touch. We can't do everything but we ought to do something.”

**Please take a gift tag from the Christmas tree beginning Nov. 30. Check the bulletin for other volunteer opportunities.**





## *A Spiritual Stewardship Journey Through Advent*

**T**he Advent season is a cherished time in the Catholic calendar, representing the period of preparation and anticipation leading up to the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. It serves as a reminder that the essence of Christmas transcends materialism and calls for a deeper spiritual connection. Stewardship — which emphasizes responsible and generous use of our time, talents, and treasure — provides a meaningful framework for Catholics to observe Advent in a way that honors the true spirit of the season.

Advent, which typically begins four Sundays before Christmas, is a time of reflection and anticipation. It symbolizes the period when the world awaited the coming of the Messiah, and it invites us to prepare our hearts and minds for the celebration of Christ's birth.

During Advent, Catholics are encouraged to allocate time for prayer and reflection, fostering a sense of mindfulness and spiritual readiness. Make a conscious effort to incorporate daily prayer and reflection into your Advent routine. Meditate on the significance of Christ's coming and how you can better live out His teachings of love and charity. Consider attending Advent retreats or joining a prayer group to deepen your spiritual connection.

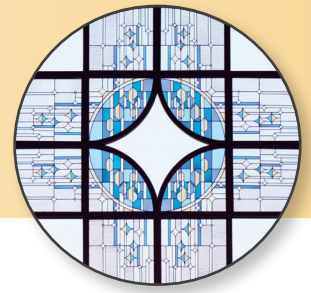
Advent encourages the use of one's talents in service to others. Whether it's participating in charitable activities, visiting the sick, or helping those less fortunate, this is a perfect time to put your unique gifts to good use. Identify your unique talents and find ways to utilize them in the service of others during Advent. If you have musical abilities, join the choir to enhance the beauty of Advent liturgies. If you're skilled in crafting, create handmade

gifts to share with friends and family, emphasizing the personal and thoughtful nature of the season.

While the commercial world focuses on buying and spending, stewardship urges Catholics to evaluate their financial resources. Evaluate your financial resources and commit to a meaningful and generous offering during the Advent season. This could involve contributing to our parish's special Advent collection or donating to a charity that aligns with Catholic values. Remember, it's not about the amount but the intention and sacrifice behind your financial stewardship.

Consider dedicating time to volunteer for Advent activities in our parish, such as organizing events, decorating the church, or participating in a Nativity play. Advent is a time to build community and support one another. Reach out to those in your parish who may be in need, extending a hand of friendship, or providing assistance where necessary. By fostering a sense of unity, you embody the spirit of stewardship.

The celebration of Advent is not simply about counting down the days until Christmas but a journey of spiritual preparation, reflection, and anticipation. By embracing the principles of Catholic stewardship during this sacred season, Catholics can not only prepare for the birth of Christ in a more meaningful way but also enrich their own faith and the lives of those they touch. Through the responsible and generous use of time, talents, and treasure, Advent becomes a time to rekindle the true spirit of Christmas and strengthen the connection with Jesus. In essence, Advent serves as a reminder that living out Catholic stewardship is not just a commitment but a way of life that brings us closer to the heart of Christ.



# *Surviving Divorce Ministry*

## *A Place for Healing and Community in the Face of Painful Circumstances*

**G**oing through divorce or separation can be tough. As Christians, we are all brothers and sisters, called to be there for one another no matter the circumstances. Here at St. Jude Catholic Church, we have a ministry for our brothers and sisters facing a divorce or separation situation called the Surviving Divorce Ministry.

Suzan Moyer Shoemaker and Patti Collins facilitate this ministry. Patti went through the training and led the first group in fall 2022. Patti invited Suzan to go through the training and share facilitating duties.

“God has given me a heart full of compassion, love, understanding, and acceptance for those who have gone through or are experiencing divorce that runs deep,” Suzan says. “So I felt like I had to try to answer the call that God had placed on my heart.”

Suzan admits that if she had this program seven years ago when she was going through a divorce, it would have helped her recover much faster. The 12 sessions focus on finding peace, power, and passion. They also provide important information about annulments and other resources. The videos show real people who have experienced divorce and provide insight into working through various emotions that can come with divorce.

“This ministry provides a safe place for the participants to process their anger, pain, and suffering and not feel alone anymore,” Suzan says. “We need each other, and we need this ministry to help people who are suffering from the devastation that divorce inherently leaves behind.”



*Suzan Moyer Shoemaker*

“This ministry gives them a safe place to share their pain, disappointment, anger, and process what happened and how to move forward,” Patti adds. “It gives them a safe place to reflect on God’s plan for them.”

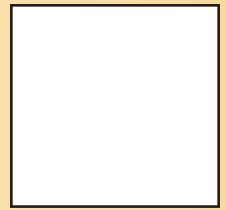
Suzan is so thankful that St. Jude’s has this ministry. There are many people who need this ministry and the support it provides.

“I have seen people’s lives impacted by divorce with little or no support system in place for them,” Suzan says. “It enables the Church to offer healing, love, and acceptance in the Catholic Church rather than making our parishioners feel judged, condemned, and alone.”

Both Suzan and Patti have seen this ministry make a difference for people. It has given people the tools to heal and helped them meet others going through similar things.

“There has been so much healing, growth, understanding of what happened or what is happening now,

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## **MASS SCHEDULE**

### Weekend Mass

Saturday Anticipation — 4:00 p.m.  
Sunday — 7:30 a.m., 10:00 a.m.,  
& 11:45 a.m. (Sept-April)

### Weekday Mass

Monday/Wednesday/Friday — 8:30 a.m.  
Tuesday/Thursday — 6:00 p.m.

### Holy Day Mass

See Bulletin

### Sacrament of Reconciliation

Tuesday/Thursday — 5:00-5:45 p.m.  
Saturday — 3:00-3:45 p.m.  
*Anytime by appointment*

## **Surviving Divorce Ministry** *continued from page 7*

letting go of things that needed to be let go, learning tools to help them handle what they are facing, achievement of true inner peace, bonding with one another, and wonderful support for one another,” Suzan says.

No matter how long ago someone has gone through divorce, this ministry can help. People that are years out have gone through this program, and it has still helped.

“Every person in the first group said that they could not have made it through without this ministry and the people in their group that God brought together,” Suzan says.

So, if you have gone through or are going through a divorce, consider participating in the Surviving Divorce Ministry.

*“This ministry provides a safe place for the participants to process their anger, pain, and suffering and not feel alone anymore.”*

**— SUZAN MOYER SHOEMAKER**

To learn more, contact Patti Collins at  
[pcollins@stjudeindy.org](mailto:pcollins@stjudeindy.org).