



Hello, there! This is being written during the third week of Advent, and I will unabashedly admit that it is my favorite time of year. Sunsets are glorious; the weather is cooler. Days are shorter, and Christmas lights seem to appear like magic, glowing and twinkling, bringing its own joy, proclaiming the light and love of Christ. Sure, that may be a stretch, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Switching gears, and continuing my effort to be more informed about our wonderful liturgies handed down to us through the millennia, here's the next idea I've encountered.

The Golden Calf of the Old Testament

If you're in need of a refresher, the golden calf was created as an icon to be worshiped when Moses stayed too long on the mountain with God. Moses went *up* to the mountain to meet God; the golden calf was created to bring God *down* to the people. Liturgy is not about bringing God down to us. Our liturgies are designed so that we can

rise up to meet God, so that our worship is not one of self-affirmation or self-seeking worship. That kind of worship does not concern itself with God, but in creating our own world. Worship based on self-affirmation becomes pointless, an apostasy—abandonment of a religious belief. “There is no experience of that liberation, which always takes place, when man encounters the living God.”*

How do we prepare for this most Divine Liturgy so as to experience this sense of liberation? How do we “go up” to meet God in the Mass? How does God speak to you during the holy season of Christmas?

May God's love and grace be part of your Christmas and the glorious new year!

Believe with me!
Alexis Couvillon, Editor

*From *the Spirit of the Liturgy*, by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict

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FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

For those of you who like to worry about everything, consider this: Christmas is almost over. Well, Christmas Day is over, but Christmas Season goes all the way to the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord on 1 / 8. If we want to take Jesus seriously then shouldn't we make an effort to keep the true Christmas Spirit alive until 8 January? Let's try. How about this: if this Christmas was one that provided you with joy and pleasure, can you do something for someone who is in darkness? And, if this Christmas was sad, painful and disappointing, can you make a Christ-like effort to do something that will give comfort and help to someone else who is in need rather than focusing on your own burdens?

On 31 December, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. Now what can an old bachelor priest tell you about families? Celebrate the holiness of your family, despite the fact that you're not a *perfect* family. Let each other know that you love them, and that you cherish their love—and ac-

cept their love for you. Come on, you can do it.

Epiphany Sunday (1/7) calls us to recognize the universal mission of Jesus and His Church. The magi were Gentiles—not Jews. Isn't it ironic that they recognized the dignity of Jesus before so many of His own people, the Jews? And, wouldn't it be doubly ironic if we Catholics failed to recognize the love and mercy of Jesus today? It's easy to look at our beautiful faith and know that we have something special. But this "special something" is meant to be preached to the whole world.

We are not supposed to sit inside the church feeling special (and maybe a little bit better than everyone else). No—we're supposed to tell people at work, at school—everywhere, that Jesus is calling the whole world to holiness and salvation. Our faith is not a secret that needs to be kept. It is a message we are commanded to preach to the whole world. Let's not be bashful.

Finally, the season of Christmas ends on Monday, 8 January with the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord. When you and I were baptized, God proclaimed to all the world, through His Church, that we were His. Let's recognize the dignity of being a child of God, and then recognize that dignity in all our brothers and sisters. The more we honor our Lord in them, the more the peace of Christ will be alive in our world.

Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year, in the
love of Him who made and
redeemed the world.

Fr. Douglas Guthrie



Dear Folks & Friends of St. Luke Parish,

I've been asked to provide an update on what's going on in the parish. This is a big question, and no matter how I answer it there will be people who are going to (humbly and arrogantly, all at the same time) insist that I am utterly misguided and don't know what I'm talking about. Well, they are right—some of the time. You see, the problem is that what *they* think is important and needs to be talked about is not necessarily what *I* think is important. Take finances, for example:

- ⇒ We are trying to raise \$3 million for the first phase of our Capital Campaign.
- ⇒ We are trying to sell our Hall Road property to bolster our Capital Campaign so we can construct our Family Life Center on our Riverstone Ranch Drive property.
- ⇒ We are trying to maintain the salaries and benefits of our parish staff so we can keep them.
- ⇒ We are trying to raise money to pay our DSF assessment this year so we don't go into 2024 with a deficit that we'll have to pay out of parish income.
- ⇒ We are trying to maintain our property so it is safe, comfortable, useful and attractive--and enhances our spirituality. This is not cheap.

Are these things important? Well, yes and no—because, if you look at our parish with the eyes of your soul, the first thing you see is people who need to love Jesus better, and you do not need things or money for that. You need money to take care of things so you can use them to make more money to take care of more things... To love Jesus better you simply need to say, as we do every Advent Season, "Come, Lord Jesus."

What I'm talking about is stewardship, which is not simply making more money, but rather acknowledging that I am part of a community—St. Luke parish—that is trying to know, love and serve Jesus and everyone else. In stewardship, the Holy Spirit is saying to each one of us: What can you do for your sisters and brothers and what do you need from them? I think this is our parish's greatest need: to be more open to each other, to the Holy Spirit and to Jesus—and to be more open to ourselves. The more we can do this, the better we can recognize what Jesus and the Spirit are telling us, the better we

OUR PARISH UPDATE



can find healing, meaning and joy and the better we share that with others who need the very same things.

So here, in my opinion, is the state of our parish: We need Jesus more than ever. Please work and pray with me to grow ever closer to Him who died and rose from the dead for all of us. Let us do what we can, the best we can, whether convenient or challenging, to follow the Lord. Finances are important. The cold, hard fact is that we need money to get by, but we need to be acutely aware that it is by uniting ourselves with Jesus in loving our Father and all our brothers and sisters that we are saved. Since this is an almost impossible undertaking, we need each other and, quite simply, that is why Jesus gave us the Church. In the community of the Church we find salvation. Let's be fiscally responsible (tithing), morally responsible (living, working and playing following the model of Jesus) and spiritually responsible (recognizing we are part of the family of our heavenly Father and imitating Jesus more intimately.)

Fr. Douglas Guthrie

THE FOUR PILLARS OF STEWARDSHIP



Hospitality - Christian Kindness

'When I was a stranger, you welcomed me.' Matt 25:35

Jesus Christ teaches that whenever we welcome one of the least of our sisters and brothers, we welcome Christ Himself. Parishioners of a stewardship parish see the face of Christ in one another. A stewardship parish is a welcoming parish regardless of the parish demographics: large or small - urban, suburban, or rural.

Prayer - A Heart to Heart with God

'Prayer is as necessary to our souls as food is to our bodies.' from Characteristics of a Christian Steward, prayer and the sacraments dispose a soul to receive God's abundant graces, which are necessary to grow in holiness. It is through prayer that we nurture our personal relationship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



Formation - Continuous Conversion

'Being a disciple is not just something else to do, alongside many other things suitable for Christians, it is a total way of life and requires continuing conversion.' from US CB's *Stewardship: a Disciple's Response - Pastoral Letter on Stewardship*

Formation is a formidable task, involving education for the mind and conversion of the heart. To know the "stewardship way of life", does not make one live a "stewardship way of life." Ongoing Catholic education is important if we are to grow in our lives as stewards.

Service - Love in Action

'...Amen I say to you, whatever you did for the least of my brothers, you did for me.' Matt. 25:40

Members of a stewardship parish are ready to minister to the varied needs of their own parish family as well as the needs of the wider community and Church. Just as the members of a family come together to help one of their own, a stewardship parish family serves those who are hurting or in need, doubting or seeking salvation. The parish family also comes together to celebrate, thank, and return God's gifts

“Prayer is the root, the fountain,
the mother of a thousand blessings.”

St. John Chrysostom

ALMA'S STORY



Alma Cervantes is our Adult Ministry Coordinator, and we are very grateful for everything that she does to provide in providing us with *so* many learning opportunities. I had the privilege to hear about how she and her family became full-fledged volunteers at St. Luke in mid-2023, and with her permission, I would like to share that beautiful story with you.

Alma and her family have been at St. Luke for many years, and she remembers the day that began their involvement. Frank Chavez, a long-time parishioner who is now deceased, as a greeter before one of our weekend Masses. Mr. Chavez greeted the Cervantes Family so warmly, not just with a handshake, but with a purpose. He asked Alma's seven-year-old at the time to carry the Book of Sunday Readings to the ambo where, the Word of God is proclaimed. It was a task readily accepted by the seven-year-old, but of course, such a young child requires supervision. That's where the father comes in. Dad escorted his son to the ambo and placed the Book of Readings on the ambo with his son. Mr. Chavez, charming gentleman that he was, whispers in Alma's ear, "I really wanted your husband to do that."

Many years later, having received their sacraments and participated in multiple ministries in our vibrant parish, they consider themselves a part of what we do at St. Luke. Dad, Mr. Filiberto Cervantes, is now a candidate in the diocesan diaconate program. His trip to the ambo was a practice session.

Mr. Chavez's legacy of hospitality is part of stewardship, as it is only in our acknowledged gratitude of all that the Lord has given us that we can reach out to our fellow parishioners in a warm, welcome witness of God's love and providence. How many people has Mr. Chavez encouraged by his gift of hospitality?

Consider this a personal invitation to join us at St. Luke. Find a ministry you would like to be a part of and welcome others into the fold.

With prayers for God's continued grace upon our parish family,

Alexis Couvillon

"Jesus, help me to simplify my life by learning what you want me to be—and becoming that person."

St. Therese of Lisieux



RHYTHM OF THE PARISH

By: Marcia Birsinger | 08.02.1996

We cannot force renewal, all we can do
is remain faithful.
People come and people go.
People are healed and people are hurt.
Ideas are born and plans die.
Leaders are raised up and leaders move on.
All in God's time; all in God's time.
Do we see the over-all plan? Not likely.
What are we called to do? Keep faithful.
We are called to love,
Called to move beyond our own strength.
"In Him who is the source of my strength,
I have strength for everything."
Phil 4:13

There is the rhythm of the Parish,
Like the ebb and flow of the tide.
Like the waxing and waning of the moon
or the change of the seasons.
We will be at peace if we go with the flow,
If we ride the crest of the waves like a surfer
then paddle out and wait for the next wave,
always watchful,
always staying in tune with the water around us,
becoming one with it, as we wait.
'The wind blows where it will,
but you do not know where it comes from, or where
it goes.'" John 3:8

So, "Come to me all you who are weary and find
life burdensome;
I will refresh you.
Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from
me,
for I am gentle and humble of heart.
Your souls will find rest.
For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
Mt 11:28-30

"It is not that I have reached it yet,
or have already finished my course;
but am racing to grasp the prize if possible,
since I have been grasped by Christ Jesus.
I do not think of myself as having reached the
finished line.
I give no thought to what lies behind, but push on to
what is ahead.
My entire attention is on the finish line as I run
toward the prize to which God calls me—
life on high in Christ Jesus." Phil 3 12-14

So let the waves go in and out,
the moon wax and wane,
the seasons come and go
as we keep our eyes on the finish line
we will keep our focus and perspective
on Christ, who is the perfecter of everything.

"I know that you can do all things, and that no
purpose of yours can be hindered.
I have dealt with great things that I do not
understand;
Things too wonderful for me, which I cannot
know." Job 42:2-3

Blessed be the Lord!

PHOTOGRAPHS

