

FINANCE COUNCIL GIVES OF TIME AND TALENTS IN SERVICE TO OUR PARISH

The Finance Council is certainly one of the key lay advisory groups in our Families in Faith community. And as a cluster of three churches making up Families in Faith, we have one Finance Council which has representation from all three churches. While it is the pastor who is directly accountable to the bishop for the administration and stewardship of temporal affairs of the parish, an active and well-formed Finance Council is a key element in promoting the financial health of our parish community.

Under the *Catholic Code of Canon Law*, a Parish Finance Council is mandated: "In each parish, there is to be a finance council which is governed, in addition to universal law, by norms issued by the diocesan bishop and in which the Christian faithful, selected according to these same norms, are to assist the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish" (537). In turn, *Canon 532* states clearly that the pastor is the responsible party — decision-making is his responsibility,



with the advice of lay boards like the Finance Council.

"I became involved in the Finance Council because I felt it was a good way to help my parish and support my pastor," says Dennis Bauer from St. Michael, a longtime member of the Finance Council. "We as parishioners have to be willing to step forward to help in all the ways a parish needs. It is a good example of stewardship, as it affords me a way to use my skills and talents in a way that is useful.

"Because I am also a trustee at St. Michael, I meet with Father on a regular basis," he adds. "The entire Council meets quarterly — the day and time vary dependent upon people's schedules."

There are eight lay people on the Council — two from each of the three churches; Marcene Bauer, our office manager, Mary Glesinger, CPA; plus Fr. Antony Thekkekara. The current Finance Council members are Louie Bauer and Patty Harris of Sacred Heart, Dennis Bauer and Tammy Diessner of St. Michael, and Jerry



LIVING OUT *Gratitude* AND *Stewardship* DURING THANKSGIVING AND BEYOND

Every November, as the holiday season fast approaches, we are filled with a deep sense of sentimentality and gratefulness for all the goodness of the past year. At the same time, we encounter many wonderful ways to give — to cheerfully share our own gifts — during this time of Thanksgiving.

It is with this spirit of gratitude that we can truly live out the stewardship way of life. This Thanksgiving, there are plenty of opportunities to do this in a direct way. Is there a new neighbor you haven't met, or someone who might be spending the holiday alone? Invite them over for Thanksgiving dinner. Perhaps you may volunteer at a soup kitchen, or you might donate a Thanksgiving meal to a family in need who wouldn't have one otherwise.

If you go shopping on Black Friday, make it a point the next day to donate old clothes that you or your family members no longer need. And, as the winter draws closer, you might participate in — or even organize — a coat drive, and then gather a small group to go out into the community to give the coats away to homeless shelters and those in need during the

winter months. There are countless such opportunities to live in gratitude and thanksgiving — opportunities that go beyond just having a meal with family and friends on the fourth Thursday of November.

Of course, we must remember that this spirit of thanksgiving does not end after Thanksgiving, nor does it end following Advent and Christmas. We must always consider how to give, even as the sentimental glow of the holiday season fades after the New Year. In January, if there is space at your table, fill it. In February, if there is abundance in your closet, give away from that abundance. In March, if there are volunteers needed at the soup kitchen, rally a team and give of your time. We need a renewed spirit of stewardship and thanksgiving that lasts the whole year so that our giving becomes habitual, and not just seasonal.

This Thanksgiving, ask the Holy Spirit where He is calling you to give. And may the joy of the Thanksgiving season flow into our lives as good stewards, every day and throughout the entire year.

A Letter From Our Pastor

NOVEMBER: A TIME OF FAITHFUL CELEBRATION AND SHARING IN THANKS

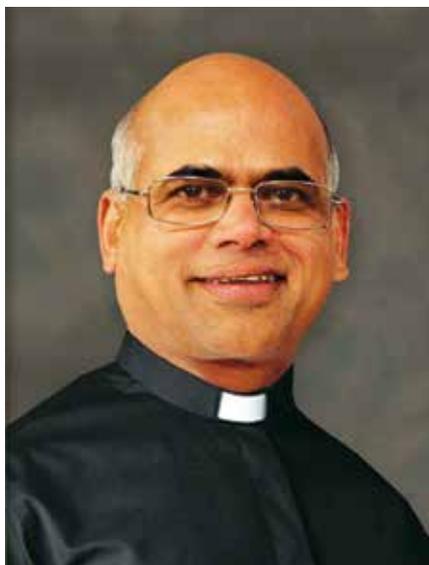
Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As I look over the calendar for November, my mind is filled with thoughts of thanksgiving. These aren't just thoughts about Thanksgiving Day, although I look towards it with happy anticipation — more than that, they are thoughts filled with a variety of reasons for why we should be thankful.

The month begins with a great celebration that should be a day of thanksgiving for all of us — All Saints' Day. This is a great feast celebrating the great company of Christians now in heaven — a company we shall eventually join, whether or not we're formally canonized, if we remain faithful to Christ.

And the communion of saints — the sharing of spiritual goods by those in heaven to us who are still in our pilgrimage — is a great cause for thanksgiving. We read the lives of the saints to be encouraged and inspired by their examples. Plus, we are strengthened by their fellowship in the Body of Christ, and we are aided by their prayers.

And then, the very next day, we celebrate All Souls' Day. Although this day commemorates all the faithful departed who are being purified in Purgatory, it is natural for us to concentrate on the members of our own family and our friends who have died. While we pray for them, that they may soon experience the joys of heaven, at the same time we also are thankful for the love they gave us



and for the faith they passed on to us.

Then, later in the month comes Thanksgiving Day, the national holiday celebrating all the things for which we are thankful. The fact that it comes toward the end of autumn reminds us that it was originally a harvest festival. For Christians today, it's a wholesome reminder that we should thank God for everything we receive, especially the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. Why not participate in the Church's Great Thanks-

giving, the Holy Eucharist, on Thanksgiving Day? It's the ultimate way to give thanks.

A reminder — while much of our attention this month may be drawn to the often contentious goings-on in our country, we need to remember that God is in charge of the universe, even though He has given us free will. If we trust in His loving care, demonstrated by returning to Him a portion of the time, talent and treasure He has entrusted to us, we can withstand the troubles of life. It's a good principle to follow in this month of thanksgiving.

Sincerely yours in Christ and His Mother,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Antony J. Lehke".

Fr. Antony
Pastor

IGNITING CATHOLICS' RELATIONS

If we, as Catholics, are truly going to embrace a life of discipleship, we must first encounter the Person of Jesus Christ — after all, it's impossible to devote one's life to someone they don't first know. Pope Francis reminded us of this truth when he said in a recent Angelus address, "To seek Jesus, to encounter Jesus, to follow Jesus — this is the way." And while this is an ongoing process, movements like Catholics Encounter Christ, or CEC, exist to help us along our way by providing Christians with powerful and personal encounters with Jesus Christ.

"It's a movement designed to strengthen our individual relationships with Christ on an ongoing basis," says women's coordinator Sharon Swett. "It enables us to share the grace of Jesus' love with others through our words, deeds and actions."

Sharon attended her first CEC in 2012 with her sister. Profoundly impacted by the experience, she eagerly became a team member the following year and has remained involved ever since. Describing

the ministry as a "true blessing," Sharon says that this weekend experience helps people become more committed to Christ and His Church as they come to know and love Him more fully.

"It's a wonderful opportunity to grow closer to God," Sharon says. "CEC calls members to make a commitment to Christ, to direct their whole life to God, and to bring other to Christ. The weekend helps clarify why we are really here and what our purpose on earth is."

Always beginning on a Friday evening and concluding Sunday night, the weekend retreat includes opportunities for fellowship and discussion, spiritual talks given by priests and laity, reception of the sacraments, and time for personal prayer and reflection. This in turn allows participants to fall more deeply in love with the Church as they come to know God better and recognize their God-given gifts and talents.

"I don't think I fully understood what it meant



Not only are participants spiritually fed, says Sharon Swett, but they also often walk away from the weekend with lifelong friendships.



Gathering at a recent women's Catholics Encounter Christ Weekend



HIP WITH CHRIST THROUGH CEC

to be a Catholic or to be a true follower of Jesus until I attended a CEC weekend,” Sharon says. “I have grown tremendously as a Christian and have experienced the joy of watching others grow, too, through the CEC movement. For some, the weekend has a powerful effect immediately, while for others it plants a small seed that can continue to help them grow closer to Christ by following the CEC way.”

Catholics Encounter Christ’s unique combination of formation and evangelization helps ensure

that each and every person, no matter their circumstances or background, walks away from the retreat with something. And in the process, participants are often blessed with lifelong friendships, strengthening them in the faith journey.

“CEC is a community filled with loving and caring people,” Sharon says. “Over the years, I have been blessed to meet and become friends with some truly wonderful women.”

We invite all members of our Families in Faith community to consider attending an upcoming Catholics Encounter Christ weekend. The next women’s weekend is scheduled for Feb. 22-24, while the men will gather March 29-31. The cost for the retreat is \$150. For more information, please contact Sharon Swett at 308-653-5402.

FINANCE COUNCIL GIVES OF TIME AND TALENTS IN SERVICE TO OUR PARISH *continued from front cover*

Smith and Deb Eschliman of St. Theresa.

“As I mentioned, the Council stands as an excellent example of stewardship — people giving of their time and talents in service to others in the parish and to the parish itself,” Dennis says. “Our three churches have been working together for 10 years, and we have combined a number of ministries. However, each church operates independently also. The Finance Council is another example of how we all come together to help Families in Faith and Father. The Council works to ensure financial integrity of all choices and systems involving our three churches.”

While the Finance Council does not have

decision-making authority, consultation is at the heart of the decision-making process for the administration and stewardship of the temporal goods of the parish. The Finance Council is oriented to sharing information, listening, contributing to the discussion, and promoting consensus.

“The relationship between the Pastor and the Council is one of support and collaboration,” Dennis says. “The authority of the Pastor is not diminished by the establishment of the Finance Council. We need to be clear on that. We are supportive and not confrontational, and that is a great gift — and another example of the Holy Spirit at work.”

If you would like more information, please contact Fr. Antony Thekkekara at the St. Michael parish office, 308-497-2662.

ST. CHARLES BORROMEEO: AN EXAMPLE OF LIVING COMPLETELY FOR THE LORD

One important aspect of stewardship – of involvement in parish life and our community – is understanding our own personal vocation. One saint especially embodies this key aspect of stewardship. St. Charles was a model priest, and many priests and clergy-in-training look to his life as an example of how to live completely for the Lord. Let us look to his example as we serve our own faith family and community.

When St. Charles Borromeo died at the age of 46, he had accomplished more than most clergy twice his age. St. Charles is credited with the continuation and completion of the Council of Trent in 1562, extensive reformation within the Archdiocese of Milan and beyond, and the creation of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine – the forerunner of the modern Religious Education system. St. Charles possessed a fierce love for the Church, especially for the people under his spiritual care – the Archdiocese of Milan.



He was born in 1538 to the powerful noble family Borromeo. But rather than live the life of a noble, St. Charles chose instead to serve the Church.

As a young man, St. Charles received the clerical tonsure — a hairstyle where the top of the head is shaved, common among religious orders — and studied at a Benedictine abbey near his hometown of Arona, Italy. His uncle, Cardinal Giovanni Angelo de' Medici, was elected Pope in 1559, and took the name Pius IV. Shortly after becoming pope, Pius IV appointed St. Charles to serve as secretary of state, as well as cardinal-deacon and administrator of the Archdiocese of Milan. At the time, St. Charles was still a layperson. While serving in these positions, he encouraged the pope to reconvene the Council of Trent, an ecumenical gathering during which Church leaders corrected various abuses and sought to more clearly define elements of Catholic doctrine.

In 1563, St. Charles was ordained to the priesthood during a secret ordination ceremony. Following the death of his older brother, Count Federico Borromeo, St. Charles' family had urged him to

marry and carry on the Borromeo name. However, St. Charles felt that God was calling him to serve the Church, and continued to fulfill his vocation.

Shortly after becoming a priest, St. Charles was appointed by Pope Pius IV as Archbishop of Milan. Historians say the people of Milan rejoiced under St. Charles' leadership and spiritual guidance — he was the first bishop in 80 years to actually live in Milan and minister to its people himself. Under his rule, Milan

became a model diocese that was revered throughout the Catholic world.

Due to his great intellect, St. Charles was often called away from Milan to help the pope in various ways. However, despite his busy life, St. Charles continued to push reformation among clergy and sought to continually improve the ministry of the Church. He often encouraged clergy to spend time educating and spiritually renewing themselves. During a homily at a diocesan synod, St. Charles addressed the priests saying, "Are you in charge of a parish? If so, do not neglect the parish of your own soul, do not give yourself to others so completely that you have nothing left for yourself. You have to be mindful of your people without becoming forgetful of yourself."

St. Charles was a true servant of the people. As the plague of 1576 ravaged much of Milan, he remained with his people, serving the sick and dying in hospitals throughout the archdiocese.

St. Charles Borromeo died Nov. 3, 1584. He was canonized in 1610, and his feast day is celebrated each year on Nov. 4.

MEET THE NEKOLICZAK FAMILY

PASSING ON THE FAITH THROUGH INVOLVEMENT AND SERVICE

We are no doubt familiar with the phrase “it runs in the family” — from physical traits, to career paths, to funny habits or quirks, some things just get passed from one generation to the next. For the Nekoliczak family, who has been involved at Sacred Heart for decades, the legacy of service is what is being passed along.

Ted Nekoliczak has been a parishioner his whole life, and his wife, Rachelle, joined the parish when she was baptized in fifth grade. Both from Greeley, the couple went to elementary school together and started dating in high school. They’ve been married for 11 years, and have five children.

“For me, it’s always been a family thing,” Ted says. “Growing up, our entire extended family was always at church on Sunday.”

Today, the family serves the parish in a variety of different ways. Both Ted and Rachelle are hospitality ministers, Ted serves as a lector, and Rachelle is part of the Stewardship Committee and has served as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. Their kids are involved as altar servers, and also help with hospitality alongside their parents. Rachelle and their middle child, a daughter, even join other mothers and daughters who work together to decorate the church.

“Over time, we just became more and more involved,” Rachelle says. “When you’re young and you have young kids, sometimes you’re scared to be involved in the church or take too much on, because you have little ones or you don’t have the time. But now that our kids are getting a little bit older and they can help in the church, we’ve become more involved.”

For Ted and Rachelle, being a model of service is one of the most important things they can do to help instill the faith in their children.



For Ted and Rachelle Nekoliczak, being a model of service is one of the most important things they can do to help instill the faith in their children.

“Sometimes you just show your kids, you don’t necessarily preach to them,” Rachelle says. “Just setting the good example of, when there’s something to be done at church, we step in and do it. My family wasn’t huge into the Catholic Church. I didn’t see that [growing up], but Ted’s family was great stewards in our parish. They led by example, and that was something that made me want to be a better Catholic and volunteer more.”

The Nekoliczaks encourage other families to make a priority of their faith and to not allow

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MEET THE NEKOLICZAK FAMILY *continued from page 7*

past circumstances or fear of judgment to keep them from the Church.

“Our church is a loving place and everyone is at different points in their lives,” Rachelle says. “Just because you’ve been away from the church doesn’t mean you’re any less than anyone else. We’re all sinners. And God loves everyone.”

“Don’t be afraid,” Ted says. “The church is welcoming and warm to new people. We’re happy you’re there.”

“And don’t be embarrassed about how your kids act or anything like that,” he adds. “We like

to see those babies and hear them because it means that our church is alive and growing.”

“God wants all of His children to be there,” Rachelle says.

They also hope that families will find ways to give to the parish in service, and reap the benefits.

“Just do what you can, when you can,” Rachelle says. “Sometimes, the more involved you are, the more you are willing to do anything for your parish, the more you love your parish.”

“Our faith has definitely deepened by doing more,” Ted says.

“Just do what you can, when you can. Sometimes, the more involved you are, the more you are willing to do anything for your parish, the more you love your parish.”

— RACHELLE NEKOLICZAK

MASS SCHEDULE:

5 p.m. Saturday - St. Michael in Spalding | **7 a.m. Sunday** - St. Michael in Spalding
9 a.m. Sunday - Sacred Heart in Greeley | **11 a.m. Sunday** - St. Theresa in Ericson