

## FR. LAWRENCE VADAKKAN SHARES HIS VOCATION JOURNEY

*‘I AM HAPPY TO HELP OUT HOWEVER I AM NEEDED HERE’*

As Fr. Lawrence Vadakkan was growing up in Kerala, India, he was touched by the tender mercy and providence of God in an extraordinary way.

“For three years, on every third Friday of the month, we would have Mass, offered at our home,” he says. “This was while our parish was acquiring a new church building. It helped me get to know priests well and sowed a seed of love for the priestly life in my heart. I would say this was the first time I began to feel the call to the priesthood. It was such a blessing for our family.”

Looking back, Fr. Lawrence is deeply grateful for the beautiful, devout family with which God blessed him.

“My parents were devout Catholics, and there is no doubt in my mind that they helped nurture my vocation,” he says. “I had three brothers and two sisters, but I lost one of my younger brothers in an accident in 2004, so there are only five of us left. All of my siblings



*Fr. Lawrence Vadakkan*

live in India.”

Over time, young Lawrence began to sense that Our Lord was calling him to a profoundly special and meaningful way of life — one that would mirror His very own. Seeking to follow His beloved will for his life, he entered a seminary of the Salesians of Don Bosco in India.

“I was in the same class as Fr. Antony, and we studied philosophy and theology together, preparing ourselves for priestly ministry,” he says. “I really enjoyed my time in seminary, especially all of the opportunities I had to come to know Christ intimately and learn about His life.”

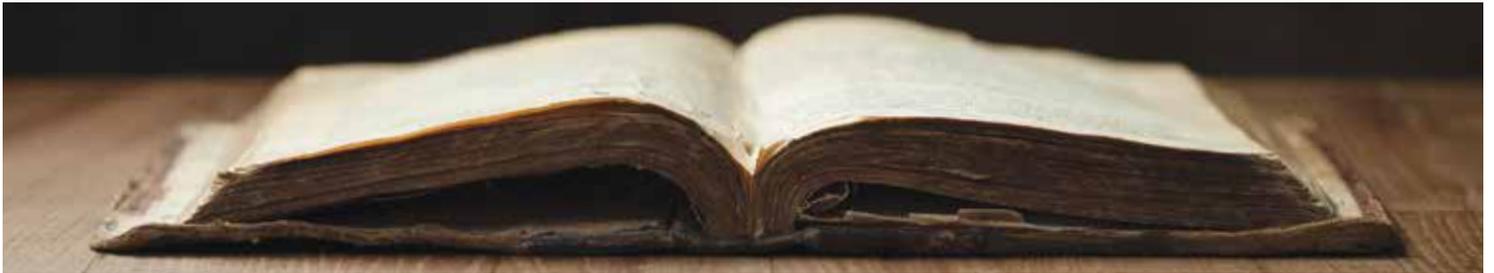
Since his ordination to the Eternal Priesthood of Jesus Christ in 1990, Fr. Lawrence has had many inspiring moments.

“After working in a school in India for six years, I then went to Sicily for 10 years, due to the lack of priestly vocations there,” he says. “The agreement was that I could study there

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# THE BIBLE

## THE TEXTBOOK OF STEWARDSHIP



**H**ave you ever wished that life came with an instruction manual? What a valuable resource that would be! Whenever you find yourself running in circles, this instruction manual would give you step-by-step instructions on how to fix the problem and reroute your course.

Well, here's some good news. For those living a Christian life, there *is* such a manual — the Bible.

Sometimes referred to as the “textbook of stewardship,” the Bible is a bountiful resource for the present-day Christian. Written by anointed prophets and sages, this collection of divinely inspired parables, poems and letters is full of testimonials that express the blessings that come from true discipleship, conveyed through lives of stewardship.

Stewardship is not a new concept. The Bible gives proof to this claim through passages such as the 26<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy. We read Moses' words, as he tells the Israelites to offer the choicest portions of their harvest to God: “When you have come into the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you as a heritage, and have taken possession and settled in it, you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land the LORD, your God, is giving you; put them in a basket and go to the place which the LORD, your God, will choose as the dwelling place for his name... Now, therefore, I have brought the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, LORD, have given me.’ You shall set them before the LORD, your God, and you shall bow down before the LORD, your God” (Dt 26:1-2, 10).

St. Paul briefly touches on the essence of stewardship when he said, “In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus

who himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35).

Again, in St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, we read about living a life of Christian stewardship: “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:6-7).

While this is well and good, what does it mean for the present-day Christian? Why should it matter that the Bible alludes to stewardship in various passages? It shows us that Christians and Jews have struggled with and benefitted from the concept of stewardship for thousands of years. It ties the message of stewardship to the role of a Christian disciple. It gives proof that stewardship and discipleship go hand-in-hand. It offers encouragement to us, that stewardship is in fact a foundational component of the Christian life, a way of life that one of the founding fathers of the Church — St. Paul — preached about and advocated.

The Bible is indeed the textbook of stewardship. It lays out the steps we must take to become true disciples of Christ. Reading and meditating upon God's Word is always a fruitful exercise. Those who regularly delve into Scripture often develop a deeper understanding of Who God is, how and why He loves us, and how we can show Him our love in return.

As you strive to become a grateful steward and live the life of Christian discipleship, develop a love for Sacred Scripture. Allow God's Word to nourish your soul regularly, and watch as stewardship changes from a foreign concept to an integral component of your daily life.

*A Letter From Our Pastor*

# THE MONTH OF MARY: A TIME FOR CELEBRATION AND JOY

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In the Catholic Church, we designate a particular devotion for each month — and May is when we honor our Blessed Mother Mary. Thus, this is a good time for us to think about and concentrate on our devotion to the Mother of God. Perhaps we can add a few more Marian prayers to our daily routine. Praying the Rosary might be even more important. Of course, that assumes that daily prayer is part of our daily routine — which it should be.

Our Blessed Mother is important to our faith and our Church. Her willingness to serve in a way that allowed the

Lord to take human form made our salvation a possibility. Because of her complete trust in God, she lived her life free from sin, and after her life, she was assumed into heaven by the power of God and crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth.

She is, of course, not divine. We worship only our Lord Jesus Christ, but we honor Mary as a saint, and also in many other ways. We honor God when we remember the role of Mary in our salvation. Devotion to Mary always leads to Jesus Christ Himself.

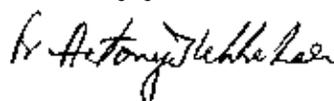
Mary was joyous when she said “yes” to God. That is the kind of joy we need to seek — and we, too, must say “yes” to the Lord. Let us be grateful to Mary for bringing us her Son. This is why we crown her on our Catholic version of Mother’s Day. Through Mary, we are given an invitation into the Catholic fold. Her feminine presence and the safety of her motherhood may help us grow.

For most of us, this time of year is a month of growth in relation to nature. It is difficult not to have May as one of our favorite months for so many reasons. May is a beautiful time. We are called to make it even more beautiful, and we can do that as we serve and love one another.

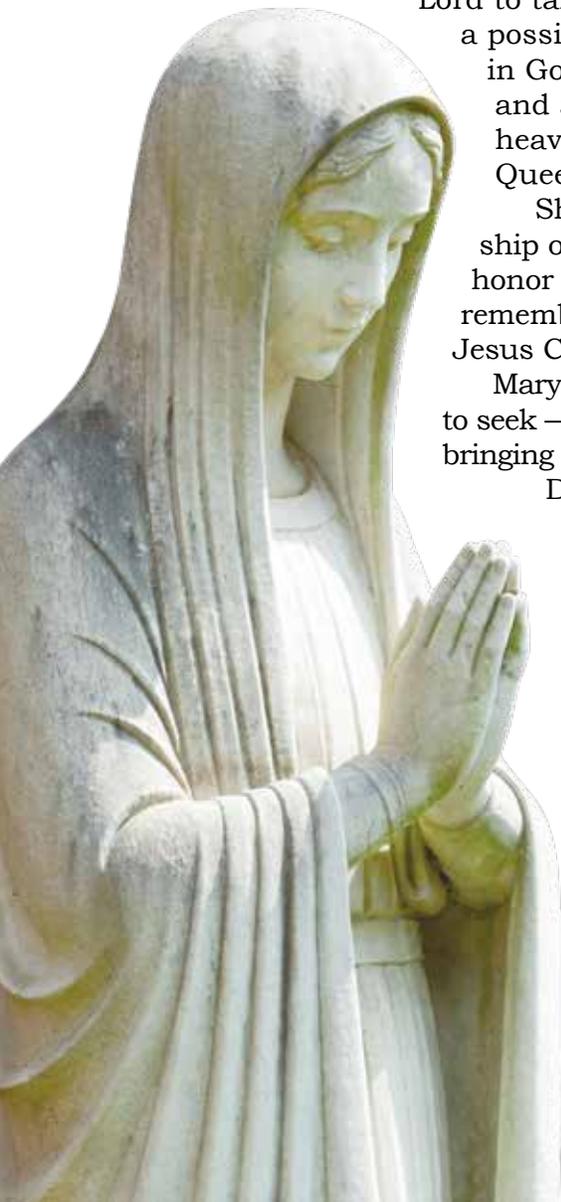
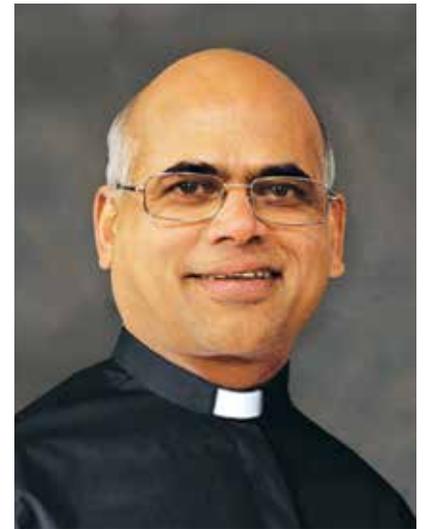
I am deeply blessed to be your pastor. I may say that often, but it is true. My priesthood has been a blessing and serving you all has made that blessing even more significant.

I pray for you daily. Please pray for me. God bless you and keep you always.

Sincerely yours in Christ and His Mother,



Fr. Antony  
Pastor



# THE 2022 PARISH GOLF TOURNAMENT

## COMBINING THE FUN OF GOLF AND THE CAUSE OF CHARITY

The time to dust those clubs off and get back into the swing of things is almost here. The annual St. Michael Parish Golf Tournament is just around the corner, and it is going to be bigger than ever.

This year's tournament will be held on June 25 and June 26 at the Cottonwood Greens Golf Course in Spalding, Neb. The two-day, multi-tier tournament will surely deliver an exciting, prize-filled, and entertaining experience to every golfer. And the best part about this weekend is that all of the proceeds go to St. Michael's Parish.

Scott Glaser, a parishioner of St. Michael's, has been attending the golf tournament for many years and has taken the reins in planning the event for the last couple of years. The tournament for him is much more than just a Church fundraiser. It is a time to reconnect with friends, meet new people and enjoy the amazing community that the Families in Faith parishes have to offer.

"Everyone is out there to have a good time," Scott says. "The golf is fun, and the camaraderie is

amazing. At the end of the day, everyone is gathered around a fantastic meal, talking, relaxing, and winning prizes. The atmosphere is laid back, and it is awesome to see everyone come together."

Since the year 2000, the tournament has been uniting the parish community around the links and raising funds for St. Michael's overhead costs.

"Golf tournaments in Spalding have always been a big hit and it just made sense to combine the fun of the tournament with the noble cause of supporting the Church," Scott says.

The tournament has historically raised around \$10,000 to \$12,000 each year, which goes toward the operating costs of St. Michael Parish. Often the money raised is used for overhead expenses, building repair costs, and building improvement projects.

"We are working hard to get sponsorships early so that this year we can set a fundraising record of \$15,000," Scott says.

All are welcome and encouraged to enter the tournament. Your golfing ability is not important.

"I see a lot of people out there who are golfing for the first time all year," Scott says. "People from all over come out to the tournament and many even plan their whole summer vacation around the event. I know people who come from out of town and travel quite a way to enjoy the tournament.

"I think the reason why the tournament has been so successful is that we keep such a level playing





# GOLF TOURNAMENT

## USE OF SUPPORTING OUR FAITH COMMUNITY

field,” he adds. “The prize money is very exciting, and it is fun to watch people who never thought that they would have a shot at the top prizes win.”

The tournament is centered around camaraderie. Golfers can expect to experience a top-notch tournament. Each day of the tournament starts with a light meal and check-in where golfers receive a

tournament shirt, golf tees, and balls. Once the rules and regulations are covered, it is time to golf. Teams set out onto the course where they will not only experience great golf but also flag prizes, snacks, and bars, which are stationed throughout the course.

Join the nearly 150 golfers for this year’s parish golf tournament!

*Sign-up sheets will be distributed in May and can be found at the parish and the pro-shop of the Cottonwood Greens Golf Course. Also, stay on the lookout for more information on Facebook and other social media.*

*And if golfing is not your thing, but you would still like to be a part of the fun, you can volunteer! Assistants for check-in, bartenders and other volunteers are needed. For more information on being a volunteer or participating in the tournament, please contact Scott Glaser directly at 308-370-1416.*

## FR. LAWRENCE VADAKKAN SHARES HIS VOCATION JOURNEY

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for two years, and if I liked the mission I could stay as long as I wanted. I chose to stay there and work at a social service center, where I came across many people from Ghana and Sri Lanka who wanted me to offer Mass. Every weekend, I ended up offering one Mass in Italian, one in Tamil, and one in English. It was a very interesting, amazing experience!”

For a period of 10 years, each year he would spend two and a half months serving and offering Masses in the United States; nine months in Italy, and two weeks in India.

Ultimately, he found that by serving others generously through the priesthood, his heart was renewed and refreshed along the way.

“I loved working with people from different cultures and continents,” he says. “It seemed

like my mission was going out to the whole world! I felt I could embrace all of humanity as Jesus did.”

For the past few months, Fr. Lawrence has been leading our Families in Faith community while Fr. Antony has been on sabbatical in Rome.

“Fr. Antony is very happy I came, and I am happy to help out however I am needed here,” he says. “One thing I like about this parish is that it is set in a smaller town with parishioners who are hardworking people, such as farmers. Everyone seems to know everyone, and they are very good people.”

After he wraps up his time with us in July, Fr. Lawrence will be returning to India, where he serves in a community, teaching Religion and hearing Confessions.

# VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2022: THIS SUMMER'S PROGRAM WILL BE "MONUMENTAL"

A common sentiment around summer vacation is "the kids don't get to see their friends!" That's why Vacation Bible School (VBS) — set for this summer at St. Theresa's Parish Hall, June 8-10 — is the perfect opportunity for our Families in Faith youngsters not only to meet with their friends but also to make new ones, all while building their friendship with God.

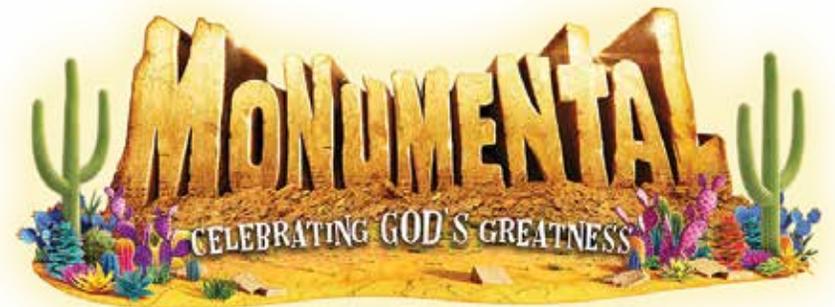
Announcements for the dates are appearing in the weekly bulletins so parents can make sure to register their children.

With the theme "Monumental: Celebrating God's Greatness," our children will learn about their faith and relationship with God through a host of fun activities.

"Vacation Bible School is a great way for kids to learn about their faith and relationship with God," says Jeri Wright, VBS coordinator. "The content of our VBS program uses Bible points, Bible verses, and Bible stories in a way that is easy for kids to understand and relate to. This makes learning about God exciting and fun for our youth! Vacation Bible School is also a great tool to share God's love with families outside of our parish. We want everyone to feel welcome and join us at Vacation Bible School!"

During VBS, the kids will enjoy interactive games, songs, Bible adventures, and snacks as they learn about God's greatness. Each day's activities will help kids understand how awesome our God is.

"Vacation Bible School makes learning about God fun and exciting," Jeri says. "Kids are able to meet and create new relationships



with other children that share the same beliefs."

To make VBS successful, a team of dedicated volunteers works both behind the scenes and throughout the week. There are many ways to volunteer, from decorating and donating supplies or snacks, to volunteering to be a group leader.

"Many of our volunteers will tell you that they get just as much out of VBS as the kids!" Jeri says. "There is nothing better than seeing the joy and excitement in the kids as they learn about God. The VBS crew is always looking for more volunteers!"

Besides offering important faith lessons to our parish children, there are also positive effects in the parish community that blossom from the Vacation Bible School program.

"Hosting VBS in the summer months has been a great way to get kids from the parish, community, and surrounding communities excited to learn about God," Jeri says. "Over the past few years, the VBS numbers have grown tremendously. It has been fun to watch kids from the different parishes in Families in Faith make new friends and grow in their relationship with God."

*VBS will be June 8-10. Please check the weekly bulletin for more information. Anyone who would like to volunteer for this year's VBS program may contact Jeri Wright at 402-340-7138.*

# THE FAITH JOURNEY OF ST. PHILIP NERI

## PATRON SAINT OF HOLY FUN

Can a saint have fun on the way to attaining holiness?

Many would say that St. Philip Neri definitely fits that bill.

Born in 1515 in Florence, Italy, St. Philip Neri showed his fun side from the time he was a boy. One such incident almost cost him his life. Seeing a donkey loaded with fruit for market, the impulsive and spontaneous little boy jumped on the donkey's back. Surprised, the donkey lost his footing, and along with the fruit and young Philip, tumbled into a cellar. Miraculously, Philip was unhurt.

Philip's father struggled financially, so 18-year-old Philip was sent to work with an older cousin who was a successful businessman. During this time, Philip found a favorite place to pray in a spot upon a mountain that had been turned into a chapel.

During these hours of prayer, Philip is said to have decided to leave worldly success behind and dedicate his life to God.

Eventually, Philip went to Rome. In 1548, Philip formed a confraternity with other laymen to minister to pilgrims who came to Rome without food or shelter. The



spiritual director of the confraternity convinced Philip he could do even more work as a priest. After receiving instruction from this priest, Philip was ordained in 1551.

As a young priest, Philip learned to love to hear confessions. Young men especially found in him the wisdom and direction they needed to grow spiritually. But Philip began to realize these young men needed something more than absolution — they needed guidance. So, Philip began to ask the young men to come by in the early afternoon when they would discuss spiritual readings, and then stay for prayer in the evening.

Philip understood it wasn't enough to tell young people not to do something — you had to give them

something to do in its place. So, at Carnival time, when the worst excesses were encouraged, Philip organized a pilgrimage to the Seven Churches with a picnic, accompanied by instrumental music for the midday break. After walking 12 miles in one day, everyone was too tired to be tempted!

Philip was known to be spontaneous and unpredictable, charming and humorous. He seemed to sense the different

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## FAMILIES IN FAITH

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# THE FAITH JOURNEY OF ST. PHILIP NERI

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ways to bring people to God. One man came to the Oratory just to make fun of it. Philip wouldn't let the others throw him out or speak against him. He told them to be patient, and eventually the man became a Dominican. On the other hand, when he met a condemned man who refused to listen to any pleas for repentance, Philip didn't try gentle words. Instead, Philip grabbed the man by the collar and threw him to the ground. The move shocked the criminal into repentance and he made a full confession.

Humility was the most important virtue he tried to teach others, as he continually worked to learn it himself. Some of his lessons in humility seem cruel, but they were tinged with humor — like practical jokes — and were related with gratitude by the people

they helped. His lessons always seemed to be tailored directly to what the person needed.

Philip did not escape this spiritual mortification himself. As with others, his own humbling held humor. There are stories of him wearing ridiculous clothes or walking around with half his beard shaved off. The greater his reputation for holiness, the sillier he wanted to seem.

But Philip was very serious about prayer. He was so easily carried away that he refused to preach in public and could not celebrate Mass with others around. But when asked how to pray, his answer was, "Be humble and obedient and the Holy Spirit will teach you."

Philip died in 1595 after a long illness. His feast day is on May 26, just in time to kick off the season of summertime fun.

## 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