

FR. JOHN'S DIGITAL QUILL FOR SPIRITUAL MUSINGS AND PARISH NEWS

Confessional Use

For many years, the main confessional the priests of the parish have used has been the confessional behind the organ counsel. With the expansion in our music instruments, some have voiced concern about confessions being heard so close to where the musicians set up for Mass.

Beginning this weekend, we will shift the main confessional used for confessions. Confessions will now be heard in the confessional nearest the statue of St. Joseph. We will keep a note on the door of the previously used confessional for awhile to remind people of this change.

Confession is a powerful experience of the Lord looking on us with mercy. I hope that this change at the beginning of the Advent season will encourage many to consider coming to confession this Advent.

First Week of Advent

This week begins a new church year with the First Sunday of Advent. With the Universal Church, we await the coming of the Messiah: at Christmas, daily in our lives, and at the end of time.

As a parish, we will focus this year on growing in our personal relationships with Christ. To do this, we will have three different offerings to help people:

- In the Advent mailings, we have included the pamphlet on the ARRR form of prayer. I will preach on this at all of the Masses this weekend. I encourage you to consider adding this format to your prayer routine this Advent.
- We will also have three separate prayer groups in which we can mutually support one another in our prayer lives and pray with one another. Deacon Bob will have a prayer group meeting on Sunday evenings at 6:00pm. I will host a prayer group on Mondays at 2:00pm. Ms. Pam Hager, who recently completed the lay formation program, will host a prayer group on Tuesdays at 9:30am. All of these groups will meet in church and the meetings will last no longer than one hour.
- We will also add a time for Eucharistic Adoration on Mondays from 3:00-9:00pm as well as on the Wednesdays of Advent.

I pray that this Advent will be a time for our parish to know the Lord more personally as we prepare to greet Him as He enters our world this Christmas.

All Things New Planning Maps

The maps that were released for our planning area during the All Things New Listening Sessions in late October are now available. If you need a hard copy, please contact the parish office. Due to the number of color pages, we will not print copies to put at the doors of the church.

Auction

Thank you for your prayerful support of our auction committee this past week. After conversation, we have decided that we will have a regular auction for our parish this year, including both an oral and a silent auction. We will also have a Fund-A-Need to further enhance security by adding some additional cameras to our building as well as to install a key fob system for the entire building.

We look forward to this annual event in February!

#IGiveCatholic

This week on Tuesday will be the annual #IGiveCatholic. This year, we will be raising funds for some security items needed for our school community. These items will help to enhance some of the security needs of our school from emergency buckets to door coverings. Thank you for considering to help this cause.

Amazon Smile

Lastly, as you begin your shopping for Christmas, please remember to use Amazon Smile! Please visit smile.amazon.com and select us as your charity of choice in the Amazon App!

I will see you online or in Church! - Fr. John
#SRAstrong

Stewardship Reflection on Gratitude

By: David Baranowski, Director of Parish Stewardship & Leadership Formation
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Do you struggle with prayer? Do you know other people that have difficulty praying? If so, start with gratitude. Simply thank God for all the people, things, and events that happen to you throughout the day. Start from the second you wake up until the second you fall asleep. Be in the moment: thank God right then and there, be specific, and speak clearly and concisely. (“Thank you God for this warm Monday morning. Thank you God for my wife, Sharon.” And, so on throughout the day). Soon, you will find yourself praying all day long. It’s like holding a running conversation with God, and it changes every day based on the circumstances in your life. Over time, you will begin to see God’s active presence in your life and what began out as simply saying “thank you” now evolves into friendship, which continues to evolve into love for God and neighbor.

Prayer is a two-way street. When you pray, you are thanking God for His gifts, but it also opens your heart to receive God’s gifts. Gratitude is a choice and it starts when you recognize that you received a gift. God is constantly sending gifts; however, many times your heart is closed to receive them. Your ingratitude prevents you from recognizing God’s love and your relationship with Him fades away. Prayer changes you; it doesn’t change God. God loves you no matter what you do. Prayer transforms you to be more God-centered and other-centered, and less self-centered.

It’s easy to recognize and receive gifts when we consider them “good.” The hard part is thanking God for the trials and tribulations in our lives. God is a good Father and like any parent He wants the best for His children. So, sometimes we don’t see the immediate benefit of things we don’t like. Think back to how many times you have said to your children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews, “You will thank me later for this.” Here’s an example. Many of us pray for more patience. However, that doesn’t mean that God is suddenly going to surround us with people who agree with us. In fact, the opposite may happen; we may find ourselves interacting with people that think completely different from us. Why? We won’t grow in patience with people that agree with us. But we will have to demonstrate more patience with those that don’t agree with us. We grow in a virtue when we have to practice it. We do not grow in a virtue if we never have to use it.

When we grow in gratitude, we are thankful for both the high points and the low points because we recognize that God is encouraging us to be more like Him. There is a lesson to be learned in all circumstances. Grateful people see God’s blessings and give thanks. Ungrateful people take things for granted or, worse, think they deserve nothing but good things in their lives. How important is it to grow in gratitude? The word “Eucharist” – the source and summit of the Catholic faith – means “thanksgiving.”

Gratitude not only helps us spiritually, but also mentally and physically. Mentally, gratitude improves personality, mental health, emotional well-being, social life, and happiness. Physically, gratitude improves sleep, blood pressure, immunity, heart health, brain activity, and energy level. Additionally, gratitude has a direct impact on generosity. Grateful people share more than ungrateful people. Generosity is really a by-product of gratitude.

How can we cultivate gratitude? We can:

- Develop a daily prayer routine – without God we can do nothing. A great gratitude prayer is Matthew Kelly’s “prayer process.”
- Write a gratitude journal – start a daily journal of things we are grateful for (good and bad).
- Show gratitude – do intentional small acts of kindness every day, throughout the day.
- Exercise gratitude – close our eyes for several minutes: think of all the people God has put in our lives, think of all talents God has given us, finally, think how these people and talents (gifts) have given us the lives we have.

Regardless of our own individual circumstances, we all have a lot to be grateful for. We all have been given a lot of gifts. We are reminded by St. Paul in his first letter to the Thessalonians, “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.”