

St. Michael's Parish Newsletter

A Welcoming Eucharistic Community, Sharing Faith and Reaching Out to All.



Dear Parishioners,

On behalf of the Pastoral Team I want to wish you and your family the blessings of this Christmas season. In the midst of the noise and rushing around, we pause to recall that day when God took on human flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary. The name He took was Jesus, a name which means "one who saves us from our sin."

The Christmas story remains just that unless we remember that it includes Christ's death on Good Friday and resurrection on Easter Sunday. Unless we put the whole story together, we miss the point of Christmas. This is called the Pascal Mystery and each Sunday, year in and year out, we celebrate that mystery when we gather together for the Eucharist. We come to hear God speak to us in scripture and to offer Christ in sacrifice. Jesus continues to serve us as He feeds us with His Body and Blood to nourish us for our journey of life.

Our call then, as followers of Christ, is to nourish one another with the Bread of Life. Every day we are offered many opportunities to make Christ present in the world through our words and actions - in our homes, in our workplaces and in our community.

I have been pastor of St. Michael's for a year and a half now and I feel privileged to shepherd you. This is a wonderful parish where many people share their gifts to serve their brothers and sisters in Christ. I realize that St. Michael's is also a large parish and that it can sometimes be difficult to get to know other parishioners. This newsletter and our new website are ways in which we can reach out and communicate with one another. I want to thank all those who have helped in the preparation of the newsletter and in the development of the website.

In closing, May the Lord bless you and keep you

May the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you

May the Lord uncover His face to you and give you His peace. (Numbers 6:22-26)

Fr. Murray

Our Website is Launched!

by Mona Lam-Deslippe

Life can become very busy with children, work, parents, soccer games, music lessons, and the list goes on. It is challenging to keep a balance in our lives and stay connected with our parish community. The parish is striving to use technology to reach out to our parishioners, to keep us informed about key aspects of parish life and connect us with fellow parishioners.

Our website was recently launched after months of preparation and planning. The *first stage* of the website is to provide basic information such as mass schedules, committee members, bulletins, news and events, and contact info. You will be able to connect with our parish community 24/7 at your convenience. The goal in the *second stage* will be to provide more information. The section about our many ministries will include pages about each ministry. The section on sacraments will provide essential information about each sacrament.

We encourage parishioners to assist us in writing articles about parish life and the events taking place in our community. In order to maintain and continue to develop the website we need to have a variety of skills and talents on our website team. If you can help us in this awesome venture, please e-mail me at mona@mldsolutions.com

www.stmichaels.dioceseoflondon.ca

To Our Readers

Welcome to the very first issue of the St. Michael's newsletter. We hope that it reflects the values that St. Michael's holds dear - welcoming all in our parish to enjoy the articles, sharing our Catholic faith in the columns and photos, and reaching out to all members of our community, visitors and friends included.

With the emphasis on this newsletter as something new for our parish, we have highlighted stories of what else is new at St. Michael's, such as the parish website, the stewardship initiative and one of our new families, the Kirk Damm family. Also featured are messages and articles from each member of the Pastoral Team, a children's page, and of course mass schedules and parish contact information. Plans are to publish three issues each year, one at Christmas, one at Easter and one in the fall.

We'd like to think we've thought of everything in putting together this newsletter, but we haven't. You've probably noticed it has no real name "St. Michael's Newsletter" is just not good enough for such an important parish publication. This is where you, the

reader, can help. This is your parish newsletter, and so we invite you to help name it. Should it be called "The Voice of St. Michael's Parish", "The Spirit of St. Michael's Parish", "Reflections of St. Michael's Parish" or "St. Michael's Parish Messenger"? Or something else entirely? We urge you to tell us which name you prefer, or submit your own new suggestion.

As is always the case with a project of this scope, this newsletter would not be in your hands now if not for all the time and talent contributed by our dedicated volunteers. Parishioners shared their expertise in writing, interviewing, photography, editing, graphic design, marketing, and printing to produce these sixteen pages.

On behalf of the Newsletter Team, we invite all our readers to enjoy this first issue, share it with your friends, support our advertisers and look forward to the Easter issue. You may even wish to join the Team or provide an article. And don't forget to submit your idea for a permanent name!

Which Name Do You Prefer?

Help us choose a name for the newsletter. Tell us which name you prefer and why. Your response can be dropped off in the Newsletter mail slot outside the parish office or e-mailed to stmichlon@rcc.london.on.ca.

The names proposed so far are:

The VOICE
of St. Michael's Parish

The SPIRIT
of St. Michael's Parish

REFLECTIONS
of St. Michael's Parish

**St. Michael's Parish
MESSENGER**

Easter Issue

The deadline for submissions for the Easter 2007 issue is February 26. If you would like to submit an article, please contact Carmen Gicante at 519-672-4875 or e-mail cgicante@yahoo.com.



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One Family's Journey of Faith



Kim, Kevin and

Shelby received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the Easter Vigil in April 2006, and Kaleb was Baptized the same evening. It was very meaningful for the entire family to join the Catholic faith all at the same time.

Kaleb has recently received the Sacrament of Reconciliation and is eagerly looking forward to receiving his First Communion in the spring of 2007.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting with one of the new families in our parish, Kevin Damm, Kimberly Kirk and their children Shelby, age 14 and Kaleb, age 7.

Kevin and Kimberly shared with me that their family has recently joined the Catholic faith. When asked what guided them to this decision, Kimberly replied, "My personal journey began about five years ago. I was raised in another faith, but always felt a connection to the Catholic Church as my Mom had been raised in the Catholic faith. It did not seem to matter what city I found myself in, if I went to Church, it always seemed to be a Catholic one."

For Kevin, his personal journey into the faith began with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) in the fall of 2005. While he originally started the RCIA process with his family for Kim and the children, he came to realize that he too had found a spiritual home at St. Michael's.

"I have never gone to any other service in London and felt the way I do at St. Michael's. Our family feels a real sense of belonging."

Both Kim and Kevin also felt strongly that there was a spiritual void in the lives of their children and decided that the best way to fill this void was to join the Catholic faith as a family.

Kevin, Kim, Shelby and Kaleb first came to St. Michael's to attend Mass on the recommendation of one of Kim's co-workers. As Kim's mother also attends St. Michael's, it seemed like a good choice.

From their first encounter with Mary Taylor to learn what was involved in joining the Church, Kim shared that their family immediately felt welcomed and included. They have found Father Murray, Father Matthew, Mary Taylor, and the rest of the St. Michael's Parish staff and parishioners warm and inclusive.

In Kim's words, "I have never gone to any other service in London and felt the way I do at St. Michael's. Our family feels a real sense of belonging."

The entire family is looking for ways to become more involved in Parish life. Shelby is lending her skills in working with children in the Babysitting Ministry. Kim and Kevin are looking at ways that they too can

become more involved. Recently, Kaleb was very honoured to light the first candle of Advent at Mass on December 3 and made a point of telling his mother Kim just how special this was to him.

Kevin, Kim, Shelby and Kaleb are thankful for the warm welcome they received to our Parish and look forward to extending this same welcome to others as they join our faith community.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the process through which new members are welcomed into the Catholic Church. If you are interested in exploring the Catholic faith, please call Mary Taylor, Pastoral Minister at 519-433-6689 x 203 or email her at mtaylor@rcec.london.on.ca



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Moving Away and Coming Back

by Fr. Matthew Bedard, Associate Pastor

It's a story like so many others. Why should mine be different? Most people think that just because I am a priest my faith came easily. Let me assure you that God didn't make my desire to live the faith any stronger than anyone else's, just because He had priesthood in His plans for me.

I grew up in a Catholic home. We, as a family, always went to church. I served at the altar for much of my youth. It wasn't until my late teens, while studying at university, that I had found myself not attending church on Sunday. I was filling my Sundays with all sorts of other things. Now, don't get me wrong, I didn't lose my faith... I still believed in God. I just thought that I could keep believing in God without going to Sunday Mass.

I still considered myself a "nice guy" and all. I tried to be considerate of others, compassionate, helpful, etc. In fact, I even kept talking about my faith to others. There were other people my age who were curious about the Catholic faith! I didn't seem to mind talking about my faith.

After about a year and a half away from the Church, I started having feelings that something was missing in my life. In fact, all the promises I made to myself, telling myself I was still going to be a good person, started to get broken. I realized I was becoming more disoriented from

my moral compass. I was moving further and further away from God, and let's just say becoming less holy.

I began to have yearnings to go back to Church. Of course, I started to put the pieces together. How could I love God and talk about the faith and say I'm living it, when part of the complete picture is missing? It was then that I had made the choice to return to the fullness of faith. I recommitted myself to my relationship with God and His Church.

That is when I felt renewed. I came to realize that, just like any commitment, there had to be an assent of will and heart. I had to actively choose to love God, choose to be active in the Church, choose to support the Church financially, choose to live my life as a faithful witness to Christ. It wasn't going to come effortlessly, but with work and renewed commitment.

The desire to know and love God and worship Him leaves no room for idleness, laziness nor complacency. Even though it can be a struggle to remain faithfully committed, we should hold on to the words of Saint Peter when he addresses our Lord in John 6:68 "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."



How could I love God and talk about the faith and say I'm living it, when part of the complete picture is missing?

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the Advent Mission



Advent marks the beginning of a new year for the Church and what better way to start than with a Parish Mission, appropriately titled *From Crib to Cross to Pentecost*. The Mission was presented by Fr. Jim Carruthers, a Professor Emeritus of Assumption University in Windsor, and focused on the humanity of Jesus.

Fr. Jim explained that Jesus was born into a particular civilization, psychology and spirituality. Jesus' life was steeped in the four foundations of Jewish spirituality: Creation, Scripture, Action, and Belief in the One True God. The essence of Jesus' spirituality is summed up in the following Jewish prayer:

*Holy One of blessing
Your presence fills creation
You bring bread from the earth
You remove sleep from our eyes
You speak peace.*

In *Creation* we are invited into the wonder and awe of the mystery of God. We are invited to participate in this mystery. We become co-workers of God and good stewards of the earth.

Jesus learned about life from the Word of God in the *Hebrew Scriptures*. How does the Word of God help us in our daily lives? When we hear the Word of God proclaimed each Sunday, do we take time to reflect on it and allow it to take root in our hearts?

Having been moved by the Word of God, we are called to *Action*. Jesus' mission was one of reconciliation and healing. Jesus taught us to love our enemies and forgive those who have hurt us.

As followers of Christ, whenever we see our brothers and sisters in need, we have a responsibility to reach out to them. The mystery of the Kingdom demands not only our intellect but also our imagination. If we keep our eyes open, we see God's presence all about us. At the end of our life will we have made a difference in the world because of our belief in Jesus?

Jesus' life was steeped in the four foundations of Jewish spirituality: Creation, Scripture, Action, and Belief in the One True God.

Fundamental to who we are is our *Belief in the One, True God*. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we live out this belief as followers of Christ by serving one another in His name.

Through the gift of the Holy Spirit we always have Jesus with us and can discover for ourselves our mission in bringing about the Kingdom.

Advent calls us to a spiritual reawakening, to a growth in holiness, to a celebration of what is at the heart of our faith - the belief that there is but One True God in whose image we have been created. We seek to know Jesus fully in His humanity and thereby discover ourselves as we are before our God.



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Prayer: Awakening our Spirit to the Presence of God



The Christmas season offers us a wonderful opportunity for spiritual reawakening. As we reflect on the great gift that God has given us in Jesus Christ, the greatest gift that we will ever receive, we experience a desire to respond to that gift with a deep sense of gratitude. Prayer is a vital part of our response.

But what exactly is prayer? The definition that I like is "Prayer is an experience of the Divine Presence, a time of spiritual refreshment."

Prayer means making space in our lives to communicate with God. It is about setting aside a time and a place where we can *consciously* enter into God's presence. I stress the word *consciously* because whether we are aware of it or not, we are always in God's presence because God's Holy Spirit lives in each one of us. Prayer helps us become more aware of our relationship with God through the power of His Holy Spirit.

The Christian writer Thomas Merton points out, "*In prayer we discover what we already have - we already have everything, but we're not conscious of that all the time. It all comes down to taking time in prayer to realize that we have what we seek.*"

The essence of prayer consists of this humble acceptance. We pray with childlike openness and

expectation.

When my children were young we used to sing a song together called "*Smile, don't you know God loves you.*" That may seem an oversimplification of what we are about here but our primary call as Christians is to recognize ourselves as beloved children of God and to respond to that love by loving God and loving one another. Prayer is about recognizing ourselves as children of God and creating a space in which we discern the wonderful plan that God has for each of us.

Children, in their innocence, are very open to God's spirit at work in their lives. I remember, several years ago, at a school mass, the priest asked the children if they could explain to him

what prayer was. One little girl in grade 3 raised her hand and said, "*Prayer is when Jesus opens his heart to me and I open my heart to Jesus.*"

Wow! What a profound response! It speaks of a relationship of mutual love and sharing and of simply resting in God's presence. Let's compare her answer with what the Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

"God calls us first. We may forget our creator or hide far from his face. We may seek other idols or accuse God of abandoning us, yet the living and true God tirelessly calls each one of us to that mysterious encounter known as prayer. In prayer the faithful God's initiative of love always comes first, our own first step is always a response to that love."

So, all prayer begins with God. Let's think about that for a minute. Most of us would probably say that we initiate our prayer time with God. Whether we are praying our morning or night prayers, choosing to read a passage from the Bible, spending time in quiet contemplation or meditation, or participating in Sunday Mass, it would appear that we are the ones making those choices, that we make the first move.

Yet that is not what the church teaches. Prayer is not initiated by us but by God. Our desire to communicate with God is put into our hearts by God. Isn't that wonderful? We

Prayer is an experience of the
Divine Presence, a time of
spiritual refreshment.

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Continued on the next page

have a God who longs to be in relationship with us. We have a God who wants to spend time with us!

The great German theologian Karl Rahner once said, *“the purest prayer, the very essence of prayer is actually that moment before we begin to pray.”*

I find this statement very freeing. You see prayer is not so much about method. It's not about following prescribed timetables or agendas. Prayer is not so much what we say but rather our attitude of openness to God. It's about communing with God and resting in His loving embrace. It's about becoming so in tune with God that His will actually becomes our will.

As I continue to grow in my prayer life I find myself more able to say to God “Your will be done.” Of course that attitude of openness and the quality of

Prayer is not about what we say but rather our attitude of openness to God.

our prayer will be greatly affected by our image of God. Is God someone we desire to spend time with each day, or do we see God as someone we feel obliged to relate to as a means of getting to Heaven? Do we see God as the source of all the blessings we have received in life or do we prefer to keep God “at arms length,” afraid that if we get too close, we may be asked to change some aspect of our lives?

For our prayer to be effective we have to truly believe that God loves us with an unconditional love, the kind of love that Jesus tells us about in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Imagine, even after the son had squandered his inheritance and lost everything, his father still welcomed him home and restored him to his proper place in the household. That's the image our God wants us to see when we reflect on his unconditional love for each of us.



When we look at a crucifix and see Jesus' outstretched arms, it's as if God is saying to us “ This is how much I love you, I've given my life for you.”

Perhaps we don't feel worthy of God's love. Maybe when we look at our lives we see things that we're not particularly proud of. Maybe we feel that our lives would need to change drastically before God could ever love us.

Fr. John Powell, in his book “The Christian Vision” writes,

“O child of my heart, you've got it backwards. You shouldn't think that if you become more virtuous I will love you more, because already you have all my love as a free gift. You don't have to change so that I will love you more. What you really need to know is how much I have always loved you. And then, oh then ... You will really change.”

As Christians our call is not to be perfect so that God will love us; rather it is to allow ourselves to be awakened to the reality of God's love. This spiritual awakening will motivate us more than anything else to be more like Christ in thought, word and deed. Prayer offers us that opportunity to quiet ourselves and so open ourselves to God's love.

Prayer - ourselves and God in loving communication - radically changes us. It deepens our relationship with our loving God and as a result it makes a difference in how we live our lives. As we begin a new year, I invite you to reflect on your own prayer life and to look for ways to strengthen and deepen it over the course of the coming year.

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Our Vision

A Welcoming Eucharistic Community, Sharing Faith and Reaching Out to All.

Does this look familiar? It's been on the front page of the Parish Bulletin for a number of years. It is also part of the masthead of this newsletter and is prominent on our new website. Those of us working on the newsletter and website rely on these words to guide us in developing the look, feel and content of all our communications. It's a simple, concise and easy to remember statement yet compelling in its implications and direction.

These eleven words form an inspirational image of the future that we as a community are continually striving to achieve.

The Vision was developed in 1993 by the Parish Council. The Council conducted a process of meetings and visioning sessions with parishioners, based on the key question, "What would we see happening five years from now if everything were perfect."

We as a parish have seen significant growth since the vision was developed, welcoming many new families into our community. Many of us may have forgotten how this vision was developed and may now be taking it for granted - like a familiar friend. It is important that we occasionally reflect on our vision and assess if we are still being guided by its compelling direction.

As we reflect on the vision, one is struck by two points: first, the vision is just as valid and current today as it when it was first developed in 1993. Second, it prompts us to ask "have we as a parish achieved the vision that was so eloquently stated more than ten years ago? Are we still building a community that creates a welcoming atmosphere for everyone and encourages all to become involved whether they are regular attendees at mass, occasional attendees or visitors? Do we respect all of our parish members, strive to be inclusive, recognize the potential in each individual and value their unique contributions? Do we reach out to all - students, young families, the elderly, the poor and the prosperous? Do we come together to celebrate and live out our faith as followers of Christ?

The following principles were developed to support the vision:

- Foster a welcoming community and provide a special meeting place where people are invited to experience the Good News and share a sense of belonging.

- Celebrate a s a community through our presence and participation in the Eucharist and other forms of liturgy.



- Respond with justice to issues and needs both inside and outside our parish community.
- Encourage a sense of belonging in our youth by recognizing them as responsible individuals.

- Foster faith development through a variety of programs and faith sharing groups.

- Respond to our baptismal call by active participation in co responsible ministry.
- Promote a strong partnership with our Catholic schools.
- Respond to and initiate invitations to strengthen the bond with other faith communities.

Given that this is our first newsletter, it's very timely to focus on our vision and how it supports the Diocesan Pastoral Plan that was approved by Bishop Fabbro in 2004.

Diocesan Pastoral Plan

In 2000 Pope John Paul II instructed each diocese to develop a pastoral plan so that the Gospel would take root in the life of the Church as we begin the new millennium. The purpose of the plan is to identify priorities which will inspire us and focus the energies of the whole diocese for the next five years.

Our Diocesan Pastoral Plan was developed after a long consultative process. It has six broad goal statements and each parish was asked to adapt these to their own local situation.

St. Michael's established a committee to develop our objectives for each of the goal statements and input was sought from Parish Council, ministry coordinators and interested parishioners.

The Diocesan Plan is given on the following page. The Parish's objectives are highlighted in bold.

These eleven words form an
inspirational image of the future
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Embracing a Future Full of Hope:

A Pastoral Plan for the Diocese of London



Called by Jesus through baptism into his passion, death and resurrection and anointed by the Spirit, we, the people of God in the Diocese of London, are to be living signs of Christ's presence in the world today. United in Christ, the Bread of Life, we commit ourselves to carrying out the mission of proclaiming the coming of the kingdom of God in our time. We embrace the Gospel believing what we read, preaching what we believe, and practicing what we preach. As a people of faith, trusting in the Spirit who leads us, we dedicate ourselves to the following goals:

Goal I As living signs of Christ's presence, we will respond to the call to personal holiness given to all by committing ourselves to opportunities for ongoing conversion and spiritual renewal.

- Expand the parish's prayer network to include residents of nursing homes and the homebound
- Revitalize the Small Christian Communities currently meeting at the parish

Goal II Called by Christ, we will evangelize through the clear proclamation of the Gospel and the constant teaching of the Catholic faith, assuring that such proclamation and teaching is linked to the life experience of the people.

- Develop and offer a Catholic update experience for those who seek to deepen their understanding of their faith
- Improve communication with the families of students attending Catholic schools affiliated with St. Michael's Parish

Goal III With our sights set on the mission of Jesus, we will minister with justice and compassion to the wounded, the searching, the entrapped and those in material and spiritual need.

- Continue to develop and implement a five-year social justice plan for the parish
- Provide outreach to the elderly by establishing a friendly visitor program to the homebound and those in health care facilities

Goal IV As the Body of Christ, formed by word and sacrament, we will make provision for meaningful liturgical celebrations in our parish communities to ensure full, conscious and active participation by all.

- Implement workshops for all liturgical ministers to assist them in better understanding the liturgy
- Assist parishioners in gaining a better understand the Liturgy

Goal V Inviting all to co-responsible ministry, we will encourage and support the ongoing formation of laity, religious and ordained.

- Help parishioners to grow in their faith by becoming good stewards of the gifts they have received from God, and guide and nurture the ongoing stewardship process for the parish
- Develop a Parish website

Goal VI Imitating Christ the servant-leader, we will employ and model governance practices at all levels that seek to: meet the needs of God's people, support the Church's mission, ensure appropriate participation in decision-making by the laity, religious and ordained, uphold Gospel stewardship, and promote accountability and transparency.

- Publish a summary of the Parish Council meetings in the Parish bulletin and website
- Continue the implementation of the Called, Gifted and Sent initiative to recruit, screen, train and support our ministers
- Review the Parish Vision Statement by offering a Day of Reflection on it

Becoming A Stewardship Parish

One of the objectives of our Pastoral Plan is to “help parishioners to grow in their faith by becoming good stewards of the gifts they have received from God.” When Fr. Murray was appointed pastor in July 2005, he was pleased to see this as an objective. He had helped to introduce stewardship to St. Pius X Parish (now Holy Family Parish) in 1996 and knew the many blessings that stewardship can bring to a parish.

Our Stewardship Committee was established in October 2005. Its role is to guide and nurture the stewardship process within the parish.

Christian Stewardship is about calling forth the gifts of parishioners and inviting them to share their gifts with the parish and the broader community, in thanksgiving to a generous and gracious God.

At the heart of stewardship is an “attitude of gratitude.” We are grateful to God for all that God has given us: our very life, friendships, family, resources - the list is endless. In our gratitude, we have a need to give back to God. “What is your will Lord? How can I serve you?”

The St. Michael’s Stewardship Committee recently prepared a *Time & Talent booklet* that lists all the opportunities for ministry in the parish. There are over 50 ministries, many of which are open to high school students. The booklet and a response form were sent to all households registered with the parish. All are invited to participate in at least one ministry in 2007.

Several parishioners recently gave a witness talk at Mass about how their involvement in ministry has been a blessing for them. We thank Christina De Vincenzo, Katie McKee, Dorothy Solomon, Paul Theriault, and Mike & Vicki Whelan for sharing their faith reflections. *We are pleased to share both Dorothy’s and Katie’s reflections with you on the following pages.*

Stewardship calls me to regular prayer and reflection plus celebrating the sacraments.

- Do I take time each day to talk things over with God, asking for the Holy Spirit to be my guide in doing His will today?
- Do I participate in Sunday Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation for nourishment and healing of mind and spirit?

Stewardship calls me to action & to give glory to God.

- Do my actions reflect the faith I profess in my family? In my work? In society?
- Do I acknowledge that God is the giver of all my gifts?

Stewardship calls me to take ownership of my church community.

- In what ways does my service help build the Body of Christ?
- What is holding me back from becoming involved?

Time & Talent Booklet

If you have not received a copy of this booklet and the response form, please pick one up from the Welcome Desk in the church foyer. They are also available on our new website www.stmichaels.dioceseoflondon.ca If you wish to participate in a ministry, please complete the form and return it to the parish office.

“Therefore our marriages, our friendships, our families and our church communities are gifts, precious gifts of God. Our call is to steward these relationships as precious gifts. That may require our time, our money, our talents, and it will always demand our commitment, sacrifice and love. It all begins by understanding all of our relationships as gifts given to us, and our subsequent responsibility to be stewards of each.” (R. Scott Rodin)

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A Stewardship Reflection



My upbringing in a large Catholic household taught me about sharing and taking responsibility for my part in keeping the family unit functioning smoothly. I am the thirteenth of sixteen children and sharing was simply a way of life on our farm in Wallacetown.

At the small mission church of St. Helen's, which held about eighty people, we regularly celebrated Sunday liturgy, sacraments, Lent and Advent evenings, weddings, funerals and socials.

My family took up three pews. Being involved in the various aspects of this church community was just expected and flowed very naturally from home life in this farming town. You simply took responsibility for sharing your talent and time because you were another form of family serving one another.

In my young adult years I moved to St. Thomas and joined Holy Angel's Church which held about 700 people. I felt lost, alone, confused and my faith wavered. Going from the comfort of being with my whole family and knowing everyone to going alone and not knowing anyone left me questioning if my faith life would survive.

Celebrating mass and receiving the Eucharist was important to me but my fear would not allow me to stay for the whole mass. I would often leave after communion until one Sunday the Associate Pastor, Fr. Clare Coleman, was at the entrance and invited me to stay and hand out bulletins. That invitation was the start of my involvement in ministry in this larger parish. My faith was renewed and my very life took on a new meaning again.

Change happens in our lives and we are stretched in different directions and new challenges. This was the case for me as well when I started raising a family of my own. By this time I had moved to London and joined St.

Michael's Church. The role of wife and mother seemed to take a great deal of my time and energy. The ministries and prayer life I had become comfortable with had to change. The challenge was to become involved in ministries that revolved around children.

My good fortune was that Inger Rosback, the Pastoral Minister at the time, was just starting the Sunday Liturgy Co-op program for children and I was involved immediately. That meant learning and growing in a different way. While sharing faith with other young families we together explored opportunities for passing this faith on to our children.

One of the great benefits of stewardship of our time and talents is that no one is an expert and yet we are all experts because we share a living faith and are quite capable and responsible for caring for one another, our church, our community and the global family.

Jesus told us plainly "Whatever you do to the least of earth's people you do for me." We are to be accountable for even our smallest action or failure to act.

Now that my children are all adults, my role has changed once again. My ministry includes simply being a friendly face to fellow parishioners and extending a warm hello. As a Eucharistic minister I am feeding my sisters and brothers with the Body and Blood of Christ. My time is a little more my own again and, as a Prayer Line participant, I devote time each day to lift up in prayer those people who have asked for a specific need to be blessed. As part of the newsletter team, I am privileged to be able to write articles such as this for our whole parish community.

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“In life you only get as much as you give,” is a quote I’ve come to understand the more I live it out. I’ve always been a really active kid, in school, in my parish, and in my community. I was gifted with incredibly involved parents who decided to expose me to many different activities. They always encouraged me to participate in the community and told me if it was something I really wanted and was ready to work for that they’d support me in it. It was only natural for me to eventually decide to take an active role in my faith.

It was at my former parish of St. Patrick’s that I first started to take part in the church community. My mom ran the Sunday Liturgy for Children so that’s where I started off and from there I went to altar serving. We moved some time ago to St. Michael’s parish and I was kind of hesitant about getting involved because I didn’t really know many people at the parish. It was my friend who first suggested that I go on a retreat with the St. Michael’s Youth Group. I was a little shy but I decided, why not?

Now that I think about it, it was really at this point that I started to see my faith as my own. My parents were the ones who had first gotten me involved with church and it was at their encouragement that I stayed involved. But now I was being presented with the option of applying my

faith and discovering what kind of a role I was willing to let it take in my life.

Youth Group was and is wonderful for that. It lets you experience the different aspects of faith with your peers, and gets you out there in the community pushing you to make a difference. I don’t particularly like going outside of my comfort zone but it’s always proven to be more rewarding when I’m able to work up the courage to try something different. My faith constantly challenges me to do just that.

Last summer I was given the opportunity to travel to Germany for World Youth Day. I traveled with a group from Montreal with the only two people I knew being my cousin and my uncle. A new language, a new country and a new group of people, with our religion being what we had in common. It was such a great experience though and I experienced what being Catholic meant on a whole new level. It was amazing how many youth had come from just about everywhere to celebrate our sharing in one faith.

It is so important to me to find my passion and follow it. I’ve learned so much more about myself and my talents by just exploring the different options open to me. It’s a risk to put yourself out there but one that is worth the effort. I encourage all youth to get involved!

“In life you only get as much as you give,” is a quote I’ve come to understand the more I live it out.



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Elementary Students visit St. Michael's



Since the beginning of September we have welcomed eight elementary school classes through the doors of the church to spend a day with us at the parish center. By the end of April, each grade 5 through 8 class from our four parish schools will have made a one-day visit to the church.

Around 10:00 a.m. the class arrives and meets me in the foyer of the church where we begin our day. Our morning focus is always on the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These discussions are lively, with great questions being posed and answered by the students. We discuss whether "wrestling with a sibling" is a sin, what it means to say "Bless me Father" and what happens if "one forgets what to do" when they see the priest.

There are always a few students who are a bit nervous but usually it has more to do with forgetting what to say than actually going to confession. Even the few students who are not of the Catholic faith see Father for a special blessing.

From this Sacrament we move on to a short review of what it is to be respectful and reverent in the church and then we attend the midday mass.

After lunch, I always ask the students if they can tell anything about the level of faith of the other people at mass, based on the actions they observed. We should be very proud of their answers because our children are able to recognize and reflect the deep faith of those they gather with for noon mass. They speak of their concentration, focus, and the way they kneel to pray before mass and after it is over. Someone usually mentions how members of the congregation stay right to the end. Often the experience of mass is the highlight of their day.

At about 1:00 p.m. we move back into the church for a self guided tour. I give them a few minutes to walk

wherever they wish throughout the building and then bring back any questions they have ever wanted to ask.

The children bring back the most wonderful questions about the fixtures within the church. These questions inevitably lead to discussions about the practices and beliefs of our faith. We spend time talking about the stained glass and what the images are trying to communicate. Questions like "Why does the ceiling in the foyer have a ripple to it?" and "Why are the bricks on the back wall separated?" A great deal of time is spent at the altar with someone inevitably asking why are there sky lights shining on the tabernacle, altar and baptismal font?

Why are there sky lights shining on the tabernacle, altar and baptismal font?

Some of the questions are predictable, and some catch me off guard, but all are fantastic. What I can usually count on though is that the questions of our children are often the same questions of many of our adults.

Even when we think we have an answer about something, being open to new perspectives can reveal a new face of God or dynamic of our faith. The depth of mysteries of the Christian faith are not something to run from. Rather these mysteries are meant to be explored and contemplated.

Over this Christmas season, and as the new calendar year begins, I would invite you to spend some time in the church being inspired to explore your own new questions of faith and church.

Our Newsletter Team members are Gail Brown, John & Michelle Cavaliere, Terry Dollard, Paul Evans, Carmen Gicante, Terry McBride, Dorothy Solomon, Vincent Taylor and Frances Theilade.

Would you like to help us in producing our Easter issue? Contact Carmen Gicante at 519-672-4875 or email cgicante@yahoo.com

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| BETHLEHEM | MARY | STAR |
| DAVID | MANGER | TRAVEL |
| DONKEY | NAZARETH | WAIT |
| HAIL | NEW | WISE |

Puzzle 1

Answer at bottom of page

Match the person with the ministry they provide during Mass

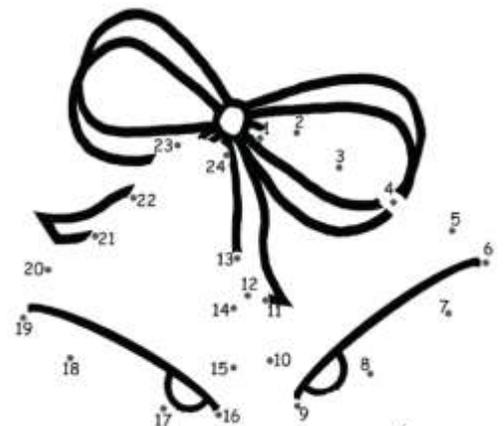
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|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Priest | ___ a. leads the songs |
| 2. Lector | ___ b. helps the Priest |
| 3. Cantor | ___ c. collects the offerings |
| 4. Usher | ___ d. serves Communion |
| 5. Eucharistic minister | ___ e. presides over the Mass |
| 6. Altar server | ___ f. reads from the Bible |

Puzzle 2

Answer at bottom of page

Unscramble the names of the following New Testament places where Jesus may have lived or visited

- | | |
|--------------|-------|
| 1. naac | _____ |
| 2. thrazena | _____ |
| 3. aeeillg | _____ |
| 4. heheletbm | _____ |
| 5. mealsruje | _____ |
| 6. saaimra | _____ |
| 7. deaju | _____ |



Answers to Puzzle 1: 1-e, 2-f, 3-a, 4-c, 5-d, 6-b
 Answers to Puzzle 2: 1 Cana, 2 Nazareth, 3 Galilee, 4 Bethlehem, 5 Jerusalem, 6 Samaria, 7 Judea

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St. Michael's Parish, 515 Cheapside St., London, ON N5Y 3X5

Phone: 519-433-6689

Fax: 519-433-2301

E-mail: stmichlon@rcec.london.on.ca www.stmichaels.dioceseoflondon.ca

Office Hours: Monday to Friday 9:00 a.m. to noon and 1:00 to 4:30 p.m.



Sunday Masses

Saturday: 5:00 p.m.

Sunday: 8:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m.

Weekday Masses

Tuesday & Thursday: 12:00 noon

Wednesday & Friday: 8:00 a.m.

Saturday: 9:00 a.m.

Ministries to Children

8:30 Mass & 10:30 Mass - September to June

10:30 Mass - July & August

Liturgy of the Word: Grades 2, 3 and 4

Sunday School: Aged 3 to Grade 1

Babysitting: Infants to age 3

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturday 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. & 4:00 - 4:30 p.m.

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St. Michael's Church

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Pastoral Team

Father Murray Sample, Pastor

msample@rcec.london.on.ca

ext. 202

Father Matthew Bedard, Associate Pastor

mbedard@rcec.london.on.ca

ext. 205

Dan Moynihan, Coordinator of Youth Ministry

dmoynihan@rcec.london.on.ca

ext. 206

Mary Taylor, Pastoral Minister

mtaylor@rcec.london.on.ca

ext. 203

Staff

Pat Estabrooks, Receptionist/Secretary

stmichlon@rcec.london.on.ca

ext. 201

Jolanda Squire, Financial Secretary

jsquire@rcec.london.on.ca

ext. 200

Sid Wocks, Hall Coordinator

ext. 210

Parish Council Chairperson:

Mark Van Den Bossche

Calendar of Events

Parent Meeting - First Eucharist	January 16
Pancake Supper	February 20
Ash Wednesday	February 21
March Break	March 12-16
Palm Sunday	April 1
Holy Thursday	April 5
Good Friday	April 6
Holy Saturday	April 7
Easter Sunday	April 8
Volunteer Appreciation	April 22
First Communions:	April 28/29, May 5/6 May 26/27, June 2/3
Confirmations	May 14, 15, 16
Pentecost Sunday	May 27