

# Blessed SACRAMENT

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## PARISH BIBLE STUDY GROUP

*Loving and Serving God Better Through His Word*

The stewardship way of life is ultimately a life of purpose. It's about using our God-given talents and treasures in our quest to know, love and serve God better. Though oftentimes this takes the form of service to others, another important aspect of this is time spent with our Lord in prayer and study.

"We're put on this earth for one reason — to know, love and serve God in this world and be happy with Him in the next," says Blessed Sacrament parishioner Clare Richter. "I see this Bible Study as a concrete way to come to know Him better. There is so much wisdom in the Bible, straight from God, that can truly transform our lives if we allow it."

Having been involved in various Bible studies over the past 13 years, Clare and her husband, Bill, currently coordinate one of Blessed Sacrament's weekly Bible Studies. Taking place in small-group settings, this ministry allows parishioners to read and discuss the readings for the upcoming Sunday. Helping them better reflect on the Scriptural readings, members also read excerpts from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as well as various other materials. This allows Bible Study members to draw greater meaning from Christ's words, preparing them to be more receptive to its message during the Sunday liturgy.

"I find it to be truly a joy," Clare says. "I'm always looking for more ways to get to know our Lord better, and what better way is there than reading His Word? This, in turn, helps us become better Catholics and hopefully get to heaven someday."

The Richters' Bible Study group currently meets Wednesday nights at 6:30 p.m. in their home. Consisting of roughly 10 people, this intimate setting has become an excellent way to grow in fellowship with other parishioners. Members are able to mature in the faith together week after week, drawing closer to one



*The Bible Study small group that gathers weekly in the Richters' home*

DECEMBER 2017

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# Blessed SACRAMENT

## Stewardship

### Hannah, the Good Steward

What should we do when our prayers are answered?

Is there anything left to do after we have sincerely thanked God for His favors? If God were a human peer, we would probably try to reciprocate by granting Him a favor in return. But the truth is that God cannot be made greater by anything that we do for Him. Instead, God receives

our thanks and tells us to “go and do likewise.” That is, He tells us to share with others the good that He has bestowed on us. And in doing so, we are really sharing God Himself. That is the definition of stewardship!

The Old Testament Book of Samuel contains one of the most poignant examples of stewardship in the entire Bible. The first

chapter teaches us of an unhappy, barren woman named Hannah. Desperate in her barrenness, Hannah prays that God will give her a son, vowing that she will raise him to be a man of God.

Imagine Hannah’s elation when she was granted her prayer! When Samuel was born, her heart’s desire had come true! Imagine further the pang of motherly sorrow, as Hannah kept her promise to God by taking Samuel at a young age to be the servant of Eli, the high priest. The Book of Samuel tells us that once Samuel became Eli’s servant, Hannah saw her young son just once a year.

Indeed, Hannah knew that Samuel was truly a gift from God – an answered prayer. Hannah’s response is that of the Good Steward – with an attitude of both gratitude and sacrifice, she gave up her son to honor God. One imagines that Hannah probably struggled with this sacrifice during those first years. She probably did not know what God had in store for her son. Yet, through her faithfulness, God used him as a gift to an entire nation. Samuel would, in time, become one of the greatest prophets of Jewish history.

Sometimes it is difficult to understand the sacrifices we make in the name of stewardship, while the results may just be impossible to miss! However, He asks that we continue to be faithful in either case. God has undoubtedly bestowed gifts on all of us – at whatever the cost, we are to “go and do likewise.”





## A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

### *Reflections at the End of the Year*

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Dear Parishioners,

It seems as if we just finished Lent and Easter, and here we are at Advent and Christmas. To say this is a busy month for many is an understatement. Although December is a month of love, it can also be a difficult month for some. For those with families, it may be a month of travel as people rush to be united with loved ones, sometimes after a long period of separation.

There is no shortage of reminders as to what time of year this is. However, for us as Catholics, we may need to refocus to see where we are in our faith lives. Were you aware that for us, December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception? In that regard, we celebrate a Holy Day of Obligation on Friday, Dec. 8. Advent begins on Dec. 3, and you may notice that we begin to wear purple as a sign of Advent. That color changes to white or gold beginning at Christmas.

Of course, this is also the last month of the regular calendar year, which may add additional tasks to our own schedules as we finalize things for the end of the year. However, there are many opportunities for us during this month to share, to pray and to celebrate in a Christian way, and I would encourage you to make an effort to be part of these. Right here in our parish, much is happening along those lines, and a careful reading of



the bulletin will alert you to the “when, where and what” of these upcoming opportunities.

As I indicated earlier, this can also be a difficult time for some. In the midst of our own celebrations and joy, we need to be aware of that reality and of those living with it. This is a time to reach out, and it is a time to show love.

This December, let our minds be focused on Christ, Who will be born for us at Christmas, and for Whose coming we must al-

ways be prepared throughout the year. This is a time to thank God and to pray. It is a time to reach out to love and live peacefully with one another. We need to remember that life continues after December, in spite of everything we feel we need to get done.

My prayers and blessings go out to each of you and your families. May God continue to watch over you. May the year 2017 end well for all of us!

In Jesus' Sacred Heart,

Very Rev. Joseph V. Romanoski, V.F.  
Pastor

## Growing Closer to God, Step by Step

While Dr. Nancy Stroud's faith story wasn't as dramatic as that of St. Paul, the steps she took were nevertheless profound.

"I never had that 'Road to Damascus' kind of conversion," Dr. Stroud says. "My story is more about little nudges and baby steps — but baby steps can take you pretty far."

Born and raised in Massachusetts, Dr. Stroud grew up Catholic, even attending Catholic schools in elementary and high school. However, she fell away from her faith in college.

"I was a math and science person and went to medical school, where it was all about science and what you could prove, and I'd really embraced that," says Dr. Stroud, who became an OB/GYN.

Dr. Stroud's medical residency brought her to Charleston in 1982, where she continued to pursue her career, with little thought to religion.

However, during that time, inspired by the example of faithful coworkers, she decided to start going back to church. And after visiting several local Protestant churches, she finally found herself at Blessed Sacrament.

"From working with people who were really alive in their faith, I was inspired to get back into a spiritual life," she says. "They had such a lively faith and it was important in everything they did.

"(The other churches) were good, but ultimately, these were not 'home' to me, they were missing something — ultimately the Mass and the Eucharist," Dr. Stroud continues. "I don't even think I was aware at that time. I just knew something was missing. I live down the street from Blessed Sacrament, and started going back to church there."

Dr. Stroud's journey at Blessed Sacrament began simply, by joining the Books Change Lives study group at the parish.

"They handed out Matthew Kelly's *Rediscover*



*Dr. Nancy Stroud is a NaProTECHNOLOGY-certified OB/GYN and parishioner at Blessed Sacrament.*

*Catholicism* book at Christmas one year," she says. "They started a book study and I went to that. One of Matthew Kelly's principles is that books change lives and things that you read really influence who you are. Spiritual reading is really a valuable tool for your faith. You find these little nuggets of gold that really add to your life and spirituality."

Through the process of reading and growing in knowledge of her faith, Dr. Stroud also began to feel convicted that perhaps God was calling her to something more.

"There were always certain teachings that were unpalatable or difficult for me to understand or embrace," Dr. Stroud says. "About five years ago, I really became convicted of the fact that I needed to fully embrace the teachings of

## ep: *Meet Dr. Nancy Stroud*

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the Church, and it wasn't up to me to pick and choose.

"As an OB/GYN, a big part of my professional work dealt with contraception and sterilization and issues like that," she continues. "That kind of hit me one day and it was a huge challenge, because it was going to require a huge change. But I realized, I wasn't called to be in a religious order, I wasn't called to be a church leader, I was called to this medical profession and there's a lot of what I do that is for God's glory. And if this is what I was called to do, then I need to do it in the way that God wants me to do it."

It wasn't an easy decision, or a quick process, but after a time, Dr. Stroud found herself led to abandon a conventional approach to women's health and fertility, and study Natural Family Planning at the Pope Paul VI Institute in Omaha, Neb. In addition to continuing to practice as an OB/GYN, and being a busy wife, mother and grandmother, Dr. Stroud is now a Creighton Model Natural Family Planning instructor, as well as a NaProTECHNOLOGY medical consultant.

"There are really good and beautiful reasons why the Church teaches what She teaches, and too often, we're not aware of that and we think we can figure it out but we don't have the depth of understanding," Dr. Stroud says. "When you try to read and understand why the Church teaches what She teaches, there's such beauty to it. Truth is not always convenient but it's still the truth. I feel like it was a great exercise for me both spiritually, as well as intellectually, learning about Natural Family Planning and the teachings of the Church."

As time goes on, daily prayer is what sustains Dr. Stroud's relationship with God.

"My best days are when I think in the morning about praying unceasingly and trying to make every visit that I have during the day an act of

prayer," she says. "Those are my best days."

She finds that since she's come to the point of choosing to follow the teachings of the Church, her relationship with God grown and deepened,

"I feel more comfortable in God's presence," she says, "Understanding the greatness of God's love and mercy has made me feel so close to Him."

She reminds her fellow parishioners of the important role that lay people have, not only in the Church, but also in the world, and encourages them to consider how their faith influences the rest of their lives.

"We need to look, not just at the things that are at church — the different activities or ministries we can take part in — but we have to look at the things in our secular life that we need to bring into line with our faith," Dr. Stroud says.

She encourages those who may struggle with the Church's teaching in a particular area.

"Be patient with yourself. If you're finding it very hard, that's okay," she says. "Keep praying about it. Don't dismiss it. Just keep praying and know that God is going to show you the path you need to follow. Study is huge. Read about it and learn about it, because that will strengthen your faith and determination once you have as much of an understanding as you can. God makes things possible, but He doesn't make them easy, and that's okay. All things work for good for those who love God."

The image of the Prodigal Son is one that speaks to Dr. Stroud's heart — and is one she hopes will encourage others.

"Part of the Prodigal Son story is that, when he was still far off, the Father sees him and runs to him," she says. "That image of God, that even when you're so far out, it's just turning and realizing that you need to head home and He's going to run out there and He's going to meet you out there before you get close. You don't have to be perfect, before God is going to be there for you."

# Blessed SACRAMENT

## *Embracing Advent Traditions*

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Advent is that time of the Church year when we prepare for the “coming” of Christ. Advent, from the Latin word *adventus*, is the season of the Church year before Christmas.

According to *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming. By celebrating the precursor’s birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: ‘He must increase, but I must decrease’” (524).

There is a compelling stewardship message found in this passage of the *Catechism*. Stewardship very much reflects putting Christ at the center of our lives (“He must increase”) and recognizing our need to serve God, the Church, and others (“I must decrease”). Advent is an important time for us as individuals and as families to emphasize the holy nature of this season. Three dominant Advent traditions have developed which allow us on a daily basis to bring our thoughts back to the significance of this Church season.

The first is, quite simply, the Advent wreath. Most of us are familiar with and aware of the Advent wreath, as it is a common practice in parishes to have a wreath and to trace the progress of Advent with it. By placing an Advent wreath in our homes, praying around it and lighting the appropriate candles are wonderful opportunities to travel with the Lord on a daily basis. The wreath is circular, representing God’s eternity, and it includes four candles — one for each Sunday and week of

Advent. To light the candles and to pray every day is a wonderful way for families to share and focus.

The second tradition is the Jesse Tree, named for the father of David. This tree is decorated gradually throughout Advent with pictures and symbols of biblical persons associated with the coming of the Messiah, Christ. You may include Noah, the ark, Abraham, Moses, a “burning bush,” Joseph, Mary, or any of a number of other familiar biblical figures and events. It is a teaching opportunity for children in particular, and also a good way for families to gather and to pray, and to reflect upon preparing for Christ’s coming.

Although it has become quite commercialized, the last key tradition is the Advent calendar. Advent calendars tend to follow the calendar month of December, not the four Sundays of Advent, which can begin as early as late November. In recent years, these calendars have increasingly utilized secular images, but if a person or family wishes the calendar to be most beneficial, it needs to be religious and Christian in nature. This, too, affords an opportunity to pause, to reflect, and to pray every day during the Advent season.

The themes and traditions of the Advent season have evolved throughout history. At one time, Advent was more like Lent — penitential in nature. We and our families need to do things that are prayerful and that prepare us spiritually for the Second and final Coming of Christ, as well. Stewardship involves planning, practicing our faith, and transmitting it to those close to us. These traditions can fulfill and help that effort.

## *Altar Flowers Ministry Decorating for the Glory of God*

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Flowers help us celebrate so many things. From the birth of a new baby to precious memories of a loved one who has passed, fresh flowers remind us of life's beauty and connect us to the natural world. When it comes to celebrating the Eucharist, the flowers that we see on the altar remind us of God's glory as we remember Jesus' role in our own lives.

The Altar Flowers Ministry has played an important role in maintaining fresh flowers at our parish each week, thanks to donations made by parishioners. Coordinator Alice D. Bolchoz says her 45 years in the ministry have brought her joy and allowed her to get to know others at our church.

"Since 1972, I have thoroughly enjoyed being the altar flower coordinator at Blessed Sacrament," Alice says. "When people call to order flowers, it gives me the opportunity to chat with parishioners who are longstanding and welcome those who are new to our very special church family."

Alice explains that she became involved when the former coordinator was moving out of state and the church put a note in the bulletin that they needed someone to replace her.

"Since I was at that time a stay-at-home mom while my three children attended Blessed Sacrament Catholic School and I wanted to volunteer my services in some capacity, I called and told them



*Coordinating the Altar Flowers Ministry has been a labor of love for parishioner Alice D. Bolchoz (center, at the altar with her grandchildren) for the past 45 years.*

that I would be more than happy to replace her as flower coordinator," she says. "Little did I think that I would still be the coordinator 45 years later."

Alice's role with the ministry includes keeping an up-to-date calendar of altar flower donations for the church, the chapel, and weddings so that there are no conflicts. She then gives the church office an announcement for the bulletin saying who donated that week's flowers. The order then goes to Peggy Sirisky, owner of The Flower Cottage, every Saturday.

"Peggy decorates the church so beautifully with her flower arrangements each week," Alice says. "Blessed Sacrament is very fortunate to have her in charge of the flowers."

What many parishioners might not know is that altar flowers can

be donated as a way of celebrating a special day in the lives of a parish family just as they would at home.

"Putting flowers on the altar for the glory of God is a wonderful way to commemorate a birthday, anniversary of the living and deceased, baptisms, graduations, etcetera," Alice says. "Since the majority of parishioners want fresh flowers on the main altar each week for church, I also keep a list with the names of parishioners whom I call if we have no donations for fresh flowers for the main altar for Sundays. And they will gladly pay for the vases, which are \$43.50 each."

*Parishioners who would like to order flowers to remember a special occasion, or would like to be added to the "call if you need flowers" list, please call Alice D. Bolchoz at 843-766-7202.*

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## Bible Study Groups

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another in the process. For many, this has been the great blessing of the group, receiving accountability and a ready support system during times of struggle.

“I’ve gotten to know the parishioners better through this ministry,” Clare says. “They are lovely people, every one of them, and being around them has certainly encouraged my own faith. We always try to encourage everybody to share and talk about the readings, and sometimes we get a really good discussion going.”

*Through their weekly gatherings, each Bible Study member is doing their best to live up to their stewardship calling — namely to know, love and serve God to the best of their ability. If you are interested in joining one of the current Bible Studies or would simply like more information about this ministry, please contact Clare Richter at 843-766-2729.*

## Christmas Mass Schedule

### Dec. 24

- 4 p.m. — Vigil of Christmas
- 6 p.m. — Children’s Mass with Children’s Choir
- 8 p.m. — Solemnity of Christmas Mass with Adult Choir and Incense
- 10 p.m. — Spanish

### Dec. 25

- 9 a.m. — Morning Mass
- 11 a.m. — Mass with Incense

### Dec. 31

- 5 p.m. Mass

### Jan. 1

- 9 a.m. Mass, 11 a.m. Mass  
(No evening Mass)

## LITURGY SCHEDULE

**Saturday Vigil:** 5 p.m. | **Sunday:** 9 & 11 a.m., 1:30 p.m. (En Español) & 5 p.m. (LifeTeen)

**Daily Mass:** Monday-Friday, 6:30 a.m.

**Confessions:** Saturday: 3:30 p.m. & after 5 p.m. Mass, Sunday: 1 p.m.

## PERPETUAL ADORATION

**24 hours a day, 7 days a week**