

# ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CATHOLIC PARISH



## Grief Support Ministry Offers Comfort and a Safe Place for Those Dealing With Loss

**A**fter the funeral is over, how do you cope with the pain? The house is so quiet. Meals are an ordeal. Did they really mean “call me if you need anything?”

Does anyone understand what you’re going through?

The answer is, yes, there are others who do understand and will welcome you.

Our Grief Support Ministry will begin its next nine-week session in February or March. The bulletin will announce the sessions that are held once a week on Tuesday evenings.

David Lacerda, a retired clinical psychologist and therapist, coordinates the group.

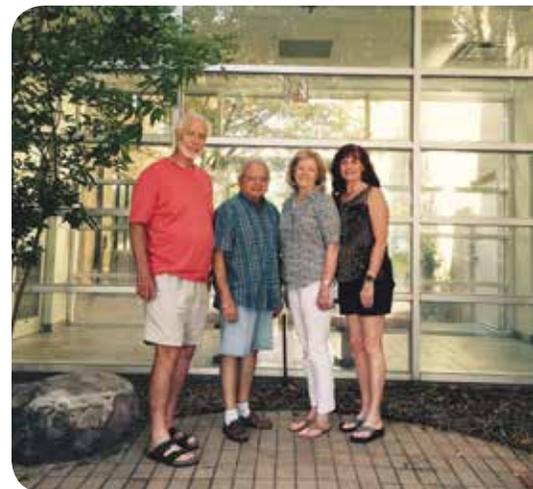
“I saw the reference about the Grief Support Ministry in the bulletin, and I was retired, so I called to see if I could help, and I haven’t looked back since,” David says. “I’ve been involved about two years.”

There are no speakers during the meetings, the participants and facilitators sit in a circle to offer their reflections and discussions. Active participation is encouraged.

“Families don’t attend together, but I see no reason not to if a couple or siblings want to attend,” David says. “What’s unique, and I’m the exception, is that all the facilitators have lost a spouse. So there is a lot of direct experience available in the discussion and conversations in the group.”

When David was 9, he lost a brother, a life event that led him to enter the psychology field. But for the other facilitators, they have either lost a spouse or an adult child.

“The facilitators feel like they have something to contribute,” David says. “They believe this work is something that is badly needed by others. They



*Members of our Grief Support Ministry gather for a meeting to discuss the next nine-week session. The sessions are scheduled twice a year, usually in the spring and fall. The members are (from left) Coordinator David Lacerda, Jaime Varas, Judy Skillman, and Pam Heroux.*

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# ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

## “Therefore Go and Make Disciples of All Nations” *Evangelization, the Church, and Our Commitments as Stewards*

According to the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus’ parting words to us before He ascended to heaven after His resurrection included these instructions: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

That is, quite frankly, a call to evangelization. Clearly, evangelization is not new to the Church – it is traced to that call from Jesus Christ, a call to His apostles and followers of that time, and that call continues today in relation to us and our lives as Catholics. “Evangelization” has become a bit of a “catchphrase” in today’s Church. Of course, it is not a new idea, nor is it a new call.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis’ absolute first publication – officially an apostolic exhortation – was titled *Evangelii Gaudium*, which means “The Joy of the Gospel.” In that document, the pope had much to say about evangelization, including this: “Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love” (120).

Pope St. John Paul II issued an encyclical in December 1990 titled *Redemptoris Missio* – “The Mission of the Redeemer” – in which he called for the church to renew its efforts in evangelization. This has become known as the “new evangelization,” but within, what Pope St. John Paul II says is that the Church “must renew her missionary commitment.” He adds, “Faith is strengthened when it is shared and given to others” (2).

Yet, it would seem that some Catholics resist this call to evangelization, perhaps recalling images of street preachers, television evangelists or door-to-door groups saying “repent” or talking about the “wages of sin.” Or, we may feel that evangelization is the role of saints or missionaries or Catholic priests. The truth is that evangelization is born from a love of people and a desire that everyone comes to know the love of Christ and the blessings of living as part of His Kingdom.



Over a decade before Pope St. John Paul II addressed this issue, Pope Paul VI issued an apostolic exhortation in 1975 titled *Evangelii Nuntiandi* – “Evangelization in the Modern World” – in which the pope said, “We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing of all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church” (14).

So, what does this mean to us as faithful stewards? Obviously, each of us is called to be an evangelist. That does not mean we go door-to-door or stand on street corners proclaiming our faith. Our own mission statement has a strong flavor of evangelization, especially because of our effort to embrace stewardship as a way of life. In recent years, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has issued two pastoral letters – one called *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy of Catholic Evangelization*, and the other titled *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*. The connection between stewardship, evangelization and discipleship is obvious, it would seem.

Pope Francis also said in his first official statement *Evangelii Gaudium* the following: “An evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral... And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ” (10). That is who we are, or who we should be.

*A Letter From Our Pastor*

# November is a Time for *Thanksgiving*

Dear Parishioners,

November seems to automatically bring us to thoughts of thanksgiving and Thanksgiving – it is both a time of year when we tend to think in terms of gratitude to God, and a time when we also formally celebrate our American holiday. My memories of Thanksgiving are filled with food, of course, but they are also filled with thoughts of family and a sense of togetherness and a sense of my faith.

But this is also a significant month in the Church from a number of perspectives. Nov. 1 is a Holy Day, the Solemnity of All Saints. The next day is All Souls Day, a day devoted to all the saints in our lives – living, not living, known, and unknown.

Most of us have people in our lives who have had a profound impact on us – people we can consider our own personal saints. This month is a wonderful reminder to think of them, thank them, and thank God for making them a part of our lives.

Our Thanksgiving holiday falls on Nov. 23, and is a time for families and gratitude. Thanksgiving became official in the United States in 1863, and in his proclamation, President Abraham Lincoln made very clear Whom we needed to thank. “To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God,” Lincoln said. In other words, we all need to thank

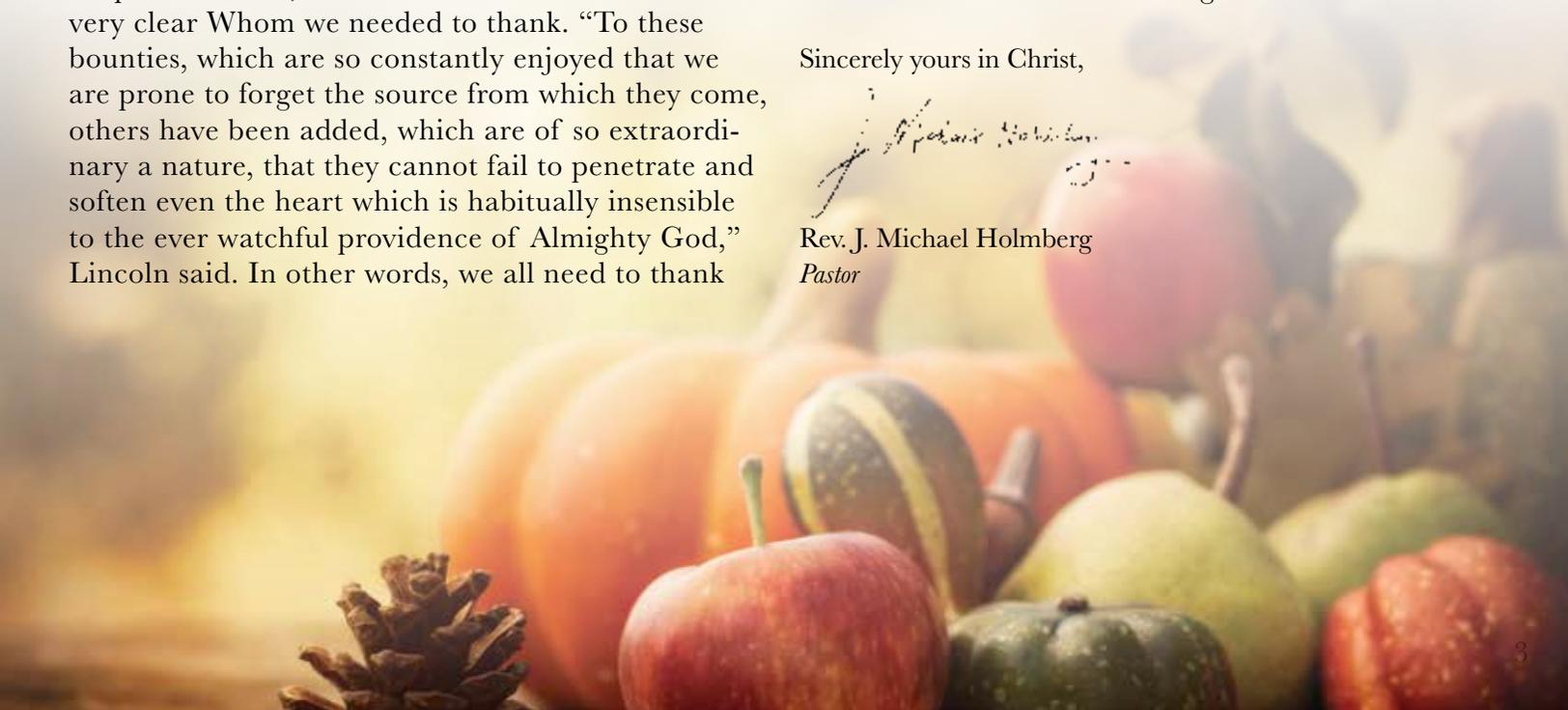
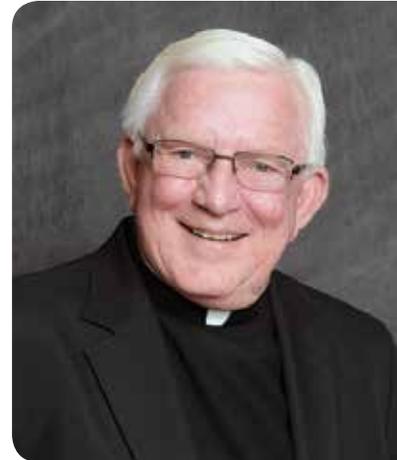
Almighty God for our many blessings.

Finally, November also brings us to the end of one Church year and the beginning of a new one. The Feast of Christ the King on Nov. 26 officially begins the final week of our liturgical year, and the First Sunday of Advent is on Dec. 3. From the beginning of the month when we thank God for the example of the saints and the saintly people in our lives, to the end of the month when we thank God for everything we have and everything we are, November is a time to approach the Lord with a grateful heart. That is what stewardship truly is all about – about approaching God, about approaching each day, and about approaching all those with whom we come in contact with hearts filled with gratitude and love.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Rev. J. Michael Holmberg  
*Pastor*



# ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

## A Place for the Little Ones: Children

It's okay to admit it. If you're a parent, there has probably been at least a Sunday or two when you've been anxious about going to Mass. Maybe it's after a particularly difficult week with an ornery preschooler, or maybe it happens when you start to doubt that your 7-year-old is getting anything out of the liturgy each week. But, sooner or later, if you have children, it'll probably happen to you.

It can be a challenging, and sometimes daunting task, to keep young children engaged, or even just limit the fidgeting, for an hour, in the pew.

Here at St. Vincent de Paul, we want Sunday Mass to be an opportunity for all our parishioners to pray and grow closer to God and their parish community. And we're aware that, for many children, sitting still for an hour can certainly be a lot to ask.

With this in mind, our young parishioners are invited to join us each Sunday for Children's Liturgy of the Word. This wonderful program is designed to give young children – ranging in age from toddlers and even younger, with parents, through sixth grade – an opportunity to experience Mass in an active and involved way, at a level they understand.

Valerie Crisafulli, a certified teacher and mom of four, has served a Children's Liturgy of the Word at the 9 a.m. Mass for the past six years. She loves seeing the kids enter into the parts of the Mass, tailored to their needs.

"I love that they're involved, and I think they come and they feel that they're part of it," she says. "They are just so happy to be there – 'This is *my* Church, this is *my* Mass, this is my home away from home.'"

In Valerie's experience, including with her own children, Children's Liturgy of the Word helps start the youngest members of our parish on a lifelong journey of faith and love for the Mass, as well as service.

"The kids are so involved, they have so many roles," Valerie says. "They really get to feel part of the liturgy. I think it's so important. Being involved gives them a better understanding of what we're doing, and why we're doing it.

"I hope and pray that every time I teach, that the seed will be planted and the love will grow," she



*Children's Liturgy of the Word is an opportunity for our children to hear God's Word proclaimed, and to participate in the Mass, on their level.*

continues. "I really hope they come away with the love of Jesus and I pray that the Holy Spirit will guide them to want to learn more and know that it's a lifelong journey."

Valerie also hopes that Children's Liturgy of the Word will be a blessing to the parents whose children attend.

"Parents can focus a little more on the homily and know that their children are getting the same thing, but more on their level," she says.

Valerie finds that not only does this program help the children grow in their faith, but serving in Children's Liturgy of the Word has also strengthened her relationship with God.

"It's been a huge blessing to me," she says. "The more I teach the kids, the more I delve a little deeper into the liturgy and spend time in prayer. It has made me more curious as an adult. I have learned so much and I love it. It's a win for the parents, it's a win for the teachers, it's a win for the kids."

For parents who may be hesitant to send their children, Valerie invites them to come see what Children's Liturgy of the Word is all about.

"It's a happy, loving and safe environment," she says. "I love that parents want to come. I love for them to see what we're doing."

# Children's Liturgy of the Word

Valerie also encourages those who are looking for a way to become involved serving in the parish to consider serving with Children's Liturgy of the Word, which is offered at all weekend Masses.

"Anyone who loves kids and enjoys young children would love this," she says. "It's a fun and easy way to be involved."

*If you would like more information on Children's Liturgy of the Word, or to become involved as a minister, please contact Jo-Lee Buncic, our Children's Ministry Assistant, at 817-478-8206, ext. 214 or [jbuncic@svdpcc.org](mailto:jbuncic@svdpcc.org).*



*Each Sunday, the children of our parish are invited to join Children's Liturgy of the Word.*

## Grief Support Ministry continued from front cover

wish they had this available when they lost their spouses. One facilitator said that it gives additional meaning to their life. The loss becomes a resource. It takes a negative and makes it a positive."

As for David, serving as a facilitator has brought him inspiration as he helps those who are grieving.

"I get inspiration at the strength of the power of the individual when they share, and how a temporary community gets formed," he says. "It is compassionate, and caring to their members. It is a very moving experience."

The sessions begin and end with prayers, and often a participant will give a reference to a Biblical passage. Spirituality and healing are discussed often, and participants speak about the power of the presence of God, or the sense of a Christian community for them. However, participants don't have to be a member of the Church to take part. Although the largest number of participants

are from Arlington, others have joined from Grand Prairie and Fort Worth, for example.

But very importantly, those taking part find that they are in a safe place, as part of a compassionate gathering where they can share what they are unable to share in other settings. Those grieving often must cope with others who are not talking about "the elephant in the room" – the fear of hurting the grieving person by talking about the loved one, when this mention would be comforting.

"They are sharing something that is very difficult to talk about or share safely," David says. "They have permission to talk openly about the loss of their loved ones."

Besides the announcements for the sessions in our bulletin, Marilyn Dietrich, Adult Ministry Director, will inform those who have lost a loved one of the Grief Support Ministry. She also reaches out to other churches in the community to inform them about the ministry.

*For more information about the Grief Support Ministry, contact Marilyn Dietrich at 817-478-8206.*

# ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

## Understanding All Saints Day and All Souls Day

All Saints Day and All Souls Day are two important days on our Catholic calendar, and both illustrate foundational elements of our faith.

On Nov. 1, as we honor the saints, we also honor God with our whole heart and soul. We need the example of the saints, who have carried Christ's cross before us, just as a newborn child needs the help and wisdom of its mother.

The saints have carried us inestimably far along the path of salvation. Many Catholics may never gain eternal life without the graces won by their red and white martyrdoms. Let us pay our saints due honor by decorating our houses and dressing up to celebrate their presence among us. Life is too short to ignore our most loyal friends!

On Nov. 2, All Souls Day, Catholics traditionally visit cemeteries to attend a solemn memorial Mass, arrange beautiful flowers on a loved one's grave, or pray the Holy Rosary for poor souls in purgatory.

Some of us may wonder, "What is purgatory? Why do we honor the dead and pray for them, anyway?"

"The Church gives the name *Purgatory* to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different than the punishment of the damned," (*Catechism of the Catholic*

*Church* 1031). The Church formulated her doctrine on purgatory at the Councils of Florence and Trent, and in reference to Scriptural texts which speak of a "cleansing fire," such as 1 Cor 3:15 and 1 Peter 1:7.

Understanding that purgatory truly exists, we easily conclude that there are souls who are there right now. We then need to help these souls through this purification process – especially if they are our loved ones!

This is how the Old Testament character Judas Maccabeus felt: "Therefore (Judas) made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin," (2 Macc. 12:46).

The *Catechism* supports this clearly: "From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may obtain the beatific vision of God. The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead" (CCC 1032).

Let us hold the dead close to our hearts and not forget about them. They are helplessly waiting for us to have compassion on them and pray for them this All Souls Day, and every day.



# The Acolyte Ministry and the Gift of Serving

For acolyte Bob Burke, being a part of the liturgy and to serve by the altar during the consecration is “an amazingly rewarding experience.”

“I don’t feel worthy at times to be there, and without a doubt it has increased my devotion to the Eucharist,” Bob says. “Everyone always says that you feel better by giving than receiving, but it’s true. And although I’m not really doing much, being up there and assisting with the liturgy is such a great blessing.”

Bob is one of approximately 20 male parishioners currently serving as a St. Vincent de Paul acolyte. Installed by the bishop, they assist the priest and deacon throughout the Mass. Their duties include processing the cross at the beginning and conclusion of Mass, holding the book for Father during the opening and closing prayers, preparing the altar for consecration, assisting with the distribution of Holy Communion, and purifying the sacred vessels. Because an acolyte actually receives minor orders, like the diaconate and priesthood, it is reserved exclusively for men.

Oftentimes, the path towards becoming an acolyte is a gradual one. In Bob’s case, it began with him desiring to become more involved in the church. A working husband and father, he was looking for a way to serve that would fit in with an often-busy schedule.

“I actually started out as an usher at St. Vincent’s roughly 30 years ago,” Bob says. “Then, after doing that for a while, I made the decision to be-

*continued on back cover*



*As an acolyte, Kevin Brett is available to help the priests and deacons throughout the sacred liturgy.*



*St. Vincent de Paul acolyte Wayne Sulak processing in the cross at the beginning of Mass.*

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## MASSES

**Saturday Vigil:** 5:30 p.m.

**Sunday:** 9 a.m., 10:45 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

**Weekdays: (M/Th/Fr)** 8:45 a.m. in the chapel  
**(Wed)** 6:00 p.m. in the chapel

**Holy Days:** 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.

**Tuesday Morning Prayer:** 8:45 p.m. in the chapel

**Confessions:** Saturday: 4-5 p.m. in the chapel

## The Acolyte Ministry and the Gift of Serving continued from page 7

come an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. I wanted to be part of the Mass in a greater way – to be able to better serve the people. I wanted to help with serving the Body and Blood of Christ. And from there it just continued to grow.”

When you think about it, says Bob, being an acolyte takes very little extra time. All that is required is that you come to Mass ready to serve. Yet, it’s also perhaps one of the most rewarding ministries, because it allows him to be in close proximity to our Eucharistic Lord.

“For those that work full-time like I still do and have family responsibilities, this is an easy ministry to fit into your life,” Bob says. “But being blessed with the opportunity to serve the Body and Blood of Christ is amazingly rewarding. You are receiving so much for just a little bit of output. I can’t express to you how much of a gift it has been to be involved in the Mass this way.”

Though acolytes often come from our Eucharistic Ministers, this is not a prerequisite of becoming one. Any Catholic male in good standing with the Church who desires to serve a greater part in the liturgy is welcome.

*“For those that work full-time like I still do and have family responsibilities, this is an easy ministry to fit into your life. But being blessed with the opportunity to serve the Body and Blood of Christ is amazingly rewarding. You are receiving so much for just a little bit of output. I can’t express to you how much of a gift it has been to be involved in the Mass this way.” – Bob Burke*

*To learn more about serving as an acolyte and future training opportunities, please contact Bob Burke at 817-366-6890 or [raburke56@yahoo.com](mailto:raburke56@yahoo.com).*