

St. Cecilia

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Getting to Know The Pratt Family

“Being Involved Contributes to Our Faith”

Mimi and Chris Pratt were introduced to each other at a Christmas party in North Beach. They were both in jobs that help others – she was a social worker, and he was a fireman. They immediately connected over shared ideals and have found that their faith has grown as they raise their young family.

“Being involved in parish life contributed to our faith as a family,” Mimi says. “It has given us a great sense of purpose and shows our children the faith in action.”

When Mimi and Chris became engaged, the process of marriage preparation and the Engaged Encounter weekend offered them a solid faith foundation upon which to build.

“The faith became a very important part of our relationship when we were engaged,” Mimi says. “We realized even more the importance of sharing your faith and having a meaningful marriage.”

About 10 years ago, Mimi and Chris moved to the Sunset District and attended a 9:30 a.m. Mass at St. Cecilia.

“We really loved the warmth of the parish,” Mimi says. “Monsignor was the celebrant, and he was down to earth and relatable. We’re very happy here and love the diverse mix of people.”



The Pratt Family – (from left) Kiley, Malia, Chris, Liam, and Mimi

They participated in a new parishioner welcome event, and at first felt a little overwhelmed at the thought of becoming active in parish life with young children.

“We took very small steps and got involved in manageable, fun ways, like helping with the Parish Festival,” Mimi says. “We joined in ways that we felt like we could at the time.”

With their three children – Kiley, Liam and Malia – at St. Cecilia School, Mimi

continued on back cover

The Eucharist and Stewardship as a Way of Life

More than 20 years ago, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a pastoral letter titled *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. This document was an invitation to follow Christ Who gave of Himself for us. Each of us is called to serve our neighbors and to be stewards of God's creation and of all that has been entrusted to us. However, to truly understand stewardship, we must look to the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is the total gift of our loving Savior to us. Stewardship is our response to that gift.

Even the word "Eucharist" implies stewardship. The word "Eucharist" finds its roots in the Latin word *eucharistia*, which in turn came from the Greek word *eukaristos*, which meant, quite simply, "gratitude" or "thanksgiving." How fitting that we, who are called to be a stewardship people, celebrate at the focal point of every Mass an act of thanksgiving and gratitude – namely, the reception of Jesus' gift to us – the Eucharist.

In their pastoral letter on stewardship, the bishops speak of the Eucharist in this way: "The Eucharist is the great sign and agent of this expansive communion of charity... we enjoy a unique union with Christ and, in Him, with one another. Here His love – indeed, His very Self – flows into us as disciples and, through us and our practice of stewardship to the entire human race."

When we receive Christ's Body in the Holy Eucharist, we hear the minister say, "The Body of Christ." To this, we respond, "Amen" – which means in Hebrew, "Yes; it is so." This is the essence of stewardship. We



should enter the Church for Mass out of "gratitude." We recognize the presence of the Lord in Holy Communion, and then we truly receive the Lord. What is left for us to do is the fulfillment of stewardship – that is, sharing what we have received in love of God and neighbor. Our entire experience speaks to stewardship – we are grateful; we recognize the real presence of the Lord; we receive the Lord; and then we share what we have received.

Christ's gift to us through the Eucharist is an invitation to us. We are called to give beyond what is convenient or what may be comfortable. We are called to forgive even when forgiveness may not be deserved; we are called to love even when that love is not returned. We are called to love as God loves us.

The Eucharist is stewardship celebrated. The Mass is more than a ritual. It is an actual encounter with God, with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We need to respond to the Eucharist with our complete selves. What we experience in the Eucharist should, in turn, translate into our daily lives. We are committed to the Church, which is Christ's body. We show our love for His body by acts of charity and generosity. We spend time in prayer, expressing our gratitude and our love.

God's greatest gift to us is Christ's great love for us – this was shown when He was crucified on the Cross to pay the penalty for our sins and to give us eternal life. God's love for us is without limit, and He offers Himself to us in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Stewardship is how we respond to that gift.

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Summer Vacations Are Coming to an End... Now What?

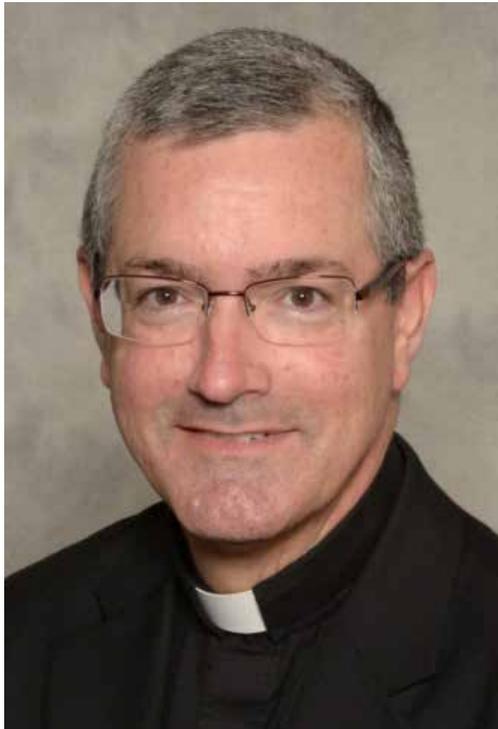
Dear Parishioners,

The month of August really does seem to return us to reality, doesn't it? Summer is coming to an end - maybe not officially on the calendar, but in terms of our lives and the life of the Church, it does. The children may view it as the end of something appealing - the start of summer vacation seems like a long time ago - and their parents may be breathing sighs of relief. For those involved in parish ministries, it might be a time when we say, "Now, it's time to work."

Perhaps this is a time when we get back into the routine of things. However, we all know the truth - that faith and the Church are not seasonal. For that matter, stewardship is not seasonal, and it's not something that is done a few times a year. Rather, stewardship is something we should be thinking about each and every day.

There are many definitions of stewardship, but at its very basis, it means using the gifts God has given us to do the things God asks - calls, expects - us to do. Stewardship is discipleship. We may tend to think of stewardship as a question: "What is mine and what is God's?" The truth is that all that we have and all that we are belongs to and comes from God - absolutely everything!

We may hear that stewardship is using and sharing our time, our talent, and our treasure. In terms of time, the secret is not learning how to use it or how to get more



of it - the secret is knowing how best to use it. Talent and treasure are given to each of us in different amounts. Nevertheless, the bottom line is that we have to trust God before we really share those things. Relying on God and living a God-centered life are fundamental to a relationship with Him - and, for that matter, with one another. Being contented is not the fulfillment of what you may want. Rather, it is the realization of what you already have.

So, we are back to the reality of this time of year. You may have heard the statement that stewardship people are grateful people. Perhaps this is a time to be grateful for the summer that has passed. But it is a time for us to recommit ourselves to doing better, especially as

we enter a time of year that provides a return to routine. Importantly, it is also a time filled with celebrations, thanksgiving, hope, and maybe even better stewardship on each of our parts.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Mark V. Taheny

Fr. Mark Taheny
Pastor

Our Pastoral Council Provides E

Although not mandated by the Catholic *Code of Canon Law*, it is stated, "If the diocesan bishop judges it opportune... a pastoral council is to be established in each parish, over which the pastor presides and in which the Christian faithful, together with those who share in pastoral care by virtue of their office in the parish, assist in fostering pastoral activity" (*Canon 536*). In turn, the archbishop of San Francisco has mandated a Pastoral (or Parish) Council in each parish.

"As I see it, the purpose of our Pastoral Council is to assist our pastor in discerning and dealing with various issues which may arise," says Liam Reidy, current President of our Pastoral Council. "We are purely advisory in nature, but we are especially a conduit for communications between the members of the parish and the pastor, as well as among and between the various organizations and ministries of the parish. Trying to improve communications is a key part of what we are trying to do."

A parishioner here for 15 years, Liam became

a member of the Pastoral Council for the first time three years ago, and he has served as President since that time. At this time, the Council meets with the pastor 10 times a year on a monthly basis, except for July and August. There are 12 members - 10 lay people appointed by the pastor, and the school Principal, Mrs. Marian Connelly, and Parish Manager Alvin Martin. Members of the Council normally serve a three-year term.

"As a rule, our meetings focus on bringing items to the pastor from parishioners," Liam says. "The people of the parish are encouraged to ask questions of the members of the Council, which the membership in turn brings to the pastor in our meetings. In reality, we are the liaisons between the people and the parish leadership.

"At times, we deal with special projects or events," he continues. "For example, we were and have been very involved in the yearlong Centennial Celebration. That was truly a concentration of our efforts for much of the past year and a half. We also organize



The Centennial Committee, of which a majority were members of the Pastoral Council.

Example of Stewardship in Action

and host the annual Welcome Dinner in February, as well as sponsor and work at the three special Family Masses held each year. Of course, we are also concerned with the many parish ministries we have here at St. Cecilia, and try to assist them where possible and to help with communications among them.”

After three years as the chair of the Council, Liam has very much enjoyed the opportunity to serve with the Council membership.

“Our parish Pastoral Council is made up of some people who are best described as fantastic,” he says. “They are dedicated and committed – excellent examples of what it means to be good stewards of your many gifts. The parish efforts in stewardship are something we endorse wholeheartedly. Part of our task is to encourage people to get involved in some way. We understand and know that it is important to give something of our time and talents back for all we receive.”

Liam offers advice for those members of our community who would like to be considered for membership.

“The pastor appoints all members, so an expression of interest is not a guarantee of membership,” he says. “However, as we have embraced and pursued stewardship, our annual Renewal is an important part of what we do. Our new members often come from among people who indicate on a commitment card their interest. Stewardship has brought great benefits to our parish, especially in the number of people actively involved.”

If you have any questions about the Pastoral Council, or feel that you might like to be involved in it, please contact President Liam Reidy at 415-759-1379 or reidypainting@yahoo.com.



Walt McCall and Liam Reidy in front of the Wall of Honor. Both members of the Pastoral Council, Walt coordinated the project and Liam was in charge of the installation and construction.

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The Pastoral Council is active in many aspects of the parish. Liam Reidy, Council President, works on the parish Wall of Honor preparations. (Photo courtesy of jGuerzonPictorials.)

Transformed by the Sacred Liturgy *The Celebration of the Paschal Mystery*

In a limited way, the liturgy can be compared to a story or a film – upon a first reading or viewing, we might understand the basic outline of the narrative, yet through every subsequent encounter, the story further unfolds before us, becoming richer and more complex.

Often, inquisitive children teach us about how to understand a story or the Mass. As a child inquires about the priest's green vestments, the foregrounded wreath or the presence of palm branches, we might pause to recall the symbolism undergirding the rich rituals of the liturgy.

There is a sense of the sacred in the liturgy, but its rituals and ceremonies can appear as empty pantomimes when divorced from their meaning. Far from empty signs, the liturgy is the celebration of the Paschal mystery, of Christ's passion, death, resurrection and glorification by which He "accomplished the work of our salvation" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1067).

From the Greek *leitourgia*, meaning public service or worship, liturgy in the Christian tradition refers to the communal participation of the people in the work of God, and God is always present and at work in the liturgy, acting in and with the Church through the sacraments.

Annually, the Church's liturgical year is structured around the Paschal mystery, which we observe every Sunday. We begin each year with a season of anticipating Christ's birth, and following a celebration of Christ's Incarnation, we gradually enter a period of preparation for the Easter Triduum, for His passion, death and Resurrection. The year closes with a period of ordinary time – a time to grow in our faith and in living out the Gospel.

Daily, the Liturgy of the Hours unifies the Church Militant in prayers said by the clergy and increasingly by the laity. As the liturgical calendar structures our year, the Liturgy of the Hours structures our day, offering us an opportunity to consecrate each present moment to Christ.

Ultimately, the liturgical life of the Church "revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments" (CCC 1113), for we receive God's grace to fortify us in our spiritual lives and as His disciples through the sacraments, particularly the Holy Mass.



The Mass nurtures us spiritually, inviting us to reflect on the Paschal mystery and to lift our hearts to God as individuals and a community through spoken and sung prayer.

The Mass moves us corporeally, drawing us to sit as we listen to the Word, to stand as we unanimously profess our faith, and to kneel as the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Mass inspires us apostolically, sending us out to proclaim the Gospel and to share Christ with our brothers and sisters.

Though the "source and center" of all prayer, the liturgy and a sense of the sacred has, in some ways, become marginalized in the American Church. Once robust parishes are seeking to rebuild, but they frequently overlook the connection between the empty pews and the decentralization of the liturgy, which was underscored by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

"I am convinced that the crisis in the Church that we are experiencing today is, to a large extent, due to the disintegration of the liturgy," Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote in his autobiography *Milestones*.

Something in the simplicity of the child's experience of the liturgy teaches us to return to what we might call the basics of the faith – meaning a love for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the sacraments and the rituals of the Church. Only through the liturgy are we nurtured on our stewardship journey and inspired to proclaim the Gospel.

Confirmation Candidates

Learn the Ropes of Our Catholic Faith

If you've ever navigated a ropes course, then you know how delicate each step can be. You journey slowly from one platform to the next, being careful of each movement, but always relying faithfully on the idea that should you slip, the harness will keep you from falling.

Taking ownership of one's faith through the Sacrament of Confirmation is a little like a ropes course. We step away from our reliance on our parents in the navigation of what we believe, but always rely on the idea that our faith will never let us fall.

Starting in September, a new group of candidates will begin the journey to receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. Each is required to be an active parishioner and a practicing Catholic interested in further exploring and developing their faith and open to sharing their experiences throughout the program.

"This is a conscious choice for candidates, and it should be their decision to participate," says Adrienne Arnold, Confirmation Program Coordinator.

Weekly Mass, monthly meetings, and a weekend retreat are required activities during the program, which culminates with the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation next spring. During each monthly meeting, known as "Catholic Faith as a Shared Experience," candidates learn, share and participate in activities with a small group led by a high school team leader.

"The curriculum is a mixture of large and small-group discussions, video-based learning, group activities and presentations, Scripture study, prayer, and personal reflection," Adrienne says. "The combination of these

different activities helps each candidate learn and understand his or her faith in a unique and personal way. The program explores ways in which Catholic faith is tied to modern-day life, and allows a safe space to explore, ask questions, and understand the conflicts and joys that our faith brings to us."

A three-day retreat in January at the Catholic Youth Organization Retreat Center in Occidental will help candidates grow closer to their peers and deepen their faith as they take part in outdoor activities, spend time in personal reflections and sharing sessions, and have meaningful experiences with their fellow candidates. In addition, a mandatory service project - to be completed throughout the program's process - supplements

classroom learning and encourages candidates to live out their faith in actions throughout the community.

Once the day comes to cross that final step into becoming fully initiated into the Catholic Church, Adrienne says she hopes the candidates will understand that Confirmation is not a "graduation," but is about the fuller outpouring of the Holy Spirit into their lives, which makes them full members of the Catholic Church because they have received the Holy Spirit in His fullness.

"It is an affirmation of Catholic beliefs that candidates get to make for the first time of their own accord, and I hope that they take it seriously and understand the power they hold as the future of the Church," Adrienne says.

Families interested in learning more about the Confirmation process at St. Cecilia are invited to contact Adrienne Arnold directly at sconprogram@gmail.com.



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St. Cecilia Catholic Church

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The Pratt Family continued from front cover

and Chris have met even more parishioners and found additional ways to be involved. Chris joined the Men's Club, and Mimi recently became a Eucharistic Minister of Holy Communion. Kiley also serves as an altar server.

"She signed herself up for it and loves being an altar server," Mimi says. "It has really deepened her faith."

Three years ago, Mimi started working at St. Cecilia School. Today, she oversees a monthly book club for students in sixth through eighth grades, and this fall she became the school counselor for kindergarten through fourth-grade students.

"I love the school and working at the school," Mimi says.

"Having the faith infused into our children's education on a daily basis helps it become a natural way of life. The school has such a wonderful impact on their character."

If you're discerning how to use your gifts, Mimi suggests visiting our parish's website and looking at all the different ministries. For the Pratt family, giving back has helped them grow in their faith and in their sense of community belonging.

"Don't be afraid to get involved," Mimi says. "There's something for everyone. We're very grateful to the St. Cecilia community, for we have such an amazing parish and school that offer so much."

"Don't be afraid to get involved. There's something for everyone. We're very grateful to the St. Cecilia community, for we have such an amazing parish and school that offer so much." – Mimi Pratt

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Saturday: 5:00 p.m. (Vigil Mass) **Sunday:** 7:30, 9:30 (Family Mass), & 11:30 a.m.

Weekdays: 7:00, 9:00 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.

Reconciliation (Confessions): Saturday, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.