

St. Cecilia

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Altar Linen Ministry

Receiving Graces Though Service

If you attend Mass regularly, you likely have an idea of the many pieces that come together to create a beautiful experience of prayer each Sunday. The priest, the choir, the readers, the ushers, altar servers, and the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion – each has a unique role in aiding the parish community as they worship. However, there is one group whose service at the liturgy often goes unnoticed.

They are humble, behind-the-scenes members of our parish – our Altar Linen Ministry.

Each time our priests celebrate Mass, they use a number of different linens – from the pieces that are used to cover the altar, to the “purificators” that are used to wipe the chalices holding the Precious Blood, and more. Our Altar Linen Ministry works hard, behind the scenes, to make sure that all of the linens used in the liturgy are carefully and reverently cleaned and ready to be used at the next Mass.

The three people who currently serve with this ministry typically pick up the pieces to be washed once a week, and return them within 48 hours. Because the linens cannot be put in a dryer, they are ironed dry, a task that usually takes about three hours.

Tina Celi has spent the past five years serving the parish in this way. She has found that the washing and ironing that she does for this ministry has helped her make time to pray and listen to God’s voice in the silence of her work.

continued on page 5



Tina Celi serves as part of our parish Altar Linen Ministry.

A special “thank you” to Justine Marchand for the years she has served with our Altar Linen Ministry. Thanks also to Tina Celi and Sean Bisser who continue to serve our parish community in this way.

Christmastime Stewardship

How We Can Bring His Son to the World

It is not uncommon to give gifts during Advent and Christmas, but it is never enough just to leave it at that. True, Jesus gave *Himself* to us at the first Christmas. And, as always, we should strive to imitate Him by giving of *ourselves* in some way as we celebrate the anniversary of His birth. But there is a way to give even more than just ourselves — by giving the gift of Christ to others. The seasons of Advent and Christmas are perfect opportunities to share the love and message of Jesus with others in a beautiful way.

Of course, giving of ourselves in imitation of Jesus is a beautiful thing. But it is just as important to remember that, as human beings, we bear the likeness of God. As Christians, Jesus Himself inhabits our very souls. As Catholics, our Lord literally dwells within us when we receive Him in the Eucharist. Based upon this logic, we do so much more than imitate Jesus when we selflessly give of ourselves to others. Indeed, just as Mary carried Christ in her womb when she visited her cousin, Elizabeth, and just as she brought Him in her arms to Simeon as a newborn child, we can also literally bring Jesus Christ to the world.

What a profound task Our Lord has laid out for us this season! As He grew in Mary's womb, Jesus could only go where Mary chose to take Him. Of course, He couldn't do anything — He couldn't even speak. Mary became His hands and feet, and even His voice. Mary could have stayed at home during her pregnancy, resting and preparing for life with a newborn, as most mothers do. But instead, the Blessed Mother helped her Son begin His mission by bringing Him to her cousin, Elizabeth. Today, in much the same way, Christ invites us to share Him with the rest of the world. He chooses to make His presence known through us. And so, as the spiritual writer Caryl Houselander beautifully states, "We must carry Jesus in our hearts wherever He wants us to go, and there are many places to which He may *never* go unless we take Him to them."

How do we bring Jesus to those in our parish and community? There are many ways. We might visit with a sick parishioner over the holidays, providing fellowship and support in their time of need. We may consider serving a local soup kitchen or food bank, and doing our part to make sure that the hungry are fed. We can sing Christmas carols for our neighbors, bringing true joy and love to their homes.



Perhaps we could help a tired friend clean her house, making her life a little bit easier during this busy season. Or we can share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others. We might even try going to work with a cheery disposition, or donating money so that a starving child in a poor country can have something to eat. These are just a few examples of how we can practice stewardship.

We may sometimes feel as if our efforts are in vain — especially when it is hard to see the effects of our evangelization. This temptation is particularly strong when we offer our treasure as a gift to God. The positive effects of monetary gifts aren't always as visible as gifts of time or talent. But when we give of our treasure, the love of Jesus can travel to places we could never go. While our gift may not directly affect someone in a positive way, it very well may enable someone else to do it for us. Sometimes, God doesn't just ask *us* to be His hands and feet, but to enable *someone else* to be them, as well.

Advent and Christmas give us the opportunity to reflect on Jesus' call to live as stewards and disciples of His Word. God has put us in a particular place, given us a certain amount of time, and asked us to perform particular tasks and selflessly share a portion of our gifts. This is all for a singular purpose — to bring His Son into the world, and make Christ's presence just as real as when He first became man more than 2,000 years ago.

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

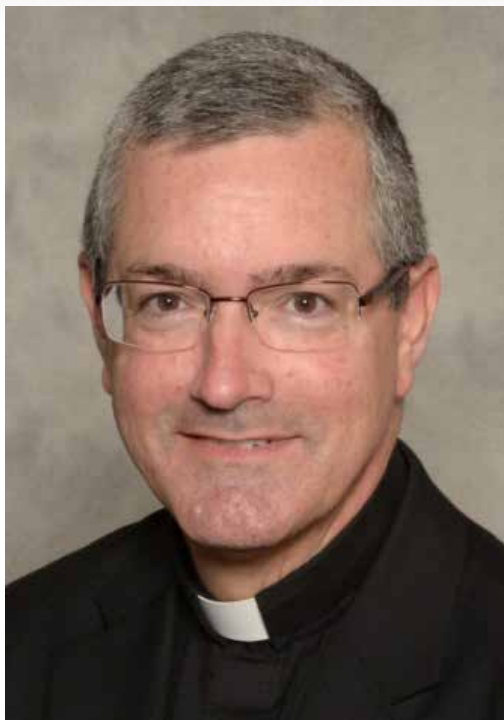
Reflections at the End of the Year

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 always 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!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Mark V. Taheny

Fr. Mark Taheny
Pastor

Holy Trinity Community

Living and A

Vivit Dominus in Cuius Conspetu Sto – “God lives in whose presence I stand.” Taken loosely from the words of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 18:15), this Carmelite motto is one of the key ideas behind the Holy Trinity Community North America prayer group. Part of an international lay Catholic organization, this relatively new movement works to renew Christ’s Church through prayer, formation, service and, most importantly, the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

St. Cecilia parishioner Yanli Guerzon first became involved in Holy Trinity Community 17 years ago following a life-changing retreat. Put on by an Indonesian priest, this retreat was designed to inspire Catholics to draw closer to God through a vibrant prayer life. Brought to a “spiritual high” from her experience, Yanli shares that she was anxious to continue drawing deeper, leading her to help form a community here at St. Cecilia.

“We were so inspired by how we could pray and really draw closer to God,” Yanli says. “And we wanted a way to keep our spirits up when the priest left – to maintain that spiritual high. So Fa-



Members of St. Cecilia’s chapter of the Holy Trinity Community North America.

ther told us about the Holy Trinity Community and supplied us with all of the materials to get started.”

Originally founded in Indonesia by Fr. Yohanes Indrakusuma, C.S.E., in 1987, Yanli explains that the movement has now grown to an international level and is acknowledged by the USCCB directory. Members strive to continuously live in God’s presence

through their prayer and interactions with others.

“We live in the presence of God on a daily basis,” Yanli says. “I’ve been greatly blessed by this ministry over the years because I can feel the presence of the Lord and His love on a daily basis. I feel like God loves us so much and this helps me give that love to others. Whenever I talk to people, even if

“As a Catholic, I believe that our first apostolate is always to pray. The Carmelite spirituality is truly grounded by prayer. The founders of our order like St. Teresa of Avila, Doctor of the Church, always emphasized the importance of talking to Jesus and not only praying for ourselves but for others. We are each called to live with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit through a Trinitarian relationship which must always begin with prayer.” — Yanli Guerzon

out the Great Commission Through Prayer apostolic Works

I'm not necessarily talking to them about God, as His instrument I want each person to feel the love of God radiating from me."

Helping them grow in this mission, Holy Trinity Community members meet in small groups twice a month on the second and fourth Friday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Typically gathering in the first floor of the St. Cecilia convent, members enjoy fellowship and a communal meal together. Then, the meeting transitions into its prayer time which includes praise and worship, opportunities for contem-

plative prayer, a spiritual teaching and faith sharing, and then, finally, intercessory prayer.

Living out stewardship, Yanli says, is a core part of the Holy Trinity Community. For as Catholics, we aren't meant to merely pray privately in our rooms, but instead are commissioned to go out and spread the Gospel. Members live out this calling by conducting retreats, offering healing services, and participating weekly in a guided Holy Hour. Prayer is also an essential part of the Holy Trinity Community apostolate,

lifting up one's hearts for others through intercessory prayer.

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Parishioners are always welcome to join Holy Trinity Community for one of their monthly gatherings, seeing firsthand what this movement is all about and personally witnessing the power of prayer. To learn more, parishioners can contact Yanli Guerzon at 415-307-6199 or askyanli@aol.com. Parishioners can also visit the Holy Trinity Community website, htcna.org.

Altar Linen Ministry *continued from front cover*

"It's a very quiet time," Tina says. "It's my time with Him and I talk to Him the whole time, doing His linens. It's beautiful."

"Unless you have something that makes you stop from all your other responsibilities, you don't stop [to pray] — you'll always find something, busy stuff to do," she adds. "You have to find something that makes you just stop."

Caring for the linens has also helped Tina grow in her appreciation for the Mass.

"I have a deeper understanding," she says. "I know what goes on now. When I attend Mass, I have a different view, and a better understanding. It has a deeper meaning."

Although she didn't expect it when she started this ministry, Tina has found that her faith has grown and she's been blessed by being involved.

"I was looking forward to doing more for my parish, so I thought, 'I don't mind ironing, I can do that,'" she says. "But it turned into being something else, something spiritual, not just doing pieces of laundry. I definitely get blessings and grace from doing it."

With longtime ministry member Justine Marchand retiring this month, Tina hopes that more parishioners will step forward to serve in this way.

"First of all, they have to love to iron — if you don't love to iron, this isn't going to work," Tina says, smiling. "If you want to take the time and if you're looking for another way to serve, this isn't difficult — it's time consuming, but it's not difficult. You'll reap the benefits, I'm sure of it. I believe I benefit more than the parish does from me doing it."

For more information, or to become involved serving with our Altar Linen Ministry, please contact Tina Celi at 415-753-8322.

Begin the Journey Home for Christmas

Christ was born the son of a poor carpenter. This was by no means an accident. His birth was the culmination of salvation history, as it profoundly revealed the glory of God. Infinite power and wisdom took the form “of a servant, coming in human likeness” (Phil 2:7) – not as a warrior, but a poor and vulnerable babe.

Every aspect of Christ’s birth, from the three kings to the swaddling clothes, carries meaning. The proclamation of the angel, therefore, is also important: “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (Lk 2:10). This message, meant to be for “all the people,” was announced to a group of shepherds in a field out in the middle of nowhere. Was this accidental? Not at all.

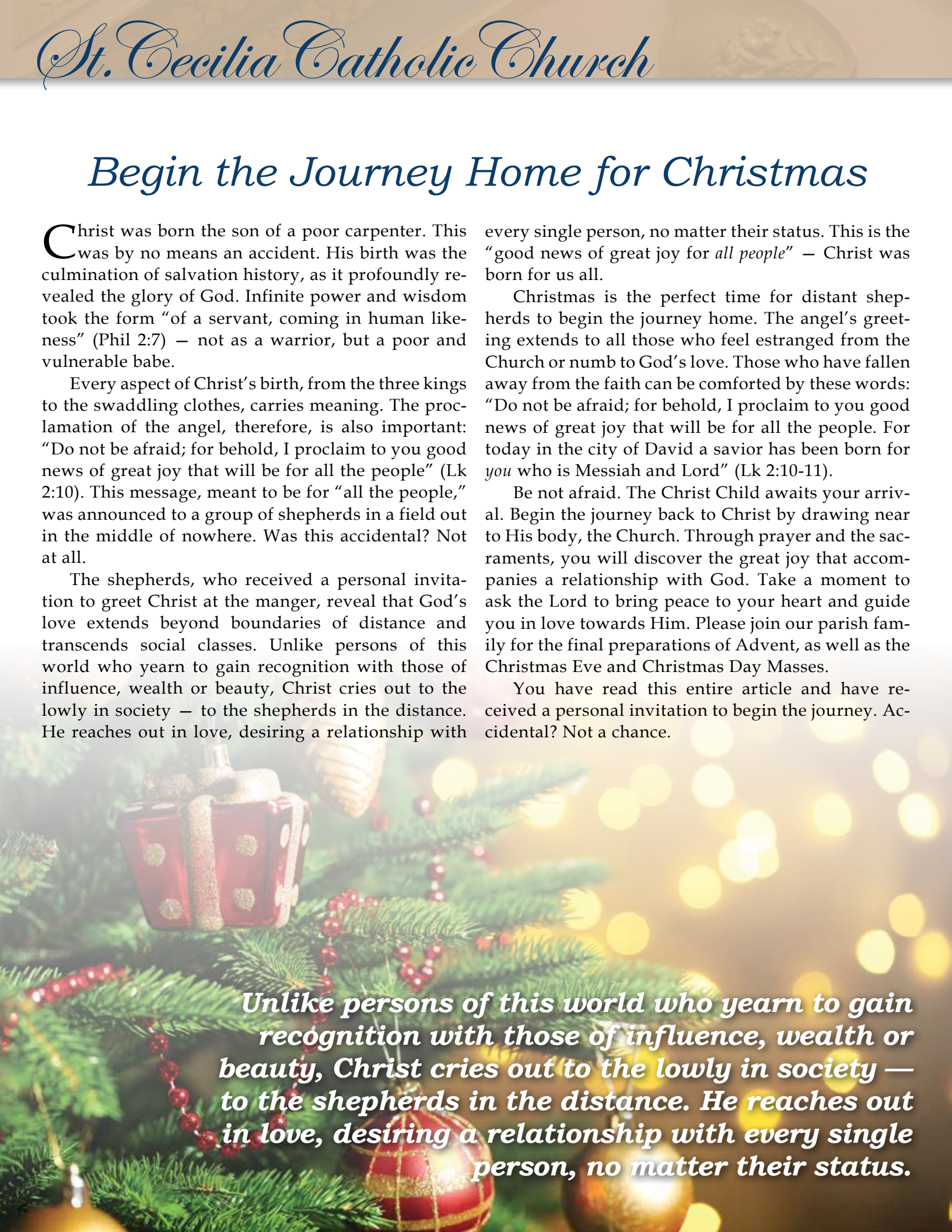
The shepherds, who received a personal invitation to greet Christ at the manger, reveal that God’s love extends beyond boundaries of distance and transcends social classes. Unlike persons of this world who yearn to gain recognition with those of influence, wealth or beauty, Christ cries out to the lowly in society – to the shepherds in the distance. He reaches out in love, desiring a relationship with

every single person, no matter their status. This is the “good news of great joy for *all people*” – Christ was born for us all.

Christmas is the perfect time for distant shepherds to begin the journey home. The angel’s greeting extends to all those who feel estranged from the Church or numb to God’s love. Those who have fallen away from the faith can be comforted by these words: “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for *you* who is Messiah and Lord” (Lk 2:10-11).

Be not afraid. The Christ Child awaits your arrival. Begin the journey back to Christ by drawing near to His body, the Church. Through prayer and the sacraments, you will discover the great joy that accompanies a relationship with God. Take a moment to ask the Lord to bring peace to your heart and guide you in love towards Him. Please join our parish family for the final preparations of Advent, as well as the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses.

You have read this entire article and have received a personal invitation to begin the journey. Accidental? Not a chance.



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Diving into the Mysteries of Catholicism at the Adult Bible Study

In 1972, a beautiful spiritual gift was given to our parish community, and to this day, a group of our parishioners are still busy unwrapping it.

“The archdiocese sent people to our parish to come and talk about the importance of Adult Faith Formation,” says Coordinator of Faith Formation Dr. Carol Braga. “Following this, we started with about 18 small groups at our parish which met regularly. We discussed faith topics together in our homes, and we were under the guidance of our priests.”

And to this day, some of the original small-group members are still “unwrapping” this gift of faith formation through the Adult Bible Study on Fridays at 10:30 a.m. in the Collins Center.

“It is delightful!” Dr. Carol says. “We read the Bible together, as well as the notes that accompany the passages. We also share what each of us happens to know about those verses, or we look up more information together. Then we share our insights and discuss it.”

Over the years, they have covered all four Gospels and some of the New Testament letters. At this time, they are studying the Old Testament.

“We are uncovering so many interesting details,” Dr. Carol says. “It has brought me to understand more about my faith and all the rules of the Old

continued on back cover

“To proclaim Christ means to make Christ known by those who do not yet know Him, and better known by those who do not know Him well. This is absolutely necessary if Christ is to be loved and served as He deserves, for we do not love what we do not know, and we do not give ourselves in devoted service except to someone we love. Knowledge must come first, then love, and then service.”
— Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.

St. Cecilia Catholic Church

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Diving into the Mysteries of Catholicism at the Adult Bible Study continued from page 7

Testament that are still being carried out by the Jewish people. It has also helped me understand people in general, and why they do what they do."

Overall, the group study allows them to embrace the calling to nourish their hearts and souls with God's truth on a regular basis.

"We have all grown a lot in our relationship with God since joining the study," Dr. Carol says. "We learn about aspects of the Catholic faith that are not mentioned during homilies. I believe that adult Catholics

need to study more of the Scriptures than just what is read at Mass. We need to hear the 'full story!'"

By cracking open the treasure chest of God's sacred Word together as brothers and sisters in Christ, the small-group members continually enjoy a powerful sense of fellowship.

"We talk freely with one another, as true friends," Dr. Carol says. "We really support one another and pray for each other. We enjoy the study so much that we continue to meet over the summer, as well."

If you would like more information about this phenomenal way to learn more about Christ's Word and His Church, please contact the parish office at 415-664-8481, or just simply attend the study.

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.