



St. Rita

catholic community

A Letter From Our Pastoral Administrator

Lent and Love

Dear Parishioners,

For St. Augustine, love proved everything. After learning all that one could, the theologian mustn't be proud, he said. Rather, he or she should remember Paul's warning that "knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies" (1 Cor 8:1). However much one may learn, only sharing in the suffering of Christ will actually save him (*De Doctrina Christiana* 2.41.62). That is, both faith and works are useless unless you also love – as God so loved the world that He sent His only Son. Thus, in reading Scripture, in work, in study, in leisure – in all these human endeavors, their worth is known by the love these things share in and spread. It makes no difference to the glory of God or to the Church that you know anything, or that you do anything, or that you give this, that, or the other thing to the Church or to anything else. That is, they make no difference insofar as they are empty of love. Like a good marriage or a good friendship, our relationship with God cannot just be works and ideas. It must be a love affair.

Love is at the heart of Lent. In this season, we are reminded through our fasts and added

prayers, through our sacrifice and confession, that it is not sufficient that we simply get our ideas right about God. It will not do just to belong to the Church as if it were a political group and not an organic body. We must love God with all the bodily, emotional and intellectual energy we can muster. Our life with God must be a genuine love affair with all that entails. God must invade your life. He must frame your day and your imagination. As a good husband takes his dearest wife as his compass, so too should God govern your reality – transcending all earthly loves and knowledge, making them finally human. I learn of love by loving my wife; I learn of God by loving Jesus. This is the way it works. This is the great sign betwixt Christ and His Church.

And it's why we're bidden by the Church to follow Jesus into the wilderness. In imitation, we are asked to deny ourselves, to sacrifice, to refuse the violence of this demonic world. We are invited to do these things because Christ is in the desert we enter. We want to learn of Him in His suffering and death, so

continued on page 2

Inside

- 3** Dallas Area Interfaith Helping People to a Life of Active Stewardship
- 4** Blessed to Serve: St. Rita's Seminarian Interns
- 6** Parish Campus Renovations Near Completion
- 7** 2017 Lent Schedule at St. Rita

Lent and Love *continued from front cover*

we may know Him in His resurrection. We must marry ourselves to Jesus in order truly to experience the tragedy of His death and the joy of His rising. We can only come to this by knowing Jesus, and we can only know Jesus by loving Him. And love is a full thing.

Probably more than anything else, the Lenten sermons of St. Leo the Great, in the fifth century, exemplify the spiritual ideal of Lent and show how it is possible to weave the threads of faith and works into a fabric of love. "But when these days," he said, "which are especially marked out for the mystery of human redemption and immediately precede the Paschal Feast, come around, we are bound to prepare ourselves more diligently with pious purification." For Leo, Lent was an opportunity for Christians to be restored to the likeness of God, so that we come "to the most holy of all feasts free from all turmoil" (*Sermon 44.1, 3*). For him, struggling for "pious purification" took the form of fasting, forgiving and almsgiving. By these spiritual or corporeal works, we are able to draw nearer God, intimate in our imitation of him, so much so as to be agents of divine work ourselves (*Sermon 43.4*). When we dare to fast, to reduce ourselves as the Son of God emptied Himself and also fasted in the desert; when we dare to forgive the innocent as well as the guilty just as God forgives us; when we dare to give out of our abundance and even our poverty; when we do all these things in prayer and out of dispassionate and Godlike love, then, as Leo said, God "sees his own love imaged forth in man" (*Sermon 48.5*). Lent is meant for our total conversion.

Lent means to shake your body and your mind. Fasting, forgiving and almsgiving are meant to be felt physically, as well as spiritually. It is meant to be a holistic experience because God became human. Our discipleship is meant to be more than intellectual. No love on earth is merely sentiment – that's called hypocrisy. The Lenten discipline of the Church, when embraced with the light touch of a lover, will bring the warm Christian soul into the very presence of Christ. This is the way of salvation. As Augustine said, it is not sufficient that we were made rich in Egypt, that we learned all we could. We must also observe the Pasch and thereby share in the love and suffering of Jesus. We must not just get our ideas right. We must go with Jesus to the suffering. As Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (Jn 11:16).

Thus, we have here something of a Lenten Rule. In love and with prayer we should fast, forgive and give to those in need. However, forgetful as we are, we must diligently keep our souls away from the ruts of dead pious mechanism. The line between healthy religious habit and rote emptiness is sometimes very thin. It is always good to ask why Christians embrace a rule of life. Often, we slip into the mistaken way of thinking that conceives a rule of life to be the same thing as a life of rules. A rule of life, in the Christian sense, is certainly not this. A rule of life is about patterning one's life after the life of Christ. Paul encouraged the Philippians to have the "mind of Christ," to think about whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, and worthy of praise (Phil 2:5, 4:8). In

continued on back cover



Dallas Area Interfaith

Helping People to a Life of Active Stewardship

As Catholics, we are called to a life of stewardship that not only shares our gifts with our faith communities, but also challenges us to pay attention to and make a difference in the lives of those outside of our particular church walls. By stepping into dialogue with others in the community, Catholics are able to voice their opinions, work towards the greater good, and actively make a difference. Helping to answer this call, Dallas Area Interfaith (DAI) works to aid parishioners as they work to live out a life of active stewardship in the larger community.

"Dallas Area Interfaith is a social justice action group," says St. Rita's parishioner and DAI Leader Johanna Parkinson. "It's a vast network of local faith and community-based organizations designed to teach people how to address things that are important to their daily life. It teaches people how to get together and talk across barriers of color, faith, and economics – to talk about what's important, what's happening in the community, and what needs to be done. They address issues that effect people locally so that local people can get involved and make a change."

Each year, listening campaigns allow local people to voice their concerns on a variety of issues – from



Many people want to get involved in civil activism, but are not sure where to start. DAI provides the teaching tools and resources needed for those interested in making a difference to get involved.

housing, bridging the inequality gap and working on community relations with local law enforcement, to the needs for speed bumps or street lights. This campaign usually brings to light seven or eight common concerns for the group to focus on through the year.

"Little action groups come out of this," Johanna says. "These groups do research, talk to others, talk to councilmen, talk to the city, and express needs. DAI teaches people how to work through the processes – how to do research, how to contact your councilmen, how to get people interested. It's a learning process."

While oftentimes, civil activism may not seem like an aspect of stewardship, when the goals and intentions in mind are to make daily life better for people, it can

be a powerful form of stewardship. How better to share one's time and talent with the community than by working to create an environment where justice and peace can flourish between members allowing Christ's love to take root?

"This is what the pope is calling us to do – to get involved in social justice and to think about those who have less than we do," Johanna says. "I think the key to this is getting to know people on a one-on-one basis, getting with people as equals – because if it's good for them, it's good for me, it's good for the city. If it makes your living better, it makes my living better – we understand how all of these issues affect daily living and that's where the key is. If we fix one thing, it's good for us all."

DAI meets monthly at a different church or organization on the third Thursday of the month from 7-8:30 p.m. Please see the DAI website for more information or to learn about the location for each meeting – www.dallasareainterfaith.com/index.php. If you would like to visit with Johanna Parkinson about ways to get involved or learn more, please contact her at 972-416-9260.

Blessed to St. R

There are many aspects to discerning a priestly vocation, particularly a diocesan one. It is a continual process of seeking God's voice, examining one's heart, and awaiting the Lord's will. For the young men discerning at the nearby Holy Trinity Seminary, an important part of this process is their yearly assignment to local parishes where they can gain

hands-on knowledge of parish life and ministry. Here at St. Rita's, we have been blessed for the past year by the presence of seminarians Kevin Sandoval and Raymond Pendleton.

Born and raised in Albuquerque, N.M., Kevin is preparing to become a priest for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. Kevin first became attracted to the priesthood during his freshman year

of high school, through the example of a dynamic Franciscan Friar of the Renewal.

"Being able to see a priest who was very good, very holy, and very joyful made such an impact on me," Kevin says. "He was also younger, unlike most of the priests that I had previously encountered."

This attraction grew stronger throughout Kevin's high school years, leading him to volunteer more frequently and to become increasingly involved in his home parish. However, even as the call grew stronger, Kevin was torn by his equally strong desire to be a dad. Things finally came together for Kevin during his senior year of high school, leading him to eventually apply for the minor seminary.

"As my desire for fatherhood grew, I started also being filled with a strong desire to lead others to Christ," Kevin says. "Eventually, I found those two paths of desire intersecting at the priesthood, where you become a spiritual father to many while also concentrating on leading others to heaven."

Raymond's vocation story, on the other hand, began a bit later. A student at Texas A&M University



(From left) Seminarians Kevin Sandoval and Raymond Pendleton feel blessed to have been part of St. Rita's RCIA ministry, witnessing evangelization in action.

To Serve St. Rita's Seminarian Interns

Kingsville, Raymond was on course to earn his Master's in Education and English. However, the summer before his junior year the Lord began working on his heart. Working at St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center and Chapel, Raymond was responsible for cleaning the chapel regularly, serving as a sacristan, and training altar servers. This close proximity to our Eucharistic Lord had a profound effect on Raymond, gradually opening his heart to the priestly call.

"I loved being in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, causing me to begin attending daily Mass," Raymond says. "I began serving every day and lecturing. Then when I left the Mass, I would think of our universal calling to serve. I began to fall in love with this idea of service to the people of God."

Burning with this desire to serve and give his life to Christ, Raymond decided to enter seminary rather than graduating first.

Now in their third year of seminary studies, Kevin and Raymond have spent the last year assisting with St. Rita's RCIA process each Wednesday evening. Through personal interactions and small group discussions, they have worked to get to know

"I loved being in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, causing me to begin attending daily Mass. I began serving every day and lecturing. Then when I left the Mass, I would think of our universal calling to serve. I began to fall in love with this idea of service to the people of God."
– Raymond Pendleton

each of the candidates, listening to their testimonies and answering their questions. In the process, Raymond and Kevin have learned many valuable lessons themselves, gaining insight into this unique parish ministry.

"This is my first experience with RCIA, so through seeing this side of the conversion of people I have learned so many things," Raymond says. "The stories of the candidates are also truly so inspiring. It's really beautiful to see them come to realize on their own that they needed more in their life. It reminds me of me of my own conversion, which is a

continuous process of striving to grow in holiness and virtue."

For Kevin, this experience has given him a great deal of hope for the future of the Church, helping him see the "full potential of what RCIA can be." Coming from a parish where the RCIA process is somewhat floundering, Kevin has been deeply impressed by the large numbers of inquirers and candidates here at St. Rita's.

"It has really encouraged me and made me happy to see this many people desiring to come into the Church," Kevin says. "My involvement at St. Rita's has also strengthened my love for ministry and people in general. That has been an important part of my vocation and desire for the priesthood since the beginning. Something about the parish and the way everyone interacts has just really touched my heart and inspired me in my own journey."

Blessed by their experience within our faith community, both Raymond and Kevin continue to lift up St. Rita's Parish through intercessory prayer. In return, all parishioners are invited to pray for these two young men as they continue to discern God's calling for their lives.

Parish Campus Renovations Near



The complete renovations of our parish campus that have been a way of life for the past three years are expected to be completed in early April, when the new Commons Building is finished.

All the work was done even as school was in session and parish activities continued.

"The generosity of the parishioners has been amazing," says Deacon Denis Corbin, Parish Administrator. It's not just financial, it has also been about members giving of their skills and interests. With their encouragement and support of the project, through service on numerous committees and sub-committees, parishioners have helped shape the progress and funding of these construction projects. Whether serving on the Building Committee or the Capital Campaign Committee and asking for pledges, parishioners have served well in helping to shape the future of our parish. I want to express our appreciation for the tremendous efforts of the parish in getting to this place where we can look back and see what has been accomplished in a few years."

Kevin Bird of DEVCON Development and Construction Co., Project Manager in the Diocese of Dallas, says that a challenge was to match the exterior brick for the new Commons Building with the existing church brick.

"We worked hard to identify the 1987 brick, but we found the same brick on the Rice University Campus in Houston, so it's still in production," he says. "The church and the Commons Building will match."

The Commons Building will be a multipurpose building that will have a number of individual rooms. It also will have two main areas – a larger room that will be suitable for receptions, overflow at Mass, and dinner events. There also will be a "coffee bar" space suitable for smaller group gatherings.

"It will be a smaller space for parishioners to just socialize," Kevin says. "Or it can serve as a preparation area for a wedding reception or rehearsal dinner, or a funeral meal. It can be a gathering space where the family can socialize and have coffee and refreshments."

Completion

When renovations were made on the school property and the parish dining hall, new restrooms and kitchen were installed. These areas will be connected internally to the Commons Building.

"If someone wants to cook a dinner and serve it in the Commons, the food can be carried to the Commons to be served," Kevin says.

"The whole idea is this is an extension of the church," he continues. "All the other buildings are more for function of office space and the school. This is specifically for the spiritual side and associated church side of things, for fellowship. The objective is that not many parishes have room for a wedding reception. St. Rita is one of a few who have a facility to accommodate a large group."

Although it was an expense, there will be an awning cover from the church to the Commons Building, and a drop-off area, or *porte-cochère*, will enable passengers to disembark from vehicles under a protective cover.

When the old convent was torn down, which was partly in use as parish offices, four stained glass windows from the day chapel were preserved and are being installed in the east side of the Commons Building. The windows will be visible from the road.

"They will be a beautiful backdrop for a wedding dinner, or a similar event," Kevin says.

The cost for the Commons Building is \$3.8 million.

The Courtyard has been rebuilt at a cost of \$1.5 million, with improvements to the surface. There are trees and granite benches for rest and reflection.

The entire campus renovation began with a strategic planning campaign that helped raise funds. Pledges made totaled \$10 million, but when the actual gifts came in, these totaled \$12.3 million. The total cost for all three phases was \$19 million, so a loan has been obtained to complete the construction.

"With the complete of the Commons Building, the Master Plan's current phases of construction have come to an end," says Deacon Corbin.

2017 Lent Schedule at St. Rita

Ash Wednesday on March 1

Masses at 6:25 a.m., 8 a.m., 12:10 p.m., 5:30 p.m., 7 p.m. (bilingual)

Daily Liturgy During Lent

Monday and Tuesday

5:30 p.m. Mass

Wednesday

8 a.m. Mass

5:30 p.m. Mass

Thursday

8 a.m. Mass

5:30 p.m. Mass

7:30 p.m. Confessions and Holy Hour

Friday

8 a.m. Mass

5:30 p.m. Mass

6:15 p.m. Poor Man's Supper (Dining Hall)

6:45 p.m. Stations of the Cross (Church)

7:30 p.m. Via Crucis (Español) (Church)

Saturday

8 a.m. Mass

9 a.m. Confessions

Reconciliation

Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. and Saturdays at 9 a.m.

Wednesday, April 5, 6:30-9 p.m.

Thursday, April 6, 7 p.m. (Parish Penance Service)

Wednesday, April 12, 6:30-9 p.m.

First Friday

8:30 a.m., March 3 and April 7, (after Mass) Eucharistic Adoration until before the 5:30 p.m. Mass

Sung Vespers

March 12 and April 9 at 4:30 p.m.



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 290
Dallas, Texas

12521 Inwood Road
Dallas, TX 75244

Weekday Masses

Monday-Friday, 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday-Saturday, 8:00 a.m.

Weekend Masses

Saturday, 5:30 p.m.
Sunday, 7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 10:45 a.m.,
12:30 p.m. (Bilingual), 5:30 p.m.

Lent and Love *continued from page 2*

order to think of these things, we must turn away from other things. We must spend time, learn, sacrifice for, and enjoy the God we love – all because He loves us. As with human loves, our love for God begs for our devotion, and true devotion shows itself in deeds. As James said, “faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead” (Jam 2:14).

But a rule of life is not just about being genuine. It is also about salvation and knowledge. Through the personal habit that follows upon living according to a rule of life, the soul is brought into a more intimate relationship and communion with God. St. Maximus the Confessor, similar to Leo, described the purpose and hope of this Lenten Rule perhaps the best. “Almsgiving heals the irascible part of the soul; fasting extinguishes the concupiscible part, and prayer purifies the mind and prepares it for the contemplation of reality.” Only then, Maximus said later on, is the mind “freed from the passions” and therefore able to journey “straight ahead to the contemplation of created things and...to the knowledge of the Holy Trinity” (*Four Centuries on Charity* 79,

86). We wonder how love and knowledge fit together. Here, in this Lenten Rule we see how. In following Christ, in following His loving and cruciform ways, we come to see how He is indeed the wisdom and power of God (1 Cor 1:24). We see how our Lenten sacrifices share in the evangelization of the world: by our imitation of Christ, the “manifold wisdom of God” is more clearly presented to the world (Eph 3:10). Thus, our practice of Lent, we discover, takes on a greater significance than simply personal growth. It embraces the whole meaning of the Church.

May you have a blessed Lent. Take this opportunity to renew your discipleship and find the Lord again. Do not neglect what is for your salvation. Our God chose to save us through love! Discover in this Lent the astounding mystery of it all.

God bless you,

Fr. Joshua J. Whitfield
Pastoral Administrator