

ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON CATHOLIC CHURCH

A WELCOMING & INVITING PARISH • ALWAYS CHRIST-CENTERED AND WORD-BASED



The Welcome Desk: Extending Hospitality and Offering Assistance for All Who Enter Our Parish



Business Manager Liz Foran and Ron Cowles are ready to provide hospitality and assistance at the Welcome Desk.

Whenever parishioners and visitors alike enter the front doors of our church, the Welcome Desk is there to fulfill the first Pillar of Parish Stewardship — Hospitality.

"I like to think of the vestibule as the 'living room' of God's house," says Liz Foran. "So you want things to be nice and inviting."

Liz can often be found at the Welcome Desk on the weekends, during the Masses. The greeters at the door know that they can send anyone who comes in with questions to the Welcome Desk and Liz will be ready to help them.

"The number-one priority is making sure that we are welcoming to all those who come," Liz says. "It could be their first time and we want them to feel the warmth of the parish family."

The Welcome Desk is a full-service desk — newcomers can register at the parish, families can register for Baptism

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Stewardship of Treasure

Giving to God First

Have you ever wondered why no one really becomes uneasy when someone brings up the first two “Ts” of stewardship – giving of your time or talents – but when the third “T” comes up, many of us become uncomfortable?

That third “T” is treasure, and some people simply become so annoyed by the subject, they tune out the words from the pulpit.

Why is there seemingly such an adverse reaction?

Our finances are such a personal subject.

Discussing money issues with others is not easy, and having someone tell us what to do with our finances is even worse. We earn the money, after all. So shouldn't we decide what to do with it?

Of course, the answer is “yes” – we decide every day how to spend our hard-earned dollars. Indeed, the monetary choices we make will either keep our finances in check, or put us into the red. The average American family has about \$7,000 in credit card debt – so finances certainly represent a challenge to our current society. Tight budgets, trying to “keep up with the Joneses” or poor financial management may be to

blame for our tight resources. Does this mean we do not have anything left over for God?

Stewardship, at its roots, teaches that we are not supposed to give God our “leftovers.” We should instead strive to return to God a portion of our “first fruits” – giving to God first and then using the rest for our other needs. God gave us our talents that help us earn a living, after all. He should come first.

This idea can be worrisome for many. If our finances are already strained, how will we ever find enough to give back to God? Or, if we do try to give God our “first fruits,” will there be enough left over to cover our required expenses?

Taking the correct financial steps toward good stewardship simply boils down to trust – believing that God, who takes care of all of His creation, will take care of us. Trust that in giving to God first, we are both acknowledging that our multitude of blessings come from Him, and that we are thankful He chose to give them to us. And finally, trust that if we give to Him first, that all else will fall into place – because He is in ultimate control.

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A Letter From The Pastor

The Word of God:

How Do We Hear It? And How Do We Respond to It?

Dear Parishioners,

A few short weeks ago, we completed our Christmas season. We are now in what we call Ordinary Time — but before long, we will begin Lent. This is one of those rare years when Ash Wednesday is in March — so, Lent does not, of course, begin in February this year.

The Gospel of John begins with the statement, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” We speak often of the Word in the Church. As most of you are aware, the first part of our Mass is called the Liturgy of the Word. What does that mean to us?

Basically, there are four parts of our celebration of Mass: Introductory Rites; Liturgy of the Word; Liturgy of the Eucharist; and Concluding Rites. My focus in this reflection is that second part — the Liturgy of the Word.

The main parts of that are a First Reading, a Responsorial Psalm, a Second Reading, the Gospel, and a Homily.

We draw on Holy Scripture from the Bible for the readings. As Catholics, we do not consider that these readings are about God, or about the Church, or about our faith, or a history lesson, or a nice story from long ago. We consider them to be God speaking directly to us. Thus, our attentiveness to what is being proclaimed is important. Are we listening? Do we hear? And then, do we respond in our lives? All of those should be facets of how we approach the Word of God.

For us, the Word of God is the living Word. God is speaking to us as a community, and He asks us to be faithful to His Word. If we pay attention and truly listen, God can nourish our spirit, and Christ can be

more real and present to us. The Homily, the Responsorial Psalm, the Profession of Faith, and the Intercessions develop the Word further and complete it. The Profession of Faith is our acceptance of God’s Word.

However, the question for us is, how do we respond to the Word? Does it change our lives? Does it bring us to the conversion necessary to live lives of stewardship and service? It is not easy, I know. Being able to listen, to hear, and then to act requires time, practice, commitment, and a desire to fulfill all of this. That is one of my prayers for us — that we can hear the Word, and that we can bring it to life in our own lives and in the lives of others.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Jose Panthaplamthottiyil, CMI
Pastor

Behind The Scenes With our FEEDING HANDS Living Out the Corporal Works of Mercy

As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops tells us, the Corporal Works of Mercy are ways we can help our neighbors “as if they were Christ in disguise.” One of the Corporal Works of Mercy is to feed the hungry. Here in the Palm Coast area, some people face many challenges and don’t always have access to a healthy meal. They may struggle with housing insecurity, be homebound or have a family member with health issues. The Feeding Hands Ministry at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is here for them. From 5 to 6:30 p.m. on the first and third Monday of every month, a healthy and delicious meal is served via carry-out or dine-in options.

Gary Thomas and Tony Baeza lead this ministry. It is their mission to keep folks fed. Gary was involved in a similar ministry at Santa Maria del Mar in Flagler Beach, and he wanted to bring this to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. When he pitched the idea, Tony, a former chef, also wanted to get involved. Tony’s children attend our parish school, and he thought this would be a great way to get involved and use his talents. Gary and Tony make a good team on the nights they serve. They both arrive a few hours early, with Tony making the main course, and Gary usually making salads and packaging items.



Feeding Hands Ministry members (from left) include Christine Damata, Laure Taggart, Lorraine Baeza, Cathy Thomas, Tony Baeza, Jerry Williams, Gary Thomas, Becky Durance Leavitt, and Carol Weiss. The following members were not photographed: Millie Kruger, Charles Crooms, Francisco and Monica Araque, Alfredo, Maria and Crystal Torres.

Besides Gary and Tony, trained volunteers gather to package and serve the food. This ministry started in January 2020, serving about 35 people. Since then, it has expanded to serve nearly 200. Most of the food is given out via carry-out, but some folks choose to eat in the Parish Hall.

“Parishioners and Fr. Jose have been so supportive of this ministry,” Gary says. “We have such a generous parish.”

Nearly 40 years ago, Gary owned a restaurant, so he had some background in purchasing food and cooking. Gary’s wife, Cathy, is a former teacher and assistant principal. She loves to talk to people and get to know them. With Tony’s cooking experience, this is a perfect

fit for all of them. From turkey and ham to hamburgers and spaghetti, those in the Palm Coast area are receiving a good meal through the Feeding Hands Ministry.

“I pretty much leave the meal planning to Tony,” Gary says. “He knows what he is doing when it comes to making food — that’s for sure.”

Anyone who shows up to eat is served — no one is turned away.

“You just never know people’s stories, and we don’t need to know their stories,” Gary says.

Both Gary and Tony work with Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida. They even purchased a freezer to keep at the warehouse to fill with meat. Tony

“We use everything we are donated to feed people. We make sure no food goes to waste. If we have extra, we donate it to other organizations doing this work.”

— GARY THOMAS

FEEDING HANDS MINISTRY

Feeding Mercy by Serving Those in Need

aims to use what he has to prepare the meals. They also receive donated baked goods from Publix and Starbucks.

"We use everything we are donated to feed people," Gary says. "We make sure no food goes to waste. If we have extra, we donate it to other organizations doing this work."

Gary feels so blessed to be able to do this work. He says that everyone who has volunteered has enjoyed it. In fact, he has had so many parishioners who want to volunteer, he is considering adding another team so that there would be a separate group for each week they serve.



Feeding Hands Ministry leaders Tony Baeza and Gary Thomas

If you would like to learn more about the Feeding Hands Ministry or want to find out how to get involved, please contact Gary Thomas at 386-569-8463.

The Welcome Desk *continued from front cover*

and any other questions can be answered. If someone is unable to get to the parish office during the week, the Welcome Desk is a great place to stop on the weekend. The Welcome Desk also has information about the parish schedule and events, and the bulletins are nearby for anyone to take home with them.

While the parish has had a desk in the vestibule for a long time, it was an idea from Fr. Jose that turned that desk into a full-service desk manned by parish staff, such as Liz, or volunteers to ensure that visitors and parishioners can get any help that they might need.

"When people walk through the doors, you don't want them to feel lost," Liz says. "The parish is a large parish, so when you walk in, you can feel overwhelmed. Having the Welcome Desk helps to ground people."

Liz is in the process of training some new volunteers to serve at the Welcome Desk. They'll be brought up to date about the operation of the parish so that they can help answer — or find the answer to — any questions brought to them.

Making visitors feel welcome at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is a priority, but the work doesn't stop there. Every parishioner, no matter how long they have been at the parish, should feel like they have a place to go to feel connected and informed. Visitors who are looking for a parish home don't have to search to find out if this is the parish for them, and parishioners can always know that the Welcome Desk is there to make their participation more convenient.

"The Welcome Desk is there for the purpose of welcoming all those who walk through the doors of the church," Liz says.

If you have any questions about the parish, be sure to stop by the Welcome Desk when you come for Mass. If you'd like to help operate the Welcome Desk, please call the parish office at 386-445-2246.

Eucharistic Adoration:

Experience Peace in the True Presence of Christ

Today's Catholics are bombarded daily with overwhelming news of everything going on throughout the world. From news to social media, we see so much stress and frustration with society and our culture. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said, "In the world there is so much noise, so much bewilderment, there is a need for silent adoration of Jesus concealed in the Host... It is a source of comfort and light, particularly to those who are suffering."

Spending time in front of the Blessed Sacrament is a beautiful gift that is offered here in our St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish.

"I always ask if someone is an adorer," says parishioner Gilda Sadio, the Adoration Coordinator for the parish. "Whenever I meet someone new at the church, I ask them and I recruit them."

As Catholics, we believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. While it is true that we can pray anywhere, we are reminded of His true presence when sitting in front of the Eucharist.

"Through Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, people increase their faith," Gilda says. "They commit to Jesus in this way and Jesus changes their heart."

For those who commit to this Holy Hour, they fill their time with prayers such as Lectio Divina, the Rosary, and the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Some might write in a



Adoration Coordinator Gilda Sadio

prayer journal or a devotional, or read spiritual books.

"For those who don't have any experience with adoration, I give them books and pamphlets," Gilda says. "I have many materials in both English and Spanish that they can use. I teach them about adoration so they are comfortable."

With the onset of COVID-19, the parish halted adoration for a while. Prior to the pandemic, the church offered Perpetual Adoration, which means that it was offered 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"I said that this is the time that we need adoration," Gilda says. "We need to pray and plead to Jesus to help us through this."

That is when adoration started again with limited hours.

"I tell people that Jesus is waiting for you to come and worship Him," Gilda says. "How long will it take you to think about it and respond to Him?"

Presently, Adoration is offered from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days a week except during Masses.

As St. Teresa of Calcutta once said, "Spend as much time as possible in front of the Blessed Sacrament and He will fill you with His strength and His power." Committing one hour of your week to spend time in the presence of God is something from which everyone can benefit. Parishioners are invited to sign up for an hour or to stop in whenever they are able.

To sign up for adoration, if you would like more information, please call Gilda Sadio at 386-225-7261.

The Importance of Loving God More Deeply at Mass

When young people see a person that intrigues them, that attraction becomes the topic of conversation at every opportunity. This attraction alters behavior so that we become enthralled with the other and desire to share our enthusiasm.

Imagine if we were more enthralled with the presence of Christ in our lives. Imagine if we fully recognized that Christ is truly present to us in His precious Body and Blood, and present as well in the proclamation of His Word and in the gathering of our community, praying and singing (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy], para. 14). Recognizing the living Christ in all these ways would awaken in us the desire to be with the One who is the object of our most fundamental, pure, and holy attraction to our merciful, loving, and gracious Savior.

If we were to recognize the presence of Christ in these beautiful ways, wouldn't our desire to be more completely in His presence increase? Surely our desire to be better stewards of our time with the Lord would grow. Our attention to the readings and other prayers of the Mass would bring about within us deeper communion with the One who suffered and died for us. If I recognized that God is the answer to all my pangs of hunger, that Christ is my way to the Father, and that the Holy Spirit works to convert my heart and soul every day, would I not seek to fill that hunger at the banquet of the Lamb?

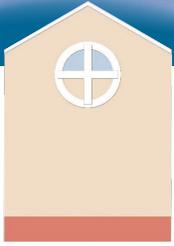
While active participation in Sunday Mass is an obligation for Catholics, we also will do well to see the lovely, motherly care the Church shows us in establishing that requirement. The *Code of Canon Law* states clearly in paragraph 1247, "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass." Sometimes, we might hear that as an overbearing rule. But it might more correctly be understood as our Mother, the Church, helping us learn what is best for us. At Mass, we hear the living Word of God proclaimed. He speaks to us. We receive as hungry,

needy sinners, the precious Body and Blood of Christ. We encounter Christ's living presence in our brothers and sisters worshiping God with us. If we truly understood that amazing truth, then how might it affect our lives? How might it affect our relationships? How might it impact our decision to bring our children along to Mass? How might it awaken within us a deeper attraction, fascination, desire for the Lord?

Generally, when we find ourselves fascinated with someone, we do not decide to spend as little time as possible with them. We do not ration our time with them. We

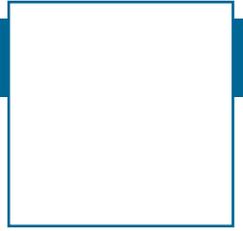
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ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON CATHOLIC CHURCH

A Welcoming & Inviting Parish • Always Christ-Centered and Word-Based



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Loving God More Deeply at Mass *continued from page 7*

want to spend time with them, to see them, to listen to them, to get to know them, to develop a healthy, loving relationship with them.

Considering our reliance on the Lord of life and love, our fascination with His mercy, His goodness, His willingness to call us to Himself, maybe we should ask ourselves about what happens in us at Mass. As I prepare to come to Church, do I find my mind turning to a receptive welcome of the Lord, just as I'll be welcomed at the door of Church? Have I dressed for the important weekly (or daily) moment of meeting my King? Do I expect some profound wisdom from God in the readings? Am I open to correction, to challenge, to affirmation in the readings of God's Word? Do I intently pray along with the priest presider throughout the Mass? Do I make an offering of my life, along with the bread and wine? Do I genuinely hunger for the Body and Blood of Christ? And do I long for that blessing that sends me on my way with the mission to build the Kingdom?

Instead of worrying about what "counts" when it comes to Sunday Mass, maybe we should work hard at fostering our love for the Eucharist, our desire for

eternal life, our attraction to the Master who calls us into a life of active discipleship. Instead of a merely heavy-handed requirement, maybe we can see more clearly that being at Mass together helps nourish us for a whole week of building God's Kingdom. Coming with those expectations, desires, and hopes, leaving early when unnecessary would disappear as a temptation instantly. Coming late because other things have taken priority would not typically happen, other obligations notwithstanding. Christ desires our company at Mass, from beginning to end. Let's draw near to Him.

