



# St. Rita

catholic community

A Letter From Our Pastoral Administrator

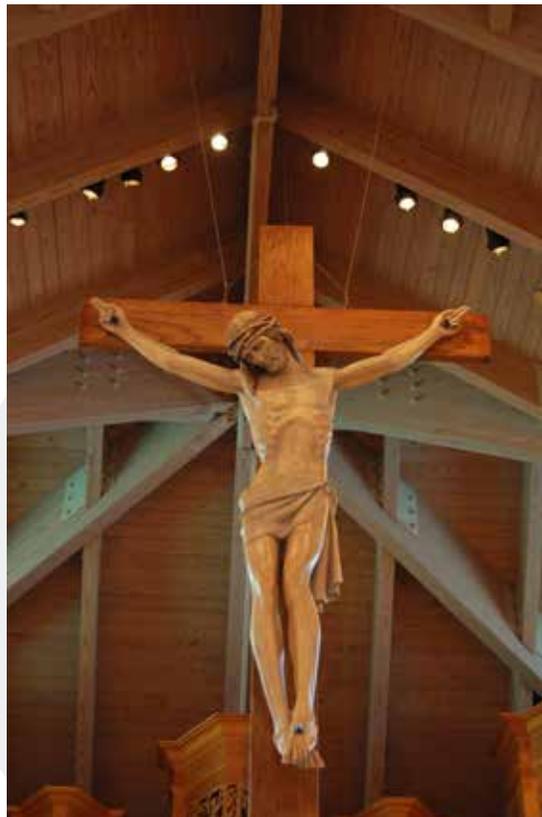
## Reflections on Sunday: *Part Two*

Some time before his death in a concentration camp in 1945, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great Lutheran minister and enemy of the Nazis, wrote down what he thought had gone wrong among Christians in Germany:

*The Church confesses herself guilty of the loss of the Sabbath day, of the withering away of her public worship, and of the contemptuous neglect of Sunday as a day of rest. She has incurred the guilt of restlessness and disquiet, and also the exploitation of labour even beyond the working week day, because her preaching of Jesus Christ has been feeble and her public worship has been lifeless (Ethics 1.3).*

What Bonhoeffer saw in the rise of Nazism was not just the dark fruit of nationalism, anti-Semitic hate and totalitarianism. Looking at the Nazi regime, he at the same time saw Christian failure. For Bonhoeffer, the Church had become too indifferent and quiescent about the slowly developing culture of death which emerged so demonically in Germany in the 1930s. For him, it

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## Reflections on Sunday: *Part Two* continued from front cover

was not just that Hitler had come to power, it was that the Church had become too indistinct and too impotent to do anything about it, or even to recognize the evil of it at all.

And losing the holiness of Sundays made it easy for the Nazis. That is, when Christians agreed to forego the rhythm of worship set by the weekly observance of the resurrection of Jesus, they by default embraced another rhythm, one issuing not from God but from someone else, the Führer. When Christians let go of the rhythm of the Church's worship, they began to forget the very language and thinking of the Church. Without Sunday, they followed another logic and rhythm designed not for their rest and honor, but for their manipulation. Without Sundays, Christians forgot that they were people and not tools, that they were created primarily to live and love, and not just to produce and work. Sundays reminded them that they were human – something they forgot by forgetting Sundays.

Last month, I wrote rather forcefully about the honor due God on Sundays. Many have forgotten that Sunday is a "day of obligation." It's a day Catholics are bound to be in Church unless hindered by some gravely serious obstacle. Now this obligation doesn't stem from any institutional instinct. We are not trying to drum up attendance over the summer! Rather, we are trying to restore within our hearts and minds the power of regular, faithful worship. It sets the rhythm of our lives in the pattern set by God. It makes you a saint, and it makes us the Church. It's how we belong to God. Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, an English Dominican, says it well:

*Surely the obligation of Sunday Mass is a sign of that fidelity. It is usually seen just as a constraint on our freedom, a rule that must be obeyed, imposed from above by 'the authorities.' It is seen as typical of Catholic legalism and of a culture of control, which is always telling people what they must do. Might we not see it rather as a sign of our stable belonging in*

*this liquid and modern world? We have an obligation to celebrate our mothers' birthday, but one would hardly see this as a constraint. It is an expression of the bonds that we have with our mothers. It is not an external obligation, like not being allowed to drive at more than 30 mph in built-up areas. It is an expression of who one is. Obligation and religion both come from a root that means 'to be bound'. Obligations express the ways in which we are rooted in abiding relationships with other people. They are signs of those enduring fidelities which give us strength and identity (What is the Point of Being a Christian? 199).*

It's more than rote following of rules – it's deeper. Observing Sunday as the Lord's Day, going to Mass, receiving Communion: all of this makes us a holy people, the royal priesthood Christ made us in baptism. Like Bonhoeffer suggested, keeping Sunday holy gives us our identity as Church that we cannot afford to lose. We must be the Church in this world desperate for redemption, truth and witness. God hopes to save the entire world, and he does this simply by calling us to be the Church. We must renew our sense of Sunday's holiness. We mustn't succumb to the ungodly rhythms of the world.

May we renew their devotion to Sunday. Don't neglect it. Come to Him and worship. This is what Christians do. Sunday is for worship and rest. Worship is not something you do if you can squeeze it in. Do not be intimidated by sports leagues, extracurricular activities and commercialism, all of which may lure you away from Mass. This is not an authoritarian appeal for your presence; it is ultimately an appeal for your very lives.

pax,

Fr. Joshua

## Being Faithful Stewards of God's Gift of His Word

For the past 40 years, every Tuesday morning from September through May, Kay Neuhoﬀ has done something seemingly routine that has proved to be an extraordinary experience that makes Christ's presence come alive in her heart.

"The Tuesday Morning Bible Study has been something I automatically just do every week, but it has really strengthened my faith," she says. "It is so helpful to study God's Word. It makes a person more hopeful and positive. For many years, Catholics weren't strongly encouraged to read the Bible, but now they are. It is very important for us Catholics to know our Bible!"

This beautiful 40-year-long journey with God's Word began when Kay opened her heart to the movement of the Spirit in a courageous way.

"I am so glad that I listened to that little nudge of the Holy Spirit and started the study," Kay says. "We began this group before studying the Bible was a very popular thing for Catholics, so I asked a friend – Peggy Hanley, who was not a Catholic but was well-versed in the Bible – if she would be willing to teach our group. She helped us for seven years and got us going. There are two or three of us who are still in the group that have been in it since the beginning."

And, even after all this time, the Spirit continues to work in the

hearts of many through the study in phenomenal ways.

"I have really witnessed God guiding our group over the last 40 years," Kay says. "We wouldn't still be in existence if He wasn't. We open every meeting with prayer, and we ask the Holy Spirit for guidance."

The study meets from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at St. Rita's and is open to the women of our parish. At this time, there are six coordinators who facilitate the study – including Kay – and about 40 women who are formally part of it, while about 30 come each week. Together, they dive into an inspirational study of the New American Bible, making use of reference books such as the Little Rock Scripture Study. After praying together, they break into three groups, with two coordinators assigned to

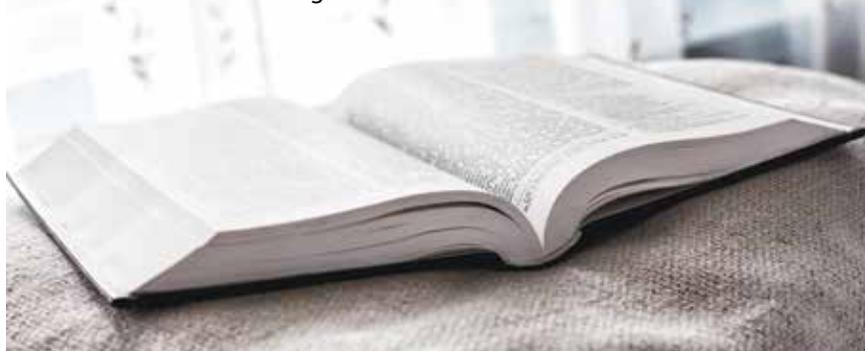
each group. Each group then holds a discussion addressing the questions and answers presented in the material for the week.

Each fall, a new book from the either the Old or New Testament is chosen for focus throughout the year.

"We just finished studying the Psalms and it was a meaningful experience for everyone," Kay says. "There is not a whole lot in the Bible that we have not yet covered in our study!"

Importantly, those who attend the study have found that it provides both an ideal way to draw nearer to the Lord, as well as to their fellow sisters in Christ.

"We open all of our meetings by praying for each other and receiving prayer requests," Kay says. "We support each other and are great friends."



*For more information and how to be a better steward of God's gift of His Word by joining the Tuesday Morning Bible Study, please contact Kay Neuhoﬀ at 972-239-1918 or email her at [krn3@sbcglobal.net](mailto:krn3@sbcglobal.net).*

## Just Faith:



*We meet some of the gardeners selling their produce in the tiny market within the garden. This garden is known for high quality greens, edible gourds, and bunching onions.*

Once in a great while, you encounter something truly life-changing – something that raises your soul to God on high and helps you become the person you were truly created to be. This is exactly what the JustFaith course is doing for many of those who participate in it.

“It changed my life and my perspective on things, and I think everyone who has taken the course will say that,” says Johanna Parkinson, who facilitated the most recent JustFaith course at our parish, along with Margaret Culgan. “It is very spiritually enlightening and fulfilling.”

JustFaith is a phenomenal course in which people of faith examine critical realities through the lens of the Gospel and the teachings of our Catholic faith. This process bridges concern for the exploitation of God’s planet and God’s people with a special care for those who are poor and vulnerable. According to their official website, “JustFaith is an intensive, small-group process for faithful Christians looking

to deepen their commitment to care for vulnerable people and our planet. Through prayer, study, dialogue, and immersions, participants form community as they explore critical realities and their implications to their lives and their faith.”

Eight people completed the last JustFaith course offered at St. Rita’s, which ran from September through May, every Tuesday evening. Throughout the course, participants read about 10 books and watched videos that covered various aspects of social justice. For example, they carefully reflected upon Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si*, which addresses the care of the environment. They also read *Compassion* by Fr. Henri Nouwen; *Tattoos on the Heart* by Gregory Boyle, a pastor in Los Angeles who started a home for gang



*Taking a break in the garden’s pavilion to learn about the history of the community garden from Don Lambert, founder of Gardeners in Community Development.*

# Forming Compassionate Disciples for Christ

members; and *Cloud of Witnesses*, a compilation of accounts of those who throughout history have been outstanding examples of social justice and “moved the world.”

“You read this stuff and it changes you!” Johanna says. “It helps you to ‘stretch yourself’ and teaches you how to have peaceful, non-argumentative dialogues with other people. JustFaith builds up a sense in people of their responsibility regarding social justice.”

In addition, participants also go on a retreat for two or three days, and spend a couple of days doing volunteer work.

“We spend time at a non-profit organization, digging in and getting our hands dirty!” Johanna says.

In the end, as is hoped for, the intense period of study and prayer rejuvenates the searching soul and inspires the heart to bring God’s mercy to the world.

“The course builds an awareness inside of you, which causes you to learn in a whole different manner,” Johanna says. “You start to see what is really right for you to do in your life.



*The JustFaith group visits a community garden in East Dallas to learn about the mission and meet some of the gardeners. This community garden joined Gardeners in Community Development in the early '90s to provide refugee gardening families with garden space, a place where they could sell produce, and to be a center where people could gather. Today, there are about 50 highly productive plots.*

You also begin to understand that the concept that you are your brothers’ keeper really is deep Gospel teaching, meant for each of us to follow.”

According to Margaret, JustFaith provides a unique experience that enriches one’s soul with the virtue of charity in a powerful way.

“One good thing about this course is that it is education and formation in the teachings of the Gospel,” Margaret says. “It doesn’t have you going out and doing things for others directly, but it moves you to help others in a way that you really desire to.”

*Facilitators are needed in order for a future course to take place. For more information about this remarkable educational ministry, or to volunteer to participate or facilitate JustFaith, please contact Margaret Culgan at 972-898-1174 or email her at [mculgan@aol.com](mailto:mculgan@aol.com).*

## The Spirituality of Stewardship Following in the Footsteps of the Saints

The word “stewardship” has long carried with it the association of a financial obligation to the Church. Many believe that stewardship means “giving my time and money to the Church in support of its work, lest it is unable to survive and thrive.”

Indeed, stewardship does often require sacrifice of some kind. But the reality is that stewardship is not simply a guilt-laden obligation, or a “bill.” Nor is stewardship in any way comparable to a tax payment or a charitable networking opportunity at work. Instead, stewardship is a spiritual way of life – an active response to Christ’s invitation to unreservedly “come after me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt 4:19).

Stewardship is about how we respond to God’s call to discipleship, and there are many different ways we can respond to His call. We can, in turn, live the stewardship way of life simply by making small choices in our daily lives, under normal, everyday circumstances.

Nowhere in Christian history is there a more archetypal example of the variety of ways we can respond to God’s call, than in the lives of the saints. The saints represent a wide cross-section of individuals – old and young, rich and poor – living in different times in human history. Some were called to the religious

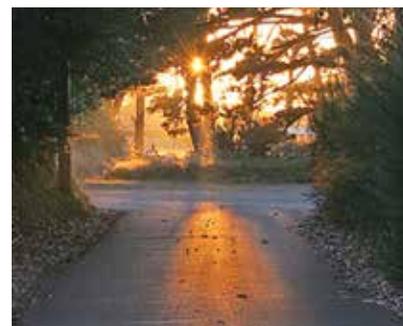
life, focusing their lives on spirituality and material simplicity through prayer, and helping to form the tenets of faith. Others were individuals focused on charitable outreach, dedicating their whole lives to feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Still, others faced great adversity and challenges to their faith, and ultimately suffered death and martyrdom in loyalty to Christ and His Church.

However, the commonality that all of these individuals share is that they responded to God’s call to discipleship by utilizing the unique talents that God had given them. They did so in ways that were conducive to their individual personalities, and that actively influenced the circumstances presented to them in their respective days and times. Contemplative spirituality, charitable giving, great courage – all of these roads have led to canonization and, ultimately, eternal life with God in His glory. We are all called to do the same.

As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states in its pastoral letter on stewardship, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, “The challenge, then, is to understand our role – our vocation – and to respond generously to this call from God” (43). When thinking about the spirituality of stewardship, take some time

to discern your talents, and how you can best respond to God’s call by naturally and effectively using the gifts He has given you. If you are a gregarious person, this might mean reaching out to a co-worker you don’t know very well, thus helping to create a hospitable work environment. If you are an individual who is often “on the go,” perhaps this means praying the Rosary while you are driving from place to place. If you have recently experienced a financial windfall or unexpected increase in income, this might mean sponsoring a little league team in your community by paying for their uniforms.

God has provided many roads to the Kingdom of Heaven, and in the saints, we see examples of the many roads that have been taken. Choosing the one that is best for us means that we can live stewardship as a spiritual practice and a way of life, and that we may answer His call to discipleship.



## Lux Mundi Ensemble Bringing Unique Sounds to Sunday Evening Mass

**W**e are told in Scripture to make a joyful noise when praising the Lord. But when the forms that such noise can take on are as numerous as the stars, choosing just one way to be joyful seems like a waste of one of God's most wondrous creations – music.

This is where the Lux Mundi Ensemble comes in. Meaning 'Light of the World,' Lux Mundi provides a blend of traditional, contemporary, and modern hymns for the 5:30 p.m. Sunday Mass each week.

"It's the best of both worlds," says Ensemble Director Carmela Couvillon.

At a typical Mass, you might hear "Amazing Grace" mixed in with contemporary classics like "On Eagles Wings," or the works of newer songwriters like Sarah Hart or Curtis Stephan. While the ensemble is labeled as a contemporary group, Carmela says she wants the music to evoke a feeling of togetherness and community that sounds current but also timeless.

"I try to pick music from different genres, but I really look at the lyrics and try to decide if it's reflective of the Eucharist and what we're celebrating," she says. "I like music that's lyrical, memorable, and something the congregation can sing. If I think it will sound



*The Lux Mundi Ensemble lends their vocal and instrumental talents to the 5:30 p.m. Mass each Sunday – (from left) Ensemble Associate Director and Vocal Coach Matt Glass, Al Solis, Erwin Korov, Debbie Breckenridge, Marisa Thompson, and Ensemble Director Carmela Couvillon. (Members not pictured include Amanda Nobis, Terry Gordy, Lisa Moore, Ben Pittner, and Michelle Chadwick.)*

beautiful in the church, then it's serving that purpose."

As for the ensemble itself, one could say they're also a blend that spans from high school-aged singers and instrumentalists on up, creating a strong cross section of the generations who attend the Mass.

"The choir we have is small, but mighty, and we're always looking for new members," Carmela says. "We have both singers and instrumentalists that can join the choir. Matt Glass is our awesome vocal coach/conductor. He conducts and sings and he's helped develop their

*continued on back cover*

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.*

## Lux Mundi Ensemble *continued from page 7*

sound. We just completed our third year together and we've come a long way."

Lending both her voice and instrumental talent to St. Rita's has been a long-standing tradition for Carmela. She was a member of the parish Children's Choir and played flute at school Masses, when she was asked to play piano for Christmas Eve Mass.

"I got my first paycheck playing Christmas Eve Mass at St. Rita's," she laughs. "That \$25 check for playing was kind of my introduction into church music."

With her oldest son, Zachary, now a member of the same Children's Choir, Carmela says it's been nice to return to her roots. The difference is that this time, she's getting to play each Mass on a nine-foot concert Steinway.

"St. Rita was my childhood church, so it's been interesting being there as an adult," she says.

*"I try to pick music from different genres, but I really look at the lyrics and try to decide if it's reflective of the Eucharist and what we're celebrating. I like music that's lyrical, memorable, and something the congregation can sing. If I think it will sound beautiful in the church, then it's serving that purpose."*

– Carmela Couvillon

*Stop by the piano after Mass to talk with Carmela Couvillon or Matt Glass about lending your talents to the Lux Mundi Ensemble. You can also call email Carmela at [ccouvillon@stritaparish.net](mailto:ccouvillon@stritaparish.net).*