

**Ss. Peter and Paul Catholic Church**  
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**Ss. Peter and Paul Catholic Church**

**Stewardship As A Way of Life: Our Grateful Response to God's Love Through Sharing**

**Growing As a Stewardship Parish: Hospitality**

"When I was a stranger, you welcomed me." (Mt. 25:35). Jesus Christ teaches that whenever we welcome one of the least of our sisters and brothers, we welcome Christ Himself. Parishioners of a stewardship parish seek to see the face of Christ in one another. With special vigilance, parishioners must seek out and welcome new members to the parish family. A stewardship parish is a welcoming parish regardless of the parish demographics: large or small or urban, suburban or rural.

When others welcome us, we are open to welcoming others. This desire to welcome others is yet another gift of God. The most vibrant stewardship parishes are those in which parishioners know they are welcomed, which fosters a sense of ownership and personal involvement in lived stewardship to the parish family.

We are all prodigal children longing to be welcomed home. In a hospitable parish, parishioners and guests feel they belong and are appreciated. This is especially true if they were ever absent from the church. Hospitality leads to a sense of ownership among parishioners. This ownership and personal involvement fosters a sense of "belonging." When parishioners experience a warm and sincere welcome, they in turn become open to give themselves to others.

God is love. God gives His love to each one of us. As God loves us, He calls us to love one another. This Divine Love flows through the heart of the faithful steward to love others. When we are recipients of such love from others, we are attracted to follow this example.



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**Dear Brothers and Sisters:**

As we continue with the "four seasons" of discipleship, we turn our focus to Sharing our Faith -- the center of the mission that Jesus gave His Church -- "go and make disciples of all nations."

We have been talking about growing as disciples of Jesus and how we do this by embracing stewardship as a way of life. This life-long journey of stewardship must be built upon a foundation of developing a personal relationship with Jesus through prayer and hospitality, welcoming and inviting all to join us as disciples. It also means that we continue to nurture our faith formation with our personal response to share what we have with others—our time, talent and treasure -- which leads to generous service to God and others.

Sharing our faith is a culmination of all that we do as we live as disciples. We share our faith as we welcome and offer hospitality to others. We share our faith as we pray. We share our faith as we serve others. We share our faith as people see us nurturing our faith as we continue our formation as disciples and seek the grace of God through the sacraments.

Yes, we are sharing our faith every day in our daily lives. We are evangelizing!

This season of sharing is a good time to step back and renew -- to make an **intentional** commitment to share our faith -- and to try to do it **more often and better**.

For example, ask yourself what steps you have taken to improve your prayer life and better know your faith? Ask what ways you are more actively living your faith? Then ask yourself what could I do to more intentionally share my faith?

There are people who many never hear the Gospel message unless we speak or act -- people who are family, friends or co-workers. God may need to use us to plant the seeds so He can do the growing.

We are all at different places on our spiritual journey. This newsletter has ideas to help you with a plan to share your faith and grow as disciples,

especially as we enter the Year of Mercy, which Pope Francis is calling us to begin in December. You will hear more about our parish plans to participate in this and opportunities for you to learn, experience, and witness God's generous mercy.

On December 13-14, we will ask you to make a commitment as to how you will work to share your faith **more often and better**. We will take our Sharing card to God as a sign of our commitment to growth and renewal, making it a powerful moment as we commit to a renewal of our spiritual life.



The Holy Spirit is a very active participant in this. We can only do this with His help. So ask the Holy Spirit to lead you on this journey.

Peace,

Father John

**Ideas for Sharing Our Faith**

- Look for someone who needs encouragement and speak a kind word
- Be aware of someone with a problem and listen and empathize with them
- Call a family member or friend who you have lost touch with
- Visit an elderly neighbor
- Say grace before all meals, including when in a restaurant
- Say night prayers with your children
- Buy someone a subscription to a Catholic publication
- Display your Catholicism: wear a Catholic T-shirt, have a crucifix or prayer card at your desk, etc.
- Share the Catholic books you read with others
- Say hello to someone you don't know at Mass

## We Are Called to Share Our Faith All the Time

Sharing our Faith (evangelizing) is something we do every day. Any time we interact with people, we and our faith are on display. People associate us with "being Catholic."

### How Do I Share My Faith?

#### Praying is Sharing My Faith

As we grow our spiritual lives through prayer and study, we strengthen our faith sharing.

#### Being Hospitable is Sharing My Faith

We can't be quiet Catholics. A solitary Catholic is a contradiction. We must always be inviting and welcoming to everyone -- the people in the pews, the person in line at the grocery store, family, friends and co-workers.

#### Inviting is Sharing My Faith

This is similar to hospitality but goes a step farther-- after a smile or a kind word, invite the person to join in worship or other events in our Church community.

#### Serving is Sharing My Faith

Serving others is one of the strongest ways we witness our faith. Whether it is in formal ministry and community involvement or in acts of kindness to our friends and neighbors, serving is our witness to love of God and our neighbor.

#### Parenting is Sharing My Faith

Parents have the main role in sharing their faith with their children. Parents are always evangelizing and showing their children what being Catholic means in what is said and done in all areas of daily life. Tell your children why you go to Mass and receive the sacraments. Tell them about how you encounter Jesus. Show them how God is with us in our lives through nature, family, friends and life's every day experiences.

#### Being a Spouse is Sharing My Faith

Our roles as spouses -- loving our spouse in the special marriage covenant of self-giving -- is a strong act of sharing our faith.

#### Performing Acts of Kindness is Sharing My Faith

It can be simple: a word, an act of kindness, an attitude of patience. As St. Francis said: "Preach the Gospel at all times -- use words when necessary."

#### Gathering in Community to Praise God is Sharing My Faith

Attending Mass is a strong example of sharing. It says "I believe" in a special way.

#### Giving to Charitable Organizations is Sharing My Faith

Sharing our financial resources gives testimony to our faith and belief that what we have is not ours but what God has given us to share.

#### Becoming the Best Version of Myself is Sharing My Faith

God will use us in many ways to reach people -- in ways no one else can. How I live my life every day in all areas -- as a parent, spouse, grandparent, sibling at school, in the work place or in leisure activities -- is the best witness of my faith to others.

#### Having Faith-based conversations is Sharing My Faith

We are called to tell people about Catholicism -- about the experience of Christ. How does your faith affect you as a person? How are you moved by Christ and your faith? How do you love Jesus? How does Jesus' love for you change you and how you live? What is your story?

Connecting with people and nurturing relationships is a powerful way to share our faith. Always be willing to announce your experience with Christ to the world. God does not give us our faith and His love to keep for ourselves, but to share with others and to shout from the rooftops!!



Many parishioners share their faith each month at the SOS Soup Kitchen.

## Pope Francis Calls Us to a Year of Mercy

Following is an excerpt from Pope Francis' announcement of the Year of Mercy:

Dear brothers and sisters, I have often thought of how the Church may render more clearly her mission to be a witness to mercy; and we have to make this journey. It is a journey which begins with spiritual conversion. Therefore, I have decided to announce an Extraordinary Jubilee which has at its center the mercy of God. It will be a Holy Year of Mercy. We want to live in the light of the word of the Lord: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36). And this especially applies to confessors! So much mercy!

This Holy Year will commence on the next Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (December 8, 2015) and will conclude on Sunday, November 20, 2016, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe and living face of the Father's mercy. I entrust the organization of this Jubilee to the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, in order that it may come to life as a new step on the Church's journey in her mission to bring the Gospel of mercy to each person.

I am confident that the whole Church, which is in such need of mercy for we are sinners, will be able to find in this Jubilee the joy of rediscovering and rendering fruitful God's mercy, with which we are all called to give comfort to every man and every woman of our time. Do not forget that God forgives all, and God forgives always. Let us never tire of asking forgiveness. Let us henceforth entrust this Year to the Mother of Mercy, that she turn her gaze upon us and watch over our journey: our penitential journey, our year-long journey with an open heart, to receive the indulgence of God, to receive the mercy of God.

Jesus urges each of us never to stop at the surface of things, especially when we have a person before us. We are called to look beyond, to focus on the heart in order to see how much generosity everyone is capable of. No one can be excluded from the mercy of God; everyone knows the way to access it and the Church is the house where everyone is welcomed and no one is rejected.

Her doors remain wide open, so that those who are touched by grace may find the assurance of forgiveness. The greater the sin, the greater the love that must be shown by the Church to those



who repent. With how much love Jesus looks at us! With how much love He heals our sinful heart! Our sins never scare Him. Let us consider the prodigal son who, when he decided to return to his father, considers making a speech, but the father doesn't let him speak. He embraces him (Lk 15:17-24). This is the way Jesus is with us. "Father, I have so many sins...." -- "But He will be glad if you go: He will embrace you with such love! Don't be afraid."

### There is an app for this!



The FREE 365 Days to Mercy app is designed to accompany you on a spiritual journey during the Jubilee Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis. From December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016, daily inspiration, stories, and news will give you a full 365 Days to Mercy.

Available in the Apple Store or Google Play

