

August 2021



Immaculate Conception

Monthly Newsletter

Immaculate Conception Catholic Church



The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Embracing the Beauty of Becoming Catholic

There's a real beauty to being raised in the Catholic Church from childhood and continuing to practice the faith in adulthood. But there is also a beauty in finding the Catholic faith as an adult and going through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults process, or RCIA. This is just what Patricia Meadows did — she went through the RCIA process, led by Deacon Paul Hlabse, from 2020 to 2021 and received the Sacraments of Baptism, First Eucharist, and Confirmation at the 2021 Easter Vigil.

"If you aren't Catholic, take the next step to go through RCIA," Patricia says.

Patricia spent many years not practicing any faith tradition. She attended Baptist and Pentecostal services as a child, but those never really fit. She also attended a Catholic school in eighth

and ninth grade. Over the years, she has been invited to Catholic Mass by friends and her cousin and attended Catholic weddings and funerals.

"I really loved going to Mass," Patricia says. "It gave me something that I wasn't getting when I was younger."

One day, Patricia ran into an old friend, Rhema Pizem, and they reconnected. The rest, as they say, is history.

"Rhema told me she was very involved at Immaculate Conception," Patricia says. "She asked me to come to Mass with her."

Patricia found she loved Mass. She visited with Deacon Paul Hlabse about enrolling in RCIA and started classes in September 2020.

"Deacon Paul said, 'This is pulling at your heartstrings,'" she says. "I was praying about

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STEWARDSHIP

Moving Toward God-Centered Living

If you were asked to explain the relationship between stewardship and your Catholic faith, could you do it?

It may, at first, seem too difficult a task. But if we take our faith seriously, we are already being persuaded to live our lives in light of Church teaching. We will therefore improve as stewards of God's gifts. So it should not be difficult to make a connection between Catholicism and Christian stewardship. However, many of us struggle with articulating this connection, or do not understand how stewardship is connected to our faith.

We often attempt to compartmentalize different parts of our lives, separating work from family, and our social life from our faith life. Then we struggle and resist when it is suggested that our faith life *is* our life, belonging in every part of our daily activities — at work, at home and with our friends.

An essay written by Bill McKibben in the July 1999 issue of *Harper's* relates that the writer once held an experiment, requesting that people record everything that came across a large cable-TV system. He then spent a year watching it, "trying to figure out what the world would look like to you if this were your main window onto it." He discovered that "you are the most important thing on earth. You sitting there on the couch clutching the remote, are the center of creation, the heaviest object in the known universe; all things orbit your desires. This Bud's for You."

This is, of course, why so many of us fail to make a real connection between stewardship and our faith. Stewardship, by definition, assumes God

as the center of reality — the point upon which everything lives and exists. But we often live our lives as if we ourselves are that point. Even our faith is geared to what "I can get out of it." If we don't like our parish's architecture, priest, music program or choir director, then we just don't contribute to the parish fund. If our parish doesn't have a youth program to our liking, a thriving singles group or a thoroughly networked senior citizen's advocacy organization, then we just move to another parish that does. We are in turn perceiving our faith in terms of "products" that we dislike, and are simply choosing not to buy.

We may also misunderstand stewardship as being primarily beneficial to ourselves, believing that God will bless us more, that we will be recognized as conscientious, or that it's simply tax deductible.

But what if we start seeing stewardship as a natural consequence of realizing that our Savior Jesus Christ is the center of life? What if we begin to intentionally will to allow God to be the dominant influence in every factor of our lives? Stewardship would then take care of itself.

The Catholic faith begins and ends with God, the Creator and Giver of every gift. How we use these gifts is a direct reflection of our personal relationship to God. Most of us are primarily self-aligned consumers of goods, and we often use our gifts for self-gratification. Our relationship with God is also usually geared toward pleasing ourselves instead of God. However, the absolute goal and essence of living the life of a Catholic steward is simple — to move toward God-centered living.

A Letter From Our Pastor

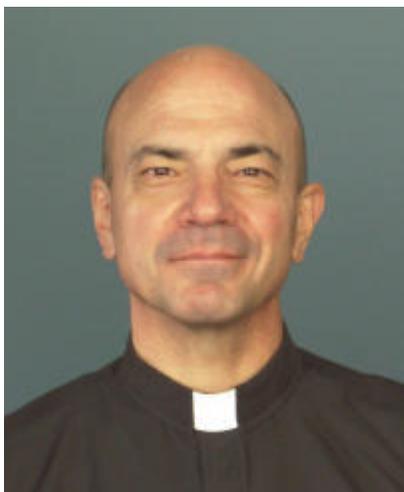
What Are You Going to Do With Your Life?

Dear Parishioners,

We are called to be the disciples of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is our calling — stewardship is the way we are to live the life we have been given. I don't think we believers would or should argue the point. It begins with our Baptism and our new life as members of the Church. There are no questions about it, even though we may not always remember that we have been called to discipleship — it is a life-long process, and we are all works in progress. But please remember, we are God's "works" that evolve moment by moment, day by day, and year after year.

To get more specific, we need to not only understand that stewardship is the expression of discipleship, but it is also the way in which we are to live our life. It is not a program — it is a way of life. I suppose at least once in our lifetime, we have been asked, "What are you going to do with your life?" Usually, that will happen at graduation, and how many of us have followed the path we thought we would at that time in our life? Perhaps we replied with a certain profession that may have interested us at the time. But there is always more to our answer than the title of a profession, just as there is more to our lives than just breathing. How do we use the gifts God has given to us? How we do so will define the life we live for God and the Church. That is our call to discipleship. It is how we should understand stewardship.

Many people ask me why I am so convinced that stewardship is a way of life. The simple answer I give is always the easy one and the most practical. My life as a faithful steward makes sense. The story of Christianity is filled with people like you



and me who wonder and desire how to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is what we are to do with our lives. Our attitude must be formed to spend the time and the talents we have, to do our part for God's Church. When does that become our priority? When does it become our way of life? These are the questions any believer must ask themselves when we think about our relationship with God, His Church, and the people around us. But, throughout my time in life as a priest, steward-

ship as my way of life makes sense and is more than possible with what God has given me to work with. It is the same with each of us. I am grateful for what God has given me and thankful I can live my life as His disciple. I say that not just as a priest, but as a baptized member of His family. I am thankful my parents brought me to be baptized a Christian and begin a life that would lead me, like all of us, to be the disciple we are called to be.

When we were baptized, no one asked us, "What are you going to do with your life?" If my parents and Godparents understood why we were all there, it should have been clear that we are all to be faithful stewards of all that God provides, beginning with the gift of life. That is why stewardship as a way of life is in my mind, heart and soul. That, too, was a gift from God for which I am most grateful. This is my calling, and "this" is what I going to do with the rest of my life. What will you do with yours?

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Michael Troha

Immaculate Conception

CATHOLIC CHURCH

MEET

KWAMI AND MARGARET



Kwami and Margaret Adoboe



Kwami and Margaret Adoboe at the Baptism of their son, Joachim

Kwami and Margaret Adoboe ran track and field together at Walsh University, and while they both agree that their first date was dinner after a track meet, they have slightly different stories about the origins of their relationship.

“I saw her studying at the library, and I thought she was amazing, but she didn’t even know I existed,” Kwami says. “I would go and look for her at the library, and then I saw her at track. Finally, I had the courage to ask her out. Fellowship turned to friendship and friendship turned to marriage”

Margaret was studying nursing, and Kwami was studying education. It was love at first sight for Kwami, and Margaret knew she wanted to be friends first.

“We do have different stories of how we first met,” Margaret says. “I remember running together and just being friends for that season and the school year. Then we started dating in the summer.”

Since Margaret was already working for the Cleveland Clinic, after prayer and discernment, they decided to make Ohio their home, and Kwami moved to the area. They were married in June 2020 at Walsh University and then in December of 2020 joined Immaculate Conception, which is where Margaret had been attending Mass before marrying Kwami.

“I knew a couple families here, and all the young families are very welcoming,” Margaret says. “They would come up to us after Mass and introduce themselves. They told us about the family group, which we’ve gone to a few times. It is nice meeting other families who are part of the parish.”

“*We hope to raise our kid in a community and show him from the beginning that we serve God together. We as a couple, a church, a parish can lead by example and invite others into our homes to share the Good News. We need to set that stage for the young community to know that God is still alive.*”

— KWAMI ADOBOE

ADOBOE: *Serving God Together*

Both Margaret and Kwami want to be involved in parish life and to raise their new son, Joachim, as an active member of the faith community. Currently, Kwami belongs to the men's group and is in the process of joining the Knights of Columbus. He would also like to become an adult altar server.

"We hope to raise our kid in a community and show him from the beginning that we serve God together," Kwami says. "We as a couple, a church, a parish can lead by example and invite others into our homes to share the Good News. We need to set that stage for the young community to know that God is still alive."

Margaret and Kwami would like to thank everyone who has welcomed them at Immaculate Conception and invited them into their homes to share food and the faith together.

"We love Immaculate Conception and this faith community and all the activities happening here," Kwami says. "We love our priests. The Catholic Church is a universal Church, and Immaculate Conception lives that. We are grateful to be part of it with our son."



The Adoboe family – Margaret, Kwami and Joachim

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

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it, too. The next thing you know, I'm in the RCIA program."

Patricia enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about the Catholic faith. She learned more about the Bible and the life of Jesus. She also learned about Mary and how to pray the Rosary.

"I do enjoy going to Mass and taking the Eucharist," Patricia says. "To me, taking the Eucharist is so holy."

Previously, Patricia had felt a void when she added Mass, but couldn't take the Eucharist. She is

so thankful she took RCIA classes to become Catholic, and she is thankful to Rhema — who served as her Confirmation sponsor — for helping her take that first step to attend Mass.

The Easter Vigil was a beautiful Mass to celebrate an important step in Patricia's life. She had several family members and friends, some who aren't even Catholic, come to celebrate with her.

"Everything in my religious life has expanded," Patricia says. "I had no religious life before, and now I have Jesus in my life."

If you would like to learn more about the RCIA process, contact Deacon Paul Hlabse at 440-259-4067 or call the parish office at 440-942-4500.

Immaculate Conception

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Pope St. Pius X: A Modern Traditionalist

On Aug. 21, the Church commemorates the feast of a great saint — St. Pius X, the peasant boy who became the Vicar of Christ. St. Pius X is a wonderful saint for our times because he effectively and definitively worked for a balance between upholding the Tradition and Faith of the Church and adapting to the Modern Age.

St. Pius X — Giuseppe Melchiorre Sarto — was born in 1835, one of eight children in an impoverished peasant family. He pursued God's call on him to the priesthood from an early age. Even as a young priest, he possessed great personal and pastoral skills. In addition to his deep holiness and virtue, St. Pius had a passion for defending and preserving the truth of the faith, which he carried with him into his pontificate.

As pope, he gave as his motto: "*Instaurare Omnia in Christo*" — "to restore all things in Christ" — a mission proclaimed not a moment too soon.

Already in Europe, secular governments, social institutions, and the mass media were driving the faith out of public life and education, all the while upholding individual freedom — understood as unlimited license — as the ultimate good. Worst of all, these philosophies had made their way into the minds of many clergy and Catholic laity, who claimed that modern science had discredited many dogmas of the Church. They proposed a new Christianity based what they called the "religious experience," a continually changing and evolving human experience that would in turn continually transform the meaning of Catholic teachings. The problem was that the new teachings proposed by



these modernists contradicted the very foundations of the faith established by Jesus Christ.

Fortunately, the Holy Father saw through the modern theories immediately and exposed the false doctrines, all the while acting with extreme discretion and pastoral charity. Pope Pius X reminded us that God, the Author of both faith and reason, and in Whom there is no contradiction, cannot allow science and true religion to contradict. Moreover, he declared that all the essential teachings of the Catholic faith and of Scripture could be defended rationally, and he encouraged the faithful to study the faith and read the Scriptures daily.

While Pius X spent much of his pontificate defending Catholic dogma from the threat of Modernism, he recognized the need for legitimate modern reforms within the Church. For instance, he initiated the codification of Canon Law, because the laws of the Church had little organization up to that time. He reformed the administrative offices of the Church. He also reformed the Liturgical Calendar, giving precedence back to the Sunday liturgies, which were too often being trumped by celebration of the daily saint's feast. Pius X initiated a renewal in liturgical music, as well, bringing back Gregorian chant and sacred polyphony to their primary place within the liturgy.

Two of this saint's most noted acts are reassigning the time of First Communion of children to the age of reason (about 7 years), and advising and promoting daily Communion, saying, "Holy Communion is the shortest and safest way to heaven."

Fatima Holy Hour Blue Army Group Devotions Kept Alive Throughout the Pandemic

*W*hile the COVID-19 restrictions of this past year may have compelled the Fatima Holy Hour Blue Army Group to meet in a telephone conference call each week, the pandemic has done nothing to restrict the group from praying “for the whole world.”

Sue Cherry leads the group that is meeting at 7 p.m. each Wednesday night in the rectory chapel.

“The focus of our prayers is the whole world, and an end of the pandemic for all who suffered and died,” Sue says. “We pray for those in fear of it, our medical people, and all involved with the pandemic, as well as our own special intentions.”

The Blue Army Group is also marking 2021 as the Year of St. Joseph with a special prayer said during the meetings. The prayer may be found on the website, www.bluearmy.com.

“It is a prayer I recommend our followers to pray,” Sue says. “It really gets to the heart of the message of Our Lady of Fatima.”

The Fatima Holy Hour Blue Army Group has been meeting for more than 20 years. They offer prayers of sacrifice and penance within a series of prayers devoted to the Blessed Mother. The group continues the devotions that came from Mary’s appearances to three shepherd children in Fatima, Portugal in 1917. When she appeared to Lucia Santos and Francisco and Jacinta Marto, she asked for conversion, sacrifices for sinners and devotion to her Immaculate Heart. She also asked for the conversion of Russia to her Immaculate Heart and to offer sacrifices for those who have no one to pray for them and souls in purgatory.

“We also pray that in this time with people in fear, that they use time wisely,” Sue says. “We pray God will give us the incentive to turn to Him instead of to other vices such as alcohol and other things. We pray to really come to know Him and boost their prayer life, which is what we need.”

Anyone who wishes to join the group in their devotions is welcome. Sue has books and materials to share, as well as extra rosaries.

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“It’s a wonderful place to come and sit and pray with like-minded people,” Sue says. “The world needs our prayers, sacrifices and penance.”

The Blue Army Group members not only offer devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, but have found they have grown closer to her, and share during the meetings their experiences with her.

“Whether it’s before we start our prayers or after, one of the group will stand up and talk about their experience, or they ask a question about it,” Sue says. “As a group we can help them along with their journey.”

For Sue, her joining the group came about after she had seen a pamphlet about it. She held the thought of

joining, until she took the step to follow in the footsteps of the Fatima children. She is building on the relationship she has developed with the Blessed Mother.

“It’s simple,” she says. “During the pandemic, the sacrifice prayer was my go-to prayer. Make all you can a sacrifice, as the angel told the children. I’d have to go to work, and there were many wonderful people working from home, as well as other places. It was just a daily grind. And that was my prayer, I offered whatever it was for that day, sometimes multiple times. It was a lot of anxiety, and that’s why it keeps me coming back. It’s simple, and I’m trusting, and trusting as the little children did.”

Interested in the Fatima Holy Hour Blue Army Group? Feel free to stop in during any meeting, or for more info, call the parish office at 440-942-4500.