



The Newsletter of
St. Peter
the Apostle Parish,
River Edge,
New Jersey

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Discovering Christ*By Joe Cassese*

I am a parishioner of St. Peters Church. I am not unlike many of my fellow parishioners when it comes to this roller coaster ride we call life. I have good days and

bad days; good times and bad times. I recently attended the Discovering Christ program here in the parish and would like to share this beautiful experience.

My journey began as a Cornerstone candidate in March of 2015. It was there that I met a great group of men who became my brothers in both friendship and faith. The Men's Cornerstone weekend was a powerful experience that rejuvenated my faith and strengthened my relationship with God. As we all know, life goes on and we are challenged with how to keep Christ in our life.

When I learned about the Discovering Christ program, I was very hesitant to commit. The program included 7 consecutive Monday evening gatherings and a Sunday retreat. I struggled with this commitment since work schedules made this challenging. Regardless, I registered for the program and was pleasantly surprised as I moved through this journey week after week.

I have to say, attending this program was a very uplifting experience. We literally discovered our relationship with Christ beginning with the commonly asked questions of "what is the meaning of life" and "why does Jesus matter" In small groups, we reflected and continued to build on these common questions such as "what does Jesus want us to know" and "why do we need a savior". We were blessed to have captivating guest speakers that helped us relate these commonly asked questions to our own personal

experiences. We are not alone and we all have our crosses to bear.

Our groups met each Monday evening and began with sharing dinner together. It was amazing to bond by breaking bread as a community, followed by inspirational talks and meaningful group discussions. I found all of this to be so motivating and inspirational. Through these talks and discussions, I am humbled to be part of this program and feel humility, compassion and grace for my fellow Discovering Christ members.

I would also like also emphasize the powerful retreat day we all experienced at The Shrine of St Joseph in Sterling, NJ. On this day, we truly experienced the power of Discovering Christ. Our guest speakers were phenomenal, especially Father Frank of St. Helen's Church in Westfield, NJ.

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During my spiritual journey in the Discovering Christ program I felt a real sense of Christ's presence being shared on all levels in our community - all ages including our youth.

Some of the gems that I took away and could relate to from the sharing of our speakers' life experiences, was the remembrance of my own childhood family's cherished memories, the understanding of feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit inside each and every one of us, to remember when you first felt the Holy Spirit in your life, and to go back to that time and feel his presence once more. I also learned not to take things for granted because some of life's simplest gifts that we all take for granted are other people's happiest moments.

I heard, saw, and understood how other people make such selfless sacrifices, including the loss of life to help other people in less privileged countries. I understood the celebration of a baby being born in difficult circumstances as God's Will, and that when God puts someone in our path and wants us to meet them, ultimately it will happen.

I had the realization and understanding that God is our Father. He looks at us as his children and he is willing to help us through our most difficult times. We will struggle with trials and tribulations and temptations, but there is good news; Christ already paid the price for us by sacrificing himself for our sins.

I do highly recommend this wonderful program to all our parishioners and hope all will attend.

I would like to thank all the guest speakers – Fr. Mike, Fr. Camilo, Mr. Michael Streit, Fr. Frank, Msgr. Tom Nydegger, Dr. Zeni Fox, and Mrs. Mary Ann Ford - as well as all who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make this happen.

I look forward to the next series “Following Christ.” I thank St Peter’s for not only offering these spiritual programs, but for also supporting this amazing community to renew and reinforce our faith in Christ.

THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

By Maureen Senzamici

The rosary is a form of prayer by which we can enter into the humanity and divinity of our Savior, Jesus Christ. The joyful mysteries inspire happiness for the beautiful events of Jesus’s young life, the luminous mysteries evoke wonder at some of His great miracles, and the glorious mysteries cause awe at the divine. By contrast, sorrowful mysteries are challenging to contemplate. However, they are critical as they form the story of our salvation and are most relevant during the season of Lent.

The first sorrowful mystery is the agony of Jesus in the garden.

Jesus shared the Last Supper, was fully aware of the impending agony and entered the Garden of Gethsemane to pray with some of His disciples. Jesus stated, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death”, and He fervently prayed to God “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matthew 26:38-39).

Jesus’s disciples fell asleep while He was praying. Jesus, frightened and sorrowful, reached to His faithful father for strength while His beloved disciples were weak at this hour of need.

The second sorrowful mystery is the scourging at the pillar.

At this point, Jesus had been betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, interrogated by high priests, spat

upon, blindfolded and struck by guards. Pilate questioned Jesus as to who He was; however, “Jesus made no reply, and Pilate was amazed” (Mark 15:5). Though Pilate stated that He found no grounds for execution, he consented for Jesus to be flogged and eventually executed. Jesus was mocked and physically abused.

The third sorrowful mystery is the crowning with thorns.

After Jesus was flogged, John 19:2 recorded, “The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head.” Jesus’s death was not only painful, but it was humiliating.

The fourth sorrowful mystery recounts Jesus’s carrying of the cross.

Jesus was so weakened that an onlooker, Simon, was pressed into service. Little is known of Simon, but it is notable that a Cyrenian, from Africa, was made to carry the cross for the man bearing the sins of the world.

The fifth sorrowful mystery recounts the crucifixion of our Lord.

Jesus was stripped of His garments, nailed to a cross, placed between two criminals and was mocked. Yet, in the midst of this horrid scene, there were examples of love and a foreshadowing of redemption. Jesus asked God to forgive the executioners. Although He had been abandoned by most of His disciples, several women followers including His mother and Mary of Magdalene remained. Christ’s love for His mother was revealed in His tender words to her on the cross when He entrusted her to the care of the disciple He loved, “Dear woman, here is your son” (John 19:26-27). Luke’s gospel shared how one of the criminals repented of his own sins, realized Jesus’s divinity and was promised a place in paradise. Finally, the centurion, who witnessed several supernatural events exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:54).

These sorrowful mysteries, painful as they are, draw us into a deeper relationship with God, Jesus and one another. God loves us so deeply that He used Jesus’s crucifixion as a means for our salvation! Thus, we can rest assured that God has a plan for our life even during difficult moments and that our Savior truly knows and can identify with painful crosses we may bear. Finally, these mysteries challenge us to see Jesus’s face in everyone especially those experiencing despair, hurt or physical pain. Hopefully, this deeper love of God will enable us to respond to others carrying crosses with the same love and devotion as the women who accompanied Jesus to the cross and the repentant criminal. Should we fall short, we can ask forgiveness and follow the examples of the centurion and the disciples who were transformed.

BECOMING A DIACONATE

By Paul Kazanecki

It was in 1986 that I first heard the term “permanent” diaconate, which was restored by the reforms of Vatican II in the 1960’s. It generated a question, which I asked my late brother, Ted, a priest in the Diocese of Brooklyn, one Saturday afternoon at our parents’ home. I knew Ted served as a deacon for a year (“transitional deacon”) on the road to his ordination to the priesthood. This is an order that Deacon Andrew Jung now so wonderfully fills here at St. Peter’s until May of this year when he will be ordained to the holy priesthood. The question that I posed to Ted resulted in a book to read and a comment that one day I might think about the diaconate. Honestly, it was not on my mind for many of these years. However, God has a good memory. The path that He laid out, bringing me and my family to St. Peter the Apostle Parish in May 2000, certainly had a lot to do with bringing me to this stage.

On Saturday, June 4, 2016, twenty-five men are scheduled to be ordained at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Newark to the diaconate for service to the Archdiocese of Newark. I am humbled and excited to be part of that class. We come from various backgrounds and professions and for nearly five years, we have gathered in a process of discernment and formation.

The formation process included four years of studies at the Immaculate Conception Seminary on the campus of Seton Hall University, in order to fulfill one of the pillars of formation, namely, the “intellectual” pillar, and monthly meetings held on Saturdays at the Church of the Annunciation, Paramus or the Church of Notre Dame, North Caldwell. We conclude our studies at the seminary in May 2016.

Besides the intellectual pillar, there are the pastoral and spiritual pillars, which were squeezed into the total formation process. By no means am I an intellectual. It was indeed a challenge going back to class and taking notes, studying for mid-terms, and doing research papers with Turabian-style footnotes in such classes as The Synoptic Gospels, Christian Anthropology, The Trinity, Canon Law, and Pauline & Johannine Literature while at the same time balancing a full-time work schedule and family commitments. At this stage of our lives, it was tough being judged on writing styles or cramming for a final when there were other things that we could be doing at home or at work.



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As I reflect on the last five years, I am grateful for all of your support and prayers, and I am looking forward to “coming back” to serve at St. Peter’s on a “full-time” basis. I could not have done this without Linda and my family’s love and support, which is certainly a prerequisite. Also, the prayers, encouragement, and notes received from so many parishioners certainly have helped me on this journey.

Over the years, St. Peter’s has been blessed by the service of four great deacons, Greg Rice, Lenny Tysch, Ed Bowen, and Andy Golden. They have served in various ministries, including baptismal preparation, social out-reach like St. Martin’s Kitchen, and evangelization efforts to name just a few. In addition, they preach the Word of God approximately once a month and serve at the altar on a regular basis. They continue to be a source of inspiration to me as ordination comes closer.

Pope Francis, in a recent message commemorating the 50th World Communications Day this past January, encouraged all of us to be bridges and bridge builders. I hope and pray that through word and deed of diaconal service I may be that bridge and builder of bridges through various ministries here at St. Peter’s.

What Does Your Heart Desire During Lent?

By Pam Lobley

You go out to your car to warm it up in the morning and gaze up at a beautiful view of snow covered trees. The quiet power of nature may stir something within you and - just like that - you feel differently about your day. You might hear a song on the radio that brings back a delightful memory from long ago. You could experience a coincidence, where something you needed or wanted showed up in your life without warning.

We can look at these eye-opening moments as pleasant, “normal” experiences, or we can see them as mystical – a window in our day that opens onto a view of a deeper, fuller existence. When we see it that way, we will be awakened to many different responses: we can feel called to gratitude, or contemplation or peace. These experiences can also call us to action, as they did recently to me, when I had the “feeling” that I should go into our parish library and check out “The Jesuit Guide to Almost Everything” by James Martin, SJ. I don’t always act on these kinds of feelings, or impulses, but I am almost happier when I do.

I had read the book years ago but I checked it out again anyway. I had the feeling that maybe I was being led to read something that would be perfect for Lent. But the first part of the Jesuit Guide talks about desire, what we want in our lives. That seemed wrong. When we think of Lent we think of penance, sacrifice – not ourselves and our desires. Aren’t we supposed to be spending 40 days in the desert?

Desire usually sounds sinful – lusty or greedy - or at the very least, whiney and entitled. But as I read on in the book, Fr. Martin points out probably our true desires are nothing like that. Our true desires have more to do with small ideas that God has planted in us which we may get a glimpse during those eye-opening moments. Our true desires are things that would lead us closer to God, because we desire God. They might be very sweeping things, like, I wish I had a career that

used more of my talents, or they might be very mundane, like, I wish our family ate dinner together more often.

Since we know that God created each of us as unique individuals, and since we know that God desires us to be close to Him and work together to bring about his Kingdom, it stands to reason he has some specific jobs that you and only you can do, even if that job seems pretty basic.

Perhaps during Lent we will be more open to the mystery that is at the edge of all our lives, and invite this mystery to enter more deeply into our everyday routine. We can choose to dismiss deep feelings or impulses as silly emotions, or we can choose to investigate what those impulses are calling us to do. Following their pull can lead us to think about our true desires, and how we might be ignoring those desires in the rush of our pressing obligations, or how we might be already living out those desires and can more fully embrace them.

This makes me think of a story from the TV show Downton Abbey. In the third season, Matthew Crawley dies unexpectedly, leaving his snooty, feisty bride Mary a widow. It was shocking and sad, so of course many fans were posting outraged comments on Facebook. One comment stuck in my mind, “Oh poor Mary,” it read, “she will never find anyone to love her for herself.”

Such a simple calling – to love a difficult person in a way that nobody else ever could. A powerful, humble undertaking, certainly something that God might want us to do.

Our deepest desires lead us to be who God really wants us to be. If we are feeling lost or frustrated, uncovering our true desires may bring us clarity. We don’t have to judge those desires as being too big or too small or in anyway not right for us. If

we think about them, and pray about them, we may find out why God put them in our hearts. If they are in our hearts, God put them there, to lead us closer to Him.

**“Create
in me a
clean heart,
O God,
and put a
new and right
spirit
within me.”**
Psalm 51:10