



*A Letter From Our Pastor*

## Introducing Our New Parish Stewardship Newsletter

I am pleased to present to you our new parish newsletter! This newsletter will help us learn how the stewardship way of life is a disciple's response to the call to know, love, and follow our Lord Jesus Christ. Every other month we will share stories that will help us better understand who we are as Catholics and individual members of God's family. The upcoming issues will feature activities and events happening within our St. Joseph community and how these will help change hearts, minds, and lives as through them we grow closer to Christ and each other. In each article, we will see how Christ is at work within us and our community as we more intentionally engage the stewardship way of life.



munity, it will bear much fruit and inspire you to consider how you can be more involved in the life of our parish — for some, and perhaps this will be an opportunity to try new things.

This newsletter will help increase communication as we feature events that are coming up and share a lot of information with you. But I also want to hear from you! That's why we are conducting the comprehensive parish survey that I asked you to complete. Your feedback is important to me and

will help and parish leadership better understand your thoughts about our parish. This survey will enable us to pave the way for our future.

Another essential step in our stewardship journey will be our Annual Stewardship Renewal. The Renewal is our annual chance to ask ourselves how we prioritize the way we use God's gifts in the Church. We will make written commitments to ourselves and God concerning how we will be

I hope that this newsletter will be a meaningful way to continue learning more about our faith. As we know more about our faith and how our fellow parishioners are living their faith out in our com-

## What Does

# S+EWARDSHIP

## Mean?

What comes to mind when you hear the word “stewardship”?

Do you think of it as just another way to talk about money? Do you quickly dismiss it as a notion that has nothing to do with being Catholic?

Stewardship is actually a concept that is Scripturally-based and is absolutely vital to our life as Catholics. God tells us, in the very first book of the Old Testament, “Be fertile and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and all the living things that move on the earth” (Gen 1:28).

What does that mean to us today? It simply means that God is telling us, “This is yours, so take care of it.” One of the first things God tells us to do is to be good stewards of the gifts He has entrusted to us!

The Old Testament is not the only place where we can find references to stewardship. Indeed, of the 36 parables in the New Testament, more than half of them deal with time, talent, possessions, or money. Therefore, if Jesus spoke of stewardship that much, it should be a very important part of our lives!

As Catholics, we refer to the three facets of stewardship as “time, talent, and treasure.” Although these are three concrete ways to express and measure stewardship, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops tells us that stewardship is part of discipleship. Stewardship is a way of responding to God’s call in every aspect of our lives.

The Scriptures and Church traditions teach us one important point that cannot be overstated — that stewardship is primarily based on our need to give in gratitude, not on the Church’s need to receive. Of course, both the Catholic Church and our particular parish will always need money. However, we are not asked to give simply to defray costs and fund charitable programs. We are instead asked to remember our need to gratefully return a portion of our time, talent, and treasure to God, recognizing all that He has given to us.

It is important to remember that stewardship is a way of life, and not a program. True Catholic stewardship involves an ongoing call to live as followers of Christ. It takes time to find and define personal goals.

You can begin by examining your personal commitments to the parish. How do you live your faith in your daily life with your family and friends? How much time do you spend in daily prayer, going to Mass, or being involved in parish ministries and activities? What percentage of your income should you give back to God every week? What talents do you have that could be used to strengthen our parish family?

In the coming months, we will be increasing and intensifying our education and communication on stewardship. We will be developing a better understanding of how stewardship is a way of responding to God’s call to discipleship. And with God’s help, changes will occur in each of our hearts as we devote ourselves to a stewardship renewal within our parish. Examine how you are currently responding to God’s call to stewardship. If God called you home tomorrow, would He proclaim, “Well done, my good and faithful servant”?

## Meet Dr. Vilma Hernandez: *Bringing God's Kingdom to Earth*

Dr. Vilma Hernandez has a beautiful hero who guides her steps — and it shows.

“I love Mother Teresa!” she says. “She is a great role model for me of what an average person can do with their life. She inspires me to make a good impact on others. As Christians, we are asked to live our life for God, and to spend it serving others. When Christ came, He taught us how to love one another. He said this is the way to bring His Kingdom to earth.”

In fact, ever since she was a child, the same values of generosity and charity that Mother Teresa stood for were planted in young Vilma's heart as well. Over time, they flourished into a great desire and a generous vision.

“I was born in Colombia, into a good Catholic family and culture,” Dr. Hernandez says. “Where I am from, Catholicism is not just a religion but a way of living. When I came to the United States as a teenager, I noticed that there was a real lack of Spanish-speaking, bilingual psychotherapists here, so I decided I wanted to help people in this area. This desire soon inspired me to earn a master's degree in



*Dr. Vilma Hernandez hopes to reach out to those most in need in our parish family and beyond.*

clinical social work, as well as my doctorate in clinical psychology.”

Now as an adult, Dr. Hernandez savors the opportunity to be a faithful steward of her education by sharing her talents as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Recently, she began working part-time as the Primary Counselor for Pastoral Care Counseling Services, a new outreach being launched at our parish under the Pastoral Care Program.

“The way I can serve others as a Catholic is by providing the best counseling services that I can,” she says. “I am really looking forward to offering counseling services for individuals and families, as well as to facilitating support groups, and more.”

In her new position, Dr. Hernandez is hoping to reach out to those most in need in our parish family and beyond.

“The reason I want to do this ministry is because our parish has become a home for many people,” Dr. Hernandez says. “They trust the Church and they trust us, but they don't trust others. If they have struggles, they may not be willing to get help from a psychologist, but they will be willing to come to us. The help we will be offering will be 100-percent confidential and professional. We are also going to offer our help to the community, as well.”

Dr. Hernandez is grateful to be a member of our parish family and we are grateful to have her with us.

“Our parish is a small, close-knit parish family,” she says. “I love that about it. It reminds me of the small Catholic parish I grew up at in Colombia.”

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# Parish School Community Shares in *Joyful Celebrations* for 125TH ANNIVERSARY



On September 14, our St. Joseph School community was blessed to usher in a year-long celebration honoring our 125th anniversary. The kickoff began with Mass, for which children of the parish helped prepare. Alumni were welcomed back, and a field day was held for the students. Yet, this was the just the beginning as we celebrate the anniversary of the first year of the school.

The theme of the anniversary year is “We Celebrate, We Remember, We Believe.” The entire community, the school and the parish, is invited to participate in the celebrations.

“As a Catholic school, our faith is central to who we are,” says Mrs. Brenda Budd, Principal of St. Joseph School. “We make sure we are not only nourishing the children academically, but that we are also nourishing their faith.”

The main events will be happening in March. On March 19, the school will hold a gala event, and a community festival will be held on March 20. Other smaller events will take place throughout the year. As the individual event dates approach, more information will always be available in the bulletin and on the website.

The 125th anniversary celebration takes us back to 1896. Founded by the Sisters of the Holy Name and later passed into the hands of the Salesian Sisters, St. Joseph’s heritage is an

inspiration to it’s community today.

“In a time when women weren’t allowed to take leadership roles, you have some women who were very remarkable,” Mrs. Budd says. “The sisters even provided medical attention to soldiers when the school first started.”

The parish and the school have been growing and serving West Tampa ever since. We owe these strong roots to the women who first offered a Catholic education to the community. Mrs. Budd sees the parish and school as the heart of West Tampa.

“This is an opportunity for all of us to work together to make sure that this legacy continues,” she says.

As the whole community is invited to take part in the celebrations, Mrs. Budd especially hopes to see some of the alumni return.

“We would love to hear about the impact that St. Joseph had on them and for them to come home,” she says.

This will be a joyful year for the whole community as we give thanks for the amazing history of our faith community and continue looking forward to great things to come.

“My biggest hope is for re-engagement and revitalization,” Mrs. Budd says. “I hope that everything that has been accomplished in the last 125 years can be accomplished in the next 125 years as well.”

*If you would like more information about upcoming 125th anniversary events, please refer to the bulletin or website — <https://www.stjosephchurchtampa.org/st-joseph-school-k-8> — or contact Nicole Nassis at 813-267-9981 or [nnassis@sjstampa.org](mailto:nnassis@sjstampa.org).*

## PASTORAL CARE: *Providing for the Spiritual, Physical and Mental Wellbeing of the Parish*



St. Joseph is a saint whose patronage extends far beyond his own personal interests. Historically, we do not know much about him, other than he was a carpenter and the earthly father to Jesus Christ. The fact that St. Joseph covers such a wide range of patronages — he is the patron saint of a happy death, expectant mothers, travelers, craftsmen, engineers, workers, families, and those selling or buying a house — is fitting for our St. Joseph Catholic Church, which also has a wide-reaching approach to caring for the parishioners as a whole.

With this approach to care in mind, a new initiative at our parish is Pastoral Care Services.

“Pastoral Care is about providing the spiritual, emotional, and social support people need to thrive,” says Maria Hernandez, who is volunteering her time and medical knowledge to help Fr. Nelson Restrepo and the committee to start up this ministry. “It is about helping them overcome obstacles that may be preventing them from growing in their faith and finding happiness in becoming active members of their community.”

The parish has a genuinely holistic approach when it comes to the wellbeing of its parishioners. Several times a year, St. Joseph offers a free family wellness event including screenings for cholesterol, glucose, and blood pressure,

while also providing educational information on things like physical activity and nutrition.

These screening events are helping to provide care for their physical wellbeing, while the parish itself provides for the spiritual wellness of the people. Lastly, Pastoral Care is starting a new free program to care for the mental wellbeing of the parishioners.

Beginning in September, the parish is partnering with BayCare and Vilma Hernandez to provide free counseling services to parishioners. One in five people is suffering from mental health issues.

“For Fr. Nelson, establishing a counseling center is of utmost importance — it is greatly needed

at the St. Joseph community,” Maria says. “Psychological and emotional counseling seems to be an immediate need among many parishioners who lack the resources to obtain it. For others, there may be the stigma of divulging a condition or situation to strangers outside of their faith community — they prefer to talk with their priest or someone at their parish they trust.”

Providing access to these services with a licensed professional who has a heart and a focus on spiritual care is one way for Fr. Nelson to provide for the mental wellbeing of his parishioners.

“The whole intent is there to provide parishioners who are experiencing a difficult time with

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## Pastoral Care *continued from page 5*

support focused on healing and reconciliation,” says Chris Yarnold, another volunteer assisting with the start of this ministry.

Dr. Vilma Hernandez has her doctorate in Clinical Psychology and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She has a heart for this work that extends beyond the scope of it being her job.

“I think it began with the idea of a career,” Dr. Hernandez says. “My first bachelors is in economics and mathematics. It was that emptiness that I felt — I just wasn’t happy. It was in a conversation with my family, and they told me to change my lifestyle. During this personal crisis, I happened to go to a church, and I went to talk to a priest because I was feeling lost. He came down and sat next to me and just helped me to feel not alone.”

“It is hard to do spiritual work when we struggle to meet our basic needs to survive when loss, grief, and pain are all around us,” Maria says. “Here is where charity/love enter. Having a safe, caring place to go for support and healing is important for finding and strengthening our faith and hope in life.”



*If you would like more information on the health and wellness offerings of St. Joseph Catholic Church, please visit the parish website at <https://www.stjosephchurchtampa.org>, call the parish office at 813-877-5729, or call BayCare at (800) 878-5470.*

## Our New Parish Stewardship Newsletter *continued from front cover*

more devoted with our use of time (using our time on earth wisely; making time for personal prayer, family prayer, and quality time with friends and loved ones); talent (using our God-given gifts to strengthen the Church through service to parish ministries and other activities), and treasure (the wise and just management of our financial resources; giving a proportionate amount of my income to the parish).

As we strive to develop stewardship as a way of life at St. Joseph, the support and involvement of each individual parishioner are necessary to sustain the life of our parish. All of you have a place here, and all of

you have a role to fill in the life of the parish as we live our lives as disciples of Christ.

May the Holy Spirit renew and refresh all of us as we work together to build our parish family through the use of our time, talent, and treasure.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Nelson Restrepo  
Pastor