



St. John BEFORE THE LATIN GATE

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Rectory Cleaners PERFORM VALUABLE SERVICE FOR OUR PRIESTS AND PARISH

It takes many volunteers with all kinds of gifts to keep our parish running. There are those who serve as lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and those who use their musical talents to give glory to God.

One ministry most of us might not consider features parishioners who spend time each week cleaning for our priests — the three-person team known as the Rectory Cleaners. You can find them every Tuesday at 9 a.m. at the rectory. With the busy schedules of Fr. John O'Neill and Fr. Carlos Loaiza, it's nice for them to not have to worry about cleaning their home. Debbie Hagan, Holly Adams and Regina Kennedy are happy to lend a hand in this area. When the three of them work together, a lot of cleaning can get done in a short time. They usually spend about 90 minutes changing linens and towels, sweeping, mopping and doing basic housekeeping.



Rectory Cleaners arrive every Tuesday at 9 a.m. to keep the rectory tidy — (from left) Debbie Hagan, Holly Adams and Regina Kennedy.

"This really is a great volunteer job," Regina says. "There are no meetings or paperwork. You just go. You accomplish it, and you are done."

Janet Hoelscher started this ministry when Fr. Pratt came to St. John Before

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Service

THE FOURTH PILLAR OF PARISH STEWARDSHIP

Throughout Sacred Scripture, there are numerous references to service. There is the parable of the vigilant and faithful servants who await their master's return from a wedding, "ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks" (Lk 12:35-40). There is the story of the good Samaritan who was moved with compassion to help the victim of a violent robbery (Lk 10:25-37). And there are several examples of Christ serving those around Him — feeding the multitudes, healing the sick, and even turning water into wine at a wedding banquet.

Why is service a running theme throughout the Gospels? Because service is at the root of living in imitation of Christ. Christ served others throughout His life on Earth, and His death on the cross was the ultimate act of service to mankind. And when we serve others, we are not only following in Christ's footsteps, we are also serving Christ Himself: "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40).

As a stewardship parish, service must be at the heart of everything we do. The parish community is the bastion of service within the Catholic Church, as we serve one another and are also served by our brothers and sisters in Christ. As the Diocese of Wichita's document, *The Pillars of Parish Stewardship*, states, "Like a blood family, the parish family stands ready and eager collectively to wrap their arms around their brothers and sisters when they suffer in trial and/or celebrate special events in their lives."

It is good to recognize the parish community as a place where service is appreciated and can be utilized for the good of the Church. However, it is not enough for us to simply serve other members of our parish family. As disciples of Christ, it is our obligation to serve people in need everywhere they exist — in our families, our greater community, our country, and throughout the world. This can be a challenging concept, as it is often much more comfortable and convenient to serve those who are close to us than it is to reach out to "outsiders." But, as *The Pillars of Parish Stewardship* eloquently points out, "Failure to have this understanding leads to a selfish parochialism, which is life draining to a parish stewardship way of life."

Think of ways that you can serve others around you, both within our parish family and in the greater community. Our many parish ministries offer a great place to begin offering your time and talents, but the opportunities for service don't end there. There are many civic and nonprofit organizations that do an immense amount to serve others across the globe and are always looking for volunteers.

Once you serve, you will find that you will reap numerous rewards in return, much like the faithful servants who doubled the talents their master had entrusted to them: "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy" (Mt 25:21).

A Letter From Our Pastor

STRIVING FOR "THE BEST LENT EVER" WILL PREPARE US TO JOYFULLY CELEBRATE EASTER

Dear Parishioners,

The most important day in February won't come till the very end of the month. Alert parishioners may already have realized I'm referring to Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, which falls on Feb. 26 this year. That means we have most of the month to plan for Lent!

I know what you're thinking right about now: "Father seems particularly happy about getting ready for Lent!" Of course, when we approach Lent in the right way, it will help us get spiritually fit to celebrate Easter. Just as an Olympic athlete goes through a long period of serious training to win a medal, so we prepare during Lent for our great Easter celebration. And "giving up" something during Lent is not supposed to leave a vacuum — we're invited to put something more valuable in its place.

We're all familiar with the three traditional Lenten disciplines of **prayer**, **fasting** and **almsgiving**. These can serve as our framework for how we approach the season of Lent. One might decide, for example, to give up a half hour of television



each evening. That doesn't mean you sit and stare at a blank wall for the half hour. Instead, fill it with prayerful reading of the Bible or a devotional book, or praying the Rosary.

Some people decide to forego desserts during Lent (fasting). But just losing weight is not the purpose of Lent! The goal is greater discipline in our spiritual lives. However, a family can put aside the money saved by skipping desserts and contribute it to a Church-related charity (almsgiving), so that our self-denial can benefit others.

These are just possible

examples. There are many ways of combining prayer, fasting, and almsgiving into our daily lives during the Lenten season. The object is to develop a spiritual routine that challenges us but still fits into our lives with our individual responsibilities and schedules.

By the way, most of us will stumble at some point during our Lenten journey. Our first instinct will be to throw up our hands and give up. What we should do is just pick up where we left off and continue to do our best as we proceed on the Lenten journey.

Of course, most of February is Ordinary Time. But that gives us time to figure out what we should do in the areas of prayer, fasting and almsgiving so we can keep our best Lent ever and arrive at Easter spiritually fit.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. John O'Neill
Pastor

A LIFE BUILT ON GENERATIONS
OF FAITH AND STEWARDSHIP:

Meet the Janda Family



Mark and Sharon Janda arrange flowers in the sanctuary with the help of their son, Trevor.

For parishioners, Mark and Sharon Janda, a love of family and commitment to the Catholic faith have always gone hand-in-hand. The two grew up in neighboring Texas towns, where Sundays were known as “parish picnic day” and everyone pitched in to make these special gatherings a success. Sharon remembers her grandmother growing flowers for the altar, and both Mark and Sharon recall the countless times their families helped with parish events and fundraisers.

These early experiences with stewardship eventually came to shape the way that both Mark and Sharon engage in their Catholic faith.

“For me, seeing my grandmother and mother — and all the generations — working with the parish made me want to do the same,” Sharon says. “It was always just an extension of our family life to be involved in the church life.”

Not surprisingly, when Mark and Sharon were married, there was no doubt for either of them that an active faith would become the foundation of their life together. When Mark’s job brought them from Texas to Oklahoma in 2002, it was natural for them to jump right into parish life here at St. John Before the Latin Gate.

Currently, Mark is a district deputy for the Knights of Columbus, a Rosarian, a Eucharistic Minister, and helps out with the choir. Sharon is also a Rosarian, heads the Wedding Committee and the Flower Committee through the Women’s Association, and serves as a lector and a Eucharistic Minister.

As they prepare to celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary this year, the Jandas credit their shared faith for keeping their marriage strong in times of both triumph and trial. Through years of struggling with infertility, they continued to place their trust in God. Thanks to His faithfulness, they were able to adopt their son, Trevor, through the state of Texas.

“We left it in God’s hands to find the right child for us,” Sharon says.

“And Trevor was officially adopted on Jan. 22, the anniversary of Roe v. Wade,” Mark adds. “We have both attended the March for Life with him through the Diocese of Tulsa, and that

has been an important part of our pro-life ministry.”

In raising their son, the Jandas continued to follow the faith tradition of their parents and grandparents before them. When they moved to this area, they chose our parish because it was important for them that Trevor attend a Catholic school. From early on, it was clear that Trevor was affected by the strong example of stewardship he witnessed in his parents.

“They used to put in the school yearbook what the children wanted to be when they grew up,” Mark says. “When Trevor was in second grade, the other kids said things like, ‘I want to be a fireman or a football player’. And Trevor wrote, ‘I want to be a Grand Knight.’ He ended up joining the Knights of Columbus at the age of 18 and is now a Fourth Degree Knight.”

Trevor helps his father with the music ministry on special occasions, and the father and son were blessed to participate together in the Knights of Columbus honor guard at

Fr. Stanley Rother’s beatification in 2017. Also, you may often find all three members of the Janda family hard at work together in the sanctuary — whenever Sharon needs a hand with the church flowers, both Mark and Trevor are there to pitch in!

With Mark, Sharon, and Trevor all living their faith to its fullest, a generations-long tradition of stewardship has continued. And after 40 years of marriage with the sacraments at the heart of their relationship, Mark and Sharon couldn’t imagine life any other way.

“Church life was at the core of our lives growing up, and we wanted it to be at the center of our son’s life, also,” Sharon says. “When you’re grounded in your faith, you’re able to face obstacles in life with the filter of knowing Christ and knowing that there is something bigger than yourself — helping others is a part of that. I think it helps you look beyond yourself to others. It’s our way to promote our community and make it stronger by being an active part of it.”

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“TRANSFORMED BY THE SACRED LITURGY” THE CELEBRATION OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

In a limited way, the liturgy can be compared to a story or a film – upon a first reading or viewing, we might understand the basic outline of the narrative, yet through every subsequent encounter, the story further unfolds before us, becoming richer and more complex.

Often, inquisitive children teach us about how to understand a story or the Mass. As a child inquires about the priest’s green vestments, the foregrounded wreath or the presence of palm branches, we might pause to recall the symbolism undergirding the rich rituals of the liturgy.

There is a sense of the sacred in the liturgy, but its rituals and ceremonies can appear as empty pantomimes when divorced from their meaning. Far from empty signs, the liturgy is the celebration of the Paschal mystery, of Christ’s passion, death, resurrection and glorification by which He “accomplished the work of our salvation” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1067).

From the Greek *leitourgia*, meaning public service or worship, liturgy in the Christian tradition refers to the communal participation of the people in the work of God, and God is always present and at work in the liturgy, acting in and with the Church through the sacraments.

Annually, the Church’s liturgical year is structured around the Paschal mystery, which we observe every Sunday. We begin each year with a season of anticipating Christ’s birth, and following a celebration of Christ’s Incarnation, we gradually enter a period of preparation for the Easter Triduum, for His passion, death and Resurrection. The year closes with a period of ordinary time – a time to grow in our faith and in living out the Gospel.

Daily, the Liturgy of the Hours unifies the Church Militant in prayers said by the clergy and increasingly by the laity. As the liturgical calendar structures our year, the Liturgy of the Hours structures our day, offering us an opportunity to consecrate each present moment to Christ.

Ultimately, the liturgical life of the Church “revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments” (CCC 1113), for we receive God’s grace to fortify us in our spiritual lives and as His disciples through the sacraments, particularly the Holy Mass.

The Mass nurtures us spiritually, inviting us to reflect on the Paschal mystery and to lift our hearts to God as individuals and a community through spoken and sung prayer.

The Mass moves us corporeally, drawing us to sit as we listen to the Word, to stand as we unanimously profess our faith, and to kneel as the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Mass inspires us apostolically, sending us out to proclaim the Gospel and to share Christ with our brothers and sisters.

Though the “source and center” of all prayer, the liturgy and a sense of the sacred has, in some ways, become marginalized in the American Church. Once robust parishes are seeking to rebuild, but they frequently overlook the connection between the empty pews and the decentralization of the liturgy, which was underscored by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

“I am convinced that the crisis in the Church that we are experiencing today is, to a large extent, due to the disintegration of the liturgy,” Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote in his autobiography *Milestones*.

Something in the simplicity of the child’s experience of the liturgy teaches us to return to what we might call the basics of the faith – meaning a love for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the sacraments and the rituals of the Church. Only through the liturgy are we nurtured on our stewardship journey and inspired to proclaim the Gospel.

As Archbishop Alexander Sample from the Diocese of Portland, Ore., writes, “If we are transformed by the sacred liturgy, then we, as believers, can help transform the culture.”

BOY SCOUTS OFFERS VALUABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACHIEVEMENT AND GROWTH

When youngsters join the Boy Scouts, they have the opportunity to learn a variety of skills and reach a number of worthy achievements. What they might not realize at the time, however, is that all their hard work and training will help them become independent, resourceful adults with a strong faith foundation.

St. John Before the Latin Gate Parish is the charter organization for Troop 5 in the Cherokee Area Council. The 18-member troop meets at 7 p.m. on Mondays in Fr. Lynch Hall under the leadership of Jason Finley, Scoutmaster, and Robert Fries, Assistant Scoutmaster.

Although the summer months most likely feel like they are eons away, the troop members are working this winter to raise money to attend the High Adventure Campout at the Summit Bechtel Reserve in Glen Jean, W.Va, where their camping and outdoor skills will be put to good use.

Jason knows what the Scouts will experience, having been in Scouting since he was a Tiger in Cub Scouts, and he knows that the impact of their experiences perhaps won’t fully register until the trip is over.

“Scouting is one of those things that they might understand the small steps, but they don’t see the big picture until they’re at the end,” he says. “They may see it as fun, so they don’t understand how big of an impact what they are doing is until they look backwards.”

The achievement most Scouts aspire to is reaching the rank of Eagle Scout. The journey will require earning a number of merit badges that call on learning a wide variety of skills. The Eagle candidates also must choose a project that will require planning for everything — from concept to acquiring materials, to the physical work. There are six members of Troop 5 currently working toward their Eagle rank.



A youngster can join the Boy Scouts at the age of 11, or in fifth grade. If the child is already in Cub Scouts, he or she can achieve the rank of Arrow of Light that will qualify that child to join Boy Scouts in the Bridge Over ceremony.

Jeremy Praetorius, Scoutmaster of St. John School Cub Pack 5, works to integrate the Cub Pack 5 activities with the Troop 5 activities, giving the younger Cubs an opportunity to observe what the older Scouts do. “A lot of Boy Scouts will help the Cubs,” Jason says.

Jason and his older brother served as examples to each other in Scouting as they were involved at the same time.

“It was something I always liked,” Jason says. “I wasn’t following in his footsteps, because it was what I intended to do on my own anyway.”

As a Boy Scout, a youngster will learn self-preservation skills as well as being independent. Honor will play a large role in the experience, as will the opportunity to acquire knowledge and learn new skills — not because it is required, but because the Scout wants to have them.

“Things are laid out differently than in school, and the boys really love it,” Jason says.

Any youngster interested in Boy Scouts is welcome to attend any troop meeting. “They are open to the public, as long as they are respectful,” says Jason Finley, Scoutmaster. For more information, please contact Jason at 785-626-4357.

St. John

BEFORE THE LATIN GATE



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Rectory Cleaners continued from front cover

the Latin Gate. Regina volunteered, then Holly, and Debbie started shortly after.

“They are very appreciative that we do this and it saves the parish money,” Regina says.

During the summer when seminarians stay at the rectory, the ladies clean their quarters, as well.

“Teamwork really gets the job done,” Regina says.

The women enjoy this ministry because it also gives them time to talk. In fact, Regina admits they might get the cleaning done a bit faster if they didn’t visit with each other! Each lady has her own area to clean.

In addition, Holly’s husband, David, usually helps before Christmas, as the group does all the holiday decorating at the rectory.

The current cleaners are looking for more volunteers, even if someone could just fill in one Tuesday a month. Regina emphasizes it is a rewarding ministry because you can always see the fruits of your labor.

“Everyone says God gives everyone talents,” Regina says. “I don’t sing. I don’t have any great talent in that area. This is something I can do. It gives our priests one less thing to worry about.”

If you would like to help clean the rectory or want more information, please contact Regina Kennedy at 918-397-5544 or regkenn8786@outlook.com.

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Saturday: 5 p.m. | **Sunday:** 8 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. (en Español)

Tuesday: 7 a.m. (chapel) | **Wednesday:** 5:15 p.m. (church) | **Thursday:** 7 a.m. (chapel), 7 p.m. (en Español)

Friday: 8:15 a.m. (church during school year/non-school days in chapel)

Reconciliation: Saturday: 4-4:45 p.m. | Sunday: 12:30-1:15 p.m.