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Saint Paul

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Conflict Resolution Provides Opportunity to Grow and Glorify God

Bill and Peg White have been teaching the concepts of conflict resolution since 2008, after three years of training with Peacemaker Ministries.

“Conflict resolution is the vehicle for people to resolve their conflicts in a Biblical manner,” Bill says. “The program we teach takes the Biblical approaches and concepts that we have seen many times and gives us a way to apply them practically.”

Bill and Peg’s goal is to teach people the right ways to approach conflict in order to repair relationships.

“When a conflict occurs, there is always a relationship there that is broken,” Bill says. “We want to get the underlying personal issues reconciled so that the subsequent issues can be reconciled, as well.”

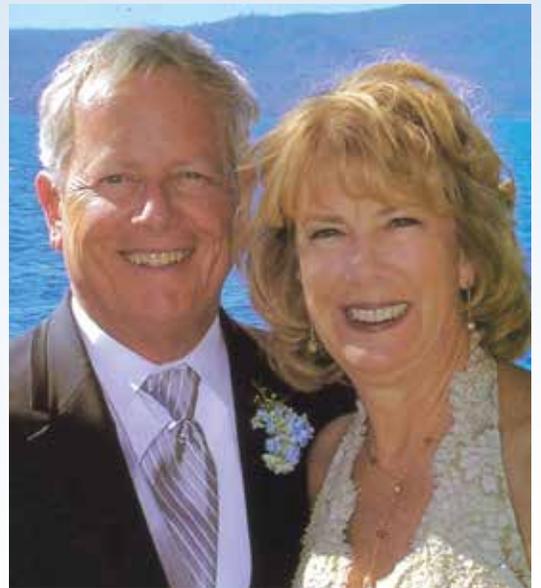
People often believe that asking and giving forgiveness is all that is required of them, but then they cut the other person out of their lives completely. God wants us not only to forgive, but also to repair the relationship that has been broken by conflict.

“With God’s grace and the proper help, we can forgive, clear the air and restore the relationship, and that is always God’s will,” Peg says. “Matthew 5:23 tells us to leave our gift at the altar and go and be reconciled.”

Conflict is often unavoidable, even within the closest relationships. So Bill and Peg want to teach people useful tools that will help them not only to forgive, but to build stronger relationships in the process.

“People believe the myth that conflict is something to be avoided, or even feared or ignored,” Peg says. “Conflict is inevitable because it stems from differing goals and desires we have as unique individuals. Handling it well, according to Christian principles, brings us together rather than dividing us and gives a demonstration of our faith at work in our lives. If handled correctly, conflict can be an opportunity to grow and glorify God.”

St. Paul Parish is in the process of putting into place “A Culture of Peace,” which will include workshops and small group studies on “Resolving Everyday Conflict.”



Bill and Peg White

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Hospitality Extends to Our Family at Home and in Our Parish

As Catholics, we are members of two very important family units. First, there are our own families, which consist of our spouses and children. And as a parish community, we are members of a larger “family of faith,” along with our clergy and fellow parishioners. Of course, both types of units share in the Catholic faith, as we gather to celebrate Mass each Sunday.

Yet, all does not appear to be well. The modern media unfortunately seems to place a heavy emphasis on the destruction of both types of family units. Indeed, every day, we are bombarded with disconcerting stories about the various issues that threaten the vital bonds of the family — divorce, abuse, gay marriage and abortion, just to name a few. At the same time, the “families of faith” in our own parishes have also been threatened by a number of issues, from scandals and mismanagement of resources, to drops in Mass attendance and school enrollment.

All of these threats and issues most certainly promote a hostile environment for today’s American Catholics. In turn, we may feel that there is little we can do to counter the negativity that is so pervasive within our country towards those practicing the Catholic faith.

The good news is that finding the solution to such seemingly insurmountable problems often begins in the most simple and basic of places — at home. In this particular case, it begins in two homes — that of our own family, and in the parish home of our “family of faith.”

Certainly, we would like visitors in our own homes to feel welcome, whether they are extended family, familiar friends, or new acquaintances. Therefore, we do whatever we can to make these visitors feel appreciated — we might prepare them a homemade meal or serve a fresh cup of coffee, or we may initiate a friendly and insightful conversation.



Of course, this effort to make visitors to our home feel welcome is a wonderful example of providing hospitality, one of the four key pillars of stewardship.

So, if we consider our other family unit — the “family of faith” in our own parish — the same can be applied to those entering our church for worship and fellowship. Whether we make an effort to get to know some of the familiar faces we see at church each Sunday, reach out to someone who is new to the community, or extend a warm welcome to those visiting our parish, we are following Jesus’ example of hospitality at its most foundational and engaging level.

Of course, while hospitality serves to enhance worship and fellowship for the entire parish family, it also impacts our community on a day-to-day basis — if we foster a welcoming environment in our parish home and present the many opportunities to minister and serve, involvement will only increase throughout the community! And if hospitality continues to flourish throughout the parish and its many ministries, so will the stewardship way of life!

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A Letter From Our Pastor

Don't Wait, Stewardship Starts Now

Dear Parishioners,

We begin this month of February with the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on Sunday, February 2. Until about 40 years ago, this feast was considered the “official” end of the Christmas season that is now, of course, the Baptism of the Lord, which we celebrated on January 12 this year. Our Catholic Church is rich in traditions, and we need to always remember these, as well as make them a part of our daily lives. Part of our stewardship as good Catholics is having an understanding of our Church and its customs.

This Feast of the Presentation, which commemorates the presentation of Jesus in the temple by St. Mary and St. Joseph as reported in the Gospel of Luke (*Luke 2:22-40*), occurs 40 days after the birth of Jesus. If 40 days sounds familiar, it should. Without even mentioning all the times “40” appears in the Bible, we know that it rained for 40 days during the Great Flood (Genesis); Moses spent 40 days on Mt. Sinai (Exodus); Jesus spent 40 days in the desert (Matthew); and there were 40 days between the Resurrection of the Lord and His Ascension (Acts). Of course, we all know that Lent is 40 days in length.

Lent this year does not begin until March. Yet, during this month of Feb-

ruary, we have an opportunity to leap ahead, to solidify our faith, and to especially live out our lives of stewardship. Scholars tend to view 40 days as a test period, based upon the ways it occurs



in Holy Scripture. The truth is that our stewardship is tested constantly — not just for a short period of time, say 40 days, but for our entire lives.

The readings for the second weekend in February speak of us as Catholics and Christians providing “light.” The Book of Isaiah reminds us that “light shall arise for you from the darkness,” and the Gospel from Matthew prompts us that “You are the light of the world,” and then expands that to speak of that lamp we are called to be: “Nor do they light a lamp and then place it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lamp stand, where it provides light to all in the house.” This is Jesus who is speaking

to us, and He more or less brings it all together by pointing out, “...your light must shine before others.”

Blessed Mother Teresa once wrote, “There is a light in this world, a healing spirit more powerful than any darkness we may encounter. We sometimes lose sight of this force when there is suffering, too much pain. Then suddenly, the spirit will emerge through the lives of ordinary people who hear a call and answer in extraordinary ways.” Jesus has called us, both me and you. He has called us to be disciples, to be good stewards of all we have been given.

We are ordinary people, but we have the ability to do extraordinary things.

I challenge you to respond to that call, to be a light to those around us, to live out our Baptismal call, and to be good stewards — not 40 days from now, but right now. If it seems that this call is the same as last month, and the same as next month, you are absolutely correct. It is never too late to begin living lives of stewardship, and for that matter, it is never too early either.

Rev. Doug Halsema
Fr. Doug Halsema
Pastor

A Look Back at Advent and Christmas Events

Our parish community was active throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons. From the Angel Tree service project, to activities for children and parishioners of all ages, there was certainly a lot taking place here at St. Paul this past December!



Celebrating the Miracle of St. Blaise

Feast Day, Feb. 3

Every year on Feb. 3, we celebrate the Feast day of St. Blaise, bishop and martyr. In remembrance of this great saint, priests at most parishes around the world bless the throats of the faithful at Masses on this feast day.

Year after year, many of us step into line to receive the blessing — yet how many of us know the reason why St. Blaise is associated with the blessing of throats? What are the origins of this yearly ritual?

Though we do not know much about the life of St. Blaise, tradition tells us that he was born to wealthy, saintly Catholic parents. Born in Armenia, he devoted his life to medicine and helping the sick. He was a physician, until he was begged by the people to become their bishop. He was appointed by the Church as bishop of the Diocese of Sebaste.

Around the year 313, when the Roman Emperor Licinius was persecuting the Church, Blaise lived as a hermit in the woods among animals that he befriended. One day, a group of hunters found Blaise and seized him. Upon their trip to the governor, they encountered a woman whose pig was being attacked by a wolf. Blaise commanded the wolf to leave the pig alone and, upon his command, the pig was freed unharmed. Blaise was then taken to prison, where he miraculously healed a boy who was choking to death on a fishbone. While Blaise remained in prison, the woman whose pig he had freed brought him two candles to serve as his light so that he could read the Scripture.

It was from the miracle of saving the choking boy that the custom of praying to St. Blaise to cure all ailments of



the throat was born. And, so, after still refusing to recant his Christian beliefs, he was suspended from a tree and his flesh was torn with iron combs or rakes.

Blaise was then thrown into a lake to drown. To the surprise of his persecutors, he surfaced and walked upon the water, and he invited his persecutors to join him. They should do this, he said, to show the power of their gods. The pagans took him up on his invitation, and ultimately they were drowned. Blaise was then told by an angel to return to dry land to receive martyrdom. He was beheaded on the shore and immediately went to heaven.

Because of his prison experience and his great reputation as a healer, St. Blaise's intercession is invoked for

the healing of diseases affecting the throat. The candles that the clergy place upon our throats while blessing them symbolize the candles that enlightened St. Blaise's cell as he studied Sacred Scripture — connecting his spiritual life to the physical healing. Let us remember to invoke the intercession of this great healer upon any ailments that might be affecting us, either physical or spiritual — especially those pertaining to the throat.

The blessing of the throats is done by the priest holding two blessed candles near the throat in the form of a cross. The priest says, "Through the merits and intercession of St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver thee from all diseases of the throat, and preserve thee from every other evil. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

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“Accommodation” is Byword for Natural Family Planning Classes

A common reaction Debra Kummer often hears after co-teaching the first class in the Couple to Couple League series on natural family planning is “Wow!”

“We also hear ‘This is great — this is amazing!’” Debra says. “And sometimes we get ‘Why didn’t someone tell us about this?’”

Debra and her husband, Mark, generally lead the CCL classes at Sacred Heart Hospital, but they also have held them at St. Paul. Both are trained volunteers for the CCL, an international Catholic nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and teaching fertility awareness, or natural family planning.

In early February, there will be a table set up in the church narthex with information on the CCL and the NFP Ministry at St. Paul.

“Anyone with questions is encouraged to stop at the table,” Debra says. “There will be classes starting within a week or two.”

The CCL classes each run about one month apart. Registration must be done online at ccli.org. The classes themselves are free, but there is a charge for the class materials.

If the situation requires it, Debra and her husband can teach a couple in the Kummer’s home. Online classes are also an option. This is particularly helpful in a military town such as Pensacola.

“No matter where the members of a couple are, they can take it at the same time and the same class,” Debra says.

While the site-based classes start in February, a couple can start at any time. The classes also are available in Spanish.

Debra says that often, they have instructed couples that have had fertility issues.

“They are glad to learn about fertility and they make changes in their life,” she says. “We have had people who gave up hormonal contraception and went natural. They are surprised to learn how effective it is.”

Once a couple has completed the class, they often become strong advocates for the program.

“A lot are very dedicated to NFP,” Debra says. “Hormonal



Martin and Emily Hanley have been teaching CCL classes for about six months, and their son, Nathaniel Francis, was born on Thanksgiving Day 2013.

contraceptives are carcinogens, and they don’t want to do that to their spouse or themselves, so they go natural. The Couple to Couple League talks about the theology of the body and respect. A lot of people haven’t heard about this. And for a couple, this is very meaningful.”

Martin and Emily Hanley of St. Paul Parish also conduct CCL classes.

In addition to the CCL classes, there also are Transitions classes for couples in the postpartum stage after the birth of a baby, and for those in the premenopausal years. Jenny Craft of Gulf Breeze also offers classes in the Creighton Model of family planning.

“We are also available for consultation after a couple completes the classes,” Debra says. “For a period of time after the classes, a couple also has access to an interactive smartphone app for charting their fertility. They also receive a one-year membership in the Family Foundations magazine.”

Mary and Scott Thomas, leaders in the NFP Ministry at St. Paul, said the NFP ministry will be expanding in the parish. They share information about NFP instructions when they conduct the Pre-Cana classes through the diocese.

“Our goal is to reach out to anyone who’s concerned,” Mary says. “We are trying to make them aware of the availability of it. These are good health practices in knowing how the body works. By monitoring the cycles, they can get in touch with what is going on.”

For information about the Couple to Couple League, please go online at ccli.org. To contact Mary Thomas about the NFP Ministry, please call at 850-433-2715.

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— Debra Kummer, CCL class leader

Knowing Christ More Deeply: *Adult Faith Formation*

We learn new things every day — from the newspaper, from a magazine, from our cell phones, or from our friends and family. But when was the last time you learned something new about your Catholic faith?

St. Paul will soon be offering new opportunities for adult parishioners to grow closer to Christ through further education and formation in the Christian life. Each of these opportunities are a call to you as an adult — a call to grow deeper in your faith, and to continue the formation that most of us received as children and teenagers. The ultimate goal is to become a strong disciple of Christ.

“Adult faith formation,” as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops writes, involves “consciously growing in the life of Christ through experience, reflection, prayer, and study.”

That means that learning new things about Christ — and in particular, about our encounters with Him through the sacraments and the Scriptures — helps us to know Him and live with Him more deeply.

Why should adults engage in faith formation? For many of us, “faith formation” sounds like something that is just for children. “I finished all that when I was a teenager,” you might think. But faith formation isn’t primarily about learning new things — it’s about growing in friendship with Christ.

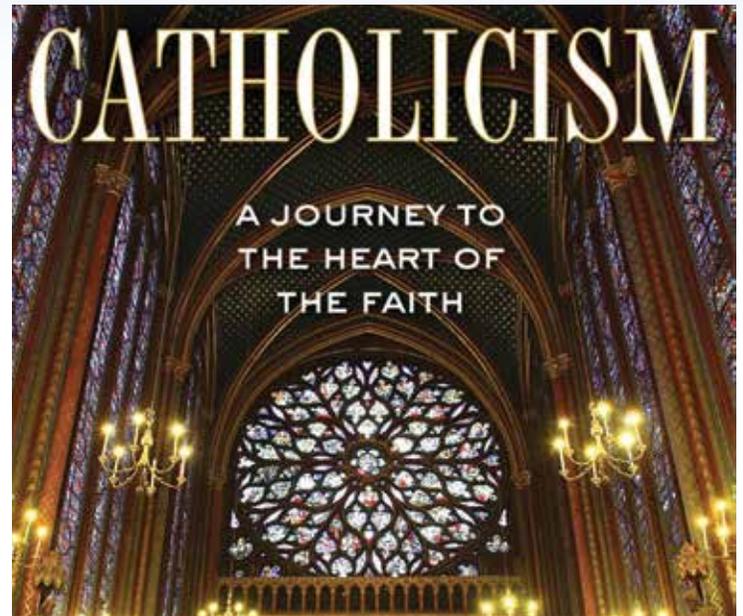
Just because you’re an adult, that doesn’t mean that your friendships stop growing. And any good friendship will involve learning and knowing the other person more deeply, in new and more interesting ways. In the same way, knowing Christ more deeply is what adult faith formation is all about.

But adult formation brings parishioners together in closer relationships, as well.

“People love growing in knowledge, in sharing their faith with others, in searching for how to best live their Catholic faith, and in being in a community of Catholics,” says Sr. Margaret Kuntz, the director of Adult Faith Formation at St. Paul. “Those who keep coming back do so because of the growth in faith that they experience, because they want to continue to grow as Catholics.”

In recent years, parishioners at St. Paul have engaged in Scripture study groups, study of the Creed, a group viewing of Fr. Robert Barron’s *Catholicism* video series, and sessions on the “Seven Deadly Sins and Seven Lively Virtues” and the new Roman Missal.

If you’re excited about opportunities with Adult Faith Formation, please consider joining the planning team. More members are welcome to help be part of the team, to give



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*— Sr. Margaret Kuntz,
director of Adult Faith Formation*

ideas, to open the doors and set up, and to facilitate. To be a part of the team, or to learn more about Adult Faith Formation at St. Paul, please contact Sr. Margaret Kuntz at 850-435-3523 or kuntzm@ptdiocese.org.

Finally, keep your eye on the bulletin for more details about upcoming faith formation opportunities!

Address Service Requested

Conflict Resolution continued from front cover

“The paradigm would be to have everyone in the parish exposed to some basic principles and ideas of conflict resolution,” Bill says. “Then we would have people trained so that they can help coach others who may be having issues.”

Bill and Peg want to encourage parishioners to be open to learning these concepts, and not to be afraid of opening up.

“It’s often hard to get people to come to the table,” Peg says. “They are afraid of speaking out what’s really in their mind and heart, so we do a lot of encouraging and coaching and preliminary work, and it almost always comes out beautifully.”

The workshops will be open to anyone who wants to attend. They are especially helpful for families and marriages, but the concepts work for any type of problem. People do not have to wait until there is a full-blown problem to get some help.

“Everyone can learn from this,” Peg says. “We aren’t perfect people. Even the best at conflict resolution can improve their lives and their relationships through learning.”

If you are interested in attending a workshop or would like more information, please contact the parish office at 850-434-2551. For more information on Peacemaker Ministries, visit www.peacemaker.net.

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Liturgy Schedule

Saturday Vigil: 4:30 p.m. | **Sunday:** 7:00, 9:00, 11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m. | **Daily Mass:** Monday-Saturday, 8:30 a.m.

Confessions: Saturdays, 9:00 a.m., 3:30 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.,
most Sundays during 9:00, 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Mass, 1st Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m., and by appointment

Eucharistic Adoration: Thursday 9:00 a.m. until Friday 7:30 a.m.