

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY

COLUMBUS, GA

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"This Is a Way We Can Respond to Christ's Calling to Discipleship" *Our Holy Family Bereavement Committee*

As we prepare for the Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis, it is fitting that we take a look at one of the many ways our Holy Family parish formally shows mercy and offers comfort to those who mourn. One of our giving ministries is our Bereavement Committee, coordinated by Belinda Johnson.

"When a family loses someone, it is difficult enough," Belinda says. "Our Bereavement ministry tries to provide comfort by removing one element of worry and concern."

The committee's process begins when the bereaved make contact with Holy Family following the death of a family member – Fr. O'Connell is the first to respond

"He provides solace and visits them right away," Belinda says. "As part of what he explains we do, he includes the possibility of the family receiving a meal, either after the funeral or after prayer the night of the



wake. This is something we are willing to do in the home. If it is a large group, we may provide it in the parish hall – but in most cases, it is in the home. If they do want us to provide that service, I then contact the family and work out the details."

As Belinda notes, a caterer from the parish provides the meal.

"The parish, recognizing the importance of this effort and the need for it, funds the ministry annually with a Bereavement

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Stewardship of Treasure Giving to God First

Have you ever wondered why no one really becomes uneasy when someone brings up the first two “Ts” of stewardship – giving of your time or talents – but when the third “T” comes up, many of us become uncomfortable?

That third “T” is treasure, and some people simply become so annoyed by the subject, they tune out the words from the pulpit.

Why is there seemingly such an adverse reaction?

Our finances are such a personal subject. Discussing money issues with others is not easy, and having someone tell us what to do with our finances is even worse. We earn the money, after all. So shouldn't we decide what to do with it?

Of course, the answer is “yes” – we decide every day how to spend our hard-earned dollars. Indeed, the monetary choices we make will either keep our finances in check, or put us into the red. The average American family has about \$7,000 in credit card debt – so finances certainly represent a challenge to our current society. Tight budgets, trying to “keep up with the Joneses” or poor financial management may be to blame for our tight resources. Does this mean we do not have anything left over for God?

Stewardship, at its roots, teaches that we are not supposed to give God our “leftovers.” We should instead strive to return to God a portion of our “first fruits” – giving to God first and then using the rest for our other needs. God gave us our talents that help us earn a living, after all. He should come first.

This idea can be worrisome for many. If our finances are already strained, how will we ever find enough to give back to God? Or, if we do try to give God our “first fruits,” will there be enough left over to cover our required expenses?

Taking the correct financial steps toward good stewardship simply boils down to trust – believing that God, who takes care of all of His creation, will take care of us. Trust that in giving to God first, we are both acknowledging that our multitude of blessings come from Him, and that we are thankful He chose to give them to us. And finally, trust that if we give to Him first, that all else will fall into place – because He is in ultimate control.



October: Helping to Feed Spiritual Hunger

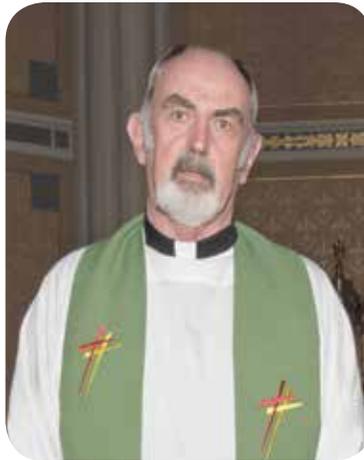
Dear Parishioners,

Have you ever been hungry – really hungry? When asked that question, most of us probably think of a time when we had pangs of hunger because we were fasting, we were on a diet to lose weight, we had saved up for a big dinner, or we just decided not to indulge what we wanted. However, there are people right here in our own community who go to bed at night with *real* hunger. And that hunger is not without real pain.

If we expand that to our diocese, our country, and the world, untold numbers of people go to bed hungry every night. Yet, while Jesus instructed us to “feed the hungry,” He did not want us to stop at satiating simply physical hunger.

All around us, there is spiritual hunger. We all know people who have plenty to fill their stomachs, but are not really sure exactly what they want in life, living unsatisfied. Some of these people are our siblings, our children, our parents, or even our spouses.

Although so many are spiritually hungry, it may not be as apparent to us as physical hunger, because the spirit is within us and we are weakened more slowly. Life goes on when we are spiritually hungry – but truly addressing that need is just as important for us as a Church as physically feeding the hungry. Spiritual malnourishment can be just as devastating as physical famine.



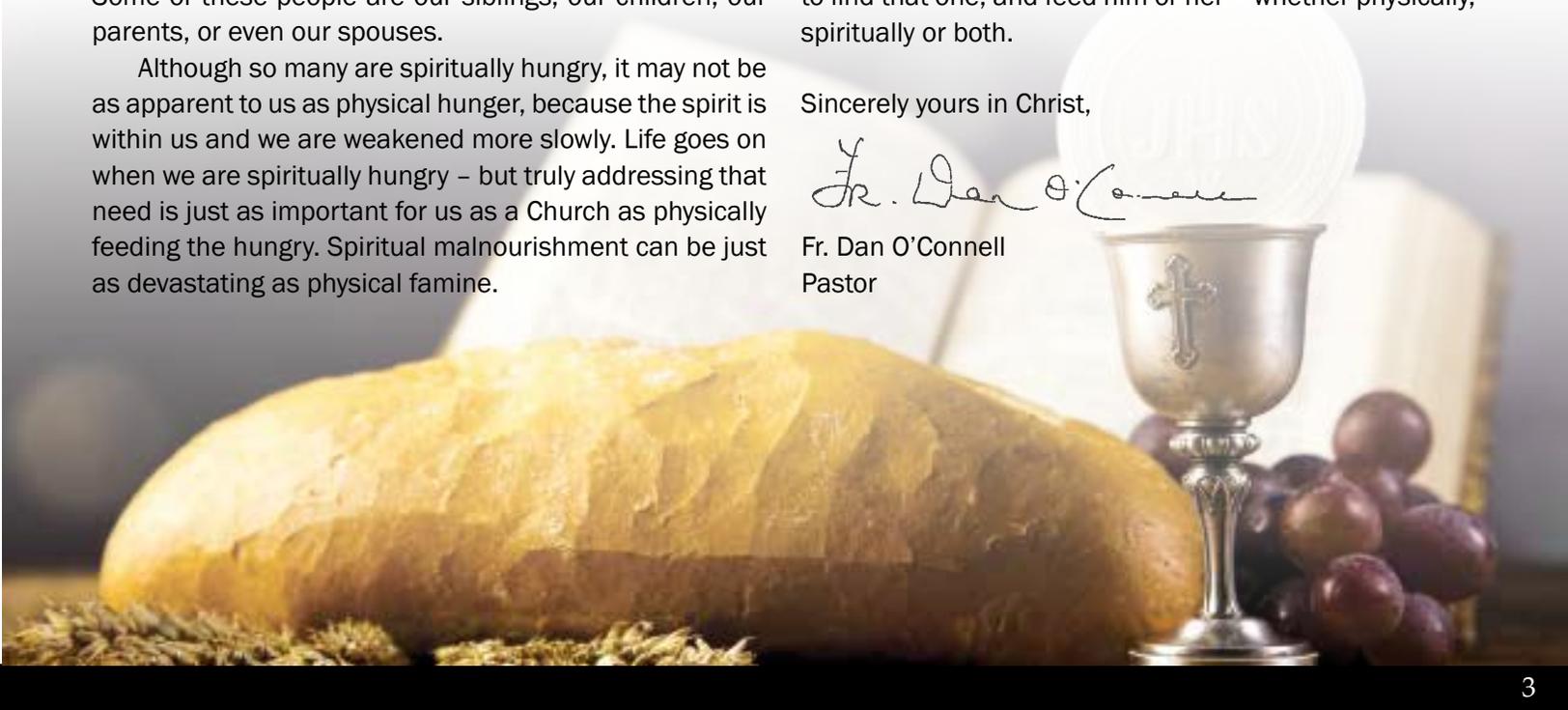
While we are aware of the reality that we, as a faith community, cannot completely eradicate physical hunger, we must do what we can to feed those around us. Both physically and spiritually, we have opportunities every day to reach out to those in need. Sometimes, it may be as simple as praying for someone. Or it may mean giving of our time, talent or treasure to those who are less fortunate than ourselves. Yet, we always have an opportunity to share the greatest gift with others that alone can satiate the human heart – the love of Christ. There

is no time better than today to begin. Will you reach out in love to those in need by sharing the love Christ has poured into you?

Blessed Mother Teresa advised us, “If you can’t feed a hundred people, then feed just one.” Let each of us vow to find that one, and feed him or her – whether physically, spiritually or both.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Dan O’Connell
Pastor





A Conversation With Pa

At 88 years of age, parishioner Gertie Bundt believes in living life to the fullest – and it has been a full life. She lived through the ravages of war, started a new life far away from home, and always found purpose and meaning in making faith an integral part of her life. For Gertie, faith means living life, and living life means having faith. And although today things have slowed down a bit, Gertie still believes in embracing life – the good, the bad, and everything in between.

Gertie, where are you from originally?

I grew up in Vienna, Austria with my mother, father, and younger brother. Vienna is the city of my dreams – it is the home of the beautiful waltz and of Johann Strauss.

Who taught your first lessons on faith?

Everything I learned about faith I learned at my mother's knee. I didn't go to Catholic school, but I received my catechism from the nuns and priests – I was surrounded by nuns and priests! For me, faith didn't come from books and from studying, but from life itself. It comes from the heart. In my country, faith is ingrained into everyday activities. We were taught to pray spontaneously, and it was a tradition for us to begin everything with "In God's name ..."



At 88 years of age, parishioner Gertie Bundt still likes to keep busy and believes in living life to the fullest.

and then finish with whatever we were about to do – "In God's name, I rise, go to bed, walk to school, start a new job." Prayer was talking to God because He is the one who gives us life. So really, faith and prayer were not separate things from life, but part of everything we did.

Do you still have the tradition of beginning a task with "In God's name"?

Yes, except now when I wake up in the morning instead of saying, "In God's name, I rise," it's more like, "In God's name, help me to rise!"

You were a teenager during World War II. What was that like?

I was deferred from serving, but because the farmers were drafted, I had to go help in the fields. One time, after a bombing in the city, I went out after the "all clear" sounded and was the first to arrive and help evacuate school children from a basement window where they had taken shelter. It's not something I consider heroic – many people did good things because the Holy Spirit guided us and so we did what we had to do. The bombing, though, was terrible and even today the sound of an air siren curdles my blood. But through it all, we had our faith – it was always with us.

How did you come to America? Were you ever homesick?

After the war, I was working in the commissary when I met my first husband, Edward B. Lawrence. We married and continued to live in Austria until our son was born. When I was 21 years old, we came to America by way of New York. I left everything when I came here – my mother, my father, my brother, my city, my country. But I accepted that this was now my new life. At the risk of sounding poetic, I knew that I was no longer Gertie Garnhaft, but Mrs. Lawrence.

Parishioner Gertie Bundt

You are admittedly a person who likes to stay busy, how have you been involved through the years both in the parish and in the community?

I do like to stay busy. Growing up I was athletic – I participated in track, swimming, and gymnastics. Later, I was a water safety instructor and even worked at Ft. Benning for soldiers in the Rangers program. I was a catechist, a facilitator for the Renew Your Heart Program, a lector, a volunteer with Hospice, and a Eucharistic Minister to the homebound. I helped build houses for Habitat for Humanity – for a couple of the houses I nailed nails, carried sheet rock and poured concrete, while with the others I provided spiritual and moral support. I helped organize blood drives for the American Red Cross. All this has given me purpose.

How would you describe yourself?

Well, I am a jack-of-all-trades and a master of none. If something needs to be done, Gertie is there. I like to talk and I love human interaction. I have to keep busy. Even when I am sitting my hands are moving – crocheting, knitting, or sewing.

You have such a positive outlook on life, and yet you have known hard times – you lived through the war and you were widowed twice. How do you stay upbeat?

That's easy. Love life – and that's life with a capital "L." Quit worrying about life and live it. Dance and sing. Up until a couple of years ago, I had a 98-year-old dance partner. She had a walker, but we danced anyway. Stay busy. Get involved. And take comfort in your faith, because with it, life is everlasting. There is a miracle in birth and in death. Look at the metamorphosis of the butterfly or the transformation of a tadpole. Love life.

Tell us about Gertie today.

This morning, I put on a pot of soup so I can get my fluids and my veggies. I folded clothes – something which I should have done yesterday. I am blessed to have my son, two grandsons, and six great grandchildren. I once told someone that I could never be a saint, and when they asked why not, I told them it was because I haven't suffered. I am 88 years old and yes, I have known sorrow and I have shed tears, but I have loved every single moment of my life. I have no regrets and I would do it all over again exactly the same way. I thank God for it all.

“One time, after a bombing in the city, I went out after the “all clear” sounded and was the first to arrive and help evacuate school children from a basement window where they had taken shelter. It’s not something I consider heroic – many people did good things because the Holy Spirit guided us and so we did what we had to do.” – Gertie Bundt



“Pray for an Outpouring of the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit”

The Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops from Oct. 4 to Oct. 25, 2015

Daily, we experience the challenges that buffet the family in the contemporary world. Their presence trickles through our social media. We witness struggling families. Our own family might be embroiled in tensions as we endeavor to live a countercultural testimony.

In light of these challenges, our Holy Father Pope Francis called for two consecutive gatherings of the Synod of Bishops on the themes of the family and evangelization. It is a historic moment for our Church – for the first time the Synod will have two related assemblies on related topics.

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Synod of Bishops is “a permanent institution of the Catholic Church.” Following the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI established the Synod “to continue the spirit of collegiality and communion that was present at the Council.” Consisting of bishops from around the world, the Synod meets when requested by the Holy Father to offer counsel on questions facing the Church.

The Synod convenes in General Assemblies, which concern matters for the universal Church, and Special Assemblies, which concern matters for a select region of the Church, such as the Church in Europe or in the Middle East.

General Assemblies may be extraordinary or ordinary in nature. Last October an Extraordinary General Assembly, meaning on topics “which require a speedy solution,” transpired, and the related second assembly taking place this October will be an Ordinary

General Assembly, meaning on topics “for the good of the universal Church” (2014-2015 Synods of Bishops on the Family, uscbb.org).

The XIV Ordinary General Assembly will continue to address concerns regarding the family as the prior Extraordinary Assembly did. Its theme will specifically be “the vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world.”

Unsurprisingly, both religious and secular media sources are expected to provide thorough coverage of the assembly, which will take place from Oct. 4 to Oct. 25.

And with the recent legalization of same-sex unions in our country, as well as the recent atrocities caught on video that Planned Parenthood has executed, the synodal topics will most likely result in significant coverage by all the media. Thus, as the dizzying flurry of media coverage initiates, we must take care to weigh our sources carefully.

Particularly throughout the month of October, let us remember as individuals and families to pray together for Church, to be discerning in our sources and to try and imitate our Holy Father by looking at each other through eyes of mercy and love.

Pope Francis provided this prayer for the Synod of Bishops on the Family in his Angelus address on the Feast of the Holy Family on Dec. 29, 2013:

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in you we contemplate the splendor of true love, to you we turn with trust. Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic Churches. Holy Family of Nazareth, may families never again experience violence, rejection and division: may all who have been hurt or scandalized find ready comfort and healing. Holy Family of Nazareth, may the approaching Synod of Bishops make us once more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer.

For more information and news regarding the Synod of Bishops, visit the Catholic News Service at catholicnews.com and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website at uscbb.org.

“The Church is the House of God and He Deserves to be Treated Well”

The Altar Society

Sometimes when we perform an act of service, we find ourselves receiving, as well.

“When I first came here, it was a few months after my husband died,” says Maria Laroque. “I felt very depressed and lonely. It gave me solace to be in church and get involved. It made everything better.”

Maria, along with a handful of other parishioners, form the Altar Society, a group that maintains the appearance of the altar and cares for the church’s linens. Tasks that they perform each week include laundering the altar cloths and linens, changing out the candles, replacing the holy water, and polishing the brass found on the altar.

“We make sure that all the right colors are on there,” Maria says. “Especially during Holy Week, there’s a lot to do, so we help decorate the church and see that the linens are all done.”

Altar Society members work on a rotating basis, each of them taking a month to visit the church and prepare the altar before weekend Masses. Maria says it can be a great ministry for those who like to visit the church in solitude because it’s something one person can do on their own.

“For one thing, to me it’s important because it looks nice and festive and you feel comfortable,” she says. “It’s important to me and it makes me feel that I have done something for the church and to please God. The church is the house of God and He deserves to be treated well.”

Maria, who is 85 and has served as Altar Society president for close to 20 years, says focusing on keeping the altar looking beautiful helped her to cope after her husband’s passing.

“I was so numb that I barely came to church, but the weekends were very lonely, so I came here and the people made me feel so good,” she says. “I felt like I’d come home



Members of the Altar Society gather with the altar cloths and candles they prepare for Mass each week. An important ministry to help keep the altar looking neat and ready to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, members take turns laundering and preparing the linens and other items used at each Mass.

and that was it. I have sometimes thought, as long as I can do it, I would like to do it. When I’m not able to, I’ll just go on the sidelines.”

Maria says making the House of God feel like home has become something she cares very deeply about, and that she pays close attention to even when she’s at Mass herself. She calls herself a “stickler” for making sure the altar cloth is straight and that the linens look perfect.

“I enjoyed it because it’s fulfilling,” she says. “It means that you can do something, especially on the holidays when you see how the church looks and how it’s decorated. It can be exhausting, but then you come to the Mass and you see the fruit of your labor and it’s nice.”

Parishioners who have an interest in lending their time to care for the look of the church are encouraged to join the Altar Society. Please call Maria Laroque at 706-321-0446 for more information.



THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY

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Weekend Mass

Saturday Vigil

5:00 p.m. Mass

Sunday

8:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m. (Spanish) Mass

Daily Mass

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

12:10 p.m. Mass

Reconciliation

Saturday

4:00 p.m.

Our Holy Family Bereavement Committee *continued from front cover*

Account,” she says. “We draw on this to fund what we do and provide. The willingness to commit those funds is another example of parish stewardship. However, often those who receive the benefit will quite often make a contribution to the parish in thanksgiving. Any gift like that is also placed in the Bereavement Account. You can really see stewardship at work – reaching out to those in need, a commitment from the parish community, and a grateful response from those who receive the gift.”

Through the years, the Bereavement Committee has evolved here at Holy Family – it is our parish family

reaching out to those in our faith family. And reaching out in service is a way of sharing the grief of those who have suffered the loss.

“I have been and am involved in many ministries here at Holy Family, but I may receive the greatest sense of fulfillment from the Bereavement ministry,” Belinda says. “To see the faces of those so saddened by the loss of a loved one, to see the mournful looks, and to be able to respond in love and mercy in this way does make me feel like I am living out Christ’s call to comfort others, ‘Whatever you did for one of the least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for Me.’”



*For more information on
our Bereavement Committee
at Holy Family, please
contact Belinda Johnson at
706-323-7865.*