

February 2017

Saint Raphael



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

“A Discernment of Spirit – How to Make God-Centered Decisions in Our Lives” Ignatian Spiritual Exercises Retreats at St. Raphael Parish

Beginning Thursday, Feb. 23, Dr. Andy Kereky, our Director of Spiritual Development, will lead a series of retreats on the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*. To accommodate people's schedules, there are two sessions offered each Thursday – one in the morning from 10-11:30 a.m. and one in the evening from 7:30-9 p.m.

St. Ignatius of Loyola was a Spanish priest and theologian who lived from 1491 until 1556. He is best known as the founder of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits. However, he was also a talented spiritual director. He recorded his recommended method for seeking a deeper spirituality in a celebrated treatise called simply *Spiritual Exercises*, a set of meditations, prayers, and other Scripture-based exercises which were first published in 1548.

The *Spiritual Exercises* were developed by St. Ignatius Loyola to help people deepen their relationship with God. For centuries, the *Exercises* were most commonly given as a “long retreat.” In recent years, there has been a renewed emphasis on the *Spiritual Exercises* as a retreat experience for lay people. Currently, the most common way of going through the *Exercises* is a “retreat in daily life,” which involves Scripture-based daily prayer and weekly meetings with a spiritual director. The *Exercises* have also been adapted in many other ways to meet the needs of modern people.



Dr. Andy Kereky, the Director of Spiritual Development here at St. Raphael, attended an Ignatian retreat some years ago. He found that his own prayer life and faith were so deeply affected by the experience that he has brought a similar experience to those who choose to pursue it here at St. Raphael. Following the first session on Thursday, Feb. 23, the retreat continues for eight more Thursday sessions, culminating on Thursday, May 4. Note that two weeks are off because of Easter – April 13 and 20.

“The Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* experience includes a discernment of spirit dimension – how to make God-centered decisions in our life,” Dr. Kereky

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“A Discernment of Spirit – How to Make God-Centered Decisions in Our Lives”

Ignatian Spiritual Exercises Retreats at St. Raphael Parish

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says. “Of course, perhaps the most important tool in developing a discerning spirit is our prayer lives. This retreat is not an end, but a beginning.”

He describes a typical week’s 90-minute session as follows.

“Of course, we open with prayer as that is at the heart of what we are experiencing and it is also how we all need to focus,” Dr. Kereky says. “That is followed by a sharing session, when those at the retreat share their own experiences from the previous week. We then have a new reflection, a new perspective of prayer and living as described by St. Ignatius in his writings. Then, we break into small groups to discuss, share and

consider what we have heard and what it means to each of us.”

Ignatian prayer is imaginative, reflective, and personal. St. Ignatius Loyola encouraged people to develop an intimate relationship with a God Who loves them and desires the best for them. Ignatius trusted human desires, and he believed that our deepest desire is to return God’s love. Ignatius also trusted feelings – he believed that feelings of joy and sorrow, peace and distress, were important indicators of the path toward fruitful decisions and deeper union with God. At the core of Ignatian spirituality is a prayer tool called the *Daily Examen*. This

invites us to prayerfully reflect back on our day and to “notice” the different ways God was present to us and how we did – or didn’t – respond to that presence.

“I know that people are sometimes hesitant to commit to things like this, or to feel that they are committed for several weeks,” Dr. Kereky says. “Of course, it is their choice, but I would recommend that they come and experience this and try it. If nothing else, they will pick up some valuable prayer tools. They are never obligated to continue if they choose not to do it. This is also a great way to enrich your Lenten and Easter journey.”



To register or get more information on the retreats, please contact Dr. Andy Kereky at 440-871-1100 or akereky@saintraphaelparish.com.

A Letter From Our Pastor

The Word of God: *How Do We Hear It? And How Do We Respond to It?*

My Dear Friends in Christ,

A few short weeks ago, we completed our Christmas season. We are now in what we call Ordinary Time – but before long, we will begin Lent. This is one of those rare years when Ash Wednesday is in March – so, Lent does not, of course, begin in February this year.

The Gospel of John begins with the statement, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” We speak often of the Word in the Church. As most of you are aware, the first part of our Mass is called the Liturgy of the Word. What does that mean to us?

Basically, there are four parts of our celebration of Mass: Introductory Rites; Liturgy of the Word; Liturgy of the Eucharist; and Concluding Rites. My focus in this reflection is that second part – the Liturgy of the Word. The main parts of that are a First Reading, a Responsorial Psalm, a Second Reading, the Gospel, and a Homily.

We draw on Holy Scripture from the Bible for the readings. As Catholics, we do not consider that these readings are about God, or about the Church, or about our faith, or a history lesson, or a nice story from long ago. We consider them to be God speaking directly to us. Thus, our attentiveness to what is being proclaimed is important. Are we listening? Do we hear? And then, do we respond in our lives? All of those should be



facets of how we approach the Word of God.

For us, the Word of God is the living Word. God is speaking to us as a community, and He asks us to be faithful to His Word. If we pay attention and truly listen, God can nourish our spirit, and Christ can be more real and present to us. The Homily, the Profession of Faith, and the Intercessions develop the Word further and complete it. The Profession of Faith is our acceptance of God’s Word.

However, the question for us is, how do we respond to the Word? Does it change our lives? Does it bring us to the conversion necessary to live lives of stewardship and service? It is

not easy, I know. Being able to listen, to hear and then to act requires time, practice, commitment, and a desire to fulfill all of this. That is one of my prayers for us – that we can hear the Word, and that we can bring it to life in our own lives and in the lives of others.

May God bless and keep you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Tim Gareau". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Fr. Tim Gareau,
Pastor

Pray 40

Our St. Raphael Mission

Our St. Raphael Parish Mission in 2017 will be conducted by Fr. Michael J. Denk, Parochial Vicar at St. Gabriel Catholic Community in Mentor. With the title of "Pray 40 Days," it will occur the evenings of Sunday, March 5; Monday, March 6; and Tuesday, March 7 from 7- 8 p.m.

Fr. Denk is excited about this year's Mission from a number of perspectives.

"As I considered how to approach this mission, I, of course, prayed about it, and in prayer I think I realized how very blessed I am as a priest to have a regular and active prayer life," he says. "I began to think how important prayer should be to all of us. Then I had an experience which brought this fact home to me."

Father relates this story, an occurrence that convinced him that the mission should focus on prayer.

"I found myself with three professional men, all very Catholic, and we were discussing our faith," he says. "As a priest and a great proponent of prayer, I asked them about their prayer lives. The first told me, 'I think I pray quite a bit, but it is really when time allows. I may pray, have a conversation with God, as I am driving to work, for example.' The second man said, 'There is a lot in my life I am thankful for. When I think of it, I say some prayers of gratitude to God because I am so grateful.' The third told me with a very self-satisfied demeanor, 'My prayer is very organized, Father. Each night before I go to bed I pray a Hail Mary, an Our Father, and the Glory Be. I have done that for years.'"

"As commendable as all of those prayers are, in some ways they fall short of what prayer can and should be – something which leads us to a deeper relationship with God," Father continues. "I asked the men if I could lead



"In prayer, I think I realized how very blessed I am as a priest to have a regular and active prayer life," Fr. Michael J. Denk says. "I began to think how important prayer should be to all of us."

them through a prayer exercise, which I did. It was, in effect, the Pray 40 Days effort I plan to present at the mission. At the end of the process, they were amazed at what happened to their spiritual lives, and especially to their prayer lives."

As Fr. Michael notes, the greatest disease we face in our society is a spiritual one.

"It is a poverty greater than any other, because it impacts the way we relate to God, Whose First and Greatest Commandment is, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength' (Matthew 12:30)," he says. "I am going to lay out a plan for people as Lent begins. Then, on the weekend before the mission begins, I will speak at all Masses to advance that. It will culminate with the three evening sessions on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday."

The mission process, Father says, consists of three steps.

"This is intended for everyone from grade school age up. I want people to come out of this experience on fire – I want God to become more real to them. I want them to receive all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I ask that people be open and to be aware of announcements and more relating to this mission." – Fr. Michael J. Denk

0 Days

on on March 5, 6 and 7

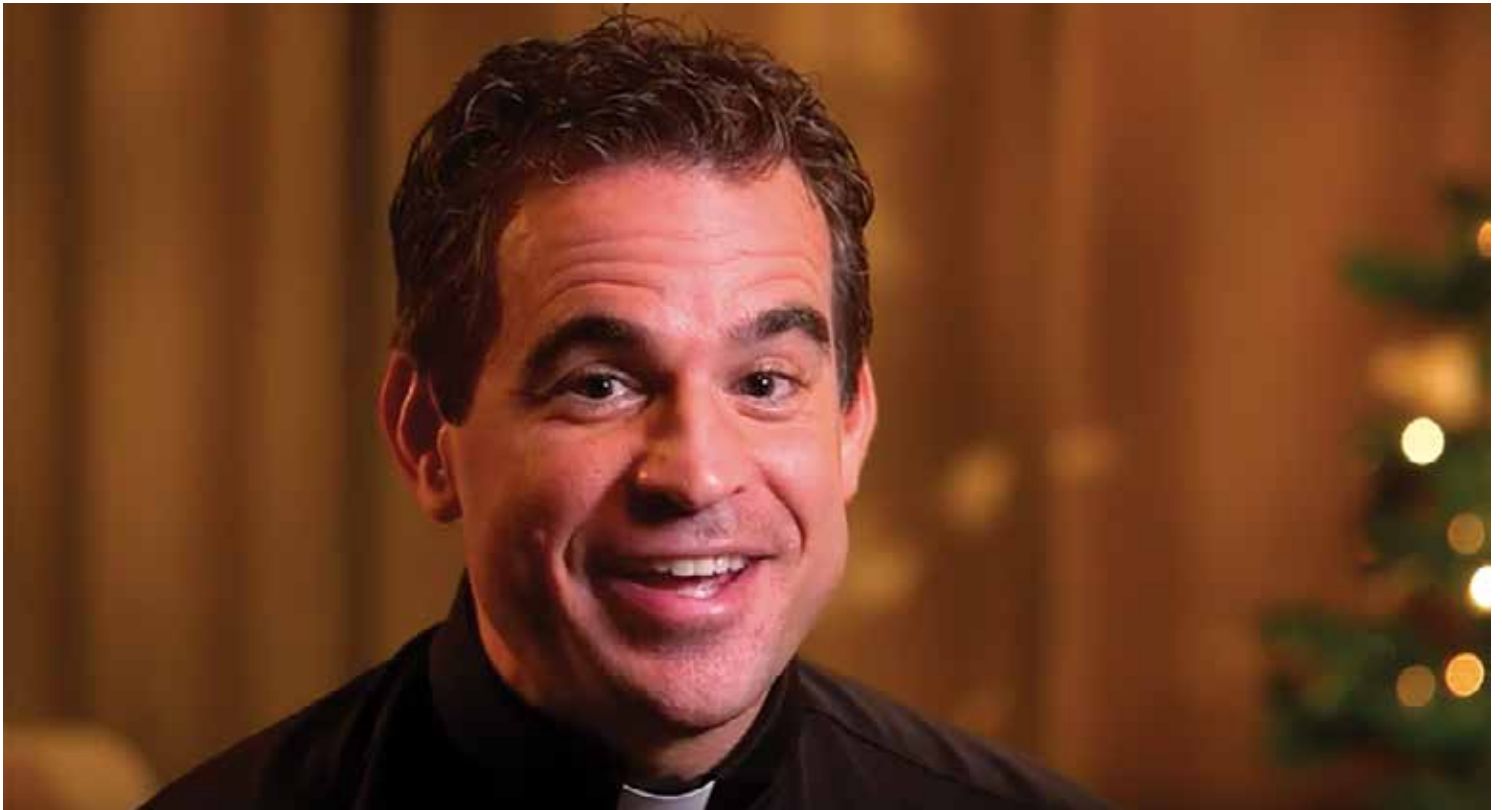
“On the first night, we are going to examine where our prayer lives are,” he says. “Most things you have learned about prayers are not wrong. However, do you grow through your prayer life? Our approaches and results from prayer should cause us to develop faith on new levels. We may be spiritually out of shape. We all share a hunger for God and we need to address that.”

The second night, according to Father, will address the need to develop a special place for prayer. It does need to be organized, but it also needs to have the proper atmosphere for it to be most effective. Finally, the third night will speak to how to make our prayer place sacred – the rituals we might establish to bring this to pass.

By the end of the mission, Fr. Michael feels each person should be prepared to have a deeper prayer relationship, a deeper personal relationship with the Lord.

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If you would like more information on the upcoming Parish Mission, please contact Deacon Mark Cunningham at 440-871-1100.



Fr. Michael J. Denk will be conducting the “Pray 40 Days” Parish Mission at St. Raphael.

Stewardship

Hannah, the Good Steward

What should we do when our prayers are answered?

Is there anything left to do after we have sincerely thanked God for His favors? If God were a human peer, we would probably try to reciprocate by granting Him a favor in return. But the truth is that God cannot be made greater by anything that we do for Him. Instead, God receives our thanks and tells us to “go and do likewise.” That is, He tells us to

share with others the good that He has bestowed on us. And in doing so, we are really sharing God Himself. That is the definition of stewardship!

The Old Testament Book of Samuel contains one of the most poignant examples of stewardship in the entire Bible. The first chapter teaches us of an unhappy, barren woman named Hannah. Desperate in her barrenness, Hannah prays that God will give her a son,

vowing that she will raise him to be a man of God.

Imagine Hannah’s elation when she was granted her prayer! When Samuel was born, her heart’s desire had come true! Imagine further the pang of motherly sorrow, as Hannah kept her promise to God by taking Samuel at a young age to be the servant of Eli, the high priest. The Book of Samuel tells us that once Samuel became Eli’s servant, Hannah saw her young son just once a year.

Indeed, Hannah knew that Samuel was truly a gift from God – an answered prayer. Hannah’s response is that of the Good Steward – with an attitude of both gratitude and sacrifice, she gave up her son to honor God. One imagines that Hannah probably struggled with this sacrifice during those first years. She probably did not know what God had in store for her son. Yet, through her faithfulness, God used him as a gift to an entire nation. Samuel would, in time, become one of the greatest prophets of Jewish history.

Sometimes it is difficult to understand the sacrifices we make in the name of stewardship, while the results may just be impossible to miss! However, He asks that we continue to be faithful in either case. God has undoubtedly bestowed gifts on all of us – at whatever the cost, we are to “go and do likewise.”



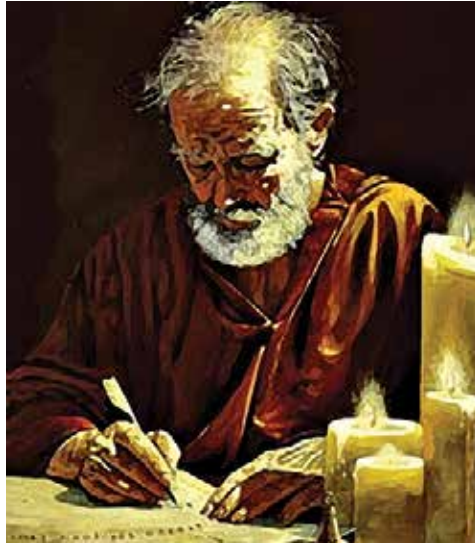
“The Opportunity to Allow the Holy Spirit to Nourish and Inspire Our Faith Lives”

Bible Study at St. Raphael — The Real Paul

Paul, called to be an apostle, to the church in Bay Village – grace and peace to you in Christ Jesus our Lord! We greet you warmly, and encourage you to respond enthusiastically to the great call that is yours through your Baptism, which we know you are already doing!

Just imagine if St. Paul wrote a letter to our faith community at St. Raphael. As our parish Bible Study *The Real Paul* continues to read St. Paul's letters, participants are coming to realize that he has written more than one to us. Although the Pauline epistles were written to specific communities who were experiencing specific circumstances, the Church realized very early that the preaching, admonition and encouragement found in these letters apply to all churches, in all times and places.

The majority of Scripture scholars agree that seven of the letters traditionally attributed to St. Paul were written by him. The others were likely written by disciples of Paul or imitators of him. Our parish Bible Study is making its way through these seven “authentic” Pauline epistles in the order in which they were likely written – 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon, Galatians, and Romans. We recently completed 1 Thessalonians, which is an excellent introduction to many of the features of Paul's letters.



The purpose of Bible study is to help us grow in our understanding of Sacred Scripture, and how it is interpreted by the Church. By going deeper and deeper into this “head knowledge,” we prepare ourselves to hear the Word proclaimed during the liturgy. Having studied and informed our minds during Bible study, we allow the Word to transform our hearts during the Liturgy of the Word.

When is the right time to join our Bible Study? This week! We have participants who have been attending for many years, and others who are brand new. Some grew up in an environment where they were discouraged from reading the Bible, while others have been reading Scripture daily their entire lives. And while most of our participants are

Catholics, we have several friends who study with us from other Christian communions. Bible Study meets most Monday evenings from 7 to 8:30 and Thursday mornings from 10 to 11:30 in the Community Room.

“When you hear the passages proclaimed at Mass that we have studied in class, the words take on whole new levels of meaning for me in my spiritual life,” one participant says. “Paul's sentences are often very confusing, and sometimes hearing them proclaimed at Mass, it helps to have considered them in class beforehand.”

As our class is just beginning Paul's second longest letter, 1 Corinthians, it's a perfect time to join us and participate.

Did you know that Paul's letters are arranged in the Bible from longest to shortest, as was the custom when collecting someone's letters in Paul's time? Paul makes the amazing claim that his experience on the road to Damascus called him to be an apostle, even though he wasn't one of the original Twelve. The influence of St. Paul's missionary work, his preaching, his teaching, and his writing cannot be overstated in the history of the Church. Studying his epistles gives us the opportunity to allow the Holy Spirit to nourish and inspire our faith lives. You are invited to allow Scripture to nourish your life along with us!

*For more information, please contact Director of Liturgy Bill Toler
at 440-871-1100 or btoler@saintraphaelparish.com*

St. Raphael

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ESTATE PLANNING SEMINAR ALL ARE WELCOME!

Our newly formed Legacy Society will be hosting its first Estate Planning Seminar on March 8, from 7-8 p.m. in the Community Room. We are fortunate that two of our parishioners, Tom Pillari (attorney) and Don Zwilling (CPA) have volunteered their time to present this informative program. The first session will cover setting up, or reviewing, your plan, traditional estate planning documents and other areas of interest. Refreshments will be served.

Please RSVP by calling the parish office, 440-871-1100, or visiting the parish website at saintraphaelparish.com, or by placing the RSVP sent in the invitation letter from Fr. Tim into the collection basket.

ST. RAPHAEL MARDI GRAS IS COMING!

Our annual St. Raphael Mardi Gras Carnival is Saturday, Feb. 25, 10-2 p.m. This community-wide event offers games and prizes for children of all ages, and a large raffle of items donated by area businesses and parish families. If you would like to donate – monetary contributions, prize items, or gift certificates – please contact Jenn Zastudil at 440-409-3393. Raffle tickets will be sold after the 10 and 12 Masses on Feb. 5, 12, and 19. We look forward to celebrating with you!

Liturgy Schedule

Saturday Vigil: 4:30 p.m. | **Sunday:** 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., noon

Weekday Mass: M, T, W, F, 7:45 a.m. | M, T, Th, F, 9:15 a.m. | Saturday, 8:30 a.m.

Confessions: Saturdays 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. | **Eucharistic Adoration:** Friday 10:00 a.m. - Saturday 4:00 p.m.