

January 2017

# Saint Raphael



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## Returning Our Blessings as a Gift *A Special Note From Fr. Tim*

My Dear Friends in Christ,

Many years ago, in my early formative years, I would ride my bike to St. Raphael and go to Mass. I have to say, I did go to Sell's after Mass for a candy bar or two, and I made sure I brought a bulletin home for Dad to see! Some Saturday mornings, I would play basketball in the old gym, now called the Lunch Room.

I have such warm memories of St. Raphael Parish with a deep appreciation for my spiritual life because of the positive influence it has had in my life. Never would I ever have imagined that I would be the pastor here! God works in incredible ways.

"The gift you have been given, give as a gift," the Scriptures remind us. I am so deeply and profoundly grateful to our faith community – as a young boy and today as your pastor.

I want to make sure that those coming to St. Raphael in the future will be blessed with the same

blessings that I have been given. This is why I joined the Legacy Society and will be donating the proceeds of my life insurance policy to the parish. I like the idea of "life" insurance because of our faith: Jesus preserves our lives eternally in heaven.

Please consider joining me in our efforts to take the gifts and blessings that we have been given, and give them in the form of a gift to assist future generations.

The Legacy Society has been initiated to help us to continue to help others for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

May God bless and keep you,

Fr. Tim Gareau,  
Pastor

*St. Raphael*  
LEGACY SOCIETY

**To learn more, please contact:**

*St. Raphael Parish*

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# Teaching Children to Live a Life of *Stewardship*

**H**ow old do you have to be to practice stewardship?

Can a 5-year-old embrace stewardship? How about a 10-year-old?

Although there is no guideline to what the right age is to begin to live a life of stewardship, God’s call certainly extends to each of His children – even the young ones.

It is especially important to show children that they are not too young to share their time, talent and treasure to help build God’s kingdom.

### *Sharing Your Time*

A young child can share of his time in a variety of ways appropriate to his ability. For example, during the day, a child can pray for a loved one that is hurt, or say prayers with his parents or siblings. He can participate in Mass each Sunday, and even take time from his day to thank God for a veteran who has served our country.

Spending time being virtuous – such as being patient, generous and kind – is also a great example of sharing our time for love of God.

### *Sharing Your Talent*

Using God-given talents to glorify God can also be performed by both young and old. An elementary school-aged child can easily clean her room or perform chores such as raking leaves, doing laundry, or taking care of pets. Making cards for people who are sick

or who have had a death in the family are other concrete examples of being a faithful steward.

Even using our talents – such as playing a musical instrument or football – to the best of our abilities to give God glory is an example of being a good steward.

### *Sharing Your Treasure*

Although children do not have the same type of treasure to share as adults, instilling the importance of sharing finances is an important lesson.

If a child receives an allowance, he can return a portion of it to the Church in the collection basket. If he gets money for his birthday, he can give a small portion of it back to God in thanksgiving. Little ones can even share things like their Halloween candy with their siblings or friends as a way of demonstrating generosity.

### *The Most Important Lesson*

Above all, the most important lesson to teach our children is *why* we share. We don’t share because we “have to.” We don’t share because our parents tell us to. We share our time, talent and treasure with God because we are thankful for the blessings He has given us and we want to thank Him for His generosity.

Teaching these lessons at a young age will allow a lifetime of good stewardship to follow for even the youngest of God’s children.



A Letter From Our Pastor

# A New Year, New Challenges, New Opportunities

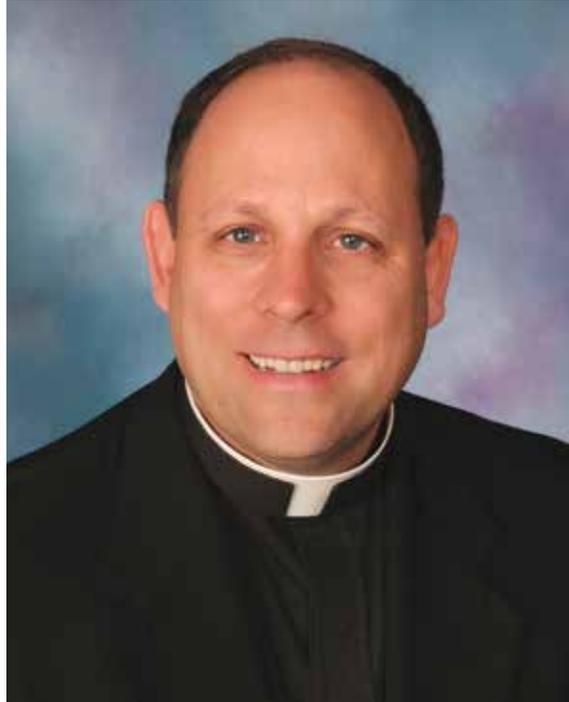
My Dear Friends in Christ,

It is a new year, and it is my prayer for all of you – and for me, as well – that we can take new steps on our faith journeys, and seek new ways to live out discipleship and stewardship.

Pope Francis once commented on his perspective of our modern approach to life. He said, “Certainly, possessions, money and power can give a momentary thrill, the illusion of being happy, but they end up possessing us and making us always want more, never satisfied. I have learned that the most important thing is to put on Christ in your life, place your trust in Him, and you will never be disappointed.”

The pope has been called “the world’s parish priest.” As we pray for one another in this New Year, may we all ask the Lord to help us appreciate Pope Francis’ approach to life, his simple way of seeing things, and his very basic way of appreciating things. I would hope that we see this year as a time for opportunity, a time to deepen our relationship to Christ, and for that matter to one another.

If we really wish to change our lives and the lives of others, there are two easy ways to do it. We are blessed with many opportunities in this parish to pray, but as much as it is important for us to take advantage of those, we also need to develop a strong personal prayer life. Recall the young Samuel, who was not quite sure what to do with his life, or what direction to go. When



he finally settled on that one important prayer, “Speak, Lord, for I am listening,” Samuel gave us the hint as to what we need to do. Prayer is a two-way street, and part of that is taking the time to listen to God.

The second important way is to exude joy. Christ certainly called us to do that. Pope Francis has had much to say about joy, as well. The Holy Father says, “Joy cannot be held at heel; it must be let go. Joy is a pilgrim virtue. It is a gift that walks – walks on the path of life, that walks with Jesus... proclaiming joy, lengthens and widens that path.” We must seek that joy and then we need to share it. That is truly our call. Joy translates quite

easily into “love your neighbor.”

Yes, there may be challenges ahead in 2017, but we must focus on the opportunities, and then exert the effort to benefit from those opportunities. Happy New Year!

May God bless and keep you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Tim Gareau".

Fr. Tim Gareau,  
Pastor



“A Wonderful Time to Connect o

# Marriage Encounter Retreat

**A** Marriage Encounter is a process that married couples can experience over a period of weeks. It gives spouses an opportunity to grow in their marriage through open and honest communication, face-to-face sharing, and heart-to-heart encounters in a comfortable and relaxed setting. It is open to married couples of all ages and levels of faith. According to the committee that oversees these encounters in the U.S. Catholic Church, “The mission is to celebrate, enrich, and support marriages and families through programs which enable married couples to discover a deeper understanding of their relationship.”

Marriage Encounter coordinator Deacon Larry Gregg echoes this mission from the national committee.

“Our St. Raphael Marriage Retreat is an opportunity for you to spend 90 minutes once a week with your spouse over our seven-week retreat,” he says. “This is a wonderful time to connect or reconnect with your spouse in an intimate environment where you will talk to and share **ONLY** with your spouse. This retreat opportunity is open to all married couples, regardless how long or short you have been married.”

“A few years ago, Deacon Larry Gregg cornered my wife – Melissa – and me as we were leaving Mass one Sunday,” adds parishioner Tom Pilarri. “His message – delivered in his usual friendly but persuasive manner – was that Melissa and I should consider attending the Marriage Retreat that was to begin in a few months. As may be typical in your marriage, Melissa was immediately interested and I was immediately

*“Our St. Raphael Marriage Retreat is an opportunity for you to spend 90 minutes once a week with your spouse over our seven-week retreat. This is a wonderful time to connect or reconnect with your spouse in an intimate environment where you will talk to and share ONLY with your spouse. This retreat opportunity is open to all married couples, regardless how long or short you have been married.”*

*We begin Tuesday, Jan. 17 at 6:45 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the Raphael Center. There will be refreshments. Registration is limited to 12 couples. For more information or to register, please contact Deacon Larry Gregg at 508-885-1234.*

# or Reconnect With Your Spouse”

## at at St. Raphael Parish

‘suspicious.’ Like many males, I was not interested in attending a ‘touchy-feely’ typical marriage encounter where I would be expected to ‘open up’ and discuss details of my wonderful marriage to Melissa. Deacon Larry assured me that my perception of the Marriage Retreat was wrong. I hesitatingly agreed to attend and I am glad that I did.

“Over the seven weeks of the Encounter, we watched videos which were then followed by private sessions involving Melissa and me and *not* everyone,” Tom continues. “During these private sessions, Melissa and I began to explore the subject matter of the video. For example, one video challenged each couple to make a commitment to make time for each other and to use that time to better communicate. The time that we spent exploring the time demands of our life allowed us to reconsider how much time we spend with each other and how to improve the ‘quality’ of that time. Certain questions that we had to answer about ourselves, our parents and our marriage allowed us to explore our different views on these matters in the privacy of a one-on-one discussion in the ‘break-out’ sessions. We learned a lot about us and about each other.”

Each week, timely topics will be presented for private discussion with your spouse. We will have thoughtful faith-based insights and some unique techniques to help your marriage continue to grow and become even stronger. Husbands and wives work together to discuss and share their thoughts with each other.

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*The registration fee is \$60 per couple, and it includes all books, handouts and  
o register, please call Deacon Larry Gregg at the parish office at 440-871-1100.*

# The Patron of Catholic Schools in America

## *St. Elizabeth Ann Seton*

As the first American-born canonized saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton's entrance into history was guided by Divine Providence. Born on Aug. 28, 1774, just months after the Boston Tea Party, Elizabeth's childhood witnessed pivotal events in the formation of our country – the Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence, and the American Revolution. At the time of the foundation of the new Republic, in a society predominately hostile toward Catholicism, a flower blossomed that would forever change the shape of education in the United States.

Elizabeth Seton was born into a wealthy Protestant family in New York City. Her life, although materially blessed, was not without suffering. Elizabeth's biological mother died when she was only 3, and her younger sister, Catherine Josephine, died at the age of 2. A spark of faith, however, was visible even in her early childhood. When questioned about her sadness concerning her sister's death, Elizabeth simply responded, "Kitty is gone up to heaven. I wish I could go there too."

Elizabeth grew into a beautiful woman, courted lavishly by handsome young men from prominent New York families. At the age of 19, she met a charming New York financier, William Seton, and the couple was wed in 1794. They remained in high society until her father-in-law's



passing, which left them to care for William's seven younger siblings, along with three children of their own. Consequently, the Seton finances crashed.

The couple traveled to Italy – it was here that William's health failed him, and he died in December 1803. Providentially, Elizabeth was left in the company of a strong Catholic family where she witnessed the practice of the faith. In a letter to her sister, Elizabeth wrote, "My sister dear, how happy would we be, if we believed what these dear souls believe, that they possess God in the Sacrament, and that He

remains in their churches..."

After an eight-month stay, Elizabeth returned to America, and she began to investigate Catholicism more deeply. She was besought by Protestant friends who hoped to dissuade her. At this time, Elizabeth prayed repeatedly, "If I am right, Thy grace impart, still in the right to stay. If I am wrong, oh teach my heart to find the better way."

In 1805, after much interior struggle, Elizabeth became Catholic. Abandoned entirely by her family and friends, she resolved her financial difficulties through teaching.

In 1807, Elizabeth was invited to establish a Catholic school for girls in Baltimore. The task was daunting, and Elizabeth labored intensely, explaining how "from half past five in the morning until nine at night, every moment is full – no space even to be troubled." After winters spent in continual hardship and sacrifice, the school flourished and, within years, Mother Seton planted the seed from which sprang the parochial school system – along with hospitals and orphanages.

Before her death in January 1821, she was the active mother of five – although two of her daughters died young – and the spiritual mother of a full-fledged religious congregation known as the Sisters of Charity. She was canonized in 1975, and her feast day is celebrated on Jan. 4.

## An Invitation to Our Winter Alpha Course



Our Fall Alpha course finished just before Thanksgiving, and we're preparing now for the Winter Alpha course, which begins near the end of January. Between 50 and 60 people attended each of the fall sessions as guests, in addition to our 20-member Alpha volunteer team. In all, over 90 people joined as guests for one or more of the sessions, which included both pre-registered guests and more than 40 walk-ins (unregistered). Everyone was welcome! The ages of our guests ranged from 29 to 87 years old. Most came because they were invited by a friend, and – despite promoting Fall Alpha only within our parish – 35 percent of those who came were not parishioners. The Alpha team worked hard to create a warm, welcoming, friendly environment for all our guests. One of those guests wrote in appreciation:

*"Thank you for welcoming me so warmly at your parish. I really enjoyed being with you and praise the Lord in the Alpha Course with you."* – Alpha Guest

Alpha is a series of sessions introducing and exploring the basics of Christian faith. Each session begins with a meal, includes a half-hour video, and ends with small-group conversation. We start with food because it's a great way to encourage community and get to know one another. The videos are designed to engage and inspire conversation. They explore the big issues around faith and unpack the basics of Christianity, addressing questions such as: "Who is Jesus?" and "How can we have faith?" The small-

group conversations are probably the most important part of Alpha. They give everyone the chance to share thoughts and ideas on the evening's topic and simply to discuss it in a small group. There is no obligation to say anything. And there is nothing that can't be said. It's an opportunity to hear from others and contribute one's own perspective in an honest, friendly and open environment.

Alpha is not a catechism class. There is no preaching, and there is no pressure on guests to become a Christian, to become a Catholic, to join the parish, to get more involved in parish life, etc. Rather, Alpha is a safe place to learn about Christianity, to encounter the person of Jesus, to discover God present in our world today. Alpha is an *experience*. Everyone is welcome at Alpha. There is no commitment or obligation on the part of guests to participate in all the sessions.

An invitation to come and experience the Winter Alpha course is extended to everyone reading this article, to everyone in the communities surrounding our parish, and to everyone's family and friends. Alpha is for people of no faith, people of other faiths, non-practicing and minimally-practicing Christians – but it's also for practicing Christians who are seeking a renewal of their faith, have a desire to share their faith with others, or who are just curious.



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# St. Raphael

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## An Invitation to Our Winter Alpha Course *continued from page 7*

Winter Alpha begins on Tuesday, Jan. 24, and runs eleven weeks through Tuesday, April 4. Sessions are every Tuesday evening from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in our St. Raphael Community Rooms. There is no cost to attend. Pre-registration is encouraged – to help us estimate food requirements – but not required. Pre-registration is available through the parish website at [www.saintraphaelparish.com](http://www.saintraphaelparish.com),

through an email to [alpha@saintraphaelparish.com](mailto:alpha@saintraphaelparish.com), or by a phone call to Deacon Mark Cunningham in the parish office at 440-871-1100. If you miss the first session and decide to try it later, that's fine – you're always welcome at Alpha, whenever you come!

*"I really enjoyed coming every Tuesday. Sad to see it end."*  
– Alpha Guest

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### *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.