

# ASSUMPTION

## *of the Blessed Virgin Mary* PARISH

### **The Pro-Life Ministry:**

### *Stand Strong for the Sanctity of All Life*

This month, to commemorate Roe v. Wade – the Supreme Court decision of 1973 that legalized abortion – our parish Youth Group will work for the cause of life with admirable courage. A contingent of 41 high school students and 16 eighth-graders will travel to the March for Life in Washington, D.C. Their commitment to making such a trip exemplifies the beautiful love and respect that our parish as a whole holds for the dignity of human life, from conception to natural death.

“Roe v. Wade disrespects the fundamental rights of the human person, especially the most innocent human persons – infants in the womb – by putting their lives at risk,” Fr. Mitch Doyen says. “Our culture has lost sight of what it means to honor the dignity of life. It is the responsibility of every Catholic to stand up for human life, because the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. All human flesh is holy – the Spirit of the Risen Christ dwells in the heart of every human person. From the embryo in the womb to the hardened criminal on death row, we all belong to God – and no one, person or institution, can betray that truth of human dignity which is given by God.”

Thanks to God’s grace, our parish has a flourishing Pro-Life Ministry that works continually to promote a profound respect for the human person at all stages

*continued on page 2*



*Priyanka, Cooper, Meah, Finley, and Emma, students at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Elementary School, offering concrete ways to give thanks to God for the gift of human life.*

### JANUARY 2017 *Inside*

- 3 A New Year, New Challenges, New Opportunities
- 4 “Being Kind, Responsible and Christian” *Catholic Schools Week at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*
- 6 Time: *The Foundation of Stewardship*
- 7 Christ Renews His Parish

## The Pro-Life Ministry:

*Stand Strong for the Sanctity of All Life* continued from front cover

of life. Its core group of about 20 members maintains powerful pro-life efforts, such as year-round advocacy for the unborn at state and local government levels, and encouraging parishioners to pray for the cause of life each October, which is Respect Life Month.

Each year, some of them attend the annual pro-life convention in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

“I believe the first action we can take to become more pro-life is to seek a relationship with someone different from ourselves,” Fr. Mitch says. “If I know a woman who has had an abortion, I will approach the dialogue differently — with compassion — which opens up the true possibility of healing for our nation. If I visit my neighbor who is on death row, I can recognize Christ in the most forgotten signs of our human longing for grace. If I know someone who cannot walk or talk, I can enter the silence of God’s heart and more readily surrender my will to His. If I love neighbors who are different in any way from me, then I stand a chance of seeing Christ as All in All.”

Our parish’s Knights of Columbus Council, which is affiliated with the Ladies Auxiliary of the Knights of Columbus, was recently awarded a very prestigious award by the North American Knights of Columbus. The council is committed to raising funds toward purchasing ultrasound machines, giving women access to more information when they make decisions about bringing their pregnancies to full term.

“If we want to bring healing to our culture, which is in need of open hearts, open minds and an other-centered attitude, one way to do it is to make it known what is at stake with the issue of abortion,” Fr. Mitch says. “We have to do better at creating an environment where women feel safe, respected and supported during pregnancy.”



*“I feel that the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion, because it is a war against the child, a direct killing of an unborn child.” – St. Teresa of Calcutta*

*“It is the responsibility of every Catholic to stand up for human life, because the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. All human flesh is holy – the Spirit of the Risen Christ dwells in the heart of every human person. From the embryo in the womb to the hardened criminal on death row, we all belong to God – and no one, person or institution, can betray that truth of human dignity which is given by God.” – Fr. Mitch Doyen*

*For more information on how to jump on board and stand strong for the cause of life along with the Pro-Life Ministry, please contact Sylvia Kiphart at 636-978-8803.*



# A Letter From Our Pastor

## *A New Year, New Challenges, New Opportunities*

Dear Parishioners,

**I**t is a new year, and it is my prayer for all of you – and for me – that we can take new steps on our faith journeys, seek new ways to live out discipleship and stewardship, and renew our commitment to follow Mary in her mission of bringing Christ to the world.

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 Holy Father 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 humble appreciation of God’s grace at work in all things. I hope we see this year as an opportunity, a time to deepen our relationship with Christ, and with one another.

I am grateful for all the ministries that contribute to our vibrant mission. In January, I am especially mindful of

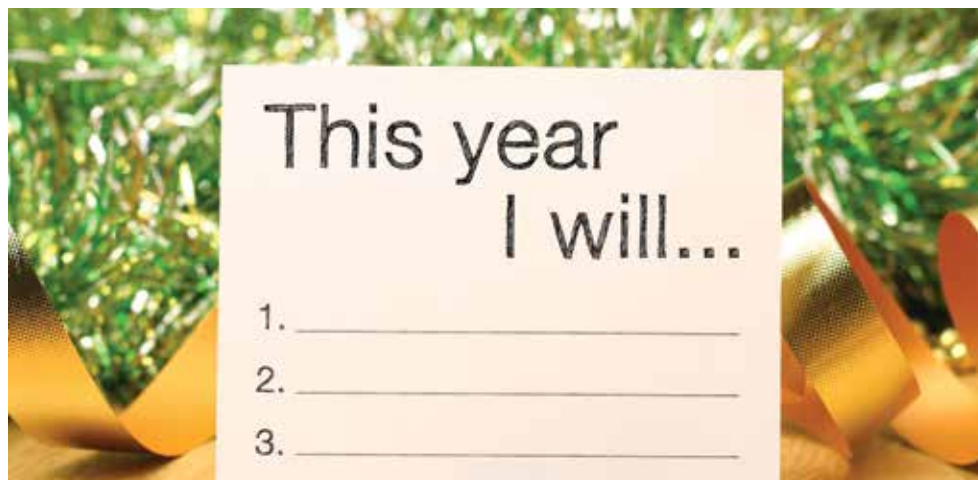
our ministries that testify so eloquently to the dignity of the human person. From our St. Vincent de Paul Society, which serves everyone in need, to our 57 delegates — mostly our youth — who will march on behalf of life on the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision, to our Knights of Columbus and Ladies Auxiliary, who were commended by the North American K of C for their commitment to life, we see testimony to the significance of every human person in God’s plan of salvation. I am sure you will enjoy learning more about our parish and our mission in this edition of our newsletter.

Let us be ambassadors of Christ’s joy in everything we do. And let the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish be a source of joy in our lives. We can join Simeon in his beautiful prayer; when he sees the Holy Family he says, “My own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people; a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel.”

Per Matrem Ad Filium,  
(Through the Mother to the Son)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Mitch Doyen". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a thick black line.

Fr. Mitch Doyen,  
Pastor



# “Being Kind, Responsive”

## Catholic Schools Week at Assumption

National Catholic Schools Week is the annual celebration of Catholic education in the United States. This year, it starts on Sunday, Jan. 29 and lasts through the week, up to Saturday, Feb. 4. The theme for the National Catholic Schools Week 2017 is “Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge, and Service.” This theme encompasses several concepts that are at the heart of a Catholic education. First, schools are communities – small families in their own right, but also members of the larger community of home, church, city, and nation. Faith, knowledge and service are three measures by which any Catholic school can and should be judged.

Mrs. Melinda Kruper, the Director of Religious Education, maintains the Catholic Schools Week theme ties in well with what the school is striving to emphasize throughout the entire year.

“All of our children, whether they receive their faith formation during the day or evening, are brothers and sisters to our larger community, the parish,” Mrs. Kruper says. “Forming their hearts and minds to know and love God and to want to share that love with others — that’s steadfast formation. “We emphasize to our students, our faculty and staff, and our parents that together we bring Christ to the world. During Catholic Schools Week, this approach to faith formation receives even more emphasis and attention.”

Catholic schools offer academic excellence and faith-filled education for students nationwide. National test scores, high school graduation rates, college attendance, and other data show that Catholic schools frequently outperform schools in both the public and private sectors. While some Catholic schools face the challenges of declining enrollments and school closures, the good news is that there is a strong demand and enthusiasm for Catholic schools. Thirty-two percent of Catholic schools have waiting lists for admission, and new schools are opening across the country.



*Students served parents on Muffin Monday.*

At Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, activities and points of focus are planned each day of the week beginning on Sunday, Jan. 29.

“On Sunday, Jan. 29, we will have Open House at the school after all three Masses,” Mrs. Kruper says. “The Open House will begin at 9 a.m. and continue until 1:30 p.m. The 10 a.m. Mass in particular will focus attention on our children who attend our faith formation programs, and our students will fulfill as many liturgical roles as possible, along with assistance from student parents and grandparents. We certainly encourage all parishioners to take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about our school, which is an important part of our parish mission.”

Monday, Jan. 30, is dedicated to the students. Teachers and catechists alike recognize that praying with students, encouraging students, and helping students learn more deeply about how God is moving in their lives is a blessing. The students are the reason we love what we do! This is why teachers and catechists will take a few minutes sharing with each child virtues they see in them.

In addition to a Mass for kindergarten through fifth grades at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 31, parents,

*“Everything we do is about our relationship with God and each other. Catholic Schools Week gives us a chance to share that with all in the parish, and especially with those who have given so much of themselves to the school, including the students.” — Mrs. Melinda Kruper, Director of Religious Education*



# Visible and Christian”

## *Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

whose participation in, and dedication to, the school is imperative is recognized. The teachers write thank you notes to all the parents. The day is also Treat Tuesday, as parents are provided a special treat from a teacher or catechist when they drop their children off at school.

Wednesday, Feb. 1, (on Tuesday Jan. 31 for the evening faith formation program) is a day devoted to thanking the school faculty, staff and catechists, another group whose contributions to the success and health of the school cannot be measured. There is a school Mass for preschool through eighth grades at 8 a.m. and a prayer service at 6 p.m. for our faculty, staff, and catechists to receive a special blessing from our pastor, Fr. Mitch and students present them with gifts. To cap it off, there is a special luncheon for the faculty and staff during the day and hors d'oeuvres for the catechists in the evening.

The area of focus on Thursday, Feb. 2 (on Tuesday/Wednesday for the evening faith formation program) is all about connecting the virtue of unity with acts of service. Through the example of St. Monica, (our patron saint focus for the quarter) students and their families will nurture within each other the virtue of unity. First, we will invite students to pray for their parents and their parents to pray for their children. Secondly, by participating in a service project that demonstrates something we all have in common: a birthday. Birthday Blessing bags will be assembled and distributed to area food banks so that the person who receives it can have a celebration on their special day and know he or she was prayed for by our families. Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary School, as a part of the larger O'Fallon community, understands that service is an important aspect of stewardship, and this helps our students understand that as well.

Finally, on Friday, Feb. 3, we accentuate the spiritual and corporal aspects of our Catholic school and recognize the dedication and support from those who assist in a variety of ways to keep our school vibrant and viable. Our PTO, School Board, parish office, finance committee, parish council, front office



*In 2016, students prepared 500 blessings bags for HOPE Pantry as their service project.*



*Last year, the teachers made sack lunches for the homeless and working poor as their service project.*

volunteers, room parents, and clergy are all invited to attend this all school Mass. The volunteers receive a blessing and, as the day is the Feast of St. Blaise (the patron saint of throat illnesses) all present receive a blessing of the throat.

“Everything we do is about our relationship with God and each other,” Mrs. Kruper says. “Catholic Schools Week gives us a chance to share that with all in the parish, and especially with those who have given so much of themselves to the school, including the students.”

*For more information about Catholic Schools Week activities, please contact the school at 636-240-4474.*

## Time:

### *The Foundation of Stewardship*

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has told us that stewardship is part of discipleship and is a way of responding to God's call in every aspect of our lives. We refer to the three facets of stewardship as "Time, Talent and Treasure," and when we consider the importance of these three Ts of stewardship, the "time" component comes first by design.

When we talk about stewardship of time, we are referring to prayer time. Prayer is of the utmost importance in a disciple's life, and it serves as the fertile ground from which the gifts of talent and treasure blossom. Only by spending time in prayer each day and receiving the sacraments are we able to consistently and generously donate our talent and treasure to the Church.

When looking for examples of how to live our lives as disciples of Christ and as stewards of God's gifts, we can always turn to the great saints of our Church to guide us. And when it comes to the Stewardship of Time, the life of St. Damien is just one example of how prayer, or "Time," is the foundation for our lives of stewardship.

Shortly after being ordained a priest, St. Damien volunteered to serve a colony of lepers isolated on the island of Molokai, Hawaii. From May 1873 until his death in 1889 (at the age of 49) St. Damien worked to restore within the lepers a sense of personal worth and dignity.

Although for some time St. Damien took the necessary precautions to ensure that he did not contract leprosy, he knew that physical touch was necessary to communicate his love and concern to those afflicted with the disease. He embraced the lepers, dined with them, cared for them, and anointed them in the sacraments. With great humility and sacrifice, St. Damien offered his own life in order to save the lives of others.

From where did St. Damien draw his strength? What was the source of his inspiration? "Were it not for the constant presence of our divine Master in our humble chapel, I would not have found it possible to persevere in sharing the lot of the lepers



in Molokai," St. Damien wrote. "The Eucharist is the bread that gives strength... It is at once the most eloquent proof of His love and the most powerful means of fostering His love in us. He gives Himself every day so that our hearts as burning coals may set afire the hearts of the faithful."

St. Damien found his strength in the Mass, the greatest prayer of the Church. Prayer was the impetus behind the generosity of this faithful servant of God, and is the fuel that ignites every heart to flame in love. Without prayer, without the grace that flows from the sacraments, we are incapable of leading lives of service and responding to God's call!

How much time do you dedicate to prayer each day? One hour? Fifteen minutes? None at all? Before you consider joining a parish ministry or volunteering your talents in service, and before you discern your gifts of treasure to the Church, be sure that prayer is your foundation. Identify a prayer schedule that is manageable. This may entail arising 20 minutes early each day to offer your work to the Lord, or attending daily Mass once a week. Every prayer commitment is unique and personal. Yet, no matter what, this time offering, this dedication to prayer, is the key to serving the Lord with faithfulness, generosity and joy.



# Christ Renews His Parish

Amid the hustle and bustle of everyday life, it is far too easy for us to feel spiritually disconnected – from God, from our parish community and even from ourselves. We may attend Mass occasionally (or even weekly). We may see the “regulars” and offer a smile and the sign of peace. Sometimes we may leave Mass feeling that we’ve fulfilled an obligation but we long for something more. We may crave deeper friendships and an encounter with the living Christ.

Jeannette Hamann remembers that longing.

“I was a fairly new parishioner with a 2 year-old,” Jeannette says. “I usually sat in the back of church in case I needed a quick exit. I heard the encouragement to attend a ladies’ retreat.”

Today, Jeannette is the Lay Pastoral Associate at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish. Little did she know that the Christ Renews His Parish (CRHP) Retreat would first renew her, and set her heart on fire.

“I attended a CRHP retreat and went on to become part of the team – team No. 9,” Jeannette says. “Today we are on team No. 38! That alone testifies to the love people find and the presence of the Holy Spirit at the men’s and women’s retreats.”

## **What is a Christ Renews His Parish retreat?**

CRHP is an effective spiritual renewal process.

“The retreat calls together the members of the parish priests, laity and parishioners in order to experience personal conversion and Christian community.” And it all takes place here!

“A lot of people ask what the retreat is all about,” Jeannette says. “Without giving too much away, the content is our faith and the weekend is all about responding. To know your faith is primarily to know your Lord – to be committed to faith is to be committed to the person of Jesus. The ‘yes’ of faith must become a ‘yes’ to a life of friendship with Jesus. Our focus is around renewal in Jesus.”

## **Who gives the retreat?**

A team of parishioners, properly formed in

*continued on back cover*



*Christ Renews His Parish is a retreat offered for parishioners not only to deepen their relationship with Christ, but also to strengthen their friendships with other parishioners and learn about the gifts that have been given to them.*

*The Christ Renews His Parish retreats are offered four times a year at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish – twice for men and twice for women. The next Women’s Retreat is Jan. 21-22 and the next Men’s Retreat is Feb. 11-12. If you have questions or would like to sign up please contact Diane Reynolds for the Women’s Retreat at 314-941-8331 or dianereynolds03@gmail.com, or Jason Thomas for the Men’s Retreat at 636-332-8191 or jthomas1027@gmail.com.*

ASSUMPTION  
*Blessed Virgin Mary*  
PARISH

403 N. Main St. | O'Fallon, MO 63366  
(636) 240-3721 | [www.assumptionbvm.org](http://www.assumptionbvm.org)

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
MAILED FROM  
ZIP CODE 58040  
PERMIT NO. 3

## *Christ Renews His Parish*

*continued from page 7*

prayer and love, and instructed in the techniques, dynamics and content of the process. The secret of “who” is that you cannot rent a priest or a team of experts. “The team” is a group that attended a Christ Renews His Parish retreat and felt called to share that love and fire with others.

### ***How is the retreat structured?***

This two-day (one overnight), live-in program (30 hours) takes place at Assumption parish for a participating group of up to 36 men or women.

Jeannette says, “Usually our parishioners go away to experience the best of Church in popular

movements and programs, and then they return to the parish to be bored. Meeting Jesus in our own parish center or experiencing Christian Community in Hall C transforms our buildings into sacred space. The parish then becomes home for its parishioners.

So, whether you are new to Assumption or have been here for years, whether you long for a deeper relationship with Jesus or long for new and lasting friendships... a Christ Renews His Parish retreat is for you! Consider this your invitation to the upcoming women’s and men’s retreats. You’ll be so glad you said, “Yes!”

*“...the content is our faith and the weekend is all about responding. To know your faith is primarily to know your Lord – to be committed to faith is to be committed to the person of Jesus. The ‘yes’ of faith must become a ‘yes’ to a life of friendship with Jesus. Our focus is around renewal in Jesus.” — Jeannette Hamann*

## LITURGY SCHEDULE

**Saturday:** 9:00 a.m. (MH), Vigil Mass 5:00 p.m. | **Sunday:** 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., Noon

**Daily Mass:** Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m.

**Confessions:** Saturday: 4:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.