



# CATHEDRAL of SAINT PETER

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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## Two-by-Two Toddler Play Group *Bringing Our Little Ones and Their Caregivers into a Welcoming Community*

Natalie Platzkoester Pavlak knows that parenting can be isolating at times — especially when you're raising two toddlers, like she is with her husband, Casey. That's why Natalie helped launch the Two-by-Two Toddler Play Group at the Cathedral. She recognized an opportunity for children to play while their caregivers could socialize and build community.

The group is open to children ages approximately 12 months to 4 years old and their caregivers.

"This is essentially a 'BYOC&T' — bring your own coffee and toddler," Natalie says. "We scatter out some books, crayons, and toys, and we play with our littles."

Natalie wants to provide this free space in a faith-based environment for toddlers and caregivers to make friends and build community. This isn't just



open to moms — babysitters, nannies, and grandparents are welcome.

"There is no structure to the playgroup," Natalie says. "It is free play, but chances are you will meet other Catholic moms and kids, which can be inspiring in a world where it seems

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# Making Time for Prayer: A Stewardship Resolution to Keep

**T**ime is one of the greatest gifts God has given us in this life. And yet, how easy is it for us to take it for granted, especially when it passes by so quickly — it seems the days, weeks, and months go by faster and faster with each new year.

Like all gifts from God, time was given to us for a purpose. Because God is the author of time, only He knows how best it can be used to make us happy. How do we find out what God wants for each of us in this earthly life? Just like any loving relationship, to know the *desires* of the lover, one must first get to know the lover *himself*.

As it turns out, our Divine Lover wants nothing more than an intimate friendship with us for all eternity. We can begin that relationship right now. The means through which we become friends with Jesus in this life can be summed up in one simple word: Prayer.

Prayer may be a simple word but putting it into practice takes effort. Nevertheless, if there is one goal that is worth all the time and effort we have on this earth, it is to develop the habit of prayer. Prayer is, essentially, a loving relationship with God, without which our lives are meaningless. St. Augustine says, “You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.” St. Teresa of Avila further explains, “Prayer is nothing else than an intimate friendship, a frequent heart-to-heart conversation with Him by whom we know ourselves to be loved.”

The new year is a great time to ask ourselves if we need to renew our commitment to prayer and to think of ways to cultivate that intimate friendship Jesus wants to have with us.

While there are numerous ways to pray, every spiritual authority includes a few essential elements in developing a life of prayer. Here are some of them:

**Make it a daily affair:** Even if it means starting at five minutes a day, set aside some time each day for conversation with Jesus, and then build from there. Proceed in little steps.

**Give it some structure:** Reading the Scriptures and other spiritual material or studying a picture of Jesus and reflecting on scenes from His life are some great ways to focus your mind on the Lord. Include opportunities to talk to Him, thank Him, express sorrow, or anger, and ask Him for the desires of your heart. Talk to Him as you would your closest friend.

**Allow for silence:** Choose a quiet place where you won’t be disturbed and where you won’t disturb others. Remember, Jesus often withdrew to pray. This makes sense. People who truly love each other often desire to be alone. Jesus loves each of us individually and wants to whisper words that only we can hear. Silence is necessary if we want to hear Him speak to our hearts.

**Make time for family or group prayer:** Praying with others strengthens us, holds us spiritually accountable, and is a good example to others. Try praying the Rosary with your family.

**Turn everyday undertakings into prayer:** When we perform any action, even the smallest one, out of love for Jesus, it becomes a prayer. We can make our entire day a prayer if we remember this simple concept.

**Don’t be discouraged when you encounter struggles:** However, distracted we become, or however unfruitful our prayer seems to be, Jesus is *always* pleased when we spend time with Him. In fact, it is often when we persevere during difficult times that He is *most* pleased. And when we feel unworthy, we should run to Jesus in prayer. He alone holds the key to our healing and happiness; He is the only one who can transform us into the persons He created us to be.





*A Letter From Our Cathedral Rector*

# Embracing Stewardship in the Year Ahead

Dear Parishioners,

**A**s we stand on the threshold of a new year, it is a time of reflection and renewal, an opportunity to set intentions for how we can grow in our faith and continue to live out our calling as stewards of God's blessings. The concept of stewardship is deeply ingrained in our Catholic faith, reminding us that all we have comes from God and should be used in a way that glorifies Him.

The beginning of a new year is often marked by resolutions —commitments to change, to improve, to grow. This year, I invite you to consider making stewardship a central theme in your resolutions. To live stewardship as a way of life, we must embrace it with a heart open to God's grace, and with practical, intentional actions. Here are some suggestions on how to do just that:

**Gratitude:** Start with a heart full of gratitude. Each day, thank God for the gifts you have received — your family, your health, your talents, and your resources. When we recognize that all we have is a gift from God, it becomes easier to share those gifts with others.

**Time:** Make prayer — Stewardship of Time — an integral part of your life. Seek God's guidance in your stewardship journey. Commit more time to daily prayer, including praying with your spouse, your children, and before meals. Perhaps consider praying the Liturgy of the Hours in the morning and evenings. Pray for wisdom in using your time, talent, and treasure to further God's kingdom and help those in need.

**Talent:** Identify your unique talents and how you can use them to serve others. Whether it's sharing your skills in music, teaching, organization, welcoming, or any other area, offering your talents for the benefit of your parish and community is a meaningful form of stewardship.

**Treasure:** Stewardship also involves managing our

financial resources wisely. Commit to tithing or giving a percentage of your income to support the work of the church and charitable causes. In doing so, you invest in the spiritual and physical well-being of your community.

**Formation:** Deepen your understanding of stewardship and its role in your life. Read the Scriptures, study Catholic teachings on stewardship, and engage in discussions with fellow parishioners. This will help you grow in your understanding of this calling.

**Community:** Build strong relationships within your parish community. In unity, we can accomplish more. Working together as a community of stewards, we can make a significant impact on the world around us.

Remember that stewardship is not just a one-time commitment; it is a way of life. It's about consistent, intentional choices that reflect your love for God and your neighbors. By embracing stewardship in the year ahead, we will find fulfillment, purpose, and a deepened connection to faith.

Let us embark on this new year with hearts filled with gratitude, dedication, and the desire to be faithful stewards of God's blessings. May our collective efforts bear witness to His love and grace in our lives and in the world.

May God bless you abundantly in this coming year, and may you find joy and peace in living stewardship as a way of life.

Peace,

*Fr Godfrey OSB*

Very Rev. Godfrey Mullen, OSB  
Cathedral Rector



# New Year Provides Fantastic Opportunities

As Jesus began His public ministry, he called 12 disciples to Himself to serve as His witnesses in the world. As He proclaimed the Good News of salvation and brought healing to the sick, He showed all of those who encountered Him that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. But what about those who hadn't seen Jesus? He wouldn't physically encounter every person, and yet, He wants all to come to know Him. For that reason, He called the 12 to Himself, and He sent them out to proclaim the Good News to the nations, helping even those who don't see Jesus with their own eyes to come to know Him.

Today, the number of Christ's disciples has expanded far and wide. We here at St. Peter count ourselves blessed to be among the called, and we must take ownership of what that means. In calling us each by name and offering us His life through the grace of the sacraments, Jesus also sends us forth to proclaim the Good News. He wants us to show His love and His goodness to others, bringing others to Him.

As we begin this new year, may we take ownership of that blessed responsibility. But remember — He doesn't call us to do it alone!

“When Jesus sent out His disciples, He sent them out in pairs,” Fr. Godfrey says. “I suspect part of His wisdom was having others to assist us in growing our faith. When we work with others we typically find more strength than when we are working alone.”

What does this mean for us?

Get involved in parish life! This is where we grow together — as a family. What's more, that is the point of our parish ministries — to help each one of us grow in our faith as we show Christ to others by actively living the faith we profess.

Take the time, as we stare into the face of the Year of Our Lord 2024, to consider where God is calling you. What talents has He given you? How can you use them? What kind of time can you offer Him beyond your responsibilities at home? What parish ministries could use the help you have to give?

“One of the hardest questions I get asked is ‘Father, what ministries do you want me to join?’” Fr. Godfrey says. “If I don't know your talents and skills, I can't answer that question well. Parishioners know their abilities better than I do. And while we're all busy, pitching in to our communal works helps me see discipleship in a whole new way. So often we say our prayers, but ministries allow us to live our faith.”

You can join a ministry any time throughout the year, and, although our Stewardship Renewal is behind us, now is a great time to assess where God is calling each one of us. Most of us are committing to New Year's resolutions. Why not make getting more active in the life of our parish a part of that?

“I'd be particularly grateful for people taking on the responsibility of filling in for setting up for the weekend



# ty to Embrace and Live out *Discipleship*

Masses,” Fr. Godfrey says. “We could always use more liturgical ministers. And the work of the Wednesday Work Crew is never finished.”

But most importantly, discern where the Lord is calling you to serve.

“We can transform this place if we all contribute even a little of what God has given us in terms of talent,” Fr. Godfrey says.

Recognizing the good that lies ahead for us in 2024, Fr. Godfrey says he would be remiss not to acknowledge the incredible stewardship that was lived throughout our parish in 2023.

“This past year brought some changes, including sharing your pastor for the first time,” Fr. Godfrey says. “I am very proud of the resilience of our parishioners as various retired priests have assisted at the Cathedral. I also see that people are more willing to pitch in as they are able — straightening up the pews at Mass is one example. Resilience, initiative, and prayer are three ways I have seen growth this year.”

At the same time, there is always room for growth, and Fr. Godfrey encourages us to continue committing our whole lives to Christ as His disciples — time, talent, and treasure. May we take the time this coming year to intentionally grow closer to Christ and His Church through our constant commitment to Him!

“We can always grow in charity; we can grow in commitment; we can grow in prayer,” Fr. Godfrey says. “I encourage all of us to be more attentive to the words we pray. What are they saying to us? Especially at Mass — the words are addressed mostly to God, but they teach us something as well. Let’s be more attentive. And then if we have questions, let us take the opportunity for faith formation so that we understand our faith more completely.”

In 2024, let us grow — as faithful disciples, as attentive warriors, as a parish family committed to living the life to which God has called us, a life of stewardship lived through discipleship. In all things we do, may God be praised!

*“While we’re all busy, pitching in to our communal works helps me see discipleship in a whole new way. So often we say our prayers, but ministries allow us to live our faith.”*

— Fr. Godfrey



# St. John Neumann:

## A Stalwart of Catholic Education

In the Catholic tradition, the name of St. John Neumann shines brightly as a pioneer of Catholic education. His life and work have left an indelible mark on the Catholic Church in the United States. Born on March 28, 1811, in what is now the Czech Republic, Neumann's journey from humble beginnings to becoming a revered saint and bishop is a testament to his unwavering commitment to Catholic education.

From a young age, Neumann demonstrated a thirst for knowledge and a strong desire to serve God. His family's modest background did not hinder his pursuit of education. He learned several languages, a skill that would prove invaluable in his later work with immigrant communities in the United States. In his early adulthood, Neumann entered the seminary in Bohemia, where his academic achievements and profound spirituality marked him as a promising candidate for the priesthood.

In 1836, Neumann decided to follow his calling to serve the Catholic Church in America, a decision that would set him on a path of great significance. He was ordained a priest and embarked on his mission to the United States, a country filled with immigrants yearning for spiritual guidance and education.

St. John Neumann recognized the pivotal role that education plays in nurturing the faith and intellectual growth of the Catholic community. He observed that Catholic immigrants in the United States often faced challenges in maintaining their faith and identity in a predominantly Protestant society. Neumann saw education as a means to preserve and strengthen the Catholic identity in the face of adversity.

Neumann's early experiences in America led him to understand that the establishment of Catholic schools was essential. These schools not only provided quality education, but also instilled in students a deep sense of Catholic identity

and values. He worked tirelessly to establish parochial schools, create a diocesan school system, and promote the importance of education for Catholic children.

In 1852, he became the fourth bishop of Philadelphia, where he continued to dedicate himself to the establishment and expansion of Catholic schools. During his tenure, he increased the number of schools and introduced various reforms to ensure high-quality education. Neumann encouraged religious orders to come to the diocese and assist in the education of children, particularly those from immigrant backgrounds.

In addition to his work in Philadelphia, Neumann played a crucial role in the foundation of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, a religious congregation devoted to education and social services.

St. John Neumann's commitment to Catholic education left an enduring legacy. His influence is still felt today, as Catholic schools across the United States continue to thrive, providing students with a strong foundation in both faith and academics.

In recognition of his remarkable life and work, St. John Neumann was beatified in 1963 and canonized in 1977. His life was a testament to the power of education in preserving the faith and nurturing the spiritual growth of Catholic communities, especially in the United States. St. John Neumann's commitment to Catholic education continues to inspire educators, students, and the faithful, reminding us of the enduring importance of quality education in the service of God. His feast day is celebrated on Jan. 5.



*St. John Neumann's commitment to Catholic education left an enduring legacy. His influence is still felt today, as Catholic schools across the United States continue to thrive, providing students with a strong foundation in both faith and academics.*

# Highlights of Our 2023 Stewardship Renewal

This past summer, our Cathedral of St. Peter leadership conducted the 2023 Stewardship Renewal. The Stewardship Renewal gave our parish community the opportunity to discern how we are using our gifts of time, talent and treasure in service to the parish and in return to God.

This month, we are happy to share with you some of the highlights of the 2023 Stewardship Renewal.

- ❖ There were 175 commitment cards received from 42 percent of active households.
- ❖ There were 1,515 prayer commitments — the stewardship of time — from 94 percent of participating households.
- ❖ There were 560 ministry commitments — the stewardship of talent — from 70 percent of participating households. Of these, 144 were new ministry commitments, while 416 were re-commitments to parish ministries.
- ❖ There were 147 offertory commitments — the stewardship of treasure — from 84 percent of participating households. The average pledge was \$2,707.

We thank all those who participated in our 2023 Stewardship Renewal. If you did not have the opportunity to fill out and return a commitment card, we invite you to consider the ways you may share your gifts of time, talent and treasure with God and our faith community!

CATHEDRAL  
SAINT PETER

## Welcoming CHRIST

2023 COMMITMENT CARD  
My offering of time, talent & treasure

First & Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse: First & Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse: Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse: Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and bring it to Mass on  
August 26/27, mail it to the parish office using the  
enclosed envelope or fill it out online at  
[www.cathedralbelle.org/stewardship](http://www.cathedralbelle.org/stewardship).  
Thanks, and God bless you!



# CATHEDRAL of SAINT PETER

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## Two-by-Two Toddler Play Group *continued from front cover*

most actively faithful people are older. It is refreshing to meet faces in the church that reflect our own.”

Fr. Godfrey Mullen, OSB, helped inspire Natalie to start this group. She took his message of hospitality to heart — realizing the lack of opportunities for caregivers and parents of younger children to be engaged in the parish.

“Fr. Godfrey is always talking about inviting people in and focusing on being hospitable to everyone,” she says.

Natalie hopes to see this group continue to grow. There’s no obligation to come every month — come as frequently or as little as you like.

“This group is just a great way to meet other Catholic women who may be at the same stage in life,” Natalie says.

“We’re often the moms who are in the hall at church chasing babies or have a sick kid and can’t make it to a parish event. It just gives us access to meeting people in the parish, but in an environment that suits us and our kids.”

The Two-by-Two Toddler Play Group meets on the last Thursday of each month. They took a break over the holidays and will start again in February.

In addition, Natalie and Casey are involved in the Sponsor Couple Ministry, prepping engaged couples for marriage. Natalie is also on the Notre Dame Academy School Board. The whole family recently joined the Adopt-a-Spot Ministry with Natalie’s sisters and their families — they maintain the landscaping in front of the school.

*For more information or to get on the email reminder list for the play group,  
contact Natalie Platzkoester Pavlak at [natalieannplatz@gmail.com](mailto:natalieannplatz@gmail.com).*

### MASS TIMES

*Saturday Vigil Mass: 4:00 p.m. | Sunday: 8:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m.  
Weekdays: Monday-Wednesday & Friday 6:45 a.m., Thursday School Mass 8:15 a.m.*

### SACRAMENT OF PENANCE (CONFESSIONS)

*Monday-Wednesday & Friday: 7:15-7:30 a.m. | Thursday 6:00-7:00 p.m. | Saturday 3:00-3:45 p.m.*