



# *Our Faith in Action*

*American Martyrs Catholic Community*

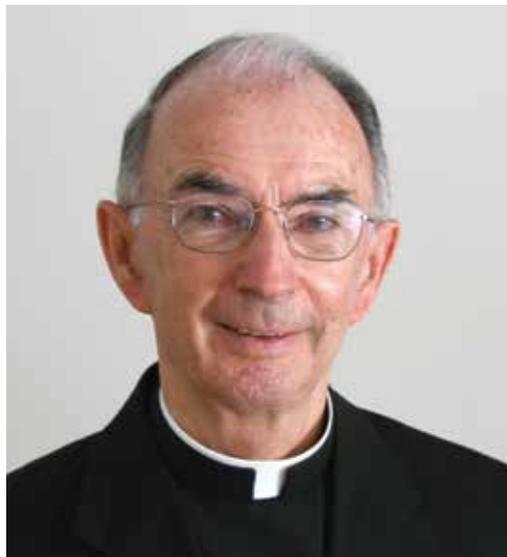
## **A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR**

### *Ministries Truly Demonstrate Faith in Action*

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Dear Parishioners,

When I learned that the theme of July's Faith in Action was to focus on the ministries of Preschool, Food Drive and Funeral Planning, I was taken aback. However, the more I thought about it, the more I came to see the connections. Our American Martyrs Preschool, which brings much joy to our families and their children, is the best preparation our children could have as they move on to more formal academics. If you have not visited our Preschool, you are missing an opportunity to witness experiential learning at its best. Under her direction and with her creativity, Jeannie Wood (Miss Jeannie) has used her extraordinary gifts of leadership and wisdom since we opened the Preschool in 1999. She is an outstanding educator who has touched the lives and hearts of so many families in our community. As we accompany her with prayerful gratitude, she retires leaving us with



the true heart of the American Martyrs Preschool. She laid the foundation upon which her successors will build. On behalf of this whole community, I want to thank Miss Jeannie and pray that she doesn't decide to completely fold up her tent – we will not let that happen. She will continue to experience the love that goes with her.

Next, we are giving praise for the monthly Food Drive Ministry. Scott Wood, Miss Jeannie's husband, is stepping aside and allowing a worthy successor, Veronica McMahan, to take over coordination of this effort for the parish. It would be interesting to know how many families and their children had meals as a result of the loving generosity of our parishioners and again "this man behind the scenes." Scott, thank you for your love of this ministry. May you always have plenty in the Lord. Remember "all who give a cup of water in my Name

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## FOOD DRIVE

### *Continuing to Meet St. Lawrence's Need... And Ours*

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The American Martyrs parish Food Drive is continuing to help our sister parish, St. Lawrence of Brindisi, with monthly collections of non-perishable food, scrip and cash for the food pantry.

Typically the fourth weekend of the month the food is collected after all Saturday and Sunday Masses. The collected items from the Saturday 5:00 p.m. and Sunday 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. Masses are delivered to St. Lawrence of Brindisi and any items donated after 9:30 a.m. Mass are picked up Monday morning by the food pantry driver.

Scott Wood, who served as the Food Drive founder and coordinator until illness forced him to step down last fall, began this ministry in 1991 after talking it over with Msgr. Barry. Monsignor agreed and for 20 years Scott asked various ministries to host the food drive each month.

“We then had about 12 groups at American Martyrs,” Scott says. “So each month, I’d make sure I had a designated group to handle it, set up the tables and have staff for each Mass and have the deliveries made.”

St. Lawrence became the sister parish of American Martyrs after Scott, a lawyer, had handled some legal matters for the parish and became friends with several parishioners. Through his understanding of the need, the Friends of St. Lawrence was organized in 1991 to establish a more purposeful relationship between the parishes.

“The need is great,” Scott says. “The St. Lawrence neighborhood in Watts is made up of a large number of single-parent families. There is a tremendous need and great poverty. St. Lawrence of Brindisi is one of the poorest parishes among the approximate 240 parishes in the Los Angeles Archdiocese. It was just an obvious selection. We had the relationship and they had the need.”

Scott has appreciated our parish’s involvement in meeting this essential need.

## FOOD DRIVE *continued from page 2*



“There are so many generous people at American Martyrs,” he says. “There’s never been a problem getting its monthly donation. Many times, the groups had creative ideas about making it a better collection. The American Martyrs Youth Group turned to the schools and got the kids to bring food. In all those years, I think there were a couple times when there was a problem with staffing, but we did it 100 percent of the time.”

No matter how many people are fed from the St. Lawrence Food Pantry, Scott says the American Martyrs parishioners are “fed” in a sense, as well.

“I think maybe we benefit on our side of this,” he says. “It’s really important for young people to be conscious of the needs of others throughout Los Angeles. To learn about social justice – the best way is to be a doer, actively collecting food.”

Scott notes that a number of parents take their children when the food is delivered.

“The kids see what reality is for a lot of people,” he says. “I think it’s very good for our parish.”

Typically, the Food Drive collects more than two van loads of food, plus hundreds in cash and scrip. One of the reasons that American Martyrs parishioners deliver the food is to check with the Food Pantry staff at St. Lawrence to make sure there are no unmet needs.

“We always try to meet the need,” Scott says. “I think it’s something the parish is proud of.”

Thank you Scott for your vision and over two decades of loving service bringing the American Martyrs and St. Lawrence communities together.

*“There are so many generous people at American Martyrs. There’s never been a problem getting its monthly donation. Many times, the groups had creative ideas about making it a better collection. The American Martyrs Youth Group turned to the schools and got the kids to bring food.” – Scott Wood*

# STEWARDSHIP

## *A Need to Give*

**W**hen the church needs a new roof or the local food bank needs donations, we jump at the chance to give for the sake of the need. It's part of our human nature — we identify a need, and we want to give of our time, talent and treasure to help.

But as a stewardship people, we are called to give of ourselves not simply because the Church has needs, but because each of us has *a need to give*. As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states in its pastoral letter on stewardship, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, "We need to give our money to individuals and families in need, to the Church, and to other worthwhile charitable organizations because giving money is good for the soul and because we need to return thanks to a loving God for all of the many blessings each of us has received" (pg 67).

As fellow members of the Body of Christ, created in God's image, we should strive to go beyond simply co-existing with one another on earth. The life we live should be fueled by love for each other. This love should dictate how we live — by giving of ourselves.

Jesus Christ showed us the perfect example of this self-giving love when He died on the cross. His death was a completely selfless act. He gave

of Himself for our sake, offering us — through that gift — life everlasting.

As Christ's disciples, we follow His example, and we give of ourselves for the sake of others, out of love and an inherent need to give.

That's not to say that we gain nothing through our gifts. In fact, in His goodness, God sees to it that we do. Most of us have experienced what happens when we give of our time, talent or treasure. We feel as though we get more out of it than we give. If you speak to someone who serves at the soup kitchen or someone who has made it a regular practice to tithe to the Church, you are likely to find that he or she feels blessed to be able to give. As the U.S. Bishops point out, "To be a Christian disciple is a rewarding way of life, a way of companionship with Jesus, and the practice of stewardship as a part of it is itself a source of deep joy. Those who live this way are happy people who have found the meaning and purpose of living" (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, 21).

Find out for yourself. Get involved in a ministry. Make a commitment to put some money in the collection basket next Sunday. Don't wait to find out if there is a need — give of yourself right now. You will be richly blessed for doing so.

## PROVIDING COMPASSION AND ASSISTANCE TO LOVED ONES IN NEED

### *The Funeral Planning Ministry*

“We are a compassionate and loving face for those in a time of great need.”

That is how parishioner Yvonne Amantea sums up the Funeral Planning Ministry that she and her husband, Deacon Chris Amantea, coordinate here at American Martyrs.

The Funeral Planning Ministry was established in 2010, and it forms part of the comprehensive Bereavement Ministry within our parish. The Bereavement Ministry also includes a team of Adult Altar Servers for the funeral Masses, a Bereavement Telecare team that offers telephone support to grieving families, and a monthly Bereavement Support Group.

“There are many details involved in planning a Mass, and not everyone is aware of all that it entails,” Yvonne says. “We are there at a time of great difficulty to help families plan the Mass and execute their wishes.”

In addition to Deacon Chris and Yvonne, there are four other parishioners serving as funeral planning ministers – Angie Babick, Rick de la Sota, Lou Anne Cappiello and Lorena Wolf. Donna MacEachern assists the ministers at each funeral Mass.

The members of this ministry share responsibilities, taking a week at a time to be “on-call.”

“These are wonderful, compassionate people,” Yvonne says. “They give selflessly of



*Deacon Chris and Yvonne Amantea serve as coordinators of the Funeral Planning Ministry.*



*Funeral planners Angie Babick, Rick de la Sota and Lou Anne Cappiello*

their time. I am in awe of these ministers.”

When a parishioner passes away, the on-call minister will be contacted. The minister makes an initial call to introduce himself or herself to the family members and set up a time to meet with them. At that meeting, the minister helps the family select the Readings and Psalm for the Mass, write the Prayers of the Faithful, and give roles to anyone the family wishes to be included in the liturgy. The ministers also connect the family to the priest and the music coordinator.

“We walk alongside the family in this journey,” Yvonne says. “We attend the funeral Mass and make sure that all goes according to the family’s wishes to honor their loved one.

After the funeral, we provide a follow-up email to get feedback and forward information about their needs to our Bereavement Telecare team. By the end of the journey with each family, we

feel as if we knew personally the loved one who died.”

In addition, the funeral ministers continue to pray regularly for each family they have served.

“Though the work we do is sad, it is very rewarding and humbling,” Yvonne says. “All of us involved in this ministry love what we do. For me, meeting the families and seeing how God works in their lives helps me to look and see God at work in my own life. We often end up doing a lot of evangelization in the process as we work with families who have been away from the Church for a while. Many times, we hear that it was through their interaction with us that they become active in the Church again.”

For more information about this powerful work, please contact Yvonne Amantea by email at [funeralplanning@americanmartyrs.org](mailto:funeralplanning@americanmartyrs.org) or by phone at 310-613-7814.

## PROVIDING A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR LEARNING

*Jeannie Wood*

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In 1997, Jeannie Wood was working at a secular preschool and her children were attending a local Christian – not Catholic – preschool. That same year, with a desire to have her children in a Catholic learning environment, she wrote a proposal for developing a preschool at American Martyrs. Over the next several years, Jeannie promoted the idea and “lobbied” the parish leadership. In 1999, Jeannie was asked to move forward with the concept, and the American Martyrs Preschool opened in September 2000. Fourteen years later, American Martyrs has a vibrant environment for preschool-age children thanks to Miss Jeannie.

Jeannie and her husband, Scott, moved from San Francisco and became parishioners in 1973. Jeannie was working as an elementary school teacher, and Scott was a lawyer. They were blessed with four children – see sidebar – and as time went on, Jeannie transitioned to Parent Education at a local preschool. This prompted her to get a master’s degree in Early Childhood Development, and she eventually became a director at the preschool.

Jeannie remembers the day in 1999 when “Msgr. Barry took a risk and delighted me with the happy prospect of opening a preschool for American Martyrs Parish. There was no hesitation and I replied with an emphatic ‘yes!’”

The Holy Spirit must have been hovering around Jeannie that day, because two weeks later the preschool where she was working was sold.

One of the buildings at the Parish School was designated for the preschool, and the work began to ready the rooms and surrounding play areas. Today, there are about 140 children enrolled in the school, with 10 teachers and several staff members – including Jeannie.



In her education and previous teaching experiences, Jeannie became fascinated with the way little ones learn. Consequently, her philosophy for the preschool was based on having the children learn as a result of experiencing sensory stimulation. Classrooms are full of art supplies, beads, blocks, bottle caps, wine corks, and so on. Downsized workbenches have real hammers, screwdrivers and clamps. There is a “take-apart” exercise where non-functioning household items are meticulously disassembled by 3 and 4-year-olds. Outside, a large area in the playground is stocked with pails, shovels and colored water, perfect for building sandcastles or anything else the children can imagine. Jeannie says

that something as simple as sensing the change in weight when a pail is full of sand is a learning experience for a child.

When asked about some memorable and rewarding experience, Jeannie smiled and said, “Memorable experiences are seeing the joys and conflicts and listening to the comments of the children – and yes, they do throw you parents under the bus occasionally!”

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*Before the days of email, Jeannie wrote a newsletter for the parents of preschoolers titled "The Director's Dispatch". Here's an early issue.*

**DIRECTOR'S DISPATCH -  
OCTOBER 23, 2000**

*A note about the stream and the bell*

Brittany, our third child, was born on October 11, 1978. At the age of 3 months, she was stricken with bacterial meningitis which left her multiply challenged. Brittany died in June, 1999.

At this same time, I was beginning to work on the plans for opening a preschool at American Martyrs and I envisioned a garden with a fountain as a centerpiece for the play yard.

And so, in our daughter's memory, I created the Brittany Wood Garden Fountain Fund. Many family members and friends donated to the fund and so the fountain grew to become the stream that has brought so much enjoyment to our preschoolers. In addition, one of our dear family friends donated a bell in Brittany's memory. You hear it ring every morning before the song and the prayer.

Since sharing stories is traditional within families, I wanted to share this story with you, my American Martyrs Preschool family. I continue to be blessed by your constant support and encouragement and last, but never least, your children.

***Jeannie Wood***  
***Founding Director***

The most rewarding experience was a little tougher, but after a while the response was, "Watching family relationships grow and watching families being woven into the tapestry of the parish."

A sign hanging in Jeannie's office states, in true stewardship fashion, "Every day is a gift." She saw a need and applied her God-given talent to develop a wonderful place for young children to start their journey of learning. Jeannie retired from the American Martyrs Preschool in June, and in her words is "just waiting for the next nudge from the Holy Spirit."

**CONGRATULATIONS AMS CLASS OF 2014**



624 15th Street  
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266  
Phone: (310) 545-5651  
www.americanmartyrs.org

## MINISTRIES TRULY DEMONSTRATE FAITH IN ACTION *continued from front cover*

will receive a hundredfold in this life and eternal joy in the next.”

Lastly, we reflect on the ministry of caring for those in grief, the Funeral Planning Ministry. As a priest, I am so grateful this ministry is so active in our parish. People so appreciate a caring presence as they face the loss of a loved one. Deacon Chris and Yvonne bring so many wonderful people around them as they lead this ministry, and many more are needed. It is a sacred ministry, and it reminds us that we must bring the love of Jesus, the presence of Jesus to the doors of those in grief.

All of these ministries are deeply connected to our calling as Christians. We bring the little

children to Jesus to be blessed. We feed the hungry and care for their needs. We stand with the families of the deceased as Jesus did at Naim and remind them as Jesus spoke to Martha and Mary, “Your brother (sister) will rise again.” May all of you in these ministries continue to know the joy of being good disciples.

In Christ,



Rev. Msgr. John F. Barry, P.A.  
Pastor

*Our Faith in Action is provided by the American Martyrs Stewardship Commission*

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### LITURGY SCHEDULE

**Saturday**, 5:00 p.m. | **Sunday**, 7:00 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

**Monday/Wednesday/Friday**, 8:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

**Tuesday/Thursday**, 6:30 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m. | **Saturday**, 8:00 a.m.

**Holy Day**, 5:00 p.m. (Vigil), 6:30 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m.