

FEBRUARY 2014



Our Faith in Action

American Martyrs Catholic Community

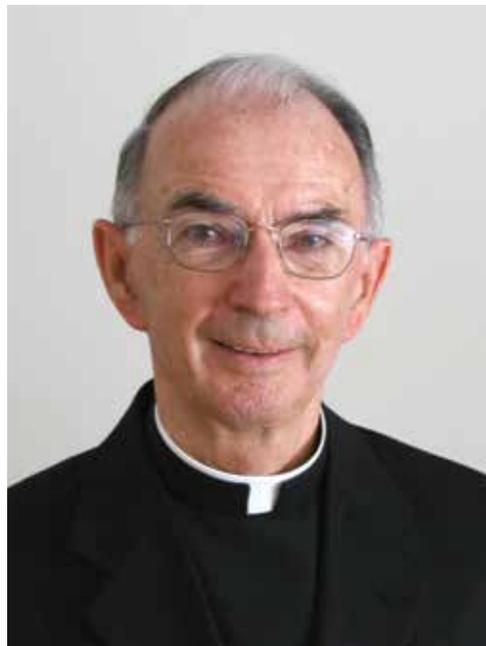
A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Places of Prayer in Our Church

Dear Parishioners,

Everything we say and do must be in and for Christ. This is no earth-shaking revelation, it is who we are as Christians. Yet, this is so easy on our lips and not always in our acting. So in this issue of *Our Faith in Action*, we are being called to look at ourselves, to question ourselves as to the place and power of prayer in our lives. I often wonder if all of us are aware of the many places on our campus which are dedicated to prayer. It is obvious that our beautiful church is this central location. It is a beacon on the hill, not only for all of us parishioners and Catholics, but for the whole community. Our tower — with its beautiful dome — is not only a navigational guide for sailors, but for all of us in the ocean of life.

Have you ever taken time to quietly walk around the inside of your church? There are many areas of prayer. The altar in its strong central point reminds us of the great feast of the Mass, where we gather for



the banquet prayer of our faith, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Think of how many priests have celebrated there, of how many weddings, graduations, First Communion, Ordinations (yes), Confirmations, and funerals have been at the foot of this altar. As you move, pause at our beautiful tabernacle where the Holy Eucharist is reserved for the needs of the sick and for visitation and Adoration. Quietly kneel here and pray over your journey, your pilgrimage. There are a number of different shrines throughout the main church, and many find a quiet prayerful place in the

Sacred Heart and St. Joseph Shrine. People come in regularly to pray by lighting a candle at any of these shrines — another form of prayerful devotion.

We are so blessed to have a very beautiful Adoration chapel off the vestibule of the Church. More of us need to spend time there praying for our families and our world. It is before the Blessed

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“ALIVE IN CHRIST”:

American Martyrs Welcomes Fr. Timothy Radcliffe

The Faith Formation Commission is particularly excited to welcome Fr. Timothy Radcliffe as the speaker for our Parish Mission in March and for the Dive-In University Series South.

A prolific writer and a profound orator, Fr. Timothy Radcliffe addresses the intersections between contemporary issues, individual faith, and the Church’s current situations. And he addresses these intersections in a direct and engaging manner.

“He is straightforward, charming, and he knows the world we live in,” says Patti Williams, Director of Religious Education. “One statement he’s known for is, ‘Clearly a big challenge for Christianity is how to remain in contact with the millions of people who look for God but don’t come to church.’ He’s very reminiscent of what people like about Pope Francis.”

Fr. Radcliffe’s talks are part of the Dive-In University Series South. This series is a multi-parish Lenten adult faith formation program largely based on the very well-attended University Series in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

“We are in the second year of what we hope will grow to be the size and scope of the University Series held in the Ventura area,” Patti says. “Msgr. Barry embraced trying to start this down here. We call the series ‘University Series South.’ The ‘USS’ can also stand for a ship, and since we’re near the water, the name seems fitting.”

This year, the series will begin with a concert by Sarah Hart, who will perform at St. John Fisher in Rancho Palos Verdes.

Continuing into mid-March, Fr. Radcliffe will speak at American Martyrs. The title of his presentation is “Alive in Christ,” which will include a reflection on John 10 that states, “I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly.”



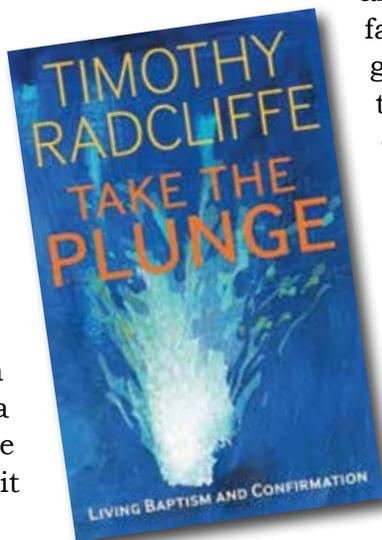
Fr. Timothy Radcliffe
“Alive in Christ”
March 16, 17, 18 and 19

Look to the Bulletin for Details

Fr. Radcliffe entered the Dominican order in 1965 and was ordained a priest in 1971. He visits the parish from Oxford, where he resides. His work focuses particularly on reaching out to others, and his publications include *Why Go to Church?* and *What’s the Point of Being a Christian?* as well as his most recent publication, *Take the Plunge*, which investigates the need to reencounter the Sacrament of Baptism.

“I would encourage people to come to hear Fr. Radcliffe because I have great confidence that they will leave with a deeper desire to know God better and experience Him in our Catholic faith,” Patti says. “Fr. Radcliffe brings great intelligence, but he also has this wonderful joy of life. I think he challenges himself, and by reason of that, his own ability to speak to every generation on the value of a rich deep faith life. This is worth leaving the house for.”

For further details regarding the Dive-In University Series South or Fr. Timothy Radcliffe’s upcoming visit, please refer to the bulletin, website or contact Patti Williams at pwilliams@americanmartyrs.org.



VOCATION OF PARENTS: *Modeling Faith for Our Children*

The Church has made it clear that parents are primarily responsible for the spiritual and cognitive development of their children in matters of the faith. As the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, states, “Husbands and wives find their proper vocation in being witnesses of the faith and love of Christ to one another and to their children” (Chapter 4, Section 35). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* further emphasizes this vocation, by pointing out that the moral education and spiritual formation of children is not only the right, but the responsibility, of their parents: “The right and the duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable...Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children” (CCC 2221, 2223).

But how can we as parents create an environment in the home conducive to spiritual and moral development? As busy adults, how can we model the tenets of the faith to our children who are taught by trained and experienced catechists? Furthermore, how do we teach our children at home in a way that complements the faith formation and sacramental preparation they are currently receiving through their parish school or religious education program?

The answer to all of these questions is stewardship.

It is important that we reinforce the lessons our children learn in school and religious education classes at home by talking with them about our faith, reading Sacred Scripture with them, and spending

time in family prayer. But what do we know about it? There are several resources online that can help parents update their learning, including Catholic Parents OnLine — www.catholicparents.org — which links parents to numerous websites and documents helping them to talk with their children about the faith.

But the best way that we can teach our children is by serving as a living example of how to live as a disciple of Christ. If we want our children to grow up as strong Catholics and to display a lifelong commitment to their faith, then it is important that we live a committed faith life. This includes an ongoing commitment to our own faith formation as adults and active participation in the sacraments. It also includes giving of our time, talent and treasure in service to our community in thanksgiving for the gifts that God has given us.

Parenting can be a tough vocation. Children deal with many influences in their lives that exist in stark contrast to the values that their parents often hope to instill within them. Fortunately for parents, the stewardship way of life provides a simple and effective model for teaching our children in matters of faith. By living as stewards of God’s gifts, we are tangibly showing our children that sharing of our gifts and talents leads to a life of happiness and spiritual fulfillment. In doing this, we give them a good opportunity to follow in our footsteps and make their faith a top priority for the rest of their lives.



PEACE MEDITATION:

Discovering New Ways to Connect With God

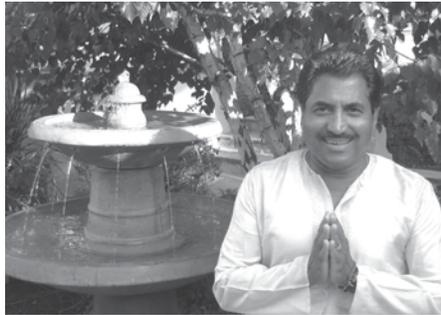
With the frantic hustle of our daily lives, our prayer lives sometimes become marginalized. At American Martyrs, the Peace Meditation group is helping parishioners discover new ways to pray and deepen their intimacy with God through prayer.

Peace Meditation is the practice of personal and communal peace by living mindfully in the presence of God. Moving through prayer disciplines using Scripture, song, mindful movement and meditation, participants quiet the restless body and mind, and open their hearts to God's ever-present love and peace.

"Prayer is a response to God's call to us, and in Peace Meditation, we use various forms of prayer to deepen our awareness of God's ever-present love that is within us and around us, sustaining all things – for in Him we live and move and have our being," says Beverly Busby, one of the ministry coordinators. "We use the Divine breath, God's Spirit breathed into us at creation, as a coming home to our hearts in God. Returning to the breath helps us to remove ourselves from the chaos of our lives and the chattering of our thoughts, and brings us back into the presence of God the Creator."

Ministry leaders first introduced Peace Meditation to American Martyrs seven years ago, under the guidance and direction of Fr. Prashant Olalekar, a Jesuit priest from India who was assigned to our parish at the time.

The group meets on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the SS. Brigid/Brendan Room at our parish. Each session is designed and led by a designated team leader, and is centered on a selected theme. The meeting begins with a meditation or a reading, and is followed by a circle of prayers and petitions, which include prayers for family, friends and community, as well as chants and a circle dance. Next, the group engages in 20 minutes of yoga stretches, followed by



Avito Moniz is one of the coordinators of the Peace Meditation Ministry at American Martyrs.

a "Walking Meditation." The session concludes with a final peace meditation reading as participants sit or lie down on their mats.

"Peace Meditation brings peace and calm in our busy, hectic lives, and allows us to slow down and try and live every moment," says Avito Moniz, one of the ministry coordinators. "I feel closer to the Lord. I am a lot calmer each time I attend one of the sessions. It

has even helped me in my marriage and other relationships."

Through Peace Meditation sessions, participants say their spirituality and personal relationship with God is taken to a whole new level.

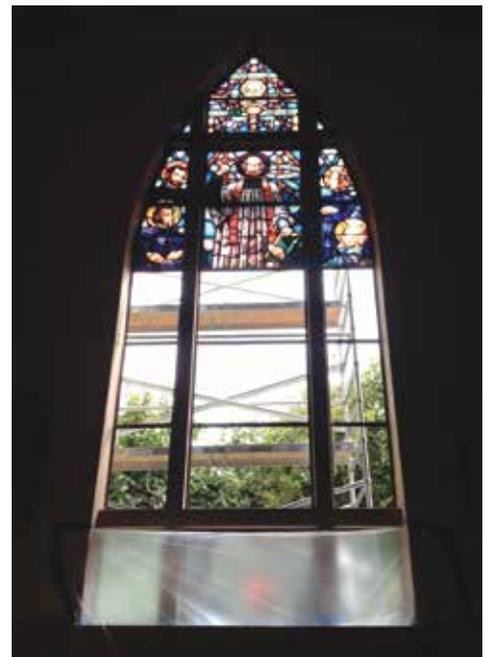
"I love and value traditional prayer forms, but at the time this ministry first started, I was in need of taking my faith and prayer to a more intimate personal level," Beverly says. "I wanted to have a deeper relationship with God and Jesus. Peace Meditation has taught me that it is possible to have an intimate relationship with our Lord even in the busyness of our daily lives. I've learned how important it is to create sacred space within my day to allow room for God. We can be in communion with Him in our daily tasks, whether it is washing our hands or cooking a meal or driving our car. He is sustaining us and all things everywhere and at all times. He is always there waiting for us to turn to Him in faith and trust and love. We need to let go and let God in as He is always there knocking. Peace Meditation teaches us to do just that; to let go and to rest in the breath of God, and to lean on the heart of God."

Parishioners interested in trying Peace Meditation or becoming active in the group may attend any of our twice-monthly sessions. Ministry leaders suggest participants bring a mat or towel to use and also to wear comfortable clothing. For more information about the Peace Meditation group, please contact Avito Moniz at 310-430-5257 or Beverly Busby at 310-376-2056.

STEWARDS OF GOD'S GRACE:

A Look Back on Our Parish Community's Activities and Events

The past several months have seen stewardship brought to life in many different ways throughout the American Martyrs parish community. From volunteering and service projects, to opportunities for fellowship and growing in faith together, the members of our community have truly been stewards of God's Grace.



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

Traditionally, the Church has set aside Feb. 2 in observance of the Presentation of the Lord – or the day in which Joseph and Mary presented Jesus to the priests and elders in the Temple.

For years, this feast – which in the United States is only formally celebrated when it falls on a Sunday – marked the end of the Christmas season. In old days, the Presentation was often referred to as “Candlemas” and was celebrated by a candle-lit procession into the church, signifying Christ as the “light of nations.”



Known originally as the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is a relatively ancient celebration. We know that the Church at Jerusalem was observing the feast as early as the first half of the fourth century, and likely earlier.

According to Jewish law, the firstborn male child belonged to God, and the parents had to “buy him back” on the 40th day after his birth, by offering a sacrifice of “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons” (Luke 2:24) in the temple — thus the “presentation” of the child. On that same day, the mother would be ritually purified — thus the “purification.”

St. Mary and St. Joseph kept this law, even though, since St. Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Christ, she would not have had to go through ritual purification. In his Gospel, Luke (2:22-39) recounts the story.

Originally, the feast was celebrated on Feb. 14, the 40th day after Epiphany (Jan. 6), because Christmas wasn’t yet celebrated as its own feast, and so the Nativity, Epiphany, the Baptism of the Lord (Theophany), and the feast celebrating Christ’s first miracle at the wedding in Cana were all celebrated on the same day. By the last quarter of the fourth century, however, the Church at Rome had begun to celebrate the Nativity on Dec. 25, so

the Feast of the Presentation was moved to Feb. 2, 40 days later.

When Christ was presented in the temple, “there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel.” When St. Mary and St. Joseph brought Christ to the temple, Simeon embraced the Child and prayed the Cantic of Simeon: “Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace; because my eyes have seen thy salvation,

which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples: a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:29-32).

Because of the words of the cantic — “a light to the revelation of the Gentiles” — by the 11th century, the custom had developed in the West of blessing candles on the Feast of the Presentation. The candles were then lit, and a procession took place through the darkened church while the Cantic of Simeon was sung. Because of this, the feast also became known as Candlemas. While the procession and blessing of the candles is not often performed in the United States today, Candlemas is still an important feast in many European countries.

Things to Do:

- Hold your own candlelight procession at home, teaching your children the significance of the light as a symbol of Christ.
- Ask a priest to bless the candles you hope to use at home this year.
- Read the Gospel account of the Presentation, found in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2, verses 22 to 35.
- Pray a decade of the Rosary, focusing upon the Presentation of the Lord, the fourth Joyful Mystery.

LETTING GOD DO THE TALKING: *Contemplative Prayer Group*

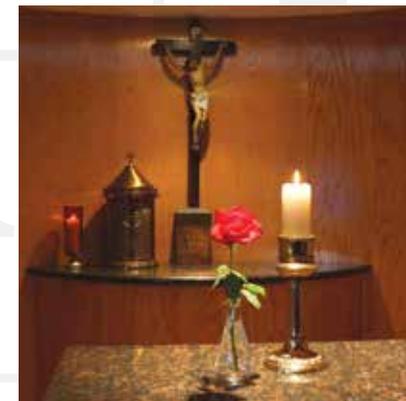
The traditional definition of prayer refers to talking to God, or asking Him for things. But one particular kind of prayer — contemplative prayer — lets God do the talking.

“In contemplative prayer, we give an opportunity for God to get a word in edgewise into our very active lives,” says Donna Ennis, the coordinator of the Contemplative Prayer Group at American Martyrs. “Instead of asking, telling or thanking God about something — which are all valid forms of prayer — we let God be the artist on the empty canvas of our soul. In contemplative prayer, we come to God empty and open.”

You might not know much about contemplative prayer, in part because contemplative prayer is not an especially noticeable or public activity.

“Because we are silent, we tend to be invisible,” Donna says. “But I think that contemplative prayer is the best-kept secret of our Catholic community. We would love to increase awareness of contemplative prayer, because this is our strength and our vitality.”

The group meets every Tuesday evening from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in St. Joseph’s Chapel in the Spirituality Center. They combine two 20-minute periods of silent prayer with brief comments, readings and meditations over the hour. Recently, the group spent seven weeks praying on the seven petitions of the Our Father.



The altar in St. Joseph Chapel, where the Contemplative Prayer Group gathers.



Donna Ennis, coordinator of the Contemplative Prayer Group.

however often you come, there’s a bonding that comes out of that, which is really very beautiful.”

Of course, you can always pray in your own home, car or office. But by praying with a group, you form a close bond with others. That bond, Donna emphasizes, comes through everyone placing themselves in God’s hands.

“We pray together, but we are not an issues group,” she explains. “When we come in the door, we step aside from our own issues — whatever we have going on in our life that is heavy, hurting or painful, we set that aside so that we can rest in God.”

The group also brings in others from outside the parish.

“What I’ve seen is that many of the people in our group are actually non-Catholics,” Donna says. “A priest friend of mine once pointed out that contemplative prayer is an apostolic work of the Church — this is our strength!”

So what does contemplative prayer do, exactly? It brings us into contact with God. But it brings us closer to God in a special way, one that requires a particular openness to Him. Contemplative prayer can also help us go deeper in the spiritual life.

“If we feel in a stuck place, that can be an invitation to go deeper,” Donna says. “There is a deeper conversation with Christ which is always going on within us.”

“We are seeing some surface tensions in the body of the Church, but in truth, our mystical roots remain deep and strong, and silently, they are so beautiful,” Donna says. “They stand to serve us well today. There is much more to be said about them. This is the way of contemplation.”

To learn more about the contemplative prayer group, please contact Donna Ennis at 310-545-7920. Or simply attend one of the Tuesday meetings at 7:30 p.m. in the St. Joseph Chapel.

“Come once, often or always,” Donna says. “Some people come occasionally, and some people come once — and

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

PLACES OF PRAYER *continued from front cover*

Sacrament where Mother Teresa drew her great strength for her extraordinary service to the poor.

The statues spread throughout our campus are gifts reminding us of who we are in relationship with the Lord. We have the perfect example of a catechetical gift where each of our buildings has teaching and prayer reminders. Every time I see children “interacting” with the statues of our faith and adults observing, I know a form of prayer is in progress.

When I recently mentioned to someone about visiting our Spirituality Center, I was surprised that its location wasn’t evident. Check our schedule for the many Spirituality Center opportunities and its availability to further your prayer life. Do not forget to check our well-stocked spiritual library, open

each Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

As you are in the area of the Spirituality Center, visit the great garden and find your outdoor spot for some peaceful prayer. Walk the Labyrinth and quietly sit at the center where you may check out your own life/faith center. My friends, all roads must lead us to Jesus Christ, who is the heart of ministry and prayer.

God bless you,



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

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

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., 12:10 p.m., 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday/Thursday, 6:30 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 12:10 p.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., 12:10 p.m., 5:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m.