

**Homily – 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ord. Time, Year A**  
**St. Monica's – September 28, 2014**  
**Fr. Raymond Lafontaine & Anna Diodati**

**Ezekiel 18:25-28:** Present conversion, not complacency about one's past good deeds, is pleasing to God.

**Psalms 25:** Remember your mercy and love, O Lord.

**Philippians 2:1-11** "Be of the same mind, sharing the same love and mutual concern: put on the mind of Christ, whose humble YES to the Father was affirmed by the Father's exalting YES."

**Matthew 21:28-32** Two sons, YES or NO: walk the talk! "Tax collectors and prostitutes are going into the Kingdom of God ahead of you."

**Sacramental Living: Walking the Talk!**

In today's Gospel, Jesus describes two kinds of people: those who initially say "no", but then follow through on what they were asked; and those who say "yes" immediately, but fail to follow through. Which of these descriptions fits you more accurately? With which of these people would you rather work, or serve on a parish committee? Obviously, it isn't enough just to say "yes"; we have to really *mean* it, and *follow through* on it. If we can't do something, we save ourselves and others a lot of grief if we admit that up front, without raising false expectations. We need to "walk the talk!"

A year ago, following the invitation extended to the whole church by Pope Francis at Pentecost 2013 to embrace wholeheartedly the challenge of what is called "the new evangelization", we as a parish committed to embark upon a 3-year journey of faith. Last year, our focus was on coming to know the person of Jesus in the Scriptures, deepening our experience of disciple and friendship with Jesus, the Living Word of God. This year, as you can see from the banner hanging over the altar today, we will be exploring more deeply how the seven sacraments of the church are an invitation to a way of life, making real and present the presence of Jesus in our personal lives, in the life of this parish community, and in the world in which we live and to which we are sent on a **mission** – which will be the overarching theme of next year's journey.

As we launch our pastoral year this weekend, as we welcome back in a special way the children in our catechetical programs and their families, we have the privilege of welcoming to the pulpit someone you all know and love - our pastoral associate and adult faith coordinator, Anna Diodati. Anna will present our theme for this year, "Sacramental Living", by taking us through the adult faith brochure you should all have received as you entered church today:

## Anna

As you can see from the brochure, our theme this year is: Sacramental Living: Responding to our call to abundant life.

Before we go through the brochure together, let's look at the definition of sacrament. A sacrament is an outward and visible sign, given by Christ, of an inner grace.

What does this mean?

God gives us gifts, talents and abilities to fulfill the mission He has planned for our lives. When we receive the sacraments, it is an acknowledgement of these graces, and a willingness on our part to become more conscious of our connection with God.

But, how do we turn the willingness into action?

If we treat our sacraments as mere rituals that we have to go through, then we do not receive their full benefit.

It's like going to visit a country, getting off the plane, going through customs to get our passport stamped to prove we've been there, getting back on a plane and coming straight home without ever visiting the country! We essentially remain unchanged by the experience.

In order to really appreciate the value of the sacraments and their transformative power in our lives, we must understand the graces they offer us, take ownership of them, and then live them out. This is how we turn our initial willingness into action. When we take responsibility for our sacraments, we are in true relationship with God.

We are not only accepting the graces He bestows upon us, we are responding to them. We're not only having our passport stamped, we're actually visiting the country so that when we get back home, we have so much to share with everyone about our experience!

When we live in dialogue with God through the sacraments, then we look for, and find Him present in everyone and in every circumstance we encounter. Life takes on a more meaningful and empowering perspective. This is sacramental living! This is what it is to live abundant lives!

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Rather than just giving out the brochure of Adult Faith Activities, the pastoral team thought it best that we go through it together.

So let's begin with the Adult Faith Cafes. You'll find these on the first 2 panels of the brochure.

Our first café is this coming October 8. "Our Call in Baptism and Confirmation" will help us understand why these 2 sacraments are so important, and what it means to truly live them out in our daily lives. We will learn that we always have a *choice* to confirm our baptism and life mission by facing our challenges with honor and integrity, with the help of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

I invite you to join us for this very special café to discover how your identity as a baptized and confirmed Christian empowers you to live out your mission, right here, right now!

Our second café highlights the sacrament of “The Anointing of the Sick”. “The Talk of a Lifetime” addresses the importance of talking to trusted people about our wishes concerning our medical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing as we age. This also includes talking about funeral arrangements and ceremonies that respect what we hold dear.

I’m particularly excited about our third café, “God Calls You by Name”, because it will be an opportunity for us to learn how to discern and respond to our personal vocation. Do you know that God calls each of us by a unique name?

When we have a sense of who we are in God’s eyes, and for what purpose we were born, then we can recognize more easily the gifts God has given us, the work that we are meant to do, and the state of life which best honors God’s purpose for us.

And our fourth Café, Living the Eucharist, will explore how we are called to live and become the Eucharist in our daily lives. When we receive Christ through Communion, it transforms us so that we can, in turn, bring Christ to everyone we encounter, through our thoughts, our words and our actions.

This is exactly what St. Paul expressed in today’s reading when he urges us to let the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus.

In the blue box you will find information about our Contemplative prayer group which meets weekly in the parish rectory.

On the next panel, you will see that we are having 2 retreats this year.

Our first retreat will take place next Saturday, October 4. “Finding God in All Things: The Sacrament of Everyday Life”, is the perfect way to begin our journey through the sacraments. I invite you to come away for a few hours to explore how you can increase your awareness of the presence of God in your everyday life. The more we become aware of this gift of connection with God, the more we are empowered to live our lives with greater courage, meaning and gratitude!

Our second retreat, “The Wonder of God in the Unfolding Universe: The Sacrament of Creation”, will take place in the month of May when nature is in full bloom! It is in creation that God first reveals himself to us, and as science offers more information on the unfolding universe, we are drawn into new understandings and experiences of our God.

Of course, Fr. Raymond’s “Video Divina” movie series is back again, and this year, we will be looking at life through the lens of the sacraments!

On the next panel, we have Faith sharing in small groups. Our faith is enriched at our every encounter, and the sharing that goes on in our groups creates lasting bonds of friendship. There are currently 5 groups with a total of 50 people in our program, with a 6<sup>th</sup> group starting up next month!

Coffee and Conversation is a great opportunity for adults, especially parents, to get together during the Sunday Faith First classes, for a fresh look at the teachings of Jesus.

This year we are viewing the Nooma series of short 10 to 14 minute thought provoking films that relate to real life situations. The content is amazing, and the lessons we take from them will definitely inspire how we respond to the people and circumstances of our lives.

On the other side of the brochure you will find how to contact the pastoral team and office staff, as well as information about our RCIA program.

The next 2 panels include our Enrichment Seminars.

Sr. Marie Azzarello will guide us through key sections of Pope Francis' book, "The Joy of the Gospel", for six weeks beginning on October 21. She will help us navigate through the book and reflect on how our relationship with Jesus influences our way of being in the world.

Back by popular demand, Pastor Brent Walker will be with us for 4 weeks beginning January 21 for another bible study! This year, we will experience scripture in a sacramental way, and explore the biblical roots of the Church's 7 sacraments.

To honor the sacrament of marriage, we are offering "The Marriage Course" in the spring of 2015! This 7 week course is an absolutely wonderful opportunity for committed couples of all ages to spend quality time discovering the important elements that make their union healthy and strong.

We offered the course at St. Monica's 4 years ago, and by the time we got to the last session, the couples didn't want it to end!

And finally, we thought it fitting to explore the sacrament of Reconciliation during our Lenten Mission. Many of you have expressed the desire to know more about forgiveness. You want to know how to discern if you've been forgiven by God and by others, and how to know if you've forgiven someone else. These and other concerns will be addressed so that we will welcome Easter with a new perspective.

We are well aware of the demands that are placed on your lives, no matter what age you are. Our goal in providing adult faith education is to provide spiritual enrichment that enhances what goes on when we meet at Mass. Our hope is that by going through the brochure together, you will pick out what speaks most to you, so that you can make a point of attending those events.

I encourage you to check the standing poster boards at the 2 entrances, the bulletin and our website for more information on our events.

We take registration for most of our events to help us set up appropriately, and to spare you from coming to the parish to find out that an event was cancelled!

Thank you for your attention! If you ever have questions, I'm only a phone call or e-mail away, and I hope to see you at the events!

**Fr. Ray** - wrap up

In our second reading today, St. Paul invites us to be of one mind, sharing the same love, looking not only to our own interests, but to those of others. He concludes: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." This, ultimately, is what it means to live **sacramentally**: putting on the mind of Christ, the heart of Christ, the attitudes of Christ. The banner hanging over the altar, symbolically reminding us of the Church's seven sacraments; the various adult faith events planned throughout the year, the movie evenings, the homilies, the catechetical program, the Alpha group for the teenagers – all of this will be geared this year to helping us live out our relationship with Jesus by consciously embracing prayerful and sacramental living.

So do take home a copy of our adult faith brochure, read it over carefully, use a magnet to stick it on the fridge, leave it in a place where you will see it regularly. Check our website regularly. Watch out for the posters and listen to those announcements. So many opportunities this year to be nourished, to grow in your own faith, to live those sacraments not just as "stamps in your passport", but as peak experiences on an exciting journey with the Lord – here in the parish, at home, school and work, everywhere the Lord sends you. For indeed, we are the Church, the sacrament of Christ; we are his Body, his sacramental presence in the world. Amen! Alleluia!