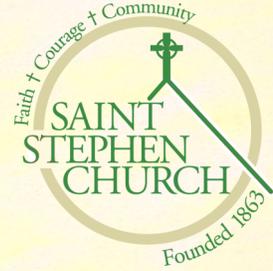


St. Stephen Church

The 29th Sunday in Ordinary time

October 18, 2020



From Fr. George

Dear Parishioners

I want to congratulate those who received the Sacraments of Initiation earlier this week. Celebrating the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist was a wonderful culmination to their RCIA journey. Thanks to Sr. Angela and her team for the hard work they put into passing on the Faith. With prayers we welcome the newest members of our Faith Community.

May God bless you and your loved ones in the week to come.

Fr. George

From Archbishop Lori—Living the Gospel of Life

A few weeks ago, I had the joy and privilege of blessing a new pro-life pregnancy center in downtown Baltimore. Located next to Planned Parenthood on Howard Street, this new center, called “Options@328,” is part of a network of life-affirming facilities sponsored by the Center for Pregnancy Concerns.



Its newest center is located in what had been an empty, run-down commercial building. I am grateful to the leadership of the Center for Pregnancy Concerns who transformed that old and neglected building into a place of welcome, understanding, love and compassion for both mothers and their unborn children.

In this center, they are received with love. Mothers have the priceless opportunity to see the child of their womb, thanks to the state-of-the-art ultrasound units that the Knights of Columbus generously provided. Here they are gently encouraged to bring their babies to term and they are provided with help in giving their babies a strong start in life.

In my heart, I knew that this is exactly where we need to proclaim and live the Gospel of Life! And proclaim it we must – clearly, firmly and compassionately.

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Readings for the 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading I: Isaiah 45: 1. 4-6

Psalm 96

Reading II: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5

Matthew 22:15-21

The full text of these readings is available at <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/101820.cfm>. Keep them in mind you as you ask yourself the questions of the week:

Teens/Adults: How much responsibility do you think the government should take for meeting the needs of the less fortunate in our society? Why is it important for you to contribute?

Children: Who needs help in your neighborhood or community? What could you and your family do to help?

Intercessions for Sunday, October 18

That all clergy may be strengthened and edified by the prayers of the Church throughout the world, we pray to the Lord...

That all leaders of state may be guided by the Almighty in the just use of power, we pray to the Lord...

For our St. Stephen community, that our lives might reflect that we are beloved by God and belong to Him, we pray to the Lord...

That the life of every person, from conception to natural death, will be protected in our laws and cherished in our hearts, we pray to the Lord...

For those who have died, that they will live peacefully in the Kingdom of God for all eternity, we pray to the Lord...

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Mission Statement: We, the parish of St. Stephen, will carry out the mission of Jesus Christ as a welcoming, worshipping, Catholic community by sharing, growing and living the Gospel.



Render unto God what belongs to him



In today's Gospel, Jesus short-circuits a clever trap by the Pharisees. They want him to declare himself pro-tax and thereby get in trouble with the Jews or anti-tax and thereby get in trouble with the Romans. Instead, he utters the famous phrase: "Render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

Today, society demands that we render unto Caesar certain things that do not belong to him:

Conscience decisions: No one should be forced to act against his conscience — particularly in grave matters such as abortion, prescribing contraception and redefining marriage. Yet, increasingly, Caesar is claiming power over these things by forcing individuals to act against their consciences.

Religious freedom: The fundamental freedom is the right to recognize God, because he is our author and our end. But the government is increasingly preventing organizations from practicing their faith in how they spend their money.

Right to life. The state has no power over the right to life. Even when the state must go to battle or execute a criminal, this principle applies: One may only kill when it is the only way to prevent someone else from taking a life. The only power the state has is to defend life, not to take life. Yet, in abortion, especially, but also in excessive use of the death penalty, the state is increasingly claiming to own the right to life and to be able to grant and remove it.

None of these things are Caesar's, and none should be rendered to him.

So what should we render unto Caesar? According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

Respect for the rule of law: We owe respect and obedience to legitimate authority acting toward the common good. We do not, however, owe allegiance to unjust laws — racist laws or those that deny the right to life, for example.

The common good: We owe it to the government to cooperate in efforts that promote the common good, which means the promotion of human rights, spiritual and material benefits, peace and security. This is best reached through small communities: clubs, parishes and other organizations.

Taxes. As Jesus says, we owe taxes to the government. Washington is on our dollar bill, and we must render it unto Washington, D.C.

But perhaps the most important lesson in today's reading isn't about Caesar, but God.

We must also render unto God what belongs to him.

Our coins may have the presidents' heads on them, but we bear the image and likeness of God. To him, we owe our very lives.

Tom and April Hoopes, writing at ncregister.com

St. Stephen School Christmas Wreath Sale

The HSA is holding a Christmas door wreath (and swag) fundraiser this year. Wreaths are from Hickory Hill Farm in Street, MD. Wreaths are on sale now until November 8. There are a variety of sizes and both decorated or undecorated. You can purchase the wreaths at this link: <http://forms.diamondmindinc.com/ststephenschool/wreath>



Pick up will be Saturday, November 28 from 3-4:15pm at pavilion next to the school. If you cannot pick up your wreath at this time but would like to order, please put that in your comments on your order and we will arrange a pickup time. Thank you for supporting St. Stephen School.

There will be no vespers on Wednesday, October 21; they will resume on October 28. If you'd like to be part of evening prayer at 7pm on Wednesdays, please join the "Prayer Team" Flocknote group. Not signed up for Flocknote yet? Visit www.ssparish.org/flocknote to make a free account with our parish!

Life after Loss

"You have been fundamentally changed by your loss. It takes time to discover who you've become."



Join a small group journey "From Grief to Healing" for people coping with loss of a loved one.

The group will meet VIRTUALLY for 6 Wednesdays 1:00 - 2:15 pm, Nov. 4 through Dec. 9

OR

6 Wednesdays 7:00 - 8:15 pm, Nov. 4 through Dec. 9

Contact Sr. Angela at redsdef@comcast.net or 443-955-1198. Feel free to call with any questions or to just chat. I look forward to journeying with you.

—Sr. Angela

Mass intentions for October 17/18

4:30 pm (Hall)	William "Bill" Button (D)
6:00 pm	Parish
8:00 am (Hall)	
9:15 am	Dolores Sterbinsky
10:30 am (Hall)	Carolyn Somers (D)

Respect Life Month Campaign to Support Local Pregnancy Centers

Thank you for all the generous donations we have received so far—God bless you!

Throughout the month of October, the St. Stephen Respect Life Committee is asking you to make a gift to help the Center for Pregnancy Concerns and the Women's Care Center in Fullerton. The need for the help that pregnancy centers provide is greater than ever.

We know that finances are difficult for some parishioners, but for those who are able, please consider making a donation in one of the following ways:

- Bring a check to Mass and place it in one of the decorated baby baskets next to the offering baskets
- Mail a check to the parish center

Checks should be payable to St. Stephen Parish, with "baby donation" in the memo line.

- Make a donation electronically [on the parish website](#). Under "How would you like to allocate your donation?" select "Baby Bottle Donation" from the drop down menu.

We will divide the donations evenly between the two centers. Thank you for your generosity!

If you are unable to offer financial support at this time, please pray for these ministries. Prayer works wonders.

Pregnancy Centers provide pregnancy testing and counseling, ultrasounds, prenatal and parenting classes, self-sufficiency training, and referrals to sympathetic medical providers. Baby clothing, cribs, diapers, baby supplies, and other necessities are also available.



Ramona's baby Silas

I was completely unprepared to have a baby. I was young, trying to finish school, and then to add something else?

When I came into Women's Care Center, I had no idea what to do. Hearing about abortion, I knew I couldn't get one and feel ok with it for the rest of my life.

It was hard to feel connected to my baby at first. But you helped me. I got more than just a pregnancy test and ultrasound here; I came for classes, too. Getting to come here was so good for me. You got me excited to be a mom!

Ramona

(from the Women's Care Center's September 2020 newsletter)

Evening Bible study : "Kingdom of Happiness—Living the Beatitudes in Everyday Life"

"Looking for something that will impact your faith, community, and soul? This Bible Study, Kingdom of Happiness: Living the Beatitudes in Everyday Life, will do it for you. This eight-week study will broaden your understanding of the Beatitudes and how they can positively influence your life. This is an opportunity in the safety of your home (on Zoom) to answer your questions, share your insights, and speak comfortably among others while you all grow together is an invitation open to you.

"As a thankful 'student' of this study I can testify that the book and associated videos are informative, engaging, and insightful. I feel blessed to experience the study with folks who have common values – all under the guidance of Sr. Angela, who makes a good thing great because she is so open to sharing her influence from the Holy Spirit. Five Stars!" - current participant

"If you want to find peace in our confused world of today, studying the Beatitudes with Sr. Angela will give you the strength and wisdom to be a peacemaker."—another participant

"Kingdom of Happiness" is from Saint Benedict Press. Their excellent Bible studies have provided St. Stephen parishioners with fellowship, and spiritual growth. If you're interested in participating, call Sister Angela at 443-955-1198 or email her at redsdef@comcast.net.

Becoming Catholic—RCIA

"Faith...takes the form of a journey, a path to be followed, which begins with an encounter with the living God."

-- Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei* (46)

Is God inviting you into deeper relationship?

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a journey toward full communion in the Roman Catholic Church. It is designed for adults who are either...

- unbaptized or baptized in a non-Catholic Christian tradition who are interested in becoming Catholic.
- baptized Catholic, but have not received the remainder of their Sacraments of Initiation (Holy Communion and Confirmation).

RCIA is not only about learning what the Catholic Church believes and teaches, but also how Catholics live and celebrate faith in daily life. It's about *sharing the faith* with people who are seeking God.

Do you think the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults might be for you or someone you know? If so, please contact Sr. Angela at redsdef@comcast.net or 443-955-1198. We hope to begin **Monday, October 19 at 7pm** VIRTUALLY through ZOOM.

Adult Celebration of Confirmation

If you are a practicing Catholic that has never been Confirmed, contact Sr. Angela. A group is forming for a short preparation for celebrating Confirmation. Contact Sr. Angela at 443-955-1198 or redsdef@comcast.net