As Lisa Veto knows, sharing the journey of faith formation with your children is one of the most beautiful experiences a family can enjoy.

“Whatever your experience has been thus far, God, by virtue of this child, is leading you back to Him,” says Lisa, our Director of Religious Education, to parents of children preparing to receive their First Reconciliation and First Communion. “It’s an opportunity – don’t miss it!”

Although the second-graders who are preparing to receive the sacraments attend weekly classes, the experience can also be a powerful one for parents. For many, it is a chance to take a closer look at their own relationship with God.

“The thing I stress most is that they are the first and most important educators of their children in the ways of the faith,” Lisa says. “We are their support, and not the other way around. God gave those children to those parents, and they should be the first educators.”

However, Lisa understands that, for many parents, it is not always that simple.

“As a mother, I understand that we sometimes feel inadequate to pass on the faith; we feel intimidated,” she says.

In order to empower parents to journey with their children as they prepare for the sacraments, Lisa does everything she can to provide resources to help parents best serve their children. From describing what will happen when their child receives the sacraments, to explaining complex terminology, Lisa does everything she can to make parents feel ready to grow with their child.

In many different ways throughout the process, Lisa invites the parents to walk alongside their child, sharing with them their own experience.

“We want to not only model what the right thing is to do, but also how powerful it is for our kids to see we believe it,” Lisa says.
Our interests and abilities are varied, and our volunteer options are endless, as we are called to give our talents back to God in loving service. Examine your heart and prayerfully discern your gifts, then direct those gifts towards serving the people of God.

Got Talent?
BRING IT TO THE SPOTLIGHT!

The word “talent” often conjures up images of stage performers in the spotlight, captivating awestruck audiences with their impeccable musical or acting skills.

While these talented performers are certainly deserving of applause, the majority of the population sits hidden in the shadows, staring on in amazement while feeling overlooked — and perhaps wishing to possess such talents themselves. But even when we feel overlooked and untalented, God knows better. As Christians, we are all called to dig deep and trust that we are specially blessed with valuable talents and abilities, even if our talents aren’t so obvious or don’t garner applause and accolades.

Along with “time” and “treasure,” “talent” is one of the “three Ts” of stewardship. Exploring our natural inclinations and preferences, especially when guided by the intricacies of our unique personalities, can unearth God-given talents.

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same spirit,” writes St. Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians. “There are different forms of service, but the same Lord.”

Some people have the gift of working peacefully with children. Equipped with patience and gentleness, they are able to guide young souls to the Lord. Yet, others shudder at the thought of a classroom full of 5-year-olds, and instead seek the quiet solace of behind-the-scenes tasks — cleaning the church, sewing altar cloths or stuffing envelopes.

Our interests and abilities are varied, and our volunteer options are endless, as we are called to give our talents back to God in loving service. Examine your heart and prayerfully discern your gifts, then direct those gifts towards serving the people of God.

H. Jackson Brown, Jr., author of Life’s Little Instruction Book, once said, “Talent without discipline is like an octopus on roller skates. There’s plenty of movement, but you never know if it is going to be forwards, backwards, or sideways.”

If our gifts of talent are not guided by the discipline of prayer, just like an octopus on roller skates, we will get nowhere fast! Yet, if we keep our eyes on the goal of heaven and serve the Lord with joyfulness, our efforts will produce a bountiful harvest. In the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians, “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will reap bountifully.”

The next time you sit quietly in the shadows behind a glaring stage spotlight, rest assured that your talents are no less impressive in the eyes of God, and will always be “applauded” when directed to the service of His people.
Dear Parishioners,

This is a time of many celebrations in the Church. The list is almost endless at this time of year – First Communions, Confirmations, graduations, and weddings. There are so many events that bring people who are not from the parish, or even members of the Church, into our parish.

You may recall that we speak of the Four Pillars of Stewardship – Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. I want to particularly speak of that pillar of Hospitality this month. It is important every day of every year and at everything we do as a parish community. However, at this time of year, when there may be strangers and newcomers in our midst, it becomes even more important.

Jesus is the cornerstone of our faith. In Matthew 25:35, the Lord speaks to us in terms of expectations when He says, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” He makes it clear to us that whenever we welcome any of His brothers and sisters, we welcome Christ Himself. Sometimes, we may think that this concept of hospitality is the responsibility of a committee, ministry or group of people assigned that task – but the truth is that we are all part of the parish hospitality effort.

If we are going to be a stewardship parish, and if each of us is going to be a good steward, we need to be aware that we need to seek and find Christ in everyone around us, everyone we meet, and certainly everyone who enters our church or other parish facilities.

Hospitality is a parish priority that each of us must take to heart. It is not so challenging to greet someone, smile at them and welcome them – yet, it may require a little extra effort on our part. That means we must have an awareness of those near us, of those who may appear to be alone or new. We may not always think of Christ in this way, but if we carefully listen to Holy Scripture, we must realize that He was a caring, welcoming and friendly person. If we are to be His disciples, we need to be the same.

As stated, Jesus assures us that when we welcome others, we are welcoming Him, as well. St. Paul once said that people who are hospitable sometimes entertain angels. For us, parish hospitality is not an option. It is our way to model the Kingdom of God right here and right now.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. William E. Brown
Pastor
In 2010, Olivia Gentilello experienced a powerful turning point in her spiritual life, and she hasn’t been the same since.

“I had been getting negligent about praying the Rosary daily, but then a little miracle happened when I was on vacation in Venice, Italy, with my husband,” she says. “I was at daily Mass, and I asked a lady who spoke Hungarian to pray the Rosary with me. She prayed it in Hungarian while I prayed it in English. Afterward, in broken English, she said, ‘Pope John Paul II prayed three Rosaries a day, and Poland was saved from Communism by the praying of the Rosary, and they got a pope elected from their country. In Hungary, we don’t pray the Rosary, and that is why we still have Communism.’”

Apparently, the woman’s story made quite an impact on Olivia, and she let God speak to her heart in a meaningful way, inspiring her to coordinate a Daily Rosary Group at our parish.

“It hit me at that moment that I need to be praying the Rosary every day,” Olivia says. “Since I have been doing so, the Blessed Mother has done many miracles in my life. Sometimes, I pray it multiple times a day, and I enjoy leading a Rosary group at our parish.”

The Rosary Group gathers after the 8:30 a.m. Mass on Monday through Friday, and after the 9 a.m. Mass each Saturday, in front of the Blessed Mother statue at our church. It has up to a dozen regular attendees. During the meeting, attendees share prayer intentions and pray the Rosary, reflecting deeply on each mystery. They pray for all kinds of needs, such as for world peace, our parish school, and family members.

As a mother, Olivia has found great consolation in attending the Rosary Group.
“The Rosary we pray helps protect our children,” she says. “At the time when I started attending this group, my children were going off to college, and I really wanted the Blessed Mother to protect them.”

It also provides its participants with the joy of fellowship, and the serenity that comes from drawing near to the Queen of Peace.

“It really helps me to have other people to go and pray with,” Olivia says. “It is also a wonderful reminder of how much we are all connected to our Blessed Mother. The Rosary is a largely untapped resource that we have as Catholics. When you start praying the Rosary on a daily basis, you realize how many miracles await us. There are circumstances in which I don’t know what to do. But after praying the Rosary, I become filled with Mary’s peace and everything turns out all right.”

If you would like more information about this beautiful ministry, please contact Olivia Gentilello at 916-712-6600.
At first glance, the Visitation seems a simple enough event — Mary went to Judah, where she visited her pregnant cousin, Elizabeth.

And, yet, the reality behind the events that took place on this fateful day is so profound that we celebrate the Feast of the Visitation every year on May 31.

Imagine being 12 years old again. For most of us, that brings back memories of playing in the park, riding our bikes, watching TV, playing baseball, and so forth. Now, imagine that at the young age of 12, you find out that you are expecting a child — and, even more daunting, that this child is the Lord. As unimaginable as that situation is for all of us, it is the reality that 12-year-old Mary knew. What a weight to bear!

Yet, it is clear that God knows what He is doing, because Mary’s reaction to this reality was much different than most of ours would be. “‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord,’ she responded to the angel. ‘Be it done unto me according to your word’” (Lk. 1:38).

Then, she set out to the town of Judah to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, whom she just learned was also expecting a child. Instead of keeping to herself and processing the fact that she was pregnant with her Lord and Savior, Mary immediately set out to bring Christ to others. She was indeed the first steward of the Church — offering her whole life to the Lord as His “handmaid,” and revealing Christ to others through her service.

As soon as Mary entered the house and greeted Elizabeth, John the Baptist leaped in Elizabeth’s womb, rejoicing at the presence of the Lord within Mary. “And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’” (Lk. 1:41-43). Mary radiated with the presence of Christ. Elizabeth had not been told that Mary was pregnant with the Savior, and yet, no sooner did Mary enter her home, Elizabeth knew.

No doubt, Mary is the steward of all stewards. So selflessly had she given herself to the Lord that she became His mother, and, in that way, her very being radiates Christ. It is for that reason that we venerate the Blessed Mother. Everything about who she is as a person, so closely united is she to the Lord and His will, brings us to her Son. And in her words that followed Elizabeth’s joyful greeting, we see exactly that. Christ is glorified through her.

In response to Elizabeth’s veneration of Mary, Mary exclaims, “‘My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For He has looked upon His handmaid’s lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is His name’” (Lk. 1:46-49).

This month, as we celebrate the Feast of the Visitation, may we all venerate the Blessed Mother for her selflessness, and ask her to bring us closer to her Son.
Allowing Christ’s Passion TO TOUCH OUR HEARTS THROUGH THE LIVING STATIONS

The Catholic practice of commemorating our Lord’s passion and death through the Stations of the Cross has evolved from the early beginnings of Christianity. Tradition holds that it originates from the Blessed Mother, who visited daily the scenes of her Son’s passion. Particularly during the Lenten season, Catholics from all around the world gather together on Fridays, praying and reliving our Lord’s great act of love for us.

Here at St. Hilary Parish and School, we have a special tradition for commemorating the Lord’s passion, suffering and death through the annual Living Stations of the Cross. Reenacted each year by the current seventh-grade class, this year’s program consisted of three presentations: one on Palm Sunday, one school performance just before Easter break, and finally on Good Friday – the day set aside each year as a memorial of our Lord’s passion, suffering and death.

“Many students have anticipated this project throughout their schooling, looking forward to it tremendously,” says seventh-grade teacher and Living Stations coordinator Danielle MacDonell. “Every seventh-grade student is part of the project in some way.”

In light of the symbolic and prayerful nature of the reenactment, students began practicing regularly for the Living Stations a month and a half in advance. Practices took place during instructional time, providing many of those “teachable moments” as the students pondered the meaning behind the words and actions of Christ during His salvific walk.

“There were lots of those moments when we would pause and I would tell them to think about what they were saying and doing,” Mrs. MacDonell says. “Moments like when all the students in the crowd shouted, ‘Crucify him! Crucify him!’ There were definite moments of discomfort that we had to work through when the kids realized what really happened to Jesus and how devastating and cruel it was.”

As a way of building upon these discussions, the students were also assigned regular reflection assignments, pushing them to connect what they were doing through their reenactment with what was happening in their daily lives.

This year’s seventh-grade cast for the Living Stations of the Cross

“It was really encouraging to see how much the students were able to open up through their reflections,” Mrs. MacDonell says. “At this age, you always wonder about the role Jesus plays in their lives. Seeing the seriousness with which they took their part and the gravity with which they approached the stations was truly wonderful to see.”

The Living Stations of the Cross is not only a blessing for the seventh-graders who put it on each year, but also for the younger students and parishioners who are led to prayer through it. Seeing Christ’s agony come alive allows His redemptive act to become more real, bringing us to a deeper appreciation of Christ’s self-giving sacrifice.

“During the Living Stations, there is a moment after Jesus dies where the people kneel and pray,” Mrs. MacDonell says. “One thing that struck the students was that many people continued to kneel and pray for a long time after the Stations had concluded. It really put people in the living presence of Jesus.”

Although Christ’s suffering and death occurred thousands of years ago, the students’ annual reenactment helps remind us that His sacrifice was an eternal one. By remembering Christ’s passion in this way, we are each reminded of God’s incredible love for us. In the process, our Lord invites us to return that love through our own small sacrifices in our day-to-day lives.
LITURGY SCHEDULE

Weekday Mass: 8:30 a.m.
Saturday: 9:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m.
Sunday: 7:30 a.m. 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. & 5:00 p.m.
Confessions:
Friday: 9:00 a.m.
Saturday: 4 - 4:30 p.m.

First Communion

Lisa shares a story of a mom who went to confession, just as her son was going for the first time.

“I had a woman the other day who came out of the confessional with tears in her eyes, but not because it was a bad experience,” Lisa says. “She said, ‘I haven’t gone to confession in almost 20 years. I went because I wanted my son to see me go and realize it’s important – and now, I feel like I’m back. I’m back in the church. I’m back at home.’”

Lisa also explains that although she sees many parents who find the process to be meaningful, as the director, she also learns from the children.

“My favorite part is the renewed sense of awe and gratitude I feel in my own faith about the graces God has for us,” she says. “It’s a constant reminder for me of what’s there if we would just be open to it.”

Lisa encourages parents to make a priority of helping their children receive their sacraments, giving them grace and strength that will be necessary as they grow, and providing them with a solid foundation in their relationship with God.

“The sacraments are important for children to receive because, as our young people grow and mature, the stakes are a lot higher with the choices they need to make,” Lisa says. “The graces from God that we receive in the sacraments fortify us and give us a foothold. I want these little people to always know their God is there, and He’s a big God, and that no matter how big the problem is, He’s bigger. I want them to always have that friendship with God, and always be able to talk to Him. I feel that the sacraments bring the children into a closer relationship with Christ.”

And wherever they are in their own faith journey, parents are encouraged to share the experience with their children.

“I really believe that Jesus meets us where we are, in all our brokenness — the good, the bad, the ugly,” Lisa says. “We’re works in progress. We’re not about judging you, we’re about loving you. You’re part of this community. We need you; you matter. Please come and be open to what God is trying to give you, through your child.”

Online registration for Religious Education, First Reconciliation and First Communion begins in July. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Lisa Veto at lisaveto@gmail.com. If you are interested in serving the parish as a catechist or volunteering at the First Communion retreats, you can also contact Lisa via the email listed here.