

## Stewardship in Action at St. Bernard



### RAIN DOESN'T DETER ST BERNARD BLOOD DONORS



Karen Brophy donates her 69th pint of blood with NY Blood Center at St. Bernard's.

As Catholic Christians, we are called to come to the aid of those in need. One way that parishioners at St. Bernard have been answering this call is by donating blood through the blood drives that are periodically held at the parish center. Volunteering to donate blood is an important and potentially life-saving act of charity, as donations help to meet the daily transfusion needs of cancer and surgery patients, accident and burn victims, newborns and mothers delivering babies, AIDS and sickle cell anemia patients, and many more.

Coordinated by parishioners Laura Felegi and Paula Machala, the blood drive program has been going on for many years at St. Bernard, and typically draws about 30 parishioners who donate approximately 36 to 40 pints of blood at each event.

The most recent drive, held on Sunday, February 11, was a success, with "regulars" and some new faces braving terrible weather conditions to donate to New York Blood Services. NYBC is one of the largest community-based, non-profit blood collection and distribution organizations in the United States. Stewardship Council member Karen Brophy and her husband Bill Brophy are "regulars" at NYBC blood drives. "I would not be alive today were it not for anonymous blood donors" says Brophy. "I received two transfusions after the birth of my daughter in 1991. Several of my family members have also benefitted from donated blood, so donating regularly is our way of giving back. The NYBC team members are "old friends" that we see at many donation locations around central NJ."

NYBC visits St. Bernard four times per year. They will be returning this year on April 29th, July 8th and October 21st. The blood drives take place in the parish center after all masses on the scheduled Sunday and no preregistration is necessary. New donors are welcomed and made comfortable throughout the process.

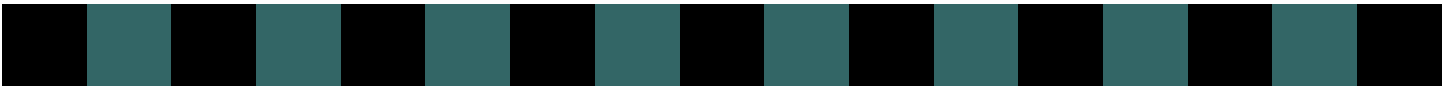
Giving an hour of your time to donate blood is a great way to be a Steward of Christ and help those in need in our community and beyond. Look out for announcements in the bulletin and on the parish website to catch the next opportunity to make difference.

#### *Interested in donating?*

Donors need to be 17 years old (16 with parental consent), weigh at least 110 pounds and be in good health. Further information can be found at <http://nybloodcenter.org/>.

#### *Interested in volunteering?*

The Blood Drive Ministry is in need of youth greeters to help out at the quarterly drives. This is an excellent opportunity to earn service hours for Confirmation candidates. Please contact Laura Felegi at [lcfelegi@optonline.net](mailto:lcfelegi@optonline.net) if interested.



## LET LENT LEAD US TO OUR “SENSES”!

Our faith has always tapped into the five senses in its liturgical celebrations, especially during Mass. We not only hear words spoken in the church, but we also touch the sacramentals that draw us closer to God and prepare us to receive the sacrament. We see the altar and the vestments, and, of course, we see, hear, touch, smell and taste when we partake of the Eucharist.

Lent begins for us – and for many of our Christian brothers and sisters - with the ashes we receive on Ash Wednesday. What a distinct sign of our faith! While it is perfectly acceptable to wipe the ashes from our foreheads after receiving them, many choose to keep them on all day as a visible indicator to everyone else that, despite our workaday tasks and concerns, our ultimate mission is otherworldly. The ashes, whose use dates back to the ancient Jewish tradition of penance and fasting, symbolize the dust from which God made us. As the priest applies the ashes to a person's forehead, he speaks the words: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” This physical reminder strengthens our understanding of our mortality much more than simply hearing the words spoken. The act of having the priest's thumb rub the ashes onto our skin engages our sense of touch, of smell, and of sound in addition to sight; we contemplate more thoroughly when as many of our senses can work in concert.

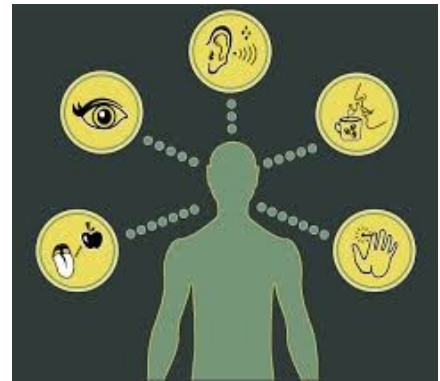
Another common use of the sense of touch is something that we do regularly, often without much thought - that is the dipping of our fingers into the holy water. This time-honored practice upon entering and leaving the church is a sign of purification, but even more so, it is a reminder of our baptism and a preparation for us to receive the Eucharist during the Mass.

While in the Western rite the use of incense occurs far less frequently than in the Eastern churches or among our Orthodox brethren, Lent is a time when incense is used more frequently, especially during the adoration periods that often follow the Stations of the Cross. These powerful scents are also reminders that we are called to repentance. Since the fragrances are much different than those we encounter in everyday life, they help us to recognize that we are called as Christians to be countercultural; that we should reject the enticements of greed and selfishness and should practice instead the virtues of humility and stewardship. Finally, as the source and summit of our faith, it is fitting that in the Eucharist we also integrate the sense of taste into our sensual awareness. When we consume the precious body and blood, we are adding taste to our spiritual exercise and thus have worshiped with all five senses engaged.

So what does all of this appreciation for our human senses have to do with stewardship? I would maintain that engaging each sense in our spiritual lives has a parallel in the life of a steward.

**Sight:** Our Lord knows everything and doesn't need to “see” us, but how we appear and how we conduct ourselves is the first important step for being a good steward. Secondly, we need to keep our eyes open to see the needs of the parish and those around us if we want to practice good stewardship.

**Taste:** When we eat our meals each day, we should remember that every good gift is from above. We should realize that we are called to take good care of what we have been given as well as those we are privileged to be among— especially those in need of food. We are formed in community and share responsibilities for each other.



**Smell:** We have spoken above about the use of incense and its symbolic importance in our spiritual lives. Let's consider that the unusual, even otherworldly scent of burning incense reminds us that we have to think “beyond the box” in addressing our stewardship efforts. Continuing to do the same things over again is often admirable as we continue to address pressing needs, but in modern society, things that once worked are sometimes ineffective today. Changing patterns require creative responses to new challenges. We need to be open to innovation.

**Touch:** Christ didn't need to touch in order to heal, but he chose to integrate human touch into his healing ministry. As stewards, are we guilty of just assuming someone else will do the work in the parish? Are we reluctant to “touch” some of the tougher tasks that our ministries require? Lent provides us with a chance to review our commitment.

**Hearing:** Our faith calls us to evangelize. We ourselves need to be open to the living word and then be ready to share it with others. For some, this will mean actual preaching, while for many others it will require us to act in accordance with Saint Francis of Assisi who said, “Preach the Gospel always; if necessary, use words.”

Living a life of authentic faith and stewardship is the greatest witness we can offer to a world in need of our gifts.

Excerpted with permission from *Stewardship-in-Motion*, The Cathedral Corporation, March 2017.

*Interested in learning more about the Stewardship Council?*

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