



"I shall reflect on myself and ask: 'What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I do for Christ?'" -St. Stanislaus Kostka



# NewStan

The Newsletter of St. Stanislaus Parish  
El Boletín de la Parroquia de San Estanislao

Spring / Primavera 2023

## Humor and Faith: Do They Go Together?

Flashback to time when you were a child, say under ten years old, at Mass, and suddenly got the giggles or started laughing at the action of a sibling or friend. Now remember the sharp elbow jab from your mother/father/aunt/Sister Mary Elephant and the admonition "No, laughing in Church!"

Now, however many years later you may recognize the real message was to stay focused on God during Mass, but in your subconscious, and the subconscious of many, likely remains that premise that humor, laughter, fun, and Church don't mix. But is that really true?

Humor is inherently tied to things that typically don't go together: it's the inconsistency between the expected and the unexpected that makes something funny. And clearly humor in general, something that brings joy and makes people happy, is in itself a gift from God. So why wouldn't there be a path to God through humor – and in fact that very contrast between the "seriousness" of faith and humor may be the key.

Case in point, would be the comedian Jim Gaffigan. The six-time Grammy-nominated comedian has always been quite open, albeit in his typical self-deprecating way, about being Catholic: "My wife, she's really Catholic, she's like a Shiite Catholic...she doesn't consider me a real Catholic because I don't go to Church or follow any of the Church teachings, but occasionally I'll root for Notre Dame...so I'm Catholic". (Truth is, he, his wife, and their 5 kids attend Mass at St Patrick's Old Cathedral on Mulberry St in New York City). Gaffigan does not solely

focus on being Catholic in his standup (he's best known for his riffs on bacon, Hot Pockets, and his poor eating habits in general) but he very often focuses on various observations about Catholicism and activities for Catholics.

Some of those observations? Referencing Lent, he jokes "Hindus are not supposed to eat meat. They don't eat meat. Catholics are like only eat fish on Fridays...unless you forget...aw do whatever you want. We'll see you at Easter!" Or about sainthood: "You know no one goes for saint anymore, because it's too hard. To be considered a Catholic saint you have to have performed two miracles. I don't know why it's two, it's not like half of us are like 'Ya know, if it was one, I'd go for it!'" And he very often jokes directly about Biblical figures, God, and Jesus: "Jesus was a carpenter. Do you think he was a good carpenter? Because the Bible doesn't really address it. Maybe back then people were like 'Good thing that Messiah thing worked out...he built a shed for my cousin and what a piece of crap.'"



Comedian Jim Gaffigan (used by permission)

Uh-oh. Here we go. Is it a problem to joke like this about Jesus? Or about people not properly abstaining? Even Gaffigan himself comments on this, frequently suggesting God might strike him down on stage for the jokes.

Yet the fact is, by causing us to laugh at these observations, Gaffigan is also raising them, in a way that doesn't immediately cause us to dismiss them as too preachy or moralizing. Perhaps after we laugh, we think, "Gee, perhaps

*continued on page 6*

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# Groundhog Day Reflections

by Norm Berger

Time, a very familiar concept to all of us, can seem to run our lives and mark our lives' transitions from infancy to childhood to young adulthood and then to adult responsibilities and inexorably to old age and the end of life. In addition to this, our perceptions of the pace of time can alter as the poet Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) stated in the beginning of his poem "The River of Life":

*The more we live, more brief appear*

*Our life's succeeding stages;*

*A day to childhood seems a year,*

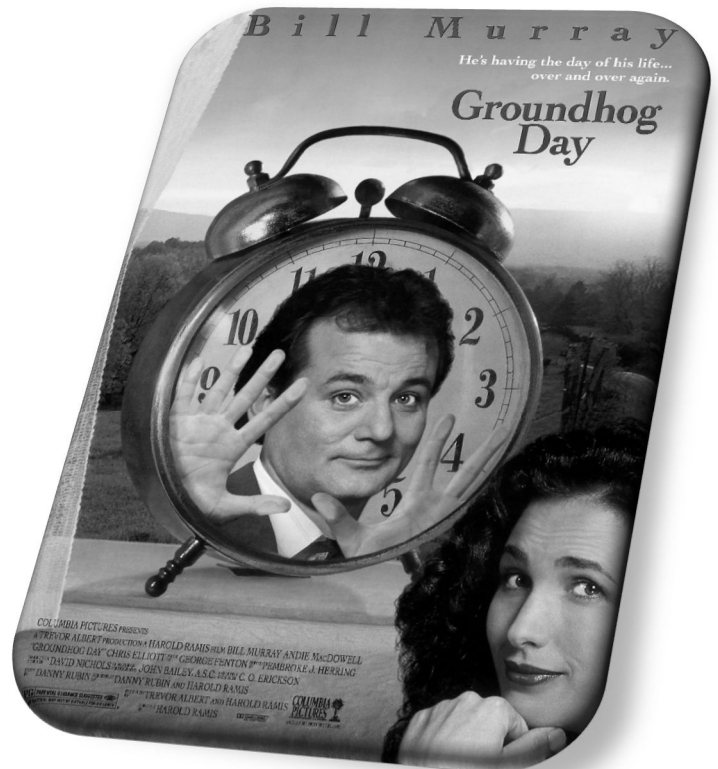
*And years like passing ages*

These concepts of time seemed to be turned on their head in the movie *Groundhog Day* (1993). SPOILER ALERT: If you've never seen this movie and someday plan to, you might want to skip this article.

There are three main characters in the movie: Phil Connors a Pittsburgh TV station weatherman (portrayed by Bill Murray); Rita Hanson, a TV producer (Andie MacDowell); and Larry, the cameraman and crew van driver (Chris Elliot). The three drive to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, to cover the annual Groundhog Day festivities. Phil is filmed giving a report in front of the Groundhog Day stage, then the trio gets ready to return to Pittsburgh. However, they get stuck in a blizzard and are forced to return to Punxsutawney for the night. The next morning, Phil finds that it is again Groundhog Day.

From this point, the same day occurs each and every morning in endless déjà vu. Phil, of course, questions what's going on and is increasingly surly and sarcastic with his crew members. Later on, in a macabre section of the film, he tries various ways of killing himself, plunging off a building, taking a stolen pickup with the groundhog in it down an embankment and also throwing his room's clock radio into the tub in which he is showering electrocuting himself. From all of these suicide attempts, etc. to escape his daily dilemma, he awakes the next morning on Groundhog Day.

His salvation is his awareness of Rita and his beginning to fall in love with her. He now spends his endless days in helping others, losing his sarcasm and learning French to read French poetry and learning to play the piano day after day to impress Rita. After rebuffs from Rita who initially



From [www.imdb.com/title/tt0107048/](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0107048/)

thinks that Phil is very insecure, self-centered and insincere, she comes to like him and even bids for him at a bachelor auction at a ball in town. The movie ends when the new day finally dawns and he and Rita celebrate.

But what's this got to do with anything you ask? Well, it is Lent at this writing. As we approach the Easter season and put Lent behind us, though, this scenario can teach us about Lent. That is, getting rid of old habits and views. Just as Phil came to love Rita, we can direct our Lenten efforts to improving our love life with our Lord who loved us so much as to give his life for us. And here's a sobering fact: Unlike Phil's seemingly endless re-dos of the same day, we don't have endless days to take the Lord and the Lenten season of preparation for granted. After all, how many Lenten seasons, and how many Easters, do we have left in our lives to sacrifice for and do honor to Him who has given so much to us?"

At one point in the film, Bill Murray's character asks, "What would you do if you were stuck in one place and every day was exactly the same, and nothing that you did mattered?" The point is, our days **do** matter and each is a chance to change our lives and move closer to God.✠

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# Annual Valentines Marriage Celebration Dinner

by Phil Ricciardi

St. Stanislaus Parish hosted its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Valentines / Marriage Celebration Dinner on Friday evening, February 3, in the Mater Dei Catholic School cafeteria. The event was sponsored and coordinated by the Evangelization Committee. Thirty-seven couples, both married and engaged, gathered for a wonderful night of good food (provided by AAA Catering) and an uplifting and humorous talk by Father Sean's good friend Father Robert Gross, the pastor from Visitation BVM Parish in Norristown.

One of the fun traditions of the Marriage Dinner is the awarding of special gift bags to the couple in attendance who was most recently married and the couple who has been married for the longest time. Applause was given to Rachael and Eric Specht, married only 2 years (and expecting their first child soon), and to Lily and Bernie O'Connor, married 62 years!



Father Gross also brought a special guest: his dog Yogi.

Yogi goes with Father Gross everywhere, including Sunday Masses, weddings, and funerals! I am happy to report Yogi was very well behaved during the event. Father Gross noted that, as a native of Long Island NY, Yogi was named after Yogi Berra, and that he was a Yankees fan. This prompted a loud number of "boos" from the Phillies fans among the attendees, the only time I can remember the guest speaker getting jeers from the crowd! It was all in good fun, however, and his talk was very well received.

Some important points he made included:

- ❖ More and more people are rejecting marriage, even civil marriages, as a necessary part of their relationships.
- ❖ Sacramental marriage is centered on caring for the other person over yourself.
- ❖ The best thing a couple can do to promote marriage is to ensure their marriage is a good example. Friends, family, and children will respond positively to a godly marriage. You may not live to see it but have faith that positive results will come.

Father Gross also shared several humorous anecdotes from his memories of his parents' marriage, including the fact that his father was actually in seminary for two years. His dad often reminded him that if he had not dropped out, Father Gross wouldn't be here today!

Couples were given a small card to write down prayer intentions. The cards were collected, blessed, and placed next to the Tabernacle for the following weekend's Masses. The evening concluded with all couples standing and reciting a renewal of their marriage vows, which was clearly very moving to those in attendance.

This annual event is a beautiful opportunity to focus on your spouse and your relationship for an evening, be enriched spiritually, and enjoy time with like-minded couples. If you have not attended this dinner in the past, please do yourself a favor and consider attending next year.✂

## WANTED WRITERS

Maybe this seems like *Groundhog Day* (see Norm Berger's article on page 2), but once again, we are in need of parishioners interested in writing for our Parish newsletter. If you...

- ❖ Can write interesting and creative articles between 400 and 750 words.
- ❖ Would like to meet people around the Parish.
- ❖ Can attend half-hour planning meetings four times a year and contribute ideas for issue.
- ❖ Can communicate and send articles via e-mail
- ❖ Can meet 2-3 week long deadlines for assignments

If this sounds like you and you'd like to give writing for *NewStan* a try, e-mail Paul at [ts.cutty@verizon.net](mailto:ts.cutty@verizon.net).

# Father Sean Says

Talking about the Catholic faith is the necessary component of evangelization. However, for a host of reasons, it sometimes seems like the hardest thing to do. Maybe we have been conditioned by the old adage of never discussing religion or politics. Or, we may have doubts about our personal knowledge base of what we believe. Perhaps, it's the fact we have doubts but don't know where to go to find the answers. Whatever the reason, it's something worth thinking about in prayer.



This issue of the *Newstan* is great lesson on sharing our faith. How refreshing it is to read articles about comedians Jim Gaffigan and Bill Murray, alongside St. Philip Neri and Moses. Being open to God in prayer allows us to experience the joy of our faith in unconventional ways. It may be hard to strike up a conversation about St. Philip Neri out of the blue, but sharing something you take away from videos you stream or movies you watch can be a moment where someone else recognizes a desire for God in their life.

And reading the article "Bells and Pomegranates" might inspire a thought about God next time you're walking through the produce aisle.

The more we share our faith, the more we encounter God, and allow others to encounter God as well. We don't have to know everything in the Catechism to do this, because we don't have to know everything about God to encounter Him. He pursues us in all that we do.✘

## GIFT NEWS

Firstly, thanks to everyone who has attended our previous GIFT (**G**rowing **I**n **F**aith **T**ogether) presentations.

Our next presentation will be **Tuesday, May 9**, and our guest speaker will be **Dr. Theresa Burke, founder of Rachel's Vineyard**, an organization which provides a healing ministry for women who have had abortions.

Bring a friend!✘

## Surfing Around?

If the quotes from Father Casey Cole and Father Patrick Tuttle piqued your interest, check out their channel [www.youtube.com/@UponFriarReview](http://www.youtube.com/@UponFriarReview). The description on their front page tells it all: "Two Franciscan friars. One Internet. Hilarity and wisdom ensues."



## NEWSTAN

### MISSION STATEMENT

In response to the St. John Paul II's call to evangelization, St. Stanislaus Parish started publishing *NewStan* to serve members of the parish community and the community at large, to inform parishioners and members of the North Penn region about new developments in the parish, and to serve as a channel for communications among St. Stanislaus parishioners and benefactors.



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Those who wish to contribute items for publication should forward them to the *NewStan* mailbox in the St. Stanislaus Parish Center. The inclusion of submitted material is subject to the judgment of the editors in consultation with Father Sean and the St. Stanislaus Communications Director. The editors reserve the right to edit all submitted material for length and content.

Visit St. Stanislaus Parish on the web at

[www.ststanislaus.com](http://www.ststanislaus.com)

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Do you have a question about St. Stanislaus Parish, or about the Catholic faith in general?

Forward your questions to the *NewStan* mailbox in the Parish Center, anonymously if desired. We will direct the questions to the right person and publish the answers in a future issue.

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# Scripture Study: Bells & Pomegranates

by Tom Pepe

*Side-by-side, without beginning or ending...*

*"They made pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen around the hem of the robe. And they made bells of pure gold and attached them around the hem between the pomegranates. The bells and pomegranates alternated around the hem of the robe..."* (Exodus. 39:24-26)

Why? Why does God instruct Moses to adorn the priestly robes that Aaron and his descendants were to wear when ministering in the Tabernacle? The Israelites were about one month into the 40 years of wandering in the desert. The average Israelite had no knowledge of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; 480 years of bondage (12 generations in polytheistic Egypt) wiped that memory clean. About all they knew of God was, well the Red Sea did not part itself and those ten plagues spoke volumes. God instructed Moses how to build the Tabernacle (a simulation of God's domicile in heaven) in excruciating detail; a home for God on Earth amongst the Israelites.

So why the bells and pomegranates on the robes of the high priest? Trendy fashion? Hardly. To be a warning when the Levites entered? Not likely. God, who knows all of what is and what shall be, needs no earthly warning. So, why?

Pomegranates should be obvious. A pomegranate is a "good" fruit. It is nourishing and a single pomegranate is bountiful in and of itself. The opposite is a bad fruit; the bible has many references to the difference between the two

(i.e., *Matthew* 7:16, *Matthew* 21:19, and *Jeremiah* 24:2-7). Bad fruit is worthless. It cannot be eaten and therefore provides no nourishment and cannot sustain life.

Bells are a little less obvious. Bells make noise and the noise is heard by all. An individual's words and actions are just like a bell. Our words and actions impact and influence those around us. Our words and actions can show love, devotion, and gratitude for God's blessings. Let us call that 'bells of pure gold' and establish that as a standard by which we measure our words and actions. Why pure gold? Because anything less is a compromise. A tarnished bell is a tarnished sound, is a tarnished message. When we show less than total gratitude for God's lovingkindness, our message is tarnished. When we compromise God's word to better fit secular reasoning, our message is tarnished and ring an inferior bell.

Just as a pure gold bell produces good fruit, anything less pure will surely produce bad fruit (of various degrees). Sometimes the bad fruit is produced by accident (e.g., ignorance of God's word) and sometimes it is produced on purpose (e.g., intentional deceit or atheism). Without conscious acknowledgement, our words and actions influence and teach others, just as the words and actions of others influence us. As *Mathew* 15:11 states, "Not what enters into the mouth defiles the man; but what goes forth out of the mouth, this defiles the man."

We all have choices. Free will. But bear in mind, our words and actions have consequences. Our bells always bear fruit, and it is up to us whether that fruit is good or bad.

Now consider the hem of Aaron's robe again. Words and the fruit produced. All of our words and actions, and the consequences that result from them, side by side, over and over, exposed (as they are to God).

Let us all strive to have bells of pure gold, and God will provide the good fruit we need to survive. ✠



From [www.avakesb.com/2011/07/high-priests-bell-found.html](http://www.avakesb.com/2011/07/high-priests-bell-found.html)

# Humor

*continued from page 1*

I don't take Lenten practices as seriously as other religions take their practices?" or "Hmmm., do I just superficially 'act Catholic' and root for Notre Dame when I should be demonstrating my faith in more significant ways?"

Even the jokes about Jesus can serve a purpose. In the episode "Jim Gaffigan Jesus Jokes" on the "Upon Friar Review" YouTube channel ([youtu.be/qc4AT3zAkvE](http://youtu.be/qc4AT3zAkvE)), Father Casey Cole, OFM, and Father Patrick Tuttle, OFM, discuss what Gaffigan does and humor about the Lord in general. Father Patrick makes the point that humor would be inappropriate "if you are being sarcastic or to discount someone's faith" but it much more beneficial when like Jim Gaffigan you are "playfully reflecting on the Lord...where folks might not have been thinking about Jesus at all, but they are because of him now." Father Casey adds significantly that, as Gaffigan often notes, "talking about Jesus" can feel like proselytizing and make people uncomfortable, but when done with humor, lightens the mood, we're laughing, we're in on the joke together...and then he's subtly evangelizing."

This indeed makes the point. Humor gets people's attention and puts them in a good mood. It also bonds people together. That then creates an opening for more serious reflection and thoughts, and perhaps for bringing us closer to God in some way.

One very common illustration of this is in homilies. Our priests and deacons at St. Stanislaus often choose to use humor to get spiritual messages across. For example, a few months ago, Msgr. McCoy opened with a joke about a woman who succumbed to the temptation to buy a dress. Father Sean frequently uses Gaffiganesque self-deprecating comments to make a point. Of course, humor doesn't *always* work. Father Jonathan observes, "My basic thought about incorporating humor into a homily is not to have anything pre-planned. Every time I have tried to say plan a joke or even use something funny from another person's homily or reflection, it goes badly. The funniest moments have been when something seems funny in an example I give, and I just run with it. Life is full of funny moments. The key is to see them."

He also adds a particularly insightful observation "The only pattern I can find is the more down-to-earth my homily is, the funnier it is." This aligns with Father Patrick's comments: For humor to work, particularly spiritually, it needs to be honest, to come itself from a good place. There

is clearly hurtful humor, but if the humor does not come from an inappropriate place, humor itself is not inappropriate. Clearly even the Pope has given Jim Gaffigan's version of humor his seal of approval: He selected Gaffigan to open for him when he appeared in Philadelphia in 2015.

Perhaps Sister Mary Elephant was not wrong when she reprimanded you for laughing in Church since that laughter was a distraction and not a path toward God. But that doesn't mean all humor is a distraction. Father Patrick comments that of course there are some "hard-to-crack folks who don't allow any slight humor whatsoever." He calls them "the Joyless crowd" which is telling. C.S. Lewis wrote "Praise is the mode of love which always has some element of joy in it" and perhaps the reverse is also true. As the hosts of "Upon Friar Review" observe, if you only view Jesus stiffly, as an icon behind the altar, the perfect One on the cross, that is hard to relate to. Whereas just as we relate to one another in humor, that can be a perfect way to join us open us up to a relationship with Him.✕

*Jim Gaffigan quotations taken from the compilation video at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5TPR2vFjZQ&t=261s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5TPR2vFjZQ&t=261s).*

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# The Second Apostle of Rome

by Sandy Sasso

St. Philip Neri, known as the “Second Apostle of Rome”, was born July 25, 1515, in Florence, Italy into a well-educated, wealthy family, and was duly educated under magnificent scholars. From a young age he was pious, praying the psalms with his sister.

At 16 he was sent to do business with a family member near Monte Cassino, where, although never neglecting his duties, much of his time was spent praying in secret in a little chapel that was nearby. Philip decided to leave for Rome, and began tutoring for pay. He lived alone as a layman for 17 years, living with minimal furnishings, spending hours in prayer, fasting, and helping the poor.

He studied philosophy for a time, and eventually sold his books to give more to the poor. His reputation grew as he visited hospitals, and met with people in workshops, banks, stores, and public areas, while preaching a greater openness to the service of God. On one occasion in 1544, he experienced a most miraculous ball of fire that entered his mouth after beseeching the Holy Spirit for what God has given him. Upon examination of his body after death, it was found that two of his ribs were broken which was attributed to the expansion of his heart.

In 1548, together with his confessor, Persiano Rossa, Philip founded the Confraternity of the Most Holy Trinity of Pilgrims and Convalescents, primarily to minister to the needs of poor pilgrims that flocked to Rome. In 1551, he was at last ordained a priest at the urging of his confessor. Upon ordination, his confessions became highly sought out, and he labored in the confessional from the wee hours of the morning until noon. His Masses were filled with all manner of mystical experiences.

He founded the Congregation of the Oratory in 1575, taking care of young men and boys, with regular meetings of prayer, hymns, and reflections on Scripture. Members were priests and laymen alike. They served the communities by teaching, spiritual direction, campus ministry, hospital chaplaincies, administration and maintaining the fabric of the community house. This was a congregation without a Superior General, completely autonomous, bound by no vows but committed to mutual charity. The congregation grew, in spite of initial harassment, but then approved by the Pope at the time. The congregation overcame and grew in size, eventually requiring a new church in Rome.

The Oratory continued to spread throughout the United Kingdom, Australia, South Africa, Continental Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, North America, and. Close to home, we have the Philadelphia Oratory, formed in 1990 at the Fairmount neighborhood parish, St. Francis Xavier.



It was formally established by Pope John Paul II in 2000.

St. Philip ‘s sanctity came out of his glorifying God with charity and solemnity. He was a man full of humor and laughter, a quiet but interested observer of political events. His soul radiated divine charity, focused on an unpretentious return to the lifestyle of the first Disciples of Christ, hence the title the “Second Apostle of Rome”. He died at the end of the day, May 25, 1595 after having spent the day hearing confessions and receiving visitors.

St. Philip Neri was beatified by Pope Paul V May 11, 1615, and canonized by Pope Gregory XV on March 12, 1622. His feast day is May 26th. ✠

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## Above and Beyond





by Sonia Fries (1926-2009)

You may marvel at fearless sky divers,  
Danger often gives people a thrill.  
It's exciting to watch race car drivers  
Whose very lives hinge on their skill.  
Mountain climbers and circus performers  
Are regarded with great awe because,  
By choice they take dangerous chances  
For a measure of fame or applause.  
but if you want to witness raw courage  
Watch a mother, hoping she'll survive,  
As she sits without brakes in the passenger seat,  
While her teen-ager learns how to drive.

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Brian Christopher Murphy Jr.	Weston Patrick White																																																																																									
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<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Michael Simon Dank &amp; Olivia Kathryn Kane              Jordan Tyler Haines &amp; Mia Marie Brocco</p> </div> </div>																																																																																										