

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL
CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

New Initiative Fosters a Strong Family Faith Life

Dear Parishioners,

Jesus Christ is Risen! Alleluia! How good it is to celebrate resurrected life and new beginnings. I love spring, and I love April in Augusta as we experience a little bit of heaven during Masters Week. Spring is a time of new life. On the day I write this, the Cardinals emerged from the papal conclave on March 13 having selected a new pope, as Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio became Pope Francis with his election as the Church's 266th pope. I pray that our new Spiritual Leader of the Universal Church will help the Church experience a wonderful new beginning focused on the Risen Life of Christ in our midst.

In recent weeks, the parish staff and leadership have been talking about a new initiative that we hope will help our faith community to experience ever more deeply the Life of the Risen Christ in our midst. The new initiative is called Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth. With all of the distractions in a pluralistic society, it is so easy to lose focus. And a recent survey pointed out that Catholic youth trail behind all other Christian denominations in knowing how to live and practice their faith in an everyday way.

Learning how to love and help our children and teens to become people of faith and followers of Jesus is a challenging and lifelong task. It is a task that we would be foolish to try facing alone. As parents, youth, teachers, parish priests, directors of

religious education, and youth ministry leaders, we must join together to help and support each other in finding the resources to live our faith with joy and enthusiasm.

I praise God for 20 years of formal Catholic education, from elementary school through graduate school — but I have said many times, it was Dan and Irene Ragan who nurtured the gift of faith within me. Parents will always be the most powerful teachers of faith to their children and teens — more powerful than any bishop, priest or youth minister, and more lasting than any faith formation program. Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth explores and develops the many actions — from simple to profound — that parents can do to create strong Catholic families and youth. Here are a few suggestions:

Recognize the sacredness of a family meal and learn to discover how God is present and operative in the ordinary events of car pools, purchasing groceries, and helping with homework. We are swimming in a sea of God's grace — seek ways to celebrate and embrace the gifts of life and the grace found in the present moment of family and parish life, as well as in the life of the larger community.

Make Meal Time Sacred

Establish days of the week that are set aside as "family meal nights" and ask everyone to commit to working their

Mass Schedule

Sunday, 7:45 a.m., 10:30 a.m.,
12:15 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Monday, 7:00 a.m. and 9:15 a.m.

Tuesday, 7:00 a.m. and 9:15 a.m.

Wednesday, 7:00 a.m. and 5:15 p.m.

Thursday, 7:00 a.m. and 9:15 a.m.

Friday, 7:00 a.m. and 9:15 a.m.

Saturday, 9:15 a.m.,
5:00 p.m. (Sunday Vigil)

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturday, 3:45-4:45 p.m.

Perpetual Adoration Chapel

Chapel is located at the corner of Monte Sano and Bellevue.

Pope Benedict's Legacy of Humility on Display During Unique Transition

As of Thursday, Feb. 28 the Catholic Church was left without a pope for the first time since the death of Blessed John Paul II in April 2005.

As most of us already know, this is the first time since the 1400s that a pope has resigned the chair of St. Peter during his lifetime.

Following the Holy Father's formal resignation, the College of Cardinals gathered for the papal conclave March 12 to select a new pontiff, and one day later, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio became Pope Francis when he was elected as the Church's 266th pope.

Looking back on the legacy of now-Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, it is perhaps too soon to attribute a defining characteristic. Nevertheless, there is one trait that comes to the minds of many — humility.

A quiet and meek man throughout his career, Benedict's resignation announcement issued on Feb. 11 came as both surprising and fitting. In it, he humbly submitted that the papal office demanded more than he was capable of giving.

"After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry," the Holy Father said.

A striking contrast to the end of the previous papacy — in which Pope John Paul II very publicly offered up his suffering and death — Benedict noted that the challenges the Church currently faces call for a strength of mind and body in the pontiff that he simply could no longer offer.

"I am well aware that this ministry, due to its essential spiritual nature, must be carried out not only with words and deeds, but no less with prayer and suffering," he said. "However, in today's world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the barque of St. Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength



which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me."

Experts — and laymen — will continue to debate Pope Benedict's decision for years to come. But one thing which cannot be denied is the humility by which his pontificate will be defined.

Bidding a final goodbye to his brother bishops and cardinals on Feb. 28, Benedict revealed one last time that his papacy was not about him, but about Him whom he served.

"I want to tell you that I will continue to be close to you in prayer, especially in the next few days, so that you may all be fully docile to the action of the Holy Spirit in the election of the new Pope," he said. "May the Lord show you what is willed by Him. And among you, among the College of Cardinals, there is also the future Pope, to whom, here to today, I already promise my unconditional reverence and obedience."

As 1.2 billion Catholics around the world are now celebrating Pope Francis as the new shepherd of the Universal Church, we are uniquely blessed to have both a vibrant new pope in the Vatican and a saintly pope-emeritus still offering his prayers nearby.

For the time being, Benedict will live in the papal residence at Castel Gandolfo before returning to an old convent at the Vatican where he will lead a quiet life of prayer.

"May the Lord show you what is willed by Him. And among you, among the College of Cardinals, there is also the future Pope, to whom, here to today, I already promise my unconditional reverence and obedience."

— Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

Prayer Ministry Offers Support to St. Mary on the Hill Parish Community

A new ministry is taking root here at St. Mary on the Hill. You may have not seen or heard it in action, but it has been quietly moving mountains. It is a group called Building Families of Prayer, and it offers spiritual support for all the families of our parish.

The Building Families of Prayer Ministry was started in April 2012 at the request of Fr. Jerry Ragan. Parishioner Joanna Watwood, coordinator for the group, is moved by the privilege and power of participating.

“Having the opportunity to help each other carry our different crosses in our different stages of family life is incredible and is such a gift,” says Joanna. “It really is about lifting each other up in prayer. The only commitment one needs to make for this ministry is to set aside one hour a month to pray for others.”

When an individual or couple signs up for this ministry, they receive a prayer book, which will guide them through their hour.

“The prayer book covers all the different couples within our parish,” Joanna says. “It covers those preparing for marriage, couples struggling to build their family, and couples who are struggling in their marriage. It is also for those raising children of all ages or having babies, for those caring for a sick or dying spouse, or for those who are widowed, divorced or separated.”

The prayer group is structured in such a way as to offer a wide variety of parishioners a full opportunity to participate in the group’s ministry. It is hoped that participation in the group will also increase.

“It is the perfect ministry for individuals or couples that don’t have a lot of time to devote to meetings or

activities, or perhaps even for couples who can’t commit to a specific time each month,” says Joanna. “All it takes is one hour per month in any place that you are comfortable praying! We would love to have anyone who would be willing to commit to an hour each month to pray for

others within our parish. It would be incredible if we had enough people sign up to cover each hour of each day every month — our parish would be covered in prayer 24-7!”

Indeed, for Catholics, prayer is a vital part of each day. However, Joanna finds this intercessory type of prayer especially meaningful.

“There is something very special about praying for others,” Joanna says. “Going to the Lord with others’ needs is a powerful and humbling experience. My husband, Jordan, and I have been the recipient of the prayers of so many people over the past few years, so I can also attest to the power of prayer on the receiving end of those prayers, as well.”

Every St. Mary on the Hill parishioner is invited and encouraged to become a part of Building Families of Prayer Ministry.

“To those who aren’t sure if this is something they are interested in being part of, just try it out,” says Joanna. “The only commitment you have to make is that commitment of one hour every month. There are no meetings, no mass messages that go out — nothing but one hour of time spent with the Lord on behalf of all your fellow parishioners.”

Those who would like more information, or would like to register for the Building Families of Prayer Ministry, please e-mail Joanna Watwood at joannawatwood@gmail.com.



Apron Ministry Families Thro

When parishioner Margaret Dunstan's husband, Richard, passed away in 2005, she was blessed by the services of the Apron Ministry.

"What the Apron Ministry did for me at that time was wonderful!" Margaret says. "I will never forget what they did for me and my family. It was amazing!"

It was the actions, hospitality, and service of the Apron Ministry volunteers during that stressful time that prompted Margaret to join their ranks. Today, she serves as the co-chair, along with the help of fellow parishioner Margaret Matheis.

The ministry's services are available to all parishioners who plan to hold a post-funeral reception in their home or — less often — in the parish hall. Its members handle all set-up, serving, and clean-up duties for these receptions.

"We are busting it to make certain that everything is perfectly ready for the family after the funeral," Margaret Dunstan says. "It's go, go, go!"



(Above and below) Members of the Apron Ministry serve at a recent post-funeral reception.



The goal of the Apron Ministry is to ensure a comforting, attractive, stress-free environment for family and friends as they celebrate the life of the deceased.

The Consolation Ministry oversees the operations of the Apron Ministry — thus, requests for the Apron Ministry's services are first sent through the Consolation Ministry. When this occurs, the Apron Ministry co-chairs alert the members, and a team is then formed. A home visit is often made prior to the post-funeral reception in order to meet with the families in need, and to assess their needs and wishes.

The Apron Ministry does not provide its services during a vigil service, but only for the post-funeral gathering. Also, the ministry does not provide nor pick up food. However, there

are times when an individual Apron Ministry member brings food to the reception.

This past year, the Apron Ministry provided its services to 30 of the approximately 60 funerals held at the

try Comforts ough Service

parish. The ministry hopes to serve even more families next year.

The hours of service are variable dependent on the time required to enter the family's home and the size of the reception. The Apron Ministry sometimes has two shifts of workers to accommodate the needs of the family.

According to Margaret Dunstan, the ministry members work well together and enjoy each other as they serve.

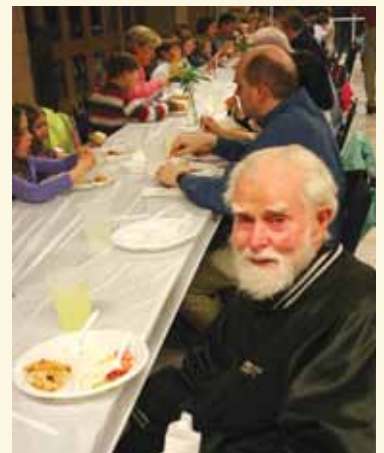
"Although it's a labor of love, we all really enjoy working together and love each other's company," she says.

Margaret is also quick to point out that the parishioners who utilize the Apron Ministry have also been a joy to work with and are always grateful for the ministry's help.

"These grieving families are so warm and welcoming," Margaret says. "We get notes of appreciation from the families, and they are always so expressive showing their thankfulness for our help."

If you would like more information on the Apron Ministry, or would like to become a volunteer, please contact Margaret Dunstan at 706-373-3032 or Margaret Matheis at 706-733-7171.

First Communion Family Adoration and Dinner



Divine Mercy Sunday and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy

In the 1930s, Sr. Maria Faustina Kowalska of the Most Blessed Sacrament, a Sister of Our Lady of Mercy, received a message from the Lord that she was to live her life as a model of Christ's merciful love and spread Christ's mercy throughout the world. She proceeded to offer up all of her personal sufferings in atonement for the sins of others. She kept a secret diary in which she wrote of God's mercy, as well as about her special devotion to Mary Immaculate and to the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, which gave her strength. Sr. Faustina's diary, *Divine Mercy in my Soul*, serves as the handbook for the devotion to the Divine Mercy. In it, we read of the message of mercy that she received from Christ.

On April 30, 2000, Sr. Faustina Kowalska was canonized by Pope John Paul II. Then, on May 23, 2000, the Congregation for Divine Worship decreed that "throughout the world, the second Sunday of Easter will receive the name Divine Mercy Sunday, a perennial invitation to the Christian world to face, with confidence in divine benevolence, the difficulties and trials that humankind will experience in the years to come."

On Divine Mercy Sunday — April 7 — all parishioners are encouraged to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet, always remembering and practicing the essential "ABCs" of Divine Mercy — ask for mercy, be merciful to others, and completely trust in Jesus.

Format of the Divine Mercy Chaplet

"Chaplet" simply refers to the prayers counted on a rosary. The Lord said to St. Faustina, "You will recite this chaplet on the beads of the Rosary in the following Manner:"

Begin with:

One "Our Father," one "Hail Mary," and the "I Believe in God."

On the "Our Father Beads" say:

Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

On the "Hail Mary Beads" say:

For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

In conclusion, three times recite these words:

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

"I want the whole world to know my infinite mercy. I want to give unimaginable graces to those who trust in my mercy." (Diary, 687).



Strong Family Faith Life *continued from front cover*

schedules around these sacred times. Use these meals to pray together and share joys, hopes, disappointments and sorrows. Help bring to life the connection between your home table and the Lord's Table by celebrating the Eucharist together weekly.

Share Your Cross Moments

"Cross moments" are a simple way to focus on significant experiences during family meal nights or other family gatherings. Invite each person to share a time in the recent past — day, week, month — that their lives intersected or crossed with God. In other words, where have they recently seen evidence of the presence of God in their life or in the world?

Choose Wisely

The top two memories for your children and teens will include how much love was in your home and how much time you spent together as a family. When contemplating schedule or activity additions or changes, ask yourself, "Will doing this activity or turning on this screen strengthen or weaken our family life?"

Fill Your Home with Faith Images

Go shopping at a religious store and invite each person to select an item of faith they would like to see displayed

at home. Also, be sure you have family and youth-friendly Bibles at home and in each person's bedroom. For a list of recommended Bibles, visit the Strong Catholic Family website, www.nfcym.org/programs/training/strongfamilies.htm.

Connect with Other Parents

Seek out other adults and parents who share your commitment to Catholic parenting. Learn from their stories, strategies and life lessons.

If you are interested in being a part of a Strong Catholic Family leadership team — a team where parents can come together on a regular basis to share, pray and support one another along this shared journey of faith — please leave your name at the parish office, or let me, Michael Lammers or Joan Purucker know. This could be a very exciting initiative that brings new life to our faith community.

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

Ad Placement

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SAVE THE DATE

**21st Annual Msgr. P. James Costigan
St. Mary on the Hill School
Endowment Golf Tournament**

Friday, May 17, 2013