

# Saint Mary

ON THE HILL  
CATHOLIC CHURCH



*News and Notes from Fr. Jerry*

## I Pray That We Will Become People of Mercy



Dear Parishioners,

**T**his month, I look forward to the beginning of a new school year. We welcome a new assistant principal, Ashley Fisher, several new teachers, and a good many new students. This month, our Parish Leadership will begin a Priority Planning Process. As we move towards celebrating our 100th Anniversary as a faith community, we want to begin contemplating what the next 100 years should look like. This month, our newest ministry, the Parish Partnership on Disability, will be seeking your input as to how we can become a more accessible and welcoming parish for all people. This month, I am very much looking forward to leading a group of parishioners on a pilgrimage to the Holy Door at the Cathedral-Basilica of Notre-Dame de Québec during this Holy Year of Mercy.

It is ironic that the last four months of this presidential campaign – Election Day is Nov. 8 – which seems to have lasted forever, coincide with the last four months of the Holy Year of Mercy (concludes on Nov. 20 – Christ the King

Sunday). If you wanted to come up with a single word to characterize the 2016 political conversation in America, “mercy” almost certainly would not be that word. It was the hope of Pope Francis that during this Year of Mercy, we would experience a “revolution of tenderness.” Well, we certainly haven’t experienced much tenderness at all during this political season, but I would hope that as a Catholic people, we can give good witness to our neighbors and approach the next few months with a little more temperance and civility.

In the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, a campaign is under way to promote civility in conversations between people whose viewpoints differ, particularly in political matters. The campaign is called “Civilize It.” In unveiling this effort, the archdiocese’s Catholic Social Action Office stressed that respectful dialogue can occur among people of differing political views. Materials related to the Civilize It campaign can be found online at [www.civilizeit.us](http://www.civilizeit.us). It

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### Mass Schedule

**Sunday**, 7:45 a.m., 10:30 a.m.,  
12:15 p.m. and 5:30 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.

# We Are All One Body: A New Parish Ministry Works Toward Greater Inclusion

**A**s Catholic Christians, we are more than just members of a Church. We are, in fact, the Body of Christ. Each of us makes up one of the many parts that come together to form the united body of the Church. This inclusiveness and cooperation lies at the very heart of our faith, and so it is fitting that one of our parish's newest ministries – Parish Partnership on Disability – has as its mission to increase accessibility and inclusion at St. Mary on the Hill for our differently abled parishioners.

The seeds of this ministry were sown when Fr. Ragan put a request in the bulletin for someone to spearhead a new committee focused on making all parish Masses and activities more accessible and inviting to all. Estelle Duncan responded to the call for service



*Estelle Duncan with her husband, Byron*

and met with Father to get the ball rolling. Estelle, who has over 40 years of experience working with the differently abled, is happy to help with this new initiative.

“My background is working with people with developmental disabilities, so that is what I’m most familiar with, but I know we also have people in the parish that have physical disabilities, such as hearing impairments, visual impairments, and more,” Estelle

says. “Certainly, accessibility was taken into consideration with church renovations. But even with that, I’ve seen people with walkers or canes struggle to get doors open. I’ve also seen parents with children with autism. So, this is really such a broad issue.”

As a first step in getting the Parish Partnership on Disability off the ground, a survey went out in the bulletin asking

how the parish can better meet the emotional and spiritual needs of our differently abled parishioners. Parishioners were also able to indicate on the survey if they were interested in helping out with this ministry. So far, response has been encouraging, and the committee held its first meeting in July to look over the surveys and get ideas on where to begin.

“We’re developing a plan of action for moving forward,” Estelle says. “I’ve also looked to see what other churches have done. My hope is that we’ll raise awareness and encourage parishioners to be more sensitive and more welcoming. They already are both of these things, but it’s good just to educate people so that everybody can be more a part of the parish regardless of their differing abilities.”

*“Think of what we can learn from [the differently abled]. We need to learn to be more accommodating of them, but they have so much to teach us. And what a chance to build relationships – we want to make sure that the people we support are truly included in the community and have the opportunity to build relationships and friendships. What a wonderful way to practice our faith.”*

– Estelle Duncan

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## We Are All One Body

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While the goal is to make every Mass and parish activity more accessible to all, this ministry has also started designating a monthly Mass to be particularly focused on inclusion. At these Masses, the first of which was held on July 3, differently abled parishioners are encouraged to serve in various capacities, such as ushering and bringing up the gifts.

The ministry will also look into providing special training to Eucharistic Ministers on how to respectfully present the Eucharist to all parishioners, as well as assuring that programs are in place to help children with differing abilities go through our faith formation classes.

Estelle emphasizes that all parishioners interested in helping out are more than welcome to join this new ministry.

"I think that so many people have different ideas of how to approach things, and experiences to draw from," she says. "[Parishioners] could help with training, or when we have the monthly Mass, help partner with the person of a different ability. So if people have an openness, certainly we could use their time and talent. [This



*Estelle Duncan with her niece, parishioner and St. Mary on the Hill School third-grade teacher Allison Crow, on Mother's Day*

ministry] is going to be evolving, and we welcome people to join us on the journey.

"I'm also hoping that we have people who have differing abilities that will come to the table," Estelle

continues. "If we don't have that perspective, we could miss the mark. We have a saying in our work with developmental disabilities – 'Nothing about me without me.' So, when we're planning in our field, that person needs to be the central focus. We need their perspective."

In addition to helping the parish fill a great need, those who become involved in this ministry are sure to receive abundant blessings in return.

"Think of what we can learn from [the differently abled]," Estelle says. "We need to learn to be more accommodating of them, but they have so much to teach us. And what a chance to build relationships – we want to make sure that the people we support are truly included

in the community and have the opportunity to build relationships and friendships. What a wonderful way to practice our faith."

Are you interested in getting involved with this exciting new ministry? Please call the parish office at 706-733-6627 and leave a message for Estelle Duncan, or email her at [eduncan081954@yahoo.com](mailto:eduncan081954@yahoo.com). If you missed the original survey about this ministry and would like to provide your feedback, the survey may be found on our parish website, [stmaryonthehill.org](http://stmaryonthehill.org).

## Meet Cris Edge *St. Mary's Facilities Manager*

It takes a lot of behind-the-scenes work to ensure that a parish runs smoothly. With a parish as large as ours, there is plenty of administrative work with records to keep, phones to answer, ministries to coordinate, people to help, and everything from baptisms to funerals to schedule. But there are also physical buildings to maintain – the church, narthex, parish hall, school, and Adoration Chapel. It's a large complex, but nothing that our new Facilities Manager, Cris Edge, can't handle. And if Cris seems familiar, that's because he used to work at Aquinas.

"When the job for a facilities manager opened up here at St. Mary's, it just seemed like a natural fit for me," Cris says. "I do many of the same things as I did at Aquinas, but on a larger scale. It's definitely a bigger operation over here. Basically, my job description involves managing and overseeing any construction or repair project. I have to do paperwork – a lot of paperwork! – take photos before, during and after each project, and work with the Diocese of Savannah to keep them informed of the progress."

While summer is the time for most of us to enjoy more relaxed schedules, this isn't the case for Cris. Since the children are not in school and because there is a decrease in parish-sponsored activities during this 11-week period, Cris says the summer months are the perfect time to deal with roofing projects (the Adoration Chapel), heating and air issues (the narthex), general maintenance, and annual inspections (such as with fire equipment). Cris, an Augusta native who plays golf



*Cris Edge is the new Facilities Manager for the parish and school.*

whenever he can (his sister, Mitzi Edge, was a PGA Tour pro), enjoys the before and after transformation of each and every project. In fact, it is what he enjoys the most about his job.

"I like to take something worn out and make it new again," Cris says. "Or take something dull and make it shiny. I enjoy the completion of seeing something returned to its original glory."

Cris also likes the fact that he is able to work in a faith environment. When he originally interviewed at Aquinas and informed them that he was not a Catholic, but belonged to a Baptist congregation, Cris remembers laughing when the administration reassured him that they like Baptists, too, and that it wouldn't be a problem. And it hasn't been.

"Before working at Aquinas, I didn't know much about the Catholic faith," Cris says. "But I have learned a lot, and I am particularly struck at the level of devotion. I mean, my church has some of the same things going on – Bible studies, prayer groups, etc. – but to see the devotion here, especially at the Adoration Chapel, is inspirational. When I worked at Aquinas, they had the Adoration Chapel open during the day, but then I came here and realized that St. Mary's has a chapel open 24 hours a day, seven days a week!"

Ultimately, it takes many people to keep a parish running smoothly, and we are grateful to people like Cris Edge who work behind the scenes for the upkeep, care and maintenance of our beautiful church so that it can be enjoyed by us all.

*"I like to take something worn out and make it new again. Or take something dull and make it shiny. I enjoy the completion of seeing something returned to its original glory."*

*– Cris Edge, Facilities Manager*

# A Look Back at Our History as We Celebrate 100 Years

**C**hurch of the Holy Trinity, Augusta's first Catholic church, was built in 1811 where our current Bell Auditorium is. Fr. Robert Browne was the first resident pastor appointed in 1810. Previous to that time, the few Catholics in Augusta had been served by priests from Locust Grove – near Washington, Ga. – where a colony of Catholics from Maryland had settled.

In 1835, construction of the Augusta-Atlanta Georgia Railroad began, and a large number of Irish laborers came to Augusta. Church of the Holy Trinity's

congregation grew until it was filled for every service. The steamboat traffic on the Savannah River and the railroad engines were the two prime drivers of Augusta's growing prosperity, and in 1845, work on the Augusta Canal commenced. More Irish laborers came to work on this important economic development, and many elected to permanently settle in Augusta.

The congregation outgrew the church by 1843, and funds were collected to build a more suitable structure. Interrupted only by the Yellow Fever epidemic in 1854,

the cornerstone for the church we know today as Church of the Most Holy Trinity was laid on July 19, 1857. Construction of the church proceeded as funds became available. The outbreak of the War Between the States further hampered the project as the Civil War's blockades hindered passage of needed materials. Indeed, the marble altar was smuggled through the Union Blockade in time for the April 12, 1863, consecration!

Augusta's first Catholic school was the old St. Mary's Academy, operated by the Sisters of Mercy. Their school opened in 1854 at Telfair and McIntosh (Seventh Street). That building would later house Boys Catholic High School. Of note – the Sisters of Mercy also staffed the City Hospital in addition to their school duties. Public education as we know it today would not arrive in Augusta until the 1880s.

The history of our parish and the Augusta Catholic community is one of continuing challenges, growth and service of the church and surrounding community. What makes their history so interesting is they never doubted their path forward, no matter how daunting the challenges. Immigrants from abroad, as well as those migrating south propelled the growth of the faith in our area, and this is a continuing theme from 1540 on to the current day!



# Nurturing Faith <sup>and</sup> Forming Friendships

## A Women's Bible Study Group at St. Mary

**"F**or the faith to shine, to not be suffocated, it must be constantly nourished by the Word of God."

These words, proclaimed by Pope Francis in a 2014 address, serve as a powerful reminder that we, as Catholic Christians, must always be turning to Scripture to renew and strengthen our faith. In recent years, the universal Church has taken this advice to heart as more and more Bible study groups have provided parishioners with the opportunity to study and share in God's Word together. And this summer, Anne Norviel and Rhonda Wallace were inspired to organize a women's Bible study group right here at St. Mary on the Hill.

"Rhonda and I used to have a group that did *Familia* — a study of the *Catechism* of the family — and we had stayed in touch and wanted to get something together again," Anne says.

Knowing that summer is often a less busy time for families, the two women decided to begin with an eight-week study that began in June and concluded at the end of July. Their group used Formed.org, a valuable parish resource, as their guide. This free website provided the group with access to countless readings, studies and videos without having to order any materials. For their summer Bible study, they decided to keep things simple by focusing on the

Scripture readings for each week's upcoming Sunday Mass. Participants used Formed.org to access the readings and a series of related discussion questions.



*Rhonda Wallace and Anne Norviel are the facilitators of the Women's Bible Study*



*The Women's Bible Study held regular meetings in the parish hall this summer*

Rhonda has been thrilled to discover what a great resource the parish has in this website, for those who wish to study on their own or in a group.

"[Formed.org] is very organized, and it even comes with a leader guide that walks you through how to facilitate a group," she says. "There are all different programs and Bible study

topics available, movies and books — and it's all free to parishioners, sponsored by the church. You just have to print out your questions and come. During the summer, it's better if it's not a cumulative study, because if you're on vacation, you can just pick up when you get back with the weekly readings. And it's also easy because you don't have to order any books — you

just print [the study materials] off each week."

When planning the group meetings, Anne and Rhonda decided to set aside an hour for discussion of the week's Scriptures, using the material from Formed.org as a guide, followed by another hour of casual fellowship. Anne notes how this combination of faith sharing and fellowship allowed space for the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of the women in the group.

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*"It has definitely helped me grow in my faith. I think any time we can sit down and study the upcoming readings, it better prepares us for Mass."*

*— Rhonda Wallace, Women's Bible Study co-coordinator*

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“It has been a blessing to hear other ladies’ perspectives on life,” Anne says. “And it’s really great to hear some of their advice about something they have been through that you’re going through – to me that is really the Holy Spirit speaking to us. I think that the whole group really understood the aspect of how God works through the Holy Spirit and how He works through the thoughts that come to our mind and what we share together.”

Rhonda also appreciates how gathering to study the Word each week has increased her faith and her connections with other women in the parish.

“It has definitely helped me grow in my faith,” Rhonda says. “I think any time we can sit down and study the

upcoming readings, it better prepares us for Mass. You can soak [the homilies and readings] in so much better. Studying the Word together in a group sparks conversation, and you get to have fellowship with people you otherwise may not have gotten to know.”

For Anne, Rhonda, and the more than 20 other women who gathered each week to study Scripture together this summer, the experience of shared faith and fellowship proved invaluable. May this be only the beginning of many groups to come at our parish that will allow us to take the words of Pope Francis to heart, nourishing our faith in God’s Word so that it shines more brightly than ever!

Interested in joining a women’s Bible study? Anne Norviel and Rhonda Wallace may be facilitating a group again during the school year and/or next summer. All those who are interested should contact Anne at 706-414-2685.

And be sure to check out the Formed.org website for free access to countless books, audio talks, videos, Bible study programs, and more! Take advantage of this valuable resource provided by the parish by entering access code JMGAH4.

# Ad Placement



# Saint Mary ON THE HILL

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## I Pray That We Will Become People of Mercy

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would be a good Year of Mercy Project to sign onto this campaign. It includes a three-part pledge that states:

*"I pledge:*

1. *Civility. To reflect respect, to throw no stones and to rise above it.*
2. *Clarity. To align my political point of view with my formed conscience.*
3. *Compassion. To encounter others with a tone and posture that say, 'I see dignity and goodness in you.'*

An explanation of goals precedes the pledge. The discussion begins, "We've all experienced it" – perhaps with "a Facebook post, a family dinner, a water cooler conversation that suddenly turns political with opposing viewpoints." What happens? "You might get angry. You may go silent."

Civilize It, however, "is about making room in your heart and speaking peacefully with those with whom you disagree." The campaign challenges participants to "imagine what would happen if aggressiveness were transformed into openness and confrontations were turned into thoughtful conversations."

The website describes Civilize It as "a nonpartisan movement and a call for all of us to help change the tone, follow our faith and quiet the quarrels in our day-to-day

lives." To hear this call, I think most of us will have to humbly admit that we've been part of the problem more so than part of the solution. We have not been very Christian in our public discourse. Often, we have not followed the way of Christ in our everyday activities. Lord knows, I am certainly in need of mercy. I need the mercy of those whom I have hurt and offended. On the road, in the office, in a Scripture study, I can be aggressive and impatient. *Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.* Above all, I need the mercy of God. I ask for your mercy and I pray for His.

Perhaps you, too, are aware that you at times are in the same situation. We all need that healing of our hearts and minds, which mercy and forgiveness brings. The only thing I can predict about the presidential campaign is that it will mercifully come to an end on Nov. 8 and most of us will be disappointed with the outcome. Be that as it may, I still pray that during these next few months, as we come to the end of the Year of Mercy, we will become people of mercy, who reveal God's love and mercy to everyone we meet. May God grant us the grace and strength to become merciful like the Father, whose heart is filled with love for us and for all those most in need of His mercy.

God bless you,

Fr. Jerry