

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL
CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

Happy New Church Year

Dear Parishioners,

Welcome to a new Church Year. In the life of our church calendar each new Liturgical Year begins on the first Sunday of Advent. The Liturgical Year is the way our church celebrates, relives and makes present to us, Christ and the main events in his life. It is the way that our church keeps placing before us the story of Jesus.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us: "We must continue to accomplish in ourselves the stages of Jesus' life and his mysteries... So through the ebb and flow of each liturgical year, we seek, with the guidance of our church, to live and internalize the events of Christ's life. And as we begin this new Church Year there is a sense of excitement as we get to know our new Shepherd, Bishop Gregory Hartmayer. I am confident that his pastoral leadership will lead us deeper into the mystery of Christ's love. I know he is grateful for the welcome and prayerful support that so many of you have already given to him.

The new Church year also brings new changes to our celebration of the Mass. These are without a doubt the most significant changes in the way we worship since the Second Vatican

Council. The changes may not come easy at first but the hope is that once we adjust to them our worship will have a greater sense of the sacred about it. The new Roman Missal will also be more closely aligned to the original Latin text that Blessed John Paul II introduced to the Church a few years before his death. Thus, as a universal church, this new translation should provide us with the closest thing possible to a universal missal. Whatever your thoughts about the New Roman Missal may be, I am grateful to all who humbly continue to seek out a deeper sense of God's presence even in the midst of liturgical change.

How we worship together is important because if we truly believe in the existence of God, then we will want to do everything possible to grow closer to Him. Prayer is the key to our relationship with God. Through prayer we come to a deeper understanding of God's great love for us. Advent has always been a time to refocus on prayer as we look forward to celebrating the Mystery of the Incarnation at Christmas. I know things can get terribly hectic during this month with all the shopping and partying that goes on, but I

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.

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Begin the Journey Home for Christmas



Christmas is the perfect time for distant shepherds to begin the journey home. The angel's greeting extends to all those who feel estranged from the Church or numb to God's love. Those who have fallen away from the Faith can be comforted by these words:

"Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord."

Christ was born the son of a poor carpenter. Accidental? Not a chance. His birth was the culmination of salvation history, as it profoundly revealed the glory of God. Infinite power and wisdom took the "form of a slave, coming in human likeness," not as a warrior, but a poor and vulnerable babe. Nothing about God's entrance into humanity was accidental.

Every aspect of Christ's birth, from the three kings to the swaddling clothes, carries meaning. The proclamation of the angel, therefore, is also important: "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." This message, meant to be for "all the people," was announced to a group of shepherds in a field out in the middle of nowhere. Accidental? Not a chance.

The shepherds, who received a personal invitation to greet Christ at the manger, reveal that God's love extends beyond boundaries of distance and transcends social classes. Unlike persons of this world, who yearn to gain recognition with those of influence, wealth, or beauty, Christ cries out to the lowly in society, to the shepherds in the distance. He reaches out in love, desiring a relationship with every single person, no matter their status. This is the "good news of great joy for all people"; Christ was born for us all.

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Be not afraid. The Christ child awaits your arrival. Begin the journey back to Christ by drawing near to His body: the Church. Through prayer and the sacraments, you will discover the great joy that accompanies a relationship with God. Take a moment to ask the Lord to bring peace to your heart and guide you in love towards Him. Please join our parish family for the final preparations of Advent, as well as the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Masses.

You have read this entire article and have received a personal invitation to begin the journey. Accidental? Not a chance.

Parishioner Profile: Martha Kearns

Born in Augusta and raised in the Presbyterian faith, the last thing Martha Kearns probably ever envisioned herself doing was becoming a Catholic and working as an administrative assistant to a priest.

But that's exactly what God had in store for her.

Through a series of circumstances, which began when her father made the decision to enroll her at Aquinas High School, Martha found herself on a different pathway in life.

"Sending me to Aquinas was the best thing my father ever did for me," Martha says. "I knew it was exactly where I was meant to be. I attended Mass, participated in retreats, and became drawn to the Catholic Faith. Aquinas was also where I met my future husband, Tony, and we dated all throughout high school."

During her time at Aquinas, Martha knew deep in her heart that she would eventually convert to Catholicism, but her conversion was not something that happened right away, partly because she wanted to be certain her parents understood her decision. It wasn't until after she and Tony married and had four children that Martha thought the timing was finally right and, with her mother's love and support, she officially entered the Church.

Although she embraced everything about her new Faith, Martha says that it was her Presbyterian upbringing, which instilled in her the importance of church involvement; furthermore, stewardship was not a new concept for her family, but a vital part of everyday life.

"My father was a deacon and taught Sunday school for over 40 years, and my mother was president of the Women's Association," she explains. "The first check my parents wrote every month was to the church. They taught me that the church comes before anything else. It was how we did things, and we didn't question it."

A self-proclaimed people person, Martha believes involvement in various parish ministries help a person feel part of a community. Whether she's serving as a sacristan, spending time in Adoration, coordinating a wedding or baptism, or helping with Wednesday Night Suppers, Martha says she finds joy in reaching out and talking to people, in making new

friends, and in finding ways to help in any way she can.

And now, as Fr. Jerry's new administrative assistant, Martha is up for the challenge in this new direction in her life, believing as she did so many years ago at Aquinas that she is exactly where she is meant to be.



Martha Kearns, Administrative Assistant to our pastor, Fr. Jerry Ragan

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-Martha Kearns

Music Ministry Brings Harmony to the Liturgy

The musicians and singers of our parish Music Ministry give back to God by using their talents to share with us the music of the liturgy.

“To use the talents and the gifts that God has given them through music,” says Director of Music and Worship Alvin Blount. “If they have that particular talent, it should be used in that way; to give, not just our treasure, but our time and our talent, to give back what God has given them.”

There are four major groups within our music ministry that use their gifts for the different Masses. These are the Parish Choir, which provides music for the 10:30 a.m. Mass on Sundays; the Contemporary Choir, which sings twice a month at the 12:15 p.m. Mass; the Youth Ensemble, which plays at the 6:00 p.m. Youth Mass; and the St. Mary on the Hill School Chorus, which sings at Masses on First Fridays and other holy days of obligation during the school year.

In preparation for the Christmas season, the groups have been rehearsing for the Christmas liturgies, which are split between three of the four groups. On Christmas Eve, the Contemporary Choir will sing at the 4:00 p.m. Mass, the Youth Ensemble will play for the 6:00 p.m. Mass, and the Parish Choir will be accompanied by a Brass Quintet at the 9:00 p.m. Mass. The Brass Quintet will also play for the Midnight Mass.



The music each of these groups provides to the Mass is a special part of any liturgical celebration, and one that strengthens our bond as Catholics and enriches our experience of the Mass.

“It’s to enhance the liturgy,” Alvin says. “Music is a universal language. It’s something that most people can take part in. It’s not to take place of the liturgy or compete with it, but to enhance it, to reinforce the message of the altar.”

Alvin has been involved in parish music ministry for 24 years, and has been the Director of Music and Worship at St. Mary on the Hill for the last 16.

“It’s in my family background,” Alvin says. “I love choral music, I

love liturgical music, and I love the organ. The best place to be for that is the Church.”

Like most people who are involved in parish life, Alvin and the other musicians and singers of our parish have received many blessings through their participation.

“I’m blessed to use the talents that God has given me,” Alvin says. “I’m not happier doing anything else. I love what I do; I never get tired of it. I’m glad to give back and be able to live and work doing what I love. That’s a blessing in itself. A lot of people work, but don’t love what they do. I love what I do.”

For more information about our Music Ministry or to get involved, call Alvin Blount at 706-733-6627.

Making an Impact

The Rosary Ministry of Our Lady

A length of cord, some beads, and a crucifix are all it takes for members of the Rosary Ministry of Our Lady to make a rosary. The tools are basic and the process is simple, but the gift of a handmade rosary can make a big difference in someone's life.

"The Rosary is a wonderful way to help spread the Church's mission," explains James Tanner, ministry coordinator. "It also gives us peace of mind, and it reminds us that we are not alone in our faith journey."

And James is speaking from experience. When he lost his job in 2004, James felt very much alone. He was a disabled Vietnam veteran with no employment prospects and no income, and he entered into a period of depression. It was during this dark time that he remembered his mother's advice to take any and all problems to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and he began praying the Rosary every day and finding comfort in the traditional prayers. Slowly, things began to change. He found peace, he no longer felt alone, and he was a man with a mission.

"One night while I was praying the Rosary, the idea that I should start *making* rosaries just popped into my head," he says. "All of a sudden, I had some direction. So I started making rosaries, and just being able to do something beneficial was extremely healing for me."

Working through Our Lady's Rosary Makers (OLRM), a non-profit apostolate based in Kentucky and dedicated to spreading devotion to the Blessed Mother, James began making rosaries. In 2007 he brought the ministry to St. Mary's, and today this small group of dedicated parishioners makes rosaries that are sent all over the world.

James explains that ministry members order their rosary supplies from OLRM, and that each member can select the type of rosary he or she wishes to make.

One of the most popular rosaries is The Mission Rosary. Developed by Archbishop Fulton Sheen, this rosary is unique in that each decade is a different color, signifying the different regions of the world (green represents Africa, blue represents the islands in Oceania, white represents Europe, red represents the Americas, and yellow represents Asia). This rosary honors the work of missions, and is a reminder of our responsibility to share the Good News with all the nations.

Also popular is the knotted cord rosary, which is the type James likes to make.

"For me, the cord rosary is portable," he explains. "I can stuff it in my pocket and pull it out whenever I feel like working on it, and I don't have to carry around a box of beads."

Because of his military background, James also likes to make cord rosaries for members of our armed forces. These rosaries are made to military specifications in that they must be of a dark green, brown, or black color, so as not to reflect light. They must be made of nylon cord so as to not make noise, and for storage purposes they cannot be more than 21 inches in length.

While the cost of rosary supplies is minimal, the cost of shipping them is an entirely different matter. Sending rosaries through the mail to a foreign country can be very expensive, so James tries to find people who can personally carry the rosaries. In the past, Nora Otero Mignone has taken rosaries to Peru, Fr. Fortunatus has taken them to Tanzania, and parishioner Cathy Mann has carried them with her on a mission trip to Guatemala. Rosaries have also been sent to Iraq, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

"Of course, a lot of rosaries are given away locally," James explains. "We've given rosaries to Fr. Frank for the Prison Ministry, to Fort Gordon, and to Birthright of Augusta."

The Rosary Ministry of Our Lady is a perfect example of how one can make an impact on the world without ever leaving home. With some simple tools, a willing heart, and a spirit of giving, Our Lady's Rosary Makers spread the gift of faith.

Our Lady's Rosary Makers meet from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Annunciation House on the second Tuesday of every month. The ministry is always looking for new members. For more information, please contact James Tanner at 706-863-8786 or jetanner1950@peoplepc.com.



After I'm Gone: Planned Giving

"Our days glide by: death is at our door." – St. Francis de Sales, The Devout Life

Stewardship is a way of life. Its practice is the only true path of Christian living, which demands active service and charitable giving.

To be considered a way of life, however, stewardship must be practiced from now until the moment of death. The call to give of our time, talent, and treasure back to God in gratitude does not cease; there is no break, no pause, no respite. The race doesn't end until the finish line.

One way to answer the call of stewardship right up until your last breath is to include your local parish or favorite charity as a benefactor in your will or revocable trust.

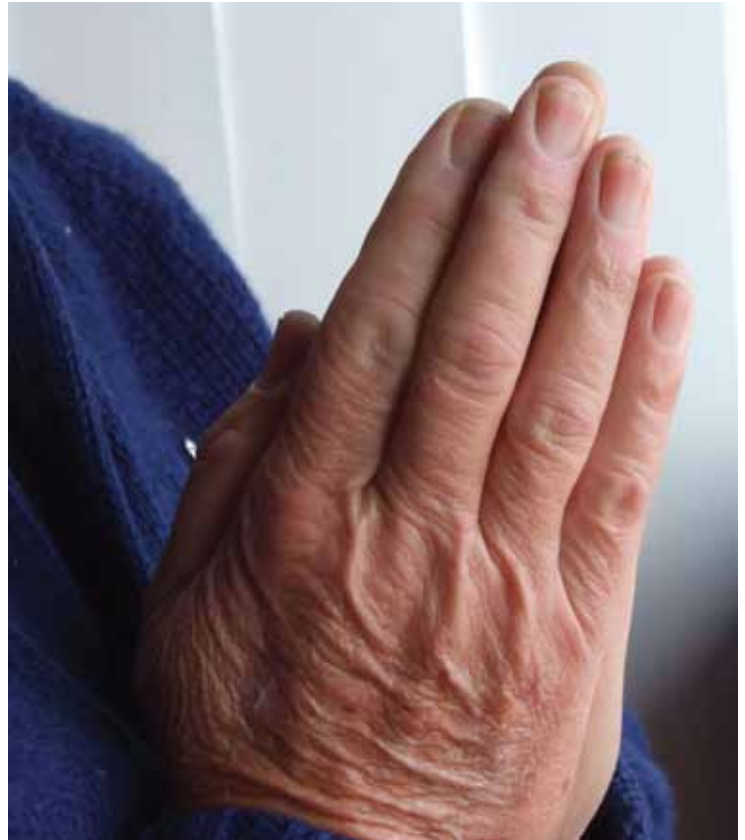
This may be a concept you've never considered. When creating a will, people often think of family and their alma mater; the local parish is generally overlooked as a beneficiary. However, the work of the Church has been greatly assisted by many generous gifts in the wills of its members and your personal contribution can make a difference in the future of the Church.

Keep in mind that more than 50 percent of adults die each year without a valid will. And without a will, the laws of the state decide the disposition of one's estate and no charitable giving is part of this distribution.

Take the time, therefore, to write a will and designate the parish or your favorite charity as a beneficiary. A bequest is a wonderful opportunity to express your commitment to the work of the Church right up to the moment of death. It is easy to arrange, does not affect your assets during life, and is completely revocable.

There are several ways to include the church in your will: as a fixed monetary amount, a specific item or designated property, a percentage of your estate, or a residual bequest (stating that after all bequests are granted, the residual is left to the Church).

Although the end of our earthly existence isn't pleasant to ponder, it remains an important part of our lives. Death itself is, in a sense, the culmination of the Christian life and our call to live as stewards continues even up until this moment. St. Philip Neri once said: "The best



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way to prepare for death is to spend every day of life as though it were the last. Think of the end of worldly honor, wealth, and pleasure and ask yourself: And then? And then?"

May we all maintain a healthy awareness of the finite nature of our earthly existence and give back to God with generous hearts.

For more information about giving opportunities to St. Mary Church or School, contact Mary Davis, Director of Development and Stewardship, 706-733-6627.

Happy New Church Year *continued from front cover*

would hope in the midst of all the busyness you would, as they say, "Remember the reason for the Season." If you have not participated in the greatest prayer of all, the Mass, in a while, I'd ask you to consider the gentle invitation on page 2 and journey home for Christmas.

And if you really want to get serious about pulling back from an overly commercialized Christmas, I would like to suggest that you refocus on prayer this Advent by spending one hour of your time each week in our Adoration Chapel. It is a very good way for you to use one of the 168 hours of the week. I would even suggest that every retired person in our parish should do this. You have the time. Come spend an hour with Jesus and pray for all those families who are stressed out with hectic lifestyles,

pray for peace in our world, pray for Catholics who no longer come to Mass, pray for your own spiritual transformation. What a wonderful way to use your TIME. What a wonderful way to begin a new Church Year.

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

Ad Placement

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Advent Penance Service

Monday, December 5th

7:00pm