

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL
CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

He is Coming! Are You Prepared?

Dear Parishioners,

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name Him Emmanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’” How many times have we heard those prophetic words? We’ve heard them in readings from the prophet Isaiah, and we’ve heard them repeated in Matthew in the readings for the last Sunday in Advent. What do we think of when we hear that Word? How close to our hearts is that proclamation?

At this time of year, those words should be very close. I think in particular of the meaning of Emmanuel, “God is with us.” That is one of the most basic tenets of stewardship — that God is with us on our stewardship missions. This month of December should be one of the high points of our annual stewardship journeys.

From the first day of the month up until Christmas is our Advent journey. The word “Advent” comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which literally means “coming.” We must also understand that *adventus* was the Latin translation of the Greek word *parousia*, which refers specifically to the “second coming.”

Advent, our time of expectant preparation for the first “coming” of Christ with His birth, is thus also a preparation for His “second coming.” On the

first Sunday of Advent (December 1), St. Paul and Jesus both tell us we need to be awake, to get ready. However, we all know what a challenge that can be with everything else that goes on around us during this season.

In our hearts, we know that this is a holy time, but the lists of things we develop to be done might often seem a long way from holy preparation. There is baking to be done; decorations to put up; lights to be hung; preparations for visitors to arrive at our homes, or for trips to visit others; gifts to be bought and wrapped. We really do have to wake up and be alert for signs of the Christ Child and for signs of the Lord, because it is so easy for them to be lost amidst everything else that fills this time of year.

Stewardship instructs us to step back and to keep in mind the reality about this Advent and Christmas for us as Catholics and Christians. Yes, this may seem like a “tired” theme because we people of faith articulate it so often. Nevertheless, that focus on what is vital is also a challenge to stewardship throughout the year, as well as a trial that seems most paramount right now. Christ deserves more from us than an hour and a half or so on Christmas Eve. He deserves daily prayers and devotions in preparation. Before Santa

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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Who is First on Your Christmas List?

The Christmas season is fast approaching. We have already made our gift lists, and perhaps even checked them twice. First on the list is family, followed by friends, our children's teachers and coaches, and maybe even the mailman. Christmas inspires us to give our family and friends gifts of love and appreciation, in gratitude towards all they do for us during the year. The very idea of holiday gift giving — a display of love and gratefulness to those who have touched our lives — is parallel to the concept of stewardship. When we give to God, we are effectively saying "thanks" for all He has done for us.



Think of all God has done for you this year. How have His loving arms embraced you? Maybe He has answered a special prayer intention. Maybe He has created a job opportunity for an unemployed loved one. He may have helped safely bring a new baby into the family, or instilled peace during a particularly difficult time. God's blessings are countless, and the abundant gifts He bestows upon us are given freely out of incomprehensible love — despite our unworthiness.

Think of the ways you respond to God's bountiful blessings. How do you choose to show Him your thankfulness? As we prepare for the coming of Christ

during Advent, will we remember to add Jesus' name to our list? Uncle John wants a new drill, and Grandpa definitely needs a new cardigan — but what does Jesus want? It is His birthday we are celebrating, after all.

The very first name on the list — above our spouse, children, relatives and friends — should be God's name. As disciples of Christ, we are called to give God our "first fruits," not our leftovers. We should joyfully place God first on our gift-giving lists, not out of guilt or as an afterthought, but out of love and appreciation.

Stewardship allows us to tangibly give a Christmas gift to God through

our time, talent and treasure. We give God gifts of time through prayer, such as spending time before the Blessed Sacrament or praying the Rosary. We can give our talents to God by way of simple charitable actions, such as bringing a meal to a hard-pressed neighbor, or watching a young mother's children so that she is able to prepare for her own family's Christmas celebration. And as for treasure, we can give God a portion of our income this Christmas by dropping an extra dollar in the collection basket. Whatever choices you make this season, make the decision to be a good Christmas steward.

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Responding to the Call to Stewardship as a Family

After a tornado hit Alice Hagler's former hometown of Tuscaloosa, Ala. in 2010, she knew she had to do something to help the community, and she did. By God's grace, she did something fantastic, and she brought a bunch of other faithful stewards right along with her.

"I really felt called to help my hometown," Alice says. "So Michael Lammers, the Youth Minister at Aquinas, and I organized a mission trip with 28 students, including two of my children. We stayed in my brother's basement and worked for three days cleaning up debris in a poor section of the city. It was 103 degrees outside, and we had to wear jeans and boots! Overall, however, it was such an amazing, meaningful, wonderful experience, and the people of Tuscaloosa appreciated us so much. We were like celebrities to them! The kids gave up the first three days of their summer vacation to go on the trip, and when we were done, many of them didn't want to leave. In fact, some of them even wondered about coming back next year!"

Amazingly, this spontaneous offering of time and talent on behalf of Alice and her children is not a singular event. Each member of the Hagler family loves their Catholic faith, and they try hard to live it out the best



Steve and Alice Hagler with their children.

"I feel led to [live out stewardship] because I feel it is my duty to the church. My kids are going to St. Mary's School, and I want to give back because I feel so grateful for the opportunity that my children have to go to such a wonderful Catholic school. We are participating in stewardship by doing so." — Alice Hagler

they can. Day by day, they continue to go forward on the journey, with hope and love at their side.

Steve and Alice have six children — Amelia, Stephen, Jay, Roger, Barrett, Susie, and Amy. Currently, Amelia attends Samford University in Birmingham, Stephen attends Aquinas High, and the rest of the children attend our parish school.

"We all go to Mass together and pray together, and we try to volunteer a lot of our time at the parish," Alice says. "Some of us work at the soup kitchen, and we help with the church basketball team. We volunteer for field day and other activities at the school for which they need parents. My husband is also on the School Commission, and our children are involved in the Youth Group."

When asked what has inspired the Hagler family to give so much of their time, talent and treasure to God, Alice has a meaningful response.

"I feel led to do it because I feel it is my duty to the church," she says. "My kids are going to St. Mary's School, and I want to

give back because I feel so grateful for the opportunity that my children have to go to such a wonderful Catholic school. We are participating in stewardship by doing so."

School Carnival Brings Pa



The St. Mary on the Hill School Carnival was held on Saturday, Oct. 12, at the school. This annual fundraiser is an opportunity to support the school while also having fun, building community, and giving back to the parish community by volunteering. And in all of those areas, this year's carnival was very successful.

"We know it was a huge success from the amount of fun the kids had," says Anthony Cashin, chair of the St. Mary on the Hill School Carnival. "And the weather was great, we had a nice full day of activities, and nobody got hurt too badly. From that standpoint, it was a success, and we're pretty confident it was a financial success, as well."

This year's School Carnival included games, activities and food for all ages. The kids enjoyed games

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says Anthony Cashin, chair of the S*



Irish Community Together

like costumed sumo wrestling and singing karaoke, and there was also an inflatable bounce castle, a rock-climbing wall and a bungee run. Each of the class homerooms in the school sponsored a booth at the Carnival, including the Ring Toss, Cake Walk and more.

On top of the games and activities for kids, there was also a silent auction. The bidding for the auction began the night before at the Carnival Preview Party. Hamburgers, hot dogs and other concessions were available to the carnival-goers, and there was also a Country Store.

Thanks to all who participated in the School Carnival and supported St. Mary on the Hill School, and thanks to all our volunteers who gave of their time and talent to make this event such a success!

*From the amount of fun the kids had,"
St. Mary on the Hill School Carnival.*



Master's Table Soup Kitchen Provides Essential Service to Those in Need

A group of St. Mary on the Hill parishioners is answering the Gospel call to feed the hungry in a very tangible way. On the fourth Wednesday of each month, these parishioners form part of a team of volunteers who serve at the Master's Table Soup Kitchen in downtown Augusta, a program sponsored by Golden Harvest Food Bank.

The Golden Harvest Food Bank was created in 1982, when a group of local leaders in Augusta decided to help our community by directly facing the challenge of hunger. A brand new facility opened its doors in 2010. Today at the Master's Table Soup Kitchen, a hot lunch is served to almost 400 people, 365 days a year.

"It's very rewarding whenever you help your fellow man and especially feeding those who are hungry," says Joe Smith, who has served as ministry leader since 2011. "We always need volunteers to assist preparing and serving a hot lunch to 400 hungry guests. This year, Christmas falls on St. Mary's day to volunteer. We plan to be there to feed those in need of a meal on this special day."

About 50 parishioners currently volunteer their time in this ministry. Two or three "regulars" help to prepare meals every month, and the others help once or more during the year as their schedules permit. The volun-

teers arrive at 8:30 a.m. and are given the day's menu. Then, they get to work chopping, opening cans, preparing salads, cooking meats and whatever else is needed to prepare the lunch, make it visually appealing, and have it ready to serve. Our St. Mary on the Hill eighth-graders are involved, as well. Small groups of students have the opportunity to serve the prepared lunch to guests on the fourth Wednesday of each month.

Joe has found that working at the Master's Table Soup Kitchen is a very powerful way to live out stewardship in his own life.

"It is time spent helping others who are less fortunate," he says. "Giving to another person who is truly in need is always fulfilling. Meeting so many new and old friends who also volunteer has been a special bonus."

The work performed by the volunteers is also essential to this ministry and those it serves.

"It's a big responsibility to feed 400 people," Joe says. "We really depend on our volunteers and appreciate each and every parishioner who helps with this most worthwhile ministry."

Please consider getting involved in this deeply rewarding service to our neighbors in need. Those interested in learning more may contact Joe Smith at 706-738-9896 or papojes@comcast.net.



He is Coming! Are You Prepared? *continued from front cover*

takes over, we need to ensure that Jesus is part of our preparations and our lives.

Stewardship as a way of life is never easy. But at this time of year, I suggest that each of us, each family, read the Christmas Story at the beginning of Advent, not just at the end. Then, we need to go back to that story and reflect upon that message again and again during our Advent and Christmas journeys. To complete our preparations and to bring the passage to fruition, we all

will long to hear those words: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests."

God be with you during this holy time of our Church year.

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

P.S. — I am always grateful for those parishioners who make a special end-of-year contribution to the parish. You help our faith community catch up to a balanced budget. But I also hope this year that many will divert their state tax obligation to help fund Catholic education, which is one of our biggest ministries at St. Mary on the Hill. Through the GRACE Scholars Program, state taxpayers can take a credit against their Georgia income taxes and "redirect" their tax payment to scholarships for students entering St. Mary School for kindergarten or from the public school system. It is a win-win situation. Try the Early Bird Special and the One-Stop Show, too!

Competition for tax credits will be greater than ever in 2014. We are only getting a small portion of the available funds. But you can get a jump on the competition by taking advantage of our Early Bird Special. GRACE will take your paperwork now and apply for your tax credit on Jan. 2. You can send your payment with the paperwork or defer payment until your tax credit is approved. Please call Mary Davis in the parish office at 706-733-6627 this week for details, or go online at <http://www.gracescholars.org>.

Attention owners of S corporations, LLCs and partnerships — you can now claim a credit of up to \$10,000 for your share of the pass-through tax liability.

Ad Placement

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL

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Baptisms

Lucy Kate LeZotte
Matt & Lindsay LeZotte

Allan Wright Barrett
Lan & Crissy Barrett

Charles Henry Paulk
Gerard & Brigid Paulk

O'Brien Rose McArdle
Ryan & Christy McArdle

Thomas Victor Casella
Vic & Lindsay Casella

Ezra Gantt Swenson
Gabriel & Summer Swenson

Taiah Shantalle Brown
Shannon & Afua Brown

Teagan Shanel Brown
Shannon & Afua Brown

Talia Shanice Brown
Shannon & Afua Brown

Caroline June Henry
Lee & Maria Henry

Advent Penance Services

St. Teresa's Monday, December 16 @ 7 p.m.

St. Joseph's Monday, December 9 @ 7 p.m.

MHT Wednesday, December 4 @ 6:30 p.m.

Recent Donations to St. Mary on the Hill

St. Mary on the Hill Church

John and Annette Lint
Donald and Pat McArdle
Kayce and Marie Patchan

In Memory of Carl Gledhill
Dr. and Mrs. Charles McCloy

In Memory of Bob Williams
Carol Hiers Shealy
Earl Martin
Constance Audet

In Honor of the St. Mary Church Youth Ministry
Mr. and Mrs. K.L. Dendinger

In Honor of the Vola Jacobs Memorial Series
Julia Blalock

St. Mary on the Hill School

In Memory of Carl Gledhill
Renee Strunk and Franklin Barefield, Jr.

Christmas Mass Schedule

Christmas Eve Tuesday, Dec. 24, 2013

4 p.m.* + — Contemporary Choir

6 p.m. — Family Mass

9 p.m. — Brass with Parish Choir

12 a.m. — At midnight,
Brass with congregational singing

Christmas Day Wednesday, Dec. 25, 2013

9 a.m. + — Congregational Singing

11 a.m. — Congregational Singing

*** Nursery Available + Incense Free**

Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God

Vigil — Tuesday, Dec. 31, 2013

6 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2014

9 a.m.

11 a.m.