

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL
CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

December, A Journey of Fulfillment

Dear Parishioners,

You and I are on a journey together – what I have called a stewardship journey. But, of course, it is much more than that. During this month of December, as we prepare for Christmas throughout Advent, that journey becomes even more special.

“God bless us, every one.” If that sounds familiar to you, it probably should. Those are the words used by the character Tiny Tim in Charles Dickens’ classic *A Christmas Carol*. The little boy says these words twice – the first time as a blessing at their Christmas dinner; the second at the very end of the story. Those are words we need to keep in mind throughout our Advent and Christmas journey. They are words

that should be close to us in our effort to live stewardship as a way of life.

Stewardship involves a conversion of heart, much like how Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* undergoes a conversion. Throughout the story, Scrooge goes through four levels of conversion – he acknowledges his sinfulness, experiences regret, repents for his sins, and as a result, he ultimately achieves salvation. Scrooge’s conversion is a wonderful example of how we all must embark on our own journey to prepare our hearts for the arrival of Christ.

Christmas represents one of the most important stories of our faith. It is the story of Jesus born in a simple

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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.

BE STEWARDS, NOT CONSUMERS DURING THE *Advent and Christmas Seasons*

The secularization of the Advent and Christmas seasons celebrates the “holidays” with full fury all the way up to the 25th of December. With all of the gift buying, partying and rushed errands, we miss the true purpose of the Advent season, which was meant to be more austere, contemplative and penitential.

Indeed, through our hectic schedules, we often fail to properly grasp the significance of this season, due in large part to the successful secularization of our Catholic “holy day,” which is now simply reduced to “the holiday season.” This fact serves as a metaphor for our examination of conscience and confession of sins in the Sacrament of Penance during the season of Advent.

Look to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and reflect upon the “Infancy Narratives” concerning the incarnation and birth of

Jesus Christ. If we only had the “Infancy Narratives” of these Gospels and no other information, we would have the Gospel of Christ in miniature. The angelic choir makes clear that Jesus is God and Man, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. The message to the shepherds makes clear that Jesus came for the outcast and rejected – for the sinner. The adoration of the Magi shows that conversion is for all people and Jesus’ message is universal. It makes clear that Jesus will suffer and eventually die, but by way of paradox, this will fulfill His mission to redeem the world from sin and death. The wood of the manger and the swaddling clothes anticipate the wood of the cross and the burial shroud. Jesus is placed into a “feeding trough” for animals, symbolizing the Risen Lord who will become the Eucharistic Food for the world at Mass.

As stewards, we should have no anxiety that is rooted in buying gifts or being “ready” in the secular sense. We can ease our anxieties by focusing on our relationship to God, Church and one another. Am I right with God? Do I use His many gifts of Grace for conversion and true stewardship and discipleship? Do I repent of my sins and make a firm purpose of amendment? Do I go to confession regularly, especially when I am in a state of mortal sin? Am I ready to meet my Lord and Savior either at my particular judgment at the hour of my death, or at the General Judgment when Christ will return in glory at the end of time?

Pray that this season will truly be a season of “holy days,” not just a holiday. Let us not be consumers of religion, but true stewards of God’s manifold gifts.

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School Community Benefits From Fun and Fellowship **A Look Back at the St. Mary on the Hill School Carnival and Preview Party**

When one thinks of school fundraisers, a weekend of family fun and fellowship is probably not the first thing that comes to mind. But with the St. Mary on the Hill School Carnival and Preview Party — one of the biggest annual fundraisers for our school — that is exactly what you get.

“First and foremost it is a great chance for fellowship within the school and the parish,” says Therese Rhodes, who chaired the Carnival Committee with her husband, Brian. “It is a great chance for all of the families to get together outside of the traditional school atmosphere. It also gives the school a great chance to perpetuate a strong presence within the community. It really encapsulates everything that is great about St. Mary on the Hill. It is a perfect representation of the faith, family and fun atmosphere that we have all become so endeared to.”

The School Carnival was held on Oct. 18 on the school playground, and the Preview Party was held the night before in the gym. The Carnival included an auction, plenty of games for all ages, a Jump House, Rock Climbing Wall, dunk tank, lots of food and more.

While the Carnival was for all ages, the Preview Party was an night of fun and fellowship for the adults in our community. The theme was “Tailgates and Touchdowns,” and participants enjoyed food and cocktails while they visited with each other and bid on auction items like Guitar Pull tickets, Gator Bowl tickets, artwork and more, raising money for the Parent Teacher Organization.

“This party really contributes to furthering our children’s education,” says Jennifer Shuford, Co-Chair of the Preview Party along with Mariah Sellers. “It’s fun for us to get together, but it helps our children in the long run, which is the whole point of it.”



Fostering a Reverent Atmosphere in Our Parish



The lighting of the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil Mass



The altar is decorated with poinsettias during Christmas



Relining and laying stone for the fountain featuring Mary and the Blessed Child

The environment and decorations of a church are essential to fostering an worshipful atmosphere through the various liturgical seasons. Our St. Mary on the Hill parish family is certainly blessed by the beautiful decorations seen in our church, particularly during the Christmas and Easter seasons. These decorations are the result of Jimmy Carrick's work and leadership at the church. Jimmy enjoys working with both parish volunteers and paid staff to improve the facilities and decorate the church during the holidays.

"What I like best is seeing all the different ministries at work in the parish and knowing the majority of folks," he says. "Whether they are paid or volunteers, they are going about their business in a manner that shows that they love what they are doing and that they know they belong to something that man could not create on his own."

Jimmy, who has been the Facilities Manager for the church properties for the past eight years, is dedicated to improving the church campus daily and providing a beautiful sanctuary environment during the holidays. Each Christmas season, Jimmy purchases several trees from Our Lady of Peace Parish.

"There are other places I could get trees from, but I like hand-picking the trees," Jimmy says. "I usually purchase seven to eight cedar trees a few weeks before Christmas, and the trees at Our Lady of Peace are always beautifully shaped."

Jimmy and a group of volunteers work together to decorate the church. The decorations include the Nativity scene, cedar trees and garland hung in the sanctuary, as well as a large 10-foot-tall poinsettia arrangement in the rotunda of the narthex. The poinsettia arrangement is made from 200 red poinsettias and is a tiered structure resembling a great red Christmas tree. After Christmas, parishioners are encouraged to take a poinsettia home.

At Easter, Jimmy decorates the church with 50 Easter lilies, providing a beautiful white flower arrangement surrounding the altar. Like the poinsettias, parishioners are encouraged to take an Easter lily home to enjoy. In addition to the decorations, Jimmy helps facilitate the Easter Vigil Mass by preparing the outdoor gathering area and the fire pit. The pastor lights the Paschal Candle from the fire pit to start the Vigil Mass, and the Paschal Candle in turn lights the entire congregation's individual candles.

When Jimmy first began working with St. Mary on the Hill, his goal was to improve the church facilities as much as pos-

Atmosphere of Worship Community

sible. In the last eight years, with the help of his team, he has completed numerous important projects – painting our parish and school facilities, repairing leaks in the school roof, sanding and painting all of the church window frames, and adding stone work around the fountain of Mary and Child. In addition, Jimmy works with volunteers from the St. Joseph's Guild to improve the grounds in various ways throughout the year.

If you would like to learn more about volunteering and helping to foster an atmosphere of worship and reverence here at St. Mary on the Hill, please contact Jimmy Carrick through the parish office at 706-733-6627.



The new floor installed for the choir loft at St. Mary on the Hill

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

Advent Penance Service – Dec. 15

7 p.m.

Christmas Mass Schedule:

Dec. 24 – 4 p.m., 6 p.m., 9 p.m. and midnight

Dec. 25 – 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.

Solemnity of Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God

Dec. 31 – 6 p.m. Vigil

Jan. 1 – 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.



UNDERSTANDING THE MASS

Giving Thanks to God in the Most Powerful Way Possible

It is ironic that today, with all of the freedom of religion that we enjoy in the United States, many of us wonder why we must go to Mass on Sunday.

However, if we really understood what the Mass is and how we participate in the celebration, we would instead be asking why we, as sinful human beings, are even able to participate in the Mass. If we simply understood and recognized that God's infinite goodness allows us to do so, we would be eager to go to Mass on Sunday and every other day of the week.

It is true, however, that all Catholics are obliged to "Keep holy the Lord's Day" by sharing in the Mass. But why are we obliged?

The Eucharistic Liturgy is the center of our faith. It is "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed" and it is

"the font from which all her power flows" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 10). It does not exhaust the activity of the Church, but is most certainly her greatest work.

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is literally re-presented to the Father during Mass, and Christ allows us to join with Him in offering that sacrifice. Imagine our Lord and Savior dying on the cross for us right up the street. Imagine knowing that Mary is sitting at the foot of the cross with St. John, witnessing her Son giving Himself to the Father for the sake of all of us. Would we not run to be there? Would we not desire to share in His sacrifice, just as Mary did?

Believe it or not, the sacrifice of Calvary is really, truly happening at our parish, every time the Mass is offered.

Our participation in Mass gives us the strength and the graces we need to live our lives as Christ's disciples. So what does this mean for us?

This means we have a front row seat to the sacrifice of Calvary. Given such a gift, how can we not accept it?

We also have a chance to join in Jesus' sacrifice by offering our own prayers and petitions. As an example, what better

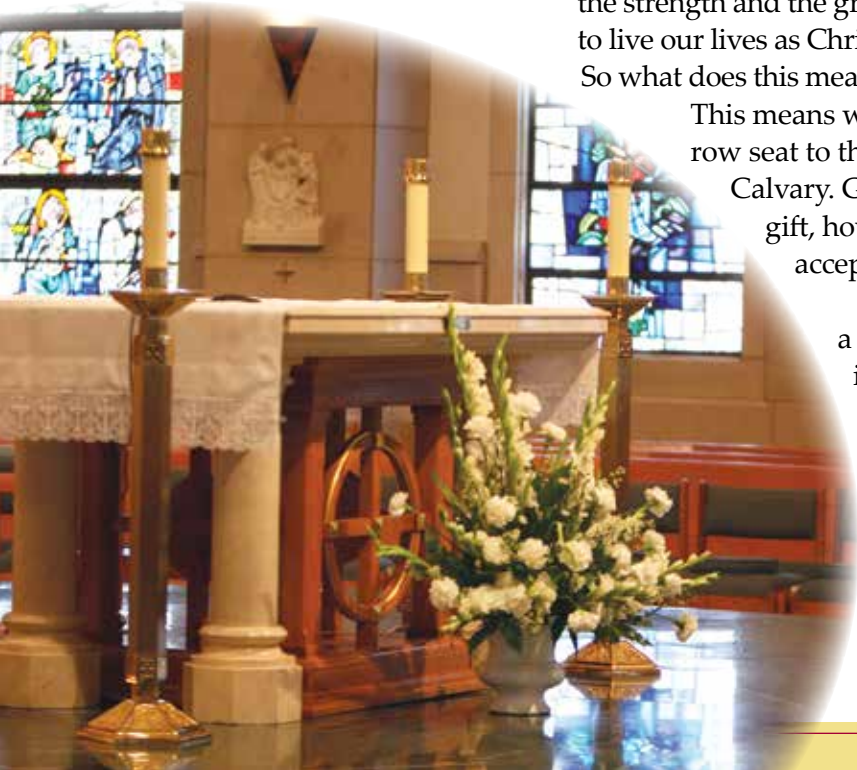
gift could we give deceased loved ones than the offering of prayers for their souls in Purgatory?

Most importantly, we have the opportunity to receive the Eucharist, followed by quiet time, when we offer sincere thanks and allow God's graces to fill us. Think of all that you are missing when you do not properly prepare yourself to receive the Holy Eucharist.

We ought to joyfully run to Church each Sunday, eager to give God glory in the greatest way we can! Attending and actively participating in Mass every Sunday is our obligation as Catholics. But we should not allow the fact that our attendance is "required" to stop us from going. Nor should we allow our laziness to overshadow the amazing privilege and the many blessings that lay before us in the Mass.

The pope and the bishops direct us to participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy every Sunday because they know there is no better way to keep holy the Lord's day – giving God thanks for all He has done for us in the most powerful way possible. They know that, through the Mass, we gain the graces necessary to live our lives in this world.

Our ability to participate in the Mass is a wonderful gift, not a great burden. May Christ enlighten our minds and hearts to clearly see the wonders of the celebration, and give us great enthusiasm and eagerness to participate.



December *continued from front cover*

manger; of shepherds coming to visit Him; and of kings following a star to find the infant. Each part of that story contains an important stewardship message. As for the child, He would become the one who consistently teaches us to give and to serve. Yet, He enters this world needing great assistance. He teaches us there is no shame in being poor, and there is no shame in grasping humility. The shepherds came from the fields with just themselves and their sheep. Their lesson is that we all have something to give, even if it is ourselves and our prayers. Those are important. The kings were men

of means. They show us that we need to do more than worship. We need to bring something to give, as well.

Yes, we are on a journey – a wonderful journey together. God is speaking to us, but we must take the time to listen. If we do, this will be a fulfilling month infused with joy.

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

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Congratulations to our 2014 Confirmation class!

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St. Mary on the Hill Church

John and Anne McCormack

In Memory of Dr. Tommy Saul

Judy Frances Seniuk
and Nancy Marsh

In Memory of Mary Anna Buckley

Estate of Mary Anna Buckley

St. Mary on the Hill School

In memory of Raymond Lundquist

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Anne and Sam Richeson

St. Mary on the Hill Rosary Ministry

Knights of Columbus Council 677

St. Mary on the Hill Adoration Chapel

Louise Wright

St. Mary on the Hill Senior Center

Elizabeth M. Fleming

Baptisms

Aubrey Teagan Castro
Daughter of Fabio & Jill Castro

Natalie Marie Reigle
Daughter of Jeremy & Aisling Reigle

Amelia Lansdale Creson
Daughter of John & Erin Creson

Theresa Marie Lanham
Daughter of Jason & Irene Lanham

Hannah Elizabeth Mulherin
Daughter of Edward & Leanne Mulherin

Matthew Edward Mulherin
Son of Edward & Leanne Mulherin