

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL
CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

How Will You Welcome Jesus This Christmas?

Dear Parishioners,

So many voices and images compete for our attention, our time and our energy. In this digital age, we are almost always “plugged in,” and that has some real benefits. But at the same time, the more plugged in we are, the less reflective we can become. We are less apt to stand back and ask, “What is my life really about?”

This is one reason why the season of Advent is such a blessing. During these weeks before Christmas, as the world tends to get busier with all sorts of pre-Christmas activity, God asks us to spend a little more time in quiet prayer, reflecting on the greatest gift ever given to us. God has a dream for us... and that dream can be summed up with the word “Communion.” God is not some vague impersonal force forever separated from our daily lives. God has been made known to us fully and completely in Jesus Christ. In Jesus, God is forever wedded to the human race. That is an awesome reality to ponder!

Not only am I able to have a relationship with God, but in Jesus Christ, I am made for this relationship! Sherry Weddell, in her book *Forming Intentional Disciples*, mentions the following:



“Normative Catholicism involves three concurrent spiritual journeys that, in practice, are often treated as separate:

1. The personal interior journey of a lived relationship with Christ resulting in intentional discipleship.
2. The journey...into the Church through the reception of the Sacraments.
3. The journey of active practice...”
(Weddell, page 54).

As a priest for over 36 years, I can share the frustration I have felt when we emphasize the last two journeys without reference to the first journey of personal intimacy with Jesus Christ. Membership in the Church and regular outward practice of faith without intimacy with

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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.

Get Ready for a Favorite *St. Mary's Annual*



With Christmas on the way, one thing you can be sure of is that there are plenty of traditions that go along with it! And one such tradition here at St. Mary on the Hill is happening soon – Breakfast with Santa, a much-loved holiday favorite for parishioners of all ages!

“Breakfast with Santa takes place after the 7:45 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Masses on the second Sunday of the month in December,” says St. Mary on the Hill Social Director Leigh McCormack. “The Knights of Columbus prepare the breakfast and the parish provides the entertainment for the children. We book Santa and make sure he has that day off to sit with us during the breakfast. We do photos of the kids with Santa, and we have a craft table where they work on ornament crafts, and a coloring contest for the kids. It provides a nice activity for the children, and the parents can sit and have breakfast!”

This year, Santa will join us for breakfast on Sunday, Dec. 13, in the parish hall. Breakfast is \$5 per person, or \$15 per family, and parents are asked to make a \$5 donation for a photo with Santa.

“It’s such a fun, family-oriented event,” Leigh says. “Entire families come. You see grandparents, parents and their children, whether they are toddlers or in college – they all come to this event. Some people even use the pictures with Santa for their Christmas cards. It’s a nice family tradition that the families look forward to every year.”

The breakfast menu includes pancakes, eggs, grits, sausage, and bacon. In addition, the Knights will also make special omelets!

“You get your \$5 worth and more with the breakfast,” Leigh says. “But what I find most enjoyable is that the families come during that busy time of the year, and it gives them an opportunity to sit and enjoy a nice breakfast with their families while watching the kids enjoy Santa. It’s sweet.”

One of Leigh’s favorite parts of the Breakfast with Santa event is seeing the joy and excitement on the faces of the children – and adults – as they wait to see Santa.

“We have a parishioner who’s about to be 100, and she comes to see Santa every year, too,” Leigh says. “It doesn’t matter what age you are, your eyes light up when

Christmas Tradition!

Breakfast with Santa

you see Santa. It's a heartwarming experience. And it's so fun to see the children wait in line to tell Santa what they want for Christmas. I've seen lists on paper, and even lists on an iPad! The kids are showing Santa pictures of what they want to make sure he gets it right. It's so cute!"

Leigh also notes that this beloved event wouldn't be possible without the help of the many volunteers who work hard to make it a success. The Knights of Columbus provide a delicious breakfast, which Leigh says is the best in town! In addition, the eighth-grade students preparing for Confirmation volunteer as elves, helping to line up the kids for Santa, and also help with the arts and crafts and the coloring contest.

So, be sure to come on out for a wonderful meal, fellowship and a special visit with Santa himself!



For more information on the Breakfast with Santa event, or to find out how you can help, please contact Leigh McCormack via email at leighmc127@yahoo.com.

Advent and Christmas Schedule

Breakfast with Santa

Dec. 13

Dec. 25 – 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.

Advent Penance Service

Dec. 15, 7 p.m.

Solemnity of Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God

Dec. 31 – 6 p.m. Vigil

Jan. 1 – 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.

Christmas Mass Schedule:

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



“A Powerful, Vital Work” St. Mary’s Saints Overseas Ministry

A few years ago, parishioner Katie Conner visited an orphanage in Russe, Bulgaria, to adopt her son, Gabriel. The sight of so many children without families to care for them stunned her.

“The aching of the children was almost palpable,” says Katie, Saints Overseas Ministry Leader. “I resolved to reach out to my parish family to see what we could do to help.”

Katie turned to Renee McCabe, who had been a huge support to her family during the adoption process, and this was the first step in forming the Saints Overseas Ministry.

As she researched the orphan crisis, Katie discovered a book called *AIDS Orphans Rising* by Sr. Mary Elizabeth Lloyd, and she reached out to the author.

“These children need to know that they have not been forgotten,” Katie says. “Sr. Mary Beth put me in touch with St. Justin’s Catholic School in Goala, Ethiopia, which her order, the Religious Sisters Filippini, established and runs.”

Katie and Renee, her assistant, received blessing from Fr. Jerry to reach out to them as a parish. They called for volunteers, and the ministry now has a core group of members.

“Our first project was simply to study and pray together,” Katie says. “We discussed the book. We remained in contact with Sr. Mary Beth for practical guidance.”

From the beginning, the response from the faith community to these children was spectacular. The first parish-wide project was the Angel Tree that took place two years ago – it collected \$8,000 to send to St. Justin’s for the Sisters to buy food and milk for many months.

More importantly, this support established a personal connection between the parish and the children.

“There is something very special about this way of serving,” Katie says. “We are serving friend to friend, and we both have something to teach each other.”

Last fall, Sr. Mary Beth visited the parish and spoke about the children her order serves. When the parish asked for another project, Sr. Mary Beth shared that the people of Goala lacked a clean water source. The second Angel Tree project was dedicated to raising funds, and these funds were merged with additional donations.

“The village now has a permanent well that is fueled by the local electrical system,” Katie says. “Our parish was instrumental in solving this massive obstacle to health and survival.”



Sr. Mary Beth Lloyd surrounded by members of the Saints Overseas Ministry. (Back row, from left) Matthew Bosisio, Tom Campbell, and Alicia Ramage. (Front row, from left) Gigi McCutchen, Katie Conner, Sr. Mary Beth Lloyd, M.P.F., Ed.D., Renee McCabe, Meg Mirshak, and Joan Spagnolo.



The schoolchildren of St. Justin’s in Goala, Ethiopia.

Way to Serve Christ" Saints Overseas

Katie recently spoke with Sister, who mentioned that in addition to the 400 children who crowd into St. Justin's school, there are about 100 more who sit on the wall surrounding the school to listen.

"For the Angel Tree this year, it would be wonderful if we could provide enough funds to give rolls and milk to all these children for a whole school year," Katie says.

Saints Overseas has also sent care packages to the children, and in addition to material gifts, each project for the school includes a spiritual component. For example, in Lent parishioners write prayers or sacrifices they will make for the children and place them on a cross in the narthex.

"Many students have sent notes and pictures to the children," Katie says. "My kids and I pray for our 'friends in Goala' in our morning prayers. We feel a personal connection to them."

The Saints Overseas Ministry meets on Sunday afternoons when preparing for a project. The ministry welcomes collaborations and is grateful for support of the Knights of Columbus, the Rosary Makers and the school children.

"We work with the Sisters to provide food, water and supplies to keep these children alive and help them thrive," Katie says. "It's a powerful, vital way to serve Christ."

Saints Overseas answers Christ's call to serve our brothers and sisters in need in a direct way. Katie believes that serving our marginalized brothers and sisters brings one closer to Jesus.

"It is exhilarating to do something to serve and love hurting children," Katie says. "As a parish, maybe we can't solve world hunger, but we can change things in this one village. So let's do that!"

For more information about Saints Overseas, reach out to Katie Conner at 706-399-4161 or by email at kathleenconner@bellsouth.net.



The schoolchildren of St. Justin's in Goala, Ethiopia.



A few of the "children on the wall" surrounding the school.

Confirmation Candidates Learn the Ropes of Faith

If you've ever navigated a ropes course, then you know how delicate each step can be. You journey slowly from one stop to the next, being careful of each movement, but always relying faithfully on the idea that should you slip, the harness will still keep you from falling.

Taking ownership of one's faith through the Sacrament of Confirmation is a little like a ropes course. We step away from our reliance on our parents in the navigation of what we believe, but always rely on the idea that our faith will never let us fall.

Seventy-three candidates navigated such a ropes course as part of their journey to Confirmation last month. As Sacramental Coordinator Joan Purucker explains, each step of the yearlong preparation process took them a little closer to receiving the sacrament.

"Starting in the eighth grade, they're required to do 15 hours of service and five hours of adoration during that year," Joan says. "They're also required to attend Religious Education classes. In the fall, they attend six or seven sessions that prepares them for the Rite itself, and they're also required to attend at least one retreat."

This year's class had the choice of attending a day long retreat organized by NET Ministries or challenging the low ropes course at Gravatt Conference and Retreat Center in Aiken, S.C.



Confirmation class of 2015 with Bishop Hartmeyer

"They're required to attend one of the retreats and they're given a choice," Joan says. "They can attend both, and we encourage them to attend both, but they're only required to attend one. Since we have the school and our parish program with CCD, it's a way of bringing these students together to get to know each other and to realize that we're all part of this parish."

Workshops at each retreat focused on topics such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit, works of mercy and service. In addition to their attendance, candidates also wrote letters to Bishop Gregory Hartmayer and Fr. Jerry.

"Fr. Jerry asks the families to write the letter to him to let him

know how they're practicing their faith together," Joan explains. "Since it's a large parish, it's a way for him to get to know a little more about the parishioners and where they are on their faith journey. He then knows how he can minister to them."

Joan says she thought this year's class possessed a chemistry together that made for a truly enjoyable preparation session, which in turn led to a beautiful ceremony.

"It was a wonderful class, and the Confirmation Mass is one of the most beautiful Masses that there is," she says. "It is so wonderful watching the bishop and seeing him administer the sacrament to the students."

Parents who wish to learn more about helping their child prepare for confirmation are encouraged to contact the parish office at 706-733-6627.

How Will You Welcome Jesus This Christmas?

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Jesus is a recipe for frustration, boredom and cynicism in the Body of Christ.

This Advent, I invite our faith community to look at our intimacy with Jesus Christ. Do we know Him? Do we love Him? Do our lives make sense apart from Him? Does our relationship with Jesus Christ affect our checkbooks, our calendars, our friendships, our attitudes, and our family life? If we can spend some time reflecting on these questions of our Spiritual Life, I have no doubt that we will be able to welcome Jesus this Christmas with joyful hearts.

I am excited that we began the Advent Season and the Holy Year of Mercy with a special shrine to Our Lady, Undoer of Knots. I feel certain that all who were able to participate in this devotion were drawn deeper into the Mystery of God's Love and Mercy. And I hope many will also be able to participate in our Advent Penance Service on Tuesday, Dec. 15 at 7 p.m.

To experience in a personal way the Merciful love of Jesus in our lives through the Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of the best ways to prepare to celebrate the Incarnation of Our Lord at Christmas.

Scripture tells us that Jesus wants to give us "every spiritual blessing in the heavens" (Ephesians 1:3). He came to Earth and wants to give us His joy, His love, His peace, His grace, and His mercy. He wants to give us His confidence, His power, His clarity, and His wisdom. All of this wealth is there waiting for us when we let Him into our hearts during this Holy Season of Advent.

May God bless you and all those you love this Christmas and always,



Fr. Jerry

Ad Placement

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL

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Mark Main, Glyn Luke,
Chuck Hayes, Mike Conaway,
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Jennifer Hughes, Jennifer Vrlik

Baptisms

Oct. 11

Cecelia Jean Louise Townsend
Daughter of
Norman and Holly Townsend
Maureen Bernadette Kilzer
Daughter of
Eric and Shannon Kilzer

Oct. 17

Hannah Louise Schmitt
Daughter of
David and Kellyanne Schmitt

Linus Xavier Scureman
Son of Evan and Megan Scureman

Oct. 18

Hannah Lou Griffin
Daughter of Hank and Venus Griffin

