

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL

CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

Celebrate Love

Dear Parishioners,

This month, we celebrate St. Valentine's Day, which has turned into a wonderful excuse to celebrate Love. I don't think we should ever miss an opportunity to celebrate love. And sadly, I think we have not done nearly enough as Catholics to promote the Sacrament of Matrimony, which for most is the foundation of a loving community that creates the family. To be committed to the Sacrament of Matrimony is to be confronted intimately day after day with the mystery of life, of other life, of life outside of oneself. At its best marriage is one of the greatest steps we can take in drawing closer to God by the forming of a close relationship of total love with another person.

One of the absolute best forms of Adult Faith Formation here at St. Mary on the Hill is the occasional Living in Love workshops that we put on. There is one this month and I hope you'll read the article about Living in Love in this month's issue. You could not give a better Valentine's Day gift to your spouse than committing to

take this marriage workshop. It has already deepened the love of dozens of couples in our faith community.

Strong marriages form a very solid foundation for this faith community. And I'd hope the following questions might help the married couples of this parish live in love each and every day.



1. Write your love story, as you want it told to your great-grandchildren.

Include how and why you fell for your spouse. Recount at least one way your spouse gave of himself or herself.

2. What gifts has God given you in your spouse and your marriage? With whom will you share them?

3. List five ways that you show gratitude toward your spouse. Which two ways does he or she like best? Resolve to do those two more often.

And if you find that you are facing difficult times in your married relationship, I would hope that you would commit to working at rediscovering the original love that attracted you to each other. There is a

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.

Living Lent in 2013

During the 40 days that Jesus spent fasting and praying in the desert, Satan was constantly tempting Him. He preyed on Jesus' humanity, trying desperately to get Him to test God. Of course, we all know that it didn't work. As Jesus is 100 percent God at the same time that He is 100 percent man, the devil was unable to take hold of Him.

Yet, the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert communicates an all-important truth to us. Jesus, the God-man, experienced everything we have and everything we ever will as human beings. Satan even tried to tempt Him, just as he tempts us every day. But because Jesus is God at the same time that He is human, He had no tendency to give in to Satan's attempts.

Even so, Christ fought Satan tooth and nail, putting him in his place! He quoted scripture after scripture, fighting Satan's deceptions with truth, finally commanding him, "Get away, Satan! It is written, 'The Lord, your God shall you worship, and Him alone shall you serve.'" At that, the devil left Him.

We all find ourselves in similar situations. We live in a world wrought with sin, and, in his ever-so-cunning way, Satan makes the sinful look appealing. We must stand firm in our faith and tell Satan to "Get away," just as Jesus did. Only then will we truly experience the glory of the salvation Christ came to give. Lent offers us a particular time to fight Satan, taking



courage in the resurrection that we are preparing to celebrate. It is a time that we spend focused on strengthening our relationships with the Lord. Armed with His power, which we receive in many different ways, we can resist the temptations of the devil and accept the salvation Christ offers each one of us.

How can we do this? Get to know the Lord through prayer. Read the Scriptures often. St. Jerome tells us that ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ. So, we must be steeped in Scripture. Read it daily — chapter by chapter, or verse by verse. It is, after all, the Word of God! Draw close to the Blessed Mother. She knows her Son better than any of us, and she is eager to bring us to Him. Join her at the cross, where she witnessed her most precious Son die for each one of us. Pray the Rosary — individually and as a family. It is a powerful prayer

through which, with Mary, we walk through Christ's life, His Death, and His resurrection. Unite with Christ Himself in His suffering.

At a minimum, the Church tells us to fast and abstain from meat throughout the Lenten Season. Catholics who are 14-years-old and older must abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, which falls this year on Feb. 13, Good Friday, falling this year on March 29, as well as all of the Fridays throughout Lent. In addition, Catholics between the ages of 18 and 60 are required to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting is defined as eating one meal and two smaller meals, which, together, do not equal the larger meal.

The idea behind these requirements is to help us focus on the spirit of the season. We are to be preparing ourselves, just as Christ did, for the great event which won for us salvation!

Living in Love

Reconnecting and Rediscovering the Joy in Marriage

In a society in which too many marriages fall by the wayside, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that love between a husband and wife is meant to grow and evolve long after the wedding day. Indeed, the hectic pace of everyday life can prevent couples from sharing the time necessary for their relationship to continue to grow according to God's plan. All too often, couples forget about the wonderful gift of each other.

But there is a solution — a day and a half of participation in a Living in Love weekend. This is an opportunity for couples to reconnect in such a way that a good, solid marriage can be elevated to an awesome, joy-filled one.

"Living in Love is designed to rejuvenate and renew," says Lorena Smith, who coordinates the ministry along with her husband, Jim. "It is a gift of time to reconnect, rediscover, and deepen the joy you have for one another."

Lorena is speaking from experience. The Living in Love weekend was an eye-opener for her and Jim — not only did they realize they had to re-prioritize their life to make more time for one another, but that it was also important to recognize the sacramentality of marriage.

"In a culture which doesn't put marriage first, it was nice to be reminded that marriage is much more than living in the same house in which the two of you are involved in separate activities," says Lorena. "It gave me the justification to be able to



Todd and Lee Merchen are Living in Love presenters

put my marriage first, and that it was perfectly OK to say 'no' to another load of laundry or household chore in order to spend more time together as a couple."

The retreat begins on Saturday morning, and ends Sunday evening with a private Mass celebrated by Fr. Ragan. Throughout both days, trained couples give a series of presentations and share their personal stories. What makes this format so successful is that there is no large group discussion or open sharing — instead, it is all about the individual couples.

"This is not just about listening to the presenters," says Lorena. "At different intervals, you are given the opportunity to be alone with your spouse to pray, talk, journal, and most importantly, make decisions. So when you return home Sunday night, you already have a course of action."

For parishioners Todd and Lee Merchen, the Living in Love weekend

was an opportunity to step outside from daily obligations to go back and revisit the early attraction in their relationship. Their experience was so positive, they are now one of the volunteer couples who give presentations.

"When we first signed up to attend, we didn't know what to expect — we were scared because, let's face it, marriage is private," says Lee. "But we ended up getting so much out of it. We were there to focus on each other, and the process helped our good, solid marriage become even greater."

Participants agree that the Living in Love weekend is the best thing that you can do for you, your marriage, and your spouse. It is a gift for each other and, ultimately, our children.

"If your wife wants to go, you go because you love her," says Jim Smith. "If your husband wants to go, you go because you love him. It is a small amount of time that will change your marriage for the rest of your life, which in turn affects your children and their future marriages. Take the time and go!"

The next Living in Love retreat will be held on Feb. 16 and 17. The cost is \$100 per couple, and includes breakfast, lunch, and a romantic dinner. Couples may register at www.livinginlove.org, or by calling the parish office at 706-733-6627. For further information, please contact Lorena Smith at 706-840-3707.

SMS Teacher Mrs. Cary

Those that knew former teacher Mrs. Cary Kata remember her as a humble, gentle person who rarely spoke unless spoken to. Her reserved nature, helpful disposition and warm smile were traits easily recognized by those in her presence.

However, most of her students, co-workers and fellow St. Mary's parishioners were probably not aware that Mrs. Kata was a star athlete while in college at the University of Rio Grande in Ohio, where she excelled in basketball, tennis and swimming. Lettering in all three sports each year, she was even inducted into the school's Athletic Hall of Fame. Her basketball jersey number was even retired in her honor.

According to St. Mary on the Hill Principal Joe McBride, if you didn't know this about Mrs. Kata, then you are not alone.

"Sadly, it wasn't until after she passed away that I learned what a great athlete she was in college," says Mr. McBride.

Mrs. Kata was a member of the St. Mary on the Hill Catholic School family for the last six years, teaching physical education, fourth grade and sixth grade. In addition, she used her passion while coaching basketball, sharing her talent and experience with her players.

"Cary never wanted to be in the spotlight and always let the kids shine, whether in the classroom or on the basketball court," says Mr. McBride. "She loved sports and worked hard with the basketball team, even guiding the B-girls to an undefeated season. I really enjoyed watching her coach."



Mr. McBride wasn't the only one who observed Mrs. Kata's passion for sports. Co-worker and friend Lori Serji saw it firsthand.

"First and foremost, Mrs. Kata was an athlete," says Mrs. Serji. "When her college basketball jersey was retired, her three sons, Justin, Christian and Martin, got it from the school and gave it to her as a Christmas present."

In addition to helping the students on the basketball court, Mrs. Kata inspired those adults around her to engage in sports – some for the very first time.

"Mrs. Kata was the one that got me started going to the gym," Mrs. Serji says. "We went swimming together – she loved swimming – and she even got me to go

to a Pilates class. If it weren't for Mrs. Kata, I would have never tried those things. She even got some other teachers, Ellen Hoffman and Allison Crowe, to exercise with us."

Doing regular exercise was one of the ways Mrs. Kata discovered something was wrong. In April 2010, she told Mrs. Serji that her energy level was so low she was having a hard time exercising. Just months later, in June, Mrs. Kata was diagnosed with bone marrow cancer, and was unable to return to St. Mary on the Hill Catholic School.

Both Mr. McBride and Mrs. Serji agree that Mrs. Kata found it very difficult not to be able to return to the school. Fortunately, the school community made it a point to remind Mrs. Kata that she was most certainly missed. Countless posters were made, Rosary cards

Mrs. Kata Remembered

were filled out, and weekly meals were brought to help her during her treatment. The school even held a "Hat Day for Mrs. Kata," with proceeds going to Mrs. Kata's family.

"She kept all of the Rosary cards together in a binder so she could go through them and she kept every single poster," Mrs. Serji says. "She was amazed at the level of support she constantly received from everyone, and it kept her spirits up."

After facing a difficult battle with cancer, Mrs. Kata died on Dec. 10, 2012 as the result of an accident in her home. Thanks to Mrs. Serji, Mr. McBride was able to keep the teachers informed, and the sad news was given to the St. Mary students.

According to student Mason Whatley, who was in Mrs. Kata's fourth grade class during the 2009-2010 school year, hearing the news about the death of his former teacher was especially difficult.

"She was a great teacher," says Mason. "I was fortunate that Mr. McBride knew that I was close to her, and was able to tell me privately."

After hearing the sad news, Mason wanted to honor Mrs. Kata, and was eager to help out at her funeral. Even though the family already had three altar servers, Mason volunteered to be the fourth altar server, and served at her funeral on Dec. 14 at St. Mary on the Hill.

When Mrs. Serji talked to the family about a reception following the funeral, they knew it would be too difficult to arrange. Without hesitation, Mrs. Serji turned to the school, and by the end of the day, all arrangements were finalized. Even Mason's mother, Lisa Whatley, coordinated flowers and helped prepare the reception along with teachers and school families. All of the posters and the Rosary binder were on display at the reception for all to see.

"Mrs. Kata's husband Marty and her three sons were blown away to see the outpouring of love and support from the school," says Mrs. Serji. "They told me they had no idea how loved their mother really was and how very lucky she was to be a part of such an amazing community."



Mrs. Kata with her husband, Marty, and their three sons, Justin, Christian, and Martin



Students and teachers at St. Mary showed their support for Mrs. Kata during "Hats for Mrs. Kata Day"

Valentine's Day

The Feast of a Christian Martyr

Candy, flowers, romantic dinners, and excuses for wooing are the common traditions we associate with the once pagan holiday known as Valentine's Day.

Dangling cupids, candy "message" hearts, and faux long-stemmed roses clutter every card store, waiting for last-minute purchase.

The question is — how did this over-commercialized holiday really begin?

There are a few stories surrounding the history of Feb. 14 and St. Valentine himself, all dating back to the Roman Empire. The 14th day of February was a day set aside to honor the goddess Juno, queen of the Roman gods and goddesses. The following day, Feb. 15, began the feast of Lupercalia — a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as well as to the Roman founders Romulus and Remus.

As part of the festival traditions, there was a name drawing among the young people. The names of young Roman women were written on slips of paper and placed into a jar. Each young man would draw a young woman's name from the jar, and the two would be partners for the duration of the festival. Sometimes the pairing lasted an entire year, and often, the couple would fall in love and later marry.

At the time, Emperor Claudius II was involved in many bloody and unpopular campaigns, and he was having a difficult time recruiting soldiers to join his military leagues. Claudius believed that soldiers were



reluctant to join because they did not want to leave their loves or families.

With this in mind, Claudius decreed all marriages and engagements cancelled in Rome. During this time, St. Valentine was a priest in Rome, and he and St. Marius secretly married young couples. For this, St. Valentine was apprehended and dragged before the Prefect of Rome, who sentenced him to be beaten and then executed by beheading. He suffered this martyrdom on Feb. 14, around the year 270 AD.

Before his death, it is said that St. Valentine left a note for the jailer's daughter, who had become his friend, and signed it "From Your Valentine." Although the truth behind the St. Valentine's legend is murky, the stories certainly em-

phasize his appeal as a sympathetic, heroic and, most importantly, romantic figure. It is no surprise that by the Middle Ages, Valentine was one of the most popular saints in England and France.

Over time, Feb. 14 became a time for lovers to exchange sweet messages, making St. Valentine the patron saint of lovers. The date was often commemorated with the sending of poems and simple gifts. During the Middle Ages, it was commonly believed in France and England that Feb. 14 was the beginning of the avian mating season, which added to the idea that the middle of February — Valentine's Day — should be a day for romance.

Celebrate Love *continued from front cover*

Retrouvaille Weekend in Augusta the weekend of Feb. 8. Retrouvaille teaches couples how to get through the tough times. It is not too late to by calling (800) 470-2230.

Finally, the love of the original St. Valentine was rooted in Christ. If you find that your love for Christ has lost focus of late, read carefully the article on Lent in this issue and try to reconnect with the Lord. I am always impressed by the great numbers who make a good start to this Season of spiritual renewal by coming to Mass on Ash Wednesday (Feb. 13) to receive ashes. But not as many follow up for the rest of the forty days. Commit now to making all 40 days of Lent

a time in which you will grow closer to Christ. I would encourage you especially to attend the Lenten Penance Service on Feb. 26. It takes place on Tuesday evening of our Parish Mission. The Penance Service this Lent will be led by Bishop Boland. Mark your calendar today so that you won't miss it.

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

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Baptisms

Annabelle Claire Hamilton
daughter of Joey and Mary Anna Hamilton

Henry Kahrs Hamilton
son of Joey and Mary Anna Hamilton

Reese Callaway Thrash
son of Jimbo and Megan Thrash

Stella Maris Sherman
daughter of Devin and Tricia Sherman

Ash Wednesday Mass Schedule:

February 13

7:00 a.m.

9:15 a.m.

12:00 noon

6:00 p.m.

