

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL

CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

LENT: A Time to Reconnect With God

Dear Parishioners,

In this month's *Marianite*, you'll find profiles of a few parish groups that are rooted in prayer. There are some wonderful and dedicated women – Martha Griffin, Susan Lewis and Mary Garner Merz – who are leading these parish organizations. Prayer is the first and most important duty and joy of every faithful follower of Jesus Christ. With prayer, you can obtain guidance from God and obtain the strength to do good and avoid evil. Prayer is our truest treasure and there is where our hearts should be. Whoever loves God prays. The heart of our prayer as Catholics is the Eucharist. So, attendance at Sunday Mass should be a non-negotiable for every Catholic.

Since this newsletter goes out to all our parishioners, whether they are active or not, I want to extend an invitation to all of who hunger for a closer relationship with God but haven't quite figured out how to "fill" your "God hunger." If you have been somewhat laid back about your participation in Sunday Mass or if you don't give much of a priority to prayer in general, I would encourage you to make the most of the upcoming Lenten Season and repent. That is the basic call of the Lenten Season – to turn away from sin and be

faithful to the Gospel. You would not be reading these words unless there was a yearning within you for a deeper relationship with God. Use Lent as a time to reconnect with God. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18.

The Catechism (CCC, 2744) reminds us that prayer is the lifeblood of your faith. Without prayer, your faith will die. When asked about prayer, St. John Paul II once said, "Pray any way you like, so long as you do pray." Beyond rote or memorized prayer, there are so many prayer practices that can lead you deeper into the Mystery of God's love.

Moving towards Lent, the book that I am reading with my Saturday morning Men's Faith Group is *Forming Intentional Disciples* by Sherry Weddell. The book is subtitled *The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus*. Being an intentional disciple means entrusting one's life to Jesus Christ. The author does a great job of showing how important the sacraments of the Church are. But, at the same time, she notes that the sacraments are not magic – they are vessels of grace that we need to actively receive. St. John Paul II was right about any prayer being good, but I'd love to see the various faith sharing groups in the parish read this book during Lent.

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.

"Listen to Your Mother"

The St. Mary's Legion of Mary Ministry

Did you know that our very own parish is brimming with heroes? Not the flashy types who pull off a daring rescue or the sports celebrities who make headlines – just ordinary folks involved in extraordinary ministries who quietly go about growing in faith and serving those in need.



The Legion of Mary is one of those ministries and its members are some of those heroes. This international Catholic group was founded by a layman in Dublin, Ireland in 1921. A Legion of Mary chapter, or praesidium, was established at St. Mary on the Hill about seven years ago. Parishioner Lilian Wongo serves as the current President of the St. Mary's praesidium.

"We try to serve the Church and all members of Christ's body through prayer devotion and invocation of the blessings of Our Lady, Mary Immaculate," she says of the ministry's goals.

The group meets on Tuesdays from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. in St. Anne's Hall. The meetings focus mainly on prayer such as the Rosary, some special legionary prayers, and Bible studies, as well as matters affecting the praesidium.

Lilian notes the importance of this time of devotion for both the members themselves and those they serve.

"Understanding the role Our Lady plays in our relationship to her Son, Jesus Christ, is the surest means to living a life of piety," she says. "We are called to service both in spirit and deed, and members of the Legion of Mary find great satisfaction in this calling."

In fact, it is this prayer and devotion that provides the fuel to launch the members out into the community.

"We go out for door-to-door evangelization and presentation of the Gospel to our community," Lilian says. "We pray at abortion clinics and counsel the victims. We do rosary making. We help members of the community to understand Mary as the infallible means of winning the world to Jesus Christ.

"We visit the sick in our local hospitals, residents in nursing homes and those confined at home," she continues. "We also provide transportation to those who need it in order to get to Mass and many other works of charity."

While involvement in the Legion of Mary clearly benefits the community, it is of great benefit to

the members themselves, as Lilian points out.

"My involvement has brought me to a fuller awareness of Our Lady and the divine role she plays in my pursuit of salvation," she says.

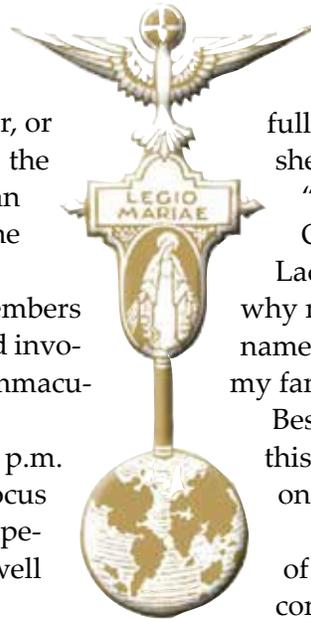
"As a personal matter to my family, knowing Our Lady goes beyond religious dogma. Our Lady is the core foundation of my family. This is why my daughter's name is Maria – so Our Lady's name will forever be on the lips of all members of my family!"

Best of all, any member of our parish can join this little band of heroes, and Lilian urges everyone to consider it.

"All are encouraged to get involved because of the physical joy we derive from being in complete devotion to the mother of the Son of God," she says. "The joy of serving the depressed through visitations and the ease with which we surrender our worries to Our Blessed Mother is amazing! The Legion of Mary will surely help parishioners to have a better relationship with our Lord Jesus, because no one knows a son better than his mother. Moreover, she always directs us to Him.

"The Lord is supposed to be seen through Christians in our everyday lives," Lilian continues. "But we have the special privilege of seeing the Lord through the eyes of His mother, Mary. What joy is greater than that? Come join us, there is endless room for everyone."

If you are interested in joining or would like to learn more about the Legion of Mary at our parish, please contact Lilian Wongo at 706-825-5159.



MARTHA GRIFFIN | *Searching for Faith*

Everyone's faith journey is a little different. Some are born into their religion, some find their faith through a life altering event, and some spend their lifetime searching until they find exactly what they are looking for. Such is the case with parishioner Martha Griffin, who knew there was something missing in her life and who, despite detours along the way, finally found that missing element when she converted to Catholicism just two years ago.

Originally from Augusta, Martha was raised in the Episcopalian faith where she attended both church and Sunday school. She credits her mother and great aunt for providing some valuable lessons on faith and stewardship through their involvement in various church groups and through service projects in and around the community.

"I learned lessons on stewardship at an early age," Martha says. "My mother used to say that we can never out-give God, and stewardship is a way we can be thankful and give back to Him however we can."

Interestingly, despite a firm foundation in the Episcopal church, Martha says that her faith journey came to resemble a "melting pot" of different faiths – she became a Baptist when she married, but returned to the Episcopal church when her marriage ended. For a few years, she and her two daughters, Christa and Tiffany, tried the Methodist Church. Her daughters later attended Aquinas High School, and Martha says she even tried the Pentecostal faith once her daughters left for college. During all those years, Martha was searching, but not finding exactly what she was looking for.

"I was feeling so unsettled about my faith," Martha says. "There had been a lot of changes that were going on in the Episcopal faith – changes that didn't feel right to me. But I knew faith was important, and I knew I wanted to live more fully, so I kept searching."

It wasn't until her daughter, Christa, announced that she would be attending RCIA classes at St. Mary's that Martha turned her attention to the Catholic faith. She readily admits that she initially started attending Mass on Sunday evening just to make sure her daughter wasn't making a bad decision. But while there was so much she didn't understand about the Catholic faith, there was also so much that appealed to her.

"Over time, I felt God calling me, telling me to keep coming to Mass and that everything would come together and make sense," Martha says. "I decided to sign up for RCIA to learn more, and Fr. Scott Winchel put my concerns to rest. He explained the Catholic beliefs so well and really went out of his way to help us – even offering a Sunday morning make-up class if we missed Thursday's class. And although I initially signed up for the class to be better informed, in the end I officially became a Catholic at the Easter Vigil Mass in 2013."

As a relatively new convert, Martha embraces everything about her new faith, taking inspiration from St. Thérèse, who stressed the importance of small daily efforts. She says that morning prayer helps her keep a prayerful attitude



throughout the day, and when she is not working at the DA's office or spending time with her grandchildren, she is finding ways to live out her faith both in the parish and out in the community. She is a member of St. Mary's prayer

group, the Intercessory Prayer Team, and the Rosary Group; she volunteers in the CCD office; and every Saturday from 5 to 6 p.m. she is in the Adoration Chapel. An avid cook, she looks for opportunities to share her muffins and quick breads, and whenever she visits the nursing home she gives away copies of the devotional, *One Bread, One Body*. But the one thing about her new-found faith that keeps her grounded – and gives purpose and meaning to her daily life – is the Eucharist.

"My mother used to say that God inhabits the praises of His people," Martha says. "And I really feel His presence during the celebration of the Mass."

In looking back at her life, Martha knows that her faith journey wasn't a straight path – that there were certainly detours, bends, and even some u-turns along the way. But sometimes, searching is meant to be part of the journey, and Martha shows how perseverance can help you find what you are looking for.

"I finally feel like I am home here at St. Mary's," Martha says. "And I have a sense of peace and contentment that I never had before. Of course, now that I am Catholic, the journey isn't over. I still consider myself a baby Catholic, and by His grace I will continue to grow."



Helping Others and Growing in Faith Through Prayer

Our parish community is truly one big family – and what better way to look out for your fellow family members than by praying? Through St. Mary on the Hill's Intercessory Prayer Group, group members are able to take prayer requests, petitions and intercessions into their own personal prayer. Conducted through email, each request is accepted and prayed for with genuine care – no prayer request is too big or too small!

Mary-Garner Merz, who heads up the ministry here at St. Mary, has experience in leading a similar prayer group from her previous parish, Most Holy Trinity.

"Before ever getting started, I saw an article about an intercessory prayer group, and I remember

thinking, 'I want the Lord to use me as a tool, to reach whoever He wants to be reached,'" she says. "My involvement in the group at Most Holy Trinity began when my friend, Ellen, and I came up with the idea of this prayer chain. She said she'd field the phone calls if I sent out the emails. We quickly found out that emailing was the most effective way to get the prayer requests out.

"When our family moved to St. Mary in 2004, we joined forces with the person who used to be the email coordinator for the group here," she continues. "She was ready to move on, so I took over. It sort of fell into my arms and I've tried to take care of it."

The group currently numbers about 150 members, and continues to grow each year. Mary-Garner

receives prayer requests via email, and then sends the requests out to the group several times a week. Those who submit their requests can remain anonymous if they choose, and requests are kept confidential outside the group. Requests of all kinds are accepted.

"If it's important for one of the members of the Body of Christ, it's important for us all," Mary-Garner says.

Once the requests have been sent out, members of the group are encouraged to pray for the intentions in any manner they choose.

"There are so many various ways someone can pray," Mary-Garner says. "Some pray right when they get the request, and some write it down in a notebook to pray about during a designated time. Some take

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– Mary-Garner Merz

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Helping Others *continued from page 4*

the requests with them to their adoration time, offer it during a family Rosary, or perform little sacrifices throughout the day that they offer up as prayer. There are as many different prayers and prayer styles as there are team members!"

Mary-Garner will also send updates to group members regarding certain requests they have prayed about in the past.

"We not only get the petitions, but also the updates afterward," she says. "For example, just recently we had a parishioner's family member who was in the ICU after childbirth. She ended up having to have a liver transplant, and they were able to find a donor. Praise God, she had the liver transplant, and we just found out that she's back at home and able to walk around and hold her babies.

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and all the many ways in which prayer is answered," she continues. "You see something that the whole community is praying for, and then you see God's hand in the way that prayers are answered. There's just not a way to even measure how incredible that is. God is really on the move in people's lives."

Through the group, members are also able to see how God sometimes provides answers that are unexpected, but just as necessary.

"What I've learned from this group is that, number one, prayer is an incredible tool," Mary-Garner says. "And number two, we don't always get the answer we asked for or think we want – sometimes that answer can be a closer relationship with God, and that's what we really need."

The ministry is a great way for those who are active in their prayer lives to continue to put it to good

use. It is also a great way for others to grow closer to God and develop their prayer lives.

"We are all on a journey, and most of us are in our infancy in our walk towards the Father, taking those baby steps," Mary-Garner says. "In my younger life, I was a person who didn't really know how to pray, and that has evolved through this. This ministry is good for someone who is like a spiritual infant – who doesn't know how to pray, but wants to – or for seasoned prayer warriors who are looking for the opportunity to pray for others. Either way, this is a way to look outside yourself."

For more information about the Intercessory Prayer Group, to get involved, or to submit a prayer request, please contact Mary-Garner Merz at mgmerz123@knology.net.

Lenten Schedule

Fat Tuesday, Feb. 17

6 p.m. in the Parish Hall

Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18

7 a.m., 9:15 a.m.,
noon and 6 p.m.

Parish Mission

March 2, 3, and 4

Mission presented by Fr. Richard Sutter

Lenten Penance Service

Tuesday, March 3

7 p.m.

Lenten Lunchtime Journey

Feb. 25, March 11, 18 and 25

Noon

Stations of the Cross

Fridays during Lent at 7:30 p.m.

“Broaden Your Gaze and Open Your Hearts”

THE CONSISTORY FOR THE CREATION OF NEW CARDINALS

Becoming a cardinal is not an award – it is a service. In an era of ever-increasing societal tumult, Pope Francis exhorts our ecclesiastical servant leaders to receive their positions as cardinals with humility and poverty.

“The cardinalship...is simply a service that requires you to broaden your gaze and open your hearts,” says Pope Francis in a letter to the cardinals created in 2014. “And, although this may appear paradoxical, the ability to look further and to love more universally with greater intensity may be acquired only by following the same path of the Lord: the path of self-effacement and humility, taking on the role of a servant.”

This February, the second Consistory for the Creation of New Cardinals during Pope Francis’ papacy will be held the week prior to Lent. The Consistory will gather the world’s cardinals in Rome on Feb. 14 and Feb. 15.

Cardinals, from the Latin *cardo* meaning “hinge,” are created by the pope as primary advisors. They impact the global Church and its future, since they will vote for the next pope upon the death or resignation of the current pontiff. Commonly called “princes of the Church,” the cardinals collectively form the College of Cardinals, and a cardinal is traditionally greeted as “your eminence.”

Pope Paul VI set new guidelines for the number of cardinals eligible to sit in conclave and elect the new pontiff. According to these guidelines, cardinals under the

age of 80 are eligible to join the conclave, and the number of cardinal electors should not exceed 120. After creating 16 new cardinals under the age of 80 in February of 2014, Pope Francis will most likely create 10 new cardinals to bring the number of cardinals to 120.

In the last Consistory, the cardinals created represented five continents, some from the poorest countries in the world. When Pius XII was elected in 1937, 57 percent of the cardinals were Italian and 32 percent were from Europe. In recent years, the percentage of Italian cardinals hovers closer to 20 percent as the College of Cardinals continues to diversify. More cardinals from Latin America might be created in light of the fact that over 40 percent of the world’s Catholics live in Latin America.

In keeping with his globally mission-minded papacy, Pope Francis will likely once again look beyond Europe and create cardinals from a variety of countries. The names of the new cardinals are expected to be released shortly before the Consistory itself.

The Consistory will follow a meeting regarding the reform of the Curia from Feb. 9 until Feb. 11 and a gathering of the College of Cardinals to discuss the reforms on Feb. 11 and Feb 12.

As we anticipate Lent in this week of ecclesiastical gatherings, we pray for our pontiff and the servant leaders of the Church, that they will be filled with the Holy Spirit during their deliberations and serve Christ’s Church with humble and discerning hearts!



Lent *continued from front cover*

It was a sense of God's presence in the Blessed Sacrament that lead Sherry Weddell to explore the Catholic faith more deeply and eventually moved her to conversion. If you have not spent time in our Adoration Chapel, the corner building on Monte Sano Ave. at Bellevue, I would urge you to make a visit at some point in the Lenten Season. The Adoration Chapel offers us the space and the quiet to respond to God's call to come to Him. It's a place to grow in friendship with the Risen Christ, to receive His counsel for the various challenges we face, to be in His presence, to praise Him, to thank Him, to beg His forgiveness, to ask for what our loved ones need, to ask for what we need. It's an opportunity for each of us to make a choice – a free, mature choice – to prioritize God, to leave other things behind and come to be with Him, who we at least say with our lips is Lord and God.

Finally, I would hope that you will mark your calendars for a very special spiritual event during the Lenten Season. Our annual Lenten Mission will take place March 1 through March 4, and the Mission Director this year will be Fr. Richard Sutter, who is the school minister at Aquinas High School. Fr. Richard is in residence

in our parish and though he has only been with us for a few months, many parishioners find him to be a dynamic and Spirit-filled speaker. His theme will be Love is our Mission.

Ash Wednesday Masses, Feb. 18

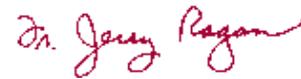
7 a.m., 9:15 a.m., noon, 6 p.m.

Fasting and Abstinence

Days of Abstinence – No meat can be eaten on Ash Wednesday and all of the Fridays during Lent. This applies to all Catholics 14 and older.

Days of Fast – Only one full meal is permitted on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday for Catholics between 18 and 59. Two smaller meals are permitted, but the small meals should not equal a second full meal. Drinking coffee, tea and water between meals is allowed. Snacks between meals are not allowed.

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

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