

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL

CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

A Spiritual and Physical Journey During This Year of Mercy

Dear Parishioners,

The idea of a pilgrimage is a rich religious metaphor. It is a spiritual journey that may or may not involve a physical journey. It speaks to those who are searching for a deeper relationship with God. We seek Him out, but God is so very generous. He tells us, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8). God is always ready to welcome us and invites us to an ever-deeper intimacy. But God won't kick down the door of your heart. God will knock gently and wait for you to open the door.

When we think about pilgrimages, we probably think about medieval people walking great distances to awe-inspiring churches. Yet, Pope Francis describes what is at the heart of the pilgrimage and encourages us to each make one during this Jubilee Year of Mercy. He writes that "life itself is a pilgrimage, and the human being is a viator (it means traveler), a pilgrim trav-

eling along the road, making his way to the desired destination" (MV, no. 14).

Pope Francis encourages each of us to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Door in our diocese some time during this Jubilee of Mercy. Being committed to the journey of pilgrimage helps us focus our attention on our spiritual journey and walk closer with God. Similarly, our daily journey to live out the mercy of God "is also a goal to reach and requires dedication and sacrifice" (MV, no. 14). With your family or friends, I would urge you to plan to join a pilgrimage to the Holy Door at the Cathedral in Savannah on Feb. 20.

Fr. Tim McKeown, pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church in Brunswick and Nativity of Our Lady Church in Darien, has been appointed by Pope Francis as a member of the Missionaries of Mercy for this Jubilee Year of Mercy. Fr. Tim will conduct our Diocesan Pilgrimage at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist on Saturday, Feb. 20. There will be at least a couple of buses going from Augusta to Savannah on that day and you can call the parish office to reserve

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.

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Sharing God's Word Through Music

Alvin Blount Reflects on 20 Years at St. Mary on the Hill

When Alvin Blount sits at the organ in the choir loft of St. Mary on the Hill, he takes in one of the best views in the church – the coronation window. On a sunny day, the stained glass depiction of the coronation of Mary bathes the choir loft in a wash of bright blues, greens, reds, and yellows. On a cloudy day, the scene is more muted, but no less inspirational to the musician who sits before it as he fills the sanctuary with the beautiful sounds of sacred music.

“The coronation window is my favorite of all the stained glass because of its beauty and what it depicts – Jesus and His mother and all the saints looking on,” Alvin says. “It lets me know that all of us will have that time – that’s what we all strive for. It gives me inspiration.”

Alvin has passed a lot of time in front of this inspirational window – this past November marked his 20th anniversary as the Director of Music and Worship at St. Mary on the Hill. Looking back on his path to music ministry, Alvin feels blessed to be able to share his passion for liturgical music with parishioners.

Although Alvin comes from a musical family – his mother was a church organist – he didn’t always know that he would also end up working in church music. But when he failed to find his original career path fulfilling, he went back to school to earn undergraduate and graduate degrees in organ and sacred music. After spending seven years as the Director of Music for an Episcopal church, Alvin interviewed to become the Interim Music Director at St. Mary on the Hill in 1995 – and the rest is history!

As Director of Music and Worship, Alvin directs two of the parish’s choirs and is responsible for planning and executing the music for all liturgies except the Sunday evening Mass, including Holy Days of Obligation, all-school Masses, weddings, and funerals. Choosing the best music to accompany the liturgy is of the utmost importance to Alvin.

“The readings of the day determine how I select the music,” he explains. “I pick the music based on what is going to best enhance the theme of the spoken word [for that Mass]. You just can’t open the book and pick – you



have to read and digest what is going on that particular Sunday.”

And Alvin has been excited to see a change in the way parishioners interact with sacred music over the past 20 years.

“I see that [participation in] singing has approved,” he notes. “People are more concerned now about congregational music.”

In addition to allowing him to share his passion for music, Alvin’s position as music director has blessed him with the opportunity to work alongside and build lasting relationships with many parishioners.

“The support I’ve received from parishioners is just astounding, through good times and bad,” Alvin says. “I’ve made friends with some amazing people who are just examples of what we want people to know about our church throughout the community – friends who I will love for the rest of my life.”

Alvin credits his experiences at St. Mary on the Hill, along with intercessory prayers to the blessed Mother, with his decision to join the Catholic Church in 1997, two years after he began providing music for the parish.

“I always had faith, was raised having faith, but it improved and grew [when I joined the Church], and I’m very grateful for that,” Alvin says. “The Catholic faith really strengthened and became a backbone of faith for me.”

Purpose and Joy in Stewardship

By *ERIC NORVIEL, parishioner*

My story is not about the nuts and bolts of stewardship, but more about the results of stewardship in my life. I was baptized Methodist and was Christian through my formative years, but lost my way in my teenage years and 20s. My 30s were not much different. I was building my life on a foundation of sand and filling it with garbage, not a solid foundation of Christ and family – although the latter somehow seeped into my myopic little world. God seems to work that way. It took the faith and patience of an exceptional woman to coach me and encourage me to be a better person. I attended church on occasion maybe once a month. On a good month, you might have seen me two times. That month would have been a coup for my wife, Anne.

Thirteen years ago, Anne and I were very much young and in love. Well, she was young. We knew that we were ready to be married. When we met with Fr. Jerry for council, and to ask him for his blessing and if he would marry us, he was forthright in discussing the strength and power that faith and God have in a marriage. Ever since that day, he has been looking at me over the top of his glasses.

Fast forward through the years, and we have been blessed with two beautiful and, mind you, challenging children. Both are students at St. Mary on the Hill School, where the blessings of education have not only been more than I would have expected, but have

brought home a class called Good Shepherd. I can remember on more than one occasion, Tristan saying, “Dad, you’re not Catholic, you wouldn’t understand.” Kids say the most honest things. And as painful as it was, he was right. I didn’t understand. I started to feel distant from him, because I knew he was growing in a way that I never had. Then he taught me the most beautiful prayer I have ever heard – the Anima Christi.

Since then, RCIA has come and gone more than one time. My career has changed. My kids have grown. And I’ve always had an excuse as to why I didn’t go – time constraints. Monday night didn’t work, I was traveling, I wasn’t ready, or the “time is right when God tells me it’s time.” Wow, I was full of excuses. Then, God showed Himself again. This time, He yelled. I felt child-like and I was out of excuses. I relented last year when, two months past the registration date for the RCIA process, by happenstance, my wife – with the help of a gracious professor at GRU – yet again, worked her Catholic magic on me and I was blessed with the aid of a spiritual advisor that helped me catch up on the RCIA process. In retrospect, that was the last and powerfully final piece to fall into place. Thank you, Deacon Tony and Lisa.

Many of you know of my recent conversion. For those of you who do not – I am here! I am with you and I am grateful. Thanks be to God! There are many of you, through your gentle nudging, support and

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Living Lent at St. Mary's

The Lenten season officially began Feb. 10 with the observance of Ash Wednesday. After an Advent season in which we celebrated the joy and wonder of Christ's birth, Lent now offers us the opportunity to actively participate in Christ's life when He says, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). With those words, we are called to walk in Christ's footsteps as He heads to that cross on Calvary. It's a journey of both intention and introspection, and while it is very much a personal one, our Parish Lenten Mission reminds us that the Lenten journey is also a communal one.

"Our family attended the Lenten Mission last year and are so happy we did," says parishioner Theresa Lambert, whose family has been a member of St. Mary's for 13 years. "It was very eye-opening! We came away with a much deeper understanding of Lent and how to truly prepare and live out the 40 days of Lent. It also helped our children think beyond just what they would give up – that Jesus calls us to do more. It certainly held us all accountable as to how we could not only grow in our Catholic faith during this time, but grow closer to Jesus, as well."

This year's Parish Lenten Mission is scheduled for Feb. 29 – March 2 and will feature Deacon Mark Cesnik from the St. Catherine of Siena Institute (CSI), a ministry dedicated

to equipping and educating parishes for the evangelization and formation of lay Catholics for the sake of their mission to the world. Deacon Mark will speak at all the weekend Masses Feb. 27 and 28, then every night – Monday through Wednesday – during the Parish Mission. As in past years, in addition to Deacon Mark's talks, the schedule will also include Benediction and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on Monday, Feb. 29; a Lenten Penance Service on Tuesday, March 1; and a closing Mass on Wednesday, March 2.

"Lent allows us to embark on what can be perhaps be a truly rich and wonderful vacation from all of that craziness in which we live and in which we participate," Deacon Mark said in a homily last March. "Lent is a vacation from the grind, allowing us to be present so we can celebrate the risen Christ after having genuinely prepared to do so."

During Lent, we are reminded to look at our decisions, our friendships, and question where we are in our lives with prayer, fasting and almsgiving. For these reasons, the Lenten season is one in which parishioners Jim and Mary-Garner Merz look forward to each year. For them, attending the Parish Mission and participating in Lenten activities has become very meaningful to them as a couple, as parents and as a family.

"Everything about Lent helps our faith to deepen as individuals, as a family, and as a Catholic community," Mary-Garner says. "The sacrifices we choose to make help our personal growth, and adding special daily prayers, going to Stations of the Cross on Fridays, and celebrating the Triduum help our faith as a family grow. For us, the Reconciliation service is always a highlight as it allows us to continue our Lenten journey with a 'clean slate.'"

Ultimately, Lent is a personal journey, and it's up to each of us to look internally and recognize areas that have crept into our lives that prevent us from fully participating in the life of Christ. But Lent is also a season of renewal, and coming together as a parish community allows us to fully experience the Paschal Mystery.

"Attending the Lenten Mission, and committing to go each night, helps us grow as a Catholic community," Mary-Garner says. "Growth in all areas – personally, as a family, as a parish community – helps the universal Church grow stronger and help spread the Good News of the Risen Lord."



Jim and Mary-Garner Merz with their children – (back row) Garrett (18); (middle row) Catherine (16) and Caroline (20); (front row) John Frederic (10), and Celeste (8)

Lenten Schedule**Stations of the Cross***Fridays at 7:30 p.m.***Year of Mercy Lenten Lunchtime Talks***Wednesdays at 12:00 noon***Parish Mission***February 29, March 1 & 2 7:00 p.m.***St. Mary on the Hill 2016
Parish Lenten Mission****Feb. 27-28***Deacon Mark Cesnik from the St. Catherine of Siena Institute (SCI) will speak at all weekend Masses***Monday, Feb. 29***Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament followed by Scripture readings and a talk by Deacon Mark***Tuesday, March 1***Penance Service, a talk by Deacon Mark, and the individual celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation***Wednesday, March 2***Closing Mass*

Purpose and Joy in Stewardship continued from page 3

kind hearts, who are responsible for helping in my conversion. Thank you. I am grateful for all you have done to get me here. And while I'm still young in my Catholic faith and stewardship is still a new concept to me, I am learning that my relationship with God is the first step in developing my faith. My conversion was a powerful lesson in getting closer to God. However, my faith is still incomplete. I have much more to learn and stewardship is part of the larger picture. Learning and saying the Rosary has been a giant step in coming closer to God. I have learned that my days are better when I wake and give at least 10-15 minutes to God. Miraculously, those 10-15 minutes have grown. I have learned that talking to Him like a friend has given my grace to be strong in a day that might be laden with stress and the demands of this earthly world that I was never built to understand or handle.

At this point, you might be asking yourself how all this conversion talk relates to stewardship. You

see, it comes in many forms. Many of you may not know that you are doing it, but you have influence on the lives around you. Having the strength in a marriage to be the foundation of faith in a family, with a spouse who might be struggling with their own spirituality – that is stewardship. Or being a patient patriarch or matriarch and embracing the struggles your son or daughter have with their spouse's lack of connection to the Holy Spirit – that is stewardship. Teaching your mother or father a powerful, humbling and graceful prayer – that is stewardship. Or having the spiritual IQ to recognize that God is asking you to prop a struggling convert on your shoulders through the blessing of RCIA – that is stewardship. It's more than money. It's more than showing up to church on Sunday. Both of these things are important, but stewardship is about the quality and reasons you are here. Have purpose and joy in stewardship. You never know who might be converting!

Serving the Parish Through the Offering of Christ's Body and Blood *Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion*

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have a very special and, of course, important job, as they assist the presiding priest in sharing the Eucharist with our family of faith. And as Patty Maleck points out, the opportunity to distribute the Body and Blood of Christ is both an honor and a privilege.

"As Eucharistic Ministers, we have many tasks, but our main focus is to distribute the Body and Blood of Christ to those present at the Mass," says Patty, who has served as a Eucharistic Minister for over 20 years, and as ministry coordinator for five years. "It's a big job and an absolutely amazing job. They are necessary to help with the flow of the Mass, and it is such a privilege to be able to serve the parish in this way. A lot of people hesitate to serve as a Eucharistic Minister because they don't like crowds or something like that, but when you're up there and you realize what you're holding in your hand, nothing else matters. You're so focused on what you're doing."

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are given training in both the theology and the mechanics of distributing the Eucharist. Ministers are personally invited to serve by our pastor, Fr. Jerry Ragan. Patty coordinates the rotating schedule of ministers for each weekend Mass.

"There are four teams of eight ministers that rotate each Sunday," Patty says. "Each team is assigned a specific Saturday or Sunday a month. The ministers that we have are a very dedicated, faithful group of gentlemen and ladies. You can always count on them to be there, and they always come through when they are needed. They ever so faithfully sign up for special



Masses and they are willing to serve in every capacity that they can."

Since joining the ministry 20 years ago, Patty has enjoyed getting to know other parishioners and becoming a part of the vibrant parish community here at St. Mary on the Hill.

"Usually, I'm a '5 o'clocker,' and I serve at the 5 o'clock Mass," Patty says. "So if it weren't for this ministry, I would only see parishioners who come to the 5 o'clock Mass. In training the new ministers and through coordinating, I've come to know many people through this ministry that I wouldn't see at Mass. The ministers on each team get to know each other pretty well. Some of the teams have been together for a

really long time. They come together before each Mass to pray, and they become good friends!"

Patty also feels that she has gained a deeper understanding of the Mass since becoming a Eucharistic Minister. She has come to love the Mass, and particularly the consecration, in a much deeper way since she began serving the Eucharist.

"It's just so amazing that you are actually offering the Body and Blood of Christ to the parishioners," Patty says. "Once that consecration happens, I think when you're a Eucharistic Minister, your attention is so focused on it because you know what exactly is happening. You see people at Mass that just kind of go through the process. But once you actually offer that Body and Blood to a parishioner, you just look at everything so differently, because you realize what you have and what you are offering everyone. Your whole focus on the Mass centers on that consecration."

For more information on the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, please contact Patty Maleck at 706-863-3895 or via email at pmaleck@knology.net.

A Spiritual and Physical Journey During This Year of Mercy *continued from front cover*

a spot. Or drive by yourself and make a weekend of it with your family.

Another pilgrimage to consider is my cruise/pilgrimage to the Holy Door in Quebec City beginning on Aug. 20. Over the years, I've made many pilgrimages to Catholic shrines and holy places in this country and throughout the world, but since my Mom had great devotion to St. Anne as a child, I made my first international pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Anne de Beaupre, near Quebec City. So, it will be a sentimental journey for me when our Holland America ship makes port in Quebec on Aug. 26 and we visit Notre-Dame de Québec Cathedral, mother church of the Archdiocese of Quebec. It is the first church in the New World to be raised to a basilica and is the only Church in the entire Americas that has a Holy Door that was designated by the Vatican.

The cruise starts in Boston on Aug. 20, and it is on the Holland America line's Veendam. I am both surprised and delighted that about a dozen folks have signed up to join me. If you are interested, feel free to contact Holland America or a travel agent and shop around for the best deal.

Not everyone has the time or financial means to make a physical pilgrimage, but I would hope many of you will make a spiritual pilgrimage during our Parish Mission, which will begin the last weekend of this month. The Mission will be a journey led by Deacon Mark Cesnik that I pray will lead our Faith Community to a deeper commitment to discipleship.

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

Ad Placement

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St. Mary on the Hill Church

Augusta Pet Crematory Services,
LLC (Tommy and Buzz Poteet)
Estate of Mary Arline Kelly
Kathryn Edry (for Lady Undoer of
Knots Grotto)
Barbara Price

In Memory of Mary Ann Goley
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In Memory of Charles Scavullo, Sr.
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Bobby Christine

St. Mary on the Hill Music Ministry

Raymond and Caroline Brady

St. Mary on the Hill Consolation Ministry

Shannon Schoenberger

St. Mary on the Hill Youth Ministry (Right to Life trip)

Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians

Baptisms

Nov. 8

Elizabeth Jane
Pollock
*Daughter of Edwin
and Jane Pollock*

Nov. 14

Kieran Mark
Smallidge
*Son of Martin and
Kathleen Smallidge*

Nov. 21

Fischer Luke
Roberts
*Son of Quintin and
Jessica Roberts*

Nov. 22

Damien Wilson
Groves
*Son of Michael and
Shirley Groves*

Dec. 5

Landon Allen
Koontz
*Son of Jeffrey and
Amanda Koontz*

Chelsea Ann
Marshall
*Daughter of Bryce
and Christine
Marshall*

Mara Julia Harris
*Daughter of Gary
and Suzanne Harris*

Dec. 6

Rowan William
McBride
*Son of Peter and
Paulette McBride*

Taylor Patrick
McBride
*Son of Dale and
Melonie McBride*

Dec. 12

Colleen Alanna Rose
*Daughter of Joseph
and Brittany Rose*

Dec. 13

Nell Kathleen
Martin
*Daughter of Joseph
and Katie Martin*

Dec. 20

Ava Marie
Thompson
*Daughter of
Keith and Nicole
Thompson*

Benjamin Fraser
Moss, V
*Son of Benjamin and
Nicole Moss, IV*

Dec. 29

Sebastian Levi
Firmin
*Son of David and
Corazon Firmin*