

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL
CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

Living in Love in 2012

Dear Parishioners,

We begin a New Year and I pray that 2012 will be a year of grace for all the parishioners of St. Mary on the Hill Parish. With the start of a new year we realize that time is passing. Life is short, so we need to stay focused on what is truly important. I like the idea of having a pastoral focus each year to help us grow in our relationship with the Lord. This year our focus is “Stewards of Love”, forming future saints through married love and family life.

A couple years ago the Church launched a campaign to help not only Catholics, but all married couples, to strengthen their own marriage. As part of that campaign, the bishops launched the National Pastoral Initiative on Marriage. One of the best things to come out of that initiative was the creation of an energetic Web site, ForYourMarriage.org. It is a treasure trove of helpful resources for all married couples. The Web site mentioned a survey conducted by David and Amy Olson with a sample of over 21,000 couples. Part of their survey was questioning couples regarding their spirituality and how it affected their relationship with their spouse. According to their survey, one’s

spiritual life does have an impact on their marriage.

If you share a spiritual life with your spouse it tends to go along with a happy marriage. Happy couples tend to agree about how they express their spiritual beliefs. They find that shared beliefs bring them closer together, and they rely on their spiritual beliefs during difficult times.

According to Dr. Olson, “Their faith helps them focus on the positive aspects of each other and to encourage and respect each other. Their marriage is a sanctuary – a source of care, mutual protection, comfort, and refuge. When feelings change, their faith tides them over and sustains their relationship.”

It is my belief that the Sacrament of Matrimony is an untapped powerhouse for the Church. When a couple is rooted in faith their love overflows and touches the lives of so many. And so I want to encourage as many couples as possible to be aware of the great Sacrament they are called to live out not only for their own benefit, or the benefit of their family, or even the benefit of our faith community, but for the benefit of the world and God’s Kingdom.

There have been about 50 couples in our parish who have experienced

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.

“On the Twelfth Day of Christmas, My True Love Gave to Me...”

When asked: “What occurs on the 12th day of Christmas?” you may be tempted to shuffle through the golden rings, maids-a-milking, calling birds, and ladies dancing to the peak of the “true love” gifts: “12 drummers drumming.” Nothing beats a mental holiday treadmill!

Although “The Twelve Days of Christmas” is one of the most popular and highly recorded Christmas carols in America and Europe, its lyrics are rarely recognized as referring to the 12 days that stretch from Christmas Day on Dec. 25 until the glorious Feast of the Epiphany on Jan. 6.

The Feast of the Epiphany, which originated in the Eastern Church, marks the end of the Christmas season and is intended to celebrate the revelation of God to mankind in human form through the person of Jesus. The word “epiphany” is taken from a Greek word meaning “appearance” or “manifestation” and finds its earliest reference as a Christian feast in the fourth century.

But exactly which “manifestation” of Christ Jesus do we recognize on the Feast of the Epiphany? The Western Church reserves Jan. 6 as the commemoration of the coming of the Magi. These three men, traditionally named Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, travel in haste towards the Christ child and remain an undying testimony to the long pilgrimage of peoples in search of salvation.

On the feast of the Epiphany in 2007, Pope Benedict acknowledged that this celebration elucidates not only



On the feast of the Epiphany, therefore, we come to realize that we are all magi on a pilgrimage towards Christ, the source of salvation. This pilgrimage is unique to each and every man, but results in a universal and dynamic experience, a constant “growing closer” between God and man. It is for this opportunity that we rejoice!

man’s pilgrimage towards God, but also God’s pilgrimage towards man in the person of Jesus Christ. He spoke of the glorious incarnation with these words: “It was out of love that He made Himself history in our history.”

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In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “Happy are those who, while possessing the truth, search more earnestly for it in order to renew it, deepen it and transmit it to others. Happy also are those who, not having found it, are working toward it with a sincere heart. May they seek the light of tomorrow with the light of today until they reach the fullness of light.”

In the U.S., the Feast of the Epiphany is observed on the Sunday following Jan. 1. This year, that Sunday happens to fall on the traditional feast date: Jan. 6. We will gather for the regular weekend Mass schedule as a faith community, acknowledging our roles as magi on a pilgrimage in search our Savior, who journeys ever closer to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

Now when asked: “What occurs on the 12th day of Christmas?” we can respond with joyful certitude: “Epiphany!”

Getting to Know Our New Parochial Vicar Fr. Raj Koppula

While growing up in South India, Fr. Raj Koppula felt called to a religious vocation from a very young age.

"I come from a good Catholic family, and my parents used to attend Mass every day," he recalls. "I used to be an altar boy for daily Mass and Sunday Masses, and my parish priest was an Italian priest. He used to tell me all the time, 'Raj, you should become a priest.' He inspired me, and I believe that God was calling me to become a priest."

After finishing eighth grade, Fr. Raj decided to actively pursue his discernment when he entered the minor seminary. He studied philosophy in South India and finished up his theology in North India, all the while pursuing a bachelor's degree in education independently through a home study program. His hard work paid off when he was ordained to the priesthood on Sept. 10, 1997.

Fr. Raj spent the first three years of his priesthood in Papua New Guinea, just north of Australia. As a parish priest in this region, he diligently cared for his people but also faced many challenges, including warring indigenous tribes. A visit to his faith community from some Canadian missionaries in late 2001 sparked Fr. Raj's interest in the Great White North.

"I spoke to one of the missionaries, and she said that there was a need for priests in Alberta," Fr. Raj says. "I applied for parish priesthood with the bishop of the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan, and he invited me to come along."

Upon first arriving in Canada in December of 2001, Fr. Raj admits that he experienced some culture shock, especially regarding the weather.

"For the first six months, I had a real shock," he says. "I could not believe myself, because it was always cold, cloudy, and below 40. In Papua New Guinea and India, it is always sunny and warm. I was thinking, 'How am I going to cope after this weather?'"

Fr. Raj eventually became acclimated to the weather, and he spent 10 years ministering to the people of Al-

berta, earning his Canadian citizenship along the way. But a series of close calls on the Canadian highways eventually led him to believe that it was time to move on to a new assignment.

"In the beginning, I was very enthusiastic about it – it was kind of an adventure," he says. "But after 10 years, I realized it was dangerous to drive on the icy roads. I had three accidents, so I thought God was giving me a sign I should move out. I spoke to the bishop and said I would like to go someplace warmer with less dangerous roads. I applied with Bishop Boland, and he invited me to come to the Savannah Diocese."

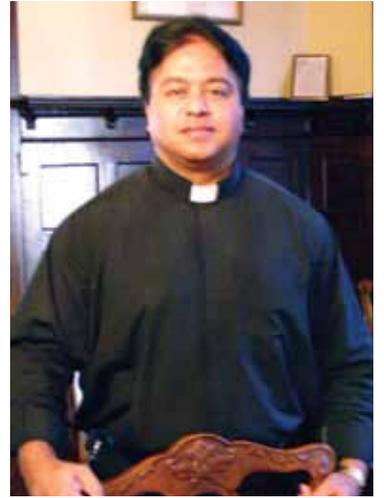
Fr. Raj arrived at St. Mary's on Oct. 5 to serve his first assignment in the United States, and he says he has been very thankful for the hospitality he has received from our parishioners.

"People are really warm and welcoming, and I am so surprised to see people have great faith here," he says. "When I was in Canada, I would maybe see 100 people for Mass. Here, when I celebrate Mass, the church is packed up. And the most interesting and beautiful point is, I see a lot of children in the church, which I didn't see in Canada, and which is very nice."

Fr. Raj also admits that the Georgia sunshine is serving him quite well!

"I am just enjoying the climate," he says, with a laugh. "I do not have winter clothes here, I can still walk with my sandals, and I don't see snow or cold weather, so for me the climate it is just perfect!"

St. Mary on the Hill Parish would like to warmly welcome Fr. Raj into our parish community. Please be sure to say "hello" to him the next time you see him at Mass or around the parish campus!



Faith, Academics, Service Celebrating Catholic Schools Week



The theme for this year's celebration – Catholic Schools: Faith. Academics. Service – focuses on three priorities Catholic schools highlight in order to make them stand out from other educational institutions, and school Principal Joe McBride says the theme perfectly reflects what our school is all about.

Beginning the last week in January, our school will join other schools across the nation in celebrating Catholic Schools Week. This national event highlights the important role that Catholic elementary and secondary schools have had in providing a value-based education for our children.

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With faith as the foundation of a solid education, students are not only taught about the basics of Christianity, but also how to enter into a relationship with God. Morning and afternoon prayers, daily religion classes, Adoration, and a first Friday Mass in which different grades participate in the planning enable students to live, learn, and practice their faith.

"One thing that really sets our school apart from other Catholic schools is that every class attends Mass once a week," explains Mr. McBride. "Many schools have Mass only once a month, or only on feast days, but we are blessed to be able to go more often."

After faith, academics are an important part of the school's mission. Excellent teachers, a full time reading specialist, pilot programs such as Simple Solutions, and this year's accreditation process mean that every student is held to high expectations and encour-

aged to reach his or her potential. Setting such high standards also means constant evaluation to make sure we continue to excel.

"This year parents participated in a survey which, along with results from student test scores, helps give us a clear picture on where we stand," explains Mr. McBride. "By highlighting our strengths, identifying our weaknesses, and setting priorities we continue to evolve and improve."

Finally, as a stewardship parish, service is stressed as both an expression of faith and of good citizenship. Whether it's serving at the Soup Kitchen, organizing food drives, or preparing packages for Operation Shoe Box, the navy, white, and plaid uniforms of our students are visible in the parish and in the community.

Festivities for the week will officially begin Monday, Jan. 29, with a benediction held in the church and various activities planned for the rest of the week. Tuesday will be Student Appreciation Day, which means no homework, donuts during lunch and the opportunity to come out of uniform; on Wednesday the Beta Club and Parent volunteers will host an Open House; Thursday will be Teacher Appreciation Day; and on Friday the week will come to a close with an all school Mass.

As a parish school we have much to be proud of, and Catholic Schools Week is an opportunity for us to celebrate the mission of Catholic education and the impact it makes on the spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social values of our children.

Together!

Transforming Families

Finding practical ways in which to live our faith can sometimes be a challenge in today's society, and for mothers who are trying to creating a faith environment in the home, this challenge can result in some soul searching questions:

- *How is God calling me to live my vocation as a wife and mother?*
- *In what ways can my family be a domestic church?*
- *How can I reveal Christ to my family and give them the tools to go out into the world and be shining examples of God's love?*

These are not easy questions, to be sure, but the study programs sponsored by Together! provide women the means in which to search for answers as they discover how our Catholic faith can help us meet the challenges of contemporary society, as well as foster communication and make decisions which elevate the family.

Parishioner and ministry coordinator Helena Rempala explains that the program is designed as a small group study which focuses on the teaching documents of the Church. Led by two facilitators, each meeting is comprised of a Gospel Reflection, in which Sunday's Gospel is read and discussed; the Catechesis, in which portions of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* are studied; and a Document Study, which emphasizes the various encyclicals and papal writings of John Paul II.

"Our Catholic Faith is so rich," explains Michelle Migone, who co-facilitates the evening group along with Kathy Wagner. "In addition to the Bible, there are also the writings of the Popes who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, teach us where the Church stands on different topics. The Together! program dissects these teachings and offers them in such a way so as to make them more accessible."

One of the reasons Together! works so well is that participants remain with the same group as they progress through the program. This way, not only are lasting



The Together Group at a recent meeting at the home of member Kathy Wagner

friendships formed, but the women support and encourage each other to incorporate the Church's teachings on marriage and family into daily life.

"Until I joined this study I had never picked up the Catechism or read an encyclical," explains Helena. "So at first, I was a little hesitant. But now my faith has taken on a new dimension. The women in my Together! group have been such a source of inspiration and, really, I couldn't live without them."

Finally, John Paul II wrote that the future of humanity passes by way of the family (*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981) and that marriage and motherhood are vocations that should be embraced. It is not meant to be easy, but through programs such as Together! mothers can find the support they need through prayer and community as they study the teachings of the Church. And the lessons they learn are the lessons they can then pass on to their families.

"As parents we have an obligation to pass on our faith to our children," says Michelle. "But in order to teach and live the truth, we have to first be informed. We can never stop learning about our faith."

For more information about Together! please call Helena Rempala at (706) 364-7441.

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Michelle Migone, co-facilitator

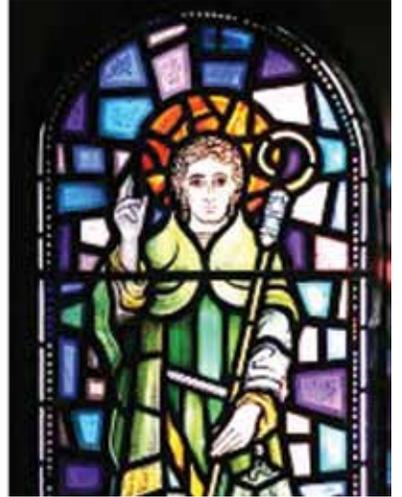
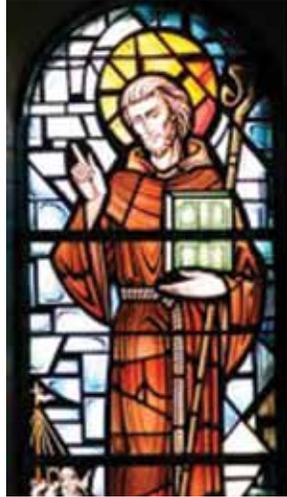
The Spirituality of Stewardship

Following in the Footsteps of the Saints

The word “stewardship” has long carried with it the negative stereotype of a financial obligation to the Church. For many, stewardship means “giving my time and money to the Church in support of its work, lest it is unable to survive and thrive.”

Indeed, stewardship does often require sacrifice of some kind. But the reality is that stewardship is not simply some guilt-laden obligation or “bill.” Stewardship is in no way comparable to a tax payment or a charitable networking opportunity at work. Instead, stewardship is a spiritual way of life – an active response to Christ’s invitation to unreservedly “come after me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt 4:19). Stewardship is about how we respond to God’s call to discipleship, and there are many different ways we can respond to the call. Because of this, we can live the stewardship way of life simply by making small choices in our daily lives, under normal, everyday circumstances.

Nowhere in Christian history is there a more archetypal example of the variety of ways we can respond to God’s call than in the lives of the saints. The saints represent a wide cross-section of individuals – old and young, rich and poor – living in different times in human history. Some were called to the religious life, living lives focused on spirituality and material simplicity, and spending their days peacefully praying and helping to form the tenets of the Faith. Others were individuals focused on charita-



ble outreach, dedicating their lives to feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Still others faced great adversity and challenges to their faith, and ultimately suffered death and martyrdom in loyalty to Christ and His Church.

In spite of their differences, the one thing that all of these individuals share is that they responded to God’s call to discipleship by utilizing the unique talents that God had given them in ways that were conducive to their individual personalities, and actively influenced the circumstances presented to them in their respective days and times. Contemplative spirituality, charitable giving, great courage – all of these roads have led to canonization and, ultimately, eternal life with God in His glory. We are all called to do the same.

As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states in its pastoral letter on stewardship, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, “The challenge, then, is to understand our role—our vocation—and to respond

generously to this call from God” (43). When thinking about the spirituality of stewardship, take some time to discern your talents, and how you can best respond to God’s call by naturally and effectively using the gifts He has given you. If you are a gregarious person, this might mean reaching out to a co-worker you don’t know very well in kindness to help create a hospitable work environment. If you are an individual who is often “on the go,” perhaps this means praying the Rosary while you are driving from place to place. If you’ve recently experienced a financial windfall or unexpected increase in income, this might mean sponsoring a little league team in your community by paying for their uniforms.

God has provided many roads to the Kingdom of Heaven, and in the saints, we see examples of the many roads that have been taken. By choosing the one that is best for us, we can live stewardship as a spiritual practice and a way of life, and answer His call to discipleship.

Living in Love 2012 *continued from front cover*

the Living in Love marriage enrichment weekend. It has helped them to see more clearly the beauty and the power of their love. If you are married, I would hope that you and your spouse could be a part of our next Living in Love weekend, which will take place in our parish hall on Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 11-12, 2012.

This is a delightful experience designed to put the fun and romance back into marriage! This retreat workshop affirms, energizes and frees husbands and wives to live in love the way they always dreamed that they would. Parish couples set up, register, facilitate talks, and provide a romantic candlelight dinner. The atmosphere is uniquely "male friendly" and the content refreshingly relevant. Guaranteed to remind you of everything you find attractive and lovable about your husband or wife and get you back in touch with why you got married in the first place.

For more information about time schedule, topics, and cost please visit: www.livinginlove.org or call Jim and Lorena Smith at 706-840-3707. You may register on-

line or fill out the following form and drop it at the parish office or in the Sunday offertory.

God bless you,

Fr. Jerry Pagan

Fr. Jerry

Living in Love Registration Form:

Wife's Name: _____

Religion: _____

Husband's Name: _____

Religion: _____

Address _____

Phone: _____

Email _____

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St Mary on the Hill Church

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*In Memory of Dr. Michael Seniuk
Dr. and Mrs. Manuel Weisman*

*In Memory of Frank Doyle
Richard and Lucille Pogue
Mrs. Joyce Weigle
Mrs. Barbara Price*

*In Memory of Mark Jardina
Bill and Anne Marie Fair*

*In Memory of James Brouillard
Mrs. Joyce Weigle*

*In Memory of Barbara Mulherin
Henry and Marcelle Rochon*

*In Memory of Anne Douglas
Mr. and Mrs. Larry Babbitt
Jeanne Walker Baggs*

*In Memory of Bernice Armstrong
Mrs. Joyce Weigle*

Baptisms

Campbell Walton Lee Smith
son of Tyler & Katie Smith

Stella Grace Lenartz
daughter of Jonathan & Allison Lenartz

Bryce Anthony DeBenedictis
son of Tony & Stacy DeBenedictis

Ethan Andrew Armstrong
son of David & Megan Armstrong

Lewis Inrique Duncan
son of Lewis & Maria Duncan

Jonathan Robert Shelnut, Jr.
son of Jonathan & Melanie Shelnut

Savannah Audrey Cranford
daughter of Jeremy & Brigid Cranford

*We are having a Parish
Appreciation Dinner on Feb. 4
at 6:00 p.m. at the School. Please
check the bulletin for details!*