

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL
CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

Praying for Freedom

Dear Parishioners,

July is a great month to reflect on what it means to be a Patriotic Catholic. Our nation's founders embraced freedom of religion as an essential condition of a free and democratic society. So when the *Bill of Rights* was ratified, religious freedom had the distinction of being the First Amendment. Religious liberty is indeed the first liberty.

This is our American heritage, our most cherished freedom. If we are not free in our conscience and our practice of religion, all other freedoms are fragile. If our obligations and duties to God are impeded, or even worse, contradicted by the government, then we can no longer claim to be a land of the free.

And so our Catholic Bishops in the United States have called for a "Fortnight for Freedom," a 14-day period of prayer, education and action in support of religious freedom, leading up to the celebration of our National Holiday, July 4th, Independence Day. All our Catholic bishops are united in asking 70 million U.S. Catholics to unite in prayer, fasting and sacrifice to turn the tide: so that we continue to enjoy

all the blessings of liberty—including the blessing of living our faith freely and fully in our beloved country. For full details, see the U.S. Bishops' site at: <http://new.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/fortnight-for-freedom/index.cfm>

My hope would be that by the time you read this column you will have already participated in some way in the "Fortnight for Freedom". But there is still time if you haven't. Here are a few suggestions:

- Pray the Rosary, or Divine Mercy chaplet, or other prayers for our nation.
- Make a Holy Hour for Freedom at the Adoration Chapel.
- Fast for a day (still having one meal) as we do on Good Friday
- Make some sacrifice (do without something) as during Lent.
- Attend daily Mass.
- Go to confession.
- Perform works of service or generosity.
- Take time to learn about your Faith—and about the threats to religious freedom.

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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.

Stewardship *Living in Love*

“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him” (1 Jn 4:16). As Christ’s disciples, we are to live lives of love. In fact, when asked which commandment is the most important, Jesus answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might,” and He immediately followed this command with, “Love your neighbor as yourself. No commandment is greater than these” (Mk 12:29-31).

So, essentially, the life of a Christian is all about love! This doesn’t mean that Christ preached an abstract Gospel, or that we need to love, love, love, because “it feels good.” Actually, it is quite the opposite. Christ’s Gospel of love is one of dramatic action, and living in that love calls each of us to action.

What is this love, then, of which Christ speaks, and how are we to live it out today?

Christ, the God who, as John tells us, “is love” Himself, came to Earth out of pure love for us. In order that we might have everlasting life, Christ took the punishment for our sins. He, the Lord of all creation, was mocked, scourged, and ultimately murdered on the cross to atone for the sins that we, His creatures, have committed. Now, that’s love! And that’s the love that we are called to imitate throughout our lives.

Notice the selfless nature of Jesus’ act. He gained nothing in return for what He did, and He calls us to love in the same manner. How do we do that here and now? Do we die on our own personal crosses? The answer, in a way, is “Yes!” We don’t necessarily die on the wood of the literal cross as Christ did, but we must die

to self for the sake of others. That is the love of Christ, and that is the love He calls us to every day. If we want to truly love God, we must love others. God Himself showed us the reality of this need when he coupled the command that we love God with the command that we love our neighbor. And then Christ explained, “Whatever you do to the least of those, you do to me.” If we are called to love God, we are called to love our



neighbor, for Christ resides in each one of us, and it must be a love like Christ has shown us – one of selflessness, wanting nothing more than the good of our neighbor.

There are many ways that we can show our love to others, particularly through prayer and service. Here at our parish, there are many ministries that offer us the opportunity to serve our neighbors. If we have a little bit of time to offer, we can help out

in the parish office by assisting with tasks such as stuffing inserts into the bulletins so that fellow parishioners are aware of what’s going on around the parish. Those of us

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with an aptitude for teaching may be called to serve others through RCIA or our Religious Education program. There is also always a need for more lectors and Eucharistic Ministers to aid the priest in bringing Christ to other parishioners at Mass.

These are but a few of the countless opportunities we have here at our parish and in our local community to serve. However we feel called to do so, one thing is for certain: the love of Christ calls us to action. How will we show our love for God this year? Remember, “Whatever you do for the least of those, you do for me.”

A Worthwhile Cause

GRACE Scholars

A few years ago, the Georgia state legislature passed a bill that allowed taxpayers to redirect some of their state tax dollars towards providing tuition assistance to students entering kindergarten or transferring from a public to a private school. With this bill came the GRACE (Georgia Residents Assisting Children's Education) Scholars program, which helps qualifying families to attend Catholic Schools in Georgia.

Through this program, parishioners and members of the community can support Catholic education and help provide tuition assistance for students, all without spending an extra dollar. All they need to do is redirect a portion of the taxes they are already paying.

"It's such an easy thing to do," says parishioner Amanda Battey, who has been donating to the program with her husband, Tom, for the last few years. "It's an easy way to give."

And it really is easy. Instructions and forms are available in the narthex and the parish office, and the parish staff is happy to answer any questions people may have.

Amanda and Tom are among many who have participated in this program, and everyone has their own reasons.

"We thought it was a good way to give back to the school and to the Church," Amanda says. "It was an easy way. At the time we weren't even attending a Catholic school, but we knew that we would in the future. We knew it was a good idea and a good thing for our family. It's a good way for another child, another family to have a Catholic education that they may not otherwise have."

For those who give through GRACE Scholars, it is a way to use their tax dollars, to support Catholic education, and more specifically the students at St. Mary on the Hill Catholic School.



Amanda and Tom Battey with their children, Kate and Thomas.

"I think Catholic education is a very important thing," says parishioner Bob McCrary, who has participated with this program for the last two years. "I can direct it to St. Mary's School, and that's very unique. I know it helps the students that need some financial help."

Bob and the other GRACE Scholars participants see their donation as a means of serving God.

"I'm serving God through the parish, through donations and helping students," Bob says. "I enjoy it myself. I get a good feeling out of it."

No matter the reason or the reward, those who participate in the GRACE Scholars program do a great service to the families who need assistance in sending their children to Catholic schools, as well as the schools themselves.

"It's a worthwhile way to give the money," Bob says. "A worthwhile cause."

For more information about the GRACE Scholars program, call the parish office at 706-733-6627.

HURRY - TIME IS RUNNING OUT!!! Only \$23.3 million in tax credits left.

As of June 8, taxpayers have burned their way through \$28.2 million of the \$51.5 million in credits available in 2012. Some \$3.7 million were awarded in the past two weeks - one of the largest biweekly increases so far this year. 54.7% of the cap is gone.

It is increasingly clear, however, that the cap will not survive the opening of school in August.

What does “Red, White, and Blue” Mean to You?



Our commitment to a rightly ordered Catholic patriotism begins with our commitment to the formation of our Christian conscience.

In 1777, our beloved country celebrated its first Fourth of July celebration in Bristol, Rhode Island, now named “America’s most patriotic town.” Thirteen guns fired morning and evening, celebrating the glory of our free nation. In 1778, General George Washington marked the second anniversary.

Although our nation’s real independence began at the end of the Revolutionary War on Sept. 3, 1783, President John Adams originally thought that the anniversary would be marked on July 2, the day in 1776 when the Second Continental Congress voted to approve a resolution of independence from Great Britain. Ultimately, Americans chose to commemorate the birthday of the United States on July 4, the day on which the *Declaration of Independence* was adopted and approved.

What does this mean for us as Roman Catholics? The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us, “The love and service of one’s country follow from the duty of gratitude and belong to the order of charity” (§CCC #2239).

As a parish community, we are called by God to respond to this duty to the best of our ability. So, where do we start?

The Second Vatican Council document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, states that “In the patriotism and in their fidelity to their civic duties Catholics will feel themselves bound to promote the true common good; they will make the weight of their convictions so influential that as a result, civil authority will be justly exercised and laws will accord with moral precepts and the common good.”

By living our lay vocation and permeating the secular world with Catholic

values, we genuinely honor God and neighbor. As “lamps shining before men,” we need to let our moral convictions – no matter the courage it may take – shine forth to be a guiding light for the world, often left vulnerable in the darkness.

The sacred document continues, “In fulfilling the mission of the Church, the laity, therefore, exercise their apostolate... in both the spiritual and temporal orders... In both orders, the layman, being simultaneously a believer and a citizen, should be constantly led by the same Christian conscience.”

Our commitment to a rightly ordered Catholic patriotism begins with our commitment to the formation of our Christian conscience. We must enrich ourselves with the Church’s teachings on the value of human life, the sacred institution of family, Catholic social and moral teachings, Catholic civil duties, and anything that further pertains to the living out of our Catholic Faith in our nation today.

Once we have done this, we will be able to act upon it. As Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said, “Today more than ever, we need to pray for the light to know the Will of God, the way to do the Will of God, and the will to carry it out.”

This year, let us give our hearts to carrying out this mission of an authentic Catholic patriotism under God. Our nation was founded under God. Let us not allow this precious heritage, this source of true life and liberty, to be lost. Its preservation relies on each one of us. Only then will we be able to truly sing, “My country, ‘tis of Thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.”

Blessings of First Communion

It is not everyday that you receive the Eucharist for the first time. It is an important and unique event that all Catholics experience. And on May 12, 73 of our parish children received the special blessing of their First Communion. Congratulations to our First Communicants and their families.



Grateful Hearts Respond Greatly Through Our Intercessory Prayer Team

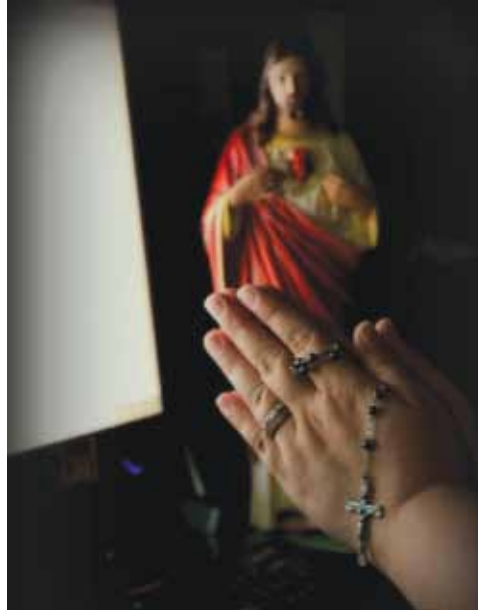
Throughout her life, Mary-Garner Merz has never really considered herself as a modern-day St. Teresa of Avila. But somehow, somehow, God's grace has enabled her to found and be the sole coordinator of the Intercessory Prayer Ministry.

Today, more than 130 prayer warriors participate in this ministry alongside Mary-Garner.

So, how did it all start?

"Similar to how Dorothy felt when she first encountered the Wizard of Oz, I used to feel uncomfortable, unworthy, and scared when I went to the Lord in prayer," Mary-Garner says. "Back in 2002 or so I was approached by (former parishioner) Ellen Mongan who asked me if I would help start an e-mail intercessory prayer team with her. I confessed the fact that praying aloud with others made me a nervous wreck, so she promised she would field the phone calls and I could just take all those sent via e-mail. Although the telephone part of the prayer ministry never really took off, 10 years later, the small group we started at one local parish has really grown."

The Intercessory Prayer Ministry is an e-mail-based prayer line, and prayer requests are called in or e-mailed to Mary-Garner. About once per day or every few days, Mary-Garner sends out an e-mail with all the requests and any updates there are on former prayer requests. All information is intended to be kept private. Upon receiving the prayer requests, the prayer warriors get



"There are so many times I have been amazed to see that people who are battling all kinds of wars remain faithful to their Faith and grow in their struggles. It is inspiring to say the least."

*— Mary-Garner Merz,
Intercessory Prayer Team
Coordinator*

to work in all kinds of marvelous ways!

"The Holy Spirit prompts people in different ways, and as many different people there are on the face of the planet, there are at least that

many ways to pray," Mary-Garner says. "Some people pray right when they get the e-mail, sitting at the computer, while others keep a notebook and bring it with them to the Adoration Chapel or present the intention during family prayers. Since we started this ministry in 2007, we have seen the Lord's hand at work in amazing ways. My ultimate prayer, no matter what is being requested, is that no matter what the outcome may be, that the Lord's name will be glorified and that the person for whom we are praying is brought closer to Christ."

Importantly, this beautiful ministry testifies to the power of stewardship.

"Grateful hearts respond greatly!" Mary-Garner says. "There are so many times I have been amazed to see that people who are battling all kinds of wars remain faithful to their Faith and grow in their struggles. It is inspiring to say the least."

This summer, consider giving yourself to prayer in a deeper, more meaningful way. Think of reading the Scriptures under the summer sun, or praying a Rosary as you walk at the park. By joining the Intercessory Prayer team, you can devote extra time to prayer, as well as to your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Those who would like to join the Intercessory Prayer Team can simply e-mail Mary-Garner Merz at mgmerz123@knology.net expressing their interest.

Praying for Freedom *continued from front cover*

- Get involved as a citizen.
- Pray the following prayer:

O GOD OUR CREATOR,
 from your provident hand we have received
 our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
 You have called us as your people and given us
 the right and the duty to worship you, the only true
 God, and your Son, Jesus Christ.
 Through the power and working of your Holy Spirit,
 you call us to live out our faith in the midst of the
 world, bringing the light and the saving truth of the
 Gospel to every corner of society.
 We ask you to bless us
 in our vigilance for the gift of religious liberty.
 Give us the strength of mind and heart
 to readily defend our freedoms when they are threat-
 ened; give us courage in making our voices heard
 on behalf of the rights of your Church

and the freedom of conscience of all people of faith.
 Grant, we pray, O heavenly Father,
 a clear and united voice to all your sons and daughters
 gathered in your Church
 in this decisive hour in the history of our nation,
 so that, with every trial withstood
 and every danger overcome—
 for the sake of our children, our grandchildren,
 and all who come after us—
 this great land will always be “one nation, under God,
 indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”
 We ask this through Christ our Lord.
 Amen.

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

Ad Placement



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