

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL

CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

Stewardship and Discipleship Begin *With Love*

Dear Parishioners,

In John 13:35, Jesus says, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” So many times, the Lord calls us to love one another. This was one of the Gospel readings back in April. On that particular Sunday, Pope Francis gathered with a large group of teenagers, and the whole theme of his homily was built around that message. It is a message that is equally appropriate for all of us, young and old.

Pope Francis is well aware of modern technology and modern communication, especially with how it is so prevalent among today’s youth. He also said in that April homily, “Happiness cannot be bought; it is not an app that you can download on your phones, nor will the latest update bring you freedom and grandeur in love.”

The pope explained that “Love is the Christian’s identity card, the only truly valid ‘document’ which identifies us as followers and Disciples of Christ.” Nevertheless, we must work to constantly renew this card, because if it ever expires, we cease being witnesses of the faith. If we are really followers of

Christ, then genuine love needs to shine forth in our lives. As Pope Francis said, “Before all else, love is beautiful, and it is the path to happiness.”

Who among us does not want to be happy? We all strive for that, and the Lord gives us a formula for achieving it. It may seem simple on the surface, but we all know how difficult it can be. Love – the kind of love to which we are called by Jesus – is work; lots of work, especially in our crazy old terror-filled world. It takes effort, renewal, conversion, and persistence.

During his homily, Pope Francis completely captured the essence of stewardship, and of love. He declared, “Look to the Lord, who is never outdone in generosity. We receive so many gifts from Him, and every day we should thank Him... Let me ask you something. Do you thank the Lord every day? Even if we forget to do so, He never forgets, each day, to give us some special gift. It is not something material and tangible that we can use, but something even greater, a lifelong gift. He offers us His faithful friendship, which He will never take back.”

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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"It Truly Is an Encounter With Christ" **The Cursillo Retreat**

The words of Blessed John Henry Newman remind us of how deeply our relationship with God is intertwined with our relationship with others – "I sought to hear the voice of God and climbed the topmost steeple, but God declared, 'Go down again – I dwell among the people.'" A close relationship with the Lord is commonly referred to as a friendship, and the way we most often experience friendship is amongst those we connect with in our community.

Parishioner Anne Arnold is a cradle Catholic. However, it wasn't until she attended a Cursillo retreat weekend that she truly experienced a deep friendship both with our Lord and others within the Catholic community.

"It's so easy to get into a rut with going to Mass and receiving Communion," Anne says. "It's easy to take these things for granted. I went to other retreats before Cursillo – they were all good, but Cursillo changed my life. It truly is an encounter with Christ. I felt very close to Christ and I knew that He was with me at all times."

Cursillo is a worldwide retreat comprised of Mass, adoration, confession, presentations on the faith, and a lot of individual time for prayer. Typically starting on a Thursday evening and lasting until Sunday, attendees have ample opportunity to take a step back from their busy day-to-day life in order to truly encounter Christ. There are separate weekends for men and women and,

upon finishing the weekend, attendees are then connected with a group of other attendees called Ultreya. While you only truly attend the Cursillo weekend once, the Ultreya groups are formed to meet regularly with other Catholics, ensuring that the faith enkindled at the retreat is fostered and shared with others.

"Our motto is 'Make a friend; be a friend; walk with a friend to Christ,'" Anne says. "I'm not going to go to Heaven alone – I'm bringing others with me! All of Cursillo is about Christianizing your environment, whether that's your workplace, your neighbors or your home. The goal of the Cursillo movement is to make sure Christ is the prime influence in society."

Fostering both an active relationship with Christ, as well as connection with others in our community, the Ultreya meetings provide an opportunity to reflect on how Christ is working in one's daily life and a time to share moments of evangelization with others. In this way, the Cursillo weekend continues to penetrate the daily lives of those who attend and invite them into a continual conversion.

Well aware that "God dwells among the people," the Cursillo movement aims to set our hearts on fire personally and provide us with the encouragement needed to go out into our communities and share Christ with others. In the words of Anne, it truly is a "'once in a lifetime' type of weekend."



A group gathered at the fall men's Cursillo. Cursillo is an opportunity for Catholics to come together, encounter Christ and build friendships.



During the weekend retreat, there is Mass, adoration, presentations, and plenty of time for individual prayer.



A group gathered at the women's fall Cursillo.

The upcoming women's Cursillo retreat is Oct. 27-30, and the men's Cursillo retreat is Nov. 3-6. Anyone who has questions or is interested in attending is invited to contact Anne Arnold at 706-589-2912 or anne.arnold@va.gov.

CONGRATULATIONS to our 2016 High School and College Graduates!



2016 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

NAME	HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDED	COLLEGE
Jack Bailey	Lakeside High School	Georgia Southern
William Barksdale	Lakeside High School	Georgia College
Alyson Boudreaux	North Augusta High School	Undecided
Kay Doss	Davidson Fine Arts	SC of the Arts at Anderson University
Riley Hennessey	Brookwood High School	Kennesaw State
Victoria Hull	Lakeside High School	Georgia Southern
Ariana Jimenez	Richmond Academy	Oglethorpe University
Alyssa McArdle	Aquinas High School	Belmont Abbey
Evan Miller	Lakeside High School	University of Alabama
Devon Louise O'Geary	Lakeside High School	Clemson
Megan Plagenhoef	Evans High School	Georgia Southern
Elizabeth Prestifilippo	Davidson Fine Arts	Columbus State University
Robert J. Scheirer	Lakeside High School with Honors	Moravian College (Bethlehem, Pa.)
Milledge Smith	Greenbrier High School	University of South Carolina
Tatum A. Torchia	Lakeside High School	Florida State University
Lindsay Marie Wallace	Davidson Fine Arts	Georgia Tech
Liam Joseph Welch	Aquinas High School	Samford University
Jeffrey Wongo	Greenbrier High School	Georgia Tech
Ben Wright	Aquinas High School	Georgia Southern
DayLon A. Young	Grovetown High School	Allen University
Lilia Marie Young	Lakeside High School	Augusta University
Carlos Zayas, Jr	Westminister High School	University of the South, Sewanee

2016 COLLEGE GRADUATES

NAME	COLLEGE ATTENDED	DEGREE
Elizabeth Brady	University of Georgia	BA Early Childhood Education
Tyler H. Bussey	Augusta State University	Bachelor of Business Administration
Matthew Cranford	Goizuetta Business School at Emory University	MBA
Amelia Hagler	Samford University	BA in History (cum laude)
Thomas Hennessey	University of Georgia	BBA Marketing
Georgianna Malchow	University of Georgia	Bachelor Degree in Marketing
James O'Geary	Wake Forest	BA Sociology/ Minor Psychology
Kellie E. Pitts	GA College & State University	BS in Biology/Minor in Health Edu.
Sean B. Pitts	Georgia Southern University	BBA in Finance
Booker Regan	Armstrong State University	BSN
Zachary Woo	University of Georgia	Bachelor of Science in Biology

“We’ve Seen Child SUPPORTING THE FIGHT AGAINST

She is a young teenage girl like any other living in Augusta. She hangs out with her friends, goes to the mall, and longs for the latest iPhone. She goes to school and dreams of becoming a teacher or a doctor. She is thrilled when a too-good-to-be-true boyfriend comes into her life. He is so attentive – his world revolves around her. He seems to really understand her and – most of all – love her. It all seems like a dream come true.

Until that dream turns into a nightmare.

Suddenly, her boyfriend is in crisis – claiming to be in urgent need of money, he asks her to do him a “favor.” Just this once. Just a dance for an older man. He hates to ask, he says, because he loves her so much. Soon, each “favor” leads to the next, each act more shameful and degrading. He turns violent, and she knows it’s time to end things once and for all. Then the threats begin – “I have photos of you I will post to social media.” Or “No one will believe you.” Or, perhaps even “I know where your sister lives.”

And then she knows. She is trapped. She believes her only choice is to do his bidding. She has become a modern-day slave.

For many of us, hearing this story probably brings to mind memories of things we have heard on the news or vague ideas about horrors taking place in distant lands. We may not even realize that

this evil – called human trafficking or sex trafficking – is actually at work right here in our own backyard. In fact, there is a very active human trafficking business in Augusta and neighboring areas. In recent years, Atlanta has been the most profitable center for sex commerce in the United States, where several hundred girls are trafficked each month. Many traffickers travel a circuit between Atlanta, Augusta and Savannah, which makes it more difficult for the authorities to track them.

So what can we do to help? St. Mary on the Hill is blessed to be able to share the treasure that is offered up by our generous parishioners with many worthy charities. One of those charitable organizations, iCare, serves women and children in the Augusta area who have been trafficked, exploited or are considered at risk.

Parishioner Katie Conner serves on the iCare Board of Directors. Like many of us, Katie did not know much about the extent of human trafficking here in Georgia until several years ago, when she began seeing more and more news stories on the subject.

“I was reading these articles and stories about sex trafficking, and every time I turned on the radio or news, there was something that caught my attention,” she says. “I hadn’t been aware of it at all before then, and I really felt God calling me to do something about it.”

After joining the iCare team and seeing how much work needed to be done to help young victims of trafficking, Katie brought the issue to the attention of the Pastoral and Tithe Committees at St. Mary on the Hill, and the parish began to share its stewardship of treasure with this worthy organization.

The services of iCare focus on three specific areas – prevention of trafficking; intervention on behalf of the women and children being exploited; and restoration, which seeks to provide the women with ongoing support. Prevention is of the utmost importance and is not always easy, as children from all walks of life can become victims.

“Poverty or a history of sexual abuse can put a child more at risk – and certainly kids in the foster care system are very vulnerable – but people need to know that it can happen to any child,” Katie says. “Kids need to know so they can protect each other. And school administrators and staff really need to know about the warning signs – a kid who suddenly has an older boyfriend, is missing school more than usual or dresses inappropriately. She might not be looking well, or suddenly her hair and nails are done, and she has cash in her pocket that she can’t account for.”

Increasing public awareness is crucial since many of the girls being bought and sold go unidentified for long stretches of time. Contrary to common belief, most

Children's Lives Saved"

AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

are still attending school and leading what seems on the outside to be a fairly normal life.

"In 2014, over 90 percent of [Georgia] victims were enrolled in school," Katie says. "So they haven't just disappeared. They're in our schools, but they won't self-identify because there is a lot of shame and self blame."

While girls, boys, and women can become entrapped in trafficking at any age, iCare usually serves women between the ages of 17 and 25 years old.

"Our particular focus is on young ladies who have children," Katie says. "We worry about the children of the victims, as well. The most ambitious project of iCare is long-term restoration. We've broken ground on the first home [providing ongoing support for the women], but there will also be a second home that will allow the women to stay with their children. There is only one other place where children can get services right alongside their mothers on the same campus. So usually they have to be separated, and that is an additional trauma. It's a very pro-life approach to take care of both the mother and child."

Thanks to organizations like iCare, the general public is becoming more and more aware of this evil in our midst. And when we read the statistics and hear the personal stories of the victims of trafficking, it becomes clear that our Church is called to take action on this issue.

"It's one of the great social evils of our day," Katie says. "It's one of the most heinous things that a human being can do to another – to enslave that person and use them as an object, to take something that God meant for good and turn it into something depraved. The young people in our midst are the most vulnerable. As Catholics, we are on the front lines, standing up for the weakest.

"That's why we exist as a faith community," she continues. "I think when we come together for Mass or parish activities, it is not meant for us. It's meant for us to feed others, to take that fuel and turn it outward. It's a gift to be given away. So, we have the gift of all the riches of our faith and the sacraments. We can never run out of grace to give away, and that's so wonderful."

As always, the blessings that come to those who share their time, talent and treasure for the good of God's people are many. Through her experiences with iCare, Katie has been given the opportunity to see God's love at work in the midst of deep despair.

"This work is so dark," Katie says. "But if you go with God – if you let Him take you into the darkness – you can see His light in a way that you never could unless you are willing to go with Him where it's very, very dark. And we have seen it – we've seen children's lives saved."



Are you interested in helping? Prayer support for iCare and other organizations fighting human trafficking is always welcome. For more information about ways you may be able to help, or to request someone from iCare to come speak to your local charitable organization, contact Katie Conner at 706-399-4161 or visit icareforthevoiceless.org.



“A REAL SENSE OF TOGETHERNESS AND FELLOWSHIP AND ACCOMPLISHMENT”

St. Joseph’s Guild

Don Thorstad loves being outdoors. By his own admission, he spends a lot of time working in his own yard. Therefore, a few years ago when he became aware of the St. Joseph’s Guild Ministry at St. Mary on the Hill Catholic Church, he was interested. It seemed to be a perfect way for him to live out stewardship – that is, using one’s gifts to serve and to build the Church and the parish.

“We enhance the beauty of our church and school campuses,” says Don, who now serves as coordinator of St. Joseph’s Guild. “We are blessed with a large and extensive campus, but because of that, the landscaping, the plants, shrubs, and flowers require constant attention and sometimes repair. Those of us who participate in this ministry like being outside. We also get a real sense of togetherness and fellowship and accomplishment from what we do. It sort of goes without saying that we also save the parish perhaps thousands of dollars each year by doing this ourselves.”

Every four to six weeks, the guild meets on Saturday mornings from 8 a.m. until lunchtime. These meetings take place during early spring to late fall. As Don points out, 90 percent of the guild’s projects consist of yard work and landscape maintenance.

“I should probably add that we have a good time doing this,” he says. “On occasion, we may have some outside painting to do. Basically, we do what is needed and what we are told is needed by facilities management people at the parish.”

Don sees involvement in this ministry as an excellent example of stewardship in action.

“One of the great joys at St. Mary and one of the reasons we are such a good and lively parish is that people recognize how important it is to be involved and to contribute in some way,” he says. “We have about 30 people signed up for the St. Joseph’s Guild, but we could always use more. Normally eight to 12 people show up for each work session.”

For many of us, our St. Mary on the Hill Parish is more or less a spiritual oasis. Part of the charm of the parish and its environs is indeed the landscaping and gardening. St. Joseph’s Guild is a vital part of the atmosphere and sentiment the parish exudes. To be a strong and vibrant faith community, we need participation and contribution of talents from everyone who belongs. Service is one of the Four Pillars of Stewardship, which we recognize and embrace as a stewardship parish. Service is at the heart of what we do as a People of God.

The environment at our church and school encourages prayer and fellowship when we are aware of God’s natural beauty and wonder.

“We need volunteers to help with all the things we do – watering, planting, weeding, and caring for God’s good earth,” Don says. “Physical labor like this cleanses our bodies and clears our minds. Keeping our Father’s House and grounds beautiful is a rewarding experience.

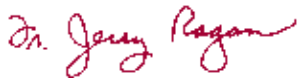
“Anyone who enjoys gardening, working outdoors or is handy with tools is welcome,” he concludes.

If you would like to learn more about St. Joseph’s Guild, please contact the parish office at 706-733-6627 or email Don Thorstad at dthorstad@comcast.net.

With Love *continued from front cover*

Gratitude is, of course, at the very basis of stewardship. It is this thankfulness that should inspire us whenever we run up against one of life's many roadblocks – those things that make it hard for us to love as we should. I often recommend prayer of gratitude in the confessional as a penance or when people are struggling with their prayer life. If we practice thanking the Lord for our daily blessings, we can accomplish this love. As the pope said in closing on that day in April, "Loving in this way, you will be recognized as disciples of Jesus. And your joy will be complete."

God bless you,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Fr. Jerry Pagan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Jerry



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