

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL
CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

Standing up to Address a Great Need

Dear Parishioners,

On Thursday evening, June 18, at 7 p.m., I ask you to join the Catholics of the Augusta Deanery as we gather to pray for the persecuted Christians throughout the world. A special Mass will be celebrated that evening at St. Teresa's in Grovetown. Since we have a Church in the deanery with Syrian roots, St. Ignatios of Antioch Melkite Greek Catholic Church, we will pray in a special way for the Church in Syria where the persecution of Christians at this moment in history is most intense.

Our homilist will be Fr. Ezzat Bathouche. Fr. Ezzat is a native of Syria. He was ordained on Aug. 22, 2008, at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Ascension in his home village of Khabab, Syria. Directly after his ordination, he served at the Major Seminary in Harissa, Lebanon, and from 2009 until 2013, he served the Cathedral of Saint George in Cordoba, Argentina. Today, Fr. Ezzat is the Priest of St. John the Baptist Melkite Church in Northlake, Illinois, serving the Melkite Community, as well as the Hispanic Community.

In recent months, Pope Francis frequently has denounced the growing wave of anti-Christian violence, a violence that is not simply a matter of restricting religious freedom, but a martyrdom of Christians.



"They are our martyrs today and they are many; we are able to say that they are more numerous than in the first centuries," Pope Francis said. "I sincerely hope that the international community does not look the other way," he added.

The news media is largely silent about it, but there is more Christian persecution today than there has ever been in the history of the world. Martyrs for the faith are being made at a rate greater than that seen in pagan Rome. Many of these martyrs are produced by the violence of the Islamic

continued on page 7

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.



Congratulations to St. Mary's F

Our students faithfully prepared for this day – for the first time, they joyfully received the Eucharist, “the source and summit of the Christian life” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1324). As a faith community, we celebrate all the young members of our parish who recently celebrated their First Communion!

Preparation for this Sacrament of Initiation consists of two years of religious education. Joan Purucker, Co-Director of Religious Education with Barbara Kareis, explains that during this formation period, students prepare for and receive First Reconciliation in January.

“Preparation also includes Family Adoration and Potluck in March and a Demonstration Mass,”

Joan says. “At the Demonstration Mass, Fr. Jerry Ragan explains ‘what and why’ as the Mass is celebrated.”

On May 9, our 62 young people joined us at the altar to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. We rejoice with them as they receive the Lord and surround them with our prayers and support as they continue their young journeys of discipleship!

“Congratulations to all of our students who received their First Holy Communion!” Joan says. “May you always feel His loving and holy presence each time you receive Jesus’ Body and Blood.”



First Communion Students



"Congratulations to all of our students who received their First Holy Communion! May you always feel His loving and holy presence each time you receive Jesus' Body and Blood." – Joan Purucker, Co-Director of Religious Education

Youth Calendar for Summer 2015

The youth will be very busy this summer! In June, they will be headed to Steubenville, Ohio for a three-day youth conference. Then, in late June and early July, there are two mission trips to Charlotte, N.C.

Mission Trip – Missionaries of Charity Charlotte, N.C.

These mission trips will give our youth the opportunity to pray, serve and love others alongside the sisters from the Missionaries of Charity – the order started by Blessed Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa). The days will be long and the floors we will sleep on will be hard, but the experience will be life-changing. We will pray with the sisters at the Mother House, then spend the days helping to run the Summer Bible camp for the poor youth of the area.

There will be two sessions:

Week One – June 28-July 2

Week Two – July 5-July 9

Also, every Second Tuesday we will serve at the Soup Kitchen. This is a great opportunity to give back to your community.

Call to Holiness and Vocatio Dei Summer Camps for Rising Seventh to 12th-Graders

Girls Camp – June 21-24

Boys Camp – June 24-27

Please visit www.diosav.org/vocations for more information.

High School Summer Camp – Saturday, July 25

Open to all who will be in high school in the fall of 2015. The theme of the camp is "Life is Worth Living in Christ," and will focus on living the Christian life to the fullest. Campers get to enjoy daily Mass, speakers, team building, and lots of fun.

For more information, please contact Sean Strasma at sstrasma@st-teresa.com.

For more information on any and all youth activities, please contact Michael Lammers at 706-394-6447.

Preparing for the Sacrament

The Sacrament of Marriage is a beautiful thing, but it is also a serious commitment.

“Marriage isn’t something to be taken lightly,” says Mike O’Neil, who coordinates the Marriage Preparation Weekend at St. Mary on the Hill with his wife, Sarah. “It is a covenant and a sacrament. All the homework, all the pre-work you can do ahead of time to better prepare yourself, you should take advantage of. We really try to make ours relaxed and very fun. We do a big dinner on the Friday night. We only give one talk that night, we bring in some beer and some wine and play some games and get everyone relaxed. We’re trying to give you food for thought and make sure you are taking it seriously.”

Engaged couples who wish to be married in the Church must meet certain requirements regarding preparation. One of the requirements includes attending a one-time Marriage Preparation Weekend, like the one held at St. Mary on the Hill parish on Jan. 16 and 17.

Each year, the Marriage Preparation Weekend begins on the Friday before Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, starting with dinner and a presentation. Then on Saturday, the weekend continues with Mass at 9:15 a.m., followed by more talks with an hour break for lunch, and ending at 4:30 p.m. Throughout the event, the engaged couples listen to a series of presentations given

by married couples who have volunteered to speak on a number of topics, which include Family of Origin, Communication, Marriage and Money, Theology of the Body, Parenting, and Natural Family Planning. The married couples have each been married for a different number of years, and each couple gives a talk on one of the topics.

“It’s always such a blessing to work with the married couples,” Mike says. “Some of these couples, I’ve heard their story four or five years in a row. Every time I hear it, I take away something that makes Sarah’s and my marriage better. It’s really a beautiful thing to bring all these wonderful couples at St. Mary’s together to present to these newly engaged couples. It’s a lot of fun.”

The engaged couples receive a discount on their marriage license as a result of attending the Marriage

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Sacrament of Marriage

Preparation Weekend, but the most profound gift is the wisdom and encouragement they receive from the presentations.

"It allowed us to discuss things we hadn't talked about beforehand that were really important during the weekend," Sarah says. "Hearing married couples talk about things they did wrong the first time, and then how they did it right the second time, gave us the opportunity to try it the second way so we wouldn't fail like they had the first time. It gave us food for thought and it gives people practical information and time to think about how you're going to live out your marital vocation with your spouse."

Couples who wish to be married at St. Mary on the Hill Catholic Church are also required to attend a Wedding Workshop at the church before their wedding. The purpose of this workshop is to inform the couple about

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the rules and logistics of the wedding ceremony itself, and topics like reverent behavior, the procession, flower girls, altar servers, readings, music, decorations, the wedding party and more are discussed.

"We go over the whole thing and let them know what they can do and can't do and what is required," says Laura Cameron, who coordinates the Wedding Workshop. "It lets their wedding be a little bit individual. That's the whole idea – to help them make their wedding beautiful and individual."

Laura has been involved in wedding preparation at St. Mary on the Hill Catholic Church for nearly 50 years, and she has seen how helpful the Wedding Workshop can be for engaged couples preparing to enter into the Sacrament of Marriage.

"They know that they have to concentrate on it themselves," Laura says. "They pick their own prayers and readings for the wedding ceremony. It puts them in a serious thinking, because they're given a book that has all the acceptable choices, and they have the privilege if any of them has a special reading they want to use, we clear it with the priest and they can use it. We don't want them to be tied down."

For more information about the Marriage Preparation Weekend or the Wedding Workshop, call the Parish Office at 706-733-6627.



Fr. Michael Hull: **In Love With God's Will**

The vocation to the Catholic Church and its priesthood wasn't exactly handed to Fr. Michael Hull on a silver platter. He worked and prayed very hard to discover it, and he also had some friends give him some pointers along the way. Throughout his life, he sought God's divine will, and because of this, he has been greatly blessed.

"My family originally went to the Episcopalian Church, and later joined the Greek Orthodox Church," Fr. Michael says. "As a boy, I served at the altar and played music in church. Although I felt a calling to be a priest ever since I was 9 years old, for a while I really resisted the call. I went to college and later worked as the Regional Health Administrator for the Department of Corrections. Interestingly, however, it was pretty obvious to the inmates that I worked with that I was in the wrong place! I was always very open about my faith with them. They were a captive audience, and they often encouraged me to go into the priesthood. I also had friends that encouraged me. One time, a friend said to me, 'Why don't you just go on and do what you are supposed to do?'"

He soon took the hint, and entered the Anglican School of Theology in Dallas in 1985. He was ordained as a priest in the Greek Orthodox Church in 1991, in which he served for many years. After a soul-searching journey, he was received in the Greek Catholic Church in 2005. Although his ordination to the priesthood was still valid in the Catholic Church, he needed to study at St. James Seminary in Boston to complete his formation.

"I realized that there was a lot of disunity in the Greek Orthodox Church, and I became under conviction about the importance of being in union with the See of Peter," Fr. Michael says. "I saw that it is actually being in union with Rome which makes you in union with Rome!"

During his time at the Anglican School of Theology, Fr. Michael fell in love with the Eastern Rite of the Catholic Church and its unique spirituality. Fr. Michael is currently the Pastor of St. Ignatius of Antioch Melkite Catholic Church in Augusta, as well as a staff member of St. Mary on the Hill. We are truly blessed to have him in our community. He offers Masses at our parish, visits the sick, buries the dead, and does whatever is asked of him.

"I find St. Mary on the Hill to be a very warm parish, even though it is huge," Fr. Michael says. "Its parishioners love each other and take care of each other. Furthermore, working with Fr. Jerry is a rare privilege. He is the most supportive and caring priest!"

By following God's will daily, Fr. Michael lives out the stewardship vision in incredible ways.

"I think being a good steward involves every act in your life," Fr. Michael says. "We are a throwaway society, and we don't seem to have respect for things. Being a good Christian means being a good steward of what God has given you, as well as the environment around you. For parents, it means giving your children the time that they need and praying with them. Stewardship really is a way of life."



Fr. Michael Hull

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Standing up to Address a Great Need *continued from front cover*

State and their sympathizers – however, Christians face persecution all around the world.

Patriarch Gregory III, the spiritual leader of the Melkite Catholic Church, has warned that jihadists could gain control of Syria, predicting that hatred between the faiths would gain the upper hand. Patriarch Gregory emphasized the significance of the Christian presence in Syria and the entire Middle East.

“We Christians have a calling here,” he said. “Without Christians, only an Islamic world would be left. We are the moving force of pluralism in the Arab world. Anyone who stands up for our presence is not only championing Christians, but also the Muslims in the region.”

Patriarch Gregory pointed out the important role that prayer plays in ending the war. He insisted: “It is very wrong to think that western Christians can help the Christians in the East by supplying them with weapons. The only solution is peace. Weapons are not the solution. Every war ends at a round table at which a solution is sought.”

So, we will gather on June 18 to pray for peace. We will gather to honor those who have been martyred for simply professing faith in Christ. We will gather to be in solidarity with all those throughout the world who suffer because they love Jesus. Please, do not miss this important Mass.

I am deeply grateful to Fr. Michael Hull for spearheading our Deanery effort to pray for persecuted Christians. I am happy that through his profile in this issue, you can get to know him a little better. He has quickly become a dear friend. I love his easy laugh, his love for the Word of God, and his willingness to be of help in whatever way he is needed. I love his passion for the things of God and his deep, deep caring for the people of God. He is a great blessing to both his parishioners of St. Ignatios and to our faith community.

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

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