

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL
CATHOLIC CHURCH

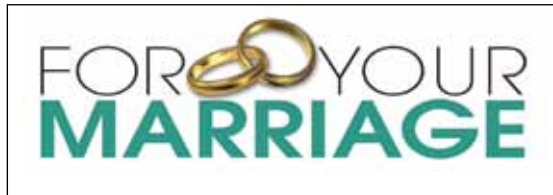


News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

Reflections on the Sacrament of Marriage

Dear Parishioners,

Historically, June has always been the most popular month for weddings. The month



But the social science studies point out that marriage is really good for you. Married couples

of June derives its name from Juno, the Roman goddess of marriage. It was anciently thought that couples who married in June would be blessed with prosperity and happiness. We rejoice in the couples who will be getting married at St. Mary on the Hill this month, but we would love to see more young couples getting married in our faith community. There were 415,487 Catholic marriages in the United States in 1972 when I entered the seminary. Times have changed, and the number dropped to 168,400 in 2010 — a decrease of 60 percent!

live longer, are wealthier, and have more satisfying sex lives than those who are single, divorced or cohabiting. Children, too, do better when parents are married.

We live in a pluralistic society and there are many among us who would want to redefine marriage. Frankly, I think too much energy has been expended by some Church leaders as they try to defend our traditional sense that marriage is meant to be between a man and a woman. Of course it is, but in a world that is in denial about objective truth, we will not change too many minds by a negative campaign. I think we do much better by joyfully proclaiming the good news of our Sacrament of Marriage. The church has a very positive vision of marriage as a happy, healthy and holy life choice. Marriage is more than a civil contract — it is a lifelong covenant of love between a man and a woman. It is an intimate partnership in which husbands and wives learn to give and receive love

Unfortunately, marriage in our day is being questioned in all sorts of ways. Cohabitation has gone up — over a third of cohabiting couples have children in their homes, so they are moving ahead without marriage. In the past, marriage gave a couple financial security, and it offered the freedom to be intimate and a place to have babies. Now people choose to have all those things without marriage.

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.

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Stewardship

Keeping Our Stewardship Commitments in the Summertime

The kids are out of school and our fast-paced lives centered on school and youth sports activities have slowed down. Our own internal clocks are now on summer time. We're ready for a break from our hectic lives.

And while we take vacations and enjoy the leisurely pace of the season, we need to remember that summer is not the time to take a vacation from God. In fact, summer can serve as the perfect opportunity to grow our relationship with God, especially since most of us have considerably more free time.

So, instead of neglecting our faith due to busy days and late nights, try these simple steps to embrace God during the lazier summer months and during your vacation.

Get More Active in a Parish Ministry

The summer is actually a perfect time to get more involved in a parish ministry. Because we no longer have to get the kids to and from school, or get them to sporting events or other activities that normally occur during the school year, our schedules are a bit less cluttered. Summer is indeed a perfect time to fill some downtime with service to God through ministry and giving of your talents. Take a look through the parish ministries to find something that suits your particular interest or talent.



VBS for Kids and Adults

Vacation Bible School is a great way for younger children to learn about God through songs, activities and fellowship. The fun-filled lessons build upon Gospel teachings while keeping kids' attention. For older children, it is a great opportunity to offer service by being a team leader or assistant. Adults can also help plan, decorate, organize, and teach during the week. It's a wonderful activity for the entire family!

Give Thanks for the Sun

Praise God for the sun, time off from school, and easygoing days by visiting the Adoration chapel to say a quick prayer. Bring a journal or rosary along to help keep yourself focused. Little children can even bring a religious coloring book to give thanks to God on their terms. Or, before heading to the pool, why not attend daily Mass with the kids? It's a perfect way to start the day and set the tone that — vacation or not — God is still an important part of your family life.

Don't Take a Vacation from Mass

Often while on a vacation away from our parish family, we are not familiar with where to attend Mass. Don't let that be an obstacle for you. Check out www.masstimes.org in order to find out where and when to go to Mass. In addition, if you are lodging at a hotel, the concierge will assist you with directions to the nearest Catholic Church.

Stewardship of Treasure

The prime reason for keeping up our pledge all summer is that God doesn't go on vacation. He continues to sustain us throughout the summer months. He persists in pouring out blessings on us, even during the hottest weather. He keeps on meeting us in His sacramental presence when we go to Mass wherever we travel. As God remains faithful to us during the summer, we are called to be faithful in our commitments to Him and our parish family, even during our vacation time.

So, enjoy the warmer temperatures and the relaxed atmosphere. Just don't forget who provides the sun and the sand! And most importantly, remember to take God with you wherever you go on vacation!

Our Family Photo Album

St. Mary's Pictorial Directory

For the majority of us, our family photo albums are books that tell a story of the past. These photo albums also help us place faces to the names of those in our family tree. And as with our family photo albums, we likely also have shelves of our yearbooks from all those years of school. Indeed, many of us remember the excitement of the annual "Picture Day" at school, making sure that we were dressed to impress. Whether this day came with excitement or fear, it was a day we all remember!

But whether you loved or hated "Picture Day," its outcome – the yearbook – was an important tool that helped us to get to know our fellow classmates. It stimulated conversations, encouraged the development of friendships, and resulted in timeless memories captured in the margins as we signed our friends' yearbooks and scribbled funny messages or jokes.

Well, our parish also has a yearbook, or family album of sorts – the pictorial directory. Instead of a yearly affair, as with a school yearbook, the pictorial directory is created once every handful of years. In fact, our last pictorial directory was released in 2009. It's a monumental effort, to be sure – but it's an effort that yields results and memories, much like our school yearbooks from years past.

Remember those few unlucky students who couldn't make it for "Picture Day"? Instead of an individual photo alongside pictures of their peers, they were represented by an empty box with the words "Photo Unavailable." The best-looking and most successful yearbooks were the ones where everyone had a photo. The same is true about our parish's pictorial directory – in order for it to be successful, each registered household must participate by having their photo taken.

"I would invite and urge all families in our parish to be a part of the new directory," Fr. Jerry says. "We need every parishioner to feel that they are truly a part of our faith community."



LifeTouch Photography, the organization coordinating our pictorial directory, will be on-site at St. Mary's twice this summer to take photos of all parish families. The first visit will be from June 25 to 29, and the second will be from July 23 to 27. As was the case in 2009, all photos for the directory will be taken in the parish hall. Parishioners are encouraged to register for a photo session during one of these visits. Registration

can be done at the church office, after Mass in the narthex, or online at www.stmaryonthehill.org. Those who participate will receive a complimentary 8-by-10 photo of their family, as well as a copy of the pictorial directory. Additional photos may also be purchased.

More than just a fun exercise, the pictorial directory truly is an evangelization tool for our parish. With more than 3,000 registered families at St. Mary's, it's just about impossible for any one parishioner to know everyone else. But with a pictorial directory, we can learn some of the faces and names of other parishioners and perhaps get to know our church community a bit better.

Fr. Jerry says this feeling of community – of connectedness – is an important part of our identity as Catholics.

"As people of faith, we are called to be in communion with one another," he says. "Our identity is rooted in our shared belief in Jesus Christ as our savior. We have a very beautiful theology that sees Christ as our Head and all believers as His Body in the world. So, we are called to believe in, with, and through one another, not privately. The practical way to form this identity is by forming close personal bonds with our fellow parishioners. By forming good friendships in our faith community, our faith is formed, molded and deepened. It is my hope that the new pictorial directory will help build good friendships within our parish."

Please be sure to sign up for a photo session this summer, and be a part of this effort to build the community of St. Mary's!

St. Mary on the Hill School Commission Offers Key Support for Projects and Goals

Dr. Rhee Fincher, professor emeritus and recently retired vice dean for Academic Affairs at the Medical College of Georgia, is passionate about education and passionate about St. Mary on the Hill School.

“Our school is really a gem of the parish,” says Dr. Fincher, who currently serves as chair of the St. Mary School Commission. “Whether you have a student there or not, the school is important for all of us. The young people of our parish are very much the future of our parish and the Catholic Church.”

The St. Mary School Commission was established in August 2009 at the request of Fr. Jerry Ragan to serve as an advisory board to the pastor and the principal. Its primary purpose is to help carry out the mission of the school — giving attention to both academic and spiritual aspects of the curriculum and student life. The School Commission is composed of parents of school children, parishioners, and highly seasoned educators like Dr. Fincher. The Commission is also fortunate to have Fr. Jerry, Principal Joe McBride, and Vice-Principal Mary Beth Mitchell as fully engaged members.

Dr. Fincher emphasizes that the School Commission is not a governing body.

“Rather, it aims to serve as a source of advice and support by collecting, analyzing and understanding issues important to school leaders, families and parishioners,” Dr. Fincher says. “The Commission also attempts to serve as ambassadors of the school in the wider community by encouraging efforts to publicize timely



Dr. Rhee Fincher, current chair of the St. Mary on the Hill School Commission.

information about the many exciting things happening at St. Mary on the Hill.”

As a result, the school website has been extensively updated, students give monthly testimonies before Sunday Masses about their school experiences, and the bulletin now contains expanded information about school events and accomplishments.

Another recent example of the School Commission’s work is its effort to both help the school increase enrollment and to make Catholic education a viable option for our parishioners in Columbia County.

“We conducted a survey which revealed that transportation was a major issue preventing some families from sending their children to St. Mary,” says Dr. Fincher.

In response, the Commission offered a proposal to the Finance Committee to purchase a used school bus. The proposal was approved and our school will now offer the option for bus transportation with two stops in Columbia County in order to better

serve our parish families.

In the year ahead, the School Commission will be working to help with the quality improvement element of the school’s recent accreditation review, advising the school in engaging in a parish-wide family faith formation program soon to be introduced, and will take part in the upcoming celebration of 100 years of Catholic education on the Hill.

Those interested in learning more about the St. Mary on the Hill School Commission may contact Dr. Rhee Fincher at 706-736-5274 or Principal Joe McBride at 706-733-6193.

Seminarian Patrick May: *One of Our Own*

Some know Patrick May as the son of Pete and Patty, and as the brother of Derek and Kathleen. Others remember him as a student at both St. Mary's and Aquinas, as well as the voice of the Fighting Irish, having broadcast play-by-play action over the Internet during Aquinas' 2011 football season. Now, we are getting to know Patrick May in a whole new light as he begins a spiritual journey of discernment as a seminarian at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Maryland.

How does the idea of the priesthood first take hold? For Patrick, the call came slowly and gradually over time. He likes to describe his vocation story as having four stages — searching, conversion, encounter, and vocation. For Patrick, the “searching” phase began toward the end of high school and continued into the first few years of college — a period in which he pursued interests that distracted him from his relationship with Christ.

“I began to seek out happiness, fulfillment and joy apart from the Lord,” says Patrick. “As I pursued these different avenues, I always found them empty and leaving me unfulfilled. Exhaustion and frustration left me in a place where I found myself simply telling God, ‘I need a change.’”

God heard, and agreed. While Patrick had never left his faith, during this stage he experienced a conversion and discovered a new appreciation for the teachings of the Catholic Church. He also realized that his faith was the best avenue for change in his life, and he encountered the living God in such a way that his life would never again be the same.

Yet, Patrick felt confused. He was set to graduate from Augusta State University with a degree in political science, and he had already taken the LSAT with the intention of attending law school — but he felt a restlessness he couldn't define. Then, one evening during



Patrick May with his sister, Kathleen.

Adoration, God spoke directly to his heart saying, “You are exactly where you are supposed to be.”

“I knew then that my home would forever be with Christ in His Holy Catholic Church,” says Patrick. “I had to reevaluate everything — ambition, friendship, goals and desires. This turning of my life over to His will allowed for Him to clearly reveal the path He had been preparing for me my whole life, my vocation.”

Now that Patrick was discerning a call to the priesthood, he wasn't exactly sure how to proceed — he only had some vague expectations about the seminary. But the spiritual guidance, advice and personal experiences of both Fr. Scott Winchell and Fr. Jason

Adams helped break down the walls that were holding Patrick back, and he submitted his official application to the vocations office.

“We were surprised when he told us, especially because the priesthood was never what we had imagined in life for our son,” says his mother, Patty. “But once we visited the seminary, and understood that discernment is a process — an openness to decide to stay or to go — we have been totally at peace. As parents, we just want our children to be happy, and Patrick is happy.”

Patrick is currently finishing his first year of pre-theology. Reflecting upon the direction his life has taken, Patrick says it was all possible due to the love and support of his parents and the fact that grew up within the midst of a strong Catholic community.

“My parents have been great examples to my siblings and myself in living the joy of the Christian life,” Patrick says. “And yes, I consider myself very fortunate to have been able to attend both St. Mary's and Aquinas. Looking back, I am able to appreciate it more every day. I know my life would not be the same today if I hadn't had this education in faith and hadn't been a part of a community of Catholics.”

The Church, a Universal Family

Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul

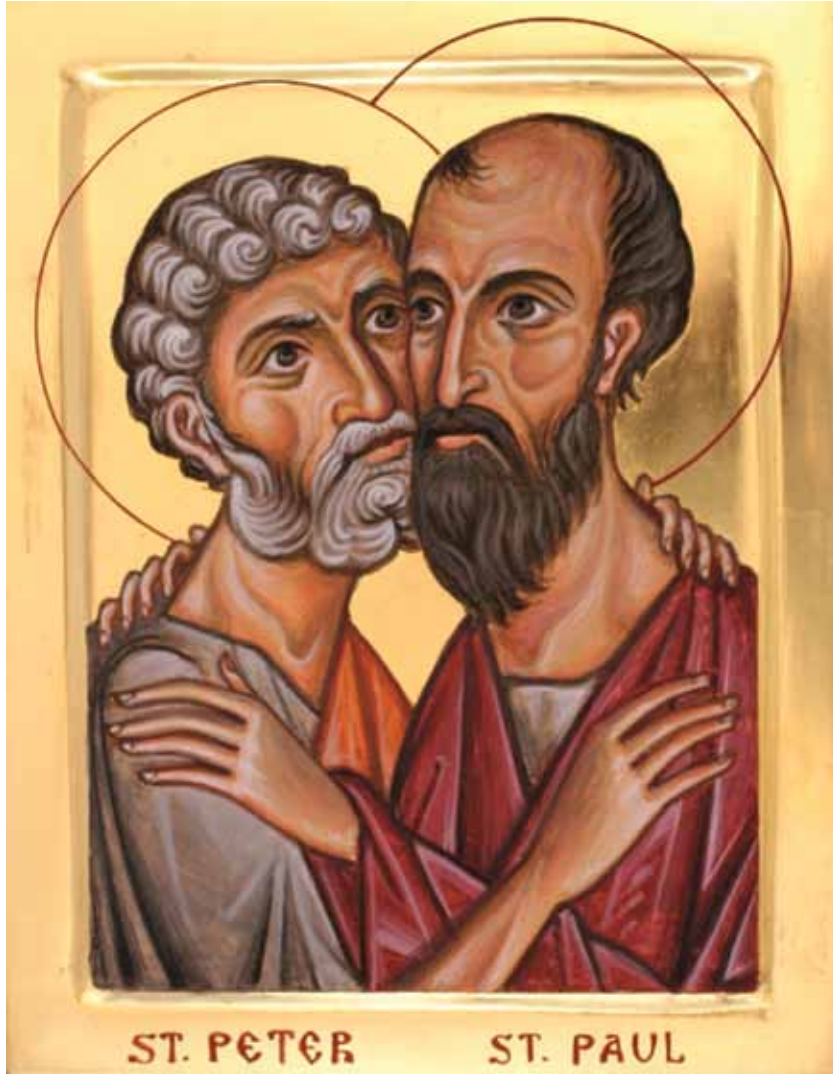
On June 29, Catholics celebrate the feast of two of our Lord's principal Apostles, foundational human cornerstones of the Church of Rome.

The first missal reading of this feast day tells us of the miraculous deliverance of Peter from prison. This illustrates the concrete fact that despite persecutions, Christ and His chosen followers will be triumphant in this world, and in the world to come.

The second is of Paul summarizing his own "pouring out" of his life as a libation. The way in which he poured it out is overwhelmingly significant — he gave his life as a missionary to gather all nations into God's unified Kingdom.

The Holy Gospel recounts Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah. After this confession, the "keys of the kingdom" were conferred onto him. These "keys" became the fundamental building block supporting the ordained priesthood and episcopal government of the Church.

In his homily on June 29, 2005, Pope Benedict XVI shared: "The Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul is at the same time a grateful memorial of the great witness of Jesus Christ and a solemn confession for the Church — one, holy, Catholic and apostolic. It is first



and foremost a feast of Catholicity."

The celebration of our catholicity is a celebration of our unity in Christ. This unity endures unto the end, as our strength and fortress in the face of evil and the trials of earthly life.

Sts. Peter and Paul remind us that our faith is founded on something much higher than ourselves, on an entity which raises horizons beyond our human frailties and imaginings. Our holy faith is founded upon the rock, Jesus Christ.

Our Holy Father eloquently describes further: "When Peter and Paul came to Rome, the Lord on the Cross who had uttered the first line

of that Psalm was risen; God's victory now had to be proclaimed to all the nations..."

As children of Holy Mother the Church, let us embrace all of the graces which these beloved saints have won for us. Let us imitate their example, and so follow Christ with unwavering resolution. As did the Blessed Virgin, let us persevere in serving the one holy, Catholic, and apostolic church in all that we say and do.

Reflections on the Sacrament of Marriage *continued from front cover*

unselfishly, and then teach their children to do so, as well. Christian marriage in particular is a “great mystery,” a sign of the love between Christ and his Church (Eph 5:32).

Some of our very best stewardship efforts at St. Mary on the Hill are geared towards preparing couples to celebrate the beautiful Sacrament of Matrimony. Mike and Sarah O’Neill serve in our Marriage Prep program, and Jim and Lorena Smith serve in our Preparing to Live in Love program — both couples do outstanding work in coordinating all our married couples who are presenters or mentors for these programs. If you know a couple who is moving towards an engagement announcement, please encourage them to contact the parish as soon as possible and make an appointment to talk with one of the parish priests, deacons or Martha Kearns, who is responsible for coordinating our Marriage Preparation programs. Both Martha and Deacon Ken Maleck are very good at explaining the process of marriage preparation and the various programs that are offered. And if you were married in a civil ceremony, but for whatever reason never had your

marriage recognized as being a sacrament that is blessed by the Church, please talk to me about it. Finally, if you are looking for a great resource to enrich your own sacramental marriage, our bishops have a great website at ForYourMarriage.org.

On another important note, Vacation Bible School is around the corner. In order to make this amazing event happen, we need many helping hands. If you would like to volunteer for the whole week or just for one day, we would love to have you serve with us. Please contact Joan Purucker at stmarysccd@hotmail.com or call the parish office at 706-733-6627. You do need to have taken our child protection course — VIRTUS — in order to qualify for this great stewardship opportunity.

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

Ad Placement



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