

# Saint Mary

ON THE HILL  
CATHOLIC CHURCH



*News and Notes from Fr. Jerry*

## The Importance of Gratitude

Dear Parishioners,

**T**he pastoral focus for our faith community at the present time is “Gratitude: the Heart of Discipleship.” I think the primary reason that our parish leadership choose to focus on our sense of gratitude is because you really can’t move forward as good stewards without a deep, deep sense that all is gift. Gratitude, they say, is the mother of faith. I think it’s true. A grateful heart can see the generous goodness of God and can know joy. I think gratitude creates a radical openness. It leads me to embrace life, to cherish life, to transform life. I am grateful, deeply grateful, for gratitude. Gratitude leads to giving. Gratitude leads to God.

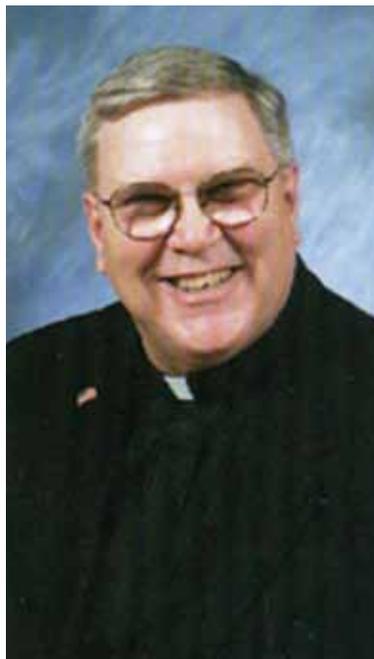
In this Year of the Priest, I am deeply grateful for a share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Some say that this is a difficult time to be a parish priest. No doubt about it! We

live in a secularist culture that can’t see the awesomeness of Jesus Christ and a consumerist culture that seems

to value stuff over the sacredness of life and love. To make matters worse, we have witnessed horrible scandals perpetrated by priests and bishops. And we are beginning to see that the declining number of priests is presenting challenges unimagined several years ago. Obstacles and struggles abound.

My response, however, when someone comments on how hard we have it is: “Don’t cry for me – there is

no need for a pity party.” We parish priests have the privilege of living in daily dialogue with life and death and God. It is a privilege worth everything. I am always humbled and ever so grateful for your openness in allowing me to enter your lives and share with you the spiritual intimacy of a God who was willing to die for love of us.



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## “Breaking the Fast” with Jesus

For the past five years, a group of parishioners has met each Wednesday during the school year for spiritual and bodily nourishment. The group, which calls itself the Wednesday Breakfast Club, is comprised of several St. Mary’s families who attend 7 a.m. Mass on Wednesdays and then stay afterwards to enjoy hot donuts and biscuits in the Parish Hall.

Parishioners Gene McManus and Michael Lamers are credited with starting the weekly get-together. The two men came up with the idea as a way to encourage their children to attend morning Mass with them.

“I was trying to get my kids to come to morning Mass with me, so I told them I’d get them a Popeye’s biscuit afterwards if they came,” laughs Gene.

After starting this tradition in his own family, Gene noticed that Michael had also begun attending Wednesday morning Mass with a few of his daughters. Gene invited Michael and his girls to Popeye’s, and it wasn’t long before the two moved the gathering to the Parish Hall and began inviting other families to attend Mass and enjoy a biscuit afterwards with them.

“What started out as a couple of us has grown to 10 or 12 adults and upwards of 25 kids,” says Gene.

While the men enjoy the social aspect of the weekly gathering, both acknowledge that the real benefit of the Wednesday Breakfast Club is the spiritual nourishment they receive during Mass.

“It’s made me love the Eucharist even more,” says Michael. “We’re nourished by His body every time we receive; it changes us from the inside out.”

Gene agrees: “My relationship with God has improved,” he says. “I like contemplative time, and this is a great way to start the day.”

Often, our priests will stop by the Parish Hall and enjoy a donut or biscuit with the adults and children. The social component of this gathering has helped several parish families feel even more connected to our community and our clergy.



*“We are forming deeper relationships and friendships with people who share the same love for the Mass.”*

*– Gene McManus, parishioner*

“It has made me realize the kind of special people we have at St. Mary’s,” says Gene. “We are forming deeper relationships and friendships with people who share the same love for the Mass.”

After breakfast, when the weather permits, Gene and other parents of St. Mary’s School students will often walk their children up Monte Sano Ave. to school.

“Hopefully, our kids are going to look back at this time and say, ‘That was cool,’” says Gene. “When they are in college or adults and they are struggling, they’ll look back and remember.”

Gene’s words illustrate the importance of developing strong Catholic traditions in the family. Children depend upon the example of their parents to learn about the Faith and the important place it should hold in their lives and hearts. By bringing our children to morning Mass, we show them how wonderful it can be to start off the day worshipping the Lord and receiving His grace through the gift of the Eucharist.

“Come join us for the most amazing thing you could do all week: receiving our Lord and building fellowship and community with others in the parish,” says Michael.

# Stewardship of the Cross

The liturgical year is such a gift to us! As we turn the pages of the calendar, reflecting on the life of Christ, we have the opportunity to consider the most sublime events in the history of mankind. Of these events, perhaps none is more beautiful and worthy of contemplation than the one we are about to commemorate: Jesus' sacrifice of Himself for us on the Cross.

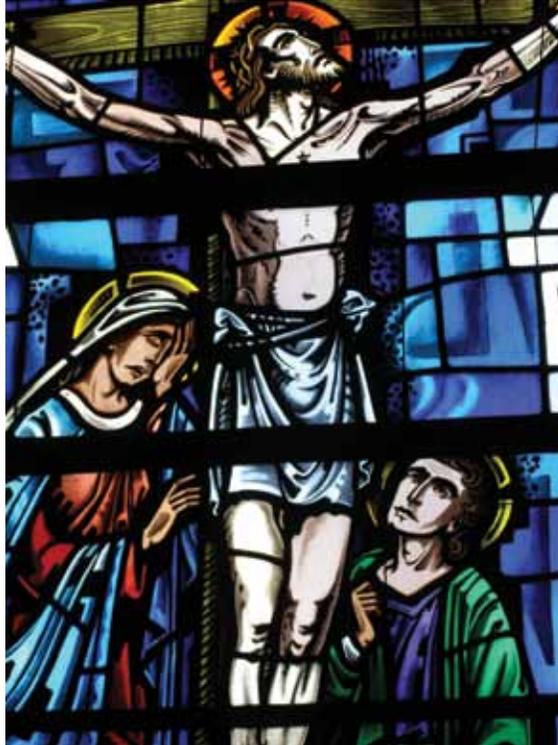
It is fitting and at the same time paradoxical — fitting that God should die for our sins because only an infinite God could rid us of the infinite debt we owed by our sin; paradoxical that He not only died for us, but wanted to die out of pure love for us, His lowly creatures. What is Jesus trying to show us by this? Even more staggering, what is He really asking when He exhorts us, in turn, to take up our cross and follow Him?

Jesus gave His life for the Church and gave it freely, and He calls us to do the same. While some of us may in fact give our entire lives to the Church, for most of us, this giving takes place by a series of daily actions, both large and small, of Christ-like, sacrificial love — specifically, by giving our time, talent, and treasure for the good of the Church. And yet, by joining these actions with His and our hearts with His Heart, we have the chance to participate in that very same sacrifice. This month, let us take the time to examine our hearts and actions in light of Jesus' as we journey with Him toward the Cross:

Jesus gave Himself unselfishly and excessively. Consider the manner of His sacrifice. One drop of Christ's blood would have been more than sufficient to save the entire human race, and yet Our Lord Jesus chose to shed every last bit. From start to finish, Jesus showed us by His passion that He wanted to do more than what was merely sufficient. If there was more He

could give, He gave it. He never stopped to count the cost or to look for what He could get in return.

Jesus made His sacrifice the supreme act of love for the Church. Counter-cultural even to this day, Jesus actually upheld sacrifice as desirable — as the most perfect way to show our love: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:13). In His infinite wisdom, Jesus now offers this path to us as the way to holiness: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk. 9:23).



Jesus gave Himself willingly and even joyfully. "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it again" (Jn. 10:18). At the first Eucharist, Jesus even went so far as to say, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you"

(Lk. 22:15). Needless to say, the Passover sacrifice to which Jesus referred was not a symbolic one, but was in fact His very Body and Blood He would give for us through the sacrifice of the Cross.

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts more like unto Yours.

## *A Lenten Stewardship Prayer*

*"O my God, teach me to be generous:  
to serve You as You deserve to be served;  
to give without counting the cost;  
to fight without fear of being wounded;  
to work without seeking rest;  
and to spend myself without expecting any reward,  
but the knowledge that I am doing your Holy will."*

*-St. Ignatius of Loyola*

# Keeping Our Eyes Fixed On Jesus

## *Annual Lenten Mission*

**W**e've all heard the expression, "Keep your eyes on the prize." For Christians, the ultimate "prize" in life is Jesus. As we venture through life, it is imperative that we keep our focus on Christ and His will for our lives. However, the day-to-day activities and responsibilities can make this seem all but impossible.

Recognizing this struggle, St. Mary's is offering parishioners an opportunity to step away from daily life and enter into prayer and spiritual renewal during our Lenten Mission, March 8, 9 and 10. The retreat will focus on the theme "Eyes Fixed on Jesus: His Birth, Death and Resurrection." Over the course of the mission, participants will explore what Jesus has done for humanity, ponder how His message can transform our lives, and learn how we can "put on Christ" here and now.

"We need to take time to ponder how Christ can have more of a personal impact on us, and help us live more fully and fruitfully," says Fr. Mike Smith, who will facilitate the mission. "He didn't just come for rules and regulations, but to love us."

Fr. Mike is a native of Augusta and graduate of the University of Notre Dame and St. Bernard Seminary. After being ordained at St. Mary on the Hill in 1966, Fr. Mike has served in diocesan Christian formation programs as well as in various parishes throughout the diocese. He is now retired and lives in Statesboro.

Fr. Mike will begin the mission by preaching at the weekend Masses on March 6-7. Then, on Monday through Wednesday evenings, he will expound upon the mission's theme, breaking the focus into a series

of presentations. Monday night's presentation is titled "Eyes Fixed on Jesus: His Birth; Our Call to Acceptance." Participants will also have the opportunity to pray the Rosary as well as sing a selection of sacred hymns.

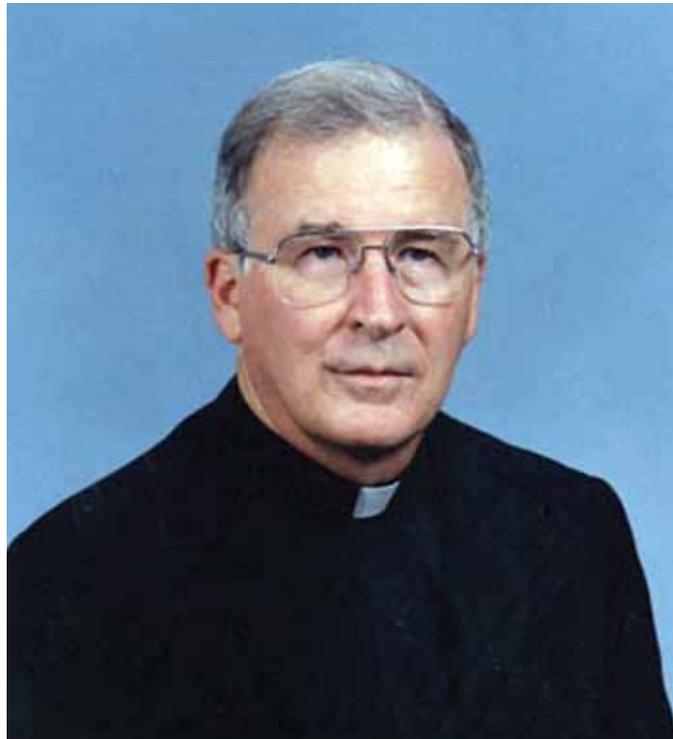
Tuesday evening's theme – "Eyes Fixed on Jesus: His Suffering and Death; Our Call to Sacrifice" – will focus on the cross. Congregational singing will also take place, as will opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

"Eyes Fixed on Jesus: His Rising to Glory; Our Call to Trust and Abandonment" is the theme for Wednesday evening. During his presentation, Fr. Mike will invite participants to focus on Jesus Glorified as well as sing a series of meditative Paschal hymns.

The Church encourages all Catholics to spend extra time in prayer during the season of Lent. While we should always set aside time in our day to talk with God,

events such as the Lenten Mission allow parishioners to join with their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ for communal prayer and faith education. Fr. Mike's mission will lead participants to better understand Christ's sacrifice on the cross – which was given freely, and on our behalf.

All parishioners are encouraged to attend this year's Lenten Mission. Consider the opportunity a gift from God to His faithful, and attend the nightly sessions with a heart open and receptive to God's touch and direction. Join with your fellow parishioners and develop a deeper spiritual life together. Begin Lent 2010 with your eyes fixed firmly on the prize: Jesus!



*Fr. Mike Smith*

# Noteworthy Achievements at St. Mary's School



*Mrs. Watwood sent five eighth-grade teams to the Future City Competition this year.*



*(l to r) Campbell Scott, Skylar Robinson and Aaron Wallace won second place in the Future City competition for their model, Water Drop City.*



*Current members of St. Mary's Beta Club, an organization that recognizes students for academic achievement.*



*Mrs. Fain poses with the winners of this year's Geography Bee: (l to r) Olivia Ramage (2nd place), Kelsey Kohler (3rd place) and Juan Migone (1st place)*



*Students donated more than \$2,100 to the people suffering from the earthquake in Haiti.*



*This year's new Beta Club inductees were recognized during Catholic Schools Week.*

# Consolation Ministry

## *Supporting Parishioners in Times of Need*

**W**hen parishioner Barbara Kareis' mother-in-law died nearly 10 years ago, she was overcome with sadness at her passing. The two had a close relationship, and Barbara needed time to grieve. The last thing she wanted to do was focus upon the funeral arrangements. Luckily, the funeral home assisted with the arrangements, making the process quick and painless.

"It was so nice to have someone walk us through the process," says Barbara.

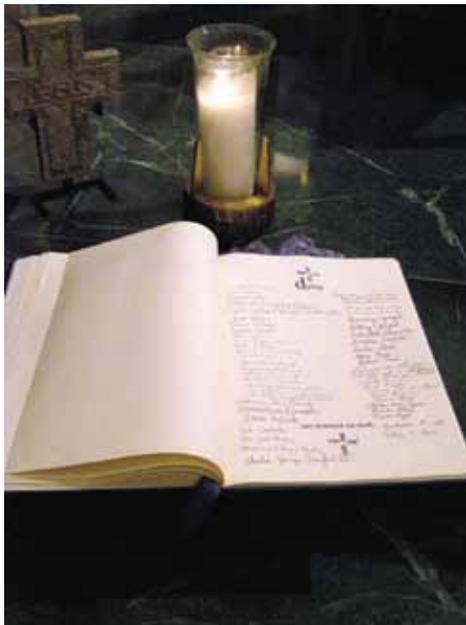
Barbara's positive experience at the funeral home ultimately led her to join the Consolation Ministry at St. Mary's – a multi-faceted network of support ministries, including a funeral support service. In general, the ministry reaches out to parishioners in times of need, such as after the death of a family member or the baptism of an infant. Several ministries operate under the Consolation Ministry umbrella, including the Apron Ministry, the Bereavement Basket Ministry, the Elizabeth Ministry, Forward in Faith, and the Parish Visitation Team.

As a trained Consolation Minister, Barbara's involvement in the ministry is primarily focused on helping families who are coping with the loss of a loved one. She assists families in planning funerals, which can be a complicated process.

"A lot of planning goes into a funeral," she says. "Families can pick out special prayers and music for the Mass, which can make the funeral more personal."

As someone who has felt the comfort of a trusted friend during times of pain and sorrow, Barbara appreciates being able to support those in our parish who are experiencing a loss. While her service definitely blesses grieving families, Barbara finds the Consolation Ministry to also be personally rewarding.

"God has been so good to me," says Barbara. "Through this ministry, He's helped me realize that I'm stronger than I thought. It can be tough to talk with people about funerals, but God has made me compassionate and allowed me to serve the community in this way."



In addition to helping with funeral arrangements, the Consolation Ministry offers many other volunteer opportunities for parishioners of varying ages and commitment levels. For example, members of the Apron Ministry assist the bereaved by setting up, serving and taking down from funeral luncheons. For those with greater time constraints, the Bereavement Basket Ministry may be a better fit. The members of this group prepare baskets with delicious breakfast foods to be delivered to grieving families on the morning of a funeral.

Through Forward in Faith, the Consolation Ministry provides support for those who have experienced

the death of a spouse. This group of widows and widowers meets monthly for social outings at local restaurants and members' homes. Parents of childbearing years receive support and Christian encouragement at the hands of the Elizabeth Ministry. This group sends cards to families of newly-baptized children as well as support to those who've lost a child.

Parishioners can also contribute to the Consolation Ministry as a member of the Parish Visitation Team. The members of this group visit homebound parishioners, sharing with them the love of Christ, the Word of God and the Eucharist.

If you are searching for a way to become an active member of St. Mary's, consider joining the Consolation Ministry in some fashion. If you are in need of the Consolation Ministry's support, please contact the parish office at 706-733-6627 for further assistance.

## Gratitude *continued from front cover*

As we journey through Lent and come to a deeper appreciation of the Pascal Mystery during our parish mission (March 8-10), I look forward to participating in the Liturgies of Holy Week. These are our most important liturgies of the entire year, and I encourage you to make every effort to be a part of them. One of my great joys as a priest is to celebrate the Easter Vigil at which we welcome through the Sacraments of Initiation the new members of our faith community. This year I am grateful that we have a good number of people who are going to be received into the Church. I hope you will join me in this celebration with grateful hearts.

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

### It's Not Too Late!!

There is still time to register for the Alpine Europe vacation, Sept. 27-Oct. 7, 2010. Participants will visit Heidelberg, Rhine Valley, Rothenburg, Munich, Salzburg, Innsbruck, and Lucerne as well as attend *The Passion Play Of Oberammergau*.

The trip will be hosted by Fr Jerry Ragan.

The cost for the 11-day trip is \$3,699 per person, which includes: round trip airfare from Atlanta, accommodations (double room) at First Class & Select hotels, private homes and pensions to be used in Oberammergau, admission tickets to *The Passion Play of Oberammergau*, most meals, services of professional tour director, comprehensive sightseeing throughout, all service charges and local hotel taxes, flight insurance

Brochures are available in the Narthex. For more information call the Church Office at 706-733-6627.

# Ad Placement

# Saint Mary

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### *Recent Gifts to St. Mary on the Hill*

#### St. Mary on the Hill Leave a Legacy Program

##### **Pew Plaque**

The Family of J.W. Purcell  
Elizabeth L. Spears  
*In Memory of Steven Boskovich*

#### St. Mary on the Hill Church

Mr. and Mrs. L.A. Ferrante  
Wayne and Dena Griffin  
Edwin Kleskie  
Chris and Susan Bowles  
Michael and Pia Hagler  
Steve and Alice Hagler  
Gary and Agnes Ackerman

*In honor of the Church Choir*  
Martin Jones and Clara Park

*In memory of France Franklin*  
George Franklin

*In memory of Dr. Thomas Saul*  
Jeffrey and Grace Heck

*In memory of Dr. Ed Bailey*  
Sarah Clayton

*In memory of*  
*Fred Charles Kruckow, Sr.*  
Joan Purucker

#### St. Mary on the Hill School

Mr. and Mrs. Pat Rice  
John and Marcelene Markwalter

*In memory of Dr. Ed Bailey*  
Carolyn Mulherin  
Mr. and Mrs. Bill Fair

### **Baptisms**

Miles Robinson Pond,  
*son of Brad and Amanda*

James Joseph O'Hara,  
*son of Joseph and Megan*

Daniel Lee Carter,  
*son of Daniel and Melissa*

James Patrick Kursch  
*son of Joe and Julie*

Gage Apollo Remo,  
*son of Keith and Julie*

Ethan Avery Koon,  
*son of Justin and Melissa*

John Cody Broome and  
James Ferrel Broome  
*sons of Jim and Alice*

Frances Grace Shelnutt,  
*daughter of Melanie*  
*and Jonathan*