

# Saint Mary

ON THE HILL  
CATHOLIC CHURCH



## News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

### Lent is a Time...

Dear Parishioners,

**M**aking a Lenten commitment is simple. What's hard is keeping it! The Lenten commitments we make ourselves are frequently a lot like New Year's resolutions – they sound good, but we don't get far into the new year before they've been broken and then abandoned.

If you are like me, you approached Ash Wednesday with the intention of doing better than you did last year. But as March drags on, it seems as though we'll never get to Easter. Our enthusiasm wanes, and it seems harder and harder to keep our commitment. And then we begin to wonder, "What's the point?"

Often, we realize we've already broken our commitment in some way – perhaps we decided we'd pray a decade of the Rosary every evening, but we were too tired one night or simply forgot. Maybe we slipped up and ate a cheeseburger on the first Friday in Lent, even though we know that all Fridays in Lent are days of abstinence from meat. So we conclude that we just can't keep a good Lenten commitment and just give up trying to make it a special season in any way.

If you're tempted to give up, **don't do it!** Just pick up where you left off, ask God for forgiveness, and begin again. Our Lenten commitments

should challenge us, and we can grow spiritually. We can even benefit from our failures if they help us better realize how much we need God's grace.

Lent is a time of spiritual renewal; a time to examine our personal relationship with Christ. I hope my top ten list of suggestions for Lent will help you grow closer to the Risen Lord.

**#10.** Lent is a time to pray and listen to God's Spirit. Take time to visit the Adoration Chapel. Start by thanking God for the things you are grateful in life and then be still and listen to the promptings that God has placed in your heart.

**#9.** Lent is a time to clear away the clutter. The messes in our house or workplace can reflect messiness in our heart. Put things in order and donate the things you don't need to Catholic Social Services.

**#8.** Lent is a time for developing new spiritual exercises. The best practice is daily Mass. But if that is not a possibility, think about reading the Bible or a book on spirituality everyday or make a commitment to Friday night Stations of the Cross. God uses many means to tell to us about his love for us.

**#7.** Lent is a time for making little sacrifices. Giving up small pleasures

### Lenten Events

#### Lenten Dinner and Talk Program

Wednesdays in March

- Dinner at 6 p.m. in the Parish Hall
- Talk in the Day Chapel at 7:00 p.m.

#### Stations of the Cross

Fridays in March

- Church at 7:30 p.m.

#### Lenten Mission

- Fr. Dave Arnoldt

March 5th, 6th, and 7th at 7 p.m.

#### Lenten Penance Service

March 6th at 7 p.m.

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# The Lydia Project

## Where Women Coping with Cancer are Not Alone

Just across the street from St. Mary's, in a small brick house with a purple and white sign, is a vibrant ministry which helps women such as Linda, Gert, Nancy, Amy, Virginia, and Joyce. None of these women know each other. They attend different churches. They live in different areas. They are different ages and come from different ethnic backgrounds. And yet, through the services provided by The Lydia Project, these women are united as they face the treatments and challenges of cancer.

The Lydia Project began in 2003 in Augusta as a non-profit charity with the purpose of providing free services to women facing any type of cancer anywhere in the world. Taking inspiration from Lydia, a woman mentioned briefly in Acts 16:14-15 who traded in purple cloth and used her gifts to help others, the Project's mission is to ensure that any woman coping with cancer is not alone. All the services are free due to the support of local businesses, organizations and churches like St. Mary's which contribute both financially and by way of the many parishioners who volunteer of their time and talent.

Of course, Lydia is very often identified by their Tote Program in which purple-handled totes are given out to women with cancer. Hand stitched by volunteers, the totes contain educational information (a pamphlet describing The Lydia Project), encouragement (a scripture passage, inspirational messages), and personal care items (package of tissues, pens, hand lotion, journal). Last year alone over 6,311 totes were distributed.

"Working at Lydia showed me how many people don't have those basic, simple comforts of life," explains Cay Hickey, St. Mary parishioner and Lydia volunteer who helps with fundraising. "Some go through chemo and radiation not having an extra blanket or hat. Some are out of a job and don't have anywhere to turn. Something like the tote is a start and lets them know that there is help."

But the tote is just one of the many wonderful services provided by Lydia. What many in the community may not realize is that The Lydia Project has an Emergency Relief Services Program which provides rent, utility, and prescription assistance to women who are financially burdened. Coping with rising medical costs, or



*Parishioner Theresa Heffernan (left) reviewing prayer requests with Lydia Outreach Coordinator Pamela Dean*

worrying about past-due rent and/or utility bills can add undo stress, which ultimately can affect their health at a vulnerable time when they need to focus on getting well.

"Many of the women referred to Lydia do not have a network of support, and coping with a life threatening illness alone lends to depression," explains Michele Canchola, Executive Director. "But just having the extra support Lydia gives makes an impacting difference in a patients' care."

Equally important for women battling cancer is the emotional support provided by the Lydia Outreach Program. Volunteers respond to any requests or referrals which come by telephone or e-mail, or through hospitals, church groups, physicians, or the Project Web site. There is also a network of volunteers who write monthly notes to the women, as well as volunteers who make hospital or home visits.

Prayer is the foundation of The Lydia Project, and through their Prayer Program volunteers meet weekly at the agency to pray and distribute prayer lists of intentions sent to them by the women coping with cancer or by their families. All requests are lifted in prayer the week they are received.

"I am always humbled how many women with cancer send in a prayer request for someone other than themselves," explains Theresa Heffernan, parishioner and Lydia volunteer. "So often we get requests to pray for husbands or young children. Yes, some requests are

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# The Newcomers Ministry

## Reaching Out to Our Newest Parish Members

Sometimes, a simple phone call can make all the difference in the world.

In the spirit of Christ, who said, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt. 25:35), members of the Newcomers Ministry personally call and welcome to the parish anyone who is newly registered; in a sense, ministry members represent our parish family and reaffirm the sense of community that St. Mary’s offers.

Parishioner and ministry coordinator Ashley Cashin explains that the ministry is set up to reach out to newcomers as they make the transition into the parish. Using a list of names provided by the parish office, Ashley then divides the list among ministry members who will then call the newcomers.

“Not only do we try and extend a welcome, but we also try to be their point of reference,” she explains. “We try to answer any questions they may have about St. Mary’s, or about the school; we give them ideas on parish involvement; and if they are interested in a specific ministry, we point them in the right direction by giving them contact information for the ministry coordinator.”

In the past, the ministry has also hosted coffee and donuts after Mass for newcomers, and while some have attended, others are a little hesitant or shy about standing out or being the center of attention. Ashley says the key is to make a newcomer feel welcome without mak-



*Meet and Greet sponsored by the St. Mary’s Newcomers Ministry in the Parish Hall*

ing them uncomfortable; as a result, there are plans to try some different ways to help newcomers feel part of the parish family such as providing them with tickets to a Pancake Breakfast.

In the meantime, as simple as it sounds, a phone call does wonders. It’s personal, it’s welcoming, and it really does make a difference in helping a person feel connected to the parish community.

“People are so appreciative that we’ve reached out to them,” Ashley says. “They are touched that we’ve taken the time to call; it may seem like such an easy thing, but that phone call goes a long way in welcoming a person to St. Mary’s and introducing them to parish life.”

## The Lydia Project continued from previous page

sad, such as when a cancer returns, but so many are life-affirming and bear witness to the strong faith women have.”

In 2011, volunteers contributed over 28,000 hours of their time. Whether by sewing totes, making hospital visits, writing notes or organizing a fundraiser, there are many different ways to volunteer at Lydia and volunteers can do as little or as much as they can fit into their schedule. Some, like Theresa, work in the Outreach Program and pray, write notes, and visit the sick; others, like Cay, work tirelessly to promote Lydia in the community through promotions and events.

And then there are the young people who, amazingly, contribute a large number of volunteer hours. St. Mary’s youth have been earning service hours at Lydia for the past several years – often returning to volunteer even after their hours are fulfilled – and high school students and Augusta State University interns appreciate the opportunity to serve women in this special way.

“Working at Lydia, in that environment, allows me to see all the good that they do,” says Taylor Ingram, parishioner and ASU student. “It’s such a spiritual environment, and being with those special women reminds me how in working together we can glorify God.”

# Bonding Irish-Americans *The Ancient Order*



Since 1836, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) has united Irish-American Catholics under the organization's founding principles of "Friendship, Unity, and Christian Charity." And for the past decade, the AOH and the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians (LAOH) have enjoyed a strong presence in the CSRA, thanks to the hard work of some enterprising Catholics who founded chapters right here in Augusta.

"I started it in Augusta with about four other people at the request of Fr. Ragan, probably 10 years ago," says Dee Ramp, Georgia State LAOH President and founding member of the Richmond I Division. "They had them all over the South, but we didn't have one in Augusta. It just sounded like so much fun, and it also sounded like it was something the Church needed."

The Richmond I chapters of the AOH and LAOH stay true to their founding principal of Christian Charity by coordinating many outreach efforts to assist those in the greater Augusta community and beyond. They organize food drives to assist Catholic Social Services in its local efforts, and they also contribute to the national Catholic Social Services St. Patrick Fund. They provide funds for seminarians who are discerning religious life, and they assist local Catholic schools with needed items and supplies, such as the recent purchase of a defibrillator for Aquinas High School. The two groups recently combined their efforts to coordinate a Catholics Come Home initiative on the front lawn of St. Mary's Church as part of the Monte Sano Avenue First Thursday festivities.

"We had a video out there that we showed, we had some booths, and we had Irish stew, soft drinks, and other Irish food courtesy of the LAOH," says Jerry Vincent, President of the AOH Richmond I Division. "We actually had three people that had been Catholic and left the Church, and after talking to them and talking to a priest, they came back to the Church. In fact, one of them has been pretty active in daily Mass and other ministries, so we felt pretty good about that."

The AOH and LAOH also emphasize the importance of youth outreach. The LAOH facilitates a Junior LAOH organization that gives girls opportunities to serve the community and learn about Irish customs and traditions, and sponsors scholarships and aca-

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*- Jerry Vincent*



# in Service and Fellowship er of Hibernians

ademic competitions. They provided relief for victims of last year's Alabama tornadoes, and they sponsored a young girl who wanted to attend a diocesan summer camp outside of Macon last summer. The AOH even recently hosted a youth Irish basketball team that flew over to tour the Southeast, receive instruction and competition against local teams, and attend a Charlotte Bobcats game.

"We sponsored a group of high school basketball players from Limerick, Ireland, and there were 11 boys and three coaches," Jerry says. "We hosted them for a lunch and took them over for the ASU women's and men's basketball games. They were able to meet some of the players, and their coaches interacted with the coaches there.

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We have even thought of a scenario where a team from Ireland would come here, and then the next year we would take a team over there to play, kind of like an exchange program."

In addition to their extensive charitable work, the AOH and LAOH facilitate a number of social activities for their members, centered on celebrating Irish culture and learning more about their Irish heritage. They sponsor a float at the annual St. Patrick's Day parade, and they participate in an annual memorial service for Dennis Cahill, a local Irish immigrant who drowned while attempting to save a young girl who had fallen in the Augusta Canal. Perhaps their biggest annual

event, however, is the "Evening in Ireland," a celebration of Irish culture that brings together Irish-American Catholics in fellowship while raising money for some great causes.

"We sell ads in the 'Evening in Ireland' book, and we've sold over \$10,000 worth of ads," Dee says. "We hire Irish Dancers, a piper, a professional band, and it's a one-night event and that brings in a lot of people. That money goes to all the local charities we support, and the LAOH and AOH both work together on that program."

The only requirements for membership in the AOH or LAOH are that one is of Irish heritage and a practicing Catholic in good standing with the Church. Anyone who is interested in participating in fun and educational activities while simultaneously serving the community is welcome and encouraged to become involved with one of these organizations.

For more information on the AOH or LAOH, please contact Jerry Vincent at 706-860-5115, or Dee Ramp at 706-955-6574.



# Lent and Stewardship of the Cross



## 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*

**T**he 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 do it because only an infinite God could rid us of the infinite debt we owed by our sin; paradoxical that He not only did it, but wanted to do it 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 for 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 a 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 Yours.

## Lent is a time... *continued from front cover*

toughens us up for bigger struggles later. So skip dessert. Give up the beer or candy. Spend less time online. You'll find you have more strength to break bad habits or take on new, good ones.

**#6.** Lent is a time to wake up to life. So, fast from TV or mindless surfing on the computer. Stop vegging out in front of the screen. I promise you will really not miss much.

**#5.** Lent is time to realize a communion of Saints surrounds us. Learn about your patron saint. Pray through the intercession of your patron saint, who will help you through the stormy times of life.

**#4.** Lent is a great time to fast from gossip. It's easy to spread information about others that makes them look bad. For the next 40 days avoid listening to gossip and refuse to pass it on.

**#3.** Lent is a time to be aware of how terribly materialistic we are. So, try spending less money. Buy only the essentials during Lent and give the savings to the poor.

**#2.** Lent is a time for reconciliation. So, prepare for the Sacrament of Confession (our Lenten Penance Service will be on March 6th) by approaching someone you have hurt and asking them to forgive you. The basic gospel call is for us to love one another.

**#1.** My number one Lenten suggestion is to carry someone's cross. Just as Simon the Cyrenean helped Jesus carry his cross, offer to help a neighbor, family member, or co-worker with a problem they are struggling with. If such an offer doesn't lead to deeper into the mystery of God's love, little else will.

Those are my suggestions. No doubt your own reflections will lead you to others. No matter what you decide on, I pray for us all. This Lent may we allow the Lord's Spirit to move within our hearts and change them according to His will. Amen! Amen!

God bless you,

Fr. Jerry

# Ad Placement

# Saint Mary ON THE HILL

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## SAVE THE DATE

**20th Annual Msgr. P. James Costigan  
St. Mary on the Hill School Endowment  
Golf Tournament**

**Friday, April 20, 2012**

