

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL
CATHOLIC CHURCH

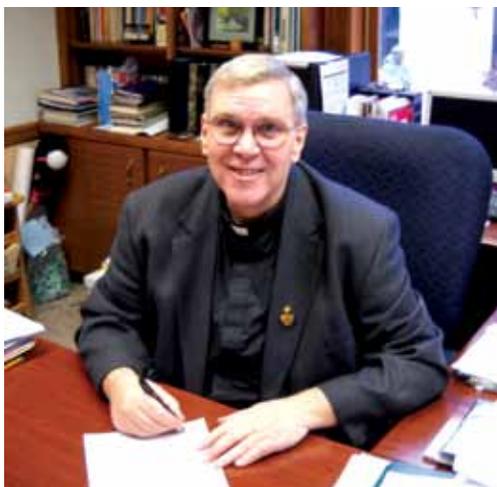


News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

Adopting an Attitude of Gratitude

Dear Parishioners,

Our pastoral focus this year has been gratitude, “the heart of discipleship.” It is my belief that stewardship leads to a deep sense of discipleship. But stewardship is impossible without gratitude, and gratitude is an attitude to have toward all of life. It is a stance we take through the difficult seasons of life as well as the good times. Some go through life feeling like victims, while others go through life with similar experiences, but feel like beneficiaries. The key difference is our perspective.



due? So often in life, the greatest blessings seem to come to those who have the greatest capacity for gratitude.

One of the important dynamics of an attitude of thanksgiving is a quality of awareness – an awareness of goodness all around us. So often it isn’t until we have matured enough in certain areas of our life that we can look back and see, for perhaps the first time, the special care and goodness we have received. A grateful heart not only has that quality of awareness of being blessed, but also the motivation

to reach out and be a blessing to others. We determine how we respond to life. We decide whether what happens to us is a blessing or a curse, a problem or an opportunity, a threat or a promise. We cannot always determine what life experiences we will have, but we can choose our response to them. But gratitude is not simply an emotional response; it is a choice we make. We choose to be grateful, or we choose to be ungrateful and take gifts for granted. We say that all good things come from God. So, why do we so often fail to give thanks where thanks is

The poet Edwin Arlington Robinson once said, “There are two kinds of gratitude. One is the kind we feel for what we have received, and the other is what we feel for what we can give.” There are few experiences in life more satisfying than to be able to bestow a gift or blessing on someone or to be able to reach out and touch another life in a special way.

With that thought, I come to those areas of my life for which I am most grateful. Of course I’m grateful for my

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Family Planning From a Catholic Perspective

After giving birth to three girls in just a few years, Rebecca and Mike Grady wanted desperately to wait a bit before having another child. What family planning options did the Church give them?

The couple knew the Church's stance on artificial birth control: it was out of the question. So, they sought out other ways to morally space their children.

"I was willing to do whatever it took," Rebecca says. "I wanted to wait a while before having another, and if that meant we had to do something that entailed more than taking a pill, out of obedience to the Church, I would do that."

That's when Rebecca stumbled upon what she now refers to as "the beautiful practice of Natural Family Planning."

Through Natural Family Planning (NFP), couples are able to work toward achieving or avoiding pregnancy by observing and respecting the natural signs and symptoms of a woman's fertility cycle. The couple must be attentive to the woman's cycle throughout the month, and then choose to enter into or abstain from the marital act when the signs indicate fertility.

After practicing NFP, Rebecca and Mike have found it to be so much more than a useful family planning technique.

"NFP has really been an incredible blessing in our marriage," Rebecca says. "It has strengthened our marriage in ways I cannot even explain. It has been wonderful for our communication as a couple, for our appreciation for the gift of our children, and in strengthening our faith in God."

This isn't to say that NFP has always been easy for the Gradys.

"NFP is a very challenging process, but it is well worth the struggle," Rebecca says. "The benefits far outweigh the difficulty that comes along with the practice. It was very difficult for us in the early stages of learning, but as we grew in our understanding of

fertility, our appreciation for the wisdom and beauty of this practice grew. We have become conscious of the awesome power we have as a couple to participate in creation! It is an awesome responsibility to say 'yes' or 'no' to that gift."

The Church teaches that there are two dimensions or intended purposes to every act of marital intercourse. Each act must be both unitive and procreative, uniting the couple deeper in the bond of married love as well as being open to the possibility of new life.

"We are to be expressing God-like love in marriage," Rebecca explains. "And God-like love is total, self-sacrificing, personal, unconditional, faithful, and fruitful."

Couples who practice Natural Family Planning experience these elements of marriage whether or not they are trying to conceive.

The Church also approves of this method of family planning. In its document *Standards for Diocesan Natural Family Planning Ministry*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops writes: "NFP reflects the dignity of the human person within the context of marriage and family life, promotes openness to life, and recognizes the value of the child. By respecting the love-giving and life-giving natures of marriage, NFP can enrich the bond between husband and wife."

Married couples searching for family planning practices are encouraged to practice NFP. There are multiple methods for monitoring a woman's fertility cycle. One method, the Creighton Model, is highly effective for couples striving to achieve or avoid pregnancy. Rebecca teaches introductory classes on the Creighton Method at Trinity Hospital throughout the year, followed by one-on-one sessions thereafter.

"We are here to help you, and we want to help you," says Rebecca, who has served as a Creighton Model instructor for nine years.

For more information, contact Rebecca at 706-736-0912. For general information about NFP, visit www.usccb.org/nfp.



The Bible

Textbook of Stewardship

Have you ever wished life came with an instruction manual? What a valuable resource that would be! Whenever you find yourself running in circles, this instruction manual would give you step-by-step instructions on how to fix the problem and reroute your course.

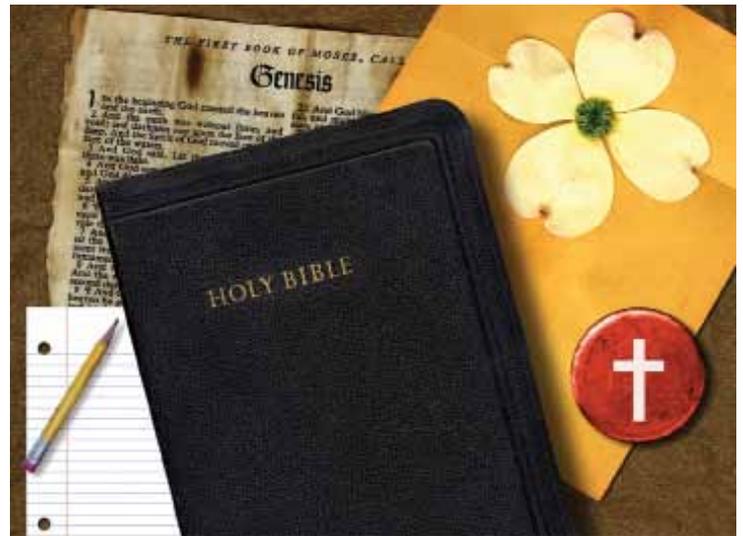
Well, here's some good news. For those living a Christian life, there is such a manual: the Bible.

Sometimes referred to as the "textbook of stewardship," the Bible is a bountiful resource for the present-day Christian. Written by anointed prophets and sages, this collection of divinely-inspired parables, poems and letters is full of testimonials that express the blessings that come from true discipleship, expressed through lives of stewardship.

Stewardship is not a new concept. The Bible gives proof to this claim through passages such as the 26th chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy. We read Moses' words, as he tells the Israelites to offer the choicest portions of their harvest to God: "When you have come into the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you as a heritage, and have occupied it and settled in it, you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land which the Lord, your God, gives you, and putting them in a basket, you shall go to the place which the Lord, your God, choose for the dwelling place of his name... Then you shall declare before the Lord, your God... 'Therefore, I have now brought you the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, O LORD, have given me.' And having set them before the LORD, your God, you shall bow down in his presence'" (Dt 26: 1-2, 5, 10).

St. Paul briefly touches on the essence of stewardship when he said, "In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35).

Again, in St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, we read about living a life of Christian stewardship: "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:6-7).



While this is well and good, what does it mean for the present day Christian? Why should it matter that the Bible alludes to stewardship in various passages? It shows us that Christians and Jews have struggled with and benefitted from the concept of stewardship for thousands of years. It ties the message of stewardship to the role of a Christian disciple. It gives proof that stewardship and discipleship go hand-in-hand. It offers encouragement to us, that stewardship is in fact a foundational component of the Christian life, a way of life that one of the founding fathers of the Church – St. Paul – preached about and advocated.

The Bible is indeed the textbook of stewardship. It lays out the steps we must take to become true disciples of Christ. Reading and meditating upon God's Word is always a fruitful exercise. Those who regularly delve into scripture often develop a deeper understanding of who God is, how and why He loves us, and how we can show Him our love in return: important topics of discussion for any steward-in-the-making.

As you strive to become a grateful steward and live the life of Christian discipleship, develop a love for Sacred Scripture. Allow God's Word to nourish your soul regularly, and watch as stewardship changes from a foreign concept to an integral component of your daily life.

Local Chef Among St. Mary's Newest Catholics

Most diners wouldn't expect to find "Shrimp Creole" on the menu at an Irish Pub. Then again, most Irish pubs aren't known for their food as much as for what's on tap.

Sheehan's, located on the corner of Monte Sano Ave. and Central Ave., is the "black sheep" in the family of Irish pubs. Its owner, Chef John Beck, delights in satisfying customers' appetites as much as quenching their thirst.

"I really enjoy serving something I'm proud of, interacting with people as they eat, and making them happy," he says. "Besides, cooking is the only thing I know how to do!"

John's play on traditional pub fare says much about his personality: he isn't afraid to try new things. For example, Sheehan's combination of soulful New Orleans cuisine, pub staples and a rich selection of domestic and imported beers flies in the

face of what's expected at a typical Irish watering hole. The result? Another highlight to add to this award-winning chef's already notable career.

In much the same way, John's life beyond the kitchen is just as rich. Born and raised in Augusta, John left home to try his luck in the "big city." He spent time in Athens and Atlanta, cooking for a string of successful "New Orleans style" restaurants before moving back to his hometown. In the years since, John opened Chow, a downtown Augusta eatery and, most recently, Sheehan's. The pub is co-owned by his wife, Patricia Sheehan.

Recently, much of John's attention has been focused away from the kitchen, and toward the altar. At the encouragement of his wife and their daughter, Aurelia, John joined the RCIA process in September. He says the experience has been thoroughly enjoyable, and has helped him find a faith he's comfortable with. Growing up, John was raised in the Baptist church, but he drifted away from the faith as an adult.



*The Beck Family:
John, Aurelia and Patricia*

"I didn't feel comfortable in the Baptist church at all," he says. "But when I met Patricia and her family, and the more I learned about Catholicism, I knew that was where I belonged."

John, who became a fully-initiated member of the Catholic Church this Easter, says RCIA – and Fr. Mark in particular – answered the questions he had about the Catholic Faith. In addition, receiving the Sacraments of Initiation allowed him to

become a full participant in the Mass, something he's anticipated for a long time.

"Instead of just sitting there, I can join my family at Communion," he says.

On the cusp of a new chapter in his life, John sees himself becoming an active member of our faith community. St. Mary's Parish has already given him much to be thankful for.

"The thing I like most about Catholicism – and this parish – is that the people are pretty much an open book," John says. "They are genuine, real, and the Church is the same way."

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– John Beck, new Catholic and St. Mary's parishioner

Doing Good for the Community

The Knights of Columbus

It took Andrew's invitation for Peter to follow Jesus. For many of our newest Knights of Columbus, it has taken a current Knight's invitation to join the fraternal organization. And those personal connections have only grown as membership has increased.

"The brotherhood is just fantastic," says David O'Brien, former Grand Knight of St. Mary's Knights of Columbus organization, the Patrick Walsh Council #677. "I love all the guys, and we get along really well."

David – who owns his own business, O'Brien Glass – was brought into the council after being invited by one of his employees.

"I had hired Brian Leonard, a past Grand Knight, as a new accountant," David recalls. "He told me that I should join the Knights, but I put it off forever until seven years ago, when I finally joined."

Since then, David has served with the Knights in all areas of parish life. A strong, family-oriented group, the Knights are often the "founders of the feast," serving up food at many parish events, including Lenten fish fries.

One of the most exciting developments in Council #677 has been the recent entrance of many new, young Knights.

Bruce Walker, the current Grand Knight, is one of them. Bruce is one of several new Knights who work in law enforcement.

"Several of us got together and started talking about ways we could take a more active role in the community – we knew we wanted to do something," he says.

So as a group, they all joined the Knights of Columbus two years ago.

"Everyone at some time had thought about joining, but had never actually done it," Bruce says. "And

when, like us, you see so much bad in your jobs, you want to be able to do some good, too."

Although Bruce and his friends thought that they were joining primarily so they could help others, he has seen other unexpected results.

"It's really put us back in touch with our priests, since one of the primary jobs of the Knights of Columbus is not just to help the community, but also help

the priests wherever we're needed," he says. "Fr. Ragan knows my name, and I can talk to him at any time. Now we have a more personal connection with our priests. That has been the most rewarding thing for me."

One of the new Knights who joined with Bruce is Jason Vinson, current Deputy Grand Knight. Jason has helped to bring in many new members who work in law enforcement, including Richmond

and Columbia County Sheriff's officers, FBI agents and ATF agents. He also spearheaded perhaps the biggest Knights of Columbus event yet: a fundraising dinner for parishioner and police officer Allison Godden, a cancer victim. The dinner took place this January, and over \$10,000 was raised in Allison's benefit.

For Jason, the Knights of Columbus also has been a great way to connect him to other Catholic men through service.

"The time we spend working at the Knights' homes and the church helps us develop stronger friendships," he says. "And knowing that you can depend on your brother Knights when you need them is really a good feeling."

With over 400 members, the Patrick Walsh Council #677 unites Catholic men in the community, offering them opportunities for social and spiritual growth. Men of St. Mary's, this is your personal invitation to join them. To learn more, call Bruce Walker at 706-799-7723.



Holy Week Celebrations

Holy Week was a special time at St. Mary's. Many in our community participated in the sacred liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday.

Easter is a season of renewal and rebirth. It is a time for all Catholics to recommit to their baptismal promises. We hope you have a fruitful and blessed Easter season!



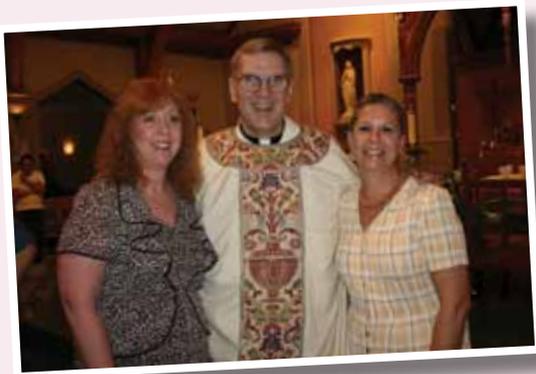
Deacon Al Sullivan and Fr. Charlie Hughes administer the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday.



Candidate Robin Medlock and her husband, Harris, pose after the Easter Vigil.



Parishioners gather outside the church for the lighting of the Easter Fire at the beginning of the Easter Vigil.



Fr. Jerry poses with candidate Lynn Pawlak and her sponsor, parishioner Cathy Fox.

Vacation Bible School 2010

Introduce your children to the Mass in a whole new way this summer. June 14-18, the St. Mary's CCD program will host a new Vacation Bible School experience: Cat.Chat's *Marvelous Mystery: The Mass Comes Alive!*

Each day's session, which takes place from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., will focus on different elements of the Mass as well as virtues and saints. Participants will also learn fun original songs written by Cat.Chat.

Registration forms are available in the narthex and on St. Mary's Web site, www.stmaryonthehill.org. The cost to attend is \$10 per child. Volunteers are needed; contact Joan Purucker or Barbara Kareis at 706-733-9908 for more details.

Attitude of Gratitude *continued from front cover*

family and friends. They have supported and guided me; they have challenged me and loved me for who I am. They gave me the support and encouragement to follow my true calling, which was to be a priest. As I move towards the 31st anniversary of my ordination on May 19th, I'm particularly grateful for my priesthood.

A priest is given the privilege of touching so many lives with the love of the Lord. What a joy it is to bring young and old into the family of God through the saving waters of baptism. How humbling and rewarding it is to bring a repentant sinner back to the peace of Christ in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or the healing experienced by those who receive the Anointing of the Sick. But the part of priesthood for which I'm most thankful is to celebrate Mass. What an awesome honor it is to break open God's Holy Word during the homily and to preside at the Liturgy of the Eucharist!

These are some of the attitudes that describe a "grateful believer."

- A grateful believer has an innate sense that all is a gift, that all is from God.
- A grateful believer knows that any successes or accomplishments attained in life are only possible with the support

of others and the grace of God.

- A grateful believer is generous with his or her time, talents and treasures.
- A grateful believer realizes that life is precious and fragile.
- A grateful believer doesn't always have to be right or have the answer to every question, but is eager to learn new things every day.
- A grateful believer doesn't have an overabundance of "have to's" in life.
- A grateful believer looks for and finds redeeming qualities in every person or situation.
- A grateful believer is able to laugh at his or her own foibles.
- A grateful believer enjoys life as much now as he or she did when they were young.
- A grateful believer smiles and says "thank you" often throughout the day.

God bless you,

Fr. Jerry Ragan

Fr. Jerry

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Recent Gifts to St. Mary on the Hill

St Mary on the Hill Church

In memory of John Regan

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kelly

Mr. Mike Rucker

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Fair

St. Mary on the Hill School

In memory of Cheatham Hodges, Jr.

Carolyn Mulherin

St. Mary on the Hill School Endowment

In memory of Mrs. Delle Johnson

Henry, Marcelle, and Susan Rochon

Congratulations, New Catholics!

The following individuals were fully initiated into the Catholic Church during the Easter Vigil, April 3.

John Beck	Elizabeth Norville
Lauren Brown	Lynn Powlak
Christine Condliffe	Nichole Richardson
Alma Curti	Stephen Seward
Scott Gorectke	Martha Shaw
William Gottschalk	Frank Sheffield
Megan Heredia	Jonathan Smith
Michael Huff	Rhonda Thornton
Chris Hutchinson	Eric Tindall
Jerry Jester	Rachel Utley
Martha Long	Cecilia Tambon
Marc Massey	<i>Sacrament of Confirmation</i>
Robin Medlock	Haley Fischer
Christa Meliezer	Vicente Morales
Bonnie Mims	Nicole Rangel
Aaron Mitchell	Whitney Thornton
Thomas Moore	Lowell William
Michael Mosley	