

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL
CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

Sharing in Family Prayer During this Month of Thanks

Dear Parishioners,

There is a Mexican saying that we die three deaths: the first when our bodies die, the second when our bodies are lowered into the earth out of sight, and the third when our loved ones forget us. Catholics forestall that last death by seeing the faithful dead as members of the Church, alive in Christ, and by praying for them — and asking their prayers for us — always. We do this especially during the month of November. We begin the month with All Saints Day (Nov. 1) and All Souls Day (Nov. 2), but continue to prayerfully remember our beloved dead throughout the entire month, especially when we gather on Thanksgiving Day.

So, even in death as Catholics, we believe the truth of the old saying, “Families that pray together, stay together.” Prayer really does make a difference! I believe this is particularly true of the Eucharist in that the same Christ who becomes present to us on the altar, is also present to my Mom and Dad, my sister, Patti, and my brother, Dan.

I am so excited that our Strong Catholic Families/Strong Catholic



A Prayer for the Family

*Lord of Life,
Bless and sustain our family.
Hold us close, keep us connected
and protect us from all evil.
Gift us with love and patience
for one another.
Help us reconcile that which
divides us and celebrate all that
unites us as one family, where you
live and reign now and forever.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.*

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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The “Thanksgiving Spirit” Doesn’t Have to End at Thanksgiving

The origin of the first Thanksgiving feast is a matter of some debate among historians. But since 1863, Americans have annually set aside the fourth or fifth Thursday of November to give thanks to God for a bountiful harvest. The holiday became a matter of federal law in 1941, as President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a joint congressional resolution to observe Thanksgiving Day on the fourth Thursday of November. Even as our society has become less agrarian, families continue to gather each November to give thanks to God for each other, and for the many blessings they’ve received throughout the year.

Most people associate this “spirit of Thanksgiving” with the fall holiday and its many recognizable symbols – brisk weather, cornucopias, family gatherings and plenty of delicious food. But giving thanks to God in gratitude for the gifts we have received isn’t an attitude we should save for this annual holiday alone. When we live lives of stewardship – sharing of our time, talents and treasure in thanks to God and at the service of others – we can sustain life in the Thanksgiving spirit throughout the year.

The Church teaches that this daily response of gratitude is an important element of living the life of a Christian disciple. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “Indeed, in the work of salvation, Christ sets creation free from sin and death to consecrate it anew and make it return to the Father, for his glory. The thanksgiving of the members of the Body participates in that of their Head” (CCC 2637).

And how can we express this spirit of thanks? We can serve others, living the virtue of charity by reaching out to our brothers and sisters in need through acts



of kindness. We can give back to God from our “first fruits,” sharing of our treasure in thanksgiving and recognition of the need to return a portion of our gifts to God. We can utilize our unique talents to make our parish and local communities better places. And, as the Catechism also points out, we can even express thanks through prayerfully offering up our daily activities to God: “Every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving” (CCC 2638).

This Thanksgiving, take a moment to think of ways that you can live in the “spirit of Thanksgiving” on the fourth Thursday of November, and every other day throughout the year. Living the stewardship way of life may not always involve a precisely-carved turkey, pilgrim decorations or a family viewing of *It’s a Wonderful Life* – but it will provide lifelong fulfillment and joy rooted in an attitude of perpetual thanksgiving.

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St. Mary on the Hill Catholic Church 2013 Annual Report

Our Family: We are a community of **2,478** registered households. On average, **747** registered families contribute weekly to the support of the parish. We have a total of **3,304** ministry commitments (talent), **2,766** prayer commitments (time) and **798** offertory commitments (treasure). A total of **104** families had youth commitment cards indicating **414** ministry commitments, **458** prayer and **28** with pledges.

Our Income:

In fy2013, parish income totaled **\$4,195,350** from the following sources:

Weekly Offertory — **\$3,796,804** which includes youth contributions of **\$3,093**

Stocks, Bequests, Memorials, Interest, Restricted & Annual gifts — **\$182,776**

Special collections — **\$79,488**

Program and other revenue — **\$136,281**

Our Tithe: Our parish is dedicated to stewardship, and we give generously throughout the year to national and international collections — as defined by the Diocese of Savannah — as well as other organizations in need. Our parish tithe committee reviews these requests and presents them to the Pastoral Council and Finance Committee annually. Please see the detailed tithe account report which was published in the Oct. 19, 2013 bulletin — it can be viewed with all fy2013 financial reports on our website, www.stmaryonthehill.org. Our total parish giving, excluding the BAA, was **\$217,085** plus **\$33,500** budgeted but not expensed in fy2013.



Diocesan Assessments: The Diocese of Savannah assesses a percentage of all parishes' income for the administrative works of the DOS. Our assessment for fy2013 was **\$218,040**. Our parish is also assessed by the Southern Cross based on a percentage of registered parish families. The assessment for fy2013 was **\$24,890** while our Southern Cross collection was **\$6,300**. Over and above these assessments, for calendar year 2013, **632** of our families have pledged **\$239,779** to the Bishop's Annual Appeal, which supports his ministries throughout South Georgia.

Education: Education is a major priority for our parish. In addition to the **\$1,869,000** for our elementary school, which had **431** students enrolled in grades K-8, the church education and formation budget includes **\$48,600** for other religious education including our pre-school, CCD program and adult education. Our Vacation Bible School had **39** pre-school and **143** elementary school participants, CCD educated **258** students, and there were **172** kindergarten, first and second-graders from CCD and SMCS who were involved in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Our youth and young adult program expenses were **\$36,695** and their ministries continue to grow in numbers. We had **14** join our church this Easter after completing our RCIA class.

Overhead: Personnel costs for religious, lay salaries and all benefits were **\$784,317**. General overhead for utilities, maintenance, liability insurance and other general expenses was **\$342,942**. Capital improvements — renovations and equipment — totaled **\$67,215**. Renovations included repairs to the parish hall bell tower, steeple, roof and brides room floor, and a bedroom and bath in the rectory. In addition, the coronation window — Monte Sano side of the church — was completely restored and all church windows and doors were refinished. The funds used for the window work were those designated through the Leaving a Legacy program.

Sacramental Activity: As a parish family, we baptized **61** children & **4** adults, had **86** students prepared for First Communion, Confirmed **84** students and **1** adult, witnessed **20** marriages, performed **3** convalidations and buried **44** of our loved ones.

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Using God's Blessings for Prayer and Song

Our Parish and Contemporary Choirs

In his letter to the Colossians, St. Paul encourages the early Christians to sing together “hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs” (Col. 3:16). The choir members of St. Mary on the Hill, under the skillful guidance of Alvin Blount, are leading us all in this singing of spiritual songs. Alvin has a bachelor’s degree in music from Mercer University and a master’s degree from the University of Tennessee. He has served as director of Music and Worship at St. Mary on the Hill for the past 18 years, directing the Parish and Contemporary Choirs, which sings at the 10:30 a.m. Sunday Masses and other liturgical celebrations.

“Singing hymns and psalms and spiritual songs is another form of prayer that seals us together as a Christian family,” Alvin says, offering insight as to why those ancient words of St. Paul ring just as true today. “Music is so important to the Church because it is a universal language that can be used to help us lay down our individual issues and egos and pray together as a community of Christ.”

Indeed, our Parish and Contemporary Choir members bring rich and diverse backgrounds to their musical ministry.

“There are about 37 members of the Parish Choir and 5 members of the Contemporary Choir,” Alvin says. “The majority of members read music well. They come from various parts of the United States and range in age from 19 to 97! Some are retired from various professions. Some are teachers or professors, secretaries, homemakers, nurses, salespersons, physicians, engineers, realtors, designers and college students. All have been active in music ensembles in Church most of their lives and take their stewardship commitment of time and talents seriously.”

Dr. John Angelo is one such example, having joined the choir shortly after he and his family moved to Augusta in 2004.



Members of the Parish Choir “at home” in the choir loft.

“Any talent we have has been given to us by God and we should use it to give Him glory,” Dr. Angelo says. “Singing in the choir is a way to use a blessing God has given to me.”

Kelly Wiedmeier once served as choir director in her parish before moving to Augusta and is now happy to be a member of our Parish Choir. She shares a similar perspective.

“Singing in the choir is my way of adding to the worship experience,” Kelly says. “For me, it is a ministry to help others have a more meaningful worship experience.”

The members of the St. Mary’s Choirs have shared their talents beyond the walls of our own church building. They have sung in cathedrals and churches in Savannah, Ga., St. Augustine, Fla., Washington, D.C., parts of Ireland, and even Italy where they had the opportunity to sing at a Mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II on the Feast of Christ the King. The Choirs have recently been hard at work, as the members have been preparing music for the Advent and Christmas season so that we may all lift up our voices as one in praise and worship of our Newborn King!

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— Alvin Blount, music director

Youth Enjoys Participation in Church Basketball League

Team sports can be a great blessing for kids of all ages. Here at St. Mary on the Hill, our youth have several sports programs to choose from, depending on the season. In the winter, the main focus is basketball.

St. Mary participates in the Augusta Christian Athletic Association basketball league with other churches in the area, including Old Macedonia Baptist Church, Trinity on the Hill United Methodist Church, First Baptist Church, Church of the Good Shepherd and Reid Memorial Presbyterian. Within this program are leagues for boys and girls ages 7 to 18, and in each league, teams from each church play games against the other churches.

Here at St. Mary on the Hill, we also have a basketball league for 6-year-olds called Mighty Mights. This program, which usually includes about four teams, is a developmental league in which the coaches are often on the court helping out.

"The goals are lower so they have a better chance of making a basket," says Alice Hagler, who coordinates the basketball program at St. Mary on the Hill. "We have teenage boys who referee. They only play the other teams from St. Mary's. It is a great way to introduce basketball to the little ones."

During the season, the teams play every Saturday morning, except for the Under 19 boys league, which plays on Thursday nights, and they practice on Sundays. The practices begin on Nov. 3, while the games start Dec. 7.



Each year, there are around 20 teams that participate in the basketball league, and there are around 30 volunteer coaches and assistants.

This program is not only a great activity for the youth who participate, it can also help to bring kids and their parents together.

"The parents are usually the coaches, and they work together every Sunday at practice and every Saturday when they play games," Alice says.

Programs like this can also help build a stronger sense of community within the parish.

"It helps parents to meet other parents that they might not have known, and kids to meet other kids they might not have known before," Alice says.

There are many ways that adults in the parish can get involved, such as volunteering as coaches and assistant coaches. Anyone can volunteer, whether already a parent of one of the kids on the team, or if simply looking to support the formation of our parish youth. All volunteers are required to undergo VIRTUS training.

Any time we give our time or talents in service to others, we get much more in return.

"I feel like I am fulfilling part of my stewardship duty by running the basketball league," Alice says. "It is a job that takes up a lot of time, and if I can help the church by doing this, I am happy to spend my time doing it. It makes a lot of kids happy and gives them something to do on the weekends when it is cold outside."

Parishioners who would like more information, or those who are interested in volunteering, are encouraged to email Alice Hagler at ahagler167@gmail.com, or call her at 706-833-4581.

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— Alice Hagler

Advent: *Preparing Our Hearts for Christ's Arrival*

There are countless references to preparation throughout Scripture: "A voice cries out: prepare the way of the Lord! Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed" (Isa 40:3-5). Indeed, much of our Christian life is spent in preparation. As disciples of Christ, we are called to remain ever-ready, prepared and alert for His return. We educate our souls, through Scripture study and faith formation, to prepare our minds and spirits for the Lord's entrance into our lives. Predestined arrival demands preparation, and as we wait – throughout the day, week, ecclesiastical year, and our lives – for Christ's arrival, we further conform ourselves to His image.

Advent, which begins this year on Dec. 1, is a time of joyful anticipation before the Lord's coming, and it capitalizes on this notion of preparation. The four Sundays before Christmas signify the penance and prayerful reflection needed to adequately prepare our hearts for Christ's arrival. Advent, in and of itself, proclaims the royalty and majesty of Christ. Much like John the Baptist's joyful exclamation, "One mightier than I is coming. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire," Advent promises the arrival of divinity. As stewards of our Catholic faith, we must reflect upon the reality of Christ's coming during Advent. In the words of Christ Himself, "I came so that they might have life, and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10). A wonderful



promise, but the redemptive nature of Christ's words disguises the sacrificial theme embedded in our Lord's message. Throughout Advent, we must search our hearts, laying all evil and worldly indulgences upon the Cross. We can then offer Christ our purified souls, as we patiently wait to welcome Him into the world.

Although we officially celebrate Advent only once a year, our entire lives should function in a preparatory state. We should expect, at any moment, for Christ to take us up with Him to heaven, so that we may sit beneath the Father's feet in eternal paradise. As a stewardship parish, we have professed ourselves disciples of Jesus Christ; through gifts of time, talent and treasure, we can prepare ourselves for Christ's

return. We give of our hearts this advent through alms of prayer. Thus, we spend our time with Christ in conversation and contemplation. Our talents, gifts in and of themselves, glorify God when used to build His kingdom. Our treasure, made possible by the talents God paired us with during creation, reflects the love and admiration we possess for our Heavenly Father. Consider our entire earthly lives as Advent periods of preparation. As we await Christ's return, especially during the upcoming Christmas season, consider how our parish family can, together, prepare a holy welcome for our Lord and Savior.

Throughout Advent, we must search our hearts, laying all evil and worldly indulgences upon the Cross. We can then offer Christ our purified souls, as we patiently wait to welcome Him into the world.

Sharing in Family Prayer *continued from front cover*

Youth Initiative is off to a good beginning. It seems too simple, but the data confirms it. One of the easiest ways to make your family stronger is to take time to pray together. Before meals. Before leaving the house in the morning. Before going to bed at night. In whatever words work for you. In whatever places and spaces feel right.

Prayer is essential for building faith at home. It doesn't have to be long. It doesn't have to be poetic. It doesn't have to be adult-type-words. Prayer is the work of all people of all ages.

Invite your children to say their own prayers and let them express their feelings to God in whatever language is right for them. Encourage them to say prayers of gratitude, as simple as "Thank you, Jesus, for _____." This is an especially good prayer for when you gather on Thanksgiving Day.

You can also make prayer fun by using things around the house. For example, slice a banana and have each person pray for one thing, then eat a slice. The more slices you have, the more you encourage your family's prayers. Or use building blocks or Lego pieces and create a tower or a church using one piece for each thing you pray for. See how high you can go!

When prayer is a regular part of daily life — and is a fun activity, too — young minds and hearts feel closer to God. Try this prayer for your family and let me know what creative ways you find to use it!

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

Ad Placement



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St. Mary on the Hill Church

In Appreciation of the Priests:

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In Memory of Mary Selzler:

Robert and Sue Lyons

Virginia Weigle

2013 Annual Report

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Our School: The church support of **\$1,869,000** is the main source of revenue for the school. Other sources of revenue for the school are from tuition — which was **\$437,400** — as well as registration of **\$112,834** and **\$27,500** from the endowment fund for a new database, website, staff development and classroom projectors. Development income was **\$23,260** from the annual PJC golf tournament and donations/memorials of **\$1,200**. The annual PJC golf tournament netted **\$17,250** which was transferred to the School Endowment Fund in June. Other income includes extended day care fees (**\$27,745**), lunch (**\$96,900**), PTO transfers of **\$10,200** and **\$85,760** from student activities, supplies, athletics and commissions.

