

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL
CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

A Time of Remembering With Grateful Hearts

Dear Parishioners,

November is a time of remembering with grateful hearts. The Book of Remembrance sits at the foot of the altar in Church, and throughout this month we will pray for those whose names are inscribed in that special book. Indeed, we will pray for all of our beloved relatives and friends who have gone before us. It is a time of remembering, a time of storytelling so that we hold onto the memory of our deceased family members. As I travel to be with my family at Thanksgiving, I will stop to visit the graves of my parents and my sister. Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Cheltenham, Pa., where I grew up always seems to be a place of such great peace – a sacred space.

November is a time of remembering with grateful hearts. I praise God that so many of you have already returned your Stewardship Commitment Cards. It is those pledges of your time, talent and treasure that make this faith community such a vibrant parish. My heart is filled with gratitude for the return you make to God for the many ways in which He bestows His mercy and love upon us. I love being a parish priest of



St. Mary on the Hill, where so many folks make such a great effort to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

November is a time of remembering with grateful hearts. Thanksgiving is at the core of our Judeo/Christian tradition. "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endures forever" (Psalm 106). This is probably one of the most repeated phrases in the Hebrew Scriptures. It acknowledges our dependence on God and His abundant love and mercy, but it also recognizes our need to share our abundance with others. To use John Donne's metaphorical images, we are not islands but part

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Mass Schedule

Sunday, 7:45 a.m., 10:30 a.m.,
12:15 p.m. and 5:30 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.

Approaching Advent From a Stewardship Point of View

Advent ignites the ecclesiastical year of the Church, and is traditionally set to begin on the Sunday closest to the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle. Advent encompasses four Sundays of penance, anticipation and joyful preparation. Commonly denoted by its distinctly purple motif, Advent's symbolic hues point to the royalty of Christ and the penance our souls require as we await His earthly arrival.

Every third Sunday during Advent, publicized by its characteristically rose color, is set aside as a time for rejoicing and merriment – a festive celebration of Christ's imminent coming. Advent's rich tradition within the Catholic Church incorporates several symbolic expressions of faith that describe the significance of Christ's coming. Seasonal mainstays – such as the family-oriented practice of lighting the advent wreath, St. Lucia crowns and Advent calendars – help us physically express the sacred nature of Advent.

The mystery and beauty of Advent, characterized by contrite hearts and holy anticipation, is in no way limited to the Christmas season. Indeed, Christians all over the world should remain in a preparatory frame of mind until Christ returns to Earth in splendor. Ever since His glorious Ascension, Christians everywhere have been on watch, waiting for Jesus to return and

take us home. As St. Paul explains in his letter to the Thessalonians, "Therefore let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay alert and sober. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (1 Th 5:2, 6).

As stewards of our parish community, we are vocationally called to spread Christ's message to the world. Much like John the Baptist, it is our responsibility to announce Christ's coming to all of humanity. We must invest ourselves, evangelically, in the mission of Christian conversion. We must not do so with force or propaganda, but with love and education. When we live with Christ's arrival firmly in mind, truly desiring His immediate presence, Christian stewardship becomes second nature. Just as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* so eloquently explains, "When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming" (CCC 524).

As the dawn of Advent breaks upon us, let us appropriately prepare our hearts, with stewardship firmly in hand, for the arrival of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



St. Mary on the Hill Catholic Church

Serving the Master – 2014 Annual Report

Prepared by the Parish Staff

OUR FAMILY: We are a community of **2,445** registered households. On average, **754** registered families contribute weekly to the support of the parish. We have a total of **3,341** ministry commitments (talent), **3,294** prayer commitments (time) and **805** offertory commitments (treasure). A total of **84** families had youth commitment cards indicating **361** ministry commitments, **582** prayer and **32** with pledges.

OUR INCOME: In the fiscal year 2014, parish income totaled **\$4,438,626** from the following sources:

- Weekly Offertory - **adults \$3,914,075; youth \$4,083**
- Stocks & Annual gifts - **\$156,163;**
- Bequests & Memorials **\$139,880**
- Special collections - **\$93,520**
- Program & Other Revenue - **\$130,905**

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 Sept. 29, 2014 bulletin – it can be viewed with all fiscal year 2014 financial reports on our website, www.stmaryonthehill.org. Our total parish giving – excluding the BAA – was **\$240,407**. For calendar year 2013, **634 (25.57 percent)** St. Mary families gave **\$243,449** to the BAA, barely surpassing our goal of **\$242,249**.

DIOCESAN ASSESSMENTS: The Diocese of Savannah assesses a percentage of all parishes' income for the administrative works of the DOS. Our assessment for the fiscal year 2014 was **\$217,356**. Our parish is also assessed by the Southern Cross, \$10 for each registered parish family. The assessment for the fiscal year 2014 was **\$24,500** while our Southern Cross collection was **\$5,553**.

EDUCATION: Education is a major priority for our parish. In addition to the **\$1,870,000** for our elementary school, which had **433** students enrolled in grades K-8, the church education and formation budget includes **\$48,600** for other

religious education including our preschool, CCD program and adult education. A total of **24** families participated in our first evening Family Vacation Bible School, CCD educated **211** students, and there were **170** 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 **\$39,850** and their ministries continue to grow in numbers. We had **22** join our church this Easter after completing our RCIA class.

OVERHEAD: Personnel costs for religious, lay salaries and all benefits were **\$790,757**. General overhead for utilities, maintenance, liability insurance and other general expenses was **\$314,549**. Capital improvements – maintenance, renovations and equipment – totaled **\$40,800**. These included exterior painting of the rectory, office and parish hall; outside light replacement on the church steeple; replacing a portion of the McDowell Street sidewalk at the church front entrance; replacing windows and installing a dishwasher in St. Anne's – nursery/Mothers' Day Out – building.

SACRAMENTAL ACTIVITY: As a parish family, we baptized **76** children and **six** adults, had **70** students prepared for First Communion, confirmed **68** students and two adults, witnessed **13** marriages, performed **six** convalidations and buried **41** of our loved ones.

OUR SCHOOL: The church support of **\$1,870,000** is the main source of revenue for the school. Other sources of revenue for the school are from tuition, which was **\$496,245**, registration of **\$147,680** and **\$30,000** from the endowment fund for assistance in paying for the security system, iPad carts and staff development, and **\$50,000** from the PTO for the security system, iPad carts and classroom supplies. Development income was **\$23,260** from the annual PJC golf tournament and donations/memorials of **\$1,200**. The annual PJC golf tournament netted **\$14,675**, which was transferred to the School Endowment Fund in June. Other income includes extended day care fees **\$33,000**, lunch **\$106,800**, and **\$69,000** from student activities, supplies, athletics, and commissions.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: Connecting Children to Jesus

If you walk into the atrium used for the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, you will walk into a whole new “Catholic world.” You will see beautiful figure sets representing Biblical scenes such as the Annunciation, Visitation, Birth of Christ, and Parables of Jesus. You will also see a child-sized altar, puzzle maps of Israel, globes, the Stations of the Cross hanging on the wall, and more. All of it is used to bring the message of the most meaningful aspects of our sacred faith to young hearts.

“Through the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, kids can gain ownership of their faith and personalize it,” says catechist Carrie Roberts. “It really helps them develop their relationship with God and make a connection with Him.”

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a ministry that provides an environment where children can explore their relationship with God using hands-on materials. It is rooted in the Bible and the Liturgy of the Church. Carrie offers Catechesis of the Good Shepherd classes at our parish school to kindergarteners, first-graders and second-graders one hour per week as an extracurricular religious activity. Bobbie Sue Schiffhauer (Kindergarten) and Carrie Murga and Rose Anderson (First Grade) offer Catechesis of the Good Shepherd to CCD students on Sundays, from 9 to 10:15 a.m. All of the classes take place in the atrium located above the school library. Co-Director of Religious Education Joan Purucker also assists with this ministry.

During the classes, the children are free to work with various materials in the atrium as their open, enthusiastic hearts desire. For example, the figurines are accompanied by a book which features Scriptures that highlight the scenes they represent. The children can refer to the book as they act out the Biblical scenes along with the figurines. The atrium also includes a miniature altar and accompanying items, such as altar cloths, a ciborium, paten, and vestments.

“Working with the altar set helps children see how everything in the Mass fits together, so they can follow along with it when they go,” Carrie says. “Our second-grade students even get to make their own missals during the year.”



The room also has art materials such as construction paper, colored pencils and religious pictures so that the children can put their God-given creative talents to use.

Furthermore, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd also includes some inspiring activities for the children to do in union with the liturgical seasons. After Easter, they do a sort of “Liturgy of Light,” using an old Paschal candle. Towards the end of the year, they practice the Rite of Baptism at a miniature baptismal font.

Ideally, the experience in the atrium helps both the children and catechists to grow in an intimate, unique way in their spiritual lives, deepening their friendship with Christ.

“The Holy Spirit is very present in the children,” Carrie says. “Once, a child told the group that they were talking to an angel the other day. Sometimes, the children say very profound things like this, and you just think, ‘Wow!’ Joan and I believe that by teaching the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, we have grown in our faith and learned more about it than even the children have. We get so much out of it, and we enjoy doing it.”

Carrie began teaching Catechesis of the Good Shepherd about 13 years ago when her son, Brendan, was in kindergarten, and she has loved doing it ever since.

“It is a calling of its own!” Carrie says. “Teaching catechesis is my excuse to be around young children. I love staying connected to them. It keeps me feeling young, too!”

Assistant catechists are needed to help bring the Catholic faith to life for our young people through this ministry. For more information, please contact Joan Purucker at 706-733-9908.

Helping the Less Fortunate, Following Christ's Example

Master's Table Soup Kitchen

November is a month that reminds us to count our blessings. For some of us, an abundance of nourishing food is something we take for granted. For others right here in our own community, a hot meal is not a given, but a true occasion to give thanks. The Master's Table Soup Kitchen in downtown Augusta provides an occasion every day for the poor and homeless in our community to give thanks.

The Soup Kitchen is a program sponsored by Golden Harvest Food Bank, a resource created in 1982

when a group of local leaders decided to help our community tackle the challenge of hunger. Today, the Master's Table volunteers serve a hot meal to almost 400 people, 365 days a year.

Several groups from St. Mary on the Hill are among those dedicated volunteers, and our parish currently provides

about 40 to 50 adult volunteers. Joe Smith has served as ministry leader for the adult volunteers since 2011.

"St. Mary's adults volunteer every month on the fourth Wednesday from 8:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.," Joe says. "Our group cooks the lunch, serves the meal, and tries to have some interaction with those who are having lunch.

"Every time we are at the Soup Kitchen we receive positive feedback from the guests who are having lunch," he continues. "Many of those dining thank us both verbally and with their expressions. It's a very rewarding feeling."



With Thanksgiving upon us and Christmas fast approaching, Joe notes how these times are particularly meaningful for those who serve.

"Many enjoy doing for others before they gather with their own families," he says. "There's a special atmosphere in the Soup Kitchen on holidays."

Joe's motivation for doing this work is both simple and profound.

"There is such a huge number of hungry in our community," he says. "Cooking food is a simple way

to give back to those less fortunate. Helping others and especially those most in need is what Jesus constantly did when He walked this earth. Helping those less fortunate is the best way I know to follow the example Christ showed us."

Some young parishioners are following this example of Christ, too. Although kitchen volunteers must be 18 or

older, kids are welcome to help out in the dining area. Small groups of St. Mary's eighth-graders help serve the meal that the St. Mary's adult volunteers have prepared each month. In addition, the "Youth Events" section of our parish bulletin provides information for any high-schoolers who would like to get involved one Sunday a month.

Any adult interested in joining this Christ-like service is welcome to contact Joe Smith by phone at 706-738-9896 or e-mail at papojes@comcast.net.

"Cooking food is a simple way to give back to those less fortunate. Helping others and especially those most in need is what Jesus constantly did when He walked this earth. Helping those less fortunate is the best way I know to follow the example Christ showed us." – Joe Smith

The True Significance of Thanksgiving

When we look back on our childhood, we recall how the events of our country's first Thanksgiving were imprinted upon our minds.

Our school teachers taught us about the proceedings of that joyous Thursday in the 17th century. Many of us dressed up as Pilgrims, donning black and white Puritan gowns and large hats with shiny tinfoil belt buckles.

We learned about the symbolic significance of Thanksgiving. And just as the original Pilgrims did, we should also open our homes and hearts to neighbors and family during the Thanksgiving season. The first Thanksgiving united the Pilgrims and natives together in celebration. Likewise, every Thanksgiving celebration thereafter has been geared toward those same feelings of love, joy and satisfaction.

The actual historical events that transpired on the first Thanksgiving are disputed, and sometimes even forgotten. But several elements have been agreed upon as fact. The first Thanksgiving took place sometime during the early 1620s. It was not given the status of "holiday," but was instead a simple harvest festival that signified the lasting presence and perseverance

of the Pilgrims in a harsh new land. The first Thanksgiving was, if anything, a sign of success and praise, where the 50 or so surviving Pilgrims gave thanks to God, sharing the abundance of their first harvest with each other and the neighboring natives. The celebration was also designed to boost the morale of the settlers, many of whom lost family and friends to disease and hunger during the early stages of civilized development.

The first "national day of Thanksgiving" was held in 1789, when President George Washington proclaimed Thursday, Nov. 26, to be "a day of public thanksgiving and prayer." However, Thanksgiving did not officially become an annual celebration until 1863, when President Abraham Lincoln declared the last Thursday in November to be a day of "thanksgiving and praise." Under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1941, Thanksgiving became an official national holiday under federal law.

The significance of Thanksgiving has never strayed far from our country's heart. Several past presidents have preserved its presence in our yearly calendars as a day of public observance, thanks and prayer.

As Catholics, Thanksgiving has additional meaning and significance. Not only do we spend Thanksgiving Day praising God for His provision and our plentiful harvests, but as a season, Thanksgiving also calls us to remember Christ's ultimate sacrifice of love.

Thanksgiving is a harvest festival of supreme spiritual importance for Catholics. As the sacrificial lamb, Jesus became our harvest – a precious seed that grew into a soul-saving tree of righteousness and perfection. He gave His life for our benefit so that we could live in His death.

Much like the first harvest our ancestors joyfully experienced, Christ strengthens our souls and provides health to our bodies. Jesus is our harvest celebration, and we experience the life-giving results of His death each time we partake in His precious Body and sacred Blood.

As disciples of Christ, let us share Jesus with the world, just as the Pilgrims shared their spoils nearly 400 years ago. Jesus is the reason for every season, including Thanksgiving. As we lift our glasses in praise of God's many gifts, focus your thoughts on the abundant harvest of Christ.

Why not begin your holiday this year by attending Mass? Even though Thanksgiving Day is not a holy day of obligation, we can express our thanks to God by spending an hour of our hectic morning at His table.

A Time of Remembering *continued from front cover*

of a continent – a piece of a whole. We are the Body of Christ.

Harvest festivals are found in many cultures offering thanks for abundant crops. Pentecost – Jewish Festival of Shavuot – was such a celebration of Thanksgiving, as was the Pilgrim's celebration in 1621 that has been identified as the first Thanksgiving in North America.

For us today, Thanksgiving has little to do with a harvest festival, although we still use the harvest symbols of pumpkins and gourds, but we are celebrating God's abundance in our lives. We celebrate faith, hope, life itself, and gifts that sustain us. More than any other national holiday, Thanksgiving is family-centered. Although many of us are scattered and apart from our loved ones, we return in spirit, if not in person for Thanksgiving. It is a time when we are reminded that people are more important than things.

So, we celebrate family, the sacrifices of our parents, the love shared with spouses, brothers and sisters, and the gift of friendship. It is in the loving relationship

with family and friends that God's love is frequently revealed to us. We become acutely aware of these gifts on Thanksgiving even though our friends and family may be far away or at home with God.

An important part of Thanksgiving is sharing our abundance – not only with friends and family, but with those less fortunate than ourselves. Donate food or money to Golden Harvest, make a gift to Catholic Charities, or volunteer to help serve a Thanksgiving meal to the homeless. The greatest gift we have to share is ourselves.

Let us join together this Thanksgiving to "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endures forever."

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

Ad Placement

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Recent Donations to St. Mary on the Hill

St. Mary on the Hill Church

*In Memory of Rosemary Roper
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*In Memory of Mary Anna Buckley
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*In Memory of Frederick Matthew Kennedy
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*In Memory of Lucille Cashin
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Barbara Price*

*In Memory of Kathy Cundey
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St. Mary on the Hill School

*In Memory of Dolores Hoffman
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St. Mary School Endowment

Mary Ellen and Paul Zielinski

St. Mary on the Hill Music Ministry

Jane and Bill Cashin

St. Mary on the Hill Senior Center

Fran and Wayne Mixon

Baptisms

*Madeline Janine Hudson
Daughter of Christopher and Allison Hudson*

*Honor Elizabeth Smith
Daughter of Joseph and Sarah Smith*

*Joseph Paxton Carter
Son of Stuart and McKenzie Carter*

*Sophia Dianna Goddard
Daughter of Nicholas and Joelyn Goddard*

*Harper Marie Mooney
Daughter of Sean and Kelly Mooney*

*Luke Joseph Pond
Son of Brad and Mandy Pond*

*Isabel Spain Alva
Daughter of Adam and Elizabeth Alva*