

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL

CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

Christian Presence in the Holy Land

Dear Parishioners,

St. Mary on the Hill has great roots in family life and I would hope they could grow even deeper. Recent studies show that parents matter in the faith development of their children... a lot! It might not seem like they are spending a lot of time at home when they are involved in school, youth ministry, part-time jobs, and so many different activities, but teens really do spend more time at home than anyplace else. And teens list consistently their parents as the people they first look to for help and guidance. Parents, whether they realize it or not, have a greater impact on their children than peer groups or media when it comes to shaping values and attitudes about faith and life.

So, I am very excited that the parish is trying to form a partnership with our parents to support and encourage them in passing on the faith to their children. I would encourage all our parents to **attend the Strong Catholic Families/Strong Catholic Youth Workshop that is taking place on September 18th**. This night will be the beginning of something truly wonderful for our faith community. Please make every effort to be a part of it.

Our faith community is also known for its great generosity to many different causes. At the end of the month, I will be asking you to be generous once again to my favorite charity. I don't own a horse but I am proud to be a member of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. Beyond my title to the parish, the cause to which I give the most money would be that of keeping a Christian presence in the land that Jesus lived. The work of the Order in the Holy Land is expressed through prayer, knowledge and education about the conditions in the Holy Land and supporting our Christian sisters and brothers who are struggling to live there through financial contributions to various projects.



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 Importance of Family Prayer

“The family that prays together stays together.”

This famous slogan was coined in 1947 by writer Al Scalpone, and has been frequently referenced ever since. The phrase pinpoints the true power of prayer, and the importance of making family prayer a consistent practice in our lives.

As Christian disciples, we are striving to follow Jesus – to grow in our love of Him and to serve Him through the use of our time, talents and treasure. If we desire to follow in his footsteps, we must first begin by getting to know Him. Spending time with the Lord in prayer forms a foundation on which we can build our lives as Christian disciples, much in the same way that spending time with a girlfriend or boyfriend forms the foundation of a strong relationship.

The Christian family is the first place where children learn to pray. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls the family unit “*Ecclesia domestica*,” or “the domestic church” (CCC 1656). Thus, parents have a responsibility to set an example by taking time for personal prayer every day, and making family prayer a regular practice. This not only sets an example for the children, but also provides them with a faith-filled foundation and brings them closer to the Lord – forming them as grateful stewards of their time.

There are many ways in which a family can pray together. One of the most important times for prayer is before meals, where we thank God for His blessings, and for the



food on our family table. Families may also share in the formal prayers of the Church, or perhaps pray a Rosary together every night. We can also thank the Lord aloud, asking Him to answer our prayers and offering Him our daily petitions. One often-suggested method of family prayer is ACTS, where we offer adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and supplication. Families may also go to their church and kneel together before the Blessed Sacrament, offering prayers in Christ’s presence.

These are just several of the many opportunities for families to pray together. Of course, prayer will be influenced by each family’s dynamics and personalities. But no matter how we pray, it is important that we make the time to do so. This will deepen the family’s relationship with the Lord, our commitment as His disciples will be stronger, and we may continually renew and foster our families’ bonds.

PRAYER OF PARENTS:

God, our Father, I thank you
for the gift of
my children and for the privilege
and responsibility
of being a parent, for this is my way
of holiness.
May I regard each of my children as
a sacred pledge
of Your love and a beautiful sign of
Your confidence in me.
Help me to pass on to my children
our greatest treasures -
faith in Your truths, hope in
Your goodness,
love in Your name for all.
I entrust my children to
Your loving care.
Banish from our home any
bitterness or lack of forgiveness.
Let us have time, deep concern,
and a sense of
sacrifice for one another. Teach us
never to be ashamed
that we are, in name and in fact, a
Catholic family
striving to live in the way of Jesus,
Who is head of our home.
Give us Your Holy Spirit to
unite us throughout
this life and let the circle of our
family be
unbroken in the Kingdom of Your
Son Jesus Christ,
our Lord. Amen.

School Improvement Plan Update

The mission of St. Mary on the Hill parish school is probably quite familiar to our faith community by now: “In a Christ-centered atmosphere, the mission is... to teach, to learn and to become faith-filled servants of Jesus.” What may not be so well-known is the in-depth research and efforts going on behind the scenes. These combine to create the very finest in both academic and Catholic formation so our students truly can be effective servants of Jesus and leaders in their communities.

St. Mary’s is accredited by both the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Florida Catholic Conference (FCC). The FCC sets standards for all Catholic schools in the state of Florida and the diocese of Savannah. Our school has met FCC standards annually since its initial accreditation in 1998 and completed reaccreditation in 2012.

“The teachers, students, parents and school community completed a School Improvement Plan through surveys, research, meetings, and focus groups to gather information,” Principal Joe McBride says. “We also had an on-site visit where our School Improvement Plan was reviewed and affirmed.”

Implementation of the plan began in the 2012-2013 school year and focuses on math, language arts, and written expression.

“We have already implemented a new phonics program in kindergarten and first grade, new supplementary math programs in fourth through eighth grades as well as new writing programs in all grades,” Mr. McBride says. “All the programs have been well-received. The teachers have given feedback to make the programs work better after using them this last year.”

Mr. McBride also notes one of the keys to the school’s vibrancy: “The goals are never fully accomplished. They are ongoing until we go through the process again in five years. We make adjustments and tweaks for continuous improvement as we go along.” For instance, this year the writing program will be adapted to make it flow better based on the school’s curriculum.

In addition, the supplementary math program, *Simple Solutions*, will be expanded to include the kindergarten, first and sixth grade classrooms so they are in



line with the other grades. Mr. McBride says that with all the changes taking place as part of the plan, he has been especially impressed with how the students and teachers have embraced this math program.

“The math program allows the children to try things they have not tried before while keeping the information already covered in front of them to help with continued mastery,” Mr. McBride says.

One of the strengths noted in the on-site visit was the Catholic identity of St. Mary’s school and its success in creating an environment that fosters our faith. Even with these accolades however, Mr. McBride says school officials continually look at how they can increase the formation of our students in our Catholic faith.

With such careful thought and planning and the wonderful support of our parish, St. Mary on the Hill School will remain a rich blessing to our community for years to come.

The Elijah Cup Ministry

By Maria M
Parishioner/Elija

As far as ministries go, participating in the Elijah Cup ministry is one of the easiest: you sign up, pick up the chalice at the designated Mass, and bring it home as a visible reminder to pray for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life. There is nothing complicated about it and, truthfully, in the hectic pace of our day-to-day lives it is nice to participate in something which gives us a moment to pause, gather as a family, and pray. But two years ago the idea of praying for vocations took on new meaning for our family when, in the very same week, we hosted the Elijah Cup and welcomed a nun from Tanzania into our home.



Maria Novajoksy and Sr. Gaudiosa of Tanzania. Participating in the Elijah Cup ministry means praying for future vocations, as well as existing ones.

When Sr. Gaudiosa arrived, wearing her simple, blue habit and speaking with a heavy accent, we were immediately drawn to her. We knew this was her first experience living with an American family, so we were determined to make her feel welcome. We took her to the World of Coca-Cola in Atlanta to sample sodas from around the world, we visited the Augusta Museum of History where she was fascinated by the James Brown exhibit, we watched *The Lion King* (her first animated feature) during which she taught us that *Simba* and *Rafiki* were the Swahili words for *king* and *friend*, and after a visit to the DuPont Planetarium in Aiken, my husband, Joe, and our boys used flashlights and tennis balls to teach her about the Solar System.

But while we were showing her things of the world, Sister was showing us how to move through this world in faith, whether it was by finding quiet time for prayer,



The Elijah Cup is a visual reminder to pray for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and religious life. Here, the Novajosky family keeps the Elijah Cup on their kitchen table where they gather to pray.



Sr. Gaudiosa visits Timothy's Kindergarten class

having a genuine interest in everyone she met, or finding joy in the simplest things. For Sister, everything related to God. One evening she and I went to see *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and as we were driving home she suddenly started singing a song from her childhood about the roar of a lion being the voice of God. I will never forget that moment.

So, that week when we gathered around the kitchen table to pray for vocations, Sister's presence reinforced the true purpose of the Elijah Cup. The ministry is based on

Kings 1:17 in which Elijah tells the poor widow of Zaraheth that if she makes him a small loaf of bread with the very last of her flour and oil, then neither her jug of flour nor her jug of oil will ever run dry. And this is the heart of the Elijah Cup ministry, for if we pray with the faith of the widow of Zaraheth, our cup will never run dry and we will continue to be blessed with vocations.

There is no doubt that we need – that the *world* needs – people like Sr. Gaudiosa. People are naturally drawn to that which is good and holy, and time and time again we witnessed how complete strangers approached Sister simply because of her vocation: the German student at the airport who, upon noticing that Sister was terrified of the escalator, not only helped her on and off, but also escorted her all the way to her gate; the businessman who offered to buy her lunch because she reminded him of a nun who taught him in grade school; the ticket agent who waived her fine for overweight luggage when he realized that everything she owned in the world was in those two suitcases.

Prayer: One Family's Story

Novajosky
Elijah Cup minister

On the last evening Sister was with us we held a dinner party in her honor. At one point she stood up to make a speech, and in her soft-spoken voice she addressed everyone by name as she promised pray for us. Then, dancing and using hand gestures, she sang us a song about *Mungu* (God) being present in the east, the west, the south, the north. *Mungu*, she sang, is everywhere. For someone who walks through this world in poverty, she gave us everything with that song.

There was not a dry eye in the room, and I marveled how this nun – with her quiet voice and humble manner, with her ready laughter and adventuresome spirit – managed to touch us in so many ways. Yes, *Mungu* is everywhere, and *Mungu* was there in that

room shining through this quiet Sister from a small village in eastern Africa.

Recently our family once again signed up for the Elijah Cup. This time Sr. Gaudiosa wasn't with us, but we felt her presence when we gathered around the kitchen table. One day she will return to Tanzania and take what she has learned and adapt that knowledge to address the needs of her community, and we know that wherever she goes we will always be connected in prayer. The same night we brought home the chalice Sister and I spoke on the phone and, as usual, our conversation ends like this: I ask her if there is anything – anything at all – which she needs, and she always replies by asking for one thing, and one thing only.

"Pray for me," she says simply. "Just pray."

Participating in the Elijah Cup Ministry is a meaningful and impactful way to support both existing as well as future vocations. Prayer is at the heart of this ministry, and while prayer suggestions are included with the chalice, there is no right or wrong way to pray for vocations. The important thing is to pray. If you'd like to participate, please sign up in the narthex for the specific Mass in which the cup is scheduled, or by contacting Miriam Cortez-Cooper at (706) 414-8007 or mcortezcooper@gmail.com.

Celebrating 100 Years of Catholic Education

There will be a Mass of Thanksgiving with Bishop Emeritus J. Kevin Boland on Oct. 19 at 5:00 p.m., to celebrate 100 years of Catholic schools playing an active role in our community. Immediately following Mass, there will be a reception at St.

Mary on the Hill Catholic School, which will include collections of historical memorabilia and an updated history booklet about the century of Catholic education in our community. Please join us for this special Mass and event!



St. Gregory the Great *Laboring for the Kingdom of God*

Sept. 3 is the feast day of St. Gregory the Great. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the Feast of St. Gregory also falls around the time when Americans make our national observance of Labor Day. While a shining example of Christian virtue, St. Gregory the Great also sheds light on the fuller value and purpose of labor and human work.

St. Gregory was born in Rome around 540 to a wealthy family, with several family members noted for holiness of life. He was raised and educated during times of great trial, both for the Church in general, and for Rome, a city besieged by several waves of barbarians.

Gregory was made prefect of Rome at a young age. He struggled with the call to give all in following Christ, but finally chose a monastic life, donating his estates to the founding of monasteries. His three years of monastic seclusion were some of the most enjoyable of his life.

Once Gregory was ordained as a deacon, he was sent to the Court of Byzantium as ambassador, where he struggled greatly with the Court's worldly atmosphere. Having provided, with some difficulty, six years of faithful service to the Court, he was joyfully recalled to Rome. Gregory was appointed abbot of St. Andrew's Monastery, which under his leadership, produced many monks who were later renowned for holiness of life. He was later chosen to be a missionary to England. This demonstrates how well-known Gregory must have been by this

time, for after he was sent away, an uprising immediately arose among the populace of Rome. A team of messengers was then dispatched to bring him back, which they successfully did.

The death of Pope Pelagius II in 590 led to Gregory being immediately chosen by the clergy and people of Rome as the pope's successor. Some sources suggest that Gregory was dragged from his bed, while others maintain that he fled from the city and hid for three days.

Despite his initial unwillingness to accept the burden of the papacy, Gregory spent the final 14 years of his life devoting all of his energy towards his work as pope.

Gregory's life produced fruit that would continue to mature for centuries to come — guidance for the care of souls, reformation of the liturgy, sending missionaries to spread faith abroad, reform of the clergy and much more. He is arguably one of the greatest foundational supports of Medieval Europe, and thus, of our own society today.

Americans celebrate Labor Day, the yearly tribute given to our country's workers. The day's purpose is to remind us of the real social and economic contributions made through the early Labor Movement, up to workers in the present day.

As Catholics, we can also celebrate Labor Day with a deeper Christian understanding of its purpose.

Jesus spoke often about "the Kingdom of God," and He taught us that it is already here — however, not



in its perfect, final form. Christians receive the Kingdom at baptism, and they also build it inside themselves through the varied ways of working to grow in personal holiness. They also work to build the kingdom, just as Gregory did, by offering Christ-like service in all areas of their lives. Thus, in our own Christian lives, we continue the exact same work that St. Gregory performed, and to which all of us are called, in building of the Kingdom of God.

St. Gregory is one of the most influential figures of the early medieval period. He affected all of Christendom, and the entire modern Western world, through the gift of all that he had to give. When Gregory arrived at the moment of his death, he surely heard our Lord say to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your master" (Mt. 25:21). What a joyful greeting and reward that awaits those who follow his example!

Pastor Letter *continued from front cover*

This past February, I was fortunate to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with members of the Order along with several of our parishioners. It was a fantastic experience and we were blessed to have Fr. Peter F. Vasko guide us on our journey. Fr. Peter, a native New Yorker, entered the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land in 1981, after a 10-year career in marketing and public relations. For centuries the Franciscans have been taking care of the sites in the Holy Land that are significant to our faith. Ordained in 1987, Fr. Peter has lived for many years in Jerusalem and served four consecutive terms on the governing board of the Franciscan Custody in the Holy Land, which represents six Middle East countries. He served on both the Custody's Finance and Sanctuary Boards and was formerly editor of the *Holy Land Review*, a quarterly archaeological, biblical and historical overview of the Holy Land.

Presently, Fr. Peter is President of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land, an organization created

to provide a worldwide voice for Christians living in the Holy Land and to ensure the continued Christian presence in the area. I have invited Fr. Peter to speak at all weekend Masses on September 28th and 29th. I am thrilled that he is able to do so. The Christian presence is dwindling quickly in the Holy Land. Fr. Peter is leading the charge to reverse that trend. I know that once you hear his story, you will be generous in supporting his work. You can use either the mission co-op envelope that is in your monthly packet or the special envelope that will be handed out with the bulletins on the weekend of September 21st and 22nd. Please make your check payable to FFHL (Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land).

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

Ad Placement

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Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth

Parent Presentation

**Wednesday, September 18, 2013
6:30 - 9:00 p.m.**

at St. Mary on the Hill Parish Hall

A light summer supper is included and child care is available.

*Please RSVP by Friday, September 13, 2013
so we can plan accordingly.*



*Registration forms may be
picked up in the Church office or
in the Narthex.*

*Partnering with Parents
to Bring Home the Faith*