

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL

CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

Let Us Renew Our Efforts to Give Out of Love as Good Stewards

Dear Parishioners,

If your calendar looks like mine, then we all know that everything is shifting back into “high gear,” as they say. Schools are back in session; most people are home from vacation; clubs, organizations and ministries are back at work full-time; and life is suddenly more hectic. As I looked at the calendar for September, certain things became obvious to me. These were accentuated by a comment someone made to me recently about how Pope Francis made them proud to be a Catholic.

I think I grasped the significance of that, and it has a September theme. We begin the month with Labor Day on the 1st. Last year Pope Francis said, “Work is fundamental to the dignity of a person... It gives one the ability to maintain oneself, one’s family, to contribute to the growth of one’s own nation.” That is certainly true as we honor our workers on Labor Day and reflect on the dignity of “labor.” Every human

being enjoys a basic right to be respected – not because of any title, position, prestige, or accomplishment, but first of all because we are created in the image and likeness of God. God bless all those who labor. What we do to maintain the fabric of our culture through our work is not just a blessing, but an important part of our stewardship in relation to our lives and our society.



The second aspect of the September calendar which seemed significant to me was that Friday, Sept. 5, is the Feast Day of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Small in stature, but so very Catholic in everything she represented and did, Blessed Teresa was an important

part of my own perception of what it meant to be Catholic and Christian. It is difficult to believe that she has been gone for 17 years. She was the absolute epitome of what it meant to be Catholic, to love and to serve. She represented a living example of stewardship in our lifetimes. What she had to say about

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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“So whether you eat or drink, or
whatever you do, do everything
for the glory of God.”
-1 Cor 10:31

LABOR DAY:

A Stewardship Point of View

Each Labor Day, most of us enjoy relaxing and having a good time with friends and family. And of course, who doesn't like a day off? But as we celebrate the unofficial “last day of summer,” we rarely take the time to think about the origins and meaning of Labor Day. And what does the holiday mean to us as workers of the Catholic faith?

Labor Day is a creation of the labor movement, and is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers. It constitutes an annual acknowledgment of the many contributions that workers have made to the strength and prosperity of our country. The first Labor Day holiday was celebrated in New York City on Sept. 5, 1882, in accordance with the plans of the Central Labor Union.

As devoted Catholics continually searching for the best way to follow Christ in our daily lives, it is good for us to consider the spiritual significance of Labor Day.

We are all co-workers in the Lord's vineyard, called to the noble mission of serving God and others. When we are working at our individual places of employment, we can always do a diligent and honest job, no matter what it takes. When serving in parish ministries, we can be punctual, kind, generous, and faithful to the teachings of the Church. When at home with our families, we can teach our children how to work hard and feel proud of a job well done. We can also take the time to thank those who work hard on our behalf. And when we acknowledge the hard work performed by mail carriers, and retail and food service workers, we can make an effort to give those who serve us a pat on the back, and show our respect for God's gift of work in our lives.

Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta encouraged the faithful to “do small things with great love.” This month, as we celebrate Labor Day, try driving to work with a rejuvenated, grateful attitude. You can also love God as you work hard at your job, allowing joy to come into your heart. You will experience your labor as something that increases your dignity as a person, and as something that disciplines your being – thus sanctifying your soul for the glory of your Creator.

St. Joseph, patron of workers, pray for us!

We can take the time to thank those who work hard on our behalf. And when we acknowledge the hard work performed by mail carriers, and retail and food service workers, we can make an effort to give those who serve us a pat on the back, and show our respect for God's gift of work in our lives.

CCD Helps Strengthen the Faith Foundation of Students and Catechists Alike

Here at St. Mary on the Hill, the CCD religious education program gives parish children the opportunity to learn and grow in their faith. Through catechism and Sacramental Preparation classes, CCD ensures that students have a consistent knowledge of the tenets of the Catholic faith, and it even helps CCD catechists to reinforce their own faith and values.

CCD classes meet every Sunday morning at St. Mary on the Hill School.

Children can begin attendance in kindergarten, and continue on with formal classes until they finish eighth grade. Students then go through seven weeks of instructional classes until they are confirmed in the fall of their ninth-grade year. CCD also includes Sacramental Preparation classes, which can include various ages in the same class. These classes are designed to cater to students who have “fallen through the cracks” due to frequent moves, or students from families who have recently entered or returned to the Church.

“Our kids are past the second-grade level, which is when the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion happen at our parish, but under the age for Confirmation,” explains Fran Blocker, who assists Sheryl Werrick in teaching Sacramental Preparation. “We sometimes have a challenge when we have people from one end of the age spectrum to another, but it’s such a joy to be a part of that growing process for them.”

Fran, who started out teaching fourth and fifth-grade classes, has been working with Sheryl in Sacramental Preparation for the past 10 years. Sheryl, who has been a part of the CCD program for 19 years, also started out teaching fourth-grade classes. Both Fran and Sheryl became involved with CCD through their children’s attendance.

“I thought, ‘If I bring them to Sunday class, I can help out also,’” Sheryl says. “Of course, they are adults now, and I have continued [in the program]. I enjoy teaching about God’s love, what He expects of us, and



(From left) Fran Blocker and Sheryl Werrick

the ultimate reward that we will have. It is also a learning experience for me.”

“My children started going to CCD, so why not do something productive while they were attending class?” Fran says. “I always think that people should find at least one area of the church that they can contribute to. If you don’t do anything in your church, you never really feel connected. So this is one of the ways you can do that.”

In Sacramental Preparation, the year is split up into different sections.

“In the first part of the year, we teach about Reconciliation, and then participate in their First Confession along with their families,” Sheryl says. “We go over the Ten Commandments, as ‘God’s rules’ for us to live by. We talk about original sin and explain that when we sin, we are hurting God, others and ourselves. We talk about ways to avoid sin, but stress that God will forgive our sins if we are truly sorry and ask for forgiveness.”

“The second half of the year includes preparation for First Communion,” she continues. “We try to help them understand the teachings of Jesus and the sacrifice He made for us, and the importance of the Body and Blood of Christ that we receive every Sunday in Mass. We also try to incorporate some fun things that they can also do related to the topics.”

Through CCD, Sheryl and Fran hope to strengthen the faith foundation that children receive at home.

“We try to explain and build upon what parents have already exposed them to,” Fran says.

“I always tell them that their faith will continue to grow as long as they continue to go to Mass, listen to God’s Word and, above all, remember that God loves them,” Sheryl says. “Hopefully, giving them the foundation of our faith will encourage them to learn more and try to stay focused on God’s love for them.”

For more information about the CCD program, or to get involved as a volunteer, please contact the parish office at 706-733-6627.

Sacristans Perform Simple but Essential Role in Our Church

Parish sacristans perform a most important role here at St. Mary on the Hill. Along with the presiding priest, they are able to serve the congregation by preparing the sanctuary and altar for Mass. For many parishioners who choose to serve as sacristans, it is both an honor and a privilege.

Tim Wright has been a parishioner at St. Mary on the Hill since his conversion to the Catholic faith in 1989, and he has since served as a sacristan and Eucharistic Minister for many years.

“Ten or 15 years ago, I was setting up for Mass and one of the priests put me in charge of the Sacristans Ministry,” Tim says. “There wasn’t a list of sacristans at the time – we just had people who always did it. It was probably when stewardship started here at St. Mary’s, so back in the ‘90s. We really didn’t know anything about sacristans, we just had a group of ladies that always set up for Mass.”

Sacristans are responsible for setting up the bread and wine, and placing them on the altar. Eucharistic Ministers are responsible for cleaning and purifying the vessels after Mass, so a sacristan’s job is simple and does not require much time.

“You just get to Mass about 15 minutes early, and set up the wine and the hosts and put them out for Mass,” Tim says. “You get the cups and bowls and everything needed for Mass, set them up on the table, pour the wine in the pure containers and set them on the altar. One of the priests referred to a sacristan’s job as ‘preparing the table for the Lord.’ We just make sure everything is ready for the priest to use during Mass.”

As the coordinator for the Sacristans Ministry, Tim sets up a rotating schedule for all sacristans based on

“It’s a job that needs to be done to help the priest. The sacristan’s job is an integral part of the Mass because it has to be done. It’s not time-consuming – it’s just 10 minutes on a Sunday, when you’ll be at Mass anyway. And it’s enjoyable. To me, there’s a lot of satisfaction in doing it.” – Tim Wright



their Mass preferences. Generally, the same sacristan serves the first Saturday each month, and another the second Saturday, and so on.

“I send out the schedules and it ends up being pretty much the same people serving the same week every month,” Tim says. “Some like to be sacristans on whatever Sunday of the month that they serve as a Eucharistic Minister. People usually choose the particular Sunday that they like to serve. We like to keep people doing their regularly scheduled day each month to keep things simple.”

For those who wish to become sacristans, the parish has a simple training program. Existing sacristans train the newcomers as they set up for Mass on their regular Sundays.

“It’s a job that needs to be done to help the priest,” Tim says. “The sacristan’s job is an integral part of the Mass because it has to be done. It’s not time-consuming – it’s just 10 minutes on a Sunday, when you’ll be at Mass anyway. And it’s enjoyable. To me, there’s a lot of satisfaction in doing it.”

Tim and the other sacristans feel blessed to be able to serve the parish in such a special way.

“There’s not a whole lot to it, but it needs to be done, and I just enjoy doing it,” Tim says. “It’s part of the Church, and it’s just kind of my way of doing my part and fulfilling my stewardship role.”

For more information on the Sacristans Ministry, or to volunteer, please contact the parish office at 706-733-6627.

RCIA at St. Mary's Begins in September



The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the Church's way to initiate its new members and thereby guide them through the process of becoming Catholic. Adults who are unbaptized (known as Catechumens) enter the church through baptism. Those who are already baptized (known as candidates) enter the church by making a profession of faith.

St. Mary's conducts classes to ensure those contemplating living out their faith in the fullness of the Catholic Church are fully aware of the church's teachings, and understand what they are professing when they agree to believe in what the church teaches.

Becoming a member of the Catholic Church is not like joining the "Catholic Club." Rather, it is a decision made by one's conscience, with full knowledge of what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, and to live out that faith within the beliefs and precepts of the Catholic Church.

Everyone's faith journey is a time of formation and conversion. Faith formation, in part, involves learning about the faith, practices and doctrines. But it is also about conversion. Conversion is a time for growth in the awareness of our relationship with God and with the Catholic Church. We ask RCIA participants to bring an open heart and mind. In this way, they will learn to

live out their call to be a disciple of Jesus within the Catholic faith.

Our classes this year will be held on Monday evenings at 7 p.m. in the parish hall. Classes run from September through March. The catechumens and candidates will be received into the church at the Easter Vigil liturgy. Classes are facilitated by fully credentialed instructors. These include priests, deacons, and religious instructors from Aquinas High School and St. Mary's School. Deacon Ken Maleck and Rebecah Grady are the co-directors of St. Mary's RCIA program.

In addition to those who have never been baptized, the RCIA program is also appropriate for those who are baptized and have joined us from another Christian tradition. Our classes will give the candidates the knowledge and experience of what it means to be a Catholic Christian. For a person to become Catholic, they are not baptized again. One may come into "Full Communion" by a period of study and participation in liturgy with our community. The Catholic Church respects your Christian upbringing and the faith experiences that are part of your life. Becoming Catholic does not mean rejecting your previous faith background. You can now live it out in the Catholic Church.

RCIA is also encouraged for adult Catholics who would like to

complete the Sacraments of Initiation – Eucharist and Confirmation.

Expectations for those involved in the RCIA process are to participate in the weekly sessions and liturgical celebrations. We attend Mass, and the faith community will witness to your commitment and come to know you and pray for you.

We meet in a classroom, but it shouldn't be considered a "class." We want you to discover God on a personal level. There are no tests, no grades. The goal is conversion through a "change of heart."

The first two months of RCIA is a time of inquiry. Faith in God and the decision to become a member of the Catholic Church are personal choices that must be made in an atmosphere of complete freedom. We will try our best to help you understand what it means to be a Catholic Christian. But we sincerely believe that you must be allowed to use God's gifts of conscience and free will without feeling any pressure from the RCIA team.

Pope Francis continually asks us to "Go forth and evangelize." What better way to act upon these words than to ask a friend, relative, neighbor, or acquaintance to prayerfully consider living out their faith in the Catholic Church? Invite them to come to our RCIA program to discover and nurture their faith life as a member of the Catholic Church.

Celebrating a New Ministry at St. Mary's

"The family that prays together, stays together." - Fr. Patrick Peyton



Family life may be under attack, but St. Mary's Strong Catholic Family/Strong Catholic Youth Ministry isn't going to just sit back and remain passive.

"This new parish ministry is very important because nowadays, families are so torn apart," says Joan Purucker, who serves as co-director of Religious Education along with Barbara Kareis. "They have become so split up that they don't even have time to eat together anymore. Anything we can do as a parish to promote the family is essential. When the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry surveyed teenagers, they found that they actually do want to spend time with their families, but they just don't know how to go about asking to do so. As a ministry, we are here to partner up with families and listen to them. We want to hear what they have to say, and help provide ways for them to learn about their faith and experience it together."

The Strong Catholic Family/Strong Catholic Youth Ministry is an initiative that helps to bring families together in prayer, service and formation. It provides families with information and opportunities to build up their faith. The idea to have such an outreach was initiated by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. This organization has been working steadily with dioceses throughout the nation, including the Diocese of Savannah, to promote such ministries in parishes.

"I've gotten very positive feedback about our ministry," Joan says. "The families who participate in it enjoy it and are very appreciative of the fact that we are promoting family life. We know that a strong Catholic

family can strengthen the whole Church, as well as the community."

This past year, the ministry hosted a few dinners with parish families to kick off the initiative, as well as to listen to their insights of what they feel they need from the parish.

One day last spring, the ministry arranged service activities for families to come and do together, such as volunteering at the local soup kitchen, visiting a nursing home, or baking cookies for soldiers.

"The service day went very well," Joan says. "The families enjoyed themselves, and they liked doing a service activity together as a family. Often, service activities are only for adults or teenagers earning Confirmation hours, but that wasn't the case this time."

In June, the initiative launched an innovative spin on our parish's Vacation Bible School – VBS – program.

"We held VBS for three evenings and the whole family was invited," Joan says. "Together, family members learned about the Bible, sang songs and did crafts, all to the theme of 'Wilderness Escape.' This year, VBS was there to share as a family!"

To the question, "What can you do to promote world peace?" Blessed Mother Teresa once said, "Go home and love your family." The Strong Catholic Family/Strong Catholic Youth Ministry puts this response into practice in a dynamic way.

The ministry is open to anyone – including you! Now is the time jump on board. To find out more about this fantastic ministry, please see the Ministry Catalog and upcoming parish bulletins, or call Joan Purucker at 706-733-6627.

Pastor's Letter *continued from front cover*

our lives and how we should live them became some of the more quotable illustrations of living stewardship that we reflect upon today. For example, she said, "It is not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving." That is our challenge as we begin the busy part of our year, to do everything we do with love.

Finally, on Sunday, Sept. 14, we celebrate the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The Cross has enormous meaning to us as Catholics. How many times do we make the Sign of the Cross to signify the Holy Trinity and to remember that the Cross represents so much to us? It is a renewal of our Baptism every time we make the Sign of the Cross.

Some 1,700 years ago, St. Helen discovered the true cross in Jerusalem. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was built on that spot, and it was dedicated on Sept. 14, 335, thus our veneration of the Cross on that date.

When we make the Sign of the Cross, we are also indicating our discipleship, our pledge to be good stewards. Whether it is in our labors that we glorify God, in serving the Lord and others with love, or constantly reminding ourselves of Christ's salvation of us on the Cross, we need to constantly rededicate ourselves to service and stewardship. This month – when we revive so much in our parish – is a good time to do that. Blessed Mother Teresa also said, "The needs are great, and none of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful."

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

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Baptisms

Lillian Marie Bentley
Daughter of Reed and Cassidy
Bentley

Katie Speight Funsch
Daughter of Nicholas and Alice
Funsch

Samuel Allen Townsend
Son of Norman and Holly
Townsend

Mary Maeve Dinos
Daughter of Jeffrey and Jordan
Dinos

Noah Joseph Caldwell
Son of Chase and Cathleen
Caldwell

Andrew Michael Sanchez
Son of Michael and April
Sanchez

Brendan Michael McArdle
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Roland