

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL
CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

Renewal During Advent and the Year of Faith

Dear Parishioners,

Pope Benedict tells us that the Year of Faith is a “summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the One Savior of the world” (*Porta Fidei* 6). In other words, the Year of Faith is an opportunity for Catholics to experience a conversion — to turn back to Jesus and enter into a deeper relationship with him. The “door of faith” is opened at one’s baptism, but during this year Catholics are called to open it again, walk through it, and rediscover and renew their relationship with Christ and his Church.

And there is no better time to begin that renewal than the season of Advent. So, as we begin a New Year in the Church with the First Sunday of Advent, I encourage you to renew your belief in the Incarnation. Renew your belief in a God who loves us so much that he became one of us. Renew your belief that he continues to be present to us in the Sacraments, especially in the Eucharist.

I see the Year of Faith as a time to get back to the basics. So, I am encouraging all those who are not getting to Sunday Mass every week to get back to this very foundational practice of our faith. God can do all things, so somehow He will speak his love to you. But it is so much

easier when we put ourselves in the path of that love. Allow God to speak to your heart in and through the Sunday Eucharist. Advent and Christmas are the perfect seasons to renew your commitment to going to Mass each week. If it has been a long time since you’ve been to the sacraments, than I’d also encourage you to attend the Advent Penance Service on Monday, Dec. 3. Many compassionate priests will be available to share with you the merciful love of God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

I am proud to be a Knight of Columbus because the Knights are always promoting the basics of faith. In a time when all things religious are being discouraged and swept away, it’s refreshing to know that the Knights of Columbus sponsor the Keep Christ in Christmas campaign to remind people that Christmas is, above all, a holy day celebrating the birth of Christ.

Keeping Christ in Christmas is keeping the very heart and meaning of the Christmas celebration alive. To celebrate the birth of the Son of God, I join with the Knights in offering the following suggestions you can use to help in keeping Christ in Christmas.

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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Keeping Things in Perspective This Christmas

Christmas season is upon us. We have started making our gift lists and checking them twice. Of course, we will include family and friends on our lists. But we may also include teachers, coaches, and even service workers, such as newspaper deliverers or mail carriers. We want to give everyone a gift, showing our love and appreciation for all they do during the year. The idea of holiday gift giving — to show love and gratefulness to others who have touched our lives — is certainly parallel to the concept of stewardship.

Stewardship — returning a portion, or gift, to God in love and thankfulness — follows the very same pattern. We give a gift to Him to express our thanks. Think of all God has done for you this year, and how his love has impacted you. Maybe He has answered a special prayer petition, or provided a job for an unemployed loved one. He may

have helped safely bring a new baby into the family, or has brought peace during a difficult time. The blessings are no doubt countless. These abundant gifts God bestows on us are given to us freely out of His love — even though we are unworthy to receive them.

Now think of all the ways you respond to these bountiful blessings. How do you choose to show God your thankfulness? As we prepare for the coming of Jesus during Advent, do we remember to add His name to our list? When we check Grandpa's name on our list, are we also including a gift to Christ? It is His birthday we are celebrating, after all.

The very first name on the list — above our spouse, children, relatives and friends — should be God's name. As good stewards, we are called to give God our "first fruits," and not what is left over. His name

should not be added to our list out of guilt, or as an afterthought. We should instead joyfully desire to place God first on our list for the same reason we want to give gifts to the others on our list — out of love and appreciation.

Stewardship allows us to tangibly give a Christmas gift to God through our time, talents and treasure. Why not spend an hour in the church adoring God, or pray a Rosary to share your time with Him? Perhaps you might bring a meal to a family going through a difficult time, or watch an infant for a young mother so she can prepare for Christmas. Providing an extra offering by way of the Christmas envelope is also a perfect way to share your treasure with God. Whatever choice you make this season, make the decision to be a good Christmas steward.



How do you choose to show God your thankfulness? As we prepare for the coming of Jesus during Advent, do we remember to add His name to our list? When we check Grandpa's name on our list, are we also including a gift to Christ?

Grandparents Leave Legacy at St. Mary's Catholic School

According to Principal Joe McBride, St. Mary's Catholic School has a unique relationship with its grandparents.

"Many of our grandparents also attended or sent their own children to St. Mary's Catholic School," says Mr. McBride.

"They have left a legacy that we are building on today. They have laid a strong foundation of the importance of Catholic education in their children's lives, and we want to honor that legacy and continue to nurture what they started."

In order to recognize the grandparents of St. Mary's students, the school held its annual Grandparents' Day on Nov. 20. Festivities kicked off with Mass at 9:15 a.m. for both students and grandparents, followed by a reception in the cafeteria.

After Mass and the reception, the grandparents visited their grandchild's classroom. Some classes gave presentations, while others offered demonstrations of students' work for the grandparents to see.

Mr. McBride greatly enjoyed watching the students' reactions when their grandparents entered the classrooms.

"It was great to see the reaction of a student when they see their grandparent — who they didn't know was coming — walk through the classroom door and surprise them," Mr. McBride says. "Those types of moments make a huge impression on the kids and grandparents, and are really neat to witness."

Honoring grandparents and letting them know how much they are appreciated is important to St. Mary's Catholic School. Many grandparents share of their time

and talent through their involvement in school activities, even though they no longer have children attending the school.

"We have grandparents that help out at the school on a daily basis by volunteering in the classroom and driving on field trips, or attending sporting events or drama performances for their grandchild," says Mr. McBride. "Others support the school through their commitment to stewardship of treasure at the parish. In addition, some of the grandparents are also helping to raise their grandchildren, and therefore have a dual role."

But no matter what grandparents' particular role may be, the school wants them to know that they are cherished.

"We want to honor those who have made our lives possible and to thank them for all that they do for us," Mr. McBride says. "It also gives us an opportunity to show what Catholic education is all about for grandparents who are not able to be

here on a regular basis."

Grandparents' Day is, most of all, an opportunity for the school to demonstrate its gratitude for all of its blessings. Without the continued support from the grandparents of St. Mary on the Hill parish, the school would not be the thriving, vibrant institution it is today.

"It is an excellent example of stewardship in action," Mr. McBride says. "Parishioners share of their gifts — time, talents or treasure — to build our school. We are thankful to every parishioner who supports us and shares in our goal to educate our children with the gift of Catholic education."



St. Mary on the Hill

Serving the Master —



Our Family: We are a community of 2,480 registered households. On average, 765 registered families contribute weekly to the support of the parish. We have a total of 3,492 ministry commitments (talent), 3,362 prayer commitments (time) and 874 offertory commitments (treasure). There were 109 families with youth commitment cards, indicating 463 ministry commitments, 355 prayer and 14 with pledges.

Our Income: In the fiscal year 2012, parish income totaled \$4,170,308 from the following sources:

- Weekly Offertory - \$3,772,051 which includes youth contributions of \$1,764
- Stocks, Bequests, Memorials, Restricted & Annual gifts - \$184,307
- Special collections - \$75,537
- Program & other Revenue - \$138,413



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 October 7, 2012 bulletin — it can be viewed with all fiscal year 2012 financial reports on our website, www.stmaryonthehill.org. Our total parish giving, excluding the BAA, was \$217,085 — plus \$38,000 budgeted but not expensed in the fiscal year 2012.



Diocesan Assessments: The Diocese of Savannah assesses a percentage of all parishes' income for the administrative works of the diocese. Our assessment for the fiscal year 2012 was \$215,544. Our parish is also assessed by the Southern Cross based on a percentage of registered parish families. The assessment for the fiscal year 2012 was \$25,334 while our Southern Cross collection was \$7,195. Over and above these assessments, for calendar year 2012, 645 of our families have pledged \$249,837 to the Bishop's Annual Appeal, which supports his ministries throughout South Georgia.

St. Mary's Catholic Church

- 2012 Annual Report

Education: Education is a major priority for our parish. In addition to the \$1,868,840 for our elementary school, which had 430 students enrolled in kindergarten through eighth grade, the church education and formation budget includes \$52,600 for other religious education, including our preschool, CCD program and adult education. Our Vacation Bible School had 60 preschool and 156 elementary school participants, while CCD educated 242 students. There were 178 kindergarteners, first and second graders from CCD and St. Mary's Catholic School 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 30 join our church this Easter after completing our RCIA class.

Overhead: Personnel costs for religious, lay salaries and all benefits were \$758,690. General overhead for utilities, maintenance, liability insurance and other general expenses was \$317,179. Capital improvements (renovations and equipment) totaled \$56,075. Because of the economy, only improvements that were necessary or paid for with designated gifts were undertaken, even though there is an ongoing list of needed projects for the church and school campuses.

Sacramental Activity: As a parish family, we baptized 70 children, nine adults, had 79 students prepared for First Communion, Confirmed 65 young adults and three adults, witnessed 11 marriages, performed five convalidations and buried 46 of our loved ones.

Our School: The church support of \$1,868,840 (a decrease of \$50,000) is the main source of revenue for the school. Other sources of revenue for the school are from tuition, which was \$486,145 — an increase over the previous year of \$65,000 and registration of \$124,260. Development income was \$23,260 from the annual PJC golf tournament and donations/memorials of \$1,200. The annual PJC golf tournament netted \$18,300 which was transferred to the School Endowment Fund in June. Other income includes supply fees, book fees, field trips, athletic contributions and PTO support, which were \$30,000 and \$15,000 respectively.

Facility improvements included replacing the flat roof in the cafeteria and gym (paid with proceeds from the construction escrow account and sale of scrap materials), replacing the gym lights (with installation provided by volunteers over a weekend) and having a shade made to cover the gym west window. Endowment funds paid for the replacement of the phone system and 10 classroom projectors.



December 8: *The Feast of the Immaculate Conception*

When it comes to Catholic trivia, there is one simple question that often evokes an incorrect response: "What is the Immaculate Conception?"

More often than not, this term is believed to designate Christ's conception within Mary, through the power of the Holy Spirit. A good guess, no doubt. But it is 100 percent incorrect!

The term "Immaculate Conception" describes the state of Mary's soul within the womb of her mother, St. Anne. It has nothing to do with a special type of generative conception by her parents — Mary's body was formed in the usual manner by her mother and father.

Instead, the term "Immaculate Conception" describes how Mary was preserved from the stain of original sin from the first moment of her existence.

Every man since Adam and Eve has been born with the stain of original sin, which can be washed away in the cleansing waters of Baptism. Yet, this fallen state never touched the soul of Mary, the new Eve. She was conceived with original sanctity and innocence, escaping all faults, depraved emotions and passions, and remained sinless. She was not exempt from the temporal penalties of Adam, however — including sorrow, physical illness and death.

The belief in Mary's Immaculate Conception has been held by the Church throughout history, though only officially declared a dogma in 1854 by Pope Pius IX. Highly de-

voted to the Blessed Virgin, Pius IX hoped the official definition would draw emphasis to the already existing belief, thereby inspiring deeper devotion to Mary. This dogma finds its roots in both Scripture and Tradition, and remains consistent with reason and the teachings of our early Church fathers.

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated every year on Dec. 8 and is one of the few declared Holy Days of Obligation on the Church calendar. All Catholics are obligated to attend Mass on this day.

Why not make this liturgical feast a special day of devotion? Bring a rose to place before an image of the Blessed Virgin in the church sanctuary, or arrange a little altar at home for your children to decorate. Recite the Magnificat and discuss the Church's teaching on the Immaculate Conception.

As our current Holy Father spoke during his homily on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in 2005, "On this feast day, let us thank the Lord for the great sign of his goodness which he has given us in Mary, his Mother and the Mother of the Church. Mary thus stands before us as a sign of comfort, encouragement and hope."

Once this beautiful feast is brought alive in our hearts and in our homes, we will never again mistakenly answer that "tricky" question: "What is the Immaculate Conception?"

The Magnificat

My soul proclaims the greatness
of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices
in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on
his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will
call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great
things for me,
and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on
those who fear him
in every generation.
He has shown the
strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in
their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty
from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with
good things,
and the rich he has
sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his
servant Israel
for he remembered
his promise of mercy,
the promise he
made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his
children for ever.

Renewal During Advent *continued from front cover*

During the Advent and Christmas Seasons, give the gift of yourself within your community and family. Give these or similar presents of friendship, understanding, kindness, love and compassion:

- Serve or prepare meals at the Masters Table.
- Bring presents to children or elderly people in the hospital.
- Visit someone who is shut-in.
- Send a Christmas card to someone you have not seen or talked to in years.
- Invite a friend or neighbor who will be alone to share your Christmas celebration.
- Reconcile with a friend or relative with whom you have quarreled. Apologize if you were wrong.
- Wish people you meet a good day, and a happy and holy Christmas.
- Get the family together to clean out all the closets and dressers. Donate usable clothing, shoes, blankets and other items to Catholic Social Service Thrift Shop.

— Send care packages to military personnel stationed overseas.

- Sing Christmas carols at nursing homes or hospitals.
- Supply hygiene products or new work boots to Catholic Social Services.

God came to earth to love us, so please share that love by undertaking one or more of the items listed above, and help make Christmas merry for someone else and yourself. And if you do come back to Mass during these holy seasons, please introduce yourself to me and let me know if this little encouragement helped.

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

Ad Placement

Saint Mary

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St. Mary on the Hill Church

Magnificat-Augusta
Mary Our Mother Chapter, Inc.

Leave a Legacy Stained Glass Windows Project
Donald and Dori Thorstad

In Memory of Bernard Mulherin
Chris and Susan Bowles
Donald and Dori Thorstad
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Mr. and Mrs. John Hutto
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In Memory of Bill Cooney
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In Memory of Mary Ann Kelly Wells
Mr. Gardelle Lewis
Fuller, Frost and Associates

In Memory of Red and Ann Douglas
Debbie Douglas Hendrix

In Honor of Interfaith Hospitality
Claudette Boskovich

In Honor of the Consolation Ministry
Mr. and Mrs. Carl Rhodes

Baptisms

Katharine Gwynn Cunningham
daughter of Khristen & Gwynn Cunningham

Cullen Daniel McKinney
son of Daniel & Colleen McKinney

Elijah Washington
son of Theodore & Juana Washington

John Bradford Deal
son of Brad & Karla Deal

Matthew Robert Darnell
son of Roy & Melanie Darnell

Caroline Lee Schonewolf
daughter of John & Hollee Schonewolf

Casey Vaughn Bentley
daughter of Reed & Cassidy Bentley

Henry James Townsend
son of Jarrett & Holly Townsend