

Saint Mary

ON THE HILL
CATHOLIC CHURCH



News and Notes from Fr. Jerry

Opportunities for Spiritual Growth in the New Year

Dear Parishioners,

I know many people think that the best New Year's resolution is not to make any resolutions — it is one that they feel they can always keep. But I like growth, especially spiritual growth, so I am always happy for any excuse to go deeper into the mystery of life. I am happy that a group of men from our faith community began the Year of Faith with a retreat that helped them be more committed to sharing God's love. I am happy for our parish school that helps our children explore the many mysteries of life, and connects them on a daily basis to God's great love. And I am happy for the Year of Faith that provides all of us a wonderful opportunity to grow in the spiritual life.

What will you do to grow closer to God in this New Year? Here are 10 "excuses" that might help you in the Year of Faith. If you followed all 10, you might consider your cause for canonization. But even if you only did a couple, I think you would grow a lot closer to God by the end of the year.

1. Participate in Mass. The Year of Faith is meant to promote the personal encounter with Jesus. This occurs most immediately in the Eucharist. Regular Mass attendance strengthens one's faith through the Scriptures, the Creed, other prayers, sacred music, the homily, receiving Communion and being part

of a faith community. We are blessed to have at least two Masses every day at St. Mary on the Hill.

2. Go to Confession. Like going to Mass, Catholics find strength and grow deeper in their faith through participation in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Confession urges people to turn back to God, express sorrow for falling short, and open their lives to the power of God's healing grace. It forgives the injuries of the past and provides strength for the future.

3. Learn about the lives of the saints. The saints are timeless examples of how to live a Christian life, and they provide endless hope. Not only were they sinners who kept trying to grow closer to God, but they also exemplify ways a person can serve God — through teaching, missionary work, charity, prayer, and simply striving to please God in the ordinary actions and decisions of daily life.

4. Read the Bible daily. Scripture offers firsthand access to the Word of God, and tells the story of human salvation. Catholics can pray the Scriptures — through *Lectio Divina* or other methods — in order to become more attuned to the Word of God. Either way, the Bible is a must for growth in the Year of Faith.

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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Stewardship

New Year's Resolutions and Stewardship

The beginning of the year is a popular time for personal reassessment. The earth has finished one more revolution around the sun, and swings low over the cold January horizon, just like last year. The days are shorter, and an evening of introspection seems more inviting. Somehow, when we take down the old calendar and tack up the new, we sense an opportunity to make a fresh start.

To make the best of this opportunity — which, truthfully, exists in June just as it does in January — it is useful to make firm commitments. It's even more useful to write them down. These resolutions, kept in a desk



drawer or on the refrigerator door, are a “hard copy” of our best intentions for self-improvement. They’re signposts that redirect our lives towards good, and towards God.

New Year’s resolutions are often focused on personal health — losing weight, relaxing more, or smoking less. It is certainly important, of course, to take good care of our bodies. But Christianity offers us a fuller concept of self-improvement. St. Paul reminds us that both the body and the soul need an exercise program. In fact, every aspect of our persons — physical, mental, spiritual, emotional — can benefit from an annual self-audit.

Some people have taken to heart this multi-faceted concept of the self, and each year make one resolution for each area. For instance, one could resolve to join a Rosary prayer group to work on spirituality, or take a continuing education course to build mental skills. Still, others use the three theological virtues — faith, hope and love — to guide their resolution-making process.

By now you may have discerned a similarity between New Year’s resolutions and stewardship commitments. First, we use a similar method to think about stewardship, by breaking it down into more specific concepts — time, talent and treasure. Second, to become better stewards, we write down our commitments. We record our good intentions to clarify exactly what they are — and to remind us of our commitment on the evenings when the Rosary group interferes with a bowl game.

Any serious commitment shares the same components — it is specific, and it is written. From marriages to mortgages, treaties to trades — serious resolutions are spelled out, both literally and figuratively.

But even more important than the methodology of a commitment is the heart of the person who makes it. Even the most well-written job descriptions are useless unless there is someone to do the job well! Let us pray that this new year is a time of grace and wisdom for those of us who seek to recommit our lives to our family, our parish, and our God.

Year of Faith Has Strong Beginning for Men's Prayer Group

by George Wisner

A group of 12 men from the St. Mary on the Hill Men's Prayer Group recently attended a week-end retreat at Hilton Head Island. Led by Mike Firmin, retired director of the Golden Harvest Food Bank, the Holy Spirit was definitely present and stirring the souls of these men to learn how to pray in order to deepen their Catholic faith, while also building a closer relationship with Jesus Christ.

The retreat began with the attendees prostrating themselves on the floor of the condominium to silently pray that the Holy Spirit would help remove any distractions they might have brought with them. The first session opened with Psalm 51, "Against you alone have I sinned, I have done such evil in your sight." This led to a discussion about how men want to be in control and self-protecting, which may lead many men to their primary sins. It was then discussed how men need to be relentless in rooting out their sins.

The sessions continued with the attendees learning about how the Catholic faith believes that the Holy Spirit is with us on earth until the end of time. The Holy Spirit is our way to experience God every day, but we must enter into a relationship with Jesus through daily prayer. How can we have a passion about Jesus if we do not know Him and have a relationship with Him through prayer and the Holy Spirit?

The men in attendance were reminded that their time on earth is but a snippet of eternity — yet if they waste this time or turn their souls over to the devil, then they will be condemned for eternity. They also learned that, as clearly stated in the New Testament, those who do not believe in Jesus Christ are condemned. The men then discussed how the devil is integrated in abortion,

and how contraception is a secondary way to prevent life — with the Catholic Church the only thing standing between the devil and total annihilation of the human race.

The attendees also learned to think of Jesus Christ as their big brother, and that the apostles did not have an advantage over us just because they knew Jesus

while on earth — indeed, the apostles did not really know Jesus until they received the Holy Spirit. The men also discussed how their life on earth is a means to their union with God

— therefore, they must be doers of their faith and constantly ask themselves, "What must we do?"

As the day came to a close, the attendees spent time learning how to pray. Mike Firmin explained the importance of shedding oneself from any distractions to prayer, such as overindulgences in jobs, hobbies, sports, drinking, television, and so forth. The men were taught "Four Reasons to Have a Prayer Life" — God deserves it, God requires it, it is good for us, and it is good for everyone else. The day finished with evening prayers and a trip to the beach. While a couple of the men braved the cool darkness for a quick dip in the ocean, other attendees were so filled with the Holy Spirit at the end of this great day that they broke out praying the Rosary as they walked a couple of miles along the beach. The retreat ended with Sunday morning Mass at St. Francis by the Sea Catholic Church. Amen, Amen!

If you would like to join the Men's Prayer Group, the members meet every Sunday morning at 8 a.m., at the Denny's Restaurant at the intersection of Interstate 20 and Washington Road.



(From left) George Wisner, Evan Scureman, Chad Sweeney, Michael Lammers, Mike Firmin, John Lint, George Ciamillo, Grzegorz Rempala, Keith Craw and Karl Quinn. Also present but not pictured were Beau Gardner and Frank Salmons.

St. Mary on the Catholic School



According to the latest headlines across the country, Catholic schools are reducing their enrollment numbers through consolidations and school closings. It is no longer the norm to have more than one Catholic school in each city across America — while some towns may not have a Catholic school at all.

Thankfully, Augusta residents and St. Mary's parishioners don't have to worry about being without a local Catholic school. Indeed, we are fortunate to have a thriving, faith-filled Catholic school within our community — St. Mary on the Hill Catholic School.

And to celebrate the spirit of Catholic education, St. Mary's is hosting the annual Catholic Schools Week from Jan. 27 until Feb. 2.

This year's Catholic Schools Week theme is "Catholic Schools Raise the Standards." This supports the recent implementation of the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools, ensuring the proficient operation and responsible governance Catholic schools across the country — thus promoting both high academic standards and Catholic identity.

St. Mary on the Hill Catholic School Principal Joe McBride believes that Catholic Schools Week is both a time to celebrate Catholic faith within the school, and to rejoice in what God has provided.

"The goal for the week is to celebrate what makes us unique — our Catholic faith," says Mr. McBride. "It is a time to invite others to see the great things that are taking place within their parish school."

Throughout the week, special events will be held for St. Mary on the Hill students, faculty and parents. The week kicks off on Monday with Benediction, Adoration and Mass. This is followed by Student Appreciation Day on Tuesday, which will feature a performance by Tara Scheyer and the Mud Puppy Band. On Wednesday, the school will be holding an Open House for prospective families from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. Teacher Apprecia-

Hill Celebrates Schools Week

tion Day will be held on Thursday, while Friday features a Teacher Luncheon hosted by the PTO, as well as the closing Mass.

All St. Mary on the Hill Catholic School families are invited to attend the opening Mass, Benediction and Adoration service on Monday, as well as the closing Mass on Friday. The families are also invited to enjoy the music at Tuesday's concert.

Both the students and the faculty enjoy Catholic Schools Week because it offers a fun and relaxing time to rejoice in the Catholic faith, and is an opportunity to embrace the unique aspects of the faith.

"It's amazing to see how the kids respond during the week, especially during Open House," says Mr. McBride. "The families that attend it talk about how well-behaved and attentive our students are, and how polite and respectful they are to the teachers and one another. They are such a true example of Christ's love for us by how they treat others."

It's important to note that Catholic Schools Week is not only about the school — indeed, it is also about the parish.

"Our parish celebrates Catholic schools by supporting stewardship, and we are the beneficiaries of that support," says Mr. McBride. "So while we celebrate Catholic Schools Week here at St. Mary on the Hill, we celebrate our parishioners' support all year long, and want to let them know how grateful we are for their support."

Any parish family with children that attend other schools, or that has any preschoolers preparing to start kindergarten, is encouraged to attend Open House to see the great things that are happening at St. Mary on the Hill Catholic School.

"The school belongs to the entire parish, and we would love for everyone to see what is taking place here at St. Mary's," says Mr. McBride.



A Saint for Life: *St. Gianna Beretta Molla*

As disciples of Christ, the Lord of Life, we are called to respect and defend the life of every human being from conception until natural death.

In today's world, a pro-life mindset is not only largely unpopular, but sometimes even dangerous.

However, the facts remain the same — the gift of life determines our humanity, and as Catholic Christians we are responsible for its protection. With the strong examples of people such as St. Gianna Beretta Molla, we are able to witness the value of being a people of faith, a people living to build up a culture resting on Christ's values — a culture of life.

From early childhood, Gianna lived an exemplary Christian life. She attended daily Mass with her mother and her brothers, and was a faithful member of Catholic Action, a lay apostolate dedicated to worldwide evangelization. Gianna often wrote beautiful prayers to the Lord, promising to follow His will no matter the consequences.

As a teenager, Gianna understood the importance of obeying God's will and made a series of resolutions to always follow His guidance. "I wish to die rather than commit a mortal sin," young Gianna once wrote. Yet, at the time, Gianna was not aware of what God had in store for her life.

Throughout her life, Gianna constantly prayed, "O Jesus, I promise You to submit myself to all that you permit to happen to me, make me only know your will." As her life progressed, Gianna would live such prayers in a radical way.

In 1961, as the mother of three and pregnant with her fourth child, Gianna was diagnosed with uterine



cancer. To preserve her health and life, doctors suggested Gianna undergo a radical hysterectomy — a surgery that would undoubtedly save her life, but consequently terminate her pregnancy. Gianna decided to wait for God's direction. Doctors removed portions of the tumor, but knew that full eradication would take a full hysterectomy. But Gianna was determined to keep her uterus intact, determined to give birth to her unborn baby. Knowing the serious dangers ahead, Gianna instructed her husband a few days prior to delivery, "If you must decide between me and the baby, have no hesitation: choose — and I demand it — the baby, save him."

As it turned out, Gianna's tumor had progressed so far that a few days after she delivered her fourth child, she passed away — a martyr for her child! Caring for the life of her unborn child meant the loss of her own life, but such knowledge never weakened her respect for life in the least. Gianna knew that her child's life was just as valuable as her own, and she needed to care for both of them. Gianna ultimately lost her life because she wasn't willing to sacrifice her child for her own sake. What a strong woman!

Though this seems radical, we are all called to respect the lives of the unborn just as Gianna did, and Gianna's fate only secures for us the reward we will receive if we work to build a culture of life, just as she did. On April 24, 1994, Gianna Beretta Molla was beatified by Pope John Paul II, and in May 2004, she was declared a saint. Because St. Gianna lived as a defender of life, she now enjoys eternal life with the Almighty God! Let us heed her example and build a culture of life!

Opportunities for Spiritual Growth *continued from front cover*

5. Read the documents of Vatican II. The Second Vatican Council ushered in a great renewal of the Church. It impacted how Mass is celebrated, the role of the laity, how the Church understands itself and its relationship with other Christians and non-Christians. To continue this renewal, Catholics must understand what the Second Vatican Council taught and how it enriches the lives of believers.

6. Study the *Catechism*. Published exactly 30 years after the start of the Second Vatican Council, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* covers the beliefs, moral teachings, prayer and sacraments of the Catholic Church in one volume. It's a resource for growing in understanding of the faith. Another helpful resource is the *U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults*, or *USCCA*.

7. Volunteer in the parish. The Year of Faith cannot only be about study and reflection. The solid grounding of the Scriptures, the Second Vatican Council and the Catechism must translate into action. The parish is a great place to start, and each person's gifts help to build up the community. Check out the many opportunities in our Ministry Catalogue.

8. Help those in need. The Vatican urges Catholics to donate to charity and volunteer to help the poor during the Year of Faith. This means to personally encounter Christ in the poor, marginalized and vulnerable. Helping

others brings Catholics face-to-face with Christ and creates an example for the rest of the world. Again, you can find ideas in our Ministry Catalogue.

9. Invite a friend to Mass. The Year of Faith may be global in its scope, focusing on a renewal of faith and evangelization for the whole Church, but real change occurs at the local level. A personal invitation can make all the difference to someone who has drifted from the faith or feels alienated from the Church. Everyone knows people like this, so everyone can extend a loving welcome.

10. Spend an hour in Eucharistic Adoration every week. The Year of Faith should bring us back to the basics. As Catholics, we believe that Jesus is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. Blessed Mother Teresa said, "The time you spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the best time we will spend on earth." This weekly hour of friendship with Jesus will bring you spiritual growth and great inner peace.

Whatever you do, I pray that 2013 will be a great Year of Grace for you.

God bless you,



Fr. Jerry

Ad Placement

Saint Mary

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**Happy
New Year!!!**
*from the
staff and clergy of
St. Mary on the Hill*