



# OUR Parish Times

Special Edition  
Catholic Schools Week

JANUARY 2022

Living the Faith Together

FOUNDED 1991

## Catholic Identity: Selfless Service

**H**appy New Year to all! It's hard to believe that the **Parish Times** family has extended new year wishes for thirty years. Thanks to its founder, Paul Zurkowski and current publishers, Kathleen and Larry Hamm for enduring and including me in this remarkable and unique parish-focused newspaper. I'm humbled and honored to share the columnist



Chuck Short

*Continued on page 20*

## A Culture of Life

*Creator God, help us honor the dignity of all people, especially those in whom God's face may be difficult to recognize. Inspire us to help protect human life in all its stages, at home and around the world. Amen*



Patricia McGann

**O**ne of the hardest concepts to teach children is that God does not make mistakes. Don't we all wonder why God creates the weak and the fragile, those with broken bodies and broken minds? Of course we do. We can't begin to understand why life seems such a struggle for some and things come so easily to others,

*Continued on page 39*

## Have You RSVP'd?

**E**very once in a while, I am asked to preside at a wedding out of town. This past October, I was invited to participate in a wedding for family friends I know at Blessed Sacrament who have roots in Iowa. I went to college in Iowa and my sister Eileen lives in Davenport, so I was doubly pleased to go there for the wedding of a wonderful young couple.

Before every wedding, I ask the couple about to be married to give me some reflections on what brings them together. Among other things, this couple talked about how much they liked to cook together, to prepare



Fr. John Enzler

*Continued on page 39*



Pantry Crew gathered for a photo Sunday morning January 16. LR back: Chuck Smith, Patrick Burke, Paul Bizot; LR front: Marleny Salinas, Luz Salinas, George Silva, Maria D'Souza, Barbara Gallagher, Sylvia Jones, and Dee Hatcher. Lucy McCallion, Lois McKearney, Kevin McClintock, and Ronnie Malone, all long-time volunteers, missed the photo op that day.

## Sharing Bread with the Hungry

*St. Martin of Tours Food Pantry Answers Christ's Call*

By Amy Hamm

*"Lord, if your people need me, I will not refuse the work. Your will be done"*

—St. Martin of Tours.

**F**or thirty years, the small building located between the church sanctuary and the parish school at St. Martin of Tours in Gaithersburg has supplied much-needed food to families, provided fellowship for volunteers, and united Catholics across Montgomery County in a corporal work of mercy.

Each week, the Pantry provides pre-packaged bags of groceries to more than 200 families. Bags include staples such as beans, canned vegetables, and cereal as

*Continued on page 18*

## Together to Christ: Knowing and Loving Jesus through the Mass

By Ann Enkiri

**A**s Holy Redeemer parish continues the journey "Together to Christ," renewing personal commitment to participating in The Holy Mass is essential. At Holy Redeemer School, priests and teachers prioritize student opportunities to attend Mass as a way of supporting parents in the shared responsibility of nurturing children's appreciation for the Holy Eucharist. Thanks to the loving support of pastor Father Mark Hughes and parochial vicar Father Ebuka, children in kindergarten through eighth grade enjoy regular opportunities to attend Mass. Special liturgies are also celebrated, as for example, during Catholic Schools Week.

Every Friday, kindergartners and first-graders join the parish at 9 AM Mass. Students in grades 2-8 join special school Liturgies of the Mass at 2:15 PM on First Fridays. Each month, additional opportunities to attend Friday Masses are welcomed by students and teachers. Each grade, from two through eight, takes responsibility for a Mass. Students lector, cantor, lead the prayers of the faithful, and act as altar servers. Each child has their own Mass booklet to follow along and learn the responses. Father Hughes and Father Ebuka invite and encourage children's responses during the liturgy, share mean-

*Continued on page 4*

## CUA Professor Helps Parishioners Consider Church's Teachings on Sexuality and Life Issues and Economic and Social Justice

By Melissa Montealegre Egan

**F**or many Catholics today, the Church's teachings on sexuality, marriage, and family life can seem disconnected from its views on social, economic, and political justice. How does one square its teachings with marriage between a man and a woman with its embrace of people with same sex attraction? How does one practice having and raising a family with caring for the environment?

According to Dr. John Grabowski, a moral theologian at The Catholic University of America, this perceived dichotomy does not exist, when one views the teachings as grounded



Fr. John Dillon, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, speaks with Dr. John Grabowski, an Ordinary Professor of Moral Theology and Ethics at The Catholic University of America, before the moral theologian's address at the parish on December 16.

in their common foundation — that human beings are both made in the image and likeness of God and that they possess a common human nature.

Dr. Grabowski's comments came December 16 at St. Francis of Assisi Church's Parish Center, during his talk on "Challenging Issues for Faithful Catholics." The talk before about 25 people was the second installment of the parish's 50th Anniversary Speaker Series, which is taking place in the months leading up to the parish's Golden Anniversary in June 2022.

In a media ecosystem that classifies people's views as 'liberal' and 'conservative,' the Church's teachings would map as being conservative on issues of life, sexuality, and family

*Continued on page 5*





# Youth Justice Reform in Maryland

**O**n January 12, the Maryland Catholic Conference sponsored a virtual town hall on reform of the youth justice system moderated by Andre Hepkins of WBAL-TV 11 News.

Senator Jill P. Carter (D-41) and Delegate Sandy Bartlett (D-32) joined Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori and other panelists in a spirited conversation about the need for reform in Maryland.

Del. Bartlett announced the Child Interrogation Protection Act (HB 0269) already had 11 co-sponsors on day 1. The matching bill in the senate, SB 0053, was introduced by Sen. Carter. This bill requires that parents be notified if their child is taken into custody and requires a child have an attorney for consultation prior to interrogation.

Watching the town hall would be a great opportunity for classes and parish groups to learn about and discuss youth reform.

To view and listen to the one-hour discussion, visit: [www.facebook.com/mdcatholic/videos/646719503031754/](http://www.facebook.com/mdcatholic/videos/646719503031754/)

The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy advocacy group for the Maryland (arch)dioceses and will be testifying on a number of youth justice bills. Join the MCC email list for updates at [www.mdcatholic.org/joincan](http://www.mdcatholic.org/joincan). MCC will post testimony online during the session at [www.mdcatholic.org/2022testimony](http://www.mdcatholic.org/2022testimony).

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# The Power of an All-Girls Education

**A**t Stone Ridge, we see the power of all-girls education and have seen its benefits for almost a century.

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Girls academically advance as they cultivate a higher sense of self-confidence as well. They explore topics independently and often seek alternate solutions to problems. This demonstration of curiosity and creativity equips them for challenging science, math, technology, and engineering projects. Ultimately, their confidence to understand scientific concepts, determine appropriate data collection and analysis, formulate a hypothesis, and



The Stone Ridge Grade 8 students are completing a sedimentation lab that models superposition, the principle of original horizontality, deposition, and lithification as part of sedimentary rocks and the rock cycle.

summarize study results increases leading them to compete in STEM-related fields in the future.

When girls from single-sex schools engage in the world around them, they are more likely to exhibit greater cultural competency and value exploring other countries and cultures. They show strengths in understanding different beliefs and collaborating with diverse groups of people. Girls also grow a deeper connection to their communities and are more inclined to get involved through service and volunteering and stay informed of world issues. Stone Ridge is bursting with mentoring and leadership opportunities. With clubs like Best Buddies and Social Action days at local charities like Bikes for the World, students have multiple ways to explore their passions while giving back and growing.

Girls, learning and growing alongside one another, hold themselves to higher aspirations and have the motivation to make their goals a reality. At Stone Ridge, we see our girls become compassionate and resilient leaders in their communities and beyond.

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# Local Parishes Respond to the Call “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission”

**L**ast October, Pope Francis invited all Catholics to walk together on a path oriented towards “communion, participation, and mission” by participating in a Synod that would be open to all members of the Church. In doing so, the Pope calls on everyone, from bishops to the laity, to reconnect to parish life, to reflect on what the Holy Spirit is calling each of us to do, and to identify our common needs in the Church. It is an invitation to listen to one another in order to understand more deeply our common belonging in Christ and to allow this belonging to inspire a shared life of mission.

This Synod is unique in the history of the Church. While synods are typically thought of as assemblies of clergy or people who bear some responsibility, Pope Francis is using the form of synod to amplify the voice of the laity.

This particular synod is taking place in several stages. After opening the Synod in Rome last fall, the work moved to the diocesan level.



Wilton Cardinal Gregory celebrated mass at St. Matthew's Cathedral on October 17, 2021 to acknowledge the opening of the local Synodal process. There, he reflected that, “This Synod offers us the opportunity

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# Remembering Martin Luther King, Jr.

As our nation commemorated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on January 17, the Most Reverend José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles and president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, reflected on his legacy:

"...More than a half-century after his death, America faces many challenges — this ongoing pandemic, issues of economic inequality and racial discrimination, violence in our communities, the struggle to welcome immigrants and refugees. In recent years, our nation has also become more polarized and our divisions angrier.

"As we look to our future, let us continue to draw from Rev. King's



wisdom, especially his commitment to the Beatitudes of Jesus, and the principles of nonviolence and love for our enemies.

"In his *Letter from a Birmingham*

*Jail*, Rev. King reminds us that we are brothers and sisters, part of a beautiful web of relationships of mutual care, each of us depending on others as others depend on

us. 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,' he wrote. 'We are ... tied in a single garment

of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.'

"Let us go forward in that same spirit of fraternity and solidarity, and let us carry on his work for equality and justice. As we remember Rev. King, let us continue to learn from him and imitate his example and prophetic witness."

Washington Auxiliary Bishop Roy Campbell, who also is president of the National Black Catholic Congress and a member of the Maryland Catholic Conference Board of Governors, celebrated the archdiocese's annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Mass on January 22.

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## Justice and Advocacy Council, Catholic Charities to Sponsor County Executive Forum in April

Please mark your calendar for April 26, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm, to attend the Montgomery County Executive Candidates Forum to be held at the Shrine of St. Jude, 12701 Veirs Mill Road, Rockville MD 20853.

The Forum is co-sponsored by the Justice & Advocacy Council of Montgomery County and Catholic Charities. This is the fourth time the two have collaborated to sponsor a forum with the goal of helping Montgomery County Catholics and others concerned about social

justice to hear directly from candidates. We will ask the candidates for their position on a variety of issues. Of particular concern will be issues affecting people in Montgomery County who live in poverty or on the margin of society.

All candidates who have declared their intention to run for County Executive have committed to participating in the Forum. These candidates include David Blair, County Executive Marc Elrich, Councilmember Tom Hucker, and Councilmember Hans Riemer.

We will invite any additional candidates who declare they are running before the February 22 deadline.

Admittance is free and all are welcome. Appropriate COVID protocols will apply and the event will be virtually available. For more information concerning the Forum, please get in touch with Mary Bennett at mmcben@verizon.net or Larry Couch at lawrencecouch1@gmail.com.

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## Brookewood Successfully Adds Varsity Swim Team to its Sports Program

Aristotle says in his *Nicomachean Ethics*: "The ideal man bears the accidents of life with dignity and grace, making the best of circumstances." Brookewood's first varsity swim team has indeed made the best of a season in which they could not control the circumstances. Brookewood's team began with six members practicing at the University of Maryland's recreation center, learning and improving under coach Betsy Bajwa. In December, the university had to shut down the recreation center due to an uptick in Covid, Bajwa went ahead and wrote out training plans for her swimmers, asking them to self-train at a local public pool where she was not allowed to be on deck and coach.

And the six swimmers managed to successfully practice on their own, improving their individual and relay times. The varsity team, which has competed at five meets thus far in its first season, came in second place at the Seton Winter Invitational on January 15th. One of its members, Elise Bajwa, qualified for the National Catholic Swimming and Diving Championship in Baltimore, plac-



Members of Brookewood's first varsity swim team include Isis Reyes, Ava Watson, Gabriela Combs, Elise Bajwa, Lupe Garvey, and Cristina Aldrette.

ing 13th in the finals of 100 breaststroke. Considering that several of the swimmers are new to high school swimming where the distances swum are longer, and many of the students who they have competed against are year-round swimmers, Brookewood's team has performed very well in its first season.

According to Coach Bajwa,

"I am impressed with the level of commitment these girls have shown. They have been thrown different obstacles, and they continue to persevere."

Brookewood looks forward to adding new members next year to its current competitive roster.

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# The March for Life: Montgomery County Catholics Pray to End Abortion

Catholics from around Montgomery County descended on the Capitol on Friday, January 21 for the 49th annual March for Life. This year, marchers braved frigid temperatures to join with thousands of other pro-life activists from around the country.

For many, the day started with early bus rides down to St. Matthew's Cathedral for the Archdiocese of Washington Youth Mass and Rally. The event was also livestreamed, which provided an opportunity for St. Francis of Assisi, Holy Cross, and other local parishes to participate virtually.

From the Cathedral, participants made their way down to the National Mall for the Rally and March organized by the National March for Life. This year's theme, "Equality begins in the Womb", provided an opportunity for reflection on the true meaning of equality, rooted in the dignity that each one of us shares as a child of God.

In a press release for the event, Jeanne Mancini, President of the March for Life, commented on the historic nature of this year's March, stating "Americans everywhere know that unborn children deserve equal rights and protection under the law... We are hopeful that, with *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* before the Supreme Court, 2022 will bring us much closer to building the culture of life we have all marched for since *Roe v. Wade* was tragically imposed on our nation nearly 50 years ago."

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At right, Students and parishioners from Holy Redeemer in Kensington pose with Cardinal Gregory at the Archdiocese of Washington Mass for Life, celebrated at St. Matthew's Cathedral.



Above, Students at Holy Cross participated in the Mass for Life virtually, by livestreaming the mass into individual classrooms. Their prayers are united with those who were able to go downtown.



At left, HR Cardinals are bundled up and ready to head down to the National Mall for the March for Life

Below, Sr. Claudia, Fr. James, and Our Lady of Lourdes parishioners outside the Supreme Court, the endpoint of the March for Life.



Above, Parishioners from Our Lady of the Visitation in Germantown boarded their bus early in the morning ready to pray for an end to abortion.

## TOGETHER

Con't from page 1

ingful homilies, and compliment the students on their participation before the Dismissal.

Teachers prepare their students for Sunday Mass as well. Primary and early intermediate students learn about the Sunday readings through the Holy Heroes Mass preparation materials which are taken home to share with parents. Working together, parents and teachers can instill a life-long love of the Mass. Families attending Mass together can gently and quietly direct young children's attention to the priest's actions and to the congregation's responses.

There are many print resources to help parents, grandparents and godparents to teach children about the Mass and about the gift Catholic priesthood. The books highlighted here would make wonderful additions to any family's library or "go-to-Mass" tote bag. Many are available at The Catholic Company ([www.catholiccompany.com/mass-books-for-children-c2790/](http://www.catholiccompany.com/mass-books-for-children-c2790/)), while others may be found on Amazon.

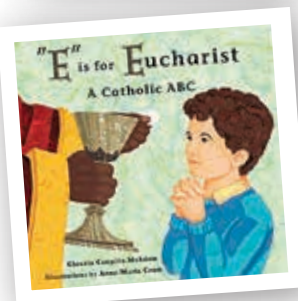
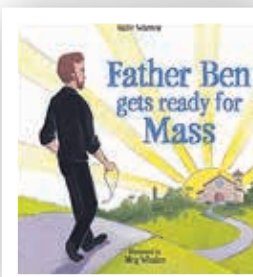
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### Books about the Mass for Children Ages 2-9

List compiled by Holy Redeemer School Librarian Ann Enkiri.

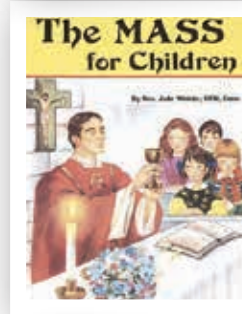
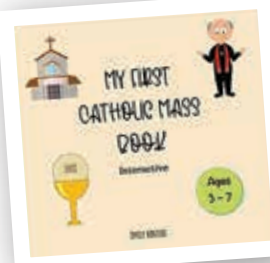
*Missal for Toddlers* by Magnificat, Ignatius Press, is available as a board book and so is perfect to bring along to Mass for children ages 2-4. Colorful pictures show a boy and girl at Mass with their parents, following along step by step with the priest's actions and the prayers.

*Father Ben Gets Ready for Mass* by Katie Warner is the perfect introduction for children to both the liturgy and the priesthood. The playful text with interactive illustrations by Meg Whalen will keep children ages 2-5 smiling!



*"E" is for Eucharist* by Claudia McAdam is an ABC book that shows young readers children like themselves as active participants in the Church. Rhyming text with gorgeous illustrations by Anna-Maria Crum engage children ages 3-6. A free Discussion and Activities Guide is available at the author's website, [www.ClaudiaMcAdam.com](http://www.ClaudiaMcAdam.com).

*My First Catholic Mass Book Interactive* by Emily Bender is a simplified guide to The Mass that children ages 3-7 may bring with them every Sunday. It is unique because in addition to visual cues for each part of the liturgy, it provides activities that enrich children's participation and serves as a coloring book. For readers, the Nicene



Creed and The Lord's Prayer are included.

*The Mass for Children* by Jude Winkler, OFM, provides easily understandable explanations for each part of the Mass: The Introductory Rites, The Liturgy of the Word, The Liturgy of the Eucharist, The Communion Rite, and The Concluding Rite. This is a perfect take-to-Mass book for readers and for non-readers with help from a parent.

*Meet the Gentle Jesus, The Mass for Children* by primary teacher and religious education director Barbara Yoffee explains every ritual gesture and prayer in language appropriate for children in grades K-3. Charming illustrations by Jeff Albrecht help children to follow along with the Mass, while Yoffee poses reflective questions at every step to keep children learning.

OPT



# Five World Powers Pledge to Avoid Nuclear Conflict

**B**ishop David Malloy of Rockford, Illinois, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace, issued the following statement in response to the recent pledge by five world powers to prevent nuclear weapons spread. His full statement follows:

"On January 3, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (China, France,



Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) issued a joint statement that is an important acclamation of the need to prevent nuclear war and avoid arms races. This principled statement affirms 'a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought' and stresses the importance of abiding by non-proliferation agreements and commitments.

"Unfortunately, the Tenth Review Conference of the Treaty

of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons that was to commence January 4 was once again postponed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the world continues to mediate the physical, social, and economic impacts of the pandemic, conflicts and calls to arms have not ceased. In my letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken in September, I expressed our hope that these critical negotiations will be soon advanced as we draw upon the

prophetic wisdom of Pope Francis in Fratelli Tutti that reminds us, 'international peace and stability cannot be based on a false sense of security, on the threat of mutual destruction or total annihilation.'

"I invite all Americans to continue in prayer and support of our leaders to advance the critical goals of disarmament."

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## PROFESSOR

*Con't from page 1*

and liberal on questions of social, economic, and political justice, said Dr. Grabowski, an Ordinary Professor of Moral Theology and Ethics at Catholic University. But that's the wrong way to look at these issues and the Church's teachings on them.

"The Church's teachings don't fit into our boxes – and that's okay," Dr. Grabowski said. "We're concerned with orthodoxy – right teaching – and orthopraxis – right living – in light of those teachings. We're concerned with the truth."

The foundation of these teachings is the dignity of the human person, he said. "God entrusts creation to us as his stewards," Dr. Grabowski said. "Human dignity comes from us being creatures of God – his beloved sons and daughters."

In understanding issues on perceived opposite poles, Dr. Grabowski referenced the writings of several clergy members and lay academics, such as Fr. Urban Hannon, Linda Waite, and Maggie Gallagher, in forming more nuanced understanding of these issues. In considering the Church's teachings on marriage and same sex attraction, he said Fr. Hannon's writings point out that our society's propensity to essentialize sexual attraction leads us to say, 'This is your identity, and this is your destiny.' In doing so, this binds people with same sex attraction to their attraction, which denies their Christian freedom to live chastely.

"When we understand the Church's teachings, it's a call to conversion for same sex attracted people and opposite sex attracted people," Dr. Grabowski said.

As a seminarian more than 20 years ago, Fr. John Dillon was taught by Dr. Grabowski and recalled how clear and solidly sourced his teacher's presentations on these issues were. He invited Dr. Grabowski to speak so he could give parishioners some clarity and consider more deeply these challenging issues of faith.

"I hope that people will see that (Dr. Grabowski's) belief is a key to understanding something that Pope Francis has said more than once: 'Everything is connected,'" Fr. John said.

Watch Dr. Grabowski's talk at: [www.sfadw.org/50th-anniversary-talks](http://www.sfadw.org/50th-anniversary-talks).

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Hazel tells Miss Karen the story of how her snowman melted.

## Snow Centers in Pre-K

There is always something fun going on in PreK! This week, students participated in different activities that dealt with the snow! They created snowmen that can't melt, had an ice cube building center, and made melting snowmen with accompanying stories on how they melted!

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Poolesville; Our Lady of the Visitation,  
Darnestown.

## Hakuna MONtata

MoN Theater kicked off rehearsals this month for this spring's production of Disney's The Lion King Jr. with a special guest appearance from Fr. Greg, Our Lady of the Visitation's new Pastor. Fr. Greg blessed the production and shared stories about his high school theater experience at Gonzaga. Students also learned about praying to St. Genesius, patron saint of performers, to guide their cast and crew.

At right,  
Stella, MoN  
alum (2021),  
teaching a  
dance work-  
shop to cast  
members!



At left, Fr. Greg bless-  
es the cast and crew  
of Mary of Nazareth's  
Lion King.

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OLVP volunteers work the lot on the busiest day ever in tree sales history

## “Fun”tastic Weekend of Tree Sales

By Matt Baker and Diana Hurley

This fall the word started going around: “No trees this year”. After 23 years of the annual Christmas tree sales as the major fundraiser for the Our Lady of the Visitation, a sense of shock was beginning to seep in. So, creative minds began imagining alternative fundraising options while persistent tree seeking continued. Thanks to a very determined parishioner who searched many hours on her computer, Pastor Rev. Greg

Shaffer happily announced to the parish in early November that we had found trees in Canada and the annual event was ON!

Marty Kelly started getting the tree lot team assembled with an expected delivery date of Dec 2. They readied the lot and began promoting the December 3<sup>rd</sup> opening weekend. Christmas kitchen coordinators Barb Moschella and Gladys Loughery began to ready menus and solicit donations. The kitchen provides

*Continued on page 11*



The OLVP faith formation students present the story of the birth of our Lord.

## Christmas Pageant Successfully Returns

By Erin Clegg and Diana Hurley

For the past 15+ years, the Faith Formation program has sponsored a Christmas Pageant. Due to last year’s virtual format, the Pageant was sadly not able to be held. Thankfully this year, cast and attendees donned masks and the show occurred on Sunday, December 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm in the main church followed by a cookies and milk reception in Founder’s Hall. Erin Clegg, Youth Faith Formation Coordinator, found a new script and began recruiting students in November. With the

help of her Pageant team, Maureen Vandegrift & Katie Kimmell, Erin coordinated roles with costumes and held a successful dress rehearsal on Saturday, December 18<sup>th</sup>. Of course, live shows have their challenges, including students having to remain home due to potential Covid exposure, thus last-minute changes were arranged.

The show was a great success! Seventh grader, Meghan Johnson, handled the role of narrator with aplomb in her meaningful retelling of the first Christmas story. The costumes were a big hit including the camel (Jacob Clegg) and

star (Juliet Young). Baby Jesus was played by seven-month-old Grace

*Continued on page 10*

**Our Lady of the Visitation Parish**  
14139 Seneca Road  
Darnestown, MD 20874

**Fr. Greg Shaffer, Pastor**  
301-948-5536

**Diana Hurley, OPT Editor**  
Hurley05@verizon.net



Parishioners learn about the weekly Sunday readings during Bible Study.

## New Parish Opportunities Bring Joy

By Diana Hurley

This Fall OLVP offered many new and renewed activities to help us build fellowship and bring joy to the parish.

On December 1, the Advent Bible Study began with an enthusiastic turnout. Father Greg provided a delicious pasta dinner in Founder’s Hall at 7:30pm. The format of this weekly study makes it accessible to those who are just beginning their Bible journey as well as those with continuing Bible Study experience. Participants read the upcoming Sunday readings, then discuss themes and links which stand out to them. After 4 successful weeks during Advent, the program has continued into the new year.

The Parish Penance Service, held on Tuesday, December 21<sup>st</sup>, was

the ultimate opportunity to prepare for the Lord’s coming. As Father Greg shared in his November 28<sup>th</sup> Pastor’s Page “Penance is a vital part of the Christian life because it helps us move away from sin.”. Three visiting priests joined Father Greg to hear Confessions at the Penance Service.

A background ministry for many years, the Prayer Shawl ministry has been re-imagined. Coordinator Cindy Kokinda invites those who knit, crochet, or those interested in learning to gather in Founder’s Hall, the first Tuesday evening of each month. Beginning in October this lively group met for the first time. Patterns and stories were shared while Cindy’s delicious homemade treats were eaten. The

*Continued on page 18*



## GOOD COUNSEL 2022 SUMMER PROGRAMS

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# Talk on the New Evangelization Challenges Parishioners as They Look Beyond the Pandemic

By Melissa Montealegre Egan

**O**n October 9, the prospect of venturing out to a Fall Ministry Retreat in the St. Francis of Assisi Parish Center amid the pandemic might have seemed daunting enough for 30 clergy members and parishioners. But, once they arrived, attendees soon faced a timelier challenge: how each of them could evangelize others in this time and place, as they are called to do by virtue of their Baptism.

Dr. Susan Timoney, associate professor of practice pastoral studies area at The Catholic University of America, issued this call to parishioners, as part of her talk on



Dr. Susan Timoney, associate professor of practice pastoral studies area at The Catholic University of America, and Fr. John Dillon, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church, chat October 9 before Dr. Timoney's talk on "Living as Missionary Disciples," as part of the parish's Fall Ministry Retreat. Her talk was based on the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' publication, "Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource on Evangelization," which was published in 2017.

"Living as Missionary Disciples," a topic founded in past and current popes' exhortations to embrace the New Evangelization. Following decades of the Catholic Church encouraging all Catholics to help others know and love Jesus Christ, the New Evangelization calls on

Catholics to become 'missionary disciples' -- people who take the time to get to know one another and guide each other in getting to know the person of God.

"It's got to be a commitment of the whole community," said Dr.

*Continued on page 18*



From left to right, parishioners Vincent Price, Sylvia Jones, and Marvin Arias discuss their hopes for the faith formation of St. Francis of Assisi high school-aged youth at a Youth Ministry Leadership Meeting held at the church on November 7.

## Parish Hopes that Better Integrating Youth into Ministry Work Will Be Focus of Young People's Faith Formation

By Melissa Montealegre Egan

**A**s St. Francis of Assisi Parish prepares to celebrate its Golden Anniversary next year, it seems fitting that the church's clergy and lay members are re-evaluating how they minister to the next

generation of worshippers -- the youth of the parish.

The church community in Derwood is embarking on a rebuild of its Youth Ministry, which recently left a partner-

*Continued on page 17*

**St. Francis of Assisi Parish**  
6701 Muncaster Mill Road  
Derwood, MD

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Pastor  
301-840-1407

**Melissa M. Egan**  
OPT Editor  
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**More St. Francis of Assisi News on Page 1**



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## Advent Service Opportunities Remind Parishioners to Practice Generosity and Mercy

By Melissa Montealegre Egan

**E**ven though Advent is a time to both celebrate Jesus Christ's birth and anticipate his second coming, many St. Francis of Assisi parishioners enjoy commemorating the season by giving gifts to people in need -- acts of generosity made possible by many longtime partnerships between the church and regional ministries.

During Advent, St. Francis parishioners can choose among supporting the Spirit Tree, a partnership with the Pope Francis Center at Assumption Parish in Washington DC, in which parishioners buy gift cards for families who request certain items; purchasing Alternative Christmas Gifts, which enables parishioners to buy services given a prescribed value that

*Continued on page 38*



On November 18, the Spirit Tree, which allows St. Francis parishioners to purchase gift cards for individuals or families in need associated with the Pope Francis Center at Assumption Parish in Washington DC, goes up in the Gathering Space of St. Francis of Assisi Parish.



St. Francis of Assisi parishioner Madge Farmer, left, and an unidentified lady, work at Millie's Bake Shop, part of the parish's Holiday Bazaar fundraiser, held November 13 in the Parish Center. The fundraiser adapted to a low-frills concept this year to accommodate needed health protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic.





A Living Nativity was presented at the Neumann House Field on December 18, 2021.

## Nativity story comes alive at Gaithersburg Parish

By Rodney Harris

**S**aint John Neumann Catholic Parish in Gaithersburg, Maryland, hosted a Living Nativity, Saturday, December 18, 2021. The Church said it wanted to “give new meaning to Christmas this year.” The ‘Living Nativity’ featured two dozen children dressed as Mary, Joseph, the Three Wise Men, and angels to bring the Christmas story to life. Live animals were there to greet attendees at the Parish’s Neumann House field, as families and friends gathered and enjoyed a cup of hot chocolate!

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## Living in the In-Between Time: An Advent Spirituality Talk

By Kimberley Rice

**M**onsignor Robert Panke, Pastor of Saint John Neumann Parish, welcomed everyone for coming out to the Advent Mini retreat on November 29, 2021, including Monsignor Michael Heintz. Since, Father Stefan Yap, Parochial Vicar was at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary with Msgr. Heintz had the privilege of introducing the guest speaker.

Msgr. Heintz thanked Fr. Stefan, Msgr. Panke, and Fr. Sweeney (Retired Priest in Residence) for their kindness and welcoming him. “It’s a joy to be with you!” Advent is my favorite liturgical season because you can’t get tired of it. It’s over before you know it, and it goes so quickly. Unlike Lent about the 5th week of Lent, we’re ready for Lent to end.

“If you live in the future or dwell in the past, and we’re almost all one of the two of those, in either case, what we miss, is the present moment. The past is gone, friends. We no longer have it, and the future is not yet ours. The only thing God has given us is right now, and we miss it far too often.”

“Liturgically and theologically, the season of Advent is structured in such a way, that the emphasis for the first couple of weeks at least up until about December 16 is not the



Photo of Monsignor Michael Heintz during an Advent Spirituality Talk on November 29, 2021 at Saint John Neumann Parish in Gaithersburg, MD.

birth of Christ in Bethlehem, but rather the coming of Christ.”

“And friends, you and I right now, we are living in the in-between times. The first coming of Christ and his second coming in Glory, that’s where we are.”

“What we’re called to do is to live now in the present moment open and inviting Christ to come into our lives.”

*Continued on page 33*

**St. John Neumann Parish**  
9000 Warfield Road  
Gaithersburg, MD 20882  
**Msgr. Robert Panke**  
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**More St. John Neumann  
News on Page 38**



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Eight Graders at St. Elizabeth's celebrate Christmas with a joyful pageant.

## St. Elizabeth's Shares Hope through Christmas Pageant

**St. Elizabeth Parish**  
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**Msgr. J. Wilfrid Parent**  
Pastor  
301-881-1380

**St. Elizabeth School Principal**  
Mary Penny  
301-881-1824

**Heather Kerr**  
OPT Editor  
301-881-1380

St. Elizabeth School ended their Christmas season with a wonderful pageant performed by the 8th grade class. Amid all of the chaos in the world, the story of Jesus' birth allowed students and families to focus on the importance of the season and share their faith as a community. Seeing students excited to take part in this school tradition gives us hope in the next generation of leaders. Through Christ's birth, the most unlikely people are brought together in joy and hope. And most of all, seeing a young child in the arms of Mary reminds us that there is hope in this world that we live in.

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¿Hablas español? Sí, hablamos español! At St. E's learning another language is a core component to our curriculum. Dr. Nuevo uses language software to help improve students' Spanish skills. Interactive videos and stories support their fluency and aid in communicative competency!



Preschool through 2nd grade students love to design digital masterpieces in computer/technology classes. They are beginning a month of creative exploration into the powerful digital tools available to create art, music and storytelling.

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## SYNODAL

Con't from page 2

nity to be with each other, to invite our family and friends back to the faith, to listen to each other's joys and sorrows, and share our hopes and dreams for our parishes."

The Synod then moved from the Cathedral to individual parishes. Each parish in the diocese has been instructed to identify two synod delegates to help coordinate the parish listening sessions. According to the preparatory documents produced by the Vatican, the listening sessions should be an opportunity for the faithful to respond to the following prompt, "A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, 'journeys together.' How is this 'journeying together' happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our 'journeying together'?"

The parish listening sessions will con-

clude in February. The results will be shared at an archdiocesan listening session this Spring, culminating with an Archdiocese of Washington report this summer. This document, together with the reports from all the other Catholic dioceses in the world, will help shape the eventual Church-wide report produced by the Vatican.

All Catholics, even those unable to participate in the listening sessions, are encouraged to pray for the Church and the outcome of the Synod.

The preparatory document stresses that this process is not just about sharing our thoughts, but allowing ourselves to be converted, because to "journey together," we need to let ourselves be educated by the Spirit to a truly synodal mentality, entering with courage and freedom of heart into a conversion process."

For additional resources visit [www.adw.org/about-us/resources/synod/](http://www.adw.org/about-us/resources/synod/) or contact your rectory for information about the parish listening sessions.

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## PAGEANT

Con't from page 7

Guilday. Eighth grader, Allison Clegg, who played the part of Caesar Augustus, said "I enjoyed seeing everyone play their parts and have fun." Participation across the grade levels is critical in this type of production and this year all levels were represented. Music ministers Ed Becker, Dianne Wawrzusin, and Diana Hurley led the audience in singing Christmas hymns. New in 2021, the event was recorded by Reece Clegg from the back of the church for those who could not attend

in person. The video was posted on the parish website.

This annual event brings parishioners together to celebrate the youth of the parish and allows the youth to immerse themselves into the Christmas story. Attendees enjoy the antics of a live show with students of varying ages as well as a fun sing-a-long of traditional Christmas hymns. As the students grow through their years at OLVP, they take on more responsibility in the Pageant. Fond memories are made as they recall each character they have played over the years. We hope to see you at next year's production!

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# A Soul Generated by Greater Love

**“E**verybody can be great because everybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love.”- Martin Luther King Jr.

MLK Day not only celebrates and honors the life of Martin Luther King Jr., but is also a National Day of Service calling others to continue his legacy. This year, Saint Bernadette School’s Greater Love social outreach program answered

the call by preparing and collecting bagged lunches and casseroles to deliver to Shepherd’s Table, a social services organization in Silver Spring.

On MLK Day 2022, Greater Love collected approximately 400 bagged lunches and 20 casseroles.

The Saint Bernadette School community will continue MLK’s legacy of serving others on this National Day of Service, as well as throughout the year by actively participating in Greater Love’s various service projects each month.

OPT



Above, Greater Love participants Lisa Collins, Alexis Collins, Meg McNally, Finn McNally, and Nora McNally collecting casseroles and bagged lunches for Shepherd’s Table.

At left Food prepared and ready to go for Shepherd’s Table



## St. Bernadette Parish

70 University Blvd., East  
Silver Spring, MD

Rev. Msgr. K.  
Bartholomew Smith, Pastor  
301-593-0357

St. Bernadette School  
Mr. Ted Ewanciw, Principal  
301-593-5611

Erin Fridley, OPT Editor  
301-593-5611

## TREE SALES

Con’t from page 7

food for the busy tree workers. The OLVP Women’s Sodality sponsored a Poinsettia pre-sale this year to enhance the overall fundraiser. Jean Jurgena and her team of wreath makers began organizing their many craft supplies stored since last season. But then, to everyone’s surprise, a phone call came in: the trees were on their way and would be delivered Thanksgiving Day at 7pm - a week ahead of time! Many quick texts and gulped Thanksgiving meals resulted in a team of over 30 volunteers to handle the task of unloading 340 trees. What a sight to see.

With the early arrival of the trees, all thought they were ready for the sale to begin. But no one expected the busiest Friday night ever. The result was the highest number of trees ever sold on an opening night - 147 in four hours! As Father Greg summarized, “The atmosphere was electric and festive all weekend. It was so much fun to be here throughout to see the steady flow of cars into



Julia Beattie and Barb Moschella bring Christmas kitchen treats out to the workers.

our lot each hour, our men were delighted to greet and help people select and load up their trees, our women joyfully and carefully crafting beautiful designs on the wreaths, and the helpers in the ‘Christmas kitchen’ making and preparing amazingly tasty and plentiful foods. Christmas cheer was ubiquitous here. It was simply a spectacular experience.” In addition, critical funds were raised to help the parish during these difficult financial times. Many thanks to all the volunteers who worked during the event and the parishioners and friends who bought trees, wreaths and poinsettias.

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A short notice crew shows up in force to unload 340 trees.

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# Follow Holy Redeemer Cardinals on Social Media

By Ann Enkiri

A dedicated team of social media experts keeps the Holy Redeemer School community up to date on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Faculty and parents appreciate the team members: Marianne Green—Technology Teacher and Coach; Danielle Trotta—Middle School Science Teacher; and Sharon Kennedy—5th Grade Homeroom Teacher. Their regular posts provide a peek inside the hallways and classrooms as well as a look inside the church and on the playing field. During this time of limited in-person access indoors and on campus, families appreciate these glimpses of their children who are happily engaged in learning. Please follow us: Instagram: @hrteachers; Twitter: @hrcardinals; Facebook: Holy Redeemer School.

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At left, "Go Fish!" Ms. Cook's Kindergartners Have a "Fin"-tastic Time Practicing Sight Words



Above, PreK4 Students Celebrate Epiphany in Mrs. Morin's Classroom on January 6th.



At right, Eight-graders Experience STEM Learning at Astronomy Club, led by Middle School Science Teacher Danielle Trotta.

## Holy Redeemer Parish

9705 Summit Avenue  
Kensington, MD

### Rev. Mark Hughes Pastor

301-942-2333

### Holy Redeemer School Mr. Thomas Corrigan, Principal

301-942-3701

## HRs Our School Nurses

By Ann Enkiri

Holy Redeemer School has a long and proud tradition of prizing student health care by staffing the school clinic with dedicated Registered Nurses. The dynamic duo of Alana Pitcher, R.N., and Missy Talley, R.N., led us through the Covid19 pandemic from the school closure in March, 2019 through our return to in-person learning in September, 2020. With expert knowledge, faith-filled compassion,

and encouragement, Mrs. Pitcher and Mrs. Talley guided administrators, faculty, staff, and parents through that especially challenging academic year. They served our entire school community with supreme professionalism and great compassion.

At the start of this current school year, our dynamic duo of Nurses Pitcher and Talley again guided our safe return to classrooms, taking on the endless challenges of following the Covid19 guidelines and applying them to individual situations.

They educated, informed, assessed, and, most importantly, calmly and clearly communicated with us all. With Mrs. Talley's leaving to care for family, Holy Redeemer was blessed to welcome Kathy Kitzinger, R.N. to the nursing team. Mrs. Kitzinger brings her own caring smile and warm greeting to students visiting the clinic.

Mrs. Pitcher and Mrs. Kitzinger join school administrators in greeting the children at arrival every day and are well-known to our students. Their shared mission is summed up in their email signature motto, "Every child needs to be healthy to



Alana Pitcher, R.N. School Nurse and Director of HR Summer Camp Cardinal

be educated, and every child needs to be educated to be healthy." While meeting the health care challenges presented by Covid, Mrs. Pitcher and Mrs. Kitzinger continue to cheerfully and expertly handle their many other responsibilities—everyday care of students' scrapes, bruises, queasy stomachs, and headaches, urgent care of any onsite injuries or illnesses, and accurate medical record-keeping.

Mrs. Pitcher shared that, together with Holy Redeemer School principal Tommy Corrigan, the school nurses have dealt with each Covid exposure as the school is made aware of it. "Covid protocols such as isolation and quarantine are part of our daily conversations. It seems that every scenario is unique and calls for collaboration, taking into account a variety of details such as vaccination status, onset of symptoms, and ideal time to test," Mrs. Pitcher reported. Given these challenges, Mrs. Pitcher praises both the students and their families: "Our students are extremely compliant—wearing their masks, being mindful of distancing, and practicing good hygiene. Our partnership with our families has been amazing."

At Holy Redeemer School, our school nurses are our very own health care heroes. We thank them and ask God to bless their hands and hearts so lovingly used to care for our children and their families.

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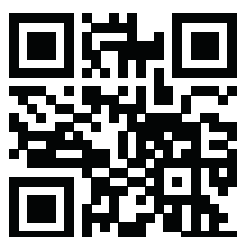
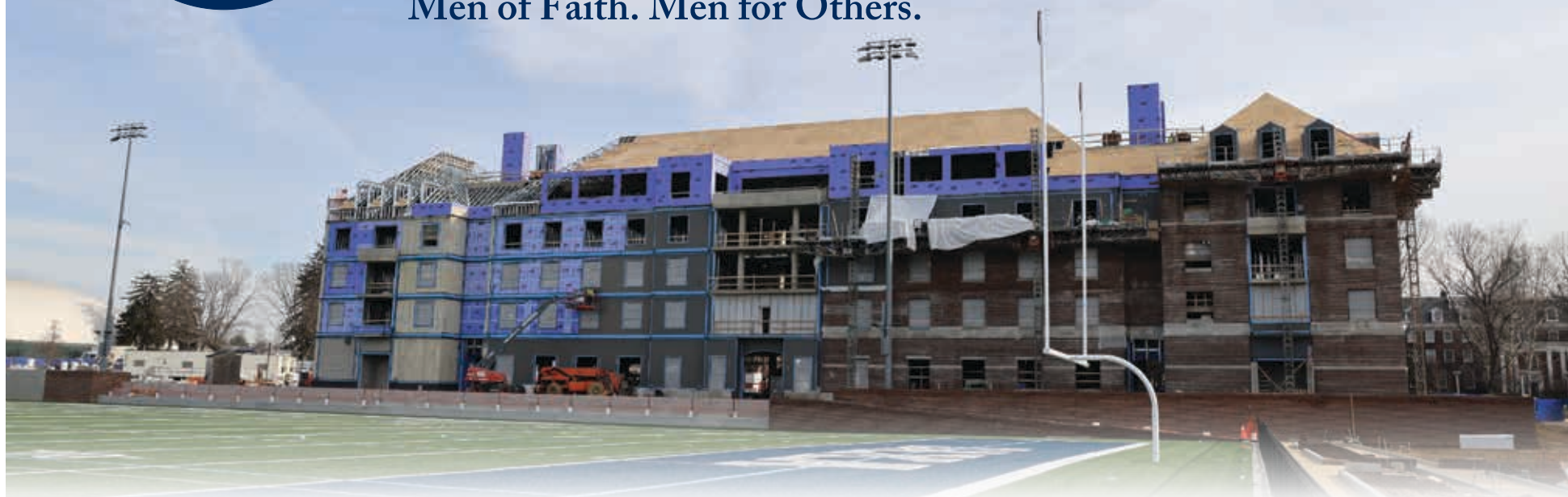
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# St. Jude Regional Catholic School Celebrates Catholic Schools Week

By Ellen Donnelly

**S**t. Jude Regional Catholic School (SJ RCS) is a diverse and welcoming community. Our program offers a faith-based curriculum in a family-centered environment that fosters spiritual and moral values. We are a proud member of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington school system and are accredited by Cognia Accreditation. SJ RCS is a place where all students can flourish. Academic excellence is a priority for all students. We have a wonderful resource program to support students with their academic needs. The school emphasizes the

development of the “whole child” within an academic curriculum for PK-8th grade.

The school continues to be grateful for the efforts of its faculty, students, parents, and guardians. The St. Jude community is stronger than ever because everyone is working together to give all the children the best possible experience.

SJ RCS will begin Catholic Schools week with an opening Mass on Saturday, January 29, at 5pm and will close the week with Mass on February 4 at 9am. We have a wonderful week planned for our community.

## Open House at St. Jude Regional Catholic School: February 2, 2022

As part of the annual national Catholic Schools' Week events, St. Jude Regional Catholic School will open its doors on Wednesday,



St. Jude Regional Catholic School is very happy to announce its wonderful new Principal, Mrs. Jeanne Donatelli (pictured on left), and its new Vice-Principal, Mrs. Kat Balog (on right), and is very excited to continue its mission.

February 2, 2022, for prospective students, their families, and the community to learn about the school and its mission to provide high-quality, values-based education. Doors will be open from 6-8 p.m. Admissions information will be available at that time, and teachers will be available to speak to prospective families.

SJ RCS serves students from 3 years old through 8<sup>th</sup> grade of all religious, racial, ethnic, and income backgrounds. Its location at 4820 Walbridge Street in Rockville is perfect for commuters as it is convenient to Veirs Mill Road, Connecticut Avenue, Georgia Avenue, and Rockville Pike.

For information on the curriculum, admissions policies and registration, contact the school office at 301-946-7888 or visit [www.stjuderockville.org](http://www.stjuderockville.org).

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### Shrine of St. Jude Parish

12701 Veirs Mill Road  
Rockville, MD

Fr. Paul D. Lee, STD,  
Pastor

301-946-8200

St. Jude Regional  
Catholic School  
Jeanne Donatelli, Principal  
301-946-7888

Maureen Martin,  
OPT Editor  
[MaureenCMartin@verizon.net](mailto:MaureenCMartin@verizon.net)

## St. Jude Regional Catholic School: Catch Our Spirit!

**S**t. Jude Regional Catholic School (SJ RCS) is more than a Catholic day school for grades Pre-K (3- and 4-year-olds) through Eighth in Rockville – at SJ RCS the spirit of community and our Catholic faith are infused in everything we do.



At St. Jude ...

We ARE...educators of the whole child. SJ RCS prides itself on providing a vibrant arts, music and community service education with a strong physical education program. Our sixth-graders experience the world first hand in Outdoor Education, our Drama Club gives our children a creative outlet beyond the classroom walls, and our students who may need an extra helping hand can draw on the expertise of a full-time resource teacher.

We ARE...academic excellence. At

every grade level, we deliver a curriculum designed to prepare students for the rigors of high school. In fact, a large majority of our 4<sup>th</sup>- through 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students attain honors of achievement each marking period. Additionally, nearly every single 8<sup>th</sup> grader who applies is accepted to a Catholic high school, and a majority of our graduates attend one.

We ARE...compassionate toward others. We turn our students' hands and hearts toward good works—from collecting much-needed goods for St. Ann's Infant and Children's Home, to preparing bagged lunches for service men and women, to gathering canned goods to feed the hungry. St. Jude children learn their role in the community of caring. Even within the school the spirit of lending a hand up is ever-present in the buddy system—every older child has a younger child

*Continued on page 39*



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### Pre-K at St. Jude: Enroll Now!

The St. Jude Regional Catholic School (SJ RCS) Pre-School is accepting applications for the 2022-2023 school year. The pre-school promotes an environment where children become independent, confident, lifelong learners with a strong sense of self. It proudly offers a positive, child-centered preschool experience that fosters a love of learning in a nurturing community. Call or email Ellen Donnelly to schedule a virtual tour – 301-946-7888 or [ellen.donnelly@stjuderockville.org](mailto:ellen.donnelly@stjuderockville.org).



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## Catholic Schools Week Program

**M**ercy students and staff have an exciting program of activities planned for 2022 Catholic Schools Week! On Student Day, our Student Council will greet students with pom poms, posters, and bells at carpool, followed by a round of Bingo during lunch. Donations of toiletries will be collected on Community Day in support of the homeless in our local community. Students and staff will wear Mercy blue and white, and Pride the Lion will deliver a surprise to every classroom. Students will compete on Blue and White

teams in a friendly foul-shot challenge in the gym. On Parent Day, students will write notes to parents, and Pride the Lion will make another appearance handing out morning treats during carpool.

Closing out the week, students will come to school dressed like one of their teachers! Back by popular demand will be the Mercy Instagram takeover by a group of NJHS students! They will plan, write and post a series of fun, informative, and inspirational social media posts sharing highlights of Catholic Schools Week at Mercy.

OPT

## Celebrating the Christmas Season at Mercy

**T**he Mercy community came together in a number of special ways to celebrate the Christmas season. Students and staff were treated to a Christmas music concert in the hallway, featuring Principal Doreen Engel on the violin accompanied by the beautiful singing voices of Mrs. Marquita Patterson and Mrs. Stephanie Lopez.

Mercy moms came together for a fun and festive cookie



Above, Mercy students tell the Christmas story through song.

At left, A festive morning concert for Mercy students!



exchange party right before the break. Mrs. Stephanie López, Mercy's Music Director, worked tirelessly to bring the Christmas story to life in a video pageant. Her creativity, along with the hard work and talent of our students resulted in a truly heartwarming and uplifting video.

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Mr. Knecht's after school chess club is a favorite of Mercy students.



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301-365-1415

**Our Lady of Mercy School**

**D Engel, Principal**

301-365-4477

**Gerry Burgess, OPT Editor**

301-330-5676

**O**n December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, the Mercy community had much to celebrate! During the 11am Mass, three Mercy students were baptized into the Catholic faith. Congratulations to the Bardwell sisters – Kerriane (fourth grade), Kellah (fifth grade), and Kendall (fifth grade), and to the entire Bardwell family!

OPT



# St. Bart's Celebrates CSW22

**P**reparations are under-way at St. Bart's for National Catholic Schools Week – the annual celebration of Catholic education in the United States. While Covid-19 continues to make waves across school districts worldwide, threatening to cancel or postpone in-person events, it is important for teachers and administrators to find creative ways to preserve beloved school traditions like Catholic Schools Week.

Throughout the week students will engage in opportunities for reflection and creative expression in thanking those who make a well-rounded St. Bartholomew School education possible. This begins with an opening Mass thanking our parish for their generous support of our school and its students. In the spirit of service and family, the school will host a muffin drive for Martha's Table.

Student Appreciation Day



Third-grade Student Council Representative dresses up as an artist for CSW 2021.

## St. Bartholomew Parish

6900 River Road  
Bethesda, MD 20816

**Rev. Mark Knestout**  
Pastor

301-229-7933

**St. Bartholomew School**  
**Frank English, Principal**

301-229-5586

**Frank Maguire, OPT Editor**  
202-512-8226

has surprises in store for its students as Teachers and Principal for the Day auction winners take the lead. Students have opportunities to share their inspirations and aspirations by dressing up as a favorite historical American icon and for Career Day. There will also be guest speakers, assemblies, and all kinds of contests including "Name that Baby: Teacher Edition" and the annual Religion Bee. The week concludes with a Coffee Cart in morning carpool to thank our parents for all they do.

OPT

## FAITH FORMATION

*Con't from page 8*

ship with St. John Neumann Parish in Gaithersburg. In its new iteration of Youth Ministry, Youth Minister Travis Tomon hopes the parish's high school-aged youth will form their faith, not just with peers in a standalone ministry, but also working with caring adults who coordinate the parish's many social justice, liturgical and administrative ministries too.

"The Youth Ministry I envision is plugged into every aspect of parish life," Tomon said. "I want to create an environment where teens are empowered to share their gifts and talents with our community because they have so much to offer. Taking on responsibility builds engagement, and engaged teens are more likely to feel like our parish is theirs."

The suburban parish possesses a strong history of Youth Ministry, with dances, Aloha parties, service work, and trips to Rallies for Life a fond memory in many parishioners' recollections. During a brainstorming session held November 7 at the church, 17 parishioners gathered to discuss how they hoped the next phase of teens' and young adults' faith formation might look at the parish. Some of the core sharings included helping teens grow in their relationship with God and creation; supporting them in maintaining their core values; and offering a place of acceptance embraced by a community of

tradition.

At that meeting, several parishioners noted their agreement with a reflection that challenged them to consider how the voices of young people were honored and heard in Church.

Allowing teens who have been confirmed to take on leadership roles in the church is something that's important to parishioner David Heller, a parent of three teens and an eighth grade catechist in the parish's Religious Education program. All his children – ages 17, 15 and 13 – have had especially positive experiences in the parish's Vacation Bible Camp program, both as campers and, later, as teen volunteers, after they aged out of VBC following sixth grade.

"Having been an eighth grade catechist and an adult Vacation Bible Camp volunteer, I see teens want to stay involved but don't know how to do that," Heller said. "I really hope (Youth Ministry) will be a logical progression from participating in Vacation Bible Camp and attending eighth grade."

For now, Tomon, 25, is focused on the details of rebuilding the youth community. On December 12, he is hosting a "Come and See" meeting during which he will invite teens to articulate how they would like to experience Youth Ministry. He is also working with adult leaders to compile a schedule of events through May 2022.

"I see my role as Youth Minister as an animator," Tomon said. "My goal is to empower our teens and our community."

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## SHARING BREAD

Con't from page 1

well perishable items like meat and produce. Patrons are able to select add-on items ranging from diapers, gluten free options, and cake mixes depending on their family's needs.

Serving nearly eight tons of food each month is no easy feat. It takes hundreds of volunteer hours and requires a flurry of activity seven days a week. Donations are accepted Tuesday through Sunday and come from many different sources, including Knights of Columbus councils, area grocery stores, Catholic schools, private donors, and several area parishes. One of the characteristics that makes the St. Martin of Tours Food Pantry so unique is the fact that it brings together many of the area parishes in support of some of the most needy and vulnerable members of the community.

Donors and volunteers come from several area churches including St. Francis, Our Lady of Mercy, St. Patrick's, Rose of Lima, St. Bartholomew's, St. Raphael's, St. Jude's, St. John Neumann, and, of course, St. Martin of Tours.

While there is a cadre of regular volunteers, extra hands are always welcomed. Sylvia Jones, a St. Francis of Assisi parishioner and a weekly volunteer at the Food Pantry for several years, commented that "You can volunteer and give just one hour without making a long-term commitment. There are lots of things that you *might* do, but if there is something that you *can* do, you *should* just do it." That was her attitude several years ago when she first started as a volunteer. "The invitation to help out was strongly encouraged," she notes. And it was something that she could do, and soon enough she wanted to give more of her time. "Now I rope others in too," Sylvia laughs.

Sundays require the most volunteers, with the bulk of the work taking place between 1:00-4:00 pm. During this time, the majority of the week's food donations are dropped off and received in a system that resembles organized chaos. Retirees and high schoolers seeking service hours alike partner up to collect and sort the food. On any given Sunday, a dozen or so volunteers welcome cars as they pull up to drop off their bounties.

Donors are assisted in emptying their cars and bringing the food to the ramp outside of the pantry, leaving them in heaping piles of plastic bags and cardboard boxes. There, additional volunteers sort the groceries into labeled bins. Green beans in one, pasta sauce in another. Within minutes, the piles of cans and jars each has a place. Once full, the bins are either brought into the pantry, or moved to an additional storage unit on St. Martin's property. Volunteers come in during the week to rotate the food, ensuring that the oldest non-perishable items are served first.

Throughout the week, yet more volunteers come to periodically check the collection bins and coolers that are left open for donors who arrive after hours. Others use cash donations and grocery store gift cards to supplement the regular donations. Volunteers are also needed to break down bulk donations into more manageable allotments. 50lb bags of rice are painstakingly repackaged into Ziplock bags more suitable for single-family use.

In an operation like this, no job is too small. It requires the contributions and helping hands of people like one young volunteer who serves on diaper duty, packaging sets of diapers and wipes, or another who smooths out all the plastic grocery bags collected during food drop-offs, to be repurposed during food distribution.

Mondays are distribution day, starting at 7:00 a.m. On average,

roughly 225 families come through the Food Pantry to take food for the week. The Pantry never shut down during the pandemic. In fact, 2020 was its busiest year to date.

The numbers are tracked by Chuck Smith, the coordinator of the Food Pantry. He publishes the numbers each week in St. Martin's parish bulletin, along with a summary of the items most needed (not canned tuna fish at the moment – the pantry has enough for the next three months!). Chuck also posts distribution data inside the Food Pantry.

On the front page of the St. Martin of Tours Food Pantry website, there is a well-known quote from St. Teresa of Calcutta. "If you can't feed 100 people, just feed one." The Food Pantry does manage to feed hundreds, often times over a 1,000 people, each week. But it provides other nourishment too. On a recent Sunday, regular Meghan Jones, an adult with Down Syndrome, helped a new volunteer to store the cans correctly in the large collection bins, making sure they were in even layers and leaving enough room to attach the lids correctly. Retirees and widows gathered not only to provide a helping hand, but to seek meaning in their time. Men labored to move the enormous bins of heavy cans to their proper shelf, growing in friendship with each lift.

The numbers and analytics posted on the Pantry wall, while impressive, don't do justice to what the Food Pantry accomplishes. It highlights the vibrant faith of Montgomery County Catholics, both in its volunteers and donors, who come together and respond as one Church to Christ's command to feed the hungry and thereby satisfy in part their own spiritual hunger.

For more information about the St. Martin of Tours Food Pantry, visit [www.stmartinsweb.org/st-martin-s-pantry](http://www.stmartinsweb.org/st-martin-s-pantry).

OPT



College students "home for break" enjoy pancakes and Catholic Trivia.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Con't from page 7

Prayer Shawl ministry donates their lovingly made "lapghans" and shawls, which are then blessed and given to those in need in the parish.

What college student would say "No" to Breakfast for Dinner? Returning students, home for the Christmas holiday, were welcomed on Thursday, December 30<sup>th</sup> by Father Greg and a wonderful supporting cast. Men from the Knights of Columbus "Our Lady of Fatima" Council #6901 as well as the parish Men's Club were glad to be cooking

and supplying the breakfast dishes behind the scenes. Students shared pancakes, laughter and a really special evening together. Dave Bivans, Grand Knight of the Council and OLVP parishioner, commented, "We were really proud to hear these young adults excitedly spouting answers to Catholic-related trivia questions and discussing lively the right AND wrong answers with each other. It was great to see, or hear, our Catholic faith alive and well in our parish youth. We were very glad to be able to help Father Greg as he continues to reach out and engage with our parishioners."

OPT

## EVANGELIZATION

Con't from page 8

Timoney. "Every Christian is called to be actively involved in evangelization. We can no longer say we are disciples or missionaries, but missionary disciples."

"So, as Pope Francis has said, what are we waiting for?"

The topic is particularly timely for the parish, as it prepares to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an archdiocesan community in June 2022. Dr. Timoney's talk kicked off the first of a series of 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary addresses that academic professors and clergy members will give to the parish in the coming year. But the message she brought is timeless, said Director of Adult Faith Formation and Social Concerns Tony Bosnick.

"(Susan's) personal faith and commitment to Christ brings life to the pastoral and theological topics she is discussing," Bosnick said.

"During this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, the topic is good, as it comes to us from 50 years of Church teaching since Vatican Council II on evangelization, then through the Popes since that time. Christ, through the Church, continues to call us to share the message of hope of the Good News."

During her talk, Dr. Timoney outlined the four ways Catholics

are called to engage in the New Evangelization:

Encounter, in which we ourselves meet and get to know Jesus Christ, so that we can help others encounter him as well.

Accompany, in which we get to know others and pray with them as they learn to live like Christ and align themselves as one of his disciples.

Community, in which we work together as a group to invite others in, so they experience a place of invitation, welcome, and hospitality.

Send, in which we accept the call to go out into the world and invite others, including people on the periphery, to Christ.

In response to a question on whether attendees observed these changes happening in the church today, former parishioner Sara Becker said she thought the pandemic had crowded out all thoughts and intentions of people to live as missionary disciples.

"But this is a prime time to talk about this," Becker said. "(We can discuss) how to bring a silver lining to this pandemic. We can be reinvigorated in our faith and every aspect of our faith."

Watch a recording of Dr. Timoney's talk at St. Francis of Assisi Parish at: [www.sfadw.org/50th-anniversary-talks](http://www.sfadw.org/50th-anniversary-talks).

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## New STEM Labs: Creating Bold Thinkers and Passionate Leaders

By Anne Gemunder

Each year, during our Catholic Schools Week Day of Giving, our school community contributes to a special project that directly benefits our students. Donations go toward general education programs such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math), music, and art which help our students continue to grow and learn every day.

This year, through generous contributions, we were able to purchase engineering-based Kids Spark STEM labs for use by Pre-K through 8th grade. Our teachers have been able to integrate these hands-on labs into their science curriculum. These labs are equipped with a variety of reusable engineering materials that range from basic building blocks to programmable robotics. Materials are robust, easy to use, and are ideal for collaborative learning and invention.

Our middle school science teacher, Christian Stokes, is excited to offer his students an opportunity to work together to create new solutions, problem solve, and increase their confidence in STEM. His 8th grade students reflected on these new



Mr. Stokes supervises St. Martin's 8<sup>th</sup> graders during a hands-on science project. Photo courtesy of St. Martin's School.

approaches to learning:

- We talk and brainstorm ideas on how we are going to do a project.
- We learn how to build different things and think outside the box.
- Having a challenge when building makes doing the building more fun.
- We use critical thinking skills

because we don't have direct instruction.

- Our goal is to build something like a robot or a car that can move on its own.

Our next Day of Giving is February 1, 2022. Thanks to the generosity of our community, we continue to make a positive impact in the lives of our students.

OPT

## St. Martin's Parish News and Notes

**Day of Prayers of Life** – On Friday, January 21, St. Martin's will have a special day of prayers for the sanctity of life. There will be the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 9:30a to 6:30p and rosaries prayed every hour.

**Synod Listening Session** – On Saturday, January 22, at 9:45a, Fr. Dave Wells will lead a parish listening session in preparation for the international Synod of Bishops in 2023. The topic is "for a Synodal Church, Communion, Participation, and Mission."

**Morning of Reflection** –

Liturgical ministers are invited to participate in a morning of reflection with Fr. Patrick Agustin and Fr. Francisco Rodriguez following the Saturday, January 29, 9a mass. The gathering will allow ministers to grown in deeper appreciation of their respective ministries.

**Couples Night of Reflection** – Couples are invited for dinner, dessert, reflection talk, and special surprises on Saturday, February 12 at 6p. Pre-registration is required. Contact [barbara@stmartinsweb.org](mailto:barbara@stmartinsweb.org) for more information and registration.

OPT



St. Martin's students enjoy their time on the playground at recess. Photo courtesy of St. Martin's School.

## St. Martin's Celebrates Catholic Schools Week

By Catherine Cooksey and Anne Gemunder

**D**uring Catholic Schools Week (January 30-February 4) we take time to honor contributors to our school community and celebrate what makes Catholic schools so extraordinary! Through these events, we focus on the value Catholic education provides to young people and its contributions to our church and our community.

### Crusaders Celebrate Catholic Schools Week with Whirlwind of Activities

- Sunday 1/30 – Parish Appreciation Day, In-Person Open House from 2:30 to 4:30 pm
- Monday 1/31 – Community Appreciation Day, School Mass at 10:15 am, Lenten Food Drive and Snowman Scavenger Hunt Begins
- Tuesday 2/1 – School Appreciation Day; Pajama, Pizza, Popcorn, and Película Day; 24-Hour Day of Giving

- Wednesday 2/2 – Student Appreciation Day, Wacky Tacky Wednesday, Student Bingo
- Thursday 2/3 – Family Appreciation Day, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade vs. Staff Volleyball Game, Sports Dress Down
- Friday 2/4 – Teacher Appreciation Day, Living Rosary, Spirit Wear Dress Down, Faculty & Staff Lunch

OPT



St. Martin's students dressed as Magi for the annual Christmas show. Photo courtesy of St. Martin's School.



St. Martin's 8<sup>th</sup> graders pursue their creative impulses in art class. Photo courtesy of St. Martin's School.

### St. Martin of Tours Parish

201 South Frederick Ave.  
Gaithersburg, MD

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**St. Martin School**  
**Stephen Lamont, Principal**  
301-990-2441

**Catherine Cooksey,**  
Parish Editor  
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**SHORT***Con't from page 1*

duties with Patricia McGann and Fr John Enzler and your readership.

Before our winter reflection, I'd like to celebrate the life of a great faith-community leader who returned to God this month. Few individuals had greater impact on interfaith work in Montgomery County than Tufail Ahmad. He was a dear friend. Tufail was a devout Muslim who migrated here from Pakistan in 1973. He experienced first-hand the prejudice Muslims experienced then. Nevertheless, he worked hard, raised a family and began a successful business.

He retired in 2000 and dedicated his life to encouraging local Muslims to engage in broader community life. He founded the Montgomery County Muslim Community Council to facilitate this work. Shortly after 9/11, he founded the Montgomery County Muslim Foundation to coordinate the Muslim community's cooperation with other faiths in meeting the needs of poor and homeless people of all or no faiths. He taught me, and exemplified, that Islamic Identity, defined in the Koran, begins with compassion and service to others regardless of faith. He was a brother in love and service to many priests, ministers, rabbis, imams, and others of good will.

I suggest two reflections for this issue related to Martin Luther King Jr. and Catholic schools' appreciation week. In both cases, we are reminded of the service Catholics provided during the dangerous and challenging times of the COVID pandemic.

Reverend King's legacy of compassion and justice is honored by the work of hundreds of Montgomery County Catholics who have acted to assure that poor and unemployed people have enough food to eat. They joyfully volunteered to establish, supply, and serve at many food pantries associated with Catholic parishes. Thousands of individuals and families received food supplements because of them.

The pantries served anyone in need regardless of legal status or faith. Parishioners served because **they were Catholic, not because those in need necessarily were.** Existing pantries like those at St Martin's and St Camillus vastly increased their service to meet enormous growing need. Some parishes like St Jude's started new pantries. And partner parishes like Our Lady of Mercy, St Elizabeth's and St Andrew's opened their hearts even more to help brothers and sisters harmed by the pandemic. In the true spirit of the Gospel, many parishes teamed up with non-Catholic faith groups to make a loving difference. Most parishes participated in the Catholic Charities annual

Greg Gannon Canned Food drive. Thousands of pounds of canned food were collected in local neighborhoods by hundreds of parish volunteers. The food supports food pantries and the extraordinary work of Catholic Charities. The drive honors an inspiration Catholic leader who courageously continued to serve the poor even as he was terminally ill. The drive is not only a compassionate food event, but also has inspiring evangelical impact. Every neighbor, regardless of faith, receives an empty bag from the local Catholic parish with a note attached urging each home to participate in helping the hungry. Every home, Catholic or not, witnesses the leadership and loving service of Catholics as they exemplify the teaching of Jesus. What a blessed message and grace filled missionaries!

**Catholic Schools Appreciation Week** is celebrated each year at the end of January. It's a time for local Catholics to learn more about Catholic schools and appreciate the work of staff, students and parents who make genuine sacrifices to be part of the important Catholic mission of raising children with superior education and deep understanding and practice of their faith. This year, more than any, all those involved in parish Catholic schools deserve our appreciation. Facing COVID for two years, principals and staff have courageously risked their own well being to find ways through the media and medical fog which has defined this pandemic. They have faced controversy and stress without reliable and consistent information about the pandemic, and it seems that everyone insists their expert opinion is the answer to the pandemic and how schools should respond! All the while, selfless Catholic educators have placed the health and educational needs of our school children above all other considerations. There are many examples of parish and family members assisting staff in small and large ways, recess duty, sanitizing, substitute teaching or nursing. Thanks to these for their loving and compassionate service. Principals, teachers and staff, and those helping, are amazing examples for students of true Catholic identity. They are yet another reason our Catholic schools are faithfully Catholic.

There is much talk about Catholic identity these days. Theologians and scholars offer examples and perspectives, most virtual. When Jesus chose to return to Jerusalem one last time to assure our salvation, it was dangerous. He did it anyway. When parish members chose to go in person to feed the hungry during the pandemic, it was dangerous. They did it anyway. When teachers, staff and students returned to school, it was dangerous. They did it anyway. Thank God for grace given to these beautiful examples of Catholic identity.

God Bless,  
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# Hark! The Holy Cross Angels Sing!

On the evening of December 17th, travelers along Strathmore Avenue would have witnessed a beautiful celebration in front of Holy Cross School. The parish and school communities had gathered under a gossamer moon to listen to the narration of the Nativity story by the fifth-grade students, with musical accompaniment by the Holy Cross School choir.

Adding to the festivities and creating an interactive setting, the Home and School Association organized a petting zoo: real sheep and a donkey nibbled on hay on the lawn prior to the performance and peacefully accepted the attention of the children and parents. Treats were served, too. A Kona Ice stand served up flavored ice, and individually wrapped homemade cookies, hot chocolate, and coffee were distributed by parent volunteers.

Dr. Mariana Mihai-Zoeter, the music director for both Holy Cross School and Parish, directed the performance. Mr. Jamie Choi was the accompanist. Mrs. Laura Menjivar assisted with costumes and during rehearsals. Holy Cross alum, Isaac Schiller, provided technical support for sound and lighting. Fifth Grade teacher, Miss Brennan



Above, Holy Cross Fifth Grade shepherds await the beginning of the performance inside the church.

At right, two Fifth Grade students portraying the Angel of the Lord, left, and Gabriel, right, are ready to shine their light and spread the Good News that Jesus is born in Bethlehem!



The Christmas pageant, staged on the front steps of Holy Cross Church, gave witness to all the joys of the Christmas season as voices raised in song.

Striegel, supported her students in rehearsing their speaking roles, while Miss Clare Hogan, the writing teacher for grades three through five provided performance-night assistance.

Eight fifth grade students narrated while others, in costume, enacted the Nativity story. The school choir, comprised of students in grades three through

eight, provided the soundtrack of traditional Christmas hymns, and with a mix of whole choir, small group, and solo performances.

"It was a beautiful evening, and a testament to the resilience and faith of Holy Cross. In years past, we have held our Nativity play in the church. Ongoing Covid restrictions might have meant a cancellation of this annual tradition, but we were determined that the show must go on," said principal, Mrs. Lisa Kane. "Great obstacles present us with great opportunities. The entire community came together to make the performance a reality. It was magnificent in every way."

OPT

## Holy Cross Parish

4900 Strathmore Avenue,  
Garrett Park, MD

Fr. Robert Buchmeier, Pastor  
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## Holy Cross School

Lisa Maio Kane, Principal  
301-949-0053

Lurana Hogan, Parish Editor  
l.hogan@hccross.org

## Christmas Eve Pageant Mass: A Holy Cross Tradition Resumes

By Yvie Killian, Pageant Director at Holy Cross

or unto us a child is born... And he will be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

-Isaiah 9:6

On Christmas Eve, more than a dozen children from the Holy Cross Church and School community presented the annual rendition of the Christmas story. Parishioners were incredibly grateful that, with COVID precautions in place, we were able to resume this long-standing tradition after a one-year hiatus. Many of the



Mary and Joseph celebrate the birth of Jesus in the company of an angel and an adorable little

costumes still in use today, were hand-made by parishioners from simple materials, such as cotton sheets, sturdy cardboard, and Christmas garland. Pieces have been added through the years, including updated wise men costumes sewn by the current director's mother and sweet little sheep hats knitted by former parishioner, Esther Rodriguez's knitting circle. Each piece tells its own story within the pageant, as a living legacy of those who have participated over the decades. When offered to have new costumes purchased for the parish, the offer



The shepherds receive news of Jesus' birth as they tend their sheep.

Continued on page 39



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# Resurrection Celebrates 40 Years and the Return of Winterfest!

**O**n November 7, Cardinal Gregory joined Father Barry, Pastor, and the Resurrection Catholic Community to celebrate their 40th anniversary of being a Catholic Community. After Mass, parishioners celebrated in the Amadeo Room with a reception and activities for children.

Resurrection was also able to celebrate the 20th Winterfest on December 3 and 4th. After not being able to have it in 2020 due to the pandemic, over 100 vendors and crafters sold items alongside of baked good items donated by parishioners, a silent auction, treasure chest room, wine cork pull, and food sold by the Knights of Columbus Msgr. Pennington Council 9808.

Pictures say a thousand words and the ones here tell how much love members of the Resurrection Community have for each other and their parish.

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## Winterfest 2021



# Advent was Alive at SJE this year!

**S**JE kicked off the season of Advent with a special Mass and blessing of the candy canes for the feast of St. Nicholas. Our younger students also left their shoes in the hallway and received special treats! The SJE Home and School Association came up with a creative reimagining of our annual Breakfast with Santa event by bringing it outside to make it safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our middle school students performed a living Nativity to make the event extra special! For the feast of the Immaculate Conception, our Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, renewed their vows at Mass. Middle School students created a beautiful display to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe on her feast day. Our Advent Service Project was adopting families through Catholic Charities. We had a special prayer service which included a representative from Catholic Charities, who accepted the gift cards on behalf of the families.



Members of Student Council give the Adopt-a-Family donations to Catholic Charities representative Teresa Villanueva.

We are so blessed to be in a Catholic school, where we are able to celebrate this holy season leading up to Christmas!

OPT



Father Banks sprinkles holy water and blesses our candy canes for the feast of St. Nicholas!



Volunteers check people in at Breakfast with Santa.



Middle School students paint a beautiful image of Our Lady of Guadalupe to display for her feast day.



Middle School students act out a living nativity at our Breakfast with Santa event.



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# God Bless Us, Every One

By Ava Cristillo, Beltran Mata Esteban,  
and Greta Rank Vidaurri, OLOL Class of  
2022

Our Lady of Lourdes School's eighth-grade production of "A Christmas Carol" was a spectacular experience that the eighth graders and their audiences will never forget. The play was first proposed by teachers Ms. Capizzi and Mrs. Long, who came to the students with the idea a few weeks before the performance. This news made our eighth graders ecstatic as they lined up to audition for "A Christmas Carol." Once the students received their parts, they got to work immediately. The eighth grade met up to practice after school and during their lunch and recess. As the anticipated night grew closer, their practices evolved into full school days of hard work on the play. Student Judah Malkus, who had the lead role of Ebenezer



The cast and crew of "A Christmas Carol" take their final bow

Scrooge said, "I was very pressured by it, but the pressure made me work harder to become the char-

acter." Many of our eighth grade students agree with Judah that participating in the play was a good

challenge for them.

Thanks to all the hard work of the students and teachers, the play

resulted in a huge success. The students learned many important skills such as learning how to get into character, the value of teamwork, and how to project to an audience. It was also incredible to see how the students and teachers all worked together to put on an excellent play. From the outstanding lead actor Judah Malkus, to the excellent stage director Andre Clevy, and the hardworking Ms. Capizzi and Mrs. Long, every participant chipped in to ensure the play's success. It is safe to say that the experience was one that the students will remember for the rest of their lives. It was beautiful to see the whole school community come together to celebrate the wonderful Christmas season at Our Lady of Lourdes. In the end, the production of the "Christmas Carol" became the perfect way for the school to wave 2021 goodbye.

OPT

## Breakfast with Santa & Children's National Toy Drive

On December 11, Our Lady of Lourdes hosted the always well-attended Breakfast with Santa event. Continental breakfast was served, and many of the children enjoyed hot chocolate despite the unseasonably warm day. Because the weather was so beautiful, the event was extremely well attended and children played outside for the majority of the morning. The

seventh grade class of Our Lady of Lourdes served as Santa's helpers and organized fun and games for the attendees. Children were able to decorate their own Christmas ornaments or hop into the photo booth. Santa was available to take requests and for photo opportunities as well.

In addition to building community and spreading Christmas cheer, Breakfast with



OLOL students enjoy the warm December weather. Photo credit: Katie Crandlemire



OLOL eighth graders load up a car full of presents for the Children's National Toy Drive



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7500 Pearl Street Bethesda, MD

**Fr. Walsh, Pastor**  
301-654-1287

**Ms. Amy Moore, Principal**  
301-654-5376

Santa also served as a toy drive for Children's National Hospital in Washington, D.C. Brand-new toys, books, and games were collected by the boxful. OLOL parent Mrs. Pomponi organized the drive and brought the gifts to Children's, where they were added to "Dr. Bear's Closet" and would surely be enjoyed by patients in the weeks to come.

OPT

More Our Lady of Lourdes News on Page 33





The Nativity was staged by students to accompany the beautiful music.

## St. Jane de Chantal School's Students Perform Their Annual Christmas Pageant

*Families and Friends Streamed the Annual Pageant Online*

By Catherine Tomsbeck

The Christmas Story was performed by the children of St. Jane de Chantal School during the annual Christmas Pageant. The performance which included spiritual reflections, music and a celebration of the Birth of Jesus, reminded us all of God's love for the world. Staging the Christmas Pageant during a Pandemic was a reminder of how much our daily lives have changed this year. While parents were not able to attend the live performance of the Christmas Story a video link was sent to each family to enjoy in their own homes.

OPT



Wisemen solemnly followed a star and searched for the Christ child in the Nativity reenactment

## St. Jane De Chantal's SPRED Program Offers Fellowship for Persons with Intellectual Differences

*For Over 40 Years Families Gather Together in Christ's Name*

By William Lawler

Originally created by a group of families, St. Jane deChantal's SPRED (Special Needs Religious Education Program) has been going strong for over 40 years. SPRED offers people with intellectual

differences and their families opportunities for fellowship, prayer, and celebration.

Prior to the COVID challenges, SPRED met twice a month on Saturday mornings. The program had time for shared prayers,

*Continued on page 37*

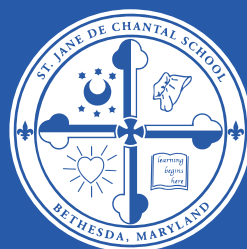
## St. Jane de Chantal Sodality Events in Full Swing

*Charitable Traditions Kept De Chantal's Sodality busy this Fall and Winter*

By Helen Bollwerk

Despite complications arising from the continuing challenges of Covid-19, the St. Jane de Chantal Sodality has resumed its schedule of events and projects for 2021-2022. Leading Sodality this year are Co-Presidents Helen Bollwerk and Anne Yockel, Prefect Kathleen Reed, Co-Secretaries Kathleen Kitinger and Maureen Wilkerson, Treasurer Lee Malone, and Membership Chair and Webpage Manager Patty Bubar. Through the ingenuity

*Continued on page 38*



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**Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton**

301-530-1221

**Michelle D'Amour Flynn**

OPT Editor



# Winter is a happy season at St. Raphael School

By Gabriela Herrera Gugiu

Snow play and our upcoming Catholic School Week celebrations kick off the happy days of winter at St. Raphael.

Snow Angels are a MUST for St. Raphael students on a snow day!

Starting in late January, we will kick off Catholic School Week with 10:00 Mass on January 30. Our theme this year will be Miracles & Magic. Decorations created by our middle school and SRS parent Ginger Browning, a former Disney illustrator, will transform our hallways by bringing miracles of our faith to life.



## St. Raphael Parish St. Raphael School

1513 Dunster Road  
Rockville, MD

Rev. Michael Salah, Pastor

Teri Dwyer, Principal

Lexi McClure,  
OPT Editor

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[www.straphaels.org](http://www.straphaels.org)  
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-St. Francis de Sales



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ARE AMONG GOD'S GIFTS TO HUMANITY



LET US  
ADORE HIM

Our theme for Catholic Schools Week is Miracles & Magic!

Here is full CSW 'At a Glance'

- Monday, January 31, we will celebrate our parents with notes home and little goody bags.
- Tuesday, February 1, we will host a catered lunch for our teachers and staff. Commemorative booklets of student letters and special gift bags will be provided as a token of appreciation.
- Wednesday, February 2, we let our priests know how special they are to us with notes and cards of appreciation. This is also Community Appreciation Day. This year we are repeating a much-loved effort of collaborating with Catholic Charities in their Cup of Joe Program, which supplies breakfast bags for the hungry.
- Thursday, February 3, is our Career Day, and we learn so much from visiting parents who share about their professions and vocations. Younger students are encouraged to explore their career interests by dressing up in an outfit that represents their dream job.
- Friday, February 4, is for the kids! A day dedicated to celebrating our students that ends with our Family Fun Night. This year, we are looking forward to welcoming the incredible performances of a renowned magician.

## Middle School Preview

February begins with the traditional Middle School Preview. We invite parents of upcoming 6 Grade students to come and learn about our middle school. We are so proud of the wonderful things happening on the second floor. For more information visit <https://straphaelschoolmd.org/>

Registration for 2022-2023 School Year is Open

For more information visit <https://straphaelschoolmd.org/>

As we enter 2022, we invite our St. Raphael community to join us in this New Year's Prayer.

Dear Lord, please give me...

A few friends who understand me and remain my friends; A work to do which has real value, without which the world would be poorer; A mind unafraid to travel, even though the trail be not blazed; An understanding heart; A sense of humor; Time for quiet, silent meditation; A feeling of the presence of God; The patience to wait for the coming of these things, with the wisdom to recognize them when they come.  
Amen.



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Fifth-grade girls at The Woods build positive relationships with peers and teachers through the advisory program.

## Building Connections in Fifth-Grade Girls Advisory

By Mrs. Mullally, Grades Five and Six Science Teacher, Grade Five Advisor

**A**dvisory is a very special time in the Upper School. One significant part of being in advisory is a chance to build positive relationships with peers and teachers. Students form a connection with their advisor which opens the door to the teacher providing academic and social-emotional support throughout the year.

The fifth-grade girls have found that our advisory is a safe space where they can express themselves, share common interests, celebrate differences, be themselves, and connect with each other.

During the first trimester, the girls in fifth grade have learned more about themselves through activities related to goal setting, study skills, healthy habits, stress, and priorities. They have bonded with each other while learning about teamwork, empathy, admiration, and gratitude.

Using Responsive Classroom as a guide, we will continue to build student-student bonds, support academic readiness, reflect, strengthen the advisor-advisee relationship, develop communication and social skills, and extend learning through various themes as the year progresses.

OPT

## Music in the Montessori Classroom

By Ms. Michele Carpenter, Co-Director of Montessori and Montessori II Teacher

**I**n the Montessori classroom, music is essential. December, the month of Christmas carols and jingle bells, provides us with the perfect focal point for music and instruments.

During circle time, we sing and recite both familiar and new holiday poems. Through these poems and songs, we develop phonological awareness, listening for rhyming words and noting alliteration. We shake jingle bells to determine the number of syllables in a word. The repetition of these poems promotes fluency, develops vocabulary, and helps children recognize patterns in language.

Our poems also have a mathematical aspect. We introduce ordinal numbers; "the first gingerbread said 'oh my we smell great.'" As well as developing the mathematical mind for beginning addition and subtraction skills; if we have five reindeer waiting for Santa, how many more do we need to wait for?

As the children become more and more comfortable with the poems, we ask if anyone would like to stand up to do parts of the poem on their own. Reciting the different parts of the poem and performing as a group not only develops confidence in the child, but community in the classroom.

In December, we do an in depth study of musical instruments and sound. We learn about percussion, brass, woodwind and string instruments, what a sound wave is, and how the different families of instruments make noise. We use the instruments we learn about to make



Montessori teachers utilize music in the classroom to help students with fluency, vocabulary, patterns, and much more.

a class band, giving the children hands on experience to understand how they are creating sound. We do experiments with tuning forks and blow across the top of a bottle to see if we can make sound.

Through these concrete experiences, we introduce complex ideas such as sound waves. Music is all around during the holiday season, Christmas carols in the car ride, in department stores, and all around. Learning through that lens allows for engagement and retention of information. And as they belt out the Christmas carols, they will be thinking of syllables, instruments, and sound waves.

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The Woods second-grade students learn about holidays from around the world, including Kwanzaa.

## Learning About Celebrations around the World

By Ms. Capri Coleman, Second-Grade Teacher

**S**econd-grade students at The Woods are learning about the different ways in which people around the world and in this country celebrate the holidays. Kwanzaa was one of the holidays these students recently learned about.

Kwanzaa begins each year on December 26. Many African-American families celebrate Kwanzaa along with Christmas. Kwanzaa was founded in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga to celebrate aspects of African-American life, heritage, community, family, justice, and nature.

Kwanzaa lasts seven days and includes seven different principles. Unity (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity), and Imani (faith). Each day a candle is lit in recognition of the prin-

ciples. The candles are: three red, one black, and three green and are held by the knara, which is placed on an mkeka or a straw mat. Kwanzaa ends January 1, with a feast called Karamu which celebrates cultural expression.

OPT

### The Woods Academy

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Knights of Columbus handover comfort kits at VA Medical Centre, in Washington DC.

## Comfort Kits for Veterans Project

By Ken Kingfield, Grand Knight, Fr. McKenna Council, Knights of Columbus 11024.

The Fr. McKenna Council of Knights of Columbus at Mother Seton Parish wishes

to thank all who participated in this very successful maiden program of our Comfort Kits for Veterans Project. With help, personal contributions, and donations, we were able to deliver over 500 personal hygiene kits to the Veteran's Affairs Medical Center, Washington DC on Monday, December 20, 2021. By this, we were able to contribute to the comfort of our Veterans, thank them and send our best wishes to all who have served and made the ultimate sacrifice for our country when called upon to do so. We cannot thank you all enough.

### Mother Seton Parish

19951 Fr. Hurley Boulevard  
Germantown, MD

Fr. Lee Fangmeyer  
Pastor

301-924-3838

Brenda Rosado  
OPT Editor

Bulletin@Mothersetonparish.org

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At top left, arrival of Magi to Mother Seton Parish

Above, children ask questions about the Magi's travels



Above, Magi telling their story

Below, presentation of gifts to baby Jesus



## Feast of the Epiphany at Mother Seton

The feast of the Epiphany was celebrated in an extraordinary way at Mother Seton, as children and adults awaited the arrival of the 3 Magi.

Epiphany, throughout the history of the Church has been an important feast; however, in

recent years it has taken a back seat among other feasts we celebrate during the Christmas season. It is on the Epiphany, which comes from the Greek word "to reveal," that we celebrate the visitation of the three Kings to Baby Jesus, and thus through them,

Jesus' physical manifestation to the gentiles. These three Kings were not Christian Kings that came to adore the Child.

What was it that compelled them to leave every comfort they

*Continued on page 33*

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# Knights Maintain the Gospel of Life Garden

By John Cavanaugh-O'Keefe

Each year on the anniversary of the two abortion decisions in 1973, the Knights of Columbus organize a parish presence at the March for Life in Washington. But this is just one pro-life activity in a list. They also organize prayer outside the Bethesda abortion clinic, Rosary after Mass, support for a pregnancy center, talks, etc. Among their projects is caring for the Gospel of Life Garden on the left of the church door, an eruption of gratuitous beauty.

When the garden was planted, it was (partly) a response to the Oaks Landfill in Laytonsville, which takes trash reduced to ash, but is also (quietly) one of the largest cemeteries in Maryland. No one knows how many bodies of unborn children are buried there; but according to six people who



The focal point of the Gospel of Life Garden is a statue of the Holy Family.

took bodies out of dumpsters in 1986-87, there were at least two abortion clinics that for years put all their corpses into the county waste stream, which ends at the Oaks.

When pro-lifers, including Harry Hand and Cathy Roth and assorted Junghanses, approached Fr. Kennedy about a memorial for the unborn, he was clear and firm: no dead bodies, no bloody photos, no horror show. A memorial was appropriate, but it had to be upbeat and tasteful. And so it is. The memorial is a cool spot in the heat of the summer, a calm place nearly all the time, and a joyful circle when kids cut loose there whirling round and round like a double helix.

The gardener who leads this Knights project – trimming, weeding, mulching, watering – is Chris Kane. He's got bright shining eyes like a mischievous kid with a dead

mouse or a teenager in love – or like a perpetually curious scientist, which he is. Planting the annual flowers and mulching everything is simple joy each spring. Repairing the sprinklers after wear and tear (or vandalism) requires vigilance. Keeping a brick walk level near a shade tree is a recurrent challenge.

The garden has two gorgeous kousa dogwoods. Its flower has four petals, so each spring the trees are covered with small crosses. They have a knobby red fruit in the fall, which is attractive except when they get smeared on the walk. (Please brush them aside when Chris isn't there.) But also, they're edible; wash and eat a few.

Have a seat! Then, maybe, say a prayer for the unknown unwanted un-named unburied unborn, and their families.

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## Msgr. Filardi Celebrates "Teaching Mass"

At the beginning of Advent, Msgr. Filardi offered a "teaching Mass." He celebrated Mass, but incorporated teaching about details; Kimberly Morrison stood at the side offering explanations of gestures and responses. "Everything about Mass has meaning," she explained. "often supported by more than 2,000 years of teaching and tradition. When we can identify beauty and meaning in the symbolic gestures and the rites of the Mass it helps us find comfort and peace in the Liturgy, and deepens our understanding of the Mass, thereby deepening our participation in the Liturgy and, ultimately, our relationship with God."

The teaching Mass was a success, and another was scheduled for January 25, focusing on the "articles" of the Mass, the things that the priest uses – the chalice, the paten, the cloths, and such.

One inspiration for the teaching Mass was Fr. Mike Schmitz, who has cooperated with Jeff Cavins developing popular teaching programs. Fr. Schmitz is chaplain for the Newman Catholic Campus Ministry at the University of Minnesota – Duluth, and an example of his work is available online at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCtZmLrFkqk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCtZmLrFkqk).

Another source of material and insight was the material used in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a Montessori-based hands-on approach to prayer and religious education.

One of the most painful aspects of Catholic parish life today, all across the country, is that intelligent young people often feel unplugged at Mass. Many devout Catholics experienced vibrant liturgies when they were in college, among people of the same age, with chaplains who were free from a long list of parish responsibilities so that they could focus on reaching young adults. After that, well ...

Participation, even reciting responses and especially singing can be a challenge. The person who sings prays twice, said St. Augustine. Yeah, maybe, say some; but my voice is pretty bad and praying once is good enough. Keep at it! Reciting the same prayers that our brothers and sisters around the globe and back through two or three thousand years of history can be thrilling. You can hear but also feel the rise and fall of the hum among people who have prayed these words together for years, patiently and persistently adjusting their tone and tempo to match their neighbors. But often, this sense of unanimity – one heart – begins with an experience of praying in unison – one voice.

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Ann Barbagallo (in white) is shown with her sisters Kay Boughan and Joan Kosack, plus Gary Boughan and Msgr. Filardi, at her farewell party January 8. Photo by JCOK

## Long-time Parish Servant Moves Away

By John Cavanaugh-O'Keefe

The parish suffered a blow in December when Ann Barbagallo left us. She didn't depart for heaven (yet) – just Frederick, where she will care for her mother.

Ann was a lector with a gentle voice, whose reading was crystal clear and engaging. She was calm and competent and beautiful, a joy to hear.

Ann was our sacristan. Do you remember how often the lectionary wasn't there, or the altar wasn't ready, or the water and wine weren't in place, or some important detail was overlooked? Yeah, we remember: just about never. She cleaned the tiles and washed the altar linens. During Covid times, after Mass, someone sterilized all the pews. That was Ann's work. Sometimes it was a small crew; sometimes it was just Ann.

Ann moved to the parish from Florida in 1986, with her husband

and her husband Richard and her son Dominic. In the 36 years since then, she worked at about 350 pancake breakfasts (our monthly Cholesterol Sundays), dishing out food and smiling like Mrs. Santa Claus.

She was active in local social services. She helped run the St. Vincent de Paul Society, meeting basic needs one-on-one for people in and around Damascus.

She was active in county social service and also social justice programs. She testified numerous times before the Montgomery County Council on behalf of the Archdiocese of Washington and other community groups to advocate for the needs of children and families, pressing to provide low-income housing, and to obtain adequate food for families.

She sold items for the overseas FairTrade program, defending workers.

When Ann lived in Florida, she was a social worker, specializing in child abuse and child neglect

cases. Then she moved to the Social Security Administration, and then moved to the Washington area to work at Health and Human Services, where she was a Senior Policy Advisor for many years. Under the Obama administration, she served as Acting Director of the Office of Family Assistance within the Administration for Children and Families.

The parish had a farewell party for her, and Msgr. Filardi presented to her various letters and commendations. There was one from the County Executive, Marc Elrich. And there was one from U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen, whose signature was legible from the back of the room. And there was one from our archbishop, Wilton Cardinal Gregory. And then there was a blessing from some Latino guy, Pope Francis.

We'll miss our modest and faithful and smiling lector and waitress and advisor and leader and advocate and sacristan.

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**St. Paul Catholic Church**  
9250E Damascus Road  
Damascus, Md.

**Msgr. Edward Filardi**  
Pastor  
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**John Cavanaugh-O'Keefe**  
OPT Editor  
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## Free Taxi Service to COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing Sites for Seniors 65+ and Residents with Disabilities

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To schedule a free trip:

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Then, call one of the Taxicab companies listed below to arrange your roundtrip transportation. You will be asked for the "Free COVID Taxi Code."

At the end of your trip, the taxi driver will have you sign a voucher so MCDOT can reimburse them for the transportation.

Drivers and riders must wear face coverings for the duration of the trip.

Participating taxicab companies include:

Action Taxi: 301-840-1000  
Anytime Taxi 301-637-9292  
Regency/Barwood Taxi: 301-990-9000 or 301-984-1900

### Reduced Ride On Bus Service, Due to Bus Operator Shortage

MCDOT announced January 16 that it has temporarily reduced Ride On bus service due to a growing number of employees sick from, or exposed to, COVID-19.

The schedule changes offer considerably more service than the previous pandemic-related cuts, but the system will have fewer trips on about half of its routes while maintaining the same span of service. Overall, service will be reduced by about 9 percent from the current schedule.

The service changes will be revisited in six to eight weeks or once bus operator availability begins to return to normal levels.

As part of the reduced service changes, the Flash weekday service is now operating on a weekend schedule, and Ride On Flex and extRa bus services have been suspended.

Current schedules are available at: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT-Transit/january-16-2022-schedules.html](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT-Transit/january-16-2022-schedules.html)

OPT

## 11 Myths about Alzheimer's Disease

**A**lzheimer's disease is a leading cause of death in the United States, and millions of Americans are affected by the disease. It's important to distinguish the facts from the myths about Alzheimer's, especially when it comes to finding information online.

### 1. Alzheimer's disease and dementia are the same thing.

People often use the terms Alzheimer's disease and dementia interchangeably, but there is a difference. Dementia refers to impaired memory, thinking, reasoning, and behavior, and Alzheimer's is just one type of dementia.

The terms are likely confused because Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia and the most well-known. But there are other types of dementia, too, including Lewy body dementia, frontotemporal dementia, and vascular dementia.

### 2. I will develop Alzheimer's disease if my parent has it.

If a parent or close relative has Alzheimer's disease, you may be worried about developing it as you get older. A person's chance of developing Alzheimer's is higher if they have certain genetic

mutations or variations that can be passed down from a parent. However, just because a biological parent has Alzheimer's does not mean that their children will develop it.

Alzheimer's disease is complex, and scientists don't yet fully understand what causes it in most people. Research suggests that in most individuals, a host of factors beyond genetics play a role in the development and course of the disease. Environmental and lifestyle factors may also affect a person's risk for Alzheimer's. Although we don't yet know how to prevent Alzheimer's, it's important to practice healthy behaviors throughout your lifetime.

### 3. Only people in their 70s and older get Alzheimer's disease.

While the greatest known risk factor for Alzheimer's is age that does not mean that only older adults develop it. For most people with Alzheimer's, it's true that symptoms first appear in their mid-60s or beyond. However, some people experience symptoms earlier, even as young as their 30s. When a person develops Alzheimer's between their 30s and mid-60s, it's called early-onset Alzheimer's. Early-

onset Alzheimer's is rare — representing less than 10% of people with Alzheimer's. Developing Alzheimer's earlier in life can present specific challenges. People diagnosed at younger ages may be more likely to be raising children who are still at home or managing work and having to apply for disability than those who are diagnosed at older ages.

### 4. Alzheimer's disease symptoms are normal as we get older.

Many people become more forgetful as they age, and some forgetfulness, such as losing things from time to time, is normal. However, common signs and symptoms of Alzheimer's, such as making poor judgments and decisions a lot of the time, having problems recognizing friends and family, or losing track of the date or time of year are not a normal part of aging.

If you are worried about your memory or other possible Alzheimer's symptoms, talk with your doctor. The doctor may ask questions about your health history, perform assessments of your thinking and memory, and carry out medical tests to determine your diagnosis.

Continued on page 31

## Let's Talk Assisted Living.



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## ALZHEIMERS

Con't from page 30

### 5. There are no treatments available for people with Alzheimer's disease

There has been significant progress toward developing better treatments for people with Alzheimer's. Several medications are available that can help treat people with Alzheimer's disease. There are also coping strategies to help manage behavioral symptoms.

While there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's disease, thanks to scientific advances, research has never been more promising. In total, NIA is funding more than 250 clinical trials including both drug and nondrug interventions.

### 6. If I'm frequently forgetting things, it must be Alzheimer's disease.

Even though memory problems are typically one of the first signs of Alzheimer's, not all memory problems mean a person has the disease. Some forgetfulness is normal as we age.

Talk with your doctor to determine whether the memory changes you're noticing are normal or may be a sign of something more serious. In some cases, depression or medication side effects can cause memory and other thinking problems. With treatment, it may be possible to reverse some memory problems due to these reasons.

### 7. You can buy supplements online to prevent or cure Alzheimer's disease.

There are many websites and advertisements that promise certain supplements can effectively treat or cure diseases such as Alzheimer's. In some cases, these may seem reliable, offering advice on healthy aging and Alzheimer's to gain people's trust and promote their products. However, there is no scientific evidence backing these claims, and currently, no supplement has been proven to delay, prevent, treat, or cure Alzheimer's.

Talk with your doctor before taking any supplements or trying any other new treatments.

### 8. You can prevent Alzheimer's disease.

There is no proven way to prevent Alzheimer's. However, there are steps you can take to help reduce your risk for this disease. A risk factor is something that may increase a person's chance of developing a disease. Some risk factors can be controlled, while others, such as the genes you inherit, cannot.

In general, leading a healthy lifestyle may help reduce risk factors that have been associated with Alzheimer's and other age-related health problems. These include:

- Controlling high blood pressure
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Staying mentally and physically active
- Preventing head injury
- Sleeping seven to nine hours each night

### 9. Doctors cannot definitively diagnose someone with Alzheimer's disease until after death.

Before researchers developed biomarker tests in the early 2000s, the only sure way to know whether a person had Alzheimer's disease was through autopsy, a procedure that is performed after death. Now, lab and imaging tests are available to help a doctor or researcher see the biological signs of the disease in a living person. For example, it is now possible for doctors to order a blood test to measure levels of beta-amyloid, a protein that accumulates abnormally in people with Alzheimer's. Several other blood tests are in development. NIA-supported research teams continue to study options for faster, less-expensive, and less-invasive ways to diagnose Alzheimer's.

### 10. An at-home genetic test can tell me if I have (or will have) Alzheimer's disease.

You may have heard about at-home genetic tests. These tests extract DNA from a person's saliva and provide reports of the genetic data. It's important to note that no genetic test can diagnose Alzheimer's disease. Genetic tests can identify certain rare mutations that cause early-onset Alzheimer's, as well as genetic variations that increase a person's risk for the disease. FDA has approved one of these tests for at-home use. This test shows if a person carries a form of the APOE gene, APOE ε4. People with this variant are at an increased risk for Alzheimer's, but it does not mean that they will definitely develop the disease.

Talk with your doctor about these types of genetic tests.

### 11. I'm not a scientist. I can't do anything to help fight Alzheimer's disease.

Even if you are not a scientist, there are many ways that you can help advance Alzheimer's disease research! Volunteers participating in clinical trials and studies have led to meaningful advancements in the detection, diagnosis, and treatment of Alzheimer's. By joining a trial or study, you become a partner in helping researchers advance their knowledge toward effective diagnostics, treatments, and preventions. All types of volunteers are needed, including people living with dementia, caregivers, and healthy volunteers.

As a family member or friend of a person living with Alzheimer's, you can also help by offering support, such as learning tips for communication or finding suitable activities. You can also offer help by supporting caregivers of people with Alzheimer's or a related dementia.

Learn more about Alzheimer's disease at: [www.nia.nih.gov/health/11-myths-about-alzheimers-disease](http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/11-myths-about-alzheimers-disease)

Content is provided by the  
NIH National Institute on Aging (NIA).  
Content reviewed: August 04, 2021

## 2021 Senior Report

The America's Health Rankings® Senior Report, now in its ninth year, provides a portrait of the health and well-being of older adults in the U.S., capturing key trends, successes and challenges in order to spark meaningful dialogue and action to improve senior health across the nation and on a state-by-state basis.

More than 54 million adults ages 65 and older live in the United States today, according to the U.S. Census Bureau — accounting for about 16.5% of the nation's population. The number of older adults living in the U.S. is large and growing; by 2050, the total number of adults ages 65 and older is projected to rise to an estimated 85.7 million — roughly 20% of the overall U.S. population. Thus, it is essential that policymakers, community leaders and public health officials consider how to best safeguard and improve the health of older Americans.

### Impact of COVID-19

This past year has illuminated the growing health concerns seniors face amid the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the pandemic has claimed the lives of nearly 450,000 seniors across the country as of May 5, 2021 — around 80% of all U.S. COVID-19 related deaths — and affected countless others. Adults ages 65 and older are at increased risk of hospitalization or death from COVID-19. Further, the pandemic has disproportionately affected certain racial and ethnic groups, reflecting some of the longstanding disparities that persist in many of the measures included in the Senior Report.

Provisional death data released by the CDC in March 2021 showed a 16% increase in the age-adjusted premature death rate between

2019 and 2020. This was the first recorded increase in the premature death rate, an important measure of a population's health, since 2017. The provisional estimates placed COVID-19 as the third-leading cause of death in 2020, behind heart disease and cancer. Older adults accounted for most deaths due to COVID-19, with the highest death rates among those ages 85 and older.

The data in the report are compiled from many different sources and referenced by the year the data were collected. This allows readers to determine which measures were collected before the COVID-19 pandemic and which measures were collected during the pandemic. This approach is intended to clarify lags that are present in the data, ensuring that public health and community leaders have the most accurate picture of health in their communities.

While the Senior Report uses the most recent data that is publicly available for each measure, the majority of the measures in the report leverage data from 2019 and thus may serve as a baseline for the health of older Americans prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic across numerous health measures will likely be reflected in the 2022 Senior Report as data collected in 2020 and 2021 are released.

The America's Health Rankings website contains state-by-state and national data for COVID-19 case rates, death rates, Medicare claims case rates and hospitalization rates, as well as vaccination rates for the total population and adults ages 65 and older.

The entire 62-page report is available at: [www.america'shealthrankings.org/learn/reports/2021-senior-report](http://www.america'shealthrankings.org/learn/reports/2021-senior-report)

OPT

Source: United Health Foundation



## ADULT DAY PROGRAM

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Olney, MD 20832  
(301) 774-7501

## Montgomery County Assisted Living Facilities

### CORRECTION

Winter Growth Assisted Living & Memory Care was inadvertently omitted from the listings of Montgomery County Assisted Living Facilities in the 2022 Senior Services Guide section of the December issue.

Winter Growth Assisted Living & Memory Care  
18110 Prince Philip Drive  
Olney, MD 20832  
(301) 774-7501  
Capacity: 16

OPT





Between dinner and board games, St. Michael's Young Adults pose for a photo.

## Young Adults at St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church

By Brian Frey

The St. Michael the Archangel Young Adults held a Christmas potluck party on December 18. Everyone brought their culinary A-game featuring a variety of delicious foods reflecting the diversity of the parish, from lasagna to pupusas and egg rolls and, of course, plenty of Christmas cookies and other sweets. In addition to fun conversation and festive Christmas music, the night also included friendly, yet highly competitive board games (check out

The Catholic Card Game!).

After going inactive following the onset of the pandemic, St. Michael's Young Adults restarted in the summer of 2021, with the assistance of seminarian Vincent Vu. Since restarting, the group has held several events in addition to the potluck, including third-Friday rosaries followed by dinner in downtown Silver Spring. The group aims to offer young adults within the parish a space for fellowship and community and encourages all interested individuals to get involved!

OPT



St. Michael's volunteers working to package meals.

## "Cup of Joe" at St. Michael the Archangel

By David Bludis

On Saturday, December 18, 2021, the Knights of Columbus of St. Michael the Archangel Church in Silver Spring, Maryland (Council #15084) came together to package approximately 1,000 grab-and-go breakfast meals that will be distributed at local homeless shelters by Catholic

Charities through their "Cup of Joe" program. The volunteers were astoundingly efficient in the assembly of the meals and were finished in little over an hour thanks to the direction and guidance of Knights of Columbus District 11 Warden, Frank Cavaliere. Catholic Charities provided the food for the packaged meals. Each meal consisted of a package of cookies, nuts, Pop Tarts, a fruit cup, and a juice box.

The Knights of Columbus Council #15084 would like to make this a seasonal activity and given the tremendous success of the recent packaging event, they will increase their goal to provide even more meals to the local homeless population.

To learn more about the Cup of Joe program, visit [www.catholic-charitiesdc.org/coj-and-smm/](http://www.catholic-charitiesdc.org/coj-and-smm/)

OPT

### St. Michael's Parish

805 Wayne Avenue  
Silver Spring, MDRev. Msgr. Eddie Tolentino,  
Pastor

301-589-1155

Cindy Méndez,  
OPT Editor

301-589-1155

## Knights Bring Advent and Christmas Joy to Marian Assisted Living Community

By: SK Stephen Paul Holowenzak

Linda Jackson, Executive Director at Marian Assisted Living, opened the doors for the Knights of Columbus (Council # 15084) from St. Michael the Archangel Church to bring Christmas cheer through music and prayer to the Marian Assisted Living community. Forty residents joined the Knights in the Divine Mercy Chapel in Brookeville, Maryland to sing Christmas carols on Tuesday, December 21, 2021. The carolers sang for nearly 45 minutes celebrating the birth of Christ through



Marian Assisted Living residents participating in the caroling.

songs of joy and reverence. The carolers sang songs such as Hark the Herald Angels Sing, Silent

Night, Joy to the World, and many more.

The Knights in attendance were Joseph Feakes, Master of the Fourth Degree for the Archdiocese of Washington, David Bludis, Grand Knight of Council 15084, Stephen Holowenzak, Charles Hayes, James Robertson, Gregory McFadden, and Andy Russell.

The caroling filled hearts with happiness and minds with memories from many years ago. Some in attendance shared their favorite Christmas memories and stories. Smiling faces and warm Christmas spirits were a glow as they left the chapel to celebrate the rest of the Advent season and the birth of our Lord in a manger surrounded by his Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph. Glory to God in the highest! May the radiant light of Christ birth shine over the 2022 year that lies ahead!

OPT



Members of the Knights of Columbus Council 15084 at the Marian Assisted Living chapel

## St. Michael's Sodality Inducts Four New Members in December



Prefect, Ingrid (second from left), and new St. Michael's Sodality members: Paulina, Jackie, Doreen and Virginia

By Cynthia Lewis

By the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Sodality, led by Prefect Ingrid Denis, was favored to induct four women as new Sodalists on Sunday, December 5, 2021—the Sodality's first inperson Mass together as a Sodality since the beginning of the COVID pandemic. The new members of the Sodality are Doreen Joseph, Jacqueline Mendoza, Virginia Montet, and Paulina Ogunshakin. We are overjoyed to welcome these new members.

Pastor and Sodality moderator,

Monsignor Eddie Tolentino led the Installation Ceremony prayers and blessed the Miraculous Medals. Monsignor Tolentino told the congregation that although the Sodality as an organization had not been visible on the first Sundays due to the virus, the Sodality has been making their presence known through prayers and good works, including a Sodality conference call to pray for the needs of the community and our country started by Prefect Denis. This effort grew into a weekly prayer of the Holy Rosary to ask for Mary's intercession to

end the pandemic. In addition, the First Saturday Devotion is faithfully observed, and the Liturgy of the Hours Evening Prayer is offered each Saturday and Sunday. The prayers include the sick and homebound, parish clergy, and the universal Church. Sodalists also served in parish food giveaways and assisted at Mass. The Sodality hosted its Annual Communion Brunch virtually and donated the proceeds to the parish. The Sodality gives thanks to Our Blessed Mother Mary for her blessings and encouragement during these unusual times!

OPT



St. Michael Sodality Members gather after Mass with our Pastor and Moderator, Monsignor Eddie Tolentino



## Christmas Bazaar

By Katie Ward, Coordinator of Bazaar

**O**n December 11, 2021 the Christ the King Bazaar returned after a hiatus of several years. Over 30 unique vendors from across the DMV participated. In addition, there were homemade baked goods and Hispanic food available from Parishioners. Money made from the event raised funds for our Capital campaign to get a new heating system.

Thank you to all who helped, especially my parents who made the trip from upstate New York, as well as my aunt and cousin. Mrs. Molina (our Religious Ed Director) was a huge help every step of the way. I am so thankful Fr. Steve believed in the idea and let me run with it! We are already looking forward to next year's event.

OPT



Lots of "Bazaar" action in the Colonial Room

## Angel Alert

By Liz Weiss, parishioner

**O**n Sunday December 19, 2021 the children of Christ the King presented the play "Angel Alert". Angel Alert is a story that takes place in heaven. The Angels are getting ready to share the big announcement of Jesus's birth, from the Angels' perspective.

Once again, Parishioner Katie Ward directed the Program. Fifteen children from the Parish participated. The "Angels" sang, danced and helped our Parish prepare for the birth of Jesus. Thank you to all of the children for their sharing their enthusiasm in the production.

OPT



The Cast of Angel Alert

## Our Lady of Lourdes

Our Lady of Lourdes fourth grader Piper Smith performed in the Miami City Ballet's performance of George Balanchine's Nutcracker at the Kennedy Center. She was fully cast in two roles and served as an understudy for one of the principal roles. Piper danced in seven performances the week of Thanksgiving. Pictured: Piper Smith (center) with several of her OLOL classmates after one of her performances.



The annual Catholic Charities Coat Collection had another successful year. Members of the school and parish donated 101 coats and many socks, gloves, hats, and scarves for those in need this winter. The drive was organized by school parents and parishioners Mrs. Gadwood, Mrs. Andrews, and Mrs. Alarcon. Pictured: OLOL students Evan and Amy Andrews, Gregory Gadwood, and Alejandro Alarcon Lopez deliver the coats and other donations to Catholic Charities.

## The Giving Tree and Cross Catholic Outreach

By Liz Weiss, parishioner

**T**his year parishioners supported 2 special charitable projects: the Giving Tree and Cross Catholic Outreach. The Giving Tree is an annual project of Christ the King. Parishioners choose paper ornaments from the Christmas tree in the Church vestibule and then fulfill the request on them. This year, 157 children from 45 families received gift cards for presents. Families also received gift cards for food for the Holiday Season. Thank you to all of the parishioners and volunteers who participated. And, a special thanks to Ludys Mendoza, Office Manager and Father Steve, our pastor, for their work on the project.

Cross Catholic Outreach is a "ministry that partners with bishops, priests, religious and lay workers to provide food, water, housing, education, orphan support, medical care, microenterprise, disaster relief

— and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ to the poorest of the poor in 30 countries." (from website) Christ the King parish collected \$13,000 during the Christmas season. This money will be used to build 2 safe and secure homes for families in Santa Rosa, Guatemala. Thank you to the entire parish community for your generosity. More than 95% of all donations to Cross Catholic Outreach go directly to the poor. To find out more information, go to [crosscatholic.org](http://crosscatholic.org).

OPT

### Christ the King

2301 Colston Drive  
Silver Spring, MD  
301-495-2306

Fr. Stephen J. Carter,  
Pastor

Paul Lamoreaux,  
OPT Editor

## EPIPHANY

Con't from page 28

knew and embark on such a long treacherous journey? Pope Francis explains "their hearts were open to the horizon and they could see what the heavens were showing them, for they were guided by an inner restlessness" which convinced them that there was another truth, something that could make them truly happy. For this reason, they were not only willing to leave their palaces and begin on this journey but they were overwhelmed with happiness in anticipation to see where this mysterious star would lead them. After months of searching for this newborn King, they found him not in a palace or in a place of power, but in a manger surrounded by shepherds and animals. They fell on their knees in worship, pre-

sented the infant with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and they discovered the glory of God.

We taught the children songs and a short catechesis about who they are and why we welcomed them. At the Kings' arrival, there were shrieks of excitement when the children saw the Kings brought their own camels! The children were also encouraged to write a letter, which they would entrust to the three Kings on their way to Bethlehem. They did not just ask for material gifts but for much bigger things such as: health of a family member, being a better sibling, a better relationship with their parents, or help in school. The Kings remained with us as they recounted their story, and the children asked them questions. We thank the Neocatechumenal Way for organizing this event.

OPT

## SPIRITUALITY TALK

Con't from page 9

messiness of your life, the mistakes of your life. One of the greatest gifts of living in the present moment, friends is that it's liberating. Nothing in our past needs to define us.

"Living in the moment is also liberating and freeing because we can surrender our anxieties and doubts about the future to the one who loves us."

"Make this Advent an increased

encounter with the Sacrament of the present moment, the Christ who once came in meekness and who will come in Glory no less wishes to come today, right now."

"Your prayer and my prayer this Advent season is simple, invite him in. Come, Lord Jesus. Come right now. Come into my life. And, if you ask him, you can be guaranteed Emmanuel will come. God with us."

The second part of the evening included Prayer and Reflections, Confessions, and Benediction.

OPT

It pays to advertise in  
Our Parish Times





Above, families gathers at the school's inaugural Christmas Tree Lighting  
At right, Principal Vincent Spadoni poses with faculty in front of the tree



Saint Peter's held their second Christmas Lights Car Tour, families enjoyed a festive evening following a route of more than 40 decorated homes.

## Inaugural Christmas Tree Lighting Brings Cheer to School Community

By Joe Howard

A new holiday tradition inspired by the Saint Peter's School community got off to a rousing start on December 10, as the school's inaugural Christmas Tree lighting brought students, parents and faculty together to celebrate with hot chocolate, handmade ornaments and an eight-foot tall tree that kids couldn't wait to see lit up.

Student chants of "light the tree" followed by a countdown from ten filled the air just before Principal Vincent Spadoni flipped a red-and-white handheld switch to illuminate the multicolored bulbs on the tree,

an artificial Virginia pine donated by the school's Mueller family. This tree will return each year for the ceremony.

The idea for the event came from parents, Spadoni noted, something he welcomes. "I love ideas from the ground level," he said. "I love that our parents come forward with a lot of ideas."

Parents, students, and teachers all welcomed the chance to get together for the event.

"I think it's really nice bringing everyone together," said Jules Burritt, a seventh-grader in her second year at Saint Peter's.

"It's very fun," added eighth-

grader Maggie Friel. "I think it's very creative how they had the little kids make the ornaments for the tree."

Friel was referring to a section where younger students could create and hang their own ornaments, a creative outlet for children who, according to second-grade teacher Kelly Nichols, were excited. "The kids are totally psyched," said Nichols. "We were talking about it today."

The tree-lighting ceremony is the school's second new tradition in as many years; last year, amid the pandemic, a neighborhood Christmas lights tour was launched, giving

families a chance to get out of the house and get into the Christmas spirit by driving past Saint Peter's homes decorated for the holidays. This year's Christmas lights tour kicked off immediately following the tree-lighting.

Events like these help infuse renewed vibrancy into the school, said parent Margaret Giron, "I like the new sense of community and energy flowing through the school," she said.

"I'm so looking forward to doing this every year," added parent Marie Joseph.

With the tree lights shining, Spadoni thanked the vibrant crowd

for attending, and wished everyone a safe and happy Christmas season.

OPT

### St. Peter's Parish

2900 Sandy Spring Road  
Olney, MD

### Rev. Thomas Kalita, Pastor

301-924-3774

stpetersolney.org

### St. Peter's School

Mr. Vincent P. Spadoni,  
Principal

301-774-9112

stpetersschoololney.org

## Winter Happenings



Saint Peter's Youth Ministry held several events in preparation of Advent, including making advent wreaths and creating blankets for Project Linus.



On December 11, second graders received the Sacrament of First Reconciliation



On January 6, Deacon Thomas Cioffi, along with students representing the Magi, visited each classroom to offer a blessing in celebration of the Epiphany



# Prepare a way for the Lord

St. Mary's Faith Community began their preparation for the birth of Jesus on the first Sunday of Advent. Once a month, parish youth host a mass. For Advent, the sixth grade read the Word and the younger children led the congregation in song from the altar. From the choir loft, St. Mary's student cantor and musicians assisted. The Jesse Tree in the Sanctuary contained dozens of tags with names of needy families and patients at Springfield Hospital in Sykesville, Md. Donations were accepted for the 25 baskets that are prepared each year by the Youth Group.

The Pavilion was a-buzz with activities for Advent which created an environment of faith and service.

The Sodality sponsored service activities to support the Shady Grove Pregnancy Center. Donations and gently used baby items were collected. The Annual Cookie Bake

Sale proceeds also went to the Center. The Haiti committee supported our twinning parish with Christmas Cards, Haiti Ornaments and Coffee sales.

The children were provided a variety of Advent and Christmas crafts. The craft theme offered a spiritual reflection to assist the children on their path through Advent. The children had a wonderful time during these activities. Donut Sunday coincided, and is always a special treat!

The women of the parish participated in an evening of prayer, reflection, and dinner at "Advent by Candlelight." The room was lit from the glow provided by each table's unique Advent Wreath. A spiritual reflection was provided by Simona Hallal.

Sunday Scriptures with Fr. Kevin was offered each Tuesday morning.

Each week during Advent, each religious education class had an Advent Wreath at their Prayer Station. As the weeks progressed, all prepared for our program Pageant. The class Pageant was performed for parents and families during the last class in December, followed by a reception. Children who were available participated in the Pageant at Christmas Eve Mass.

## St. Mary's Parish

18230 Barnesville Road  
Barnesville, MD 20838

Rev. Kevin O'Reilly,  
Pastor

(301) 972-8660  
www.stmaryonline.com



Above, each table is decorated with its own Advent Wreath provided by the guests at the table.

Below, children and parents gather for an opportunity to create beautiful religious crafts for Advent and Christmas.



Above, the ladies enjoying good company, food and spiritual inspiration.

At left, Fr. Kevin, Brenda Murtha, Eileen Hanlon, and Bonnie Bowie enjoying the fellowship of the evening.

Below, confirmation Candidate Lia Jung, assists parents and children in creating their Advent projects.



Music Director, Diane Yendrey leads the Youth Ensemble, as they perform during mass.

## December Youth Mass



The youngest children leading the congregation in song.



Jordan Smith and Adam Singh handle ushering duties for Youth Sunday.

## Christmas Eve



Above, the children performed a beautiful Pageant as the The Word was read.

At right, the Angel Gabrielle, Alina Jung, appears to Mary, Claire FitzGerald to share the Good News.

At left, Johnny Horan, James Sheehan, and Hannah Colihan present gifts to the Infant Jesus, as the Three Kings.





# OLQP Polish School Students Present *Jaselka* Christmas Play

By Bozenna Buda, ED

Shortly before Polish Saturday School recessed for the Christmas vacation, students presented their Christmas Nativity Play *Jaselka*. This is an annual labor of love in which all students have a role. Preparation for it involves much time and lots of devotion on the part of students, teachers and parents.

The *Jaselka* took place on December 18, 2021, and everyone contributed to making it a beautiful and memorable event. Each student recited a part of the narrative of the First Christmas in verse. The students were joined by the audience in singing carols *koledy* with guitar accompaniment by a parent. To the delight of everyone, *Sw. Mikolaj* also made an appearance at the end of the program.

OPT

At right, the shepherds in the OLQP *Jaselka*.



Above, St. Nicholas *Sw. Mikolaj*, with two helper angels, visited Our Lady Queen of Poland Parish and distributed presents to the parish children.

At left, *Jaselka* presentation in OLQP Polish School Nativity Play.



At right, Baby Jesus with Mary and Joseph and Angel in the OLQP Polish School *Jaselka* Christmas play.



The OLQP Polish Saturday Supplementary School teachers: Urszula Kolodziej, John Armstrong, Principal Ewa Chlebowska.



Gifts of Hearts to Baby Jesus on the feast of the Epiphany, Jan. 2, 2022- OLQP Pastor Fr. Jerzy Frydrych reads some of the good deeds written on a "heart" which children placed in the manger. Parish children wrote their good deeds on heart-shaped pieces of paper and brought them as presents for Baby Jesus, on the feast of the Three Kings.

## Peace Light of Bethlehem arrives at OLQP

By Bozenna Buda, ED

On December 26, 2021, the Feast of the Holy Family, the Peace Light of Bethlehem was brought to the Our Lady Queen of Poland and St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish community in Silver Spring by local representatives of Polish Scouting Organization ZHP



Peace Light-The presentation of the Bethlehem Peace Light to Our Lady Queen of Poland Pastor Fr. Jerzy Frydrych on Dec. 26 by Polish Scouting ZHP Leader Bozenna Buda (*Hufiec Podhale*) and Grand Knight Franklin Morton, Knights of Columbus St. Maximilian Kolbe Council 16634. Mass lector Mirek Skibniewski is in the background.

Continued on page 37

## Knights of Columbus Council 16634 Activities

By Bozenna Buda, ED

In addition to their constant and reliable service to Our Lady Queen of Poland Parish and community, the Knights of Columbus St. Maximilian Kolbe Council 16634 also undertake special projects. This Advent they contributed to a mission that supports the impoverished and participated in a local winter coat drive.

Council 16634 contributed to Kamilańska Misja Pomocy Społecznej (the Camillian Mission for Social Assistance) in Warsaw, Poland. Grand Knight Franklin Morton stated that, "One of our founding principles is helping people who are less fortunate than us." In this spirit, Council 16634 took their community program to an international level. As a Polish Diaspora (Polonian) Knights of Columbus organi-

zation, whose chaplain is OLQP Pastor Fr. Jerzy Frydrych, they wanted to assist fellow Poles who are in need, especially at this difficult time of the year.

GK Morton noted that, "We are

Continued on page 37



Grand Knight Franklin Morton in photo symbolizing the Knights of Columbus St. Maximilian Kolbe Council 16634's monetary contribution (500 PLN) sent to the Kamilańska Misja Pomocy Społecznej (Mission), in Warsaw, Poland, on Jan. 2, 2022.



K of C Coat Drive- GK Franklin Morton, St. M. Kolbe Council 16634, with a box of donated winter coats on Jan. 14, 2022, at the drop-off center. Next to him is Ms. Amanda Owens, the local organizer of the event.

### Our Lady Queen of Poland

9700 Rosensteel Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Rev. Jerzy Frydrych,  
S. Chr. Pastor  
301-589-1857

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Sharing the Peace Light-After Holy Mass, Polish Scouting ZHP Leader Bozenna Buda (*Hufiec Podhale*) and SK Bob Dowlut, Knights of Columbus St. Maximilian Kolbe Council 16634, shared the international Peace Light of Bethlehem with the OLQP community. Pictured is Parish Council President Izabella Macander and parishioner Alice Beard.



## SPRED

Con't from page 25

crafts, games, and singing. In recent years, they used a consistent unifying theme to center the classes. Themes included *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, *God's Love of the World*, *How We Show God We Love Him*, and Old and New Testament Stories.

Aside from the regular classes, SPRED also has an annual Christmas Pageant and May Crowning. Fr. Giese and other de Chantal's priests celebrate Mass with our community. For many years, the Knights of Columbus Rock Creek Council has also very graciously hosted them for a monthly prayer service with coffee and donuts.

Education is in their name, but it is really the opportunity to be together and share as a community that makes the program *Special*. Current program participants range in age from 33 to 54 and have all received the sacraments through Confirmation, so this is not a religious education program with a set goal or ending. Instead, they come together as a community to share and celebrate what makes everyone great. Some participants are talented artists, others are particularly thoughtful in their prayers, others love singing, but everyone in the group shows the joy that comes from being together and sharing in faith. St. Jane De Chantal is their home,



SPRED Families enjoy snacks at their bi-monthly prayer services

but they have families from many parishes.

Because of COVID, they have not been able to meet as regularly recently, but they have continued to have group prayer meetings at DeChantal and they had a wonderful Christmas Pageant. They look forward to resuming all of their activities soon.

They also love welcoming new members and all are welcome. If you would like to participate or have any questions, please contact Bill Lawler [william.lawler@blankrome.com](mailto:william.lawler@blankrome.com) or call the Seton Center for Religious Education at St. Jane De Chantal Church 301-530-9100.

OPT



DeChantal's SPRED program performed their own Nativity pageant to the delight of their families and friends

## KOC ACTIVITIES

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the first council [Council 16634] to accomplish this great feat." He added that, "The main goal of Kamilińska Misja Pomocy Społecznej [KMPS] is to provide comprehensive help to the poor in the spirit of the Church's tradition, according to the guidelines of Catholic Social Science. The priority is to be specific and effective ... supporting the poor, especially the poorest." The mission of KMPS is expressed in this quote from the First Letter of John: "My Little children, let us not love in word, neither with

the tongue, but in deed and truth" (1 Jn 3:18) (<https://misja.com.pl>).

Council 16634 also participated in a Winter Coat Drive sponsored by Thrive DC. The drop-off location was in a Laurel Assisted Living Center in January, 2022. GK Morton summarized it thus, "This winter, it will be crucial to keep [people] healthy and warm amidst the pandemic and flu season. The Knights are playing a role in the effort to ensure that this happens!"

We commend the Knights of Columbus St. Maximilian Kolbe Council 16634 on their important work to help communities everywhere.

OPT

## PEACE LIGHT

Con't from page 36

(Council *Hufiec Podhale*) and the Knights of Columbus St. Maximilian Kolbe Council 16634. The Peace Light had traveled from Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, to Europe and then was brought to New York City. The Polish Scouting Organization (PSO)

ZHP received it there and made it available for sharing with others in the *Hufiec Podhale* Council, including our local PSO-ZHP in the Washington metropolitan area.

After Mass, parishioners and friends could take a Peace Light infused candle home with them. The Peace Light represents the light of Christ and is a symbol of hope, intended to promote global peace and harmony (<https://PeaceLightNorthAmerica.org>).

OPT

## Made in God's Image: St. Mary's Students Participate in the March for Life



At left, High School students from St. Mary's Parish participated in the Mass for Life to pray for the unborn.

Below, Mrs. Oyster and Father James with St. Mary's High School students at the March for Life.



At left, students at St. Mary's School prayed the Rosary for the unborn, for mothers, and for the respect of all human life because we all are created in the image and likeness of God.

Students from St. Mary's School and Parish participated in the annual March for Life both by marching and in prayer. Their prayers, joined by thousands of other Catholics across the nation, express a hope for the end to abortion and for the acknowledgement of the sanctity of all human life, from conception to natural death.

OPT

## St. Mary's Parish

520 Veirs Mill Road Rockville, MD

Msgr. Robert Amey, Pastor  
301-424-5550

St. Mary's School  
Mrs. Debby Eisel, Principal  
301-762-4179

Mrs. Debby Eisel, Parish Editor  
301-762-4179



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## St. John Neumann

# An Evening of Emmanuel at St. John Neumann

By Larissa York

On the way to attend candlelight adoration, I was with a friend. As we approached the parish, the chants calmed our chatter. We stood still before entering as we paused to listen to Vespers, the Evening Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours. Fr. Stefan Yap, Deacon Peter Mlynarczyk, and Seminarian Dylan Prentice led the congregation. Incense wafted through our masks as I pulled the door open. Just then, the church started singing “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” We were captivated by the solemn beauty of prayer, and the environment of worship enveloped me. It was the Sunday before Christmas, and it finally felt like Advent.

Despite the purple linens and readings reminding us of the long preparation for the Savior’s birth, I was not full of expectant hope. Even with going to daily Mass, some-

thing was missing. I could not quiet myself during the busy season. Even in adoration, I found myself tired and weary. I had plenty of petitions and people that filled my prayer time. I would surrender things to the Lord and give Him thanks for His goodness. And yet, I was lacking the rest promised in Matthew 11:28.

The parish was dim during the rest of Vespers, and after rows of candles were lined up on the altar and lit, our Eucharist Lord was exposed. Off went the lights, and only Christ could be seen, illuminated by dozens of candles. Jesus’s entrance into the room was subtle and sweet, similar to His Nativity. The time for prayer provided both peace and passion; His presence renewed the faithful’s ardent desire for His second coming while reassuring their hope.

In the darkness, I could hear the whimpering of tears breaking the silence. God was tenderly whispering His love to all those

who came to meet Him. Each heart spoke to His Sacred Heart and found rest listening to how His beats with love for them. While the moment felt like Heaven, the time came for benediction.

Afterward, I remained in my pew, not wanting to leave the Prince of Peace. I had been longing to be with Him for months. And, I was; however, I was too busy for the reality to resonate. I sat and watched the candles getting snuffed out, even those of the Advent wreath until only one remained. The one that glows red next to the tabernacle. The sanctuary lamp never is extinguished because Jesus is truly Emmanuel - God with us. He always remains present within the tabernacle waiting for us, and He counts our footsteps until we come back to Him.

And so, I left knowing that He would be coming with me and with the plan of seeing Him soon.



Vespers, the Evening Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours at Saint John Neumann parish on December 19, 2021

OPT



Organist, MaryLu Hartsell is playing the organ at Saint John Neuman parish.

## MaryLu Hartsell to Retire After 24 Years of Service

By Marisa Stoolmiller

After faithfully serving as our music director, organist, and liturgist for the past 24 years, MaryLu Hartsell retired on December 31. She is looking forward to sleeping in, traveling, visiting her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, playing the organ at home, just for the sheer enjoyment that it brings to her. MaryLu loved working in this parish. She says, “The people and the choirs and other musicians occupy a very special place in my heart.”

A Mass and reception in MaryLu’s honor were held on December 26. The parish community was able to come together and honor MaryLu and wish her many years of happiness during her retirement. On behalf of the parish community, Msgr. Robert Panke presented MaryLu with a beautifully framed print.

The parish staff and parishioners alike are deeply grateful for the



A photo of Monsignor Robert Panke presenting MaryLu Hartsell, Organist at Saint John Neumann parish, with a retirement gift on December 31, 2021.

many ways MaryLu has generously shared her talents and generous heart over these numerous years here at SJN. She is an incredibly talented musician and director, a faithful parishioner, and a friend to all. She will be greatly missed!

OPT

## SODALITY

Con't from page 25

and determination of its members, Sodality sponsored its traditional fall activities by reimagining them for the pandemic era.

Beginning in October 2021, Sodality resumed holding its monthly Sodality Mass at the 10:00 a.m. on the first Sunday of the month. Sodality members are encouraged to attend that Mass, pray the Sodality’s Prayer together, and wear their Miraculous Medals as a sign of their devotion to the Blessed Mother. The first General Meeting and Mass were held on October 13.

As it has for several years, the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Unit of Sodality sponsored a very successful parish-wide school supplies drive in early October 2021 to benefit the catechetical program of DeChantal’s sister parish, the Shrine of the Sacred Heart in Washington, DC. This program provides religious education in the native languages of the Shrine’s underserved, immigrant populations.

On November 7, 2021, Sodality

revamped its traditional, catered, sit-down Communion Breakfast and speaker presentation by hosting its first “Takeout Continental Communion Breakfast” for the parish. Mrs. Betsy Hamilton, principal of St. Jane de Chantal School, presented an inspiring talk to a captivated audience. She described the myriad ways in which the teachers and school staff have worked together tirelessly throughout the pandemic to educate the parish’s children – both online and in person – and nurture their faith and sense of community.

From November 12 to December 3, 2021, Sodality conducted its annual Giving Tree project, a much-loved highlight of the Advent season at DeChantal for many years, under the leadership of co-chairs Denise Sintetos and Colleen Hadigan. Sodality’s meticulous organizational framework has enabled the parish to provide hundreds of Christmas gifts annually to the needy. This year, Sodality built upon the extremely successful model it created in 2020 to make the project a contact-free process so that parishioners could select gifts

while avoiding crowded shopping malls or offer monetary donations if that was their preference. The 2021 Giving Tree supported 11 charitable groups with gift items and five charities with financial donations.

To close out its 2021 activities, Sodality held its second Mass and General Meeting of the year on December 1. Following Mass, the members gathered in Caulfield Hall to write Christmas cards to send to the retired Sisters of Charity in Greensburg, PA, whose order founded St. Jane de Chantal School.

The women of Sodality remain optimistic in 2022 and are continuing to plan Sodality’s full spring schedule of events. These include a luncheon fundraiser, the annual Lenten Morning of Recollection, the Anniversary Mass and Brunch, the Junior Sodality scholarship essay contest, the Plant Sale, and the Junior Sodality May Crowning liturgy. No matter what circumstances may develop, St. Jane de Chantal’s Sodality members remain devoted to the Blessed Mother and Her Son and steadfast in their mission of service to the parish and to others.

OPT

## MERCY

Con't from page 8

are provided by local and global nonprofit organizations associated with the church; or buying right-to-life Christmas cards, which benefit organizations supporting the dignity of life.

In addition, Religious Education students and their families participate in the Christmas Stocking Help Line program run by Catholic Charities of Montgomery County during the Advent season. The program allows St. Francis parishioners and other participating parishes to buy gifts or gift cards to benefit a local family in need.

The Spirit Tree project – a popular Advent tradition at St. Francis – has been adapted over the past two years, because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020 and 2021, organizers at the Pope

Francis Center at Assumption Parish requested gift cards for food and grocery items instead of tangible gifts, since that fulfilled a need among the families they served, said St. Francis Director of Adult Faith Formation and Social Concerns Tony Bosnick. All told, the parish collected more than \$9,000 in gift cards for the Spirit Tree project.

“The donation of gift cards worked very well, as it saved lots of work sorting through the presents, noting which ones had not yet come in, contacting people who said they would give those gifts, then waiting for them to arrive. Then we could mail the gift cards to Assumption and not have to drive them down, which saved much effort as well,” Bosnick said.

“The gift cards directed to meeting food needs are also very helpful in alleviating hunger, something very important which Assumption

chose to do,” he said.

With the Christmas Stocking Help Line project, Director of Religious Education Susan Anderson said the Religious Education team prepared 60 stockings for children, plus additional stockings for family gifts. Whether families are buying tangible gifts or gift cards, she said she believes the lessons learned are the same: awareness of the needs of others, compassion, and care for those in need, giving of ourselves, generosity, and gratitude. The ministry collected nearly \$3,000 in gift cards for Catholic Charities.

“These lessons are at the heart of our faith as disciples of Jesus called to share the Good News,” Anderson said. “Service opportunities such as the Christmas Stocking Help Line lead to a greater understanding of the works of mercy and the depth of Catholic Social Teaching.”

OPT



## McGANN

Con't from page 1

and we certainly can't understand why God doesn't fix people or their situations.

How do we teach our children to see the Face of God in the man who asks for quarters outside of Starbucks? How do we convince them that we are called to see the person hidden behind the twisted body of the boy in the wheelchair? If we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, if we are called to love saints and sinners alike, how do we reconcile God's imperative with

the world we live in today? The tendency to encourage sympathy for "the poor" or "the disabled" is a powerful one. We teach our children to put their pennies in the poor box or bring in canned goods for the food drive because we have more, and we should share what we have with families who live in misery and squalor. We do our part by *allowing* a few children with disabilities to attend our Catholic schools, or by building a ramp at the rear entry of our business. Sympathy and condescending generosity belie God's message that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. On the contrary,

they reinforce the idea that some of us are better than others by virtue of what we have, how we look, or how we function in the world.

It is difficult to teach children the difference between sympathy and the recognition that we are all simply human - all brothers and sisters deserving of respect because we are created by God. How do we convince our children that no one should be judged by how much he has or even by how much she contributes to the world - because no one can know that until we are long gone from this world? First, we have to convince ourselves that that's actually true. If we begin to

see that "people in need" are simply people in need, we will begin to see that a lack or surplus of material goods does not determine the quality of one's life.

If we acknowledge that there are people who live and learn differently than we do - not better or worse, just differently - we neutralize the judgments implied by labels like "disabled" and "handicapped". If we abandon the idea that we have a right to decide who gets included or excluded from our schools or our lives, we gain a new perspective on what it means to live in harmony with our brothers and sisters.

Our actions communicate our

values. Our children watch and they listen. They know what we believe because we show them. If we have spent our whole lives believing that some people are pitiable, and that some are to be avoided, we need to reconsider. It's time to act as if we believe in the inherent dignity of every human being - as if we believe that we are all equal in God's eyes. Acting "as if" we believe these things might be the best we can do right now and can eventually lead us to be true believers. We should never forget, though, that our children will be watching, listening and learning.

OPT

## ST JUDE

Con't from page 14

to mentor, teaching the buddy good behavior in church, working on projects together, and watching over them in the halls and at recess.

We ARE...a community. We encourage parents to become an integral part of our school through numerous volunteer positions—helping with the hot lunch program, planning events through the Home School Association, chaperoning a field trip, or monitoring the halls and



playgrounds. We want parents to feel as at home at St. Jude as their children do.

We ARE...people of faith. Ever mindful of our Catholic identity, SJRCS fosters a strong faith com-

mitment and religious spirit, values, and morals. Students attend weekly mass and adoration and monthly penance as well as participate in the annual May Crowning and Christmas pageant, attend Rosary Group, and recite the school prayer and other prayers throughout their school day. Additionally, priests from the Shrine of St. Jude are involved with the school nearly every day.

We ARE St. Jude...and you can be, too!

To learn first-hand what makes the St. Jude community unique, attend the upcoming Open House on Wednesday, February 2, 2022, from 6-8 p.m., or schedule a visit to see students and teachers in action. You can also learn more about St. Jude Regional Catholic School and watch an Admissions Video on its website [www.stjuderockville.org](http://www.stjuderockville.org). Additionally, Mrs. Jeanne Donatelli, principal, can answer any questions you may have about the school or the application process. She can be reached at 301-946-7888 or [Jeanne.Donatelli@stjuderockville.org](mailto:Jeanne.Donatelli@stjuderockville.org).

OPT



## ENZLER

Con't from page 1

meals and to try new things. They talked about what a gift it is to then share that food together at their common table.

As I studied their reflections, I thought that this is exactly what should happen for all of us in the Eucharist. It is a gift to share in this divine meal, and to do so with those we know and love.

During my homily, I told the bride and groom how wonderful it is that they love to come together to eat, and I spoke about the food of the Eucharist. I reminded them that every time they go to church, they are coming together to share in the very special meal that is the gift of Eucharist. It is a different kind of meal, of course - a special celebration of the gift that Jesus gave us of his very self, his flesh and blood.

I asked those in attendance what this beautiful and joyful wedding would be like if we did all by Zoom. How different would it be if we were not in the church for the wedding but watching it on a screen

at home? And what would it be like if we didn't come to the reception but watched from home without being able to full participate in the wonderful meal and festive atmosphere that goes with every reception I've ever attended. It seems to me that not being able to be part of the banquet, the dancing, and the party would make me sad instead of joyful.

I think we should view our participation in the Eucharist at our own parishes the same way. It is just not the same to watch it on screen or not participate at all. I encourage all of us to think deeply about how important it is that we be at God's banquet in person - when it is safe and conditions allow - to fully receive and enjoy the gift of the Eucharist with our parish family.

Attending Mass is a chance for us to be fed not just by the Eucharist itself but also by the community with which we celebrate, by the word of God that challenges us to live even better lives, and by the presider who brings it all together in a way that helps us give thanks for the blessings we have in both the Eucharist and in God's family.

I encourage all of us in this first month of a new year - and with Lent only about a month away - to think about how we can make every week special by celebrating the gifts of eating together, praying together, and Jesus' special presence to us in the Eucharist. Receiving Jesus makes us *theotikos*, or "Christ bearers," and helps us become more Christlike.

Knowing that, wouldn't we enthusiastically embrace and participate in this miraculous gift? We should change our tone from "I have to do this because it's my obligation" to "I want to do this because it is my chance to receive Jesus in the most special way and say thanks to God."

I sometimes wonder how thrilled God would be if all of us came to Eucharist every week. The world would be a better place if we all made time to thank God for the blessings and gifts we receive and for all the ways he watches over us each and every day.

We are all invited to the Lord's banquet. We need only say yes to the invitation. What does it say on your RSVP?

OPT

## TRADITION

Con't from page 21

was kindly declined, with Mrs. Killian noting, "there is something so quintessentially authentic to the manger story in these simple hand-sewn costumes, so lovingly made, that needs to be preserved."

This year's pageant music was especially beautiful. Dr. Mariana Mihai-Zoeter, our new Parish Music Director, met weekly through the month of December, to prepare a small youth choir to lead the hymns and serve as cantors. About a dozen grade-school parishioners served as pageant players, and two of our parish middle schoolers, Ryan Cooper and Anna Bangert, served as lectors, reading the pageant script and Scripture readings. Additionally, two Holy Cross School alumni, Caroline Killian from Academy of the Holy Cross, and Audrey Wilkerson from Saint John's College High School volunteered to serve as Junior Pageant Directors. Using the talents that they developed during their own years serving in the pageant, these



Having followed the star of Bethlehem, the Magi bring gifts for the newborn King.

two parish teens were of invaluable assistance in co-directing our youngest pageant players. As Father Robert Buchmeier reflected at the end of the Mass, "This is true evangelization." We are truly grateful for all of the families who participated in this very special Mass.

From everyone here at Holy Cross, the light is on, and we hope to see you in the New Year!

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