



Parish Times

Senior Services Guide
Pull-Out Section

DECEMBER 2023

Living the Faith Together

FOUNDED 1991

Seeing the Lights Around Us

By Chuck Short



Chuck Short

Let's begin by celebrating the Catholic Business Network of Montgomery County, which held its annual Gala on December 3. The CBN's mission is to convene Catholic businesses in support of each other and local Catholic education. Each year CBN recognizes individuals who are examples of outstanding community service.

The Outstanding Business Persons of 2023 are **Dennis and Anne Sullivan** of Holy Redeemer parish. Dennis coached soccer and basketball for 21 years and Anne was a Eucharistic Minister for 12 years. Their children attended Holy Redeemer and local Catholic high schools. Dennis and Anne started their IT company, FCN, Inc. with his brother, George, in 1990. The company has grown and evolved over the years. As their company has grown, Anne and Dennis have enjoyed being able to support the Catholic schools and agencies that mean so much to them. FCN is a significant supporter of Catholic education throughout

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The Real Reason We're Happier During the Holidays

By Msgr. John Enzler



Fr. John Enzler

Advent is a season of preparation and waiting, both spiritually and culturally. It is also a time of "holiday cheer." I notice it every year. From Thanksgiving to Advent and through the Christmas season, people just seem happier.

All the festivities and gatherings are obviously a part of the reason, but I would say that it goes to something deeper inside of us: We are all in a spirit of giving, and that brings us joy.

We like to give gifts, to do nice things for our loved ones, our friends and neighbors, our co-workers, and others. I think we especially love giving to children and seeing the pure joy on their faces and in their response.

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St. Elizabeth's students are suited up to participate in their study of the Chesapeake Bay.

St. Elizabeth's Students Explore the Chesapeake Bay

St. Elizabeth's middle school students got hands-on experience studying biodiversity, science, and shorelines through the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC),

located in Edgewater, Maryland. They took on the role of scientists, using sampling techniques and other methods to learn

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Mother of God School Celebrates and Honors Veterans

By Melissa Furman Sloan, Principal

Amidst report cards, conferences, and busy days, Mother of God School takes the time each year to celebrate and honor our Veterans. Prior to Veterans Day, veterans from our communities, families, and friends are invited to our Veterans' Day assembly. We save special seats for our honored guests before the entire school enters the gym for our assembly.

Students sit in awe of our loved ones, some dressed in uniform, as they fill their seats. The Knights of Columbus from St. John Neumann Parish, for whom patriotism is a central tenant, graciously offered to



A veteran receiving gifts handmade by Mother of God students to show their appreciation for his service to our country

present the flag and lead the school in the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem.

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Keep Your Eye On The Star

By Patricia McGann



Patricia McGann

As we head into the Advent Season, we have a choice to make. We can spend the next twenty-five days running around from store to store, and party to party. We can spend hours on our computers searching for a "just right" gift for the people on our list. Or we can consider another way to prepare for Christmas.

What if we decided that our gifts this year would be gifts of time and attention? What if we skipped the fancy SmartWatch and the twenty toys that nobody really needs? What if, instead of hours wrapping and shopping, and browsing, we set aside time to visit a friend or relative we've neglected recently?

What if we gave our children the one

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Teaching is Hard, so is Getting to Heaven

By Michelle Ardillo

I have retired three times as a teacher. Yes, three times. The proverbial bad penny? Glutton for punishment? Decision-making issues? No, but yes to bits and pieces of all three.

Teaching is my second career. In 2004, I left a 20-year lucrative and satisfying career as a real estate paralegal to work for the Archdiocese of Washington as a youth minister and substitute teacher with the dream of a classroom of my own. In 2007, after an ADW job fair I began teaching middle school language arts at Holy Redeemer in Kensington. I am ever grateful to HRS for 10 great years where I taught the children of entire families, from the oldest to the youngest, where I experienced the warmth and generosity of the HRS community, and where I learned to be a teacher and, eventually, a good one.

Then, in 2017, I transferred to St. Jude Regional Catholic School, my home parish school, the alma mater of my daughters, where I first started my employment with the ADW and my home away from home. Teaching at SJRCS revitalized my teaching career; it is where I became a very good teacher. More importantly, SJRCS is where I learned the true mission of a Catholic school teacher: to get students to heaven. It is where

I embraced my Catholic faith in a new and soul-filling way, where I decided on a daily basis to respond to the many requests for my time and talents with a simple statement, "Mary said yes."

But then came COVID-19, and my doctor recommended I not go back into the classroom that year. And so, my first retirement came in July of 2020. I was devastated, my pain expressed in an essay published in the *Huffington Post*.

A year later, fully vaccinated and just coming to terms with retirement, I was asked to come back to SJRCS to teach upper-school religion. I once again gave Mary's response. My schedule was such that I could go to daily Mass, hear the Gospel, and then come back, filled with the Eucharist, eager to share all of that with my students. Just as in Mary's case, I received much more with my "yes" than I gave. But my passion was and always will be teaching language arts, so I once again retired at the end of that year.

They say God has a sense of humor, though, and once again, my principal asked me to come back the next year to teach language arts. "Just one year," she said. (Mary, how many times did you have to say yes?) That year, however, was glorious. I had the BEST eighth-grade homeroom class of all time, taught my favorite pieces of litera-

ture, and reveled in the progress of the writing of those kids. Their high school acceptance letters proved it, and I told them that I had decided to graduate with them, to retire once more.

And then, just two weeks before the opening of this school year, I was asked to fill yet another opening: long-term sub for upper school language arts. Other than the embarrassment of rejoining a faculty full of people who gave me lovely retirement gifts just months before, setting up a classroom quickly was hard work but so much fun. I know the writing is on the wall, though. A post in this wonderful school will be too hard to pass up and will probably be filled before you read this issue of *Our Parish Times*.

Before you accuse me of glamorizing teaching, everyone who has spent one day in an elementary school classroom knows the job is tough. Teaching is hard. The "job" is never done. You can stay late and go in early, but if you do

it right, you will never ever be completely done. Teaching upper school English means teaching grammar, which most people shy away from. It means grading essays and research papers. It's tedious and time-consuming, but giving constructive criticism is the only way to effectively improve student writing.

A teacher colleague of mine recently posted a long but touching post on Facebook, and with her permission, I'm sharing part of it with you. Her sentiments expressed my feelings very well.

"Yesterday I attended the funeral of a beautiful person, the mother of two amazing boys that I taught many years ago - who are now in high school and college...Being there yesterday was so hard, and many tears were shed...but it was also beautiful because there was so much love...Teaching is hard...but it's also beautiful because of the connections you make, the love that's there, and the lives that are forever intertwined and connected. The children and their families...

they truly become a part of your family...I'm thankful for being fortunate to know such beautiful souls and families and for all the light and love they continue to pour out into the world."

Teaching is hard, and teaching in Catholic schools means a lot of sacrifices, including some financial ones. Often, we are in older buildings with less technology. With a smaller staff, we take on extra responsibilities. But we have one thing that the public schools don't have: our true mission of getting students to heaven. For so many of us, teaching is not a job; it is a vocation, and it is a vocation that I am proud to have had for 19 years.

Michelle Ardillo is a freelance writer and a semi-retired language arts teacher at St. Jude Regional Catholic School. She is at work on her first novel and researching a book about the Blessed Virgin Mary's apparitions.

OPT

ADW's Annual Rocky Stone Award is Presented to Meghan Jones

The Rocky Stone Award was first bestowed on Howard "Rocky" Stone in 1986. Mr. Stone, a parishioner of St. Bartholomew church in Bethesda, started a committee under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Washington in 1979 to bring awareness to parishes regarding the needs of people with disabilities. This committee continued to bear fruit and the Office for Ministry with Persons with Disabilities soon began. Now there is a combined Office of Deaf and Disabilities Ministry and so this important work continues today.

The Rocky Stone award is given to a lay person or persons within a parish of the Archdiocese of Washington who have demonstrated leadership, or advocacy on behalf of



2023 Rocky Stone Award winner Meghan Jones

persons with disabilities. It may also be given to those who demonstrated leadership across the entire Archdiocese.

This year's Rocky Stone award was presented to Meghan Jones on October 21, 2023. The award was given at the Pope Francis Center which is the home of St. Francis Deaf Catholic Church and the Office of Deaf and Disabilities Ministry. Meghan leads a young adult faith group called Martha and Mary's Kitchen. This group meets on Zoom to discuss Scripture like Mary and then cook a meal together like Martha. Meghan works alongside Rachel Chung, Coordinator for Disabilities Ministry for the Archdiocese. However,

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Palestinian Christians Maintain Christianity, Wood Carving, and Hope in the Holy Land

By Amy Sapenoff Hamm

This Advent, Christians will pray for peace between Israel and Palestine. Thoughts turn both to the Holy Land of today, amid war and suffering while at the same time contemplating the Holy Land of 2,000 years ago and the birthplace of our Lord in Bethlehem.

For a small group of Christians still residing in the Holy Land, these two starkly different realities intersect in a concrete way. Nearly 38,000 Christians live in Jerusalem and the West Bank. They are given a particular vocation, being asked to both live through the current circumstances and all the while continue to hope that they will be able to welcome pilgrims back to the place of Jesus's birth, public ministry, Crucifixion, and Resurrection.



Ghassan Al Sahouri and his family have been living this tension between violence and hope for many decades. He, like many people from Bethlehem, is a wood carver. Christians in the Holy Land have practiced the tradition of carving religious figures from native olive wood for centuries. Al Sahouri has been carving since 1977, selling his items to pilgrims during times of peace and stability.

On-going violence in the region has threatened this artform. "Wood

carving all but died during the First Intifada in the late 1980s," Ghassan shared. "Not only did many Christians leave Palestine to move abroad, but with no pilgrims or tourists to sell the items to, wood carvers had to take other jobs, in construction or other occupations, in order to support their families."

Ghassan moved to the United States in 2003. He endeavored to promote the woodcarving of his homeland to Christians in the United States. In the beginning, he contacted local Catholic parishes, but was often turned away. He eventually received a letter of endorsement from the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, which gave him the credibility that he needed to truly begin in earnest. Several American bishops soon offered assistance in making connections within their dioceses, which led to invitations from many pastors for Ghassan to present information about the Christian communities in the Holy Land and to sell their wares after Masses.

Ghassan's efforts started small. He began by selling the work of five Palestinian Christian families from Bethlehem. He launched his non-profit, the Little Bethlehem Christian Group, in order to send financial support to the participating families. Now, 20 years later, the Al Sahouri family travels all

over the United States to speak at parishes and sell their products, and the Little Bethlehem Group supports hundreds of families in some capacity, from direct financial assistance to help purchasing medication, with the profits from their olive wood carvings. The Little Bethlehem Group is based in Clear Spring, Maryland, and frequently appears at parishes in Montgomery County.

Ghassan always starts by introducing himself and his mission—to support and encourage the Christian

presence in the Holy Land. This mission is evermore essential given the conflict today. As Ghassan explained, "The Palestinian Christians are a diminished presence. The Christians rely on support from abroad, and more specifically the Catholic Church, particularly in the United States. First and foremost we need to pray for peace, but we also need to offer concrete support for the Christians who continue to reside in land where Jesus lived."

More information about the Little

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Siham (left) and Ghassan (right) pictured with Bishop Larry Silva of Honolulu. The couple gifted Bishop Silva with a large, hand-sculpted crucifix during one of their many visits to Hawaii to sell their products. Photo originally printed in the Hawaii Catholic Herald, photo credit to Darlene J.M. Dela Cruz

Freedom of Religion in Montgomery County

By Ann Guthrie Hingston

Many of us have children in parochial schools, making it easy to ignore what is happening in public schools and the impact of decisions made by county officials on our families and communities. You may have heard that in recent months concerned parents of many faiths and their clergy, including Catholic priests, have stood in unison at rallies outside the headquarters of the county Board of Education. They gathered to promote restoration of First Amendment parental rights and the free exercise of religion in Montgomery County.

Such activism is the result of two recent changes at Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). Earlier this year the Board of Education, consisting of elected officials, decided to change past practice and to deny parents the right to "opt out" their children from lessons and books that unnecessarily violate their sincerely held

religious beliefs. They took this action even though other Maryland public school districts allow parents to "opt out." Also, MCPS adopted changes to the school curriculum and instructional materials to spark discussions of human sexuality and relationships, beginning as early as PreK (4 years old).

We believe these are intentional moves to silence voices of faith. A nonpartisan volunteer group called United Against Racism in Education (UARE) is engaged in building coalitions of people of faith who attend churches, synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship. Together we are urging MCPS to change its policies to allow public school parents to decide whether their children should be exposed to such curriculum materials.

Roman Catholics comprise the largest religious denomination in Montgomery County. We believe it is time for us to realize that the Judeo-Christian beliefs we cherish

are being pushed aside by school and county officials. Many Catholic families opposing the school board on its denial of God-given parental rights are from countries other than the United States. They left their birthplaces and families to move to this great country, because of freedom of speech and freedom of religion. The Montgomery County Board of Education is stripping these rights away.

Groups of parents, grandparents, teachers, community members and faith leaders are committed to restoring Parental Rights in Montgomery County and within our school system. We want Montgomery County Public Schools to get back to their major task: "Academic Excellence for Every Student." Parents need to be informed and advocate for their children.

For more information about our efforts, visit the website - UARE. US, Facebook: United Against Racism in Education and X (Twitter) @UARE4Kids.

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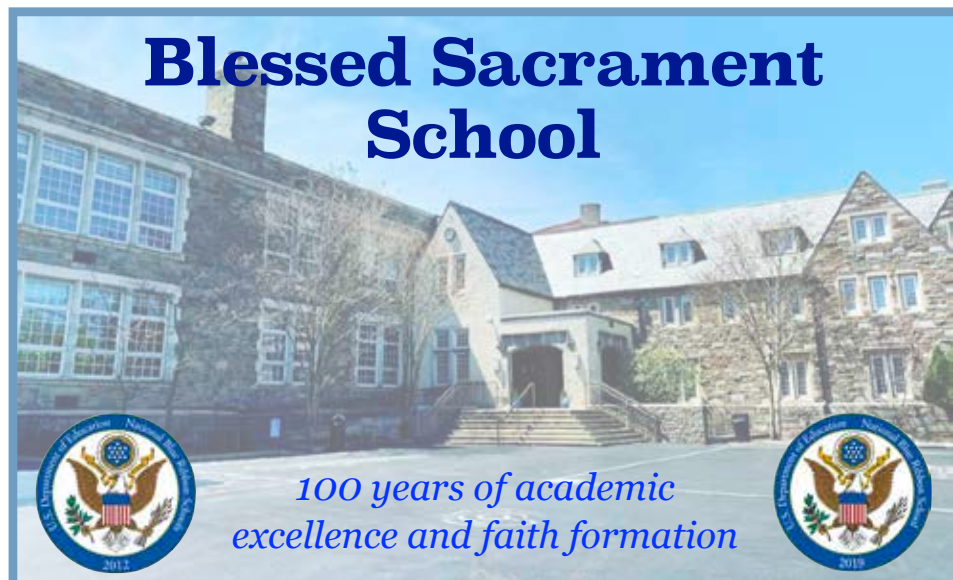


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Our clients with their gift bags after attending a parenting class called "Infant Expectations".

Centro Tepeyac Efforts to Support Mothers are in Full Swing

By Julie Kilmer

The months of October and November have been no less busy as we continue to serve mothers in need daily. From our Open House to our growing parenting classes ... we had great turnouts and continue to connect with our community in meaningful ways!

During the month of December, we will be making and selling Guadalupe bracelets and keychains at local schools to raise money for Centro Tepeyac. The Catholic University of America will be the first school to host this event. Please reach out to us if you would like your school to participate!

Additionally, we will host a Christmas Party on December 12 to celebrate the feast day of our patron saint, Our Lady of Guadalupe! We will be gifting our Baby Bundles to clients, which are bathtubs filled with baby clothes, diapers, wipes, tow-



Our recent Open House was an occasion to show off our newly organized Baby Boutique, in addition to our counseling room and play area.

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els, blankets, and toys as an early Christmas present!

Furthermore, with our newest program, "Moms Supporting Moms" we hope to create a space in which our clients can come to meet other mothers and share about the highs and lows of parenting in a warm and welcoming environment, while enjoying some coffee and donuts. This group will meet on the last Tuesday of every month. Please contact us if you or any of your friends are interested!

Lastly, thank you to the generous

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Our Baby Bundles are ready for distribution!



Participants donned their best team attire for the evening's festivities.

St. Bart's Auction Raises Record-Setting \$100,000+

On November 4, more than 150 St. Bartholomew parents, parishioners and supporters donned their favorite sports teams' attire and descended upon the school's Parish Hall—transformed for the night into the ultimate Homecoming environment, complete with bleacher seating and a food tent—for the school's annual auction. The school's biggest fundraising event of the year surpassed all expectations, raising more than \$110,000 to support existing programs and significant enhancements to school security.

Following a warm welcome from principal Kevin Giblin and Father Mark Smith, enthusiasm swelled as Msgr. John Enzler led a Paddle Raise

that generated more than \$30,000 in donations to fund key security enhancements around campus, including a keyless access system, alarm monitoring, lighting and more. Additional funds will support ongoing school needs, including professional development, teachers' wish lists and St. Bart's art, music and physical education programs.

Led by co-chairs Anne-Marie Coakley and Nicole Perraut, this year's Homecoming included the debut video of *The Children of St. Bartholomew Catholic School* and musical entertainment by *The Bizmonks*, featuring a cameo guitar and drum performance by Father Alex Wyvill.

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St. Bart's Families Open Their Trunks

For students and parents alike, St. Bart's annual Trunk-or-Treat celebration has become as synonymous with Halloween as door-to-door trick-or-treating itself. This year was no exception. Following 5:00 pm mass on October 28, the Bobcat community enjoyed an evening of pizza, dancing...and, of course, candy.

Creativity abounded as families decorated their trunks to pass out candy.



Giving Thanks as a Community

Giving thanks and giving back were at the center of attention for students and faculty as they prepared for the Thanksgiving holiday. Contributions to St. Bart's Thanksgiving Food Drive helped benefit 25 families who received traditional Thanksgiving items, two weeks' worth of pantry staples and gift cards for fresh turkeys. The

generosity of the school community shined throughout the drive, from the students who participated in the Student Council's Thanksgiving card cover design contest, to the eighth-grade class that sorted donations on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, to the parents who dedicated their time to deliver-

Continued on page 38

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Update on Policy Issues

By Kathy Kelly

Holy Cross Church in Garrett Park held an Advocacy Day on November 4, 2023, featuring Andrew Rivas, the Archdiocese of Washington (ADW) Manager of Public Policy, speaking on pro-life issues coming up in the Maryland General Assembly. He made the case that Holy Cross Church and other nearby parishes are in a strategic area to influence a particular Maryland delegate to help defeat a bill on Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS). Mr. Rivas also shared his hope of growing the ADW Advocacy Network and noted it would be helpful to have volunteers from every parish in that network.

ADW hopes that we can influence Delegate Aaron M. Kaufman (Democrat, District 18) to help defeat PAS. He has served as a Delegate since January 2023, and is on an oversight committee that seeks to get the PAS bill passed. Kaufman is the first member of the Maryland

General Assembly with a physical disability. He is a longtime member of the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, and while working for the Jewish Federations of North America pushed for legislation that would offer more financial security to persons with disabilities. Those who want to contact Delegate Kaufman to ask him to oppose the Physician-Assisted Suicide bill can contact his office at 410-841-3314, or email him at: aaron.kaufman@house.state.md.us

Rivas drew on his past experience working for Catholic Conferences in other areas of the country to note that sometimes bills can be killed while they are still in committee. He also noted that people feeling they should consider PAS are often worried about healthcare costs and their ability to leave an inheritance to their children.

Regarding the abortion amendment that will be on the Maryland ballot in 2024, Rivas wants to disprove that the num-

bers are against pro-lifers. He cited the 70,000 messages citizens sent to legislators in the last legislative session in opposition to the abortion amendment bill, and noted the ability of Catholics to conduct outreach encouraging voters to reject the ballot proposal to declare abortion a fundamental right in Maryland.

The strategically located parishes in a position to reach out to this delegate include Holy Cross, Holy Redeemer, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady Queen of Poland, St. Catherine Labouré, St. John the Evangelist, St. Bernard, St. Jerome, and St. Mark.

Those who want to sign up for email messages from the ADW Maryland Advocacy Network can do so at: <https://adw.org/advocacy>

Kathy Kelly is a parishioner at St. Jane de Chantal and is the Maryland director of Democrats for Life.

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Mrs. Ann Vitz engages her students in classroom conversation about the virtues.

Great Moral Stories Begins at Brookewood

Mrs. Ann Vitz recently joined Brookewood this fall, teaching the *Great Moral Stories* class. With a background in working with inner-city children and in homeschooling, Mrs. Vitz employs Mary Beth Klee's *Core Virtues* program, rooted in Aristotle's four core virtues—prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. The program, promoting virtues like respect, diligence, honesty, and generosity, utilizes quality children's literature to nurture a robust moral imagination.

The Great Moral Stories program at Brookewood focuses on a specific virtue each month, encouraging students to "catch" virtues rather than simply being "taught" them. Girls set monthly or weekly goals related to virtues: elementary students use goal sheets with the virtue's definition and application questions, while

middle and upper school students explore stories of real people practicing virtues and engage in case studies of high school students dealing with real-life conflicts.

The *Great Moral Stories* class complements Brookewood's curriculum well. With students already exposed to excellent stories in English classes and to building moral foundations in religion classes, this class provides another avenue for them to seek the good. Mrs. Vitz's approach fosters holistic learning and application of virtues, moving beyond memorization. Ultimately, the goal is for students to "fall in love with the good," using a curated collection of books to teach and explore virtues in an engaging and meaningful way.

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8:30am – 10:25am

Headmaster's presentation at 9:45 am

McGANN

Con't from page 1

thing that they truly want, even if they don't know it? What if we set aside time to be with each of them – having a picnic in the park, or lunch at Silver Diner, arranging a movie night, or a basketball game, something they enjoy that we can share with them? A simple card that promises time together, doing something they like to do can be the best gift they receive. I know you're thinking that your kids would be so disappointed, but are you sure about that?

What if we enlisted our children and grandchildren in a cookie baking project, and then took those cookies to a local soup kitchen, nursing home, or over to Walter Reed Medical Center?

If we consider time and attention, kindness and compassion as the gifts we will give this year, we can give those gifts in small ways every single day. We don't have to look far for opportunities to share these gifts, especially if we're not caught up in the rat race of shopping. We will have time to talk to a lonely friend on the phone a little longer. We will have time for an extra bedtime story. We will have time to sit a few more minutes at the dinner table finding out how everyone's day went.

Every day we drive by people begging at the local intersections.

Do we look straight ahead, pretending we don't see them or just roll up the window? Do we tell ourselves that "She should just get a job", or that "He will just spend the money on liquor or drugs"? What if we decided to suspend judgment? What if we decided to simply see The Face of God? What if we decided to love our neighbors, even the ones who stand on the corner with ratty signs, or sit in front of Starbucks with an empty cup?

Maybe we can put together a few Christmas cards with a little money in them. We could keep those cards in the car, and hand them over with a smile instead of pretending we don't see the person standing right in front of us.

It's one thing to say that we believe everyone is a child of God. It's another thing to demonstrate our love of neighbor in genuine and ordinary ways every day. We can refuse to gossip about another person or simply smile at the person in front of us in line. A simple "Good morning", and a dollar in his cup will make life just a little easier for the man who lives in the parking garage. Your belief in the dignity of all people can become an active belief with very little effort this Advent, and with very little expense!

Oh, and of course I have one more idea. Take that money you saved not buying all kinds of stuff, and donate it to the Shepherd Foundation, or to your local Catholic School.

OPT



Pictured: St. Patrick's Alumni Kylie Boyd Class of '16, Olivia Mascari '16, Carrington Boyd '14, Carmella Rizzo '16, and Caroline Maurano '16.

Another Successful Haiti Yard Sale supporting Life Connection Mission Thanks to Your Support!

To all those who donate and/or volunteer at the annual yard sale held at St. Patrick's to support Life Connection Mission (LCM), we share very good news! In June 2019, with a team of volunteers from St. Patrick's Parish, LCM cleared out a space behind the pre-school with the hope of being able to install bathrooms for the pre-school students. In 2020, enough funds were raised to make the installation of three toilets possible, and a new vision began for what to do with the rest



The wonderful play space behind Life Connection Mission, made possible by the Haiti Yard Sale.

of the space. Our dream was a beautiful play yard for the pre-school students that would be an extension of the classroom. Then the pandemic hit, and we lost the ability to host the yearly yard sale, our biggest fundraiser. We patiently waited and in 2022, we were able to hold the yard sale once again and raise the remaining money needed to com-

plete the project. They say good things come to those who wait, and I think these before and after photos prove that! We are so in love with this BEAUTIFUL play yard! And a HUGE thank you to ALL of YOU who continue to support our mission and our students through your donations and hard work each year at the yard sale.

OPT



Our students represented the whole Communion of Saints with their costumes!

Celebrating All Saints Day with our Students, Families and Parishioners

All Saints Day at St. Patrick's School was joyfully marked by a Mass led by our fourth graders. Dressed as the saints they've been studying in class, these students actively engaged in every facet of the Mass. The seventh grade class led us in

song, creating an atmosphere of faith and celebration. Coming together as a community to celebrate Mass, particularly on a Holy Day of Obligation, serves as a beautiful testament to our shared faith and unity.

OPT

St. Patrick's Trunk or Treat Spooktacular!



LEFT: Families gathering in the parking lot to participate in this year's Trunk or Treat

RIGHT: St. Patrick's students show off their Halloween costumes.



St. Patrick's recent Trunk or Treat event was a hauntingly good time for students and families alike! The school's parking lot came alive with creatively adorned trunks, each offering a unique treat-filled experience. From pirate ships to whimsical themes, our community showcased their spooky spirit. Little monsters roamed in costumes while laughter echoed through the night. Thanks to all who made this another successful spooktacular event!

OPT

More St. Patrick News on Page 34

St. Patrick's Parish

4101 Norbeck Road
Rockville, MD

Rev. Msgr. Charles J. Parry, Pastor
301-924-2284

St. Patrick's School
Ms. Christie Anne Short,
Principal

301-929-9672

Parish Editor
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Parish Memorial Tree Blessing

Trees planted on the De Chantal campus are dedicated to families, pastors, and parishioners and were blessed by Fr. Giese

By Maureen Wilkerson

Planting a tree will enrich the Earth and keep memories alive for generations. This past spring, St. Jane De Chantal's Environmental Committee initiated *The Memorial Tree Project*. By dedicating a newly planted tree on the parish grounds, the committee thought that this would allow parishioners to memorialize a loved one. Their corollary purpose was to celebrate God's creation in the spirit of *Laudato Si*.

On Sunday, October 1, near St. Francis of Assisi's feast day, pastor Father Samuel Giese lead the Blessing of Memorial Trees. A large crowd followed Father Giese throughout the De Chantal campus as each of thirty-two trees was blessed, and each person or family that was memorialized was remembered. This peaceful

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Grateful De Chantal School families planted a tree for the school's beloved principal, Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton.



Father Giese blessed over 30 trees on the newly renovated De Chantal campus, including multiple trees surrounding the new playgrounds and Reyes field.

De Chantal Parish uses the time of Advent for Reflection, Service, and Cheer

Parish committees, communities, and organizations highlight Christmas time for all

By Michelle Flynn

While Catholics around the world prepare their hearts for the coming of our Savior, St. Jane De Chantal parish also uses this time to come together as a community for reflection, service, and joy. Every De Chantal committee, community, and organization shines during Advent.

The parish Sodality's annual Advent Giving tree is always a favorite. Beautiful Christmas trees placed in the church's narthex are adorned with small cards. Each card has a gift wish for someone in need that has reached out to the sodality. The sodalists ask the parish to shop for a gift for someone in need from various local charities like the Little Sisters



All are welcome to join our Adult Choir and other various parish music groups for beautiful Christmas music.

of the Poor, Gabriel Project, Queen of Peace, or Sisters of Charity, and many more. The parish High School Youth Group visited A Simple House, which is a DC homeless outreach program. The teens, chaperoned

Continued on page 22



The Class of 2019 boys enjoyed a friendly soccer match this Thanksgiving on the new Reyes field.

Always a Duke!

New Reyes field is enjoyed by all the De Chantal Dukes this Fall

By Catherine Tomsbeck

After its blessing at the end of summer, the new De Chantal Reyes Field welcomed current students and alumni throughout the fall. Many CYO practices and clinics were held for the De Chantal Dukes Rookie and JV teams. Even some parent vs kids soccer matches were played to close out the seasons. Parents are 2 - 0 this year against their children. After finishing their last CYO Soccer season, the current eighth-grade class of 2024 held a coed-soccer match. This spirited, competitive game ended with the girls as victors. Even Dukes from the *past* enjoy the new field. During Thanksgiving weekend several members of the De Chantal class of 2019 enjoyed the field while home from college. Friendships that began in the kindergarten hallways of the school remain strong and the De Chantal Reyes Field has

become a gathering place for our former students to enjoy a friendly game. No matter where our students go, they will always be Dukes. Go Dukes!

OPT

St. Jane de Chantal Parish

9601 Old Georgetown Road
Bethesda, MD

Fr. Samuel C. Giese, Pastor
301-530-1550

St. Jane de Chantal School
Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton
301-530-1221

Michelle D'Amour Flynn
OPT Editor



70TH De Chantal ANNIVERSARY

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Mother Seton Parish Food Drive

By Joan Tapocik

Mother Seton Parish had an extraordinary Food Drive on November 11, 2023. Our parishioners were so very generous with non-perishable food items, as well as gift cards. Because of their generosity, we can provide food bags for 57 families (including \$50 gift cards) for Thanksgiving and Christmas.



ABOVE: Father Lee Fangmeyer helps with food collection.



LEFT: Food Drive bags, handmade by parishioner Marilyn Balcita.

local food pantry replenish their supplies. Our tireless volunteers collected, organized, and filled the food bags. This year we were so blessed to have our MSP Quilting Angels provide lovely fabric that our Sodalist, Marilyn Balcita, used to make beautiful cloth food

bags for each family. The food bags for Thanksgiving have been picked up and distributed to

the local families.

In December, the Christmas food bags will be picked up for distribution along with Christmas gifts for all members of the 57 families thanks to the MSP Giving Tree project sponsored by MSP Sodality of our Lady. Thanks so much to everyone who donated, helped, and supported these endeavors. It is such an honor to be a member of this wonderful parish.

OPT

In addition, we collected enough food items to help our



Mother Seton Parish parishioners pledge 2,000 rosaries to Our Lady.

Mother Seton Surpasses Goal of 2,000 Pledged Rosaries

By Nancy Fazio

Members and friends of Mother Seton Parish, for the third year in a row, not only gifted our Blessed Mother with the praying of 2,000 Rosaries, our original goal, but surpassed it with over several hundred more Rosaries pledged, in answer to the call from Our Lady of Fatima to pray the Rosary for conversion, reparation, salvation of souls, peace and unity. The Rosaries were offered from the Feast of the Holy Rosary on October 7 up until the 105th Anniversary of the Miracle of Fatima on October 13.

We are most grateful for Father Lee Fangmeyer's support of this event. All were encouraged to attend

the public recitations of the rosary offered before the 9:00 am daily Mass, as well as public recitations of all the mysteries of the Rosary throughout the day on October 13

Continued on page 35

Mother Seton Parish

19951 Fr. Hurley Boulevard
Germantown, MD

Fr. Lee Fangmeyer
Pastor

301-924-3838

Brenda Rosado
OPT Editor

Bulletin@Mothersetonparish.org

More Mother Seton News on Page 35

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Tradition! Tradition! HR Third Graders Visit National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

In keeping with a long-standing tradition at Holy Redeemer School, 59 third graders boarded two yellow school buses for The National Shrine and Basilica of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Emmitsburg, Maryland on the Monday after Thanksgiving. The students joined a decades-old tradition of HR third graders, making this pilgrimage to learn about the first American-born saint, Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton.



Third-grader Gabe finds Great-Great-Aunt's Memorial: Sr. Marie Margaret Hallahan



ABOVE: Father Kyle Vance, vested for Mass at the Basilica, with third-grade students and teachers

RIGHT: Happy Pilgrims visit the Seton Shrine

From 1951-1984, Holy Redeemer School was led by principals and teachers who belonged to the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, the order originally founded by Elizabeth Ann Seton. Guided by their religion teacher, Mrs. Pam Hurley, who fondly remembers the sisters from her student days at HR, and accompanied by third-grade teachers Mrs. Andrea Heyl

Continued on page 34



HR Teacher and Alumna, Karen Markham, boards the bus with Greta.

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

More Holy Redeemer
News on Page 38

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A fun charcuterie board lesson for members of the Mercy Moms' Club!

Parents Build Community – The Mercy Way!

Mercy parents have always worked hard to plan special events and activities for students and fellow

parents, and this year is no different! In addition to organizing annual traditions such as Friday Night Lights, the Father-Daughter Dance, and a Mother-Son Event, our parents have now launched a Moms' Club and a Dads' Club. The first Moms' Club event was a hands-on lesson in creating a charcuterie board. Mercy moms went home with their own beautifully designed board of meats and cheeses. The Dads' Club opted for a more unstructured get together, meeting at a favorite beer and wine locale for pizza and conversation. Both groups are looking forward to socializing during these monthly events.

OPT

Our Lady of Mercy Parish

9200 Kentsdale Drive
Potomac, MD

Fr. Charles Antonicelli, Pastor

301-365-1415

Our Lady of Mercy School

Mrs. Christine Green, Principal

301-365-4477

Gerry Burgess, OPT Editor

301-330-5676

More Our Lady of Mercy News on Page 34

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School

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The Curtain Rises on Mercy's Drama Club

Starting in mid-September, Mercy students (grades 5-8) spent more than 30 hours planning and rehearsing for this year's show, Matilda, Jr. Their hard work

and dedication will be displayed during the upcoming performances on December 1 and 2, at 7:00 pm. We anticipate a full house for both shows – all are welcome!

OPT

School Tours and In-Person Open Houses

Mercy will be offering two special events on December 5 for prospective (and current) families. A Kindergarten Round-Up, for rising kindergarten students will be held from 9:00-10:00 am. Families with current fifth-grade students are invited to our "Fifth Grade Step-Up"

from 8:30 am.-12:00 pm. Mercy's next open house event will be held on Sunday, January 28 during Catholic Schools Week. Private tours continue to be available at any time. Interested families should contact schooloffice@olom.org or call 301-365-4477 for more information.

OPT



Mercy students prepare for the weekly Mercy Live news broadcast.

Exciting Upgrades Coming to Mercy!

Plans for exciting renovations and upgrades to the entire Mercy campus are projected to begin in the summer of 2024. In addition to the construction of a new Parish Center, the school will be expanded to include several new classrooms and resource rooms, a turf field will be installed, and the gymnasium will

be expanded to include bleachers. We are incredibly grateful to our parish and school community for their support of the Campaign for Our Lady of Mercy. These renovations will impact the academic, social, and physical well-being of all Mercy students, current and future.

OPT



Students collected enough food to fill the bed of a pickup truck during a food drive at Mercy.

Our Lady of Mercy Alum Patricio Fraga-Errecort Earns Prestigious Ivy-League Athletics Award

Our Lady of Mercy alum, Patricio Fraga-Errecort, class of 2015 is celebrating many recent successes. Currently pursuing his graduate studies at Cornell University, Patricio has not only excelled academically but has also made significant contributions to the Cornell University Polo Team, where he serves as the President and Captain. Patricio has recently been honored with Academic All-Ivy accolades as part of the 2022-23 At-Large Academic All-Ivy Teams.

Patricio's accomplishments extend beyond the Ivy League, showcasing his prowess as a top student-athlete in non-Ivy League sponsored sports. Throughout the academic year, he demonstrated exceptional skill on

the men's polo team, scoring multiple goals in ten games and making a mark in the US Polo Association National Intercollegiate Championships.

This prestigious recognition is reserved for a select few Ivy League students who epitomize excellence in both academics and athletics. Nominated by each Ivy League institution, these individuals stand out as the best and brightest in their respective fields.

We take immense pride in Patricio's achievements and eagerly anticipate his continued success. His accomplishments are a shining example of the excellence that Our Lady of Mercy alumni consistently attain in their chosen paths.

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Maryland 20874

Principal: Mr. Michael J. Friel

**Assistant Principal:
Katherine Schultz**
301-869-0940 (tel)
301-869-0942 (fax)

**Development Director
Sarah Muir**

OPT Editor: Katherine Schultz,
kschultz@maryofnazareth.org

Website:

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St. Paul, Damascus; Our Lady of the
Presentation, Poolesville; Our Lady of the
Visitation, Darnestown.

Mary of Nazareth's Boy Scout Pack 76 demonstrated extraordinary commitment and community spirit through their recent efforts to support St. Martin's Pantry. In collaboration with the Mary of Nazareth community, the Boy Scout pack 76 played a pivotal role in surpassing expectations by supplying bags of food for families in need, just in time for Thanksgiving.

Mary of Nazareth community helped the Pantry reach nearly six tons of non-perishable food which were distributed to 593 families, marking the largest number served in the Pantry's 33-year history. As a beacon of goodwill, Boy Scout Pack 76 and the Mary of Nazareth community have truly made a lasting impact on the lives of those they've served during this Thanksgiving season.

OPT

Grandparent Day Success!

At Mary of Nazareth School, Grandparents Day is a cherished tradition, warmly anticipated each year. Grandparents immerse themselves in the school experience by rotating through classes with their grandchildren, gaining insights into their academic pursuits. This vibrant day is made possible by the dedication of parent volunteers from the HSA, who meticulously plan schedules to ensure each grandparent can participate fully. MoN teachers curate interactive activities, encouraging grandparents to engage in collaborative projects, such as science experiments, family tree creations, and arts and crafts.

This year's Grandparents Day marked a milestone



Grandparents were able to participate in engaging lessons and activities during their visit to MoN.



Classroom time together is always fun during Grandparents Day!

with a record turnout! Coughlin Transportation Co. even provided shuttle services from the parking lot and Simply Fresh made sure there was plenty of coffee and pastries to make everyone happy. Grandparents not only observed but actively contributed, from providing valuable assistance in science projects to helping younger grandchildren make decorations for thanksgiving. The day culminated in a Mass at the KFC, allowing the school community to be together just before the Thanksgiving holiday.

OPT

SHORT

Con't from page 1

the Washington Metropolitan area. In addition to financial support, Dennis and Anne volunteer their time and talents to Catholic causes in the area.

Former County Executive **Ike Leggett and his community spirited wife, Catherine**, were recognized as Outstanding Community Partners. Having had the honor of working for Ike and with Catherine on many of her community engagement projects, I could fill pages with their contributions to public service, education, the arts and culture, economic growth, compassionate caring, transportation, and fiscal responsibility. But many, and I suspect Ike and Catherine will agree, see that their most important contribution is building a County that welcomes all people in peace; respects the dignity of each individual; and promotes opportunities for all to achieve their highest potential. They have led our community toward these goals and partnered with faith, business, civic, nonprofit, cultural and other groups in the mission. As County Executive, Ike Leggett supported almost every Catholic social services activity. We are a far better and more beloved community because of them.

Julie Beavers received the Paul Zurkowski Founder's Award, named for the founder of the CBN and *Our Parish Times*. Julie came to work for CBN in 2016. Board members will agree that she served as the invisible backbone to CBN and its many successful activities tending to the details. Julie and her

husband Steve have four children in Catholic schools. She is a valued parent at St Elizabeth's. Recently, the City of Rockville recognized her value and hired her to staff its community advisory boards. As a Rockville resident, I could not be happier.

We are in the season of peace and love. Yet around us, the fires of hate and war blaze. Dare we reflect on peace? As true disciples of Jesus, we must seek peace and love. Otherwise, the wondrous journey that began in the stable will end in the tragedy of the cross rather than the promise of Easter.

As we engage in this season of giving and love, let's reflect on what each of us as individuals and in solidarity with other parishioners, can do to promote the peace and love in our communities that Jesus taught. Let's focus on Jesus's lessons of service and sight.

The Church ended the liturgical year, as it always does, with the clarifying and demanding Gospel of St Matthew, Chapter 25. **"Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?...whatever you did for one of the least of mine, you did for me."**

Jesus is our model of **service**. Many faith communities follow His lead with food distributions, winter coat collections, volunteering in shelters, The Greg Gannon Food Drive and other charitable activities. These are essential, especially as the demand for basic needs is on the rise. Thank you all! Establishing a **personal relationship** with those who need us will transform our charity into more Christ-like acts of peace and love. It's a generous thing to collect food for the

needy; it's a blessed act of love to see their wounded and wondrous human heart. **"And Jesus wept"**. These often-repeated Gospel words describe the depth of love Jesus felt for those who suffer. Service with a tearful eye and joyful heart is the paradox of Christian love. As an enduring Christmas gift, let's open our hearts to those who are marginalized.

As some of you may know, my son is blind. He often says that the greater sadness of blindness is not that he cannot see, **but rather that he is not seen**. It is a common thing for people who are different from the "mainstream" to be invisible and voiceless. Being unseen deprives people of respect and inner peace, leaving them isolated, anxious, depressed, and hurt. Without presence or voice, those with disabilities, the isolated elderly, unborn, immigrants, those who have different values are not perceived or included in community life. We may risk feeling a portion of Jesus's sadness when we extend our empathy, love and service to others thus experiencing them as Jesus did. Yet we will most certainly share the joy of the Prince of Peace who saw, heard, and welcomed gentiles, sinners, disabled, sick and those shunned in the community into His wider circle of love. The heart of the season will be warmed, and parish life illuminated by wonders we have not yet seen.

Wishing you an Advent season of deep spiritual growth and a happy Christmas!

God Bless!
Chuck Short
cshort5@verizon.net

OPT



Mary of Nazareth

Catholic School




Catholic Schools Week

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St. Mary's Oktoberfest Celebration



ABOVE: Marcela Morgan welcomes Father Charles Okonkwo and parishioners to partake of the delicious buffet.

ABOVE LEFT: (L-R) Ines Kuperberg and Brigitta Mullican wear the traditional German dirndl, a feminine dress originating in the German-speaking areas of the Alps.

ABOVE RIGHT: Jonine and Dan Gannon

On Saturday evening, October 21, over 100 St. Mary's parishioners enjoyed German food, music, beer, and an Oktoberfest trivia challenge with Father James Glasgow, P.V. Jonine and Dan Gannon spearheaded St. Mary's Oktoberfest for the second year, as Dan said, "spreading the joy," and donating the entrée of authentic German bratwursts. Parish Pastoral Assistant, Kathy Yates, completed the meal by asking parishioners for donations of sides and desserts, "St. Mary's parishioners are

very generous for parish gatherings, and we always have a lot of delicious food donations."

Dan Gannon, who works as a contractor, and has taught Faith Formation and led youth groups in various parishes, said, "we need to know how to celebrate, and if I don't do it, who will. Anytime I can do my part, I will. We are called to use our gifts to make people smile."

Jonine Gannon, a dietician for

Continued on page 28

St. Mary's Gets a New Look

St. Mary's School proudly unveiled our school's emblem painted magnificently by Mimi's Masterful Murals on the front of our school for all to see! For years, St. Mary's has been hidden in the heart of Rockville. The mixing bowl of Veirs Mill, Route 28, and 355 is a busy intersection with several unmarked brick buildings, so it is no wonder that our school blended in with the scenery. Our school board members unanimously voted that a mural on the front of our building would certainly bring eyes to St. Mary's as people traveled along Veirs Mill Road. This project couldn't have been done without the help from our wonderful donors at our 2023 Gala. St. Mary's is proud

to let all of Rockville know that 'We Are St. Mary's School'!

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St. Mary's Parish
520 Veirs Mill Road Rockville, MD

Msgr. Robert Amey, Pastor
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St. Mary's School
Mrs. Debby Eisel, Principal
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Mrs. Debby Eisel, Parish Editor
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ENZLER

Con't from page 1

Advent reminds us that Christmas is all about God's gift of Jesus to us, which we celebrate not just on Christmas Day but through a season that lasts until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord on the Sunday after Epiphany. We rejoice that our God loves us so much that He sent His own son, Jesus, born in a stable in Bethlehem, to bring us the gift of eternal life and eternal love.

Advent helps us to slow down a little bit amidst our busyness, preparations, and distractions to realize the great gift of Jesus. All the parties, decorations and Santa Claus are nice, but more important, changing our hearts to see more clearly how much the Lord loves us and how we respond to that love all throughout the year.

I especially like that we give not just to people we know but also to those in need. So many parishes and parishioners get involved in various giving activities.

The Greg Gannon canned food drive takes place in November and December, and some of the parishes here in *Our Parish Times* are heavily involved in that effort. Many parishes also do an angel tree, providing names so we can buy gifts for a family that can't afford them. Others of us will help at soup kitchens or food pantries, doing things we don't always do for those less fortunate. There are countless opportunities to help others.

I think it's important in Advent that we get involved in something beyond ourselves, that we give freely of ourselves as we remember and honor God's gift to us.

By doing so, we experience more deeply God's all-embracing love.

This was instilled in me very early thanks to my parents and a wonderful family tradition. My parents would place the manger for the Nativity set in a prominent place during Advent. We then picked names out of a hat, not to buy a gift but to do kind, generous, giving things for that family member throughout Advent.

Each day we did something nice, we got to place a strip of paper on the manger that served as the straw to give Jesus a comfortable bed. Through our kindness, we were preparing for Jesus' birth.

It was fun and meaningful to do something for a sister or brother – make their bed, prepare their lunch, leave a little candy bar under their pillow and more. It was quite a sight come Christmas to see the baby Jesus lying comfortably on a manger full of "straw" that we had placed there. We could see how doing for others directly impacted the baby Jesus, and it felt good.

As St. Francis wrote in his prayer, "It is in giving that we receive." Let's give ourselves to God and to each other this Advent, and then celebrate with great joy the uplifting Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Throughout these weeks, let us not forget the "reason for the season," celebrating with and doing things for our families, our friends and those in need. May we do it all because of our great love for the Lord Jesus, who showed his love for us through his birth and Resurrection that accomplished our salvation.

OPT



2022 "Carols in the Church" reception on the front lawn.

Advent Happenings at St. Bernadette's

The Religious Education program of Saint Bernadette is in full swing with Advent and Christmas preparations. On December 3, our visiting seminarian, David Tines, will present a talk entitled "The Art of Prayer." During this presentation, David will discuss different and time-honored ways to grow in prayer life, with special attention to praying during special times such as Advent and Lent. All parishioners are invited to attend.

For the next few Sundays, our religious education students will be preparing for our parish's third annual "Carols in the Church."

Led by Religious Education parent, John Stoneham, our CCD students will lead the congregation in an evening of singing and fun. "Carols in the Church," will begin at 6:00 pm in the main church on December 17, Gaudete Sunday. Family and friends are invited to come together to sing Advent and Christmas songs and stay afterwards to enjoy a reception. Weather pending, the reception will take place under our CYO "Christmas Tree Lights" in the church front yard and will feature a bonfire and delicious treats brought by Saint Bernadette parishioners.

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ABOVE: Seminarian David Tines visits second grade CCD at Saint Bernadette.



Olivewood depictions of the Holy Family, some of the many beautiful products sold by the Little Bethlehem Christian Group.

HOPE

Con't from page 3

Bethlehem Group, including the opportunity to purchase their products, can be found on their website, <https://little-bethlehem.org/>

OPT

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

St. Michael the Archangel Celebrates Michaelmas 2023!

By Janice Hamilton Outtz

On September 30, St. Michael the Archangel celebrated our feast day in a grand fashion. Nine days before our celebration, we started with a Novena to St. Michael. The celebration began with a procession of cultural flags representing the home countries of our parishioners into the church followed by a bi-lingual Mass celebrated by our Pastor, Monsignor Eddie Tolentino. Our theme for the celebration was: "Michaelmas: One Mission, Many Ministries to Build God's Kingdom."

After a wonderful Mass with a church full of parishioners and guests, we continued our celebration with an international potluck dinner and entertainment for children and adults. There were specialty foods from five different regions: the Caribbean, Africa, Philippines, United States and Europe, and Latin America. Judging by the smiles on the faces of the participants, the food was good and plentiful, and the fellowship was wonderful too.

The parish also held a 50/50 raffle with half the money raised going to offset the expense of putting this celebration on and the other half to the winner. Our parishioner, Judith Hayes was the

winner of \$600. Judith generously donated her winnings to the St. Michael's pew restoration drive. *Yea, Judith! Thank you.* Service was also a big part of the Michaelmas celebration. In addition to making scarfs for the homeless population, donating nonperishable food items, and making more than 100 "to go" food lunch bags for Shepherd's Table to distribute, parishioners cleaned our Parish Center to prepare for our Religious Education classes. As you can see from the pictures, Michaelmas was a grand celebration for all.

OPT



TOP LEFT: Parishioners line up to process flags representing different cultures and countries into the church.

TOP RIGHT: Parishioners enjoying the international potluck.

LEFT: Bi-Lingual Mass Celebration

ABOVE: The international flags on the altar.



ABOVE: Service Volunteers stop for a photo after preparing more than 100 meals.

RIGHT: Volunteers preparing the meals.



"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink." – Matthew 25:35.

By Lisa Taylor

On Saturday, September 30, the St. Michael's Service Committee gathered in honor of the feast of St. Michael to assemble 70 meals for the homeless. The volunteers exceeded the goal and prepared 117 meals to deliver to Shepard's Table for the poor. This project was just one of the service projects that was done in honor of the feast of St. Michael the Archangel. We hope to continue our work for the poor and welcome

all to join us. Please visit our website for more information on the next service opportunity.

OPT

St. Michael's Parish

805 Wayne Avenue
Silver Spring, MD

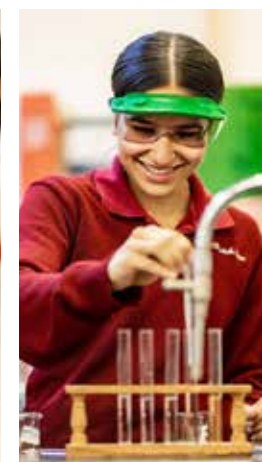
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Pastor

301-589-1155

Sheri Golden, OPT Editor

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ELIZABETH SETON HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS ARE THE FUTURE AND HER FUTURE IS NOW



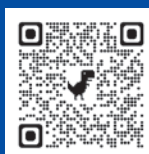
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Middle School students and teachers enjoying Outdoor Ed at Cunningham Falls

Fall Adventures

Students at Our Lady of Lourdes enjoyed all kinds of adventures this October. Learning moved beyond the traditional classroom for everyone from preschool up through the eighth grade.

Preschoolers, kindergartners, and first graders enjoyed fresh air and seasonal outings to Butler's Orchard and Green Meadows Farm. They picked out the perfect pumpkin, met new animal friends, and were accompanied by their outstanding buddies in seventh and eighth grades.

The fourth and fifth graders took advantage of the beautiful October weather and spent a day touring the Naval Academy, visiting the Maryland State House, and enjoying a Mission BBQ lunch in Annapolis.

Students in the middle school visited the Grotto at Mount Saint Mary's University where they engaged in prayerful reflection and celebrated Mass. Later in the month, they attended a longstanding OLOL tradition, Outdoor Ed. The three-day camping trip included long hikes to waterfalls, late nights guarding the campfire, and plenty of s'mores and memories made.



OLOL students show off their pumpkin choices at Green Meadows

OPT

Annual OLOL Parish Picnic



Our Lady of Lourdes parishioners enjoy food and fellowship on a beautiful September night. Photo credit Katie Crandlemire photos.

Our Lady of Lourdes celebrated the end of summer on September 30 with a crowded 5:00 pm vigil Mass followed by our annual Parish Picnic. It was an opportunity for families to gather after the summer months away to reunite and for new members of

the parish to meet one another and learn about all the opportunities to get involved in parish life at Lourdes.

Jamie Caulfield and John Acevedo, along with help from the

Continued on page 20

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More Our Lady of Lourdes News on Page 20



RIGHT: Two first graders listening intently to the fifth-grade buddy.

LEFT: Students snag a corner of carpet to start their new book together.



Reading Buddies: a New Chapter at SJE!

The St. John the Evangelist library was alive and buzzing on November 16, the kick-off day for a new monthly Reading Buddies program. Clusters of students could be found up and down every book-lined aisle. The new program matches up first grade and fifth grade students with the hopes of encouraging both new friendships and a love of reading. The first day of the program provided the new buddies with the opportunity to get to know one another. Books about Thanksgiving were selected for the inaugural launch. Everyone seemed to enjoy the morning and the new SJE reading buddies are already looking forward to their December meeting! **OPT**



The SJE 12U girls' soccer team brought home the championship trophy! The whole school was able to celebrate their success with a dress-down day on November 7. Go Eagles!

Support the St. John the Evangelist Parish Community this Advent and Christmas

During the Christmas season, an annual tradition at St. John the Evangelist parish is the decoration of the altars of the Main Church and Historic Church with Christmas plants donated by parishioners in remembrance of loved ones (living or deceased). If you would like to donate a plant in memory or in honor of someone, please fill out the form, available either on the parish website or in the weekly bulletin. Your donation can be placed in the offertory basket at any mass before Christmas Eve or dropped off at the Rectory. The Liturgical Arts and Environment Ministry will coordinate the ordering, delivery, and decoration of the altars. Plants will remain on the altar throughout the liturgical Christmas season (Christmas Eve through the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord). A special memorial mass for all those named in donations will be offered on Sunday, January 7, 2024 at 10:30 a.m., in the Main Church.

In addition to purchasing memorial altar flowers, consider buying your Christmas tree

from St. John the Evangelist's own Boy Scout Troop 466. Christmas tree sales began on Saturday, December 2 and will continue until Saturday, December 23. The tree lot is located at 10103 Georgia Ave, Silver Spring and will be open on Thursdays and Fridays from 5:00-9:00 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. Sales will continue until the trees run out!

OPT

St. John the Evangelist Parish
10103 Georgia Ave. Silver Spring, MD
301-681-7663

Rev. Joseph Calis, Pastor

St. John the Evangelist School
Shindana Crawford,
Principal
301-681-7656

Monica M. Bradford, OPT Editor
bradfordsm2@comcast.net

St. John the Evangelist



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PICNIC

Con't from page 18

OLOL Men's Ministry, manned the grill and organized the food and entertainment. The eighth-grade students pitched in by taking over the set-up and clean-up for the festivities. It was wonderful to see the many generations of parishioners and friends gather to celebrate and enjoy our thriving parish community.

OPT



ABOVE: Multiple generations gathered to enjoy the picnic. Photo credit Katie Crandlemire photos.



BELOW: Fr. James Morrison, the Parochial Vicar, enjoyed spending time with parishioners.



Pastor Father Rob Walsh addresses the school community at the start of the Living Rosary in October. Photo credit Katie Crandlemire photos

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AWARD

Con't from page 2

Meghan finds all the recipes, prayers, and the opening ice breaker. Typically, the group meets four times a year. Each session has a unique theme, with each session lasting for four weeks. Meghan also invites young adults from her neighborhood, from art classes she takes, really young adults from anywhere to join the group! The themes discussed include friendships in the Bible, gratitude, and the most recent session explored the lives of women in the Bible. The materials are adapted for people living with learning needs, but all are truly welcome in the kitchen.

In addition to Martha and Mary's Kitchen, Meghan has participated in the White Mass several times, read at the Papal Mass for Pope Francis, and is an active member of her home parish of St. Francis of Assisi in Derwood in so many ways. This includes serving as an acolyte, the youth choir, and so much more.

For more information on Martha and Mary's Kitchen, contact the Office of Deaf and Disabilities Ministry: specialneedsministry@adw.org 301-853-4560

OPT

TREE BLESSING

Con't from page 9

half hour on a sunny midday was deeply meaningful for all who were able to attend. One dedicated tree drew near to ten people to honor their loved one.

As donations were made for the trees, many moving stories were shared. Several dedications were in fact a collective effort to remember loved ones, teachers, Sisters of Charity, and priests.

All are invited to take time to pause and walk through the parish grounds to reflect and pray on the names on the plaques installed at each tree.

OPT



2024 Senior Services Guide

Victory Station planned for White Flint site

Affordable Senior Living Apartment Project

Montgomery County has selected Victory Housing, Inc. (VHI) as its development partner for an affordable housing project to be located on Chapman Avenue in North Bethesda. The project, to be named Victory Station, will occupy the portion of the property not utilized for the planned White Flint Fire Station. The site is one of the County-owned properties identified for the development of affordable housing.

This planned development, being designed by Grimm + Parker Architects, will be a 10-story affordable senior apartment community comprised of approximately 129,000 square feet with 104 one and two-bedroom apartments. The residents of this community will be 62 and older and have household incomes between 30% - 100% of area median income (AMI). Community features will boast a community room, a fitness center, a multipurpose room, a rooftop lounge for social programs and relaxing, and furnished patio areas with great views of the surrounding cityscape. Victory Housing corporate headquarters will be relocated to the new community.

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for
upcoming
events

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strong, resident-centered care plan. The moment someone decides to join Kensington Park, whether it be in Independent Living, Assisted Living or any of our three levels of Memory Care, we vow to make all residents feel right at home, just like family. **Call us today to learn more about our community.**

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Independent Living, Assisted Living & Three Levels of Memory Care



Health Care Decision Making for Maryland Catholics

Continual advances in medical technology bring many blessings but also pose complex ethical questions. While many of us avoid thinking about illness and death, they are a reality. It is wise take time now, before a crisis, to prayerfully consider your health care and end-of-life wishes with your Catholic faith in mind, to talk with family members, and to put your wishes in writing.

The Maryland Catholic Conference has made available a 12-page document – which can be downloaded at mdcatholic.org/health-directive – to encourage Catholics to take time to reflect now before facing a crisis. Then when illness and death inevitably come, we can face them with the comfort and peace of understanding our faith, and knowing our Church is there to embrace us in our hour of need.

This free resource covers three areas:

- Principles of Catholic teaching on end-of-life care
- Frequently asked questions
- Maryland Catholic Declaration for Health Care Decision Making, a customizable advance directive – consistent with our Catholic faith and reviewed for compliance with Maryland law – through which you can appoint a health care agent and express your wishes for spiritual support, medical care and treatment, pain-relieving medication and, should you be unable to take food or drink orally, medically assisted nutrition and hydration.

The Declaration has been prepared in light of the pastoral letter by the bishops serving Maryland, *Comfort and Consolation*, and in light of Maryland law, the Maryland Health



Principles of health care and end-of-life decision making, FAQs, and an advanced care directive that is Catholic, was developed in light of Maryland law, and can be used in Maryland

Care Decisions Act.

The Maryland Catholic Conference addresses issues that affect the inherent value and dignity of human life at all stages because, as Pope Francis has said, “All life has inestimable value; even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn, and the poor are masterpieces of God’s creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect.” Visit www.mdcatholic.org/issues/life/.

OPT

Villages – Age-in-Place Supported Communities

What is a Village?

The Village concept is a growing grassroots movement that aims to provide the support that older adults may require when choosing to age-in-place. The idea is simple: neighbors helping neighbors. Villages help older adults stay in their communities by helping to coordinate and deliver services and support within their communities.



Villages are membership-driven, grassroots organizations run by volunteers and paid staff to coordinate villagers’ access to affordable services, including transportation, health and wellness programs, home repairs, social and educational activities and trips.

Villages provide critical neighbor-to-neighbor connections to combat social isolation, improve mobility and access to services, and provide knowledge and support necessary to empower seniors and others to be healthy and secure. The Village Coordinator provides guidance, support and resources to support the creation and sustainability of villages in com-

munities across the County.

Montgomery County is committed to support local initiatives. Resources for active and developing villages are available at: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/ADS/Villages/resources.html

For a complete list of Villages in Montgomery County scan this QR Code:



OPT



The St. Francis International School community’s Honored Elders (grandparents, close friends or special connections) joined students for Thanksgiving Mass followed by the 1st Quarter Awards Ceremony. They were treated to a reception and then were able to spend time in their students’ classrooms.

Grandparents Day: Celebrating across Generations

Grandparents have always held a celebrated place in the Catholic Church. We recognize the importance of Saints Joachim and Anne, the parents of Mary and the grandparents of Jesus. Joachim and Anne played a similar role in the life of Jesus that our grandparents do today: serving as key instruments in passing on the faith from generation to generation. Grandparents help instruct grandchildren in learning their prayers, discovering the lives of the saints, discovering the joy of the sacraments, and often even serve as godparents or Confirmation sponsors.

For these reasons, many of our Catholic schools celebrate Grandparents Day, usually just before Thanksgiving break when out of town grandparents might be visiting. Grandparents are welcomed into classrooms, participate in art projects, and are entertained with musical performances by their grandchildren. Programming throughout the day is designed to create special memories to allow for quality time among family members.

Some Catholic schools, particularly those attached to Victory Housing communities, also use the Thanksgiving holiday as an opportunity to visit assisted living



Grandparents visit Lizzie in the third grade during Holy Redeemer’s celebration of Grandparents Day.

facilities to provide company and a smile to the residents. These moments create an opportunity for the older residents to share their wisdom and experience and for the young students to share their energy and enthusiasm.

We express our gratitude in a particular way during Thanksgiving and the presence of grandparents and special friends in our lives is one more reason to truly give thanks!

OPT



Our Lady of Mercy fourth graders delivered handmade fall decorations to residents of Byron House Assisted Living.

LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE

Ingleside at King Farm is a not-for-profit Life Plan Community offering independent living, assisted living, memory support, long-term care, rehabilitation, home care, and a social day program.



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The Continuum of Care

Selling the house and moving to a retirement community can create enough stress for the entire extended family. To have to then pick up and move to an assisted living facility when you need help with an ADL or two, and then move again to a nursing home when your clinical acuity level continues to increase is too much for many seniors to even contemplate. Enter the CCRC – Continuing Care Retirement Community. CCRCs offer the full range of senior housing options – independent living, assisted living, and skilled nursing – all on one campus or in one building.

Most CCRCs are at the upper end of the cost spectrum of retirement communities. Continuing Care Retirement Communities, also known as Life Care

Communities, offer a secure, stimulating and protected environment for seniors, with access to medical and nursing services, should the need arise. There are a range of contract agreements, terms, entrance fees and monthly service fees which are set by the individual CCRC and regulated by the Maryland Department of Aging.

For a complete list of licensed CCRCs in Montgomery County scan this QR Code:



OPT



Assisted Living Primer

How are you doing with your ADLs? The term “activities of daily living,” or ADLs, became widely used by gerontologists starting in the 1980s to refer to the basic tasks of everyday life, such as eating, bathing, dressing, toileting, and transferring (e.g. from a bed to a chair). Helping seniors with their ADLs is the purpose of assisted living.

When people are unable to perform these activities, in order to cope they need help, either from other human beings or mechanical devices or both. Although persons of all ages may have problems performing the ADLs, prevalence rates are much higher for the elderly than for the non-elderly. Measurement of the activities of daily living is critical because they have been found to be significant predictors of the use of paid home care, alternative living arrangements, nursing homes, physicians and hospital services.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s the assisted living industry – blending aspects of both the hospitality (hotel) and the healthcare industries – evolved to provide assistance with ADLs in private-pay, congregate-living settings. Sunrise Senior Living in McLean (Va.) was the industry pioneer and is one of the largest providers of assisted living in the United States with more than 400 communities in 37 states. In addition to help with ADLs and assistance with medication, most assisted living communities provide three meals a day in restaurant settings, leisure activity programs, and limited transportation services.

It’s important to know what assisted living is not. It is not skilled nursing, and it is not regulated by the Federal government. Residents of assisted living communities who develop needs beyond help with ADLs and medications – who need the constant care and supervision of healthcare professionals – may have to be discharged to nursing homes.

Maryland has developed a threetiered approach to licensing and regulating assisted living facilities. The major variable is the type and degree of assistance with medications that is authorized. Level I licensees (mostly smaller group home facilities) may only provide “assistance with taking medication or coordinating access to necessary medication and treatment.” Level II licensees are permitted to “administer necessary medication and treatment, including monitoring the effects of the medication and treatment by staff.” Level III licensee responsibilities may include “monitoring or arranging for monitoring of the effects

of complex medication and treatment regimens, ongoing therapeutic intervention or intensive supervision to manage chronic behaviors.”

In practice, this means that only Level III facilities are qualified to provide care for Alzheimer’s sufferers. Because assisted living communities frequently charge extra fees for their various services, comparing per diem rates can be misleading. Many facilities have cafeteria plans based on levels of service.

Each Assisted Living residence is required to complete a Uniform Disclosure Form describing its services and policies. Fee structures for assisted living vary, with some facilities charging a single fee based on the resident level of care while others provide an “a la carte” menu of services. It is important to understand what is included in the base monthly rate, what services require an additional charge, and circumstances under which fees may increase. The Uniform Disclosure Form includes fee information and is required to be filed with the Office of Health Care Quality as part of an application for licensure. The Uniform Disclosure Form must be made available upon request or be part of the Assisted Living marketing materials.

The Maryland Health Care Commission maintains an excellent web-based Consumer Guide to Long Term Care (<http://mhcc.maryland.gov/consumerinfo/longtermcare/>), which includes helpful facility Search and Compare features and links to several consumer checklists.

Assisted living facilities in Montgomery County with three or fewer residents and those with 18 or more are inspected every year. Facilities with more than three but fewer than 18 are inspected at least once every three years. Inspections (called ‘surveys’ in the health care industry) are performed by Montgomery County’s Public Health Services acting as agent for the state’s Office of Health Care Quality (OHCQ). The most recent survey will be made available to a prospective resident by facility’s administrator upon request.

For a complete list of licensed Level II and Level III Assisted Living Facilities in Montgomery County scan this QR Code:

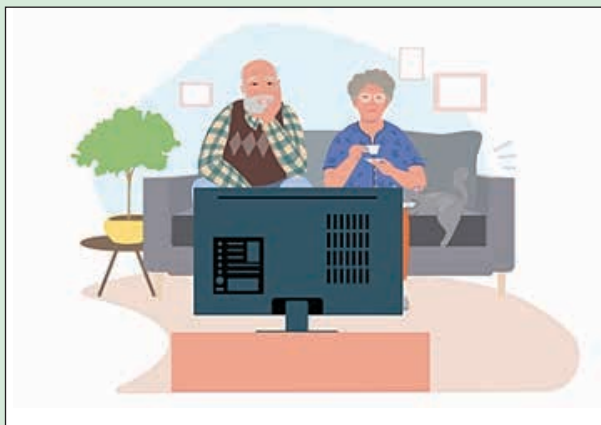


Strong association between being sedentary and dementia risk

Based on data from nearly 50,000 adults in the United Kingdom, National Institute on Aging-funded researchers have shown an association between dementia risk and daily sedentary behavior. Though the study cannot establish a causal link, it does support the idea that more time spent not moving – such as sitting while watching TV, working on a computer, or driving – may be a risk factor for dementia. The findings were published in JAMA.

A research team led by scientists at the University of Southern California and the University of Arizona looked at data from the UK Biobank. Focusing on adults 60 years and older who wore devices that measure movement, called accelerometers, the researchers used machine learning to predict what patterns of accelerometer data truly predicted sedentary behavior. They then used hospital and death registry data to determine which of these participants developed dementia in the following years.

Median duration of sedentary behavior was just over nine hours per day,



similar to results of studies on Americans. The analysis also indicated association between sedentary time and dementia risk. Most notably, the risk for dementia increased greatly for adults who were sedentary more than 10 hours a day.

Though this study did not test the role of physical activity and dementia risk, UK Biobank data has also been used to show a healthy lifestyle is associated with lower risk of dementia. These recent results support the need to study whether there is a causal link between sedentary time and dementia risk and what aspect of sedentary behavior increases that risk.

Source: National Institute on Aging

BRIGHTVIEW SENIOR LIVING

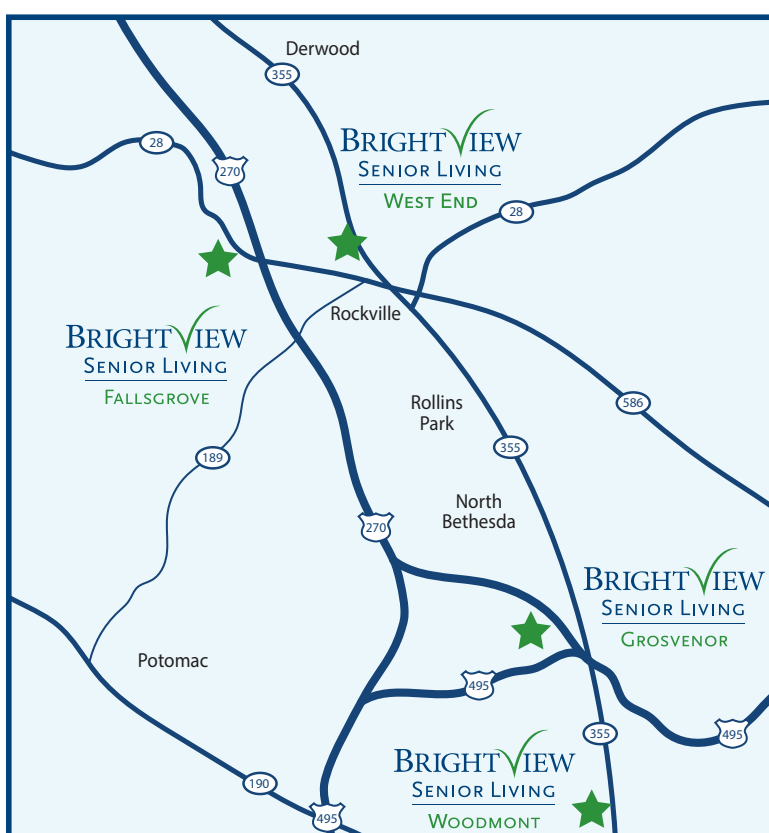
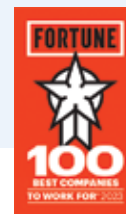
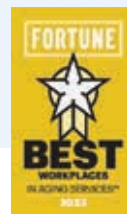
Choosing the right senior living community requires careful consideration. Knowing the top factors to consider is important.



U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT'S TOP 5 SENIOR LIVING CONSIDERATIONS

- 1 SAFETY**
Ask about 24/7 staffing and emergency response systems.
- 2 STAFF**
Visit the community to get a feel for the team.
- 3 VALUE**
Ask for a breakdown of what's covered in your monthly rent and compare it to your current monthly expenses.

- 4 DINING**
Ask about dining venues and menus, apartment kitchens, and, of course, daily happy hours!
- 5 SOCIAL LIFE**
Consult a community program calendar to ensure your interests are well represented.



Call today to schedule a visit at one of our 4 Montgomery County communities to learn more about the Brightview Senior Living difference.

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www.BrightviewSeniorLiving.com

Independent Living | Assisted Living | Enhanced Care | The Gallery | Dementia Care



Adult Day Service – Helping the Middle Hold

Commentators now refer to the ‘the sandwich generation’ – adults caught between the conflicting demands of raising their children and caring for their aging parents.

Elder care has replaced childcare as the number one dependent care need in the United States.

And the situation intensified dramatically when the members of the babyboom generation – 76 million Americans born between 1946 and 1965 – began to retire in droves in 2010. The boomers are living longer, and their children are having fewer children of their own.

What are the care options for a parent who is frail or impaired? As two-income families have become the norm, has the three-generation family in one household gone the way of the horse and buggy? Home care and assisted living are getting a lot of attention these days. What else is there?

Adult day care developed in the 1970s to provide frail adults an opportunity for socialization and recreation therapy in a safe and supportive environment during



the work week. It enables their primary caregivers to relax and go about their lives. Transportation is available to and from their homes for adult day participants.

There are now 21 licensed adult day centers in Montgomery County, up from 13 just a few years ago.

For a complete list of licensed Adult Day Care Centers in Montgomery County scan this QR Code:



OPT



Do you know someone who cannot get to Mass?

The Archdiocese of Washington produces a weekly Sunday TV Mass filmed in the Crypt Church of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. It is a wonderful ministry for those members of our Catholic family who are unable to be physically present with a local worshipping community for the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy.

The Mass airs every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. on WDCW-50

- Dish or Direct TV subscribers: Ch. 50; no cable.
- Comcast: Ch. 23 in Washington, DC and Montgomery County; Ch. 3 in Prince George's County and Southern Maryland
- RCN: Ch. 15
- Verizon: Ch. 3

The Sunday TV Mass is available to watch anytime on the National Shrine's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/marysshine

Celebrate! A Newsletter for Viewers and Friends of the Sunday TV Mass

Keep up with the latest news and information about the Sunday TV Mass through **Celebrate!**, the newsletter for viewers and friends.

Download the most recent issue at: <https://adw.org/parishes-masses/sunday-tv-mass/> or email communications@adw.org.



The 2024 Saint Joseph Sunday Missal is Available to order

This pocket-sized missal is a wonderful tool to help TV Mass viewers to understand the Mass and actively participate in it. The missal provides each Sunday's prayers, readings and responses so viewers can unite with the prayers of the priest and recite or sing their parts with understanding and devotion. It includes the Order of Mass in two colors and large type with the People's Parts in bold type for quick identification and an updated hymnal section with over 90 popular hymns, as well as many prayers.

Order your copy by calling Claudia Cheek at 301-853-4516 or cheekc@adw.org.

Suggested donation: \$7.00 per copy (includes shipping)

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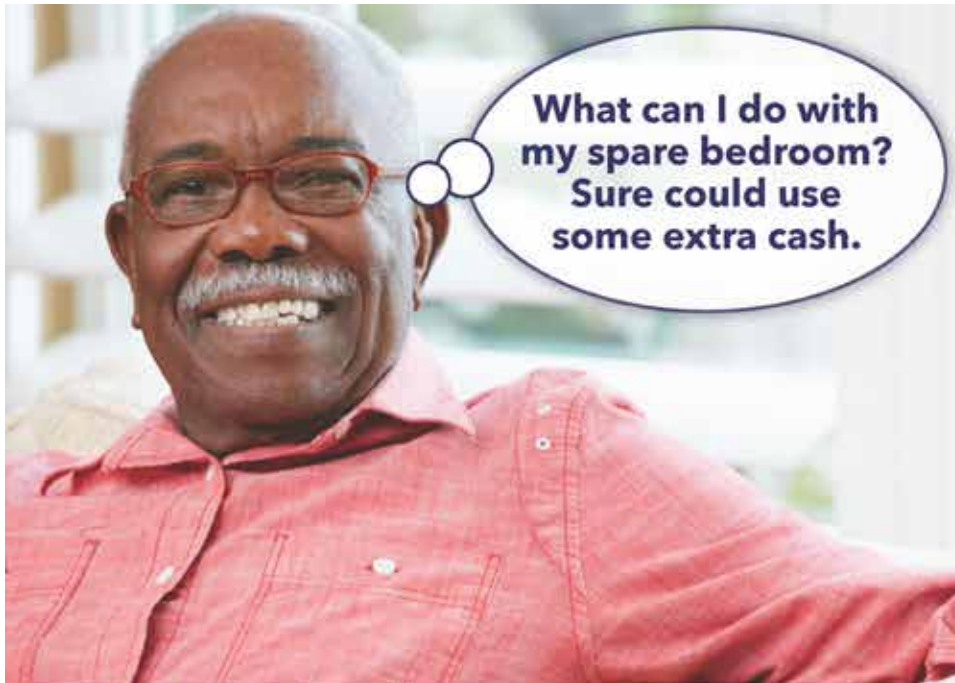
The Leggett Opens in Silver Spring New Affordable Senior Living Apartment Community

Located at 1315 Apple Avenue in Silver Spring, The Leggett is a 267-unit, 16-story, mixed-income, multi-use community. This newly constructed building offers one- and two-bedroom units for county residents aged 62 years and better, with 238 units set aside as designated affordable.

The Leggett combines affordable housing for seniors with direct access to public health amenities that work to create a sustainable and vibrant community. The Leggett will feature an integrated Holy Cross Hospital-affiliated wellness center with “Senior Source” programming, and an urgent care facility. Adjacent to The Leggett will be the new 133,000 sq. ft. South County Regional Recreation and Aquatic Center. The Center is part of a public-private partnership between HOC and Lee Development Group in the Central Business District of Silver Spring and will offer a state-of-the-art recreational facility with basketball courts, a public Olympic size pool, a therapy pool, spa, a gym, exercise and weight rooms, movement and dance studios, a culinary arts kitchen etc. An added bonus community amenity is the extension of the Capital Crescent Trail.



OPT



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HomeShare@HIPhomes.org

www.HIPhomes.org/Home-Sharing

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www.VictoryHousing.org

A Non-Profit Organization



Supporting Retired and Elderly Religious

For over 30 years, the Retirement Fund for Religious collection has been coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) to be held in U.S. Catholic dioceses in November and December.

Benefitting some 30,000 senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests, the Catholic bishops of the United States launched the Retirement Fund for Religious in 1988 to help address the profound lack of retirement funding among U.S. religious communities. The proceeds are distributed to eligible religious order communities to assist with retirement and healthcare expenses, and roughly 94% of the fund goes to aid elderly religious.

Of 517 communities providing data to the NRRO, only 36 are adequately funded for retirement. (See chart.) Historically, Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests—known collectively as women and men religious—received very little pay. Any surplus funds were reinvested in ministry and the education of younger members. As a result, hundreds of US religious communities lack



adequate retirement savings.

Like many Americans, religious communities face the monumental challenge of funding eldercare. Currently, the average annual cost of care for women and men religious past age 70 is nearly \$51,000 per person. Skilled care is roughly \$78,000. The total cost of care for senior women and men religious in the United States has exceeded \$1 billion annually for each of the last 14 years.

During the early and mid-twentieth centuries, the Catholic Church in the United States experienced a surge in vocations to religious life, with numbers peaking in the mid-1960s. Care for elderly members was provided largely by younger ones. Over time, however, the number of vocations decreased while lifespans increased. The result is far fewer younger members available to support the retirement and eldercare needs of

senior members. Currently, 70 percent of the religious communities providing data to the NRRO have a median age of 70 or older. (See chart.)

Historically, Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests—collectively known as women and men religious—engaged in ministry for little pay. Any surplus income was reinvested in their ministries, including Catholic schools and hospitals. As a result, today, hundreds of religious communities lack adequate retirement savings to care for the aging members of their communities. The demographics of most religious communities have shifted in recent years so that retired members outnumber younger ones.

Visit www.retiredreligious.org to learn more about who we help and why they need our help now.

Please give to the Retirement Fund for Religious appeal in your parish or send your donation to:

Retirement Fund for Religious
P.O. Box 96988
Washington, D.C. 20090-6988
www.retiredreligious.org

OPT

Senior Call Check Program

Maryland is the first state in the country to start a free, opt-in, telephonic service to check on Maryland's older residents, all across the state.

All Maryland seniors are urged to use the program as a resource. Senior Call Check phone lines are open M-F 8 am-5 pm and Saturday 9 am-3 pm. During these hours, seniors can call toll-free 1-866-50-CHECK (1-866-502-0560).

How Does It Work?

Every day a telephone call will be placed to a participant at a regularly scheduled time. These calls will take place between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. as close as possible to the one-hour time block pre-selected by the participant. If the participant does not answer their first call, they will be tried two more times. If those calls go unanswered, additional calls will be made to notify an alternative person who is selected by the participant during program enrollment. This could be an adult child, a neighbor, or another loved one. The alternate will then be encouraged to check on the older adult program participant. The failure of the participant and alternate to answer may result in a Welfare Check by local law enforcement.

Who Can Participate?

Any Maryland resident who is 65 years of

age or older who has a landline phone or cell phone (TTY is available). The participant and alternates should not have automated call blocking technology (or they should disable that phone feature for this program).

How to Apply?

Three options available to apply:

1. Online at: <https://aging.maryland.gov/Pages/senior-call-check-sign-up.aspx>
OR

2. Download, print, and mail in the Maryland Senior Call Check Paper Application.

Under RESOURCES, click on Paper Application at: <https://aging.maryland.gov/Pages/senior-call-check.aspx>
OR

3. Call toll-free (866)-502-0560 and ask to have a paper application mailed to your home.

When Do Calls Begin?

Daily calls will not begin until the applicant / participant receives a call to verify all of their information. Verification will include a successful test automated call to both the participant and alternate where applicable. After all information is validated, a Welcome Packet will be mailed to your home address. The welcome letter will include your start date

OPT



File of Life Program

Imagine that you are injured or suffer from a medical condition that temporarily renders you unconscious or unable to communicate effectively with paramedics. Without important information about your medical history, how will first responders be able to quickly assess and treat your condition?

The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service offers a free service entitled the File of Life program. The File of Life packet enables Montgomery County Fire and Rescue personnel to obtain a quick and accurate medical history when a patient or family member is unable to provide the information. The "File of Life" is a red, magnetic packet that contains important medical information about you. The "File of Life" also includes space to list contact information for your doctor, family members, insurance information and any other special circumstances that rescue per-

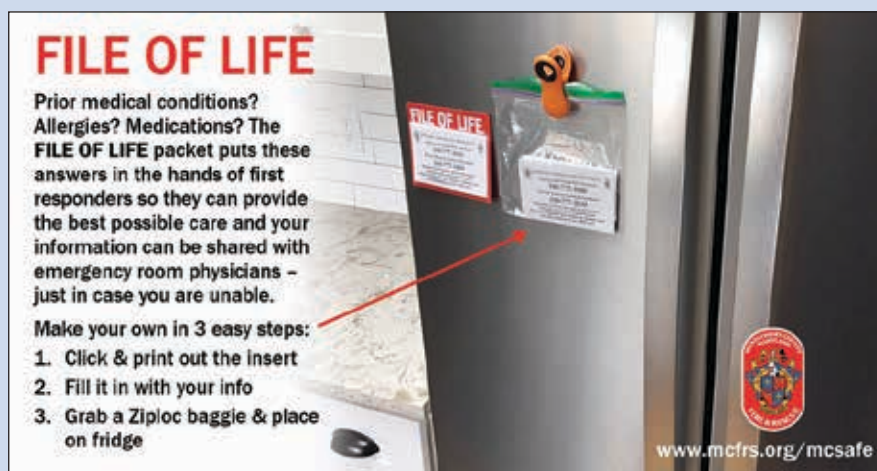
sonnel should know in caring for you. FREE File of Life packets are available to Montgomery County residents. Call 311 to request a File of Life packet be mailed to you.

DIY option! Visit www.mcfrs.org/mcsafe and print out a File of Life insert, fill it out and hang on your refrigerator. Since you cannot print out the red, magnetic pouch that holds it, consider putting it in a Ziploc/plastic bag. If you still would like one mailed out to you, contact 311 for assistance.

Who should fill one out a "File of Life"?

Senior adults. However, the File of Life is applicable for people of all ages, especially individuals with chronic or severe medical conditions and/or developmental disabilities.

OPT



Holy Cross Celebrates National Native American Heritage

On November 17, Holy Cross School hosted its annual assembly to celebrate National Native American Heritage Month. The event came together through the planning and coordination of faculty member Lori Kellam,



ABOVE: Robert Rose, a renowned Native American dancer, performs the Eagle Dance to a delighted audience.

LEFT: Ralph Zotigh sings a Zuni Pueblo song greeting the sunrise and thanking the creator for another day.

RIGHT: Another spectacular performance by Robert Rose of the Men's Fancy War Dance impressed everyone at the assembly.

whose relative, Dennis Zotigh, is a Cultural Specialist and a writer at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. Their family are members of the Kiowa, Santee Dakota, and Ohkay Owingeh tribes.

Denis Zotigh was accompanied by his father, Ralph Zotigh, and Robert Rose, a renowned dancer.

Mr. Zotigh opened the assembly by referencing a map depicting the prominence and distribution of tribes in North America. There are 720 tribes speaking 250 languages and dialects. This was followed by a beautiful song entitled "Zuni Sunrise Call," performed by Ralph Zotigh. The song was composed by a member of the Zuni Pueblo tribe who would climb to the top of the highest hill overlooking the pueblo every morning to greet the sunrise and thank the creator for another day.

Robert Rose's astonishing performances of several dances awed the audience. His full costume for the Eagle Dance was a hit; we learned that the eagle is believed to be a messenger between people and their creator. The Men's Fancy War Dance came next, originally choreographed by two young boys inspired by their horse. The grand finale was an intricate Hoop Dance.

Continued on page 33

A Feast at Holy Cross

Students in Pre-K 4, Kindergarten, and First Grade celebrated at their annual pre-Thanksgiving feast on November 20. Families contributed all the traditional fixings so that our youngest students could enjoy a delicious send-off before our Thanksgiving holiday. The event is a culmination of learning about the first recorded Thanksgiving in Plymouth, and how the Wampanoag and English settlers gathered together to give thanks after a bountiful harvest.

OPT



A young Holy Cross student exudes joy during the annual pre-Thanksgiving meal for PreK-4, Kindergarten, and First Grade, thanks to the generosity of school families who prepared and served all the traditional fare.

A Silent Mass and Rosary for Peace

The school Mass at Holy Cross on Friday, October 27, celebrated by Father Stephen Wyble, carried a special significance. We gathered to pray for peace in the Middle East. To emphasize the solemn nature of our prayer intention, the Mass was celebrated without song. Students and faculty entered the church silently and lifted voices with sincere petitions to end the suffering of all people suffering from the conflict. Following the Mass, Father Wyble led a schoolwide rosary, asking for the intercession of our Blessed Mother to bring peace and healing to the war-torn region.

"We teach our students that prayer is a great comfort, and that it can move mountains," offered Mrs. Kane. "We continue to pray for those suffering in Israel and Gaza, and for an end to the conflict. Every afternoon, the entire school community recites St. Francis Assisi's prayer for peace. It is a reminder that we can each bring hope, peace, and light into the world."

OPT

Holy Cross Welcomes Grandparents and Special Friends

The excitement was palpable as faculty and students of Holy Cross welcomed nearly three-hundred grandparents and friends for a special event on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving! This beloved annual event celebrated the distinctive bond these friends and family members have with the Holy Cross School children in their lives. Additionally, it gave the students the opportunity to showcase what they've been learning, share more about Holy

Cross school and collaborate with their loved ones in a meaningful way.

The day commenced with guests gathering with the entire student body and parish community in our beautiful church for the celebration of Mass. An all-star performance followed the conclusion of Mass, where guests were treated to the singing talents of each grade through a spirited concert. Grandparents and special friends then stopped by Lewis

Hall to fuel up with coffee and an assortment of refreshments before heading off to the classrooms. Fun and engaging activities such as family interviews and craft projects were abundant in each classroom for students to complete with their special friends and grandparents. Custom made photo frame props were circulated throughout the school to help capture amazing images of guests and their students.

Principal Kane summed up the successful event by stating, "There was so much love and joy to behold at this special event. What a blessing it was to have so many grandparents and special friends visit Holy Cross!"

OPT



Holy Cross students and their special visitors were in the frame and all smiles during our Grandparents' and Special Friends' Day on Tuesday, November 21.

Holy Cross Parish

4900 Strathmore Avenue,
Garrett Park, MD
301-942-1020

Holy Cross School

Lisa Maio Kane, Principal
301-949-0053

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



ABOVE: Religious Education students dressed as saints.

LEFT: Saint Philomena visits Father Steve, our Pastor.

All Saints Celebration

By Liz Weiss, Parishioner

At the English Mass on Sunday November 5, a number of "Saints" came to visit church. The English-speaking Religious Education students came dressed as various men and women recognized as

saints by the Church. The students learned about their saints and then presented that information to Father Steve. What a novel way of learning about All Saints Day! The parish family was enriched by the students' presentation.

OPT

VETERANS

Con't from page 1

This year, our third-grade class, led by Mrs. Lily Schellhase, recited the poem *In Flanders Field* by John McCrea. *Flanders Field* is a beautiful poem to honor the sacrifice of those who fought in World War I. Our eighth graders, led by Mr. Paul Davy, wowed our guests with a recitation of *Concord Hymn*, written by Ralph Waldo Emerson to remember the battles at Lexington and Concord during the Revolutionary War.

Every year, a guest speaker is invited to talk to the students about their personal service in the armed forces. This year did not disappoint with a heartfelt and inspiring speech given by an Air Force vet-



Mr. Marcolin, the middle school History teacher, and keynote speaker, with a parent veteran.

eran, our own middle school history teacher, Mr. Joseph Marcolin.

One of the most beautiful parts

of the ceremony was when the different branches of the armed forces were honored by their anthem. As each branch of the military's anthem is played, the members of that service stand to be recognized.

The Knights of Columbus retire the colors with reverence. A beautiful ending to the assembly is the handing out of gifts. Students from all grade levels made cards, paper poppies and other flowers, and other gifts. Our student council representatives made sure that each visitor had an armful of personalized gifts! We hope and pray that the students at Mother of God learn to appreciate, respect, and honor those who have put their lives at risk to safeguard our freedoms.

OPT

ADVENT

Con't from page 9

by Parochial Vicar Father Morgan, Youth Minister Mrs. Okim, and parents, listened to a presentation on their ministry, and overview of the homeless outreach and then went out to visit the homeless and offer coffee, hot chocolate, and prayer. The De Chantal Parish always finds joy in service, but they also use Advent time to reflect.

The St. Jane De Chantal parish's music programs superbly enhance the parishioners' Advent reflection with a beautiful music program. *Lessons and Carols* is a beloved tradition in the parish. On December 17 at 7:00 pm in the church, the De Chantal Adult choir, Children's choir, and various other parish music groups will elevate everyone's Christmas spirit with wonderful music. All are welcome. De Chantal also offered a Parish Penance service on December 5 at 7:00 pm. As music and confession help the parish prepare and reflect on Christ's coming, it also brings joy for all who wait for Him. St.



St. Nicholas gathers the De Chantal parish children to story time where they heard the story of St. Nicholas and the story of the miracle of the Poinsettia.

Jane De Chantal also spreads cheer during Advent.

De Chantal parish's children are always joyful during Christmastime and the rest of the parish can't help but join in on the fun. The second annual *Donuts with Santa* has quickly become a new favorite tradition for all parishioners young and old. On Sunday December 10, after 10:00 am Mass, the parish is invited to Caulfield Hall for donuts, coffee, hot chocolate, and St. Nicholas. Our parish Adult

Choir will sing Christmas Carols as everyone enjoys fellowship and donuts. The children can make a craft and will be greeted by St. Nicholas who will lead a story time while the children leave their shoes outside the Scanlon room where they may find a treat!

Advent is a time to gather together to wait for our King. All are welcome at St. Jane De Chantal Parish this Advent Season for reflection, service, and joy.

OPT

December Events at Christ the King

By Liz Weiss, Parishioner

Once again, December is a very busy month at Christ the King. On December 8, we celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception. On Sunday December 10, we will be having the Annual Christmas Bazaar from 10 am to 3 pm. Many vendors will come and share their unique gifts. This is a great way to support the Parish. On December 12, we will be celebrating Our Lady of Guadalupe. On December 17, the children of Christ the King will perform the Christmas play, *Signs of Christmas*, at 2:45 pm in the church. The play brings Old Testament prophecies and the Christmas story to life. Throughout the month, The Giving Tree will be in the vestibule of the church. Parishioners choose ornaments from the tree to provide gift cards for toys so that children can have a special day and grocery certificates to help needy families celebrate Christmas this year. During all four weeks of Advent, we prepare to receive Jesus. Finally on December 25, we celebrate the birth of Jesus. We have so much to celebrate as a parish community this month!

OPT



The Church looked special for the Feast of Christ the King

The Feast of Christ the King

By Liz Weiss, Parishioner

The Feast of Christ the King is the last Sunday of the Liturgical Year and is celebrated as the Parish Feast Day. On November 26, Masses were celebrated with special vestments and incense. The choir wore their gold sashes and gold banners were displayed in the Church. Father Steve wore a special vestment given to him for the Feast.

The Spanish Language Mass at 11:30 am also featured a special tribute to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The families from Paraguay celebrated in advance the Virgin of Caacupe Day, which is December 8. It is a tradition that has lasted for centuries. Each year, many pilgrims visit the small town in Central Paraguay to commemorate the anniversary of the Blessed Virgin appearing there. Here at Christ the King, young parishioners wore traditional dresses and brought a statue of the Virgin of Caacupe.

OPT



Two young parishioners with the statue of the Virgin of Caacupe of Paraguay

It pays to
advertise in
Our Parish Times

Christ the King
2301 Colston Drive
Silver Spring, MD
301-495-2306

Fr. Stephen J. Carter,
Pastor

Paul Lamoreaux,
OPT Editor

Race for Education Helps Support Families in Receiving Catholic Education

By Melissa Furman Sloan, Principal

Each October, Mother of God School transforms its expansive 18-acre campus into a racecourse for all students, families, staff, and friends of the school. Race for Education is the biggest fundraiser for the first half of the school year. All funds go to support the need-based financial assistance given to families to help make Catholic school accessible for fami-



The principal, Mrs. Sloan, awards lap winners to second graders.

lies who desire a Catholic education for their children. Students in Pre-Kindergarten, 3-year-olds, through eighth graders run the course for one hour each to compete for the



Seventh graders form a tunnel to encourage a Pre-Kindergarten student.

most laps run. Each lap is one-third of a mile. Many parents and friends take the day off from work to run with their children, decorate the campus, and cheer from the sidelines. This is the favorite event of so many families each year!

Students compete for the highest number of laps per class. An award is given to a boy and a girl in each grade.

Prizes are also awarded for the most money raised per grade, the most money raised per class, and more! Prizes range from pizza parties to gift cards or a week of out-of-uniform dress.

This year did not disappoint! Parents and teachers did an incredible job making signs and setting up tables and treats for each home-room. The day started with prayer and encouragement from the principal, Mrs. Sloan. Pre-Kindergarten students started the race with their upper-class buddies. The buddies ran one lap with Pre-K students. Each class runs for one hour. They spent the remainder of the morning cheering on older and younger students, resting, and using the rented bouncy castle. The cheering and building up of students is inspiring and beautiful to witness.

This year, a new element of competition and community was added



Even grandparents run the race! A grandmother runs with her Kindergarten grandson.

to the school House system. Mother of God School split students and staff into three houses: St. Gabriel House, St. Michael House, and St. Raphael House. Throughout the year, Houses compete in friendly competitions and events to gain points for their House. Race for Education is the kick-off event for the new year with Houses. This year, the school provided t-shirts for each House member. This helped to honor each House and also allowed for more cheering and excitement.

At the end of a long morning, everyone gathered together, excited and exhausted, to celebrate lap winners. This year, the whole school lap winners were two brothers, a

fourth and seventh grader, who ran eight miles in one hour! There were even several Pre-Kindergarten students who ran three whole miles in an hour! Over the following week, donations continued to come in, and money was counted and organized by class. \$38,723.28 was raised to support the need-based tuition assistance, making it possible for more families to afford a Catholic education at Mother of God School. The day is about raising money, but just as importantly, the students, staff, and families had fun, promoted health and exercise, built up the school community, and participated in healthy competition.

OPT

Middle School Students Gain Confidence Through Team Building

RIGHT: Middle school students enjoy their day of team building.

BELOW LEFT: Mother and seventh-grade daughter enjoy the adventurous day together.

BELOW RIGHT: A seventh grader begins his climb at Sandy Spring Adventure Park.



By Melissa Furman Sloan, Principal

Middle school can be a difficult time, but Mother of God School seeks to meet each student where they are and help them grow and flourish into the person God has created them to be. We do this through experiential learning, and one of the most treasured middle school experiences is the yearly team-building trip to Sandy Spring Adventure Park.

Students, teachers, and parent chaperones spend the day at the adventure park, where there are 15 separate trails of different levels. Participants travel up in the trees and bridges via zip lines, ropes, and platforms. Students are tested and grow in confidence and skills throughout the experience. Each year, it is such a gift to see middle school students trying new things, being brave, and encouraging and lifting each other up.

OPT



Mother of God School
20501 Goshen Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20879

Mr. Hall Miller,
School President

Mrs. Melissa Sloan
School Principal
301-990-2088
www.mogschool.com

Christmas Pageant Draws Angels, Boys Included

By John Cavanaugh-O'Keefe

“We have, for the first time ever, a boy angel!” announced Peggy Hall, who has run the annual Christmas pageant since Jesus was born again in Damascus.

If you can get one boy to be an angel, you might get more. And in fact, before the day was over, Mrs. Hall had indeed located another. Last year, he was a donkey, but he’s coming up fast. This young man may be on the St. Joseph track!

Being an angel is not automatic; it takes some training. For one thing, angels don’t flap their wings up and down, they go side to side, forward and back, in a graceful motion. Boys too. After all, football players practice moving gracefully, although they might keep it a secret. “Well,” queried the new recruit, “how do you know then?” Pressed, Mrs. Hall identified her confidential source: “My son told me. He plays football.”

The pageant faces recruiting challenges. There’s often a need for more kings and innkeepers and other participants who have lines, who need to recall someone else’s words under pressure, and pronounce them clearly – and audibly, even in the back of a large church. Joseph has to shout to be heard, but still be gentle to comfort Mary, who has to sound tired, but with enough energy that she sounds tired 100 feet away.

Peggy Hall has been recruiting, training, and orchestrating the pageant for years. The script was written by a great parish hero, Diane Kanne, now frail and home-



Peggy Hall teaches angels how to praise God when they need a little coaching.

bound but still radiating crinkly-eyed good humor. The underlying text, of course, was written by St. Luke, with some assistance from St. Matthew. In the spring, Mrs. Hall runs the Living Stations. If you haven’t been to either of these parish prayers, you are missing a treasure.

It’s hard to do a Christmas pageant without having serious truth sneak in at the edges. Where two or

more are gathered in my name, said, Jesus, there I am in their midst. And then, if Jesus comes in quietly, angels and saints will come quietly too, and fill the church joyfully. So even if you can’t see everything crisply or hear everything perfectly, it’s a show not to be missed.

The herald angels are coming, and there will be singing. So sit up and hark!

OPT

Serving the Parish, Serving the Poor

By John Cavanaugh-O'Keefe

On October 14, recalling the feast of Our Lady of Fatima, Catholics at 2,000 locations across the country took time to gather and pray the Rosary. At St. Paul’s, the Rosary rally was organized by Pat Stack, a long-time parishioner. She flees the lime-light; but knowing a little about her means understanding a little more about the parish.

Pat is pro-life. She has helped for years to distribute literature about corporations that support Planned Parenthood, with information about how to contact them to urge that

they take a pro-life stance, or at least a neutral stance. She coordinates the parish participation in the Gabriel Project, collecting various needed items, plus cash – bottles-full of cash, still being collected (ahem). This fall, the parish collected Christmas stockings – that’s big stockings, not tiny baby socks – full of baby items, placed in the Gabriel Crib in the narthex. The Gabriel Project supports women who are pregnant or postpartum up to three months after birth, along with their other children, who need help to stay clear of the lethal quick fix of abortion.

Pat and her husband Bob help out twice a week at the Lord’s Table Hot Meal Program, a soup kitchen at Epworth Methodist Church in Gaithersburg. Many local churches help out, and St. Paul has a team that prepares and serves meals regularly; Carol Dutil leads this service from the parish. There’s a second St. Paul’s team, led by Jen Wrona, who adds a service, bringing gift bags with toiletry items to give to

all guests. The bags are prepared by the Heritage Girls headed by Elizabeth Browning Elam.

Gaithersburg has changed over the years. It was a sleepy cow-town a few years ago; “diversity” in Gaithersburg used to mean that there were Angus cattle there, not just Hereford and Holstein. But now it’s among the most ethnically diverse cities in the nation – number one most diverse as some reckon it – meaning there are more Koreans and Latinos and Indians and others living among the Caucasian Methodists than in the past. So the soup kitchen often needs a translator. Enter Pat, Tuesdays and Fridays, kind and practical and fluent in Spanish.

Prayerful, pro-life, serving the poor including immigrants: that’s a glimpse of Pat. And the balance in her life – pray and then act, to help the most vulnerable including babies and the homeless and immigrants – matches the balance in the parish. So look quick, before she hides.

OPT

For Christmas, One New Pastor?

By John Cavanaugh-O'Keefe

At the beginning of Lent, Msgr. Edward Filardi took a leave of absence to deal with personal issues. There was no scandal, just a prudent decision to get some help. May all in need imitate his courage! But now, he has resigned and will be assigned elsewhere. So who’s the pastor?

First, Jesus said that if his sheep were abandoned by the hired shepherd, he himself would step in: we’re covered for everything that really matters. The Catholic Church in Japan was persecuted and apparently destroyed in 1620; but it survived underground – without clergy or even contact with other Catholics – for 245 years, until 1865.

Second, we have a wonderful archbishop, Cardinal Wilton Gregory, who has said Mass here and played golf with us to raise money for the clinic in Honduras. When Msgr. Filardi came here, the Cardinal introduced him, saying he was sending us the best. (We agree.) The Cardinal will not overlook us.

Third, indeed the Cardinal has not overlooked us. He sent ten exemplary priests out here, on a temporary basis. Ten! And they were inspiring – all of them, 10 for 10.

Fourth, the administration of the parish has been in the capable hands of Fr. Lee Fangmeyer, pastor of Mother Seton parish next

door. He radiates competence and preaches with clarity and charity.

Fifth, many daily decisions of the parish were in the hands of the parish secretary, Meghan McFarland, who was shoved into a leadership role – which she handled with grace and efficiency. She is quick to point out that the whole staff in the rectory is generous, knowledgeable, and committed to the parish.

Sixth, the parish is knit together by a long history of a long list of lay initiatives. The driving force when the parish was founded was the laity here – about 60 families. Some of those families are still here, including our much beloved Virginia Rhodes (age 102) and her son Michael. There are several prayer groups and Bible studies, a complex religious education program with hundreds of participants, a score of service groups, plus innumerable durable friendships.

Seventh, Father James Oberle is committed to staying here until we get a new pastor. He is adamant that he will return to retirement and teaching. But if we don’t get a pastor for a few years, and he’s stuck with us, that would be brilliant! Maybe we should visit the archdiocesan offices and gum up the works.

We’re okay. In fact, we’re blessed, extravagantly.

Still, we mutter a bit: who’s the pastor? We’ll take good care of him, honest.

OPT



Our Program Manager, Diosmary, teaches an excellent makeup class for the moms and their daughters as a way to help them feel more confident and beautiful, which has a positive impact on their mental health and self-esteem.

CENTRO TEPEYAC

Con’t from page 4

support of the Church of the Little flower for hosting the baby bottle campaign to support the mothers and children at Centro Tepeyac! Phone number: 301-587-9516 For Off-Hour Assistance, Call 1(800) 395- HELP.



Our volunteers having fun at the Harvest Bingo Night at Holy Cross Catholic Church.

Contact: office@ctepeyac.org or Juliekilmer@ctepeyac.org Centro Tepeyac is located at 12247 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20902.

Office hours are Monday through Friday from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm.

For more information, visit www.centrotepeyac.org

You can also offer material assistance by shopping our Amazon Baby registry (listed as Centro Tepeyac Silver Spring) to send donations right to our center.

Centro Tepeyac, most importantly asks for your prayers. We entrust our work to Our Lady of Guadalupe to protect the mothers who cry out for support and for their children. Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!

OPT

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

John Cavanaugh-O'Keefe
OPT Editor
cavanaughokeefe@gmail.com

The Power of Speaking in the Target Language

By: Rina Bados, Spanish Teacher

The ability to speak and be understood in a language that is different from our native tongue might be the most difficult task of learning a world language. It takes time, effort and opportunities for exposure and engagement through verbal expression.

How many of you learned a world language perhaps in middle school, high school or college and can honestly say that you understand what others are saying, or perhaps understand what you read from a text, but have a hard time speaking the language?

I have a tip for you! Don't worry about speaking perfectly. Most people will appreciate that you are making the effort trying to communicate.

Speak!, speak!, speak!

Take every opportunity to speak in the world language that you are interested in



6th graders having a one-on-one conversational skit about their classes. The students naturally improve their fluency, punctuation, and pronunciation through practice.



At the beginning of each class, 3rd graders greet each other in Spanish.

learning or improving. Consistency and risk taking are key!

Why is it so important that our students are given input to engage in active speaking in the target language?

It is simple: It will boost their confidence as language learners! Some examples I use in class are shown in the pictures included in this article.

OPT

Opportunities for Mixed Age Learning

By: Megan Mullally, Grade 5 and 6 Science Teacher

Starting in Montessori, students have a variety of opportunities for mixed age learning at The Woods. Once students go to first grade, they are in age based classrooms. Knowing the benefits of interactions with kids at different age levels, we continue to provide opportunities for students to learn, socialize, and bond with each other across the grades.



Students at the Woods Academy conducted an experiment during a mixed-aged activity.

LEARNING

For National STEM Day, fifth and sixth graders invited Lower School students to join in their science classes. The fifth graders showcased their robotics skills and worked

with first and second graders to complete "Penny Drop". This experiment involved students completing steps of the scientific method, including forming a hypothesis, testing their hypothesis, and collecting data.

Finally, the class analyzed the data and determined what liquid - water, dish soap, or corn syrup - pennies could hold the most of before spilling over. In sixth grade, students explained some of their recent experiments related to simple machines to the visiting third and fourth graders. Then the Upper and Lower School students collaborated on creating a catapult to launch "snowballs" using the engineering design process. The groups drew their designs,



Woods Academy students play chess together during this popular after school program.

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Montessori student working on a pumpkin activity.

Holidays in a Montessori Classroom

By: Andrea Webber, Montessori II Teacher

All ushers in the season of parties and festivals celebrating many holidays.

We kick it all off with Halloween in October, then tumble into Thanksgiving, and sprint headfirst towards Christmas and other winter holiday celebrations. If you peek inside a Montessori classroom at Woods, you will see students exploring the holidays through the lens of geography, math, science, and cultural studies (and having a ton of fun too!) In this way, Montessori holidays are a truly immersive experience.

In a Montessori classroom, the study

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More The Woods Academy News on Page 39

THE WOODS
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OPEN HOUSE

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STEAM
SHOWCASE

January 21
12pm - 2pm

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ABOVE: Albert and Christine Stefanelli visited the many Miracles of the Eucharist created by Blessed Carlo Acutis.

RIGHT: Liam Slonski and his mother Laura slowly read and visited the stories sharing the Eucharistic Miracles.



LEFT: Father Kevin invited parishioners to bring their animals, big and small, to the Blessing of the Animals.

BELOW: Grand Knight Tom McCartin, with other members of the Knights, provided a wonderful Halloween Dance for Special Olympians.



BELOW: Brenda Murtha invited others to participate in the Girl Scouts and Religious Medal preparation.



ABOVE: Children lead the congregation in song at the Youth Sunday Mass.



ABOVE: Diane Yendrey reached out to musicians and vocalists to join the Music Liturgy.

RIGHT: Msgr. John Macfarlane presided over the Rite of Commitment for some of our Confirmation candidates.



ABOVE: Father Kevin with several of our Confirmation candidates for the Rite of Commitment.



Fall Happenings at St. Mary's

The beauty of the grounds at St. Mary's in the fall enhances the spiritual life of the faithful and provides a wonderful backdrop for all our outdoor functions. Father Kevin held the Blessing of the Animals out on the grounds and visited a farm to bless the cows who could not make it to the event. Our Fall Festival for Haiti, supporting the needs of our twinning parish, St. Joseph in Carcass was a fun family

experience. We greeted visitors to the festivities who were excited to help with the needs of the Haitian Community, as well as enjoy wonderful food, music, prizes, raffles and fellowship.

Our Lady of Fatima Knights of Columbus sponsors the Special Olympics Halloween Dance each year. Young adults with special needs don costumes and dance the night away.

The young people of the Parish continue to be provided with opportunities to participate fully in the Liturgy of the mass. The littlest ones join Children's Liturgy each Sunday. During Youth Sunday, musicians bring their trumpets and drums to play, Choristers support the congregation in song while some children stand in the Sanctuary leading songs with movement. The youth read the Word from Scripture

and perform the ushers' duties. Hopefully, welcoming and including the youth in liturgy will lay a strong foundation for their faith.

Our parish was blessed to host the display of Eucharistic Miracles by Blessed Carlo Acutis. The Sodality and Knights sponsored the weekend-long event. Many were in awe at the magnificent display and the many miracles they depicted.

OPT

LEARNING

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created their catapults, tested their builds, and made improvements.

In Upper School, sixth and seventh graders have the opportunity to join First Lego League Robotics teams. These groups build and code robots, as well as creating an innovative solution to a proposed problem. One of the FLL teams, The Bite Sized Bakers, is designing baking and cooking equipment that

is safer for children. As part of their project, these students interviewed Ms. Roome, Mrs. Levin, and their Montessori OWL chefs. The sixth graders were able to spend time with the young chefs, get ideas for their innovation project, and enjoy tasty Rice Krispie treats!

SOCIALIZING

Break, recess, and after school activities not only provide an outlet for energy, but they also encourage socialization among students of various ages. It is not uncommon

to see a fifth grader playing basketball with some 8th graders out at break, a fourth grader teaching a first grader how to play chess, or seventh and eighth graders tossing a ball with Lower School students during flag football.

BONDING

For International Day of the Girl, all of the girls in grades 1-8 created personalized HerSHEy's candy bar wrappers to celebrate their positive character traits and learn more about each other.

One hallmark at The Woods is prayer partners. Every Upper School student is paired with a Lower School student, and they meet monthly for activities ranging from reading buddies or letter writing to kickball or nature walks.

BENEFITS

All of these opportunities are immensely beneficial to kids. During these exchanges, our younger students are fortunate enough to be surrounded by helpful peer mentors. Children often learn best from

one another, and they naturally seek each other out. Additionally, the younger students watch as the older kids enjoy advanced, challenging work, and this inspires them. They look forward to doing those activities when they get older. In these situations, our older students have the opportunity to serve as mentors and to take leadership roles. They are afforded the chance to practice patience, compassion, and connection. For everyone involved, these opportunities are filled with smiles, laughter, and fun!

OPT

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Parish Traditions New and Old

Traditions both new and old were part of parish life from October to December: the Pet Blessing, Newcomer's Dinner, and Craft Shoppe are just a sampling.

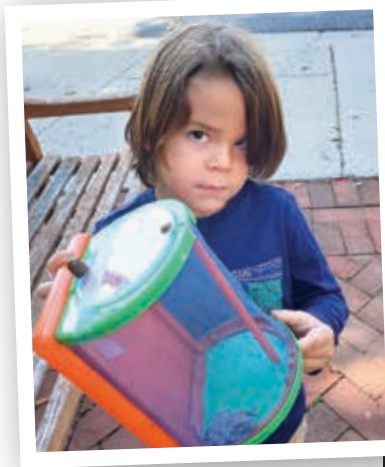
The Pet Blessing tradition began at the parish nine years ago and is celebrated in honor of St Francis of Assisi's feast day. On Sunday, October 1, families



ABOVE: Tom and Cathleen Royals with their family enjoy the Newcomers' Dinner.

LEFT: Leon Schmitz shows his frog before being sprinkled with holy water.

BELOW: Connor DaSilva, Stephanie DaSilva, Stephanie Moreno, Zara and Eileen share a laugh during the pizza dinner.



were invited to bring their favorite pets, which ranged from traditional dogs and cats to the more exotic. This year included a pet frog. After gathering in the lower parking lot, Father Greg prayed over the animals then sprinkled them and their owners with holy water.

The Newcomers Dinner was the idea of Mary and Tony Antonelli, new parishioners since 2022. They offered to invite members new to the parish to their home for dinner. Fr. Greg was totally on board and fully supported the effort, but they had no idea just how much the parish had grown since Fr. Greg's pastoral leadership began in the summer of 2021. After sending out close to 200 invitations, the event gathered over 75 new parishioners. After participating in Holy Mass on Saturday, October 2, the attendees moved downstairs to Founder's Hall to meet each other and share fellowship over dinner. Recent new parishioner Keith Bonardi volunteered to pick up the preordered pizza from Mamma Lucia's and then man the fire pit. Outside games,



Perfectly behaved at the Pet Blessing.

including corn hole and soccer, were a hit with children and parents alike. The high winds on the evening extinguished neither the enthusiasm nor the bonfire. Marshmallows were roasted and

enjoyed with the S'more fixings. Mary Antonelli said, "It was a total team effort including Diana Hurley on the computer, Tony Glander, parish facilities, and

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Youth group participants gather the materials for the Blessing Bags

Teens Turn Out for Service, Faith and Fun

Where can you find 10-15 teens hanging out each week? At the OLVP High School Youth Group. This co-ed group loves to have fun, eat dinner, and experience their Catholic faith in a real and personal way.

In 2021, Father Greg began a casual Youth Group for the parish. Camaraderie was built with drop-in volleyball games and pizza dinners. The next year, he invited attendees Caroline Serenyi and Maggie McNulty to help him grow the program. They started planning activities that would focus on a threefold rotation between service, faith, and community. The 2023 Fall season kicked off on Sunday, September 3 with a party and games at the Rectory. The now weekly get-togethers begin with Sunday 5:00 pm Mass. Generally, the group then heads down to Founder's Hall for dinner from a rotation of crowd favorite restaurants, for example Shake Shack, or Cugini's pizza. Caroline and Maggie then help Fr. Greg lead the main focus of the meeting.

Community:

Fun games like the Spooky Saints Tournament bring lots of laughter and light hearted competition. Played the week of Halloween, this community building activity split the attendees into teams then used a sports tournament style grid with head-to-head match-ups of saints. Votes were based on comparing details from the saints' amazing lives that were on notecards for each team to select. The winner that week? St. Jerzy Popieluszko!

Service:

A favorite service project for the group is "Blessing Bags". These bags are put together for homeless people. The bags include water bottles, hand warmers, socks, a list of local resources and a prayer. The Youth Group makes the bags available to the parish following Sunday Masses so that parishioners can distribute the bags to homeless persons all around the area. A plan to perhaps partner with some parish families or ministry would allow

them to grow this program even more into the next year.

Faith Based:

A powerful experience the Youth Group enjoys is when they go into the church for Adoration. They have time with the True Presence in the Blessed Sacrament to draw closer to Him. The experience is enhanced by members sharing their musical gifts, for example, junior Walter Dommers will play his guitar or Stella Humphries will play the piano. During Adoration, Fr. Greg is available for Confessions. This unique opportunity draws each of the teens closer to their faith in a truly personal way.

The Youth Group thanks their awesome adult helpers Mary Sonkin and Tom Moschella. They



Blessing Bags service project is all hands on.

are always ready to help in any way. As Caroline Serenyi states, OLVP Youth Group is "a really welcoming community. I've had a really positive experience with it and we are always excited when new people join the group."

Find out more on their Instagram account: olvpyg

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Retreat Provides a Road to Freedom

Our Lady of the Visitation hosted an in-house retreat on Saturday, October 28. The retreat drew 45 participants from around the community. The theme, "Road to Freedom", focused on how we can use the Cross of Christ to bring true freedom into our lives. Fr. Greg Shaffer provided meditations, which included "different aspects of freedom in Christ: freedom from sin, freedom through forgiveness, freedom to deal with reality, freedom to be ourselves, freedom to spread the Gospel, and

freedom to choose what is good." Using a highway driving analogy, he reflected on how we may often be driving in the "fast" lane of pride; or in the "slow" lane of false humility, whereas we find true freedom by staying in "our" lane when we follow God's will for us with fortitude.

Natalia Allende, who serves with the OLVP Healing Ministry, presented a reflection on forgiveness. The act of forgiving God and others gives us a change of heart, converting painful memories to ones of

peace. Participants were encouraged to make personal forgiveness statements regarding concrete situations and persons in their lives. Barb Moschella, who attended the retreat stated, "It was very helpful for our spiritual growth. I had a profound experience."

The full day retreat from 9:00 am-3:00 pm also included Mass, breakfast, adoration, silent reflection, confession, small group discussions, lunch, and stations of the cross.

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It was a special day for many of our students as they welcomed their grandparents and other special visitors.

Grandparents and Special Persons Day

Grandparents and Special Persons Day is one of our favorite days of the year! The joy, smiles, and excitement that fills our school on Grandparent's Day makes it something we look forward to every year. We started the day with breakfast and a special musical presentation, we then invited our Grandparents and Special Persons to see our students in action in the classroom. The day ended with a trip to the book fair. A wonderful time was had by all!

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Microscopes were used to better understand the rich ecosystem present in the Bay

BAY

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about life in the Chesapeake Bay. Students worked together at various

stations, which provided the opportunities for in-depth investigation. It was a great day exploring the estuary and surrounding wetland ecosystem!

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We are thankful for so many things this year! One tradition that lives on at St. E's is the Kindergarten Feast. Kindergarten students gather to give thanks and celebrate the start of the holiday season. Mr. Turkey makes a grand appearance to say 'hello' to his friends!

TRADITIONS

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John Hurley, supporting food service and cleanup." It was agreed that the Newcomers Dinner will soon become a regular parish tradition.

The Craft Shoppe has been a perennial parish favorite since 2007. This shop highlights hand-made craft items that are donated

so that all the proceeds from the Shoppe go to the parish annual Tree Sales fundraiser. Crafters, such as Patti Kelly, start early in the Fall and sometimes the summer, making their wares. Patti's reindeer spoons often sell out the first weekend of the Shoppe. Dettie Stack with her team of Anne Manners, Jean Jurgena, Betty Foley Cobb and Patti, not only create, gather and work the Craft shoppe, they also hand decorate the Christmas

Wreaths sold during the Tree Sales. Other crafters have shared their creations such as Kathy Kelly who donated beautiful polished glass tree ornaments and Colleen Kelly, Patti's daughter, who makes OLVP ornaments. The Shoppe is held in Founder's Hall the entire week of Tree Sales, December 1-10. Contact Dettie (301) 840-8049 to make craft donations.

OPT

OKTOBERFEST

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HealthCare Services Group, who works with dieticians in nursing and rehabilitation centers across the state of Maryland, said, "I like to see parishioners come together for any kind of celebration, this is truly a celebration in the Lord's eyes."

German-born parishioner Brigitta Mullican, who dressed in a traditional German dirndl, said she doubted one of the trivia answers; that roast chicken was consumed more than bratwurst at Oktoberfest in Germany. No matter, her table still won the trivia challenge with the most correct answers. In 1956, Mullican came to the U.S. from Germany as a child with her parents, and an older and younger brother; not one of them speaking English. They joined her father's sister, Aunt Barbara, who had married an American, in Georgia. In the U.S., the family added three more sisters, moved to North Carolina and then in 1965 to Rockville. As a senior at Richard Montgomery High School in 1968, Mullican became an American citizen. Mullican's favorite German dish is a special Christmas meal, Rouladen, made of red cabbage and dumplings.

Ines Kuperberg, a friend of Jonine and Dan Gannon, like Mullican is German-born and dressed in a traditional German dirndl for St. Mary's Oktoberfest. Kuperberg has been in the U.S. nearly 20 years and the Gannons have helped with her transition and hope to be a U.S. citizen. Kuperberg said, "I love how the parish comes together to share different heritages and share music, food, and dancing. The world needs more of this!"

Long-time St. Mary's parishio-



The Howards, Steven, Chisomo and baby Nova enjoy the St. Mary's Oktoberfest.



New Parish Council Chairman, Christopher Kelly holding Frank, with St. Mary's Pastor, Rev. Msgr. Robert Amey.



Cara Thomas graciously served each dining table from a generous buffet of breads and cheeses.

ner Walter Werner, born in 1934 in the western German town of Bietigheim, near the Enz River, came to the U.S. in 1951 after World War II. Asked about the authenticity of the food served at St. Mary's Oktoberfest, Werner replied, "I'm an American now. I've been in the U.S. longer than I lived in Germany." Werner leads

rosary prayers after the 12:10 pm daily Mass Monday through Friday and after the 9:00 am Saturday Mass.

Father James Glasgow said, "it was a wonderful evening, celebrating with parishioners and fostering a sense of community."

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Refugees' Story of Escape and Resettlement Illustrates Impact of Social Teaching on Global Solidarity

By Melissa Montealegre Egan

The Church's social teachings instruct Catholics that respecting the dignity of life, advocating for the common good, and practicing global solidarity should guide our daily interactions with one another. When an Afghan refugee couple shared their story November 8 of escaping their homeland and resettling in Montgomery County with the help of a multi-faith coalition, their testimony at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church drove home these moral lessons in a way listeners had not previously learned.

Sponsored by the New Neighbors Interfaith Alliance (NNIA), the event at St. Francis of Assisi Church drew about 125 people, some of whom don't typically fill the pews there on Sunday. Alongside the parishioners were members of Unitarian and Methodist churches, synagogues, and Muslim communities who belong to the NNIA's multi-faith coalition and fam-



From left to right, St. Francis parishioner Mary Kate Ryner, Saara, Mohammed, Father John Dillon, New Neighbors Interfaith Alliance volunteer Patti Johnson, Somaia, and St. Francis parishioner Christine King.

ily members of Mohammed and Somaia, who were the featured speakers.

Following a choral hymn by the parish's Choir and an opening prayer from pastor Father John

Dillon, parishioner Mary Kate Ryner opened the event by explaining NNIA's origins in 2019 to help refugees and asylees who have escaped persecution and armed conflict in their countries to resettle

in the United States.

"Our Gospel values led us to help these families create new lives for themselves and we are so grateful that you have shown some interest in joining us in this effort," said Ryner, who leads the alliance's education efforts. She was joined by parishioner Christine King, an NNIA steering committee member, who explained the group's efforts to provide housing, tutoring, transportation to medical appointments, and social opportunities for the 30 families NNIA helps in Montgomery County and beyond.

Mohammed and Somaia took turns telling their story, explaining how the couple both worked in professional jobs – he, a deputy director of the Afghan Department of Labor, and she, a nurse for Save the Children – whose family prospered in Afghanistan under the support of the United States and its coalition partners. Their fortunes fell with the rise of the Taliban. They left Afghanistan in August 2021 when

the Taliban took Kabul, seeking refuge in Iran and Brazil and enduring a dangerous trek through 10 countries in South and Central America before crossing the U.S. border.

It was shortly after arriving in Maryland, where Mohammed stepped off a bus and into a church – an act that connected him with NNIA and its resources. Today, he is working at improving his English, running a small business selling rugs made by his relatives in Afghanistan, and receiving help developing a business plan.

Sherry Nason serves on the NNIA steering committee with King and attended the "Sharing Our Story" event to support the families she has helped. A member of Temple Beth-Ami, she said the notion of "Tikkun Olam" in Judaism ("repair the world") propels her to welcome the stranger and stay involved.

"It's part of the fabric of being Jewish – to reach out to the less fortunate as part of the community," Nason said.

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Members of the pilgrimage to Medjugorje led by St. Francis Parochial Vicar Father Grzegorz Okulewicz joined other pilgrims in pausing to take a photo in Dubrovnik, a city in Croatia. The side trip to the picturesque city was tacked on to the group's trip to Medjugorje from October 12-20.

Pilgrimage to Medjugorje Brings Innate Peace, Connectedness to Eight Parishioners

By Melissa Montealegre Egan

Forty-two years after the Virgin Mary allegedly began appearing to six youth in the picturesque parish of Medjugorje in the region of Bosnia and Herzegovina, her purported presence and messages have drawn nearly 50 million pilgrims to this village between mountains. In October, eight St. Francis of Assisi parishioners embarked on this pilgrimage, returning with a peace and closeness that they say was forged in their shared experience.

From October 12-20, St. Francis Parochial Vicar Father Grzegorz Okulewicz co-led the pilgrimage of two dozen

people to Medjugorje, carrying some skepticism with him. While the Vatican-appointed Ruini Commission investigated Medjugorje from 2010 to 2014 as a site where supernatural events have occurred, Pope Francis has withheld comment on whether the Holy See has approved the visions.

"Medjugorje was connected in my mind where religious people go to get spiritually uplifted, which in my mind, seems disconnected from reality," Father Okulewicz said. "But that's not what I found."

The village, some 50 miles from the Adriatic Sea, has blossomed into a destination for the Catholic faithful that sounds root-

ed in many fruits of the Church. St. James Catholic Church, the spiritual center of Medjugorje, is the site of Masses celebrated in different languages from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, according to Father Okulewicz. Between 5:00-9:00 pm, local and visiting priests hear confessions on either side of the church. At 5:00 pm, two Rosaries are prayed, followed by more prayer during the timeframe when the visions allegedly occur daily for three of the original visionaries. At 6:00 pm, a Mass is celebrated in Croatian, followed by adoration of the Cross or exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

The primary messages of

Continued on page 38

Parish's Advent Traditions Inspire Others to Reflect upon Impact of Jesus' Incarnation, Birth

By Melissa Montealegre Egan

At St. Francis of Assisi Parish, longtime parishioners know the Advent season brings with it certain traditions they can look forward to like clockwork – the Spirit Tree Gift Project, the annual Christmas Tree Sale, and lighting of the Advent wreath candles, among them.

But the church's charitable outreach and liturgical services aren't offered for tradition's sake alone. Father John Dillon and the parish's faith formation leaders are hopeful both giving opportunities and seasonal devotions to our faith can help nurture a conversion to Jesus Christ during the Advent season.

"Our hope is that our hearts are more open to what Jesus has done through his Incarnation and birth," said Director of Social Concerns and Adult Faith Formation Tony Bosnick. "Anything we can do in our parish to help us understand that is good."

The suburban parish's calendar is full during the period before Advent and the liturgical season itself, with the Spirit Tree going up in the church's Gathering Space before Thanksgiving. Parishioners are invited to take a gift tag off the tree,



The Spirit Tree at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church is full of gift tags, waiting to be taken by parishioners wanting to donate gift cards to members of Assumption Parish in Washington, DC or refugees served by the New Neighbors Interfaith Alliance.

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Green Activities Going Strong at Saint Peter's



Students bike to school as part of Walk N' Roll Week

By Jane Bornhorst

Members of the Saint Peter's School Environmental Club and parent volunteers are working to encourage the school community to use environmentally friendly practices to keep our world clean.

To reduce the school's carbon footprint, Saint Peter's held "Walk N' Roll Week" from November 6-10. Students, faculty, and staff were encouraged to find creative ways to get to and from school, whether it be biking, walking, or carpooling to save car miles and excess emissions. This student-driven effort was led by parent volunteer Julie Zadecky.

"We hope the experience of walking or riding a bike to school will provide an opportunity for the students (and maybe their parents too) to enjoy some physical activity and fresh air before starting their day and have a nice wind down after school too. We'll be collecting information from families who participate to tally up how many miles we've saved and hope that the students will enjoy it enough to continue alternative commuting beyond this week," Zadecky says.

Under the direction of parent volunteer Margaret Giron, the club is also working to create a rain garden, which utilizes

rainfall to help plants grow and reduce soil and mulch runoff on the school grounds. The club measured roof runoff from the school downspout to help determine how big to make the rain garden.

Students in Mr. Tremblay's math classes used rain garden calculation tables provided by Montgomery County to calculate the drain rate, and fourth grade math classes calculated how much mulch volume was needed for the space. The environmental club selected plants, and Mrs. Caldeira's seventh-grade science class did a perc test, which analyzes the drainage capability of raw land for future development.

Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Laudato Si*, said climate change should be taken seriously, and that Catholics and everyone should do all they can to protect the Earth and environment. In late November, a speaker from the Office of Social Concerns will speak to Saint Peter's students about fulfilling this Catholic obligation.

"It's so much fun to see the excitement and enthusiasm that the kids have for planning and executing eco-friendly projects, not to mention the smiles on their faces at the completion of a successful project!" said Giron.

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Everyone arriving at St. Peter's by bicycle was all smiles!



Fourth graders dressed as Saints and prepared presentations for All Saints Day.

Hall of Saints

By Dora J. Gomes

Catholics around the world celebrate All Saints Day on November 1, remembering the work and lives of the saints, and praying to them for their intercession.

Each year, the fourth graders of Saint Peter's School celebrate All Saints Day by creating a Hall of Saints. Students appear as a saint of their choice and prepare presentations for their fellow schoolmates and family, about the lives of their chosen saint for this event.

"I am Saint Anthony, who was the one to hold baby Jesus and who can find lost things", said Anthony

whose birthday is on St. Anthony's feast day. Another student, Jack chose Saint John the Baptist, who "prepared the way for Jesus".

Students expressed many different reasons for choosing their saint. Sahana chose Joan of Arc for her bravery and was surprised to learn that she was put on trial for witchcraft. Lena chose Saint Kateri because she loved the environment and the poor. Instead, Maryline, who loves music, chose Saint Cecilia, as she is the patron saint of music and was a martyr.

Thaddeus and Camilla both chose Padre Pio, expressing the same enthusiasm to learn that Padre

Pio could be in two places at the same time.

There were also representations of Mary the Blessed Mother, Saint Joseph, Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Michael the Archangel, Saint Teresa of Calcutta, Saint Lucy, Saint Patrick, and many more.

The participants expressed it was fun creating costumes in the image of their saint and doing research that all led to the All Saints Day celebration, where they presented themselves to visitors in the Hall of Saints. This event is a great way to learn about the lives of the Saints that leads in strengthening the Catholic faith.

OPT

Game On! Coding Class Empowers Young Minds

By Erin Pant

This fall, Saint Peter's technology teacher, Mr. Stephen Szot, offered a new after-school video game coding class for students in grades 3 to 5. The eight-week class introduced fundamental coding concepts through the online block coding environment MakeCode Arcade.

Szot has previously taught a more advanced coding class to middle-school students and wanted to offer younger students the opportunity for a similar engaging, creative, and innovative learning experience.

"The only prerequisite was a love of learning something new, interest in video games and of course a desire to create their own games," said Szot.

Over the course of the class, nineteen students created digital games that could be played on personal handheld gaming devices that they took home with them at the completion of the class.

Along the way, the students were introduced to computer programming topics including variables, loops, conditional statements, and functions, and the basics of game design including sprites (objects on the screen you can interact with), game conditions (win and loss criteria), and navigating sprites along an X Y coordinate system.

"My favorite part of the video



Students enjoy a new after-school video game coding class.

game coding class was coding lots of games that were really fun, like Space Invaders and Baby Dinosaurs," said third-grader Ella Czyz.

After creating a game, the students were challenged to consider how each game could be enhanced to make them more or less complex, or to improve on the sound, graphics, and overall fun of the experience.

"The interaction, energy, and creativity of the students impacted me the most during this class," said Szot.

While the original lesson plan aimed to complete three games during the class, the students were so eager to learn they were able to

accomplish creating five games. "I enjoyed coding a lot of differ-

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St. Pope John Paul II, Pray for Us!

By Bozenna Buda, ED

Even before he became known as Pope John Paul II, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla visited the United States. His concern for the spiritual needs of the Polish diaspora in the Washington, DC, area prompted him to intercede on behalf of them in 1976. This resulted in the formation first of our mission and then, in 1983, of our parish of Our Lady Queen of Poland and St. Maksymilian Kolbe in Silver Spring, Maryland. Priests from the Society of Christ, an order established in 1932 by Cardinal August Hlond, the Primate of Poland, have been seeing to the pastoral care since its beginning. Fr. Jerzy Frydrych is the current pastor. In October, parishioners enjoyed



His Excellency, The Most Rev. Slawomir Oder, Bishop of Gliwice Diocese, Poland, and Pastor Fr. Jerzy Frydrych, S.Chr., celebrated Holy Mass at Our Lady Queen of Poland Parish, Silver Spring, MD, on October 15, 2023.



JP2 Pilgrimage 2023-Participants gathered at Our Lady Queen of Poland Parish, Silver Spring, MD, to check-in and hear final announcements from the Knights of Columbus. The pilgrims prayed and received blessings from Pastor Fr. Jerzy Frydrych, S.Chr., and Very Rev. Pawel Sass, V.F. (both on the left, near the church).

a visit from The Most Rev. Slawomir Oder, Bishop of Gliwice Diocese in Poland, who oversaw the cause of the canonization of St. John Paul II. Later that month, Our Lady Queen of Poland Parish was the starting point for "Walking with John Paul II – A Pilgrimage of Faith" for parishes, families, and faith groups. Along the route were water and snack stands, some of which were staffed by the Knights of Columbus St. Maximilian Kolbe Council 16634 from our parish. The Pilgrimage ended at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, DC.

On October 22, parishioners venerated the St. John Paul II relic in the church as they remembered his elevation to the papacy forty-five years ago and prayed for his continued intercession.

OPT

Christmas Program 2023

Note: Traditional Polish Christmas Wafer "Oplatek" is available after Mass on Sunday.

BOZE NARODZENIE, CHRISTMAS DAY, DECEMBER 25
 12:00 am Pasterka - Midnight Mass
 10:00 am Christmas Mass
 12:00 pm Christmas Mass

SAINT STEPHEN, DECEMBER 26
 7:30 pm Mass

THE HOLY FAMILY, DECEMBER 31
 10:00 am Mass
 12:00 pm Mass

NEW YEAR, JANUARY 1, 2024
 12:00 pm Mass

EPIPHANY, JANUARY 7
 10:00 am Mass
 12:00 am Mass

Remembering Our Roots: Celebrating Our Faith and Heritage

November 11 is remembered as Poland's Independence Day. After 123 years of being absent from the map of Europe because of partitioning by its neighbors, Poland again came into being as a sovereign state in 1918. On Sunday, November 12, Pastor Fr. Jerzy Frydrych, S.Chr., celebrated the commemorative Holy Mass requested by the Polish American Congress-Washington Metro Area Division (PAC-WMAD). In addition to parishioners and friends, representatives from the Embassy of the Republic of Poland were also present, as were, Knights of Columbus St. Maximilian Kolbe Council 16634, PAC-WMAD, Polish Scouting Organization-ZHP,

Polish School from Our Lady Queen of Poland Parish, Polish School from the Embassy of Poland, Polish Legion of American Veterans, and others.

The Embassy Polish Saturday School also celebrated Polish Independence Day 2023 with a dramatization of the historical events by the students. The presentation was attended by a very appreciative audience and was complete with Polish costumes, poetry, and traditions.

OPT



LEFT: Pictured with the students is Principal Katarzyna Zieleniewska and representatives from the Embassy of the Republic of Poland, Attache, and Polish Scouting Organization-ZHP.

BELOW: Students at the Parish Polish Saturday School, which is headed by Principal Ewa Chlebowska, dressed in Polish regional costumes as they recited poetry and prose about Polish Independence Day to an audience of family and friends.



LEFT: Fr. Jakub Waszkowiak, OFM, a scholar, lecturer, and guide to the Holy Land gave a very informative talk about it on November 19 after Holy Mass. He also joined Pastor Fr. Frydrych and the parishioners for a multi-generational pre-Thanksgiving dinner which was enjoyed by all.



ABOVE: Many groups were present to commemorate Poland's Independence Day on November 11.



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Authors Galore!

We have been blessed to have four authors speak to our students since the beginning of the school year. Ginnamarie Tennant spoke to Middle School students about her books on saints, *Louis and Zélie: the Holy Parents of Saint Thérèse* and *An American Little Flower: Blessed Miriam Teresa Demjanovich*. Carolyn Sloan, author of *Welcome to the Opera*, brought four opera singers and a pianist to talk about and read her book. Our friend and neighbor, Valerie Tripp, visited the second grade twice! The first visit was to discuss the writing process and to gather the students' ideas for a story that she planned to write about them and the characters in the reading program she wrote about in *The SuperKids*. She came back the next week to read the story she wrote. It was a BIG hit, especially each time a student heard their name read aloud! Ms. Tripp also spoke with our third-

grade class about historical fiction and gave each student a copy of her book, set in 1824 in New Mexico about a girl named Josefina titled *Second Chances: Josefina*. Finally, last but not least, Rachel Kolar came to speak about and read her Halloween book *Mother Ghost*. Beyond the learning in the classroom, these firsthand experiences of meeting and hearing from authors, our students are being motivated to become better readers and writers.

OPT

TOP LEFT: Author Carolyn Sloan with opera singers and students

RIGHT: Author Ginnamarie Tennant with her two published books



ABOVE: Author Valerie Tripp with second-grade students



LEFT: Author Rachel Kolar with her book *Mother Ghost*

A Busy Fall At St. Francis International School

We had the honor of Bishop Evelio Menjivar-Ayala celebrating a school Mass. He was kind enough to greet and shake the students' hands afterwards.

It was a blessed week celebrating the feast of our patron saint, Saint Francis of Assisi. The highlight was having the students meet and pet police horses after Mass.

A "Parenting in the Digital Age" workshop with Denise DeRosa was held to help our community understand social media and how best to manage our children's interactions with it.

Our families came together for our Fall Service Day. 100 S.O.M.E. (So Others Might Eat) Emergency Hygiene Kits (including items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, and soap) and 50 Shepherd's Table bags were assembled. Others helped clean up and beautify our campus and church grounds.

Four of our middle school students were inducted into the National Junior Honor Society. It was extra special because NJHS member Kelsie Markey played a beautiful piece on her violin.

Our successful Fall Book Fair was made possible by the help of many volunteers.



After weeks of participating in our afterschool program, Girls on the Run, a program designed to inspire girls of all abilities to recognize and embrace their inner strength and make meaningful connections with others, 18 of our girls participated in a 5K walk/run. Siblings, parents, teachers, alumni, and even our principal either joined them in the walk/run or came out to cheer our girls on!

OPT



TOP LEFT: Volunteers helping at our Fall Service Day.

TOP RIGHT: New members of SFIS National Junior Honor Society.

CENTER LEFT: Bishop Evelio Menjivar-Ayala shaking hands with one of many students after Mass.

CENTER RIGHT: Students petting police horses.

BOTTOM LEFT: Book Fair Volunteers

BOTTOM RIGHT: St. Francis International School Girls on the Run



St. Francis International School

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A Fun-Filled Fall at St. Raphael's Catholic School

By Catherine Pulse

Our St. Raphael School Community has come together for many exciting activities and events this fall. A team of enthusiastic and constant supporters created an event to remember, with our Annual Bill Finch Memorial Tournament, which took place on Friday, October 13, 2023. The creative team, including Angela and Mike Mussio, Shannon Grant, and John O'Brien, arranged a day that began with a new tradition in its second year, the Pickleball Tournament. Pairs of players battled for victory, leading up to the main event, the Golf Tournament. Parishioners, School Families,



ABOVE: The first ever Pickleball Tournament champions!

LEFT: The eighth grade showed off some Christmas style on Halloween.

RIGHT: Color cannons added to the excitement of our annual Angels on the Run



and generous sponsors participated, supporting our school community- coming together as "one" family in Christ.

October continued to be a busy month, as nursery school enjoyed their fall festival. This is an event involving a pumpkin patch, games, and treats being brought right to the school thanks to a team of joyful parents, coordinated by the nursery school board. The highlight is having each child pick out a small pumpkin and then smiling for the camera

with this new prize!

Kindergarten visited the Pumpkin Village at Leesburg Animal Park on their first field trip. Seeing the animals was very exciting as was the hayride.... and choosing a pumpkin as well!

Halloween parties took place before the school and nursery school parades on October 31. Students completed Halloween crafts, played Halloween games, and even had some spooky snacks in the classroom on Halloween morning. Principal Teri Dwyer, dressed as a referee, led her "team" of St. Raphael teachers, dressed as athletes, and began the day with traditional morning prayer. After the classroom excitement was over, parents, family, and friends lined the sidewalk to watch as each class paraded by, showing their creative costumes for all to see. Students dressed as minions, Disney characters, scary creatures, and even an invisible man. The eighth grade cre-

ated a Christmas themed procession, complete with Santa, the Grinch, a Snowman, presents, and many other themed characters. Students paraded to Raphael House to visit the residents, took class photos, and were dismissed in time to relax before trick-or-treating! The next morning, families returned for mass on All Saints Day, thanking the Lord for all His blessings and for all the sacrifices of the saints.

Traditions continue into November, as Angels on the Run, our annual fun run, mile run and 5K took place on Saturday, November 11. This year's theme was a color run... and it was full of blasts of color and loads of fun. Orange Theory helped kick off the festivities, with a fundraising class at their Park Potomac studio. Run participants could attend class and pick up their packet for race day at Orange Theory. Runners and families gathered early the next morning for color hair spray, crafts, energetic band music, and loads

of color powder! Color cannons released colors and volunteers tossed puffs of color powder as runners completed their run. It was a fun and spirited event; our community coming together to support the school and stand together as "one."

OPT



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HOLIDAYS

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of Halloween is not just goblins and ghouls, costumes, and candy. The class will also get a botany lesson on the parts of a pumpkin, from skin to pulp and stem to tendril. Students feel pumpkins, cut them open, investigate the parts, then are offered follow up lessons to cement learning. Some classes may measure pumpkins, their height, length, width, and weight. Perhaps they graph the dimensions of several pumpkins, turning their investigation into a math lesson. Throughout their study of the pumpkin, students use their five senses to explore this round, orange orb. They use their tactile sense to feel the texture of the skin, their visual sense to judge size, their auditory sense to listen to the squish of the pumpkin's pulp, their

olfactory and gustatory senses to smell and taste the pumpkin's seeds after roasting. In addition to our pumpkin studies, students learn about the historical origin of Halloween and how the holiday has evolved over time. We also examine Días de Muertos, the day of the dead festival, which is celebrated in Mexico. And, of course, we still celebrate Halloween the old-fashioned way – we sing spooky songs, learn scary poems, and parade in costume. Halloween affords us so many opportunities to explore, experience, and learn – taking the holiday far beyond simple tricks and treats.

When Thanksgiving comes, turkey and family dominate the traditional celebration of this very American holiday. However, in Montessori, we talk about what the United States looked like before the Pilgrims arrived. The students find it fascinating to discover the many

Indigenous tribes across our country. We look at Indigenous music, art, folktales, and food. In our art lessons we look at weaving, painting, and sculpting. We talk about native foods like corn, and we make butter. We listen to Native music, discuss the instruments made and used, and the purpose of the music in tribal ceremonies. We share Indigenous folktales and discuss why these folktales were important to their culture. Additionally, we discuss how modern America celebrates the holiday, and we host our very own Thanksgiving feast. We talk about what it means to be thankful and how we show our gratitude to others. In a Montessori classroom, Thanksgiving extends far beyond turkey, football, and Thanksgiving Day parades and focuses on both age-appropriate history lessons and modern-day customs.

After we recover from our

Thanksgiving meals, classroom banter turns to discussion of Santa, candy canes, and Christmas gifts. Our Montessori lessons focus on the historical and religious foundation of Christmas, Hanukkah, and other winter celebrations around the world. We might look at Kwanza, Los Posadas, St. Lucy's Day, Soyol, Three King's Day and more! There are so many traditions around the world which we seek to illuminate through story, art, music, and geography. In this way, our great big world becomes a little smaller and more relatable to your young student.

Maria Montessori believed that lessons should be non-linear, multi-sensorial, and multi-cultural. We feel fortunate to be able to give your children beautiful, deep, and whole lessons which we hope will enrich their view of the world around them.

OPT

HERITAGE

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Mr. Rose used a number of hoops to create a tree, a butterfly, a tornado, a flower, and other gifts of nature.

Members of the audience were invited to join Mr. Rose in a Round Dance to conclude the assembly. Students and faculty joined in while Mr. Zotigh accompanied beating a one-two cadence on the drum.

"We are so grateful to the Zotighs and Mr. Rose for spending time with us again this year, and for Mrs. Kellam for arranging the visit," Principal Mrs. Kane noted. "We all came away with a deepened understanding of the beauty and rich cultural heritage of the American Indian, but we also were reminded of our shared values of faith in our Creator."

OPT

It pays to advertise
in Our Parish Times

St. Patrick

St. Patrick's Sixth and Seventh Graders Attend Camp Calleva for a Day of Teamwork and Challenges!

The St. Patrick's sixth and seventh grade students spent a cool October day at Camp Calleva where they enjoyed a day full of fun among the trees. Working together in teams, students enjoyed several different activities where they had to problem solve tandem wall climbing, balancing on logs, and helping each other overcome fears. Watching as our students encouraged one another to complete tasks was a wonderful testament to this close-knit community.



OPT Groups of students participate in low-ropes activities to develop teamwork and problem-solving skills.



The sixth and seventh grade students gather to listen to a Calleva staff member.

St. Patrick's Sip and Shop-The Perfect Start to the Holiday Season!

St. Patrick's held our annual Sip and Shop on Thursday, November 9 to a huge crowd! Our gym was packed full of over 50 wonderful vendors with many different gift options to kick-off the holiday shopping season. With jewelry, art, décor, and personalized items, there was something for everyone.

Our annual Sip and Shop is a great way to support local small businesses while bringing our whole community out for a fun filled evening. From school and alumni families to parishioners, this event brings everyone together. Thank you to our event chairs Karen Boone and Christina Grantham who returned to chair this event for their third year in a row. We can't wait for next year!

OPT



ABOVE: Participants in this year's Sip n' Shop pose for a photo.

LEFT: This year's event drew a huge crowd!



St. Patrick's fourth grade in front of the Shrine.

Memorable fourth-grade trip to Emmitsburg

The fourth-grade class took their annual field trip to visit the National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and the Grotto at Mount St. Mary's in Emmitsburg. They got to see the first school Mother Seton started and visit the houses where she lived. They also had the opportunity to fill up their holy water bottles from the spring of water flowing at the Grotto. This is always a memorable field trip for our students.

OPT

SHRINE

Con't from page 11

and Ms. Karen Markham, the students enjoyed touring the Shrine and Basilica in small groups, led by parent chaperones. Mrs. Heyl remembers her own children enjoying this traditional field trip and Ms. Markham recalls making the pilgrimage herself as an HR third-grader. HR's parochial vicar, Father Kyle Vance, joined the students and offered Mass with them at the shrine.

Before leaving, the students shared their excitement at going someplace new with their classmates, their curiosity about what they would see, and their eagerness to visit the gift shop. After learning about the life of Mother Seton, participating in Mass, and praying as they made their pil-



Holy Redeemer third graders pause at St. Elizabeth's altar.

grimage through the grounds, the students were clearly impacted by their time in Emmitsburg. The top lesson learned by all, "She was the first American-born saint!" Declan reported that, "I first noticed how

big the church is. Then, I looked at the murals, each one made out of small tiles." The third-graders reflected on how they can try to be saints, like Elizabeth. Holly was touched by the sorrow in Elizabeth's life, "When she was little, her mother and sister passed away. Many sad things happened, but Elizabeth always stayed close to Jesus." Elizabeth's practice of writing in a prayer journal resonated with the children. "I can write down my prayers in a journal and put Jesus first," one young pilgrim shared. This third-grade field trip is an important tradition. The most-recent pilgrims endorse it as a great way to learn about an important saint and to get some good ideas on how to live like a saint.

OPT

Our Lady of Mercy



ABOVE: Mercy seventh graders "ham-burgered" it up at a local restaurant for a school fundraiser.



LEFT: Making stone soup is an annual tradition for Mercy's PreK 3 students.

Mother Seton

Mother Seton Parish 50th Anniversary

By Amy Tolan and Amy Massey

Mother Seton Parish will celebrate its 50th Anniversary in 2024, but the beginning of the celebratory year kicked-off with a weekend full of prayer and fellowship from October 6-8.

The weekend began with Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on Friday



ABOVE: Parish Picnic 2023

LEFT: The Intercultural Choir of Mother Seton Parish

opportunities to cover more material on the topic. Saturday evening, the parish welcomed Bishop Evelio Menjivar-Ayala, as he presided at both the English and Spanish Masses.

The weekend culminated with the annual Parish Picnic on Sunday afternoon at Black Hill Regional Park. A different area of the park from previous years was chosen for the picnic and everyone loved the new location. Typical picnic fare was served with delicious side dishes provided by the parishioners. Everyone enjoyed volleyball, face painting and the perfect fall weather.

This weekend was only the beginning of many wonderful events to come in the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Parish.

OPT



morning, which lasted throughout the night until Saturday morning. On Friday evening, the intercultural choir led a time of music and praise, with songs in English, Spanish, French and Igbo. Also, during this time on Friday, three parishioners were invited to share a witness. Long time Mother Seton parishioner, Joan Gerard, spoke of the history and working of the Holy Spirit in the parish over the many years she has attended. Additionally, two pilgrims from World Youth

Day shared their experiences and how their lives were impacted and changed by the opportunity to travel to Portugal.

On Saturday morning and afternoon, parishioners participated in a retreat titled, *Jesus and the Eucharist*. There were presentations, group discussions and the Sacrament of Reconciliation was available to all in attendance. The content was meaningful and those who came were asking for future

ROSARIES

Con't from page 10

culminating with a Special Mass at 7:00 pm commemorating the 30th Anniversary of Mother Seton's Sodality. All were also welcome to pray their Rosaries privately at home or in visits to church throughout each day of the week during our Rosary pledge drive.

We thank all who fulfilled their

Rosary pledge, including the priests of our parish. It was heart-warming to see the outstanding, generous response, throughout each day, of all the public and private rosaries and intentions, especially to bring each person, each family, our Church our Country and our world back to and closer to God, praying for the restoration of God's spiritual, physical, natural and moral order, living lives in obedience to God's holy commands, especially

the protection of the unborn and all life, traditional marriage, purity, God's creation of male and female, protection of our religious freedoms, renewal within our Church, the return of our Country back to One Nation under God and for our own holy personal intentions. We pray that many blessings may abound from this event, and we encourage all to continue to pray and trust in the power of praying the daily Rosary.

OPT

Sisters of the Holy Cross \$1 Million Gift to The Academy of the Holy Cross: Ensures Continued Commitment to 155-Year Mission

Kensington, Md. — The Academy of the Holy Cross is pleased to announce a \$1 million gift from the Sisters of the Holy Cross to support the #EmpoweredGirls Campaign. The Sisters of the Holy Cross are the sponsoring congregation of The Academy of the Holy Cross. The gift affirms the deep commitment the sisters have for the Academy's mission to educate the next generation of women leaders and ensures the success of the campaign, which includes the construction of a new

athletic and wellness center.

"As founders and continuing sponsors of The Academy of the Holy Cross, we share with them the sure hope that education can change lives and transform systems," said Sister M. Veronique (Wiedower), CSC, president of the Sisters of the Holy Cross. "We are excited to support the Academy as they continue to educate young women who will make a positive difference in the world."

The Sisters of the Holy Cross, as founders, have sponsored the

Academy since 1868. They also support the school through grants, including recent funding of the Academy's annual Chesapeake Bay trip with its *Laudato Si* relevant focus on sustainability and the environment.

"We are immensely grateful to the Sisters of the Holy Cross for recognizing in today's Academy the same commitment to courage, compassion and scholarship as when it first began, and for their generous donation that will

Continued on page 39



De Colores dancers from Mexico

7th Annual All Saints International Festival

By Brenda Rosado

On October 29, Mother Seton Parish had the opportunity to celebrate their Seventh Annual All Saints International Festival. There were representatives from 19 different countries who shared their faith, food, and culture, on a beautiful, sunny Sunday.

Around 250 parishioners attended the festival and celebrated their unity in Jesus Christ, coming together as one Church. Children and adults enjoyed walking around the room with their "passports," getting them stamped at each "country" while sampling food and learning a little about other cultures. The festival was blessed with performances from the MSP French Choir, De Colores Dance Team from Mexico, Maria Lucia from Nicaragua, Maricarmen from Peru and 5-year-old Naomi from India.

The All-Saints International Festival Committee wants to thank all who participated in the festival by sharing their faith,

food, cultures, and talents with us! Also, thank you to everyone who gave their time to help before, during and after the festival; Fr. Lee Fangmeyer, Art Padama, Sue Lea, Ruth Chavez, Carol Dickerson, Walter Montes and Miguel Romero, it could not have been done without you. Thank you also to Joey Echeandia for his slideshow of the participating countries and to Jeff Thorne for the beautiful photos he took.

The success of this festival was made possible by everyone coming together as One Family in Faith. It was such a beautiful afternoon to celebrate the rich diversity of our Parish.

OPT



Two of our participating countries, Nicaragua and El Salvador.



Performance by our Mother Seton Parish French Choir



Our Parish
Times Online



The procession in honor of the Solemn Novena to St. Jude Thaddeus made its way around the campus of the Shrine of St. Jude on Oct. 28. Photo by Tom Roach.

2023 Solemn Novena to St. Jude

By Nick Scholz, Deacon at the Shrine of St. Jude

The Solemn Novena to St. Jude Thaddeus began on October 20 and ended with a procession and Mass on the Feast of St. Jude on October 28, 2023. The Mass was followed by a reception.

The Novena Director for 2023 was Msgr. John Enzler, the former director of Catholic Charities and “pastor to the poor.” Msgr. Enzler spoke each night of the novena. His talks centered on the seven principles of Social Justice and how they pertain to each of us: Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Care for God’s

Creation; Rights and Responsibility; Call to Family, Community, and Participation; Solidarity; Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers; and Option for the Poor and Vulnerable.

Msgr. Enzler encouraged all of us, in imitation of Christ, to embrace the call to work for solutions that respect human dignity and foster solidarity in our daily lives.

The Novena consisted of Novena prayers, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, scripture readings, a talk, and veneration of the St. Jude relic.

Novena services are held every Tuesday night at 7 pm at the Shrine of St. Jude.

OPT



Thanksgiving meals, ready for distribution. Photo by Tom Roach.

St. Stephen's Food Pantry Thanksgiving Distribution

By Nick Scholz, Deacon at the Shrine of St. Jude

On the Saturday before Thanksgiving, the St. Stephen Food Pantry at the Shrine of St. Jude distribut-

ed food to over 265 families. The Thanksgiving distribution consisted of a bag of groceries containing stuffing mix, muffin mix, gravy, cranberries, applesauce and various spices. Along with these grocery items, clients were also given a 10- to 14-pound turkey and a box of vegetables and fruit.

Pantry Director Mike Goss said, “I am grateful for all the volunteers who helped make this distribution possible, and I feel blessed that our parish pantry ministry can assist those in need both in our parish and surrounding community.”

For more information about the St. Stephen Food Pantry at the Shrine of St. Jude, visit: <https://www.shrinesstjude.org/news/food-donations-needed>.

OPT

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Thank you, Deacon Nick, for 29 Years of Service!

Following the 5 pm Mass on October 28, parishioners were invited to a reception to mark the end of the Solemn Novena to St. Jude as well as to recognize Deacon Nick Scholz for his 29 years of service to the parish. Deacon Nick offered the following message for parishioners:

A little over 29 years ago, after my ordination Mass, I was handed a letter from then Cardinal Hickey that said I was assigned to my home parish, the Shrine of St. Jude, and I was thankful to get that assignment. I was never asked to move to another parish, and that can only mean one of two things—either I’m doing a fairly good job here or, other parishes just don’t want me and St. Jude got stuck with me forever!

Over these last almost 30 years, I have witnessed many changes in our parish. Numerous original parishioners have passed on or moved and children that I baptized in my early deacon years or that were part of the parish teen club that I moderated are now married and have children of their own. Many “young parents” that my wife and I knew through our children attending St. Jude School—and working Bingo—are now grandparents and even maybe great-grandparents.

The five pastors I have been privileged to work with have made many positive changes to our parish: creating the St. Jude outdoor shrine; remodeling the



The Shrine of St. Jude celebrated the retirement of Deacon Nick Scholz on October 28. Pictured left to right are Nick's grandson Isaac, Nick's daughter Melissa and her husband Phil, Nick's granddaughters Cori, Cali, and Molly, and Deacon Nick with his wife Kathy. Photo by Tom Roach

church, the school and the old convent; and creating new ministries. Over the years, they have enhanced our Masses and other devotions. Yes, there have been a lot of changes in our parish community.

Some things though haven’t changed—that is the faith, spirit and pride of the St. Jude parishioners, people like you! Your commitment to our Lord, your loyalty to our parish, to being the “Light of Christ on the Hill” has been and always will be an inspiration to me, and to so many others. I am humbled by your dedication. I have been privileged to be allowed to serve here as a deacon and blessed to be able to walk with you on your journeys of faith.

Being a deacon and the dia-

conal ministry takes support and understanding from family, and I’d like to acknowledge and thank my wife of 49 years, Kathy, my children, and my grandchildren for all their support and prayers over the years. Thank you all so much.

I have cherished the time I have served at this parish and am grateful for the spiritual growth and community that I have experienced while serving as a deacon. I pray that our parish will continue to thrive and grow, and I thank all of you for the opportunity to serve, to be part of your lives, and a part of this parish community.

Fr. Lee has agreed to let me stick around in my retirement, so I’m looking forward to the next 30 years!

OPT

Fifth and Sixth Graders Go on Outdoor Adventure

By Kat Balog, Assistant Principal, St. Jude Regional Catholic School

St. Jude Regional Catholic School fifth and sixth graders recently went to Calleva Adventure Course to work on team-building and self-confidence. Students worked together in groups to accomplish challenges like climbing trees 35 feet in the air, swinging from ropes, balance and agility, and problem solving. Everything took place on the beautiful Calleva campus in Dickerson, Md. Students were surrounded by nature and enjoyed the beautiful fall weather. It was so exciting to see the students conquering their fears and challenging themselves—all while having their classmates cheering for them.

OPT



SJRCS students enjoying their outdoor adventure!



73 students grades 6-8 presented their projects at the St. Jude Regional Catholic School 2023 Science Fair. Families, friends, and classmates learned about many aspects of science from the students’ presentations. Congratulations to all the young scientists. Photo by Rebecca Sella

Christmas & New Year's Mass at the Shrine of St. Jude

Sunday, December 24, 2023 (Christmas Eve)

Sunday Mass: 7:00am, 8:30am, 10:30am, 12:30pm (Spanish)
Christmas Mass: 4:30pm (Children's Mass), 6:30pm (Spanish), 9pm (Concert), 9:30pm (English)

Monday, December 25, 2023 (Christmas Day)

7:00am, 8:30am, 10:30am, 12:30pm (Spanish)

Sunday, December 31, 2023 (New Year's Eve)

7:00am, 8:30am, 10:30am, 12:30pm (Spanish), 5:00pm (English)

Monday, January 1, 2024 (New Year's Day)

10:00am (English), 12:00pm (Spanish)

More Shrine of St. Jude News on Page 39

St. Martin's Parish Advent Activities

Advent Parish Mission – On Monday, December 4 through Wednesday, December 6, Fr. Bill Garrott, O.P. will present the Advent mission on the theme “Christ-Lock: Identity Theft No More” in English at 6:30 pm in the church.

El Tabernáculo Abandonado– On Thursday, December 7, Author Vicky Schneider will present the life and spirituality of Bishop Manuel Gonzalez at 7:00 pm in the parish hall.

Walk with Mary – On Saturday, December 9, walk with parishioners on the Archdiocesan pilgrimage from the Shrine of the Sacred Heart to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate

Conception in D.C. where Mass will be celebrated at 2:00 pm.

Misa de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe – On Sunday, December 11, St. Martin's celebrates this feast day of the apparition of Our Lady to Saint Juan Diego with Mass at 9:00 pm and a reception afterwards in the parish hall.

Las Posadas – From Tuesday, December 12 to Tuesday, December 19, celebrate the Hispanic Christmas novena centered on Mary and Joseph asking for room at the inn with parishioners at the parish at 7:00 pm with prayer, song, food, and drink.

OPT



All Saint's Day

Fourth graders at St. Martin's School dress as their favorite saints at the school's mass for All Saints' Day. Photo courtesy of St. Martin's School.



Fifth graders at St. Martin's School enjoy the annual Halloween parade around the school playground. Photo courtesy of St. Martin's School.

To wrap up Hispanic Heritage Month, St. Martin's Pre-Kindergarteners and Middle Schoolers held their annual Sabor Latino. With the vision of Spanish teacher, Ms. Villars, and Pre-K teacher, Ms. Ro, our students were able to participate in a fun-filled celebration of Hispanic culture. There was a lot of food, a lot of dancing, and three very large piñatas! Photo courtesy of St. Martin's School.



CODING CLASS

Con't from page 30

ent games. The class made me want to continue learning to code” said fifth grader Alexander Czyz.

“I was surprised at the custom

soundtracks, unique colorful character designs, and code modifications they created. Not to mention debugging to identify and correct coding and structural errors that were introduced. After this class, I hope that the students continue to learn, create, and expand their inter-

est in coding while at home,” said Szot.

Based on the positive feedback, energy, and enthusiasm from students Szot hopes to offer this class again in the future.

OPT

Father Patrick Agustin Fosters Vocations Ministry

By Victoria Blanco, Eighth Grader

Have you received your calling for a religious vocation? Are you wondering how this might happen? Luckily, St. Martin's has formed a new ministry to focus on fostering vocations. Father Patrick Agustin, Parochial Vicar at St. Martin's, was able to share with us some information regarding the Vocations Ministry.

Being a priest was always an option for Father Patrick, and he received his calling about ten years ago. On November 4, 2013, Fr. Patrick went to his dear friend's ordination ceremony and felt that his calling was taking place then and there. Tears started coming and he heard God's voice telling him, “You are going to be my priest.” Ever since that calling, he went on to pursue a life of serving God.

St. Martin's is the first parish that he has served at, and it has exceeded Fr. Patrick's expectations. He fondly says that there is a lot of life, many opportunities, and great service in the community. Fr. Patrick believes that his most important accomplishment is feeling like a true father to the community. His continued goals include encourag-

ing prayer, supporting priesthood, and promoting more vocations.

Fr. Patrick wants more men and women to experience the love and service of religious vocations because he believes that God has created everyone with a purpose that will lead them to happiness in this life and in Heaven. That is the main reason why he created the Vocations Ministry. For those who are considering a religious vocation, his advice is, “do not be afraid,” for this could be the greatest adventure of their life!

Rosa Majano assists Fr. Patrick by leading the Vocations Ministry. A recent activity is passing a chalice to a different family every two weeks. While the chalice resides at the family's home, the family prays daily for vocations. There are also prayer groups for vocations daily after 9:00 am Mass for all to join. If you would like additional information, in the back of the church is a beautiful custom-made kiosk showcasing booklets, pamphlets, prayers, and other inspirational guides.

Please don't forget to pray for religious vocations and even consider one yourself!

OPT

St. Martin's Food Pantry Continues to Serve

By Victoria Blanco, Eighth Grader

St. Martin's food pantry has continued to serve the community for more than thirty years! Surprisingly, it began its operation out of a closet! Today, the pantry is operated from a building adjacent to the church. It is currently providing food for an average of 400 families per week, which is nearly twice as many families as last year. The two main reasons that the number of families coming to the pantry has increased are the rise in prices/inflation and immigrants that have not been earning enough money from their jobs.

Currently, the pantry needs about ten to twenty volunteers each week to prepare bags for families on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and then to distribute them on the following Mondays. Each bag that is given out contains one non-perishable item from these various food categories: canned soup, canned beans, canned vegetables, tuna/canned meat/fish, pasta sauce, canned fruit, mac & cheese, pasta mix, pasta, peanut butter and jelly, add-ins, meals-in-a-can, and cereal. The non-perishable items are usually donations from people, and the perishable items are usually donated by grocery stores such as Costco, Safeway, and Trader Joe's. The pantry opens on Monday mornings starting at 5:30 am and stays open until there are no more clients or food left (although it has never had to shut down because of the latter). Families are given their numbers at

5:30 am and the distribution begins at 7:00 am. The clients wait in a line to get a bag of non-perishables, bread, fruit, and vegetables. About 4-5 tons of non-perishable foods are needed each week to supply enough people. A fun fact about the pantry is that the oldest volunteer is 95 years old!

Chuck Smith, a member of the Pantry Board, has been working at the pantry for 25 years. His job at the church began at the Social Concerns office; he did that for one year. In 2000, he began supervising the pantry. He retired from that position in March 2021 and has been a part of the board until now. In all of his 25 years of working at the pantry, it has never had to close down. It would only close down only if there were a shortage of food.

Mr. Smith affectionately added, “The nicest thing is when someone who had been coming to get food, comes back to donate.”

OPT

St. Martin of Tours Parish

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Gaithersburg, MD

Fr. David G. Wells, Pastor
301-990-3203

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

Catherine Cooksey,
Parish Editor
240-477-8706
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Holy Redeemer

Holy Redeemer Students Celebrate Grandparents Day



ABOVE: Ariah enjoys time with her grandmother in PreK4C

RIGHT: Fifth-graders Peter and AJ share an activity with their grandparents



ABOVE: Grandparents are delighted to work with eighth-grader Clare
RIGHT: Nick welcomes his grandparents to PreK4B



Participants in this year's Turkey Bowl gather on the sidelines.

THANKS

Con't from page 5

ing the boxes to Sacred Heart in Columbia Heights.

Thanksgiving week at St. Bart's featured an all-school mass, followed by a specially catered Thanksgiving feast for all students

and teachers. Additionally, in what has become a yearly tradition, the eighth-grade class faced off against teachers, staff and unwitting parents for the annual Turkey Bowl on the school's upper field. The spirited game ended in an uncontroversial tie, as the entire school cheered from the sidelines.

OPT

St. Francis of Assisi

PILGRIMAGE

Con't from page 29

Medjugorje are distilled into five 'stones,' which are derived from the Blessed Mother's purported messages to the visionaries: a discipline of attending Mass daily, going to Confession monthly, fasting on bread and water on Wednesdays and Fridays, reading the Bible every day, and praying the Rosary in the morning, mid-afternoon, and evening. These practices are said to bring about personal conversion and revival.

St. Francis parishioner Isabel Seyed-Ali entered the pilgrimage with no expectations to be converted. However, she said she hoped to experience "a connection," which she deeply felt two days before the group returned home. During Eucharistic Adoration in the St. James chapel, she decided to pray the Stations of the Cross. "I was reflecting and praying for people in jail, for the elderly, for young adults and for the whole world. I was thinking of why the whole world was not here and receiving the Eucharist," Seyed-



Members of St. Francis of Assisi Parish rest on their way up to Apparition Hill, the site where the six visionaries claim they first saw the Blessed Mother appear near Medjugorje in June 1981. From left in the background, sitting, is parishioner Mario Alvarenga. In the foreground, second from left is parishioner Bea Weiss, second from right is parishioner Isabel Seyed-Ali, and far right is parishioner Lenny Baklarz.

Ali recounted.

"Through the mysteries, I was able to feel Jesus' pain. It brought me into unity with Jesus," she said. "After that, I had a spiritual energy of sorrow for three days."

Members of the group stayed in the pension of visionary Ivanka Ivankovich-Elez, who purportedly receives visions once a year on June 25, the anniversary of the Blessed Mother's first appearance in June 1981. Before they returned home, they gathered there to share with one another their experiences of the past week.

"The fact that each had their own moment where they were touched by grace proves to me the authenticity of the pilgrimage as a fruitful time," Father Okulewicz said.

Magdalena Pettey, who organized the trip and accompanied the group on her eleventh trip to the region, said the pilgrims feel both "a peace that surpasses human peace" and a connectedness with one other that feels like a family.

"Our Blessed Mother connects people," Pettey said. "That is the fruit of Medjugorje."

OPT



Brian Pettit, ministry coordinator for St. Francis of Assisi's Christmas Tree Sale, stands near the trees at the tree lot on November 24. The sale will run through December 10 or whenever supplies run out. The church is located at 6701 Muncaster Mill Road in Derwood, Md.

TRADITIONS

Con't from page 29

with each one listing the description of a person and gift cards from suggested stores. In the past, the cards had benefited parishioners at Assumption Parish in Washington DC, but recipients now also include refugee families served by the New Neighbors Interfaith Alliance, a multi-faith coalition welcoming refugees and asylees resettling in Montgomery County.

Other giving opportunities

include the sale of olivewood religious items sold by a Christian family from the Holy Land and the parish's Alternative Christmas gift program, which invites people to donate to charitable entities in amounts approaching the cost of certain services these groups provide. The annual Christmas Tree Sale takes place from November 25-December 10, with all proceeds benefiting the church.

The parish also offers several liturgical and sacramental opportunities during Advent, including a devotional small group using

resources from Living Compass. Individuals, couples, and families are also invited to light the Advent wreath candles in the church and attend an Advent penance service on December 11.

The parish's Religious Education Ministry offers its own giving opportunity for students through Catholic Charities' Christmas Stocking Help Line project. This year, the parish received the names of 44 children for whom \$50 gift cards were sought. Director of Religious Education Susan Anderson modified the request to

families, asking them to give \$25 gift cards, of which she hopes 88 will be collected.

"Christmas is a season for giving," Anderson said. "We're being mindful of thinking of others in their own time of need, and that, while it's a time of joy, it can also be a challenging time."

The opportunity to teach their children that others are available to help a person facing difficult circumstances enticed Adam and Kristen Kuszak to participate in the Christmas Stocking Help Line project. They plan to take their 11-year-

old daughter and 8-year-old son to Target, allow them to select a gift card, and perhaps enclose an anonymous note to the recipient family, Adam Kuszak said.

Both parents feel strongly about instilling in their children a sense that they are lucky and fortunate. With that good fortune comes a need to give back. "You should derive joy in doing something for others, even if you don't get something back," Kristen Kuszak said.

OPT

Shrine of St. Jude

SJRCS Seventh and Eighth Grade Students Witness the Bible Come to Life

By Lucy Young, SJRCS Grade 5-8 Religion Teacher and Fifth Grade Homeroom Teacher

On Thursday, November 2, St. Jude Regional Catholic School's seventh and eighth graders, accompanied by Mrs. Balog, Mrs. Cain, Ms. Miller, and Ms. Young, traveled back in time at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C. Students had the opportunity to learn about and experience the narrative, history, and impact of the Bible. In the initial nonprofit filing in 2010, the purpose of the museum was stated "to bring to life the living word of God, to tell its compelling story of preservation, and to inspire confidence in the absolute authority and reliability of the Bible."

The museum has six floors, each of which exhibits aspects of the Bible's history or impact. The seventh and eighth graders began the day on the first floor, where they got to use modern technology to



Middle School students from St. Jude Regional Catholic School along with their chaperones visited the Museum of the Bible in early November.

learn quick facts about the Bible. The majority of the day was then spent on the third floor, where students were given a tour of "Galilee"

and its nearby towns. They were able to meet people from the time of Jesus and ask them questions about their lives. They learned how people cooked and what they ate, how they traveled, how they built their homes, where they worshiped, and more!

After lunch on the top floor, students journeyed back to the third floor for a virtual reality experience of the entire Old and New Testaments. A favorite exhibit for many was walking room-to-room to experience every book of the Old Testament. The seventh and eighth graders were blown away by the combination of history, art, architecture, theater, and music to bring the Bible to life.

May God continue to bless these students. We are so grateful to the Museum of the Bible for their evangelical work in sharing the true, good, and beautiful and pointing people to Christ.

OPT

GIFT

Con't from page 35

allow us to continue this mission," said Katy Prebble, The Academy of the Holy Cross President & CEO. "Together with our donors' critical contributions we are thankful to see projects, like the athletic and wellness center, support a new generation of students."

The groundbreaking for the school's athletic and wellness center is planned for June 2024. The building will have features geared towards educating the whole student, including:

- A competition-size court to allow student athletes to develop and thrive in their sports.
- Space enough to allow school-wide community gatherings seating over 400.
- A bordering, ADA-accessible ramp to Ridgeway Field.
- A Moreau Options Program-inspired Bocce Ball court.
- A fitness center, open to all students.

The athletic and wellness center will not only benefit the Academy's 400 students and 28 athletic teams but will serve as a reminder of the Sisters of the Holy Cross' love for the school and students. The goal of this important new addition demonstrates the well-known quote of Blessed Basil Anthony Moreau, founder of the sisters: "How we educate the mind will change with the times; how we cultivate the heart is and will remain timeless."

About The Academy of the Holy Cross

Holy Cross is a private, Catholic, independent, all-girls school that

has been educating "women of courage, compassion and scholarship" since 1868. Holy Cross prepares young women to feel confident taking academic risks, leading their peers, and standing up for their beliefs. Graduates are exceptionally well prepared for college and beyond. Holy Cross offers a rigorous curriculum including Honors and AP courses, Project Lead the Way Engineering, and a Dual-Enrollment/Dual-Credit program with Marymount University. Through championship athletics, extensive arts, or by providing 10,000 hours of service annually, Holy Cross students do not wait for opportunity, they create it. **For more information, visit academyoftheholycross.org.**

About the Sisters of the Holy Cross

Founded in 1841 in Le Mans, France, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross is an international and intercultural community of women religious whose motherhouse is in Notre Dame, Indiana. The Congregation serves in Bangladesh, Brazil, Ghana, India, Mexico, Peru, Uganda and the United States.

Sisters of the Holy Cross are called to be witnesses of God's transforming love for the life of the world. Their ministries focus on providing education and health care services, eradicating material poverty and ending discrimination — giving witness to God's desire for the transformation of human hearts, human relationships and all creation. **To learn more, visit csc-sisters.org.**

OPT

Christmas Tree Sales at St. Jude's

Fresh cut Christmas trees will be sold at St. Jude's from December 8-10 for \$60 a tree. Jude's is located at 12701 Veirs Mill Rd, Rockville. Trees will be on sale from 3:00-6:00 pm on December 8, from 9:00 am - 5:00 pm on December 9, and from 9:00-3:00 pm on December 10. These Balsam firs are 5 to 8 feet tall. There are also Christmas wreaths available for \$30.

Proceeds will be used to fund the charitable projects of



Grand Knight Stephen York of St. Joseph Manyanet Council #5567 prepares signage for this year's Christmas tree sale.

the Knights of Columbus of the St. Joseph Manyanet Council during the year, including providing Christmas ham dinners for the neediest families within our community. Council 5567, led by Grand Knight Stephen York, serves the parishes of St. Jude's in Rockville and St. Catherine Laboure in Wheaton. He can be reached at (301) 467-9032 and sayork@gmail.com. The website for the council is <https://uknight.org/CouncilSite/index.asp?CNO=5567>

OPT

The Woods Academy

Grandparents Day at The Woods Academy



ABOVE: Grandparents join some of our youngest learners in a day of family and fun.



ABOVE: Our Grandparents Day visitors are all smiles in the classroom!



LEFT: Visiting grandparents join in on all the classroom activities.

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Catholic Business Network of Montgomery County 30th Anniversary Gala



ABOVE: Attendees enjoyed seeing donations tallied in real time. Master of Ceremonies Shindana Crawford (Principal at St. John the Evangelist) did a great job encouraging generosity to support Catholic education. The evening exceeded the goal of raising \$110,000.

Business Person of The Year
Dennis and Anne Sullivan, FCN Inc.

Community Leaders of the Year
Ike and Catherine Leggett

Paul Zurkowski Founder's Award Winner
Julie Beavers



ABOVE: Julie Beavers (center) accepts her award for Volunteer of the Year alongside Joe Barton, CBN-MC President, (left) and Shindana Crawford (right).



ABOVE: The Gala took place at the North Bethesda Marriott Conference Center. Guests enjoyed a lively cocktail hour, followed by a seated dinner during the presentation of the awards. The event is attended by teachers and administrators from Catholic schools, business leaders, clergy, and many other community members.



ABOVE: Catherine Leggett accepts the Leggetts award for Catholic Community Leaders of the Year alongside her husband, Ike Leggett.

RIGHT: Left to right: Joe Barton, Bill Whitaker, Dennis Sullivan, Anne Sullivan, and Shindana Crawford. Anne and Dennis Sullivan accept their award for Business Persons of the Year, presented by their friend Bill Whitaker. CBN-MC President Joe Barton and Master of Ceremonies Shindana Crawford also joined in for the photo.



ABOVE: Left to Right: Gabe Albernoz, Ike Leggett, and Chuck Short. Albernoz, who later presented the Catholic Community Leaders of the Year award to Ike Leggett and his wife, Catherine Leggett, enjoys the cocktail reception with *Our Parish Times* columnist Chuck Short.

The Catholic Business Network of Montgomery County's annual gala was a resounding success, raising nearly \$150,000 for Catholic Education and honoring many community members (see Chuck Short's column on page 1 to learn about this year's award recipients). The money raised at the gala supports parochial grade schools in one of three ways. First, CBN-MC sponsors an annual essay scholarship contest for rising eighth-grade students, providing five male and female

applicants with a scholarship for the following academic year's tuition. Second, CBN-MC provides school grants. Catholic school administrators submit grant requests for a project that needs funding, possibilities range from a new slide on the playground to updated laptops for the computer lab. Every grant request is at least partially funded through this program. Finally, financial assistance is provided through needs-based scholarships. Principals can make an anonymous appeal on behalf of their stu-

dents with financial needs. Like the project grants, each of these requests is at least partially funded. These programs are made possible by funds raised at the CBN-MC gala as well as the on-going support of members throughout the year. For more information on the Catholic Business Network of Montgomery County, including details about upcoming networking events, visit cbnmc.com