

Messenger

St. Mary of the Assumption
Roman Catholic Church

Spring 2017
Vol. 8 No. 1

From the Pastor ... "Our 100 Days ..."

Lent and Easter have been a special time for Christians since earliest days. Commemorations and celebrations marking Jesus' Last Supper, His death on the Cross, and His Resurrection from the dead - known as the Triduum (the three days) - were observed, and soon expanded to include the week that began on Palm Sunday - a week called "holy."

Gradually, Christians saw the value of preparing for this week. The 40-day season called Lent developed - commencing on Ash Wednesday, a day of solemn reflection on life's meaning and purpose. Lenten time was characterized by practices designed to renew, strengthen and even start charity practices benefitting the sick, the poor, the oppressed, the forgotten, the disenfranchised, the spiritually searching, the lonely and the depressed, among others. Fasting, prayer and almsgiving were frequently practiced by young and old alike. A community spirit and common time together became important ways to prepare for keeping Holy Week.

Counterbalancing the emphasis of penitential practices leading to the Triduum was a period of extended rejoicing, spring-filled hope, and lively charity sharing which became known as the Easter season: a 50-day period of keeping Christian life with a different but important flavor. Pentecost Sunday concluded this season, with special remembrance on the role of the Holy Spirit in our faith life.

This special season of some 100 days, from the start of Lent through Pentecost, is upon us once again - in this Year of the Lord 2017. Once more, we are encouraged as a faithful, dedicated family of believers to grow in our common call to a deeper conversion and commission to Jesus and His ways. This is our time together - whatever our backgrounds, whatever our life situations, whatever our disappointments and doubts, whatever our hurts, whatever our hopes and visions - *this is our time* - to make a Christian difference and contribution in our worlds. Consider fully participating in the services, prayers and celebrations of this time - especially of the Triduum days. *Mark your calendar now!*

- Fr. Paul

Experience "The Story of Faith"



"The Story of Faith," a two-evening presentation by nationally-known actor and Biblical performer Frank Runyeon, takes place Monday, March 20 and Tuesday, March 21 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at St.

Martha's Church, 10 French Road, Depew. The presentation is cosponsored by St. Mary's, along with St. Martha, Our Lady of Pompeii and Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta Parishes.

Plan to attend either or both evenings. On Monday, Runyeon will present *Signs: The Gospel of John*, and on Tuesday, he will present *Sermon on the Mount and Hollywood vs. Faith*. Along with the Biblical insights offered in all three segments, *Hollywood vs. Faith* sheds light on the struggle to live as a Christian in today's media age, including humor and personal stories that will hit home with listeners.

Runyeon has starred in more than 1,000 television shows over the past 20 years. He is an honors graduate of General Theological Seminary and Princeton University.

There is no admission fee. For more information, call the St. Mary's Faith Formation Office at (716) 683-8564.

St. Mary's to Host Before Cana on March 25

Once a year, St. Mary's hosts a day-long Before Cana program for couples preparing for marriage in the Catholic Church. This year's date is Saturday, March 25 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. in the Parish Center.

Before Cana is a Buffalo diocesan requirement prior to being married in the Church. Through this guided encounter, couples spend time alone, as well as in larger groups, focusing on such relevant topics as the meaning of marriage as a sacrament; communication; commitment and fidelity, and sexuality in marriage.

The day concludes with couples attending 4:30 p.m. Mass as a group.

For more information, please call (716) 683-4193 or email davej@st-marysonthehill.org.

Have You Downloaded Your Free Parish App?

Download St. Mary's free parish app on your Smartphone. Scan this QR code or search for "St. Mary of the Assumption" in the Apple and Android stores. Or, go to www.parishsolutionsco.com/assumption.



The app features parish news, educational resources, schedules, prayer resources, a digital rosary and much more.

St. Mary's Triduum Schedule

All Masses and services are held in the Church unless otherwise indicated.

Holy Thursday, April 13	9 a.m. Morning Prayer (Chapel) 7 p.m. Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper
Good Friday, April 14	9 a.m. Morning Prayer (Chapel) 3 p.m. Solemn Liturgy 7 p.m. Stations & Veneration of the Cross (Parish Center)
Holy Saturday, April 15	9 a.m. Morning Prayer (Chapel) 12 Noon Blessing of Easter Baskets 8 p.m. Celebration of Easter Vigil
Easter Sunday, April 16	6:30 a.m. Sunrise Mass (Westwood Park) 8 a.m. Mass 10 a.m. Mass 12 Noon Mass

Additional Lenten Events

Lancaster-Depew Ministerium Ecumenical Services & Luncheons Wednesdays at 12 Noon: March 8 through April 5

Daily Mass will be celebrated at 11 a.m. on these Wednesdays.

March 8: Deacon Don Watkins @ Faith United Methodist Church,
5505 Broadway, Lancaster: "Purpose"

March 15: Fr. Paul Steller @ St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church,
55 Pleasant Avenue, Lancaster: "People"

March 22: St. Mary's hosts with Speaker Rev. Karen Gough: "Proclaim"

Also: March 29 @ Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta: "Praise"

And April 5 @ Holy Mother of the Rosary Cathedral: "Pain"

St. Joseph's Table

Wednesday, March 15 - 6 to 8 p.m. - Parish Center

Communal Penance Services

Monday, April 10

3 & 7 p.m. - St. John the Baptist, Sandridge Road, Alden

Easter Bunny Brunch

Saturday, April 15 - 10:30 to 11:45 a.m. - Parish Center

Registration is limited.

For Easter Bunny Brunch reservations or more information on these and other events, please call the Rectory at (716) 683-6445 or visit www.stmarysonthehill.com.

Mausoleum Niches Offer Alternative to In-Ground Burial

Improvements continue to be made at St. Mary's Cemetery, offering more options for families who choose the cemetery as a final resting place for their loved ones.

More than 30 of the 160 newly-added niches for cremated remains in the cemetery mausoleum have been purchased. Each niche holds two sets of remains. Payment plans include the option of making a 10 percent down payment and then paying the balance on an account in monthly installments, according to Cemetery Director Daniel Rinow.

Mausoleums are buildings that house the bodies or cremated re-

mains of the deceased after a funeral. They offer a cost-effective alternative to in-ground burial. Mausoleum crypts are designed to withstand weather and protect remains. Entombment is dry and clean, and since it is above ground, it also appeals to those who may not prefer the idea of a traditional burial. It also saves on ground use.

Cremation is now recognized and accepted by the Catholic Church, with cremation usually taking place following a funeral Mass. Currently in the United States, about one-third of bodies are cremated. The percentage is as high as 50 in more heavily populated states, which tend to be more land conscious.

For more information or to purchase a mausoleum niche or burial spot, please contact Daniel Rinow at (716) 683-6445, extension 34 or dannyr@stmarysonthehill.org. Information also is available on the St. Mary's Parish website at www.stmarysonthehill.com.



The Vatican's Teaching on Cremation

Pope Francis recently directed the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith to publish new instructions reaffirming the Catholic Church's stance on cremation.

The Church continues to recommend that cremated remains of the deceased be buried in Catholic cemeteries or other sacred spaces, such as a church or an area set aside for burial. The Church does not allow for cremated remains to be placed in a residence, nor are they to be scattered in the air, on land, or at sea, or preserved in mementos such as jewelry or other objects. Church teaching also prevents cremated remains from being divided among family members.

SCRIP & Amazon Smile Purchases Benefit St. Mary's

Shop and support St. Mary's at the same time, by purchasing SCRIP or using Amazon Smile.

SCRIP enables you to purchase cards from local and national vendors, for your own use or as gifts. A percentage of every purchase comes back to the parish. There are no added fees. A wide variety of stores, restaurants and other vendors take part in the SCRIP program. For more information, please call (716) 683-2112, ext. 323 or email SCRIP@smeschool.com.

You can order SCRIP and track your rebates online, as well as check your account activity, create a personalized favorites list, and reload SCRIP cards that you already own.

If you shop through Amazon Smile at <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/16-0764775>, Amazon will donate 0.5 percent of eligible purchases to St. Mary's. Amazon Smile is the same Amazon or Amazon Prime that you already know: the same products, prices and services.

Millions of products on Amazon Smile are eligible. You will see these products marked "Eligible for Amazon Smile donation" on their product detail pages. Amazon will remember your initial selection of St. Mary's as an organization to support, and then every eligible purchase you make will result in a donation.

More information on both SCRIP and Amazon Smile is available at www.stmarysonthehill.com.

Meet our Ministries: Meditation & Yoga As Christian Spiritual Practice

A new ministry which started last fall at St. Mary's is *Meditation & Yoga as Christian Spiritual Practice*, taught by parishioner and registered yoga instructor Jane Schmitt. Schmitt volunteers her time, teaching classes two Tuesdays a month, from 7 to 8 p.m. in the Parish Center. She also teaches at Joy Wheel Yoga & Wellness, East Aurora.



Classes are free of charge. They are multi-level, so anyone from those who have never practiced yoga to experienced veterans can participate.

Schmitt has trained to teach yoga to not only adults, but also children, seniors, and those suffering from anxiety and depression. As she trained, she noted, "it became clear that yoga is for everyone, since we all have stress in our lives."

"Although yoga offers many physical benefits, it is the spiritual path it can lead you to that reaps the greatest reward," she added. "As a Catholic Christian, it didn't take long for me to connect a little more deeply to my own faith and beliefs. We simply learn to go back to prayer and take time to rest in God's presence."

Class dates vary from month to month. For more information, please check Church bulletins or the parish website at www.stmarysonthehill.com, or call (716) 683-6445, ext. 24.

Preparing for the Priesthood

by Deacon Don Watkins

The priestly formation process, for me, has been about developing a larger theological and ministerial toolbox. Almost a dozen years ago, Bishop Edward Kmiec ordained me a permanent deacon. The formation process I completed back then properly prepared me to do everything I needed to do as a permanent deacon in the Buffalo diocese.

Thanks to the generosity of Bishop Richard Malone and other persons too numerous to mention, I have been allowed to return to Christ the King Seminary to study for and discern the vocation of the priesthood.

The "hounds of heaven" have pursued me through the affirmation of many persons inside and outside the Catholic Church to answer this holy calling. I pray to God that the many graces I have been given will remain steadfast within me as I strive thorough this humbling, growing and life-changing process. Many of my fellow permanent deacons have told me that I must be brave to undergo a second formation process. Indeed, it takes much courage to endure the rigorous academic and formation processes.

The Christ the King faculty and

formation team have much to teach us. My seminarian classmates have been very helpful in their fellowship with me. My father and the good people of my home parish, All Saints in Lockport, have given me their unwavering support along the way - and I am currently enjoying my pastoral year assignment with Fr. Paul and the faithful parishioners at St. Mary's.



In any event, this process is necessary to develop the skills needed for ministering five of the seven sacraments, along with caring for the countless needs of the faithful, in whatever capacity the Lord and the Diocese of Buffalo will call upon me to do in the years ahead.

Thank you and blessings to everyone at St. Mary's, who continue to make my time here so joyful and fulfilling.

- Deacon Don Watkins concludes his pastoral year assignment at St. Mary's in June. We wish him well in his future studies and in the priesthood serving our diocese!



Happy St. Patrick's Day!

May your troubles be less and your blessings be more - and nothing but happiness come through your door!

Saint Gianna Beretta Molla

by Barbara Owczarczak, Pastoral Minister

Gianna Beretta was born in Magenta, Italy, on October 4, 1922. She was the 10th of 13 children of Alberto and Maria Beretta, but only eight survived to adulthood. Gianna was a pious girl raised in a pious family: one sister became a nun, and two brothers became priests. When she was three, her family moved to Bergamo, and she grew up in the Lombardy region of Italy.

In 1942, Gianna began to study medicine in Milan. While in college, she worked with the poor and elderly, and joined the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. A physician and surgeon, she graduated from the University of Pavia in 1949, and started a clinic in Mero, Italy in 1950. She returned to school and studied pediatrics, and went on to work with mothers, babies, the elderly and the poor. She also was active in Catholic Action, groups of lay Catholics who attempted to encourage a Catholic influence on society.

Gianna considered a call to religious life. She hoped to join her brother, a missionary priest in Brazil, where she intended to offer gy-

necological services to poor women. However, her chronic ill health made this impractical, so she continued her practice in Italy.

After giving birth to three children, Gianna suffered two miscarriages. In 1961, she learned that she was expecting again. During the second month of her pregnancy, she developed a fibroma on her uterus. Her doctors gave her three choices: an abortion, which would save her life and allow her to continue to have children; a hysterectomy, which would preserve her life, but take the unborn child's life and prevent future pregnancies; or removal of only the fibroma, with the potential of further complications.

Roman Catholic teaching would have allowed her to obtain a hysterectomy, but would forbid an abortion. Wanting to preserve her child's life, Gianna opted for the removal of the fibroma. After the operation, complications continued throughout her pregnancy. Gianna was quite clear about her wishes, expressing to her family, "This time it will be a difficult delivery, and they may have to save one or the other -- I want them to save my baby."

On Good Friday, April 21, 1962, Gianna gave birth to her fourth child, Gianna Emanuela, via Caesarean section. However, Gianna continued to have severe pain, and died of septic peritonitis seven days later.

Gianna was beatified by Pope John Paul II on April 24, 1994, and canon-

ized on May 16, 2004. Her husband Pietro and their youngest child, Gianna, were present at the canonization ceremony. The miracle recognized by the Roman Catholic Church



to canonize Gianna Molla involved a mother, Elizabeth Comparini, who in 2003 was 16 weeks pregnant and sustained a tear in her placenta that drained her womb of all amniotic fluid. Because a normal term of pregnancy is 40 weeks, Comparini was told by her doctors the baby's chance of survival was nil. Through a constant stream of prayers for the intercession of Saint Gianna, Comparini delivered a healthy baby.

In his homily at her canonization Mass, Pope John Paul II called Gianna "a simple, but more than ever, significant messenger of divine love." Saint Gianna Molla's feast day is April 28, the anniversary of her death.

The St. Mary's Respect Life Committee donates baby items to the St. Gianna Molla Pregnancy Outreach Center, located in Buffalo. Different items are collected each month. A donation box is located in the Church foyer. Watch the bulletin for updates - and thank you for your continued generosity!

Faith Formation Update: A Busy Spring Ahead

by Sister Therese Chmura, CSSF

The St. Mary's Faith Formation program has a busy spring ahead. Upcoming sacraments and activities include:

The Senior Prom

Members of the Family Faith Formation program are hosting a Senior Prom on Friday, March 17 from 2 to 4 p.m. in the Parish Center. This is an opportunity for senior citizens from our parish and community to come together for an afternoon of fun and relaxation. Come and share memories of days gone by, listen to live music provided by the Lancast-

er Central Schools music department ... and maybe even get up on the dance floor!

First Reconciliation and First Eucharist

Second and third grade children, with the help of their families, are preparing to celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, respectively, for the first time. First Reconciliation will take place on Friday, March 10 and Saturday, March 11, and First Eucharist Masses will be celebrated on Sunday, May 7 and Saturday, May 13. Please pray for our young families.

Middle School Program

Our parish is fortunate to have the presence of a seminarian, Deacon Don Watkins, with us for this school

year. Deacon Don, along with Joe Kugler, Casey Dudziak and Tyler Guarasci, facilitates the 2016-17 Middle School Faith Formation program for grades 6 through 8. Our students are fortunate to be under the guidance of such a great team!

Generations of Faith

There is one more Generations of Faith weekend for the 2016/17 year: on Saturday, April 1, Sunday, April 2 and Monday, April 3. Pastor Fr. Paul Steller instructs adults both during Generations of Faith and during our Family Faith Formation sessions. If you have never - or have not recently - participated in Generations of Faith, don't let the upcoming April session pass by without registering.

Welcome New Parishioners

A warm welcome to these new parishioners who registered at St. Mary's between November 2016 and January 2017:

Robert & Linda Bridge

Bryan & Barbara Doyle

Dennis & Ashley Fruehauf and Family

Joseph & Donna Gartler

Kevin McClellan

Wilfredo & Veronica Monticello

Richard & Francine Vastola and Family

Aaron Wentlent & Candelaria McElhinny and Family



St. Mary's Family Faith Formation program held a "Souper Bowl Weekend" drive, collecting cans of soup and funds to benefit three area food pantries. Thanks to all who contributed, as more than \$1,000 was raised, along with a generous supply of canned soup. Helping out at the drive were, from left, Jenna Draves, Elyse Oun, Madison Dubucki and Elana Oun.



St. Mary's Elementary

Academic Excellence - Faith - Community



St. Mary's Elementary is proud to be a STREAM school. During the first semester of the 2016/17 school year, related activities included 6th graders (left) making "ooblek" - a type of slime, to learn about the properties of the Earth's asthenosphere, which has both solid and liquid properties. Students in grades 4 through 8 learned about computer hardware in technology classes. This included 8th graders (right) taking apart a computer and then identifying its components and their significance.

St. Mary of the Assumption and St. Mary's Elementary School present

Mega Raffle 2017

Bigger & Better Than Last Year - Only 650 Tickets Will be Sold!

GRAND PRIZE \$25,000

Live Drawing will be held Friday, June 2 - 7 p.m.

A total of 10 prizes will be awarded including:

\$25,000 Grand Prize

One \$1,000 Prize - Two \$500 Prizes

Two \$250 Prizes - Four \$125 Prizes

Your chance to win is 10 in 650!

\$100 Per Ticket

To purchase tickets or for more information, call (716) 683-6445.

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Deacon Donald Watkins, Seminarian

Diane Zwirecki, APR, Editor
Ray Milkowski, Sr., Photographer



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St. Mary's Mass Schedule

Daily Masses:

8:30 a.m. Tuesday, Thursday (School Chapel)
12 Noon Monday, Wednesday, Friday (School Chapel)

*During the school year, there is also an 8:30 a.m. Mass on Fridays in the Church.
Please call the Rectory or visit the website for holy day information.*

Weekend Masses:

Saturday

4:30 p.m.
7 p.m.

Sunday

8 a.m.
10 a.m.
12 Noon

Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession):
Saturday 3:30 p.m. - 4 p.m.
*Appointments can be made for the Sacrament
by calling the Rectory at 683-6445.*