

Messenger

St. Mary of the Assumption
Roman Catholic Church

Spring 2019
Volume 10 No.1

Faith Formation in Action



Participants in St. Mary's Family Faith Formation Program organized their annual Souper Bowl Weekend collection to benefit area food pantries. Thank you to parishioners who supported this effort, as \$1,258.93 in donations, along with a generous supply of canned soup, was collected.

The soup was distributed to the Lancaster Trinity Episcopal Church Food Pantry, the Sister Mary Josette Food Pantry at Villa Maria College, the Response to Love Center and Gerard Place. Monetary donations went to the same pantries, as well as toward supporting other local needs.



From the Pastor ...

Shortly after his ordination to the priesthood, John Neumann was sent to Western New York to evangelize and serve the German Catholics of the region. During his time here, he laid the foundation for a number of future parishes, including St. Mary of the Assumption. When he left this region, he became a member of the Redemptorist Order, was known as an inspiring preacher and teacher, and eventually became Bishop of Philadelphia. His advocacy for the faith through prayer and good works was well known.

The Redemptorists had a special devotion to Mary under the title of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. They created a novena in her honor, celebrated every Wednesday. This devotion spread in our diocese, including here at St. Mary's. Every Wednesday after 12 noon Mass, novena prayers honoring Our Lady of Perpetual Help are said - a tradition here at our parish that goes back many years.

An icon honoring Mary under the title of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is in our Church, located between the statues of Jesus and Mary. Over the years, this picture has become so darkened that it is difficult to see the images. A new icon has been obtained to replace the existing one. The feast day honoring Mary under this title is June 27.

We are planning a formal blessing of our new image at the weekend Masses on May 18 and 19 - our way of thanking Mary for her continuing help on behalf of our parish community.

I hope that you might be able to join us in our upcoming observances of Lent and Easter time here at St. Mary's. For those who can, please consider participating in our Wednesday Ecumenical Lenten Services. Listings of times and services - along with other events and celebrations - can be found in this issue of *Messenger*. May this be a time for prayer and deepening of our commitments to all our sisters and brothers!

- Fr. Paul

*"He who is devout to the Virgin Mother
will certainly never be lost."*

-St. Ignatius of Antioch

To read more about Our Lady of Perpetual Help, see pages 4 & 5.

St. Mary's 2019 Lenten & Easter Events

Lancaster-Depew Ministerium Ecumenical Services

Wednesdays at 12 Noon - Followed by Lunch

Details are listed below. Daily Mass at St. Mary's will be celebrated at 11 a.m. on these dates.

March 13 @ Faith United Methodist Church, 5505 Broadway, Lancaster

Speaker: Rt. Rev. John Mack, Pastor, Holy Mother of the Rosary Cathedral - *God's Will and My Inadequacy*

March 20 @ St. Mary of the Assumption Church, 1 St. Mary's Hill, Lancaster

Speaker: Rev. Kelly Negus, Pastor, Lancaster Presbyterian Church - *God's Will and My Dreams*

March 27 @ Lancaster Presbyterian Church, 5461 Broadway, Lancaster

Speaker: Rev. Stephen Mannion, Pastor, Faith United Methodist Church - *God's Will and My Identity*

April 3 @ Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta Church, 496 Terrace Boulevard, Depew

Speaker: Rev. James Brown - *God's Will and My Worldview*

April 10 @ Holy Mother of the Rosary Cathedral, 6298 Broadway, Lancaster

Speaker: Rev. Paul Steller, Pastor, St. Mary of the Assumption Church - *God's Will and My Response*

St. Joseph's Table

Monday, March 18 - 6:30 to 8 p.m. - Parish Center

Easter Bunny Brunch

Saturday, April 20 - 10:30 to 11:45 a.m. - Parish Center - Registration is limited. Call (716) 683-6445.

Holy Week Services:

Palm Sunday Masses

Saturday, April 13 - 4:30 & 7 p.m. (Church)

Sunday, April 14 - 8 a.m., 10 a.m. & 12 noon (Church)

Tenebrae Service

Tuesday, April 16 - 7:45 p.m. (Church)

Holy Thursday - April 18

Community Morning Prayer - 9 a.m. (Chapel)

Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper - 7 p.m. (Church)

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament - 8:30 to 11 p.m. (Chapel)

Good Friday - Passion of the Lord - April 19

Community Morning Prayer - 9 a.m. (Chapel)

Commemoration of the Lord's Passion - 3 p.m. (Church)

Stations of the Cross - 7 p.m. (Parish Center)

Holy Saturday - April 20

Community Morning Prayer - 9 a.m. (Chapel)

Blessing of Easter Baskets - 12 noon (Church)

Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter - 8 p.m. (Church)

Easter Sunday of the Resurrection - April 21

Sunrise Mass - 6:30 a.m. (Westwood Park)

Masses - 8 a.m., 10 a.m. & 12 noon (Church)



Calling All SME Alumni!

St. Mary's Elementary School has a proud legacy in Lancaster and Western New York. Our first parish school was established in the late 1830's by St. John Neumann and was housed in a modest, three-room building. A larger school was built in 1874 and, some 83 years later, our current school building opened its doors.

We need input from St. Mary's Elementary School graduates: who you are and when you attended SME. Or, perhaps you're not a graduate, but you know one who either still lives in the area or has moved away. You too can assist us as we continue the 180-year legacy of Catholic education here at our parish.

Please fill out the form below and return it by placing it in the collection basket at Mass or mailing it to me at St. Mary's Rectory, 1 St. Mary's Hill, Lancaster, NY, 14086. You can also find the form on our website at stmarysonthehill.com.

For more information, feel free to call me at (716) 683-6445 or email me at pauls@stmarysonthehill.org. Thank you!

- Fr. Paul Steller, Pastor

St. Mary's Elementary School Alumni Information

Name: _____

Address/City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Years of Attendance: _____

Classmates or Other Alumni You Can Remember: _____

Thank you very much!

Before Cana Set For March 23

Once a year, St. Mary's hosts a day-long Before Cana program for couples preparing for marriage in the Catholic Church. Our 2019 program will take place on Saturday, March 23 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Before Cana is a Buffalo diocesan requirement prior to being married in the Church. For more information, contact Deacon John Owczarczak at (716) 683-3269 or johno@stmarysonthehill.org.

Craft Show, Meat Raffle Will Benefit St. Mary's

These two events sponsored by the St. Mary's Elementary Home School Association will benefit the school and parish. Both will be held at the school and are open to the public:

- A **Craft Show** takes place Sunday, March 24 from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission is \$2 per person.
- A **Meat Raffle** will be held on Friday, March 29. Doors will open at 6 p.m. and the first spin will be at 7 p.m. Admission is \$5 per person pre-sale or \$7 at the door and includes beer, wine and pop. There will also be 50/50 splits and basket raffles.

For more information on either event, contact HSA@smeschool.com or call (716) 683-2112.



Living as Catholics In Today's World

A family can take on many different looks when you're living as a Catholic in today's world.

Since last September, Fr. Paul Steller, St. Mary's pastor, has been presenting a series of discussions entitled *Living as Catholics in Today's World*. The program focuses on the Sacraments and our call to holiness.

Living as Catholics continues through April. It is part of our parish's Family Faith Formation program, which meets monthly, and Generations of Faith, which meets four times a year. *Living as Catholics* is designed to include members of both programs, as well as other parishioners interested in learning more about the Sacraments.

In February, Fr. Paul's presentation was a catechesis on matrimony. Family Faith Formation and Generations

(continued on page 6)



Fr. Paul Steller, St. Mary's pastor, officiates as parishioners Christina and Frank Pietrantonio renew their wedding vows during St. Mary's February Generations of Faith program.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

The iconic picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, displayed to the right of the altar at St. Mary's Church - near the candles and side entrance door - will soon be replaced and rededicated. How familiar are you with Our Lady of Perpetual Help - her story, the icon and its details?

Windows to Heaven: The Art of Sacred Presence

The depiction of Our Lady of Perpetual Help at St. Mary's - and in churches throughout the world since the 15th century - is an icon, a word that has a long religious history, dating back to Biblical times. The original meaning of the word "icon" was an "image" or "representation." Over the centuries, such images of Jesus, Mary and other sacred persons have been referred to as "windows to heaven, the art of sacred presence" and "guides to prayer."

Although icons are works of art, they are considered more than just that, because it is believed that the spirit of God was involved in their creation. The word "iconographer" literally means "write of icons" - and icons are referred to as being written, versus painted, just as the Scriptures were written. The writing of an icon is a very spiritual process, involving long periods of prayer, fasting and contempla-

tion. And everything about it has a meaning tied to the Scriptures: the icon's symbols, colors, postures and suggested gestures. Iconographers do not generally sign their names to their creations because they do not seek gratification or fame - just the glory of God.

How to Pray Before an Icon

Praying with icons cultivates a posture of stillness, an open heart, and an attitude of listening. You begin by placing yourself before the icon. Keep your eyes open and focus on being in God's presence. Pass through this "window to heaven" into closeness with God. Be still long enough to enter communion with God, Jesus, Mary or a Saint Intercessor. Allow your heart to feel the Divine Mystery and gain a sense of holiness and sacredness.

In the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Mary points out and directs us to Jesus. Her watchful gaze and care for us never ends; it is perpetual.

Icons in Religion and Spirituality

Clicking on an icon on your computer often grants you access to seemingly unlimited possibilities. The ancient context of the word "icon" in religion and spirituality holds a comparable meaning. It originated in ancient Greece and meant "image" or "spiritual representation." St. Luke is said to have created an image of Mary. Today, he is the patron saint of iconographers.

The Icon: Its Details



Mary's face is majestic - expressing calm and solemnity. Her eyes, slightly closed, express ineffable sorrow and sympathy, because she sees the suffering her Son will endure, and the suffering of all people in the world.

She wears a dark red dress, signifying the passion of Jesus, and a blue mantle, symbolizing her perpetual virginity. These colors honor Mary as both Virgin and Mother. In the Byzantine world, where the icon originated, dark red was reserved for the empress alone; thus, this is a recognition of Mary's Queenship.

On Mary's veil are stars, honoring Her as "the Star of the Sea." The size of the Mother is out of proportion to her Son, which seems to be a deliberate attempt by the artist to suggest that Mary is larger than life.

On Mary's left side is Michael the Archangel, carrying the lance and sponge of the crucifixion of Jesus, while on her right side is Gabriel the Archangel, carrying a cross with three horizontal crossbeams and four nails. Thus, the icon helps us appreciate Mary's concern for all who suffer and are in need of her Son's healing and help.

Not so clear on the painting are Greek letters that signify Mary as Mother of God, or those signifying Michael, Gabriel, and Jesus the Christ.

History, Legend and Tradition

The history of the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is steeped in both legend and fact. One pious tradition attributes it as an artistic creation of Luke, the Gospel author. However, it

is in the 1400s, in the work of an unknown artist displayed in the Keras Kardiotissa Monastery, Greece, that it first actually appears.

In 1499, St. Matthew's Church in Rome began veneration to Mary there - a devotion that spread throughout the city over the next 300 years. When Rome fell to Napoleon's invading troops in 1798, the church's icon of the Blessed Virgin was hidden by Augustinian monks in a private chapel, where it

remained for the next 65 years.

In 1865, the Redemptorist Order restored the icon to a place of honor in Rome's Church of St. Alphonso and gave the picture the title it has held until this day: Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Entrusted by Pope Pius IX to make Mary better known worldwide, the Redemptorists began a devotion honoring her under this title, with novena prayers said on Wednesday of each week. This devotion is still kept to this day.



Keras Kardiotissa Monastery, Greece

Living as Catholics (continued from page 4)

of Faith participants joined other attendees as part of Generation of Faith's interactive segments - which centered on family and marriage.

One hundred six families - 332 people in all - took part in dialogues, role playing, prayer, music, the renewal of wedding vows by three couples, and the serving and enjoyment of wedding cake afterwards.

"Our discussion centered on what it means to be a family and to be married," said Sr. Therese Chmura, CSSF, director of faith formation at St. Mary's. "Comments from our younger children when they were asked what being married meant to them were very enlightening. Responses included 'partnership,' 'working together' and 'love.'"

"Families talked about things they enjoy doing together and then acted them out, kind of like charades, so others could guess. It was a great way for families to continue to get to know one another and for everyone who took part to take pride in their own unique family," Sr. Therese added.

As couples renewed their wedding vows, children and others watched or took part in the ceremonies.

Discussion by high school students included what traits to one day look for in a spouse. Following the vow renewal ceremonies, the students served wedding cake.

For more information on St. Mary's Faith Formation programs, call (716) 683-8564 or visit stmarysonthehill.com.

Our Lady of Pompeii, St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, St. Martha, and St. Mary of the Assumption Parishes Invite You to our

Parish Mission

through **WORD, WORSHIP & WORKS OF MERCY**



REIGNITE YOUR FAITH LIFE!

Each night we will explore one of the three pillars, and give you practical ways to bring them more fully into your lives. Give yourself a spiritual "shot in the arm" with a nourishing experience of his Word, a more integral vision of Worship, and a more energized engagement of Works of Mercy.

← "Thomas is in the top 10% of the best Catholic speakers today."
- Dr. Tim Gray, President of the Augustine Institute

March 25-27th
Monday, Tuesday, & Wednesday at 7-8:15pm

**Join us at Our Lady of Pompeii Church,
186 Laverack Ave., Lancaster, NY 14068**

For more information, call OLP Parish Office at 716-683-6522
Free will donations accepted. Refreshments follow in the Ministry Center each night!

All are welcome!



Our Speaker
Author and retreat director Thomas Smith brings a wealth of experience and insight on the Word of God to audiences across the U.S. and is a repeat guest on Catholic TV and radio, and is the former director of the Denver Catholic Biblical School and Catechetical School.

Parish Directory Update

St. Mary's parish directory will be updated once a year, with photos taken in the Fall, in plenty of time to order holiday photos. If you or your family were photographed in either March or November of 2018 and you have not yet received a 2019 directory, please pick up your copy at the Rectory. Thank you!

Buy Scrip To Support St. Mary's

St. Mary's Scrip program enables you to purchase cards from local and national vendors - for your own use or as gift cards. A percentage of every purchase comes back to the parish. You can buy Scrip in Church after Mass, at St. Mary's Elementary School on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8 to 10 a.m., and at the Rectory on weekdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. For more information, call (716) 683-2112 or email SCRIP@smeschool.com.

St. Mary's of Lancaster
4th ANNUAL

MEGA RAFFLE

\$25,000 Grand Prize

LIVE DRAWING ON FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 2019
Doors open at 6:00PM, Grand prize drawing at 10:00PM



\$100
PER TICKET

Ticket includes admission for 2 (aged 21+),
pizza and all beverages.

**No outside beverages allowed.*

**** ONLY 650 TICKETS SOLD ** 450 MUST BE SOLD BEFORE 5-31-19 or REFUNDS WILL BE ISSUED ****

12 Prizes Awarded

NEW THIS YEAR – TWO EARLY BIRD DRAWINGS!
\$250 on 3/1/19 & \$150 on 4/1/19

\$25,000 Grand Prize

1 - \$1,000 PRIZE ** 2 - \$500 PRIZES ** 2 - \$250 PRIZES ** 4 - \$150 PRIZES

Your Chances to WIN A PRIZE: 12 in 650!

CALL 253-7880 FOR MORE INFORMATION

Preparing for First Communion



First Communion will be celebrated at St. Mary's on Saturday, May 4 and Sunday, May 5. Children preparing to receive the Sacrament for the first time recently participated in Teaching Masses with Pastor Fr. Paul Steller and Director of Faith Formation Sr. Therese Chmura, CSSF. Blessings to all our children and their families!


Keeping You Up to Date

- From November 3, 2018 through February 1, 2019, the following new parishioners joined St. Mary's: Michael and Kari DeBergalis and family, Daniel and Diana Elliott and family, John and Suzanne Fridmann and family, Jason and Pamela Hejna and family, Paul and Noreen Pignataro, James and Barbara Ryan, and Richard and Amanda Sullivan and family.
- These children became members of our parish family through Baptism: William Tomczak, Jasper Cominsky, Grace Bala, Grace Mullen, Charles Bello and Henry Spencer.
- These beloved souls were called home to the Lord: Elvira Forster, Rosanna Garrow, Robert Mroz, Adele Lewandowski, Arlene Ford, Mary Freudenberger, Howard Huber and Diane Knowlton.

*Lenten Prayer
For Easter*

Almighty Father, I thank You for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead and redeemed humankind.

Fill us with the fire of the Holy Spirit, that we may be faithful disciples and enthusiastic witnesses of our Catholic faith. Alleluia, Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed.



St. Mary of the Assumption Roman Catholic Church
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Rev. Paul W. Steller, Pastor
Rev. Msgr. W. Jerome Sullivan, Weekend Associate
Dr. David Jerome, Permanent Deacon
John Owczarczak, Permanent Deacon

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



Visit us on Twitter @stmarys716



Like us on Facebook.



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.*