

# St. Mary's Messenger

St. Mary of the Assumption  
Roman Catholic Church



Summer 2021  
Volume 12 No. 2

## Obligation to Attend Mass Resumes

The obligation to attend Sunday Mass resumed the weekend of June 5 and 6 in the Diocese of Buffalo.

The following are excerpts from a letter from the Most Rev. Michael W. Fisher, Bishop of Buffalo, as well as the bishops of the Rochester, Syracuse and Ogdensburg dioceses - all of whom also resumed the obligation during the first weekend of June:

"Praise be to Almighty God, who has been by our side throughout this long and devastating pandemic. He has heard our cries of mourning and been our rock in this stormy sea. He has delivered us through this crisis and brought us to the point where we can now clearly see an end in sight to the suffering, lockdowns and isolation.

Today, with vaccination rates rising, infection numbers across the state are falling and we are seeing the re-opening of every sector of society, including businesses, restaurants and sporting events. Now it is also time to return to Sunday Mass.

The obligation to attend Holy Mass on the Lord's Day is a sacred one. Anyone who is frail or at risk due to advanced age or medical conditions is always excused from this obligation, and we encouraged you to use your prudential judgment throughout this pandemic to determine if it was unsafe for you to attend Mass. This remains true.

However, for those who are healthy and not at great risk, the pre- (continued on page 5)

## From the Pastor: Our Eucharist (Mass) "Obligation"

As a health and safety precaution during the Covid 19 times, the traditional "obligation" for celebrating our weekly Mass in person was lifted. Live streaming of the Mass was offered for those who had the necessary means as an opportunity to view the Mass and pray along at home. Since early June, regular participation with the parish community in celebrating the Eucharist has been restored. As always, the frail, those of advanced age, and those experiencing medical conditions are excused.

How is the idea of "obligation" to be understood and lived? Often, for those growing up prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), to deliberately miss Sunday Mass - even once - was tagged as gravely sinful, subjecting one to divine punishment and possibly eternal suffering. The principle reason for attending Mass was rooted in "fear" - and for many Catholics of that generation, it remains their basic reason for attending Mass.

Our first Christian sisters and broth-

ers understood "obligation" as arising from the need and importance of celebrating together the mystery and wonder of Jesus' saving death and resurrection. Following the Jewish tradition of keeping the Sabbath (Saturday), they chose Sunday as the appropriate day for the community to gather for prayer, reflection and celebrations around the Table of the Lord. This established a natural and necessary "obligation" to be together, not out of fear or the obligation of law, but because of the renewing, strengthening support offered by and for one another with our risen Lord and Brother. This continues to be our reason for weekly gathering at Mass.

The Pandemic's "blessing" may be that the "absence of presence" helps us better appreciate who we are and are called to be as the "family of God." Once again as we are enabled to return to the Lord's Table, may a clearer and deeper spirit of obligation help all of us to grow in the love of God.

- Fr. Paul



## Feast Day Raffle Set for August 15

Mark your calendar and watch for tickets to arrive in the mail for St. Mary's annual August 15 Feast Day Raffle.

There will be three raffle prizes, all consisting of the winners' choice of gift cards from our St. Mary's Scrip program. Our Scrip list includes hundreds of local and national vendors, so you have a wide variety of options from which to choose.

Our Feast Day Raffle raises funds for parish outreach ministries, education, care of the poor and disadvantaged, the administration of Sacraments, and liturgies. For each ticket you purchase, your name will be entered to win one of the following:

- 1st Prize: \$2,000 in Scrip gift cards
- 2nd Prize: \$500 in Scrip gift cards
- 3rd Prize: \$200 in Scrip gift cards

Tickets are be priced at \$30 each – or \$50 for two tickets.

Your completed ticket stubs may be dropped off or mailed to the Rectory or dropped in the collection basket at Mass. Extra tickets will be available in the back of Church and at the Rectory.

*Thank you for your support!*

## Registration Under Way At St. Mary's Elementary

Registration is under way for the 2021/2022 year at St. Mary's Elementary School.



Registrations are being accepted for all grade levels: pre-K through grade 8. Registration packets are available in the school office.

To pick up a packet, have one mailed to your home, or for more information, call (716) 683-2112 or email secretary@smeschool.com.

## St. Mary's First Reconciliation Class of 2021



With celebrations spread over a number of weeks to maintain safety and social distancing as the Covid-19 pandemic continued, 57 youngsters received the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time this spring at St. Mary's. Congratulations and blessings to our Class of 2021, their families and loved ones.

*Michael Betz  
 Sebastian Bindemann  
 Aaliyah Bzibziak  
 Anthony Carroll  
 Chase Carroll  
 Sawyer Coppola  
 Gianna DeMarco  
 Joseph Deuel  
 Jack Doerflein  
 Adrianna Donhauser  
 Zachary Espinosa  
 Avery Falls  
 Noah Fuqua  
 Benjamin Giglio  
 Cecelia Gill  
 Danielle Gregg  
 Benjamin Keem  
 Tyler Kilianski  
 Wyatt Kiliszek  
 Zachary Kinnin  
 Alexandra Klink  
 Mariana Kotlak  
 Cole Kulpit  
 Hannah Kusak  
 Brooklyn Letina  
 Jacob Loga  
 Tyler Mayfield  
 Ewen Nicastro  
 Elijah Oun*

*Emmi Paradowski  
 Carolena Paterek  
 Petrina Paterek  
 Scarlett Pfender  
 Anna Pietrantonio  
 Lucas Prasad  
 Cecilia Przepasniak  
 Joseph Reisdorf  
 Juliana Riley  
 Liam Roberts  
 Mason Schaffer  
 Nicholas Schaffer  
 Landon Scharf  
 Julianna Smith  
 Vivienne Smith  
 Gavin Smith-Ostrowski  
 Brisyn Smykowski  
 Devyn Smykowski  
 Shane Sparmo  
 Harper Spinelli  
 Zander Spoor  
 Nicholas Swiech  
 Emily Toole  
 Russell VanCoevering  
 Linnea Wells  
 Ian Willard  
 Caylee Zaluski  
 Sonya Zgliczynski*

## St. Mary's First Communion Class of 2021



Like First Reconciliation, celebrations of First Communion were also spread over several weeks at St. Mary's this spring, as 54 children received the Eucharist for the first time. Congratulations and blessings to our Class of 2021, their families and loved ones.

*Giuliana Balducci  
 Madison Bianco  
 Summer Boswell  
 Grayson Burns  
 Andrew Canzoneri, IV  
 Charlotte Cavalleri  
 Harper Clement  
 Clara Conlon  
 Logan Coppola  
 Adeline Corcoran  
 Cadence Czerniejewski  
 Kennedy Czerniejewski  
 Joseph Deuel  
 Connor Drzewiecki  
 Giavanna Fiegl  
 Andrew Germann  
 Lucas Gonser  
 Jaxon Hejna  
 Gracelyn Janiga  
 Allison Jerackas  
 Noah Johnson  
 Sophia Kalinowski  
 Julia Karnath  
 Henri Khoury  
 Alexandra Klínk  
 Avery Ley  
 Elliott Lopez*

*Andrew Lubkowski  
 Emma Maslowski  
 Tyler Mayfield  
 Evan Niewczyk  
 Edward Over  
 Alexander Paoella  
 Emmi Paradowski  
 Kaden Paterek  
 Kieran Paterek  
 Haley Patro  
 Sawyer Peterson  
 Joshua Petroski  
 Lily Pfender  
 Cecilia Przepasniak  
 Mason Schaffer  
 Nicholas Schaffer  
 Ethan Selmensberger  
 Emma Silverblatt  
 Lukas Sliwinski  
 Julianna Smith  
 Lee Smith  
 Vivienne Smith  
 Gavin Smith-Ostrowski  
 Ashlyn Szarzynski  
 Jordan Thomson  
 Aaron Waite  
 Sean Warmus*

## Marilyn Streit Receives St. Joseph the Worker Award

Congratulations and thank you to Marilyn Streit, who received the Lay Award of St. Joseph the Worker on Sunday, May 2 at a Mass at St. Joseph Cathedral, celebrated by Bishop Michael Fisher.



Marilyn has been a St. Mary's parishioner for 55 years, during which time she has quietly ministered to our parish in many ways. She serves a key role in the Bereavement Ministry, helping those who have lost loved ones to prepare for their funeral Masses, and organizes annual parish remembrances for our faithful departed.

Marilyn also assists in service as a lector and Eucharistic minister. She also has assisted in counting weekly collections.

Blessings to Marilyn on receiving this well-deserved honor!

### Help Update Our Records

St. Mary's is compiling a list of parishioners who have been recipients of the St. Joseph the Worker Award presented by the Diocese of Buffalo. If you received this award at any time during the 1990s, please help us bring our records up to date by calling the Rectory at (716) 683-6445. Thank you!



## St. Mary's Parishioner Updates

During the months of February, March and April:

*These new parishioners joined our St. Mary's family:*

Brandon and Jenna Akromas and family, D'Arcy and Mallory Furniss and family, Dana Jandzinski, Gary Marlinski, Steven, Melissa and Emery Mitchell, Thomas, Ashley and Claire Panek, Robert, Leigh and Jackson Przepiora, Aaron and Jennifer Przykuta and family, Daniel and Jenna Sandker and family, Sarah Shafer and family, Jennifer and Vivienne Smith, Mark Tamsett and family, Helen Wilson, Ernest and Mildred Zablotny, and Ryan and Samantha Zenicki and family.



*These couples were married at St. Mary's:*

Justin Luksch and Brianna Koerner, and Patrick Mattox and Elspeth Phillips.

*These children became members of our parish family through Baptism:*

Henry Daniel Bala, Liam Scott Federowicz, Conrad William Furniss, Harrison Robert Furniss, Natalie Grace Grogan, Adrien Jaxon Helminski and Leo Charles Zaccarino.

*These beloved souls were called home to the Lord:*

Jack T. Bumbalo, Ann Ciszewski, Joanne M. Curran, Michael J. Curran, Jr., Michael J. Daddario, John A. Dryja, Rita J. Kotas, Catherine Loftus, Jordan Marston, Patricia Molino, Michael Schmitt, Angeline Sciolino, Rita M. Sobczak, Eugene M. Urso and Rosaline C. Wozniak.

## Faith Formation in Action Year Round



The Family Faith Formation program at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Lancaster, finished the 2020/21 year on Sunday, May 16, with participants meeting in the outdoor Pavilion located outside Church. The children's activity for this final in-person session was painting clay flowerpots and then planting green beans in them. During this activity, families helped out and at the same time, conversed about various ways they had kept their faith alive during the Covid-19 global pandemic.

Fifty families took part in the 2020/2021 family program.

Best practices in faith formation developed during the pandemic will be retained for the future, not only in the family program, but also in St.

Mary's traditional, middle school, high school, sacramental preparation and other educational programs.

Next up on St. Mary's Faith Formation schedule is Vacation Bible School, which will take place from Monday, July 26 through Friday, July 30 from 6 to 8 p.m., with a Closing Mass on Saturday, July 31 at 7 p.m. Vacation Bible School is open to children entering kindergarten through grade 5. Middle and high school students have volunteer opportunities to assist with VBS.

This year's VBs theme is "Rise Up!" Children will be learning about Jesus as they enjoy arts and crafts, music, and even flying kites.

Please call (716) 683-8564 or visit [stmarysonthehill.org](http://stmarysonthehill.org) to learn more.



## Welcome Bishop Mike!



Bishop Michael Fisher celebrated Mass and the Crowning of Mary with St. Mary's Elementary School children on Friday, May 14. Mass was held outdoors near the Pavilion for safe social distancing, and the May Crowning was held in the Grotto outside Church. Welcome to St. Mary's, Bishop Mike!

### Mass Obligation

(cont'd from p. 1)

sumption of the faithful should be that, unless they are at an enhanced risk, or caring for others who are at risk or sick, the obligation to attend Sunday Mass now resumes, effective the weekend of June 5/6, the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

We are grateful to God to have reached this point and ... we can't wait to see you again. Come home to Mass!"

**7 p.m. Mass on Saturdays is being celebrated outdoors in the Pavilion, weather permitting, throughout the summer. Please bring a lawn chair!**

## Sr. Therese Chmura Reassigned As Local Minister at Buffalo Convent

*Sr. Therese Chmura, CSSF, who for the past nine years has been Director of Faith Formation at St. Mary's, has been reassigned as Local Minister at Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent, Buffalo, effective July 1. Sr. Therese leaves St. Mary's with these parting words for parishioners:*

Dear St. Mary's Faith Community,

As you know, I am a Felician Sister, whose local "headquarters" is 600 Doat Street in Buffalo, formally known as the Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent.

It has been a joy to serve at St. Mary's since September 2012. You have helped and supported me in so many ways - which makes this note very difficult to write. It was a blessing to spend nine very beautiful years with you. I have become very fond of our dedicated, faith-filled catechists and volunteers. I have come to love our parents, youth and children. I appreciate the seasoned members of the parish who have a vested interest in the young. You have impressed me by your faith, generosity, and concern for those in need.

Beginning July 1, my community has assigned me to serve as local minister at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent. I have been called to oversee all aspects of the lives of the 50 sisters who reside there. My role will be to provide an atmosphere in which all the sisters can thrive, especially after a very long period of isolation caused by the pandemic. Several of the sisters are engaged in ministry outside of the convent, and others are engaged in internal ministries.

Our elderly sisters, who are provided with a medical staff for their physical care, also reside there. My role is to

walk with these sisters at their end stage of life in a safe, warm and caring atmosphere. These elderly sisters have served Western New York and beyond for countless years. Now, they are in need of attentiveness, support and care. I will do my best to provide that, just as I did my best to serve you at St. Mary's. One of my many tasks will be to



arrange funerals for the nine sisters who passed away during the pandemic, when gatherings were not permissible. God only knows what else is awaiting me!

I have truly enjoyed working with Father Paul, the staff, and all of you. Thank you for sharing your faith, your stories, and your lives with me. Thank you for many fond memories of my years at St. Mary's. I apologize to anyone I may have inadvertently hurt along the way. In the days ahead, I will be praying with our sisters for you in a very special way. Please pray for me and know that I will rely on your continued support as I change gears - leaving our young and vibrant families to journey with my sisters.

Although I will be just 20 minutes away, I am very sad to leave you. You have touched my life in ways you will never know. I sure am glad there is a heaven where we will be together again!

May God bless you and keep you close to Himself. May Mary guide you in the ways of Jesus.

With my gratitude, love and prayers,  
*Sister Therese Chmura, CSSF*



## Reach Out to Us Anytime!

You can reach members of our parish staff via email:

Fr. Paul Steller, Pastor:  
paul@stmarysonthehill.org

Deacon John Owczarczak:  
john@stmarysonthehill.org

Business Manager Bob Over:  
bob@stmarysonthehill.org

Cemetery Director Danny Rinow:  
danny@stmarysonthehill.org

Music Director Andrea Ross:  
andrea@stmarysonthehill.org

Communications Coordinator  
Diane Zwirecki:  
diane@stmarysonthehill.org

Events Coordinator  
Mary Kate DeMarzio:  
marykate@stmarysonthehill.org

Bookkeeper  
Heather Pierce:  
heather@stmarysonthehill.org

St. Mary's Elementary School  
Principal Kim Kwitowski:  
kwitowskik@smeschool.com

St. Mary of the Assumption Parish presents...



**Monday, July 26, 2021**

9:00 AM Registration  
10:00 AM Shotgun Start  
Lunch at the Turn  
*One Hour Open Bar before Dinner*  
4:30 PM BBQ Themed Dinner  
Prizes and Awards

Prizes for... Longest Drive · Highest Team Score  
Lowest Team Score · Closest to the Pin ·  
Hole in One Contest · Other Day of Contests



**GOLD SPONSOR \$1,500**

1 Golf Foursome  
Company Name on Tournament Banner  
2 Hole Signs  
Recognition on SME Website

**SILVER SPONSOR \$1,000**

1 Golf Foursome  
Company Name on Beverage Cart  
1 Hole Sign  
Recognition on SME Website

**BRONZE SPONSOR \$ 750**

1 Golf Foursome  
Putting Green and Driving Range Signage  
Recognition on SME Website

**LUNCH SPONSOR \$ 500**

1 Golf Pair  
Lunch Reception Signage  
Recognition on SME Website

**RECEPTION SPONSOR \$300**

Signage at Cocktail Hour  
1 Hole Sign  
Recognition on SME Website

**CONTEST SPONSOR \$100**

1 Contest Sign  
1 Hole Sign  
Recognition on SME Website

**HOLE SPONSOR \$50**

1 Hole Sign  
Recognition on SME Website

**Proceeds to benefit  
St. Mary's Elementary School**

Registration Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
email: \_\_\_\_\_

\$150 – Individual Golfer (will be assigned to a group)

\$600 – Foursome \_\_\_\_\_

\$50 Dinner Only

I am unable to attend, but would like to make a donation in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Sponsorships:

— GOLD	\$1,500
— SILVER	\$1,000
— BRONZE	\$ 750
— LUNCH	\$ 500
— RECEPTION	\$ 300
— CONTEST	\$ 100
— HOLE	\$ 50

Please make checks payable to: St. Mary's Elementary School or scan the QR code above to pay with credit.  
Forms may be mailed to: SME GOLF COMMITTEE, 2 St. Mary's Hill, Lancaster, NY 14086 · 716-683-2112

## Stop By for Coffee After Mass

St. Mary's is holding its Summer Coffee Hours in the Pavilion after Sunday Masses, through the end of the summer. Please plan to stop by!

Volunteers - individuals, families, ministries or other groups – are needed to host Coffee Hours following 8 a.m., 10 a.m. and 12 noon Masses. It takes just a small amount of time and it's a great opportunity to meet fellow parishioners and share faith, fellowship and fun. If you can help, please contact Elaine Driscoll at (716) 553-2618 or edristoj@aol.com.

**New this year:** If you have a special intention for which you would like the support of prayers from your fellow parishioners, you may submit it in our Prayer Box during a Sunday Coffee Hour. Otherwise, you may enter your intentions in the book located on the podium near the parking lot entrance to Church. These intentions are remembered during daily Masses at St. Mary's.

## St. Columba: Celebrating a Celtic Saint

by Barb Owczarczak, Pastoral Minister

Columba was born in 521 in Gartan, in what is now known as County Donegal, Ireland. His family were local aristocrats, part of the Cenél Conaill, a powerful local clan, some of whom became kings of Tara – the most powerful office in Ireland. His parents were Eithne and Fedelmid, and he is known to have had three sisters and a brother, but he may have had more.

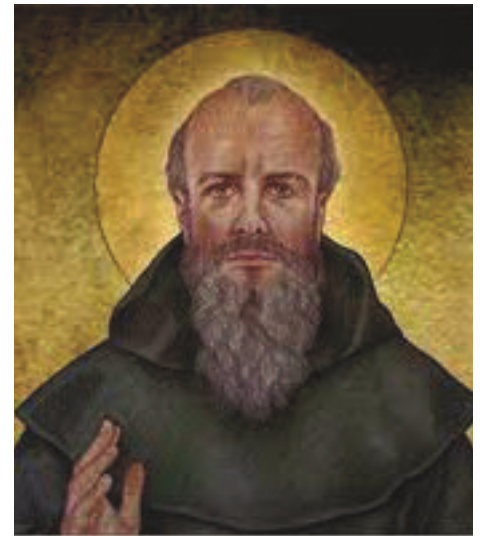
Columba is known to have been baptized in Temple-Douglas in the County Donegal parish at Conwal. Historians are unclear if Columba (also called Colmcille, Colum or Columcille, which mean "dove" in the Irish language) was given this name or if he adopted it later in life. As a young man, he studied at Moville under St. Finnian, then in Leinster at the monastery of Clonard under another St. Finnian. He was ordained a monk and priest in 551, before he turned 25, and spent the next 15 years preaching and setting up churches and monasteries at Derry, Durrow and Kells.

In 563, Columba is said to have traveled to the tiny Island of Iona, barely one mile by three miles in size, with 12 companions. It is believed by some that he fled Ireland after making a copy of the Gospels that the king of Ireland possessed. This theft caused a major battle between Columba's

clan and the king, which his clan won. Feeling remorse for the theft and the many deaths from the battle, Columba fled to Scotland. It is believed the isle was given to him by his kinsman, Conall mac Comgaill King of Dál Riata, who invited him to come to Scotland in the first place. There Columba built the first Celtic church and monastery in the country. It became a mother house, as Columba and his followers spread Christianity throughout Scotland. Iona would grow into one of the most influential religious and cultural centers in all of Britain.

The site was first prepared by ridding the isle of women and cows. Columba believed "where there was a cow, there was a woman, and where there was a woman, there was mischief," so abbey builders had to leave their wives elsewhere. It is also rumored he banished frogs and snakes, though it is unclear how that was done!

Besides bringing of the Celtic faith to Scotland, the monastery is known for the teaching of writing to the abbots, for their carvings, for the creation of texts of recorded history, and for the illustration of manuscripts. The abbots were a driving force behind scientific inquiry and learning at the time. When the abbey was attacked in 806 by Viking raiders, many of the monks



were slaughtered, and their works destroyed. Over time, the Roman Church replaced the Celtic Church in Scotland, and nothing remains of the buildings Columba had built, but it is believed his tomb remains on the isle.

According to traditional sources, Columba died in Iona on Sunday, June 9, 597 and was buried by his monks in the abbey he created. Columba's relics were removed in 849 and divided between Scotland and Ireland. He is the patron saint of Ireland (along with Brigid and Patrick), of Scotland, of bookbinders, floods, poets, and of Derry, where he founded a monastery in 540.

His Feast Day is June 9.



### Buy Scrip to Support St. Mary's

Please remember to support St. Mary's by purchasing Scrip gift cards.  
A percentage of all sales comes back to our parish and school.

Cards are available from a wide range of local and national vendors.

Orders may be sent to St. Mary's Elementary School, placed online, dropped off at the Rectory on weekdays between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m., or left in the locked box in the Church vestibule.

For more information, visit <http://stmarysonthehill.org/why-buy-scrip/> or email [scrip@smeschool.com](mailto:scrip@smeschool.com).

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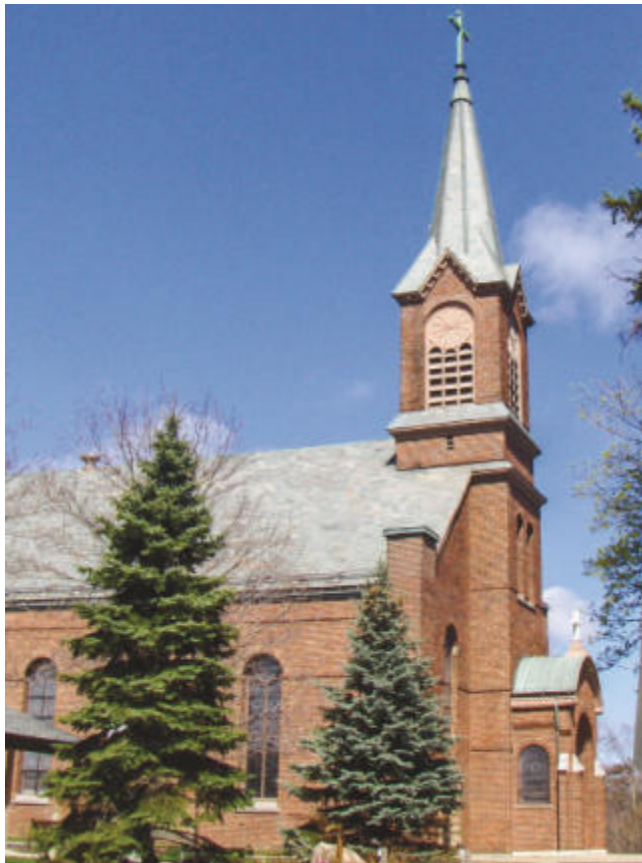
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Rev. John J. Mitka, Weekend Associate  
John Owczarczak, Permanent Deacon  
Diane Zwirecki, APR, Editor  
Ray Milkowski, Sr., Photographer



Visit us on Twitter @stmarys716



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## Masses

Monday – Friday: 12 Noon

Saturday: 4:30 & 7 PM

Sunday: 8 AM, 10 AM & 12 Noon

Weekday, Saturday 4:30 PM and Sunday 10 AM Masses  
are livestreamed.

Visit <http://stmarysonthehill.org/live-streams/>.

Livestreamed Masses are also available on Facebook and  
You Tube @St Mary's on the Hill.

*Please call the St. Mary's Rectory at (716) 683-6445  
for Holy Day Mass schedules.*

## Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)

Saturday 3:30 - 4 p.m. or by appointment

*Appointments may also be made by calling  
the St. Mary's Rectory at (716) 683-6445.*