

THE GABRIEL

HE IS RISEN

*“THIS IS THE DAY THE
LORD HAS MADE;*

*LET US REJOICE AND BE
GLAD IN IT.”*

PSALM 118:24

EASTER 2020





FROM THE DESK OF FATHER TOM

Dear Friends,

Okay, maybe I need to get out more often. Obviously I can't speak for you, but as for me, there are times I find myself unconsciously singing a refrain from one of the songs we've just sung at Mass.

Has it ever happened to you? Seemingly out of nowhere finding yourself singing, lifted up, in fact giving glory? Old words become new, sung now from within. Is it just the song or do we in fact unconsciously simply delight in having our hearts captured and lifted up by the One who makes all things new? I now find myself wondering, will a lifted-up heart lead to a lifted-up mind? I hope so.

Perhaps like me, you can still parrot back the old definition of prayer memorized years ago from the Baltimore Catechism: "Prayer is the lifting up of our minds and hearts to God." I think, though, I may have been absent on the day when others learned that it is God who does the lifting, the raising, the making all things new. It is God who takes the initiative with Abraham and Sarah, with Moses, with David, with Mary, with Joseph, with Jesus, and with you and with me! Do we want to learn the new refrains God taught and sang within our ancestors in faith, giving them all a new voice, a new heart, a new understanding?

Maybe I really do need to get out more often - out of my head and into my heart- welcoming with a new trust those stirrings within which just might be God lifting me, raising me. God lifting up my mind and my heart to reveal a new way of understanding of what Jesus felt within himself. God appealing to me- to us - to be like Jesus: an Apostle of Hope!

Just maybe the Easter season invites us to let our stirred hearts be led where our minds tempt us at times to avoid... those new relational places where God appeals to us to be an Apostle of Hope!

It really wasn't too long ago that we heard the Epiphany story of the wise men who followed the star. Why, the story begs, if it was such an amazing star, did only the figurative three set out to follow it? Perhaps it is a question of true wisdom. There were in fact other wise ones in the story, certainly the experts to whom Herod turns to ascertain the whereabouts of the newborn King. They have the head knowledge, but they never make the journey to the heart. We never hear of them again. They would not let their hearts lead their heads to undertake a new journey of discovery to new understandings. I guess in a sense they too needed to get out more often!

I encourage you during this Easter season to allow one of the many parish ministries to capture your heart and give you a new voice as an Apostle of Hope. During the Easter season we read in the Acts of the Apostles of the many miracles performed in the early church not by Jesus but by those who put their faith in Him. May we be those miracle workers today as we allow our God to lift up our minds and hearts in wonder and in hope as we sing, "Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!"

Happy Easter!



THE GABRIEL

THE MAGAZINE OF THE PARISH OF STS. PHILIP AND JAMES
SAINT JAMES, NY, 11780

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FROM THE EDITOR

ELENA ATKINS MINGIONE

Eas·ter

/ˈɛstər/

noun

the most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and held (in the Western Church) between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the northern spring equinox.

With the joys of Easter surrounding us we should try to take a moment to really think about the sacrifices the Son of God made for us.

There are times when we lose sight of life's treasures. We focus on the negative.

That's a trap we can easily fall into. So much can go wrong in our daily lives. We miss a train, we're late for a meeting, someone pushes the wrong button, you get a flat tire, your workday was far from stellar. At night, your child knocks over their juice which spills into their meal. A meal they expressed disdain for as soon as they sat down. Day to day frustrations, while often overwhelming (at that moment) are so insignificant in the scheme of our lives. Think about that for a moment. Then shift that thinking. Shift it to, *there's always a brighter side that God affords us*. Those are the gifts and treasures money can't buy. You know what they are. The beauty of a sunset, a magnificent full moon, the night sky filled with too many stars to count, fresh air, a smile from a stranger, a kind word received, something your child, grandchild, friend or neighbor shares with you. All those moments are immeasurable and lest I say, monumental for our souls. I know, of course, there are things money *can* buy to help us shift our focus. And those things, can, at times, lighten our load. So, enjoy those things too. A good movie at the theatre, a Broadway show, a hot cup of fresh coffee, an opera, a piece of chocolate cake, those new golf clubs, a delicious meatloaf with mashed potatoes, all those things can ease life's challenges.

The list goes on and on and on. God has given us the opportunity to enjoy.

Why and how did we get this opportunity? While the complexity entails mysteries of our faith, the answer should be easy for Catholics. God our Father sent His only son to be crucified, to die on the cross so that we may live.

Let's be Apostles of Hope this Easter season and beyond.

Be grateful.

Pay it forward.

Look for nothing in return.

God our Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will see it. No one, *absolutely no one else needs to see it*. **And that's a fact!**

Happy Easter!

John 11:25-26. Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die."

REMEMBERING KATIE

BY CLAIRE FARRELL

There are moments in life that one cannot be prepared for. For me, it was the day my 23 year- old daughter died. Katie was suddenly and brutally torn from our lives, leaving a devastating and gaping hole in my heart and in our family. Most profoundly, she left behind her 1-year old son. And I'm quite sure that her final thoughts on this side of heaven were just the words of love that a mother has written on her heart for her child. And I believe, after so many years, that on her side of heaven, Katie has watched her son grow up to the happy and healthy 9-year-old third grader he is today.

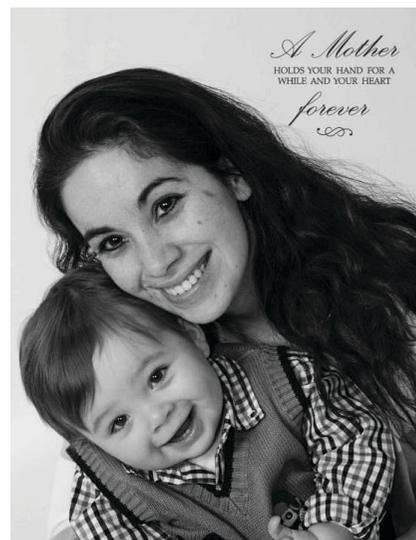
There are many mysteries that we commit our faith to, not the least of which is the impact of tragedy and suffering on the course of our earthly journey. We trust that God has a purpose greater than our capacity to discern, and if we can surrender our suffering to His purpose, it is there that we find His grace. For my family, for Katie's son, we saw God's grace manifest in the good people of this parish who wrapped their arms around us in so many ways. God was visibly and tangibly present to us in the love and goodness of our SSPJ family for the months and indeed years after that day that violently changed the fabric of my family and stole my baby grandson's mother from him in an instant.

However, when a young life is interrupted violently and purposefully, we are left not only with our own immediate loss, but the agonizing loss of her future, and the ever-present sense of her suffering. We are left with questions that will never be answered. As we lose the memory of the sound of her voice we wonder: what would she sound like speaking her son's name? As the memory of her face is frozen in time in pictures we wonder: What would she look like today when smiling at her son? As we have lost the reality of her everyday presence, we wonder: what would her future have looked like? We seek an answer from God that sometimes becomes gradually clear in the legacy of loss.

I like to believe that Katie's legacy... her future, her purpose, her *raison d'être*.... is made manifest in the life of her son and her understanding of motherhood. Katie wrote her own legacy by her fierce determination in claiming the unexpected, unplanned pregnancy that she loved and protected against an outside world who suggested she do otherwise. Katie was the brave face of the young, alone, unsure single mother who refused to sacrifice her pregnancy to a society who told her that she was unready, unprepared, and incapable of motherhood. How brave my daughter was. Katie understood the inherent sanctity of all life. Not some life... all life. She knew that her son was just as destined to be part of God's plan as she was, no matter what obstacles they both might endure. In her own words: "A pregnancy may be unplanned, but a child is not a mistake." Katie understood that a mother lays down her life for her child; she does not take the life of her child. Katie's legacy is just simply this: motherhood should be embraced, unborn babies should be welcomed to life, and the greatest sacrifice we can make in God's great earthly kingdom is to lay down our life for love.

Therefore, it seems to me, that the most perfect place for Katie to be remembered is in a playground. Katie is an SSPJ alumnus and spent many years playing on the playground where her son, Tyler, now plays with his classmates. Generations of children have passed through our parish and our school and have run freely and innocently in our playground. Each of our children has a purpose and a destiny that God alone knows. In Katie's memory, we pray that all young mothers will recognize that their own worth, their own purpose, their own destiny.... is inextricably connected to their children, born and unborn. In her memory, we pray that all children experience that joy, innocence and freedom that is found running through a playground on a beautiful day.

The Katie Farrell Memorial Playground will be dedicated this spring, thanks to the efforts of many parishioners, Principal Diane Anderson, Pastor Father Tom, Business Manager Virginia Portanova, and Katie's family.



MUSIC MINISTRY

BY MARGARET ADAMS



The Music Ministry wishes you a very Blessed and Happy Easter!! Thank you to all our members for a job well done. A prayerful Lent and joyous Easter was had by all.

I would like to spotlight a part of the Music Ministry that needs more volunteers, the Baptism Music Ministry. We presently have 10 people in the Ministry. If more people become involved in this ministry, the time commitment for each member would be lessened. Baptisms are held twice a month on Sundays at 2:00pm. Would you please prayerfully consider sharing your talents and joining this joyful ministry?



I would like to acknowledge the people who dedicate their time and talent to this part of the Music Ministry. Some are also members of the choir and cantors.

They are:

Singers

Barbara O'Donnell

Grace Cazzaniga

Judy Contrino

Carol Argentieri

June Kempf

Accompanists

Susan Ricci (flute)

Jim Scully (guitar)

Clare Farrell (piano)

Sophia Hagendorf (piano)

Christine Fena (piano)

PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

BY LYNN SISTI



Parish Social Ministry has times when, although always with something to do, there is not the constant flurry of activity that occurs from September through December. Our endeavors for the last few months included the Blood Drive and our Soup Supper. So, with little to report now, I would just like to reflect on our ministry as one of service.

Service to others means doing something for someone else without expecting any reward or gain. It means being unselfish. It also means helping people out when they cannot complete a task by themselves. By serving others, you are bettering your character and the character of those around you. It is said that one act of kindness leads to another one. Service to others is a very important part of making a community. By helping and serving, you are letting the respect between others and yourself to grow. This growing respect allows the community to thrive and grow stronger. Therefore, service to others is an extremely important part of any community.

When you serve, you discover that often the most important things you have to offer are not things at all. You start to realize, your time, presence, attention, and the ability to give, stem from a state of mind and heart, a place much deeper than the material. You begin to discover humble opportunities to serve – everywhere. And so, begins a shift from a “me” orientation to a “we” orientation. You start to look at people and situations with an eye for what you can offer them, and not vice versa. The mindset shifts from “What’s in it for me?” to “What can I do to help?”. When serving in this way, your cup fills and overflows.

Service doesn’t start when we have something to give. It blossoms naturally when we have nothing left to take, and that is a powerful place to be. We begin to play our part – first, by becoming conscious of the blessings we receive, then by feeling gratitude for them, and finally by continuing to pay forward our gifts with a heart of joy.

Mother Teresa, who made a difference in the lives of millions has said, “We can do no great things – only small things with great love”. It’s not just what we do that matters, but the inner motivation behind our action that really counts.

Any time we practice the smallest act of service, even if it’s only holding a door for somebody, and you do it with a full heart, that kind of giving changes the habit of self-centeredness. No true act of service, however small, can ever really be wasted. Eventually, there comes the realization that when you give, you actually receive. Over time, all those small acts, those small moments, lead to something different where service becomes increasingly effortless and as awareness grows, you inevitably start to see the unending ripple that interacts with countless others.

Author Rachel Naomi Remen says, “When you help, you see life as weak, when you fix, you see life as broken, when you serve, you see life as whole.” With that understanding, we start by becoming conscious of the blessings we receive, then by feeling gratitude for them, and finally by continuing to pay forward our gifts with a heart of joy. Each of us has such gifts: skills, material resources, connections, presence, everything we consider ourselves privileged to have. Using our gifts, our actions become more effortless and begin a ripple effect. What each of us can do on a personal level is make such small offerings of service that ultimately create the field for deeper change. The revolution starts with you and me.

Note: If you would be interested in volunteering in Parish Social Ministry, please call Lynn Sisti at the parish office, 631 584 5454. At the present time, we have enough volunteers for the food pantry. However, there are many other areas where your time and talents will be well utilized.

THE STUDENTS OF SSPJ

THE TIME I FELT CLOSE TO GOD

Dear Friends in Christ,

I would like to share with you the Mission of Sts. Philip and James School.

Saints Philip & James School is dedicated to providing a Catholic education that nourishes respect for individual diversity, fosters cooperative learning, promotes global awareness, and instills 21st century skills needed in today's society. Our primary commitment is to integrate the Gospel message with the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development of our students, thus enabling them to become the leaders of tomorrow.

It is a true blessing to see our mission come to life. To see our students grow in their faith and become active participants in their school and parish community is a gift to all.

SSPJ students were asked to describe a moment when they felt close to God. It is evident that the Good News of Jesus Christ our Lord is alive in the hearts of our students. Our dedicated faculty and staff give our students so many opportunities to let Christ in. As they strengthen their Catholic Identity, academic excellence follows.

I am honored to share the following essays with you.

Blessings,
Ms. Anderson



DIANE ANDERSON
PRINCIPAL - SSPJ SCHOOL



CHRISTINE McGOVERN
GRADE 3

FROM CHRISTINE McGOVERN
GRADE 3

One time I felt close to God was my First Holy Communion. I felt close to God that day because I was excited to do my 3rd sacrament and to try the body and blood of Christ. I was also so excited to make it with my friends.



FROM JULIANNA CAREY
GRADE 3

The day I felt close to God was when my little sister was born. I was going to be a big sister for the first time. God was watching me when I was going to the hospital to see her. Grace is a great sister and now she is a big sister to our little brother. Thank you God for being close to me at that moment.



JULIANNA CAREY
GRADE 3

FROM JACK CAREY
GRADE 4



JACK CAREY
GRADE 4

On November 1st my prayers were answered when I got a new baby brother named Benjamin. He was born at Southside Hospital and the first day I saw him, I had tears in my eyes. God had created such a wonderful baby boy.

My dad told me mom and Benjamin would have to stay in the hospital for four days. Each day my sisters and I went to the hospital to see mom and Ben. I couldn't wait for them to get home but my dad told me there was a chance Benjamin would have to stay in the hospital another day. He wasn't gaining weight and had blood drawn every day. I was scared. I just wanted my brother to come home.

Before I went to bed I said a prayer to God for Benjamin and then I went to sleep hoping he would come home. During the night my Dad called me downstairs. I was nervously walking down the stairs toward the kitchen when...I saw my brother!

"I was praying for this!" I said to my mom and dad. I started hugging them. When my brother came home I knew Christ was with me. Thank you God!

FROM JOSEPH NIGRO
GRADE 5

During the summer of 2016, my family and I traveled west. We flew from New York to Houston, Texas. My parents rented a car and we drove through three states. As we traveled, I was in awe of the untouched landscape of our country. I saw amazing rock formations, unusual plants, and spotted wildlife along the way. The most spectacular landscape I encountered was in Flagstaff, Arizona home of the Grand Canyon. It was the most beautiful site I had ever seen. Its' colors were vibrant and its' vastness indescribable. As you stood at the edge of the Grand Canyon, the view before you seemed unreal. You felt as if you were a spectator looking out at a gorgeous painting. It was at that moment I experienced Christ. I felt as a small piece of Heaven was shared here on Earth. A landscape only God could paint, an untouched environmental wonder, created to remind us of God's greatness and endless love.



JOSEPH NIGRO
GRADE 5

FROM JACK HURLBERT
GRADE 5



JACK HURLBERT
GRADE 5

I remember one time when I was helping a new altar server. I was showing and guiding her through all the different steps of the mass. We both held a candle and walked down behind the cross at the beginning of mass. I showed her that you have to walk slowly.

During the gospel we held the candles again. I guided her and told her when to get up. I also made sure we both bowed at the crucifix. We held the candle the whole time Deacon John read the gospel.

We also prepared for the blessing of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. I showed her the water that we would use to clean Father Patrick's hands. I also told her when to ring the bells when Father Patrick blessed the body and blood of Christ. At the end of mass, I again guided her to the candles and showed her where to stand.

I feel like Christ was present in my life that day because He reminded me of all the steps I had to first take when I started as an altar server last year. It reminded me of when an older boy helped me. Christ was with him that day and it helped me to be a better altar server. I feel like I am living Jesus' word when I altar serve.

FROM MATTHEW MONTEFUSCO
GRADE 6

God is someone who can help us when we are going through rough times. Some other names for God are Lord, Savior, and Father. When I think about God I feel happy and peaceful.

A time I feel closest to God is when I am at reconciliation. When I walk, step into the confessional I feel nervous but I know that everything is ok. After I confess my sins to the priest, I feel good. I feel like God is right there with me. I walk out of the little room and feel God's grace. I feel really peaceful and happy.

It means so much to me to always feel God's Love always.



MATTHEW MONTEFUSCO
GRADE 6

FROM NICOLE LoCASTRO
GRADE 6

God is my Father who gives me everything. He loves me and I love him. I call him Noel, Lord, and my peace. When I think about God I feel peaceful, loved, safe, and happy.

A time that I felt God's love was my first time cantoring. I felt so close to God because I was on the altar, and I felt like God was standing next to me the whole time. I felt an overwhelming rush of happiness. I was so very loved with the support of my friends and family. I was so nervous but God gave me the confidence to stand up in front of the whole church and sing. I never knew I could do something that would make me so happy.

I know that I will always continue cantoring and that I will never forget the day that I cantored for the first time. I love my church. I grew up with it; I want my future to be in it. I am just so glad that I could do this.



NICOLE LoCASTRO
GRADE 6

FROM JONAH CARLSON
GRADE 7

In my life, there were many times I felt close to God, but this one affected me the most. A few months ago, my dad called me and my sister to tell us that our grandpa was sick. He told us he has cancer. My dad told us that it was only stage one, which we were thankful for. We were still very sad that he had been diagnosed with cancer, but we were blessed and so was he. He was also very happy that it was only stage one because that meant he got more time with us. He was not in the hospital; he was still up and working. He has to go to the doctor a lot, but it's OK. We would rather him do that instead of being in the hospital.

My family and I are very happy that he is doing the activities that he loves, like seeing his grandkids, golfing, and going to work. Now, he is doing great. He will hopefully recover soon and not have to go to the doctor. He loves God and I am sure God loves him. I hope even more miracles happen and he gets fully better.

But, every decision is made by God and is made for a reason.



JONAH CARLSON
GRADE 7

FROM KATE NICASTRO
GRADE 8



KATE NICASTRO
GRADE 8

As a Catholic, I have had the honor of experiencing many special moments with God. I have gone to Catholic school my whole life. As a result, Jesus plays a large role in my daily life.

Just a few weeks ago, I went to adoration. I have gone to adoration many times before, but this time was different. Every time I would pray, I felt like God was responding when I spoke to him. The technical term for "Adoration" is to venerate our savior for what he has done for us. We praise him in his own divine image. Personally, I have my own definition for adoration. Adoration is almost therapeutic for me. Everyone has their own ideas or secrets that they don't want to share with others. I can trust God with anything. When I go to adoration, I get this feeling. The more I go to adoration, the stronger the feeling gets.

The last time I went to adoration, (and I know this sounds cheesy) something happened to me. I can't describe the feeling, but when I was praying and I heard the peaceful music playing in the background, I felt like I was in an eternal happiness. The feeling and happiness I receive at adoration is exactly what I picture Heaven to be like. Obviously I don't know what Heaven entails, but it was at this moment when I realized what it represented. It represents everything I want from my life. One of my biggest fears is, or was, death. After this moment, I realized that when I die, it will be because God decided that I knew the true meaning of life. I felt like he was telling me that once I arrive to Heaven, the only feeling I will feel is what I felt at this exact moment.

Again, I go to Catholic school, but I have never felt closer to God than at this moment. As long as the incredible moment I experienced is just like Heaven, I am a happy camper.

FROM MAEVE O'CONNOR
GRADE 8

A time I felt Jesus present was when I had to read the second reading at five o'clock mass. I chose this time because it was something I was nervous about but when Jesus was with me, I didn't feel scared.

When I arrived I was so nervous I was shaking. I walked in to see Rita greeting people at the door. Rita has been helping me practice my reading. She takes me to the back of the church to practice once more. As I read my voice trembles with fear. I'm terrified. Rita encourages me that I will be great. After that I go to the front of the church and continue greeting people with Ms. Anderson. Then Ms. Anderson leaves and we process in. I was happy to have a kind lady doing the first reading to help me. We get to our seats in the front and I feel an overwhelming sense of calmness. I truly believe Jesus was with me, helping me. I go up and do my reading perfectly with no fear. Jesus was present and helped me do something I thought I couldn't ever do.

Jesus has been with me to help me through tough times. When Jesus was with me that night at mass, I felt as though I could do anything. That night I did something totally out of my comfort zone, without fear, and that was because of Jesus on my side.



MAEVE O'CONNOR
GRADE 8

***WISHING YOU A VERY HAPPY AND BLESSED EASTER,
FROM ALL OF US AND FROM ALL THE STUDENTS AT
SSPJ.***



HEART TO HEART

BY DR. JOE FRANCO



FEAR IN THE TIME OF CORONA VIRUS

Disclaimer: This article is certain to be outdated by the time you are reading it. Consider it a journal entry, written before the post-coronavirus future unfolded. As I sit and write in early March 2020, fears of the potentially devastating effects from the novel coronavirus COVID-19 can be overwhelming. New York has declared a state of emergency in the face of accelerating numbers of infected, currently 216 cases at the time of this writing. Suffolk County has 6 of the 216 reported infections. If you watch the news, confusion, chaos and fear reign. Many are likely to be infected, with the elderly and immunocompromised at greatest risk of death or critical illness. While not currently at biblical proportions, there is genuine cause for concern.

Fear is a funny thing. It can be both empowering and disabling. It can lead to bad decisions or can sharpen focus leading to good ones.

In a horror movie, a woman runs for her life from a monster, making bad decisions all the while. She picks up a banana instead of a gun on the table. The audience screams “DON’T OPEN THE DOOR!” What does she do? Fear, real or perceived, clouds the thought process and often leads to bad judgement.

A little bit of fear can be helpful. It hones your senses. In my clinical practice, when I am a little worried about a particular patient, I’m double and triple checking; waiting for the lab results; making sure they follow up. My fear is a catalyst for the action needed for the patient at that moment.

In my personal life, I worry about my children, both in their day to day lives and on their path in the world. My daughter was recently learning to ride a two-wheeler. Taking off the training wheels put knots in my stomach. With her helmet and knee pads, she is prepared for battle. I am sure to hold the back of the bike, promising to never let go. Her lips trembled and so did my knees. A few falls, scrapes and bruises later, she rides out and turns back towards me, a half-toothed smile gleaming as she feels the rush of freedom the bike provides. Her new-found confidence and self-esteem a result of determination and discipline. Watching my child ride a bike for the first time was exhilarating. I understood what it meant for her to face fear and grow into the person God intended for her. In a way, it was a spiritual experience. Had I given into my fear, she would still have the training wheels on. Had neither of us any fear, she would be riding her bicycle on the LIE. Striking the balance between fear and calm is how we both moved closer to the people we are supposed to be.

The Gospels list some 125 Christ-issued imperatives. Among the most common theme is to “not be afraid” or “not fear” or “have courage” or “take heart” or “be of good cheer.” The reassurance that Jesus wants me to live a life of freedom and peace provides comfort during this time of uncertainty. We all know that we fall short of this, yet we are striving to become who God created us to be. Remember that in these disordered times, God created a universe that is perfectly ordered for you to move towards your true self and the framework of how to get there is outlined in the Gospels. *Do not be afraid, I am with you.*



As it relates to coronavirus, I pray we all have a healthy level of fear. Some will hoard hand sanitizer and Dinty Moore canned stew. Others will write off this virus as a flash in the pan. Recognize that both extremes are likely to hurt people. Use common sense and judgement. Irrational fear, often perpetuated by the 24-hour news cycle, is likely to cloud that. I will spare you a lecture on handwashing and avoiding sick contacts. Listen to the CDC and the surgeon general. God knows where this infection will be at the time of our Gabriel publication and into the coming months. As always, let us come together as Catholics in prayer for the sick and dying, while we keep an appropriate level of fear, motivating us to help others and ourselves.

RCIA

THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

BY SISTER THERESITA



ERIC AND HIS FIANCEE'
KATHERINE

“If it is Easter, then we celebrated RCIA Rights at the Vigil,” stated Sister Theresita.

This year our RCIA process was different than usual. At the beginning of the year we did not have any candidates for the process and so what do we do?

Our creative team suggested bringing the process to the church. So, in December, we began doing some Advent programs for all those interested. After taking a break from church classes, RCIA returned to do a Lenten series. People remained in church after the 8:00am and 12:00 Noon Masses to enjoy revitalizing their life of faith. Through this experience we gained two candidates for completion of their sacraments, Eric and Paul. They have faithfully been attending classes along with their fiancés and celebrated

their full communion at our Easter Vigil.

The team, including Michael & Glee Hoonhout, Janet O’Hanlon, Bill Haff, Marty Rizzo, Tom & Paula Parish, Georgia Priebe, Barbara Erias & Sister Theresita are so grateful to all those who participated. All are welcome to join us after Easter in the Philip and James Room for the part of the process called Mystagogy, which continues the cycle of learning and celebration of faith.

Again, thanks to the parishioners who joined us. Please know you are always welcome to be with us.

Check the bulletin for schedules.



RCIA
A Journey In Faith



***“Be who God meant
you to be and you
will set the world
on fire.”***

St. Catherine of Siena

SISTER T



PAUL AND HIS FIANCEE'
MARIA

THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

BY VIRGINIA PORTANOVA

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in You!

The Heart of Jesus was no different than ours.

The heart is a symbol of love, pumping lifeblood through our bodies about 100,000 times a day. The physical heart of Jesus symbolizes the total love of Jesus, divine and human.

Why do you think the heart of Jesus is shown on the outside of His body? A child answered, because He loves us so much that He can't keep it in!

"O God, what will You do to conquer the fearful hardness of our hearts?

Lord, you must give us new hearts, tender hearts, sensitive hearts, to replace hearts that are made of marble and of bronze.

You must give us Your own Heart, Jesus. Come, lovable Heart of Jesus.

Place your Heart deep in the center of our hearts and enkindle in each a flame of love as strong, as great, as the sum of all the reasons that I have for loving You, my God.

O Holy Heart of Jesus, dwell hidden in my heart, so that I may live only in You and only for You, so that, in the end, I may live with You eternally in Heaven."

~ ~ ~ Prayer of St. Claude la Colombiere to The Sacred Heart of Jesus ~ ~ ~

What is a devotion to the Sacred Heart all about – It is the practice of selfless love.

We seem to be living in a love-starved world – a selfish world – a world so preoccupied with space and time that almost no thought is given to the joys that await those who faithfully serve God in the here and now. What does God want from us – He wants us to love Him with all our heart and to serve Him faithfully. It's not a difficult task. It is not beyond our reach. It is not impossible. When we give ourselves to the needs of all who cross our paths on this journey of life, we are serving our God.

There is no paved road to Heaven. No golden staircase to reach the gates. The way to meet God face-to-face is to practice selfless love here on earth.

⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, Matthew 5:44

Sometimes there seems to be so many obstacles on our path. We encounter people who are unkind, unjust and even outright cruel. It is then that we are asked to reach out, to extend a hand, to show the kind of love that God expects from His followers. The same love that Jesus showed for us by dying on the cross.

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a Visitation Sister and St. Claude la Colombiere, a Jesuit priest worked together to spread the devotion to The Sacred Heart. The devotion flourished in the later 1600's. School, hospitals, retreat centers, parishes and universities were named in it's honor. In 1675 The Sacred Heart appeared before Sr. Margaret Mary saying, "behold this heart burning with so great a love for men".



We invite you to take a few minutes to sit before the Sacred Heart in the new prayer garden.

Meditate on some of the most important questions:

Do I show love to my family, friends and neighbors?

Do I show love to strangers and outcast as Jesus would expect from me?

Do I love my enemies and pray for those who persecute me?

Do I express love for the earth, sea, sky, the universe?

Do I love as Jesus loves?



**VIRGINIA
PORTANOVA**

THE MEANING OF GIVING

BY VIRGINIA PORTANOVA

Financial success is often the measure by which we judge many corporations. While certain aspects of the Church are run as a corporation - we are more than that – we are Church, a parish family. The Church is responsible for the financial resources which have been entrusted to it. This responsibility includes safeguarding Church assets, exercising prudence in financial matters, and accountability to those who provide monetary support to the parish. As such, the Church is committed to the highest standards of fiscal integrity and accountability. We assure you the best financial practices are always followed.

Over the years we seem to hit some rough patches in the roadway, potholes in the pavement, gray clouds that just seem to hover overhead but all is not doom-and-gloom - we need to focus on the blue skies and green lights ahead. SSPJ has much to be proud of. Our accomplishments are great financially, spiritually and ministerial life as well.

Yes, Mass attendance is down which leads to a decrease in collections. While we note that this is a systemic issue globally, that doesn't alleviate the financial pressures here within our parish. Over the past five years, we have reacted to this financial challenge by reducing expenditures, cutting payroll, relying heavily on volunteer office staff; all the while adding to the programs that are at the heart and soul of SSPJ.

Thank you to all who have responded to our request to “share a cup of coffee with us”. Your continued support and generosity enable us to continue operating our parish within our balanced operating budget. Your support of Catholic Ministries Appeal not only offers hope and support to the ministries it serves, when we reach our goal set by the diocese, the parish receives a rebate which helps us to tend to needs such as unforeseen repairs or maintenance outside of our budget. Support of parish fundraisers is a great way to meet and greet our parish family. Thank you to the chair-people of Magic of Ireland and all who supported this event. It was a great success in building community and raising funds.

So, why should we financially support our church?

1) Giving is Compassionate

“Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble” (Philippians 4:14)

Parish ministries care for hurting people around the world. If financial assistance will bring some relief, then giving will be an act of compassion. Christian compassion always extends beyond care for people's physical well-being to their spiritual well-being.

When you support Christian ministries striving to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ, you are being compassionate.

2) Giving is Ministry

*“...no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only.”
(Philippians 4:15)*

It is important for us to understand that Giving is not simply a way to support Christian ministries...Giving makes you a part of the ministry itself!

3.) Giving is Wise

*“Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.”
(Philippians 4:17)*

Wise investing, successful investing, produces increasing returns. When Scripture talks about investing our resources in gospel ministry, we see again and again that this is wise, because it is abundantly fruitful.

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...”
(Matthew 6:19-20)*

Jesus is saying that it's possible to invest in all kinds of things in this life. Treasures on earth can be taken from us. Time and age can wear them down and destroy them. Markets can crash and diminish them.

There is another kind of investing that is completely secure. We can lay up treasures in heavenly things. We can invest in building Christ's kingdom.

Investing in Christ's kingdom produces an amazing return.

4) Giving is Worship

*“I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.”
(Philippians 4:18)*

This does not mean that by giving you earn God's favor and love. It is the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross that makes us right with God. Faith in him alone is the basis of our forgiveness and eternal life.

We worship when we give. Giving is not merely about supporting a person or a ministry...not merely about following a command. Giving is about heartfelt worship to the Lord. You acknowledge, “God, you own everything. All that I have is a gift from you.”

5.) Giving is Safe

*“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 4:19)*

Most investing involves risk. And this is often the obvious reason we struggle with giving. You might be wondering, *If I give to the Lord, if I support Christian ministries, how can I be sure that I'll have enough for everything else?*

Verse 19 provides a wonderful promise to rest in: *“My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”* We need to let that sink in.

What you think you need and what God knows you need may be two different things. In God’s perfect wisdom he may withhold many things that you feel are necessities. But because he is your loving Father in Christ, you can always trust that he is doing this for your good.

Why should we support our Church?

Giving is compassionate, giving is ministry,
giving is wise, giving is worship, and giving is safe
because we serve the God of abundant riches.

At the end of the day, our greatest desire is that the God who made us, the God who saved us, and the God who will bring us into his kingdom one day will receive glory forever and ever.

There is no greater motivator than the glory of God and giving is one way we honor him.

But we must remember that every Christian virtue, including giving, happens under the banner of his grace.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit” (Philippians 4:23).

We do not support Christian ministries in order to earn God’s favor, we do not pray in order to earn God’s favor, we do not attend church in order to earn God’s favor, we do not do anything in order to earn God’s favor.

We do everything in response to the favor he has graciously shown us, and continues to graciously show us each day, and will graciously show us forever.



**VIRGINIA PORTANOVA IS THE BUSINESS
MANAGER FOR SSPJ**

Springtime Reading

A Book Review

I was able to make my annual retreat using the theme of the following book as my focus, *The Song of the Seed (A Monastic Way of Tending the Soul)* by Macrina Wiederkehr. I found this book exceptional. This book, together with the guidance of my Spiritual Director and God, helped to make my retreat extremely motivating and inspirational. I thought I would share a little of my findings with you.

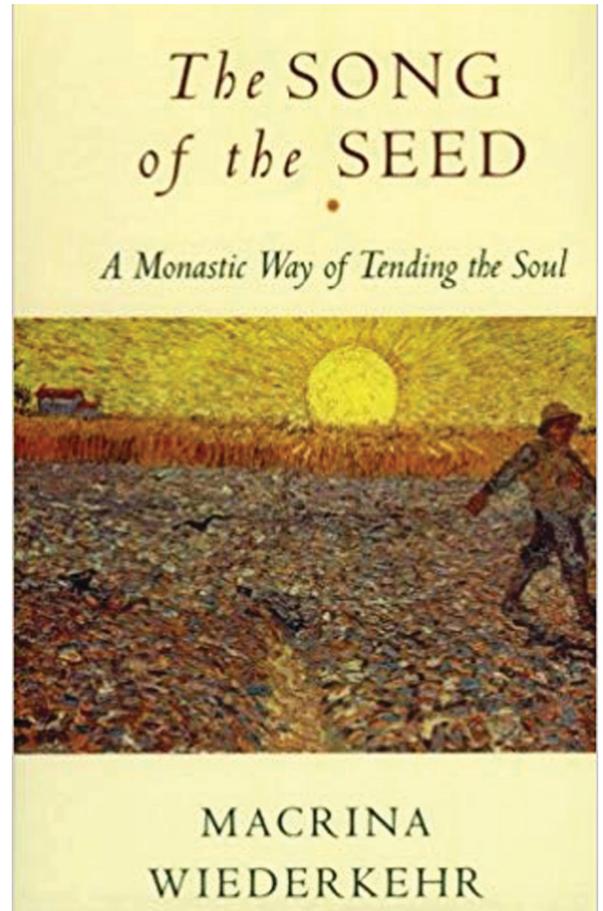
We are all familiar with the parable of the Sower and the Seed. (Mt 13:1-23) Most of the time we tend to focus on the seed in the thorns, on the road, or on the rocks. Well, in a very positive approach Macrina asks us to look at the seed that fell on good soil. It is so easy to name all that is wrong with us, yet we need to focus on the good seed within us that is constantly growing and calling us to deeper union with God. The seed has been planted by God and we need to water it, nourish it. I found that this book does just that. By using Scripture readings and reflecting on their effect on our lives we come to a deeper understanding of who we are and how we relate to God.

Some of the topic titles include, *The Dance of Trust; The Dance of Conversion; The Feast of Healing; The Feast of Freedom; The Gift of Discipleship and The Gift of the Buried Treasure.* The book has had a profound effect on my life so much so that I have already decided to share it with several friends and form a reflection group. My prayer is that you take a chance on enriching your spiritual life and read this inspiring book.

Have a joy filled Easter.

Many blessings and happy seed growing. You already have good soil!

BY SISTER THERESITA





THIS EDITION OF THE GABRIEL WAS
SUPPORTED BY A GENEROUS
ANONYMOUS DONATION.

IT IS DEDICATED TO THAT FAMILY'S
SPECIAL INTENTION



In recent news:

Pope Francis has announced the appointment of Rev. Luis Miguel Romero as a new Auxiliary Bishop of the Rockville Centre Diocese. Bishop-elect Romero has served the last six years as pastor of Our Lady of Loretto church in Hempstead and had recently been appointed in charge of Hispanic ministry in the Diocese.

The former Auxiliary Bishop of Rockville Centre, Nelson Perez, has been appointed by Pope Francis as the new Archbishop of Philadelphia. With 1.3 million Catholics, Philadelphia is the 4th largest diocese in the United States.

The Pope annually delivers an Easter message in his “Urbi et Orbi” address in the Vatican. Since he delivers this message on Easter Sunday each year, we do not have his 2020 message. However, here is an excerpt from last year’s message:

“Today the Church renews the proclamation made by the first disciples: “Jesus is risen!” And from mouth to mouth, from heart to heart, there resounds a call to praise: “Alleluia, Alleluia!” On this morning of Easter, the perennial youth of the Church and of humanity as a whole, I would like to address each of you in the opening words of my recent Apostolic Exhortation devoted especially to young people:

“Christ is alive! He is our hope, and

in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world. Everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive! He is in you, he is with you and he never abandons you. However far you may wander, he is always there, the Risen One. He calls you and he waits for you to return to him and start over again. When you feel you are growing old out of sorrow, resentment or fear, doubt or failure, he will always be there to restore your strength and your hope”

(Christus Vivit, 1-2).

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE VATICAN NEWS HAS AN APP? YOU CAN FIND IT IN THE APPLE APP STORE OR IN GOOGLE PLAY.

DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU CAN FOLLOW THE POPE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

Yes, it’s true. The Pope has Twitter and Instagram accounts, You can follow the Pope on Twitter @pontifex or on Instagram @franciscus.

Here are some recent posts by the Pope:

TWEETS:



Pope Francis @Pontifex

There is a poverty that we must accept, that of our own being, and a poverty that we must seek instead - a concrete one - from the things of this world, in order to be free and to be able to love. #GeneralAudience #Beatitudes

Pope Francis @Pontifex



The Document on Human Fraternity, signed one year ago, has written a new page in the dialogue between religions and people of good will. As brothers and sisters, we want to say “no” to violence, and together promote peace, life, and religious freedom.

Pope Francis @Pontifex



Brothers and sisters, in moments when we are far from God, it would do us good to hear this voice in our heart: “My son, my daughter, what are you doing? Please, don’t kill yourself. I died for you.” #Homily-SantaMarta

INSTAGRAM POST:



EN : If we lose our memory, we destroy our future. May the anniversary of the Holocaust, the unspeakable cruelty that humanity learned of 75 years ago, serve as a summons to pause, to be still and to remember. We need to do this, lest we become indifferent. #weremember #memorialday



SAVANNA ANTONELLI

NICHOLAS GAMPEL

LOUIS SMETTAN

ANNA SOFIA GUCCIARDI

GUILANA DI PALO

**STUDENTS IN
3RD GRADE
RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION
MADE MOSAIC
CROSSES THIS
SEMESTER**



Easter Love

On Easter we celebrate love,
love coming down from heaven,
love blanketing the earth
in a transforming embrace;
unique and infinite love,
giving more than we can imagine
for us, to cleanse our sin,
a perfect sacrifice, Lamb of God,
the walking, talking Word.
He is teacher, role model, friend,
this God in human form,
dying, then rising from the dead,
proving all who believe
will also rise
to have eternal life, with Him,
Lord of all.
Oh, Happy, Happy Easter!

by Joanna Fuchs

