

STEWARDSHIP

Our Way of Life



The Church of
St. Mary

A NOTE FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear People of St. Mary's Community,

I am most especially grateful to God for the opportunity to serve here in Alexandria at Thanksgiving. After being in Zimmerman for only a month, I was asked to come here. I thought it was at the *end of the world*. But, like every parish I have ever been assigned to, I learned to love where I was assigned. But here the added benefit is the beauty of the area lakes, along with people who indeed have their own minds. I am thankful for these blessings.

What does it mean to be thankful? The sin of Adam and Eve was first and foremost a failure in *receptivity* and *gratitude*. God gave them life, each other, and the garden and asked them only to *receive it in gratitude*. Only after doing this, do we go on to “break and share.” Before all else, we first give thanks.

To receive in gratitude is the most primary of all religious attitudes. **Gratitude is the ultimate virtue**; it defines holiness. Saints are people who are grateful, who see and receive everything as a gift.

After Achilles tendon surgery some time ago, I spent a night in a hospital. Another patient was brought to the room from the emergency room. He groaned with pain. Several times that night, a nurse entered the room to care for him. Despite his pain, each time she walked away from his bed, he would thank her.

Finally, she said to him: “*Sir, you don't need to thank me. This is my job!*”

“*Ma'am!*” he replied, “*it's nobody's job to take care of me! Nobody owes me that. I want to thank you!*”

I was struck by how, even in his pain, this man remained conscious of the fact that **life, love, care, and everything else comes to us as a gift, not as owed**. He genuinely appreciated what this nurse was doing for him.

It's our tendency to forget this that gets us into trouble. The failure to be grateful, to take as what's offered as gift as *owed to me*, lies at the root of many of our deepest resentments towards others — and their resentments towards us.

Invariably when we are angry at someone, especially at those closest to us, it is precisely because *we are not being appreciated* (that is, thanked) properly. Conversely, I suspect, more than a few people harbor resentments towards us because we, consciously or unconsciously, think that it is *their* job to take care of us.

Like Adam and Eve, we *take* what can only be received gratefully as gift as if it is ours by right. This goes against the very contours of love. **It is the original sin.**

As we approach Advent together — the season of preparing for the enfleshment of God in our world, think about who or what we take for granted. Christ still takes flesh in our world — through you and me. Are we grateful for that great a gift? How do we show it?

In gratitude....

Fr. Steven M. Binsfeld



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A JOYFUL MEETING

by Courtney Palan

Adam and I were married at St. Mary's in Alexandria on December 29, 2017 and planned our honeymoon to Rome, Italy at the recommendation of Adam's aunt and uncle who had also visited Rome and attended a Sposi Novelli (newlywed couple) audience at the Vatican in years prior.

A few months before our wedding we requested our tickets from the Bishops Office for US Visitors in Rome and confirmed that we would "qualify" by being married in the Catholic Church within 2 months of the date of the audience. We then received confirmation that we would have special seating on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2018, to hear Pope Francis address St. Peter's Square and give a special blessing to the newlyweds in attendance.

That morning was rainy and cold as is typical of February in Rome, but we were too excited to complain! We waited at the gate outside St. Peter's Square with hundreds of others who had also arrived early hoping for a seat up close to where Pope Francis would be speaking. There were obviously other newlyweds there, dressed like we were in our wedding dresses and suits, and there were also school and church groups and other tourists waiting to enter into the Square which was closed for the Pope's general audience.

Our seats were in a special section up on a stage only a hundred feet or so from where Pope Francis himself sat with a dozen other Cardinals. We were among about 30 other couples in this section and we felt so honored and humbled to be ushered up so close to the front and near to the Pope.

Pope Francis addressed the general audience giving a short message in Italian and then each Cardinal stood and interpreted the message and gave a shout out to their respective country and language. After the message was complete, the Pope stood and waved at the crowd. We thought that the ceremony was complete, but suddenly an usher showed up and asked us couples to quickly form a line along the back gate of the stage. As we formed a line, Pope Francis started making his way along the gate greeting each person and group that stood along it. We wondered in awe if he was going to come and greet each one of us as well, having expected he would do a general blessing to the newlyweds as a group.

Pope Francis finally reached the line of newlywed couples and we watched as he started greeting, shaking hands and blessing each couple individually. When he finally reached Adam and me, we were star-struck and could barely come up with words other than "thank you, Father" to Pope Francis. He looked into our eyes and gave us a blessing, and this was such a genuine and intimate moment even being surrounded by hundreds of people. As he was turning away from us, Adam suddenly piped up, "Also, Father, Courtney is pregnant!" We had found out only a few weeks earlier that we were expecting our first child. This caught Pope Francis' attention and he turned back to us, asking when was the baby due and what would we be naming the child? When I responded that we weren't sure on a name, he reminded me that we needed to think hard on that. He then paused to bless my womb.

The moment was so special that words are hard to find to describe the incredible connection we felt with the leader of our faith. We are incredibly fortunate that a photographer was taking photos of our interaction and we have amazing memories captured to treasure forever.

Adam and I now have two boys, Oliver born October, 2018 and a brand new baby, Leo, born October 2019.

LIVING OUR CORE VALUES - COMMUNITY

by Troy Sladek, Principal, St. Mary's School



Each month, the students at St. Mary's School gather for an all-school assembly to learn about our Core Values. When learning about the Core Value, Community, the focus was on students being welcoming and inclusive to one another. The buddy bench that was recently installed on our playground provides a great example and opportunity for students to live out our value of community.

The Ganje family donated a buddy bench to the St. Mary's School playground this year. Dice and Bennie Ganje were dedicated supporters of St. Mary's School since it was built in 1957. Their commitment to education was evident in their willingness to serve on the Parish Council, the Diocesan Board of Education, Church and School Committees and volunteering in the school lunchroom.

The couple also spent countless hours on starting the CCD program at St. Mary's so public school children could have the opportunity for a Catholic education.

Their children have proud memories of their parents' desire to make sure everyone felt welcomed and no one was ever left out. The buddy bench provided by the Ganje family to St. Mary's School in honor of their parents Dice and Bennie, epitomizes their love and kindness.

For more info, check out the following link and see how our story will be reaching many more students.

<https://www.theparkcatalog.com/blog/buddy-benches-donated-honor-parents/>

In collaboration with the Andria Theatre, St. Mary's 5th and 6th graders present:

SAVE THE DATE!



ALL ARE INVITED!

**February 13
Andria Theatre**

All of our 5th and 6th grade students will be onstage performing.



ST. MARY'S PARISH MISSION
 OCTOBER 2019
 Encountering Biblical Characters

Thank you to everyone who came to the Parish Mission! The mission consisted of four days of encountering biblical characters portrayed by evangelist, educator and actor, Mark Price. We explored discipleship in modern times as Mark portrayed Judas Iscariot, Simon Peter, Saint Paul, and Francis of Assisi.

Mark also met with the St. Mary's and St. Agnes school children, led a lunch presentation, and spoke at a gathering at Grand Arbor. If you missed it, his presentations and protrayals can be found on his website, markprice.com.

"It was a huge shot-in-the-arm for discipleship and spiritual growth - not only for our parish, but the Alexandria & surrounding communities!"
 - Jim & Kathleen Lingor, Parishioners

Exploring discipleship will continue with Theology Thursdays. We hope you will join us!

THEOLOGY THURSDAYS

Thursdays, 6:30 - 8:30 PM in the Great Hall



DECEMBER 5

Practical Catholic Parenting

Presenters: Jim and Maureen Otremba

Catholic parenting can be very difficult and stressful. Hear practical tips and truths you can use today which will empower you to parent in a more peaceful way.

FEBRUARY 13

The Bible and the Modern World

Presenter: Dr. Vincent Smiles

In an age of science, what can the Bible contribute to human knowledge, and within the Church, what challenges are posed by a historical-critical view of the Scriptures?

MARCH 19

Empty Vessels

Presenter: Aaron Carpenter

What is the role of the Assembly in the Liturgy of the Word? How do we listen more effectively?

APRIL 16

Spiritual Direction: The Practice of Contemplative Presence

Presenter: Becky Van Ness

Becky, former high school teacher and now Director of the Spiritual Direction Program at St. John's School of Theology, explores how accompanying another on their spiritual journey helps one develop a deeper sense of the presence of God.



THE BLESSINGS OF SERVING

by Francie Peterson
& Carol Gaffaney

One of the most fulfilling and gratifying ministries that we work in is the Funeral Lunch Program. By hosting and serving families at this difficult time, we have come to such an appreciation of others, even of those we have never met. We read their obituaries, meet their families and friends and catch snippets of conversations about the deceased and realize what a blessing each and every person is to the people in their lives.

Our work is simple and our tasks easy, yet they seem to bring some comfort and peace to those who are mourning. Living out the Corporal Work of Mercy of Burying the Dead, in this way makes us grateful for God's great gift of life and of all the people he has put in our paths. We are so blessed to serve our parish community in this way!

St. Mary's School presents its Christmas Program

Jesus, The Light of the World

at The Church of St. Mary

Thursday, December 19, 2019 at 7:00 P.M.

*The St. Mary's Handbell Choir will join us
as we celebrate the gift of Jesus born in our world.*

Please join us!

What is Advent?

A season of hope, preparation, EXPECTATION & celebration



The **ADVENT WREATH** is a popular symbol used as the focus of prayer throughout the season

Advent is made up of **four weeks**, divided into **two periods**:

- 1) First Sunday of Advent until December 15
FOCUS: Christ's second coming at the end of time
- 2) December 16 to 24
FOCUS: Preparation for celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ

The **first Sunday of Advent** marks the beginning of the liturgical year



"Advent" (Latin)
MEANS
"a coming or arrival"

Advent is **more** than the preparation for Christ's birth. It also celebrates the three-fold coming of the Lord:

- **Remembering** the events that surrounded the Lord's coming long ago
- **Celebrating** his presence in his living Body, the Church
- **Looking forward** to his final coming in glory

Through prayer, spiritual reading, acts of charity, and participation in the Eucharist, Advent helps us to expand the meaning of our lives, so we are not ends in ourselves, but a people who seek Christ as our hopeful end and joyful fulfillment.



CANDLES mark the steps in our Advent journey

Our prayer at Advent is one of hope and love:

Come, Lord Jesus!



CHRISTMAS LITURGY SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve 4:00 PM & 9:00 PM

(incense used at 9:00 PM Mass)

Christmas Day 9:00 AM

Carols sung 30 minutes before every Christmas Mass

PENITENTIAL SERVICES

December 18 at 7:00 PM
December 22 at 2:00 PM

INDIVIDUAL CONFESSION

December 19 at 10:00 AM
December 20 at 3:00 PM

WE NOW OFFER ONLINE GIVING!

How does online giving benefit me?

- It is easy, convenient and safe.
- It allows you to give any amount, anytime, from any device with internet access.
- You can choose to give from your checking, savings, or credit card.
- You can establish recurring giving so you are covered if you are away for the weekend.



How does online giving help our parish community?

- It increases the efficiency of processing regular giving for financial planning.
- It allows our parish to more effectively engage with all of our members.
- It utilizes technology to allow us to spread God's Word through more consistent stewardship.

SIGN UP TODAY!

stmaryalexandria.org or call the Parish Office at 763-5781

320-763-5781 | stmaryalexandria.org

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