

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Holy Thursday, April 9 7:00 PM - Mass of the Lord's Supper
**Incense used, Adoration follows in the Great Hall*

Good Friday, April 10 9:00 AM - Morning Prayer
**Incense used*

12:00 PM - Liturgy of the Lord's Passion
**Incense used, with Veneration of the Cross and Communion*

8:30 PM Tenebrae Service, *Hope in the Shadows*
**A contemporary Tenebrae Service with Veneration of the Cross*

Holy Saturday, April 11 9:00 AM - Morning Prayer

8:30 PM - Easter Vigil (no 5:00 PM Mass)
**Incense used*

Easter Sunday, April 12 8:00 AM & 10:00 AM Mass

PENITENTIAL SERVICES

Sunday, March 22 at 2:00 PM
 Wednesday, April 1 at 7:00 PM

INDIVIDUAL CONFESSIONS

Saturday, April 4 at 3:00 PM
 Tuesday, April 7 at 3:00 PM
 Wednesday, April 8 at 10:00 AM

Stations of the Cross every Friday during Lent at 5:15 PM

420 Irving Street
 Alexandria, MN 56308



STEWARDSHIP Our Way of Life



The Church of
 St. Mary

A NOTE FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear People of St Mary's Parish,

Have you been called? What's your vocation? For many people, this simple question may be difficult to answer. Words or terms used to describe *calling* and *vocation* are *work, career, mission, trade, craft, and purpose*. These terms create mindful relatable visions and images on how to earn a living or provide and care for a family.

However, a few non-familial terms such as *family relationship, commitments, promises, community, and marriage* also are calling and vocation. Being a daughter or son is a vocation, marriage is a vocation, and being a good neighbor is a vocation.

Within a church, terms and words used to define calling and vocation include discipleship, ministry of the baptized, gifts of the Spirit, or ministry in daily life. We are called in many ways and at multiple speeds. A calling can occur slowly, as a planted seed, as an idea that was sowed, then nourished and grown. A vocation has a *progression-like* quality to it — like a seeker on a journey of new information and discovery. There are times it can happen quickly, as a moment in time, a flash of brilliance, an *"ah-ha"* moment. Each of us have multiple callings during a lifetime and they can occur simultaneously. **A calling is personal, lifelong, and ever-changing. It can be communal, serving a community larger than yourself.**

A calling doesn't invite you to stand up and give the answers but rather *invites you into the question*. John F. Kennedy said in his inaugural address on January 20, 1961 "... ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." There is so much power in that imperative. It is to be *proactive* rather than *reactive*, by taking a hold of a calling and nourishing it. That is why we offer various experiences in prayer and formation.

In our parish, a way we refer to vocation is **shared ministry**. Each of you as *shared ministers* are an example of asking not *what St. Mary's can do for you*, but *what you have done for St. Mary's and the Alexandria area community* through prayer, service, and the sharing of financial resources and talent. The energy and essence that you bring to your ministry is *more than* being a volunteer, **it's a calling, a vocation**. Each and every shared minister is vital to the health and energy of what we call *Church*. Whatever your calling or vocation, I want to express my appreciation for what you do and even more, for *who you are* as you exercise your ministry.

Thank you for coming forth to serve.

Fr. Steven M. Binsfeld



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I was 17 years old when I met my husband. His hair was bleached blonde and then dyed blue, and I picked him out of a crowd, telling my friends, "I want that one!" Five years later, Andrew and I married. Having a type-A personality, I naturally had everything for my life planned out from that moment on: I'd teach elementary school for a few more years while I waited for my husband to finish his undergraduate degree. Then, I'd give birth to our first child one month after that. From there, we'd have three more children every two years, timed perfectly apart. Have you ever heard the saying, "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans?"



A MISCARRIAGE STORY
by Megan Bristow

After a few years of trying for our first baby, I finally received the call I'd been praying for: a nurse informed me I was pregnant. We went for our first ultrasound at a mere six weeks, but as I frantically searched the screen for a sign of life, I saw nothing. I had miscarried.

Dealing with my grief was a challenge. I was angry with myself, with my brother and sister-in-law for having a new baby, with the pregnant woman the next booth over at Qdoba, and so angry with God. I didn't understand why or how He could do this to me. We went to church, we prayed regularly, attended Bible studies – so why would He give us this cup? We prayed Novenas, to patron saints of Mothers and Fathers, and still, nothing. We still weren't becoming pregnant, and my miscarriage was still a miscarriage; there were still no miracles or "divine interventions".

Finally, one night Andrew shared something that entirely changed my outlook. "What if the reason

we're not having a baby yet is because it's not just about us?"

Dumbfounded by the mere suggestion that this could possibly be about anyone BUT me, I opened my mouth and found no words. I believe that silence was the Holy Spirit working on my heart, giving me the grace to really listen to the wisdom Andrew had to offer. "Maybe," he continued, "the reason it's not happening right now is because it's so much bigger. Maybe God is making us wait because our baby needs to be born at just the right time to meet their spouse. Or maybe, they'll cure cancer. But they have to be born at the

perfect time for those things to happen."

And in that moment, my whole outlook shifted. I realized then, it wasn't about me at all. God's plans are so much larger, grander, than we can even begin to comprehend.

While I can't say I entirely know or understand just what that larger plan is at this point, I'm certain someday we will see it. Still, I do know some of the pieces of that "waiting" puzzle have made us more compassionate and more empathetic. The idea that God's will is so much larger than our own plans is something I also find comforting as I navigate this life after the sudden loss of my mother and various medical diagnoses of a few of my children.

We are now a very full family of six. Seven years ago, I would never have believed this would be my reality. I hear almost daily, "you are one busy mom!" But if there were ever any phrase true for us now, it would be, "If you think our hands are full – you should see our hearts." It just took a little patience.

A WAY TO THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

Lent lasts 40 days. It begins on Ash Wednesday and ends at the beginning of Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening. The 40 days of Lent recall Jesus' temptation in the desert and rejection of sin.

ASH WEDNESDAY

The ashes we receive symbolize the dust from which God made us. As the ashes are applied to a person's forehead, the following words are prayed, "Repent, and believe in the Gospel," or "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

3 PILLARS OF LENT

Praying
Fasting
Almsgiving

DO YOU KNOW?

The ashes we receive on Ash Wednesday are often palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday liturgies, which are burned and used as ashes for the following year.

WHAT IS FASTING?

One full meal and two smaller meals.

Days for Fasting:

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday

Who participates?

Mandatory for those aged 18-59 (Those pregnant or sick are not obligated to fast)

GOOD AND BAD HABITS

Many people choose to let go of a **bad habit** (like gossiping or too much screen time) or strengthen a **good one** (attending Mass more often or praying on a consistent daily basis)

WHAT IS ABSTINENCE?

No meat.

Days of Abstinence:

Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and Every Friday during Lent

Who participates?

Mandatory for those older than 14 years.

ASH WEDNESDAY MASS TIMES:

Wednesday, February 26 at 8:30 AM & 7:00 PM

FINANCIAL UPDATE

by Todd Wentworth, Parish Business Administrator

Here is the financial update for the first six months, July – December, of our fiscal year.

We have received generous gifts from **Fr. Al Ludwig's Trust**. He contributed to the School Trust Fund and the Parish Benevolent Fund. He also gifted over \$900,000 to establish an account to address ongoing specific needs of our Parish. This gift was not intended to be used to pay monthly expenses, but instead to be used for broader purposes in supporting our parish. Fr. Al was specific about what he did not want his gift to be used for. We intend to honor Fr. Al's request for the use of this most generous gift. Because of accounting reasons, we must show Fr. Al's gift and related earnings in our financials. As you review parish financial information in the future, be aware that those funds are not readily available for Parish use. In other words, it will look like we have more money available than we really have.

Here are some of our "challenges":

- ▶ **Offerings** are **down \$21,000 or 2.2%** compared with the first 6 months of last year. This is the 2nd year in a row that the first 6 months of our year showed lower regular offerings than the year before. Offerings (Sunday, Christmas & Holy Days) represent 60% of our TOTAL REVENUE & SUPPORT.
- ▶ Costs are up 2%, basically nothing more than a minimal cost of living adjustment. It isn't difficult to see that decreasing offerings and increasing costs is not a sustainable plan. **As parishioners, is this how we want to run our organization?**
 - ✦ Nearly 70% of our costs are for payroll and related costs. Another 10% are for utilities, interest on our debt, and diocesan assessments. It is very difficult to significantly reduce these costs. (Payroll and benefits are still below area employers.)
 - ✦ The remaining 20% of our costs go to further programming, repairs and maintenance and administrative costs. These are more discretionary but deemed necessary.

There have been many bright spots that show our vibrancy and potential:

- ▶ Through the process established by Fr. Al's Trust, the Finance Committee has used funds to pay off the small debt relating to Phase III construction. This is in keeping with Fr. Al's wishes.
- ▶ **NCYC 2019!** (See separate article in this newsletter)
- ▶ Through our own parish tithing we have contributed \$19,000 to various organizations and individuals in need.
- ▶ MNSAA has accredited our Catholic school for the period 2020 to 2027.
- ▶ We hosted Mark Price for our parish mission in October with a near capacity crowd on the final night.
- ▶ We have implemented initiatives that have generated over **\$20,000 of annual savings**.

We, the 5,500+ parishioners of St. Mary's, have an obligation to invest in our parish. The success of our mission - *To Know, Love, and Serve God by Living the Eucharist* - is dependent upon the active involvement of each one of us, in the use of our time, talent, and finances.

I encourage you to review your current giving levels and intentionally strive to increase your financial and time contributions. Even an increase of 15 minutes of prayer and \$1 a month makes a difference.

If you have not already done so, please look at our new Online Giving option. A link can be found in the upper right-hand corner of our website which also includes specific instructions if needed.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

by Kathy Fischer, Faith Community Nurse

It is a priority of The Church of St. Mary to provide a safe environment within all church facilities and at all church activities. St. Mary's has established safety and security protocols that will promote and maintain a safe and secure environment.

A safety and security committee was formed in February 2019 to address the ongoing and potential safety and security needs of our parish. The committee members included ushers, custodial staff, parish and school staff, law enforcement and outside experts.

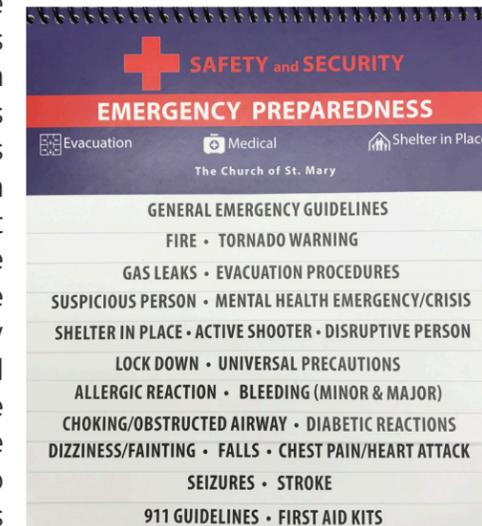
A risk assessment was completed that asked the question, "What event(s) are most likely to occur?" Part of this assessment was a walkthrough of our facilities by the Douglas County Emergency Preparedness Director, Alexandria Fire Chief, a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) representative and committee members. The most likely safety and security concerns at St. Mary's are medical and weather related. Once the assessment was completed, the committee created a plan to address the needs identified. This plan included written policies and procedures, creation of a volunteer safety response team, training of appropriate staff and volunteers, coordination with emergency services, and emergency action documents and reference materials.

Members of each usher team, sacristans, musicians, parish staff, Faith Formation teachers and volunteer safety and security response team members trained throughout the month of November. Training topics included fire safety (alarms and extinguishers), evacuation procedures, medical emergencies, CPR/AED, lock down, shelter-in-place and interacting with disruptive persons. In total, 102 parishioners were trained.

The volunteer safety response team members are comprised of individuals with specific skill sets to include medical training, EMS/paramedics, fire fighters, law enforcement and facility operations.

The primary goal of the response team is to assist the ushers to provide discreet security, implement emergency plans and respond to an emergency.

A few examples of what parishioners might notice as a result of our emergency preparedness efforts are: during Masses, ushers are more observant of all activity, including activity in our parking lots; the Chapel doors are locked during Mass; we now have visual identification of fire extinguishers and AEDs; and our Emergency Preparedness Flip Charts are now located throughout our campus.



Emergency Preparedness Flip Chart

To live our mission
"To Know, Love and Serve God by Living the Eucharist"
we must ensure that everyone who comes to
The Church of St. Mary feels valued, safe and secure.

NCYC - NATIONAL CATHOLIC YOUTH CONFERENCE

Last November, nineteen high schoolers from our parish traveled to Indianapolis to attend the National Catholic Youth Conference. Below are quotes from the students and pictures highlighting the experience.



“

I was filled with so much hope. With 20,000 teens worshipping Jesus Christ, people may say we are the future of the church, but instead we are the present. We will be the ones to renew the face of this earth, not later, but now.

“

Everyone at NCYC could clearly feel God inside of them. They were the happiest people I've met and **we all treated each other as brothers and sisters like God intended.**



“

It was a time where not only did I feel that I was loved by someone (other than my parents), I could see and believe that there was someone out there that could hear my struggles and **they could accept who I really am and not the person with the mask over my face.**



“

Seeing 20,000 people my age come together and worship God with so much love and passion really inspires me to grow closer to Him. This will be something I will never forget, for **it brought me a step closer to our Lord.**



“

As teenagers, we get caught up worrying about being judged by people, whether it's through our faith, appearance, popularity, etc. During NCYC we were able to connect with other teenagers and explore our faith in ways we usually don't get exposed to. My favorite part about NCYC was **meeting other teenagers who want to grow in their faith.**

“

I learned a lot about myself and about the church. It felt so cool knowing that there are **so many kids that want to grow in their faith. It was an amazing experience that I will never forget.**

