SPRING 2023

STEWARDSHIP

Our Way of Life

Living a Life of Stewardship

The Church of St. Mary

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A NOTE FROM FATHER MATTHEW

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,

This is a great time of year, as we are hunkered down in the snow, to take stock of life and plan for Spring. The doldrums of winter can be depressing if we focus too much on the present. When we are in a place of desolation, St. Ignatius of Loyola encourages us to look back in thanksgiving to the gifts we have received in the past or forward in hope to the good things we expect to come. It is the second of these two that I wish to encourage today. We are stewards of hope.

We have, as the Body of Christ, the Church, the one good thing that the world cannot give to people: the hope of eternal life that Jesus Christ gives us. We are called to be a people of hope—to bring joy to our present for the good things we know will come in the future. We can endure even great suffering in the present if we know that it will bear fruit in the future. Take, for example, the martyrs who suffered great tortures and death here on earth. They could only find the strength to endure their trials because of the hope of eternal life. We look to the martyrs as examples of hope. To the world they seem to have lost everything; we who look forward to heaven have a longer view.

If you are feeling a lack of hope in your life, look back in gratitude and remember that you are loved. Hope has been entrusted to you by God to be shared with His people.

You are a steward of hope—a witness in this world for God. Someone (or many someones) in your life needs you to show them this hope. By the way you speak and act, you can lift people's eyes to our heavenly goal. By what you strive for here on earth, and especially by what you sacrifice here on earth, you show the value of what is to come.

Hope is a gift; we do not produce it ourselves. It is the virtue of clinging to God and remaining close to God. Closeness to God increases our trust in God. Thanksgiving for the gifts we have already received can reinforce the habit of hope; when I consider the gifts received in the past, I am renewed in my hope for the gifts that are to come. If you are feeling a lack of hope in your life, look back in gratitude and remember that you are loved. Hope has been entrusted to you by God to be shared with His people. May God grant you hope in such abundance that it overflows all your words and actions.

Peace in Christ,

Father Matthew Kuhn, pastor

A KNEELER PROJECT
A STORY OF INSPIRED PARISHIONERS

Have you ever knelt down to pray and found yourself distracted? It happens to many of us. When Jerry Rutten arrived at St. Mary's for Mass one day, he knelt to begin praying as most of us do. He looked at the kneelers in the row ahead of him and realized they were in bad shape. In that moment, he was inspired to do something ahout it. After realizing that almost every kneeler in the church was damaged or needed some repair and cleaning, he put together a plan and a team of family and friends.

So began the 2022 Kneeler Project which included 13 volunteers and 167 volunteer hours between November 27 and December 2. The group dismantled every kneeler, removed old bumpers and felt pads, and cleaned each kneeler at an acetone station. Then they pre-drilled screw holes, and installed the new bumpers on the kneelers. About 1,400 kneeler bumpers were replaced, and bushings, hinges and stoppers were also replaced as needed. Jerry and his wife, Marie, even provided the church with their workflow document to use in the future.

The next time you kneel, take a look at the row ahead of you to appreciate this huge task. You might be distracted, but that's ok. Sometimes the distraction is the Holy Spirit calling you.

BELL CHOIR ACROSS GENERATIONS

When 9-year-old Anna Bienias asked her parents if she could join the St. Mary's Bell Choir, not only did they say yes, but her dad, Kevin, joined in. Since Anna's grandma, Laurie Bienias, had participated in Bell Choir years ago, she thought it was a good time to get back to the bells, too, ringing beside her son and granddaughter.

Leading the way, Anna inspired her family to get involved and now St. Mary's is blessed with three generations ringing bells with joy for all of us to enjoy!

ST. MARY'S - GUATEMALA COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP
SAN JUAN MIRADOR

The Church of St. Mary - Guatemala Community Partnership was initiated by the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Committee and approved by Fr. Steve Binsfeld and the pastoral council in 2018. Several parishioners have visited the San Lucas Mission in past years, most recently in 2019. A group from St. Mary's is planning to visit the Mission and the community of San Juan Mirador in April, 2023 to continue this partnership. Please pray for them and the people of San Juan Mirador.

In 1981 in a place named "Canal," 5 families came to live thanks to the help of Father John Goggin. This was during the time of the armed conflict, the time of the guerrillas, and the families built temporary housing there. This was the beginning of San Juan Mirador.

On September 18, 1991 an earthquake occured that devastated the plantations San Jorge, San Bernardino, y Sajbina. This affected many families and many lives were lost. Many of the families from these plantations took refuge in the Quixaya community center. They stayed there until Father John, with compassion and human kindness donated land to 44 families. It is now called San Juan Mirador in honor of Father John (a mirador is a "scenic view"). This was coordinated with the Mission.

The present community has received many benefits from Father John in coordination with the Mission. The development of the San Juan Mirador community also continues with the help of its people who are hardworking and they strive to work in a team. They do not have a lot of land for each owner and married children often have to live with their parents.

Since 2015, the Mission has built 25 block houses, 13 hybrid houses, 3 wood homes, and 61 fuel-efficient stoves in San Juan Mirador.

In 2019, San Juan Mirador was served by 2 visiting medical groups who conducted a total of 95 consults. There were 69 children enrolled in the child nutrition program with 8 families receiving the supplement.

LENT & HOLY WEEK AT ST. MARY'S

Individual Confessions

SATURDAYS
2:00 - 4:30 PM
Throughout Lent

Reconciliation Service

SUNDAY, MARCH 12
4:00 - 6:00 PM
(This is a brief service followed by individual confessions. Several priests will be available.)

Stations of the Cross

Every Friday during Lent at 5:15 PM in the Great Hall

Living Stations of the Cross

MARCH 1
7:00 PM

MARCH 4
7:00 PM

Palm Sunday

SATURDAY
APRIL 1
5:00 PM

SUNDAY
APRIL 2
8:00 AM
10:00 AM

Holy Thursday

THURSDAY
APRIL 6
7:00 PM
Mass of the Lord's Supper
**Incense used*

(Eucharist will be reposed after Mass.)

Good Friday

FRIDAY
APRIL 7
9:00 AM
Morning Prayer

12:00 PM
The Lord's Passion

8:30 PM
Tenebrae Service

Holy Saturday

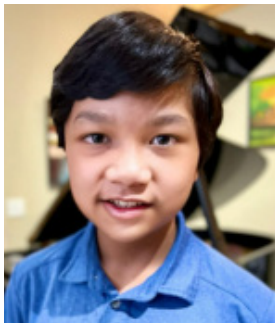
SATURDAY
APRIL 8
9:00 AM
Morning Prayer

8:30 PM
Easter Vigil
**Incense used*

Easter Sunday

SUNDAY
APRIL 9
8:00 AM
Easter Mass

10:00 AM
Easter Mass



AN INSPIRING YOUNG MUSICIAN

St. Mary's is truly blessed with many talented and passionate musicians, singers and instrumentalists alike. St. Mary's violinist and pianist Alex Rodriguez, 14, is celebrating a recent musical success of his own. Last month Alex participated in the Saint Paul Piano Teachers Association concerto competition and won the grand prize. With the win, he will have the opportunity to play alongside the Mississippi Valley Orchestra in St. Paul on February 19.

Alex explains the competition and what it means to him, "I won a piano concerto competition called SPPTA (Saint Paul Piano Teachers Association) with the 3rd movement of the Grieg Piano Concerto in A minor. It means a lot to me because I beat lots of pianists that I look up to in that competition."

When asked how his faith impacts his piano playing, Alex remarks, "Faith has influenced my talent by inspiring me to share God's gift to me through sharing my talent. Faith has inspired me to perform more in places like church and has inspired me to challenge myself more so I can grow in making music. Being part of the St. Mary's Music Ministry is the opportunity to share my talent with others and the opportunity to inspire others to share their talents too."

Congratulations Alex!

MID-YEAR FINANCIAL UPDATE

St. Mary's has completed the first half of our fiscal year. Our fiscal year runs from July 1 – June 30. Here are some highlights from the past 6 months:

Our regular sacrificial offerings are our primary source of revenue and support for our parish. We started off July & August poorly and fell behind our annual budget very quickly. Since then, we have done better and seem to have stabilized. Fortunately, we have maintained some savings to cover times of shortfalls and opportunities. After 6 months our offerings are **$70,000 or 6.5% behind budget**.

Regardless of the weak collections, we are committed to living out our mission and call of Christian disciples. Our **Outreach** committee continues to meet a couple times per year. Most recently they authorized supporting 5 different organizations for a total of $6,000. They included Let's Go Fishing, YMCA, Senior Center, Tekakwitha Center in Crookston and Young Life. We also tithed weekly offerings for relief of Hurricane Ian. This year, I have received more calls for help from local agencies such as, Douglas County Social Services and West Central Communities Action, than at any other time in my 5½ years here at St. Mary's. As good stewards, we have shared nearly $24,000 of our regular operating budget to help individual families in need, primarily to get started with permanent housing.

Our **Catholic School** enrollment increased to a record of 256 students. To accommodate this growth, we expanded our 6th grade into 2 classes and hired another teacher. About 33 cents out of each $1 received through regular offerings and other revenue supports our Catholic school and these students.

We continue to make monthly payments on our **debt**. Our debt balance is down to $1,167,996. With an interest rate of 2.783% we are scheduled to be debt free in just over 7 years.

LOOKING AHEAD...By the time you read this, our lighting project should be complete in the church. The 25 year old power distribution and controls have been replaced at a cost of $60,000. Our church roof was significantly damaged in the storms last spring. We continue to work with our insurance company on its assessment, but we will need to get this replaced fairly soon. The Caring & Sharing Room is in need of more and efficient space, so we continue to look for an alternative solution. The kitchen remodel/expansion remains a need, but costs have been prohibitive. We will continue to monitor this area of our campus. Finally, we continue to search out options for a new rectory to provide a comfortable home, in Alexandria, for both of our priests.

Inflation is real. We received a letter from our insurance company stating a roughly 33% increase in our rates for 2023. That will be about a $24,000 increase in that one bill alone. Catholic social justice requires us to pay fair and just compensation to our employees. We will continue to strive to do this even during these inflationary times. As a service organization, it should be no surprise that salaries and related costs make up 69% of our total budget. We employ 38 full-time and 5 regular part-time employees.

At St. Mary's we believe that, as followers of Jesus Christ, we are Christian stewards. All we are and all we have is a gift from God that he has entrusted us with. We look forward to an exciting 2023 as we all continue to increase engagement in OUR parish community.

I am grateful for all of you and am blessed to be a part of this parish community. Thank you for getting involved in our parish. May God continue to abundantly bless you and your family!

Todd Wentworth

Todd Wentworth,
Parish Business Administrator

ASH WEDNESDAY

BEGINS THE SEASON OF LENT

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22
8:30 AM & 6:30 PM

Remember, that you are dust,
and unto dust you shall return.

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY
ALEXANDRIA, MN

stmaryalexandria.org

Ash Wednesday Mass will be livestreamed on Facebook

The Church of St. Mary
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