

# OUR LADY

## *Star of the Sea*

CATHOLIC CHURCH

### Conduits of God's Mercy

#### *Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry*

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When parishioner Susan DePorre moved here from Michigan nearly a decade ago, she was anxious to get involved and resume her volunteer work. But with four young children and no network of support yet within the community, Susan initially had a difficult time finding a parish ministry that fit into her schedule. Then, she discovered the Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry, or BEAM, a non-profit, ecumenical outreach agency devoted to helping the less fortunate within beach communities. Seeming like the perfect fit, Susan eagerly became involved, eventually becoming Our Lady Star of the Sea's BEAM coordinator.



*Susan DePorre with her husband and four children*

"This was something I could volunteer in sporadically as I found time," Susan says. "Then that year, the man in charge of Our Lady Star of the Sea's BEAM asked me to take over. He ran many programs at our church, and so I agreed to step in as the parish ministry coordinator. My goal was to offer a place where anyone could volunteer. I think a great part of giving is not in volunteering myself, but allowing others the opportunity to volunteer."

BEAM's mission, Susan explains, is "to provide emergency assistance and a path to economic stability" for those in need. This is done through a wide variety of programs that allow individuals to remain in their homes despite financial difficulties, while receiving the assistance needed to gain self-sufficiency.

Throughout her years of involvement within the ministry, Susan has witnessed BEAM's transformation from small endeavors to a full-scale operation equipped by a strong support team. In early years, for example, food drives and Christmas distributions to families in need were run by a handful of youth, shelving canned goods in a small closet or handing out simple Christmas gifts. This is much different from the professional operations of today, Susan says, made possible by BEAM's many donors and volunteers.



## *Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry* continued from front cover

“It has been such a blessing to have witnessed the transformation of a tiny operation grow into a huge community support with strong leadership,” Susan says. “From a little boy handing out Christmas toys and shelving canned goods in a closet, to a nutritional client-choice shopping experience in two different 1,000-square-foot food pantries. The once scary, garbage-strewn side of the building is now a prosperous bright vegetable garden growing more than enough food for clients, and was even featured on CNN. Clothes used to be stacked up against a wall to share with others, and now there are thrift stores and a larger, better back-to-school event.”

Our Lady Star of the Sea has played a key part in this transformation, Susan adds, through their continual support and involvement in BEAM. For example, thanks to Msgr. Keith Brennan’s support of the First Sunday Food Sharing at weekend Masses, parishioners both young and old are able to donate food to those in need. There is also a growing number of parishioners volunteering for the ministry, inspired by both BEAM’s overall mission and their ability to choose the area and timing of service that best fits their schedule. And in the process, parishioners are able to truly become Christ to those in need.

“BEAM allows our parishioners to be Jesus’ hands and feet on Earth by helping those in need,” Susan says. “I am repeatedly overwhelmed with the generosity of the Our Lady Star of the Sea community. I am honored that friends and unknown parishioners call me up and ask if I know how or where they can volunteer, or how their child can earn service hours. I’m blessed to be the conduit connecting our parishioners to the many volunteer opportunities at BEAM. Also, this is an interfaith ministry, and I enjoy the mix of saintly people who work together to help their less fortunate neighbors.”

*Parishioners interested in learning more about BEAM can either contact Susan DePorre at 904-285-5268 or [sdepo@comcast.net](mailto:sdepo@comcast.net), or they can contact BEAM’s volunteer coordinator, Colleen Brennan, directly at [colleen@jaxbeam.org](mailto:colleen@jaxbeam.org) or 904-241-7437.*



*The annual Back-to-School-with-BEAM event allows families to shop for children’s clothing and receive other necessities, like filled backpacks and new shoes.*



*BEAM’s vegetable garden, which successfully grows enough food to support ministry clients.*



*Our Lady Star of the Sea parishioners carrying a basket filled with donations following a First Sunday Food Sharing liturgy.*



*A Letter from Our Pastor*

## Reflections at the End of the Year

Dear Parishioners,

It seems as if we just finished Lent and Easter, and here we are at Advent and Christmas. To say this is a busy month for many is an understatement. Although December is a month of love, it can also be a difficult month for some. For those with families, it may be a month of travel as people rush to be united with loved ones, sometimes after a long period of separation.

There is no shortage of reminders as to what time of year this is. However, for us as Catholics, we may need to refocus to see where we are in our faith lives. Were you aware that for us, December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception? In that regard, we celebrate a Holy Day of Obligation on Friday, Dec. 8. Advent begins on Dec. 3, and you may notice that we begin to wear purple as a sign of Advent. That color changes to white or gold beginning at Christmas.

Of course, this is also the last month of the regular calendar year, which may add additional tasks to our own schedules as we finalize things

for the end of the year. However, there are many opportunities for us during this month to share, to pray and to celebrate in a Christian way, and I would encourage you to make an effort to be part of these. Right here in our parish, much is happening along those lines, and a careful reading of the bulletin will alert you to the “when, where and what” of these upcoming opportunities.

As I indicated earlier, this can also be a difficult time for some. In the midst of our own celebrations and joy, we need to be aware of that reality and of those living with it. This is a time to reach out, and it is a time to show love.

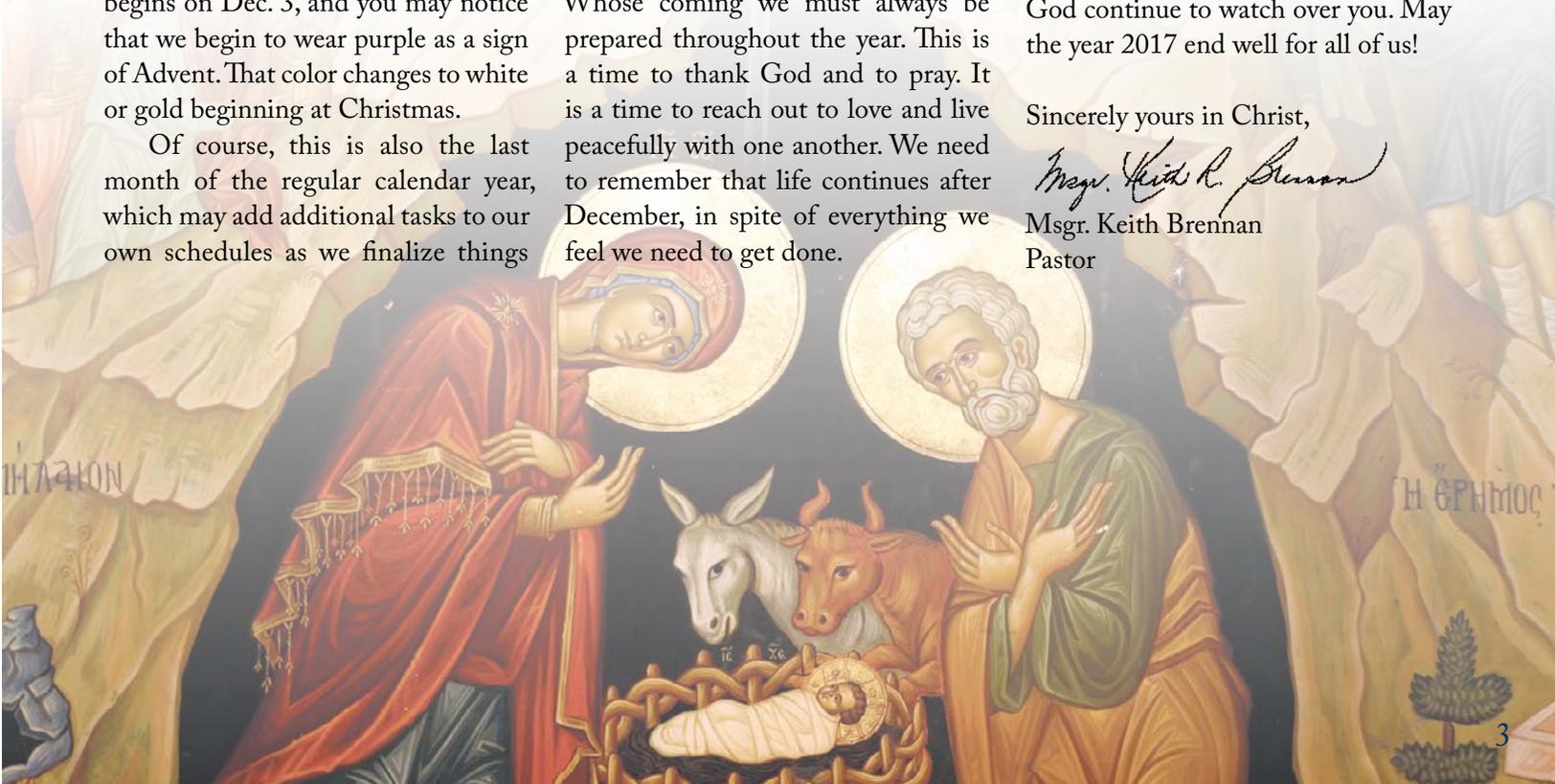
This December, let our minds be focused on Christ, Who will be born for us at Christmas, and for Whose coming we must always be prepared throughout the year. This is a time to thank God and to pray. It is a time to reach out to love and live peacefully with one another. We need to remember that life continues after December, in spite of everything we feel we need to get done.



My prayers and blessings go out to each of you and your families. May God continue to watch over you. May the year 2017 end well for all of us!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Keith Brennan  
Pastor





# Service and Fellowship Opportunity

*We thank all who participated in our recent Ministry Fair who were present to answer questions and provide information. Those who indicated their interest in the many ministries on offer are invited to take part in the life of our parish — please consider...*



# Communities Abound at Ministry Fair

*Ministry Fair — from the ministry leaders and members who offer helpful information, to those who attended and offer at Our Lady Star of the Sea. You are invited to consider bringing your talents to our parish ministries!*





# Embracing *Advent* Traditions

**A**dvent is that time of the Church year when we prepare for the “coming” of Christ. Advent, from the Latin word *adventus*, is the season of the Church year before Christmas.

According to *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming. By celebrating the precursor’s birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: ‘He must increase, but I must decrease’” (524).

There is a compelling stewardship message found in this passage of the *Catechism*. Stewardship very much reflects putting Christ at the center of our lives (“He must increase”) and recognizing our need to serve God, the Church, and others (“I must decrease”). Advent is an important time for us as individuals and as families to emphasize the holy nature of this season. Three dominant Advent traditions have developed which allow us on a daily basis to bring our thoughts back to the significance of this Church season.

The first is, quite simply, the Advent wreath. Most of us are familiar with and aware of the Advent wreath, as it is a common practice in parishes to have a wreath and to trace the progress of Advent with it. By placing an Advent wreath in our homes, praying around it and lighting the appropriate candles are wonderful opportunities to travel with the Lord on a daily basis. The wreath is circular, representing God’s eternity, and it includes four candles — one for each Sunday and week of Advent. To light the candles and to pray every day is a wonderful way for families to share and focus.

The second tradition is the Jesse Tree, named for the father of David. This tree is decorated gradually throughout Advent with pictures and symbols of biblical persons associated with the coming of the Messiah, Christ. You may include Noah, the ark, Abraham, Moses, a “burning bush,” Joseph, Mary, or any of a number of other familiar biblical figures and events. It is a teaching opportunity for children in particular, and also a good way for families to gather and to pray, and to reflect upon preparing for Christ’s coming.

Although it has become quite commercialized, the last key tradition is the Advent calendar. Advent calendars tend to follow the calendar month of December, not the four Sundays of Advent, which can begin as early as late November. In recent years, these calendars have increasingly utilized secular images, but if a person or family wishes the calendar to be most beneficial, it needs to be religious and Christian in nature. This, too, affords an opportunity to pause, to reflect, and to pray every day during the Advent season.

The themes and traditions of the Advent season have evolved throughout history. At one time, Advent was more like Lent — penitential in nature. We and our families need to do things that are prayerful and that prepare us spiritually for the Second and final Coming of Christ, as well. Stewardship involves planning, practicing our faith, and transmitting it to those close to us. These traditions can fulfill and help that effort.





## Finding Comfort and Friendship in a Faithful Community: Meet Barbara Conway



*Barbara Conway and her late husband, Jim, joined the parish when they moved to the area in 1990.*

For longtime parishioner Barbara Conway and her husband, Jim, Our Lady Star of the Sea became “home” right away — even as they were still in the process of moving.

“We joined the parish, while we were still living at the hotel, before we even bought a house,” Barbara says with a smile. “My husband just knew this was the parish for us.”

The New York couple, who met after midnight Mass at Fordham University, both grew up in families that were active in the church. So, stewardship came naturally.

“My mother was always baking things for the sisters in the convent,” says Barbara, who attended Catholic school from elementary through college. “She’d bake wonderful cakes and then the cakes would go out. The Church has always been important in our life.”

When Jim was transferred to Jacksonville with Crowley Maritime Corporation in 1990, the couple quickly found ways to become involved at Our Lady Star of the Sea, as adult altar servers at daily Mass, as well as lectors. They also began serving at the soup kitchen once a month and with

the Respect Life group, with Barbara sitting on the board of the Women’s Help Center for a number of years.

Upon arriving in Jacksonville, the couple was also introduced to the Chaplet of Divine Mercy and Divine Mercy Novena, devotions that became an important part of their lives.

“Jim was very devoted to the Divine Mercy,” Barbara said. “He had a magnificent voice. When he sang the Chaplet as he first learned it, it was Gregorian chant, it was beautiful.”

Sadly, in 2006, Jim passed away. Yet, his legacy lives on in Barbara and her service to the parish.

The Divine Mercy group meets every Friday morning, after the 8:30 a.m. Mass, to sing the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and hosts a celebration at the end of the Novena each year on Divine Mercy Sunday, the Sunday following Easter.

Barbara also serves as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to the Sick and Homebound, often visiting her fellow parishioners four days out of the week.

“It’s a beautiful ministry because you’re carrying the Lord, taking Him from the Mass and bringing Him to these people who can’t come to Mass anymore,” she says “It’s very rewarding.”

According to Barbara, one of the most valuable things that she has gained from her time at Our Lady Star of the Sea is friendship — from those who prayed her through the loss of her beloved husband, to the friendships she experienced CRHP with in 2008, to today, the ladies she meets with each week, as part of the 22-week Walking With Purpose Bible study.

“Your friends help you get through it,” she says, of experiencing the loss of her spouse. “When you’re first going through difficult times, your prayer life might suffer. That’s really when your friends are praying for you and you feel that and it keeps you going. We have a wonderful prayer community.”

Although Barbara is often busy keeping up with her four children, four grandchildren, and great-grandson spread across the country, she’s grateful to have a community, a place to call “home,” at Our Lady Star of the Sea. She



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## Meet Barbara Conway

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reminds others of the importance of surrounding yourself with a supportive community and good friends.

“You do this when you bring your children up,” Barbara says. “You make sure they have good friends because they’re going to become like their friends. For us, we have to build our community, keep good friends close. I think it’s important because it helps us in our own journey and building a stronger relationship with Jesus.”

She encourages her fellow parishioners to become involved in whatever ways they feel called.

“Just get involved in whatever ministry you feel the Lord wants you to be in,” Barbara says. “Listen to the Lord — there is something for everyone. Even just a smile to someone in the next pew can make a difference.”

### *Advent Schedule*

**Anointing of the Sick Mass**  
*Saturday, December 16 at 2:00 p.m.*

**Advent Penitential Service**  
*Tuesday, December 19 at 7:00 p.m.*

**Christmas Eve Mass Times:**  
*4:00 p.m.; 4:15 p.m. (Cultural Center);  
7:00 p.m.; 10:00 p.m.*

**Christmas Day Mass Times**  
*8:30 a.m.; 11:00 a.m.*

## LITURGY SCHEDULE

*Saturday Vigil - 5:30 p.m. | Sunday - 7:30 a.m.; 9:00 a.m.; 11:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.*

*Daily (Monday to Saturday) - 8:30 a.m. | Wednesday - 7:00 p.m.*

*Sacrament of Reconciliation: Wednesdays from 6:00-6:45 p.m.*

*Saturdays from 4:00-5:00 p.m.*