

# OUR LADY

## *Star of the Sea*

CATHOLIC CHURCH

### The Hess Family: Loving the Poor with Open Arms

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In 1972, in Houston, when Mary Anne Hess saw her new neighbor pushing an under-sized African American baby girl in a stroller, she felt an inspiration that soon changed her life forever.

“I began thinking that my boys were in school during the day, and I could do something like that,” she says. “When I asked her about it, she simply said, ‘Here’s the number.’”

Graciously heeding the nudge of the Holy Spirit, Mary Anne went ahead and picked up the phone — and she’s ever grateful that she did.

“At 9 a.m. I called the number she gave me, and I had a social worker at my door at 10 a.m.,” Mary Anne says. “After an interview, I had a beautiful five-pound African American baby boy in my arms that same day at 1 p.m. Truly! It was amazing!”

And the rest is history — a touching history colored by the joy of selfless giving. By embracing the stewardship of life in a profoundly authentic way, the Hess family also found themselves embracing numerous blessings.

“Over the years, we ended up caring for 97 pre-adoptive infants in cooperation with supportive organizations such as the Christian Child Help Foundation, Children’s Home Society and Catholic Charities,” she says. “They were such lovely little ones, and I loved taking care of them. I wish we could



*By embracing the stewardship of life in a profoundly authentic way, Mary Anne and Dave Hess have also embraced numerous blessings.*



## *Stewardship*

# Becoming Fishers of Men

Whether you hold a high-profile position, such as parish council president, or have more of a behind-the-scenes role as a coordinator of a parish ministry, God has called you – as a parish leader – to help build His Church.

This challenge is just as important as the call of any other Catholic leader, including the earliest disciples.

When Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee, He urged a group of fishermen, “Come follow me.” Jesus promised if they laid down their nets and followed Him, He would make them fishers of men. These men were among His original disciples, and they knew Christ’s call was so important that they left their secular occupation to follow Him.

Just as He did with the fishermen, Jesus calls each of us today. He is not necessarily asking us to leave our secular careers, but He is asking us to put Him first in our lives and to share His message of love with others.

God truly wants us to serve Him and to build His Church through the secular occupations we have chosen. It is through the Church that new disciples are born, and it is in the Church that disciples continue to mature. Forming disciples of Christ is the most important work that can be done on earth, and each of us has been called to play an active role in this work.

So, how do we go about building the Church? Where do we find the plans?

Some people mistakenly think that building the Church – in particular, building our own parish or diocese – is no different than building a successful business. Indeed, the

purpose of building the Church is to change hearts – a goal that only God can accomplish.

Secular society has not prepared us for this work. However, the Holy Spirit – sometimes referred to as the “Architect of the Church” – has the plan. In order to implement this plan, we must become good listeners. We must open ourselves to the workings of the Holy Spirit as He transforms us and guides us to carry out God’s work and to serve as His instruments on earth, building the Church together with Him.

This is where spiritual exercises, such as retreats, come into play. A retreat offers the individual an opportunity to spend time alone with the Lord, allowing God to draw the person deeper into the mystery of who He is, who we are and what He is doing in our lives. Stewardship retreats can offer parish leaders the opportunity each year to spend time with the Lord as He directs them in the ways of discipleship. As leaders, we must take time to meditate on the Scriptures and allow Jesus to open up His Word to us. Then, as we grow deeper in our understanding of what God wants of us, we can exclaim, just as the first disciples did on the road to Emmaus, “Our hearts are burning within us” (Lk 24:32).

God has placed an extremely important call on the lives of all parish leaders, no matter how big or small the role. It is vital to understand how we, as parish leaders, can best answer His call. What, in particular, is the Lord calling each one of us to do? He most likely is not asking us to drop our nets, but to pick them up and become “fishers of men.” We must discern how we can most effectively cast our nets for Him.





*A Letter from Our Pastor*

## Resolve to Give Back to God in 2018

Dear Parishioners,

Another new year — 2018! There was a time in my life when this date (and others) seemed so far in the future. It is amazing how those dates start to pile up and stream by, isn't it? I have reached a point where measuring one's life by the years and dates is not as significant as many other things.

I recall reading somewhere, "The world around us asks, 'What does a person own?' But God asks, 'How does a person use what he or she has been given?'" This month of January is one filled with reminders of holiness — the official end of the Christmas season; the Epiphany of our Lord; the Baptism of the Lord; and the return to Ordinary Time, which, as we know, is not "ordinary" at all.

At Epiphany we hear, "Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts" (Matthew 2:11), a reference to the Magi and their visit to the Christ Child. The image of the Magi kneeling before the infant Jesus and opening their gifts for Him is one we should all try to follow. Each of us is called to open our gifts before Jesus and offer Him what He needs. I heard a suggestion once that if you have a

problem with this thought, you should perhaps keep one of the Magi from your Christmas Nativity set and place it on your desk as a reminder.

During the Baptism of the Lord, God makes it clear when He proclaims from the Heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). God has given us the greatest gift He could give. He gave His only Son. When we think about the enormity of that gift of Jesus sent to save us, in addition to all the other blessings that God has entrusted to us, it is very humbling. God has given us so much. What do we give in return?

Making resolutions is common at this time of year. We will also hear this month about how Jesus called the first apostles. The Lord calls us as well to follow Him. Let us resolve to try to do that better — all of us. That does not mean we have to leave our work and our families behind, but we do need to put our service to Jesus. That should be our top resolution.

In *The Theology of the Hammer*, Habitat for Humanity co-founder Millard Fuller wrote, "The only truly



safe investment one can make in life is what is given away." First and foremost, God wants us. That should be our real resolution — to give ourselves to the Lord. May we all do a better job of that in 2018. God bless you all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Keith Brennan  
Pastor





# A Wonderful Family

*In December, our families and little ones had the opportunity to enjoy a meal and spend a little time with Santa Claus himself! We thank all who gave of their time and talents to make this event possible, as well as all the families and children who attended!*

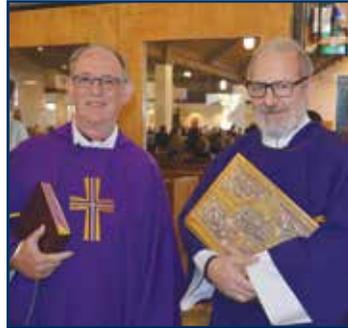


# Christmas Celebration





# RCIA: Celebrating the Journey



Many of us grew up in Catholic families and were familiar with Catholic customs and traditions from an early age. We may not have been able to articulate all of the elements of the Creed, but we knew what “being Catholic meant.”

“RCIA is a way for people to get good information about our Church — a way for them to learn about the rich traditions of our Church and ultimately lead them toward conversion,” says Sr. Lucy Clynes, D.W., Pastoral Associate and RCIA coordinator.

This ministry is available to any person seven years or older who either has not yet been baptized (known as a *catechumen*) or who is seeking full communion with the Church (known as a *candidate*). Typically meeting weekly for an entire year, RCIA allows catechumens and candidates to come together in the context of a small community in order to learn about and be transformed by our Catholic faith. This all culminates with their full initiation into the Catholic Church during the Easter Vigil.

“It’s a process that’s both individualized and personal,” Sr. Lucy says. “Over the course of their time together, they do form a real, small Christian community amongst themselves as with the Church family.”

Referring to the RCIA process as a “faith journey,” Sr. Lucy explains that there are important landmarks known as rites in which we as an entire faith community are called upon to celebrate with and spiritually support the candidates and catechumens. This process begins with the Rite of Welcome, which took place here at Our Lady Star of the Sea on Sunday, Dec. 10, at the 9 a.m. Mass.

“This Rite is always so important because although these folks have been meeting, sharing and discerning both privately and in their sessions together, this is the first time that they are truly being initiated into our Church community,” Sr. Lucy says. “This Rite also gives parishioners a visual for who they are praying for.”

During the Rite of Welcome, catechumens and candidates are formally introduced to the congregation before having their senses blessed by both

# of Our Newest Parishioners

the priest and their godparents or sponsors. Then each person is gifted with a cross, symbolizing their continual desire to be converted by the Gospel.

Next in the candidates and catechumens' journey are the Rites of Sending Forth and Election, which will both occur on Sunday, Feb. 18. The first part of this process, the Rite of Sending Forth, will take place during the 9 a.m. Mass. It is when we as a faith community acknowledge and celebrate the journeying that has already been done by the catechumens and candidates. Then candidates and catechumens travel to St. Augustine in order to meet with the bishop and celebrate the Rite of Election.

"This allows them to understand what it means to be part of a universal church," Sr. Lucy says.

Because these men and women are choosing to become part of our Catholic family, it is essential that we as a parish welcome and support them throughout their journey. These Rites, then, are opportunities for us to celebrate with them much as we do following the birth or Baptism of a new family member.

"The Church asks us, the community, to initiate and welcome these new members," Sr. Lucy says. "It's important that the entire community recognize our catechumens and candidates, offering them their support and creating a sense of joy that they are now among us. And then when the catechumens are later dismissed to reflect upon the Word of God, we're invited to reflect ourselves on what our own understanding of the Eucharist is."



*This year, Our Lady Star of the Sea is blessed to have two catechumens and 16 candidates coming into full communion with the Church. We invite all parishioners to take these upcoming Rites as opportunities to meet and welcome them, and encourage you to lift them up in prayer in the months leading up to Easter Sunday. For more information on the RCIA process, please contact Sr. Lucy Clynes, D.W. at 904-285-2698.*



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## The Hess Family: Loving the Poor with Open Arms

*continued from front cover*

have cared for 100! It was my mission in life. I miss it so much! Sometimes, we even got to meet the future adoptive parents, which was very warm and exciting — or go to the Baptisms or birthday parties of the babies.”

In addition to taking in these precious children, the Hess family has also given their time, talent, and treasure in many other ways to our parish family and beyond. Dave and Mary Anne are faithful parents to their two sons, Peter and David III, and their four grandsons. Dave has mentored several teenage men over the years, one of whom graduated from Yale University on a full scholarship and is now a teacher. Furthermore, Dave has been enthusiastically involved with Christ Renews His Parish, and is a member

of the Men’s Club. Both he and Mary Anne help with the Meals on Wheels program as well.

“I love our parish,” Mary Anne says. “I appreciate that there are always new programs and ministries being started. There are so many beautiful babies at our church that have such wonderful young families, and we have such a good school.”

Desiring union with Our Lord in a powerful way, Dave and Mary Anne find solace in going to Eucharistic Adoration nightly on the First Friday of every month.

“I really enjoy this silent prayer time in the middle of the night,” Mary Anne says. “It is so quiet and worthwhile. At the end of the evening, we pray for former adorers, asking God to welcome them into heaven.”

### 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.*