

OUR LADY

Star of the Sea

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Parishioners Find Many Blessings in the Divine Mercy Prayer Group

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If you have ever come to Our Lady Star of the Sea for the 8:30 Mass on a Friday, you may have noticed a large group of people remaining in their pews after the conclusion of the Liturgy. These parishioners are part of a special ministry that has blessed our parish with the power of group prayer for many years. As Jesus Himself reminds us in Matthew 18:20 — “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” — when people come together in prayer, He is surely among them. The participants in the Divine Mercy prayers feel the truth of these words when they gather to pray each week.

Parishioner Barbara Conway and her late husband, Jim, first learned about the Divine Mercy Chaplet and Novena when they moved to Ponte Vedra Beach in 1990. These special prayers originate with St. Faustina, a 20th-century Polish nun who had a vision of Jesus appear to her in a white robe, raising His right hand in blessing and pointing toward His chest with His left hand, from which

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Some members of the Divine Mercy Prayer Group — (back) Rose Mabry, (front, from left) Mimi Fait, Rodger Fait, and Midge Barnhorst



Parishioners Find Many Blessings in the Divine Mercy Prayer Group *continued from front cover*

emanate one white and one red ray of light. St. Faustina recorded this vision and the many revelations she received from the Lord in a diary she penned prior to her death in 1938.

St. Faustina's diary sparked a new interest in God's message of Divine Mercy, and led to the creation of the Divine Mercy Novena and the Divine Mercy Chaplet, which consists of prayers said on the beads of a normal rosary. In April of 2000, St. Faustina was canonized, and shortly after, the Church proclaimed the Sunday following Easter to be Divine Mercy Sunday.

Long before the official proclamation of Divine Mercy Sunday, Barbara and her husband had been saying the Divine Mercy Novena every year, beginning on Good Friday and ending on Divine Mercy Sunday.

"Jim and I brought the Novena to the parish, and every year we would order the Novena booklets from the Marian Press," says Barbara. "For the Divine Mercy Sunday celebrations, we have confessions, adoration, the Chaplet, and then benediction. The celebration has really grown, and we now get as many as 200 people! It's a wonderful celebration."

Several years after Jim passed away in 2006, the devotion to the Divine Mercy was continuing to grow here at Our Lady Star of the Sea. Barbara formed a prayer group around the devotion, and participants expressed a desire to say the Chaplet and Novena on a regular basis.

"Our parish has really taken to this Divine Mercy Chaplet and Novena," Barbara says. "So, we say the Chaplet and Novena every Friday after the 8:30 Mass and we can have as many as 20 people there. We pray for the sick and dying, because the Lord said He would be with them."

Indeed, in one of the revelations St. Faustina recorded in her diary, Jesus tells her: "When they say this chap-

"The whole program — just knowing about Faustina and the Chaplet, definitely helps people grow in their faith. The Novena is just so beautiful because each day you pray for a different group of people, and I think it covers the whole spectrum of everybody here on earth. It can be a private devotion, but meeting as a group is the icing on the cake." — Barbara Conway

let in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just judge, but as the merciful Savior" (*Diary*, 1541). Recently, Barbara had the opportunity to take Communion to a dear friend in hospice. She said the Divine Mercy Chaplet for her, and the next day, she learned that her friend had passed. Barbara is thankful to have had the opportunity to pray for her friend in this special way.

Barbara urges any parishioner who is interested in enriching their prayer life to come join in the Divine Mercy Chaplet and Novena after Friday morning Mass and experience the many blessings that come with participation in this group.

"The whole program — just knowing about Faustina and the Chaplet, definitely helps people grow in their faith," Barbara says. "The Novena is just so beautiful because each day you pray for a different group of people, and I think it covers the whole spectrum of everybody here on earth. It can be a private devotion, but meeting as a group is the icing on the cake."

Are you interested in experiencing the Divine Mercy prayers? There is no need to sign up or plan in advance. Simply join in any Friday after the 8:30 a.m. Mass, and begin a new prayer devotion sure to bring many blessings to your life and to the world!



A Letter from Our Pastor

Where Are Our Priorities?

Dear Parishioners,

I am in hopes that you are aware that we are completing and will continue to celebrate the holiest time of the year in our Church. Easter Sunday, April 1, is the high point of the year for us as Catholics. We will, of course, continue to celebrate this holy time until Pentecost Sunday, which is May 20 this year. That is correct — our Easter season continues until then.

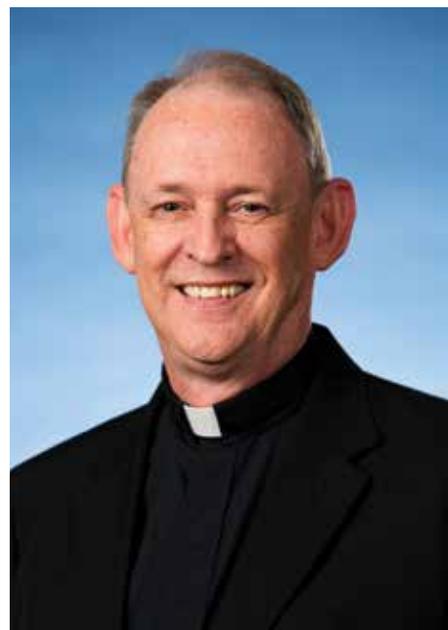
St. Paul provided some sage advice. He said, “think of what is above, not of what is on earth” (Colossians 3:2). Regardless of your opinions on what happens after resurrection, we can agree that it will be something “above” this life. Paul might be asking us if we put God first in all things. Life can become very encumbered with possessions, money, power, and even our egos.

Our goal should be to put God at the top of our lists. If that is not what we do, we may need to adjust our priorities. If we have not moved in that direction during Lent or in the past, now is the time to do it. We must constantly strive to not allow earthly things to become our gods.

It was St. Gregory the Great who said, “God made us to be the gardeners of paradise.” Some stewardship people have maintained that God has given each of us a garden — and when we are judged, we only hear one question, “What have you done with the garden I gave you?”

What have we done? What are we doing? First, we must recognize and acknowledge that we are all gifted, admittedly in different and varied ways. Despite what we see as our gifts or how we measure them, we need to ensure that we are using them in ways that serve God and others — ways that show good discipleship and stewardship on our parts.

Were you aware that the month of April is dedicated to the Holy Spirit in the Church? The term “spirit” translates from the Hebrew word *ruah*, which means “breath.” Truly, as Catholics, the Holy Spirit has been breathed into each of us, and is part of the garden we have received. Do we turn to Him? Do we rely on Him for strength? Do we even grant that He is part of our



very being? We should. We need to, as St. Paul advised, “think of what is above, not of what is on earth.”

May God bless you in all you do, and strive to do!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Keith Brennan
Pastor



A Look Back on Our Joe-



We thank all those who took part in our Joe-Paddy Parish Celebration, making the event such a success!



-Paddy Parish Celebration





Sealed With the Holy Spirit: *Confirmation at Our Lady Star of the Sea*

Most of us understand that growth — physical, intellectual and spiritual — is vital to human life. The Church believes that the Sacrament of Confirmation is a significant feature of spiritual growth. Confirmation builds on what began at Baptism and was nourished by the Holy Eucharist. During Confirmation, the Holy Spirit comes upon the person, accompanied by God the Father and God the Son, just as He did at Pentecost.

“Confirmation completes our initiation into the Catholic Church,” says Deacon Daniel Scrone, who has headed up Confirmation training and preparation for the past two years at Palmer Catholic Academy. “Our faith and our beliefs are sealed with the Holy Spirit. These young people have gone through a two-year preparation for this day. This is a joyous occasion for them and for our parish community. It has been a privilege for me to be involved and to witness the transformation of these young people.”

Confirmation will occur at Our Lady Star of the Sea on Wednesday, April 18, at 6 p.m. in the church. One-hundred and twenty of our young people have been preparing for this sacrament and will receive full initiation into the Church on that evening.

“Most Rev. Felipe J. Estévez, the Bishop of St. Augustine, will be here



Celebrating Confirmation, 2017

to celebrate the Mass and confirm our young people,” Deacon Daniel says. “We had a retreat for them in March and will have an eighth grade lock-in in preparation the weekend before on April 13. It is my privilege to teach eighth-grade religion at Palmer Catholic Academy, so I know many of these young people very well.”

Being sealed with the Holy Spirit, a key part of Confirmation, is a major step on the journey on which we all travel. Pope Francis recognizes the importance of this. He says, “We can study the whole history of salvation, we can study the whole of Theology, but without the Spirit we cannot understand. It is the Spirit that makes

us realize the truth or — in the words of Our Lord — it is the Spirit that makes us know the voice of Jesus.”

Confirmation is neither the end nor the culmination of one’s faith journey. It is only the beginning. According to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, “In the Sacrament of Confirmation, the baptized person is ‘sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit,’ and is strengthened for service to the Body of Christ.” The key word here is “service.” We are all called to lives of service and there are many opportunities here at Our Lady Star of the Sea to respond to that call. Each of us should seek ways to join our confirmandi as they strive to become disciples of the Lord.

If you would like more information about Confirmation at Our Lady Star of the Sea, please contact the parish office at 904-285-2698.



Bill and Winnie Walsh: *Taking Catholicism to Heart*

Throughout the nearly 50 years that they have been married, Bill and Winnie Walsh have truly taken Catholicism to heart, in a rich variety of ways. By striving to be faithful spouses, parents and Catholics all around, they have embraced the stewardship vision beautifully and lived life to the fullest.

“We have been involved in so many different kinds of ministries over the years, and the Lord has led us to help in various areas,” Winnie says. “He has really opened up doors for us. We really believe in the whole concept of stewardship, and in giving back out of gratitude for all God has blessed us with. We feel that when we are called upon to something for our faith community, we should try to be willing to do it.”

From the beginning of their married life together, they have been blessed with God’s providential presence in a remarkable way, particularly through their experience as parents.

“We grew into the beauty of taking care of our children,” Winnie says. “Forty-nine years ago, I gave birth to twin girls, Jennifer and Danielle. Danielle was born not breathing, and at the time of her birth, the doctor said he faced a distinct choice — he could either let her die, or help her live, but he knew if she lived, he would be ‘crucifying’ our family. That is the exact word that he used — ‘crucifying.’”

Although raising Danielle has been an extraordinary challenge, it has also proved to be an extraordinary grace.

“She was only supposed to live to be 10 to 12 years old, but she is now 49 years old,” Winnie says. “She is profoundly handicapped — like a 6-month-old, developmentally. She is so beautiful, and she has such a peace about her. We had no idea what a blessing it would be to have her in our family. She has made us better people, and our life has been so enriched by her. I can’t imagine how we would be without her. She has taught us so much about life.”

In past years, throughout the diocese, Bill and Winnie have enjoyed volunteering with ministries such as Camp I Am Special, a program for children with special needs, and SEARCH for Christian Maturity weekends, which are retreats for young people.



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“It was a wonderful experience to be involved with Camp I Am Special,” Winnie says. “It was great to watch the children have a week of normalcy, and go out and fish and play like normal kids. It reminded us how blessed we were as a family, as well.”

Currently, Winnie and Bill help to provide meals at the Gabriel House of Care, a facility on the Mayo Clinic campus that helps people who are awaiting an organ transplant or undergoing cancer treatments.

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About five years ago, they rediscovered Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish as their spiritual home after they made a Christ Renews His Parish retreat at our church. “The retreat brought us back home to our parish,” Winnie says. “Coming to Our Lady Star of the Sea and meeting different parishioners stirred something inside of us and helped us realize that this was our faith community, and where we really belonged.”

Now that they are fully integrated into the life of our parish family, they find that receiving Christ at daily Mass gives them spiritual nourishment and strength. Winnie serves as a lector, as well as a spiritual director for members of our parish. She also gives talks about the Sacrament of Matrimony for the Rite of

Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) process, and Bill serves as an RCIA team member.

Bill finds that meeting with a men’s Cursillo group every Friday morning gives him much encouragement, as well.

“We really help each other stay on track, and share fellowship with each other,” he says.

Winnie finds a similar source of spiritual refreshment by being part of the Council of Catholic Women.

“It is important for women to be able to come together, accepting and uplifting one other,” she says. “At the Council of Catholic Women meetings, we share our life stories, which are sacred journeys. We share our faith, have fun, and encourage each other to use our gifts for the glory of God.”

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.