

OUR LADY

Star of the Sea

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Building a *Culture of Life* with the Human Life and Dignity Ministry

So, what is on your calendar for the second Friday of each month from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m.?

If it isn't saving the lives of unborn babies, and you have a little space, you might want to pray about jotting that one down.

"Our parish has 'adopted' this time slot to pray at the Women's Choice Clinic in Jacksonville," says Debbie English, who coordinates the Human Life and Dignity Ministry at Our Lady Star of the Sea. "We gather together to peacefully pray the Rosary, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, and the Stations

of the Cross, interceding for the unborn babies and their mothers who are considering aborting them. Those who are not comfortable praying at the clinic itself pray the Mercy Chaplet after the 8:30 Mass that morning instead."

This beautiful effort is just one of the many ways that members of the Human Life and Dignity Ministry are working to build a culture of life in our midst. By spreading the word about various pro-life events in our area, they are opening hearts to the call to respect life from conception until natural death. For example, this year they are encouraging others to attend the Florida Respect Life Conference, which will take place at the Shrine of Our Lady of Leche in St. Augustine from Oct. 11-12. This past summer, they helped coordinate meals for Camp I Am Special, a six-day residential camp experience for children, teenagers and adults who have intellectual and developmental differences. They also inform people about Caring Choices Pregnancy Services, a program offered by Catholic Charities, as well as Project Rachel and Rachel's Vineyard, which are outreaches that foster post-abortion healing. Recently, the ministry also helped get our parishioners involved with 40 Days for Life, a remarkable pro-life effort of prayer and fasting to end abortion.



Catholic Gators at the 2019 March for Life in St. Augustine.

INSIDE

- 3 Being Good Stewards of Our Personal Harvest
- 4 Going into Prayer with the Blessed Mother:
The Month of the Rosary
- 6 Making the Most of Every Sunday
Putting God First
- 7 Meet Jenni Smith:
Forming Family and Self in the Faith



Human Life and Dignity Ministry *continued from front cover*

Many of those who participate in the Human Life and Dignity Ministry have been touched by God in a meaningful way, and experienced the call to be faithful stewards of the gift of life. Debbie has such a story.

After graduating from the University of Florida, Debbie went on to earn a degree in ultrasound technology. She studied away, but she had no idea what marvelous things the Lord would do with the knowledge she obtained.

“It is amazing how God works,” she says. “I never knew down the road that God would have me doing ultrasounds for vulnerable women and helping save the lives of precious, unborn babies.”

For the past seven years, Debbie has been volunteering as an ultrasound technician at Lifeline Resources, a local crisis pregnancy center. Her experience has been both rewarding and trying at the same time — which seems typical when a person is on the front lines, fighting for the culture of life.

“At first, I thought I could save every baby and every mother from experiencing the harmful effects of abortion, but then I realized that I just can’t,” she says. “However, I began to see that many of the women who came in were not abortion-minded, and that showing them ultrasound pictures of their babies would really help them make the right decision. The photos also give them something to show their family and friends, so that others can see that what is inside of them really is a life, even at only eight weeks along the pregnancy.”

Over time, Debbie’s dedication to pro-life work also made a profound impression on her daughter, Morgan, who heads up the Respect Life Ministry at the University of Florida, where she is a student.

“I had three children, and I taught them to be pro-life from little on,” Debbie says. “I would always tell them stories about the women I was trying to help, and I believe it helped them to become pro-life themselves.”

Further, Morgan brought the 40 Days for Life effort to Gainesville. In January, she was awarded a commendable scholarship at the March for Life in San Francisco for her pro-life work.



Morgan English, Debbie English and Brooke English at the 2019 March for Life, Washington, D.C.



Morgan English receiving commendable scholarship this past January

Please refer to future parish bulletins for more information on upcoming events and meetings offered through the Human Life and Dignity Ministry.



A Letter from Our Pastor

Being Good Stewards of Our Personal Harvest

Dear Parishioners,

In the United States, October is the month that brings the completion of the harvest. Although many Americans live in urban areas and seldom ever see a farm, the foods we all eat — fruits and vegetables, meats, milk, and the grain for our bread — come from farms and ranches across America and around the world.

Some of us may feel completely detached from farm life and think that the harvest has little to do with us, but we are all connected with agriculture more closely than we realize. The success of the harvest affects the prices we pay — and if the harvest were to fail completely, there would soon be nothing available to put on our grocery shelves.

In the Old Testament world, most people were farmers, and the Israelites were to bring offerings to God from the harvest of their fields and flocks. The success of the harvest directly affected their wellbeing during the next year. At their agricultural festivals, “the measure of your own voluntary offering which you will give shall be in proportion to the blessing the Lord, your God, has given you” (Dt 16:10) they were told.



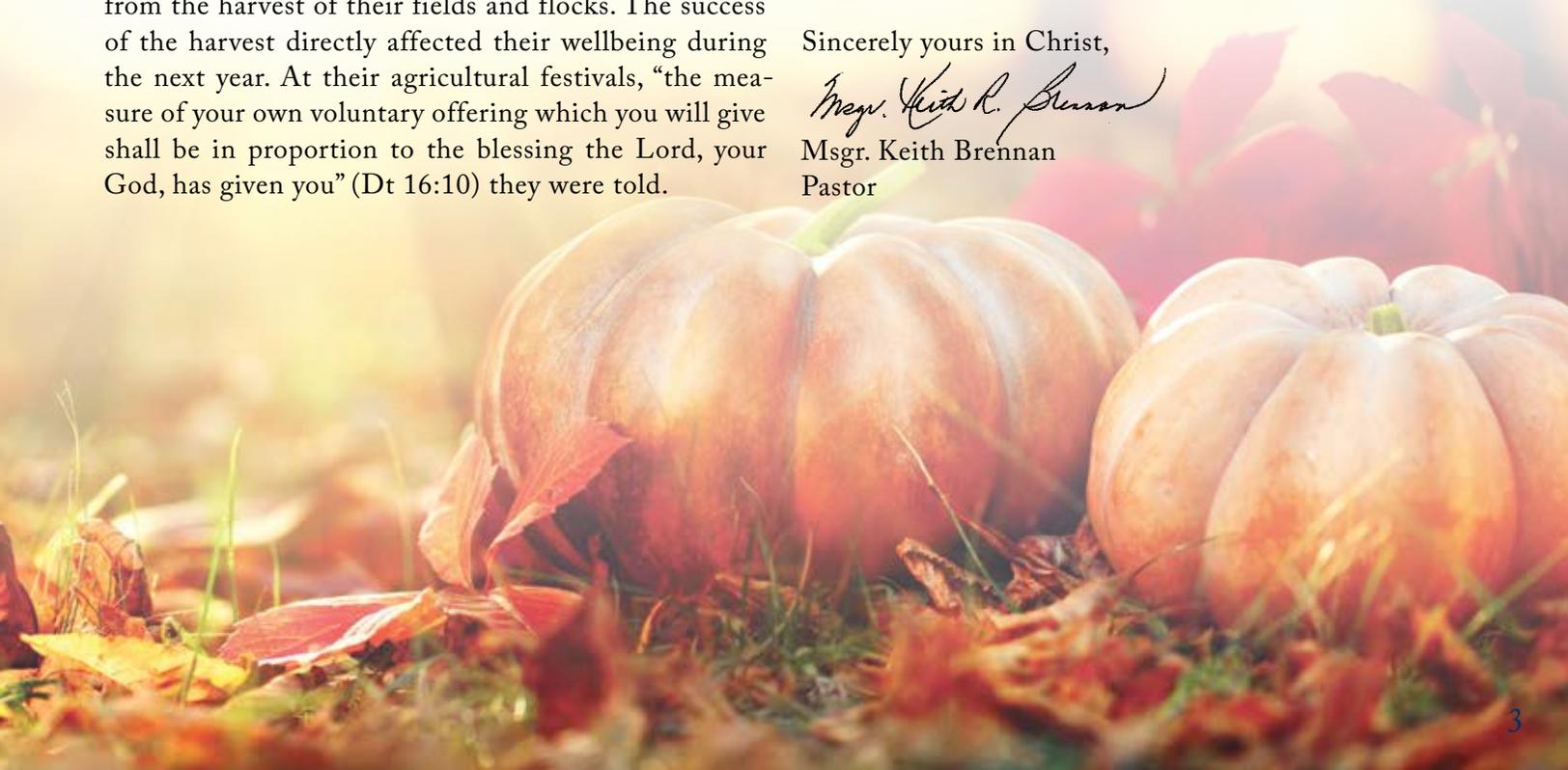
The same holds true for us. We may not have a harvest of fruits or grains, but we do receive a return for our own labor, whether it is in a factory, an office or a classroom. We are also invited by God to return a portion to Him for His glory and our own spiritual welfare, in proportion to the blessings we have received.

It’s ultimately a choice we make. Are we going to hoard everything we get, or are we going to give back to God a portion of what He gives us? When we give back to God, will we return just what’s left over after everything else is paid, or will our gifts have a higher priority? Are we, as stewards, going to return the first

fruits, rather than the leftovers, to God? What choice will you make?

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Keith Brennan
Pastor





GOING INTO PRAYER WITH THE BLESSED M

As Catholics, we are blessed to be able to cultivate a special relationship with the Blessed Mother — sharing with her our times of joy and sorrow, finding inspiration in her graceful obedience, and placing our trust in her intercessory prayer on our behalf. One of the simplest, yet most fulfilling ways to show our devotion to Mary and bring our intentions to her and our Father in heaven is by praying the Rosary. This month, the Church remembers the blessing of these special prayers by celebrating the feast day of Our Lady of the Rosary on Oct. 7 and by designating October the “Month of the Rosary.”

The tradition of counting prayers finds its roots in ancient times, when early Christians would use rocks or knotted ropes to number their prayers. In 1208, when St. Dominic was preaching against the heretical Albigensians in France, Mary appeared to him and implored him to teach

her Psalter, or prayers, to the people. Five years after adopting the Marian Psalter, the Catholics defeated the Albigensians, despite their forces being outnumbered 20 to one!

The Marian Psalter first consisted of 150 Hail Marys divided by Our Fathers. Over time, the 150 prayers were divided into groups of 50, called mysteries, which evolved into what we now call the Rosary. Each mystery examines particular events in the life of Jesus — and therefore, those of his mother, Mary, as well. In 2002, St. Pope John Paul II added the Luminous Mysteries to the original three — the Joyful Mysteries, the Sorrowful Mysteries, and the Glorious Mysteries.

Parishioner Vivian Garcia holds a strong devotion to the Blessed Mother and the Rosary. While she said the prayers now and again during her childhood, she later made a commitment to the Rosary a part of her everyday life as an adult.



As Catholics, we are blessed to be able to cultivate a special relationship with the Blessed Mother — sharing with her our times of joy and sorrow, finding inspiration in her graceful obedience, and placing our trust in her intercessory prayer on our behalf.



ANOTHER: *The Month of the Rosary*

“Seven years ago, I decided for Lent that I would say the Rosary for 40 days,” Vivian says. “And I never stopped! When you do something long enough, it becomes a part of your life. Now it is the first thing I do every single day when I wake up.”

In the years since, Vivian has found her faith life revolutionized by the Rosary.

“Now, instead of worrying about things, I’ll say a Rosary,” she says. “Any situation where I’m nervous or unsure about something — for example, when my daughter first started driving recently — I put it in the hands of the Blessed Mother by praying the Rosary. It’s one of the most relaxing prayers because it is repetitive and doesn’t require a lot of your own thoughts, so it becomes a meditation.”

While a personal devotion to the Rosary offers many blessings in and of itself, participating in a group Rosary is also a wonderful way to express a commitment to the Blessed Mother. In the month of October, Palmer Catholic Academy leads an active Rosary for children and parents that takes place around the church grounds.

Throughout the year, a daily group Rosary is offered at Our Lady Star of the Sea.

“It’s just a really beautiful and relaxed environment where you can either participate with your voice or participate quietly,” Vivian says. “There’s a very special bond when you share a part of your faith together because praying is so intimate. Being blessed enough to pray with someone else certainly connects you in a different way.”

Having experienced firsthand the immense spiritual benefits of the Rosary, Vivian would encourage all parishioners to begin a devotion to the Rosary this month. For



A group gathers to pray the Rosary every weekday morning in our parish’s Marian Chapel.

those who are unfamiliar with the prayer, there are many apps available that will walk you through the steps. Vivian recommends the interactive Rosaries on the EWTN and the Laudate apps.

As Catholics, adding the Rosary to our arsenal of prayers can enrich our faith life beyond measure.

“Most of the saints have had a devotion to the Rosary, and Padre Pio says that the Rosary is the weapon for our times,” Vivian says. “The Rosary calms you and soothes you. When there is an issue or a crisis, you just go into prayer. It really is the only way to get through the worries and concerns of life, with the help of the Blessed Mother and the Rosary. I have absolutely seen the Rosary in at work in my own life.”

Our Lady Star of the Sea offers several opportunities for developing a devotion to the Rosary. A group Rosary is held every weekday at 8 a.m. and Saturdays at 9 a.m. in the Marian Chapel, coordinated by Grace Diez-Hoeck at 904-868-3661. On the first Saturday of each month, Respect for Life is the special intention of the Rosary, coordinated by Mariann Werninck at 904-703-4379, and a Rosary for the Sick is coordinated by Bob Grano at 904-273-0256.



Making the Most of Every Sunday

Putting God First

Many Americans set aside their Sundays to enjoy various leisure activities. Indeed, Sundays during the summer months may include cookouts, or perhaps afternoons spent at the swimming pool or baseball stadium. And when fall arrives, many fans will certainly be spending their Sundays in front of the television, as they become engrossed in the excitement of the National Football League's highly anticipated Sunday games.

Sunday is also the day when more than 18,000 Catholic parishes in the United States will be celebrating Masses. But if recent statistics are any indication, the percentage of the U.S. Catholic population attending Mass that day will stand in stark contrast to the percentage of the U.S. television audience watching Sunday football games.

According to the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life's *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* published in 2008, Catholics account for roughly 23.9 percent of the adult population in the United States. But of the 70 million-plus registered Catholics in the U.S., only 36 percent attend Mass once a week or more, according to Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

Only 12 percent of U.S. Catholics participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year, and a mere 17 percent of Catholic men say they have ever slightly considered becoming a priest or religious brother.

God gives us leisure time to clear our heads and recover from what can often be a hectic daily life. But it is important that we glorify God in all that we do, and time away from work or school provides a great opportunity to regularly celebrate the sacraments. As Catholics, we are obligated to attend Mass on a weekly basis, barring illness or extenuating circumstances. But this is just the first step. Spending time in prayer, Eucharistic Adoration and Reconciliation provides us with the grace, healing and the wisdom to live as disciples of Christ on a daily basis. And sharing our time, talent and treasure through ministry participation and charitable giving enables us to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ, thus ensuring that we are placing God at the top of our list of priorities.

Each Sunday presents an opportunity for us to foster our discipleship commitments to Christ. So, make the time and discern ways that you can put God first, on every Sunday throughout the year.

Sharing our time, talent and treasure through ministry participation and charitable giving enables us to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ, thus ensuring that we are placing God at the top of our list of priorities.



MEET JENNI SMITH

Forming Family and Self in the Faith



Parishioner Jenni Smith with her husband, Troy, and their six children.

Like many cradle Catholics, parishioner Jenni Smith admits to once having more of a “going through the motions” kind of faith. But as she grew in her own motherhood journey, Jenni suddenly realized that she needed more, and felt compelled to learn the *why* behind the faith she’d been raised in and practiced all of those years.

“I was born and raised Catholic, attended Catholic grade school, and was sending my own kids to Catholic school, more because that is what was expected than anything else,” Jenni says. “But as my kids got older, I knew that I didn’t want to just sit in the same pew every Sunday and fill out my envelope while never knowing the people sitting beside me. I really wanted my faith and my family’s faith to be more than that. I knew I wasn’t going to leave my faith, but I needed to know more. I needed to know why I was doing all of this — I wanted to be able to provide my children with answers.”

As these feelings deepened within her, Jenni finally decided to attend one of Our Lady Star of the Sea’s

Christ Renews His Parish weekends, or CRHP. Not really knowing what she was in for, this experience would become what Jenni describes as a turning point in her life, finally providing the *why* she was seeking.

“I think taking that initiative and attending that first weekend really opened my eyes as to why I’m here,” Jenni says. “It helped me recognize why we are Catholic, and it’s all about the Eucharist — helped open my eyes through the Holy Spirit.”

Filled with a renewed spiritual vigor, Jenni returned home committed to forming her children in the Catholic faith, which she has come to recognize as her number-one ministry. Jenni has joined a moms group here at the parish and is a regular adorer during Palmer Catholic Academy’s weekly adoration hour, coordinated by Diane Foley. Not only have these ministries helped Jenni go deeper in her spiritual life, but they’ve also blessed her with a beautiful sisterhood — a community of women from whom she is continuously learning as they share and grow in the faith journey together.

continued on back cover



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 24
Ponte Vedra Bch., FL

Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church
545 A1A North | Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
(904) 285-2698 | www.olsspvb.org

Meet Jenni Smith *continued from page 7*

"I'm humbled all of the time in our community because there are so many incredible women who are so much further in their journey and so much more educated than I will ever be," Jenni says. "You do your best when you have little people. Sometimes we can look at those people who are able to do all of these different ministries and feel guilty because we just aren't there. But then I had one older women in the community remind me, 'Your ministry right now is raising your children.'"

Yet, to do this successfully, as Jenni has come to realize, she must always continue her own pursuit of

holiness — for as the saying goes, you can't give what you don't already have. So as Jenni works to fulfill her mission of "raising the next generation of Catholics," she strives to first model that faith to them.

"I knew I needed more out of it, so I had to put more effort in," Jenni says. "I had to figure out why I wanted to be part of this as an adult. And what I learned is that there are so many ministries and great offerings to get involved in at the parish. You just have to find what fits you and your family best."

"I knew I needed more out of it, so I had to put more effort in. I had to figure out why I wanted to be part of this as an adult. And what I learned is that there are so many ministries and great offerings to get involved in at the parish. It's just a matter of taking the time to get to know what's available and choosing to become part of them." — JENNI SMITH

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.