

OUR LADY *Star of the Sea*

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Men's Group Ministry Serving up Fish Fry and Plenty of Fellowship

Our parish Men's Group Ministry once again is offering us a chance to begin our Lenten journey as a parish family during their annual Fish Fry set for 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 28.

Everyone is welcome to the Fish Fry that will be held at the Cultural Center on our campus. The fee is \$5 per person and \$20 per family.

"It's not a fundraiser," says Rob Vergnolle, Chair of the Men's Group Steering Committee. "The fees offset most of the cost, and whatever is short, the Men's Group and parish pick it up."

Feedback from the parish has prompted the group to serve not only the traditional fried fish, but also a more healthful option of baked fish. Side dishes include hush puppies, slaw, macaroni and cheese, and red beans and rice. The cooks will prepare grilled cheese sandwiches for the youngsters, or for those who don't eat fish. Carry-out is available and is handled by a designated team.

While the menu promises a tasty dinner that evening, there is much more being served at the Fish Fry.

"It brings us in the Men's Group closer as a family," Rob says. "It has the biggest number of volunteers of the year, and there's a lot of fellowship. It gives us a chance to gather and kick off the Lenten season with a parish dinner. And it is fully supported by the parish."

In past years, the Men's Group held two fish fries during Lent, but when it became apparent that the first one in the season drew more people, it was decided to hold just one.



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Men's Group Ministry Serving up Fish Fry and Plenty of Fellowship

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"We have a lot of families who come," Rob says. "A lot of younger families come and older parishioners, too. It is great fellowship. It's one of the bigger gatherings we have all year with the parish. It's standing room only, usually. We get in excess of 500 people. It's just really a nice sense of fellowship — maybe the best all through the year."

Rob works with Victor Gonzalez and Victor Yazbec to get things organized.

"After eight to 10 years of working together, we have a blueprint," Rob says.

On Tuesday, they begin defrosting the fish that has been pre-ordered. All of the other supplies are gathered and preparation begins at 2 p.m. Friday. By the time the buses from the senior residences begin arriving, everything is ready to serve.

Parish fish fries have become a way to foster fellowship while providing the opportunity to follow the Lenten abstinence directives. Non-Catholic organizations, such as volunteer fire departments and fraternal organizations, have begun holding fish fries as fundraisers, knowing there will be willing patrons.

Catholics, under Canon Law, have abstained from meat on all Fridays, and the practice remains part of Canon Law. However, according to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, we follow the prescribed days of fast and abstinence on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, and the days of abstinence every Friday of Lent.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops state: "Abstinence laws consider that meat comes only from animals such as chickens, cows, sheep or pigs — all of which live on land. Birds are also considered meat. Abstinence does not include meat juices and liquid

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— ROB VERGNOLLE, MEN'S GROUP STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIR

foods made from meat. Thus, such foods as chicken broth, consomme, soups cooked or flavored with meat, meat gravies or sauces, as well as seasonings or condiments made from animal fat are technically not forbidden. However, moral theologians have traditionally taught that we should abstain from all animal-derived products (except foods such as gelatin, butter, cheese and eggs, which do not have any meat taste). Fish are a different category of animal. Salt and freshwater species of fish, amphibians, reptiles, (cold-blooded animals) and shellfish are permitted" (*Questions and Answers about Lent and Lenten Practices*).

So, be sure to mark Feb. 28 on your calendar for the Our Lady Star of the Sea Men's Group fish fry. You will meet fellow parishioners you might not ordinarily meet at Mass, and men will have the opportunity to learn more about our Men's Group Ministry!

Anyone with questions about the Fish Fry may call the parish office at 904-285-2698. For information about joining the Men's Group Ministry, please contact Rob Vergnolle at rvergnolle@landsouth.com or 904-612-8183.



A Letter from Our Pastor

Striving For “The Best Lent Ever” Will Prepare Us to Joyfully Celebrate Easter

Dear Parishioners,

The most important day in February won't come till the very end of the month. Alert parishioners may already have realized I'm referring to Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, which falls on Feb. 26 this year. That means we have most of the month to plan for Lent!

I know what you're thinking right about now: “Father seems particularly happy about getting ready for Lent!” Of course, when we approach Lent in the right way, it will help us get spiritually fit to celebrate Easter. Just as an Olympic athlete goes through a long period of serious training to win a medal, so we prepare during Lent for our great Easter celebration. And “giving up” something during Lent is not supposed to leave a vacuum — we’re invited to put something more valuable in its place.

We’re all familiar with the three traditional Lenten disciplines of **prayer, fasting and almsgiving**. These can serve as our framework for how we approach the season of Lent. One might decide, for example, to give up a half hour of television each evening. That doesn’t mean you sit and stare at a blank wall for the half hour. Instead, fill it with prayerful reading of the Bible or a devotional book, or praying the Rosary.

Some people decide to forego desserts during Lent (fasting). But just losing weight is not the purpose of Lent! The goal is greater discipline in our spiritual lives. However, a family can put aside the money saved by skipping desserts and contribute it to a Church-related charity (almsgiving), so that our self-denial can benefit others.

These are just possible examples. There are many ways of combining prayer, fasting, and almsgiving into



our daily lives during the Lenten season. The object is to develop a spiritual routine that challenges us but still fits into our lives with our individual responsibilities and schedules.

By the way, most of us will stumble at some point during our Lenten journey. Our first instinct will be to throw up our hands and give up. What we should do is just pick up where we left off and continue to do our best as we proceed on the Lenten journey.

Of course, most of February is Ordinary Time. But that gives us time to figure out what we should do in the areas of prayer, fasting and almsgiving so we can keep our best Lent ever and arrive at Easter spiritually fit.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Keith Brennan
Pastor

Lent



PARISHIONERS Bill and Winnie Walsh REFLECT

This month, we celebrate the feast day of St. Valentine, the patron saint of happy marriages. With that in mind, there could be no two better parishioners to highlight in this issue of our newsletter than our very own Bill and Winnie Walsh, who celebrated 50 years of marriage last August! Through both the triumphs and trials of the last half century, the Walshes have remained steadfast in both their Catholic faith and their devotion to one another.

Bill and Winnie grew up in the Bronx, but when they first met in 1968, it was at a gathering in Upper Manhattan for Winnie's cousin, who was holding a "meet and greet" as a part of his bid for political office. Bill's friends had bet him that he couldn't get Winnie to go on a date with him. Bill lost the bet when Winnie turned him down and encouraged her friend to pursue him instead!

A month later, Bill and Winnie bumped into each other again, and this time, they began talking and getting to know each other a little more. Almost a year later, in the middle of a blizzard in Poe Park in February of 1969, Bill proposed.

On Aug. 16, 1969, the couple received the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, and their life together began. However, both Bill and Winnie say that they came to understand the covenant of marriage most fully and deeply a full year and a half later, following the birth of their twin girls.

"Your life just gets turned upside down," Bill says of that time. "We weren't thinking about children at all, but God had other plans. Then to have one of the twins,



Bill and Winnie Walsh on their wedding day, Aug. 16, 1969

Danielle, be profoundly handicapped — how do you get through that? Eventually there is acceptance and you can see the blessings there. They're called 'special' children for a reason — she really is a blessing in our life."

Winnie is equally honest about the often difficult journey that brought the Walshes to complete faith in the Lord and His plans for their family.

"It took us a while to see the blessings," she says. "When we received the news that Danielle would never walk and never talk, it was stunning. I remember wondering how we would ever be able to do it. It was a time of profound prayer and introspection on how we would move forward as a family.

"That's when we really began living the vows we made on our wedding day," Winnie continues. "We had no idea what it really was to honor and cherish in

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— BILL WALSH



ON THE Blessings of 50 Years of Marriage



Parishioners Bill and Winnie Walsh, married for 50 years

life and in death. Then you have children who are so dependent on you, and you start living that. The Lord led us like babies being weaned from the bottle, step by step. Then one day you wake up and think, ‘What an incredible journey.’”

Reflecting on Danielle’s influence on their family life, the Walshes can see the many ways she continues to bring everyone together. Her twin, Jennifer, lives in New York City but always keeps Danielle in her heart and mind. The Walshes’ younger daughter, Briana, works in a school for special needs children. And over the years, with the ups and downs of Danielle’s health struggles and hospitalizations, Bill and Winnie have witnessed a continued outpouring of support from their parish family here at Our Lady Star of the Sea.

Through it all, Bill and Winnie have kept their focus on their strong Catholic faith and their marriage.

“Life is going to be joyful, but you are also going to experience these valleys,” Bill says. “It’s going to be your faith that gets you through those struggling times. I’ve been blessed that Winnie is a very kind, loving person and has got me through this life of mine. And the people we meet at church are so strong in their faith — we all help each other through the tough times.”



Bill and Winnie Walsh with their daughters — Danielle (center), Briana (left) and Jennifer (standing, right)

The Walshes have remained active in parish and community service throughout their lives, serving as Eucharistic Ministers and lectors, and preparing meals for the Gabriel House of Care and the Marywood Retreat Center camp for children with disabilities. In addition, they bring the wisdom and experience of their long marriage to the talks that they give on the Sacrament of Matrimony as part of the Our Lady Star of the Sea RCIA process.

Continuing to build on five decades of committed love, Bill and Winnie Walsh are surely a blessing and an inspiration to our RCIA process, our parish and our community!

“The real gift of marriage is the constancy,” Winnie says. “When he walks in the door, he knows I’m here, and when I walk in, I know he’s there. You come home and say, ‘This is my home, this is my husband.’ Looking back at 50 years, it is only by the grace of God that we are here. It’s stunning that we are here. And we ask God for the courage to go on.”



JOE-PADDY DINNER DANCE

Celebrating Our Church and Honoring Two Great Saints

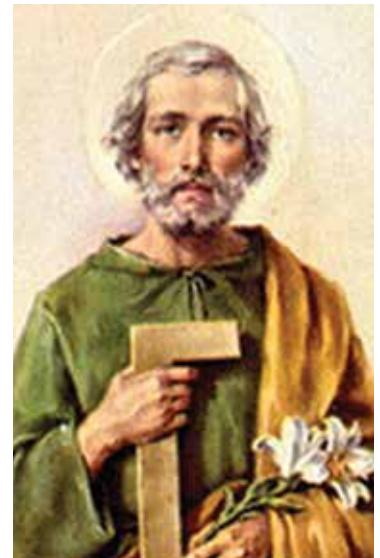
Every March, the Church celebrates the feasts of two great saints — St. Patrick on March 17 and St. Joseph on March 19. Not only are these two men powerful examples of Christian manhood, but they have also become pillars of Irish and Italian culture. And here at Our Lady Star of the Sea, we have a special way of honoring these two beloved men through the annual Joe-Paddy Dinner and Dance event.

"It all started with annual St. Patrick's Day dinner begun and coordinated by Frank Kane and the Men's Group for many years," parishioner Mary Lou Billyer says. "Then in 2017, we decided to combine the celebration of St. Patrick's Day with that of St. Joseph, the patron saint of the universal Church. Our traditional Irish cuisine, which includes corned beef and cabbage and Irish soda breads prepared by our parishioners, was then opened up to also include fabulous Italian cuisine items such as pastas, sausage and peppers, and scrumptious desserts prepared by our marvelous kitchen chefs — Frank Wawrzyniak, Mark Sitton, Dave Rybak and Andy Soltis from our men's group, as well as talented parishioners Monica Costantino and Kathy Rybak."

Coordinated today by both the Men's Group and the Council of Catholic Women, the Joe-Paddy Dinner and Dance continues to be an evening of fun and fellowship for parishioners. In addition to its fabulous cuisine, the evening also includes live musical entertainment provided by both the Jacksonville Pipes and Drums and our very own choir band, Jeremiah 29, 50/50 raffles, and dancing. Mary Lou says it's just an overall good time and a beautiful way to celebrate the gift of our Catholic faith and parish community.

"Each year it brings us together for fun and fellowship, and reminds us of our many blessings, particularly our great parish community of faith-filled members," Mary Lou says. "I personally love seeing the enjoyment on the faces of my fellow parishioners as they enjoy each other's company, the dancing and bagpipers' performance, and the overall celebration of our parish family. I enjoy, too, the friendships that have evolved with the wonderful people I have had the opportunity to work with over the years"

Making this possible each year is a large group of dedicated volunteers, all offering their time, talent and treasure to ensure another successful celebration.



This year's Joe-Paddy Dinner and Dance will take place on Saturday, March 21, starting at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$15 apiece and can be purchased through the parish office.

Tables of 10 may also be reserved in advance upon payment. "Tickets do sell out so we encourage parishioners to buy theirs as early as possible," Mary Lou Billyer says.

If you are interested in assisting with the planning and orchestration of this evening, please contact the parish office at 904-285-2698.



The Sign of the Cross

A Powerful Prayer Tradition in the Catholic Church

Since we say and make the Sign of the Cross so often, it may easily become a rote, perhaps even thoughtless, action. However, it is important to remember that the Sign of the Cross is much more than a simple gesture. Even in its most basic form, the Sign of the Cross — accompanied by the spoken or unspoken words “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” — is a prayer, a creed stating our belief in the Holy Trinity, the dual nature of Jesus Christ, and the dependence of our salvation on His crucifixion and resurrection.

In addition, making the Sign of the Cross is an indication of a willingness to take up our own cross and suffering for the sake of Christ. The prayer is considered one of the greatest weapons against Satan and all demons, and an added strength against the temptations of the flesh.

In the Roman Catholic Church today, the Sign of the Cross is typically made with either three fingers or an open hand touching first the forehead, then the chest, followed by the left shoulder and then the right

(in the Eastern Church, the right shoulder is touched before the left). The concept of making a sign, or “setting a seal,” upon the forehead of those who place their faith in the Lord appears in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible — see Ezek. 9:4 and Rev. 7:3, 9:4, and 14:1.

Early versions of the Sign of the Cross were traced on just the forehead, using the thumb and forefinger held together in the shape of a tiny cross. We still see this version of the blessing performed during Baptisms (with the cross traced on the infant’s forehead) and on Ash Wednesday (with the cross traced in ashes on the foreheads of the faithful). Similarly, when the Gospel is read during the Liturgy of the Word, the priest or deacon leads the congregation in forming this small cross on the forehead, mouth, and chest, indicating a willingness to keep the Word of the Lord in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts.

There is no doubt that our early Church fathers were strong believers in the sanctifying power of the Sign of the

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The Sign of the Cross *continued from page 7*

Cross. A second-century ecclesiastical scholar, Tertullian, and a third century saint, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, both wrote about the necessity of performing the Sign of the Cross at one's waking and one's lying down, at entering and leaving a room, at mealtimes, and more. St. Augustine also referenced the importance of marking the cross on the faithful's forehead during the administration of the sacraments.

It is likely that the sign transformed from the tiny cross on the forehead to the larger, full-body cross used today sometime in the fifth century, when heretics began questioning both the dual nature of Jesus Christ — fully human and fully divine — and the unity of the Holy Trinity. Believers in these crucial Church doctrines began forming the cross with three extended fingers (representing the Trinity), keeping the ring finger and

little finger pressed down into the palm (representing Christ's dual nature), and tracing a cross on their entire upper body so there could be no mistaking the gesture.

Today, the Sign of the Cross still figures predominantly in our prayer life as Roman Catholics. We commonly perform it upon entering a church; at the beginning and end of the Catholic Mass, a Benediction, or the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament; when opening and closing our personal prayers; at mealtimes; and when passing by a Catholic Church (in recognition of Christ, present in the tabernacle). As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us, the frequent, intentional use of the Sign of the Cross can help the faithful dedicate each day to the glory of God and provide strength in the face of trial and temptation (2157).

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.