



# OUR LADY

## *Star of the Sea*

CATHOLIC CHURCH

### *First Holy Communion*

#### Powerful Opportunity of Rebirth for All of Us

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Spring is a time for rebirth. Flowers bloom from the ground, newly hatched birds chirp from their nests, and there is an overall feeling of joy as the world around us returns to life. For our parish second-graders, this spring holds a particularly special meaning as they make their final preparations before receiving their First Holy Communion.

"It's just the most beautiful thing when a child is able to welcome Jesus into himself for the first time like that," says Interim Director of Religious Education Karen Pabian. "Once you receive Jesus into your body like that, you are forever changed. You know you are never alone and this His grace will be sufficient to carry you through life."

As a way of preparing for this momentous occasion, these children have spent the past two years learning about Christ's teaching, morality and the sacraments themselves. For the 34 Palmer Catholic Academy students, this has occurred within the context of their daily religious instruction, while a total of 31 other Our Lady Star of the Sea youth have attended weekly Faith Formation classes every Wednesday throughout the school year.

"Their preparation has consisted in weekly lessons from the Sadlier *We Believe* text book, practicing their basic Catholic prayers, becoming familiar with our church building including the Reconciliation rooms, and practicing the proper and respectful way to receive the Holy Eucharist," Karen says. "They also attended our First Reconciliation and First Eucharist mini retreats, with at least one parent."

This is all done in an attempt to help the children truly understand the significance of these sacraments, allowing them to fully enter into and benefit from the life-changing graces they impart. Karen says the preparation also plays a pivotal role in developing the children's understanding of Christ's sacrificial love for them.

"It helps develop an understanding of the Father's love and of their participation in the sacrifice of Christ," Karen says.

*continued on back cover*





OUR LADY STAR  
OF THE SEA

# Keeping the Faith

## During a Crisis



**A**dversity is a part of life. We may face family strife or financial issues. We may experience a personal or family medical crisis. We may suffer the loss of a loved one.

The thought of not being able to attend Mass to receive the Precious Body and Blood of our Lord as a result of a crisis — such as the one we are experiencing today with the COVID-19 pandemic — is devastating.

Right now, it may seem challenging to remain a faithful steward. We may even question our faith and wonder how to find God during these turbulent times.

Where do we turn?

First and foremost, we must pray without ceasing. During a difficult time, you can always turn to the Church's treasury of prayer. Take time each day to read the daily Scripture readings — they can be found at [USCCB.org](http://USCCB.org), and then by selecting the date on the calendar on the home page. You can also use the many rich resources of our faith to engage in spiritual reflections each day as an individual and with your family. This can include simple prayers like an *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* a few times a day, as well as praying the Rosary, the Liturgy of the Hours, and Stations of the Cross, among others. Many resources for these are easily found online.

It is also important to remember that at times when you cannot physically attend Mass, Sunday remains a holy day, and you are encouraged to pray. You can participate in prayer by way of televised or live-streamed Mass — one option for viewing daily Mass online can be found at [www.wordonfire.org/daily-mass](http://www.wordonfire.org/daily-mass).

During times of crisis, we must also find ways to use our talents to serve God. If you are unable to participate in ministries and serve your parish community, you can still use your talents to serve your family and those closest to

you. Something as simple as calling to check on family and friends — or even doing a video call — can go a long way.

Finally, we must try to remain good stewards of our treasure. You may have lost your job or have seen a reduction in work hours and pay. But despite your hardships, a faithful steward must faithfully try his or her best to return a portion of your treasure to God however He is calling you to do so. Check the parish website for online giving opportunities and do what you can to return a portion of your treasure to God.

No matter the situation, God always remains faithful to us. Don't forget that everything God gives us is a gift, and the way in which we share our gifts with God and our neighbor is ultimately how we give Him glory.

### **An Act of Spiritual Communion**

My Jesus, I believe that You are present  
in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things, and I desire  
to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive  
You sacramentally, come at least spiritually  
into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there  
and unite myself wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen



*A Letter from Our Pastor*

## Are We Truly an Easter People?

Dear Parishioners,

During a visit to Croatia when he was pope, St. John Paul II proclaimed, “Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people, and Alleluia is our song.” Are we really the Easter people? I think we should be.

This is still the Easter season and it continues throughout this month until Pentecost Sunday, May 31. What does that mean, however, to be Easter people? Being an Easter person has much to do with how we view our faith and how we live it out. Stewardship people are Easter people.

Jesus is so alive for us on Easter Sunday morning. He needs to be alive for us and in us every day, and certainly in these days that follow Easter. At the time of His Resurrection, His followers did not whisper “He is risen” — they shouted it and rejoiced! That is how we need to approach our faith as well.

During Lent leading up to Easter, we did not use *Alleluia* in our liturgies. We put it away until Easter, and I missed it. But then, it made it even better when it came back over and over on Easter and throughout this Easter season. St. John Paul II was telling us all that we are not just

an Easter people, but we are also an *Alleluia* people. We are called to exemplify *Alleluia* in everything we do. Think about it. Who is an *Alleluia* person? Certainly, it’s someone who seems to just brim over with the Good News, constantly reflecting the joy of being a Christian and a Catholic. It is also possible to be an *Alleluia* person in quiet ways, but others do need to see that God is alive in us in everything we do.

Easter began with the Easter Vigil, but it did not end on Easter. That was the beginning. One indication to us that Easter is going on right now is a change in how we identify the Sundays throughout May. For many years, the Sundays that followed Easter during the Easter season were called the “Sunday after Easter.” When the Church adopted the new liturgical calendar, that was changed to “Sunday of Easter.” Thus, we are not winding down from Easter — we are in the midst of it.

We became Easter people at our Baptisms. We should be Easter people every day and every week and during every season. Being an Easter person is acknowledging our call to discipleship and stewardship. We



should begin and end everything with *Alleluia*. *Alleluia* — *Hallelujah* — means quite simply “Praise to God.” It is not just something we sing, chant or say. It is something we live. By living our lives in praise of God — stewardship is, after all, a way of life — we can be and are an Easter people.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Keith Brennan  
Pastor





# Mothers Pass

In the month of May, we celebrate all of our earthly mothers and mother figures, thanking them for the limitless love and sacrifices poured into their children. It is only natural, then, that we also take some time this month to venerate our Blessed Mother in a special way with events like the walking Rosary and the May Crowning. In other ways, Our Lady Star of the Sea celebrates the Blessed Mother all year long — with our parish name, in the statuary, through the imagery in and around our church, and even in the many mother-daughter relationships that flourish right here in our faith community.

Rita Bono and Dana Dreckman make up just one of the mother-daughter pairs that can be found among our parishioners. The Bono family first began attending Our Lady Star of the Sea following a move to our area from Philadelphia in 1984. Dana, the youngest of Rita's three children, was just 4 years old at the time.

In her own experiences of motherhood, Rita has turned often to the Blessed Mother for her intercession.

"I ask Mary for her protection all the time for my children," Rita says. "One of my daily prayers is asking her to please surround her cloak around my children, their spouses and their children. I am a believer in the Rosary, and that helps get me through a lot."

Now that Dana has four daughters of her own, Rita feels blessed to see her continuing to pass the Catholic faith on to the next generation.

"I'm very proud of Dana because she has all of her children in Palmer Catholic Academy and practices the faith with her family," Rita says. "It has also added to our relationship to sit in the same pew on Sundays."

As Dana prepares to celebrate Mother's Day this month, she recognizes the powerful influence of both her



*(From left) Dana Dreckman with her mother, Rita Bono*

earthly mother and her heavenly Mother in her life. After visiting the shrine to Our Lady of La Leche in St. Augustine during her first pregnancy, Dana has turned often to Our Lady for guidance and protection as a mother. And

*"I ask Mary for her protection all the time for my children. One of my daily prayers is asking her to please surround her cloak around my children, their spouses and their children. I am a believer in the Rosary, and that helps get me through a lot." — Rita Bono*



# on the *Gift of Faith*



*(From left) Kristy Yazbec and her mother, Evon Mickler*

she is deeply thankful for the example of faith she has always had in Rita.

“My mom is the most selfless person that I’ve ever met,” Dana says. “It’s a very humbling thing to watch her. She always made it look easy as a mother — which it’s not! — so it’s a great talent that she was able to do that. She always encouraged me to rely on my faith, in good times and in bad, and that was a solid piece I could fall back on. She’s amazing, and I try every day to emulate her.”

Another woman who played a role in Dana’s early faith formation was fellow parishioner Evon Mickler. Evon taught in our parish Religious Education program for years and remembers Dana among her many past pupils. In addition to forming countless young parishioners in the faith since the foundation of Our Lady Star of the Sea in the 1970s, Evon has been a strong model of faith to her own children as well.

As a convert to the Catholic faith, Evon knew very little about the Blessed Mother as a child. She began

learning more about Mary while preparing to join the Church and decided to travel with a friend to visit the site of the Medjugorje apparitions.

“That trip really connected me to Mary, and she’s been a mainstay in my life and in my faith ever since,” Evon says. “She has led and guided me throughout my conversion and throughout raising my children.”

“The Rosary is such a beautiful way of just sitting and being enveloped in her arms while you’re praying,” Evon adds. “I think mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers all turn to Mary. There is just nothing like one mother turning to another mother.”

If anyone knows just how true those words are, it is Evon’s daughter, Kristy Yazbec. Kristy has turned to her mother and to the Blessed Mother for strength in the faith throughout life. She still holds fond memories of the May Crownings that took place when she was a student

at Palmer Catholic Academy, and enjoys attending them again now as a school parent. Kristy loves to pray the Rosary, and has many statues and images of St. Mary adorning her home.

As a mother herself now, Kristy is even more grateful than ever for the wonderful example of faith and motherhood she has always found in Evon.

“Prayerful parents was the norm for me growing up,” Kristy says. “It was the example set for me, and I want to do the same for my own children. I grew up with the faith and knowing that God was in my life at all times. My mother and I are still in the same parish, we do some retreats together, and I was a witness on her CRHP weekend. We have always been very close — I call her my best friend.”

How blessed we are by the many faithful mothers and mother figures in our parish. And how thankful we can all be — this month and always — for the truly amazing gift we have in our Blessed Mother!



## St. Isidore's Simple Stewardship

When we consider the lives of the saints, the first that usually come to mind are more than likely classed into four categories — martyrs, priests, religious, and great miracle workers. St. Isidore was none of these, and yet he is revered in Spain as one of “the five saints,” which include St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Francis Xavier, and St. Philip Neri, all of whom were canonized with him in the same year. His feast day is May 15.

The life of St. Isidore is a great testimony to how, with God’s grace, we can take the occurrences of a simple, mundane, and even sometimes difficult life and use them as opportunities for sanctification.

Isidore was born near Madrid, around the year 1070, into a peasant family. While still a young boy, he began working as a day laborer on the farm of Juan de Vergas, a wealthy landowner, just outside of Madrid.

Despite the hard work on Vergas’ farm, where Isidore spent the rest of his life in service, he did not complain and always tried his hardest to meet the tasks requested of him. Above all things, he upheld his relationship with Jesus. As he walked behind his plow, he would talk to God, offering up his work as a prayer. He rose up extra early each day before work to attend daily Mass. He would even spend his vacations touring the different churches of Madrid and the surrounding areas.

As hardworking as Isidore was, his fellow workers complained to Vergas that the pious laborer always arrived late for work because he attended Mass every day. Isidore could not deny the accusation, but he assured his employer that he always made a special effort to compensate for the extra minutes he spent in prayer.

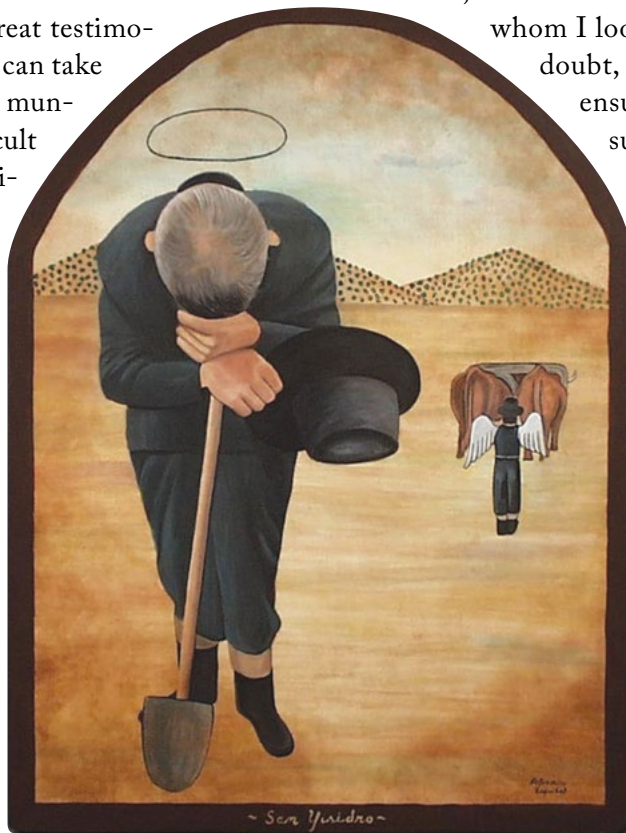
One day, Vergas decided to see for himself whether Isidore was really slacking in his work. Hiding in the bushes, he watched as Isidore came out of church, went directly to the fields, and began his plowing. To Vergas’ astonishment, he saw a “man” with another plow beside Isidore, driving a team of white oxen. When he ran toward the mysterious team, it disappeared and Isidore only looked puzzled when Vergas asked him about it.

“Sir, I work alone and know of none save God to whom I look for strength,” Isidore said. No doubt, God had sent His angels to help ensure that Isidore’s work would not suffer because of his placing the spiritual above the temporal.

While working for Vergas, Isidore fell in love with and married a young woman, Maria Torribia, who shared his devotion and faith. They had one child, a son, who died while still a boy. A model of sanctity herself, Maria — also a canonized saint — served her husband faithfully all her life. Together, Isidore and Maria would look for ways to serve the poor, even though they had very little themselves. One story says that when Isidore brought a number of hungry people home with him one day, Maria realized as she

scraped the bottom of the pot that there was no more stew. Isidore asked her to check one more time, and she was able to spoon out enough to feed everyone. They could not refuse an act of kindness to anyone.

At times, we might be tempted to think that we do not have the talents or the assets to be good stewards. But St. Isidore shows us by his simple, humble example that we can live out the call to discipleship in the smallest actions of charity and piety — that we only need do as much as we can, and trust that God will do the rest.





## Stewardship: *Living Life to the Fullest*

As professed disciples of Christ, we are also stewards of our personal and communal vocations. When we declare Christ as our King and Savior, we also promise to exist as His earthly body. The universal Church depends upon its individual earthly members for evangelization and support. As stewards of Catholicism, we must respond to this call with living faith and heartfelt stewardship. We must employ our lives in Christ's service, allowing Him to vocationally use us to our fullest potential. God designed us with specific talents in mind — by closely communicating with Jesus, His Son, we can put our talents to proper use. As stated in John's Gospel, when we give our lives to Christ, He promises to ignite them accordingly: "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

True life demands sacrifices, which are crucial in urging us onward and upward toward Christ. When we embark upon a lifelong path of stewardship, giving our time, talent and treasure in the service of God and His Church, we are effectively allowing Jesus to guide us along life's slippery slopes with the steady hand

of a practiced master. Christ explains this concept in the ninth chapter of Luke's Gospel: "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it" (Lk 9:23-24). Only after completely giving our lives over to Christ, will we experience the true majesty of life — the life each of us is destined to live.

As Catholics, we are urged to outwardly promote all stages of life, and to stand up in its defense. Considering the attention death has garnered within our society — whether we focus upon abortion, embryonic stem cell research, capital punishment or euthanasia — an understanding and

respect for life must be reinstated into our culture and lives. But we must first harbor a true, personal love for life within our very souls, and live our own lives to the fullest, through Christ, in the service and promotion of His Church. We must become stewards of faith, in order to truly live as Christ planned. And we must give our time, talents and treasure — all gifts God has given us through life — before we can really claim to be alive.

Let us promote the sanctity of life through personal conversion. Our deaths in Christ destine us to live in His glory, the ultimate expression of life. Let us become the disciples we claim to be, by adopting the essence of stewardship and melding it into our very souls.

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## First Holy Communion *continued from front cover*

Yet, this journey isn't limited to the parents and catechists. We the parish family also play an important role in the process. That is why the First Communion liturgy takes place within the context of a regularly scheduled Mass, emphasizing the fact that through these sacraments the child is also becoming more deeply connected to us — the Body of Christ.

And in the process of witnessing this transformation in our parish youth, we are each invited to participate in our own spiritual rebirth by imitating the excitement and enthusiasm radiating from these little ones.

“Upon receiving the Sacrament of Eucharist, each person is stating their belief in the real presence of Jesus in the form of bread and wine,” Karen says. “We each acknowledge God's unending love for us as we receive the

Living God into our own person. We thank Him for His love for us and ask that He helps us participate actively and consciously in the Mass. His love helps us love and care for others.”

Having already received their First Reconciliation last fall, the second-graders will take their next big step in the faith by receiving their First Holy Communion at any weekend liturgy during the month of May. We invite all parishioners to pray for the students as they complete their final days of preparation.

*For more info about Our Lady Star of the Sea's Faith Formation program, please contact Karen Pabian at 904-567-1960.*

### 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.*