

Gifts of St. Laurence

A Stewardship Newsletter
Easter 2016



My dear parish family,

Happy Easter! Even the word ‘Easter’ has the sound of happiness and hope. Easter is the reality for Our Lord Jesus and the destiny for his people. Appearances sometimes notwithstanding, we are destined for eternal communion with the resurrected Christ. As St. Paul writes, “If we confess with our lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, we shall be saved.”

Authentic Easter faith necessarily leads to interior freedom, joy and a loving life. Easter faith shuns nihilism and despair. This doesn’t mean our earthly lives are easy. The Cross is the only way to Easter, for Jesus and for us.

I love these two Psalm passages. They speak vividly to me of the experience of Easter.

Psalm 116:

“How gracious is the Lord, and just;
our God has compassion.
The Lord protects the simple hearts;
I was helpless so he saved me.

Turn back, my soul, to your rest
For the Lord has been good;
he has kept my soul from death,
my eyes from tears
and my feet from stumbling.

I will walk in the presence of the
Lord in the land of the living.”

Psalm 66:

“For you, O God, have tested us,
you have tried us as silver is tried:
You led us, God, into the snare;
you laid a heavy burden on our backs.

You let men ride over our heads;
we went through fire and through water
but then you brought us relief.”

Many of you need a healthy dose of that relief and refreshment right now. May that Easter joy pour upon us and on the whole world! For all these 50 days of the Easter Season, may we sing the Easter ‘Alleluia’ and never cease to praise him.

In the Risen Lord,

Fr. Drew Wood

Fr. Drew Wood, Pastor

A JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY

Pope Francis announced an extraordinary jubilee, a Holy Year of Mercy, from December 8, 2015, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, until November 20, 2016, the Sunday dedicated to Christ the King.

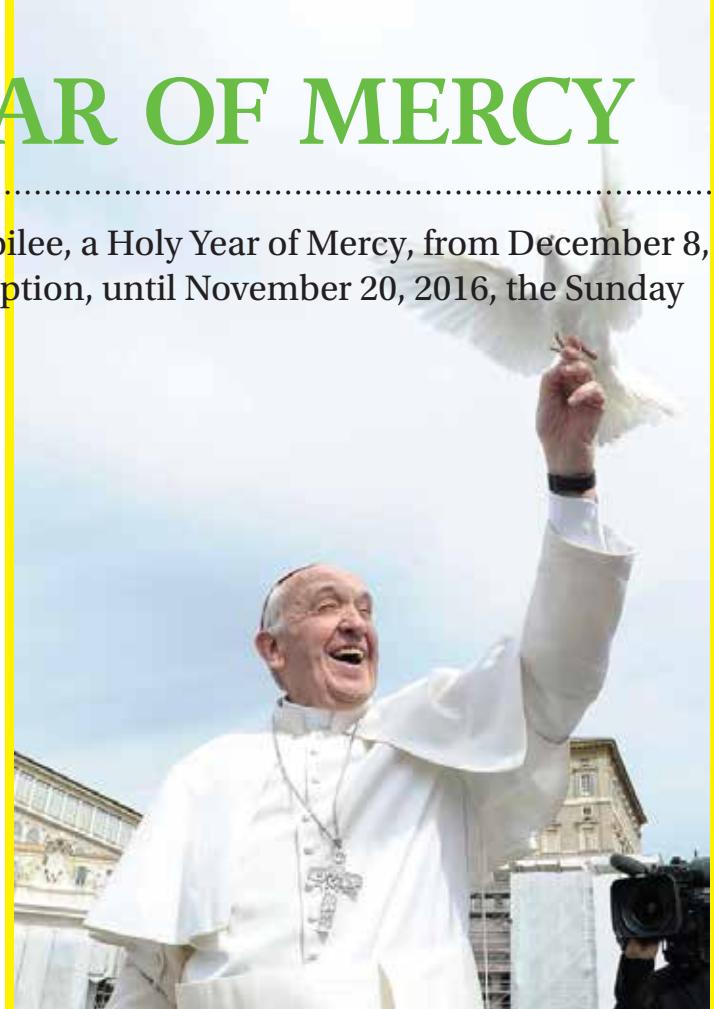
We Live in an Era of Mercy

I believe this is a time for mercy. The Church is showing her maternal side, her motherly face, to a humanity that is wounded. She does not wait for the wounded to knock on her doors, she looks for them on the streets, she gathers them in, she embraces them, she takes care of them, she makes them feel loved. And so, as I said, and I am ever more convinced of it, this is a *kairós*, our era is a *kairós* of mercy, an opportune time.

Pope Francis I – From his book *The Name of God Is Mercy*

During the Year of Mercy we are called to:

- meditate on Scripture of the Lord's mercy
- receive the sacrament of **confession**
- perform **works** of mercy
- offer **forgiveness** within our own families
- make a **pilgrimage**



Make a Pilgrimage: Walk Through a Holy Door

Cardinal DiNardo has designated 8 Catholic churches in our Archdiocese to serve as pilgrimage sites during the Holy Year of Mercy. To see the list of these churches (which includes nearby St. Theresa), please visit www.archgh.org/yearofmercy.



A Message of Divine Mercy

The Divine Mercy devotion is based on the writings of St. Faustina Kowalska, an uneducated Polish nun who lived 100 years ago. Her diary, *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, records the revelations she received about God's mercy. Even before her death in 1938, this devotion had begun to spread and on the Second Sunday of Easter of the Jubilee Year 2000, at her Canonization Mass, Pope John Paul II proclaimed to the world that "from now on throughout the Church this Sunday will be called Divine Mercy Sunday."

The ABC's of Divine Mercy

A - Ask for His Mercy **B** - Be Merciful **C** - Completely Trust in Jesus

Join us for nine days of prayer and speakers on the message of Divine Mercy. Please visit www.stlaurence.org/divine-mercy for the complete schedule.

Divine Mercy Sunday Celebration
Sunday, April 3 - 2:30pm in the Church

Divine Mercy Novena at St. Laurence
March 25 (Good Friday) thru April 2
7:00-8:00pm in the Chapel

Ave Maria Center: A New Home for Ministries

TUESDAY MORNINGS AT THE AVE MARIA CENTER

By Regina Johnson & Kay Quenan

Tuesday Morning Bible Study is a weekly Bible study with 100+ men and women members, now in its 13th year. It has grown over the years, primarily through friends inviting friends – people eager to learn more about God's Word. TMBS originally started in the old St. Laurence Religious Education Center. But since that facility had no elevator, some members' participation was limited because they could not join in the small group break-outs. Our space was limited, but the study was blessed and continued to grow.

When the construction of the Ave Maria Parish Life Center began, the concern was finding a facility large enough for TMBS to meet. We were blessed again when Sacred Heart Parish in Richmond agreed not only to allow us to use their space, but to merge their TMBS with ours! We spent 1½ years at Sacred Heart, where they welcomed our whole big group with open arms and hearts! Jesus blessed us with new friendships and a whole new experience in studying the Word of God. When it was time to return to St. Laurence, we left with mixed feelings: sad to leave our new friends, but joyful to be coming "home" to the new Ave Maria Center.

Now in our beautiful new building, we see how Jesus is blessing us in new ways! The large kitchen and serving area allow us to gather for fellowship before the session begins. Marian Hall gives us ample room for the whole group to gather for praise and worship and to view the DVD lecture (on two screens!) with a state-of-the-art sound system. Small groups meet on the second floor in 10 different meeting rooms and there is an elevator for those who need it.

Our current study of the *Book of Revelation* by Jeff Cavins will wrap-up April 12. We look forward to starting up again in the fall, when we will study *Acts: The Spread of the Kingdom*. Please consider joining us next fall – and bring a friend! We know you'll feel "at home" at the Ave Maria Center!

Please visit our page at www.stlaurence.org/bible-studies-1 for more information.



Ave Maria! A New Home For Weekday Children's Program

By Becky Wilkinson, WCP Director, and Ban Haller, WCP Assistant Director

In January, we moved into our new home. Like with the construction of a new home, there were times when we wondered if the new space would be everything we had planned and hoped it would be. Well, when the furniture arrived and everything was in its place, we were all amazed. It is everything we hoped for and more. Truly like a "School in Heaven"!

From the moment you enter the Weekday Children's Program lobby "living room," you feel the warmth and happiness that young children and families bring to the space. A parent who toured our area on a recent weekend remarked that she was impressed by how wonderful, clean, and happy (yes, *happy*, at least for an *inanimate* building) the facility looks!

During the day, you hear the happy sounds of children engaged in learning as you walk the hallways. Guardian Angels Hall has been such a wonderful addition! It provides space for daily gross motor development, a play area on rainy days, and a much-needed venue to house special events and activities.

We have been able to welcome new families to our program and we have space to accommodate more children with our increased license capacity. The new Ave Maria Center has renewed the staff, children and families of Weekday Children's Program, by providing a beautiful, refreshing place, a safe harbor and a new home for us.

Jesus says, "Let the children come to me..." Matthew 19:14



St. Laurence Weekday Children's Program provides quality Early Childhood education for children crib through 5 years. Learn more at www.stlaurence.org/weekday-childrens-program.



All Things NEW

By Kris Frank

Who doesn't love new things? A new outfit or haircut can boost one's confidence. A new toy will keep us entertained. A new household appliance grants assurance that things will continue to work smoothly around the home. And, who doesn't love that 'new car smell'? New things are the best! God understands this reality, I believe, because he created this reality. In the book of Revelation, Jesus speaks these powerful words: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21:5). Maybe we've heard this verse before, and maybe for some it even sounds a bit cliché, but let's take a moment and really think around what Jesus' words imply.

All of us have some old, broken stuff in our lives. Maybe we find ourselves in a bit of a rut; a cycle that we can't break free from. We've made some mistakes. We've done things we regret. We've hurt others and we've been hurt, too. We are running on our own strength, and we are running on empty. What would happen if we stopped trying the same old tricks and self-help mantras and rather invited God into our lives in a new and personal way? What if we stopped trying to recycle what God wants to replace?

St. Paul gives us a hint at what may happen in his second letter to the Corinthians: "So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ" (2 Cor 5:17). This is God's promise to you and me, to remove and replace all of those things in our lives that are dragging us down and keeping us from being the world-changers we are called to be.

And how do we know this is true? How can we trust this? We simply have to look at the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Not only did our God decide to become man, but he freely chose to die for us. Somewhere along the way we began summarizing the Gospel with the terms bad and good. "We were bad, so Jesus came to make us good." It is a nice thought, but that simply isn't the case. We weren't bad, we were dead, spiritually dead. He didn't come to make the bad good, but the dead alive. If he didn't hold himself back from the cross back then, why would he hold himself back from us today?

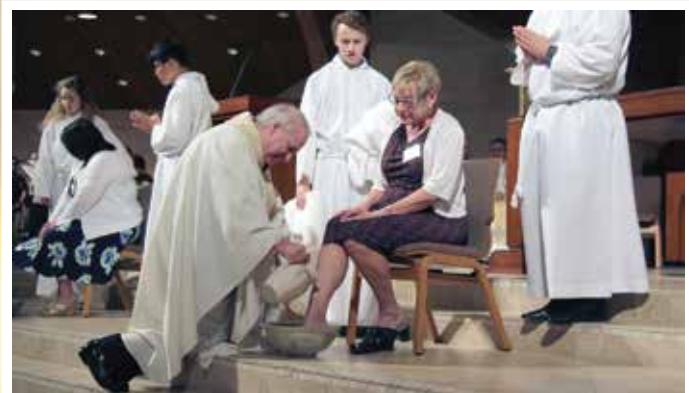
St. Paul, again, reminds us in his letter to the Hebrews, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb 13:8). And the story doesn't end with the cross! The God who raised himself from the dead will also bring life out of the deadness in our hearts. When we look to the empty tomb, no matter where we find ourselves today, we can look towards tomorrow with hope as we are reminded that Jesus came, not just to restore, but also to renew and resurrect.

Whatever brokenness or hurt you are dealing with in your life, remember – for the believer, pain is always temporary. So, this Easter season, let us turn away from those same old things that weigh us down and turn our attention to the new – new things God wants to work in our lives.

God makes all things new.

What is the Triduum?

The Easter Triduum (pronounced *trid-oo-uhm*) begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, includes the Solemn Good Friday liturgies, reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil, and closes with Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday.



HOLY THURSDAY

Mass of the Lord's Supper

7:00pm in the Church

Rich in symbolism, this Mass is the ritual reenactment of the Last Supper. All three priests concelebrate, the bells are rung during the Gloria, holy oils consecrated by Cardinal DiNardo are presented, and the feet of 12 parishioners are washed by our priests, just as Jesus washed the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper. At the end of Mass, we sing *Pange Lingua* and process with the Blessed Sacrament to the parish hall, where some will stay in Adoration keeping vigil with the Lord.



GOOD FRIDAY

Solemn Good Friday Liturgy

3:00pm and 7:00pm in the Church

This celebration of the Lord's Passion is offered twice at St. Laurence, to accommodate the large crowds that come for this solemn liturgy.

The altar is stripped completely bare and the tabernacle is empty. Fr. Drew asks for everyone to wear red, the liturgical color for this day.

The Liturgy of the Word is proclaimed; everyone, young and old, comes forward to adore the Cross, and Holy Communion is distributed during this profound service.



EASTER VIGIL

8:30pm in the Church

The Easter Vigil is the greatest and most noble of all solemnities and by its very nature, takes place at night. Everyone gathers around a large fire blazing on the church plaza. The paschal candle is lit and from this candle, everyone lights a candle of their own before walking into the darkened church. Multiple readings from the Old Testament trace the history of God's people until we sing the Gloria, and the lights come on fully and the bells are rung! It is at this Mass that people are baptized and confirmed. It is a glorious Mass that should be experienced by every Catholic at least once!

EASTER SUNDAY

In the Church:

7:00am, 9:00am, 11:00am, 1:00pm, 5:00pm

At the Ave Maria Center:

9:15am and 11:15am

Alleluia! This is the day the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice! Two extra Masses are offered to accommodate the many people who come to Easter Sunday Mass. This day is the beginning of the 50 days of the Easter Season – and every Sunday year-round is a commemoration of this Sunday.



Try Something New!

In September 2015, our parish conducted a survey of adult parishioners, called the Gallup ME25 Survey. Over 3,800 parishioners participated, giving us a feel for the spiritual engagement of our parish. Two months later, the results were broadcast to the parish (see the complete report at www.stlaurence.org/get-engaged) and in January 120 ministry leaders gathered to identify these four specific areas of priority:

1. In my parish, my spiritual needs are met.
2. In my parish, I have opportunities to learn and grow.
3. In the last six months, someone in my parish has talked to me about the progress of my spiritual growth.
4. In the last month, I have received recognition or praise from someone in my parish.

In the next few months, we will initiate efforts designed to invite everyone into a higher level of spiritual engagement; some may be evident to you, some will be behind the scenes. But you don't need to wait on parish leaders to take the first step! Try some of the following ideas on your own and see if you enjoy a greater sense of belonging at St. Laurence.

CHECK OUT a great Catholic speaker.

Our popular Adult Faith Formation Speaker Series features nationally recognized speakers on a variety of topics.

On April 11, we are thrilled to present Christopher West on "God, Sex, and the Meaning of Life". Register at www.stlaurence.org/christopherwest.



HELP out at Mass.

What could be easier? It takes no extra time and you're there anyway! We can always use more ushers and greeters – soon you'll be part of a team making others feel the love. Go to www.stlaurence.org/mass-hospitality.



THANK someone for serving.

We are a parish of over 25,000 people and just a few thousand of those make everything happen around here! So, the next time someone does a nice job serving at Mass, opening your door in carpool line, or pouring juice at Coffee & Donuts on Sunday... thank them.



GO to confession.

If you haven't received the Sacrament of Reconciliation for a while, the Year of Mercy is the perfect time to go! This is precious one-on-one time with our priests who can offer absolution, consolation, acceptance and love. Confessions are offered daily at St. Laurence.

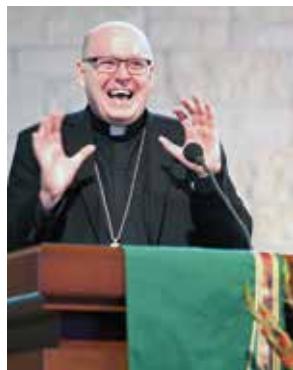
LEARN along with your kids.

Instead of just dropping off your kids, stay with them and volunteer at Vacation Bible School, teach CCE, join Moms & Tots, or sign up for a Family Night. There are two Family Nights coming up on Friday, April 1 and June 24. Learn more at www.stlaurence.org/family-nights.



13th Annual Heart of Worship - Serve the Lord With Gladness

On a sunny Saturday afternoon in early February, 1,400 people gathered at St. Laurence for a full day of spiritual refreshment known as Heart of Worship. The day included talks by three brilliant Catholic speakers, Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, a catered dinner by Maggiano's, and some of the best praise & worship music in all of Texas! If you happened to miss out, you can listen to the speakers' talks at www.stlaurence.org/how. And save-the-date for Heart of Worship next year on February 25, 2017.



Heart of Worship Speakers

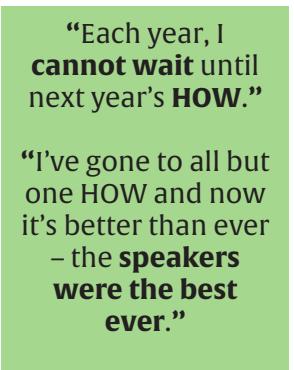
Bishop Brendan Cahill, STD,

Sr. Miriam James Heiland, SOLT,
and Ennie Hickman



"Don't know how you did it, but each year just gets **better and better**."

"I felt the Spirit moving – it was a very **peaceful** day."



"Everyone I met was so **gracious – full of the Spirit –** thank you, St. Laurence, and **thank you, Lord!**"

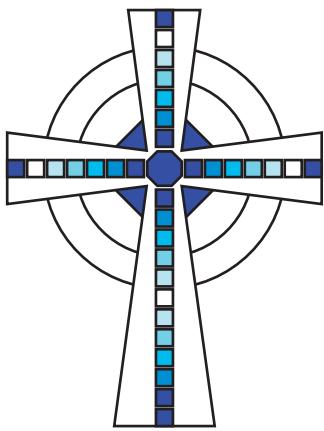


"Each year, I **cannot wait** until next year's **HOW**."

"I've gone to all but one HOW and now it's better than ever – the **speakers were the best ever**."

"This was **my first HOW** and it could not have come at a better time."

"My mom came last year and invited me this year. **Loved it – thanks – very refreshing.**"



St. Laurence Catholic Church
3100 Sweetwater Blvd.
Sugar Land, TX 77479
281.980.9812
For event details see our website at www.stlaurence.org



MASS SCHEDULE

Daily Masses

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday
7:30 a.m. & 12:00 p.m.
Wednesday 7:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
Friday 8:15 a.m. & 12:00 p.m.

Saturday 8:30 a.m.

Sunday Masses

Saturday 5:00 p.m.
Sunday 7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m.,
11:00 a.m., 12:45 p.m., 5:00 p.m.

Misa en Español

Segundo y cuarto sábado del mes a 7:00 pm en La Capilla de la Misericordia Divina

Sacramento de Reconciliación

en Español será ofrecido antes de la misa del 6:00 pm a 6:45 pm

Reconciliation

Saturday after morning Mass
Saturday 4:00 pm to 4:45 pm
Wednesday: 5:30 pm to 6:20 pm
Mon.-Thur. after morning Mass

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Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday - March 20

Saturday 5:00pm

Sunday 7:00am - 9:00am - 11:00am

1:00pm - 5:00pm

Holy Thursday - March 24

Mass of the Lord's Supper

7:00pm

Good Friday - March 25

Divine Mercy Stations of the Cross

12:00pm

Good Friday Liturgy (wear RED)

3:00 pm - 7:00pm

Easter Vigil - March 26

8:30pm

Easter Sunday - March 27

7:00am - 9:00am - 11:00am - 1:00pm - 5:00pm

Overflow Masses at the Ave Maria Center

9:15am and 11:15am

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo

St. Laurence Catholic Church

Rev. Drew Wood, Pastor

Rev. Jaison Thomas, M.S.F.S., Parochial Vicar

Rev. Simon Kipiti, Parochial Vicar

Deacon Rey Arellano, Deacon Albert Bothe

Deacon Don Burns, Deacon Charles Plant