



Our Journey TOGETHER

ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Where Are We Going?

Our parish is a great community filled with many wonderful people seeking to do the right thing and growing closer to their God. However, the best parish communities never accept a state of simply “being,” but instead, heed the call to become more. God calls us to always become clearer and more profound reflections of His Kingdom. Becoming a community of intentional disciples and everyday stewards is a reality that only be achieved when we take seriously our journey as a parish family.

Yogi Berra, the late Yankee catcher and amateur philosopher, said this: “If you don’t know where you are going, you will end up someplace else.” At St. Michael the Archangel, we are choosing to not end up “someplace else.” Through our continuing partnership with Liturgical Publications (LPI), 2017 will be a year of dreaming, sharing, learning, and planning.

After the first of the year, with LPI’s help, we will embark on a long-range planning process that will not only seek to create a plan for our future, but it will also provide all of us in the parish a chance to share our hopes and dreams, as well as our disappointments and concerns. There will be many listening sessions and a town hall meeting scheduled, as well as a spiritual needs survey, so that every single person has a chance to be heard. YOU have a chance to help us journey to where God is calling us, instead of someplace else. After much work is done and many gifts and talents have been shared, our long-range parish plan is scheduled for release on Pentecost Sunday, the birthday of the Church. May that day serve as a day of renewal for us at St. Michael the Archangel. Thank you for what you will contribute to this process in the coming months.

St. Michael the Archangel Roman Catholic Parish Community is committed to serving God and welcoming him in one another through a firm belief in God’s love. Our mission includes: strengthening the presence of God through Word and Sacraments; dedication to stewardship and social justice; and ministry to our members and the greater community through acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity. All of this is achieved through complete union with the Holy Father and our Bishop of Raleigh.

DECEMBER 2016 NEWSLETTER

Letter from the Pastor

I give thanks for all of you during this Advent Season when we are called to reflect upon God's intervention in human history through the incarnation of His Son.



We strive in this holy season of Advent, to become a more vibrant parish by reflecting upon the connectedness of the Advent Season to our faith experience and celebrations. We are an alive and healthy faith community as evidenced by our many active parishioners. Our full parking lot on the weekends certainly shows strong commitment to not only praising God, but serving Him.

So many parishioners participated in our Thanksgiving Basket outreach as well as the Jesse Tree program. Attendance at the "Beloved: A Series of Evenings on Marriage Enrichment" and the "Date Night" series has been so encouraging. I am edified by the number of parishioners who attend our educational programs and provide ideas for future programs. I am also excited to see how many people offered to serve on our Pastoral Council, and I look forward to working with our new Council members.

I have fond memories of Advent and Christmas as a young boy growing up in Syracuse, NY. One Christmas my mother, brother, and I went to Midnight Mass at our parish church. I went upstairs to the "High Mass," quickly becoming captivated by the beauty of the church and the music. I never realized that my mother and brother had gone to the "Low Mass" downstairs. I was totally embarrassed, but it is a fond memory for me.

I urge you all to use this joyous season of Advent to count your many blessings, commit to daily prayer, and consider ways in which you can offer your talents to serve our parish and community.

Most of all, I pray that all members of our community will be touched by the Holy Spirit and renewed during Advent. God bless you all, and as always, I ask for your prayers as we work together to do God's work.

Monsignor Douglas P. Reed

Hey, Know it All!

Well, we don't mean that in a rude way, but do you know it all? We hope you've noticed some of the ways that your church is trying to keep you in the know!

You're reading this newsletter and we thank you for that! Have you tried out the new St. Michael Parish App so you have all the news and updates at your fingertips? To download: iPhone users can: · Text App01 to 555888, OR · Search for "St Michael Cary" in the iPhone App Store Android users can: · Text App02 to 555888 · OR search for "St Michael Cary" in the Google Play Store.

Our church bulletin is now in full color and packed with information about upcoming events, the work of our many ministries, prayer, support and social groups, and much more. Pick up a copy at the church or read it online through the link on the parish website. We also reach out to our parishioners and our neighbors through social media. Check out the church's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/stmichaelcary. You can also follow us on Twitter and get on-the-spot news, cancellations and photos and videos of daily church happenings.



So, maybe now you really are a know-it-all! Thanks for keeping in touch with all the great things happening at St. Michael Parish.



Members of St. Michael's Youth Group attended a Christian music concert in Durham recently.

High School Youth Activities Build Fellowship

By Justin Fletcher, Youth Minister

The youth group at St Michael engages in a wide variety of events and outings that build up our common life of fellowship. There's almost always something interesting coming up soon. Our hope is to host opportunities that provide for the youth of the parish to gather together, and grow closer to each other and to our Lord Jesus Christ. In addition to our regular Faith Formation on Sundays and Bible Study on Wednesdays, we've hiked, carved pumpkins, visited the elderly, attended concerts, and bowled like champions.

Soon we're going on a weekend retreat for high schoolers, and singing Christmas carols in local neighborhoods. In January, some of us are headed to Washington, DC for the March for Life, and we will also join the Love My Life Rally in Raleigh.

We're always looking for new ways to have fun, to engage the youth more deeply, and to be more Christ-centered. That's the main goal for all our programs here at St Michael, including the youth ministry. We want to experience the joy of being together as fellow believers in Christ, and through that shared joy offer ourselves in service to the world as His disciples.

Please gather a few friends and join us!

For information about Youth Ministry contact:

Justin Fletcher - email: jfletcher@stmmary.org
or 919-468-6163

WEEKLY EVENTS:

- Youth Bible Study -
Wednesdays, 6:00-7:15 pm.
Meeting in the Youth Room.
Refreshments served.
No registration required

- Post Confirmation Youth Ministry Gatherings -
Sundays 4:15 - 5:45 pm
Register at <http://bit.ly/2g2CKgP>
\$25 registration fee

STEWARDSHIP BASICS FOR EVERYDAY STEWARDS

If we are all called to live a stewardship way of life, then are we all called to the same way of life?

Everyone has been given gifts, starting with the fundamental gift of life itself. From our birth we are growing in relationship with Jesus Christ. As we grow older, we receive gifts simply because we are alive, but others are fruits of that relationship. The closer we draw to God, the more we are given to steward over. Many of these gifts were there already, but seeing the world through a stewardship lens helps us see them for the first time.



Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS

But we are not all called to live out our stewardship in the same way. The call has two fundamental aspects:

1) The call is personal. Because every person has been created with a unique set of gifts, strengths, and talents, every call is unique. As our lives play out, and our relationship with God grows, the plans for our lives can become more evident. A problem arises when we neglect our relationship with God. Our awareness of the Divine in our life increases our ability

to truly discern God's will and what is best for us. It is important to always focus on the fact that Jesus calls us by name and he knows us better than anyone. Getting to know Him more intimately inevitably leads to a greater self-awareness.

2) The call is never heard in isolation. We are by nature creatures meant for community. As baptized Christians, that community is the Body of Christ. Without interaction with other members of that Body, we miss out on chances to hear God speak to us. Without the assistance of other members of the Body, our ability to discern and live out our vocation is handicapped. A stewardship way of life requires one to maintain meaningful relationships with others. Only through these relationships can a person truly understand what they have to give.

There are many ways to respond to God's call in our life. Some choose ordained ministry or religious life, and some choose a secular vocation. Some choose to give of themselves to one primary passion in life, and some share their gifts in many different areas. The important aspect for a good steward is not how will I live out this way of life, but will I just say **YES**.





Enjoying a recent "Date Night" are Michael and Cathy O'Sullivan, John and Jill Flanagan, Sharon and Bo Degnan.

What Have You Done for Your Marriage Lately?

When is the last time you scheduled a date night with your spouse? Family life is busier than ever these days, and married couples tend to put their marriage relationship on the back burner to meet the needs of their children, work, and other family commitments. Yet we know that this is not the ideal.

Successful and faith-filled marriages contribute to society and the community at large more than we know. Marriage is a personal, but not private, relationship with great public significance. Marriage is good for the couple, and solid marriages make an essential contribution to the common good.

In an effort to support the vocation of marriage, St. Michael the Archangel has scheduled a series of monthly Date Nights to invite married

couples in our faith community to gather for fellowship, food and enrichment. Msgr. Doug Reed has been committed to offering programs that support marriage since he came to our parish.

Partnering with the local Regnum Christi group, the parish is offering these Friday night events once a month through May of 2017. Fr. John Hopkins, LC, a priest of the Legionaries of Christ in Bethesda, Maryland, is the presenter each month, offering different topics on marriage at each session.

On November 18th the first Date Night was held in the Conference Center Gallery. John and Jill Flanagan attended, and Jill stated:

"The Date Night program offered at St. Michael is exactly the kind of series we have been looking for to help us focus on further strengthening our

marriage. We appreciate that the church recognizes the importance of a strong marriage for the good of ourselves, our families and our community. For the first night in the series, we invited other couples to attend with us and we all enjoyed the evening. There were some helpful items communicated that will not only help our marriage but apply to other relationships as well. Additionally, we had a very nice evening with our friends and met some new couples within our parish community. We look forward to future Date Nights at St. Michael!"

The next Date Night is scheduled for January 20, 2017. The cost is \$35 per couple and includes, dinner, wine and the presentation. Registration is available on the parish website as well as in the parish office. Why not make a commitment to the enrichment of your marriage in the new year and join us for Date Night in 2017!



Several of our funeral ministers at a recent Mass: Top row from left to right: Jim Ludwiczak, Kathy Ludwiczak, Sally York, Bill Thompson, Carlton Saul, John Lucas. Bottom Row from left to right: Sue Quick, Spring Nguyen, Jean Fucella, Jackie Weidner

Funeral Ministers Honor the Deceased, Comfort the Bereaved

About 65 times a year, Director of Sacramental Life Leslie Stironek, Music Assistant Diane Williams, and a small dedicated group of volunteer parishioners provide an unparalleled gift to families dealing with the death of a loved one.

"I'm so proud that our parish provides a reverent and beautiful funeral Mass for anyone who has been baptized, whether or not they are parishioners," said Stironek. "It is an opportunity for our church to be the face of God, and hopefully to bring people back to the church."

Stironek personally interceded to provide cremation and internment for a 59-year-old homeless woman. Our parish took responsibility for the woman's final arrangements. She has also helped arrange a military honor guard, a burial at sea, and a service for someone who ended his own life. She helped a blind woman bury her husband, and comforted a woman whose 8-year-old daughter had died of cancer.

No fees, except for the cantor, are ever requested. However, some families are so grateful that they donate not only for the services provided them, but to assist

others to come who are less fortunate.

St. Michael's funeral ministers reverently serve at all funeral Masses and memorial services, helping the families every step of the way before and during the funeral.

Parishioner and funeral minister John Lucas explained the origins of the church's funeral ministry.

"When the church first opened I noticed that our pastor, Msgr. John Wall, was presiding at a Mass of Resurrection with no help. I resolved to step up and began to assist him at funerals. We had no altar servers, readers, hospitality ministers, or Eucharistic ministers," Lucas said. Jackie Weidner, who has served as a funeral minister for more than five years, illustrated her dedication to this ministry with a story.

"A young father, born the same year as our older son, died quite unexpectedly at age 41. My heart ached for his widow and three daughters. After serving that funeral I called my son, Seth, just to hear his voice and tell him how much I love him."

Let the Children Come

Have you ever been on the St. Michael campus between 12 and 6 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon to see nearly 1,000 students on their way to and from Faith Formation classes? And, hundreds more students attend classes on Mondays and Tuesdays.

St. Michael Catholic School and St. Michael Preschool serve many of our parish families in helping to educate children in the Catholic faith. For families whose children attend public or charter schools, the Faith Formation program offers help to families in assisting their children to grow in knowledge of the faith and in their Catholic identity.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that parents are the primary educators of their children in matters of the faith (CCC 2223). The Catechism also states that “The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents” (CCC 2226).

Members of the parish Ministry and Formation staff, along with many volunteers, have structured English and Spanish programs for students in Kindergarten through high school. For a program of this magnitude, more than 150 volunteers are needed each year. Many dedicated parishioners serve as catechists, room assistants, hall monitors, IT assistants and more.

Once such volunteer, Susan Shaper,

St. Michael Parish Helps Parents Teach Our Faith

has served in Faith Formation as a catechist for her son Will’s classes for years.

“As a Faith Formation parent volunteer, I have grown in my faith alongside my son.” Susan emphasized the benefits of getting involved and has enjoyed making many new friends in the process. “Some of my dearest friends are people I met volunteering in faith

formation over the years,” Susan says.

The Elementary Faith Formation program now includes a program for children with special developmental needs, and offers special programs such as workshops for First Communion, May Crowning, and a Feast of St. Francis of Assisi animal blessing. These activities would not be possible without the dedication of our outstanding volunteers.





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Thank You!

As our campaign ends, we thank those who have contributed to make it a huge success!

RESPONSE RATE FOR ST. MICHAEL: 17.34%

New Giving Patterns for St. Michael: Parishioners responding to the campaign thus far have increased their gift significantly by an average of **28.62%**!