

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY

COLUMBUS, GA

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“Become Involved in This Vital Mission” *The Valley Rescue Mission*

Joan Reilly reminds us that we don’t need to travel abroad to serve others, for there are great needs within our own community.

One way Holy Family parishioners can serve locally exists through the Valley Rescue Mission (VRM), which operates shelters for men, women and children.

“Volunteering with VRM has expanded my horizons with regard to how difficult some people’s lives are and how truly grateful I need to be,” says Joan, Team Leader for the Valley Rescue Ministry. “When I read about the poor in the Gospel, I think of the people at the mission.”

The Valley Rescue Mission, according to its mission statement, exists “to exalt the name of the Lord Jesus Christ through spiritual, educational, and charitable means directed toward those in spiritual and economic need.”

For the past 40 years, VRM has worked to improve the quality of life for those in need in our community.

“The mission relies solely upon the generosity of the community through contributions from individuals, businesses, clubs, schools, and private foundations,” Joan says. “Funds are also obtained from the sales generated in the five bargain centers. One-hundred percent of the money generated goes right back in the mission’s general operating budget.”

Holy Family parishioners first became involved with the mission following Carole Faletto’s suggestion at a monthly meeting of the church’s Council of Catholic Women in



Valley Rescue Mission volunteers



The Valley Rescue Mission *continued from front cover*

2014. Carole and her husband, Joe, were an integral part of the mission until Carole passed away on Nov. 26, 2016.

“Wholeheartedly and unanimously, it was decided that we continue this ministry,” Joan says. “We welcome any and all newcomers.”

On the first Thursday of each month, volunteers from Holy Family serve from 2:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. at the Howard Mott Center for Men, which is the mission’s facility that provides men with hot showers, a comfortable bed, breakfast, dinner, and advice on community resources.

The volunteers help by making sandwiches, serving a hot meal prepared by the personnel at Valley Rescue, cutting desserts, and cleaning off the tables after each group is finished eating.

Julie Lisi began volunteering with the mission a few months ago and knows that her faith has grown through serving the community.

“It forces me to see my problems are so minute compared to others,” Julie says. “It was hard for me to

step outside my comfort zone in my faith, but I knew I needed something meaningful in my life and something that would make a difference in someone else’s life.”

Carol Feliciano also recently began serving at the mission. She was impressed by the kindness and appreciation of the staff and those being served.

“Many of them asked God to bless us for our work,” Carol says. “Everyone was so friendly. I feel this is a great opportunity to make new friends in our church family, too.”

All are welcome to join members of the faith community who are serving locally through collaboration with the Valley Rescue Mission. Corrie and Tom Pope, who first began serving with the ministry in 2014, would encourage others to give to the mission either of their time on Thursdays or their treasure by donating to the VRM retail stores.

“Become involved in this vital mission so that you will see firsthand, just as we have, how truly blessed we are,” Corrie says.



Valley Rescue Mission volunteers (from left) Julie Lisi, Carol Feliciano, Brigette Alvarez, Tom Pope, Joan Reilly and (front) Corrie Pope



Joe and the late Carole Faletto (who passed away in November) started the VRM ministry at Holy Family.

If you are interested in becoming involved in the Valley Rescue Mission, reach out to Joan Reilly at 706 687-2610. Find out more about the Valley Rescue Mission and how to support it by visiting the website www.valleyrescuemission.org.

A Letter From Our Pastor

Give Thanks to the Lord, It Is Right and Just

Dear Parishioners,

Every time I prepare my monthly letter to you in this newsletter, I am reminded how blessed I am. Being a priest truly is a blessing. While the job is not always easy – a pastor has many responsibilities – the rewards are equally humbling.

As we complete our preparations and then share in our celebrations of the Triduum and Easter, I am also prompted to think about the holiest things I do. By far, the holiest is celebrating Mass, and especially consecrating the holy bread and wine so Christ is present among us. The very word “consecration” literally means “association with the sacred.” To have that duty is incredible. I have never taken it for granted, and although it may appear at times to be somewhat automatic, it never is for me.

Almost all of us are familiar with the Mass, and with what we do and say leading up to the high point – the Eucharist. But I think we must guard against becoming too casual in our responses and what we say. That is what I work to avoid, but I believe you need to work just as diligently to make sure that you are listening, hearing, and being aware of what you are saying. For us as Catholics, the Mass is the most important sacred act in the Church.

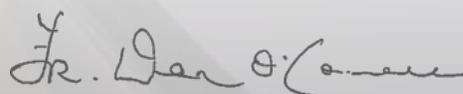
I suppose I could write a whole series of letters or articles on the meaning of everything we say and do at Mass, but I was thinking of one exchange in particular during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It is something we may say in sort of a habitual way, but I firmly believe each of us must truly consider what we are saying.

I say to you, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” and you respond, “It is right and just.” Think about what

that means, because it is very much at the heart of stewardship. I am saying we need to thank God, show gratitude for everything we are and everything with which we are gifted – and you, at least in words, acknowledge that doing that is exactly what we need to do. The Mass is filled with statements and exchanges of that sort, and I would ask that we really think about what they truly mean.

Even the simple exchange between the Eucharistic Minister and you at the actual reception of the Host is heavy with meaning. We say, “The Body of Christ,” and you reply “Amen.” In that instance, “Amen” means “Yes, I do believe this is Jesus.” Like myself, you are blessed. Sometimes we just need to realize it. Happy Easter!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

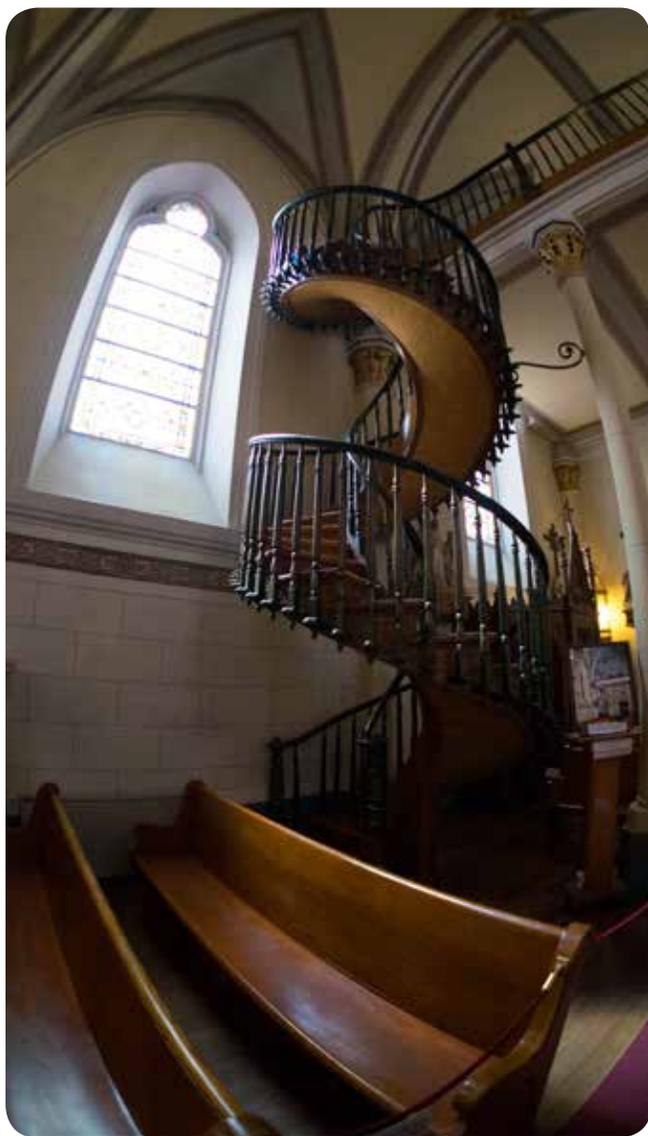


Fr. Dan O'Connell
Pastor





Fred Prieto Shares His Passion for Photo



From Fred's portfolio of church photography, the miraculous staircase of Loretto Chapel in Santa Fe, New Mexico. When the Loretto Chapel was built in 1878, there was no way to access the choir loft. The sisters prayed to St. Joseph when they could find no one to put in a staircase. One day a stranger showed up with some simple tools and a donkey. He built the staircase – a double 380-degree turn with no center support – but when the sisters went to pay him he had disappeared. The stairs contain only wooden pegs-- no nails-- and the origin of the wood has yet to be determined.

As the adage goes, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” Indeed, the visual arts can often move hearts and minds, even when words fail to do so. Here at Holy Family, we are fortunate to have a parishioner who is happy to use his photography skills to assist us whenever we are in need of pictures for our various parish publications. Thanks to his great artistic talent, Fred Prieto is able to provide us with photos that truly speak volumes about the beauty of our church and the joy of parish life here.

Fred, who first came to Columbus when he was an Army officer stationed at Fort Benning in 1987, has long been a professional hobbyist in photography. He enjoys sharing the valuable experience that years of study have brought him – in addition to helping with parish publications, he has also mentored photography students at Columbus High School and taught continuing education courses at Columbus State University. Fred is a member of the Georgia, North Carolina and Florida Photographers Associations, and he continues to improve his skills and learn new techniques through workshops hosted by these organizations.

Fred's interest in photography began at a very young age, spurred by his family's tradition of sharing pictures with one another.

“When I was a young boy, the elders in the family would display photographs during holidays and celebrations,” he recalls. “When I was about 10 years old, I started taking pictures on my first camera – my very own Kodak Baby Brownie, which I still have today. Later on, one of my uncles had a Polaroid camera when it first came out in 1959 or 1960, and I used to take a lot of pictures with it. As time went by, I became more proficient with it, and then as technology improved, I went along with it. I think I've owned about every brand and make of camera there has been!”

Alongside his passion for photography, Fred has also nurtured a deep love for the Catholic Church throughout his life.

“I was raised across the street from a Catholic church in El Paso, Texas, called St. Francis Xavier,” Fred says. “The church itself was the life of the community where we lived – it was central to everything we did, all of our celebrations. So, I have been very active in the church since I was young.”

Photography and Devotion to the Church

In addition to taking photos of Church of the Holy Family, as well as our different organizations and ministries, Fred has made a habit of photographing all of the other Catholic churches he comes across in his travels. Over the years, he has developed a portfolio of photos of these churches, which he seeks to capture “in all their divine holiness” as temples and sanctuaries to the Lord.

With such a close attachment to the Church, it is no wonder that Fred – even in the many years he spent traveling during his Army career – stayed active in parish life in all of the different places he has lived. His wife, Maria, shares his devotion to the faith, and the couple made it a point to raise their two daughters in the Church. Now settled as parishioners of Holy Family for over 25 years, Fred and Maria continue to actively live out their faith.

Fred greatly enjoys serving as an usher and sharing his artistic talents with the parish, and encourages all parishioners to get involved in church life in any way they can.

“If you do something that helps somebody, it always comes back to you,” he affirms. “I always encourage people to give – it comes back to you, and sometimes it comes back double. Serving the Church fulfills my need as a human being for a Higher Power. Without the Lord, life would very difficult. I served two tours in Vietnam and have had some close calls – I’ve had two surgeries for a tumor in my pituitary gland, and I have survived pancreatic cancer. All of these experiences reaffirmed my belief in the Lord and in my Church.”

From a very young age, a love of photography and a devotion to the Catholic Church have both shaped Fred’s life. It seems only natural, then, that Fred use his great artistic gift in service to the parish. We are grateful that he has chosen to share his talent with us, and thank him for inspiring us with this beautiful expression of his commitment to the Catholic faith.

“I was born a Catholic and will die a Catholic,” Fred says. “It’s embedded in my life and in my culture. I’ve always been faithful to the Church – it’s always been a part of who I am, and I could not live without it.”



Fred and Maria Prieto



From Fred’s portfolio of church photography, an image of San Rafael the Archangel in Quebradilla, Puerto Rico



Celebrating the Easter Vigil, the “Mother of All Vigils”

As the sun wanes on Holy Saturday, the universal community of the faithful will gather for the Easter Vigil, the pinnacle of the liturgical year. As sung in the *Exsultet*, the Easter Proclamation, “this is the night.” This is the night when Christ triumphed over sin and death and “rose victorious from the underworld.”

During the Easter Vigil, the Church awaits and then celebrates Christ’s resurrection with a sacred liturgy that draws upon rich symbolic traditions to highlight our transition from death to life, from darkness to light.

The very atmosphere in the church space as we gather on the evening of Holy Saturday prepares us for the Easter Vigil. Tangible signs throughout the church represent Christ’s entombment. The holy water fonts stand empty, the tabernacle lies devoid of Christ’s presence and the sanctuary lamp is fittingly extinguished.

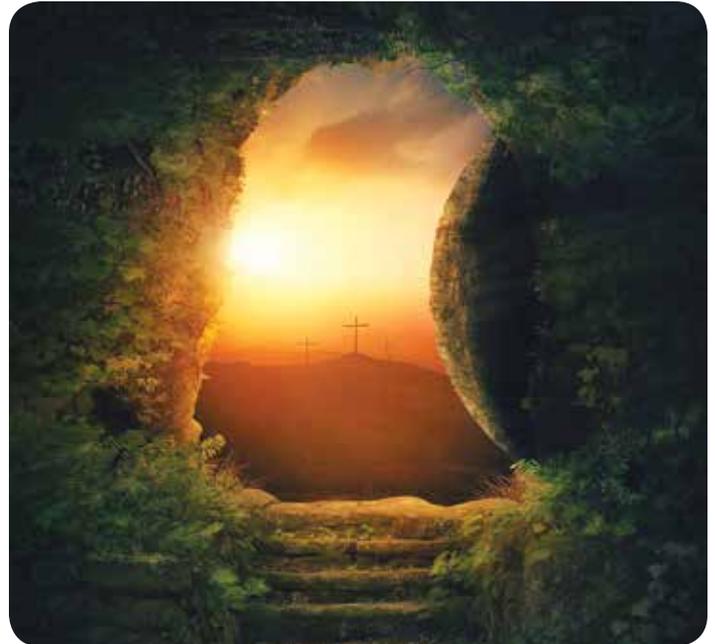
According to the Church’s rubrics for the liturgical year, the vigil should take place during the night, and its unique four-part structure sets the celebration apart from all other liturgies.

With the church shrouded in darkness, the celebration begins with the Service of Light, during which the faithful gather outside around a blazing fire that draws the community together.

During the Service of Light, the Paschal candle, the central sacramental of the Easter Vigil liturgy, is brought forward. The candle represents Christ, the light of the world, and the faithful process into the church following the candle, which brightens the darkened space. At this time, the candles held by the community are lit from the Paschal candle, and the Easter Proclamation is sung.

Following the Service of Light, the Liturgy of the Word is proclaimed, and passages from the Old and New Testament show God’s intervention throughout salvation history. We sing the *Alleluia* for the first time since the commencement of the Lenten season.

Then, in the Liturgy of Baptism, we welcome the candidates and catechumens who have prepared in a particular way throughout the Lenten season to enter the Church. Alongside the new members of the community, we renew our own baptismal promises during this holy night.



Lastly, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Christ – in His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity – becomes present in the consecrated bread and wine. The Blessed Sacrament is once again in the tabernacle, and the sanctuary lamp is illuminated.

As we anticipate the Easter Vigil, the “turning point of the Triduum,” we can prepare ourselves for this sacred liturgy by renewing our Lenten resolutions and our desire for complete conversion to Christ. We can read the Liturgy of Word for the Easter Vigil, meditating on Christ’s loving and powerful actions on the behalf of His beloved people.

With the transition from the 40 days of Lent into the 50 days of the Easter season, we can find small daily ways to celebrate this time of rejoicing. Perhaps we will light a symbolic candle each evening, welcoming the light of Christ, or decorate our domestic churches with signs of the Resurrection from white linens to spring greenery.

Throughout these blessed weeks of the Easter season, the Paschal candle is illuminated at the beginning of each liturgy as a tangible reminder of our ongoing faith journey and our daily turning from the darkness of sin to the light of Christ.

Part of Something Bigger: The Diocesan Youth Conference

Growing up here in the Bible Belt, it can often be difficult for our young people to get a true sense for the universality of the Catholic faith. Our teens may feel alone in their faith as they strive to live out the beliefs passed on to them by their parents. This makes events like the annual Diocesan Youth Conference, or DYC, so essential, allowing our youth to grow in their Catholic faith and to gain a deeper understanding of their unique mission as a disciple of Christ.

“Living here in Georgia, we are really the minority when it comes to other Christian faiths,” says youth minister Amy Vaughn. “Attending the DYC gives our teens a chance to really celebrate our Catholic faith and to see other young people who are truly living it out, as well.”

This year, Amy was able to take nine Holy Family teens to the DYC in Augusta, Ga. There, the teens were

able to come together with roughly 400 other youth and adult chaperones from across the Diocese of Savannah, all united by their common faith and desire for holiness. Over the course of the weekend, teens were able to participate in small-group discussions, attend daily Mass, participate in Eucharistic Adoration, receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and listen to keynote speakers.

“It is just a very unifying experience,” says junior Rachel Vaughn, Amy’s daughter who has attended the DYC three times. “They talk about different ways you can strengthen your faith and show it to others. It’s great to be around other young people who share the same beliefs as you. You can all talk about it openly and share in one another’s faith. It reminds us that we’re not alone and we’re able to connect with other people within the Church.”

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Teens are able to listen to dynamic speakers, participate in small-group discussions and fun activities, and to experience the love of Christ in a powerful way.



A group shot of the Holy Family teens who attended this year’s Diocesan Youth Conference.



THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY

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Weekend Mass

Saturday Vigil

5:00 p.m. Mass

Sunday

8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

Daily Mass

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

12:10 p.m. Mass

Reconciliation

Saturday

4:00 p.m.

The Diocesan Youth Conference *continued from page 7*

Witnessing the young Church come together in this way, says Amy, is a powerful thing. You can feel the Holy Spirit's presence as you witness the transformation in the teens' minds and hearts. And for the adults there as chaperones and facilitators, it serves as a concrete reminder of how truly alive our Church is as these young people embrace their role within Mother Church.

"It was really encouraging to see teenagers on their knees worshipping God, praying and crying during adoration," Amy says. "Just seeing the Holy Spirit working and touching their lives, as an adult it was just so moving to witness, and really reiterates the importance of passing on our faith to the young Church."

Best of all, the effects of the February conference are still being felt here within our own faith community, as the teen participants seek to implement what they received into their daily living. One of the ways this has

been done is through the recent teen Bible study, which was born directly from this year's DYC.

"The DYC really inspired us to keep up the faith and to continue pursuing it," Rachel says. "So we started participating in this Bible study to help keep the fire alive."

Currently, the teen Bible study gathers every Wednesday evening from 6:30-7:30 p.m. in the Teen Talk room. Based upon the daily readings, the study is designed to allow teens to read, discuss and apply the Scriptures to their daily living. It also continues to provide parish youth with support, anchoring them in the Catholic faith amidst the pressures and temptations of everyday living.

Teens are also invited to participate in the monthly 6 p.m. Youth Mass each first Sunday of the month, and to attend the Teen Talk each Sunday from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. in between the 8:30 and 11:00 a.m. Masses.

If you would like to learn more about upcoming retreats or Holy Family's Youth Ministry program, please contact Amy Vaughn at amyvaughn1966@gmail.com.