

# QUARTERLY BLESSINGS

SUMMER 2018 ST STEPHEN CATHOLIC CHURCH

*A Mother's Love*  
THE MOTHER OF GOD IN OUR LIVES

# A Mother's Love

**W**hen I was a boy my mother used to often tell my siblings and I, "Before you say anything, first ask yourself: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?"

Those three questions I continue to ask myself even as a 48 year old. Concerning the beauty of mother Mary's love, I now reflect on those three questions again:

## *Mother Mary's love: Is it true?*

Throughout my life, even perhaps in those years I wandered in the desert, I have always known Mary as my mother and her tender love. From the bedroom I shared with my three brothers when Mary watched over us as we slept to this day when I drive by the Statue here at St. Stephen, I know her love for me to be true.

## *Mother Mary's love: Is it kind?*

I'm always reminded of the painting in the Sistine Chapel, on the day of judgment, sinners being pulled into heaven on the rosary beads.

After my mam lost her second husband, my dad, in a car accident, I remember chatting with her and she was extremely angry with God. I remember talking about praying and she said, "No! I'm done with Him, but I'll talk with His mother, she'll understand." Needless to say, my mam did pray again, as Mary's kindness always leads us to her Son Jesus.

## *Mother Mary's love: Is it necessary?*

Those of us blessed to know a mother's love need no response to this question. The tenderness and peace that comes to me when I ask Mary's intercessions is truly soul filling. So, yes in my spiritual life Mary's love is very necessary.

Mother Mary pray for us!

*Fr. Dermot Dunne*

Fr. Dermot Dunne  
Pastor



## Holy Hour of Prayer

**O**ne of the ways I have chosen to celebrate the Diocese of St. Petersburg's 50th anniversary, is to consecrate all of our people to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. When we consecrate ourselves to Mary, we entrust ourselves to her, asking for her intercession, asking for her prayers, but also following her example of trust.



We know that Mary was close to Jesus, to our Lord, and she desires nothing more than for each of us to draw close to the Lord as well. On May 6, during a special Holy Hour of prayer,

we offered a prayer of consecration to her, we place ourselves in her hands and ask for her prayers and for her intercessions.

My hope for the consecration is that it will be an opportunity for each of us in our Diocese to realize that Mary played a very important role in the life of our Lord, in the life of her son. She not only gave birth to Him, carried Him in her womb, but she stayed close to Him throughout His life and ministry, through the good times, as well as through the difficult times and the adversities of life. I think it's an example for us - that we need to stay close to Mary and we need to stay close to our Lord as we journey through our lives. May Mary's example of trust and faithfulness be our strength, our light and our guide. —Bishop Gregory Parkes

# From Mary To Mother

By Brandon Avery

I still call my mother “Mommy”. The simple truth of this is that I never really knew her in any other way. Yes, she has a first name. She is a wife, daughter, sister, friend, nurse, and much more. Yet, from my prospective, she will always be the woman who carried me, bore me into the world, helped raise me, and introduced me to both parental love and a love of God. The title represents respect, station, and love built from before I took my first breath, and among all of her other titles, “Mommy” is reserved for me.

In much the same way, I often wonder what that relationship was like for Jesus, Mary, and John. I picture the young disciple, following Jesus much like a baby brother would, waiting outside of Jesus’ home as He gathers supplies. He is getting a bit down because he missed meeting Jesus’ mother again, when a middle-aged woman holding a bucket of water startles him. She smiles sweetly and says, “Hello, You must be John. Jesus has told me so much about you. I’m Jesus’ mother.”

The young boy would quietly say, “Hello, nice to meet you... ummm...what would you like me to call you?” as he opens the door and carries the bucket for her.

She replies, “Mary, is fine. Thank you.”

Over the next couple of years, not constrained with the same familial burdens as the older Apostles, he would often accompany Jesus home and got to know Mary. He would fill in parts of stories that Jesus would modestly leave out, help Jesus around the house, and sometimes get rewarded with Mary making his favorite meal. Jesus would start to tease John about being part of the family.

As Jesus’ death grew near, and He finds Himself worried for both His widowed mother and young, beloved disciple, He would think of the fond times they shared and utter, “*Woman, behold, your son.*’

*Then He said to John, ‘Behold, your mother...’*”(John 19:26-27).

John would do as instructed and take care of Mary as his own mother. As they both sat quietly in their grief John would ask, “*Mary, is there anything I can do?*” and she would say, “*No. But please, call me Mom.*”

It’s interesting that as you get older, the more meaning familial titles take on. What do your children call you or their grandparents? Which of your friends earn an “Aunt” or “Uncle” title? What do you call your in-laws?

Are the titles you choose based on culture? Respect? Familiarity?

It is interesting to watch a Catholic’s progression with getting to know Mary. Much like Jesus and John, it is a slow building relationship. At first, it is almost a rote answer: Mary is Jesus’ mother. As time goes on, she may gain a bigger role such as Mary, Mother of God. Then comes the more artistic depictions, such as “*Morning Star*”, “*Ivory Tower*” or “*Arc of the Covenant*”. During May and October, months devoted to Mary, we may pull out the titles of her station: “*Queen of the Angels*” or “*Queen of All Saints*”. When in distress she is the “*Refuge of Sinners*” or “*Help of Christians*”. However, for those who have really come to know Mary, who have built that relationship via intercessory prayers and decades of the Rosary, they address her simply as “*Mother*” or “*Mama*”, a title of respect, station, and love from one of her children in the Church. May we all both model and come to know her unfading, motherly love. †



*“You must transmit your joy in being adopted sons and daughters of God through the creative power of the Holy Spirit. Do this with the help of Mary, Mother of Jesus. Cling to her Rosary, and you will never wander far from her side.”* –St. John Paul II

# A Few Good Men

By Reuben Persaud

I converted to Catholicism. Upon my confirmation, my mother-in-law gave me the gift of a beautiful Rosary. As a new catholic, I accepted the Church's teaching on this devotion and resolved to learn how to "pray the Rosary." My teacher was Spirit FM. And for the last thirteen years, I have prayed the Rosary at least once, and sometimes, several times a day.

I learned to make it my own, interjecting, my own meditations, thanksgivings and petitions; for my relatives, for the Church, for the St. Stephen community in particular, and a host of other situations for which I am asked to pray. I know on my own, I was not worthy to intercede for all these situations, so I asked for Mary's help.

For many years, I dictated to Mary my intentions and where any graces from my prayer were to be directed. A few years ago, through *the 33 Days to Morning Glory* retreat, I learned to totally trust Mary to use the graces as she chooses. It was easy to do, given our long relationship. In the last couple of years, at the urging of my wife, we formed a group that meets to pray the *First Saturday Rosary* at our home. We storm heaven with our thanksgiving and petitions through Mary.

Over the years at St. Stephen, I have come to know many men who have a great devotion to Mary and regularly pray the Rosary. In these pages, I will introduce some of these friends to you, and let them tell you of their relationship with the Rosary.

**Charlie McGowan:** Coach, Umpire, Boston Marathon runner, founder of a Homeless Ministry, and all-round sportsman. A man who likes a good cigar and single malt scotch, but loves Mary and the Rosary, always carries one in his pocket and prays multiple times daily.

*"The mother of a family is the glue that holds that family together, a matriarch. Mary interceded for the guests and threw the first Hail Mary pass by telling the servants, do whatever He tells you! Jesus*

*must have rolled His eyes like I did many times at my mother, but Jesus did what she asked. I trust Mary to intercede on my behalf as well. Some of the homeless on Sundays have said they don't pray to Mary, I say why the heck would you ask me to pray to Jesus for you when you can go directly to His mother? Sons have a special bond with their mothers. If more men would say the Rosary, even just a decade, it would increase their faith and perhaps become a little more personal.*

*Many Sundays, my wife and I go to Apollo Beach after Mass to say the Rosary in a beautiful setting!"*

**Dan Connelly:** Retired Sherriff's Deputy, Scuba Diver, Catechist, equally comfortable with a hunting rifle or toolbox repairing his old truck; and a man who always carries a Rosary.

*"Praying the rosary is a blessing given to us to continue Jesus' mission! When Jesus was dying on the cross, he gave us his mother. This gift of the first disciple is another contact with the risen Jesus. I, like most men, had a special love for my mother, as she gave me life and cared for me in my younger life. Well, in much the same way, the Rosary is Mary caring for us in our earthly life, helping us to prepare for the eternal life. Do "real men" pray the Rosary? All men should, if they want to set an example for family and friends. Our goal should be to help prepare our family and friends for life, both here and in eternity."*

**Mike Latour:** Navy veteran, a retired HR professional, Tri-athlete and Marathon runner, a world traveler.

*"When I left home for the Navy, I fell away from the church and only returned twelve years ago. I had to relearn how to be Catholic and the Rosary was not on the list. I attended a post-CRHP (Christ Renews His Parish) meeting which started with the Rosary. I was embarrassed that I barely knew how to pray one of the most holy and reverent prayers on earth and in Heaven. I resolved to learn everything I could about the Rosary, as I worked my way back*



into the Catholic traditions. Not long after I began praying the Rosary, my prayer life changed. At first, I prayed it when I had the time. Then I began to notice the peace it gave me, and made my problems melt away. I began to pray daily and look forward to talking to our Holy Mother. It was the beginning of a beautiful relationship. Then I read **Fatima For Today** by Fr Andrew Apostoli, and I learned many things about Mary and Jesus that I did not know. It made me appreciate how critical Mary is to our Catholic faith and the world. Through her apparitions, millions have heard her message of encouragement and instruction about her Son, Jesus. She is our direct connection to Jesus who is *The Way, The Truth and The Life*. My devotion increased after attending the **33 Days to Morning Glory** retreat, where I learned how much Mary loves us, how she is our advocate, and how important the Rosary is in protecting our souls. I have consecrated myself to Jesus through Mary, and pray that I will always have Mary in this life and in Heaven.

*Hail Mary...*

**Dan Stamey:** Financial planner, called to be a real Catholic man in a way few men are. His son Barry is a special needs young man, and Dan is the best possible father to him and a model for other men. He is Barry's best friend, coach, cheerleader at his games and his cook; this flows naturally from his deep faith and devotion to Mary and the Rosary.

*"I pray the Rosary each day at the YMCA and then a second Rosary as I drive to work. I also pray the Rosary with my wife as we walk around our neighborhood. I learned the Rosary from my wife, and her parents. Why do I pray the Rosary? Because I have to! Padre Pio says, "it is the weapon."*

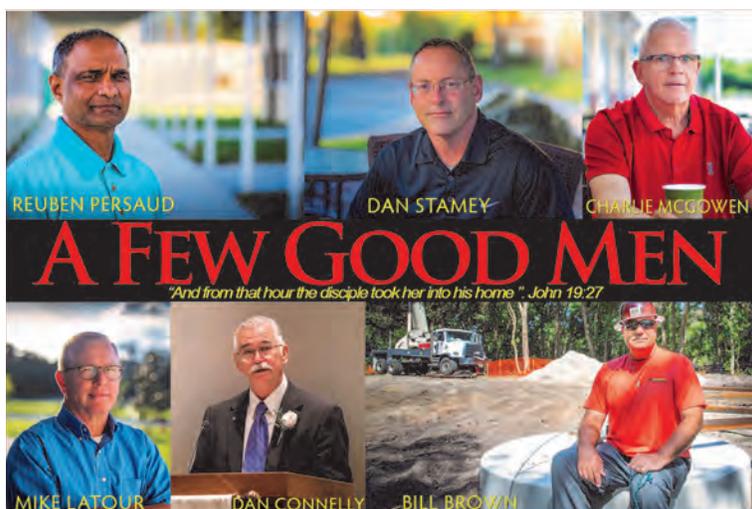
*My Mary moment happened when Pam and I were in Key West celebrating our 29th wedding*

*anniversary. We were at an outdoor restaurant and they had a DJ, so we went to dance and the DJ announced what we were celebrating. When the song was over, a young couple came to us and said, "Tell us how you stayed married for 29 years."*

*Out of my pocket, I took a Rosary given to me by my father-in-law (one from the Holy Land), I put it in her hand and closed her fingers around it and said, "This is how we've stayed married for 29 years!"*

**Bill Brown:** Engineer who builds big things; Hospitals, Nuclear Power Plants, Towers, and he is a St. Paul Street Evangelist. Bill really likes beer, but loves Mary.

*"I learned to pray the Rosary as a young child from my aunt, Sister Rose. She was a happy, chubby*



*nun who also told us stories of the saints. Now I say a decade every morning with my wife, Julie. We also like to pray the Rosary as we walk the beach. People often say nice things as we walk by. I carry a Rosary with me wherever I go. Sometimes when I'm waiting in line, I pray a portion*

*in my pocket or I'll take it out with holy pride and pray silently in public. I often start one as I fall asleep. Sometimes I finish it, sometimes I don't. I like to pray the mysteries that coincide with the time of the Liturgical calendar; Joyful during Advent and Christmas, Sorrowful though Lent, Glorious during Easter, Luminous in Ordinary Time. I pray the Rosary because we are taught it is the most powerful weapon in this spiritual warfare. The devil hates Mary more than God because she is only a creature, yet so very holy. I believe whenever I say the Rosary, I weaken the devil's power in my life." †*

*Reuben Persaud and his family have been members of the St Stephen for over 20 years, and serves as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and as a Catechist for the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults).*

# Miraculous Medal

By Janet Swilley

The Medal of the Immaculate Conception is popularly known by Catholics the world over as the Miraculous Medal. Our Lady herself presented the familiar design. The front of the medal depicts Mary standing on a globe with the head of a serpent beneath her feet. Circling the oval-shaped medal is the signature inscription: *O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.*

On the reverse, twelve stars surround a large letter M from which a cross arises. Below the M, the medal depicts two flaming hearts. The left heart, circled with thorns, represents Jesus. The right heart, pierced by a sword, symbolizes Mary.

How did the Blessed Mother convey the design of this medal? God selected a 24 year-old novice in the community of Sisters known as the Daughters of Charity, Paris, France. The extraordinary story begins on the night of July 18, 1830 when a mysterious child awakens Sr. Catherine Laboure. The child leads her to the convent's chapel. There, Sr. Catherine sees the Virgin Mary sitting in a chair. She kneels beside Mary and rests her hands in the Virgin's lap. The two speak for several hours. During the conversation, Mary promises she will return and give the young nun a mission. The child leads Catherine back to her bed.

A little more than four months later, Sr. Catherine learns what Mary wants. On Nov. 27, 1830, during her evening meditation, Catherine has a vision of Mary standing in a position similar to the depiction on the medal. Later, the vision changes to include the inscription found on the front side of the medal. Mary speaks to Catherine saying, "*Have a medal struck upon this model. Those who wear it will receive great graces, especially if they wear it around their neck.*" The first medals were made in 1832 and distributed throughout Paris. The medal's effects were immediate.

According to the Association of the Miraculous Medal, the blessings that Mary promised began to shower down on wearers of the medal. The devotion spread rapidly. In 1836, a Church investigation declared the apparitions to be genuine.

Since Mary asked Catherine to have the medal struck, devotion to the Medal has spread the world over, the image having achieved iconic stature. But what does the medal mean? In answering that, one discovers why it works.



## The Front Side

- Mary stands on a globe, crushing a serpent beneath her feet. Describing the original vision, Catherine said the Blessed Mother appeared radiant as a sunrise in all her perfect beauty.
- Rays shoot out from Mary's hands, which she told Catherine symbolize the graces Mary shed upon those who asked for them.
- Words from the vision form an oval frame around Mary: *O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.* Seen as a matrix, the elements of the front design encapsulate major Marian tenets.

**Qualities of Our Lady as Illustrated by the Medal**  
**Mother** Her open arms, the recourse we have in her.

**Immaculate** The words conceived without sin.

**Assumed into Heaven** She stands on the globe.

**Mediatrice** Rays from her hands symbolizing grace.

**Our Protection** Crushes the serpent (Gn 3:15).

## The Reverse Side

- A cross and bar surmounts a large, bold M.
- 12 stars disperse around the perimeter.
- Two hearts are depicted underneath the M, the left lapped with a crown of thorns, the right skewed by a sword. From each, a flame emanates from the top.

Again, employing a grid analysis, we can see how the reverse-side design contains great symbolism reflecting major tenets of the Catholic faith.

## Design and its Catholic Meaning

**The large letter M** Mary as Mother, Mediatrix.

**Cross and bar** Jesus, Cross of Redemption.

**12 stars** 12 Apostles, who formed the first Church.

**Left Heart** The Sacred Heart, who died for our sins.

**Right Heart** The Immaculate Heart, who intercedes for us.

**Flames** The burning love Jesus and Mary have for us.

The Association of the Miraculous Medal in Perryville, Missouri, notes that there is no superstition or magic connected with the Miraculous Medal, nor is it a good luck charm. Rather, it is a testimony to faith and the power of trusting prayer. Its greatest miracles are those of patience, forgiveness, repentance, and faith. †

*(Divine Mercy Cenacle study)*

## Our Mary

By Barb Zielinski

**O**ur Mary, Our Lady of Fatima, who stands two feet tall without her crown, is now about 65 years old and has been a part of our family household for the past 60 years.

Before John and I were married, his mother and father brought Mary into their home in Chicago and would hold weekly “*block rosaries*” in her honor. When John and I dated, I attended several of these neighborhood gatherings and knew then that this was the man I wanted to spend my life with.

John’s mother gave Mary to us after we were married and we cherished her. She always had a special place in our home in Chicago. She was with us as our family grew, and we turned to her often as we raised our eight children. (A ninth baby is in heaven with Mary and Jesus.) When word came that we would relocate to Florida because of a job transfer for John, Mary traveled with us and soon had her place of honor again in our new home in Brandon.

She then saw us through the difficulties associated with adapting to a new environment, new schools, new friends, and a new parish. But she was our constant friend! She was especially our

salvation through our trying years of raising eight teenagers! I must have used hundreds of candles while praying for her help, protection, and intercession. Her son heard her pleas on our behalf as we all survived those teenage years. We have had a couple of different homes since then, but Mary has always held a place of honor in each.



Over the years, she became a little worn and yellowed, so it was time to give her a little extra attention. John and I found a priest in Tampa who did a wonderful restoration job on her. I believe he felt it was a labor of love.

She was again returned to her place of honor in the entryway of our home, and to this day the kids and grand kids will call and ask me to “*light the candle!*” That tells me that they are in

need of her help and that they know they can rely on her intercession.

After all these years, it was an easy decision for John and I to consecrate ourselves to Mary with the Diocese on May 6 since she definitely is, and has been, a special part of our family for the past fifty years. †

*Barb and John Zielinski are active members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.*

*“When I was going through a severe trial, I ran to my Mother Mary. She scooped me up like child and held me. Then she moved me closer to her other arm where baby Jesus was nestled. I leaned over and kissed Him.*

*Another time, I went to Mother Mary with my troubles. I sat next to her. She put her arm around me and covered me with her blue mantle. And St. Joseph came to sit on the other side of me.” –Allan Garcia*

# Hope Amidst Sorrow

By Marki Taucedo

They say she looks sorrowful. To me she looks determined, fully resigned to God's perfect and holy will; a model of trust amidst adversity and hope despite disappointments. Our Lady of Czestochowa. I have loved this beautiful and miraculous image of our Lady, with the deep slashes on her cheek, for as long as I can remember, and am delighted to share her with you!

Our Lady of Czestochowa, according to tradition, is a sacred icon painted by St Luke the Evangelist on the top of a table built by Jesus. As St Luke painted he listened to Mary tell of the life of her son, information he used later in writing his Gospel. I was so blessed and privileged to visit this beautiful Icon of our Lady in Jasna Gora, Poland on my recent Divine Mercy Pilgrimage. Having recently lost my beautiful sister to cancer and being in a terrible car accident that totaled my car (which I walked away from), I began my pilgrimage with a heavy heart. I have returned satiated with God's graces including the special grace of venerating this beautiful image of Our Lady.

As I looked at her, I loved her, particularly for the long scars on her cheek and throat, inflicted centuries ago by invaders and always reappearing over the years despite many attempts by art restorers to cover them. She spoke to me, understood my brokenness, she was my Mother.

She is often called the Black Madonna, which is primarily due to darkening from age and the smoke of candles used for light. In Jasna Gora she has a gold crown and coverings. She is, after all, the beloved Patron Saint of Poland, their Queen, and is treated as such.

Over the centuries the image has survived many attacks, including the Hussites when the Icon was broken in three pieces and struck by a sword causing two deep slashes in Mary's cheek. As the enemy raised his hand to strike it again, he suddenly fell over writhing in pain and died. Many miracles are attributed to her including in 1920 when the Soviet

Army was set to invade. The Polish people prayed to our Lady (Feast of our Lady of Sorrows), and the Russian army withdrew after the image of our Lady appeared in the sky.

During the Nazi occupation of Poland in World War II, Hitler ordered all religious pilgrimages stopped. In a demonstration of love for Our Lady and their confidence in her protection, a half a million Poles went to the sanctuary in defiance of Hitler's orders. Following the liberation of Poland in 1945, a million and a half people expressed their gratitude to the Madonna by praying before this miraculous Image.

John Paul II came to this shrine six times during his Pontificate. After surviving the assassination attempt, he had his blood stained papal sash hung next to the image in gratitude for Mary's intercession in saving his life. On his first trip to Poland in 1979, Pope John Paul II visited the shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa. He said, "*The call of a son of Poland to the Cathedral of St. Peter contains an evident and strong link with this holy place, with this Shrine of great hope: Totus tuus (I am all yours), I had whispered in prayer so many times before this Image*" (June 4, 1979).

We are reminded in this beautiful Image of Our Lady of Czestochowa that despite our challenges, disappointments, and struggles now and in the future, we too can trust and hope in God's infinite mercy and perfect holy will. We see a dark-skinned face — a woman's face — and her child: Her face torn, refuses to look away until we see the truth. Her hands point us to her Son and remind us that by her side we are fighting a battle that her Son will always win. Our Lady of Czestochowa, pray for us! ✠



Parishioner Marki Taucedo and her husband Rick, are parents to four children and six grandchildren. Marki recently returned from a Divine Mercy pilgrimage to Poland where she visited the miraculous image of Our Lady Czestochowa.

# House of the Virgin

By Cindee Mace

**M**y husband Mike and I celebrated our 40th Wedding Anniversary back in 2011 by taking a Mediterranean cruise. One of the stops was to Ephesus in Turkey, where we toured, not only the amphitheater where Saint Paul preached, but we also visited what is believed to be *The House of the Virgin Mary*. In the 19th century the house (now considered a chapel) was found near Ephesus based on the visions of Anne Catherine Emmerich, an Augustinian nun in Germany. The Bible teaches us that Mary was entrusted to the care of John by Jesus Christ at Calvary (John 19:25-27) and John may have brought Mary to Ephesus where he could continue to spread the teachings of Christ.

Upon entrance to the chapel, completely made of stone, there is one single room with an altar and a large statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary prominently displayed in the center. On the right side, there is a smaller room where the Virgin Mary is believed to have slept. As we walked through the chapel, we were able to light candles and pray. It was so beautiful, quiet, and serene.

Marian tradition holds that some form of running water used to flow like a canal in the smaller room where the Virgin Mary slept and rested, leading to

the present drinking fountain outside the building structure. We were given small urns by our tour guide to fill with that water as we exited the chapel.

Outside of the shrine is a “*wishing wall*” where people write their personal intentions on paper or fabric and then tie it on to another piece of fabric.

Although the structure has never been officially recognized by the Catholic Church as the home of Mary, many gestures made by several popes authenticated its history in the eyes of the faithful.

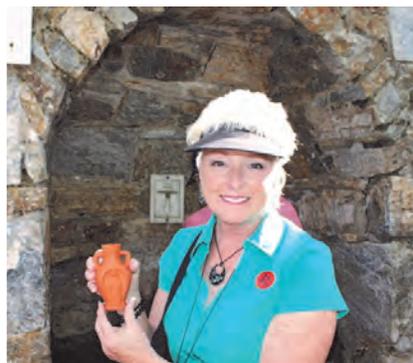
First, Pope Leo XIII blessed the House of the Virgin Mary during his pilgrimage in 1896. Secondly, Pope Pius XII gave the House of the Virgin Mary the status of a Holy Place in 1951. This privilege was subsequently confirmed by Pope John XXIII. Finally, Pope Paul VI paid a visit in 1967. Since then the

House of the Virgin Mary has become a place of pilgrimage for the faithful. In more recent history, the House of the Virgin Mary was also visited by Pope John Paul II in 1979, and more recently in 2006 by Pope Benedict XVI.

Every year on August 15th, a ceremony is organized at the site to commemorate the Virgin Mary’s

Assumption into Heaven. †

*Cindee Mace is a member of the Quarterly Blessings team, the St. Stephen Adult Choir and attends the Divine Mercy Cenacle study.*



*“Mary, our Gracious and loving Mother, bestow on all Mothers your wisdom and grace, provide guidance and understanding to those in need of patience and instill in our hearts a love for others that embodies the teachings and example of your Son, our Lord and Savior.” –Dennis Mazanec*

# Personal Look at Mary

By Our St Stephen School Children

**W**hen asked, “How does Mary love you?” these are some of the answers from our kindergarten class:

*She is a part of God’s family. With her heart. She shares her good stuff. She is kind. I have done good things. She is the Mom. We love her. She protects us. She prays for us. Mary loves because God loves.*

**“Mary is my friend because...**

*...I love her.”*

*...She is nice.”*

*...She does nice stuff.”*

*...She is kind.”*

*...She is good.”*

*...She is like God.”*

*...She takes care of us.”*

*...She is the Mom of Jesus.”*



Ms. Hoffman led her first grade students on a discovery tour in search of every statue or representation of The Blessed Mother that could be found in their school. They took photos and researched the meaning of each icon found. Students were excited to share what they learned and to talk about how the project encouraged them to think about Mary.



When the students were asked which statue or photo was their favorite, each student knew exactly which to select and why.

**Alicia-** *Our Lady of Guadalupe because she appeared in a Spanish country.*

**Kimberly-** *Our Lady of Guadalupe because she speaks Spanish.*

**Miguel-** *Our Lady of Grace because she is my friend.*

**Soren-** *Our Lady of Fatima because she appeared to three children.*

**Sebastian-** *Our Lady of Lourdes; I love her blue ribbon.*

**Alyssa-** *Our Lady of Grace*

**Evan-** *I like Mary Undoer of Knots because my shoes get knotted and it is hard to undo.*

**Grace-** *I love the Lady of Grace because it has my name.*

**Nicholas-** *Lady of Guadalupe because her hands are together.*

**Sofia-** *Lady of Grace because it is my middle name.*

**Adrian-** *I love the Lady of Fatima because the white on clothing seems more pure.*

When the students were asked why Mary looked different in each icon they saw, their thoughtful replies were:

**Group Comment-** *Mary is our Mother. Everyone knows children look like their mother so when Mary appears to someone she looks like them so they will know that she is their mother.*

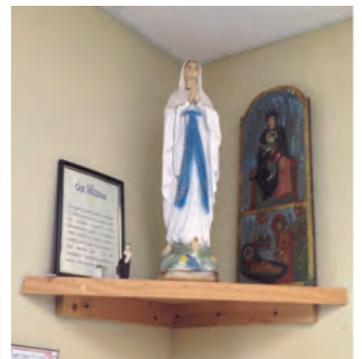
**Miguel-** *She wants to look like their mother.*

**Soren-** *She dresses like what they would like.*

**Sebastian-** *She wants to look like them.*

The photos the children captured and the info obtained from their research are shared below:

In the Angel Wing of the school, the students located the statue of Mary as she appeared to Saint Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes, France. In an Angel Wing classroom and in the fifth grade



classroom, statues and photos of Our Lady of Fatima were found. Students read about how Mary appeared to three children on May 13, 1917 and told them to pray the rosary.

Pope Francis made this image and devotion popular. Our Lady is undoing the knots started by Eve. This prayer card was found on a desk. The Students' research about the photo revealed Mary is referred to in the photo as Our Lady Undoer of Knots.



A favorite of the students were the many different photos and statues they found of Madonna and Child.

Students were surprised to see the many different ways Mary was portrayed when Jesus was a baby and then as He grew up.



In a Faith Formation office, students found a very beautiful and unusual icon of Mary and Jesus that was made in Jerusalem.



Here is what some of our other first grade students shared:

#### How does Mary love you?

- Because I'm smart and nice.* – Lillie
- Because I love other people and my teachers and my friends.* – Nicholas
- Because we love Jesus.* – Brianna
- Because we know geometry.* – Rian
- She is in your heart.* – Evelynnn

#### “Mary is my friend because...”

- ...I love her son Jesus.*” – Wesley
- ...She is my Mother.*” – Noah
- ...She is holy.*” – Wyatt
- ...She raised Jesus and is nice.*” - Evan K

Ms Reese's second grade class was also asked to answer these questions about Mary. Here is how they responded:

#### How does Mary love you?

- She is our mother in Christ. We pray for her and her Son, and she watches over us.*

#### “Mary is my friend because...”

- ...she is part of God.”*
- ...she is part of the Holy Family.”*
- ...she made Jesus.”*
- ...she is Jesus' mother.”*
- ...she helps us.”*
- ...she loves us. She is our mother in Christ.”*
- ...she is part of our family.”*
- ...she is kind. She is our second mother.”*

Other second grade answers:

#### How does Mary love you?

- Because we are part of God.* –Ian M
- I follow the ways of her son.* –Ethan P
- Because I love her.* –Thomas B
- By protecting us.* –Ben P
- I love Mary a lot because we would not have Jesus.* –Jacob S
- We love her son.* –Jacinta S
- Because I do very good things.* –Evelyn B
- Because I'm special* –Faith E
- She cares for me like she cares for Jesus.* –Aricelle D

(Continued on page 19.)

# Our Mother

By Elizabeth Maerz

**M**ary has always meant so much to me. I remember as a very young child watching a procession through the church of first communicants with the girls in their white dresses and veils and the boys in white shirts and black pants. After the young children passed by, they were followed by an eighth grade girl dressed in a wedding gown. She had been chosen to crown the Blessed Virgin with a beautiful tiara of flowers. Music and singing filled the church with the words, “*O Mary, we crown thee with blossoms today.*” I was so impressed. Ever since then Mary has been in my heart. When I was about fifteen, I drew this charcoal picture of Mary. I still have it hanging on my bedroom wall.



I am a member of The Divine Mercy Group here at St. Stephen and look forward each year to renewing my consecration to Jesus through Mary, which I have done for about seventeen years. I used St. Louis De Montfort’s book, *To Jesus Through Mary* for many years, and now it is so easy through Fr. Michael Gaitley and his wonderful book, *33 Days to Morning Glory*.

I am now 87, and following Mary has been a safe and easy way to live life. Each day I pray to Mary through conversation and with the Rosary. I call her “*Mother*” and ask her to stay with me every moment of the day. She always points me on the right path to Jesus. †

*Elizabeth (Betty) Maerz has been a member of St. Stephen for four years, although she visited frequently while staying with her daughter, Ann Marie and John Vaughan and family, for many years. Betty is also a member of St. Stephen Adult Choir.*



## The Rosary

By JoAnne Cox

**O**ur Divine Mercy Ministry was invited to pray with an elderly homebound parishioner. We went with the intention of teaching and praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. She told us that her favorite prayer was The Rosary. I asked her to lead us in the rosary because I was not versed in saying the Rosary. After that we prayed the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. For the next two years every Thursday we visited with her and prayed the Rosary and Chaplet.



Through the years my love for the Rosary grew. Now the Rosary and Chaplet are in my daily prayers. I fondly think of my friend who taught us how to love the Rosary as much as she did. I believe Mary had her hands on us at this time of prayer and friendship. Our family now has a beautiful grotto in our back yard. †

*JoAnne Cox and her husband, Kip have been members of St. Stephen Parish since 2007. She is a Eucharistic Minister and active in several ministries including the Columbiettes, Divine Mercy, and Hope is Contagious.*

# My Immaculata

By Erma Charles

**M**ay 13, 2015, the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima, the day of my consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary, marked the beginning of my truly living and experiencing the fullness of our faith and the joy of having a ‘oneness’ with Our Blessed Mother. The fullness of my relationship with Our Blessed Mother began to take shape when I participated in the *33 Days to Morning Glory* retreat at my church. Until that point in my Christian journey, I did not understand the power and joy of our Blessed Mother’s Advocacy.

What unblemished joy it has been for me to discover our Blessed Mother; her great love for us and the tender mercies and graces she obtains for us from Our Lord. My consecration to Mary liberated me! From the moment I understood Mary’s special role in salvation, that God created the Immaculate Conception with the purpose of winning souls to be with Him in eternity and her being our intercessor directly to Him, my soul soared! I then shared St. Maximilian Kolbe’s enthusiasm and confidence in calling our Blessed Mother, his ‘Immaculata’ and she became my ‘Immaculata,’ too. I now understood that Mary, the espoused of the Holy Spirit, can intercede for me for the grace to live each day in full communion with the Holy Spirit.

Once I consecrated my all to my Immaculata, she reciprocated in marvelous ways to reveal her love and tender mercies, and to obtain graces for me. My joy in my consecration grew even more as I started to connect the dots, and saw how much my Immaculata has been there for me, from the time I was given her name as a baby at my baptism. My Immaculata comforted me at my mother’s funeral and began playing a maternal role in my life after

my mother’s passing. I have also found that as my relationship with my Immaculata became more intimate, she obtained graces in my life that take care of even the smallest detail. One such occasion, two years ago, as I was preparing for my convalescence following breast cancer surgery, I decided to fully change over my bedroom duvet set and had the hardest time finding one to fit my mattress. So, I asked for my Immaculata’s help while I was shopping... it sounds silly, I know, however this is how close I feel to Our Blessed Mother. Through an

inexplicable confluence of events, I was able to find the last available duvet set to fit my bed and, to my most pleasant surprise, the duvet set color matched exactly to the shade of white and blue of the garments depicted in the picture of our Blessed Mother, that was in my bedroom! So, I was surrounded with her colors as I healed from surgery, and I sensed her constant presence during my recovery.

I renew my consecration to Our Blessed Mother in prayer each day and will always look to my Immaculata for her guidance and entrust my all to her,

because I know that she is my pathway to Jesus and the Most Holy Trinity. I love Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and my desire is to know and to do His will. However, I no longer must figure out God’s will for myself. My Immaculata will lead me to God’s will. She who knows God’s will and did His will most perfectly, will lead me to Him and help me to know and to do His will most perfectly. This is what I believe Jesus intended when He gave His mother to us at the Cross. †

*Erma Charles and husband Dexter, have been attending Mass at St. Stephen Catholic Church for the past 5 years. Erma has a passion for liturgical music and enjoys singing in the Voices of St. Stephen Choir; a ministry in which she feels called to serve and to give praise to God in song.*



My little devotional to my Immaculata. The picture of Our Lady of Fatima is draped with the 7-Sorrows Rosary, gifted to me by Immaculee Ilibagiza, who witnessed Our Lady’s apparitions at Kibeho.

# Broken, Blessed, Believe

By Denise and  
Thomas Moyer

Our daily prayer: “Jesus, Denise and Thomas trust and obey in you always. Mary full of grace, Mother of mercy, Denise and Thomas entrust our hearts and the hearts of our loved ones to you always!” A simple but powerful prayer as a consecration of our lives and our family to her care.

Our Marian journey together began on October 13, 2004. This is an anniversary of the final apparition of our Lady of Fatima. On this day our lives as husband and wife took us to total dependence and soul searching to hold tight to our foundation as a couple, “Jesus, We trust in you always!” Thomas is my beloved husband, soul mate and best friend. My Thomas, as I lovingly call him, is currently incarcerated at Zephyrhills Correctional Institute of Florida.

Thomas began his preparation for Marian Consecration much earlier than I. Thomas invoked the Holy Spirit living in Mary with our daily prayer that we share together nightly on our 15 minute phone calls.

When I decided to join the Diocese of St. Petersburg, Bishop Parkes and the parishioners of St. Stephen for Marian Consecration, new and wonderful priorities were taking shape on our journey.

My Easter Triduum Weekend began with my own private Marian retreat in preparation for the consecration. It was a glorious and beautiful day spent at home on my lanai in my prayer chair the morning of Good Friday. I began reading the introduction to *33 days to Morning Glory, A Do-It-Yourself Retreat, in Preparation for Marian Consecration*. I even got out my CRHP (Christ Renews His Parish) bible and read many scriptures that were referenced in the introduction of the book. For me to read anything and to even to open a bible

are two great beginnings. I have even found my Catechism and researched some references that were noted in the materials.

Our Lady of Fatima has been humbly and silently

present throughout our marriage. Thomas and I had the blessed opportunity to go on a pilgrimage together many years ago. On this pilgrimage we purchased a statue of Our Lady of Fatima. Our blessed Mother was a part of Thomas’s faith and foundation that he has continued to share with me.

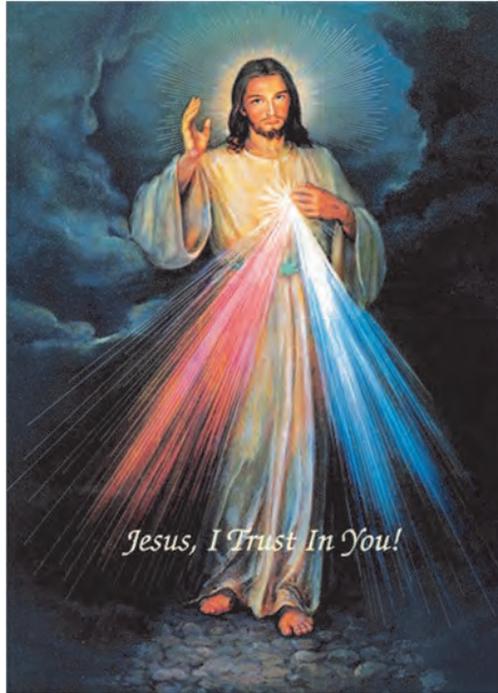
On April 5, Bishop Parkes was scheduled to celebrate Mass at Zephyrhills Correctional Institute. During my “Marian Retreat” I was inspired to reach out to the Diocese of St. Petersburg and ask if it was possible for Bishop Parkes to

take in with him *33 Days to Morning Glory* books. No doubt that our Blessed Mother was instrumental in this holy ambition.

The Zephyrhills Chapel was at full capacity for Bishop Parkes; standing room only, Catholics and non-Catholics, inmates, officers, Chaplains and volunteers joining in the celebration of the Mass with Bishop Parkes. There were sixteen copies of *33 Days to Morning Glory* that made their way into the prison.

After Mass, there was a time for questions and answers. Thomas asked the Bishop to elaborate on the Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which he was leading at the Diocese of St. Petersburg, bringing the diocese closer to the Heart of Jesus. The book just happened to be near the bishop for him to use as a reference. Several books have been shared with inmates at their request, at the intercession and prompting of our Blessed Mother, for sure.

May those who are seeking Jesus find recourse to our Blessed Mother through the Consecration to the



Immaculate Heart of Mary. May Mary's example of trust and faithfulness be our strength, our light and our guide.

*"Consecrating ourselves to Mary means accepting her help to offer ourselves and the whole of mankind to him who is holy, infinitely holy; it means accepting her help by having recourse to her motherly heart"* Bishop Parkes.

Our Marian Journey will continue. I am planning on reading *33 days to Morning Glory* again.

The dynamics of this book, especially reading about St. Louis de Montfort, St. Maximilian Kolbe,

Blessed Mother Teresa and Blessed John Paul II have opened our hearts to our spiritual Mother Mary.

*"Come Holy Spirit living in Mary; Let us be a fit instrument in your immaculate and merciful hands for bringing the greatest possible glory to God"* —a portion of the Morning Glory Consecration Prayer. †

*Thomas and Denise Moyer are parishioners of St. Stephen and were married at St. Stephen on July 11, 2004. Denise is also our Parish Advocate for those seeking Annulments and joyfully serves part-time as Pastoral Assistant.*

## Motherhood

By Melissa Zumpano

**O**ur family life is centered around our Catholic faith. During college we became consecrated to Jesus through Mary using the St. Luis de Montfort preparation for consecration. The effect of our consecration has had a profound impact on our spirituality. The more we strive to know and love Mary, the closer we grow to Jesus.

As with everyone, there are many difficulties in daily life, both big and small. We try to make it a point to pray the Rosary every day. As we reflect on our Lady of Sorrows, we remember Mary as she underwent the greatest suffering; watching her Son die so that He could bring mercy and salvation to the world.

Raising our two children Natalie (2 months) and Luca (2 years) is our greatest joy, but also a great challenge. In moments when we feel beyond our limit with patience or energy to be good parents, we try to thank God that our children are healthy enough to scream and cry and drive us crazy sometimes. They are truly our sanctification. Since becoming parents we've learned we must give totally of ourselves in a way we have never experienced before.



We have a special love for the Divine Mercy devotion and try to pray the Divine Mercy prayer each night as we put our children to bed. Recently, as we were praying the Divine Mercy, our son Luca

suddenly stopped playing with his trains, put his hand out as if he were feeling rain, and looked up at the ceiling. He walked across the room intently staring at the ceiling and then said with great excitement,

*"It's dripping from Jesus! It's raining."*

We continued to pray and when finished, I asked Luca what Jesus was doing and he replied, *"He is kissing Natalie."*

As we pray the Divine Mercy, I have always imagined being immersed in the blood and water

gushing forth from Jesus' heart. Luca revealed to us that when we pray the Divine Mercy, His graces are literally raining down on us. We tell our children we want them to be saints, but in reality they are already little saints and are helping us become saints. God knows we need those torrents of graces to get there! †



*AJ and Melissa joined St. Stephen in 2012. Melissa is a stay-at-home mom and teaches Creighton Model natural family planning. AJ is a cardiac sonographer. They enjoy playing with their kids, walking in nature, traveling, and cooking.*

# Saint Sidebar

By Megan Glogowski

When faced with hardships, our actions and strength to carry on define us as Christians. Some refer to the world wars as the darkest hours of humanity, especially in reference to the Holocaust of the 1930s and 40s. Even in these darkest hours with unfathomable death and destruction, some people maintained their faith and embodied what it means to be Catholic.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe, born Raymund Kolbe, became a defender of the faith and eventually a martyr in the Nazi death camp Auschwitz. Born in the Kingdom of Poland in 1894, Maximilian Kolbe from an early age, expressed his faith and dedication to it. At the age of 12, he had a vision of the Virgin Mary offering two crowns as representations of his destiny: one white crown, symbolizing purity and the second a red crown symbolizing martyrdom. Mary asked if he would accept either of the crowns she held, and St. Maximilian stated that he would accept both. Following this vision, he and his elder brother joined the Conventual Franciscans and in 1911, they took their first religious vows.

From his vision of the Virgin, Maximilian had a deep connection with Mary and took on the efforts to convert and persuade those against the Church all with the intercession of Mary. These efforts, inspired by people speaking out against Pope St. Pius X and Benedict XI, were organized into a group known as Militia Immaculata or Army of the Immaculate One.

He strived to defend his faith and convert sinners with central teachings on the Beloved Mother. In 1918, Maximilian was officially ordained as a priest and continued his promotions of Mary throughout Poland. Within this organized movement, he also began to publish articles with a monthly journal titled “*Rycerz Niepokalanej*” or “*Knight of the Immaculate*.” He even opened a religious printing press within a new Conventual Franciscan monastery at Niepokalanow, Poland.



In 1939, when Nazi Germany invaded Poland officially beginning WWII, Maximilian Kolbe was one of a few brothers who remained in their Polish monastery. He took multiple measures to help those in his town by creating a temporary hospital and eventually providing refuge for almost 2,000 Jews hiding from the Nazi invaders. He had two incidents that landed him in prison. The second arrest occurred after his printing press was closed for publishing anti-Nazi pamphlets and information. This last offense had him in jail for three months before being transferred to the Nazi death camp Auschwitz. In his captivity, the brutality and harassments based on his faith continued, but he prevailed and maintained his beliefs. In his second month in the concentration camp, the German over-seers picked men to starve to death to dissuade people from escaping the camp.

Maximilian volunteered to take the place of one of the chosen men, saving the life of Franciszek Gajowniczek, a man with a family who survived the horrors of the camp. In his last days, he took refuge in praying to the Virgin Mary with other prisoners and maintained his composure, never giving into desolation. From the chosen group to starve to death, Maximilian was the last remaining one after two full weeks. Finally, the Nazi guards gave him a lethal injection during which Maximilian remained calm awaiting his unification with the Lord and his Heavenly Mother.

Maximilian died on August 14, 1941, and his body was cremated the following day, on the feast day of the Assumption of Mary. He was originally known during his beatification as a “*Confessor of the faith*” in 1971, but later during his canonization, Pope John Paul II on October 10, 1982, declared him a martyr.

Throughout his life, St. Maximilian fought against those who sought to harm and threaten his faith, all while keeping the Gospels and Mary close to his heart. His strength and dedication to God and Mary even in the darkest of times hopefully can

inspire us all to do the same in our own hardships and struggles in life. †

*Megan Glogowski just celebrated her graduation from Florida State University with a Bachelor of Science in Media and Communication Studies with minors in British Studies and International Affairs. She looks forward to spending time with family over the summer before beginning work in mid-August.*



### About the Cover

*Captured at sunset, the St Stephen statue of Mary holding the dove of peace reminds us to always have faith and reassurance in the Light of Christ.*

—Rick Tauceda.

## A Heavenly Mother

By Gretchen Robens

When I was young, one relationship that was difficult for me was with my mother. She was an assertive career woman before her time, and it was hard to find my own “space”. In fact, my husband and I would fast and pray before any expected visit! Her spirituality was remote, and always brought contention into our little Christ-centered home.

On one occasion, I went to confession before an expected visit. I wanted to be sure not to give bad attitudes a chance to trip up this encounter — but rather, I hoped it would be one in which we could share God’s peace and joy with her. Following my time in the confessional, I went out to pray my penance prayers and ask for God’s help ahead.

That’s when I felt transformed. I felt as though I was a small child in the lap of a woman. I was receiving a deep love I had never felt before, and as I began to weep I realized that I had no memories of

that kind of motherly embrace and comfort. I steeped myself like a teabag in this heavenly love for quite some time before returning home.

Then the strangest thing happened. I now had a new wholeness in my heart! When my mother came to visit, nothing triggered the usual reactions of defensiveness. I felt strong and protected, even charitable and kind! She noticed this right away; the first evening she asked if anything was different, and she even complimented me (first time) for being a good mother and wife!

This began a new and wonderful stage in our relationship. I now saw how much I was like her and how much I owed her in the world. She must have seen something new, too. It wasn’t long before she had her own conversion and received the joy of the Lord for herself. I was with her when she passed into His arms at the end, with music in her ears.

I attribute all of this to the transforming grace of God’s love, and I thank Mary for being the instrument! †

*“I pray the rosary daily. I am in love with Mary, the blessed Mother of our Lord Jesus. I pray the rosary to Jesus through Mary, who as my intercessor, is a direct line to Him.*

*While praying the rosary, I make many personal requests through Mother Mary, such as to be blessed with an abundance of love and caring for others, moral strength when faced with temptations, courage when difficult decisions are required, calmness when anxious, patience when in short supply, and tolerance for things I cannot change – to name a few. After praying the rosary, I thank Mother Mary for being at my side 24/7 and close by asking she pray for my extended family, special needs families, and the United States of America, especially the military and their families.*

*The rosary is prayed in the chapel Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday after the 8:30AM Mass. (On Wednesdays, if there is a Mass for the school children when school is in session, we directly go into Eucharistic Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel following Mass.)” —Dimitri Tripodi*

# Misconceptions of Mary

By Gloria St. Amant

Having grown up in a fundamentalist Christian church, I was raised with many misconceptions of the Catholic Church, not the least of which was that they worshipped idols. I remember the St. Christopher statue that my girlfriend's mother had on her dashboard. When she drove us to school on rainy mornings, I would wonder, "Who were these people who believed statues, medals, and icons somehow protected their lives?" I arrogantly saw such traditions as evidence that Catholics were ignorant, superstitious people who were condemned for worshiping graven images.

Mary was one of those idols. It wasn't that my church disliked Mary. We just ignored her. Yes, she was the mother of Jesus and she played a significant role in the nativity story, but she was relegated, in my mind, to an inferior status, a minor player in the salvation story. She was a mother, that's all, a position not particularly revered in the feminist revolution of my formative years. This is what I thought about Mary for many years, even after I converted to Catholicism. In fact, Mary was a major stumbling block to my conversion and I was only able to join the Church in "good faith" because I dismissed her, yet again, as unimportant. I reasoned, "What did it matter?" I was not obliged to practice any Marian traditions to be a Catholic. However, over the years I have come to defend Mary and her God-given role in His Church to non-Catholics and Catholics alike. Here are some of the erroneous claims made against her and some of my answers:

**Mary is a religion unto herself. She is worshipped as some sort of minor deity.** Properly, Mary is *revered* as the Mother of the Son of God, she is "full of grace," "blessed among women," and free from the stain of sin. We *honor* Mary as our spiritual mother.

**Catholics pray to Mary.** Properly, we ask Mary to *intercede* for us as we would any "saint" including our fellow Christians but Mary, in her closeness to her beloved son, is a most powerful intercessor.



**Mary is ever virgin but the Bible says Jesus had brothers and sisters.** In Biblical times, (and still in many cultures today), the words "brother" can mean many things, a cousin, a close relative, even a friend or close associate. Mary's perpetual virginity shows her unique role in salvation history and is the sign of her undivided gift of herself to God.

**Prayers like the rosary are repetitious prayers that Jesus condemns.** Jesus forbids "vain repetition" but the rosary is not vain repetition. It is supposed to be a *meditation* on the mysteries of Christ's life. Christ himself taught us to pray "The Lord's Prayer" and when we repeat it, we do not consider saying it again and again ineffectual, useless, or hollow.

**The Doctrines of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and Assumption (1950) are relatively new to the Catholic Church and are not biblical.** Both of these doctrines belong to the deposit of faith and represent the Church clarifying what God had already revealed and to correct errors or misunderstandings being taught.

As grievous as these misconceptions of Mary are, I believe my discounting Mary as a minor player in God's plan of salvation to be far more serious. I saw Mary as a needless "layer" of hierarchy Catholics put in between the sinner and the savior. I am still learning to see her as my loving mother, one who loves me so much she spoke the eternal "yes" and as any good mother, wants to tenderly teach me to do the same. However, I don't believe I truly related to the personhood of Mary until I saw her portrayal in the film *The Passion* by Mel Gibson. I wept for Mary as a fellow mother who watched her child brutalized by the world. What generosity of heart, what humble submission to God's plan must such a woman have! How we mothers cry for our children, how we want to protect, to love them perfectly. Mary can teach me how. †

# A Mother's Plan

By Allen Odell

**M**others have a way of making their desires known and accomplishing them. I was invited to a friend's home for a small group presentation of the traveling statue, Our Lady of Fatima. I gave petitions to Mary and on I went with my life.

A few months later, I was invited to go on a Marion pilgrimage to Europe, on the last possible day to sign up. I immediately said, "No."

That afternoon I got my mail and in it was a book of *The Complete Story of Fatima*. I didn't have a current passport, and I wasn't ready to pay for a trip like this. The first payment was due in two days. I prayed about it. I knew when I opened the mail and saw the book, my Mother already had her plans for me. I ended up having the trip paid for before I had my passport.

The pilgrimage was twelve days with so many blessings that could never have been planned. I went in faith that Mary was leading me and showing me how much she loves me.

This past April Our Lady of Fatima came to St. Stephen, and I was one of the four men to carry her into the chapel. It brought me back to that first night in Fatima, Portugal, during part of the candle-light procession as we sung *Ave Maria*.

I can't wait for what Mary has planned for me next. Where is Mary in your life? †



Allen Odell is the Facility Manager for St Stephen Church. He is the father of five children.

## Personal Look at Mary

(continued from page 11)

### Second Grade

**"Mary is my friend because..."**

...She was a nice person and she made God." –Ian M

–Ian M

...She gave us Jesus." –Ethan P

...She is kind and prays for me." –Thomas B

...She had Jesus and protects us and the Holy Family." –Ben P

...Life would not be good if Mary was not my friend." –Jacob S

...Mary loves Jesus and we should love Mary because she is Jesus' Mom." –Tegan K

...She is Mother of Jesus and she loves us." –Jacinta B

...We worship her son." –Faith E

...She answers my prayers." –Evelyn B

### Third Grade

**How does Mary love you?**

She helps me & cares for me when I'm in trouble. –Bradley

She had to be brave & sacrifice her only son for us. –Josh

She helps me & cares for everyone. –Isabella

She loves me by caring for all the things I do. –Joaquin

**"Mary is my friend because..."**

...She is loving & caring to other people." –Isabella

...She helps me make good choices." –Bradley

...She can be by my side at any time." –Joaquin

...She is my Holy Mother." –Josh †

**Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us!**

# Window to Mary

By Tom Avino

In the mid 1990's, I worked for a company in Clearwater called Seminole Finance. We were the financing arm for used car lots and from time to time customers would come to the building to make payments. One morning right before Christmas in 1996, a customer commented to the receptionist that the outside window of the building looked like a figure of Mary. I remember going outside just to take a look and noting the remarkable likeness and size. My office was the bottom of the glass panel that had the image. It stood 20 feet wide and over 60 feet tall. While I wasn't convinced this was a blessing, I did find it quite curious. For whatever reason I was compelled to call the 727-577 NEWS number to tell them about it – somewhat tongue in cheek I must admit – but I let them know about the customer and that it actually did resemble representations of Mary. By the end of the day helicopters, news crews, and an amazing number of visitors were everywhere, and I mean everywhere. In the days to follow it was in all the headlines in the papers, the local and national news, and the radio stations. As we all marveled at this experience my fellow employees would regularly remind me, in their light-hearted, somewhat sarcastic tone, of what I started. When a call would come in for information, they always transferred them to me to provide updates. I had calls from radio stations, TV networks, *48 Hours*, papers, churches, and believers. It became overwhelming. People started leaving money right on the wall, just leaving it out in the open; cash, stacks of coins, and burning candles. We had to install a lock box, hire security, and issue badges to enter our own parking lot. People were always trying to enter the building. One person died when being restrained by the police

trying to break in at night, which added even more to the drama. All kinds of theories were ventured about how the image mysteriously appeared: Was it a giant stain, an old Christmas decoration of the same image which left a mark underneath and exposed by the sprinklers – or was it a heavenly sign? There was even someone who paid to have the image tested for legitimacy. One of the local radio stations encouraged people to break the window, so one night someone threw acid on the glass panes which disfigured the likeness terribly. Surprisingly when it rained shortly after, the image was completely restored adding more speculation that it was divinely created.

Within the first few weeks it was estimated that over 500,000 people visited the site. Keep in mind, this was an office building and where the public was visiting was one side of a parking lot. Traffic on both sides of US 19 and Drew Street became unbearable. The icon truly had become a phenomenon.

Not long after, the owner of the company moved us to another location and sold the building to a Catholic ministry organization, Shepherds of Christ, who renamed it "*Our Lady of Clearwater.*" Then, in 2004, the top three panes of glass were broken, but a large crucifix still remains.

I rarely share this story with anyone, let alone a whole congregation, but when asked about using a picture of a Mary statue on my front porch for an upcoming article, I felt excited in the moment to share my experience. I smiled to myself as I realized how God works and how he used Mary to bring me back to my church. I had grown up in a very committed Catholic family of first and second generation Italians. Mary was especially important to my mom, and the reverence she expressed for her, helped to shape Mary's significance in my own beliefs.



I brought up my daughters in the church. They both graduated from St. Stephen Catholic School, and the camaraderie, sense of family and, of course, faith helped me as a single father to raise them as spiritual, kind, and beautiful people. Over the past few years through a series of events, I walked away from the church itself, but not my faith. As time went by I realized that it was not enough and missed the

experience, but didn't quite know how to acclimate back into a congregation after such a long absence. Mary's presence in reuniting me with my church is profound, intentional and, as I think about it, not at all surprising as she has always brought me comfort and peace. Mary always shows us the way to her son. †

**Book Review:**

**Hail, Holy Queen by Scott Hahn**

By Janet Swilley

Scott Hahn unveils the Marian mystery at the heart of the Book of Revelation and reveals how it is foretold in the very first pages of Genesis and in the story of King David's monarch which speaks of a privileged place for the Mother of the King. LK 1:48 says, "all generations will call her blessed." This book is a feast of Scripture, theology and spirituality for Christians, Catholic and Protestant alike, to fully understand Mary's significance in the divine plan. Building on these scriptural and historical foundations, Hahn presents a new look at the Marian doctrines: Her Immaculate Conception, Perpetual

Assumption and Coronation. Mary fills the pages of Scripture from the beginning of the first book to the end of the last.

Hail, Holy Queen examines and analyzes the biblical and theological foundation of Marian devotion with insight and deep faith. Its message is crystal clear, concentrating our attention on Mary, the Mother of God, in her relationship to Christ and His Church. It is actually ideal for class in Marian studies or a Marian study group.

Scott Hahn's motive is to write for all Christians who will listen, especially his fellow Catholics, and appreciate the place of Mary in their lives. He tells why he loves and honors the Virgin Mary and the importance of discovering, or rediscovering, our mother in the covenant family. †



**Parishioners Share Their Mary Gardens**



Marty Diebold



Jose Martinez



Margie Grimsley



Felix Calon

# Guests of the Quarter

By Joelle Riethmiller

Home is where the heart is. This is a familiar and traditional phrase of sentimentality and affection. In the Riethmiller household, we are striving to make our home within the Immaculate Heart of Mary and through her, within the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In recent years, both Brad and I have experienced the gentle, tender, loving, and compassionate heart of our Blessed Mother. We trust that Mother Mary is cradling our family tenderly within her mantle and carrying us to the merciful Heart of Jesus Christ, her Son.

Some of our family's favorite devotions to our Blessed Mother are within her titles of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady Star of the Sea, and Our Lady of Fatima. Our family spent three months in Key West in 2010 as part of a work assignment for Bradley. Since we lived in Pennsylvania at the time, it was a family adventure. We attended Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church while living there. Naturally then, we turned to Ave Maristella for intercession during hurricane Irma in September 2017.

Our youngest child, Ava Grace, our Florida baby, was baptized on May 13, 2012; so Our Lady of Fatima holds a special place in our hearts. To further this devotion, Abigail (14), Emma (13), Ian (10), and Ava (6) completed the *Marian Consecration for Children* written by Carrie Gress, and consecrated themselves to Mary on May 13, 2018, while Bradley and I renewed our entrustment.

The newest, but possibly dearest, devotion is to Our Lady Undoer of Knots. Any simple examination of conscience will reveal knots that exist in an individual's life, distancing one from God. But often knots exist that are not evident. Every individual, every marriage, every family carries a variety of very personal crosses. Some are externally apparent while others lay within the walls of homes or within the hearts of individuals. Our Blessed Mother loves us so tenderly and knows our sorrows and struggles

even when all appears well on the outside. We are grateful for our Catholic faith, the Grace within the Sacraments, and the gift of our Blessed Mother.

***"The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." John 1:5***

We have experienced the gentleness of Our Lady as she intercedes to shed light on knots that bind us and to slowly and lovingly untangle them. Through the tender embrace and gentle guidance of our Blessed Mother, we continually experience the mercy and love of the Divine Trinity.

***"We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28***

Another prayerful activity we have practiced as a family has been to pray the Litany of Loreto. This is a beautiful prayer of invocations to the Blessed Mother which includes titles given to her by our early Church Fathers. It is interesting to see which of these particular titles captures your family's attention. For example, members in our family have specific affection for Our Lady within the titles of Cause of Our Joy, Mystical Rose, and Morning Star.

As family activities and commitments wane during the summer, we encourage you to pray the Litany of Loreto as a family. Be patient and observant as the Holy Spirit works within you and draws you to a particular title for the Blessed Mother. Then research it, pray with it, and allow Our Lady to obtain abundant graces for your family, bringing you closer to Jesus. We pray that you will experience how, as St. Bernard has said, *"Mary has made herself all to all, and opens her merciful heart to all, that all may receive of her fullness: the sick, health; those in affliction, comfort; the sinner, pardon; and God, glory."* †

*Within the St. Stephen community, the Riethmiller family is active in music ministry, Baptism ministry, Greeter ministry, Catholic Kids' Camp (Vacation Bible School), and the homeschool community.*



# 33 Days To Morning Glory

by Jeanne Lewis

**M**ary had me at “*the quickest, easiest and surest way to become a saint*” and I accepted the invitation to participate in the **33 Days to Morning Glory** retreat.

Who could refuse an opportunity to grow in holiness with the ultimate advocate, mentor, guide, and life coach — Mary the Mother of God?

I have done the **33 Days to Morning Glory** retreat and consecrated myself to Jesus through Mary many times. Each time is more powerful than the last. I like to consider myself as member of Team Mary!

The first Consecration was on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, how appropriate for me as my confirmation name is Bernadette. Each retreat helps me to see more fully how Mary is guiding me to Jesus. It wasn't until this 2018 retreat that I saw how Mary helped save my life.

At the age of 14 while on a family vacation to Iowa, I was hospitalized with Reyes Syndrome. The cause of Reye syndrome is unknown. It usually begins shortly after recovery from a viral infection. About 90% of cases in children are associated with aspirin (salicylate) use. If undiagnosed, the patient may go from flu-like symptoms to death in a few days or even hours.

The clinic doctor who initially examined me had just seen an article about the warning signs of Reyes Syndrome, and that there was a research team at University of Iowa studying the syndrome. I was immediately taken by ambulance to Iowa City more than 2 hours away. My parents signed my life over to the doctors to do whatever they could to save my life. The only survivor of the 15 Reyes Syndrome patients brought to University of Iowa Hospital was a young boy who suffered severe brain damage. I walked out of the hospital two weeks later.

I knew that family and friends had been praying for me, but it wasn't until last year at my uncle's funeral that I heard that entire families were

attending daily Mass and praying the Rosary on my behalf. Mary guided the medical team and bound my family to her through all those Hail Mary's!!!

Mary has been on the move throughout my life. What I didn't know was that my membership on Team Mary started as a child...really at my baptism. Jesus gave himself to Mary in the womb, and Mary was given to us all by Jesus as he hung from the cross... Then He said to the disciple, “**Behold, your mother.**” (John 19:27)



Learn more about Mary. Love and trust her. We can never love Mary more than Jesus loves her. Consider consecrating yourself to Jesus through Mary. You will not be disappointed!

I am a Mary Girl! †

*Jeanne Lewis and her family are long-time parishioners of St. Stephen, with a strong devotion to Mary.*

“Giving everything to our Blessed Mother so she can give it to her Son makes my day easy. As Mary cannot be outdone in her generosity, she covers my shortcomings. The **33 Days to Morning Glory** Retreat really brings that into focus. I find the readings easy and inspirational. The conversations at the retreat are even better. Thank you for bringing me closer to our Mother and her Son!” –Chris Lewis

“It has focused me to petition Mary to intervene on my behalf. I relate to her my cares and worries regarding my family, friends, and community.” –Nancy Davison

“I consecrated my heart to Jesus a couple of years ago. Without a doubt the second time around is much more meaningful and fulfilling! Reflecting on the readings, participating in group discussions and pondering the words of Father Michael Gaitley are moving me forward on my spiritual journey!” –Stacy Kines

# Patroness of the Americas

By Janet Swilley

**O**ur Lady of Guadalupe, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, in Spanish, is also called the Virgin of Guadalupe. In Roman Catholicism, the Virgin Mary appeared before St. Juan Diego in a vision in 1531.



Our Lady of Guadalupe has a special place in the religious life of Mexico and is one of the most popular religious devotions. According to tradition, on December 9 and again on December 12, 1531 Mary appeared to Juan Diego, who was an Aztec convert to Christianity. She requested that a shrine to her be built on the spot where she appeared, Tepeyac Hill which is now in a suburb of Mexico City. The bishop demanded a sign before he would approve construction of a church. Mary appeared a second time to Juan Diego and ordered him to collect roses. During his second audience with the bishop, Juan Diego opened his cloak, and let dozens of roses fall to the floor and revealed the image of Mary imprinted on the inside of his cloak. The image is now venerated in the Basilica of Guadalupe.

Defenders of the Virgin of Guadalupe, including Pope John Paul II, who canonized Juan Diego and declared Our Lady of Guadalupe the patroness of the Americas, accepted the authenticity of the early documents and various oral accounts of the apparition.

A shrine to the Virgin has existed on the site since at least 1556, when the archbishop of New Spain promoted devotion to the image of Mary at a chapel in Tepeyac. By the end of the 16th century Our Lady of Guadalupe formed part of a wide network of shrines to the Virgin throughout Mexico. In 1648, the story of Mary's appearance to Juan Diego was codified in the work of Miquel Sánchez. An account in the indigenous language, Nahuatl was published in 1649 and accepted as accurate far and wide. The devotion continued to grow, especially after Our Lady of Guadalupe was credited with ending a deadly epidemic of hemorrhagic fever that

ravaged Mexico City in 1736–37 and she was proclaimed patroness of Mexico City. In 1746 her patronage was accepted by all the territories of New Spain, which included part of present-day California as well as Mexico and regions as far south as Guatemala and El Salvador. In 1754, Pope Benedict XIV approved her patronage and granted her a proper feast and Mass for December 12. In 1910, Pope Pius X proclaimed her patroness of Latin America. In 1935, Pius XI approved her patronage over the Philippines. Since the early 18th century the devotion was spread throughout the world by the Jesuits and other religious.

Our Lady of Guadalupe's role in Mexican history is not limited to religious matters; she has played an important role in Mexican nationalism and identity. In 1810, she was promoted by Miguel Hidalgo y Castilla as the patroness of the revolt he led against the Spanish. The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared on the rebels' banners and the rebels' battle cry was "*Long Live Our Lady of Guadalupe.*" In the late 19th century, during a religious revival in Mexico, preachers declared that the foundation of Mexico could be dated to the time of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe because she freed the people from idolatry and reconciled the Spanish, and indigenous peoples, in a common devotion. Emiliano Zapata's peasant rebels carried the banner of Our Lady when they entered Mexico City in 1914 during the civil war in Mexico. In 1926–29, the banners of the rebels bore her image. Her continuing significance as a religious and national symbol is attested by the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who visit her shrine every year.

Parish leaders will attest, their faith community needs continual, ongoing, conversion to live and proclaim Guadalupe's unifying message. As U.S. Catholics of all racial and ethnic groups continue to face the challenge to be authentically Catholic in America, and are tasked with helping make our nation a greater instrument of peace, Guadalupe's hope, promise, and challenge is among the greatest treasures Hispanic faith offers to the church and society. †

# Mary, Undoer of Knots

By Jeanne Lewis

**W**e all have some “*knots*” in our lives and Mary can untie them! The devotion to Mary, Undoer of Knots, has become more popular ever since Pope Francis encouraged the devotion in Argentina and then spoke about it during his first year as pontiff.

The theology of the devotion actually goes back to the second century. Saint Irenaeus wrote that “*The knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by the obedience of Mary; what the virgin Eve bound by her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith.*”

[St. Irenaeus learned his Catholic faith earlier in the second century from St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor, who in turn learned the faith from St. John the Apostle himself! (*Mary: Who She Is and Why She Matters* by Robert Stackpole, STD)]

Mary’s faith unties the knot of sin! Pray that the Blessed Virgin Mary will intercede for us all to untie the knots of sin in our lives so that we may be purified and ever closer to God.

## Rope of Trust

In the Old Testament the word for trusting faith was a Hebrew word that meant a rope. In other words, trust was like a rope. It expressed what a rope did for you. It provided security, tied you to another person in safety, something you could depend on. If you tied something down with a rope, it was secure.

Building trust is very much like making a rope. A rope is made by intertwining many strands together. The more strands, the stronger the rope; the better quality strands, the stronger and more dependable the rope. ([www.bibletalk.tv/trust-is-like-a-rope](http://www.bibletalk.tv/trust-is-like-a-rope))

## A Life Line

Rope is literally the lifeline that helps tether the climber to a rock face. It is so amazing that little braided strands and some fancy clips, called karabiners are responsible for the safety of so many people. ([www.midlandsda.org/Sermons/2010-03-13.html](http://www.midlandsda.org/Sermons/2010-03-13.html))

So what makes rope so special? Of course, it comes made in various materials, but the one thing that all ropes have in common is that they are made up of multiple strands of whatever material. Each strand by itself is strong, but its strength is multiplied greatly when those strands come together to form the rope. Needless to say, a good rope is essential for the survival of a climber; a good rope is essential for the life of a Christian.

## Knots

Just as a single strand of rope is more vulnerable to breakage than a series of braided strands, a knot in that same rope will make it weaker.

All knots reduce the strength of the rope in which they are tied generally by 20% to 40% of the unknotted strength. ([www.allaboutknots.blogspot.com](http://www.allaboutknots.blogspot.com))

When our lifelines are knotted or when we try to go it alone in life, like a single strand, the strength of our faith is diminished or may be broken. Mary, the Undoer of Knots, helps to untie our tangled lives. When we weave ourselves to her, she helps to strengthen our faith by using her unfailing trust in God. Trust Mary to bring you to a more perfect relationship and love of Christ! †



**Did you know...** that Mary is revered by Muslims? They acknowledge her as the greatest of woman. “*O Mary! Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee – chosen thee above the women of all nations*” (Sutra 3:42). She is the only woman explicitly named in the Qur’an (Koran). In it, Mary’s name is mentioned 34 times in 32 verses. The name Jesus is written 25 times. The phrase “*son of Mary*” exists 23 times. In the Bible, the gospels and Acts, Mary, Jesus’ mother is named 19 times.

# Consecration to Mary

By Joanne Ywanauskas

**W**hile sitting in the Mary Garden, I composed the following after my first **33 Days to Morning Glory** consecration on Our Lady of Lourdes Feast Day in 2013:

*“I’m filled with a soaring, swelling love for the Sacred Heart and Divine Mercy of Jesus. I sense our loving Mother & her Immaculate Heart rejoicing for me on this holy day. My head is tingling with delight; my heart overflowing with desire to follow Jesus. With my dear Mother’s guidance, I long to be the hands, feet and heart of Jesus to all who cross my path.*

*As Father Emery placed the Miraculous Medal over my veiled head, joyful tears poured forth during the Consecration and Adoration. As I emptied out all I’ve done, all that I am and pledged myself entirely to the Blessed Mother, the unimaginable Love of her spouse, the Holy Spirit, welled inside me. How I intensely crave this Love and Mercy!*

*My dearest, sweet Mother, so this is Consecration to your Son through your protective, blessed hands? Oh, Mother Mary Immaculate, hold me in your heart; form me into whatever you choose that will be most pleasing to your Son. Thank you for this day, my Lord and God.*

*On this perfect day of Consecration, let us truly cherish and hold dear the memories of this blessed day. More importantly, let us put forth into practice, being the hands, feet & heart of our dear Lord, Jesus Christ. We can do this! After all, we now know the “secret” to being saints... and we do not walk alone.” †*

*Joanne Ywanauskas and family have been St. Stephen parishioners since 2005. She and husband Tom, joined the choir in 2005. Joanne also serves in the Divine Mercy Ministry*



*“For our first time offering the 33 Days to Morning Glory retreat at St. Stephen, I purchased a lot of Miraculous Medals to give to everyone that came to the Consecration. I had several left, so I decided I would always keep some with me to share. One morning I stopped at a gas station and reached for my purse on the passenger seat. When I picked it up, one Miraculous Medal fell out. I thought to myself that the medal must be meant for someone that day. I put it in my pocket and went on with my day. Later that afternoon I went to a bank, a branch I usually don’t go to. As I was at the teller, there was a man next to me talking to his teller about his wife that had cancer. He was telling her about some of the struggles they were having. When I heard this, I remembered the medal in my pocket and knew I should give it to him. I stepped over to him and told him about what happened with the medal falling out of my purse. I told him a little about the Miraculous Medal and that I believed the medal was meant for his wife. He looked at me for a second then reached out and hugged me and said he knew his wife would like it. He thanked me a few times. I looked back at my teller and she was crying. She said that the timing for that to happen was perfect and how kind I was to do that. I told her it wasn’t me and that the Holy Spirit led me to him. Obviously, He was working again through Mary.*



*I’ve had other occasions that I have given medals to people I meet. Sometimes I feel like I am being drawn to a person that may be hurting. And it always seems to be a person that is in need of prayer or is praying for someone. I enjoy giving them the medals and the comfort it gives them.” –Bridget Wray †*

*“The reason for my returning to the Catholic church and my faith after being away for 18 years is the graces received from Our Blessed Mother. She is so tender, merciful and loving, she desires that all her children to return to her Son and she will lead the way back. Since then, I have participated in Marian pilgrimages and consecrations and each time I’m just in awe of all the participants, including myself that she touches with blessings and graces. “Why should I be honored with a visit from the Mother of my Lord?” (LK 1:43) –Linda*

*“Together, my husband and I participated in two 33 Days to Morning Glory retreats. I had been a long time member of the Eucharistic Apostles of Divine Mercy (EADM). After we married, I introduced him to this beautiful devotion, we prayed the Divine Mercy Chaplet, Novena and attended Divine Mercy Masses.*

*One night my husband had to be transported to the hospital for a life-threatening event. It seemed the entire ER staff was in the room working to save him. Perhaps they did not realize I remained in the room. He cried out to me saying that he did not want to die! I removed the blessed scapular from my neck and placed it around his. Together we recited the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Days later, even after two surgical procedures, the scapular was still around his neck.*

*On a few occasions when called to a relative's death bed, we have recited the Divine Mercy Chaplet and at times with the homebound we visit. As Jesus instructed St. Faustina to record in The Diary of Divine Mercy, “Write that when they say this chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the merciful Savior” (Diary, 1541)*

*What a blessing it is to be instruments of God's incredible mercy.” –Anonymous †*

*“I practically fell into doing the 33 Days to Morning Glory. I stopped for coffee, donuts and conversation after Mass and there was a signup table for the retreat. I felt uncertain that I should signup, and then I noticed that the final retreat and consecration was on May 6. This is the birthday of my wife who passed away two years ago and so it caught my attention. I decided to give it a try.*

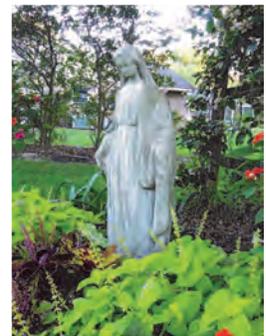
*To prepare for the retreat, I went to confession and Mass just before the first retreat meeting. Father Joe heard my confession and observed that I made him think of a race car driver. Father had ministered to the Indy racing community and said that I was sitting in a race car ready to go, but that I wasn't able to get the car into gear. The car is my faith life and I was stuck at the starting line.*

*This 33 Days to Morning Glory study and the wonderful people running it have helped me to get my car, my Catholic life, into gear. I don't believe in coincidences and feel that God was calling me to attend—I'm so glad that I did.” - Mic †*

## Parishioners Share Their Mary Gardens



Cheryle Stoltman



Cathy Brooks



Lisa Huetteman



Joseph Zanga



Shandi Burke



Basia Kalinowski



Sarah Livingston

## St. Stephen Catholic Church

10118 Saint Stephen Circle  
Riverview, FL 33569

Return Service Requested

## QUARTERLY BLESSINGS

Our mission is met each quarter, when one person reading the *Quarterly Blessings*, who is not actively involved in the church, becomes inspired to participate in any one of the many wonderful spiritual and fellowship activities happening at St. Stephen.

Comments, suggestions and contributions for this publication are encouraged and always welcome. Please email us at [QB@ststephencatholic.org](mailto:QB@ststephencatholic.org). Any photos submitted to the *Quarterly Blessings* will gladly be returned upon request.

### *Quarterly Blessings Advisor:*

Fr. Dermot Dunne

(813) 689-4900

### *Quarterly Blessings Board Members:*

Brandon Avery	Liz McLaughlin
Nicki Gallagher	Gretchen Robens
Jeanne Glogowski	Gloria St. Amant
Heike House	Janet Swilley
Cindee Mace	

### *Additional Editorial Team Members:*

Peter Konowicz

Logo design created by Rick Tauceda.

Cover by Rick Tauceda.

Subscribe for electronic delivery of the *Quarterly Blessings* online at [www.ststephencatholic.org](http://www.ststephencatholic.org).

Printing of the *Quarterly Blessings* is provided by:

**Messner Publications**

3250 Dundee Rd.

Winter Haven, FL 33884

(866) 651-2111

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Lakeland, FL  
Permit No. 1



## *Welcome Father Tim!*

Following his ordination, Father Tim Williford has been assigned to St. Stephen Parish. You may see him at morning Mass periodically as he gets settled. Be sure to extend a warm welcome!

## *Guests of the Quarter*

It takes many individuals within our parish to help make it flourish, though they may often go without notice. Sometimes the individuals make up a whole family.

The Riethmiller Family; Learn about them inside!

