

# *Our Faith in Action*

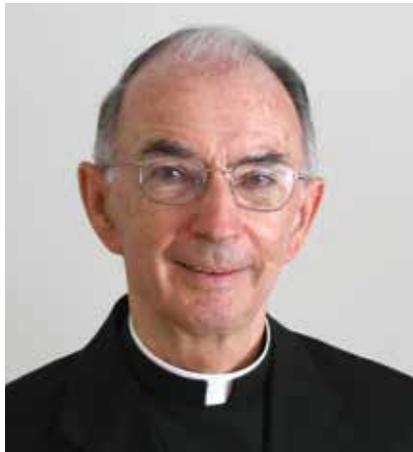
*American Martyrs Catholic Community*

## A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

### *Gratitude for the Gifts God Has Given Us*

Dear Parishioners,

Every day I live, I feel more and more grateful for the gift of the Holy Eucharist. At the same time I am ever more aware of my own unworthiness. I say this not in any negative way but to underline my sense of gratitude. All that we say and do must lead us to the Eucharist and all that we are comes from the Eucharist as our source. In light of this I am so happy to see this month's issue of *Faith in Action* featuring so many ministries directly connected to the Eucharist.



Those of us who are involved in bringing the Holy Eucharist to the homebound know the blessing and the joy it brings to our lives. Those we visit in their homes or care centers give us so much as they express their faith, strengthening ours and causing us to be more connected with the earliest practice of the Church. Many were martyred because of their commitment to this sacred ministry.

As we look to the canonization of Blessed Pope John XXIII and Blessed Pope Paul II, we are reminded of their great love for the Mass. Think

of the Second Vatican Council and the renewal of the Liturgy and remember the many wonderful ways you and I can more fully participate in the celebration of the Mass. As a priest who is "pre-Vatican II" I remember my sense of distance from the people as I celebrated Mass, and today I am so grateful for the connection I feel with all who are present to be actively and fully involved in the celebration. Many of us have great memories of Blessed

John Paul II who traveled the world to celebrate the central gift of our faith. He welcomed hundreds of thousands to these celebrations and all of them were to draw people to a closer union with Our Divine Lord in the Eucharist. No one could doubt this great Pope in his love for Jesus in the Eucharist and he suffered for his faith. It is very fitting that his canonization is on "Divine Mercy" Sunday, a devotion he established and to which he invited all to express their faith in God's mercy.

Each year we are blessed to have our American Martyrs School eighth grade lead us in their unique

## KEEPING MEMBERS OF OUR PARISH FAMILY CONNECTED

### *Communion to the Homebound Ministry*

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The Communion to the Homebound Ministry here at American Martyrs brings the Eucharist to parishioners who are unable to attend Mass regularly on their own due to advanced age or illness. This beautiful ministry blesses both the volunteers and the homebound parishioners they serve. Deacon Fred Rose, who has been a part of Communion to the Homebound at American Martyrs since 1997, notes how much he enjoys and appreciates this ministry.

“It’s important to keep in contact with the people, let them know that someone is caring for them,” Deacon Fred says. “I think I get more from them than they do from me. But it’s a give and take — we both give. It’s really kind of special.”

All of the Communion to the Homebound ministers are parishioners here at American Martyrs and do not have to serve as Eucharistic Ministers prior to beginning their work with this ministry.

“I have a little book that we give them for training,” Deacon Fred says. “They are also given a pyx, a small container that holds the Eucharist. Some people visit two or three homebound parishioners, so I give them a pyx that will hold that many. There are often caregivers who stay at the house with them, so we try to provide the Eucharist to them too.”

For many homebound parishioners, the Communion to the Homebound volunteers are their only connection to the parish, and often the outside world. This ministry also allows these parishioners to stay connected to the Church through the gift of Communion, which they would not receive otherwise.

“Our visits and the bulletin help keep them connected,” Deacon Fred says. “The person taking Communion [to the homebound] is the connection, or the bridge to the parish. We are an arm of the Church in their homes.”

While working to provide a welcome and much-needed service, volunteers are often surprised to build meaningful and lasting friendships with the parishioners they visit. They are happy to spend time with them, which gives the caretakers a little break.

Mary Kay Quilliam, a busy mother of two who has served through the Communion to the Homebound Ministry on and off for several years, began bringing the Eucharist to one particular gentleman after getting to know him through seeing him at daily Mass for a number of years. When the gentleman was no longer able to attend Mass, Mary Kay was pleased when God created an opening in her schedule that allowed her to bring the



*Deacon Fred Rose*

gentleman the Eucharist on a regular basis until he passed away in December.

“God works in mysterious ways,” Mary Kay says. “He brings us in for a moment where He needs us. I actually just bumped into [the gentleman’s] niece. We met only once, one night when I brought him Communion, but we recognized each other in Church today and said ‘hello.’ It’s just amazing the connections that end up happening, even beyond the person who is receiving Communion.”

If you are interested in volunteering, or know of a homebound parishioner who would like Communion brought to them, please contact Deacon Fred at 310-545-5651.

## PRAISING HIS NAME IN FESTIVE DANCE

### *Wings of Faith Ministry*

One of our most privileged duties as sons and daughters of God is to worship and praise Him. Often, we think of this as something we do as we kneel before the Tabernacle in church or while quietly praying the Rosary. But there are many forms of prayer, and many ways to worship our infinitely creative God. Even the Old Testament instructs, "Let Israel be glad in their maker, the people of Zion rejoice in their king. Let them praise his name in festive dance, make music with tambourine and lyre. For the Lord takes delight in his people..." (Ps. 149: 2-4)

Here at American Martyrs, the members of the Wings of Faith Ministry are praising God and helping parishioners to praise Him as the Psalmist instructs through "festive dance." Wings of Faith is a sacred dance ministry, started in the parish about 35 years ago by Rosemarie Kelley (who passed away in 2008). Today, parishioner Jenna Stubbs serves as the group's coordinator.

"[The goal of sacred dance] is to inspire people by enhancing their worship," Jenna says. "Sacred dance is not a performance, but rather a prayer."

The members of the Wings of Faith Ministry dance at various Masses, during the Communion meditation or the Responsorial Psalm. They also dance at

Reconciliation services and other liturgies.

The members of the ministry are fellow parishioners, most with a background in some form of dance training. Typically, four to nine participate at a time in this form of worship. The group rehearses weekly on Tuesday evenings for an hour and a half, sometimes more if further preparations are needed.

"Dancing connects me personally to a deep, soulful worship," Jenna says. "When I dance, I feel the Holy Spirit and a freedom to praise our precious Lord Jesus in a most special way. I was a performer in my dancing career for many years. Yet this ministry to sacred dance is by far the greatest gift, privilege and blessing."

The dancers dress simply, taking care to be modest, and they utilize colors that vary depending on the time of the Church year and the particular liturgy. Ever mindful that sacred dance is a prayer and not a performance, they try to dance as one body in Christ. Jenna notes that her favorite aspect of this ministry is the positive impact it has had on other people.

"Most of the responses we get are of pure enjoyment and appreciation," she says. "It touches their hearts for the Lord."

If you would like to learn more

about this unique and beautiful way to worship the Lord, please contact Jenna Stubbs at [wingsoffaith@americanmartyrs.org](mailto:wingsoffaith@americanmartyrs.org), or call the parish office at 310-545-5651.



*Members of the Wings of Faith Ministry, including founder Rosemarie Kelley (second from right)*



*The members of the Wings of Faith Ministry are fellow parishioners, most with a background in some form of dance training.*



*Wings of Faith Member*

## Blessed John Paul II and Blessed John XXIII

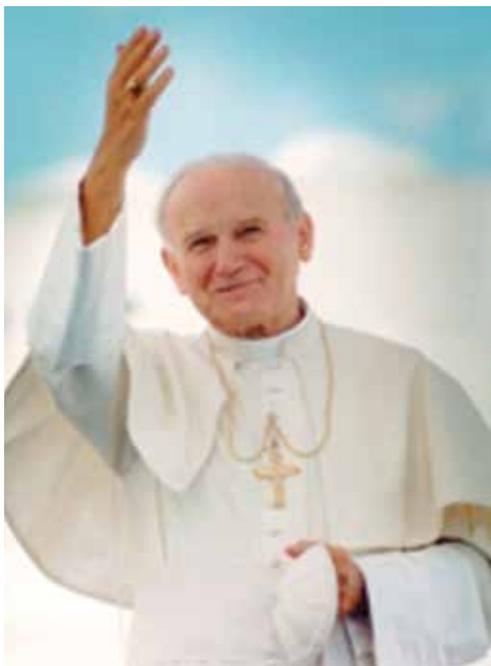
Recognizing the heroic virtue and unwavering faith of two 20th century popes, Pope John Paul II and Blessed John XXIII, Pope Francis announced in September that he would declare his two predecessors saints at a single ceremony on April 27.

“To celebrate them together is a sign of appreciation of the holiness of two popes who paid witness to our time,” the Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, said during a news conference.

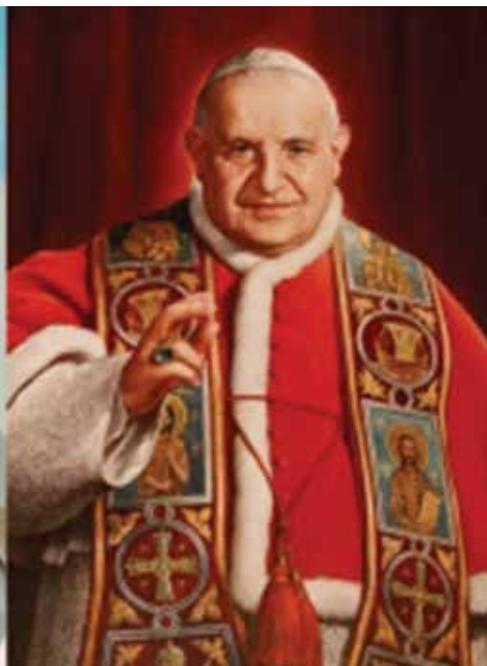
Blessed John Paul II served as pope from 1978 to 2005 and was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI on Divine Mercy Sunday, May 1, 2011.

Blessed John XXIII, who is known particularly for convoking the Second Vatican Council, was pope from 1958 to 1963; Blessed John Paul II beatified him in 2000.

The Catholic Church’s process leading to canonization involves three major steps. First is the declaration of a person’s heroic virtues, after which the church gives him or her the title “Venerable.” Second is beatification, after which he or she is called “Blessed.” The third step is canonization, or declaration of sainthood. Canonization is the culmination of a thorough process by which the Church investigates the life of the individual in question



*Blessed John Paul II*



*Blessed John XXIII*

and seeks confirmation from heaven in the form of a verified miracle performed through the individual’s intercession.

This process often begins decades or even centuries after the saint’s death, but in the case of John Paul II, who died in the spring of 2005, this process has been a relatively quick one.

Born Karol Wojtyla in 1920 in rural Poland, John Paul II’s early life was one of successive hardships. He lost his mother, father and siblings at an early age. Left alone in the world, Wojtyla turned to his faith and developed a profound relationship with Christ during the Nazi regime at the time of World War II.

Ordained to the priesthood in

1946, John Paul II spent the next three decades as a priest and then as a bishop, ministering to the people of Poland who were under post-World War II Soviet rule. His experience of the oppression of the Polish people and the gross abuses of human dignity formed his unique philosophy and theology that went on to become the cornerstone of his papacy.

In 1978, at the height of the Cold War, the College of Cardinals elected Wojtyla as the first non-Italian pope in 455 years and the first Pole in the Church’s history.

John Paul II went on to become one of the most important figures of the 20th century, redefining the papacy in the mass media age and advancing the renewal

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## *John XXIII to be Canonized April 27*

of Vatican II. His travels around the world and his wildly popular World Youth Day events helped strengthen the unity of the global Catholic Church.

Blessed John XXIII was affectionately referred to as “Good Pope John.” Born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli to a large and humble family of sharecroppers in 1881, he was ordained to the priesthood in 1904, and his efforts throughout the Holocaust

during World War II would help save Jewish refugees from Nazi persecution. Roncalli was raised to the rank of Cardinal by Pope Pius XII in 1953. However, in October 1958, Pius XII died suddenly from heart failure, and Roncalli was elected pope.

John XXIII’s papacy was initially perceived as a “stop-gap,” due to his advanced age. Yet, John XXIII announced in 1959 his intention to call a general

council — and in October 1962, the Second Vatican Council was opened. However, he would not live to witness the remaining periods of the Second Vatican Council, as he died from illness in June 1963.

Pope Francis took the rare step of waiving the requirement of a second miracle for Blessed John XXIII, paving the way for his imminent canonization.

### APRIL 27, 2014

## *Divine Mercy Sunday*

April 27, 2014 – the day Pope John Paul II and John XXIII will be canonized as Roman Catholic saints – is also Divine Mercy Sunday. A special connection exists between Pope John Paul II and Divine Mercy Sunday, as the late pontiff is credited with both canonizing St. Faustina (whose diary contains meditations on Divine Mercy) and creating Divine Mercy Sunday as an official solemnity of the Catholic Church.

Meditating upon Christ’s Divine Mercy is an exercise in spiritual awareness, where the individual comes to more fully understand the immense mercy of Christ. This mercy is freely given to humankind, unworthy of such a gift.

Our community will observe the solemnity of divine Mercy on Sunday, April 27 at the 11:30 a.m. Mass. All are invited to attend. Parishioners are encouraged to prepare for this occasion by participating in the Divine Mercy Novena, beginning Good Friday, April 18. Information about the novena can be found at [www.ewtn.com](http://www.ewtn.com), search “Divine Mercy.”

Those wishing to experience Christ’s Divine Mercy in the form of a plenary indulgence — the omission of sins — can do so by receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to Divine Mercy Sunday and then participating in the Mass on April 27. Information about the indulgence can be found at [www.ewtn.com](http://www.ewtn.com), search “indulgence.”



## RECENT EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Over this past winter season, our parish community has remained as active as ever. On Feb. 22, the 34th Annual American Martyrs 5K Run/Walk took place. The event was blessed with beautiful weather and a strong showing of community and fellowship. The youth of our community enjoyed celebrations and fellowship, as well. Four of our Boy Scouts received their Parvuli Dei Award, while children and their Grandbuddies enjoyed sharing in the joy of reading.

Post-run breakfast  
in O'Donnell Hall



Thank you from  
American Martyrs  
5K runners...



We were over a  
thousand strong!



## THE WAY OF THE CROSS

### *A Holy Week Tradition at American Martyrs*

This Holy Week marks the 32nd year of the dramatization of the Stations of the Cross by our American Martyrs School eighth-grade students — a parish tradition.

“The Holy Spirit surrounds this lovely part of our parish and school community tradition,” says Jennifer Robbins Brannan, parent and director of the Way of the Cross. “It is a six-week rehearsal process, and it is amazing what these students can do.”

This longstanding tradition began with an original piece and music adapting the Mass of the Cross. Robert Curtis, CSP and Virginia and Thomas Kelly wrote the original piece, and Bill Svarda composed the original music and arrangement. The students performed this dramatization for years. Virginia Kelly and Catherine McGrath previously served as the directors.

When Jennifer began directing in 2010, she and Msgr. Barry started working on the creation of a new piece that would include liturgical music and monologues from each character.

“Instead of narrators walking us through, there are monologues,” Jennifer says. “At each station, the character will talk from his experience, and there is a meditation through Mary’s eyes and her experience. For example, at the first station we hear directly from Claudia. We hope it makes it a real, intimate and emotional experience.”

Each year, the students begin preparing for the Way of the Cross around February with a two-part audition process. All students first write an essay reflecting on what part they connect with and why. Then, every male student auditions for the role of Christ and every female student auditions for the role of Mary.

“There is a role for everyone, especially since we have two casts,” Jennifer says. “All students participate in both the afternoon and evening dramatizations. They can write if they would rather be in the technical crew and why. Those working in the technical roles work the soundboard, the spotlights, and the slide show.”

As the students rehearse, they are encouraged to study and to reflect on their character or role.

They keep journals in character and even write a letter as their character to someone they love.

“At rehearsals, I lead them in a meditation, and we try to approach it in a way so they are really considering themselves as these characters,” Jennifer says. “I tell them that they are giving the parish a gift and the deeper they enter into their roles, the deeper the gift. Ultimately, walking deeper with Christ, deepening their

relationships with Him, that’s my hope for the students through this.”

Supported by their parents, Jennifer (director) and Monica Lucenti (parent volunteer coordinator), the eighth-grade students carry the responsibility of the dramatization.

People comment, “when you see the kids and what they’ve accomplished, they don’t look like kids,” Jennifer says. “They put such time and thought and prayer into this preparation that it transforms into something else. It’s a spiritual experience for the kids, and I think that translates to the people watching. It’s a beautiful way to go into Easter weekend. It feels different. Give yourself that gift.”

This Good Friday, April 18, all who would like to experience the Passion are welcome to join us. The dramatizations will occur at 12:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., and Good Friday service will follow.



*The dramatization of the Way of the Cross.*

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## GRATITUDE FOR THE GIFTS GOD HAS GIVEN US *continued from front cover*

dramatization of the “Way of the Cross.” The hours they have spent preparing this public prayer for us will hopefully be one of their great memories to grow their future life of faith. Our prayer is that they may continue to witness to their Catholic faith and remember the intimate connection between the “Way of the Cross” and the Mass. Every time we pray “the Stations” we remember the Sacrifice of Jesus.

At various times of the year, we see the Wings of Faith ministers offer us a prayer to help us see that all movement must be a reflection of the creative love of God and that as David danced to give glory to God, these ministers are always singing God’s praises and reminding us that their movement is not to entertain but to inspire.

So as you read through this issue and see the movements of our community reflect on your faith and let us continue to be grateful to God for the gift of all our ministries that enable us to be more aware of who we are as the Body of Christ, coming to receive His living self in the Eucharist.

In Christ,



Rev. Msgr. John F. Barry, P.A.  
Pastor

*Our Faith in Action is provided by the American Martyrs Stewardship Commission*

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### LITURGY SCHEDULE

**Saturday**, 5:00 p.m. | **Sunday**, 7:00 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m.  
**Monday/Wednesday/Friday**, 8:00 a.m., 12:10 p.m., 5:00 p.m.  
**Tuesday/Thursday**, 6:30 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 12:10 p.m., 5:00 p.m. | **Saturday**, 8:00 a.m.  
**Holy Day**, 5:00 p.m. (Vigil), 6:30 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 12:10 p.m., 5:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m.