



Our Faith in Action

American Martyrs Catholic Community

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Blessed to be a Part of the American Martyrs Community



Dear Parishioners,

I hope you are enjoying some summer respite. Schools are beginning to welcome returning and new students and the students and parents are in different places regarding this reality. Featured in this edition you will find insightful reflections on the parish schools and preschools - our educational ministries, one fellowship ministry, and one support ministry.

When it comes to educating our children each succeeding Pope reminds us that there is nothing more important to do than to form them in Christ. We help our parents fulfill this obligation in many ways but especially in our American Martyrs School.

Our Elementary (Pre-K through Eight) school is the choice of many parents who make great sacrifices to provide this form of education for their children. I am so proud of our school, its administration, faculty and staff. I wish we had space for all applicants but when parents commit themselves to wait for a vacancy, it very often happens.

Other parents select our local public and private schools for the academic education of their children and work with our School of Religious Education for support in their religious formation. Our religious

education director works with both schools and is supported in so many ways by a dedicated and caring faculty. The programs offered are well planned and presented by all of these leaders who give so generously of their time and talent. Many feel called to this ministry. If you do, Patti Williams will be happy to meet with you and share details of preparation and commitment. It takes all of us working together to share the gift of our faith.

Our preschool is yet another branch of our teaching ministry. With the legacy of Miss Jeannie and her well prepared successor, Miss Mara, the future looks bright and promising for this happy place where there is a less formal approach about religious education but where children are surrounded with gifts of wonder and joy leading them to appreciate the love of God. They become focused with the holy bell and prayer and their day takes all the turns and twists of a child's imagination.

As you read about our Pancake Breakfast Ministry, I hope you will share the good news of these great people who have fun serving delicious breakfasts to their die-hard regulars and those who come on the spur of the moment. It is a great place to

continued on back cover

THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY - August 15

Every year, tens of thousands of pilgrims visit St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, eager to glimpse the spot in which the alleged bones (relics) of St. Peter, our first pope, remain to this day.

The relics of saints have been venerated throughout the ages in every corner of the world – yet, the bones of the very first Christian, the Blessed Mother, are nowhere to be found. Where are the remains of the Queen of all Saints?

When it comes to the day, manner, or year of the Blessed Virgin Mary's death, nothing is certain. No account is given in Scripture. The Church turns instead to Tradition for an answer.

Since the birth of the Church, no Marian relics have ever been venerated – nor can they ever be – because her body was assumed, or taken up, into heaven. There exist, therefore, no remains of the Blessed Virgin's body on this earth. She lives, right now, body and soul, in heavenly glory.

Although the particular dogma of the Assumption cannot be found in the writings of Scripture, if we look at many other writings by the early Christians, it is clear that the Church has always held this dogma to be true. Even more, though there is no statement of fact in the Bible itself that Mary was assumed body and soul, the truths that we do know about Mary from Scripture simply serve to back up the reality that she was assumed into heaven. She gave herself wholly to the Lord and followed His will for her life, perfectly, to the end.

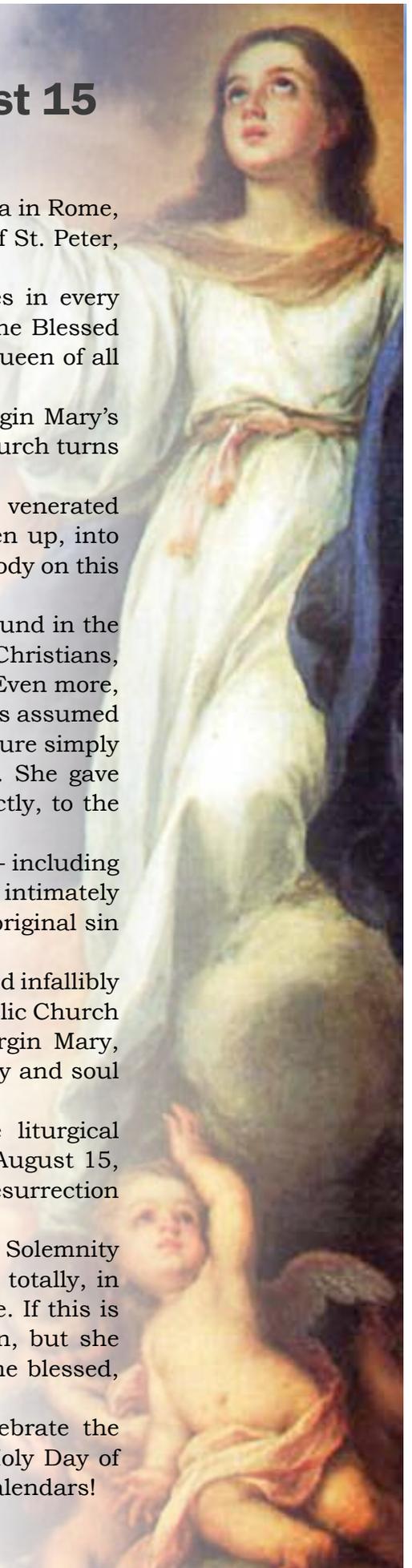
The Assumption of Mary reveals that the promises of the Lord – including the resurrection of the body – were fulfilled in Mary. She shared most intimately in the life, death, and resurrection of her son, and was free from original sin and its effects – including corruption of the body at death.

It was no surprise, therefore, in 1950 when Pope Pius XII declared infallibly the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a dogma of the Catholic Church with these words: "The Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heaven."

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is observed on the liturgical calendar as a solemnity – of higher importance than a feast. On August 15, this wonderful celebration is accompanied by great hope in the resurrection of the body and everlasting union with God in heaven.

In the words of Pope Benedict XVI during his homily Mass on the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary in 2006: "Mary is 'blessed' because – totally, in body and soul and forever – she became the Lord's dwelling place. If this is true, Mary does not merely invite our admiration and veneration, but she guides us, shows us the way of life, shows us how we can become blessed, how to find the path of happiness."

Alongside Catholics throughout the country, be sure to celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption on August 15. This is a declared Holy Day of Obligation in the Church and a great liturgical feast. Mark your calendars!



STEPHEN MINISTRY PROVIDES HELP FOR THOSE IN NEED

Everyone needs help at some time in life, whether they are struggling with the death of a family member, financial instability, or any other sort of crisis. Many times, all we really need is someone to talk to and listen to what we are going through. The Stephen Ministry is there for exactly that reason.

“It’s a counseling service for people who are going through a crisis in life — lost a job, bad diagnosis, family problems,” says Deacon Dick Williams, who leads the Stephen Ministry with his wife, Patti. “We help people who are basically healthy. They don’t need a therapist, but they need someone to talk to confidentially.”

Those who come to the Stephen Ministry for help are called care receivers. A Stephen Minister meets with each care receiver once a week for the duration of the time they spend receiving care. The identity of the care receivers and all their information, including the reason they are receiving help, is kept strictly confidential.

Stephen Ministers are specially trained to assist the care receivers during their time of need. Each minister receives 50 hours of training, which includes learning when someone needs more assistance than what a Stephen Minister offers, and needs to see a professional. The ministers also gather on the first and third Thursday of each month to support each other in the ministry and in



their relationships to the care receivers. They do not, however, discuss the identities of the care receivers themselves or break the strict confidentiality of the ministry.

The Stephen Ministers do not try to “fix” their care receivers. Instead, they work with them, building a relationship with them and talking about what they are going through. The process really requires meeting face-to-face to be effective.

“We’re filling the role that Jesus filled,” Deacon Dick says. “He was a good listener and He helped bring the power of God’s healing to the people that He spent time with, and that’s very much what this ministry is about.”

Simply by listening to the care receivers and supporting them through difficult times, the Stephen Ministers can truly help those they work with to find peace in their lives.

“Having somebody you can talk to about anything gives you the ability to process things,” Deacon Dick says. “Let’s say

someone in your life dies. Your friends and acquaintances expect you to move on fairly quickly, but it takes one to five years for people to process something like that. So your Stephen Minister is there for you for as long as it takes. We talk to people, we pray with people, we really support them throughout their crisis until they’re feeling whole again. People generally feel like they’ve come out of a dark place when they’re done. Some people are only with us a few months, and some are with us for several years.”

In working with people and helping them through their time of need, the Stephen Ministers are helping to share the love of Christ with each of the care receivers.

“The whole idea is that we are acting in the place of Christ,” Deacon Dick says. “If we do our jobs well and represent Christ with the people who are going through the crisis — the saying in Stephen Ministry is, ‘We do the caring and God does the curing.’ So if we do our part, then God does God’s work.”

For more information on the Stephen Ministry or if you or someone you know needs to take advantage of the help the Stephen Ministry offers, please leave a message for Deacon Dick Williams on the confidential Stephen Ministry line at 310-545-8244.

PARISH SCHOOLS AND FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS SET TO BEGIN NEW ACADEMIC YEAR



As we look forward to the 2014-15 school year, our parish school and faith formation programs are preparing new initiatives and welcoming the newest members of our formation community.

American Martyrs School, which includes pre-kindergarten – the “Pony” program – through eighth grade, has experienced significant growth over the years. This has resulted in a current enrollment of approximately 700 students at AMS. The school will be embracing leadership changes for the upcoming academic year in accordance with the new school Vision, under the direction of Msgr. John Barry and Principal Camryn Connelly. The Vision of AMS consists of several categories and key initiatives, including Leadership and Governance, Academics, and Educating the Whole Child, all of which will serve to create positive change at the school.

To learn more about the new AMS Vision, please contact the school office at 310-545-8559. The first

day of school for the upcoming year is August 27 for the first through eighth grades, and August 28 for the Pony and Kindergarten classes.

The *School of Religious Education*, or SRE, is a program of religious instruction for children of the parish who do not attend a Catholic school. The goal of SRE is to provide uniform faith formation for all the children in the parish.

This year, the total expected enrollment for SRE will be close to 1,000 students. The program is supplemented with church tours, liturgies and penance services throughout the year. A yearly highlight of the program is the SRE Advent gathering, where families gather for an evening of fun and food as they await the birth of the Christ.

“I am looking forward to creating our new community of teachers this year,” says Patti Williams, the director of SRE. “These wonderful volunteers come from all aspects of our parish,

continued on page 5



including AMS teachers who stay after a long school day, to retired teachers sharing their love of teaching within our community, to parents of SRE students who grow in their faith along with their children.”

New family orientations will be held on August 24, September 7 and September 9. During these orientations, parents can learn about the religious education of their children and meet other parents in the program.

American Martyrs Preschool is available to 3 and 4-year-old children and consists of three-hour sessions in the morning and afternoon. The Preschool is play-based and includes developmental, age-appropriate activities that change yearly to accommodate each incoming class. Mara Zepeda, the new Preschool Director, is looking forward to working with the children and serving the parish.

“I am very excited about taking over a program

that was built on the sheer needs of the children – they come first,” says Mara. “I am grateful that the foundation of the Preschool has been laid so soundly, and will keep the child-focused mentality at the forefront.”

Sunday Preschool provides an age-appropriate faith development experience for young children so that parents can attend Mass with their older children. Classes are held on the school campus each Sunday, from late September through mid-May.

“Each Sunday, children have opportunities to sing, pray, share, and create,” says April Beuder, Sunday Preschool Co-Director. “Our program plants the seeds of faith that are nurtured by their families at home.”

For information about SRE or Sunday Preschool, 310-546-4734 or American Martyrs Preschool, 310-802-8149.

SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR AMERICAN MARTYRS OUTDOOR MASS

On Saturday, September 13, our community will be gathering to celebrate the liturgy at the Outdoor Mass, which takes place at 5 p.m. on the St. Elizabeth Field.

Please bring your chairs and/or blankets for the Mass!

Following Mass, on the blacktop, there will be food available for purchase, or you may bring your own!



Our American Martyrs community is getting ready for the upcoming Stewardship Renewal – please be sure to look out for your Renewal materials next month!



PANCAKE BREAKFASTS FOSTER FELLOWSHIP AND COMMUNITY AT AMERICAN MARTYRS



Since 2003, John Wargnier and the Pancake Breakfast Ministry have been serving our parishioners after Mass on Sundays to raise money for the parish and American Martyrs Catholic School. On the first Sunday of the month during the school year, John and his core team of volunteers serve breakfast after the 7 a.m., 8 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. Masses.



The all-you-can-eat breakfasts include scrambled eggs, pancakes, sausages, milk, juice, and coffee.

John, who serves as the Pancake Breakfast Ministry chairman, began the ministry in 2003 when Msgr. Barry was looking for volunteers.

“Msgr. Barry wanted someone to start this ministry, so myself and three or four other guys decided we would do it,” John says. “We have kind of a core team, so it’s been a community builder for us because it’s brought us all together even though our kids aren’t going to the school together.”

While the Pancake Breakfasts serve to raise money for the school and our parish, the main reason John and his team began this ministry was to build community and foster fellowship between parishioners. Parishioners come together after Mass to share a meal and some quality time together.

“The Pancake Breakfasts are great for meal-sharing and family-gathering,” John says. “They allow parishioners time to sit and chat with each other. We also invite new parishioners twice a year for a welcoming breakfast coordinated with the Hospitality Ministry whose members come

and chat with the new parishioners helping them feel welcomed. We have a welcoming breakfast and we coordinate with the Welcoming Committee, who come in and mingle with the new parishioners to make them feel welcome.”

The cost of the Pancake Breakfast is \$4 for children 12 and under, and \$6 for adults. The family rate is

\$25 for a family of two adults plus children. All proceeds from the breakfasts go back to the parish to help fund the different ministries including the school.

John is always on the lookout for new volunteers to help with the breakfasts. There are many opportunities to serve, from cooking and serving the food to set-up and take-down. Many parents with students at American Martyrs School volunteer, and there are even opportunities for students to serve.

“We can always use volunteers,” John says. “There are always times when we need help, especially for the later breakfast. We need help with cleaning up, bussing tables, doing dishes. Once a month, one grade from the school comes in and serves the drinks for us, and we donate money to the school for them participating. It’s a very good community builder for the volunteers. It allows school parents to fulfill some service obligations and we get teens who come and help to fulfill their service hours.”

For more information on the Pancake Breakfast Ministry, or to find out how you can help, please contact John Wargnier at 310-796-1058, or via email at johnwargnier@americanmartyrs.org.

“The Pancake Breakfasts are great for meal-sharing and family-gathering. They allow parishioners time to sit and chat with each other. We also welcome new parishioners by serving free breakfast to newcomers to the parish.”

– John Wargnier, Pancake Breakfast Ministry chairman

624 15th Street
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266
Phone: (310) 545-5651
www.americanmartyrs.org

BLESSED TO BE A PART *continued from front cover*

be on the first Sunday of the month. John Wagnier creates a spirit of hospitality for all. Where better to bring our new parishioners and people who may enjoy your company for breakfast. Thank you to these special people.

Last on our topics this month is our Stephen Ministry. Do you know of the support and caring so many have experienced at difficult times in their lives? The men and women of Stephen Ministry are the presence of Christ for them. They are trained and formed under the leadership of Deacon Dick and Patti Williams. On behalf of all of us we want to thank our Stephen Ministers for the gifts they bring to our community.

So, my friends, enjoy this issue. Get to know more about how these ministries are our response

to the Gospel. They are an expression of how all of us work together to be good stewards of God's gifts to us. We are Kingdom Builders and feel so blessed to be such a part of the living and loving community of American Martyrs. May God bless you with some relaxation before summer ends and the sound of children returning to school rings throughout our area.

In Christ,



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

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

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., 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday/Thursday, 6:30 a.m., 8:00 a.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., 5:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m.