



Our Faith in Action

American Martyrs Catholic Community

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

The Lord Bless You and Keep You in 2014

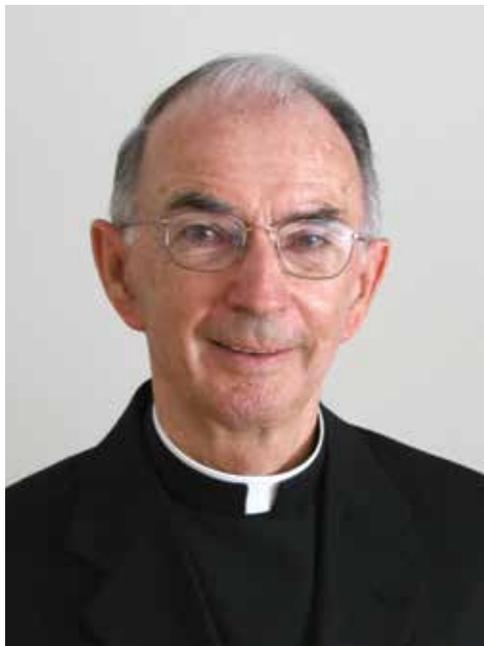
Dear Parishioners,

There is no better way for us to begin this New Year than by listening again to the inspired Word of God.

“The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord let His face shine upon you. The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace.” – Numbers 6: 23-26

For many people a New Year presents an opportunity to make some resolutions about one’s life. These resolutions can come from different sources. They may be based on the foundation of politics, finances, war, peace, health and many others. All of these when understood properly can be of great benefit. However we’ve got to be careful. So I would like to propose for our parish a new emphasis on our Catholic culture.

You may ask what is “Catholic Culture”? It is first and foremost based on the teachings of



Jesus Christ as presented in the Scriptures and the Tradition of our faith, so let us look again at the passage from Numbers.

First of all Catholic Culture demands that we be a people of “blessing.” Our lives must bless God and recognize that all people are created equally and must have their human dignity respected from conception through natural death. This entails much more than our rejection of the destruction of human life through abortion or euthanasia as it certainly does. It demands that we bless the poor, the sick, the lonely, the

fearful and discouraged by our caring for them. The various ministries of our parish must continue to grow in this blessing obligation. Thank God our parish is doing much but we must encourage one another to expand the blessing. So Catholic Culture must permeate everything we do for justice and peace.

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PASTOR'S LETTER *continued from front cover*

How do we feel and live out God's "keeping"?
The keeping begins with our Baptism but continues by God's grace as we become more aware of the gift of the Holy Spirit. In this gift we keep one another in prayer. There is no such reality as a non-praying Catholic. Our culture is expressed and lived in the various forms of prayer but above all in the Prayer of the Mass wherein we are bonded by God's Word and share the Eucharist as we unite with Jesus in offering the perfect worship to the Father. This perfection comes not from us sinners but from Him who is the Perfect one, the Son of God, Jesus. The Sabbath worship is essential for Catholic Culture. It must be that time of our week when we set aside time for true Table Fellowship expressing the gratitude of "keeping." At this Table and from this Table we must find and share welcome and fellowship to all who come to be with us. We "keep" them in the bonds of love to which Jesus call us. A great resolution would be to know more about the Mass and how we may better celebrate together.

How do we allow God's face to shine upon us?
Catholic Culture calls us to live our lives in a way that reflects the shining grace of God. Catholic Culture calls us to conversion, joy, peace and a sense of knowing that we walk in the presence of God and as a part of that great pilgrimage we receive daily "bread". We lift up our brothers and sisters and gratefully allow God's face to find a true reflection on ours. As Catholics we have moral standards. We must work to have well informed consciences and order our lives to reflect the gift of the teachings of our faith. A good resolution would be to follow our Holy Father's words of guidance or follow the commentaries of our bishops on issues impacting our lives in many different ways. It is so easy to "stop" learning about our faith and so operate out of some misconceptions. Some good reading will help us to be more informed and more appreciative of our Catholic Culture.

God looks upon me "kindly"; God never rejects me. I profess that Jesus died to save all people (no

exceptions) and that He wants each one of us to "arrive" home safely as we wear the clothing of love and peace in our hearts. As Jesus does for us, so must we look kindly on one another as brothers and sisters.

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, is showing all of us what true Catholic Culture means. We have to change our own hearts and in so doing inspire all in our lives to look again at what faith means and who God is for each one of us. The Pope is constantly reminding us that Catholic Culture involves a deep devotion to Mary. She is the first and only perfect human disciple of Jesus. She takes her mothering seriously and we are blessed to be her sons and daughters. The Church places her at the door of the New Year. There is no better foundation for our resolutions than to resolve to imitate her response to God's call, "be it done unto me according to your word." Catholic Culture is our "business" at American Martyrs; it is a culture that welcomes all without exception. There are no strangers.

I wish you a truly blessed New Year. All of us should do our part to encourage people to return to our church who may have separated themselves from us because of a feeling of being excluded due to a life situation or sadly because of the behavior of some clergy or anyone representing our faith. It is our gift to invite them to look again. If I or anyone from our staff or volunteer ministry can help you, please know we are here to support and heal in any way we can.

Catholic Culture is such a large subject; I have just touched the obvious but it is all embracing and life giving in so many ways. Let us walk more consciously in this gift during 2014.

God bless you,



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

RESULTS OF THE 2013 STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL

This past fall, the Stewardship Commission conducted the 2013 Stewardship Renewal of Commitment. While our parish is still accepting commitment cards, the current results certainly demonstrate that commitment to prayer, ministry and the Catholic faith are of continually increasing importance to our parish community.

At press time of this newsletter, 514 households took part in the Stewardship Renewal by filling out and returning a commitment card.

We thank everyone who participated in our Stewardship Renewal, and we encourage all parishioners to do so as soon as possible!

Several of the notable results from the 2013 Stewardship Renewal include the following:

- **2,187 Prayer Commitments** — or commitments to Stewardship of Time were made by 469 households who returned commitment cards. There was an average of four prayer commitments made per household.
- The top five “Time” commitments were:
 - “Attend Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days,” 446 commitments
 - “Spend 15 minutes a day in personal prayer,” 303 commitments
 - “Pray together with my family,” 266 commitments
 - “Discuss our Catholic Faith with my children,” 243 commitments
 - “Spend extra time with my spouse each day,” 216 commitments
- **There are 1,623 Ministry Commitments** — or commitments to Stewardship of Talent were made during the Stewardship Renewal, with 441 of these being new “interested in

joining” commitments and 1,181 being re-commitments. There were 461 households with talent commitments, with an average of three talent commitments per household.

- The top 10 “Talent” commitments were:
 - Eucharistic Ministers, 133 commitments
 - Women’s Cornerstone, 124 commitments
 - Men’s Cornerstone, 92 commitments
 - Matthew 25, 75 commitments
 - Knights of Columbus, 69 commitments
 - Altar Society, 61 commitments
 - Parish Fair Committee, 56 commitments
 - Lenten Friday Dinner, 48 commitments
 - Lectors, 47 commitments
 - Food Drive, 46 commitments
- **376 households made “Stewardship of Treasure” commitments.** The total amount committed by this group was \$1,058,408. The average annual pledge was \$2,814.

Indeed, these statistics point to an already-active commitment to stewardship here within our American Martyrs community. And while the spiritual benefits of stewardship can never be quantified, this annual commitment on behalf of our parishioners helps to ensure that American Martyrs remains a vital and faith-filled parish community. We thank everyone who participated in our Stewardship Renewal, and we encourage all parishioners who have not yet filled out and submitted a commitment card to do so as soon as possible!



THE ADORATION CHAPEL

Spend a Few Quiet Moments with Christ

The practice of Eucharistic Adoration spans centuries. From all-night vigils to scheduled weekly hours, most of us are familiar with the spiritual practice of adoring Our Lord in the Eucharist. More recently, this practice has been revived, as seen at our own parish.

“The [Adoration] Chapel was started in the summer of 1999 by Msgr. Barry, a wonderful man and our pastor,” says Mitzi Jagatich, a longtime adorer. “It used to be a little room in the entrance of the church where the baptismal font was. After Vatican II, the font was put into the sanctuary, and this room was converted to the chapel.”

Wrought iron doors with opaque glass allowing for privacy sets the room apart where the Blessed Sacrament is displayed. The chapel is usually open a half hour before the first Mass of each day until the church is closed for the night around 9 p.m.

When the chapel was originally opened, there were scheduled adorers for each hour, along with a coordinator and a list of substitutes if someone could not be present for their scheduled hour.

“Right now, we’re more in a mode of inviting folks to come without the expectation of having to be there a full hour,” says Jim Quilliam, who began serving as coordinator of the Adoration chapel several months ago. “We’re hoping that people will drop by and take the time to spend with the Lord in an environment where they can pray. We’d like the chapel to be seen as more of an invitation, not an obligation.”

Jim hopes parishioners will frequent the chapel because they feel welcomed to stop by and visit with the Lord for however long they are able. In addition, he hopes to improve the serenity of the chapel.

“One of the things that I have looked into is creating a quieter space for the chapel,” says Jim, describing the busy location and sound level within the area. “I’ve received some requests from parishioners to close off the area more. We want to have a quiet environment so folks can rest and rejuvenate themselves in the presence of the Lord without distractions.”



The doors to the Adoration Chapel

The Adoration chapel offers a place to continue a long-standing tradition of the Church — Adoration of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, whenever parishioners would like to visit and for however long.

“Take five or 10 minutes before or after Mass for yourself to spend with the Lord,” Jim says. “In the busyness of everything happening in life, just taking that small amount of time would be far better than not being able to commit to an hour.”

For Mitzi, the practice of Eucharistic Adoration offers an intimate time of peace with Jesus.

“It’s such a beautiful thing,” Mitzi says. “Many people stop by after Mass. It’s wonderful to see. It’s the greatest thing to be able to go in and quietly talk to Jesus.”

All are welcome to spend time with Our Lord in the Adoration chapel during the hours that the church is unlocked. For more information about our Adoration chapel, please contact Jim Quilliam at jimquilliam@hotmail.com.

AMERICAN MARTYRS – A HOSPITABLE PLACE

“When I was a stranger, you welcomed me” (Mt. 25:35).

“A Welcoming Community, Helping One Another to Live Holy Lives in Jesus Christ” (Our Parish Mission).

Moving from the Stewardship Renewal this past fall into the New Year, we are continuing to emphasize the virtue of Hospitality. Our goal is to emphasize the importance of being a welcoming community that extends a friendly invitation to each member to become active in building the Body of Christ. In our parish, “All are welcome.”

Just as Jesus welcomes every person with open arms, we welcome the presence and involvement of all our members — whether they are longtime members, new families, or just recently returning to the Church. And, as Msgr. would say, “If you have come here as a stranger, you will leave as a friend.”

As the Holy Father recently states in his exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, “The Church which ‘goes forth’ is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice.... An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives....” Further, he states,



American Martyrs Church – The Risen Christ

“Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ.”

From our recent parish survey when asked, “How welcome do you feel in our parish?” 91 percent responded feeling “somewhat” to “very welcome”. Secondly, 84 percent responded seeing themselves as responsible for the “welcoming spirit of the parish.” These excellent results, though, should not allow us to become complacent. We should strive to maintain and exceed these so every person coming to Mass or to a parish event; every caller to the school or parish office; every person seeking information via the website or printed materials, will be greeted with a joyful message welcoming them to share in our parish experience. A lofty goal, maybe. But by working together

as disciples — following in the compassion and love of Jesus Christ — we will welcome others who will then become involved in our faith community and pass on the joy of welcome.

If you wish to join in our hospitality efforts — those stepping forward to welcome all to Mass each week — please contact Erin McGarry at cec@americanmartyrs.org.

“May the church be the place of God’s mercy and love, where everyone can feel themselves welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live according to the good life of the Gospel. And in order to make others feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged, the church must have open doors so that all might enter. And we must go out of those doors and proclaim the Gospel.” – Pope Francis, during the General Audience at St. Peter’s Square, June 12, 2013.

STEWARDSHIP: NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

The new year has arrived, and we have all been busy making and trying to keep our list of New Year's resolutions. Many of us choose resolutions geared toward health and fitness. After all, possessing good overall health is critical to our well-being. Others may try to avoid a particularly bad habit. Maybe you need to quit smoking or stop swearing. Still many of us plan things we have always wanted to do, but never get around to doing.

As the days of January continue onward, however, many of us find the inspiration of keeping our good-intentioned resolutions to be fading fast. By the end of the month, most of us have given in to our temptations and returned to our old ways. We are only human, right? Discouraged by this yearly failure, many of us don't even bother making New Year's resolutions anymore, especially if we feel like we won't succeed.

Maybe our failures lie in both how we make our resolutions and what resolutions we actually choose. What we need to understand is the "root" of our resolution. For example, if you resolve to eat less candy to drop those recently added holiday pounds, is the "root" of your resolution a selfish one — wanting to look better since you overindulged? Or, are you genuinely seeking to stop giving in to each "sweet tooth" craving by practicing mortification — giving up of a personal pleasure to glorify God? If the "root" is a selfish one, only to benefit yourself, then it is often difficult to keep in the long run. However,



if we are trying to glorify God, our mission is much more important and worth keeping.

Tying your New Year's resolutions into the principles of stewardship — giving of your time, talent and treasure back to God — is a great way to ensure that the "root" of your resolution is right on track! For instance, resolving to pray each evening before going to bed glorifies God, brings you peace before slumber, and allows you to grow in your relationship with Christ. The "root" is pure. Your desire

to keep it will be stronger and make it easier for you to keep. In the same way, resolving to return your talents to God by helping others in need is an excellent choice in creating a selfless resolution with the right "root." Furthermore, resolving to re-evaluate your finances is also extremely important, and the beginning of a new year is a great time to do it. Are you giving back to God out of gratitude for all He has given you? Or, are you merely dropping a dollar or two in the collection basket just to feel good about yourself?

If you are not where you would like to be as a good steward — either with sharing your time, talent or treasure — you can resolve to do better. The new year is a perfect opportunity to start anew and become the good steward that God desires each of us to become. And when we choose selfless things that build His kingdom instead of ours, we are sure to not only stay on track, but to succeed!

Tying your New Year's resolutions into the principles of stewardship — giving of your time, talent and treasure back to God — is a great way to ensure that the "root" of your resolution is right on track!

AMERICAN MARTYRS PREPARES TO CELEBRATE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK 2014



2012-13 Academic Decathlon



Varsity Girls Volleyball

The school year is a third over, and a lot has happened since American Martyrs Catholic School began the current school year this past August.

So far this year, the school has raised money for the Philippines, dropped off 431 pairs of shoes for Soles4Souls, and participated in the Warm Coat Drive. In sports, several American Martyrs teams placed in the Catholic Youth Organization final tournaments. The girls varsity volleyball team finished fourth, the boys varsity flag football team finished third, and the golf team finished second in the Fall Tournament. Both the girls varsity and boys B-junior varsity cross country teams won their championships.

The sixth-grade students attended the Outdoor School from Oct. 22-25 and we piloted a new bicycle safety program. There is much more to come in

the next few months of the school year.

In the next few weeks we have the fourth-grade Mission Day on Jan. 17, the Jr. High Science Fair on Feb. 19, the American Martyrs Catholic School 5K on Feb. 22, and the Academic Decathlon on March 1.

However, one of the biggest events of the school year occurs this month, when American Martyrs Catholic School will celebrate the uniqueness of Catholic education during National Catholic Schools Week, from Jan. 26 to Feb. 1.

“It is a week in which all Catholic schools across the nation celebrate education that not only prepares students for a secular life, but a Christian life,” says American Martyrs Catholic School Principal Camryn Connelly.

Catholic Schools Week usually has a different theme each

year, but the National Catholic Educational Association, or NCEA, has set one theme for this year and the following two years. This theme, “Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service,” encompasses several concepts that are the heart of a Catholic education.

“Catholic education focuses on educating the whole child — mind, body and heart,” Ms. Connelly says.

Each school celebrates this week in its own unique way. Here at American Martyrs Catholic School, the celebration will include a number of activities and events. With the help of The Association of Catholic Student Councils, or TACSC, the Jr. High students will be led through a Student Leadership Day. At this event, students will attend workshops focused on diversity, self awareness, teamwork, and

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CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK *continued from page 7*

setting goals, and will also participate in a service learning project.

Other Catholic Schools Week activities will include assemblies for the clergy, an Open House, and making “thank you” baskets for local community members, such as the Manhattan Beach Police and Fire Departments, L.A. County Lifeguards and more.

“We celebrate and thank our parish, local and global community,” Ms. Connelly says. “Our school is one ministry within the American Martyrs Catholic Community. We are only here because of our parish. Our parents sacrifice much to make Catholic education a priority. Our local community supports us tremendously. This week allows us a

moment to stop and thank them for all they do for the entire school community. We are truly blessed.”

Some of the week’s activities are also opportunities for parents and other parishioners to get involved in the celebration.

“Parents are the backbone to Catholic Schools Week,” Ms. Connelly says. “They arrange various celebrations and lunches, provide support on the playground during recess, and host an ice skating party for the students, to name a few. This week could not happen without them.”

For more information about Catholic Schools Week or to get involved, please call American Martyrs Catholic School office at 310-545-8559.

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., 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.