



Our Faith in Action

American Martyrs Catholic Community

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Beginnings and Endings

Dear Parishioners,

June is a month of endings and beginnings, many of them for our young people. Our grade school graduates end their years (for some it is 12) on our campus. Our teens complete their high school years and all over our country parents and families gather as our young adults complete their undergraduate degrees.

While all of these celebrations are endings to stages of education, we know that they are more importantly new beginnings. Our prayers follow all of these young people as they pursue their dreams for the future. We pray that God will keep them safe in their faith and that the Holy Spirit will be their guide as they make life choices. Too often graduations bring confusion about values, and good young people leave behind the most valuable relationship in life – they put God into “inactive mode” in their daily lives and lessen their true capacity for deep satisfaction and happiness. Yet, in the midst of all of this, there are so many great young people who provide an example of living their faith each day and being outstanding witnesses for Christ.



June is also the month of the Sacred Heart devotion. It calls us to renew and strengthen that “anointed” heart relationship with the Lord that began in our Baptism. It is a time to reconsecrate our families to the Sacred Heart. In my home as I grew up, my parents knelt with us each night and prayed the *Prayer of Consecration*. I treasure this memory, and each night I kneel and consecrate “my family,” all of you, to the Sacred Heart.

In June, we also celebrate Corpus Christi (Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ). The Church reminds us to take time to appreciate the Holy Eucharist. We can do this in many ways. Above all we center our lives in the Mass and realize that this is the “summit and the source” of our spiritual lives. The Church calls us to “full and active participation” in the celebration of the Mass where we have the perfect Sacrifice of Jesus and are nourished by sharing in the Eucharist. We are blessed to have so many Eucharistic Ministers help in the distribution of this Sacred Gift to the great numbers at our

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STEWARDSHIP

Don't Take a Vacation From Stewardship This Summer

Everyone deserves a vacation. After nine grueling months of school, kids get to enjoy the summer to relax and regroup before beginning a new grade. Employees, after diligently working long hours and dealing with stressful situations, deserve time away from the office to enjoy their favorite getaway. And of course, holidays like Easter and Christmas offer us the opportunity to share time with family and friends as we celebrate our faith more fully.

No one would argue that we need to mentally refresh our minds and bodies from time to time so that we can come back rejuvenated and ready to do our best.

Taking a break though from some things, like being a good steward, seems unreasonable. Imagine saying to yourself, "This month I don't think I'll pray before meals or at bedtime," "I'm going to take a break from Mass," "Someone else can take Communion to Joe this month," or "the parish will be fine without my contribution." It almost sounds silly to state these things but many times we inadvertently "forget" that some things still need our attention even during a "break."

So, now that summer has arrived in full force and our leisure time each day has increased, how can we remain good stewards?

First and foremost, don't stop praying. Why not take a moment of your free time each day to read the Gospel or a spiritual reflection while lounging in a hammock?

Or, if you enjoy writing, keep a summer spiritual journal and write in it somewhere peaceful like in your backyard at dusk.

Maybe, if you like to read, you could brush up on your favorite saint while on a road trip.

Or, if you have never given it a chance, why not pick up a rosary and say one decade each day until it becomes natural to say the whole thing?

Next, try to participate in an outreach program over the summer. Think of the life of Christ – everything He did on Earth was an act of service. Now, think of the gifts God has bestowed on you. He wants you to share them with others like He did, and summer gives us the time to do just that.

If you are handy with tools, you may call Habitat for Humanity to see how you can help build a home for a family in need.

If you are a strong student or an adult who likes to work with kids, you could offer to tutor a neighborhood child or the children at St. Lawrence of Brindisi to help them prepare for the next school year.

No matter what gift God has given you, there is a way to share it.

Getting paid for volunteering sometimes happens. And, if you have a summer job while on break, you'll get a paycheck for sure. Have you ever taken an opportunity to think about sharing the first fruits of your check?

If you are a young adult, returning a portion of your paycheck to God is an important thing to consider. After all, without Him, you wouldn't even have the talent to accomplish the job in the first place. Giving a portion back to Him is a way to say thanks. Remember, the collection basket is not just for parents.

Remember that the time God gives you is a gift. What you do with it – whether on vacation or not – is meant to give Him glory. Why not use the extra time off to do just that?

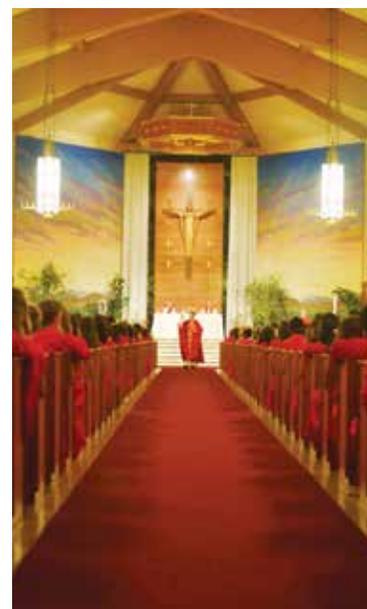


FIRST COMMUNION AND CONFIRMATION AT AMERICAN MARTYRS

*Congratulations to all who have come to the table of the Lord in celebration of
First Holy Communion and Confirmation.*

May the Lord bless each of you as you continue on your faith journeys.

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RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE OF MATTHEW 25

Hearts for the Hungry

It is far easier to love humanity in general than to love our neighbor in particular, so the saying goes. Approximately 14 miles from American Martyrs is our sister parish, our neighbors from St. Lawrence of Brindisi, to whom we reach out on a monthly basis.

“It has been such a special thing for me to help out with Hearts for the Hungry,” says Frank Valdez, project leader of Hearts for the Hungry at St. Lawrence of Brindisi. “I’ve always wanted to do something like this. I’m closer to not only our parish, but also to my faith and living out the Gospel of what we’re supposed to do as Christians.”

The initiatives under Matthew 25 Ministries at American Martyrs offer hands-on outreach opportunities to live out our discipleship in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and greeting the stranger.



Volunteers form an assembly line to prepare lunches.

Hearts for the Hungry is one such initiative that makes and distributes lunches, as well as toiletries and clothing to three local communities in need – Santa Monica, the St. Francis Community Center, and St. Lawrence, our sister parish.

“Our sister parish in East Los Angeles is in an impoverished area of the city,” Frank says. “This project came about six or seven years ago because

we wanted to help that parish and the parishioners in need of food and the homeless in that community who frequently go to St. Lawrence looking for food and assistance.”

Every second Saturday of the month, a group of volunteers meets at American Martyrs at 8 a.m. In an assembly-line fashion, they prepare sandwiches and pack lunches. When finished, they caravan to St. Lawrence, and from approximately 9 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. they distribute lunches and hygiene kits, including basic items such as shampoo and soap.

“The people we serve at St. Lawrence are very grateful,” Frank says. “This might be the only meal that they get for the day. I think the volunteers also get so much out of it. They



Donations of clothing for the members of the community.



Distributing lunches at St. Lawrence.

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see what spending a little time helping other people can do. A lot of the folks come back to keep helping out. It’s nice to see the reaction on both ends from the receivers and the volunteers.”

In addition, the Rockin’ Readers evolved from Hearts for the Hungry. A group of approximately 10 to 12-year-old Girl Scouts from American Martyrs conceived the idea of a reading nook for the community children. Coordinated by Mary Kay Quilliam, the Rockin’

Readers read books with the children while their parents collect lunches, hygiene kits and clothing.

“They collect the books themselves, and parishioners donate books,” Frank says. “It’s cool to see these girls encouraging reading for these children, some who might not speak English.”

With Hearts for the Hungry, there’s room for a wide range of volunteers, including families with young children. Several regular volunteers

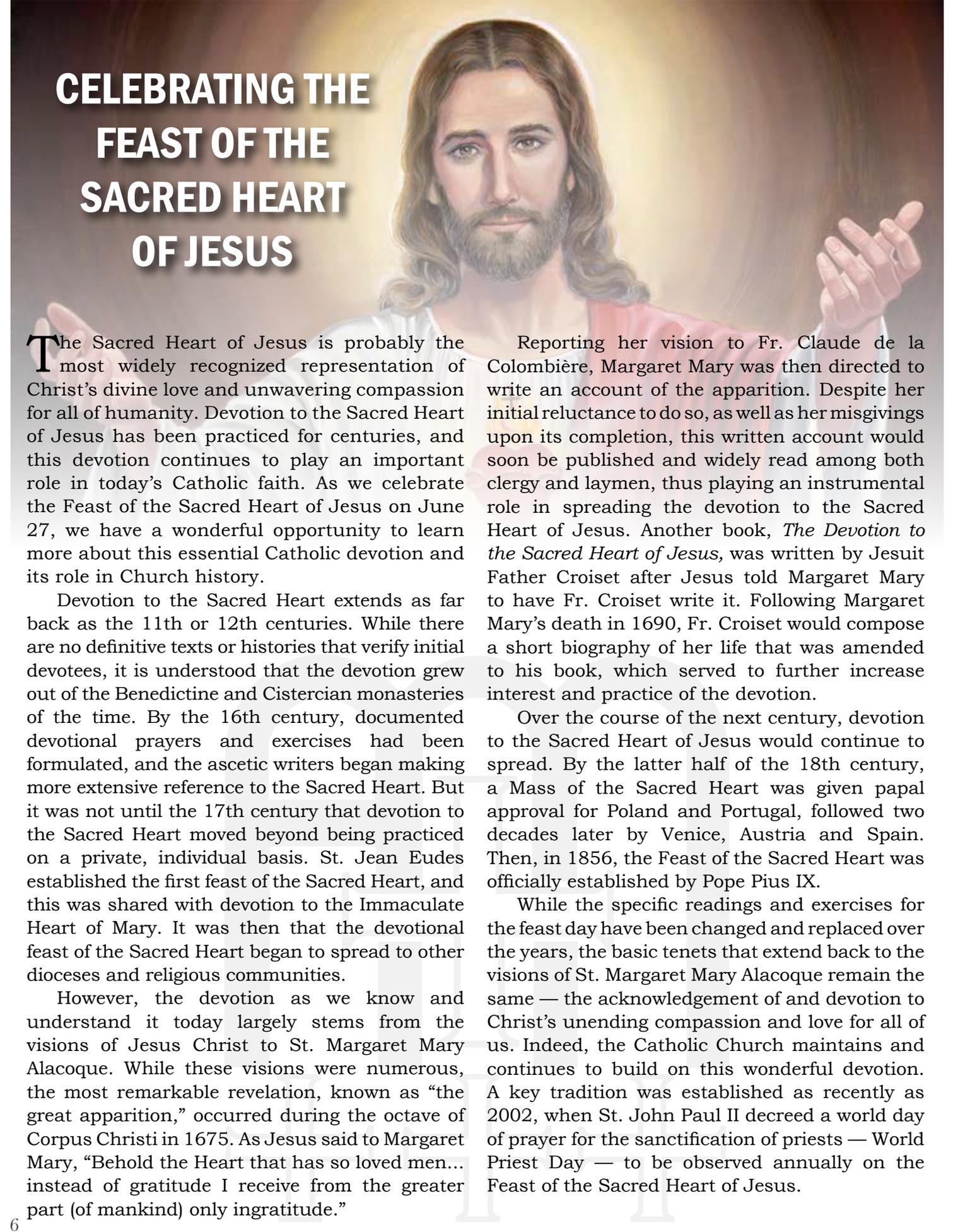
include Tom Hoffarth, the clothing donation coordinator, and Laura Stout and Jim Quilliam, two volunteers who also organize the ministry in the event of Frank’s absence. Also, Frank sees a diverse mix of new volunteers each month.

“There’s a role for everyone, young and old parishioners alike,” Frank says. “At as young as 4 years old, kids help with stuffing the sandwich bag lunches with chips and snacks and putting the kits together. It’s great for families looking to foster service (early stewardship) in their children. I bring my girls with me and hope it will rub off on them.”

All volunteers are welcome and are only asked to commit to one month at a time. Volunteers are asked to confirm via phone or email their expected participation with Frank. If you are interested in more information about Hearts for the Hungry at St. Lawrence, please contact Frank Valdez at 310-926-6940 or frank.valdez@utexas.edu.

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— Frank Valdez, Hearts for the Hungry project leader



CELEBRATING THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is probably the most widely recognized representation of Christ's divine love and unwavering compassion for all of humanity. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been practiced for centuries, and this devotion continues to play an important role in today's Catholic faith. As we celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on June 27, we have a wonderful opportunity to learn more about this essential Catholic devotion and its role in Church history.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart extends as far back as the 11th or 12th centuries. While there are no definitive texts or histories that verify initial devotees, it is understood that the devotion grew out of the Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries of the time. By the 16th century, documented devotional prayers and exercises had been formulated, and the ascetic writers began making more extensive reference to the Sacred Heart. But it was not until the 17th century that devotion to the Sacred Heart moved beyond being practiced on a private, individual basis. St. Jean Eudes established the first feast of the Sacred Heart, and this was shared with devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It was then that the devotional feast of the Sacred Heart began to spread to other dioceses and religious communities.

However, the devotion as we know and understand it today largely stems from the visions of Jesus Christ to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. While these visions were numerous, the most remarkable revelation, known as "the great apparition," occurred during the octave of Corpus Christi in 1675. As Jesus said to Margaret Mary, "Behold the Heart that has so loved men... instead of gratitude I receive from the greater part (of mankind) only ingratitude."

Reporting her vision to Fr. Claude de la Colombière, Margaret Mary was then directed to write an account of the apparition. Despite her initial reluctance to do so, as well as her misgivings upon its completion, this written account would soon be published and widely read among both clergy and laymen, thus playing an instrumental role in spreading the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Another book, *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, was written by Jesuit Father Croiset after Jesus told Margaret Mary to have Fr. Croiset write it. Following Margaret Mary's death in 1690, Fr. Croiset would compose a short biography of her life that was amended to his book, which served to further increase interest and practice of the devotion.

Over the course of the next century, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus would continue to spread. By the latter half of the 18th century, a Mass of the Sacred Heart was given papal approval for Poland and Portugal, followed two decades later by Venice, Austria and Spain. Then, in 1856, the Feast of the Sacred Heart was officially established by Pope Pius IX.

While the specific readings and exercises for the feast day have been changed and replaced over the years, the basic tenets that extend back to the visions of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque remain the same — the acknowledgement of and devotion to Christ's unending compassion and love for all of us. Indeed, the Catholic Church maintains and continues to build on this wonderful devotion. A key tradition was established as recently as 2002, when St. John Paul II decreed a world day of prayer for the sanctification of priests — World Priest Day — to be observed annually on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

SHARING THE EUCHARIST IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE MASS

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (Eucharistic Ministers) have a very special job here at American Martyrs. Along with the presiding priest, they are able to share the Eucharist with parishioners. For many parishioners who choose to serve the parish in this way, it is both an honor and a privilege.

“It is such an awesome thing to me to be able to share Eucharist in celebration of the Mass,” says Peggy Paul, who has served as a Eucharistic Minister for five years. “We’re called to be the Eucharist to others as Christians and Catholics, and it reminds me that it is my duty to do that within the Mass and elsewhere. To share the Eucharist is more than just handing a person a host. I try to make eye contact and smile, and to make it clear that we’re transmitting our part in the Body of Christ.”

Eucharistic Ministers are given training in both the theology and the mechanics of distributing the Eucharist. To volunteer, you must be a confirmed, practicing Catholic in good standing with the parish, and you must complete VIRTUS training within the first year. Sue White, joint leader of the ministry with her husband, Dan, works hard to accommodate the schedules of the 180 or so volunteers when setting the Mass schedule each month.

“We take in everyone’s personal preferences,” Sue says. “Everyone lets us know which Masses they prefer to serve, so we look at that, along with any special requests. A couple of weeks before creating the schedule, we send an email asking people for preferences, then we sit down and fill in the schedule for the month.”

Since joining the ministry eight years ago, Dan and Sue have enjoyed getting to know other parishioners and becoming a part of the vibrant

parish community here at American Martyrs. They have also learned quite a bit about what it takes to make the Mass run smoothly.

“Because we’re in charge, we know a whole lot about what’s going on in the parish in general,” Dan says. “We meet with the heads of other ministries regularly, so we have a better understanding of what all the pieces are and how they come together to make the Mass a success each week.”



Peggy also feels that she has gained a deeper understanding of the Mass since becoming a Eucharistic Minister. She enjoys actively participating in the Mass, as well as being an active part of the parish community.

“Being a Eucharistic Minister has given me a feeling of deeper participation, and maturing from just going to Mass to actually being part of the Mass,” Peggy says. “It is a deeper and more complete experience for me. It also symbolizes a deeper and more complete participation in our community.”

Terri Brown, Director of Liturgy and Worship, has a very popular saying among Eucharistic Ministers: “We are the Body of Christ giving the Body of Christ to the Body of Christ.” The ministry as a whole in the parish has adopted this as their motto.

“I believe it’s one of the great signs of lay ministry,” Peggy says. “It symbolizes that we are all becoming the Body of Christ through this act of the Mass. Having more involvement reminds me that being a parish is more than just going to church and receiving something from the priest. It is about becoming the Body of Christ as a whole congregation.”

For more information or to become a Eucharistic Minister, please contact Sue and Dan White at eucharisticministry@americanmartyrs.org.

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BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS *continued from front cover*

Masses. Some of these ministers have a special care for the sick and bring the Eucharist to “shut-ins” on a regular basis.

Our Meditation Chapel is a quiet place to spend time with the Lord. Blessed Mother Teresa said the most effective time in her ministry was the time she spent before the Blessed Sacrament. Taking her inspiration as an extension of the meaning of the Eucharist we care for the poor. Many of our people are involved in works through Hearts for the Hungry. Some donate clothing and hygiene items, others make lunches and gather non-perishable foods and still others distribute these resources to those in need.

Let us not forget our dads and wish all of them “good, loving and grateful” children. All of us know that this is the best gift we could give. It is one that

the youngest and the oldest can equally give.

June is the beginning of vacations for our school children and then also for their teachers. I hope it will be a time of refreshment and renewal for all. Yes, June is a month of endings and beginnings. May all your endings leave you with happy memories and your beginnings provide possibilities beyond your dreams.

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.