

SEPTEMBER 2014

# Our Faith in Action

American Martyrs Catholic Community

## A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

### *A Vibrant Community and an Active Liturgical Life*

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Dear Parishioners,

September brings hustle and bustle in homes as parents usher their children and youth to school. Religious Education classes and formation sessions, from preschool to adult, are inviting each of us to grow in our faith. Ministry meetings appear on our calendars. Everything is leading us as people of faith to the one table of the Lord. We bring together the work of our hands and the commitment of our hearts to the praise and worship of our God.

It is very appropriate that this edition of *Our Faith in Action* is addressing the many ways we work together to build up a sense of our liturgical life. What is good liturgy? Who makes good liturgy? The priests, deacons and lay ministers all play essential roles – but in the end, liturgy is the work of the people. The people of God come together as the Body of Christ to be united with the priest to offer perfect worship to God through and with Jesus, our High Priest. It is only when all of us begin to grasp this reality together that we can say we “love” good liturgy at American Martyrs. I am asking each of us to make an effort to gather before Mass begins for the procession and leave when the ministers have recessed from the church. I know that this may not always be the reality, but we must strive for the ideal.

We are a vibrant community, blessed with many young families. Our church is a house of prayer where all are welcome and we allow children to be children. Let us continue to affirm these wonderful young parents who bring their children each week, when so often it would be easier to stay at home. As we come to Mass, let us ask God to bless all of our children, and at this time of year as we send them off to school, also ask Him to keep them safe and joyful as they learn and grow. Let us bless parents and teachers, and show them through our witnessing to our faith the beauty and joy of worship in our community.

When we listen to our choirs and musicians, may we realize that unless we add our voices, the Body of Christ is not united in praising God. We should also recognize the other leaders – altar servers, Eucharistic Ministers, lectors, sacristans to name a few – who make many sacrifices for good liturgy. Our greeters who give us a Sunday – or Saturday evening – smile; thank them and take their greeting into church to share with the people around you. One never knows how a person next to you is crying out for our sign of love and fellowship. This sharing brings us to true liturgy.

Together with Monica Hughes, Liturgy Director, and our priests and deacons, our Liturgy and Worship

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## COMMUNITY INVITED TO SHARE IN CELEBRATION OF ANNUAL OUTDOOR MASS

What could be better than joining with friends, family and neighbors under a clear, blue California sky to celebrate the Word of God?

And what could be better after sharing the bread of the Eucharist, than to share a wonderful meal into a beautiful September evening?

In a true meaning of the word, the annual Outdoor Mass is a joyous celebration of the Eucharist offering “welcome” to the American Martyrs community and beyond.

This year’s, Outdoor Mass is at 5 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 13 on the St. Elizabeth Field, where over a thousand will gather for the event that was first held in 2005 to mark the parish’s 75th anniversary.

“This has been so well received,” says Mike Wilk, coordinator. “The parish community let us know they’d like to have one, so that’s why we’re doing it. People bring beach chairs, blankets, and it’s very relaxed. No food is allowed during Mass, of course, but people can share in a picnic dinner or they will be able to purchase food from a caterer on-site.”

For those who have never attended the Outdoor Mass, the experience promises to be enjoyable.

“We have the set-up down to a science,” Mike says. “We take out a stage and set it up next to the batting area of the field. We bring



out all the items necessary for Mass. All the priests and all the deacons take part.”

The celebration is open to all within our local community.

“We invite all of the neighbors in the area whether they’re Catholic or not,” Mike says. “They are all invited.”

The Mass draws easily 1,500+, he says.

“We ask parishioners to invite anyone – people who may have

strayed come, and a few non-Catholic neighbors think it’s really cool – and this is all building community,” Mike says. “Many of the parish ministries take part, so we have a lot of different aspects regarding building of community. The music is usually a mix of choirs. It sounds great.”

There is no registration or sign-up necessary. As one parishioner said, “bring your family, friends, and a smile!”

## LITURGY IS LIFE

The Mass is but one type of liturgy in the life of the Church. There are others, like the Liturgy of the Hours, and within the Rites of Baptism and the other Sacraments. But the Mass is key. Vatican II tells us, “For it is in the liturgy, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, that ‘the work of our redemption is accomplished,’ and it is through the liturgy especially that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ the real nature of the true Church” (SC 2).

What does the word “liturgy” mean? The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us that the word “liturgy” means “a ‘public work’ or a ‘service in the name of/on behalf of the people.’” We are also told “The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows” (Vatican II).

Liturgy, then, is vital and essential to our lives as Christians. It is there that the visible signs bring about what they signify. In

essence, we become what we eat. By partaking in the Eucharistic Liturgy, the Mass, we become closer to God and to each other. We are once again freed from the shackles of sin, and once again witness ourselves and the others with us as part of the Mystical Body of Christ. Each time we go to Mass, we are recommissioned to go out and evangelize, to bring the good news of salvation to the world.

Every time we go to Mass, or we experience one of the Rites of the Church, we again, as it were, plug ourselves into grace, the very presence of God. This is why God gives us the Eucharist. It is the place where Christ becomes most present to us in His very Body and Blood, which we consume, as the perfect offering from the altar.

One main point to be made here is that we have to participate as active doers in the Mass for us to fully experience the gifts we are offered. Vatican II tells us that full, active, and conscious participation in the liturgy is both our right and our duty according to our Baptism. We are called to participate both as

a right and as an obligation.

So, again we are invited to come home to the God who loves us with great compassion and tenderness. We are constantly invited and urged to take the time to pray, to avail ourselves of the Sacrament of Penance, and to fully participate – every Sunday – in the Mass which is God’s gift to us. God is patient and always stands at the door to welcome us back. All we have to do is walk through it.

Have you been away from participating in the life of the Church? Do you regularly go to Mass? This family, the parish, needs you. We are incomplete when you are not with us. One thing is certain: by coming home to the parish and to the Mass, your life will be changed. If you are open, your life will take on new meaning. Come home. Let us be community with one another again. And may you experience the peace of the Lord; a peace that is beyond all understanding. May the Liturgy of the Church be to you a light in the vast darkness of our world.



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT OUR ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL

Once again, it's time for our Annual Stewardship Renewal of Commitment. Every year, someone asks, as you may have asked yourself, "Didn't we just have a Stewardship Renewal?" Yes, we had a Stewardship Renewal last year, and we're going to have one next year, too! This is an annual occurrence — part of the rhythm of parish life at American Martyrs. Just as the Church proposes a time of spiritual renewal each Lent, we believe in the importance of a yearly discernment of commitment. Is the Lord asking you to give more time, talent, or treasure to our parish this year? The following Q&A about our Stewardship Renewal will help you discern your commitments to American Martyrs this year.

**I feel like my life is already too full with family obligations and work obligations? I barely even have time to relax. How can I possibly do anything more?**

We all have many obligations to our families, jobs, schools, and other endeavors. But we also all have the same number of hours in the day with which to accomplish these things. The issue is not how much time we have, but how we use our time.

Before you fill out your commitment on-line, take some time to reflect on how God fits into your day-to-day life. Remember, living as true stewards of God's gifts involves giving back the first fruits of what He has given to us.

*Commitment Weekend is  
September 27-28.*

*Visit*

*[www.americanmartyrs.org](http://www.americanmartyrs.org)  
to renew your commitment!*

**I am happy with my current level of parish participation. Why do I need to keep renewing my commitment every year?**

As part of the renewal process, it is important that we consider our current level of participation in parish life at American Martyrs. Sometimes, the call to stewardship involves the quality of service in addition to its quantity. In looking through the opportunities for ministry available at the parish, maybe you'll find yourself drawn to a new ministry you haven't tried before, or new ways to share of your time with God to enrich and enlighten your prayer life. So even though your current level of parish participation might not change drastically, the ways in which you participate may change as you grow in living the stewardship way of life.

Even if you end up continuing to participate in the same ministries you have in the past, reviewing them and recommitting to them reaffirms your participation.

**I'm not very active in the Church and, frankly, feel like it may be too late to get involved. Why should I participate in the process?**

It's never too late to renew your faith life, and participating is a simple step by which you can immediately re-enter the life of the parish. Our parish community is here to welcome and nourish you in your faith journey. Begin by checking the box that says, "Attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day," and take some time to discern additional ways in which God is calling you from that starting point.

**I'm physically unable to attend Mass or be active in parish life at American Martyrs. Is there any reason for me to participate?**

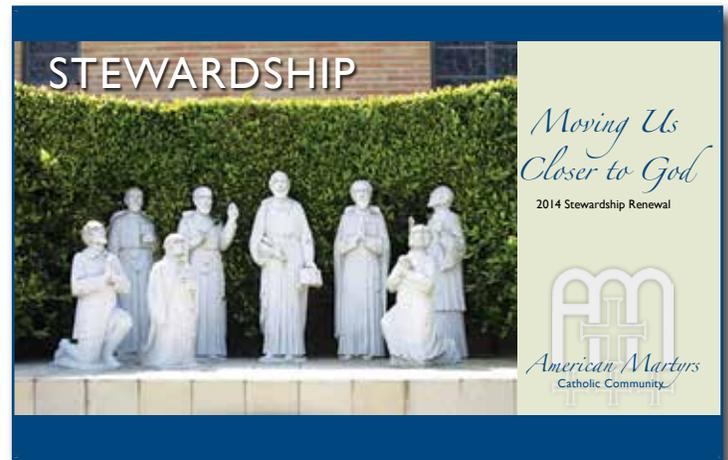
Of course! Your prayers are just as important to the success of our parish community in carrying out its mission as are ministry participation and

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financial contributions. Take a moment to look over some of the opportunities to spend quiet time with God listed in the “Stewardship of Time” section of the renewal booklet and take a step towards growing in your relationship with Christ and His Church.

*Every parish family receives a Stewardship Package in the mail. It includes a letter from Msgr. Barry inviting each of us to participate in this year’s renewal and the stewardship guide that describes the ways we can serve in ministry.*



**I’m reluctant to make a financial pledge for the year, in case my circumstances change and I’m unable to fulfill it. Should I?**

Your Commitment is a pledge of good intention. Make your pledge based on what you are setting out to do to give back to God, and do your best to fulfill that pledge. If your financial circumstances change, your gift will likely change, as well, but it is still important to prioritize God first. We’ve all got to start somewhere, and it’s important that we begin our commitment by writing down our goals for giving back of our gifts to God.

**I’ve expressed interest in a ministry in the past through filling out a Commitment Card, but nobody from the parish ever followed up with me about it.**

While we do our best to consistently follow up with everyone who has shown interest in the opportunities for ministry at American Martyrs, we sometimes fall short in our follow-up. If this has happened to you in the past, we sincerely apologize and encourage you to renew your interest in the efforts you might like to participate by filling out your commitment this year. Every year, we go into the renewal with the intention of making sure that everyone who has expressed interest is contacted with more information, and we will do so again this year.

**I struggle with some of what goes on at American Martyrs. I feel like when I submit my commitment I’m saying I support it all.**

In discerning and submitting your commitment, you are not making a pledge between yourself and American Martyrs; you are making a pledge between yourself and God. Struggles occur in life. This is a part of being human, and we respect the opinions of each and every member of our parish family. But it is of the utmost importance that each of us fulfills our discipleship of Christ by growing in our relationship with Him and utilizing the gifts He has given us to carry out His mission on Earth. Beyond helping the parish, filling out our commitment expresses a devotion to spiritual growth and a strong belief in the Catholic Faith.

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## CELEBRATING THE LITURGY AT AMERICAN MARTYRS



*Our American Martyrs community – from our youngest members to longtime parishioners of our parish family – gathers in celebration of the Mass as the Body of Christ. We also witness the stewardship example of our community members who serve during the Liturgy – as altar servers, lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, or as members of our Music Ministry.*



## “A PRAYERFUL AND MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE FOR OUR COMMUNITY”

*Monica Hughes, Director of Liturgy at American Martyrs*

Love and comfort with the Church’s rich liturgy is a knowledge that Monica Hughes has fostered for years and joyfully shares. “Liturgy’ actually means the work of the people, the public prayer of the church – we join our voices together in our prayer and worship,” Monica says.

On July 1, Monica became the parish’s new Director of Liturgy. She and her husband, Terry, have been parishioners at American Martyrs since their children were young. They have been a part of the community for years, and their children—Mike, Meghan, Maureen, Marna, and Morgan – attended American Martyrs School, Religious Education and received their sacraments at the parish. Her involvement with liturgy began when Monica, having taught Religious Education when her children were younger, served as part of the Liturgy Team at the parish from 1973 to 1976. “We discussed the seasonal celebrations and how to make the worship within those time frames more meaningful to the community,” Monica says. “I served as a volunteer in this position until I was asked to be the parish coordinator for Religious Education, which was a fairly new position I held for seven years.”

Following her years as coordinator for Religious Education, Monica taught junior high math for four years while completing her Master’s in Religious Education from Loyola Marymount University and before beginning her work for the Archdiocese in 1987. “I entered the Archdiocesan Office of Religious Education to work with adult religious education and eventually became the Program Director for the Advanced Catechetical Ministries program, training



*The Liturgy and Worship Commission. (From left) Lindsay Schnebly, secretary; Monica Hughes, Liturgy director; Trish Hoying, co-chair; and Bob Breen, chair.*

master catechists,” says Monica. “I was with the archdiocese for 15 years and became the Associate Director for the Office of Religious Education under Sr. Edith Prendergast, who is still the Director.”

In 2003, Monica left the Archdiocese and continued to work in variety of ways ranging from consulting to publishing. Recently, Monica was approached with the position of Director of Liturgy at American

Martyrs. “As Director of Liturgy, I’ll work with the various liturgical ministers to make sure their needs are attended to and the liturgy becomes one in which the entire assembly joins in full, conscious and active participation.”

Monica has already developed relationships with those who are involved with the liturgy, and as Director of Liturgy, she looks forward to working closely with them. “Although Deacon Derek and Terri Brown are stepping away from being the Directors of Liturgy, they will still be involved with the RCIA process as Directors and very much involved at the Easter Vigil. I have worked with both of them for years and am looking forward to our working together still.”

For Monica, becoming the Director of Liturgy offers her an opportunity to share her talent and love for the liturgy with the community and for the community. “I have a love for the liturgy that started when I worked with the Liturgy Team all those years ago,” she says. “With my understanding of the liturgy and my experiences here at American Martyrs, I’m happy to share my talent with our community.”

Welcome Monica in your new role as the Director of Liturgy!

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

## A VIBRANT COMMUNITY *continued from front cover*

Commission brings all of these ministry leaders together to plan the seasonal as well as the weekly liturgies.

Again this September, we have our Outdoor Mass where many of us gather together on our St. Elizabeth Field to celebrate who we are in the Lord. It has proven to be a joyful gift leading us into a shared meal – purchase catered food or bring your own! Share your faith by inviting a neighbor, a family member or maybe someone who has not been as actively involved in our Eucharistic life.

I hope you enjoy this issue and that it helps you to be more engaged in the liturgical life of our parish. And, if God is asking you to serve in one of these ministries or any another, respond in prayer and commitment.

“Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which

is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people’ (1 Pt 2:9, cf. 2:4-5) is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.

“In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 14).

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., 12:10 p.m., 5:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m.