

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY

COLUMBUS, GA

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Our Parish Youth Grow Together in Faith

As Catholics, it's important for all of us, especially our youth, to surround ourselves with others who share our values and beliefs. Holy Family's Youth Ministry allows our parish teens to do just that. Through weekly Sunday meetings, as well as various other activities and social events, our middle and high school students are able to both have fun and grow in faith.

At weekly Teen Talk meetings, students in eighth through 12th grades gather every Sunday for fellowship and faith formation.

"We use different approved material from the diocese for this program, and we switch to a different one every year," says Luke Mansour, who moderates Teen Talk. "We try to let the conversation flow freely – we'll discuss different topics, we'll have



special guests come in, we'll use videos. Really, we just want them to ask any questions they might have about their faith, and build a faith foundation to prepare them for their future. We want them to have confidence so that when they're faced with

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"The more [our youth] understand their faith – that Jesus is present with us in the Mass, that He really did die for our sins – the more I think they can go out and be role models for other teenagers. This way, they can say, 'Hey, we can still have a lot of fun and not get caught up in all these destructive things around us.' They're not just talking the talk." – Luke Mansour

MARCH 2016



Our Parish Youth Grow Together in Faith *continued from front cover*

tough decisions, they'll have that foundation to fall back on."

Luke also believes it is important for teens to talk about issues that are relevant in the world today.

"Current events are always changing, and there's always something happening in the world or community that may affect their faith," he says. "Because of this, we try to talk about a variety of different topics. I think that teens are looking for answers as to how their faith and religion fits into everything going on around them. They want to know how they can apply these things to their lives, beyond just the Mass.

"That being said, I've learned so much from them – they are doing so much more to adapt to the faith in today's times than I think we're aware of," Luke adds. "I was amazed at how many of the kids have daily prayer readings on their phone! They are a lot more knowledgeable than I think we sometimes give them credit for."

In addition to Teen Talk, the parish offers various social gatherings for the teens, such as dinner at Buffalo Wild Wings or a bowling night. Youth have also had the opportunity to attend local youth conferences, such as the Diocese of Savannah's Diocesan Youth Conference – five teens from the parish recently attended this conference in Perry, Ga., from Jan. 15-17.

While it's integral for youth to have good role models both in their homes and communities, it's also important

for them to have someone to look up to among their peers. Each year in Teen Talk, high school seniors are selected to lead the discussion throughout the year – all the teens are also encouraged to speak up and talk about their own experiences. In order for these teens to be role models and leaders, though, it all comes down to an understanding of the Catholic faith.

"It's a lot more powerful when a teen sees someone in the class make a statement about their faith," Luke says. "I've had so many wonderful people stand up and tell their stories, how something in particular moved them, or how they feel about a certain part of the Mass or a sacrament. The more they understand their faith – that Jesus is present with us in the Mass, that He really did die for our sins – the more I think they can go out and be role models for other teenagers. This way, they can say, 'Hey, we can still have a lot of fun and not get caught up in all these destructive things around us.' They're not just talking the talk."

Teen Talk meets every Sunday morning from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. All parish youth are invited to join! Please keep an eye out for announcements regarding future youth activities, and feel free to call the parish office at 706-323-6908 for more information.





A Letter From Our Pastor

Make Prayer and Hospitality Pillars of Your Lenten Journey

Dear Parishioners,

In the coming weeks, we will conclude our Lenten observance, experience Holy Week, and celebrate the joy of Easter. Of course, I hope that you have made some effort to make this Lenten season special and significant, but if you have not, it is never too late to accomplish that goal.

With thoughts of Lent, Easter and the Year of Mercy at the top of my mind, I offer a couple suggestions to help carry you to the end of your Lenten journey.

As you know, prayer is foundational to stewardship, as it is one of the Four Pillars of a stewardship parish — along with hospitality, formation and service. With this in mind, here are some suggestions on how you might make your prayers even more consequential.

Pick someone to pray for, perhaps even someone you don't get along with. Just pray for them. You do not have to tell them you are praying for them, but the exercise is good for you, and for them, as well. If possible, find a time this month to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, especially if this is something you do not normally do. Pray every morning shortly after you get up, and again each evening before you turn in. It does not have to be a long prayer, but it does need to be done consistently.

In terms of the pillar of hospitality, there is also much we can do in

this area, both as a parish and as individuals and families. Here is a suggestion that involves hospitality — one that is also connected to gratitude and even the Year of Mercy. Many of us spend time at a computer. It is a way for us to stay connected to those who are close to us, and to the world around us. Why not begin and end each week emailing someone a note of thanksgiving? Again, it does not have to be lengthy, but when we think about it, each of our lives is filled with people to whom we should be grateful.

Just send that someone a note thanking them for something specifically, or in general. By starting and ending each week like that, our minds are in the right place for prayer and for having the attitude that Christ asks us to have.

I thank you for all you do, for our parish, for the Church, for one another, and for me personally. I am blessed. Like most, I may not express it often enough. I pray for you, and I ask you to pray for me during this holy time.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Dan O'Connell
Pastor



Newlyweds Reflect on the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony *Seth and Megan*

Those of us who have been married in the Catholic Church know the deep feeling of blessing that comes when we receive the gift of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. There are few newlyweds, however, who have experienced the blessings of the Church in quite the same ways that parishioners Seth and Megan Tracy have! Married at Holy Family on Jan. 16, the Tracys have been awed and humbled by the amount of prayer and support they have received from many special people, including their fellow parishioners, several religious men and women, and even Pope Francis himself!

During their honeymoon in Rome, Seth and Megan had the opportunity to meet the Pope during his general audience at the Vatican. Their meeting took place as part of the *Sposi Novelli* (New Spouses) program, which invites couples who have been married in the Catholic Church within the past two months to attend a papal audience and receive a nuptial blessing.

"We found out about it through my sister, who is a Sister of Life," Megan says. "She told us that when you get married, you can get a blessing from the pope. So we did a quick Google search and found out about *Sposi Novelli*."

Megan and Seth then contacted the Bishop's Office for United States Visitors to the Vatican to schedule their visit. Upon arriving in Rome, they picked up their special tickets for the papal audience at the North



Seth and Megan Tracy shared the wonderful opportunity to meet Pope Francis during their honeymoon in Rome.

American Pontifical College. At the general audience that Wednesday morning, the *Sposi Novelli* couples – many in their wedding attire for the occasion – were seated in the first row, just behind the area reserved for the disabled.

"There were probably about a dozen couples from all over – there were some from Spain, France, others from the United States," Megan says. "After the pope gave his audience, he greeted the bishops and cardinals that had come. And then he went and greeted all the disabled in the front, and right after that he made his way all the way up the row [of newlyweds]."

Finding the words to answer the pope's greeting was no small task, but

Megan and Seth were able to connect with him during this special moment.

"I speak Spanish, so in Spanish I just said, 'Good morning, Father, thank you for all that you do for our church,'" Megan says. "It was all I could muster! Seth was holding one of his hands with his hand, and I was holding the other, so we were making a kind of circle and he looked us right in the eye. I didn't feel like he was rushed at all to get to the next person. He spent a moment in time with us. He had a big smile on his face like he always does. It was touching, it was just so moving. He was really listening."

Knowing that Pope Francis spends much of his time visiting and greeting crowds in many countries

Holy Matrimony and Meeting With Pope Francis

Megan Tracy

around the world, Seth feels blessed by the opportunity to have met him at the Vatican.

“For me, just meeting the pope was awesome, but getting to meet the Holy Father at the Vatican was particularly special,” Seth says. “Being at the Vatican is such an amazing experience. For one, it is where St. Peter was martyred – a place that has existed for so long and will exist until the coming of Christ. We are just two small people who got to be a part of it and will be a part of the continuation of this faith, this vastness that is Catholicism. It’s humbling and awe-inspiring at the same time.”

By taking the time to personally greet newlyweds each week at his general audience, Pope Francis demonstrates the deep respect our Church has for the vocation of marriage.

“It just shows how highly [the Church] regards the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony because we were sitting in front of religious, priests and nuns,” Megan says. “You’re so humbled because Pope Francis has just been to the U.S., and you think of the millions of people who flocked to see him – and here you are in the front row.”

“It just reinforces what the Sacrament of Marriage is,” Seth agrees. “You have the Holy Father of the largest religion in the world taking

time out of his day once a week to give you a nod and a thank you for entering into this domestic church.

“As husband and wife and future parents, you are the guardians of the faith to pass it on to your children,” Seth continues. “To me, it really reinforced how important it is for me to be a good husband – not just merely a good Catholic, but to really work on this vocation to do everything I can to be the best possible husband. Our job as spouses is to help each other get to heaven.”

Following their meeting with the pope, there was another incredible blessing in store for Seth and Megan. Seth, who converted to the Catholic faith two years ago, began listening to a series of podcasts entitled *Catholic Stuff You Should Know* at the beginning of his conversion process. As a result, the podcast hosts, Fr. Mike and Fr. John, proved to be greatly influential figures in Seth’s faith journey. Knowing that the two priests are studying in Rome this year, Seth inquired about them at the seminary where he and Megan picked up their *Sposi Novelli* tickets.

“It just happened that they were doing a Mass at St. Peter’s, so two days before we left Rome, we got to go to Mass with two priests that had a huge influence on me becoming Catholic,”

Seth says. “Then following the Mass, we got to have breakfast with Fr. John and Fr. Mike. For me – someone who was outside the faith coming into the faith – it was just incredible to meet them.”

From meeting the pope and two priests that played a special part in Seth’s conversion, to several chance meetings in Rome with religious women that they know through the Sisters of Life, the Tracys feel fortunate that the beginning of their married life has been so blessed and rooted in the faith. And for these two parishioners of Holy Family, the blessings received on their honeymoon were just a continuation of the strong, supportive start to their vocation that they have received from the parish.

“The Turner family leads the Pre-Cana classes here, and their insight, teaching, and example are absolutely incredible,” Seth says. “Even the examples of the other families at Holy Family has been incredible. Fr. Dan was really supportive of us, and we had two priests, the deacon, and two sisters at our wedding. We definitely felt like we had the support of the whole parish. There is not a doubt in our minds that our vocation is to be married because it has been one blessing after another, back to back, from our dress rehearsal through our honeymoon.”



Feast of St. Joseph, Husband of Mary

March 19

Devotion to St. Joseph began relatively late in Church history, primarily because his role of husband to Mary and head of the Holy Family was underplayed in early Christianity by many unauthenticated legends of Christ's childhood. These legends almost always portrayed Joseph as an old man, a simple guardian of Mary and Jesus.

Modern theology places Joseph in a much more important position. Because of his valid marriage to Mary, Joseph shared in Mary's parenthood – Joseph was a father to Jesus in every way except biological. Joseph appeared publicly as the natural father of Jesus, thus shielding the virginity of Mary and the reputation of Jesus. Joseph's fatherly love, authority and watchful service were all necessary circumstances in God's plan for the Incarnation.

Joseph was born in Judea or Galilee in the first century B.C. Little is stated in the Bible about the influence Joseph had on Jesus. History tells us that he brought Mary and Jesus to the temple each Passover and taught Jesus the carpentry trade. He seems to be the silent family man who shows his love for his family by providing them with security. The very safety of Mary and Jesus was guarded by Joseph when he took his family into Egypt to avoid the massacre of male babies ordered by King Herod.

In the history of the Church, Western veneration of Joseph began with the introduction of the Feast of St. Joseph in the late 15th century.

In 1870, at the end of the First Vatican Council, Pope Pius IX declared St. Joseph to be the patron of the Universal Church. He is also the patron of carpenters, workers, fathers, and a happy death given that he died in the presence of Mary and Jesus. The title of Joseph's March 19 feast day is "Husband of Mary." Pope Pius XII later declared May 1 to be the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, to counteract the Communist May Day holiday.

A traditional prayer to St. Joseph

O Blessed St. Joseph, faithful guardian and protector of virgins, to whom God entrusted Jesus and Mary, I implore you by the love which you did bear them, to preserve me from every defilement of soul and body, that I may always serve them in holiness and purity of love. Amen.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: *Giving the Body of Christ to the Body of Christ*

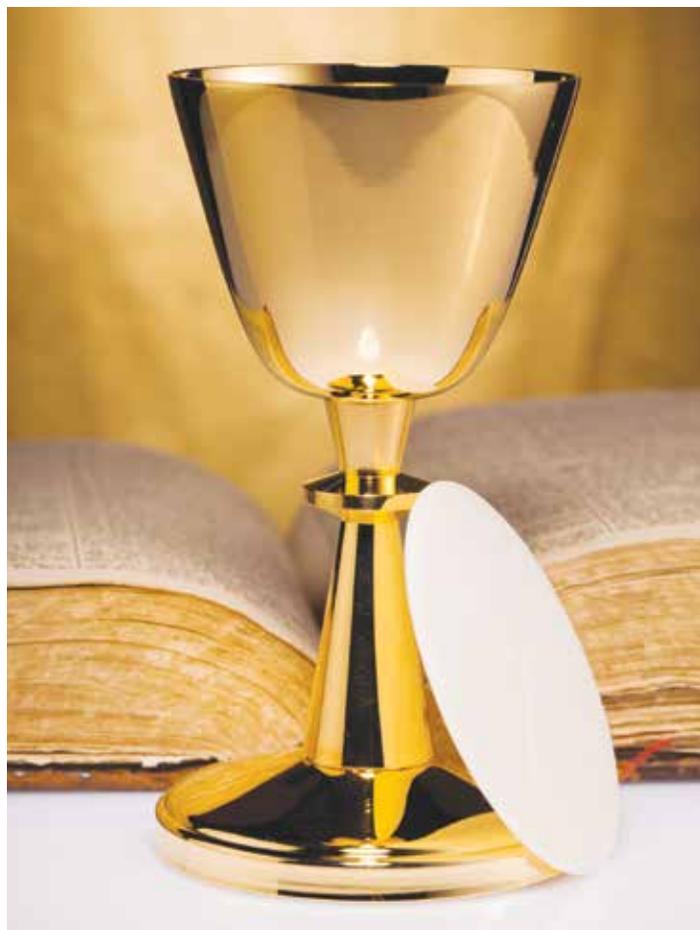
We see Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at all our weekend Masses, where they exercise their special call to service – assisting the priest in distributing the Precious Body and Blood of Christ. Holy Family’s 25 Extraordinary Ministers don’t just serve at Mass – they also bring Holy Communion to those who are sick or homebound. By serving with devotion and care, the ministers are able to be an example of Christ to the entire parish community.

“Extraordinary Ministers should be an example to those in the community, an example of how you should be living your faith,” Deacon Arnie Goodman says. “It’s important to understand that this is a calling, and not just something you do for 15 minutes on a Sunday. You are also an Extraordinary Minister outside of Mass – you bring God and the Eucharist to other people in Mass, and so your life has to reflect that.

“The minister receives communion first, and since you are what you eat, you become the Body of Christ,” he adds. “Then they are able to give the Body of Christ – the Eucharist – to the Body of Christ – the congregation. There’s a really profound connection there.”

Extraordinary Ministers who serve at the parish’s weekend Masses are able to note their availability, and are then scheduled monthly by the parish office. The ministers who serve the homebound and sick also have a set schedule.

“We have people who live in nursing homes or individuals who might be sick, who need to receive the Eucharist each Sunday,” Deacon Arnie says. “We also have people who are in the hospital, and they go and bring them communion there. It’s important that these people don’t lose that sense of family and sense of connection to the church. Ideally, the ministers should also visit with them – I know that I myself like to talk to the people and pray with them, and talk to their families as well. You need to spend time with the people to make them feel needed and wanted. I also think it’s important to bring the whole



“The minister receives communion first, and since you are what you eat, you become the Body of Christ. Then they are able to give the Body of Christ – the Eucharist – to the Body of Christ – the congregation. There’s a really profound connection there.” – Deacon Arnie Goodman

sense of the Mass to them, as well. For example, an important part of the Mass is the reading, and we should bring that to the people we are visiting. It’s important that we understand it, and impart it to them in a spiritual way.”

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Weekend Mass

Saturday Vigil

5:00 p.m. Mass

Sunday

8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

Daily Mass

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

12:10 p.m. Mass

Reconciliation

Saturday

4:00 p.m.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

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All the parish's Extraordinary Ministers go through training, and have recently undergone an in-house training in order to ensure that ministers are serving the community as best they can.

"We just wanted to go over what everyone should be doing, what they're doing now, and to get them more involved in the process – how can we make this better, and how can we get more people involved?" Deacon Arnie says. "I'm very big on the spiritual aspect of ministry. It's not just a job – it's a calling. It's a vocation.

"It would be very hard for someone to just be a minister in the church," he adds. "If you're a father, you're not just a father in your house. If you're a teacher, you're not just a teacher in the school. Whatever you are, you are throughout your whole life, and you always take it with you. So if you're a Catholic in the pew inside

the church, you're a Catholic when you leave the church building, too. You need to live out that Catholicity in your life – you never turn it off, because it's who you are."

Deacon Arnie encourages all parishioners to discern their own calling to serve – whether it be as an Extraordinary Minister, or in another role entirely.

"To be a part of a ministry is to answer when God taps you on the shoulder, asking you to do something," he says. "Everyone has a role, and we all have a different calling. Everyone is important. Each one of us is born with a gift, and in a way, we're all ministers in some way – we can minister the Gospel to other people just through the way we live our lives. We should all be in humble service to others. I like to compare it to the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday – we should all be willing to wash each other's feet."

For more information about the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, or if you think you might be called to this ministry, please contact the parish office at 706-323-6908.