

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY

COLUMBUS, GA

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Remembering Candida (Dida) Wills

A lot happens in the life of a parish. Pastors come and pastors go. Children grow up, marry, and have children who then create their own memories of parish picnics, breakfasts with Santa, and crowded Christmas Eve Masses. In the life of a parish, ministries are introduced, building funds are launched, and the rhythm of the liturgical seasons are punctuated with baptisms, weddings, funerals, and ordinations. Yes, a lot happens in the life of a parish, and it is parishioners such as Candida (Dida) Wills who remind us how faith and service are the heart and soul on what makes a parish flourish.

But before Dida settled with her husband, James, and her family here in Columbus, long before she became a familiar face in the parish office, she was a little girl who grew up in a large, Italian family in New York. Her parents had emigrated from southern Italy and settled in the Bronx where her father owned a small business and her mother was a homemaker. And when you take their Italian heritage, a large extended family of grandparents, aunts and uncles, and then mix it with a healthy blend of both Catholic and Italian traditions, family gatherings were fun, loud, and celebratory.

"Every Sunday and holiday, especially Easter and Christmas, were based upon the traditions of the Catholic Church which, in those days, included no meat before Mass on Sundays or even before Mass on Christmas Eve," says Kathy Wills, Dida's daughter. "But afterwards, they would have a traditional Christmas Eve dinner of seven fishes and homemade sausage while waiting for Santa to arrive. Everything centered on the Italian tradition where food, faith and family were the tenants of her childhood."

When Dida met James in 1953, she was a single, young woman working as an administrative assistant in downtown Manhattan. Despite always professing that she would always remain



James and Candida (Dida) Wills, 1960



Dida with her great granddaughter, Rayne on Mother's Day in 2012



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Remembering Candida (Dida) Wills *continued from front cover*

single, James changed her mind and, within six months, they married and Dida embraced her new role of military wife, which meant tours to places such as France, Germany, Thailand, and Panama. But no matter where in the world they were assigned, Dida found her anchor in faith and family.

“As a military family, we moved all over the world but Mom showed us that family is everything and that we are never alone if we take care of each other,” Kathy says. “Traditions and respect for our heritage and our grandparents were to be preserved and honored. She taught us at a very young age about the importance of the Mass. No matter where we lived, Mom found a priest and made sure we attended Mass. I remember in Bangkok, Thailand there were no Catholic churches, but she found an army chaplain who celebrated Mass on top of a hotel.”

And having come from such a strong foundation of faith and family while growing up in the Bronx, Dida was the backbone of their family. Whether it was searching for the best medical care for her children or waking up at 4:00 a.m. to take cinnamon yeast rolls out of the oven, Dida’s life revolved around her husband and her children. She also had many passions – singing, gardening, reading, animals (strays always showed up on her doorstep) and painting (oils, water colors, and Panamanian batiks) – but perhaps the only thing she did NOT like, not at all, was going to the dentist.

“My fondest childhood memories are the treks we took to the library,” Kathy says. “Mom could not drive, but she never let that stop her. We walked along the railroad tracks to get to the library, and we would go to the children’s section while she picked out books from the adult section. I can still remember the special smell and quiet of the library, and her love and respect for books fostered my love of reading to this very day.”

When the family settled in Columbus in 1977, it wasn’t long afterwards that Dida met Fr. William O’Neill, made Holy Family their parish home, and began looking for ways to be involved. She helped Lucille Heyn in the church office, volunteered with Holy Family’s Soup Kitchen, was a member of the Rosary Guild, and shared her vocal talent with the Choir where she was known for singing *Ave Maria*, *Oh Holy Night*, and *Panis Agelicus*. In January of 1993, Fr. Herbert J.



Dida (seated) celebrating her 85th birthday with family as well as close family friend Janet Turner (left).

Wellmeier asked if she would like to be his secretary – a job that she would hold through three priests and over a course of 23 years.

In fact, it is Dida’s role as parish secretary that many came to know her. Sitting at her L-shaped desk, with everything arranged just so, it was her face that people first saw when they entered the office, and it was her voice people heard when they called on the phone. When Dida’s middle daughter, Janet, started

working part time at the parish to help with the bookkeeping, she saw firsthand her mother’s patience and love for everyone who walked through that door.

“She always had compassion for the homeless who came in asking for help,” says Janet. “I saw how mom supported and empathized with families who lost loved ones. She was dedicated and efficient with her job and responsibilities, and there was always someone in the office that would come in to just sit and talk with her. She was a wonderful friend, confidant, and advisor to many.”

And Janet also witnessed how her mother, who initially began working in the office with just a typewriter and all types of binders for the bulletins, learned to triumph over technology.

“Every time we were introduced to a new software program, my mom would panic,” remembers Janet. “She would say, ‘I am too old for this. It is time for me to retire!’ How many times I laughed to myself when she said this because I knew she would never let anything stop her from the job she loved so much. But as upset as she would get in having to learn Word or Excel, she learned it all. How proud I was of her!”

Sadly, on April 19, Dida passed away at the age of 86. In the last months of her life, Dida’s deep faith and love of her family sustained her, and she prayed the rosary every day and always kept the television channel on the Mass and EWTN. She is missed by her three children, four grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

Ultimately, with so much that happens in the life of a parish, it is parishioners like Candida Wills who not only remind us of a life well-lived, but of how faith and service is a legacy for future generations of parishioners. It’s a gift that keeps on giving, it gives purpose and meaning in all that we do, and it goes to the very heart and soul of parish life.

A Letter From Our Pastor

Stewardship: A Positive Way to Live

Dear Parishioners,

There is something about the month of August that is glorious. Summer is still in full force – the lazy, hazy days are upon us, and some still have vacations on the horizon. And, yet, we can also see the end of this wonderful season drawing closer – our vacations may already be over, and we may be sadly anticipating the end of this relaxing time, with back-to-school and a return to the busyness of life just around the corner.

We are at that point in the year when things are coming to an end and things are beginning all at once. However, isn't that the way it always is? The Russian playwright and short-story writer Anton Chekhov once said, "People don't notice whether it is winter or summer when they are happy." There is certainly truth to that statement. You might say it is a stewardship statement.

I am sure you are wondering how to make the connection between Chekhov's quote and stewardship, but the connection is found quite simply in the word "happy." I once heard someone say in a presentation about stewardship that people who live stewardship as a way of life are almost always happy. There is a reason for that.

Stewardship is a positive way to live. It means feeling grateful and centering your thoughts on gratitude. In other words, your focus is on the good things in life, not the bad. That does not mean you have perfect health or that all is ideal in your family, that you always sleep well at night, or that you enjoy everything that happens to you or around you.

However, it does mean that when the good happens, you thank God. You recognize that good and are filled with feelings of joy and gratitude. You and I know people like

that, don't we? We know people who always seem filled with joy, regardless of what may be happening to them or around them personally. To me, these kinds of people are stewardship people – the kind of people we all need to strive to be.

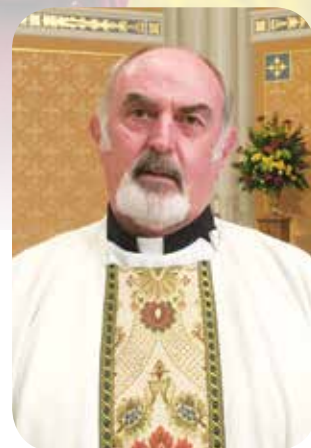
No doubt, you have heard that living a life of stewardship means living with an "attitude of gratitude." That is not easy, for you or for me. Let us vow to try to be like that nonetheless. As we watch our summer season dwindle away and the busier time of year begins again, let us concentrate on how God has blessed us. If we do that, I truly believe that we can be those people Chekhov described. If we are happy, it will not matter what time of year it is.

I am grateful for you, your support, your prayers, and – most of all – your presence in my life. Thank you and God bless you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Dan O'Connell
Pastor





Visiting the Sick with Columbus Hospice

The Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, in many ways, is nothing more than a reminder of the important truth Pope Francis told us in his address on the World Day of the Sick in December 2013?

“Occasionally our world forgets the special value of time spent at the bedside of the sick, since we are in such a rush...” Pope Francis said in that 2014 address. “We forget about giving ourselves freely, taking care of others, being responsible for others.”

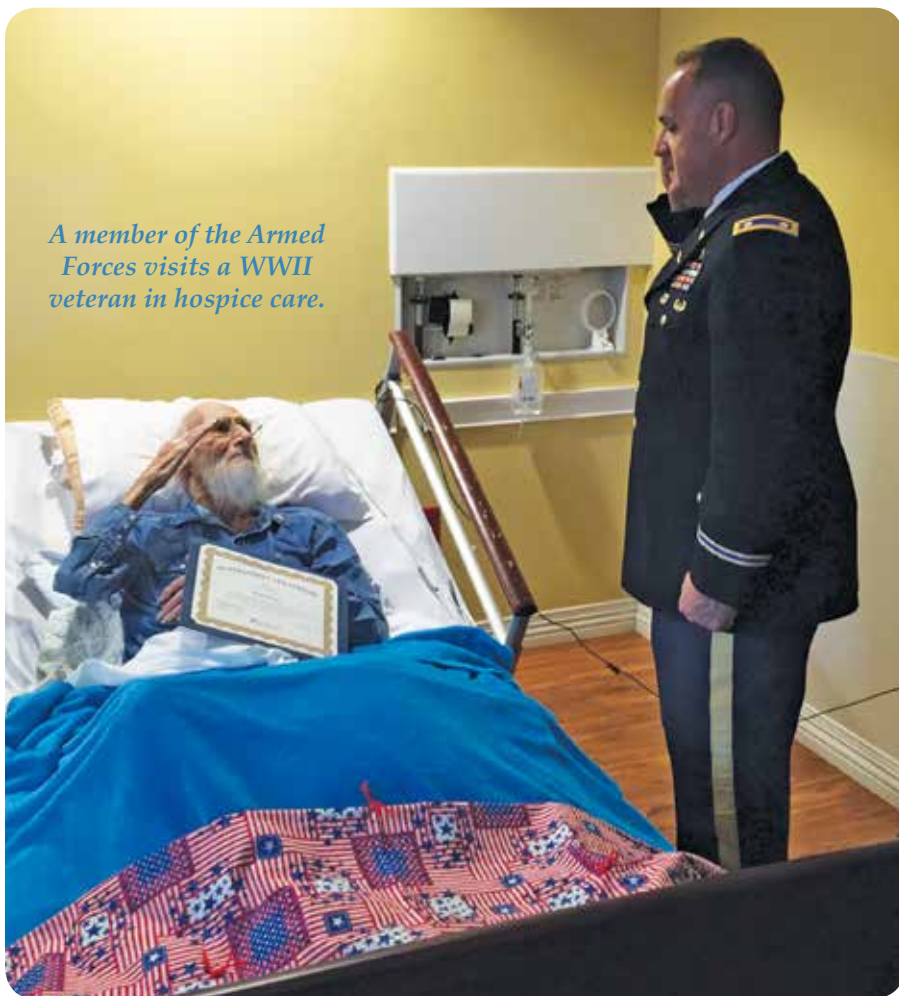
We are called by our Holy Father to give freely of ourselves, to care for others, especially spending time journeying with those who are elderly or ill. Visit the sick — one of the seven Corporal Works of Mercy — is an opportunity for us to come back to what is most important:

being witnesses of God’s love and mercy to our brothers and sisters, especially in their suffering.

Here at Holy Family, we’ve found a way for you to do just that through Columbus Hospice. Founded in 1979, Columbus Hospice is a non-profit organization serving the area.

“We provide quality, compassionate care to those with a life-limiting illness,” says Terri Roberts, Director of Volunteer Services at Columbus Hospice. “We provide care to those in need regardless of their ability to pay.”

“Our organization provides scheduled visits from a nurse, 24 hour on-call support, equipment needed for comfort, medications needed for pain and symptom management, emotional, volunteer, and spiritual and bereavement support,” she adds, “We have an excellent team of registered nurses, chaplains, social workers and certified nursing assistants to meet the patient and family where they are and provide stellar care. We (also) have a 25 bed inpatient facility that is warm and welcoming for those who need care.”



A member of the Armed Forces visits a WWII veteran in hospice care.

“Our patients all have a story. They come from different backgrounds, ages and family dynamics. They have one thing in common — a better idea of when their life will come to an end. We all have death in common and the way we deal with that is uniquely handled by the person and their family.”

— Terri Roberts, Director of Volunteer Services at Columbus Hospice

Terri encourages Holy Family parishioners to become involved in volunteering with Columbus Hospice.

“Volunteers are the heart of hospice,” she says, “Our hospice began with volunteers.”

From patient companionship, to office help, to baking birthday cakes or caring for someone’s pet, there’s ways for everyone to get involved.

“Sometimes the caregiver just needs a break or we will have someone that is lonely and needs some company,” she says, explaining that patient companionship is always the greatest need, “In some instances, the only way a caregiver can get a break, to go to their grandson’s soccer game or a doctor’s appointment (is due to) the support of our volunteers.”

Terri tells a heartwarming story of a volunteer, who also became a hospice patient, before recently passing away.

“I (recently) went to the funeral of one of our long time volunteers,” says Terri, “After she was admitted to our hospice, she continued to do her volunteer duties up until the last week of her life. She sent birthday cards to our patients and that was her ministry. She was a kind lady and sending the cards meant the world to her, and our patients.”

The heart of this ministry is sharing love with someone, as they near the end of their journey.

“Our patients all have a story,” says Terri, “They come from different backgrounds, ages and family dynamics. They have one thing in common — a better idea of when their life will come to an end. We all have death in common and the way we deal with that is uniquely handled by the person and their family.”

Those who volunteer have the privilege of walking alongside another, entering into the mystery of sharing God’s abundant mercy, through their service.

“I encourage people to give it a try,” says Terri, “There is something for everyone’s comfort zone.”

“We hold numerous new volunteer trainings throughout the year,” she adds, “We work around the volunteer’s schedule. (People) can volunteer as little or much as they’d like.”

“Hospice volunteering was one of the most rewarding things I’ve ever done in my life,” Terri says, in closing, “It puts your life into perspective in ways I couldn’t imagine. You are there to give of yourself but you receive so much more in return.”

Doesn’t that sound just like God’s mercy?



“(Columbus Hospice) was the second hospice in the United States to receive grant money to help care for our patients’ pets. We provide vet care, grooming, pet medications, and transportation free of charge to any patient that needs assistance,” says Terri Roberts.



Columbus Hospice offers compassionate care to those nearing the end of their lives.

If you’d like to get involved in serving with Columbus Hospice, contact Terri Roberts at 706-243-0044 or t.roberts@columbushospice.com.



The Assumption of Mary: A Time to Celebrate!

Can a pile of bones really be that exciting? Every year, tens of thousands of pilgrims visit St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, eager to glimpse the spot in which the alleged bones 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 Mystical Rose, are nowhere to be found.

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.

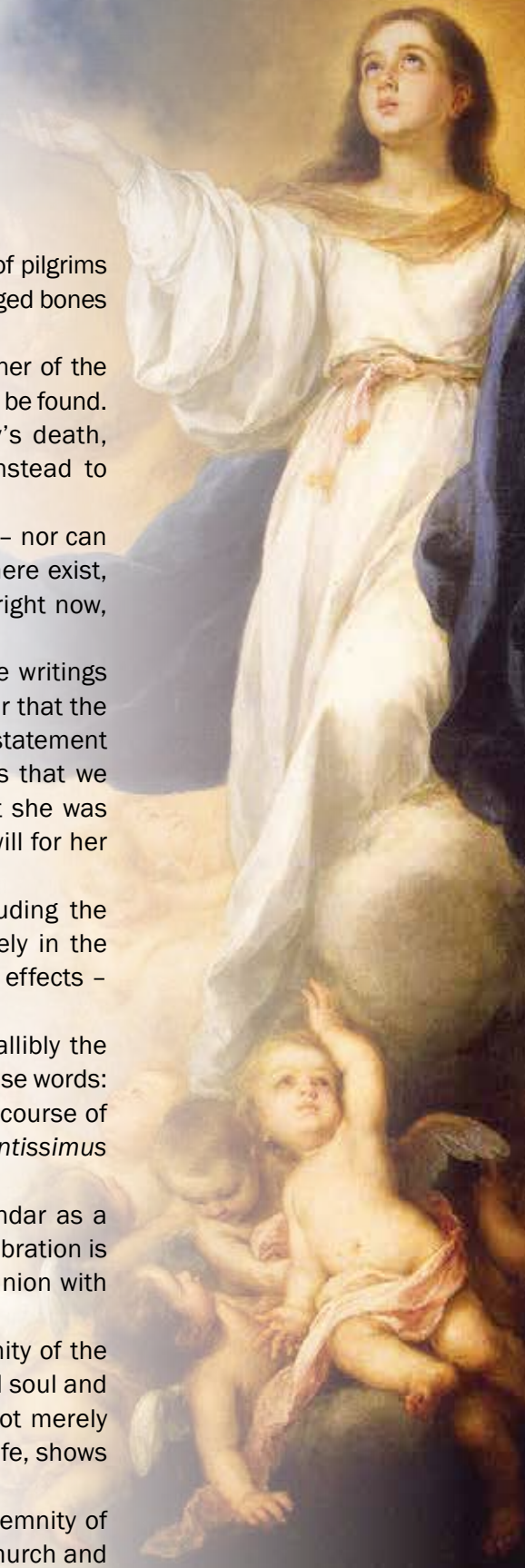
The Assumption of Mary reveals that the promises of the Lord – including the resurrection of the body – were fulfilled in Mary. She shared most intimately in the life, death and resurrection of her Son, and was free from original sin and its effects – including corruption of the body at death.

Therefore, it was no surprise when, in 1950, Pope Pius XII declared infallibly the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a dogma of the Catholic faith 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 heavenly glory" (*Munificentissimus Deus*, 44).

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is observed on the liturgical calendar as a solemnity – of higher importance than a feast. On Aug. 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 Aug. 15. This is a declared Holy Day of Obligation in the Church and a great liturgical feast. Mark your calendars!



“Meeting Individuals Where they Are”

Religious Education Program Evangelizing Children

One of the paradoxes of teaching is that so often in the process of instructing we end up learning far more from our students. This is perhaps most true when it comes to the role of the catechist. For although we adults may know all the technical terms and doctrines, children have such a trusting and open nature, making them ready instruments of God’s grace.

“I’m convinced that little kids are closer to God than we are,” says Director of Faith Formation Julie Hird. “We are not really teaching them anything in the end; we’re just helping to form what they already naturally have. I’ve been a catechist for many years and what is very humbling is that much of what I have learned about my faith I’ve learned from the children themselves.”

“I think it is a very dynamic program — both for kids and families — and I’m hoping it has a ripple effect on our parish as a whole.”

— Director of Faith Formation Julie Hird

In a beautiful cycle of mutual giving and receiving, parents and catechists are charged with forming their children in the faith while simultaneously being driven to holiness through their children. This is why here at Holy Family the Faith Formation’s motto is to “meet individuals where they are.”

“Evangelization, when you think about it, is all about meeting people where they are and leading them toward truth,” says Julie, “That is why my mindset has always been to reach adults — to reach families — through the children. My hope has been to do something in the class that will set a spark in each child’s heart, inflaming them and eventually their entire family with the love of Christ.”

This is why Julie is excited about the Faith Formation’s newly adopted program *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies*, which is designed to help children understand and apply the Gospel message to their lives.

“It is an opportunity for the kids to get their hands on their faith, wrap their brains around it, and then take it home with them to share with their families,” says Julie.

Revolving around the Sunday Gospels, the *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies* Faith Formation Program uses Christ’s own words to instruct children in Catholic doctrine, the sacraments, God’s commandments, and traditional



Julie Hird, Director of Faith Formation, is excited about Holy Family’s newly adopted faith formation program designed to help children understand and apply the Gospel message to their daily lives.

prayers. This is all done within the rhythm and seasons of the Church’s liturgical year, encouraging our young people to more actively participate in parish life.

“The program uses the Gospel of the Sunday that our classes are meeting on,” says Julie. “This way, if a kid has already been to Mass, either at the Saturday vigil or the 8 a.m. Mass, they are able to break down further what they have already heard; if a child is going to

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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.

Religious Education Program Evangelizing Children

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Mass afterward, this helps better prepare them. Then, in the case of our children whose parents sadly do not bring them to Mass, this is like sending a bit of Mass home with them, hopefully inspiring them to return to the liturgy.”

Because the *Pflaum Faith Formation* program is produced quarterly, it is uniquely able to stay up-to-date on recent events. In this way, students are able to see the relevancy of their faith as it is applied to real live events occurring around them.

“This further helps our children apply what they are learning about the faith with the world around them,” says Julie.

Broken down into five different age appropriate editions for children in preschool through eighth grade, each take home booklet helps include parents into their child’s religious formation, emphasizing the importance of parents and children alike remaining active participants in both the Mass and the life of the Church.

“I think it is a very dynamic program – both for kids and families – and I’m hoping it has a ripple effect on our parish as a whole,” says Julie.

If you have a child between grades kindergarten through seventh grade, we hope you will consider registering him or her for this new and exciting program. Registration will occur on Sunday Aug. 21 and Aug. 28 in St. Joseph’s Hall. Classes will officially begin on Sunday, Sept. 11 following the 8:30 a.m. Mass. For more information about this program or to volunteer as either a catechist or an assistant, please contact Julie Hird at 706-289-9322 or holyfamily4706@gmail.com.