

Back to School Renewed in Christ

Three Simple Habits to Renew Prayer and Relationship with God



Preparing for a new school year can be exciting, stressful, or even a bit underwhelming. Whichever it is for you, consider what are your spiritual routines to keep centered on Christ, strengthen your conscience, and be disposed to receive the grace the Lord is offering to handle daunting schedules, demanding assignments, and social challenges.



Last week, Seminarian Michael Tupta, hosted a “Back to School, Back to Basics” event with middle school and high school students in the Martinsburg area, made possible by St. Joseph Parish and coordinated by Linda Abrahamian and Mary Catherine Lehman.

“I shared my own story, particularly the process of maturing into my Catholic Faith and making my relationship with the Lord and His Church my

own during my years in high school and college,” Tupta said. “I then took the opportunity to point out that the beginning of a new school year is a great time to implement some small habits into our daily routines.”

Tupta, who will soon be returning for his third year in Rome at the Pontifical North American College, laid out how the simplest things can make the greatest difference.

His top three:

1. Daily prayer. You cannot love someone who you do not talk to.
2. Weekly attendance of Holy Mass (Sunday & holy days of obligation). We are obliged to worship God as an act of justice.
3. Monthly participation in the Sacrament of Confession. Christ, the Divine Physician, waits for us to give us healing.

“Understand the importance of being

realistic in making changes to our daily routine,” he said, because he continued, “Trying to do too much too fast, even of good things, often leads to burn out and giving up all together.”

Inviting God into our lives through prayer helps us to naturally turn to Him during the highs and lows a school year and life brings.

Daily prayer also creates a moment of stillness and reassurance to remember that our identity is not based on temporal aspects of grades, popularity, athletic ability, or future plans. It devotes time to know God and come to recognize His voice through our thoughts, words, and actions.

“Making these choices now as a student and young adult will truly shape the direction of your life”, Tupta said.

Prayer helps us sort through what is good, what is true, and what God is calling one to do.

“Beginning the day with an offering of our prayers, works, joys and sufferings, so that in the difficulties of the day, we may better respond to stress with greater trust in Divine Providence.

“It doesn’t have to be complicated. What matters is consistency and sincerity. God wants our hearts and relationship with us”, Tupta said.

Furthermore, at World Youth Day in August of 2005 in Germany, Pope Benedict XVI acknowledged that attending Mass can sometimes seem inconvenient when Sunday is viewed only as free time, but the Holy Eucharist gives us our proper focus- Sacramental unity with Jesus Christ.

The practice of worthily receiving the Holy Eucharist must be properly ordered

in the necessary habit of participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Tupta said that three priests were a part of the St. Joseph event, who were available for the youth to participate in the Sacrament of Confession.

For especially those who were non-Catholics in attendance, Tupta said he, “gave a brief explanation about this beautiful sacrament and made it clear that I desired for them to be able to receive the sacrament themselves in the fullness of becoming Catholic. Many of the non-Catholics spoke privately with the priest about their own relationship with God. A simple and clear examination of conscience and a step-by-step of how to go to Confession was given to all as well.

“Practical and measurable spiritual habits will help students face struggles and realities, for they will be in relation with our God and not simply trying to do it alone”, Tupta said.

So, students, parents, and teachers let this school year be a prayerful one with “consideration of how powerful the Lord’s mercy and love is,” Tupta said. “Most especially remember and realize our baptismal dignity, which leads us to examine where we are currently in our relationship with the Lord and how we must be reconciled to the Lord and His Church. It is famously said that Jesus loves us right where we are, but he loves us far too much to let us stay there.”

AUGUST DEDICATED TO THE

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

The Immaculate Heart of Mary represents the most genuine, pure love the Blessed Mother has for God.

Hers is the heart that felt both the greatest joys and harshest sorrows, but through it all she remained steadfast in faith.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the heart is “the depths of one’s being, where the person decides for or against God” (CCC 368).

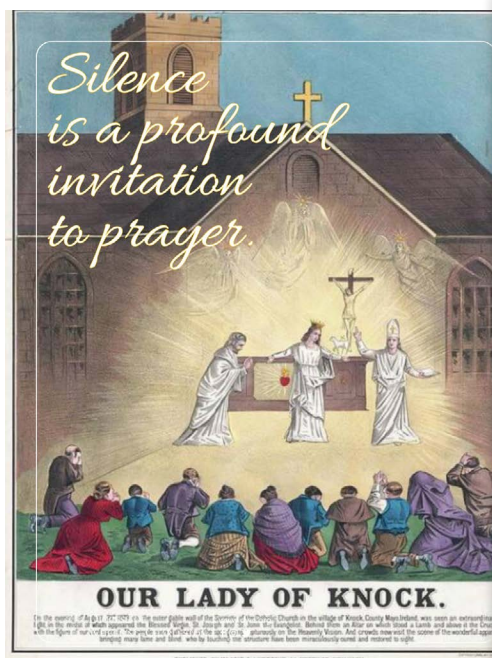
Together, let us pray:

*O Immaculate Heart of Mary,
full of goodness, show your love towards us. Let the flame
of your heart, O Mary, descend on all people. We love
you immensely. Impress true love in our hearts so that
we have a continuous desire for you. O Mary, gentle
and humble of heart, remember us when we are in
sin. You know that all men sin. Give us, by means of
your Immaculate Heart, spiritual health. Let us always
see the goodness of your motherly heart and may we be
converted by means of the flame of your heart. Amen.*



LEARNING FROM OUR SAINTS

THE SWEETNESS OF GOD, THE GIFT OF THE EUCHARIST, AND MARY'S LOVING PROTECTION

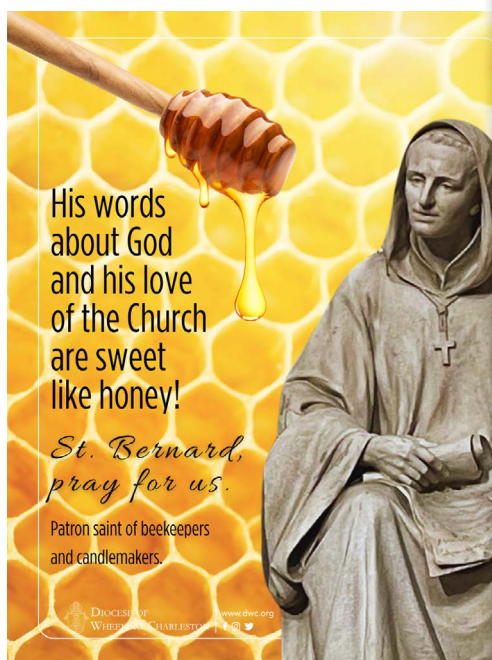


AUGUST 17 – OUR LADY OF KNOCK –the silent apparition. On a rain-soaked evening of 21 August 1879, the quiet village of Knock, Ireland, witnessed a miracle that would echo through the ages. As darkness fell and the sky poured, a luminous tableau appeared on the church wall: the Blessed Virgin Mary, radiant in white and crowned, St. Joseph beside her, St. John the Evangelist preaching from an open book, and the Lamb of God, Christ in the Eucharist, shining with a halo of golden stars. The figures were “full and round as if they had a body and were alive,” and yet they spoke no word, their silence a profound invitation to prayer.

Witnesses, among them 11-year-old Patrick Hill, declared the vision “distinctly real,” and Dominick Byrne Jr., who wept in awe recounted how the ground beneath the figures stayed dry, even as rain lashed the air. Mary McLoughlin, the parish housekeeper, first mistook the apparition for new statues, only to realize the truth and alert the parish priest, who later regretted not seeing it himself. A traveler noted a brilliant golden light emanating from the church that night.

The Church, after careful investigation, affirmed the reliability of the testimonies. The presence of St. John underscores the Gospel’s proclamation of Jesus as the Lamb of God, inviting believers to contemplate the Eucharistic reality of Christ. Today, the Knock Shrine welcomes pilgrims worldwide, offering a space for prayer, hope, and a deeper communion with Christ through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the saints.

The feast of this apparition is celebrated on 17 August, a date chosen to honor Pope St. Pius X. For further reading and eyewitness accounts, visit the Knock Shrine website.



AUGUST 20 – ST. BERNARD – He is considered a Doctor of the Church for his letters, poems, and sermons, but was adamant that words are empty if not delivered and acted upon in love - for a true preacher must reach people’s hearts not to impress them with arrogant intellect and scholarly words.

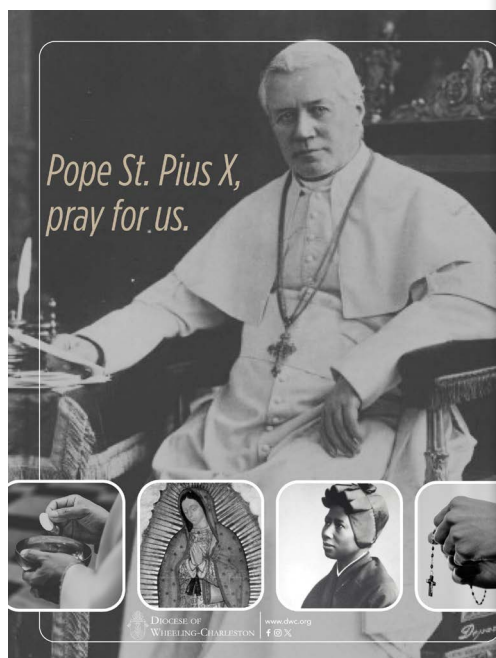
His masterpiece on the sweetness of God is found in his Prayer of Divine Love. He describes how God’s love completely satisfies yet simultaneously increases our hunger for Him.

“Jesus, how sweet is the very thought of you! You fill my heart with joy. The sweetness of your love surpasses the sweetness of honey. Nothing sweeter than you can be described; no words can express the joy of your love. Only those who have tasted your love for themselves can comprehend it.”

His sweetest, most comforting words about being part of the Church focus on navigating life’s struggles by leaning on Mary’s maternal protection. His famous “*Star of the Sea*” sermon illustrates the safety found within Catholic devotion: “*If the hurricanes of temptation rise against you, or you are running upon the rocks of trouble, look to the star—call on Mary! If you follow her, you cannot falter; if you pray to her, you cannot despair; if you think of her, you cannot err. If she sustains you, you will not stumble; if she protects you, you have nothing to fear.*”

When we call out to Mary in prayer with “O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!” we are actually echoing the words St. Bernard that he spontaneously burst out on Christmas Eve in 1146, while processing into the cathedral as the congregation sang the Salve Regina (Hail Holy Queen). It is recorded; he was overcome with emotion he cried those now famous words that the Church later permanently added to the end of the prayer.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux was born in France in 1090 and died on August 20, 1153.



AUGUST 21 – POPE ST. PIUS X. – He reminds us, “Holy Communion is the shortest and safest way to heaven.” He was born Giuseppe Sarto in 1835, and affectionately nicknamed “Bepi”. He was one of nine children raised on a farm in Italy near Venice. His father Giovanni Sarto was a mailman and his mother Margarita, a seamstress.

He was only 11 years old, when he told his family he wanted to be a priest. His parish priest helped the family send him to a Catholic high school. He graduated when he was only 15 and was first in his class. Ordained in 1858, he quickly became a popular young priest considered as reverent, loving, genuine, and inspiring.

In 1903 he was elected pope at the age of 68, taking the name Pius X. Even as pope, he taught catechism classes in the Vatican courtyard for children each week. He knew children are the future of the Church. Through his actions he prioritized Catholic instruction and Catholic education as important as celebrating the sacraments and serving others as a disciple of Christ.

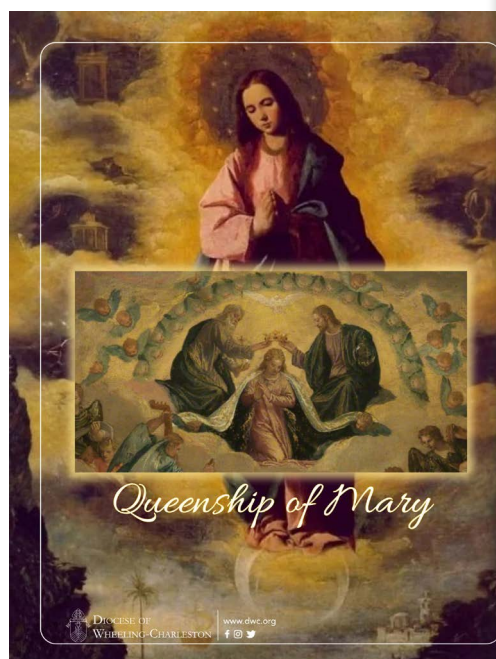
He enacted a law that allowed children as young as seven to receive First Communion and encouraged everyone to receive the Eucharist daily.

He believed no one ever stops learning and our religious education must be perpetual even as adults.

While he humbly accepted the grandeur of papal traditions out of respect for the Church, as pontiff he chose simplicity over pageantry. Before his passing in 1914 he said, “I was born poor and I will die poor.”

Quick side notes:

- Pope Saint Pius X was devoted to Our Lady of Guadalupe, raising her sanctuary in Mexico to the status of basilica in 1904, and formally declared her the Patroness of Mexico and all of Latin America in 1910.
- He said the road to peace begins and ends with the Rosary – “If there were one million families praying the Rosary every day, the entire world would be saved,”
- When he was a Cardinal, he was the celebrant that received former slave Saint Josephine Margaret Bakhita into Christian initiation - baptism, first holy communion, and confirmation.



AUGUST 22 – QUEENSHIP OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY – Mary the Mother of God is not only a gentle woman, but also a force to call upon in our great spiritual battles. The latter is indeed what we should call to mind on Saturday, Aug. 22nd. As evil enemies seek to bring about hatred, violence, selfishness, and ignorance, call upon Mary’s maternal protection, reminding us of God’s love, compassion, truth, humility, and mercy.

In the Book of Revelation Chapter 12, we can see our Queen of Heaven, “A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of 12 stars.”

The queen is pregnant and brings forth a child - destined to rule all the nations. Immediately a dragon appears to devour the child, but he is swept away to safety. A war breaks out among the angels. It is a battle between good and evil. Saint Michael prevails and the dragon – Satan was cast into hell.

Mary does not rule as earthly rulers often do with force, self-promotion, or control. Her royal power from God is the power of maternal love and intercession for the whole human race from heaven.

Honor Mary ‘s Queenship and pray the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary (Typically said on Sundays and Wednesday).

Glorious Mysteries

1. *The Resurrection — Faith*
2. *The Ascension — Hope, Desire for Heaven*
3. *The Descent of the Holy Spirit — Wisdom, Love of God*
4. *The Assumption of Mary — Devotion to Mary*
5. *The crowning of Our Lady Queen of Heaven. – Glory in Mary’s Intercession*

Appalachian Music and Story Telling

Join us for Appalachian Mountain dulcimer music!
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VENUE :

St. Joseph Retreat
Center Porch
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SAVE THE DATE

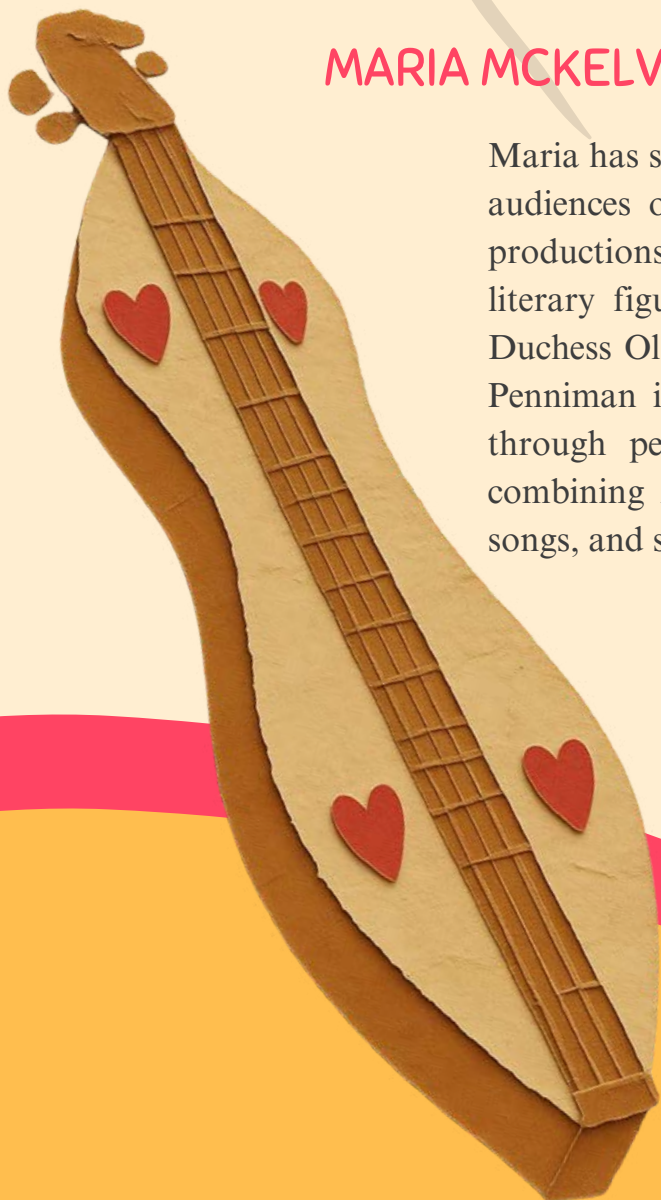
August 18th, 2026
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Donations Welcome

MARIA MCKELVEY

Maria has shared her passion for history, art, music, and theatre with audiences of all ages since 1979. She has performed in numerous productions throughout the region, portraying both historical and literary figures. Recent roles at Towngate Theatre include Grand Duchess Olga Katrina in *You Can't Take It With You* and Lavinia Penniman in *The Heiress*. Maria also brings Beatrix Potter to life through performances for the Beatrix Potter Society. She loves combining Appalachian Mountain dulcimer music, traditional folk songs, and storytelling to create engaging programs for all ages.

Reserve your spot today:
Contact Anna Marie Troiani
Phone: 304-907-0171
Email: atroiani@csjoseph.org



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49 & UNDER
50+

-  MEDALS FOR 1ST, 2ND, AND 3RD PLACE
-  WINNERS RECEIVE RIBBON & STIPEND
-  EACH PLAYER RECEIVES SHIRT FOR EVENT AND SWAG BAG
-  EVENT IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

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TWENTIETH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

First Reading: Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

Isaiah preaches that God welcomes foreigners into his house of prayer.

Responsorial: Psalm 67

“O God, let all the nations praise you!”

Second Reading: Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

The call of God is irrevocable.

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

The Canaanite woman relentlessly cries out to Christ without giving up on Him. He recognizes her desperate prayer and turns this moment into a lesson for his disciples about the importance of a faith strong enough to persist through obstacles and doubts.

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL SCRIPTURE TEXT](#)

PRAYER INTENTIONS

For the Church, that we are living examples of the good news of the gospel to all people in a spirit of love, generosity, and humility, let us pray to the Lord. . .

That leaders around the world may strive to serve all the peoples of their nations, ensuring that all are treated with equal dignity, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For people of all religions in the Holy Land, that they may enjoy the freedom to worship freely and live in peace, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For all those who have asked us to remember them in our prayers, and for those who have no one to pray for them, let us pray to the Lord. . .

Lord hear our prayer



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Liturgy of the Hours

LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Pray the prayer for this day, this hour!

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Scan the QR code or visit the link below to view a PDF version of the Liturgy of the Hours.



MASS ONLINE

Saturday 6pm Masses will continue to be livestreamed from the Cathedral of St. Joseph, and will be available on our website each Sunday at DWC.ORG.