



Our Lady of HOPE

CATHOLIC CHURCH

THE SACRISTAN MINISTRY

Sharing Stewardship Gifts With a Heart of Humble Service

Twenty-five years ago, when Janet McGee began serving as a sacristan for our 4 p.m. Saturday evening Mass, she couldn't have imagined the impact it would have on her life.

"Back then, Fr. Dave needed one, and he asked me if I would be willing to serve," Janet says. "It was that simple. I told him that if he would show me what to do, I'd be glad to help."

As the years have passed and pastors have changed, Janet has continued to serve, getting things ready for Mass to begin so that when the celebrant arrives, he can get himself ready without additionally needing to prepare the altar.

"I unlock the church, and then set up the book for the readings," Janet says. "I put out the bulletins and get the chalice and everything out. I wash it all really good and then check how many hosts we have. I put about 100 hosts in each paten. I put the wine out. I do whatever I can to help Father. Then, after Mass, I make sure everything is cleaned up and I lock the church."

And while Janet works in truly humble servitude, wanting nothing in return, she admits that what she has gained from her service doesn't even compare with what she gives.

"I feel so blessed and honored to be able to do this," Janet says. "It has strengthened my faith and brought me a



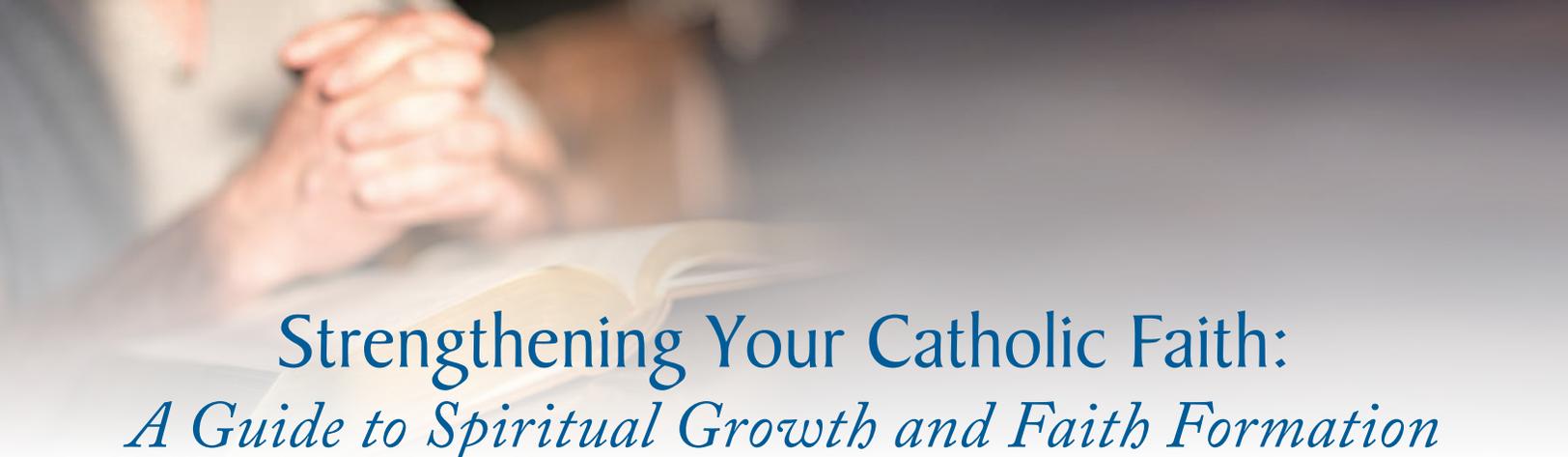
(From left) Fr. Juan, Janet McGee, and Fr. Paul

lot closer to God. It takes an extra 30 minutes of my time each Saturday, but the way I look at it, it is simply a part of my Mass experience."

What's more, Janet says that as she prepares the altar and cleans the vessels, she spends time reflecting on Christ's sacrifice and all He has done for her.

"Look what He did for us," she says. "He gave His life

continued on back cover



Strengthening Your Catholic Faith: *A Guide to Spiritual Growth and Faith Formation*

The journey of faith is a lifelong commitment, a continuous process of deepening our relationship with Christ and understanding the teachings of the Church. To improve your faith life and foster a closer connection with Christ, it's essential to engage in meaningful practices and explore Catholic literature that can provide spiritual nourishment. Here are some ideas to help you enhance your faith and some insightful Catholic-based books to read.

DAILY PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Building a strong connection with God starts with prayer and reflection. Setting aside time each day for prayer, whether it's the Rosary, the *Liturgy of the Hours*, or simply speaking from the heart, allows you to commune with the Divine. To complement your daily prayer, consider reading *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, a classic work that guides Catholics in developing a deeper prayer life and drawing closer to Christ.

ATTEND MASS REGULARLY

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Catholic faith. Regular attendance at Mass is crucial to growing closer to Christ. It's not just about fulfilling an obligation — it's an opportunity to receive the body and blood of our Lord and Savior. For a deeper understanding of the Mass, *The Lamb's Supper* by Scott Hahn offers insights into the biblical roots of the Eucharist and its significance.

STUDY THE BIBLE

The Word of God is a rich source of spiritual growth. Dive into the Scriptures, attend Bible studies, or join a Catholic reading group to explore the teachings of the Church. *The Catholic Study Bible* with commentary is an excellent resource for gaining a deeper understanding of the Bible's teachings and how they relate to your faith. Utilize

the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' New American Bible online at www.bible.usccb.org/bible.

ENGAGE IN FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS

Our parish offers faith formation programs, which can provide a structured way to learn about the teachings of the Church. These programs can include courses on Catholic theology, morality, and the history of the Church. Contact the parish office for information about available opportunities to deepen your faith and understanding.

READ CATHOLIC LITERATURE

Immersing yourself in Catholic literature is a powerful way to improve your faith formation. *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales is a classic that offers practical guidance for leading a life of holiness. *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis is a thought-provoking work that explores the Christian faith from a broader perspective.

SEEK SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

Having a spiritual director or mentor can be immensely beneficial in your faith journey. They can offer guidance, support, and insights that help you grow spiritually. Consider reading *Spiritual Direction: A Guide for Sharing the Father's Love* by Fr. Thomas Acklin and Fr. Boniface Hicks to understand the role of a spiritual director in your life.

Improving your faith life and growing closer to Christ is an ongoing process. By incorporating these practices and exploring Catholic literature, you can deepen your understanding of Church teachings and develop a more profound relationship with our Lord.

Remember that faith formation is a personal journey, and it is never too late to start or continue on the path to spiritual growth.

A New Year, New Challenges, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Dear Parishioners,

It is a new year, and it is my prayer for all of you — and for me, as well — that we can take new steps on our faith journeys and seek new ways to live out discipleship and stewardship.

Pope Francis once commented on his perspective of our modern approach to life. He said, “Certainly, possessions, money, and power can give a momentary thrill, the illusion of being happy, but they end up possessing us and making us always want more, never satisfied. I have learned that the most important thing is to put on Christ in your life, place your trust in Him, and you will never be disappointed.”

The pope has been called “the world’s parish priest.” As we pray for one another in this New Year, may we all ask the Lord to help us appreciate Pope Francis’ approach to life, his simple way of seeing things, and his very basic way of appreciating things. I would hope that we see this year as a time for opportunity, a time to deepen our relationship to Christ, and for that matter to one another.

If we wish to change our lives and the lives of others, there are two easy ways to do it. We are blessed with many opportunities in this parish to pray, but as much as we need to take advantage of those, we also need to develop a strong personal prayer life. Recall the young Samuel, who was not



quite sure what to do with his life, or what direction to go. When he finally settled on that one important prayer, “Speak, Lord, for I am listening,” Samuel gave us the hint as to what we need to do. Prayer is a two-way street, and part of that is taking the time to listen to God.

The second important way is to exude joy. Christ certainly called us to do that. Pope Francis has had much to say about joy, as well. The Holy Father says, “Joy cannot be held at heel; it must be let go. Joy is a pilgrim virtue. It is a gift that walks — walks on the path

of life, that walks with Jesus... proclaiming joy, lengthens and widens that path.” We must seek that joy and then we need to share it. That is truly our call. Joy translates quite easily into “love your neighbor.”

Yes, there may be challenges ahead in 2025, but we must focus on the opportunities, and then exert the effort to benefit from those opportunities. Happy New Year!

In Christ,

Fr. Paul Ferguson

Fr. Paul Ferguson
Pastor

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page. It features a large, light-colored cross standing on a wooden surface. In front of the cross, the year '2025' is written in large, 3D, light-colored wooden block letters. The background is a soft, warm sunset or sunrise over a landscape with rolling hills.

Catholic Schools Week 2022 *United in Faith and Community*

Our Washington Catholic Schools will observe Catholic Schools Week from Jan. 26 through Feb. 1, with a full calendar of activities that celebrate what makes a Catholic education so valuable, as well as an affordable option for families.

“The theme this school year is ‘Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community,’” says Karie Craney, Principal of Washington Catholic Middle/High School. “This week is truly a week-long celebration and school team-building event that reminds each of us how special we are in God’s eyes and how lucky we are to teach, work, and learn at Washington Catholic Schools.”

The celebration will be the opportunity for Washington Catholic Schools to tell their story of tradition and excellence.

“We take time to celebrate all who make Catholic education possible, such as alumni, parishioners, parents, faculty, staff, students, and our community,” Mrs. Craney says. “We celebrate our success with our students, faculty, and staff, and reflect on how to better live our mission in the year to come.”

During the week, the faculty, staff, and students at our Washington Catholic Schools will recognize what makes our schools so special — the ability to share our Catholic faith throughout the school day, every day. The week is also an opportunity to recognize those who sacrifice to make Catholic education possible.

“We recognize the generous donors, parents, relatives, and the parishioners of Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church,” Mrs. Craney says.

For Mrs. Craney, the best part of Catholic Schools



There’s fun to be celebrated during Catholic Schools Week, as these students depict during last year’s event show.

Week is the Diocesan Mass at St. Benedict’s Cathedral.

“All the schools in the diocese are represented and share in the Body of Christ,” she says. “After this Mass, we take our Seniors and fifth-graders to have lunch in Evansville. It is a great bonding experience for our students and staff who attend. We also enjoy gifting baskets to our neighbors, to include the YMCA, Courthouse Annex, local law enforcement, and the First Baptist Church. The baskets are given to thank them for another year of support to Washington Catholic Schools.”

The celebration of Catholic Schools Week at Washington Catholic Schools is an opportunity to help families understand that Washington Catholic Schools are an option for the best education they want for their

“This week is truly a week-long celebration and school team-building event that reminds each of us how special we are in God’s eyes and how lucky we are to teach, work, and learn at Washington Catholic Schools.” — KARIE CRANEY, PRINCIPAL

25 Celebrations Under Way Community at Washington Catholic

children. “We want our community to be proud of the Catholic education we provide and help us to spread the word that Catholic education is more affordable than ever before,” Mrs. Craney says. “We want families to know that they do not have to be Catholic to attend Washington Catholic. Our school is open to families of all denominations.”

Besides the celebration of Catholic Schools Week, the students at Washington Catholic are given the opportunity to incorporate service into their education.

“We have been blessed that Michelle and Eric Ringwald come to school as a part of the St. Vincent de Paul Youth Group to work on projects with our students,” Mrs. Craney says. “Some projects that have been completed or are in progress include the Box of Joy project, a special box in our student-created chapel where students can ask for items they need.”

The athletic programs are an opportunity to teach the student-athletes about giving back to the community.

“For the past four years, the girls’ and boys’ varsity basketball teams have helped assist with the Jubilee Christmas in Washington by helping parents pick and wrap gifts for their children,” Mrs. Craney says. “This year our athletic

teams are also collecting new and gently used books for PACE.”

The Washington Catholic BETA Club, made up of 53 of the 58 students in high school, competed in the state convention in Evansville in November and came home with 15 individual awards.

BETA Club is an international honor society for fourth through 12th-grade students. Its purpose is to promote academic achievement, character, leadership, and service among elementary and secondary school students.

The Washington Catholic awards included seven first-place awards, seven second-place awards, and one third-place award. The categories were in Spanish, Social Studies, Science, Creative Writing, Woodworking, Drawing, Photography, Digital Art, Painting, Sculpture, Quilling, and Mixed Media. Two students were awarded Best in Show for Drawing and Woodworking. Washington Catholic’s BETA group overall placed second in Banner, first place in Robotics, and second place in Group Talent.

“Lane Myers was also elected Secretary of the Indiana BETA Club,” Mrs. Craney says. “We are excited for this group to compete in Orlando, FL at the National Convention in June.”



Bishop Joseph M. Siegel shares a joyful time with several Washington Catholic Schools students during Catholic Schools Week.



During Catholic Schools Week, students from Washington Catholic Schools have opportunities to learn outside the classroom.

Parents wanting more information about what Washington Catholic Schools can offer their children may visit our website, wccardinals.org.

ST. SCHOLASTICA: A SAINT OF *LOVE* AND *DEVOTION*



When looking at her life, her unwavering faith, and her deep love for God and her brother, St. Benedict, St. Scholastica is a remarkable example for all Catholics to honor and emulate. As we approach her feast day on Feb. 10, let us delve into the history and importance of St. Scholastica in the Catholic Church.

Born in Nursia, Italy, around the year 480, St. Scholastica is best known for her close relationship with her twin brother, St. Benedict, who is considered the father of Western monasticism. Raised in a Christian family, the siblings were inseparable throughout their childhood. However, as they grew older, they chose different paths — Benedict became a monk and founded the famous Monte Cassino monastery, while Scholastica embraced the monastic life in a convent located nearby. Despite the geographical separation, their spiritual connection remained unbreakable.

St. Scholastica's life teaches us the importance of nurturing one's spiritual journey. Her deep commitment to the monastic life exemplifies how individuals can find their own paths to God. By dedicating herself to prayer and contemplation, Scholastica became an inspiration for those seeking to deepen their faith and grow closer to the Divine.

Her story is a testament to the power of sibling love, as well as a profound love for God. Her famous encounter with St. Benedict on the evening before her death is a poignant example. On that night, the two siblings met for their annual spiritual rendezvous. As they conversed about matters of the soul, Scholastica implored her brother to stay with her, as she had a premonition that it would be their last meeting. When Benedict refused due to his

monastic rule, Scholastica fervently prayed for a downpour. Miraculously, her prayers were answered, and a thunderstorm prevented Benedict from leaving. Three days later, Scholastica passed away, and Benedict saw her soul ascending to heaven in the form of a dove. This story encapsulates the pure and selfless love that we should all strive for in our relationships, both with our loved ones and with God.

St. Scholastica also stands as an advocate for women in the Church, proving that their spiritual contributions are equally valuable. As the founder of a Benedictine convent, she demonstrated that women could lead a life of dedication and prayer within the monastic tradition. Her legacy endures in the many women who have followed her example and become devout sisters and nuns, contributing significantly to the Church's spiritual growth and service to society.

St. Scholastica's feast day on Feb. 10 is a time for Catholics to reflect on the virtues she embodied and to seek her intercession in their lives. Her love for God, her profound spirituality, and her dedication to the monastic life make her a beacon of inspiration for Catholics. Honoring her reminds us to cultivate our spiritual lives, deepen our relationship with God, and embrace the powerful bonds of love with our family and community.

As we celebrate her feast day, let us remember her legacy and seek to emulate her example of selfless love, commitment to God, and dedication to the monastic life. St. Scholastica's life continues to inspire Catholics, reminding us of the profound impact one person can have on the faith and devotion of many.

Prayer Opportunities Draw Community Closer to Christ and Our Blessed Mother

We are familiar with the story of the Wedding at Cana, when Mary tells the servants, “Do whatever he tells you” (John 2:5). Mary always points us to Jesus. Conversely, Jesus listens to his mother.

Here at Our Lady of Hope, we are blessed with several opportunities each week to pray to the Lord and our Blessed Mother. Before daily Mass, a committed group gathers to pray the Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, Memorare, and St. Michael prayer. There’s also a Rosary before Saturday and Sunday Mass.

Kitty Lawson, who helps oversee these prayer opportunities, is thankful to Louis Lamb, Connie Gray, Cynthia McCarty, and Judy Brewer for their invaluable service.

“We work so well together,” Kitty says. “If the designated person doesn’t make it, someone else steps in. It’s a group effort.”

Before the Thursday morning Mass, a group prays for an end to abortion, and prays a special Rosary for this intention.

“We’ve seen progress made, and we keep praying,” Kitty says. “We won’t give up on this cause until there are no more abortions.”

On the Fourth of July and before elections, they say a patriotic Rosary with music. Typically, there are about 50 people in attendance for these.

“Our country needs prayer,” Kitty says. “There is a lot to be corrected in our society. There are a lot of immoralities and people not following what Jesus taught us.”

Kitty loves the Rosary and our Blessed Mother. She prays a Rosary every day.

“The Rosary is a reminder of our Blessed Mother’s role in the salvation of the human race,” Kitty says. “It goes through the life of Christ and what He did for us.”



The Blessed Mother helped convert Kitty and her husband, Jim, to Catholicism. They were Methodists before becoming Catholic in 1998, having completed the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults studies. Kitty started to investigate the faith more after a Catholic friend told her about Marian apparitions.

“Once I started to learn more about Mary, I just knew wherever she was, I was going to be,” Kitty says.

Consider arriving at weekend Mass 30 minutes early to pray a Rosary, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, Memorare, and St. Michael prayer. It’s a beautiful way to prepare for Mass.

“The Rosary is the beginning and still is part of our faith story,” Kitty says. “It’s a conversation with the Blessed Mother. There’s no better way to prepare for Mass.”

If you'd like to volunteer to lead the Rosary before Mass, contact Kitty Lawson at 812-698-0834 or kslawson1942@gmail.com.

315 N.E. Third Street
Washington, IN 47501
812-254-2883
www.ccwash.org

THE SACRISTAN MINISTRY *continued from front cover*

for us. If I can't give Him an extra 30 to 45 minutes of my time, then something is wrong. This is my gift to Jesus — a way for me to thank Him for all He's done."

When asked how much longer she will serve as a sacristan, Janet answers with humble determination.

"I'm never going to stop, until God tells me to," she says. "I am doing this for Him."

In that same humble spirit, Janet encourages more of us to consider serving Our Lady of Hope in this way. Serving as a sacristan is an incredible way to give of ourselves, to offer our service together with Christ's sacrifice on the cross and in so doing to more deeply participate

"Look what He did for us. He gave His life for us. If I can't give Him an extra 30 to 45 minutes of my time, then something is wrong. This is my gift to Jesus — a way for me to thank Him for all He's done."

— JANET MCGEE

in the sacrifice of the Mass. Currently, Janet is the only active sacristan, so all of the other Masses could use one — please consider serving!

If you would like to serve our parish in this way, contact Fr. Paul at the parish office, 812-254-2883. He will direct you on what to do and get you involved.

