



Our Lady of HOPE

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Students Take Important Step on Faith Journey as They Receive FIRST COMMUNION

Seventeen students recently celebrated a big step on their faith journey — First Holy Communion — receiving the Eucharist for the first time on April 7. All were dressed in their best, smiling ear to ear. We joyfully celebrate alongside these students, who also made their First Reconciliation in late 2023.

Yvonne Evans has coordinated First Communion preparation for the past 60 years. Next year, she will hand over the reins to Jennifer Oxford.

Yvonne initially taught at the school and taught First Communion for grades 1-2. She was asked to continue helping after she retired from “40-some” years of teaching. She was also a pastoral associate at the parish for some time. And here we are 60 years later, under her direction. Yvonne helps with both the school and religious education students who are preparing for the sacraments.

“I’ve helped many children and their parents and even some grandparents receive First Communion,” Yvonne says. “I even helped lead Jennifer through First Communion.”

Yvonne always tries to get the parents involved in their child’s journey. She is happy to work with Kelli Barnard, second and third-grade religious education teacher, to prepare students for the sacraments.



The 2024 First Communion class celebrates their special day.

“I love working with Kelli,” Yvonne says. “She is just excellent.”

Yvonne and Kelli planned the liturgy for the big day. On April 6, there was a retreat for students, with which Fr. Paul Ferguson also helped. Over the many years that Yvonne has led First Communion preparation, she has pieced together the curriculum from several resources.

“They study the Mass parts to understand it more,” she says.

After decades of service, Yvonne recognizes it’s time to hand this work on to a new person. She has enjoyed working with the hundreds of kids she’s seen receive the

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PENTECOST:

The Church's Birthday Offers a Lesson in Stewardship and Discipleship

Celebrated 50 days after Easter, Pentecost holds immense significance in the Catholic Church. It marks the day when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and Mary, empowering them to spread the Gospel. This event is not only a cornerstone of the Church's liturgical calendar but also a powerful lesson in stewardship and discipleship.

Pentecost, often referred to as the “birthday of the Church,” underscores the central role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Catholic. The Holy Spirit is a gift from God, just as all our talents, time, and resources are. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and Mary reminds Catholics that their own lives should be characterized by the openness to receive and share the gifts God has bestowed upon them.

■ SHARING THE GOOD NEWS:

One of the primary messages of Pentecost is the universal mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel to all nations. The apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke in languages they did not know, allowing them to communicate with people from various backgrounds. This moment teaches Catholics that the call to discipleship and stewardship is not exclusive but extends to all people. Catholics are called to be good stewards of the Good News, sharing it generously and inclusively with others, just as the apostles did.

■ BEING EMPOWERED FOR SERVICE:

Pentecost is a reminder that the Holy Spirit empowers individuals for service. The apostles, who were once fearful and uncertain, were transformed into bold witnesses of Christ's teachings. This transformation illustrates the transformative power of the Holy Spirit and how it equips Catholics for service to the Church and the world. Stewardship, in this context, entails using one's talents, time, and treasure to serve others and advance the mission of the Church.

■ UNITY IN DIVERSITY:

The diverse crowd present at the first Pentecost, representing various nations and languages, highlights the theme of unity in diversity. Catholics are called to embrace and celebrate the diversity of God's creation while recognizing the common bond of faith. This is a vital aspect of stewardship — respecting the unique talents and backgrounds of each individual within the faith community and utilizing these differences to build a stronger, more vibrant Church.

■ BEING RESPONSIVE TO GOD'S CALL:

Pentecost serves as a reminder of the apostles' responsiveness to God's call. They were willing to leave behind their old lives, filled with uncertainty and fear, and accept the mission to spread the Gospel. This act of responding to God's call is fundamental to discipleship, which encompasses a willingness to be generous with one's time, talents, and treasure in service to God and others.

Pentecost is a pivotal moment in the Catholic Church's history, and its significance extends beyond the historical event. It is a lesson in stewardship and discipleship, emphasizing the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the call to share the Good News, the empowerment for service, unity in diversity, and the responsive nature of discipleship. Catholics are reminded that, like the apostles, they are called to be good stewards of the gifts and blessings they have received, using them to serve and enrich the Church and the broader community. Pentecost serves as an annual reminder that the Holy Spirit continues to guide and empower Catholics on their journey of faith and stewardship.

Circling Back to the Basics of Stewardship

Dear Parishioners,

Our parish has been committed to living Stewardship as a Way of Life for a while now, and I thought this might be a good time to circle back to the basics. Perhaps some of you hear the word “stewardship” and are still not sure what to think.

Wherever you fall in your understanding of stewardship, you may find yourself wondering why you even need to participate in the first place, or how you can possibly give more of yourself to God when you are already pressed for time, energy, and money.

As you try to answer these questions, the first thing to remember is that God is the source of the “three Ts” of stewardship — our time, talents, and treasure. If it were not for God, we would not have any of these.

The second key element on which to focus is to consider how you are receiving His gifts. Do you feel entitled to all He has given you, and perhaps demand even more from Him? Or do you thank Him for His abundant generosity, and as a sign of your gratefulness, return a portion back to Him?

God, in His infinite love and mercy for us, grants us these gifts during our time on Earth, even though we do not deserve them. As a sign of appreciation, we can give Him a return on His investment.



If God gives you a free Saturday afternoon, you could take your kids to Confession instead of watching TV, playing golf, or scrolling through your phone. If God gives you cooking skills, you could prepare a meal for a family with a newborn baby instead of going shopping.

Financial choices are applicable to stewards, as well. Do you waste your financial resources or take them for granted? Do you carefully think about what portion you should return to God?

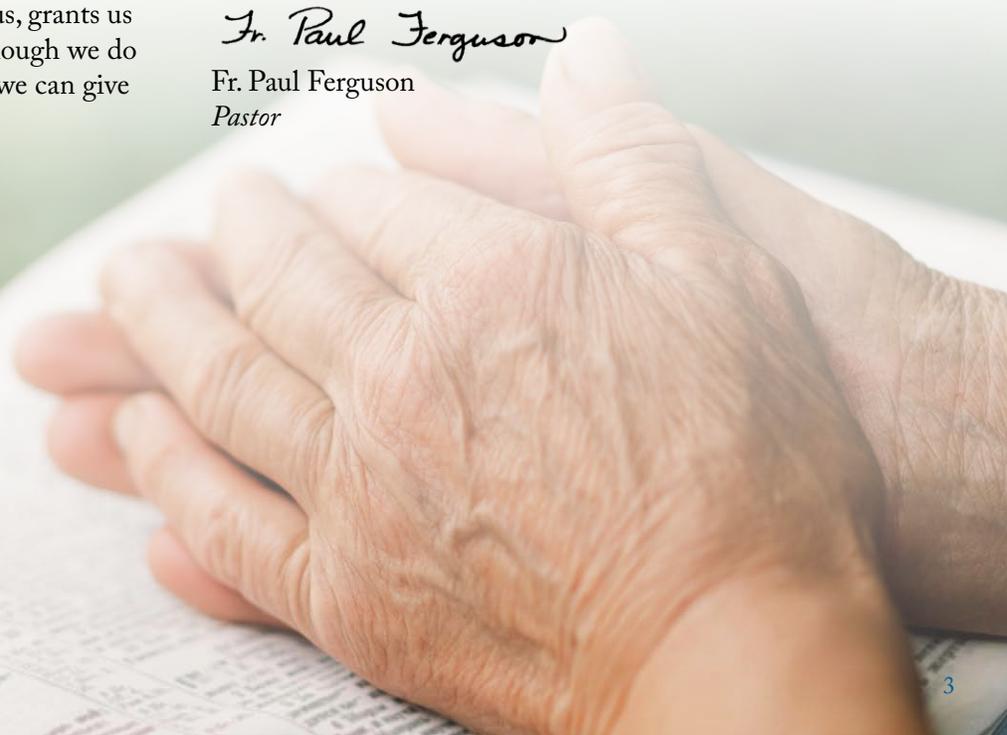
However deep your understanding of stewardship, remember that it is not a rule or mandate — it is an invitation. No one is “forced” to live the life of a good steward. Our realization that God has blessed us — wherever we are in our faith journey — should drive our yearning to give back of our time, talent, and treasure.

Out of love for our Creator — and to continue to grow in His love — we should desire to give stewardship, as a way of life, a try.

In Christ,

Fr. Paul Ferguson

Fr. Paul Ferguson
Pastor



GET READY FOR Vacation *Children of the Parish Invited*



With summer right around the corner, our parishioners are hard at work preparing for this year's Vacation Bible School program. Every year at Our Lady of Hope, volunteers present Vacation Bible School (VBS) for the children of our parish.

"Our parish has a long 25-year tradition of VBS," says Kande Batz, Director of Religious Education. "This program is possible thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, whom we thank on behalf of our young community."

The annual VBS program offers four fun-filled days of learning about Jesus with other children in the parish. It is open to children entering preschool through fifth grade. It will be held from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. daily from June 3 through 8. This year's VBS theme is "Cool Kingdom Party — Mary Leads Me Closer To Jesus."

Valerie Clarke is one of the volunteers for VBS this year. She says caring for the children in our parish community is an important feat.

"We can awaken in them the sense of belonging both to our Church on the global level and to our Catholic community here in Washington," she says. "We can help them to cultivate the love of Jesus. Transmitting our faith in a creative and fun way through fun activities and crafts awakens our little ones' interest in learning more about their faith."

During VBS, students encounter Jesus in various fun and enlightening ways. There is a theme for each day and for the week related to the faith. The day begins by introducing the theme to the group, then the children enjoy learning about the faith by way of food, songs, crafts, games, and a lesson with their peers. To wrap up, all the students gather back in the gym to review the day and the songs they learned.

"Through VBS, children will not only have fun with their

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Registration is available at bit.ly/OLOHVBS or at the back of the church — the registration deadline is May 20. Those interested in volunteering may sign up at bit.ly/OLOHVolunteers or at the back of the church.

Bible School 2024

ended to "Cool Kingdom Party"

peers, but they will also get to know Jesus, read the Word of God, and learn about our Catholic faith," Valerie says.

Parishioners are invited to consider supporting VBS in a number of ways.

"We need food to feed our volunteers," Kande says. "We typically ask different parish groups or individuals for food each night for the volunteers."

In addition to food, parishioners are asked to please pray for the success of the VBS week. We are blessed in our parish community with the support of many volunteers, both teens and adults who assist with the program. Kande and the team need leaders in charge of the various aspects of the program.

"I can see and feel the commitment and the joy in their faces when they are with the children sharing their talents and gifts," Kande says. "The contact with the children helps

us to learn how important it is to continue to build our Catholic community. Our volunteers are really committed to helping our children learn about our faith."

Volunteers must be in sixth grade or older to help out and all adult volunteers are required to have a background check.



First Communion *continued from front cover*

Eucharist for the first time.

"I love the children," Yvonne says. "They are my life. The parents too — I enjoy all the time with them. It's such a special sacrament. They are ready for it."

Over the years, the children have gotten accustomed to walking to Communion with their arms crossed, but now they no longer need to.

"I love seeing their excitement," Yvonne says. "They know that this is Jesus, their very best friend. They are in touch with who He is. It makes me so happy to see their enthusiasm."

Kelli also enjoys watching the students receive First Communion. She feels blessed to work alongside Yvonne to share this special sacrament.

"She is a true example of being a disciple of Jesus," Kelli says of Yvonne. "She has a way of helping make the sacrament special for everyone."

We extend our gratitude to Yvonne for her many years

of devoted service in helping to form our young Catholics. And we offer our congratulations to this year's First Communion students as they celebrate the reception of this important sacrament!



DEEPENING YOUR FAITH: The Transformative Power of Catholic Podcasts



In the digital age, where information flows ceaselessly, Catholics are finding solace and spiritual growth in the world of podcasts. These audio treasures not only serve as a source of inspiration but also as powerful tools for deepening one's faith and understanding of Catholicism. Let's explore how embracing Catholic podcasts can be a transformative journey for believers, accompanied by a curated list of the top 10 Catholic podcasts that you can easily access online.

The Power of Catholic Podcasts

Podcasts have become a cornerstone of modern communication, allowing individuals to consume content on the go. For Catholics seeking to fortify their spiritual journey, podcasts offer a unique blend of convenience and depth. Whether you're commuting, exercising, or simply relaxing at home, these audio programs provide a space for reflection and education, and serve as companions in the journey of faith.

Ten Catholic Podcasts for Spiritual Growth

1. **Catholic Stuff You Should Know:** Delving into various aspects of Catholicism, this podcast combines humor with profound insights, making complex topics accessible to all.
2. **Word on Fire Show:** Hosted by Bishop Robert Barron, this podcast explores the intersection of faith and culture, offering a deep dive into the teachings of the Church.
3. **Pints with Aquinas:** A lively exploration of the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, this podcast invites listeners to engage with the rich intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church in a friendly, conversational style.
4. **The Catholic Talk Show:** Covering a wide range of topics, from history to current events, this podcast provides a fresh perspective on Catholicism with a dose of humor.
5. **Catholic Answers Live:** A live call-in show where apologists answer questions about Catholicism, providing valuable insights into the teachings and practices of the Church.
6. **The Liturgy Guys:** Exploring the beauty and richness of the liturgy, this podcast offers a deeper understanding of the rituals and traditions that form the heart of Catholic worship.
7. **The Jeff Cavins Show:** Hosted by Bible scholar Jeff Cavins, this podcast delves into Scripture, offering listeners a profound and practical understanding of the Word of God.
8. **Catholic Feminist:** A thought-provoking exploration of feminism and its intersection with Catholicism, this podcast encourages critical reflection on gender issues within the context of faith.
9. **Catching Foxes:** A candid and humorous take on the challenges and joys of living out the Catholic faith in the modern world, this podcast is both relatable and insightful.
10. **Among the Lilies:** Designed for Catholic women, this podcast explores topics relevant to their spiritual and everyday lives, fostering a sense of community and solidarity.

How to Access These Podcasts

To embark on your faith-enriching journey, simply visit the websites of the respective podcasts listed above or search for them on popular podcast platforms such as Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, or Stitcher. Subscribe to stay updated on the latest episodes and let these podcasts be your companions in deepening your Catholic faith.

Catholic podcasts offer a unique and accessible means for believers to grow spiritually and learn more about their faith. Embrace the transformative power of faith in your ears and let these podcasts accompany you on your journey of Catholic discovery.

SUMMER SOCIAL Offers a Great Time for Our Community to Gather, Socialize, and Have Plenty of Fun

Having time outside of Sunday Mass is important for the growth and unity of a parish. Often, there are many parishioners who you rarely have the chance to speak with because they attend a different weekend Mass time. It can be difficult to cultivate true friendship and community when you only see someone for a brief time once a week. One of the ways that Our Lady of Hope strives to form this community and fellowship is through the annual Summer Social.

Our Lady of Hope has hosted the Summer Social for over 10 years. The event is open to the public, but the main purpose is to encourage community within the parish by providing parishioners with an opportunity to gather, socialize, and have plenty of fun.

For this year's event, the Beer Garden — geared towards adults 21 and over — will be open on the evening of Saturday, June 1. The Summer Social will take place the following day, Sunday, June 2.

Arwyn Vaal, who is heading up this year's event, has been involved on the committee since 2022. For her, it has been a wonderful chance to meet new parishioners and to feel more connected and involved at the parish.

"The Summer Social will have activities for all ages," Arwyn says. "We have an area that will be for kids, set up with kid's games, prizes, and maybe a fun surprise. For adults, there is the opportunity to socialize and eat yummy foods, and we will have our grand raffle and basket raffle. When our committee is planning the social and all the activities, we do our best to plan everything to encourage socialization. We want to create opportunities for fellowship and cultivating friendship."

In addition, there will be booths set up providing information for some of the parish ministries. There will be food trucks and live music, and St. Benedict's Brew Works will be pouring a variety of their beers. Kids will have the chance to enjoy the local playground, an area for corn hole, and the chance to enjoy the music as well.

The Summer Social is also a great way to get involved at the parish and volunteer some of your time. There are many different areas where help is needed, including the different food booths, setup or teardown, and the kids' game area. The committee works with the volunteers to help

make sure that those who volunteer also have plenty of time to enjoy the festivities.

"When parishioners get involved, not only does it help our committee and give a better appreciation for the event, but it also helps make the event better," Arwyn says.

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF
WASHINGTON

SUMMER SOCIAL

**SATURDAY, JUNE 1ST,
6PM TO 10PM**
BEER GARDEN \$5 COVER • SHANE
& ED RODIMEL • FOOD TRUCKS

**SUNDAY, JUNE 2ND,
11AM TO 3PM**
KIDS GAMES • FOOD • RAFFLE •
ICE CREAM

315 NE 3RD ST, WASHINGTON, IN
47501

SEE FACEBOOK PAGE FOR MORE
INFO

If you have any questions, or to get involved contact Arwyn Vaal at arwynvaal@gmail.com or 678-662-9057. You can also call the parish office at 812-254-2883 and ask for Teresa.

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

The Significance of the **VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a significant event in the Catholic Church, commemorating the visit of the Virgin Mary to her cousin, Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John the Baptist. This feast day, celebrated each year on May 31, holds profound theological and spiritual significance in the Catholic Church.

ENCOUNTER WITH THE MESSIAH

The meeting of Mary and Elizabeth is a poignant moment, as the first recorded encounter between Jesus, still in Mary's womb, and John the Baptist, in Elizabeth's womb. According to the Gospel of Luke, when Mary greeted Elizabeth, the baby in Elizabeth's womb leaped for joy. This profound connection is a testament to the divinely ordained roles of Jesus and John in the plan of salvation.

A SIGN OF GOD'S PRESENCE

The Visitation is a powerful sign of God's presence and grace. It is during this visit that Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, proclaims Mary as "blessed among women" and acknowledges the significance of Mary's role in God's

plan. Mary's Magnificat, a beautiful hymn of praise to God, is also recited during this encounter, emphasizing the importance of humility, gratitude, and recognizing God's blessings in one's life.

CELEBRATING THE FEAST

The Feast of the Visitation is celebrated on May 31 in the Catholic Church. On this day, Catholics are encouraged to attend Mass. May we reflect on the Visitation's significance and continue to draw inspiration from Mary's faith and charity, on this day and throughout the year.

