



Our Lady of HOPE

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Getting Ready for VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2026 *Fun-Packed Program Draws Our Youngest Catholics into the Faith*

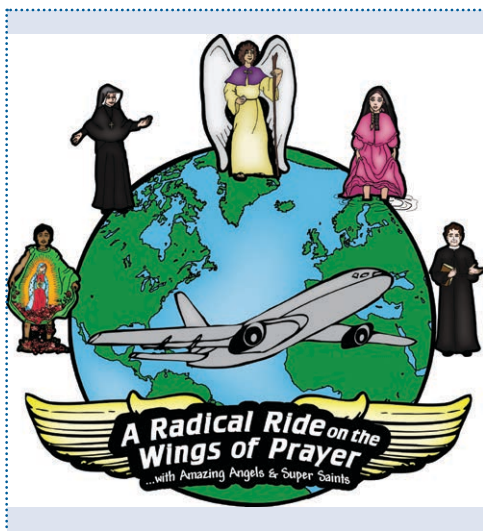
Summer is nearly here, and that means it's time to get ready for Vacation Bible School at Our Lady of Hope. Co-leaders Kande Batz and Valerie Clarke are excited to welcome children in rising pre-K through fifth grade to participate in activities centered around Catholic virtues and traditions, the saints, sacraments, and Scripture.

"VBS is a four-day adventure to learn about Jesus and how He saved us through His death and resurrection," Valerie says.

The program is scheduled for June 1 through June 4, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Washington Catholic Middle School. Each evening begins with a large-group gathering and a priestly blessing, followed by rotating small-group activities. Finally, each night will conclude with closing prayers and songs.

"Through activities like skits, games, crafts, and music, our faith is brought to life," Valerie says.

The theme for VBS this year will be "A Radical Ride on the Wings of Prayer with Amazing Angels and Super Saints." Participants will learn the ins and outs of prayer — what prayer is and how to apply it to their lives, to



build a consistent prayer life that will remain with them as they grow. Valerie explains that the fun activities create lasting memories, while giving children a foundational understanding before they experience religious education classes during the school year.

"Through the program, the children encounter stories, games, crafts, and fun centered around our faith," she says. "This helps them build a basis for continuing a life with Jesus. Many students remember the fun they had at VBS for many years after."

VBS isn't just a memorable experience for the kids — the many volunteers who make VBS happen have

just as much fun! Valerie says that many volunteers return each year and are visibly impacted by seeing the children grow and learn. It is an excellent volunteer opportunity for students who have finished seventh through 12th grades.

"We are blessed with many adult and teen volunteers," Valerie says. "They enjoy experiencing their faith in a different way and seeing the faith through the eyes of the children."

When all the fun crafts, snacks, music, and games

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The True Meaning of the Word “Stewardship”



There is a stigma attached to the word “stewardship” in some Catholic parishes, likely because many pastors and parish leaders mistakenly equate stewardship with money. But a true steward knows that couldn’t be further from the truth.

Stewardship is a biblical principle that has nothing to do with money. Nineteen of the main parables of Christ relate directly to stewardship. And, in those parables when Christ speaks of stewardship, He never mentions raising money. Surprised?

Stewardship simply means being grateful for all of God’s blessings. Everything we have — each breath we take on earth, the tremendous talents we possess, and our ability to earn income to sustain ourselves — all stem from God. We come into the world with nothing, and we leave with nothing.

Recognizing this and being grateful for our bountiful

blessings is the first step of stewardship. Once these realizations fall into place, we are then eager to find a way to respond to God’s generosity and embark upon a stewardship way of life.

And stewardship is just that, a way of life. It is not like a TV show to which you can tune in whenever the mood strikes and shut off when you are no longer interested. It is truly a way of living.

Yet the mere word “stewardship” has gotten a bad rap over the years — and not just by us laypeople.

According to the late stewardship pioneer Msgr. Thomas McGread, when a pastor speaks about money during his homily, 75 percent of the congregation immediately stops listening. However, did you know that tithing is mentioned in the Old Testament 39 times, and in the New Testament 11 times? Tithing is biblically based, and it simply means to give a portion of our gifts back to God.

In 1992, when the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops was forming the Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, they originally didn’t want to title it *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*.

“Instead, they wanted to just call it *A Disciple’s Response*, with the reason being that they felt ‘stewardship’ meant money,” said Msgr. McGread before his passing in April 2013. “I convinced them at the time that ‘stewardship’ is a biblical term, and it is our job to explain what a steward is. Before the Pastoral Letter, most of us didn’t understand the spiritual dimension of stewardship.”

So, how do we go about sharing the spiritual dimensions of stewardship with fellow parishioners and lay leaders?

First, Msgr. McGread cited the importance of being hospitable and discovering the needs of parishioners. He felt that when parishioners were welcomed and their needs were met, they were fulfilled and felt a sense of belonging to their parish. This, in turn, creates ownership. Once parishioners felt like they were part of the parish, they wanted to respond by sharing their time, talent, and treasure to help make it the best parish community possible.

And, as parishioners support their parish with all of their resources out of gratitude, the entire parish blossoms. Prayers increase, ministries grow, and yes, the offertory increases. These blessings are natural outcomes of living a stewardship way of life and they are why we must always remember the true meaning of the word “stewardship.”

Faithfulness as We Move Toward Ordinary Time

Dear Parishioners,

Much of the Christian life is lived outside of the Church's most intense seasons. As we move through the weeks of the Easter season and look ahead to Ordinary Time, the Church gently shifts our focus toward the steady, everyday practice of discipleship. The month of May invites us to reflect on this rhythm and on the role that faithfulness plays in shaping our relationship with Christ.

The weeks that lead us toward Ordinary Time remind us that following Christ is not sustained only by great moments or special celebrations. It is sustained by consistency — returning to Mass each week, making time for prayer even when life is busy, and remaining connected to parish life through seasons of change. These simple decisions carry lasting spiritual weight and help form habits of faith that keep us rooted in Christ.

This steady faithfulness is closely tied to stewardship. Stewardship is not a one-time response, but a way of living that flows from recognizing that everything we have comes from God. Our time, our abilities, and our material resources are gifts entrusted to us, and faithfulness means offering those gifts consistently rather than occasionally.

Living stewardship in this way requires intention. It asks us to move beyond convenience and toward commitment. When we give our time in prayer and service, share our talents through ministry, and support the parish



financially with regular generosity, we help ensure that the Church can continue her mission. These quiet acts of faithfulness allow ministries to function, needs to be met, and the Gospel to be proclaimed.

Parish life depends on this steady commitment. A parish grows strong not only through special events or major initiatives, but through the faithful participation of parishioners who understand that their presence matters. When many people contribute what they can, the Church becomes a place of welcome, stability, and hope for all who enter.

The month of May is a good time to reflect on how we are preparing for the longer stretch of Ordinary Time ahead. Are we making prayer a priority? Are we engaged in the life of the parish? Are we offering our gifts with consistency and trust? These questions are not meant to burden us, but to help us grow as disciples who live with purpose.

May God strengthen us in these weeks of the Easter season and prepare our hearts for the work of faithful discipleship in the time ahead.

In Christ,

Fr. Paul Ferguson

Fr. Paul Ferguson
Pastor

SHE SHALL BE CALLED

New Ministry Offers a Place to Share

A woman's role is often taken for granted. She cooks, she cleans, she rears children. While many tasks can be taken on by both genders, there is uniqueness in each. In light of this reality, Julie Bassler happened upon a valuable ministry opportunity here at Our Lady of Hope.

"When I was on FORMED, I noticed there was a program called Mysteries of the Rosary," Julie says. "It was done by an organization called Paradisus Dei — Paradise of God. I was just so moved and impressed by the quality of the videos I was watching. I checked into the organization, asked for some information, and got an email about another program that Paradisus Dei does, That Man is You."

That Man is You is a men's ministry facilitated twice a year in various groups around the diocese and beyond. But there wasn't a similarly configured ministry for the women, and people had pointed that out to Paradisus Dei.

"They sent me some information on this new program

they were starting, She Shall Be Called Woman," Julie says. "They really wanted to do something for the women. I've been hearing people want small groups and an opportunity to get together and learn more about our faith."

Julie works with Faith Formation, and she brought the idea to the group.

"We formed a core group of eight women," she says. "We started in the fall of 2025."

In addition to Julie, the core group includes Angie Ashby, Beth Browning, Connie Gray, Gracen Swartzentruber, Mary Wimmenauer, Melissa Cox, and Molly Mitchell. She Shall Be Called Woman — or SHE for short — operates much like This Man is You, with a fall and spring session, each running nine weeks.

"Paradisus Dei does a great job," Julie says. "They have contact people to support us with the program. We either Zoom, phone, or email."

The spring session of SHE focuses on the Ten Virtues

Many women gather for She Shall Be Called here at Our Lady of Hope.



ALLED WOMAN

are in the Journey of Faith and Life

of Mary. They meet on Mondays from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus. They begin with snacks and socializing from 5:30 to 6 p.m. — each of the small groups is assigned a week to bring snacks. Then, they watch a video from Paradisus Dei for about half an hour. Finally, they go into their small groups and discuss, share, and pray.

“We have small group leaders who lead the discussion,” Julie says. “Paradisus Dei does a nice job giving us something to follow every week.”

There are currently about 70 women enrolled, though about 40 to 50 come every week. Once you’re registered, you won’t need to register again for future sessions. You’ll have access to the materials.

“You can do it on your own if you miss a night,” Julie says. “You have access to the videos for the entire session. They’re separate, standalone lessons.”

All discussions are completely confidential.

“It’s created an awareness and allowed us to share our beliefs, faith, and lives with each other,” Julie says. “It’s been a catalyst to help us walk this life together and understand what our role and purpose are.”

The ministry is free of charge, though Julie does make an appeal each session.

“I encourage everyone to participate,” she says. “It’s not mandatory, and the amount doesn’t matter. The appeal goes to Paradisus Dei to support them.”

SHE is open to all women 18 or older and has been well-received in our parish.

“We welcome all women,” Julie says. “Just come. It’s never too late to join. Invite a friend. We want to make sure everybody is comfortable in their small group. We’re really excited about it.”

Those interested may call Julie Bassler at 812-259-2944 or the parish office at 812-254-2883. The ministry also has a welcome table at the back of the church before new sessions.

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conclude, the theme of prayer as a component of everyday life will remain imprinted on the hearts of both participants and volunteers. Valerie explains that community is vital to making a lasting impression.

“The immersive, fun environment makes the lessons memorable and engaging,” she says. “Children experience friendships that grow through the years of attending. It is a great outreach tool, welcoming children into a fun community.”



All sign-up information and volunteer information can be found at bit.ly/OLHVBS. Please note — all adult volunteers are required to undergo a background check.



Patron Saint of Holy Fun *The Faith Journey of St. Philip Neri*

Can a saint have fun on the way to attaining holiness? Many would say that St. Philip Neri definitely fits that bill.

Born in 1515 in Florence, Italy, St. Philip Neri showed his fun side from a young age. One such incident almost cost him his life. Seeing a donkey loaded with fruit for market, the impulsive and spontaneous little boy jumped on the donkey's back. Surprised, the donkey lost his footing and, along with the fruit and young Philip, tumbled into a cellar. Miraculously, Philip was unhurt.

Philip's father struggled financially, so 18-year-old Philip was sent to work with an older cousin who was a successful businessman. During this time, Philip found a favorite place to pray in a spot upon a mountain that had been turned into a chapel.

During these hours of prayer, Philip is said to have decided to leave worldly success behind and dedicate his life to God.

Eventually, Philip went to Rome. In 1548, Philip formed a confraternity with other laymen to minister to pilgrims who came to Rome without food or shelter. The spiritual director of the confraternity convinced Philip he could do even more work as a priest. After receiving instruction from this priest, Philip was ordained in 1551.

As a young priest, Philip learned to love hearing confessions. Young men especially found in him the wisdom and direction they needed to grow spiritually. But Philip began to realize these young men needed something more than absolution — they needed guidance. So, Philip began asking the young men to come by in the early afternoon to discuss spiritual readings, and then to stay for prayer in the evening.

Philip understood it wasn't enough to tell young people not to do something — you had to give them something to do in its place. So, at Carnival time, when the worst excesses were encouraged, Philip organized a pilgrimage to the Seven Churches with a picnic, accompanied by instrumental music for the midday break. After walking 12 miles in one day, everyone was too tired to be tempted!

Philip was known to be spontaneous and unpredictable, charming and humorous. He seemed to sense the different ways to bring people to God. One man came to the Oratory just to make fun of it. Philip wouldn't let the

others throw him out or speak against him. He told them to be patient, and eventually the man became a Dominican. On the other hand, when he met a condemned man who refused to listen to any pleas for repentance, Philip didn't try gentle words. Instead, Philip grabbed the man by the collar and threw him to the ground. The move shocked the criminal into repentance, and he made a full confession.

Humility was the most important virtue he tried to teach others, as he continually worked to learn it himself. Some of his lessons in humility seem cruel, but they were tinged with humor — like practical jokes — and were related with gratitude by the people they helped. His lessons always seemed to be tailored directly to what the person needed.

Philip did not escape this spiritual mortification himself. As with others, his own humbling held humor. There are stories of him wearing ridiculous clothes or walking around with half his beard shaved off. The greater his reputation for holiness, the sillier he wanted to seem.

But Philip was very serious about prayer. He was so easily carried away that he refused to preach in public and could not celebrate Mass with others around. But when asked how to pray, his answer was, "Be humble and obedient and the Holy Spirit will teach you."

Philip died in 1595 after a long illness. His feast day is on May 26, just in time to kick off the season of summer-time fun.

PRAYER TO ST. PHILIP NERI:

St. Philip Neri, we take ourselves far too seriously most of the time. Help us to add humor to our perspective — remembering always that humor is a gift from God. AMEN.

Looking Back on the Source + Summit Retreat

A Time for Young People to Encounter Christ in the Eucharist

In March, a group of nearly 30 youth and three chaperones had the privilege of attending the Source + Summit Retreat through the diocese. The event, held at Mater Dei High School, gave young people the opportunity to encounter Christ, especially through the Eucharist.

Sara Voges, a parishioner and school staff member, attended for the first time, as did her son. The retreat far exceeded her expectations. She knows the youth grew in faith through the music, Mass, Reconciliation, Eucharistic Adoration, speakers, and more. There was even time for outside fun.

“The weekend was filled with faith, connection, and joy,” Sara says. “We kicked things off Friday evening

with a beautiful Mass, followed by inspiring talks from a variety of speakers — monks, friars, nuns, and lay people — each sharing powerful messages.”

Bishop Joseph Siegel said the closing Mass, which was a beautiful way to wrap up the faith-filled weekend.

“Watching the students grow in their faith, open their hearts, and truly encounter Christ over the course of the weekend was incredibly powerful,” Sara says. “Moments like these are a reminder of how important it is to step away from the noise of everyday life and simply listen. I feel so grateful to have witnessed the Holy Spirit working so clearly in their lives.”

John Dale Drake, an eighth-grade student, said

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“Moments like these are a reminder of how important it is to step away from the noise of everyday life and simply listen. I feel so grateful to have witnessed the Holy Spirit working so clearly in their lives.” — Sara Voges



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receiving guidance from a priest during the retreat helped him begin to forgive and truly grow closer to God.

Sara feels so grateful to have had the opportunity to attend the Source + Summit Retreat. Seeing the youth so alive in their faith was truly touching. Sara likens it to how she felt when she attended the National Catholic Youth Conference last November — Lucas Oil Stadium

in Indianapolis was filled with youth alive in their faith. During the event, Pope Leo had a live video conference with the attendees.

“When Pope Leo came on, you would have thought a rock star came on,” Sara says. “The cheering, the screaming — just so many kids excited about their faith. It was a moment to pause and appreciate that kids are really into their faith now. These kids are on fire for their faith.”

