



Our Lady of HOPE

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Meet the PARISH COUNCIL:

Giving in Gratitude to Support Our Pastor and Community



The council members, who are chosen through our annual nomination process, meet with Fr. Paul once a month. Together, they discuss many of the bigger decisions that will affect our parish.

Pastoring a parish as big and vibrant as Our Lady of Hope is no small task. It takes tremendous time, energy, and focus to ensure that our parish is cared for in all of its various areas. So, Fr. Paul leans on our Parish Council for essential advice and support as he leads the way.

“The Parish Council works with Father and with several other smaller councils around our parish to help

make decisions and provide any advice and support we can,” says Eric Ringwald, outgoing Parish Council president.

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“A lot of parish decisions are

handled through lower councils, so we handle the bigger things,” Eric says. “For example, when we were in the process of hiring a Director of Marketing for the school, we talked with Father about that throughout the process. We also work through facility decisions, like if flooring needs to be changed or things like that, and we approve the budget.”

Council members each serve a three-year term once they are selected. Then, there is an option for them to stay on for another term.

As Eric explains, while the intricacies of the term process might seem a bit confusing, these parishioners’ love for our parish and their willingness to serve us is absolutely clear.

“I enjoy knowing what is going on within the parish and helping Father make the parish a better place — both now and for the future,” Eric says.

Eric has served on the Parish Council for two years. He began serving shortly after joining Our Lady of

continued on back cover



STEWARDSHIP *and* PATRIOTISM:

CELEBRATING INDEPENDENCE DAY AS PART OF OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

Independence Day, celebrated on July 4, is a time when the United States comes together to commemorate its history, freedom, and the principles upon which the nation was founded. For Catholics, this presents an opportunity to reflect on how to be patriotic and practice Catholic stewardship for the good of the country.

Here are several ways to merge faith and patriotism on Independence Day:

- **Pray for the Nation:** Begin your day with prayers for the United States. Ask for guidance and wisdom for its leaders, unity among its people, and peace and prosperity for all. Prayer is a powerful way to combine faith and patriotism.
- **Be an Active Citizen:** Engage in civic activities that reflect your love for the country. This could involve voting, participating in local community events, or advocating for causes that promote justice, peace, and the common good.
- **Support Veterans and Service Members:** Show your gratitude to those who have served or continue to serve in the military. Consider donating to organizations that assist veterans and their families, or simply thank them for their service.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Care for the environment is an important aspect of stewardship. Protecting the nation's natural beauty, from its parks to its rivers, is a patriotic act that conserves the land for future generations.
- **Support Local Businesses:** Patronizing local businesses helps boost the economy and supports your fellow citizens. Shopping locally not only contributes to the well-being of your community but also to the country as a whole.

- **Promote Social Justice:** Advocate for social justice issues that align with Catholic teachings, such as caring for the poor and vulnerable, supporting immigrants and refugees, and working towards racial equality. Addressing these issues is a form of Catholic stewardship that positively impacts the nation.
- **Educate Yourself:** Study the history of the United States, its founding documents, and the principles upon which it was established. Understanding the country's heritage enables you to engage in discussions about patriotism from an informed perspective.
- **Foster Unity:** In a time when divisiveness can be prevalent, strive to bring people together. Encourage open and respectful dialogue, build bridges of understanding, and work towards unity in the spirit of solidarity.
- **Practice Gratitude:** Reflect on the blessings and freedoms you enjoy in the United States. Gratitude is a cornerstone of stewardship, reminding you to acknowledge and appreciate the gifts you've received.
- **Share Your Faith:** Living out your Catholic faith and values in your community and throughout the country is a patriotic act. Be an example of love, compassion, and selflessness as you interact with others.

Patriotism and Catholic stewardship need not be mutually exclusive. In fact, they can be beautifully intertwined as you strive to make the United States a more just, peaceful, and compassionate nation. By living your Catholic faith and embracing your role as a patriotic citizen, you contribute to the common good and the well-being of the nation while also celebrating the freedoms and principles that Independence Day represents.



A Letter From Our Pastor

During Summer Travels, Remember St. Christopher Is Along for the Ride

Dear Parishioners,

As we enter the month of July, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the significance of this month in the Catholic calendar, particularly in relation to the feast day of St. Christopher. St. Christopher, whose feast day falls on July 25, is a revered figure in our faith, and his life offers us valuable lessons on how we can emulate his virtues and strengthen our connection with God.

St. Christopher is known as the patron saint of travelers, and his story has been a source of inspiration for countless individuals throughout history. His life was a testament to selflessness and devotion to Christ, which ultimately led to his recognition as a saint by the Catholic Church.

The most famous aspect of St. Christopher's life is his role as a ferryman who helped people cross a treacherous river. He would carry travelers, including a child who, unknown to him at first, was the Christ Child, on his shoulders. His selfless act of service, despite the physical hardship it caused him, reminds us of the importance of helping others on their journey. During the month of July, we can reflect on how we, too, can be "Christophers" to those in need, offering our assistance and support to fellow travelers on the path of life.

St. Christopher's life teaches us that our Christian faith should be an active and living faith. His simple yet profound act of service exemplifies the Gospel message of loving one's neighbor and carrying the burdens of others. As we celebrate his feast day this month, let us strive to emulate his selflessness by engaging in acts of kindness and charity, especially towards those who are less fortunate.

St. Christopher's name, which means "Christ-bearer," symbolizes his mission. During July, we can reflect on how we can become bearers of Christ's light in our daily lives. This may involve spreading the message of the Gospel through our words and actions, being a source of hope and inspiration for others, and carrying Christ's love in our



hearts as we interact with our neighbors and loved ones.

St. Christopher's story also teaches us the importance of perseverance in our faith journey. He faced many challenges and dangers while carrying out his mission, but his unwavering commitment to helping others, even at the risk of his own life, serves as a powerful example. As we honor him this month, let us renew our commitment to following Christ faithfully, no matter the obstacles or trials we may encounter.

In conclusion, St. Christopher's feast day in July provides us with an opportunity to reflect on his life and the virtues he embodied. Let us strive to emulate his selflessness, become "Christophers" in our own right, and carry the love of Christ in our hearts as we travel through life's journey.

May God bless you all and may the intercession of St. Christopher guide and protect you on your own spiritual journey.

In Christ,

Fr. Paul Ferguson

Fr. Paul Ferguson
Pastor



An Inside Look at ALTAR SERVING

A VALUABLE WAY FOR YOUNG PARISHIONERS



In every Catholic parish, there is a small portion known as the sanctuary, which is set apart, elevated, and reserved specifically for the actions of the liturgy. This sacred space calls our attention to our Lord's sacrifice and quietly draws our hearts to want to be near Him, to know Him better, and to serve Him with ardent love.

At Our Lady of Hope, Fr. Paul Ferguson is delighted to have altar servers join him in the liturgy and has witnessed the impact it has had on several who have even gone on to become priests.

"Altar servers are able to participate in being close to the actual liturgy and the Eucharist," Fr. Paul says. "I believe through the Holy Spirit working in them, it just opens their hearts to have a different understanding of what the Church is all about and take that to heart."

There are at least three to four altar servers per Mass. On special occasions, it may be required to have around six altar servers to help out.

"Altar servers are vital in helping us to have a smooth liturgy," Fr. Paul says. "They bring the chalice, the missal, and everything else to the altar. They are there to assist the priest and deacon throughout the liturgy."

Students who have entered third grade are welcome to join the altar servers and will undergo training to prepare them for their role.

"Every year, sometimes twice a year, we have a training session for servers," Fr. Paul says. "It's usually on a Saturday

For those who are interested in altar serving, contact



ALTAR SERVING

YOUTH SERVANTS TO PARTAKE IN THE LITURGY

morning and then after the training, they come over for a pizza lunch in the parish office.”

Being able to serve at the altar is a unique act of stewardship and a great way for our youth to become involved in parish life.

“They are giving their time and talent to be able to serve,” Fr. Paul says. “It is something anyone can do which makes it a little bit more comfortable for them.”

Altar serving offers young parishioners the valuable experience of serving on a team for the greater glory of God. It is a beautiful responsibility that demonstrates reverence and a particular attentiveness and sensitivity to the presence of God during Mass that continues to seek serving and seeing Him in others after Mass.



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— FR. PAUL FERGUSON

Fr. Paul through the parish office at 812-254-2883.



DEFENDING THE FAITH:

The Imperative for Catholics in the Modern World

In an era marked by diverse ideologies and constant questioning of religious beliefs, the role of Catholic apologetics has become increasingly crucial. Catholics are called not only to practice their faith but also to be articulate defenders of it in the face of skepticism. Misconceptions about Catholic teachings, ethical concerns, and challenges to the Church's authority abound. In such a climate, being passive about one's faith is no longer an option. The call to defend Catholicism has never been more pressing. Catholic apologetics is the art of providing a reasoned defense of the faith. It involves explaining and justifying Catholic beliefs, practices, and traditions in a way that engages with the questions and criticisms of the broader society. Apologetics is not about arguing or imposing beliefs but rather about presenting a compelling case for the rationality and truth of Catholicism.

The Call to Become Better Defenders

- **Knowledge is Power:** Catholics must equip themselves with a solid understanding of their faith by delving into the teachings of the Church, understanding the Bible, and being aware of the historical context of Catholic doctrines.
- **Articulating Beliefs Effectively:** Being a defender of the faith requires the ability to articulate Catholic beliefs clearly and coherently. This means developing the skill to explain complex theological concepts in a way that resonates with individuals from diverse backgrounds and belief systems.
- **Addressing Misconceptions:** Modern society is rife with misconceptions about Catholicism, ranging from issues of morality to misunderstandings about the role of the Church in history. Catholics must actively address and dispel these misconceptions, presenting the authentic teachings of the Church with humility and conviction.
- **Engaging in Dialogue:** Rather than retreating from discussions with those who hold different beliefs, Catholics should actively engage in dialogue. A respectful exchange of ideas fosters understanding and bridges gaps between different worldviews.

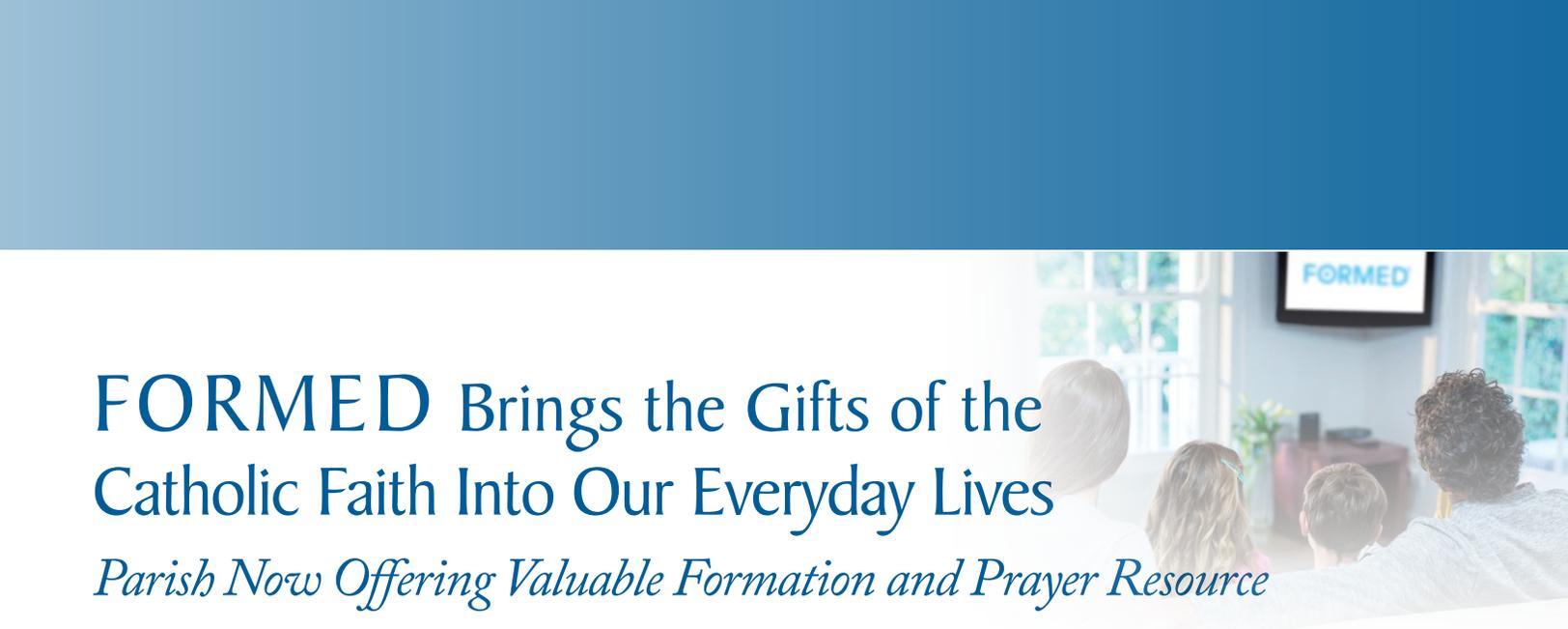
- **Utilizing Modern Platforms:** The modern world provides a plethora of platforms for communication. Catholics can harness the power of social media, blogs, podcasts, and other digital mediums to share their faith and engage with a global audience.

Apologetics Resources for Catholics

- **Catholic Answers:** A comprehensive resource offering articles, videos, and a radio show that addresses a wide range of questions and challenges to the Catholic faith.
- **Summa Theologica, by St. Thomas Aquinas:** A timeless work that delves into the philosophical and theological foundations of Catholicism, providing a solid intellectual basis for apologetics.
- **Mere Christianity, by C.S. Lewis:** While not explicitly Catholic, this classic work presents a rational defense of Christian beliefs, offering valuable insights into Catholic apologetics.
- **Fides et Ratio (Faith and Reason), by Pope St. John Paul II:** An encyclical that emphasizes the harmony between faith and reason, guiding Catholics in articulating the rationality of their beliefs.
- **The Case for Jesus, by Brant Pitre:** This book explores the historical evidence for the reliability of the Gospels, providing a scholarly foundation for defending the truth of the Catholic faith.

In a world where faith is often challenged and misunderstood, Catholics are called to be ambassadors of truth and defenders of their rich tradition. Embracing the art of apologetics is not a task reserved for theologians alone but a collective responsibility for every Catholic. By becoming better defenders of the faith, Catholics contribute to a more informed and respectful dialogue, fostering understanding and appreciation in the diverse tapestry of beliefs that make up the modern world.





FORMED Brings the Gifts of the Catholic Faith Into Our Everyday Lives

Parish Now Offering Valuable Formation and Prayer Resource

Faith formation is a lifelong journey. It doesn't stop when you graduate from religious education or Catholic school. Our faith calls us to always pursue a deeper relationship with Christ. And how can we do that without knowing as much as we can about Him? For those of us who want to fit our faith formation into our daily lives, our parish offers a free subscription to FORMED.

FORMED is a streaming service filled with rich, Catholic content. Our parish recently subscribed to FORMED, allowing all parishioners access to the wide array of movies, studies, audiobooks, and more. Our school is already using FORMED for our students, and our ministries are beginning to explore the many Bible studies available on the platform. While this platform is an excellent resource for the parish and school, it is really targeted for the average family or individual who is looking to grow in their faith.

"FORMED is for the family," Fr. Paul says. "It is a way to gather your children and learn more about our faith at home. It will help center our parish families on faith and Christ."

The platform offers video content as well as audiobooks and e-books. From movies on the lives of the saints to children's shows, documentaries, and series on the sacraments and liturgical seasons, FORMED has a wide variety for enjoyment, education, and spiritual growth. Simple faith formation at your fingertips offers a range of benefits. As your personal faith grows, it builds up our faith community and the Church as a whole.

Connie Gray helped to bring FORMED to our parish as a member of the FORMED Committee, working closely with committee chair Julie Bassler. Connie and her husband have been using it for about three years. During the pandemic, Connie found that FORMED was a great way to continue to grow in her faith — especially as a convert — and she hasn't stopped. In fact, she and her husband joined the Mission Circle so that they can support the platform and receive exclusive content.

"It stretched my whole understanding of ways we can develop our faith," Connie says. "It's an incredible tool for the faith."

Every parishioner has access to FORMED through the parish. The registration link can be found on the parish website. Once you have made an account, you will be able to browse the content, comment, and save things to watch or listen to later. Whether you are looking to learn about a certain topic, enter more deeply into the liturgical year, or enjoy wholesome entertainment, FORMED is the place to start. Over 150 parishioners have already signed up.

"Our hope is to help many more discover this amazing gift of faith inspiration, education, and entertainment," Connie says.

To sign up with FORMED, use the link on the parish website or visit formed.org.

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Meet the Parish Council *continued from front cover*

Hope. He says that in addition to allowing him the opportunity to get to know Fr. Paul, the school staff, and the parish administration better, serving on the Parish Council has profoundly impacted his faith.

“When you have more of an idea about what’s going on in the parish, there are more things to be joyful about, as well as more to be concerned with, and both draw me to prayer more,” Eric says. “I have more of a reliance on God in faith when things are concerning, and I have more gratitude to God in all the joy and happiness of the good things going on.”

Furthermore, Eric says that serving on the Parish Council is his way to offer God his gratitude for all he has been given.

“We all need to give in some way through our time and talents,” Eric says. “God has blessed us tremendously. I am mindful of that, so I want to give back in some way. This is the way I feel called to give back at this time.”

In turn, Eric encourages all of us to consider how God is calling us to give of ourselves in gratitude.

“There are a lot of opportunities for us to get involved at Our Lady of Hope,” Eric says. “The parish becomes stronger when we all get involved. We are a stronger witness to each other and to those in our community when we serve our parish together.”

For their part, the Parish Council members continue to serve and to be a witness to all of us of the importance of giving back.

We recently held nominations for new members, and as Fr. Paul and the council vote on placement this summer, we pray that those who have been chosen will be given the grace to serve our parish well. May God bless you for your service to Him and His Church, and may we all follow your lead — giving our time, talents, and treasure in gratitude for what we’ve been given!

