



THE BRIDEGROOM COMES

*A Reflection on the Vigilance of our Parish
as It Awaits the Coming of Christ
During the Pastoral Year of 2023–2024*

December 2023





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Advent summons us to alertness. Isaiah, John the Baptist, Elizabeth and Zechariah, Mary and Joseph, the Shepherds, and the Magi invite us to venture out to the limit of what we can accomplish individually and collectively. Standing with them, we meet, all at once, the satisfaction of effort, the futility of being human, and the capacity of God to do a new thing. If I take up the stance of Advent, I must face all that needs to be done, take on what I can do, live with what I cannot, and never despair. So I stay busy in human affairs and I wait for God.

If each of us hears the Gospel call to watchfulness, so does the whole Church, and, when she is fully awake in God's presence, four modes of activity mark her life: worship (*leiturgia*), service (*diakonia*), common life (*koinonia*), and witness (*martyria*). Ancient Greek words capture the multifaceted ways in which the Household of Faith lives out its covenant with Christ, intimate with Him in the present and longing for Him to complete His work. These are spiritual imperatives and so, in each time and place, means will be found to satisfy them.

A brief three-week Advent finds us concluding a calendar year, beginning a liturgical year, and half-way through a pastoral year. Let me claim this moment as a vantage point for reflecting on the singular life of our university Parish as an alertness to the gift of doing good works, to the insufficiency of those same deeds, and to God's promise to complete what He enables us to begin. Hopefully you can grab some time for a read.

Parish Life at-a-Glance

Registered Households: 2101

Average Weekly Mass Attendance:

During Term: 1,928

During Vacation Time: 1,641

Adults Initiated: 35

Infants Baptized: 72

First Communions: 45

Confirmations:

Youth: 26

Adult: 40

Infants (emergency): 2

Weddings: 39

Visits to the Sick:

Clergy: 226

Visitation Guild: 18 Weekly

Funerals: 33

Adults in Formation (OCIA): 25

Diakonia: The Service of the Parish

Diakonia I: People Serving People

We begin with all the ways of service in which the Lord will find us occupied when He comes. The Parish simply has a heart for *diakonia*. Let's start wide: the **weekly offertory** represents the steady and loving commitment of our parishioners to maintain the life and mission of St. Thomas. The supportive resolve of the Parish has resisted inflationary pressures and, so far, offertory giving is 4.2% higher than last year. We receive this gratefully as a help and an encouragement. A number of parishioners have taken an extra step and committed themselves to our program of debt retirement known as **STA 100**. 32 members have made annual commitments amounting to \$83,220—which comes to just under \$250,000 over three years. They do us all the service of securing the future and so, on behalf of all, I say: Thanks! Their sacrifice reminds me of the vast generosity poured into the building of our new church, which welcomes without cost all who come through its doors—parishioners and guests, Catholics and non-Catholics. It will come as an Advent light in the darkness that our debt on the church has fallen from six million in the Spring of 2021 to under four million at the present time.



This year the general giving of the Parish stretched generously beyond our boundaries. Our support of the **Stewardship Appeal for the Diocese** represented a substantial commitment (\$100,675 by 184 donors) to the many people who rely on the regional church for support. This year the Parish also joined the Bishop in a special initiative, **“Learn to Lead”** (\$3,442 by 22 donors), to support the development of Catholic education in our Diocese, particularly as it concerns Charlottesville Catholic School. Fr. Shay Auerbach got a great response of \$11,000 when he brought us the needs of **Sacred Heart Parish in Richmond**, and so did Br. Luke Neitzke when he presented the needs of our **Dominican Novices and Student Brothers**. The year has been studded with “second collections”, as specified by the Bishops of the United States.



Knights of Columbus Kiosk, Lent 2023

Paragraphs to come will make clear how much members of our community pair practical with financial generosity. Many, many women and men volunteer within this Household of Faith to assist with Divine Worship, administration, formation, parish study, hospitality, and environment. A Parish like ours cannot exist without this contribution of self, and so this will be the place to say thanks for the common *diakonia* that literally keeps us going.



Knights & CCS Students, Lent 2023

I am confident that volunteering in this way makes people very happy and so I see as a crucial part of our mission the sharing of this habit of life with the young. I am so gratified by the number of students and young adults who take it up in our community.

All around are people who have put service at the heart of their spiritual and social lives. The **Knights of Columbus** serve generously within the Household of Faith and beyond. **Worthy Grand Knights Phil McDonald and Chuck Rockacy** have made generous service priority. They threw a parish dance this summer that was a marvelous success (with the help of Fr. David's ballroom skills), and, at their Soup Suppers, almsgiving and fellowship simmered wonderfully together in the same Lenten slow cooker. In our courtyard, the number of memorial bricks continues to grow, telling our story and supporting good works. St. George too has benefited from generously proportioned work days by the Knights. Out in the world, their programs of Coats for Kids and KOVAR (for mentally challenged



Knights at St. George, Summer 2023



Friends of the Poor Walk,
September 2023



St. Michel School

adults) have made a real difference to people in our region. So much of this activity they make possible by parking cars for University events, and I marvel at the resourcefulness of strategies like this.

Also ministering out of a shared spirituality are those in our ranks who have joined the tri-parish **Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Holy Trinity Conference**. From their life of service and prayer have come wonderfully diverse opportunities for giving: Stuff the Truck, the Easter Appeal, Keep the Lights on for Christmas, and the Walk For the Poor. The Parish has given an openhanded response to these initiatives. What everyone may not realize is that the Vincentians, led valiantly by **Kelly Albertini**, accept the challenge of going to see the needful in their homes to assess need and share prayer. Truly, they are the face of Christ's concern and we owe them a great debt of thanks for this.

Parishioners drop off food for the **pantries at Incarnation and Holy Comforter**, they give time to serve suppers at the **Salvation Army**, and they bring goods to be distributed at the **Haven**. In your name we make donations to **Pacem, Loaves and Fishes, AIM, and Love Inc.**

Our twinning work with **St. Michel in Saltadere, Haiti** has continued to garner practical and financial support in the Parish. Large numbers have become sponsors of the ministry (with a total of 478 students sponsored), while support of the Hope for Haiti Golf Tournament in September (\$12,700 raised) and the Haiti Arts Fair in

November was very gratifying for our Haiti Ministry, which also works with the congregations at Holy Comforter, Incarnation, and Our Lady of the Rosary. On the weekend of the Arts Fair, the Parish also gave a very warm welcome to Fr. Asmith, the Pastor of St. Michel.

Our homebound parishioners receive the neighborly loving care of **Jean Scanlan** and her volunteers in the **Visitation Guild**, who bring Holy Communion and kindness. These same gifts also depart from the 9AM Mass every Sunday, bound for **patients at UVA Medical Center**. It is a pleasure to bless **Jim Lamb** and his crew as they set off. Residents at **Martha Jefferson House** also receive the Eucharist and other sacraments each month.

In a post-Christian world, proper sacramental care of the elderly, sick, and dying is by no means a given. We need to do more work here on locating those in need and on informing their caregivers about best sacramental practices.

Since I wrote last, our parishioners have continued to develop our service to the deceased and those who grieve for them. **Bethany Guild**, under the direction of **Debby Kessler**, remains poised to help with funeral Masses and receptions, while the **Jesus Wept** bereavement group has drawn those who mourn into a gentle and attentive community of healing. **Kathy Brown and Roman Cybak** are planning a new session for January.

We live in a time of greater personal isolation and so helping people in the work of grieving becomes paramount. We are doing what neighbors and extended families might formerly have undertaken as a matter of course. This will include helping people through the funeral process itself (about this see below under "Worship").

Diakonia II: Care of Place

When I walk through the doors of STA, I perceive the service of innumerable hands creating an environment for my welcome and my prayer. **John Michie** and **Sam Nicholson** do not relent in keeping our premises clean and neat. This year we have expanded the scope of maintenance to include regular window washing in the church and oiling of its wooden doors. We are settling into a maintenance calendar which really helps.

Outside, even in a year of water shortfall, our grounds are graced with an ever-growing array of native plantings, beautifully placed and maintained by **Delia Laux** and her crew. Every Monday morning in season—

and often out of season—they are at work serving us and the neighborhood. This group was saddened recently by the death of one of their stalwart members, **James Tupper**. His passing came as a great loss to many of us.

Inside, **Marta Brannon** maintains our environment with the assistance of **Jane Lenox** and **Karen Wright**, who watch over our plants.

I am grateful to say that this year we were able to replace a **hot water heater, a rotted beam over the alley doors, and the whole roof of the Parish Center**. Two splendid bequests and the generosity of the Parish in a special collection enabled us to accomplish most all of this, with a shortfall of \$15,000. The new roof comes as a double gift because not only has it secured the environment beneath, it will also support a network of **solar cells** that will significantly reduce energy costs. The cells are currently in design and the cost will be donated by one of our own. How blessed we are!



Fr. David with the old roof

Each year, as regular income allows, we try to make environmental improvements that enhance the welcome we give and the life we share. Last year, this meant painting the corridors on the second floor. This year, it meant **painting the lower narthex and corridors**. On a parallel track, we are producing the signage needed to acknowledge the many gifts that went into our new church, and to make the place easy to navigate.

One work of renovation came as a gift: **Beth Turrentine** placed our new library in great order.

Coming this January, work in the bathrooms of the Parish Center and finishing of the first-floor conference room. Details TBA.

Diakonia III: The Service of Leadership

Ever since Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, Christians have understood that leadership is properly exercised among them as a service. In our own age of polarities and groupthink, leading calls for extra sacrifice. How wonderful then that our parishioners come forward graciously to exercise this particular *diakonia* among their peers. Our longest standing body of such service is our Finance Council. As Chair, **Tom Laux** calls **Larry Brannon, John Bryce, Will Foshay, and Carola Schenone** together every other month to assess our current financial status (operating and capital), to determine priorities for budgeting, and to prepare a report for you every September. The expertise placed at our service in these sessions gives me deep security and real insight into our situation. I am now 13 years a pastor, and in all that time my Finance Councils have been pillars of good sense in every storm.

This year, we have added two new councils to widen the service of leading. Appropriately enough, **Deacon Tony DiTolve** has graciously assumed leadership of the Deacon's Council, He collaborates with **Mark Ross (Knights), Kelly Albertini (St. Vincent de Paul), Matt Lines (Catholic Hoos), Delia Laux (Respect Life), Bob Fromm (Haiti), Kathy Brown and Roman Cybak (Bereavement), Judy Zacharias (IMPACT), and Jean Scanlan (Visitation Guild)** to coordinate out the many opportunities for financial and practical generosity listed above in "People Serving People".

We hope that all our appeals give the congregation a real chance to hear each cause presented and to make an informed response. This Fall, too many "asks" came too close together and this Gospel reflection and response to social concerns became difficult for people. I saw this happening and was grateful that we had started this group. They experienced what we needed to change. The Council has had some great meetings and I am sure you will be hearing from them.

Formed at the same time, the **Committee for Parish Life and Mission** promotes Parish life as a life to be lived, shared, and supported. **Karl Meier** leads this group *ex officio* as Director of Mission. He and **Tom Laux, Matt Hantzmon, Ellen Gortler, Kevin Thurman, Matt Lines, and Eleanor Nicholson** have met twice and already have put quarterly financial updates in the Bulletin, and worked on our initial event for STA 100, so that this dedicated group has become true insiders to the extraordinary mission of the Parish. This has been a

great beginning and we can expect the Committee to learn from the endeavor, and to invite us all more deeply into the life we already share.

The formation and naming of this group can remind us all that we now live in mission times, and that a Parish like ours will need to take on the work of forming its members and of sharing the promises of Christ with a secular world.

To complete the governing structure of our Parish, one more council needs to be formed, and this will be our **Pastoral Council**. I had hoped to have this in place this year, but it seemed best to form these other two councils first. From this point, it will be easier to refine the charge and membership of this final group. We should begin work on this project at the outset of 2024.

Diakonia IV: The Service of the Parish Staff

At the heart of daily Parish life, maintaining the status quo, planning initiatives, and asking how they can be better next year, is our **Parish Staff**, serving the community through its conversation and collaboration. We meet every Wednesday to review what has happened and to plan what will. The staff also acts as a reality check on the Pastor's dreams and ideas! When it comes to programs and policies, they possess a collective experience that is hard to beat. In many ways we are a good microcosm of the Parish: week by week, meeting by meeting, we learn how to keep everyone in the loop, give everyone a voice, and ensure everyone space to do his or her best. As we accomplish this more and more for ourselves, I think we will produce greater cohesion in a complex Parish.

The **Parish Office** gives us a setting for shared work and for interface with individuals and groups in the daily business of the Parish. Maintaining these lifelines are **Marianne Jablonski**, our Administrative Assistant, and **Lori Donlon**, our Business Administrator. Lori in record keeping and Marianne in scheduling do us all many invaluable services, and together they give order to the service of the whole Parish. Other members of the staff have a mention elsewhere in this report, but these two give us our center.

Diakonia V: The Service of the Friars

We Friars surely are grateful to be connected to such a remarkable mission in such a remarkable place. Our



Feast of our Patron, January 2023

fraternal bond has been strengthened profoundly by sharing our ministry to St. Thomas, St. George, and the University of Virginia Medical Center. For the most part, we continue to serve you and each other much as we did last year at this time. **Fr. Mario Calabrese** has the *diakonia* of being our Prior, and of serving our Province of the Order as Director of Vocations. We benefit greatly from his kindness, and the young men discerning their vocations profit from his pastoral insights. **Fr. David Mott** serves the Community as Subprior and serves as Vicar of St. George and of the physical plant here at St. Thomas. In both positions, his great practical know-how is a gift that serves all of us on a constant basis. **Fr. Matthew Erickson** superintends the economic affairs of our community and, for the Parish, coordinates our hospital and funeral apostolates. Life here is richer

because of his preaching. **Fr. Joseph-Anthony Kress** serves our undergraduate students gathered in the Catholic Hoos. He co-hosts the podcast, *Godsplaining* (in the top 200 on the Apple index for religion and spirituality). He also does liturgical consulting for organizations such as *Amazing Parish* and the *National Eucharistic Congress*. My own “department” continues to be our marriage ministry and my work with our religious education programs.

Our news would be the arrival of freshly-ordained **Fr. Nicholas Hartman**. Father's academic gifts have enabled him to make a new outreach to our graduate and professional students, detailed below. He serves our community by generating the weekly schedule of our ministries. Fr. Nicholas has also enriched divine worship with his musical capability.

Koinonia: The Common Life of the Parish

In isolated times, the shared life of our Parish offers in person connection that forms, heals, and profoundly encourages. We are blessed here to embody the essential structure of the Catholic Church, for among us a whole range of Christian communities interpenetrate to form the community of the Parish. Setting groups into a mosaic is a cornerstone laid at our founding as a Parish for the “Students, Faculty, and Staff of the University of Virginia”.

Koinonia I: Catholic Hoos

Catholic Hoos is the community of undergraduates who discover in their college years the Gospel as a way of life. They are accompanied in this adventure by **Fr. Joseph-Anthony** as Chaplain, **Matt Lines** as Associate Director, and **Grace Joy (soon-to-be Bailey)** as Intern. Catholic Hoos numbers hundreds of actively engaged students. The community has a weekly center in its Tuesday T-Sup, a student shopped, cooked, served, and cleaned up meal that makes their bond tangible and deepens it at the same time. Regular attendance has grown from 80 to 100. Catholic Hoos welcomes students each year with a pig roast (cooked and served by the Knights of Columbus) and sponsors social events through the year. Members can embrace social service opportunities, missionary trips, retreats, and opportunities for shared prayer (a rosary group is growing rapidly). Each January, the Seek Conference draws Catholic college students from across the nation to days of worship, fellowship, and study. This year nearly 60 of our students will attend. At home, Bible studies occupy the heart of this shared life. As of this writing, 220 students participate in over 30 weekly Bible Studies.

Leading these and spearheading evangelization among the student body at large are our **Focus Missionaries: Brittany Worthington, Jack Guidera, Anna Craig, Carol Ann van Zandt, and Shane Chilcott**. They are present on Grounds and encounter students, inviting them to know Christ and to ground their lives in His promises.

Catholic Hoos serves our mission as a university Parish by providing students a gateway to the whole of Parish life. Students serve us all as readers at Mass, servers, sacristans, and catechists. They swell the ranks of those who commit to hours of Eucharistic adoration. Matt Lines is developing the incremental and formative quality of student communal life with a series of “Fourth Year Seminars” to help students live their Catholic life as adults in the world.

Koinonia II: Graduate and Professional Students

Since our mission is coextensive with the university, it needs to serve effectively graduate and professional students. In just a semester, **Fr. Nicholas** has expanded our ministry in this direction with alacrity. He has established contact with existing groups of Catholic professional students—the **St. Thomas More Society (Law School)**, **Darden Catholic**, and the **St. Luke Society (Medical School)**. He is present at their gatherings for prayer and fellowship. He has recently formed a group for Catholic graduate students in general. In the next semester, I will



FOCUS Missionary Team



2023 Leadership Team



Fall Retreat 2023

ask him to report in greater detail on these developments. Suffice it to say, great progress has been made and Father's determination to connect has served us all in an evangelical way.

Koinonia III: Faculty and Staff—The St. Anselm Institute

University faculty and staff have taken their place in every part of Parish life in every chapter of its history. In true collegial fashion, they have banded together to form the **St. Anselm Institute** to meet their spiritual needs as intellectual people, and their intellectual needs as Catholic members of the academy. **Fr. Nicholas** ministers to the Institute and oversees the logistics of their connection to the parish. This year, we have welcomed them to our “grounds” for their “Graduate Student Fellowship” and Dante Reading Group. **Charles Kromkowski** coordinates their great programming.

Koinonia IV: Mutual Support



Frassati “First Friday”

Jesus made neighbors central to the teaching he gave and to the life he established. How wonderful then to see people discovering in our halls the deep meaning of this word.

The **Frassati Young Adult Fellowship** welcomes women and men from our Parish and beyond. Accompanied by **Fr. David**, the group meets every First Friday for fellowship. Members also sponsor a reading group and Bible studies, as well as dedicated groups for women and men. Just recently, Frassati held their second annual winter dance. During the summer, activities ramp up, with the addition of hikes and other weekend events.

On Saturday mornings at 7:15AM, a group of men have been assembling for fellowship and prayer. The **Hounds of the Lord** currently ponder together *The Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales. Under the leadership of **Domenic Puzio**, they joined the Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage this past September, and they will be sponsoring other activities for the men of the Parish in future, specifically they will be hosting a half-day retreat on January 20 (details forthcoming).

The **Three Hearts Family Ministry**, animated by **Jen DiPaola and Caroline Golomb**, invites families to gather before Blessed Sacrament exposed every Wednesday at 4PM. They have also held two very successful family potlucks this fall and have more planned for the Spring.

Jen and Caroline continue to discern the best time of day, and day of the week, for gathering families.

This past spring, **Maria Calise** and **Martin Harrar** felt it was time to let go of the **Senior Ministry** they had tended for so long. I would like to thank them for the great graciousness of their service.

I hope we may find the best way of gathering seniors at this time, and so continue their work.

Koinonia V: Parish Study

My years of pastoral ministry have taught me that nothing builds community like study. The shared investigation of a text or an issue brings relationships past small talk to the meeting of minds



Frassati Pumpkin Carving
October 2023



Frassati Winter Dance, December 2023

and hearts. Since study performs an essential function in Dominican life, we hope its spiritual effects may be manifest in a Dominican Parish.

We have already seen how Bible studies animate the life of Catholic Hoos and the Frassati Fellowship. But venerable in the life of the whole Parish, at eighteen years running, is the **adult Bible Study** presided over by **Charlie Burns**. This year, 65 people have signed up for a year-long trek down Jeff Cavins' *Bible Timeline*. Small group work and snacks provided by the membership make these sessions so much more than a class.

On Thursday mornings, **Patty Gazewood's Women's Bible Study** has burgeoned with the advent of childcare. Here too, bonding comes from encountering the Word, and so study yields to prayer and a profound sharing.

This semester, **Fr. Nicholas** restored systematic study to our offerings. He offered the parish a Sunday class on the essential goodness of the human body. We hope this will be the first of many opportunities for an "adult Sunday school".

This semester also brought new study and fellowship with the advent of **Well Read Moms**. This reading group seems to be off to a fine start and has already brought in one guest speaker.

Finally, this semester we released a series of video reflections called *Learning from Bricks and Mortar*. These introduce the elements of our Parish Church as giving shape to our prayer within it. I am grateful to **Eleanor Nicholson** and **Lori Donlon** for helping to organize this, and to our parishioner, **Chris Tobey** who produced them so elegantly. We hope they take their place beside our earlier series on Baptism in a library of instructional resources available on our website.

Koinonia VI: Hospitality

Hopefully everything we say and do here makes people feel at home with God, neighbor, and self. But food and drink prepared and set out by loving hands does wonders along the way to Gospel happiness.

For example, **Coffee and Donuts** seems the humblest of repasts, but on Sunday morning, in Church, it speaks eloquently about the community we are, and helps us to flourish. As many of you know, we invite our ministries to take turns sponsoring the event and they use it to speak to the Parish about their life and work. They also come away with a few bucks for their projects. This system has spread information and involvement. We are very grateful for both. Special thanks go to Eleanor Nicholson for organizing the sponsorship and setting up its parameters. They also go to Sam Nicholson who does the advance preparation for coffee and donuts every Saturday.

This year, **Judy Zacharias** and **Mark Ross** got us started on using ceramic mugs for the coffee rather than disposable. This has cut down on expense and waste, and our ministry sponsors have jumped in to take on the dishes. Thanks to all involved in this development.

Karl Meier has upped our game by providing a spread of wine and cheese (and always more!) after solemn evening Masses on the major feasts. These have been delicious, simple, and elegant, and they have prolonged the festal spirit we encounter in Church.



Fr. Walter & Chris Tobey filming
July 2023



Volunteer Appreciation
April 2023



St. Joseph's Table
March 2023

Over the last several years, we have developed a cycle of major celebrations when we try to gather the Parish for a party. These are: St. Dominic (August 8), the Anniversary of the Dedication of the Church (September 20), Advent Lessons and Carols, St. Thomas (January 28), St. Joseph's Table (March 19) and the Easter Vigil. This year **Br. Luke Neitzke** helped us add to this list the **Midsummer bonfire on St. John's Eve** (June 23).

Clara Coscia has helped us to develop, staff, prepare, and clean up these major events. She has just completed her term of service and we are very grateful to have had her energy and skill.

The hospitality of the staff completes this section, for the **Volunteer Appreciation Party** they throw in the courtyard in the Easter season signals gratitude and springtime all at once.

Koinonia VII: The Dominican Laity

The Dominican Laity live a community life in our midst. They have a shared commitment to prayer, study, apostolate, and community, following the principles established by St. Dominic for his followers. Much of the service rendered in our Parish, in many aspects of its life, flows from their commitment. In particular, they sponsor a rosary-making apostolate and one for knitting prayer shawls. In each craft, prayer, and fellowship come together to make a great product. As I write, **Donna Kerrigan** is completing her term of leadership and on behalf of us all I would like to extend thanks for a zealous and generous tenure in office.

The Witness of the Parish

Martyria I: The Work of Formation

The Church's first testimony to Christ comes in the formation of souls. Her work goes beyond teaching about Him to inviting people into relationship with Him. In that relationship, the Lord becomes active Himself, constantly prodding the soul to conversion. So the life of the Church renovates us individually and collectively through the Lord's sacramental presence at its heart. Our works of formation provide the entry point to a process that occupies the rest of our lives.

The **Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA)** invites women and men, those who seek baptism as Christians and those Christians who seek the Communion of the Catholic Church, to encounter Christ in Sacred Scripture, Church teaching, and community. To this end, **Deacon Tony DiTolve** provides a multifaceted experience each Wednesday evening. He makes use of the Credo video series, but also of commentary from **Tom Russman, Victoria Lannon, and Sam Nicholson**. These are followed by small groups in which those in formation also hear each other. The experience becomes complete when gracious parishioners put on a lovely spread. This year, 25 are headed for the Easter vigil. OCIA can also serve Catholics who have never been confirmed. Anyone interested in adult initiation is welcome to contact Deacon Tony who can assess needs and offer solutions.

Most of us, though, walk the path of Christian formation from our birth. Let me trace the journey the young of our Parish can make from birth to the frontier of adulthood. Baptism will be their setting out, and for this **Caroline Golomb** will prepare Mom and Dad, while, generally speaking, **Deacon Tony** will officiate. **Jamie Ballenger** comes next in the procession, inviting the little ones into the *Atrium* for the **Catechesis of the Good Shepherd**. This Montessori-based approach to catechesis speaks the Gospel to every sense, so that for each child it becomes a personal discovery shared with others. CGS has expanded from Sunday morning to include a Thursday morning session (in coordination with the women's Bible study) and a Wednesday afternoon session (in coordination with the Family Holy Hour).

Caroline Golomb is the next to meet souls as they meet Christ. She organizes our **Religious Education** classes on Sunday morning, and she is helped by a wonderful corps of 20 catechists, many of them Catholic Hoos. 120 young people are signed up for our Sunday morning offerings. Also part of Caroline's brief is preparing boys and girls for First Holy Communion each May. This Summer, Caroline worked with **Jen DiPaola** and a host of others to restore **Vacation Bible School** to our summer menu. 40 kids had great fun receiving the Gospel, and it is already on the calendar for the summer of 2024.

Reed Golomb ushers young people into adolescence with **Edge**, a program of catechesis and accompaniment for those in middle school. Each Monday evening, 27 kids have an experience of games, teaching, and small group work, topped off by a great snack at the end.



First Communion, May 2023



Confirmation, Spring 2023



Summer Youth Ministry Trips

Once they reach high school, the kids move to Sunday night and work with Reed in **Life Teen**, which runs on the same chassis as Edge. This year, about 60 kids join in for the sessions. On Wednesdays, *Oratory Nights* are available, featuring Eucharistic adoration, Scripture study, and fellowship. During Summer, these give way to more recreational *Bosco Nights*. Throughout the year, more intensive events deepen the bonds and awareness being fostered. These include the *Diocesan Youth Conference* in February, the *Winter retreat* in March, the *Diocesan Work Camp* in June, and the *Steubenville Youth Conference* in July.

Crucial to all these events, especially to the accompaniment involved, is the “Core Team”. For Life Teen and Edge, Reed now has a core team of 35, about 40% of whom are Catholic Hoos. This represents a very substantial increase over last year.

Complementing the Life Teen experience is a series of talks that prepare the teens for **Confirmation**. This year, 28 are getting ready to meet the Bishop on April 11.

Martyria II: Marriage Ministry



A Journey Through Your Ceremony retreat

Our preparation of couples for marriage lands us at a crucial intersection of the Gospel with secular life. Here we work with people of all faiths or no faith, and with Catholics at every level of practice. We try to make this an opportunity to present Christ and his teachings in the intimate forum of marriage preparation. **Jillian Miller**, our wedding coordinator, has grasped these evangelical opportunities in a wonderful way.

We deal with three groups of people in marriage preparation; those who prepare with us and celebrate the sacrament here, those who prepare here to marry elsewhere, and those who prepare elsewhere and marry here. For all of these people, we hope to be more than just one of the venues and vendors with whom they must deal. We give each couple a genuine welcome and offer them a real connection to the community of the Parish. We do this in several ways. First, we have begun to partner engaged couples with a **Mentor Couple** well-established in Christian marriage. Over the course of several meetings, the two couples exchange all kinds of wisdom and insight well beyond the experience of officiating clergy. We also invite our engaged couples to join each other for *A Journey Through Your Ceremony*, an afternoon of reflection on the marriage rite itself. Finally, we invite couples to an online fertility awareness workshop, led by our own **Dr. Karen Poehailos**. These sessions are all in addition to the several meetings each couple has with one of the Friars. It has been a pleasure to see this ministry take off over the past two years.

This year we hope to expand the number of our mentor couples and for marriage ministry to serve the spiritual needs of married couples in general. This work will begin with a marriage retreat on the weekend of February 9–11.

In preparing for weddings, as in preparing for funerals (see below), we face the challenge of balancing the particularities of people’s lives with the universality of the Church’s rites. If all the energy goes into creating a singular event there is little left for actually experiencing the moment. Yes, couples need to plan a wedding, but they also need to let marriage happen to them and the universality of the ritual gives an opening to this.

Martyria III: Communications

Generationally and geographically spread out, our parishioners have many ways of getting their information and we try to meet them on all possible pathways. Communication not only supplies data; it issues a double call from Christ in his Church, inviting individuals into the works of a group, and summoning each group to recognize its place in the whole.

Eleanor Nicholson continues to keep our communications program running, on its cylinders of bulletins, bulletin letters, e-bulletins, “voicers”, videos, website, social media, and signage. Our methodologies have

remained consistent over the past year but we feel they have become more efficient and better targeted. We hope this Bulletin has become a real resource for prayer, study, and reflection. On behalf of all of us, I offer thanks to Eleanor for giving coherence to so much information for so many recipients.

Martyria IV: Public Witness

The witness we give to Christ within the Household of Faith must, of necessity, overflow its boundaries and become live in the world around us. This happens visibly when Catholic Hoos walk the Stations of the Cross on Grounds or pray the rosary at the Rotunda. It also happens when the Friars and Ministers of Holy Communion walk the corridors of UVA Medical Center.

Witness shows up in public when we advocate for those in need as we do in our support of **Lifespring Pregnancy Center** in its work for the unborn and the mothers. The overflowing crib in the lower narthex this Fall made that support tangible, as did our significant presence at Lifespring's Gala in September. Throughout the year, parishioners give witness to the sacredness of each life as they pray the rosary outside of Planned Parenthood. This takes on particular vigor during the **Forty Days for Life**, centered on October as Respect Life Month. We can be grateful to **Delia Laux** for organizing these great efforts.

Public witness also takes place when members of the Parish, led by **Judy Zacharias** and **Patty Gazewood**, work with **IMPACT**, a local interfaith organization that advocates for practical improvements in life for those in need. These issues include affordable housing, transportation, and after-school care.

We can be grateful too for those members of our Parish who bring their faith personally into the public arena. Their courage challenges us in a shadowed time to speak more about the faith and hope we have received.



Candlemas, February 2023



Collection for Lifespring
Pregnancy Center, October

Leiturgia: The Worship of the Parish

Service, common life (including study), and witness each prompt worship as we recognize what God has made it possible to accomplish. Likewise, each finds its origin in worship, whence come the inspiration, challenge, and energy that prompt the good action. Thus the Second Vatican Council refers to the Eucharist as the “Source and Summit of the whole Christian Life”. Fair to say, in our Parish, this cycle of life unfolds with great vigor.

Leiturgia I: The Schedule and Modes of Worship

This October marked two years since we established the post-covid, post-construction schedule of Masses that we have now. **Sunday Masses** are at 5:15PM (Sung Vigil), 7:30AM (Said), 9AM (Solemn), 11:30AM (Sung), 5:15PM (Sung) and, during term, 9PM (Solemn). At Solemn Mass, incense is used. This schedule has in general worked well.

A logistical problem has emerged in that we have our major choral Eucharist at 9AM, right before religious education at 10:15AM. Managing this transition calls for discipline all around, but we can do it.

Daily Mass takes place at 8AM and at 5:15PM (with evening prayer incorporated). On Saturdays we have morning Mass at 8:30AM (with morning prayer incorporated). On Thursday evenings we have sung Mass at 9PM, ministered by the Catholic Hoos community.

Missing from this roster of late has been the 12:25PM Mass on grounds, said on weekdays except Thursdays. Chapel renovations will soon be complete and we hope to resume this practice.

On certain solemnities we move the 5:15PM Mass to 7PM so that we can muster our choir after work. At Christmas and Holy Week the regular schedule does not obtain and we try to give a substantial heads up in advanced.



Ash Wednesday 2023



Preaching & Serving

Confessions are heard on Wednesdays from 7PM to 8PM, with three priests available, and on Saturdays they are heard from 9:15AM to 10:15AM, also with three priests available. During this past year we have added a third session on Sundays at 8PM with two priests available.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place **during term** from 6PM to 9PM each weekday except Wednesday, when it takes place from 1PM to 9PM (interrupted by the 5:15PM Mass). Wednesday exposition takes place in Church, otherwise it happens in the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Chapel.

During **vacation times**, we expose the Blessed Sacrament on Wednesdays from 1PM to 8PM in Church (interrupted by the 5:15PM Mass).

On **Saturdays** through the year, we expose the Blessed Sacrament during morning confessions unless preparation for a wedding or funeral impedes it.

Solemn and extended exposition takes place twice a year, on the Anniversary of the Dedication of the Church (September 20) and on the Solemnity of St. Thomas Aquinas (January 28).

We are blessed by a sizable corps of committed adorers, but it can always grow and we must ensure that the exposed Sacrament is never left alone. The silence and recollection of a committed Holy Hour make a very valuable practice.

We also hope to develop Wednesday as a special day of prayer. The elements are in place already. At 1PM we expose the Blessed Sacrament with Midday Prayer and Preaching. At 4PM we have Family Holy Hour, and, at 8:45PM, we have sung Night Prayer, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and procession to Our Lady's shrine.

Leiturgia II: Music

Over this past year our music program has taken deeper root as a multi-faceted experience unified by the primacy of the human voice, the careful use of instrumentation, and the dialogue between trained singers and the congregation. As Director of Music, **Karl Meier** commits himself to maintaining the diversity of our Parish's musical heritage, unified by these core principles.

We are blessed to have ensembles of singers at four of our six Sunday Masses. At 9AM the **parish choir** under Karl's direction advances from confidence to confidence. They are accompanied on the organ and the violin by **Kathleen Rosenberg**. At 11:30AM, **Rob Cordaro and his choir** continue a tradition of prayerful contemporary music over three decades old and each Sunday garner applause from a grateful congregation. 5:15PM Mass experiences the scripturally grounded praise and worship music of the **Worship Collective** and at 9PM **Kat Hammock** leads a group of student singers who establish a lovely contemplative tone. Through the whole day the generous gift of song is helping people to pray and enabling them to sing.

Especially beautiful are those moments when all these stands of artistry come together in a pan-Parish choir. We are blessed this way at some of our major feasts, such as the Dedication and Candlemas. Each Advent the "Awaken..." series of lessons and carols gathers the whole Parish around the gift of music, and this Fall we added the *Ave* concert in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary.

Leiturgia III: Ministers

Beyond naming are those who make our worship possible by reading, serving, ushering and coordinating. Ministering to all the ministers is **Marta Brannon**, who, as Director of Worship, has made so many at home in our sacristy and sanctuary. **Fr. David** assists her in training Readers and Ministers of Holy Communion. **Phil Bongiorno** of Catholic Hoos has continued to develop the confraternity of college servers and **Reed Golomb** has facilitated the training of teens for serving. I never celebrate Mass without realizing the gift of these wonderful collaborators in God's service.

Marta also keeps us wonderfully supplied with all the materials liturgy requires, especially the flowers and plants that ornament the greater feasts. A whole group of people helps here in these tasks.

Perhaps you would be fulfilled by joining the ranks of our liturgical ministers. No doubt you will help the community and find connection and fulfillment for yourself.



Our ever-growing choir



Our servers, bearing incense for Solemn Mass

Leiturgia IV: Challenges

We could not write honestly about worship without mentioning the sound issues that have bedeviled our settling into the new church. Fr. David and Karl Meier have been indefatigable in working on these issues. They are working to get the sound system, which is wirelessly connected, working to its best, to set up a new assisted listening system, and then to see what additional measures might be necessary. Please know that we hear the frustration and share it.

Fr. Matthew, Marta, and Karl are at work developing the kind of pastoral guidance for funeral preparation that is already in progress for weddings. We hope to give people guidance that allows them to grieve properly, to embrace the work of praying for their beloved dead, and to grow in the hope of the Resurrection.

Closing

I hope this document has conveyed something of the vibrancy of our Parish life. As one who is new to it, I find it a great privilege to be gathered with all of you. In our troubled times, the life of faith and civility maintained here surely proclaims that Jesus lives.

Gratefully,
Fr. Walter

