

OCTOBER 2023
VOL XXIII NO. 1



VOICE OF ST. MARY'S

Parish Newsletter

Pastor

Rev. Joseph A. Baker

Permanent Deacons

Deacon Jim Wallace

Deacon Ray White

Vicar Forane

Rev. David Sabel

Parish Secretary

Patti Zehr

Rectory/Parish Office

815-844-7683

Email -

zehr.patti@stmaryspontiac.org

Contributors -

Father Joe

Principal Karen Jones

Patti Zehr

Margo Law

Deb Bromberek

Danielle Gill

A HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION
Masses will be offered on
Tuesday, October 31 at 5:30pm
and Wednesday, November 1
at 7am, 8:15am and 5:30pm

ALL SAINTS DAY

NOVEMBER 1ST



Masses will be offered on
Thursday, November 2 at
7am, 12 noon at St. Mary's
Cemetery, and 6pm where
names will be read and
candles will be lit for those
we have lost this last year

SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR ANNUAL PARISH THANKSGIVING DINNER

Turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, sweet potatoes, vegetable, cranberry sauce, roll, dessert and drink...what more could you want from a delicious meal prepared by the women of our parish.

Join us on Sunday, November 12 for our Annual Parish Thanksgiving Dinner which promises to be delicious, as always, and a great opportunity to gather with our fellow parishioners and enjoy this meal in good company, in addition to raising some funds for the Women's Guild to continue their good work for the betterment of our church and clergy.

The meal will be served in the parish hall from 11am to 2pm. Those dining with us are asked to enter from Main Street at the new gym entrance. Those who prefer a carryout can enter the hall from Chicago Street and go into the Rosary Room to get your meal to go. Cost is \$10 for adults, \$5 for children in grades 1-8 and \$30 family maximum for those in the same household. Raffle tickets for the 50/50 raffle will be available at both entrances. You need not be present to win.

Many hands make light work for the women (and men) of our parish. Volunteers are needed to prepare, serve and clean up, and food donations are requested to help keep expenses down and the meal cost reasonable. Go to our website at: church.stmaryspontiac.org and scroll to the bottom of the page for the link to volunteer or donate food.

We look forward to seeing all our parish families at our Thanksgiving Dinner on November 12. We have been so blessed here at St. Mary's! Now let's gather to give THANKS!



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



Eternal Rest Grant Unto Them, O Lord, and May Perpetual Light Shine Upon Them

If you are at all like me, you can probably hardly believe we are already on the cusp of November. Each year these days in the calendar leave me a little exasperated. The summer is certainly gone. The days are shorter.

Most of the corn and beans have been cut. It leaves me thinking that the Church has some wisdom in asking us to set aside the month of November to reflect on eternity and specifically to pray for the Faithful Departed, the Church Suffering, those who are going through the final stages of purgation before entering the glory of Heaven.

Indeed, this is what the Church asks us to do in November, and it is fitting. The natural world is approaching its annual "death". Soon, all the lush signs of summer life and produce will be gone and we will enter into the cold, dark, and short days of winter. As Christians, though, we know so often what appears to be reality is not actually the case. Yes, the world seems to die, but agrosience tells us the freezing, the thawing, the snow, the ice, the melting, the re-freezing, and the re-melting serves a purpose. It is this process that prepares the ground for the beautiful spring and summer that will once again be upon us in 2024. The death of late fall and winter paves the way for life to come.

So in November we remember those who have died, those who have died in this past year especially, but all those who have died over the ages, our family members, our loves ones, our friends, those who perhaps were once so close to us but of whom we have not so much as given a thought in many years. Each year we are encouraged to call all these people to mind, as many as we possibly can, and pray for them.

I recommend in the coming days to spend 30 minutes writing down the names of each person who meant something to you who is deceased...for that matter, write down the name of each person you can remember who is deceased, even those who did not mean anything to you. Write down the names of those whom you wished you had not remembered. Maybe the fact that you have recalled their name is an indication they are pleading with you to pray for them. There are so many forgotten souls in Purgatory, and they too need our prayers, especially in this month of November. If you take me up on this exercise, I think you will find when the 30 minutes are completed, something powerful, something indescribable has happened in your own soul.

Bring your list of names to St. Mary's and write them in our Book of the Dead which will be to

the side of the ambo for the entire month. These names will be especially remembered at each of our Masses throughout the month. Visit a cemetery and pray for the dead laid in that place. The Church offers a plenary indulgence to anyone who does so between November 1 and November 8, presuming the individual also prays for the needs of the Pope and goes to Confession within a week of visiting the cemetery.

Of special note, I encourage you to attend our Masses on November 1 and November 2. November 1, of course, is All Saint's Day, a Holy Day of Obligation. We will have Masses that day at 7am (note the difference from the 6am Mass that we have had in the past on Holy Days), 8:15am school Mass, and 5:30pm. We will also have a Vigil Mass for the Holy Day on the evening of October 31 at 5:30pm.

The next day, November 2, is All Soul's Day, the one day throughout the year which is reserved specifically to pray for the dead. On this day, each priest is encouraged to say three separate Masses in which one can be said for a specific intention, one is offered for the Pope, and one is offered for all the Faithful Departed. As in previous years, prior to the beginning of our evening Mass, we will have a service in which we will read the names and honor those who have died over the last calendar year. We will also have a Mass at 7am in the church and a Mass at noon at St. Mary's cemetery (weather permitting), after which I will lead those who would like to stay in reciting the Rosary.

Finally on the evening of Thursday, November 9, I invite you to attend a viewing of a 75 minute film, "Purgatory: The Forgotten Church" at 6:30pm. Following the film, we will have a question and answer/sharing session for anyone who would like to stick around. This 2013 film produced by a friar of the St. Bonaventure Province of Conventual Franciscans in Chicago is extremely well done, is captivating throughout, and is the best source I have seen that explains and makes sense of Purgatory. If you have questions about Purgatory or what happens after death, I bet this film will aid you in beginning to find an answer.

So as I began, I end: I can hardly believe we are nearly in the 11th month of 2023. Yes, God's created world is approaching its annual "death" but like our own deaths, we know it is not really the end. As the famed prayer of St. Francis of Assisi concludes, "It is in dying that we are born to eternal life." When the cold of winter has passed, the world will come back to life. May we spend this coming month praying for the departed who have passed, that they would enter into eternal life and that one day we, too, will be there with them, and with a nod to the even more distant future, may you have a Blessed Advent and a Happy 2024!

Fr. Joe



ENCOUNTERING THE EUCHARIST

Having passed from this world to the Father, Christ gives us in the Eucharist the pledge of glory with him. Participation in the Holy Sacrifice identifies us with his Heart, sustains our strength along the pilgrimage of this life, makes us long for eternal life, and unites us even now to the Church in heaven, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the Saints." CCC1419

Have you ever asked the Holy Spirit to help you participate in the Mass more deeply?? I don't just mean the outward things like singing, vocalizing the prayers of the Mass that are said by the congregation instead of remaining silent, but actually asking Our Lord to help you to bring your heart into the participation of the Mass. Just like any relationship if you stop participating with an open heart and learning more about one another, that relationship becomes stale and boring. So maybe next time you go to Mass, ask the Holy Spirit to help you to participate more in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and watch what happens overtime.

"The greatest love story of all time is contained in a tiny white host."

-Venerable Fulton J. Sheen

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, November 7 at 6:00pm

Holy Hour in Church with Diocese of Peoria Traveling Monstrance

Saturday, November 18 after 4:00 Mass

Wine/Cheese/Crackers/Eucharistic Video in the MPR (old gym)

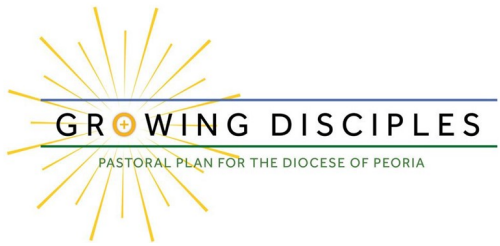
NURSING HOME MINISTRY LEADS WOMAN TO THE SACRAMENTS

Every week, Extra Ordinary Ministers from our parish go to each of our local nursing homes to distribute the Holy Eucharist to Catholic residents. Members of the Legion of Mary visit the nursing home residents as well often leading the Rosary. During their visits, they may build relationships with other residents and field questions about our Catholic Faith. This is the case for Deanne Polen who struck up a relationship with parishioners Pat Hepperly and Karen Peissig. Both women answered Deanne's questions and educated her about the Faith. In time, Deanne desired to be Baptized and brought into full communion with the Church by receiving her First Communion and Confirmation as well. Last month, Fr. Joe offered a special Mass at Accolade Health Center for Deanne to receive all her Sacraments with her new friends, Pat & Karen, as her Baptism and Confirmation sponsors.



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR LADY SAINTS SOFTBALL TEAM!

The Saints brought home the 2023 IESA Class 1A State Softball Championship! They ended their season 26-1 with their only loss coming at the hands of the Class 2A champs. What a season and what great support they received from our school, church and community! Way to go ladies!



Thank you to the parishioners that attended last week's Growing Disciples Parish Planning Meeting to hear first-hand of the proposed changes to the churches in our area. If you were unable to attend, please review the following information and provide feedback to the Diocese before November 22. Information for the entire diocese can be found online at: growingdisciplescdop.org

GROWING DISCIPLES PASTORAL PLAN PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you have sown the seeds of faith in your people and given us the responsibility as the Church to nurture and grow an abundant harvest for the Kingdom of God.

Send forth, we pray, the grace of the Holy Spirit to allow us to discern a path forward as we read the signs of our times. Help us become unified in the dream you have for us — to be a vibrant and mission-driven Church.

As we seek to live as disciples of your Son, Jesus, inspire us to give authentic witness to our relationship with you, so that others may be inspired by our love for you. Center us and feed us by the gift of the Eucharist that we may be strengthened for our mission. May each of us live out our vocation in service of the Gospel.

Almighty God, may we enter into this challenge and opportunity as a people filled with hope. Allow us to truly pray, dialogue, assess, discern and do what it is you are inviting us to, so that we may respond to today's needs and tomorrow's promise.

Committing ourselves anew to GROWING DISCIPLES, we trust in your providence, and we pray, Almighty God, that our efforts today will bear fruit for a brighter tomorrow.




Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen, pray for us!

OCTOBER 1 - 31, 2023




**KEY
DIOCESAN
DATA**



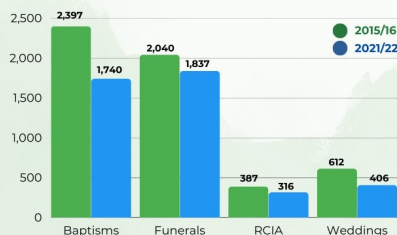
PASTORAL PLAN GOALS:

-  Enable the faithful to go make disciples within a mission-driven, sustainable structure of parishes and schools.
-  Enhance the vibrancy of our parishes, schools and ministries.
-  Increase our support of the happiness, health and holiness of our priests.

CURRENT REALITIES:

-  Sacramental Participation has been declining steadily for many years.
-  Small parish sizes and resources limit evangelization efforts.
-  There will be fewer priests in the future.

SACRAMENTAL REALITIES IN THE DIOCESE OF PEORIA:



- Infant baptisms down 27% since 2015/16.
- Funerals are down 10% since 2015/16.
- RCIA attendance is down 18% since 2015/16.
- Catholic marriages are down 34% since 2015/16.

TOP CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARISH GROUPS:

- Evangelization potential
 - Vibrant liturgies - Parishes with that can offer a compelling weekend Mass experience
 - Provide the needed outreach and ministry to the area
- Geography & Demographics
 - No more than 30 minutes to attend Mass (or for priests, to travel to Mass)
 - Awareness of how people in the area travel and any geographic barriers to driving (rivers, highways)
 - Demographic trends such as growth or decline in population or change in composition.
- Natural affinity between parishes & Past collaborations and relationships
- Long term sustainability
 - Necessary scale and resources for lay leadership, evangelization and financial sustainability
 - Manageable pastor assignments
- Feedback of priests and faithful
 - Priest day and subsequent feedback
 - Key Parish Leader meetings
 - Pastoral Planning Commission



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PEORIA

SPALDING PASTORAL CENTER
419 NE MADISON AVENUE, PEORIA, IL 61603
PHONE (309) 671-1550 | FAX (309) 671-1579

View the planning area information here:



Pontiac Planning Area



Grouping – Merger of the following parishes:

- St Mary – Pontiac (school) *Recommended Primary Site*
- St Joseph – Flanagan *Recommended Not in use*

Combined 2022 Mass Attendance – 535

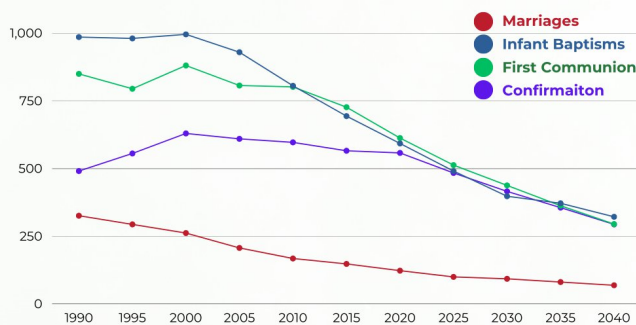
Recommended Priests Assigned – 1

Other Considerations:

- Revise Mass schedule based on 1 priest assigned to determine best schedule to promote vibrant liturgy.
- Work with nearby Dwight/Odell parish to coordinate future plans for evangelization and ministry collaboration in the area.
- Discuss future of schools in the area with Dwight/Odell parish and the Diocese.

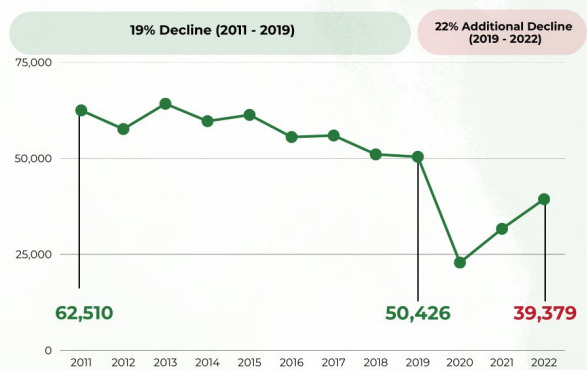


SACRAMENTAL REALITIES NATIONWIDE:

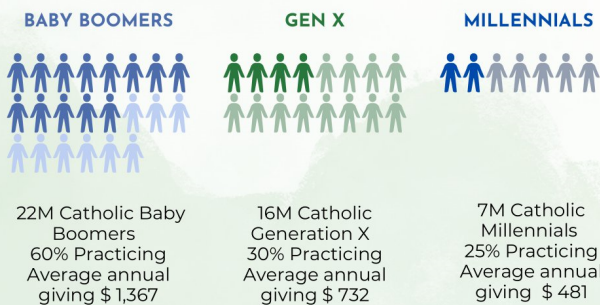


- **Catholic marriages** are down 55% since 1990.
- **Infant baptisms** down 50% since 1990.
- 1 in 5 children baptized do not receive **First Communion**.
- 2 in 5 children baptized are not **Confirmed**.
- 85% of children Confirmed stop practicing their faith by age 21.

MASS ATTENDANCE IN THE DIOCESE OF PEORIA:

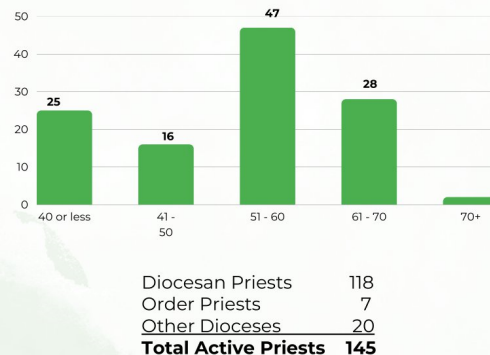


THE GENERATIONAL SHIFT:



5 to 7% of Parishioners (Mostly Boomers) provide 80 to 90% of Time and Money

DIOCESAN PRIESTS BY AGE:



PRAY FOR OUR PARISH FAMILIES THIS YEAR

We ask everyone to pray for specific church and school families each week-day. Please remember these families in your prayers each day for them to grow in their faith this year. Thank you.



Mon Oct 23	Donna Steffens Family Nora Eppel Family	Mon Nov 20	Ted & Becky Sullivan Family Flynn Eggleston Family
Tues Oct 24	Steve & Mary Smith Family Harper Highland Family	Tues Nov 21	Gabe & Allison Tarr Family Grace Becker Family
Wed Oct 25	James Stadel Family Kennedy Krenz Family	Wed Nov 22	John Tibbs Family Daxell Collins Family
Thurs Oct 26	Cindy Steiner Family Arkadiy Kukharskiy Family	Thurs Nov 23	Lanette Tooley Family Champ Daily Family
Fri Oct 27	Sue Smith Family Anna Loucks Family	Fri Nov 24	Lindsay Taylor Family Adrian & Bianca Gill Family
Mon Oct 30	Jim & Sharon Stahler Family Margaret, Leo & Natalia Matthews Family	Mon Nov 27	Bernie Timmerman Family Reid Gray Family
Tues Oct 31	Cindy Stepro Family Everett & Bruce Meiner Family	Tues Nov 28	Rosenda Torrez Family Zander Miller Family
Wed Nov 1	Joe Stock Family Preston Richardson Family	Wed Nov 29	Kathy Telford Family Ryann Krenz Family
Thurs Nov 2	Alex Strong Family Landry & Wilder Saxton Family	Thurs Nov 30	Jack & Mary Timmerman Family Zain Pierce Family
Fri Nov 3	Tom & Deb Sullivan Family Finn Voigts Family	Fri Dec 1	Dan & Pat Unzicker Family Graham Mennenga Family
Mon Nov 6	Matt & Charlotte Stock Family Greg Bradshaw Family	Mon Dec 4	Diane Thomas Family Cameron & Maddie Mikeworth Family
Tues Nov 7	Brian Studnicki Family Jack DeYoung Family	Tues Dec 5	Margaret Tolbert Family Kallen & McKinlee Morgan Family
Wed Nov 8	Douglas & Patty Swartz Family Chris Gray Family	Wed Dec 6	Brad Trainor Family Riley & Sammi Salinas Family
Thurs Nov 9	Mark & Tricia Stoeckel Family Kate, Jacob & Grace Lauritsen Family	Thurs Dec 7	Sam Tomasello Family Barrett & Holland Tissiere Family
Fri Nov 10	Dave & Mary Jo Sullivan Family Lanie McGuckin Family	Fri Dec 8	Doug & Maranda Trainor Family Boston Alsdorf Family
Mon Nov 13	Mike & Angie Sweeting Family Gavin Wehri Family	Mon Dec 11	Kim Trainor Family Harper Bachmann Family
Tues Nov 14	Sabrina Stotler Family Henry Yedinak Family	Tues Dec 12	Christina Trevino Family Lexi Brown Family
Wed Nov 15	Dennis & Nancy Sullivan Family Harlow & Hadley Noonan Family	Wed Dec 13	Edward Trainor Family Elliot & Leo Bauman Family
Thurs Nov 16	Keith & Judy Sypult Family Conner Trachsel Family	Thurs Dec 14	Marcus Trevino Family Jasmine Kennedy Family
Fri Nov 17	Scott & Madeline Stover Family Avery & Cecilia Alsdorf Family	Fri Dec 15	Jim Trainor Family Reagan Mackinson Family

THE PARISH DIRECTORIES ARE HERE!!

If you had your picture taken, you can pick up your free directory at the parish office, Monday-Thursday 9am to 4pm, Friday 9am to noon. Extra copies are available to purchase for \$20 each.



Two new benches at St. Mary's Food Pantry were blessed and dedicated in memory of long-time volunteer Evelyn Ribordy who passed away earlier this year. Several members of Evelyn's family were able to attend the blessing.

From the Principal's Desk...



I hope this message finds you all in good health and high spirits. It is with great joy and anticipation that we announce our upcoming Confirmation ceremony for our dedicated Catholic students. This sacred sacrament is a significant milestone in their spiritual journey, marking a deeper commitment to their faith and a strengthened bond with our Lord.

Confirmation is a pivotal moment in the lives of our young parishioners. It represents a conscious decision to affirm their baptismal vows and to step forward in faith as fully initiated members of the Catholic Church. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they receive the gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord, enabling them to live out their faith with greater conviction.

Our students have spent months in preparation, guided by their dedicated catechists and parents. Together, they have delved into the teachings of the Church, reflected on the Scriptures, and engaged in acts of service and kindness within our community. This journey of faith has been marked by growth, self-discovery, and a deepening connection to God.

As our students approach this sacred ceremony, we are filled with hope and expectation for the wonderful contributions they will make to our parish and to the broader community. Their enthusiasm for living out the Gospel message is a beacon of light, inspiring us all to be more faithful disciples of Christ.

We invite all members of our parish community to join us in celebrating this significant moment in the lives of our students. Your presence and support means the world to them as they take this important step in their faith journey. Your prayers and well-wishes will be a source of strength and encouragement for them as they move forward.

The Confirmation ceremony will take place on Sunday, November 5 at 1:00pm at St. Mary's Church.



Mrs. Karen Jones

I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13

2024-2025 REGISTRATION DATES

Kindergarten

- Registration for current PreK4 students and current SMS families begins 12/4/23.
- New family registration begins 1/10/24.

4-year old PreK

- Registration for current PreK3 students and current SMS families begins 12/4/23.
- New family registration begins 1/10/24.

3-year old PreK

- Registration for current SMS families begins 3/1/24.
- New family registration begins 4/3/24.

For more Information:
school.stmaryspontiac.org
or 815-844-6585



From The Back Page

by Margo Law

Dear St. Mary's Parishioners,

This article is being written like a letter to family and friends since you are like family and many of you are friends. The big difference is that I commonly write letters to one person at a time, and you are a sizable group with a variety of gifts, tastes, ideas, and preferences. I like that about you! You keep my attention and me on my toes! So, how have you been? I hope you are happy and joyful, but not too comfortable. Too much comfort tends to make me think I deserve it—which I don't. Too much comfort helps me forget about getting ready for Heaven. Come, Lord Jesus, save me from my comfort zone!

Kel Krenz and I facilitated the first group of our Evangelical Catholic Reach More Mission Training at St. Mary's. Kel has moved on to teach at Central Catholic and I am currently shepherding our ten newly trained leaders as they lead evangelizing small groups in our community. I am also preparing to launch two new training groups in the spring.

The Evangelical Catholic is a nation-wide promoter of our faith, offering formation and training for lay people to engage in their personal apostolates. Over the course of twelve weeks, parishioners are formed and trained to build relationships and share the good news with people in their lives who have fallen away from the Church or are not Catholic. We have ten newly-trained leaders from our parish ready to invite people who are not Catholic or who are not currently active at St. Mary's into their small group bible studies.

"What happens in these small groups?" you may well ask. These groups gather around God's Word to share in fellowship, spiritual growth, and prayer, all within the context of friendship and trust. Our hope is that genuine friendship, mentorship, and prayerful reflection on scripture will encourage members of the small group to reunite with or join the Church.

What we are doing through the help of Evangelical Catholic, is an apostolic movement, which is not the same as a ministry. Ministries serve those already in Holy Church. Personal apostolates, however, go out into the world to welcome home those who seek the fullness of faith, that is, the Catholic Church.

Since October is dedicated to the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, it may be a good time to reconsider how often you and/or your family honor Mary and Jesus by praying the Rosary. If ever there was a time to reflect on what the Holy Eucharist means to each of us, it is now, during this three year revival of the Blessed Sacrament. As one of the saints said, some people may not believe in the power of the Eucharist because it seems too good to be true. But it's both true and very good!!

Please pray for our evangelical efforts as we strive to obey Jesus' commission to go and make disciples. If you have questions, please ask me. Lastly, please remember the homebound and those in nursing care. They evangelize us if we let them.

God bless you!

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
PONTIAC, IL
Permit No. 7

Church of St. Mary
Box 374
PONTIAC, ILLINOIS 61764
Address Service Requested