

# Maneline

ST. MARK Catholic Community

## Fr. Innocent Returns for Visit to ST. MARK

By Mary Fisk

ST. MARK was happy to welcome Fr. Innocent Rugaragu, S. J., for a visit in December. He had been in residence in the Parish for several years while he completed his Doctoral Studies in Peace and Reconciliation at George Mason University. He returned home in 2017 to his native Rwanda upon completion of his studies to help continue that nation's healing process following the genocide in the 1990s.

His last visit to Northern Virginia was in 2021. Fr. Innocent has been working for the Jesuits and the Church in Rwanda, where the number of Catholics continues to grow.

### 2017–2019

When he first returned to Rwanda, his initial work focused on serving as the Director of the Jesuit Retreat and Hospitality Center, Centre Christus. The Center was founded in 1974 to provide a place of retreat from everyday life to allow people to draw closer to God. After the tragedy of the genocide, during which 17 religious and lay people at the Center were killed, the Center developed into a place to foster inner peace and healing. Under Fr. Innocent's stewardship, the needed construction was completed, and the Center is flourishing. It is now a multifunctional facility with 43 private rooms for retreats as well as meeting rooms and a conference center for larger groups and training sessions. It also has a welcoming garden and a coffee shop and café where local businesses can sell their goods. In addition to spiritual renewal, the Center assists local people who need psychological, societal, and material support. It has 30 staff members. For more

information, email Fr. Innocent at [innoruga@yahoo.com](mailto:innoruga@yahoo.com) and [centre-christus@yahoo.fr](mailto:centre-christus@yahoo.fr).

From 2017 to the present, in addition to being Director at Centre Christus, he has taught a course of peace, conflict resolution, reconciliation, reconstruction, and research methodology—both quantitative and qualitative—and leadership at the University of Rwanda, Center for Conflict Management (CCM). He was also Director of Vocation Promotion in Rwanda and Burundi as well as Assistant Director of People Inspiring Community through Organizing (PICO) and a member of PICO's international Board of Directors. PICO is a network on faith-based organizations based in Oakland, California.

### 2020–2021

He was missioned to be Director of Development in Rwanda and Burundi; this work largely involved fundraising, resource mobilization, and community work. He also continued his work with the University of Rwanda and PICO.

### 2021–2024

Most recently, his primary focus has been the substantial task of completing and expanding St. Ignatius Catholic School for nearly 1,782 Students in Kindergarten through High School in the capital city of Kigali.

The School's curriculum is faith-centered and emphasizes STEM courses to help Students be well-formed in the faith and well-educated in key subjects to succeed in life. Fr. Innocent, himself fluent in multiple languages, has English and French teachers on Staff



so that the Students will be comfortable in several languages from an early age. He is also working to build the capacity for sports activities and eventually increase the bus transportation options.

He explained that the School has many needs. The greatest is infrastructure: expanding the capacity to accommodate more children, particularly starting with Kindergarten; increasing the number of offices for the growing Staff of 85 Teachers, 19 Administrators, and 86 Support Staff; and increasing the number of shower facilities for sports activities and the number of bathrooms for Students. The dining hall is inadequate for the growing enrollment; Fr. Innocent is expanding it so that Students will not have to eat in shifts and so that there is a place where the entire School can gather for events, including Masses. Next on the needs list is additional Staff to teach the expanding enrollment of Students. Additional School and area needs include digging wells to improve the water supply and developing solar resources to provide reliable energy.

Fr. Innocent celebrated his 50th birthday on the Solemnity of the *Immaculate Conception* on December 8 at ST. MARK. He expressed “a spirit of gratitude... so many people have helped to make these projects come to fruition.”

*Continued on page 2*

## FINANCIAL OPTIONS TO SUPPORT ST. IGNATIUS SCHOOL

- You can visit the School website at <https://gracefoundation.squarespace.com/donate>.  
<https://stignatiusschools.rw>.
- You can mail a check payable to “*ST. MARK* Catholic Church,” indicating that it is for “Rwanda” or for “St. Ignatius School”, to the Parish Office at 9970 Vale Rd, Vienna, VA 22181, Attention of Mary Ann Dmochowski (Bookkeeper).
- You can mail a check payable to the “Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus,” indicating that it is for “Rwanda” or “St. Ignatius School,” to 8600 La Salle Road, Unit 620, Towson, MD 21286, Attention of Fr. Richard McGowen, S.J. (Treasurer).



## *Holiday Giving:*

### A Time of Abundant Blessings and Generosity

In the final five weeks of 2023, *ST. MARK* Parishioners made a difference in the lives of many in the Northern Virginia/Maryland/Washington, DC area who are struggling to make ends meet.

- We collected donations of 7.5 tons of clothing at the Activities Center during the week of Thanksgiving. We sent it right back out to 21 organizations that are helping those in need. Many individual shoppers came to receive items in person as well. Over 160 volunteers helped sort and package the donations throughout the week.
- 26 pints of blood were donated during our annual Advent Blood Drive.
- Our Giving Tree program collected over 1,300 gifts and over \$10,000 in gift cards and cash that went to 12 local organizations that directly help those in need.
- Our Adoptions program provided gifts valued at \$100 per child for 60 Foster children through Fairfax County Family Services, 3 families through the Fairfax County School system, and 1 family in Reston with 7 children. Parishioners provided more than \$3,000 in gift cards to help 75 people associated with FamilyPASS/Shelterhouse program.
- Our Prayer Shawl Group made more than 400 hand-made hats, scarves, shawls, and baby blankets; these were delivered to the Reston Homeless Shelter, Iliff Nursing Home, Sunrise Retirement Home, Embry Rucker Shelter, the Lamb Center, HOPE, and A Women’s Choice.
- We provided a hot and nourishing meal to more than 130 people on a cold November night in Fairfax, thanks to our FACETS Hot Meal Volunteer Team.
- We visited our friends at Sunrise Retirement Home to distribute the EUCHARIST every Sunday.
- We provided dinner for the Embry Rucker Homeless Shelter in Reston and the Christ House for Homeless Men in Washington, DC.
- We collected more than 2,500 pounds of food and distributed the food to the St. Lucy Warehouse and to Food for Others.
- We gave more than \$10,000 worth of food to Shelterhouse in Fairfax for children and adults in our FamilyPASS program.
- The ESL program celebrated the end of the 2023 year with its 100+ students and many, many volunteers.

*“One thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.”*

*—Albert Schweitzer*

## Eucharistic Revival Activity Badges Awarded

A group of eight young people and two adults participated in the Eucharistic Revival Activity Program and received their badges at a prayer service at *ST. MARK* on December 8.

The ongoing Eucharistic Revival is a three-year initiative sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Revival was launched in 2022 and continues until *Pentecost* in 2025. The goal of this program is to help all Catholics, young and old, revive their faith and love of Jesus through prayer and the Sacraments, especially the EUCHARIST.



**Dave and Erin Benbennick, who are both Catechists at *ST. MARK* and completing their Catechist certification through the Catholic Education Center, have a long history as Scout leaders. They volunteered to prepare for the ceremony and provide refreshments for the attending families.**

The National Catholic Committee on Scouting is offering the Eucharistic Revival Activity Program in support of this national program. The Scout program was designed to encourage each Scout to grow in knowledge and love of the EUCHARIST and to see a personal experience of Jesus in the Sacrament. The program is open to every Catholic, irrespective of membership in the Scouts, who is over the age of six years.

## Persecution of Catholic Clergy Rises in 2023

More than 130 Catholic priests and religious were arrested, kidnapped, or murdered in 2023, according to a new report on Catholic persecution published by Aid to the Church in Need and publicized by *The Catholic World Report* on January 10, 2024. The increase was due largely to arrests by authoritarian governments; in 2022, there were 55 arrests, and in 2023, there were 86.

### Arrests

■ **Nicaragua:** Nicaragua leads the countries persecuting religious leaders and activities. The regime of President Daniel Ortega held 46 clergy in custody in 2023, including two Bishops and four Seminarians. In January, 19 members of the clergy were released and expelled from the country: two Bishops, 15 priests, and two Seminarians. In October 2023, 12 priests were released from prison and sent to the Vatican. These clergy add to the dozens of others who have been exiled in the past few years. “The restrictions on religious freedom continue in a country where four out of nine dioceses now have Bishops living abroad”, says Regina Lynch, Executive President of Aid to the Church in Need. She adds, “... We must highlight how tremendously unjust it is that they have been forced to

live apart from their flocks and their families. The uncertainty and the fear among the community are also great.” His government also expelled religious Sisters, including the Missionaries of Charity, and closed Catholic schools and media outlets.

■ **China:** China is another country high up on the list of persecuting nations. The report found that 20 members of the Catholic clergy were under arrest at some point in China in 2023. However, the report also noted that “confirming the information is almost impossible”; some of the persecuted members of the clergy “remain unaccounted for after many years”.

■ **India:** In India, at least five Catholic clergy and one woman religious were arrested in 2023; these actions were largely driven by anti-conversion laws, which the report noted “impede the work of the Church.” Although all of those arrested have been released, they could still face charges and prison time.

■ **Belarus and Ukraine:** The report found that 10 members of Catholic clergy were arrested in Belarus, three of whom are still imprisoned. Two Greek Catholic priests arrested by Russian forces in Ukraine remain in custody

### Kidnappings

The report noted that incidences of

kidnapping of clergy and religious sisters declined in 2023 from 54 to 33, but the problem “remains significant.” Most of the kidnappings (28) occurred in Nigeria, where religious and ethnic conflicts have made the country dangerous for Christians. The remaining incidences occurred in Haiti (2), Mali (1), Burkina Faso (1), and Ethiopia (1).

### Murders

Murders of Catholic priests and other members of the clergy decreased slightly from 18 in 2022 to 14 in 2023. This includes 11 priests, one Bishop, one religious Brother, and one Seminarian. However, the report notes, some of these murders were unrelated to persecution or have unclear motives. Of the seven murders clearly tied to persecution, three were in Nigeria. Other murders linked to persecution occurred in Tanzania, Mexico, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

“Many Christians,” the report noted, “and especially clergy and religious, paid a heavy price for their commitment to common good, human rights, and religious freedom in the communities and nations they serve.”

In the next *Maneline*, we will report on the persecution and killing of Lay Christians around the world.

# Recognizing the Pervasive Moral Challenge of Pornography

By Joe Flaherty, Director of Religious Education

The landscape for pornography has changed immensely in recent decades. The anonymous access to pornography that was first available on desktop computers and now in the cell phones has changed both the availability and nature of this sin. Scrambling to respond to this multi-billion-dollar industry, the Church responds with one of her oldest and more powerful weapons against immorality—mercy.

## Fr. Sean Kilcawley

Fr. Sean Kilcawley is a sought-after speaker on this subject. I was impressed with a talk that was recorded four years ago at my alma mater, Christendom College, entitled “Recovering Masculinity in a Pornified World.” In it, he noted how much pornography impacts society as a whole, including the people of God, the Church. He said that the average age that children are exposed to pornography is between ages eight and eleven. Pornography is a cause in one-fourth of divorces.

He illustrated how otherwise faithful people can be affected in their prayer life in a profound way. At a Youth conference, one participant told him that he was not feeling anything during Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Although feelings are not everything in prayer, this young man could tell that others were having a profound experience in prayer, and he wanted that. When Fr. Kilcawley asked him if there were things that might be in the way of his relationship with Jesus, he found out that he had a daily habit of pornography and masturbation. Fr. Kilcawley said to him that one of the side effects of such daily habits is that it shuts down our emotional life and our emotions go from numb to frustrated. “It’s not that you can’t feel Jesus; you can’t feel anything,” he told the youth. “However,” he added, “once there is purity of heart, you start to see God.”

He gave the example of another person who was having difficulties in his relationships. “I just don’t get people. Like, I don’t really get people’s feelings, and I have a hard time seeing other people’s points of view, and, sometimes, I hurt people’s feelings without realizing it. I’m

kind of just all about the mission.” When Fr. Kilcawley told him that this could be a side effect of pornography addiction, the man reluctantly admitted that he had a daily pornography habit. “Let’s do an experiment,” the priest said. “Let’s get that out of your life for a while and see what happens.” Fr. Kilcawley gave him a book on treating pornography addiction and the name of a therapist. When they met two months later, the man thanked the priest. He had been going to therapy and had been meeting with his own priest and learning how to pray, but one experience was particularly meaningful. The man was driving in his truck when his son said, all of a sudden, “I like the new dad.” “What?” “Well, I liked the old dad; I just really like the new dad.” This man was able to become more emotionally tuned into his son, and his son was able to experience the love of God through his earthly father. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

Fr. Kilcawley believes that mercy is crucial to the work of ministering to those who struggle with pornography. He recounted the story of parents whose son had developed a pornography habit by age 12. This “very brave” 12-year-old told his parents about his problem, and they were accepting enough to help their child through this difficulty. They went to the priest for help. Fr. Kilcawley asked this boy about his first experience viewing pornography. The boy said that he had first seen pornography in the fourth grade. The priest asked, “How do you think Jesus felt? If Jesus was in the room, what do you think He would do?” The boy responded, “He would probably stare and shake His head at me and say it’s bad for you, it’s a sin. I’m hurting people. I should know better. Father, it’s like I’m holding the nails and driving them into Jesus’s hands.” Fr. Kilcawley responded, “You’re just a kid...[Jesus] would kneel down in front of you and put your head on His shoulder and say, ‘I’m sorry this happened to you; this should have never happened to you. I will always love you. I will never leave you.’” Tears welled up in the boy’s eyes because he was encountering his Father who is rich in mercy.

Fr. Kilcawley presents a number of responses and solutions from least invasive to more invasive. In some cases, people may be able simply to go to Confession if a habit has not taken hold. In many other cases, however, people may need other resources to help. This may include putting a filter on one’s devices, such as [covenanteyes.com](http://covenanteyes.com), or regularly attending a “12-step program” or therapy. In some cases, people will jumpstart their healing by attending intensive sessions that can last many days but can have the effect of eight months of weekly therapy.

## Rachel Killackey

Rachel Killackey is the founder and executive director of Magdala Ministries (<https://www.magdalaministries.org/>), which describes itself as a “place of honesty, hope, and healing for women of faith struggling with sexual addiction.”

Rachel was raised in a devout Catholic family. She was 13 years old when she was exposed to pornography for the first time; from there, she would turn to it when she was hurt or angry. Her habit grew until the age of 16, when she got into an argument with a boy at her school who was justifying the use of pornography. She became very angry at him and adamantly argued against what he was saying, but she also realized that she had to do something to help herself stop using pornography. She traded her smart phone for a simpler phone that would not have internet access.

When she went to Ave Maria University, she was still struggling. The final push for her was when a “really good” guy wanted to date her, and she worried about starting a relationship with him in the midst of this struggle. She went to a healing retreat, and at Adoration she kept telling Jesus, “Lord, I really need it to be done!” When she was blessed by the priest holding the Monstrance, all she could hear was “It is finished.” After that, the struggle got much easier. She believes that she had addressed the soul aspect of her pornography use at this moment but she still needed to work on the mind and body aspects. A year later, she shared her story for the first time publicly when she was a counselor at Young Life camp.

Rachel thinks that it is important to get an accountability partner. She does not recommend that significant others take on this role. Rachel also thinks that therapy is crucial for healing from pornography addiction. For herself, it was very important to address the shame from past actions that had been placed on her identity. Therapy gave her a lot of freedom when she went to it. “Addressing what [pornography] does to you mentally and your relationships is really crucial.”

Rachel later started a support group for women at her college that became the inspiration for Magdala Ministries. She noted that there was some doubt that this was a broad problem for women. She believes that this sort of response feeds an identity crisis with some asking themselves, “Am I even feminine because I am dealing with a ‘masculine’ thing?” She believes that the people who are coming to Magdala or to her support group at Ave Maria “are literally dealing with an identity crisis of what it means to be a woman.” This is why avoidance of judgment is so important.

A profound moment happened in the months following her major recovery. She took a class on the Theology of the Body with Dr. Waldstein, who is a brilliant theology scholar, a polyglot, and the translator of John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* into English. Rachel was inspired by the message that she learned in this class about sexuality and marriage but doubted whether John Paul II’s vision for marriage could apply to her because of her history. Rachel chatted with her professor. She told him that she had struggled with pornography and asked him if she could still have the sort of image of a wonderful marriage that John Paul II described. Dr. Waldstein smiled and said, “Lust did not attack you because you can’t love. Lust attacked you because your love is meant to change the world.” She cried at the time and has reflected on this many times since then. Now she mentions this every time she gives a talk or writes an article about pornography. “That is the crux of my ministry: you are made for love, and that is why Satan is trying to thwart this, suppressing what you are made for.”

### “Brain, Heart, World”

*Brain, Heart, World* is a documentary produced by the educational organization, Fight the New Drug. The film starts with

a basic human desire for happiness and how it relates to love and relationships. “Given the ever-growing body of research, it can no longer be denied that repeated porn exposure has a tangible effect on consumers and is connected to declining relationship satisfaction as well as various forms of exploitation.” The documentary’s three parts discuss how pornography affects the brain, the heart, and the world.

“The Brain” dives into the scientific research that illustrates the physiological and neurological harms pornography has on individuals. “The Heart” explores pornography’s impacts on romantic relationships and on platonic relationships such as those with friends, family, and everyday interpersonal connections. “The World” highlights pornography’s impact on society in a variety of ways, including its inextricable connection to the global issue of sex trafficking. The latter is perhaps the most shocking revelation about pornography. As people are coming to a greater awareness about the pervasiveness of human trafficking, they are also coming to realize that not all of the people who are depicted in pornographic images and videos are doing so willingly. Fight The New Drug and similar organizations were so persuasive about communicating this connection that, in 2022, Visa and Mastercard ceased processing payments to the largest internet pornography website in the world since there was ample evidence that many of the “actors” portrayed in its films were victims of human sex trafficking.

### Human Trafficking

Long-time *ST. MARK* parishioner Erin Benbennick has been working with anti-trafficking organizations off and on for about five years, including Reset 180 and Anti Trafficking International. “The first session that I went to (of an anti-trafficking conference she attended) included a video of convicted sex buyers who said their interest in sexual activity grew by watching porn and further felt like they needed to experience it themselves.” She believes that pornography creates a market for sex that will be provided by sex traffickers.

The documentary “Brain, Heart, World” will be shown along with discussion time during the Adult Faith Formation programs in the CFC gym from 9:30

a.m.-10:45 a.m. on Sunday, March 3, and Sunday, March 10.

The respective video presentations are available at the following locations:

- Rachel Killacky  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFtn6oaY7iQ&t=375s>
- Fr. Sean Kilcawley  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PM2X9ATUJMA&t=7s>
- Brain, Heart, World  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxmlb3QynMs&t=1566s>

## USCCB Resources on Pornography

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has been addressing this growing moral challenge. The Bishops approved the formal statement, “Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography”, with an almost unanimous vote. A print version can be ordered from Ascension Press.

The Bishops note in the Introduction: *“Everyone, in some way, is affected by increased pornography use in society. We all suffer negative consequences from its distorted view of the human person and sexuality. As bishops, we are called to proclaim anew the abundant mercy and healing of God found in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and through his Church.”*

The resources in the Clean Heart Series are available at <https://www.usccb.org/cleanheart>;

- “Create in Me a Clean Heart”, abridged version
- “Pornography’s Effects on Marriage and Hope for Married Couples” by Sam and Beth Meier
- “Raising Chaste Children in a Pornographic World” by Ryan Foley
- “The Role of Priests in Ministry to Those Who Struggle with Pornography” by Fr. David Songy
- “Wash Me Thoroughly: Healing from Pornography Use and Addiction” by Daniel Spadaro

## Reflections from *ST. MARK* Finance Council

By John Zolper, 2023 *ST. MARK* Finance Council Chair

**S***T. MARK* has faced many challenges over the past three years. These challenges included no in-person Masses for part of 2020; restrictions on Mass and Parish ministries, including restrictions on *ST. MARK* Catholic School operations; reduction in Mass attendance even after the return to in-person celebration; significant capital improvements, including refurbishing the Church pews, installing a new sound system, and replacing the CFC Gym roof, among other challenges.

We continue to pray for a return to full participation in Mass and Parish life as we are only at about 60 percent of the Mass attendance from 2019 (when we averaged 1,300 at weekend Mass attendance for the first two months of 2020 versus about 800 for the same two months in 2023). We celebrate all those who are attending Mass and participating in Parish activities. We are blessed that *ST. MARK* Catholic School enrollment has been strong over this period due to the outstanding leadership of Principal Parker and the Faculty, Support Staff, Students, and families. Although there has been a positive increase in Mass attendance

over the past year, the Pastor and the Pastoral Council recognize that reduced Mass attendance remains a core challenge, and they have been taking steps to increase attendance. I ask for your prayers for successful evangelization by all to address this shortfall.

Finally, I turn to the current financial situation of the Parish and the fall 2023 stewardship campaign. In September and October, the Finance Council shared a summary of Parish finances via letters and a Stewardship Brochure (you can see these documents on the *ST. MARK* website at <https://stmark.org/give/>) to all 2,434 registered Parish families as well as through talks at Masses. Fiscal year (FY) 2023 that ended on June 30, 2023, ended with a \$120,000 surplus on the balance sheet due to the generosity of Parishioners and the efforts of Staff to contain expenses. Thank you all! This surplus added to Parish reserves, which remain low at less than two months of expenses (six months of reserves is a reasonable goal). Without this FY23 surplus, Parish reserves would have been less than one month of expenses.

During the fall 2023 Stewardship Cam-

paign that supports the current fiscal year 2024 budget, the Finance Council shared the planned FY24 budget based on conservative projections for income and expenses. With Parish income dependent on the generosity of Parishioners, and the lower Mass attendance correlating with fewer donors, the conservative income projection fell \$200,000 short of the projected \$2.9M of Parish expenses. At this writing, Parish Staff was still tabulating donations received in December 2023. Initial feedback is positive, with contributions up and expected to help make a significant dent in the deficit. However, continued and sustained contributions are needed to meet the annual operating expense budget of \$2.9M. When the final Stewardship Campaign results are available in January, we will report the results in the Bulletin.

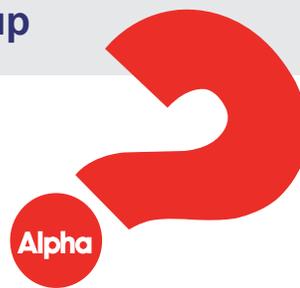
THANK YOU TO ALL FOR YOUR GENEOSITY! I ask for your continued prayers that the Lord may provide for the spiritual and financial needs of the parish of *ST. MARK*.

May the Lord bless you and the parish of *ST. MARK* in 2024 and beyond.

## Alpha Offering a Lenten Tune-up

**A**fter five years of history and more than 350 graduates, the Alpha Team at *ST. MARK* is adding a new program for the Lenten Season. It is offered by Fr. John Riccardo and his ACTS XXIX team in Detroit, called the Rescue Project. With basics similar to Alpha (fellowship, meal, and video presentations followed by small group discussions), the Rescue Project starts with the Bible and goes into areas appropriate for Lent.

Fr. John believes that the Bible's message should be presented in a compelling and attractive manner. He undertakes to do just that. He has a presentation that is sober and serious, yet uplifting with a message of the Father's great love that delivers us from Sin, Death, and Hell.



The 8 weeks of the Rescue Project presents a perfect opportunity for a needed spiritual tune-up, from whatever starting level, heading into LENT and preparing for the great celebration of EASTER.

Join us on Monday evenings in the Cassidy Activities Center for a hearty meeting, with light food, fellowship, and enlightenment. There are no fees or requirements but endless benefits. We will start on Monday, February 5,

at 6:45 p.m. with a meal followed by a presentation and discussion from 7:30 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. We hope to offer a simultaneous Zoom presentation if the technical aspects can be arranged. For questions and to signup, contact Karen Asta at [karenjasta@gmail.com](mailto:karenjasta@gmail.com) or 703-489-0826.



## ST. MARK Book Club

The Book Club meets monthly via Zoom on Thursday evening at 7:30 p.m. In January, the Book Club discussed *The Hidden Manna: A Theology of the Eucharist* by Fr. James T. O'Connor. The readings for upcoming months are as follows:

- **February 8:** *The Shadow of His Wings* by Fr. Gereon Goldmann
- **March 14:** *Confessions of a Cafeteia Catholic* by Peter Kreft
- **April 11:** *Eucharistic Miracles* by Joan Carroll Cruz

## February Feasts and Memorials

- 2 Feast of the *Presentation of the Lord*
- 3 *St. Blaise*, Martyr
- 4 *St. Catherine de Ricci*
- 5 *St. Agatha*, Martyr and Bishop
- 6 *Sts. Paul Miki and Companions*, Martyrs
- 8 *St. Jerome Emiliani and St. Josephine Bakhita*
- 10 *St. Scholastica*
- 14 **Ash Wednesday**
- 17 *The Seven Founders of the Servite Order*
- 21 St. Peter Damian, Doctor of the Church
- 22 Feast of the *Chair of St. Peter the Apostle*
- 23 *St. Polycarp*, Martyr and Bishop
- 27 *St. Gregory of Narek*, Doctor of the Church, Monk, Poet

Each of the Saints that we remember in February lived a life of faith and hope and love that continues to inspire us today. Their backgrounds vary considerably, but their love of God shines through the centuries.

■ **St. Agatha:** This beautiful young Roman woman living in Sicily wished to serve God, and she made a vow of virginity so that she could love Him alone. When she refused the advances of a wealthy and powerful official, she was horribly tormented and tortured, finally dying around 251 AD. She is the Patron Saint of those who are sexually abused.

■ **St. Polycarp:** This disciple of the Apostle John was a Bishop, and he was martyred in 156 AD.

■ **St. Peter Damian:** He was a Doctor of the Church, Abbott, Benedictine Monk, Cardinal, and Mediator

■ **St. Jerome Emiliani and St. Josephine Bakhita:** These two Saints share a feast day.

## Upcoming M&Ms Events

### February

- Coffee in Activities Center: Wednesday, February 7, 10:00 a.m.
- Valentine's Day Lunch: Tuesday, February 13, 12:00 p.m., Bonarati Restaurant, Vienna

### March

- Coffee in Activities Center: Wednesday, March 6, 10:00 a.m.
- St. Patrick's Day Celebration Lunch: Wednesday, March 13, 12:00 p.m., Auld Shebeen Restaurant, Fairfax

**St. Jerome**, like St. Francis of Assisi, was imprisoned after a military skirmish, and in prison, he found God. He devoted his life to helping the sick and the poor, and he founded three orphanages for abandoned children. He is the Patron Saint of orphans and abandoned children.

**St. Josephine Bakhita** was born in Sudan. As a child, she was kidnapped by Arab slave traders and forced to walk barefoot over 600 miles to a slave market. She was sold or given away over a dozen times. She traveled to Italy in 1883 as a slave; she came to know more about God and draw close to Him through the Canossian Sisters. She eventually won her freedom and joined that Religious Order. Her faith and love of God touched the lives of many, and thousands lined the streets at her funeral in 1947. She is the Patron Saint of the victims of human trafficking

■ **St. Paul Miki** was born into a wealthy Japanese family. He became a member of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and as a well-known preacher, he brought many souls to the Faith. He and his 25 companions were arrested and marched 60 miles to Nagasaki, where they were crucified in 1597. From the cross, he forgave his executioners. He said, "The only reason for my being killed is that I have taught the doctrine of Christ.... I thank God it is for this reason I die. I believe that I am telling only the truth before I die. I know you believe me and I want to say to you all once again: Ask Christ to help you to become happy. I obey Christ. After Christ's example, I forgive my persecutors. I do not hate them. I ask God to have pity on all, and I hope my blood will fall on my fellow men as a fruitful rain."

## Milestones

### BAPTISM

*ST. MARK welcomes the following new Parishioners to our Parish family:*

James Lewis Bunyard  
Elizabeth Nashe Forchu  
Connor Timioh Harsh  
Kiera Broch Lawson  
Luke Anthony Rindone

### DEATHS

*The following Parishioners entered into eternal life:*

Kathy Aquilina  
Everett Barnes, Sr.  
Bernie Byrne  
Mary Ann Cushing  
Margaret Davis  
George Jerz  
Timothy Lyons  
Tom Niedermaier  
Thomas Searby  
Leticia Sevilla  
Luis Tupas

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*"We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way."*

*—St. Francis of Assisi*



**Maneline**  
**ST. MARK Catholic Church**  
**9970 Vale Road**  
**Vienna, VA 22181**

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## *Mark Your Calendar*

### **February 2024**

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| <p>1 Embry Rucker Food Delivery 10:00 a.m.</p> <p>2 First Friday Eucharistic Devotion 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.<br/>Middle School Bowling Challenge 6:30 p.m. at Bowl America</p> <p>4 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.</p> <p>6 PENANCE and EUCHARIST Preparation Class 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>7 M&amp;Ms Breakfast 10:00 a.m.<br/>Planning for Arlington Diocese's 50th Anniversary 7:00 p.m.</p> <p>8 College MOMs Meeting 7:00 p.m.</p> <p>11 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 1:00 pm to 4:00 p.m.<br/>Donut Sunday after the 9:00 a.m. Mass</p> <p>13 French Group Meeting 10:30 a.m.<br/>Prayer Shawl Ministry Meeting 1:00 p.m.</p> | <p>14 <i>Ash Wednesday</i> Masses at 6:15 a.m., 5:30 p.m., and 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>16 Movie Night 6:00 p.m.<br/>Stations of the Cross 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>18 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 1:00 pm to 4:00 p.m.<br/>Christ House Food Collection</p> <p>19 Youth Ski Trip leaves at 6:30 a.m.</p> <p>20 PENANCE and EUCHARIST Preparation Class 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>21 PENANCE 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>23 Middle School Friday Night 6:30 p.m.</p> <p>25 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.</p> <p>28 PENANCE 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.</p> |
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