

# Maneline

ST. MARK Catholic Community

## Becoming Catholic: A Journey Come to Fruition at the EASTER Vigil

By Nathan Williams

If you had asked me a few years ago what I would be in 2024, the last thing I would have said would be Catholic. Coming out of an Evangelical background, I had no Catholic family members (direct or extended), no Catholic friends, and essentially no exposure to the Catholic Church whatsoever, except for vague ideas about the “Dark Ages”, weird traditions, and the fact that Catholics included a few extra books in their Bible. So, it is a strange thing indeed that I will be confirmed as a member of the Catholic Church this EASTER.

How and why I showed up at the doors of *ST. MARK* is still somewhat hard to explain. To provide some background, although I grew up attending fundamentalist Evangelical churches, I had read the Bible (often daily) and was a Baptized (and re-Baptized!) believer, I eventually lost my faith during college. I had lived for several years in a sort of uneasy agnosticism until I realized I was wrong and “read” my way back into what C. S. Lewis would call a “mere Christianity”. Christianity was true after all: I had come to believe God is real and Christ rose from the dead for our salvation.

What should I do now? Well, I came to realize that if I am going to be a Christian, I should probably go to church. But which one? I had attended Evangelical and non-denominational churches nearly my whole life and figured I ought to try something different. I Google-searched the churches in my

area: Methodist, Lutheran, Orthodox Presbyterian, Anglican, Catholic. I thought about it, and something told

“All of it points to the glory of God and Christ’s work on the Cross. I realized that this was something I needed to be a part of. The Catholic Church was no longer merely reasonable; it was now something true, good, and beautiful.”

me that if I should try something different from my upbringing, I ought to go *really* different. Catholicism was the strangest option I could think of while still keeping me in the wheelhouse of “traditional” Christianity.

Other than being different than what I grew up in, Catholicism had one other thing going for it in my mind: I knew St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine were highly regarded in the Catholic Church, and these two Saints were absolutely key in bringing me out of agnosticism. So if these two guys (I did not think of them as Saints at the time) were pretty smart, which I thought they were, and if they were important to Catholicism, maybe, just maybe, there is something in the Church into which I should look. I think I wanted to get a closer look into what happened at a Catholic Church and how they could possibly believe their own doctrine.

### Attending My First Mass

I researched more online and read (somewhere) that I was supposed to

attend the Catholic Parish geographically closest to where I live. So, one Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m., I showed up at *ST. MARK* and attended my first Mass. To call it strange would be an understatement: standing, sitting, kneeling, Readings, hymns. Are they saying the Nicene Creed? Also, why is the sermon (what they called a “homily”) so short, and why did Communion (the “EUCCHARIST”) take so long? It was like nothing I had ever seen before, and I

felt like a fish out of water. A few things stuck out to me at the time, which, while strange, I came to appreciate:

- They read several selections from Scripture.
- They took the Mass seriously. I had grown tired of church services feeling like comedy shows or high-school theatre.
- There were no smoke and mirrors. I got the feeling that they were not trying to hide a secret or water down what they actually believed. It was all there right in front of me, and I did not feel I was being pandered to as a non-Catholic, and I respected that. The Pastor did not feel like a used-car salesman.

This was something I needed to chew on. Providentially, after the Mass had ended, someone at *ST. MARK* put me in contact with Jean Lupinacci, who was in charge of RCIA at the time. I did not know what that acronym stood for, or

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# Becoming Catholic: A Journey Come to Fruition at the Easter Vigil

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what “Catechesis” was, but I met with her later that day, She graciously answered a few dozen of my most pressing questions that I had jotted down (mostly historical and doctrinal). During the meeting, I once again got this feeling that she was not trying to pull the wool over my eyes, bend the truth, or twist Scripture. That Sunday gave me a lot about which to think. I continued to read about the Catholic faith, but I was so thrown off by the experience of going to Mass that I stopped going until I could read more about it. Eventually, though still intellectually interested in Catholicism, I got lax about the idea of attending Church and almost forgot all about it.

## Accepting an Invitation to Talk

Fast forward several months, and I got a random call from Joe Flaherty, who was the new Director of Religious Education at *ST. MARK*. He asked if I wanted to come in and talk. At the time, a total stranger calling me out of the blue and inviting me to discuss the Catholic faith was like a slight nudge that I needed to keep going. In retrospect, it was incredibly Providential,

and I thank God that I answered the phone from an unknown caller.

## Learning about the Faith

After a few meetings with Joe, I joined RCIA to learn more about the Catholic Faith in a more structured format. This is precisely what I needed, since I realized solo internet research does not exactly lead to a life of Faith. We read this book called the *Catechism*, which, to my surprise, laid out the entirety of Catholicism in a way that was logical and well-formatted, while also tied to Scripture; writings from the Church Fathers; and the Church’s official teaching, liturgy, and tradition. During this time, I was also slowly exposed to the incredible intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church, and I found that Catholics have very good and solid reasons for what they believe.

## Coming Home

The whole “Catholic thing” began to open to up to me. I slowly saw the line drawn from the ancient Church of the Apostles and Martyrs to what was happening daily in the Mass at *ST. MARK*. The Scriptures, the Church Fathers and the Saints, the liturgy, the hymns, the

devotions, the theology—all of it felt like a whole new world to me. I had found something of incredible depth and richness but taken it on with incredible humility and reverence. All of it points to the glory of God and Christ’s work on the Cross. I realized that this was something of which I needed to be a part. The Catholic Church was no longer merely reasonable; it was now something true, good, and beautiful.

In Matthew 13, Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to hidden treasure, the man who found it with joy selling everything he has to obtain the field where it was found. This was my feeling at the time. But how did I not see it sooner? It was right there the whole time. I do not know, but with joy I embrace it now with my whole heart. I thank God for His loving patience with me during the slow journey, which is only just beginning. I think of St. Paul when he said “and last of all, He appeared also to me, as of one born out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:8). Although I took far too long along the way, the Lord led me home. Thanks be to God!

## PARISH YOUTH RECEIVE THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

On Monday, March 11, 73 Parish Youth completed the Rites of Initiation by receiving the Sacrament of CONFIRMATION at a Mass celebrated by Bishop Burbidge. A reception in the Activities Center followed the Mass.

### Spirit Teams

Spirit Teams play a pivotal role in the sacramental preparation of Parish Youth. Spirit Teams are Small Communities of 8th Graders, made up of a mix of Catholic School and Religious Education students, that provide the Candidates with opportunities to live out their faith as disciples



in fellowship. The Spirit Team leaders are parents who plan service, spiritual, and social experiences for these students over the course of the school year.

The leaders of this year’s Spirit Team were Cindy Ahad, Amy Atkinson, Helen Baucom, Deanna Busted,

Andrea DiMarco, Jen Djouadi, Camy Geide, Ryan Malisko, Jennifer Messina, Kristen Petersen, Megan Pickersgill, Mary Reilly, Mayela Stuparitz, Lisa Throckmorton, and Lisa Wise.

The Youth service activities included helping at the Thanksgiving Clothing Drive, working at the Lamb Center or Christ House, making tags for the Giving Tree at CHRISTMAS and helping to sort all of the items, and helping at the Fall Festival. The Middle School and High School Workcamps, and their respective fundraisers, offer additional opportunities.

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## PARISH YOUTH RECEIVE THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

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### 2024 CONFIRMANDI

The 73 Youth who received the Sacrament of CONFIRMATION in March were as follows:

Anastasia Ahad, Carolyn Angelicchio, Taylor Atkinson, Eleanor Bae, William Beck, Owen Beresny, Maia Berthe, Joseph Bird, Lorenzo Bonacci, Robert Bonilla, Sophie Bordener, Gaby Bremer, Annabelle Busteed, Finbar Cahillane, Elaina Castillo, Ian Clark, Levi Craner,

Daniel DiMarco, Nathaniel Djouadi, Caroline Eich

Jonathan Fernando, Elise Fitzgibbon, Maris Francescon, Daniel Gagnon, Lucas Geary, Bria Geide, Lyla Geiger, Abigail Glassman, Kristina Grabowski, Cameron Gureff, Piper Guy, Julia Heinzelmann, Charlotte Henderson, Ella Henderson, Nolan Henderson, Andrew Hodson, Karina Jaklis, Noah Jordan

Fiona Kalbaugh, Luke Lauretti, Andrew Long, Nicholas Lucchese, William

Lytton, William Maggiano, Allison Malisko, Mia McCabe, Tyler Messina, Mackenzie Muller, Natalia Novoa, Benjamin Petersen, Bella Pham, Brian Pickersgill, Gustavo Platero, Leyton Reilly, Olivia Rojas Mühlethaler

Alexandra Samsot, Tadas Stanis, Jake Stuparitz, Santiago Talbot, Jake Tardy, Mairin Tarr, Olivia Taylor, Sofia Tran, Gabriella Trevino, Andrew Weiler, Hannah Wibowo, Genevieve Wilson, Logan Wise, Giovanna Yappel, and Javion Zdimal.

## Our Lady of Guadalupe's Message of Love for All Peoples

By Rita Ann Butcher

The Sunday Religious Education program recently featured a presentation on the Blessed Mother's appearance to a native man named Juan Diego in 1531. Her appearance occurred about a decade after the Spanish conquest of Mexico. The Aztec religion had waned, but the native people had not embraced Christianity in any large numbers.

Little did Juan Diego know as he traveled one morning past Tepeyac hill on the way to Mexico City that he was on a pilgrimage that would light the way for our journey. We can imagine him as a simple peasant holding his conversion to Christianity as a treasure in his soul. Trudging up the road on a dry rocky path with no shade, he was focused on his final destination: Mass and catechism class. Perhaps there was a small stream sprouting nearby and a random sage bush. Little did he expect to encounter a heavenly vision of grace and beauty.

Yet there on the top of the hill was our Blessed Mother clothed in heavenly azure blue, a combination of sky and sea. She was standing on a crescent moon, she was with child, and she held her hands held in a praying position. The sun radiated its rays as a symbol of her bringing Light to us.

Our Lady addressed him in his native language, called him "my son", and told him not to be afraid. She asked him to go to the Spanish Bishop and tell him that she wished to have a small church built on this hill. The Bishop did not grant

the request. Juan went back to Tepeyac to tell the Lady of his failure. She sent him back, and again the answer was no. The Bishop said he would consider the request if Juan Diego could bring him a sign that the apparition was truly the Mother of God. When Juan Diego reported this to Mary, she told him to meet her on the top of the hill in the morning. When he arrived at the snow-covered top, he beheld an unexpected burst of red color from roses and other flowers with the sweetest scent. What a magnificent sight in winter! Surely, this was the sign for the Bishop from Our Lady.

Following Mary's instructions, he gathered the flowers in his tilma, a coarse agave cactus cloth. He went back to the Bishop with what he thought was "the sign". As he opened the tilma and the flowers fell to the floor, the Virgin's image appeared on it, and the Bishop fell to his knees.

Scientists over the centuries have studied the image carefully, using sophisticated technology. They have not been able to explain how the image had come to be made. It was not painted; there are no brush strokes. It was not placed on finely woven silk or tapestry but on a plant-fiber weave fabric that should have dissolved after a few decades. Yet the tilma and image remain intact after 500 years. Scientists who looked into her eyes in more recent years were stunned when they found the image of the Bishop and others in the room at

the time visible—but upside down, as they would be in a living human eye!

This gift from Mary tells us that she came to bring her Son's benevolent love, compassion, and understanding to all peoples in all ages. Within 10 years of her appearance to Juan Diego, 9 million Aztecs became Christian, and human sacrifice ended.

She wears a gold brooch with an image of a cross. She understands her Son's sacrifice. She crushes the serpent at her feet and teaches us to unite in love and forgiveness rather than engage in war and conquest. I see a heavenly mother who loves all humanity. We can be united by one God. If we listen to her message and reflect on mercy and forgiveness, we can walk forth on our own pilgrimage and bring healing light to others.

### Celebrating 50 Years of Priestly Service

Fr. Pat, Fr. Tuck, a past Parochial Vicar, and Msgr. Mark Lane from the Diocese of Richmond will celebrate their 50th Anniversary of Ordination on May 4. The Parish will host a celebration for these three dedicated servants of God on Sunday, May 5, at the 11:00 a.m. Mass. A simple reception will follow the Mass in the Activities Center.



# Fridays in LENT: Suppers and Stations of the Cross

By Judy Buchino

## Soup and Salad Suppers

This year, *ST. MARK* continued the practice of Soup and Salad Suppers prior to the Stations of the Cross for six Friday evenings in Lent. The Suppers offered a wonderful time to experience fellowship with our Church members. Although the group was relatively small, it filled several tables with friends, family, members of prayer groups, Alpha, and many of the other groups so active at *ST. MARK*.



A different Parish group provided the meal each of the six weeks: Youth Ministry, *ST. MARK* School, the Religious Education Commission, Alpha, the Funeral Bakers, and Liturgical Art/BAPTISM volunteers.

The Supper started at 6:00 p.m., giving everyone plenty of time to enjoy the hearty meatless soups and bountiful salads available. No one went hungry! The camaraderie of the group was apparent, as everyone was able to enjoy the meal in leisure. There was no rushing from one event to another; we were able to take time and have some good conversations with friends from *ST. MARK* and to meet new people.

After the meal, the group moved to the Church at 7:30 p.m. to pray the Stations of the Cross. One of the booklets we followed was, "The Way of the Cross", by St. Alphonsus Liguri (1696–1787). Catholics have prayed the Stations of the Cross for more than 1,000 years. Additional information on the history of the Stations of the Cross is available at [https://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/liturgy/documents/ns\\_lit\\_doc\\_via-crucis\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/documents/ns_lit_doc_via-crucis_en.html).

## The Stations of the Cross

Although this devotion is particularly practiced in LENT, it can be spiritually rewarding at any time or season. There are 14 Stations of the Cross. Each

Station represents a different moment in Jesus's Passion and Death, and each gives us the opportunity to encounter the Jesus of the Gospels in a very personal way.

1. Jesus is Condemned to Death
2. Jesus Carries the Cross
3. Jesus Falls for the First Time
4. Jesus Meets His Mother
5. Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross
6. Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus
7. Jesus Falls a Second Time
8. Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem
9. Jesus Falls a Third Time
10. Jesus is Stripped of His Garments
11. Jesus is Nailed to the Cross
12. Jesus Dies on the Cross
13. Jesus' Body is Removed from the Cross
14. Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

For each Station, we did the following steps:

1. We named the Station: The First Station is Jesus is Condemned to Death.
2. We read the opening prayer: "We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You." (Kneel) "Because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world." (Rise) Anyone who was unable to kneel could sit or stand.
3. We read the selected Scripture passage for inspiration.
4. We reflected on what this Station of the Cross means for our lives.
5. We ended by praying the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

When we repeated this process for all 14 stations, it was amazing how the story of Jesus's Passion impacts our day! More information on this devotion is available from Dynamic Catholic at <https://www.dynamiccatholic.com/lent/stations-of-the-cross.html>.

A more modern booklet is "A Light for My Path: Praying the Psalms on the Way of the Cross" by Michale Ruzicki, illustrated by Michael O'Neill McGrath, OSFS. The introduction by Paul Turner states: "The Stations can be a penitential exercise. Through them we recall the sins from which we are saved by means of the Cross of Jesus. Remembering our sins is unpleasant. If we focus only on the wrongs we have done, we can easily end up in despair. But if we never reflect back

on our mistakes, we cannot face the person we have been, nor intelligently strive to become the person God wants us to be."

During the Covid pandemic, when we were required to shelter in place, I found that I could walk over to *OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL* and view the stations from outside the Church. Each of the windows of the Chapel shows a rendition of the Stations of the Cross by Brother Mickey McGrath. With a prayer card in hand from St. Jude Missionaries, I could walk along the path and recite the prayers with a mindful reflection on each station. The artist used bright colors in his work, and I was particularly caught up by the oval shape of many figures: Jesus meets his mother Mary, the sorrowful face of the Lord enduring his suffering, and Mary hovering over the body of the Lord. It gave me the sense of a loving God embracing all those who suffer. The Stations offer us a meaningful tool for growth at any season of the year.

## Lenten Cross of Mercy

LENT is a special time in our spiritual journey. One way that Parishioners engaged with Lenten practices was through the **Lenten Cross of Mercy**, which was displayed in the Narthex. The Cross was one way to help support the mission of the *House of Mercy* in Manassas, which provides food and clothing to those in need. It contained a variety of tags, for either Spiritual or Corporal Works of Mercy. Parishioners were able to select one or more tags and help make Christ's mercy and love visible to those in need in our community.

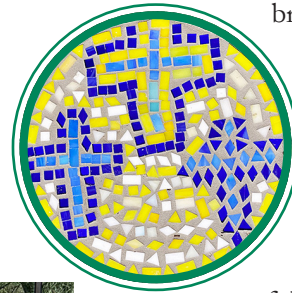
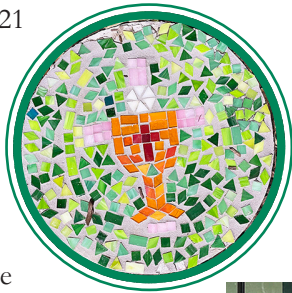
Those who participated delivered the material items to the foot of the Cross; monetary donations were sent to the Parish Office or sent via mail to the *House of Mercy*. The *House of Mercy* in Manassas thanks everyone for their donations that made it possible to share God's love during this Holy Season. May God bless you abundantly!

# Garlands of Green and Rosary of Stone

By Faith Roberts and Betsy Zolper

Our native-plant Mary Garden came to life in October 2021 through the efforts of the *ST. MARK* Care for Our Common Home team (CCH). Hours of planning and many more hours of digging out invasive plants were required to clear this little sacred place. Generous Parishioners donated the statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the native plants, and the garden bench. The *ST. MARK* School Third-Grade classes learned about planting native plants, and each Student carefully planted a Jacob's Ladder along the stepping-stones. Students from Grades K-8 had created the beautiful mosaic stepping-stones in January 2022 during Catholic Schools Week. Students and teachers honor Mary in May with lessons near the Garden and by placing flowers at her feet.

In December 2022, the Garden was certified as a Kateri Habitat by the St. Kateri Conservation Center (<https://www.kateri.org/mary-gardens-for-a-spiritual-experience/>). A goal of the Conservation Center is to have at least one Kateri Habitat in every parish in the United States. With more than 17,000 parishes and 60 million Catholics in our country, the potential for Catholic conservation is vast. Please consider this an invitation to find a spot for native plants in your yard, and create your own Kateri Habitat. All Habitats are marked on a map and include a short description and pictures. Watching the birds and butterflies feasting in the



Garden can initiate a renewal of our Faith by deepening connections with God and the fostering of relationships with all of Creation.

The Mary Garden is not only a pollinator garden to support our local ecosystem, which is part of the glorious creation given to us by our Creator. It is also a Rosary Garden. The stepping-stones form a one-decade rosary. The first stone is for the Sign of the Cross, then the Our Father, then 10 stones for 10 Hail Marys, and ending with the Glory Be stone in front our Blessed Mother in her appearance as Our Lady of Guadalupe. Each of these stones has Christian symbols in mosaic that were created by the children in our School. See if you can find the crosses, roses, fish, star, dove, angel, chalice, and candle.



Encourage your children to pray as they step along the stones. The Garden is meant to be a welcoming place for

children and adults. Feel free to sit on the bench and pray, and feel free to bring local flowers to place before Our Lady (vases are tucked behind the statue). Please bring some water to fill the vase. A lovely bunch of dandelions picked by a child and given for love to Our Lady is a beautiful thing.

**Join us in the Garden on May 11 after the 11:00 a.m. Mass for the May Crowning of Our Lady.**

Volunteers are needed to care for the Garden and keep this joyful expression of our devotion to Mary going! Please join the Mary Garden ministry by sending an email to [stmark.cch@gmail.com](mailto:stmark.cch@gmail.com).

## Special Education Survey

Do you know someone with special educational needs who wants to learn about the Faith?

The *ST. MARK* Religious Education Office is reaching out to our Church family to gauge the spiritual and personal growth needs of Parishioners with children and young adults with disabilities. This includes individuals who cannot learn in a typical classroom environment.

The survey found at the link below will help us to determine the specific needs of our member families. The individual results are confidential and will be used to explore possible opportunities to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities within our Parish.

Your completion of this survey by Tuesday, April 30, is much appreciated. While we are investigating potential services, please note that we cannot guarantee the establishment of a formal program. Survey link: <https://forms.ministryforms.net/viewForm.aspx?formId=78159421-665b-43f6-8c2d-9d1fa7e8da5a>.



## ST. MARK Bids Farewell to Director of Youth Ministry

Kevin Flores, who has served in the many varied aspects of the Parish's Youth Ministry since 2011, will retire May 17. Kevin and his wife Evelyn will return to their home in Mission Viejo, California.

Kevin graduated from California State University at Fullerton with a BA Degree in Broadcast Communications in the early 1990s and worked on several television shows and independent productions, one with the Make-a-Wish Foundation. He eventually responded to the call to work in Youth Ministry after the Pastor at Mission San Juan Capistrano asked him to step up and take over the vacant Youth Minister position. He began by working in the Diocese of Orange (California) at several parishes. He particularly enjoyed the popular Life Teen program that provided opportunities to engage with young people and help them to grow in the Faith.

Kevin and Evelyn moved to Virginia in 2006 when her work with the federal government continued. Kevin was Assistant Director in the Arlington Diocese Youth Office from 2006 to 2011. During these five years, he helped with large events for Parishes, including Junior High Bashes, High School Rallies, Deep Water sessions, and Diocesan-sponsored WorkCamps. He also ran retreat sessions for various Parishes assisting other Youth Ministers. He had the opportunity to travel to Sydney, Australia, for the 2008 World Youth Day, managing a large Diocesan group of nearly 300 pilgrims! He also helped to manage the logistics for the 2011 World Youth Day in Madrid. Kevin took Youth Ministry certification courses through the Diocesan Youth Office in both California and Virginia to gain knowledge of the complex world of Youth Ministry.

After years at the Diocesan level, Kevin decided he would like to work again in Parish life and with the youth of the Parish. When he came to *ST. MARK* in 2011, his first task required him to hit the ground



Kevin and Evelyn Flores

running as he joined 50 eager High School youth for their Annual High School WorkCamp leaving for an unknown town in Pennsylvania at 5:00 a.m.! His primary responsibilities were to run the Sunday night program for teens, which included social, service, and prayer events, and Catholic Youth Community (CYC). He also worked alongside the Middle School Youth

Minister, Eric McDade, who eventually left to pursue his vocation to the priesthood.

Eric's departure in 2017 meant that Kevin became the new overall Director of Youth Ministry, with full responsibility of what had been divided among the two. He now oversaw Middle School Youth, High School Youth, College and Young Adults. In addition, he worked with the volunteer Commissioners of the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) sports program that include cross country, tennis, basketball, track and field (Fall and Spring), volleyball and cheer. Kevin has also worked closely with the Scouts BSA organization.

Kevin recalls that "Covid was particularly challenging," since the Youth were not able to meet in person. For that first year, the CONFIRMATION Retreats for both the boys and girls were held via Zoom, so personal interactions were limited. Since then, for every CONFIRMATION retreat he runs, he coordinates the work of the priests for Confession and adult Volunteers for Small Groups, as well as working with fellow Staff for logistics and content. This year's in-person retreats were held at Hunting Ridge Center in Winchester; about 35 boys and 33 girls plus adult Volunteers participated over two weekends. Fr. Pat and Fr. Ignatius both joined the weekends, and each gave a teaching Mass so the Candidates could better appreciate the richness and wonder of the Liturgy.

Kevin was blessed to see our late Holy Father St. Pope John Paul II in Rome in the 2000 Jubilee year for World Youth

Day. Although he was frail and confined to a chair, the young people dancing and chanting "John Paul II, we love you!" gave him energy from within himself.

His many quotes will stand the test of time, but the quote that stands out most to Kevin is "The future starts today, not tomorrow!" Working with so many young people over his 30-plus years as a volunteer and Director, Kevin has seen that the youth that he has served are not the future of tomorrow but **the future of today!**

### WORKCAMP 2024

This year's Annual Diocesan WorkCamp will again be in Winchester County. The participants will return to stay at Frederick County Middle School, a relatively new facility built in 2020.

Kevin describes the WorkCamp as "a well-oiled machine," and the Parish's many years of participation helps things to run smoothly. The Youth and adult Volunteers sleep in the classrooms: boys in the basement and girls on the second floor. The Diocese had earlier worked with the local Social Services agency to identify specific needs. These needs might include roofing, repairing floors, installing insulation, putting in new windows, and building handicap ramps. Licensed contractors volunteer their time and skills for WorkCamp to ensure that all work is in accordance to code and all permits are in place. To date, eight *ST. MARK* Youth have signed up for the week, with four adult Volunteers, all new to the WorkCamp experience.

Sarah Kirk is the group leader or "stakeholder" for *ST. MARK* parish. Registration has closed for this summer's WorkCamp, but an Information Meeting about WorkCamp 2025 will be held this October. All High School Youth completing their freshman year through graduating seniors are eligible.

## Divine Mercy Sunday, April 7

This special feast day celebrates the Mercy of God and fittingly concludes the Octave of EASTER, since God's Mercy was fully revealed in the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ during *Holy Week*.

Pope John Paul II drew attention to the Mercy of God in his encyclical "Dives in Misericordia" (Rich in Mercy), published in 1980. He wrote, "Believing in [God's] love means believing in mercy. For mercy is an indispensable dimension of love; it is as it were love's second name and, at the same time, the specific manner in which love is revealed."

This feast is based on the revelations from Jesus Christ to Sister Faustina, a Polish Religious Sister, in the 1930s. John Paul II proclaimed the Feast of Divine Mercy Sunday at the canonization of St. Faustina on April 30, 2000. In the revelations, the Lord said that, just as we ask for His mercy, so does He require us to be merciful to others; "I demand from you deeds of mercy which are to arise out of love for Me. You are to show mercy to your neighbors always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse or absolve yourself from it."

## Parish M&Ms

### March

The M&Ms held a successful After Mass Coffee on Wednesday, March 6. On Wednesday, March 13, 31 members of the group went to the Auld Shebeen in Fairfax to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. After a hearty meal, the group happily sang Irish tunes in a sing-along led by Nancy Dunaway. Merriment was added to the desert when Bill McCarthy graciously volunteered to tell some couple of Irish jokes. As the saying goes, a good time was had by all.

### April

In April, the M&Ms had an After



Mass Coffee on Wednesday, April 3, and a Potluck Lunch on Wednesday, April 17.

### May

Plans include Breakfast in the Cassidy Activities Center on May 1, following the 9:15 a.m. Mass, and Luncheon in the Cassidy Activities Center in May 15 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

## Save the Date for Vacation Bible School!

Vacation Bible School will be held from July 22-26 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The dropoff time is 8:45 a.m.

Campers (Pre-Kindergarten through rising 5th grade) and Volunteers, especially adults, are needed. Stay tuned for registration and additional information. Contact Sarah Lundquist at [slundquist@stmark.org](mailto:slundquist@stmark.org) if you have questions or would like to volunteer.

## ST. MARK Book Club

The ST. MARK Book Club meets via Zoom on the second Thursdays of the month at 7:30 p.m. from September through June.

The March selection was *Confessions of a Cafeteria Catholic* by Peter Kreeft and Nat Whilk.

### Upcoming meetings

- April 11: *Eucharistic Miracles* by Joan Carroll Cruz
- May 9: *The Shroud: Face to Face* by Robert Orlando
- June 13: *Silent Angel* by Antonia Arsian

## Milestones

### BAPTISM

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

McKenna Mae Good

### DEATHS

The following Parishioners entered into eternal life:

John Finta  
Otto Gercken  
Rachel Lyons  
Adele McGowan  
Charles Moss  
John Sichenze  
Timothy Tully

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*"Holiness does not consist in not making mistakes or never sinning. Holiness grows with the capacity for conversion, repentance, willingness to begin again, and above all, with the capacity for reconciliation and forgiveness."*

Pope Benedict XVI

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**PAID**  
**Permit No. 16**  
**Merrifield, Va.**

## *Mark Your Calendar*

### **April 2024**

- 1 Alpha
- 3 M&Ms Breakfast 10:00 a.m.
- 5 First Friday Eucharistic Adoration 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
- 7 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 1:00 p.m.  
Evening Prayer and Benediction 5:00 p.m.
- 14 Donut Sunday after the 9:00 a.m. Mass  
Blood Drive on Sunday April 14th 8am – 1pm
- 18 High School Workcamp Meeting 7:00 p.m.
- 19 Movie Night Friday,
- 21 Christ House Food Collection  
Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 1:00 p.m.  
Evening Prayer and Benediction 5:00 p.m.  
Newcomers' Luncheon after the 11am Mass
- 26 Middle School Friday Night 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- 27 Volunteer Appreciation Dinner  
after the 5:30pm Vigil Mass
- 28 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 1:00 p.m.  
Evening Prayer and Benediction 5:00 p.m.

### **May 2024**

- 1 First EUCHARIST rehearsals
- 3 First Friday Eucharistic Adoration  
10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
- 4 Middle School BASH 3:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- 4-5 First EUCHARIST and May Crowning
- 5 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 1:00 p.m.  
Evening Prayer and Benediction 5:00 p.m.  
50th Anniversary Celebration of Ordination of Fr. Pat,  
Fr. Tuck, and Monsignor Mark Lane at 11a.m. Mass  
with reception
- 11-12 First EUCHARIST  
Workcamp Fundraiser after Masses
- 12 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 1:00 p.m.  
Evening Prayer and Benediction 5:00 p.m.
- 17 *ST. MARK* Movie Night 6:00 p.m.
- 19 Christ House Food Collection
- 26 Hot Meal Preparation and Delivery 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- 29-June 1 Forty Hours Devotion

