

ST. PATRICK

CATHOLIC CHURCH



Catholic Schools Week: *Celebrating the Many Gifts and Blessings of Catholic Education*

Once a year, Catholic schools throughout the nation set aside an entire week to celebrate the gifts and blessings of Catholic education. At St. Patrick Catholic Church and School, we have a lot planned for our own celebration. Principal Lourdes McKay is looking forward to the community coming together to show appreciation for the work being done in our school to form the students into disciples and stewards.

“Catholic education plays an essential part in nurturing the call to holiness for our children,” Mrs. McKay says. “Through religious education and prayer, Catholic education provides students with the formation to know, love and serve Christ and pursue excellence in learning.”

The national theme for Catholic Schools Week this year is “Faith. Excellence. Service.” Our parish and school will host open days, school tours, Masses, and liturgies. Games and activities for the students and community will provide an opportunity for our community to come together in celebration and appreciation. Each day will honor a different part of the community that makes Catholic education successful. From the parish, to the staff, teachers, and



families, as well as the religious vocations that we foster and that serve us, each component is vital to our school.

“We are a family that helps each other thrive,” Mrs. McKay says. “Our students minister to the many parishioners that attend our weekly school Mass, and our parishioners have always been so generous with the school’s various fundraisers and activities.”

A Catholic education is a gift to both the students and the Church. The whole person is formed, educated and loved in a Catholic school.

“We provide our students with the tools to cultivate their entire person through the educational process

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WEEKEND LITURGY:

Saturday: 5 p.m. (English), 7 p.m. (Spanish)

Sunday: 9 a.m. (English), 11 a.m. (Spanish),
5 p.m. (English)

First Saturday: 9 a.m. (English), 7 p.m. (Spanish)

VER AL DORSO
PARA ESPAÑOL



Meet Luis and Edna Garza:

Helping out with a Smile and a Servant's Heart

When it comes to a vibrant parish, it's "all hands on deck" to get things done. If we each do our part, everything and more will be completed. Some folks at St. Patrick's have lots of hands on the deck. Luis and Edna Garza are an example, as they are involved in many ministries — and they do it all with a smile and a servant's heart.

"We don't do it for praise," Edna says. "We see a need, and we help if we can. If people would just take one little thing, it would make a big difference. If everyone plays a small part, it makes the job a lot easier."

On any given day, you can find them at the parish helping with one ministry or another. They wouldn't have it any other way. They've been helping at St. Patrick's for at least 20 years. They've been members for about 48 years.

Both Luis and Edna were raised Catholic — Luis even grew up three houses down from a Catholic church in Eagle Pass, Texas.

Luis and Edna are both very involved in the 60-5 Club, which is open to anyone age 55 and older. Although the group is on a hiatus due to the pandemic, they normally meet on the last Tuesday of the month at noon in the Faith Formation building. The members enjoy a potluck meal followed by Bingo.

Both are also very involved in planning the Fiestas Patrias in September. The event is a celebration of Chile's independence from Spain, and it usually includes a fair, Bingo and dance team performances, to name a few activities.

"I am busier now than when I worked," Edna says with a chuckle.

Edna also helps by filling in at the St. Patrick's office when someone is out. When a meal is needed for a small event, Edna organizes a group to prepare it. She also helps with the meals for funeral receptions. Edna also was previously a collection money counter. She simply loves the opportunity to be involved and meet new people.

"I have never met a stranger," Edna says. "If I don't know someone, I find a way to get to know them and learn more about them."

Luis has been a member of the Knights of Columbus at St. Patrick for 37 years. The couple's son, Luis, Jr., is



also a member of the St. Patrick Knights. Their son, Edward, is a Knight at his parish in Katy, Texas. Luis enjoys the opportunity to be involved and help out with the many organizations that the Knights support, everything from the Special Olympics to St. Patrick's Catholic School.

"We do a lot of work for the church and the priests," says Luis. "If they need something, they call us. They call the Knights the 'right hand of the church.'"

Luis and Edna feel very blessed. Their greatest joy is being with family. They have two sons, two daughters-in-law and five granddaughters.

In Luis's free time, he enjoys doing repair work on lawnmowers and other small equipment. Edna loves to make rosaries. She also creates cascarones, which are eggs filled with confetti and decorated for Easter. The couple also enjoys praying the Rosary and reading the Bible together.

Start 2022 with a Clean Spiritual Slate

Dear Parishioners,

We were all taught in school that the month of January gets its name from Janus, the ancient Roman god of doors and gates. His image was always carved or painted with two faces, one looking forward and the other backward. This reflected, of course, that you can go either out a door or in through one. From this very specific function, his role was generalized to include all beginnings and new endeavors.

Because of Janus' place in the Roman pantheon, it seemed natural to the Romans to name the first month of the civil year after him. (The Church year began back with the First Sunday of Advent, you'll remember.) And although we no longer worship the pagan gods of the ancient Romans, the name has stuck down the centuries.

But we're not immune to the human instinct that moved the Romans to name the first month after Janus. His double countenance, facing forward and backward, reflects how we approach the coming of each new year.

The last week of the old year finds the newspapers and TV programs giving a glance back at the past year ("the 10 best, or worst, movies of..." and such) along with predictions of what the new year will bring. My personal favorite is always "the 10 worst predictions" for the year just ending.

Just like the secular world does — Janus-like — we both look back at our own successes and failures, happy events, and sad ones, during the year just ending, and forward to the new year as we prepare our resolutions.

When we reflect back on the blessings we've received, our hearts should be filled with gratitude — and blessings there have been, no matter how difficult the year has been. But for most of us, there have been failures and failings, too. That calls for repentance, and perhaps a trip



to the confessional — but God, who makes "all things new" (Rv 21:5), will then give us a clean spiritual slate with which we may begin the new year.

I'd also like to challenge you to include your grateful response to God as you make your resolutions for the new year. You don't have to wait until you fill out a commitment card to decide this is the year when you're actually going to attend Mass once a week in addition to Sunday (or begin worshiping every Sunday if you haven't been doing so) or to pray the Rosary every week or to begin regular prayers

with your family. Include in your resolutions how you are going to get involved in some ministry in the parish or some service to the community, and then do so. Decide to become more faithful in your financial stewardship if your treasure commitment is less than it should be. Look forward to the new year and bring Christ and His Church to the center of your resolutions. Then see what a good year it will be, with God at the center!

Have a happy, and holy, New Year.

In Christ,

Fr. Denzil Vithanage, Pastor



The Fourth Pillar of Parish Life: **YOUTH MINISTRY** *Creating Authentic Connections*

There's no doubt that our faith is meant to be lived in community. Jesus made it clear, as written in the Book of Matthew — “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

Here at St. Patrick's, we have a way for our youth to gather in Jesus's name — the Youth Ministry program, for eighth to 12th-grade students. They meet every Sunday at 6:30 p.m. after the 5 p.m. Mass.

Fr. Denzil Vithanage has identified Seven Pillars on which we can focus to make St. Patrick's the best it can be — Youth Ministry is the Fourth Pillar we will explore.

“We need to ask how we can help make disciples,” Fr. Denzil says. “We want to be friends in the faith.”

The goal of our Youth Ministry is to walk with middle and high school youth on their journey in faith. Most recently, the group has been focusing on how to become saints. But they've explored many different topics over the years.

“God has a goal for us all to become saints,” says Mary Zamora, who has coordinated the Youth Ministry program for five years. “We want the youth to learn this and ways they can achieve this goal.”

Mary is especially thankful to be meeting with the youth once again, after such a long break due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The youth began meeting again in May 2021, and while it's been a slow process getting students back to the Youth Ministry, Mary is thankful for those that do come.

“Although we don't have a large group, it's been very fruitful for myself and the kids,” she says.

Over the summer, youth gathered for a social outing at a park with canoeing, swimming and hiking. Mary used this as an opportunity to connect socially and grow in faith. Before the pandemic, youth also went to the Diocesan Youth Conference in the summer.

“I want to be able to create a fun environment for the youth,” Mary says. “In the future, I want to make some



updates to the Youth Room to make a comfortable space for kids that makes them feel at home. I want the kids to be excited and proud to be Catholic.”

Mary, who works as a full-time nurse, feels so blessed to be doing this ministry, and is so thankful for Fr. Denzil's support. Diana Luna and her husband, Miguel, also help with Youth Ministry programming.

“This is part of my journey to sainthood,” Mary says. “This is a ministry that I have been called to do. It helps me be holy.”

Mary invites all parishioners to think of ways the youth might be able to help — whether that be serving in the church or assisting a parishioner in need. She also invites parishioners to consider giving financially to the program — she does everything she can to keep costs low for the youth.

Most of all, Mary asks parents to encourage their children to be involved in the Youth Ministry — making their spiritual life a priority will have a positive impact as they grow!

For more about the Youth Ministry program, visit stpatrickslufkin.com/youth or contact Mary Zamora at 936-414-9768. The group meets every Sunday evening in the Youth Room from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Virtues that Lead Us to Heaven

PART 2: THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES INTRODUCED

By *BRUCE W. GREEN*

Introduction

In last month's newsletter, we discussed the meaning and purpose of the virtues. This month, we begin to look at what are called the "theological virtues."

The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity (see 1 Cor. 13:13) are called theological because they relate directly to God.

Theological virtues are gifts to help us live the supernatural life in God

Whether an adult or infant, our supernatural life in God begins with our Baptism. We not only need the grace that comes from Baptism — we also need the graces of the theological virtues to help us live our new life in God.

The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity (see 1 Cor. 13:13) "dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity" (*Catechism*, 1812) and "[t]hey are infused by God into the souls of the faithful [at Baptism] to make them capable of acting as his children" (*Catechism*, 1813). An infused virtue is one given by God supernaturally in the soul without one's own effort.

A simple way of understanding this is that faith, hope and charity are infused supernatural habits given to us as gifts to help us be faithful to God, to resist concupiscence (the attraction to sin), and to provide the foundation for our entire moral life.

It is important to remember, however, that, as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches, a mortal sin destroys an infused virtue by turning away from God (*Treatise on Sin and Vice*, Q. 73,1).

The theological virtue of Faith

Faith "is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us"



(*Catechism*, 1814). If this virtue had not been graciously infused in us at Baptism, it would not be possible for us to believe all that God has revealed.

Moreover, a Catholic who intentionally dissents from any one thing that God has said and revealed, as St. Thomas notes, loses the supernatural gift of faith because it is a turning away from God.

Sins against the virtue of faith

The following list of sins against the theological virtue of faith is not exhaustive. The specific sins listed are selected because, unfortunately, they appear to plague Catholics in the modern age:

- **Voluntary Doubt**

Voluntary doubt is the calling into question or ignoring of some aspect of Divine Revelation, whether from the Sacred Scriptures or Sacred Tradition (i.e., what the Church formally proposes for belief).

An example of this sin against faith is the refusal to believe what the Church teaches about the Real Presence, the reality of a literal Heaven and a literal Hell, the Immaculate Conception, or the refusal to believe that there is no salvation outside the Church.

- **Involuntary Doubt**

It can also be a sin against faith to engage in involuntary doubt — that is, to hesitate to believe, or to embrace persistent anxiety and suspension of belief in the face of objections to the Catholic faith (e.g., to continue to struggle with the belief that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist because it seems to fly in the face of perceived senses, or because so many professing Christians do not believe in it).

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Virtues that Lead Us to Heaven

PART 2: THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES INTRODUCED

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- **Heresy**

Heresy is the decisive denial by a baptized person of one or more tenets of the faith, or the obstinate doubt concerning the same (e.g., believing that the Eucharist is merely a symbol of Christ, and not His Real Presence).

A heretic who is aware that his belief is at odds with Catholic teaching and yet continues to cling to his belief pertinaciously is a *formal heretic*. As the Church teaches, this heresy is sinful because the heretic knowingly holds an opinion that “is destructive of the virtue of Christian faith... disturbs the unity, and challenges the Divine authority, of the Church” and “strikes at the very source of faith” (*First Edition of the Catholic Encyclopedia*).

Material heresy, on the other hand, means that the individual holding a false belief is unaware that his opinion

denies “some truth which is to be believed by divine and Catholic faith” (*Canon*, 751).

Heresy is a frightening error, and the lively virtue of faith keeps one from committing this sin.

- **Apostasy**

Apostasy is the total repudiation of the Christian faith after Baptism. The heretic differs from the apostate in that he only denies one or more of the doctrines of the revealed faith, whereas the apostate denies the faith itself, a sin which has always been looked upon as one of the most grievous.

The theological virtue of faith, infused at Baptism, can be lost through the mortal sins discussed, resulting in the loss of salvation unless restored through the Sacrament of Confession.

Catholic Schools Week

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by engaging the human need for physical, mental, social and spiritual nourishment,” Mrs. McKay says.

Ultimately, these children are the ones who will take the faith out into the world. Our future priests, religious and saints are being educated here.

“I hope our students can recognize that our school’s mission is to help them grow close to Jesus and to help them develop a love for serving in society and the Church,” Mrs. McKay says. “I hope we can help them realize that there is a great reason to celebrate that they are part of our school family and are blessed to receive a Christ-centered education.”

We hope that everyone will come together for our Catholic Schools Week celebration by attending the liturgies, coming to see the school, and participating in our special events. Financial support can be given through the *Many Gifts One Nation, A Day of Giving to Catholic Schools* fundraising event. It will run from 12 p.m. Eastern on Feb. 1 to 12 p.m. Eastern on Feb. 2.

“When I look at their praying hands while they are reverently meditating in prayer, it gives me the peace that only comes from knowing that we are forming the saints of tomorrow,” Mrs. McKay says.

If you would like more information about St. Patrick School and the events during Catholic Schools Week, please visit the school website at www.stpatrickslufkin.com/st-patrick-school/.