



ST. MARYS DEANERY
Catholic Parishes of Mercer & Auglaize Counties



St. Aloysius, St. Francis,
St. Joseph (Egypt), St. Anthony, Immaculate Conception,
St. Bernard, St. Henry, St. Augustine, St. Wendelin,
Precious Blood, St. Rose, St. Patrick,
St. Joseph (St. Joseph), St. Teresa, St. Peter, St. Mary,
St. John the Baptist, Holy Trinity, St. Paul, St. Sebastian,
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Holy Redeemer, Holy Rosary,
Mary Help of Christians, Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Northern Lights

Winter 2016—Volume 65

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Matthew 5:14

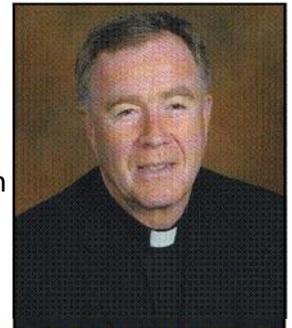
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From the Desk of the Dean...

I've been playing with a couple of coincidences: winter and Christmas, and winter and the Year of Mercy.

Christmas really has no date historically; we don't know Jesus' exact birthday, and yet it seems to me no accident that early Christians piggy-backed on the pagan Roman observance of the winter solstice as 'sol invictus' (Latin) or 'the unconquered sun.' Just when the daylight can't get any dimmer, lo and behold, it emerges from the dark side to resume its march towards summer brightness. Just when our need for a Savior was great, just when our human situation is at its coldest and darkest, the sun of righteousness warms us with his healing rays. If we are to behold the Christmas miracle all year long, winter is a fitting place to start.

Light in darkness, warmth in the winter, a track of feet in the snow, a lantern showing a path, a door set open. That's what mercy is about. Undeserved, but so needed, unexpected, but so welcome, asking for nothing in return, but intending to be contagious. Perhaps mercy is most needed in wintry seasons—in nature, in our lives, in our church and parishes, in our world. Frost and chill, ice and snow, wind and cold. Ground and hearts and attitudes harden; things freeze—opinions, positions, hurts and grievances, as well. Perhaps mercy is God's "antifreeze," designed to help us all survive the winters of our discontent.



Fr. Richard Walling

Fr. Rick Walling

Deanery Center Digest



The St. Marys Deanery Center has joined Facebook! Be sure to "Like Us" to have access to religious news, learn about area events and engage in conversation with fellow parishioners of the St. Marys Deanery!

Visit: www.facebook.com/StMarysDeanery



Also, be sure to check our website to find parish mass and confession times as well as links to parish websites and area religious organizations. Find your parish's Deanery Center Board representative, electronic versions of the Northern Lights Newsletter, information on upcoming events and many great resources to enrich your faith!

www.stmarysdeanery.com

*We also have joy with our troubles,
because we know that these troubles produce patience.
And patience produces character, and character produces hope.
And this hope will never disappoint us, because God
has poured out his love to fill our hearts.*

Romans 5:3-5

Jubilee Year of Mercy at the Shrine

By: Anne C. McGuire

The Shrine of the Holy Relics in Maria Stein is one of seven pilgrimage sites for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati for the ordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis. The year, a time to remember that “God never ceases to show the richness of his mercy,” will begin at the Shrine on Tuesday, January 19, with the *Opening of the Holy Doors of Mercy*. Bishop Joseph Binzer will preside at the Opening of the Doors and a Mass of Reconciliation, beginning at 1:00pm. The date coincides with the *Calendar’s Jubilee for Pilgrimage Workers*. Throughout the afternoon there will be opportunities for prayer, pilgrimages, film presentations, as well as fellowship, hospitality, and getting acquainted with the Companions of St. James. The evening will celebrate the Jubilee Day with *Pilgrimage Lessons and Carols*, a service of music, prayer, and proclamation.

From January 19 through November 20, events at the Shrine will focus on the importance of God’s mercy in our lives daily, and on welcoming pilgrims to contemplate the significance of God’s mercy in their lives. The Shrine will offer pilgrimages with a particular focus on mercy and on the “grace-filled moments” which pilgrims already experience as they enter the Relic Chapel and each of the Sacred Spaces of the Shrine. Scheduled **Pilgrimages of Mercy**, with sets of Pilgrimage Prayers, will focus on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, saints whose lives inspire both holiness and mercy, and prayers from Scripture and our Sacramental tradition that lead us to deepen our understanding of mercy and forgiveness.

For many pilgrims, the call to “never tire of asking for forgiveness” requires time for prayer and reflection. Schedule **Mercy Immersion Day**, a time for individuals to pray and reflect, with some guidance, on God’s mercy, including uninterrupted time in one of our Mercy Reflection Rooms, equipped with resources for reflection in print, art, and music. Additional opportunities include Lenten highlights: The Seven Last Words of Christ as Invitation to God’s Mercy – Lenten Sundays at 2:00pm and Mondays at 7:00pm – concluding with prayer with a Relic of the True Cross; and a Lenten day of Reflection – Praying for God’s Mercy – on March 13.

The words of Pope Francis remind us to be joyful as we all work together to celebrate mercy and forgiveness in all that we do and in all we are called to be: “I am convinced that the whole Church—which has much need to receive mercy, because we are sinners—will find in this jubilee the joy to rediscover and render fruitful the mercy of God, with which we are called to give consolation to every man and woman of our time.” It is with that joy that we, too, want to celebrate God’s mercy with you. May the holiness of the Communion of Saints, which pilgrims experience at the Shrine, truly unite us during this coming year “to fortify the weakness of some with the strength of others” (Pope Francis: *Misericordiae Vultus*).



Thank You!!

By Teresa DiSalvo

Saint Charles Senior Living Community would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the participants and the volunteer that came together to make the Sounds of the Season choral concert a huge success. The following choirs so generously performed, and we thank you: Saint Teresa Choir, Holy Trinity Choir, Saint Louis Choir, Saint Henry Adult Choir, Saint Augustine Choir, Saint John the Baptist Adult Choir, and special guest Nate Hanson, Organist.

The Saint Charles Senior Living Community would also like to extend a special thank you to Tim and Katheleen Nealeigh for their generosity in donating some of their private collection of nativity sets for our display this year. The display is spectacular and we are grateful to be able to share it with our community. Thank you Tim and Katheleen.

HEAVENLY HUMOR...INCOME TAX-Did you hear about the man from the IRS who phoned a certain Baptist minister to say, "We're checking the tax return of a member of your church. Mr. Smith lists a donation to your building fund of \$5000. Is that correct?"

The minister answered without hesitation, "I haven't got my records available, but I'll promise you one thing: If he hasn't, he will!"

St. Augustine Hosting REBOOT! LIVE! = CHRIS STEFANICK



WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

On our own personal *Road to Emmaus* Jesus asks each one of us that same question: "What are you looking for?" His disciples, after having experienced Jesus' life, passion and death head back to their old way of life. They feel duped, for they had hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel. Their lack of faith blinds them. On the road to Emmaus they meet up with Jesus, they walk and talk with Him personally not recognizing who He is. They recount the deeds of "Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet," sharing his mighty deeds, his condemnation, passion and crucifixion, yet not recognizing him as the risen Savior. On the third day, they go on to share how the women have found the tomb empty and angels have proclaimed his resurrection.

Have we, too, traveled this road for so long, walked and talked with Jesus and no longer recognize Him? Are we so consumed with what path to choose, but have already lost our way? Do we know our worth and who defines us? We are all searching for something to quench the longing in our hearts. We know that when we discover that 'something' it will satisfy our innermost longings and we will finally be happy. Every human heart desires true happiness, but it eludes us. Why? Well, here's good news, Jesus wants this for us more than anything. Take a minute to wrestle with this question: Where and how do I find my identity? If you are finding your identity in Christ you are certainly finding it somewhere: your career, possessions, marital status, accomplishments, successes, failures, friends, etc. Believing we have to earn love or approval in order to be happy is one of the biggest lies we fall into. God's love is freely given and our identity is based on how 'he' sees, what 'he' thinks of us, and how 'he' loves us. If we search for our identity within the confines of our relationship with God, we will discover it. In John 15:11 Jesus says, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

We all need a redirect, a reboot, or refresher course. Don't wait any longer, start here: Join us for a **REBOOT! Live! on Wednesday, March 2, 2016**. It's a high-energy, 2½ hour event designed to bring a brand new vitality to faith communities. The experience is fresh and compelling, like hearing the Gospel for the first time all over again! This event is FOR EVERYONE from child to senior citizen. Everything from prayer & spirituality, to work, dating, marriage, parenting, health, and more: there is no part of a person's life that will be left untouched.

For questions or tickets contact Barb Blanco at 419.628.3434 | e-mail: Barb@staugie.com.