

St. John Nepomucene

Fall/Winter, 2013

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A Conversion Story**

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Celebrating the Angels in the Home

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Crafts

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A photograph of a church service. In the foreground, several young men in white robes are holding tall, lit candles. The background shows a large church interior with many people seated in pews, looking towards the front. The lighting is warm and focused on the candle bearers.

Serving the Lord in Ennis since 1902

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St. John Nepomucene *Bazaar*

Saturday, September 21 at the Knights of Columbus Hall

6:30 PM - Wine, Cheese, and Dessert Bar

7:30 PM - Late Nite Catechism
"Til Death Do Us Part"

comedy show begins

\$40/person - includes the Wine, Cheese, and
Dessert Bar and the comedy show

Tickets may be purchased on the parish website.

Childcare will be available for \$10/family.

To reserve childcare for your children,
please call the St. John Nepomucene
parish office.

\$10 Wine Pull (not included in the \$40
for the comedy show)

Sunday, September 22 at the KJT Hall

11:00 AM - Bazaar Luncheon begins

Gordita sale, BBQ, Fried Chicken, and fixins

Silent Auction

Live Auction

Raffle Drawing

4:00 PM

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Thank you for bringing us into your home!

As a part of the Ennis community, St. John Nepomucene would like to take this opportunity to let you get to know us a little better.

Some of you have had contact with St. John for years.

Some of you have known St. John parishioners your whole lives.

Some of you may not know much about St. John or the Catholic faith.

Some of you may have lost contact with St. John over the years.

We would like to invite you to get to know us better in this little magazine, and, if you would like, please join us at Mass or any of our many studies or events so that we can get to know you as well.

For the first time, or for the first time in a while, welcome to St. John's!

Recent Events

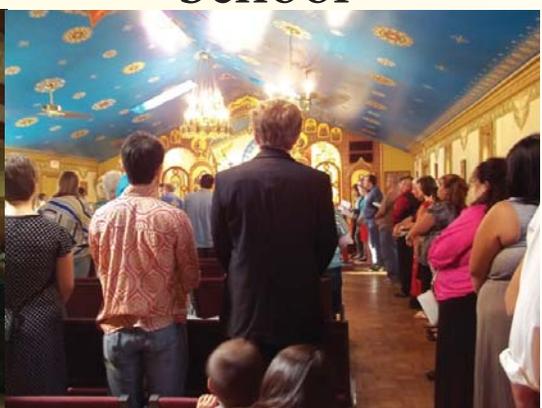


Fun at the Parish May Festival in honor of St. John Nepomucene and Cinco de Mayo



Adult Confirmations at Pentecost

Vacation Bible School



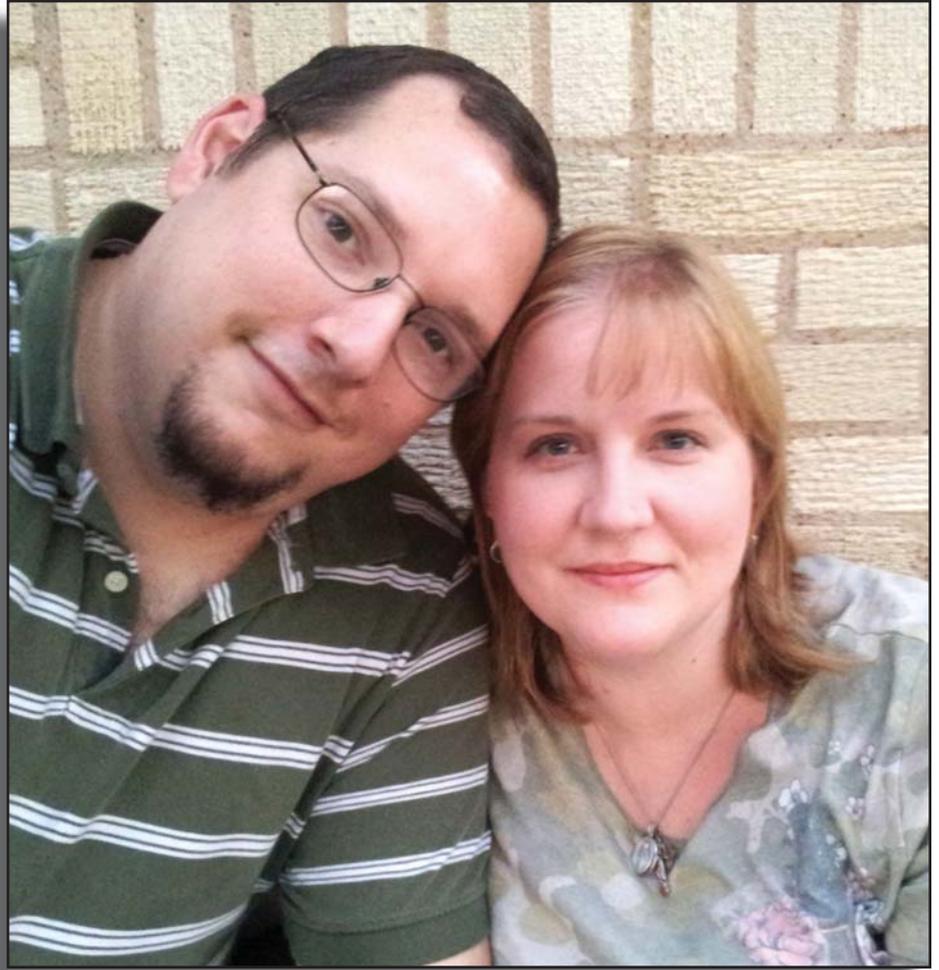
Parish Mission and Cooking Demonstration

RCIA trip to Byzantine Catholic Church

A Change for the Better: A Conversion Tale

Kevin Ford: My name is Kevin Ford and I live in Ennis, Texas. I am a Catholic, but this wasn't always the case. I'm not even a true Texan. I was born and raised in Louisiana as a Southern Baptist. Over the course of my life I have been Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and now Catholic. Here, I want to share how I made that journey to end up where I am today.

It's hard looking back trying to decide what to write about, when you're talking about your religious life. Where did you get your start, who taught you? I would say that my religious education started with my parents. They made sure that I went to church on a regular basis and that I was involved in bible school. I got baptized the first time when I was twelve at First Baptist church in Bossier City, Louisiana. I say the first time, because I got baptized again a few years later. I guess I thought that the first one didn't take. As I got older, my parents started to become more and more distant from the church. They let the pettiness and politics of the people in the church drive them away from God. By the time I was a freshman in High School, they had stopped attending church completely. They didn't mind me or my sister going to



church, but they didn't feel they needed "church" to be close to God. But I continued going, and was active in my youth program. To be honest I'm not sure now why I continued going. I guess I thought that it was what was done. I felt an obligation. It was one place that I could go and not feel that I didn't belong. So life went on like this until I graduated High School and went off to college.

College was different. I was out on my own for the first

time. And for a while church didn't have a place in my life. I was planning on following in my Dad's footsteps and joining the Air Force, so I applied for and got a scholarship to Louisiana Tech University from the Air Force ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps). ROTC was my life at first. That's what I did. But something was missing. About four months after I started college, a few friends invited me to the Wesley Foundation, which is a Methodist-based organization

Continued on page 8 (Conversion)

MaRisa's Story

My name is MaRisa Falkenbach, my parents are Jimmy and Cathy, I am the youngest of three siblings, and like most I was born and raised in Ennis, Texas

I am what many would call a cradle Catholic. This means that from the time I was born, I was raised catholic. I was baptized at St. John Nepomucene and also attended religious education and Mass there. I wouldn't say that my family and I were active Catholics, but that all changed when my parents answered the call for volunteers for the



MaRisa at 8

high school program Life Teen. I spent the majority of my adolescence around the youth group, watching my parents try and bring Christ to the teens. Without them even knowing it, they were ministering to me too. As a tag-along, I didn't get to participate in everything the teens did. I believe that God used that to create a hunger for Him and the Church inside of me. Soon my parents and I were on fire with the faith. Although I didn't understand everything about my Catholic faith, being immersed in the Church at such a young age really helped shape me into the Catholic Christian I am today; it granted me the gift of faith.

The youth minister, Glen, his wife Patty and the teens became like family to me. Glen and Patty were like a second set of parents to me. Glen was like a kid in an adult's body. He was always wearing jeans, a t-shirt and flip flops. He played beach volleyball with



the teens and played guitar at the Life Teen mass; this made him very approachable. Glen was also a convert. As a cradle Catholic I often took the Faith for granted, so seeing Glen so grateful to be a Catholic added fuel to the fire growing in my heart. The teens were like my big brothers and sisters. Witnessing them choose to go to church and be active in the youth group made me want to be just like them.

The pastor at this time was Fr. Fred Caldwell. Fr. Fred was the hands and feet of Christ for me. He wore street clothes instead of the priestly clerics; this made God's love for me very real. We traveled on mission trips together, we shared meals at our home; he really was "Father" Fred.

Despite the positive influences of Glen and Fr. Fred and the strength I gained in regards to my faith, when I

faced the challenges of their exits from my life, I was not able to hold on. Although I felt rooted and strong, his leaving proved otherwise. All of a sudden I felt lost. I realize now the weakness of my faith. Life Teen Mass wasn't the same experience for me; it had changed. I wasn't the only one, though. Some of the teens drifted away. And as if that wasn't enough, Fr. Fred left our parish. This raised many more questions and doubt. "Why did you let two very important people in my life leave me? Don't you want me to keep growing in my faith? How am I supposed to continue without them?" In hindsight, I realize that I wasn't focusing on my relationship with God, but with people.

As a result of these difficult, trying times, my family left the Church. My mom questioned if Catholicism was right, I doubted that God was even real, and my dad was just mad. For a year I wandered in a dark desert. I visited other churches hoping that I would be happy somewhere, but at every church I felt like some-

thing was missing. I had a deep hunger inside of me for something; I didn't know what. With time, over the next year or so I realized that I was hungry for the true presence of Christ- something only the Catholic Church had, so I came home.

I definitely wouldn't say that I was on fire with the faith, though, but I understood that my focus needed to be on my relationship with God in order to build a true, unshakeable foundation. On a retreat with my youth group one of my prayers was to build on that relationship. To my surprise two Franciscan nuns were joining us for the weekend. Nuns were very interesting to me because I had never met or



MaRisa's senior picture talked with one before. Maybe they were part of God's answer to my prayer. After brief conversations with them I was even more intrigued by their love for God and their radical faith. After all they had sacrificed all that the world had to offer for a relationship with God. Their joy was so striking



MaRisa and her family

that I pondered why I wasn't near as joyful and happy and could I be. During adoration in front of the Blessed Sacrament I continued to wonder why and how they were so happy without material things, secure finances and without husbands and/or children. Suddenly God spoke to my heart saying, "Be my bride. Consecrate yourself completely to me. Become a nun." God was proposing to me! I felt so much joy in my heart that all I could say was, yes! So in a time span of two days I went from being a lukewarm Catholic to falling head over heels in love with God and accepting his offer to live a radical life as a nun.

The last two years have been serious times of spiritual growth and maturity with God. Currently I am a student at a Catholic university, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio. I am still discerning the religious life and will join a convent, God willing, after graduating from Franciscan. My faith journey has been a rollercoaster, but I can say that now it has leveled out. God tells us that the road to salvation is narrow; He never said there wouldn't be a few bumps and potholes along the way. 

Life Teen

Sundays: 5:00 Life Teen Mass
followed by Life Nite

Tuesdays: "Food for the Soul" -
6:30 AM Mass
followed by breakfast

Wednesdays: "Into the Deep" -
6:00-8:00 PM in the Cafeteria

Kick-Off - October 6th

Conversion (continued from page 5)

that holds non-denominational services. I had found a home. Throughout my college career, I spent at least a couple of hours a day over at the Wesley Foundation. I joined the band. I led several small groups, and in general was somewhat of a "Holy Roller". That is also where I met Jessie.

Jessie and I started dating in 1998 and when I graduated in the summer of '99 we got married. This turned out to be a mistake. Without going into the gory details, let's just say that while our relationship had started out in a Christian fashion, it didn't stay there. We were married for about a year and a half when she said that she wanted to try a trial separation. What I wanted apparently didn't factor in. Well, I didn't want to be in that kind of relationship, so I left and tried to move on. I got a job in Dallas, Texas and basically put all thoughts of my past and God out of my mind. I wasn't miserable. I wasn't happy. I just was. I travelled a lot, and worked mostly on the weekends. I started to have my parents' view that I didn't need to go to church to be close to God. I considered myself a good person. I didn't drink to excess, I didn't gamble, I didn't sleep around. I just went about my business. I dated several people over the course of the next few years and then I met Aman-

da. I knew that she was special the first time I met her. We weren't dating for long when I found myself thinking that she could be "the one." I am going to let her introduce herself here now, and then we will continue with the story.

Amanda Ford: My name is Amanda Ford, and I am also a Catholic. But, unlike Kevin, this has always been the case. People like me refer to ourselves as "cradle Catholics." I was born in Ennis, and raised by parents who are also "cradle Catholics." They were married at St. John's in 1977 and are still parishioners there today. They baptized my brothers and I as infants, educated us in our faith as best they could, and instilled solid, Christian values in our family. Although I may not have realized it growing up, I am blessed to be their daughter. My parents' consistency and devotion to their Catholic faith fostered a sense of pride and devotion of my own, even if I couldn't always explain all of the "why's?" that come along with being a Catholic. And while I resented them sometimes for "dragging" us kids to Mass every Sunday, I don't ever recall leaving Mass and wishing I hadn't gone. I always knew I had just taken part in something very special and sacred. By the grace of God, my parents laid a spiritual foundation for me, and it is an inheritance greater than any

other they could ever leave me.

And it's a good thing, too. Throughout the years, I've had several opportunities to throw my hands up and walk away from this crazy Catholic life. I was in Junior High when the abuse scandal of Rudy Kos came to light, and I was about the same age as the young men that were his victims. I was in public school, and I can remember very clearly going to class the day after his crimes became public knowledge. All of a sudden, being Catholic made me a target for dirty looks and crude, insensitive jokes. And while that was nothing compared to the horror that Kos inflicted on those boys, I was still hurt. It didn't make sense to me that I was subject to such cruelty, simply by association. I suppose I could have tried the old "if you can't beat 'em, then join 'em" trick. But I don't remember consciously wishing that I wasn't Catholic during that time, and I credit my parents once again. I'm sure they felt angry and confused and betrayed like so many others, but I don't think it ever occurred to them to just up and leave the Church. Looking back now, I'm very grateful for their resiliency.

Years later as a high school senior, I was starting to concern myself with all the stuff the world tells teenagers they should worry about, which is everything but God. I was too wrapped up in myself to think about Him or my Catholic faith on a deeper level. We didn't really have any ministries at St. John's back then for young adults, at least none that I can remember. Church and my relationship with Jesus had collectively become one of those things I had to check off my list once a week so that I could get back to "real" life. So the next few years

flew by in a blur of college classes that amounted to plenty of debt but no career, and working in dead-end jobs just for the paycheck but never getting ahead. I sank into a deep depression, and became an emotional eater which led to weight gain. I didn't even attempt the dating scene for fear of the rejection I was certain to encounter. I was 23 years old and had lost all direction and purpose in my life. The despair was so all-consuming that I couldn't see past it, even to see that Jesus could and wanted to help me. I sat in Mass every Sunday, in His very Presence, but I was letting the devil pull the wool over my eyes with worries and fear. Fear. That's a big word, and one that would continue to dominate my life for years to come. But in the spring of 2003, God set His plan in motion --- a plan that would be long and painful, but would teach me a new word: TRUST. And the first step in that plan was meeting a guy from Louisiana named Kevin.

KF: Amanda and I met, and it was

pretty much love at first sight for both of us. We dated for about a year before I proposed. I was not Catholic at the time, and had no desire to become one. In fact, we had never really discussed our faith beyond the point that we were both Christian and that was good enough. I wasn't attending any protestant church on my own, but I went to Mass with Amanda at times. That was about the extent of our spiritual relationship.

AF: I knew very quickly that I wanted to marry Kevin. But back then, it was probably for the wrong reasons. He was the first man that ever showed any real interest in me. He could have taken advantage of my vulnerability, but he didn't. He was a perfect gentleman. Still, he pulled me up out of the pit I had been in, and I latched on pretty hard. So now my focus switched from being all about me and my depression to being all about Kevin. Still no real room for God at that point. I figured the fact that Kevin at least had Christian values was





enough for me. I never gave it any more thought until it was time to set a wedding date. I wanted to get married in the church I grew up in. But again, for the wrong reasons. It wasn't because I understood or appreciated the Church's view on marriage. I knew that divorce was considered a no-no, but I'd never really bothered to find out why. I just wanted the big fancy dream-wedding that I'd seen dozens of my friends and family members have.

KF: But because of my previous marriage, we were not able to set

a date right away. I would have had to go through a (minimum) two-year process to have my first marriage annulled before we could even consider getting married in the Catholic Church. I wasn't willing to wait that long, and neither was Amanda.

AF: Absolutely not. I (sort of) understood why the annulment was necessary. I mean, we had to prove his first marriage was invalid before he could marry me. But when I was told how long and potentially messy the process would be, I didn't feel that I could ask Kevin to

go through with it. He was going to have to drudge up a very painful time in his life in order to prove that his first marriage was mistake. And for what? Just so he could have a ceremony in a church that he didn't belong to? I had no idea what he thought of my Catholic faith because I had never talked to him about it. And if I had, I certainly didn't know Church teaching well enough to answer any questions he might have asked me. I very quickly became afraid of him leaving me, so I didn't push the annulment. I acted like it was no big deal, and we got married in a civil ceremony in November of 2004.

KF: Fast forward about five years. We had moved a few times since our wedding because of my work, but we ended up back in Ennis. Our first son, Lukas, was born in the spring of 2008. Amanda wanted to baptize him Catholic, and I was fine with that. I still went to Mass when she did to be a good husband, but she was going less and less frequently all the time. We were living day by day, but drifting apart. Further from each other and further from God. Later that year, Amanda was invited to a retreat at St. John's called CRHP (Christ Renews His Parish). I could tell that it had brought her closer to her faith, and seemed to revitalize her zeal for life and her concern for me. We talked a little more about faith after that, but it never went anywhere.

AF: That's because I was now officially terrified of sharing my faith with Kevin. But we'll get to that. My weekend at CRHP was the first time that I'd ever really encoun-

tered a group of people (outside of Mass) that were genuinely active in their Catholic faith. People who knew what it truly meant to be Catholic and wanted to share it with others. I realized that, up to that point, I had been professing to believe in a faith of which I was fairly ignorant. Not that I was some brainwashed sheep. I knew there was more to being Catholic than just punching a time card at Mass every Sunday. But I was too afraid to dig any deeper than that because I also knew that a true relationship with Christ and his Church wasn't an easy one. The other women I met at CRHP could witness to that fact. But the joy they exuded was so inspiring, that I wanted to know more about living a life of holiness and faithfulness. So I started reading the Scriptures and the Catechism more. I went to Mass more often. Not long after that, the parish hired an Adult Education director who was offering all kinds of classes on Church teaching and Apologetics. I attended as many as I could as often as I could. For the next year and a half, I learned more about Catholicism than I had in all my previous years combined. My parents were taking classes with me too, and it was so empowering to really learn about the faith that we always knew as the Truth, but were not educated enough to defend. The other side of that coin is that I now felt compelled to truly share my Catholic faith with Kevin. I just had no idea how he would react, especially to several of the teachings that had been stumbling blocks even for me. Namely divorce, contraception and the authority of the church. I finally understood why

the annulment that Kevin never got was so important. I finally understood how and why contraception had been tearing our marriage apart. But remember what I said before about fear? It was paralyzing me, so I just prayed. A lot. I had found my place in the Church, and knew that Kevin needed to find his own place. Whether that was with me or somewhere else wasn't for me to decide. So I put it in the Lord's hands and tried to trust that He would lead Kevin where Kevin needed to be.

KF: Having no idea that all of this was going on with Amanda, I was invited to a CRHP retreat about two years later in the spring of 2010. I thought it was odd that they asked me, considering I wasn't Catholic. But I had gone to retreats in college and thought, "Why not? It'll be fun." Well, that weekend changed everything. While I was on the retreat, another man at my table asked me why I wasn't Catholic. I spouted an answer about not being able to follow someone (the Pope) whose tenants I didn't completely agree with. That same guy responded with, "Well do you believe in Jesus' teachings?" That got me thinking about my faith and what was I running from. Later that night, I saw what's called an "Examination of Conscience" card. This is what Catholics use to help call to mind their sins before going to Confession. And I saw some things on there that I had NO idea were considered sins, like using contraception for instance. I didn't know why Amanda had never said anything to me about it, so I confronted her when I got home. Needless to say, we had several long, late-

night conversations for the next few days. Then the following week, a group of monks came to put on a mission at St. John's and they talked about contemplative prayer. Meaning you ask God questions, expecting that He will answer.

AF: We were asked to silently practicing this type of prayer during the brothers' talks, and then Kevin and I would come home each night to discuss our experiences with each other. We were communicating with God and with each other on a level that we never had before. It was a very eye-opening few days for us as individuals and as a couple. We were finally allowing God to let us see what was holding us back. You guessed it: fear. For Kevin, it was fear of going through the annulment process, of confronting the pain and anger that he never really let go of, and fear of allowing God to heal him. For me, it was fear of being rejected by the man I loved for wanting to live my faith. For us together, it was fear of having more children and allowing God to provide for us. We were afraid to trust in Him.

KF: We wanted desperately to be the husband and wife that God was calling us to be for each other, but fear was ruling our lives. So in August of 2010, I started the process for my annulment and I decided to find out what this whole "Catholic" thing was all about. I started going to RCIA classes, which are for people considering joining the Church. I tried to enter into Christ in a way that I hadn't in years. The more I learned about the Catholic Church, the more it made sense. I wanted that personal relationship with Christ. I wanted to be accountable

continued on page 22 (Conversion)

“God is Love”

1 John 4:16

We have heard this statement from the first letter of St. John, and we can agree that it's a wonderful thing, but I think that often we never even penetrate to the wonderful reality that this simple statement proclaims. In our brokenness, we have a hard time conceiving of what real love is; we have a hard time conceiving of what it would mean for God to be love. We have a hard time believing that God truly loves us.

We can see this difficulty throughout the history of mankind's relationship with God. Before they had ever sinned, before they knew what evil was, our first parents believed the lie that the serpent told them, that is, that God does not love them, that He does not want what is best for them. Despite being surrounded by evidence of His love, despite being given stewardship over a good Creation that had been made solely for them, they chose to believe the lie that God did not love them.

This tragedy is replayed throughout the history of Israel. Despite the miracles that God worked to free them from slavery

and the promises that He had made to them about bringing them into the Promised Land and providing for all of



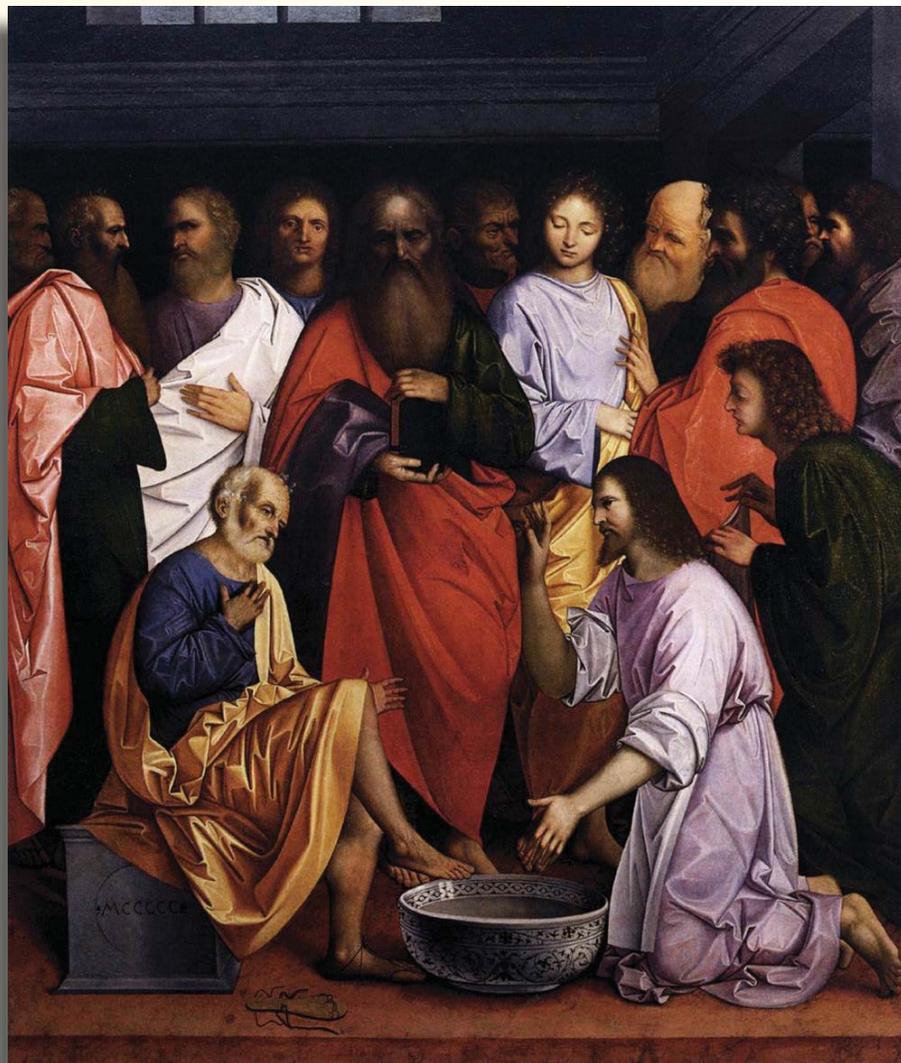
Jacob Wrestles with the Angel, Gustave Doré

In this painting (based on the story in Genesis 32), we see Jacob wrestling with the angel of God. Because of this incident, God gave Jacob the name “Israel” which means “wrestles with God.” Too often we are like Israel here and the people of Israel; we wrestle with God instead of trusting in His love.

their needs, the Israelites grumbled against Moses and against God. They did not trust themselves to His care. They did not believe in His love for them. They even declared that they preferred slavery in Egypt to trusting in God. And even after they had gained possession of the Promised Land, the Israelites time and again turned from the God who loved them by worshipping false gods or relying on their own abilities and taking credit for gifts that they had actually received from God. They did not acknowledge the love of God.

This history is not just something of the past, though. Each of us can point to times in our lives or to areas of our lives where we have not and do not truly believe that God is love, where we have not trusted in the love of God. We keep Him where we want Him. We set limits on where He is allowed in our lives. And we tell Him through the way in which we live that we don't trust Him and that we think we don't need Him.

And we do all of this despite the fact that it is only the love of God that brings us into existence, that gives us the good things that we have, that sustains us in being, that brings us forgiveness, and that leads us to salvation. "We love him because he first loved us." (...) Without His love we would not even exist. Without His love we would not have the Savior who died so that we might have life. Without His love we



Washing of the Feet,
Giovanni Agostino da Lodi
God truly loves us and wants to give us what we need. Jesus' whole life, His death, and His resurrection are proof of this. Do we believe it?

would not have the possibility of accepting the gift of Eternal Life that He offers to each of us.

In his first encyclical, Pope Francis has written about the transformative power of faith, and this faith which can make our lives what they were meant to be is a faith that

is a trusting of oneself to the love of God. Such a faith is not merely intellectual assent, not merely agreeing with one's mind, that God is love. It is committing one's life, in all of its aspects, to the love of God. It is trusting in His love to such an extent that one may be truly

said to be His.

Such a step may seem risky. Such a step may seem to make us less than we could be. But that type of thinking comes from a place of fear and is the type of fear that drove Adam and Eve and the Israelites (and each of us) into sin. The

way out of this, the way to true freedom, the way to the life that is best for us and that God wants to give to us is through entrusting ourselves completely to the God who is Love, the God who loves us, the God who died that we might have life. 🙏



*Christ and the Rich
Young Ruler,
Hienrich Hofman*

**Jesus invites us
to follow Him.
Will we turn
away or trust
ourselves to this
loving God?**

If you want to read more about the love of God, the following would be good places to start:

The Bible

Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love)

Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei* (The Light of Faith)

Gospel in Glass



The stained glass windows in a Catholic church tell of some aspect of the faith that we hold so dear. They are truly the Good News of Jesus Christ told in the form of scenes from the Bible and the history of our faith. At St. John Nepomucene, we are blessed to have such beautiful windows. Moreover, our windows actually tell the entire life of Jesus in order. If you start up near the sanctuary of the church beside the statues of St. John Nepomucene and St. Cyril, you will see that the window depicts the announcement that the angel made to Mary that she was to bear Jesus. Proceeding towards the back of the church from there and then back up to the front of the church, one will see windows depicting important events from throughout Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. You are invited to come and meditate on these events and to draw closer to Jesus through these beautiful windows.

The Flight of the Faithful



This small window appears directly beneath the window which depicts the Annunciation. In this window, we are presented with some of the traditional symbols used in Christianity to tell the Gospel through art. The main symbols that we see here are the lit candle and the two birds.

The lit candle symbolizes Jesus Christ who is the light of the world. Throughout Christian history, Christ has been symbolized by candles. We have the large Paschal candle that is used at the Easter Vigil as a symbol of the resurrection of Christ. We have the candles that are given to people when they are Baptized, because in their Baptisms, Christ, the light of the world, has come into their lives. In these and in many other places, the candle points to our true light, Christ.

The birds in the window symbolize the faithful, those who have been given wings by Jesus. Without Him, we can do nothing of value. With Him, we can soar.

As we can see in this window, those who are given wings by Christ, that is, the faithful, flock to Him. Jesus is a light that draws us to Him, and we use the wings that He has given us to get there. This shows how fitting it is to have this smaller window beneath the window depicting the Annunciation, for in moving toward Christ who empowers us we are imitating Mary, who was the first to accept the gift of Christ into her life.

The Annunciation

“...the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!’”

Luke 1:26-28

In this window, we see the angel Gabriel in front of Mary. He has already spoken these words of greeting. He has come to the one to whom he was sent; he is playing his part in the wondrous deeds that were unfolding in that little town, unnoticed by the world.

“But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.’”

Luke 1:29-33

In these verses of Scripture, we have the content of the startling message that Gabriel is delivering to Mary. Not only is Gabriel saying that she has found favor with God and that she has been filled with grace, he is saying that she has been chosen above all women to bear the long-awaited Messiah, the one who will bring with him the kingdom of God.



“And Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I have no husband?’ And the angel said to her,
‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;
therefore the child to be born will be called holy,
the Son of God.’”

Luke 1:34-35

In this window, the Holy Spirit is depicted as a dove descending from heaven. He is coming down and overshadowing Mary. The ray of light coming from the Holy Spirit and extending to Mary is showing that he is affecting her, that she is conceiving Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the moment when God the Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, took on humanity and became one of us is shown here in this window. This is one of the greatest moments in all of history.



“And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’ And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.”

Luke 1:36-38

The humility of Mary’s response is mirrored in her posture in the window. It is not everyday that an angel comes and announces that you are to conceive the Son of God through the power of the Holy Spirit; in fact, it is only once in the history of the world. But Mary knows that God is good and she trusts herself and her future to His loving hands. She is willing to do as He asks even though her life will never be the same. This is an attitude toward God from which we can learn much. 

The Hail Mary!

When there are only 3 seconds left on the clock and you find your team down by 5 points and on the 50 yard line, what play do you reach for to win the game? The Hail Mary pass, of course! It's a pass thrown on a wing and prayer, just hoping that it somehow squeezes by defenders and into the outstretched arms of a wide receiver. It doesn't work very often, but when it does the result is spectacular. It is shown on highlight reels over and over again because it goes against the odds. And even if it doesn't work exactly that way, there is always the chance you

could have another Immaculate Reception.

"The term became widespread after Dallas Cowboys quarterback Roger Staubach (a Roman Catholic) said about his game-winning touchdown pass to wide receiver Drew Pearson in a December 28, 1975 playoff game against the Minnesota Vikings, 'I closed my eyes and said a Hail Mary'" (Wikipedia, "Hail Mary pass," accessed August 30, 2013).

Sometimes in life, we all get to a point where nothing seems to be going right. It may be our job is taking a turn for the worse; our kids don't seem to listen; constant fighting with our family or spouse. And when the going gets tough, the tough have a way out – The Hail Mary.

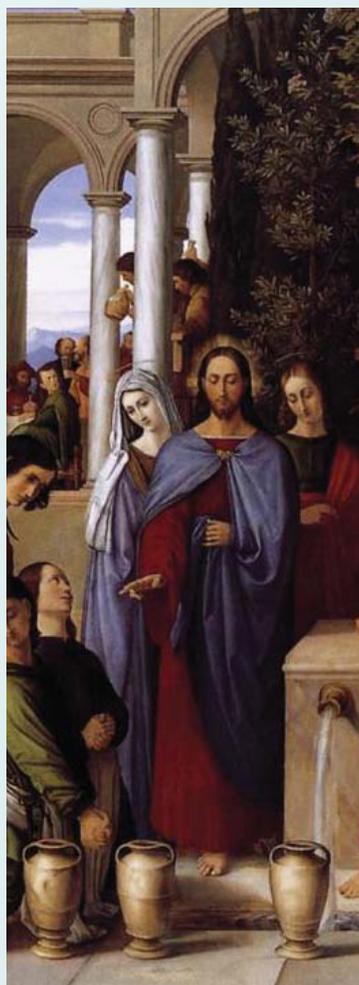
Hail Mary,
Full of Grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit
of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary,
Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now,
and at the hour of death.
Amen.

Why reach out in a moment of desperation to the Mother of Jesus? Because who better to intercede for us before God than the one who knew God on earth His whole life. Mary knew what it was like to struggle and witness immense grief. She stood at the foot of the cross as her only Son was crucified and died, powerless to help in any way.

Most of the prayer comes directly from Luke 1 (see pages 16 and 17 above) and at the end we ask for her intercession. We never pray *to* Mary as we pray to God. We ask for her to pray for us as we ask those around us to pray for us and our intentions. And yet, don't many of us like to find the biggest prayer warrior we can to pray for us? For this reason, we seek out the one who knew Jesus Christ more intimately than any other on this Earth. So we pray that Mary put our prayers at the very foot of the cross she stood at. She acts as our VIP pass to God Himself.

In the most desperate of times, we often find that one eternal truth – we are nothing and completely incapable of holding our lives together. Only in God can we find the strength to do that which is great. The Creator of the Earth is also the Creator of all that is good and holy in our lives. We can call upon Him in our times of need to give us strength to accomplish that which would otherwise be impossible. We can become better spouses, parents, children, employees, students and friends.

As football fever descends upon Ennis and the rest of Texas this fall, let us all remember that when the odds are against us and our backs are to the wall, we have a surefire play. Call on Mary to intercede for us before God and He will most assuredly never deny a request from her. Close your eyes, throw up a Hail Mary, and trust that your prayers will land directly in God's hands. Touchdown! 🏈



The Wedding Feast at Cana (detail),
1819 Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

see John 2:1-11

St. John Nepomucene

Feasts of Faith

Michaelmas

Michaelmas is the feast day of the archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. We celebrate this day on September 29th. Just as we remember other holidays and make them special (4th of July, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving Day), we should make the days of holy saints and angels special!

Angels are God's messengers. There are accounts of each of these angels in Scripture. What makes these angels important? They are defenders, healers, and heroes. We can look at their lives and be inspired by what they have done. These angels are also powerful intercessors. Asking for their prayers is another special way to remember them on their feast day.

St. Michael

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. Revelation 12:7-8

St. Michael is known as the "Defender of the Catholic Church." He helps to fight the battles against Satan. When we need protection, defending, or are scared we can ask St. Michael for his help.

St. Gabriel

And the angel [Gabriel] said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. Luke 1:30-31

St. Gabriel is well known for the Annunciation, announcing to Mary that she was to give birth to the Savior, Jesus Christ. How cool is that! Think about it - asking for prayers from the angel who was given the honor of telling Mary she would have Jesus as her son - this should definitely be on our list of things to do!

St. Raphael

Raphael said to Tobias, before they approached his father, "I know that his eyes will be opened. Smear the gall of the fish on his eyes, and the medicine will cause the white films to fall away. And your father will regain his sight and see the light." Tobit 10:7

One of the many things St. Raphael has done was give Tobit his vision back. Raphael is known as a healer. We can ask for his intercession in areas of our lives that need healing. Read the book of Tobit to learn more about St. Raphael.



St. Michael and the Devil
1518, Sanzio Raffaelo



The Annunciation
Francesco Albani



Tobias with the Angel Raphael
1500-1505, Pietro Perugino

Prayer to St. Michael:

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the other evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

Prayer to St. Gabriel:

Blessed Saint Gabriel the Archangel, we pray that you intercede for us at the throne of divine mercy: as you announced the mystery of the Incarnation to Mary, so through your prayers may we receive faith and courage, find favor with God, and redemption through Christ our Lord. May we sing the praise of God our Savior with all the angels and saints in heaven forever and ever. Amen.

Prayer to St. Raphael:

Blessed Saint Raphael the Archangel, we pray that you help us in all our needs and through life's trials as you, through the power of God, restored sight and gave guidance to Tobit. We humbly seek your help and intercession, that our souls may be healed, our bodies protected from all sickness, and that through divine grace we may become fit to dwell in the eternal Glory of God in heaven. Amen.

Ways to remember and celebrate the feast of Michaelmas (September 29th):

- Make bannock for breakfast
- Color the salt angel on the next page
- Read and learn more about these three archangels
- Say the prayers for each archangel and ask for their intercession

Savor the Faith

St. Michael's Bannock is a bread that is traditionally made for breakfast on the feast day of the archangels Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel. It can be made the day before or the morning of the feast day. It is quick, simple, and delicious! Adding some butter and jelly make a nice touch with this traditional bread.

St. Michael's Bannock

2 c flour
2 tbs sugar
1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp baking soda
1/4 tsp salt
2 tbs butter
1 c buttermilk or yogurt
1/2 Raisins

Preheat oven to 375°F. In mixing bowl mix together flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Add butter and cut into dry mix using two butter knives. Next add buttermilk or yogurt—this makes the dough soft. Add raisins. On a flat, floured surface, knead the dough until it becomes smooth. Make it round and place it on a greased cookie sheet. Use a knife and make a cross on the top. Bake for 40 minutes until golden brown. If you like serve with butter and jelly!



Bannock pictures above

Crafts

Color the salt angel

Supplies Needed:

- Outline of angel on the next page
- Glue (liquid)
- Salt
- Watercolors/paintbrush

1. Trace the glue on the outline of the angel. Make it thick enough for the salt to stick to it.
2. Sprinkle the salt on the glue. Gently shake off excess salt (just like applying glitter).
3. After the glue dries (place under fan to dry quickly), use the watercolors and paint the salt. Watch the angel become so colorful!



Salt Angel pictures to the right





Home Traditions

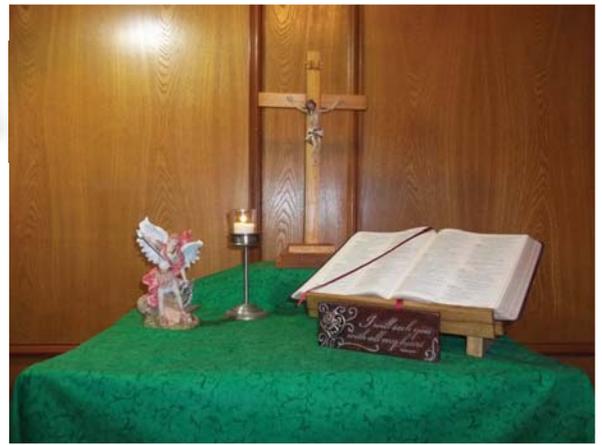
Setting up a Prayer Table in Your Home

“Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Let us follow this passage from scripture by setting up a sacred space in your home.

- Find a special place in your home
- A corner of a room, a wall space, or an entire room if you have one. It should provide a place for you to pray to him when you are home, even if it be a quick, silent prayer.
- Place a small table there
- If you don't have a table or do not have the room for one you can just use a wall and have a kneeler or a nice rug for you to sit or kneel on.
- Cover with a nice cloth
- Picking your color cloth by liturgical season is great!
- Green for ordinary time (now), purple for Advent (the four weeks before Christmas), gold or white for Christmas and Easter, and purple for Lent (the 40 days before Easter).
- Choosing religious items for your space: very important!
- Crucifix and Bible Crucifix in the center, the Bible propped up and open on the left or right. Set the Bible open to a scripture verse you like.
- Candle A small candle reminds us of lifting our prayers to heaven. It also lights up your sacred space a little bit more
- Religious Art or Statue Place this piece (Mary, Jesus, saints, or a story in scripture) on the table on the other side of the crucifix.
- The religious art or statue should remind you of God and help you to reflect and meditate on Him. It should bring your thoughts and eyes towards our Lord.

All that is missing is you and your family! Make a point at least once each day to pray together in front of this space. At night before you go to bed is a good place to start. In our family we know to meet at our sacred space each night and that's where we pray together then go to bed. 



Conversion (cont. from 11)

for my actions to God. Like Amanda said, I had never fully gotten over my previous marriage, and now I wanted to.

AF: For the next two years, we waited while the annulment process played out. God blessed us with our second son, Nicholas, in December of 2011. We were trying to break the cycle of fear and anger that we had created over the previous seven years, but at times it was still extra hard to see God in one another. I attended RCIA classes with Kevin as a refresher course for myself. We went to several other talks and missions together as well. But the one that really helped us the most was a set of classes about a book by Pope John Paul II called *Theology of the Body*. It's a very in-depth look at the Church's teachings on marriage and spousal love, and how they relate to Christ's love for us. I think this really sealed the deal for Kevin in his decision to join the Church. For me, it was the most beautiful teaching I'd ever heard, and it totally transformed our marriage.

KF: *Theology of the Body* put words to how I had felt about God my whole life and didn't know it. It allowed me to communicate some of the concepts of Love that I knew, but couldn't convey to Amanda before. And then God really went to work. We had talked for years about me finding a new job where I didn't travel, but with the unstable economy it didn't look promising. Then I got in a wreck that left me with an injury, and I was going to a chiropractor here in Ennis. Through a set of circumstances that only God could engineer, a fellow patient I met there ended up offering me a job that eventually led to another job, which happens to be the same company Amanda works for. How's that for God's goodness when we follow His plans? He took me from a position of being lost from Him, lost from my wife and from myself. And now I never have to be apart from Him or Amanda again, and I have more peace than I could have ever asked for. When the annulment process

was done, my first marriage was declared invalid, meaning I was never truly married to my ex non-wife. Amanda and I had our marriage convalidated at St. John's in August of 2012. On the same day, I made my First Communion and my Confirmation. I was fully welcomed into the Catholic Church. The following spring, God blessed us again with our third son, Tobias.

AF: I guess we're a lot like that song about God blessing the "broken road" or something like that. Even though we may not have always seen it at the time, it's easy to step back from the tapestry of our life and see the Holy Spirit moving and working. We now go to Mass every Sunday as a family. Kevin joined the choir, and many times will lead the congregation as a cantor. I sit and listen to his beautiful voice and wonder at the miracle that brought us to this very moment. We feel called to help in family ministry, and have even shared our story with engaged couples preparing for marriage. We are planning to be facilitators of more Theology of the Body classes in the future and hope to assist with marriage retreats within the parish. It's a complete about-face from where we were ten years ago, and we give all of the glory to God.

KF: Definitely. But life isn't always easy. We aren't Ward and June Cleaver by any stretch. But we know now that we can do all things if we keep God at the center of our relationship and our family.



Want to know more?

If you are interested in learning more about God or about the Catholic Church, please call Seth Wright at the St. John Nepomucene parish office. He would be happy to answer your questions and can even get you started in the process to becoming Catholic if that is where the Lord is leading you.

**St. John Nepomucene
Parish Office:
(972) 875-2834**

Upcoming Events

September, 2013

21st - Confirmation Masses

21st-22nd - St. John Annual
Bazaar

29th - Sunday Children's (PK-5th)
Religious Education begins



October, 2013

1st - The Edge (6th-8th) begins

2nd - Wednesday Children's (PK-5th)
Religious Education begins

6th - Life Teen (9th-12th) Fall Kick-Off



December, 2013

4th - Children's Religious
Education Christmas Play

4th-12th - Our Lady of Guadalupe
Novena



January, 2014

17th-19th - Life Teen Retreat

February, 2014

1st-2nd - Christ Renews His Parish
Men's Retreat

8th-9th - Christ Renews His Parish
Women's Retreat

16th - St. Cyril and St. Methodius
Celebration





St. John Nepomucene Weekly Schedule

[Click here](#)
to go to the
online calendar.

| | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Mass: | Saturday | 5:00 PM | Mon.-Fri. | 6:30 AM |
| | Sunday | 7:00 AM | | 12:05 PM |
| | | 11:00 AM | Mon.,Wed. | 6:30 PM |
| | | 1:00 PM (Spanish) | | |
| | | 5:00 PM | Tues.,Thurs. | 6:30 PM (Spanish) |

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|---|
| Confessions: | Mon.,Tues. | 6:00 PM and following the 6:30 PM Mass |
| | Saturday | 3:30-4:30 PM |

(972) 875-2834

www.stjohncc.net