



ST. MARY'S PARISH
8 CHURCH ST.
HOLLISTON, MA 01746

November 2024 Newsletter
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FEAST OF ALL SAINTS
A HOLY DAY OF
OBLIGATION



Friday, November 1,
Holy Day Masses
at 9:00 AM & 5:30 PM

On this day Catholics honor and ask the prayerful intercession of all the Holy Men, Women, and Children who have gone ahead of us in faith and now live in the light of God's presence. Some of the saints have been "declared" by the Church and their names are known to us. Most, however, are known only to God, and this day we both commemorate their holy lives and recall our own calling to become saints – holy witnesses of Christ's love to the world.

A PRAYER FOR ALL SAINTS

Dear God, thank you for the example of the Saints. I desire to join in their company, worshiping you forever in Heaven. Please help me follow their footsteps, and yours, Jesus Christ. Help me to conform myself to Your image, seeking Your will in all things, as the Saints did. Please help me to devote myself, and all that I do, to Your glory, and to the service of my neighbors. Amen.

ST. MARY'S PARISH PASTA NIGHT
Saturday, November 16.

Come join your fellow parishioners for fine Italian fare, live music and great company at this year's Pasta Dinner on Saturday, November 16 from 6 to 8 PM.

This year's live musical entertainment is Singer / Guitarist Filip Ramil! (Photo Right).

The menu will include rigatoni with red sauce, rigatoni with broccoli and chicken, rigatoni with butter, meatballs, salad, rolls and soda, water, juice and Italian pastries.

Families with children of all ages are welcome. The cost is \$10 per person, or \$30 for immediate family (parents and children).

Tickets will be on sale after all Masses the weekends of November 2 and 3 and November 9 and 10, and at the R.E. Office starting November 4. There are no tickets at the door on Nov. 16. **Mangia!**



St. Mary's Parish Newsletter

November, 2024 ~ Volume 50, Number 7



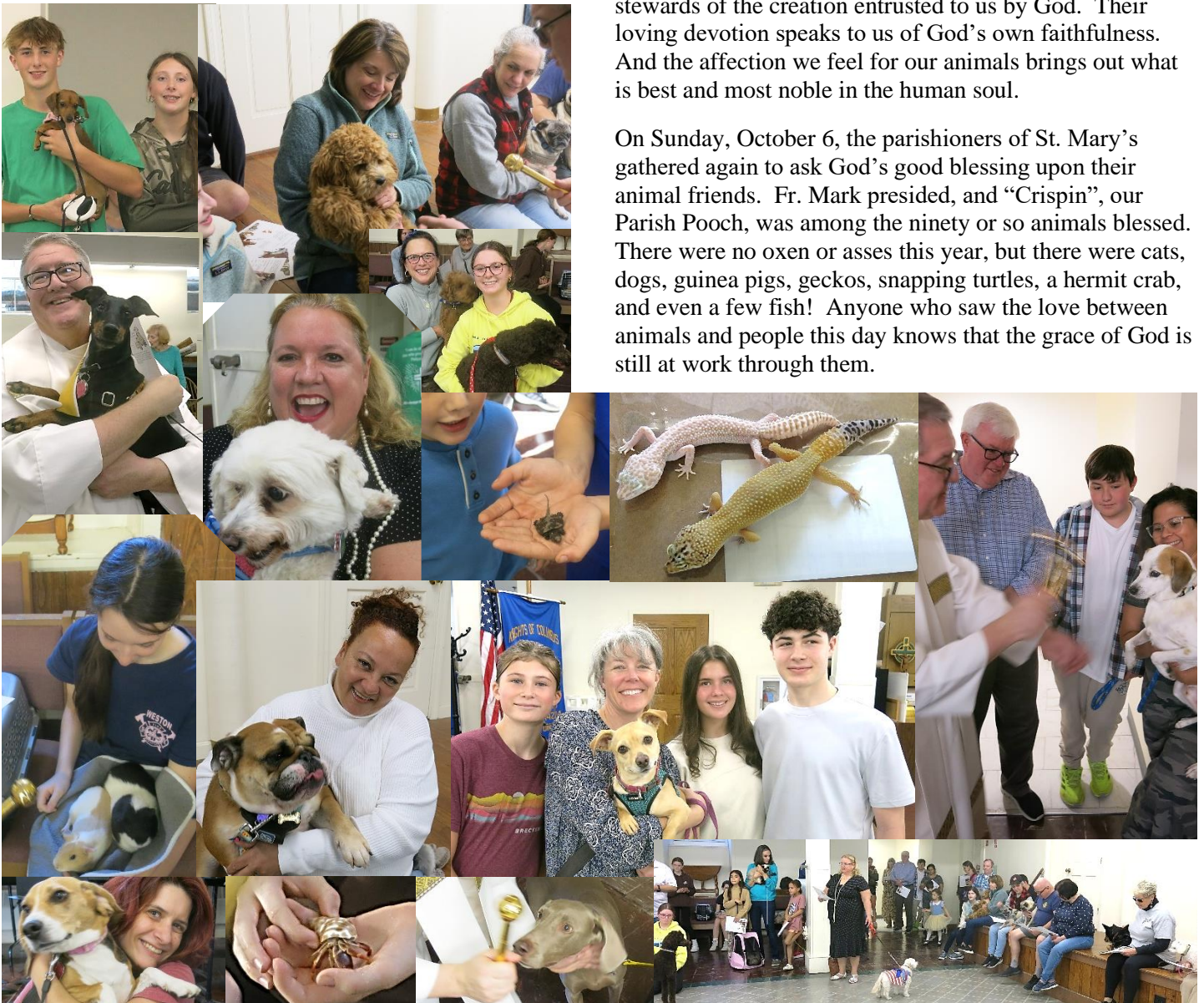
ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL!

Christmas will soon be upon us and animals play a part in the Nativity Story. An ox and ass were present in the stable where Jesus was born. We read in Isaiah: *“The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand.”* (1:3) Biblically, the ox and ass represent awareness, and in that stable all humanity was given a new awareness – a perfect revelation of God in the person of Jesus.

Even today, animals can help make us more aware of God, Who is love. When we care for them, we are being good stewards of the creation entrusted to us by God. Their loving devotion speaks to us of God’s own faithfulness. And the affection we feel for our animals brings out what is best and most noble in the human soul.

On Sunday, October 6, the parishioners of St. Mary’s gathered again to ask God’s good blessing upon their animal friends. Fr. Mark presided, and “Crispin”, our Parish Pooch, was among the ninety or so animals blessed. There were no oxen or asses this year, but there were cats, dogs, guinea pigs, geckos, snapping turtles, a hermit crab, and even a few fish! Anyone who saw the love between animals and people this day knows that the grace of God is still at work through them.

St. Mary's Parish
8 Church Street
Holliston, MA 01746
Rectory: 429-4427
Religious Education Center: 429-6076
Music Program: 429-6076
Religious Education Email: st.marysre1870@gmail.com
Parish Email Address: st.marys1870@gmail.com
Website: www.stmarysholliston.com
Mission: “To Know Christ and to Make Him Known!”





FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Members of the St. Mary's Parish Family,

On the next Newsletter page, you will see photos of the young men and women who recently were Confirmed here at St. Mary's. We are so proud of all of them! Their names, including Confirmation saint names, are listed here. It is customary for those being Confirmed to take a new name to mark the significance of this moment of full initiation to the faith.

The saint chosen is someone whose life and witness inspires the young person. Hopefully, the newly Confirmed will now develop a prayer relationship with their saint, asking that holy man or woman to pray and intercede for them from heaven. A wide variety of saints were chosen as our teens searched for the one most meaningful to them.

As we celebrate this month the Feast of All Saints, consider reading up a bit on your own Confirmation Saint. Do you remember how they inspired you? Were they strong in an area that you need to grow, or did they share a struggle in common with you?

If it's been a while since you asked your saint to pray for you, perhaps commit to doing so each day this month. It was in their name that you were sealed with the Holy Spirit, forming a special connection not only between you and God but between you and that saint in heaven.

God bless you!



Rev. Mark J. Coiro

CONGRATULATIONS NEWLY CONFIRMED!

Jack 'Joseph' Baribeau
 Brian 'Padre Pio' Bernier Jr.
 Anthony 'John Chrysostom' Bonariggo
 Liam 'Vincent de Paul' Brannigan
 Luke 'Thomas Aquinas' Burgett
 Brody 'Gabriel the Archangel' Cashman
 Anthony 'Joseph' Cataldo
 Kaitlyn 'Maria Goretti' Clark
 Madellene 'Catherine of Bologna' Cordova-Flynn
 Dylan 'Andrew the Apostle' Cosgrove
 Melanie 'Teresa of Calcutta' Denault
 Liam 'Charles Boromeo' Duross
 Claire 'Martha' Fitzgerald
 Emma 'Elizabeth Ann Seton' Fitzpatrick
 Isabella 'Maria Goretti' Flores
 Jacob 'Joseph' Galipeau
 Julia 'Cecilia' Galipeau

Alyssa 'Genevieve' Garbarino
 Matthew 'Michael the Archangel' Gimblett
 Paige 'Joan of Arc' Gimblett
 Hanna 'Rose of Lima' Kaufman
 Abigail 'Elizabeth of Hungary' Laingen
 Amelia 'Veronica' Laingen
 David 'Teresa of Avila' Lebak
 Amelia 'Catherine of Alexandria' MacEvoy
 Bridget 'Catherine of Siena' Malvey
 Sofia 'Rose of Lima' Mancini
 Tyler 'Vincent de Paul' Mottor
 Joseph 'John' Mullett
 Madeleine 'Cecilia' Pierce
 Sarah 'Monica' Queeney
 Thomas 'Peter' Quinn
 Claire 'Jude' Radcliffe
 Cameron 'Paul' Reffel
 Luke 'Vincent Ferrer' Roberto
 Alexander 'Christopher of Lydia' Robie
 Elizabeth 'Agatha of Sicily' Roth
 Sara 'Rosalina' Schellings
 Maria 'Lucia' Silveyra-Dodds
 Autumn 'Philomena' Smith
 Antonia 'Helena' Stevens
 Sean 'Denis' Warner

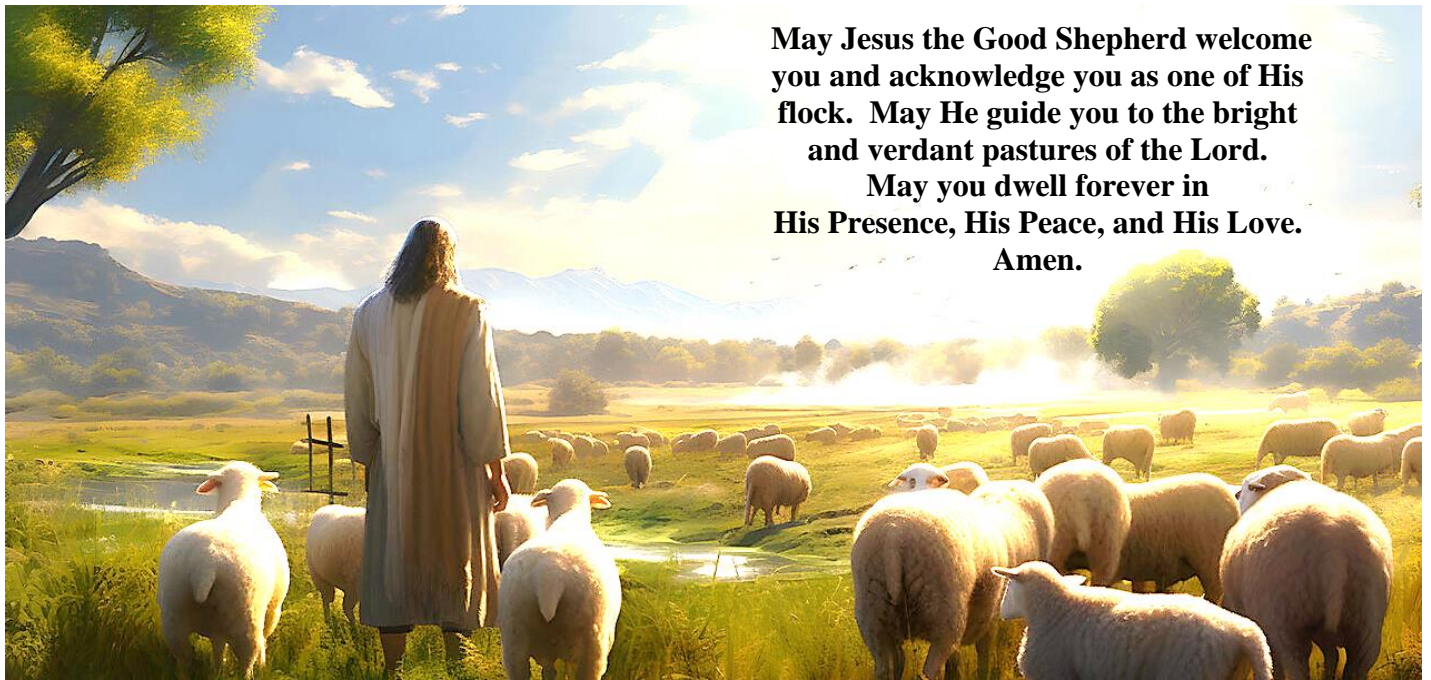


PHOTO ABOVE: Shown with Fr. Mark, Saint Mary's Business Manager Mary Sanning was recently invested as a Dame of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. The ceremony was performed on Saturday, October 19, at the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Providence, RI. The celebrant was Boston's Archbishop Designate, Richard Henning. Deacon Ron Dowding was invested as a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre at the same celebration. We congratulate them both for taking on this new ministry in support of our Christian Brothers and Sisters in the Holy Land. Learn more at: <http://www.oessh.va/>



St. Mary's congratulates the forty-two young people who received the Sacrament of Confirmation here on Saturday, September 28. Through this sacrament God has poured out His Holy Spirit upon them, empowering them with many gifts. By choosing to be Confirmed, these young people have made a beautiful commitment to God - to live and love and worship as active members of His Holy Catholic Church. We pray that our young people will be true to the commitment they have now made. For by being faithful to God, they will be faithful to themselves - healthier, happier and more of a blessing to others than they could ever be without Him. Come Holy Spirit and enkindle in us the Fire of Your Love!





May Jesus the Good Shepherd welcome you and acknowledge you as one of His flock. May He guide you to the bright and verdant pastures of the Lord. May you dwell forever in His Presence, His Peace, and His Love. Amen.

Michael Ferriero
Charlotte Marden
James Baker
Robert Neff
Joseph Gallerane
Roland Dwinell
Edward Connors
Bertha Archambault
Mary Ann Hyland
Peter Fish, Sr.
Donald Parnell
Norman Kehoe
Victor Losanno
Margaret Dennison
Joan Quigley
Todd Parmenter
Virginia Riely
William St. James
John Walker
Peter Lawrence
James Martin
Arthur Moore
Richard Gentile
Alexander Adams
Eileen Levitan
Agnes Kovacs

Robert Barrett
Thomas Cordell
John Spera
Michael Fair
Deacon Philip Caruso
Rita Murphy
Arthur Cabral
Richard Ozog
Cheryl Griffin
Richard Chartrand
Kathlyn Hilliard
Mary Elizabeth Harmon
Michael Mansfield
Alan Denman
Roberta Kerrigan
Alice Baker
Marilyn Pulito
Ida Kolenda
Sally Lunter
Ronald Mattson
John Fjeldheim
Alan King
Stephen Casler
Timothy Farrell
James Jordan
Paul Pate
Patrick Shea

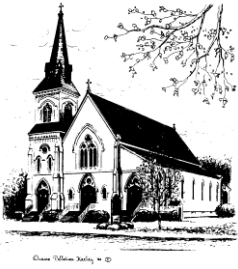
FEAST OF ALL SOULS

The individuals listed here were honored with Christian burial from St. Mary's since the Feast of All Souls last year. They will be commemorated in a special way at a Candlelight All Souls Mass,

Wednesday, November 6 at 7 PM

A candle will be lit in each one's memory as their name is read. They and all our beloved dead will be kept in prayer throughout the month of November, according to Catholic custom.

All are invited to take part in the All Souls Mass to pray for the repose of their own departed loved ones.



Saint Mary's Parish

8 Church St. ~ Holliston, MA ~ 01746 ~ (508) 429-4427

November, 2024

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

For the past 64 years, St. Mary's, Holliston has relied on the Grand Annual - a once a year special collection that goes entirely toward parish operating costs. In combination with the weekly offertory, the Grand Annual allows St. Mary's to pay her staff and maintain her four buildings, three of which are over 100 years old.

As you know, the Grand Annual always takes place in November. The 2024 St. Mary's Grand Annual Collection is Veteran's Day Weekend - November 9 & 10. The goal is \$150,000 – the same as the 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 Grand Annuals, which despite the pandemic were all achieved.

The single largest facilities item covered by this year's Grand Annual is the replacement of the large church skylight above the sanctuary. Installed in 1993, the seals have now worn out and the structure has degraded. This has allowed water and dirt to penetrate past the outer protective Plexiglass layer and onto the actual glass. If not replaced, it is only a matter of time before water starts to get into the church sanctuary.

As our parish grows, the Fr. Haley Hall kitchen is being used much more. The two very small sinks are inadequate for the size of our functions, and various kitchen surfaces need to be refinished. The refrigerator also needs to be replaced. This summer we had to install a new church bell system, since the one installed in 1978 finally wore out. Multiple front exterior areas of the church (Town Hall side), have rotten wood and peeling paint, while the interior of the rectory is also in need of repairs. A complete Grand Annual breakdown follows:

\$30,000	Church Skylight Replacement
\$28,000	Main Parish Center Kitchen Repairs and Renovation
\$14,950	Replacement of rusted-through Fr. Haley Hall parking lot double metal doors and frame
\$10,825	Church exterior rotted wood repairs and painting, multiple areas
\$16,084	New Church Bells installed over summer
\$20,000	Rectory Repairs including damaged flooring, stair carpets, plumbing leaks, ceiling stains, torn wallpaper, peeling paint, and shower and lighting repairs in third floor bathroom.

The remaining Grand Annual amount is applied to staff salaries (\$30,141).

Since successfully paying off the last of her \$1.2 million loan debts in the fall of 2010, St. Mary's has been able to pay her bills and remains debt free. Your generous support of St. Mary's 2024 Grand Annual will assure that the hard-won financial health of our parish continues. We realize that these current economic times are difficult for many. But if we all do what we can according to our means, then the 2024 Grand Annual will be a success. Thank you in advance for your generosity. And thank you for the many ways you personally help to build up our beautiful parish family.

Sincerely,

The St. Mary's Finance Council

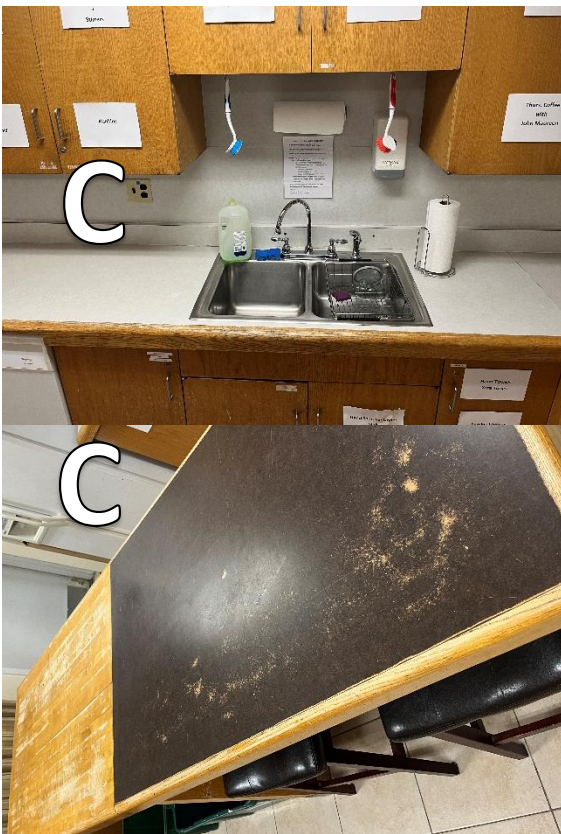
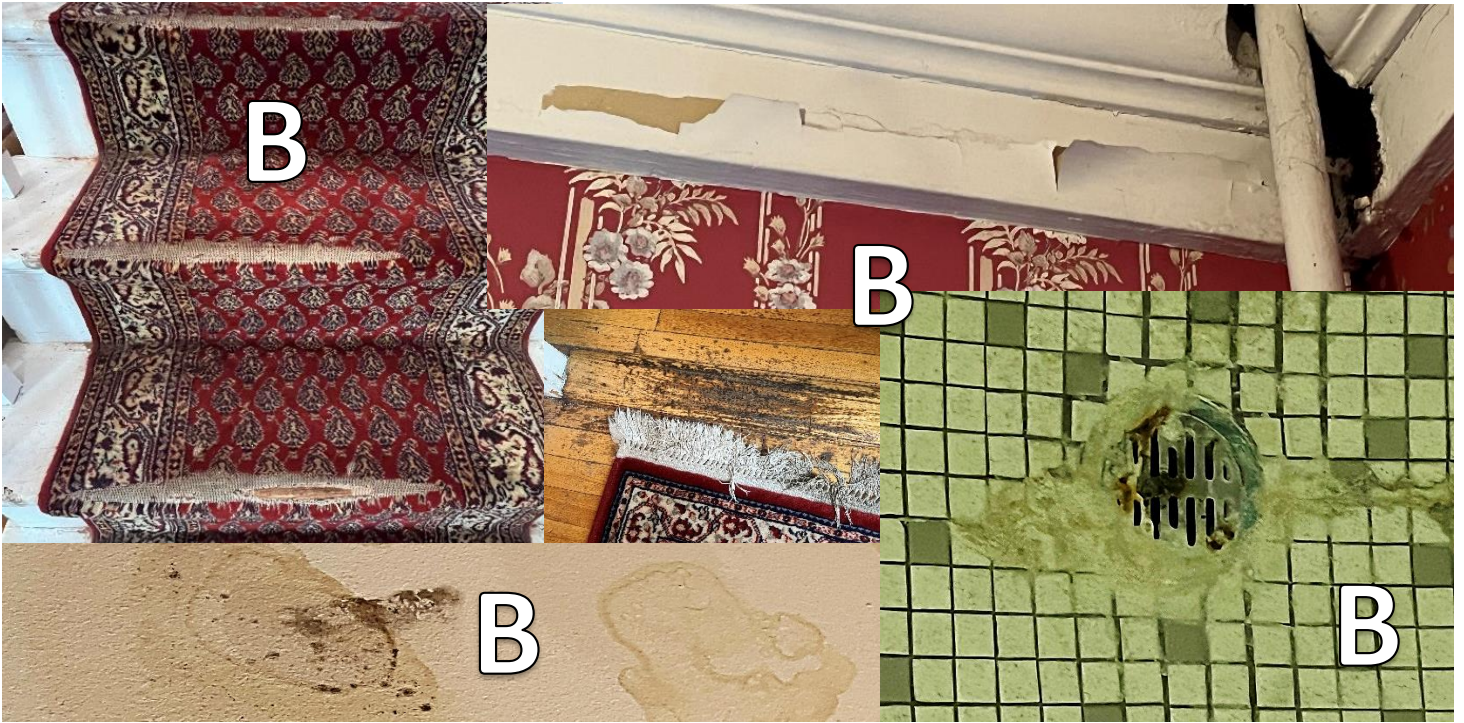
Kim Latifi

Kevin O'Connell

Ron Pipe

Dianne McDermott Roy

Kevin Diamond



PHOTOS OF A FEW OF THE 2024 GRAND ANNUAL ITEMS

- A – Church Sanctuary Skylight**
- B – Rectory Interior Carpet, Floor, Ceiling, Shower drain, Paint, Wallpaper**
- C – Parish Center Kitchen too small sinks and worn surfaces**
- D – Rusted through double doors from Fr. Haley Hall to Parking Lot**
- E – Church Exterior rotted wood and peeling paint – multiple areas affected**

HOW TO MAKE YOUR 2024 GRAND ANNUAL GIFT

Please carefully review the Grand Annual information mailed to you by the St. Mary's Finance Council. It should arrive around November 6.

Pray about it and **decide as a family** what gift you can make according to the means with which God has blessed you.

If you have children, make them aware of your Grand Annual support so that they can learn good stewardship by your example.

If possible, please return your gold Grand Annual envelope the weekend of November 9 & 10, or as soon as possible thereafter. It may be mailed to 8 Church Street or dropped off through the Rectory Office Door Mail Slot at that same address. You may also place it in the offertory basket at Mass.

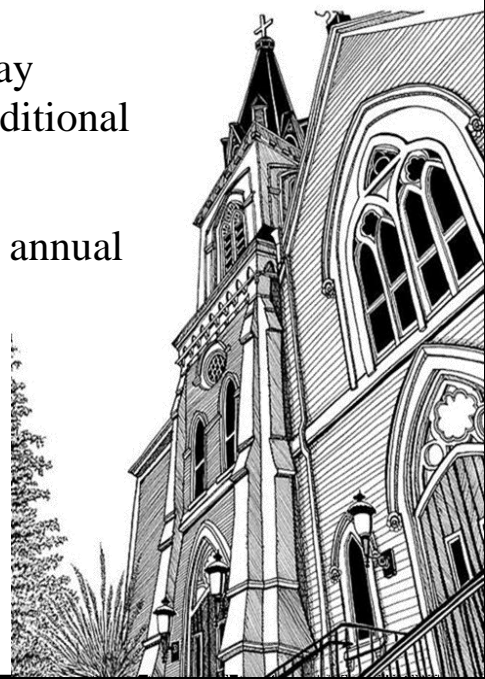
It is important that the special gold envelope, or an envelope clearly marked "Grand Annual" be used.

For those using Automatic Giving or WeShare, you may designate your Grand Annual support as a separate, additional offering.

Thank you for doing your part to support this essential annual stewardship effort!

"Every person shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you."

DT 167:17



Meet Our St. Mary's Choir Section Leaders!



Mark Schiappucci has been the Tenor Section Leader at St. Mary's since 2016. A versatile performing artist, Mark is equally at home with a wide variety of repertoire, from Renaissance sacred works, to 19th century art song, to musical theater. He is currently the Director of the Greater Milford Community Chorus, a position he has held since 2019. Mark has been a featured vocal soloist with the Metrowest Symphony Orchestra and the Claflin Hill Symphony Orchestra, and has been a guest conductor of the latter. He holds a degree in vocal performance from New England Conservatory.

Sophie Bradburn has been serving as the Alto Section

Leader since October 2023. She studied music at Mount Holyoke College and has been singing in choirs over half of her life, including in the Yale Camerata and Chamber Choir, and in the choirs of Old South, Boston, Trinity Church, and New Haven, both as a founding member of the girls' choir and as an alto in the adults section. When not singing, Sophie enjoys reading (or listening) to books, and watching shows and stand-up.



Thomas Valle-Hoag began leading the Saint Mary's Bass

Section in September 2024, after joining the parish with his wife, Claudia, in February. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Latin Language and Literature and a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from Oberlin College and Conservatory in 2019, and a Master of Sacred Music from the University of Notre Dame in 2021. Thomas has performed opera, oratorio, art song, contemporary song, and musical theater all over the USA and abroad. Since returning to Massachusetts, he has performed with Boston Baroque, Upper Valley Baroque, Cappella Clausura, Emmanuel Music, and the New England chapter of the Olde Towne Carolers. In addition to Saint Mary's, Tom is a Cantor and Youth Choir director at Holy Family Parish in Concord, MA. When he isn't sprinting between gigs, he plays Dungeons & Dragons, trains for half marathons, and is slowly teaching himself to do his own car maintenance.



To join St. Mary's Music Ministry, contact Music Director Abbey Kelley-Lanser:

508-429-6076 x224 |

musicatstmarysholliston@gmail.com.



St. Mary's Parish Middle School Youth Group

Open to all 6th, 7th & 8th Graders for Faith, Friendship, Service & Fun.



GRADE 6 DEERFIELD WHITEWATER

The date was Friday, August 16, as twenty-one St. Mary's MSYG 6th Graders and five adult leaders packed four rafts for a day of Class I-III whitewater adventure on the Deerfield River in Western MA. The 8th Grade MSYG members had rafted the Kennebec River in June, and now these younger members had their chance for whitewater adventure. First, they mastered such rapids as "Sideways Splash", "Freight Train" and "Pinball". Then it was time for "Zoar Gap" - at Class III the day's biggest rapid. This was followed by several miles of water bucket fights and swimming in the deeper spots. Awesome fun!

MSYG OCTOBER KICK OFF

Thank you everyone who made the October 6 Middle School Youth Group Kick Off such a success! 101 teens met new people, played a crazy game, learned all about St. Francis of Assisi, prayed with him, and enjoyed delicious ice cream together. (Photo Below). See you on Nov. 3!

NEXT MSYG MEETING Sunday, November 3 6:30 - 8 PM

Come Enjoy ~ A Prayer Service for our Beloved Departed; A Giant Milk & Cookie Bar; Sign Ups for the annual Cookie Walk (Dec. 7 & 8); Sign Ups for Paintball (Monday, Nov. 11); Sign Ups for Grade 7 BINGO at Timothy Daniel's Nursing Home (Friday, Nov. 22); Sign Ups for the Celtics (Monday, Nov. 25)!





St. Mary's High School Youth Group

Teens Gather In Faith

At our first Service Event, October 19, we had 50 teens sign up to make bagged lunches for the homeless of Fr. Bill's Shelter in Quincy. Our original plan was to make 75 bagged lunches, but with so many teens we were able to make 177 bagged lunches! Each bag contained a sandwich, chips, an apple, and delicious homemade cookies baked by our TGIF teens. The bags themselves were decorated with Bible verses and messages of love and hope.



ISAIAH 58:10

And if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like noonday.



Join us at our next T.G.I.F. Meeting,
Sunday, November 17
from 7:00 – 8:45 PM.

Come deepen your relationship with Christ while connecting with friends – new and old.



Whether you're new to T.G.I.F. or have been attending for years, there's a place for you here! Let's grow in our faith together and build lasting friendships rooted in Christ.

All High Schoolers are welcome!



Troop 14 Holliston

Boy Scouts of America
St. Mary's Parish * November, 2024

Meetings: Monday Nights 7:00 - 8:30 PM

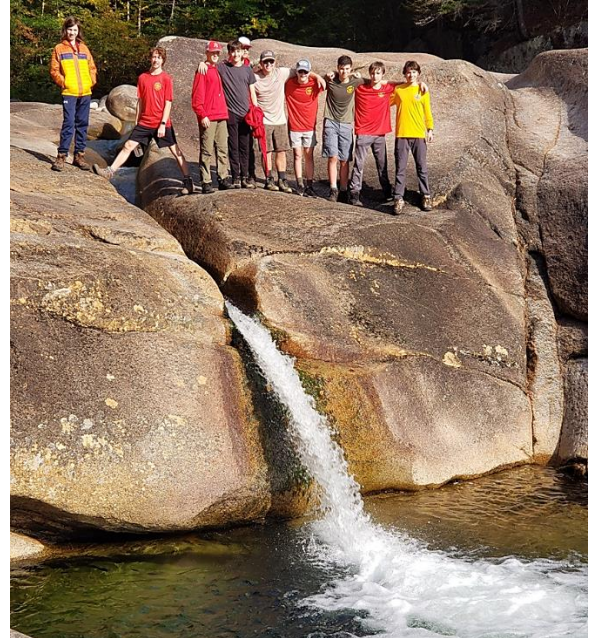
Contact: Chris Baribeau, Scoutmaster
508-579-4357

Email: Troop14Holliston@yahoo.com

If interested in joining Troop 14, contact the Scoutmaster. It is an ideal organization for boys in sixth grade or above.

The Troop meets weekly during the school year, Mondays from 7 - 8:30 PM in the Lower Church.

OWL'S HEAD BACKPACKING TRIP: Our Fall activities began with a backpacking trip in the White Mountains from September 13 - 15. This was a great first hike of the new Scouting year for Scouts preparing for the 2025 summer High Adventure trip to Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. Owl's Head Mountain is a 4,000 foot summit that includes a little bit of everything - water crossings, varied terrain, a steep slide ascent, and bushwacking. The Scouts also experienced two nights of Hammock sleeping off trail and ended up tallying 14 miles of round-trip hiking when the weekend was over.



NOBSCOT CAMPOUT: Troop 14's annual campout at Nobscot in Sudbury took place September 20 - 22. This is a fun campout that is a great way to ease back into the Scouting year and spend time together as a Troop. It is also a great opportunity for our newer Scouts to learn how to camp with Troop 14. Our time at Nobscot included hiking up to the scenic overlook of the Tippling Rock trail, campfires, games and working on rank requirements including cooking camp meals. While it rained for a majority of the weekend, Scouts embraced the rain and demonstrated their true Scout spirit.



WHITE MOUNTAIN HIKE AND CAMPOUT:

Troop 14 took advantage of the great fall weather and completed a second Philmont training hike in the Presidential Range with a hike up Mt. Jackson and its neighbor Mt. Pierce.

Both summits were 4,000 footers and provided additional training for the group of eight scouts and three Leaders.

The group experienced 40 mile per hour winds at the summit. Mt. Washington can be seen in the background of the summit photo.



PRAAYER SHAWLS AND SECOND CHANCES

By Jane Lebak

Sometimes, God places a special order for a handknit. In late January, 2017, I awoke with the image of a round, red blanket with a flower in the center and a feather-and-fan lace pattern...and I knew exactly who to knit it for. That'll wake you up in a hurry.

Decades ago, I had a compulsion to write fan mail to my favorite author. I tracked down her email address and even opened a document to write it, but I didn't. Why would she want to hear from me? The next week, she died. I've regretted it ever since. Therefore, when I get that nudge, I follow it. When God placed that special order for a blanket, I thought, "Do it now, do it now, do it now." I hit the yarn store before noon, printed the pattern before dinner, and by evening, I'd completed the first chart. Do it now.

Handknits (and hand-crochets) are warm, but handknits are also comfort. They're time. They're a squishy reminder that someone wants you surrounded by softness and beauty. We think of handmade baby blankets, and how the infant is soft and protected. Adults need care and love and softness, too, so our parish makes prayer shawls and lap blankets. People need beauty. We need the support of our parish when life gut-punches us. The knitter or the crocheter casts off the work, then brings it to the parish, and the parish sends it out to someone in need.

Ideally, the knitter or the crocheter has stepped out of the transaction at that point, and the love you're feeling is from God. Because God loves you, but the hands He uses to make blankets are ours. In January 2017, I knit like the wind. I bound it off, mailed it...and the recipient died that spring. Do it now. The Saint Mary's prayer shawl ministry needs more crafters. If you can make something, or if you've felt the urge to learn, please consider joining us. Do it now, do it now, do it now.



Knights of Columbus

St. Mary's Council #14224 November, 2024

"In Service to One, In Service to All."



CELEBRATE HOLLISTON - COUNCIL BOOTH AND CHECK PRESENTATIONS: At Celebrate Holliston on September 21, the Council presented donation checks to the Holliston Pantry Shelf, Holliston Senior Center, MetroWest Veterans Emergency Fund and Doug Flutie Autism Research. Funds for these donations were raised from the Annual Charity Raffle and the Annual Swing for Charity Golf Tournament. Again, our Council thanks St. Mary's parishioners, golfers and golf sponsors for their participation in helping these worthy charities.



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3 - DECEASED MEMBERS MASS AND INSTALLATION OF 2025 OFFICERS: Our Council will remember our deceased members at the 11:30 AM Sunday Mass. After the Mass, the Council will hold the installation of our 2025 slate of officers in Father Haley Hall.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9 - RECYCLING EVENT, COUNCIL AND THE GREEN TEAM: Our Council, in cooperation with Green Team Recycling, will be holding a Fall recycling event at St. Mary's parking lot on Saturday, November 9 from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. The recycling items accepted have been expanded and details are on our website www.kofc14224.org. You should also receive a large postcard in the mail with details of this event which will help improve our environment.



VETERANS SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17 - SECOND ANNUAL ROAD TOUR EVENT: The theme will be focused on Holliston's Veterans. Learn about several of Holliston's veterans of past wars that have been honored throughout the town. Open to all, the tour will begin at St. Mary's parking lot at 1:00 PM. Entry fee is \$20 per car or \$10 per car for veterans. Bring your car and at least one passenger for a fun event. Prizes and refreshments will be held after the tour in Father Haley Hall.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE FOR 2024: The Knights of Columbus is the largest Catholic Fraternal organization in the world with "...more than 2.1 million members in over 16,800 local councils globally" [from August 16 PILOT pg.7]. For membership information contact Grand Knight Albert Scaramella at 508-561-0584 OR ajscaramella@comcast.net OR you can now join ON-LINE by going to the Supreme K of C website kofc.org/joinus. Our Council respects members limited time but needs new members to share our faith journey as Catholic men.

MONTHLY ROSARY: The next Rosary will be Wednesday, November 20 in the church at 7:00 PM. Any and all persons are welcome to attend. As quoted in the March, 2017 Columbia magazine, "Knights need to be men of prayer."

2024 FALL PROGRAM

Called to Holiness

BECOMING OUR BEST SELVES



About WINGS

WINGS is a ministry of encouragement and faith enrichment for women anywhere on their spiritual journey. Free babysitting is provided!

Fall Season October 9 – November 13

Please join us in Fr. Haley Hall or on zoom Wednesdays from 10 – 11:15 AM featuring weekly inspiring speakers discussing how we can all grow in holiness!



November 6 – *“Holiness in a Distracted World”*: Georgeanne Donovan, fmr. Superior General of the Marist Missionary Sisters



November 13 – *“How does the Church Grow in Holiness?”*: Fr. Carl Chudy, D. Min., Interfaith Outreach Coordinator, Fatima Shrine

How to Join

Send us an email – that's it! Not quite ready to join? Drop in to a meeting or visit our website and Facebook for more details. Suggested dues are \$20/season or \$50/year but all are welcome to attend regardless of ability to pay.

Contact us

 stmaryswingssecretary@gmail.com

 scan for website

 facebook.com/wingsholliston





Stepping Up in Faith

By Deacon John Barry

How steps 6-9 of the 12-Step Program, and the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola can help us on our journey toward holiness.

Over the previous few Newsletters, we have illustrated how the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and the Twelve Step Program of Addiction Recovery are closely related. It is important for us to understand that we do not have to be “in recovery” in order to practice these steps for a more fruitful and virtuous journey of faith. As spiritual companions in iTHIRST, Diane and I accompany those who are suffering from unhealthy attachments. They can include everything from social media to relationships to substance use disorder, and their afflictions can impact whole communities. We are all, to some degree, impacted by unhealthy attachments; whether they be to social media, gossip, various types of food or something more significant, we can all benefit from practicing these steps for a healthier life in Christ. So far we have covered steps one through five. Now let us look at the next four steps.

Steps Six and Seven: Conversion from Guilt

Saint Ignatius describes this step as moving from compliance to the Commandments toward loving relationship with God. This begins with an understanding of being completely forgiven, which is achievable through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It coincides directly with AA Steps Six and Seven: being entirely ready to have God remove all our defects of character and humbly asking Him to remove our shortcomings. According to Fr. Edward Dowling, the spiritual director of Bill Wilson (founder of Alcoholics Anonymous), “there are two liabilities when we commit a sin: the guilt of the sin... (and) the obligation of restitution.” The sixth and seventh steps address the guilt of our sin, helping us move beyond self-loathing to self-loving and self-emptying. Thus, we begin to follow the example of Jesus, “Who emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant.” [Philippians 2:7]

Steps Eight and Nine: Restitution

The second part of Fr. Dowling’s equation of liability is the obligation of restitution. The eighth and ninth steps of the 12 Step Program address these liabilities. Steps eight and nine require us first to make a list of all persons we may have harmed, to have a willingness to make amends to them all, and finally to make direct amends to the people whom we have identified wherever possible. The only exception we’re given is where offering restitution might injure them or others. These steps parallel the Unity phase of the Spiritual Exercises, which include our recognizing a deeper sorrow for sin and the compassion for God’s suffering people, and then making a total response in love to God’s love. These are important steps in our spiritual journey as Christians seeking holy lives. In order to obtain the graces of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, each of us needs to not only repent and disclose our sins to the priest, but to have a sincere intention to make reparation, and to actively carry it out [CCC #1491]. The Catechism describes reparation as “making amends for a wrong done or for an offense, which is an offense against God.” The recognition of our shortcomings and the willingness to address them with the help of God releases us from the burden of guilt and the hopelessness of despondency. It helps us to move forward in hope with the confidence of Zacchaeus, who hurried down from his cross to receive Jesus under his roof [Luke 19:1-9].

In the next newsletter we will review the last three steps of Ignatian Spirituality and the Twelve Step Program, and how practicing them deliberately can help us to live a more joyful and grace-filled life.

Reach Deacon John & Diane Barry at (508) 794-9128. Learn more about iTHIRST at <https://ithirstinitiative.org>

