



The Parish Press

Newsletter of Saint Raphael Parish Family

Milford, Connecticut

February 2021



T4S Presents WFFN on Saturday Evening, February 6

T4S, our terrific Teens for Service, are hosting the annual fun fest known as WFFN (Winter Family Fun Night) on Saturday, February 6 from 6:00-7:30 p.m. Families with children ages 3 through 10 are invited to come on down - via Zoom! No winter weather worries, just an evening of lively activities: arts & crafts, puzzles, Play Doh creations, a sing-along and more. Make a real party of it - invite close friends and other family members, too!

Want to join in the fun? The teens certainly hope you will! RSVP to Maria (atomasetti@snet.net or 203-988-8598) by February 1 for the Zoom link, meeting information and your packet of Fun Night materials. Enjoy!



In late February last year Lent began, as it does every year, on Ash Wednesday, and we were just starting to hear news about the Corona Virus. By the 2nd Sunday of Lent we had already eliminated the sign of peace at Mass, emptied and covered or removed all holy water fonts, eliminated Communion from the chalice, and taken other precautions to help prevent the spread of this new disease. The 3rd Sunday of Lent saw our churches empty, public attendance at Mass suspended.

We begin Lent 2021 in much the same way as we left Lent 2020. We now have limited attendance at Mass, but the crowds that typically mark the beginning of this penitential season will not be there. We will have three Masses on Ash Wednesday, with attendance limited to 100 people per Mass.

During Lent 2021, most of us are still limited in the things that we can do. We spend much more time at home; many students learn at home, folks are still working from their kitchen tables, and few of us have been to a movie or a restaurant or travelled out of state. Many Catholic thinkers have likened this time of pandemic to Christ's forty days in the desert or the forty days of Lent. Some have said that the current staying at home condition might afford more time for prayer or spiritual reading.

How we will celebrate Lent as a parish is still evolving. Some ideas are elsewhere in this newsletter, and as other decisions are made, we will reach out with that news. In the meantime, journey with the Lord in this our second Lent in a time of pandemic.

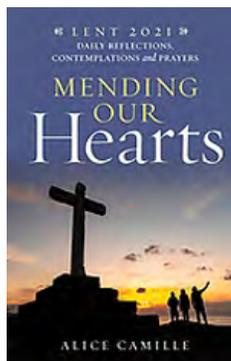
Father John

Lent Begins

Lent. A season of penitence. "A time of grace," in the words of Pope Francis, "a time for letting God gaze upon us with love and in this way *change our lives.*"

We hear the prophet Joel in the first reading at Mass on Ash Wednesday: "Return to me with your whole heart. Rend your hearts, not your garments and return to the Lord, your God."

The three traditional "pillars of Lent," prayer, fasting and almsgiving, lead us to a closer relationship with God. Through prayer and reflection we can deepen our commitment to the Lord. Fasting offers an opportunity for interior conversion. Giving alms means making the needs of others our own, giving something of ourselves to others.



In *Mending Our Hearts*, our companion booklet for Lent this year, Alice Camille invites us to rediscover community "through the benevolent eyes of Jesus." Although "we enter this new season of repentance with a lot on our minds and in our hearts" we must "choose love and trust over fear and hate." Each daily reflection includes a prayer and a statement or question for contemplation.

Look for the booklet, a gift to you from the parish, at the main church entrances.

Stations of the Cross - Presented Through Our Website

Praying the Stations of the Cross in our two churches won't be possible this Lent. We encourage all of you, however, who love this traditional Lenten practice to go to <https://saintraphaelmilford.org>, our parish website, where you will find links to a variety of presentations of the Stations.

There are Stations by Francis of Assisi and Alphonsus Liguori, Stations from Scripture and Virtual Stations from Busted Halo. You'll find others, too, including Stations of the Cross for Kids and Bishop Robert Barron's Stations of the Cross Meditations. In light of our recent social justice panel discussion we have also posted the link to Praying the Stations for Victims of Human Trafficking.

*We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you,
Because, by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*

**Ash Wednesday
February 17**

Mass and Ashes

8:00 a.m.
12:00 Noon
Saint Gabriel Church

7:00 p.m.
Saint Ann Church

“How’s Emma?” A Report from the Prayer Line



Emma Dunn, Heart Warrior

Emma Dunn has been a regular on the parish prayer line since the fall of 2002, months before she was born. Ann and Lou Eden’s granddaughter, diagnosed in utero with a complex congenital heart defect, had her first open heart surgery on March 14, 2003 at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. She was four days old. Six months later, suffering from aortic and subaortic stenosis, she had a Ross-Konno valve replacement. Successful surgery, but Emma has had valve leakage (regurgitation or “regurge”) ever since. The level has varied from “mild to moderate,” to “mild plus” or “moderate minus.” When it reached “severe” last year Emma was facing surgery again, fraught with additional difficulty and risk because the surgeon would have to dissect the scar tissue from previous surgeries before he could get to her heart.

She remained on the prayer line, but in late fall, thanks to Deacon George’s kindness and concern, Emma’s name was mentioned in the Prayer of the Faithful every weekend. We have prayed for her as a family, and God has heard our prayers.

On Tuesday, December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Emma’s surgeon placed a device called the Haart 300 in her aortic valve. Although the surgery went well, Emma had two post-op seizures. (Subsequent tests - CT, CTA, EEG with video telemetry, brain MRI - showed nothing, but she is now on an anti-seizure medication.) According to

Katie, Emma’s mom, “She had some of the worst pain and anxiety I’ve ever witnessed.” Through it all she retained her trademark sense of humor, “laughing really hard with her nurses & doctors” and giving them all crazy nicknames.

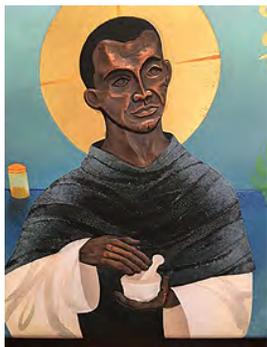
Discharged December 15, Emma went home to Buffalo (to the delight of her family, especially her 9-year old sister Regan), then returned to CHOP before Christmas to have her sutures removed, and to have an echocardiogram, an ekg and a meeting with her cardiologist. Although the surgical procedure went “perfectly,” the leak has come back, so she’ll have another cardiac MR this month to see “exactly where we are on the regurge scale.” The goal of her surgery was to reduce the valve leakage while preserving the existing valve and avoiding the inevitable valve replacement for as long as possible. Her cardiologist is pleased: she’s healing well and her heart sounds good.

So, how is Emma? She’s a heart warrior. As we went to press she was preparing to return to Clarence High School, where she is a senior on the cheer team. Six weeks ago she “couldn’t take a flight of stairs without becoming short of breath.” Now, says her mom, “She’s READY.” A bit anxious about the upcoming MR, but tough and ready.

Emma and her family are very grateful for all the love and prayers from the wonderful people of Saint Raphael Parish. She asks that you keep them coming!

A Social Justice Meditation

“Racism is a sin almost nobody confesses. Like pollution, it is a ‘sin of the world’ that is everybody’s responsibility, but apparently nobody’s fault.”
(Franciscan reflection on the life of Saint Martin de Porres)



Saint Martin de Porres

The Church considers Saint Martin de Porres (1579–1639), a Peruvian Dominican friar, the patron saint of social justice, racial harmony and mixed-race people. He was the son of a freed Panamanian woman, who was probably black but also possibly of indigenous stock, and a Spanish grandee who abandoned the family when Martin was a child. At the age of 12 he was apprenticed to a barber-surgeon and learned how to cut hair - he is also the patron of saint of barbers - and how to draw blood, care for wounds and prepare and administer medicines.

Martin became a Dominican oblate, or lay monastic, in 1601, at a time when it was not customary in Peru to receive a “poor mulatto,” as Martin described himself, into a religious order. He was known for his devotion to the Eucharist and constant prayer.

He worked in the order’s infirmary, where he treated all people regardless of their color, race or status, and distributed food and alms to the poor and needy. He was a good friend of Saint Rose of Lima, another lay Dominican. Martin De Porres was canonized in 1962 by Pope John XXIII.

A Social Justice Note for Your Calendar:

Monday, February 8

International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking

Jesus is Presented in the Temple



On February 2 we celebrate the Feast of the Presentation. When Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the Temple to “perform the custom of the law,” as Luke recounts in 2:22-32, Simeon recognizes the long-expected Messiah, the “light of the nations” and the “glory of Israel.”

GIFT for February: Living the Moral Life: Living Faithfully

This month we'll look more deeply into Commandments that emphasize respect, gratitude and helping each other, and see how these are qualities we learn within our families and from our parents/guardians. The sessions will focus on the key qualities we need to guide us in our most important and closest lifelong relationships, qualities like love, respect, gratitude, honor, obedience and assistance. In age-appropriate ways we will learn what the Church teaches about living together as a family, being together in romantic relationships, and remaining committed to one another in marriage.

GIFT Sacramental Program Schedule

First Communion

Required Learning Session #1
(Children w/parent or guardian)

In-Person:

Saturday, February 6
10:00 - 11:45 a.m. *or*

Virtual:

Thursday, February 11
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Confirmation

Required for Candidates

In-Person:

Sunday, February 7
1:00 - 2:30 p.m. *or*

Virtual:

Tuesday, February 9
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Nicene Creed

For all Sacrament Sessions:

In-Person: Saint Ann
Parish Center Classrooms
Virtual: Zoom Information
to follow

The schedule at right is for those who have registered in advance. To request a change of date or to change from in-person to virtual classes please notify Maria (atomasetti@snet.net or 203-988-8598 - voice or text) well in advance of the scheduled session. Maria will email virtual dates and Zoom information to those who have registered for GIFT's virtual option.

Registered families/participants can look forward to receiving a YouTube video of the welcome, the opening prayer and song, and Deacon George's presentation prior to February's sessions.

GIFT 's Virtual Adult Series with Deacon George Continues February 22

GIFT's virtual adult series Zoomed into homes in January as Deacon George facilitated a discussion on *Respect for All Life*. Several parishioners signed on, there were thought-provoking questions (and some answers!) and the sense of an hour well spent. This month's session (February 22, 7-8 p.m.) will focus on GIFT's February topic, *Living Faithfully*. Adult parishioners, especially parents/guardians of teens who attend the virtual GIFT session, are invited and encouraged to participate. Contact Maria (as above) for the Zoom link and further information.

In-Person Class Schedule:

Friday, February 19
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 21
1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 23
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Saint Ann Parish Center
Hall

For registered families
and participants only.
No walk-ins permitted.

Summer VBS Camp 2021 Rocky Railway: Jesus' Power Pulls Us Through!

No details yet, but we have a theme! Campers on this faith-filled adventure will discover that trusting Jesus pulls them through life's ups and downs - when life feels like a valley or a mountaintop.

Dates under consideration are the week of July 26 or the week of August 9.

Can't wait to hear that "All Aboard"?? Check the weekly bulletin and upcoming issues of the newsletter to see how Rocky Railway rolls this year!!



CRS Rice Bowls Are Here! Please Support Our Parish Lenten Project What You Give Up For Lent Can Change Lives

For Catholics across the country Lenten almsgiving means CRS Rice Bowl, the official program of Catholic Relief Services. Using small cardboard donation boxes, which first appeared in Allentown, PA in 1975, we have helped our brothers and sisters at home and around the world overcome hardships like hunger and malnutrition. When we put our faith in action through Lenten alms we have the power to make the world a better place for all.



If you can, please consider making donations to CRS Rice Bowl this year. Reflect on how caring for our neighbor is caring for Christ. 75% of what you give supports the work of Catholic Relief Services around the world, while 25% stays in the Archdiocese of Hartford for local hunger and poverty alleviation efforts.

To learn more about CRS' worldwide efforts, take a virtual journey to Madagascar, El Salvador and Timor-Leste via the Sizzle Reel invitation *Come Fly With Us*. Pick yours up at https://photos.crs.org/rb2021videos_en/hefb42b2d#hefb42b2d. Olivia the Owl will be your guide.

Rice bowls will be available at our February and March in-person GIFT sessions. We'll mail them (or drop them off) to all participants in virtual sessions and to any parishioners who request one. If you have questions or need more information please reach out to Maria (as above). Thank you.

*God of mercy, through these 40 days of Lent, may we
deepen our faith in you and our love for one another
as we await with joyful anticipation
the great celebration of Easter. Amen*

Change of Seasons

First up on February's parish calendar - Winter Family Fun Night, presented "virtual style" this year by T4S. Check out the details inside.

 On the 17th, Ash Wednesday, Lent begins and we move from the green of Ordinary Time to violet, the color of penance and humility. Read inside about some possibilities for prayer, fasting and almsgiving as we follow Jesus to Calvary.

Send a Valentine message to those you love, so important in this year of stress and uncertainty. Use whatever platform works best for you - card, text, FaceTime, email - and let them know they are close to your heart. Catch up with the heart warrior who has been the focus of parish prayer.

February is the month of the Holy Family. Pray to them and treasure yours.

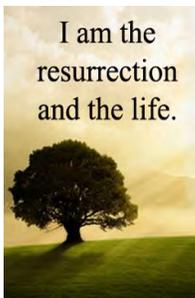
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Ash Wednesday: February 17



I am the
resurrection
and the life.

In Memoriam

Saint Raphael's mourns the recent loss of

Carl Kleeberg Cummings
Barbara Schroeder
John Lawless
Judith Delaney
Honorata Lyimo
Rafaella LaBombarde
John C. Keller
Patricia Braccio

May the risen Christ welcome them into the fullness of life and may their families take comfort in knowing that we share in their sorrow.

Support for the Grieving Please Reach Out in Your Need



Has the death of someone you love left you feeling angry, lonely or anxious? Remember that you can reach out to our Bereavement Support group for consolation during this especially difficult time.

Although we still cannot meet in person we are available by phone to offer the comfort of a kind heart and a listening ear. Please call us at 203-877-4020.

March Parish Press Info Due February 10

Please send your news, notes, comments and photos for the March newsletter to parishpress06460@gmail.com by Wednesday, February 10, or call Ann Eden (203-874-8744). Thanks. We look forward to hearing from you.

We Welcome With Love . . .

the newest member of our parish family,

Rosalyn Sylvia Twidwell

who was baptized on Saturday, January 16, at Saint Ann Church. God's warmest blessings on you, Rosalyn, and on your family.



The Card & Gift Shop is Open . . . By Appointment Only

. . . and we're still offering terrific half-off pricing. Call 203-257-6216 to schedule an appointment. (Are we an exclusive shop, or what?!) We have prayer cards, rosaries, coloring books, mugs, gift items and more on our shelves. Check us out!

Creative Hands to Reassess This Month

After their usual January hiatus Creative Hands will reassess this month. The virus, the cold and early winter darkness have kept attendance low. Members remain in touch, however, and they've been busy. Val Yergeau reports that they have a lovely selection of shawls and lap robes ready to be delivered.

When meetings resume they'll continue to be held on Thursday evenings starting at 6 o'clock in the Saint Ann Parish library.

To keep in touch, for information or to drop off shawls/lap robes, please call Val at 203-687-9568 or drop her an email (vyergeau@gmail.com).