



The Parish Press

Newsletter of Saint Raphael Parish Family
Milford, Connecticut

May 2021



This month we celebrate two great post-Easter feasts, The Ascension of the Lord on May 13, and Pentecost on May 23. Ascension, a Holy Day of Obligation, is always celebrated on the Thursday forty days after Easter. Pentecost falls ten days later. After his death and resurrection, Jesus appeared several times to a variety of people - the two Marys at the empty tomb, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the followers who shared breakfast on the beach after the miraculous catch of fish, and to the disciples and Thomas in the upper room in Jerusalem.

Forty days after Easter, while gathered with his disciples, Jesus gave them the promise of the Holy Spirit and then ascended into heaven. Luke recounts this event in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

We might expect the time between the Ascension and Pentecost to be one of slightly stunned disorientation. After all, Jesus has gone, and the Holy Spirit he promised has not yet come upon the disciples. We might expect them to have been a little bit lost. But there is no mention of fearfulness, unease or disbelief in Luke's account, but a boldness instead. The inner group of disciples devote themselves to prayer - not just among themselves but with others as well. Peter, clearly the leader, gathers the whole group of believers and initiates a process to replace Judas. There will be 12 apostles again.

On Pentecost Sunday we remember the day the disciples received the promised Holy Spirit. The second chapter of Acts describes a "strong driving wind" and "tongues as of fire" as the Holy Spirit is poured out, not just on the disciples, but on people from all over the world who were in Jerusalem to celebrate a Jewish feast. Over 3000 people were baptized that day, creating the beginnings of the Church. (Thus Pentecost is considered the birthday of the Church.) The liturgical color for this great feast is red, for the tongues of flame that signify the Holy Spirit. It is a tradition in our parish that parishioners wear red when they come to Mass on Pentecost Sunday.

Father John

May is for Mothers, and for Mary

May is definitely for mothers! We will celebrate our mothers, stepmothers, foster mothers, all the women who have loved and nurtured us during our lives, on Mother's Day, (Sunday, May 9 on this year's calendar), a tradition that began in the United States in the early years of the twentieth century.

May is also the month that the Catholic Church dedicates to Mary, a tradition that dates back more than seven centuries. We honor Mary, Our Mother, as Mother of Christ, Mother of Our Savior, Mother of divine grace, Mother most pure, most chaste, most admirable and other beautiful Marian titles found in the Litany of Mary. On May 24, the Monday after Pentecost, we will celebrate Mary, Mother of the Church, a feast established by Pope Francis in 2018.



Some fifty-six years ago Pope Paul VI published *Mense Maio*, an encyclical on prayers during May for Preservation of Peace. The Holy Father's eloquent plea for Mary's help resonates with us today.

May [Mary] graciously lend an ear to the devout pleas of those all over the world who beg her for peace. May she enlighten the minds of those who rule nations. And finally, may she prevail on God, who rules the winds and storms, to calm the tempests in men's warring hearts and grant us peace in our day.

May Crowning

We will honor Mary with the tradition of May crowning this year and think of how intimately our parish is connected to the Blessed Mother through Scripture and Tradition. Saint Gabriel Church is dedicated to the angel of the Annunciation who heard Mary's *Fiat* that made our salvation possible (Luke 1:26-38). Saint Ann Church is dedicated to the woman Tradition identifies as Mary's mother.

On Mother's Day at the 11 o'clock Mass at Saint Gabriel's Tom Croteau will crown Mary with the garland of flowers he has donated in memory of his beloved sister Michelle.

Early in May the statue of Mary outside Saint Ann Church will be crowned with a wreath of flowers. We invite parishioners of all ages, including families with children, to place fresh flowers or small potted plants near the statue beginning May 8th through the end of the month. Large vases will be placed near the statue for your convenience. Come and pray a Hail Mary, a decade of the Rosary, or another Marian prayer. (Please remember to practice safe distancing if necessary.) Parishioners might also plan for a May crowning at home, inside or perhaps in an outside garden. *Mary our Mother, pray for us.*

Ascension Thursday Holy Day Masses

8:00 a.m., Saint Gabriel's

7:00 p.m., Saint Ann's

Congratulations, Aaryn Rotondo

On Thursday, April 8, Aaryn received Jesus for the first time in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. May you continue to grow in God's love, Aaryn, every day of your life.

A Social Justice Meditation

The Lord has loved me so much; we must love everyone in return. We must be compassionate.
Saint Josephine Bakhita



Saint Josephine Bakhita

Saint Josephine Margaret Bakhita was born around 1869 in the Darfur region of Sudan. Kidnapped at the age of 8 by Arab slave traders, for the next 12 years she was sold and resold in the markets of El Obeid and of Khartoum. The humiliations and sufferings she experienced, both physical and moral, were so severe that she forgot the name her parents had given her. Her kidnappers named her Bakhita, Arabic for “fortunate.”

Eventually she was brought to Italy, where she served as a nanny. For a time she and her charge were entrusted to the care of the Canossian Sisters in Venice. It was there that Bakhita learned about God. She received the Sacraments of Initiation in 1890, taking the name Josephine, and discerned a call to follow Christ. With the help of the sisters she gained her freedom and in 1896 joined their order.

For the next 42 years of her life, she worked as a cook and a doorkeeper at a convent in Schio, Vicenza. She also traveled and visited other convents, telling her story, preparing other sisters for work in Africa. She gained a reputation for great compassion, piety and love of the poor.

Asked toward the end of her life what she would do if she met those who had enslaved and humiliated her, Josephine reportedly replied, “I would kneel before them and kiss their hands because through their actions I have come to know Christ Jesus and he is my life.” She was canonized by Pope John Paul II on October 1, 2000. Saint Josephine Bakhita is the patron saint of victims of modern slavery and human trafficking.



Emma Dunn

An Update on Emma, from her Mom In Response to the Many Inquiries from Concerned Parishioners

It’s been two months since our last visit to Philadelphia, and Emma has been busy living her best life. She once again tried out for and made the Clarence (NY) High School Varsity Cheerleading team for this strange spring football season. And talk about a silver lining: If this pandemic hadn’t interrupted life - and sports - this school year, Emma wouldn’t have been able to participate. But she’s back at it with a vengeance, a flyer on her team, and nothing makes me happier than watching her stunting on the sidelines during Friday Night Lights. Emma also just finished her final competition as an all-star cheerleader. It was bittersweet, and how perfect: it was on her home turf in Pennsylvania.

As for Emma’s heart, it’s better than it’s been in probably five years. She displays no symptoms of poor cardiac function, and she feels terrific. The leakage in her heart has gone from “severe” to “mild to moderate,” and we couldn’t be more pleased. No seizures since December, and although we continue to follow up with neurology (and cardiology, genetics, the cleft palate team - I could go on), things are looking reasonably stable on all fronts.

What the future has in store for Emma’s heart is anyone’s guess, although she’ll likely need a valve replacement before she transitions from the Children’s Hospital to the Adult Congenital Program when she’s in her early twenties. Of course, our girl has always held her cards close to the vest, so who knows? What the future has in store for Emma herself is also uncertain, but I suspect that she will handle life after high school with the same fierce spirit with which she has navigated her first eighteen years. She is choosing from several possible options for college, having a great senior year, despite the craziness, and enjoying the last couple months until graduation.

Ah, graduation. There aren’t enough Kleenex to wipe away all the tears that will fall on June 26th as Emma walks across that stage to receive her diploma. I can assure you that no one else in the Clarence High School Class of 2021 has had to fight so hard for that piece of paper, and no one has touched as many lives as my girl has in the process.

My mother has always said that Emma brings out the best in people, and it’s true. The love, prayers, and support we continue to receive from the people of St. Ann (ok, come on - it’s hard for me to remember that you’re St. Raphael now!) has been our rock and foundation throughout the last eighteen years. Thank you for caring so much about my little girl and her bum little ticker. God has certainly blessed us with each and every one of you, and we are so thankful.

Katie

MYTHS VS FACTS

ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Print media and social media publish a great deal of information and a lot of misinformation about human sex trafficking and where it occurs. In an effort to educate parishioners and to help them to protect their children, the Pastoral Council's Human Concerns and Social Justice Committee will publish a "Myths vs. Facts" column monthly in *The Parish Press*. This month's column appears below.

Myth: Human sex trafficking occurs primarily overseas.

Fact: Trafficking occurs across the globe. The United States, according to government officials, is one of the most active sex trafficking countries in the world. Here in the U.S. exploitation of trafficking victims occurs in cities, affluent suburbs and rural areas. And most victims know their trafficker. The initial recruitment is often carried out by a friend, a relative or a classmate.

For more information or for help call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.

GIFT Sacramental Program Schedule

Confirmation

Catholic Social Teaching

In-Person:

Sunday, May 16, 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

Parish Center Classroom

Saint Ann Campus

Virtual:

Monday, May 25, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Note date change. Zoom link to follow

GIFT: Looking Back on 2020/2021 Looking Forward to Fall 2021

2020/2021 marked the 16th year of our GIFT, Growing in Faith Together, program - faith formation for people of all ages. Our theme for the year was Living the Moral Life.

Thank you to the 70+ families who participated in the program with all of this year's pandemic-related challenges. Approximately 1/3 of our families were part of in our in-person classes. The remaining 2/3 were very committed to our virtual programs on Zoom. We are still working with our First Communion families and Confirmation candidates in preparation for their Sacraments. We truly missed seeing so many of you in person this year - missing the opportunity to get to know you better and build community.

We will be posting the "opening recordings" for our six Living the Moral Life sessions on the parish website (see below), giving everyone the opportunity to sing or reflect on the words of High Above Our Way, our theme song, and to hear and reflect on Deacon George's short session overviews.

GIFT's topic for next year will be Prayer Life, focusing on forms of prayer, Catholic prayers and devotions, the Mass, and how we can continue to develop our prayer life throughout our lives. We will make decisions re: what the GIFT program will look like in 2021/2022 based on the status of the pandemic and guidelines from the CDC and Archdiocese of Hartford. Look for our GIFT and Sacramental Program mailings in early August!

Special thanks to Andy, Deacon George, Cassandra, MaryJo, Mary Lee, Michelle, Pat and Tom, our dedicated GIFT Team, for all of your support throughout the year.

If you have questions about the GIFT "all ages" or Sacramental programs please contact Maria Tomasetti (atomasetti@snet.net or 203-988-8598, voice/text).

Saint Raphael Parish Website
<https://saintraphaelmilford.org>

Steam's Up, Kids! Book Now for Summer's VBS Rocky Railway

Monday, July 26 - Friday, July 30

9:30 a.m. to 12 noon

Saint Raphael Parish Center

Option 1: Campers ages 4 through 10

An in-person adventure for a maximum of 20 campers. Staggered arrival times between 9:00 and 9:30 a.m., safe distancing and face masks.



Campers will enjoy Bible adventures, Crafts & Imagination, Kid-Vid Cinema, Locomotion Games (modified for safety) Rocky Railway Dance and the always popular Fun Wrapped Snacks!

Option 2: Open to campers ages 3 through 10

This option includes a take-home camp bag with one evening ZOOM gathering during the week of July 26.

Bible Buddies like Finn, the smiling rainbow trout, will help campers remember each day's Bible Point.



Day 1: Jesus' power helps us do hard things.

Day 2: Jesus' power gives us hope.

Day 3: Jesus' power helps us be bold.

Day 4: Jesus' power lets us live forever.

Day 5: Jesus' power helps us be good friends.

Suggested donation for this rollicking Rocky Mountain adventure is \$25 for the week (\$5.00 per day) which will help offset the cost of camp supplies. For registration forms or further information contact Maria as at left. Please register by Wednesday, July 21.

Attention, Class of 2021 Send Us Your Post-Graduation Plans!

Given the uncertainty of 2021, we are still finalizing plans for the annual Saint Raphael Parish Graduation Celebration. We take this opportunity every year to recognize our eighth grade, high school and college graduates, with family and friends, at a very special time in their lives.



For planning purposes, we are reaching out to all graduates and their parents/guardians to learn more about plans for the year ahead. This is what we'd like to know:

* Eighth grade graduates: What is your current school, and which high school will you be attending?

* High school graduates: What is your current high school, and what are your plans for next year?

* College graduates: What is your current college/university, and what are your plans for next year?

Please contact Maria Tomasetti (as at left) with graduate information. It will be great to hear from you!

Congratulations on your upcoming graduation! We look forward to recognizing your accomplishments!

May . . . Mary . . . Mothers

May is the perfect month for celebrations! The sun shines brightly (most of the time), flowers are in bloom, and we still sing the *Alleluias* of the Easter season.



It's also the month to honor mothers and to give special honor to Mary, Our Blessed Mother. May crownings are scheduled at each church. Check inside for details.

Emma Dunn's mom has sent us an encouraging report on our courageous heart warrior and we have details about July's Rocky Railway VBS camp. There's also a message for all members of the Class of 2021.

Great liturgical celebrations this month, too: Ascension Thursday (a holy day), the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Our Lady, Mother of the Church. Enjoy!

The Parish Press

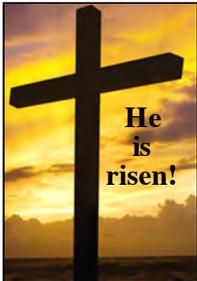
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Happy Mother's Day!

In Memoriam



St. Raphael's mourns the recent loss of
Renate Mohring Traum
Peter Palmer Ekeh Wanda Warren
Irene Ann Keegan John Coughlin
Susan Becker Louise Grinnell
Ronald Therriault Marc Baillargeon
Alcine Panton Bertha Betso
William Schule, Sr. Agnes Hine

May God welcome them into eternal life and may their families find comfort in their wonderful memories.

Bereavement Support Is a Phone Call Away



We are still unable to meet with you in person, but members of our Bereavement Support Group are only a phone call away. To ease the pain that loss can bring they offer a calming voice and an understanding heart. Please call us at 203-877-4020.

Submit *Parish Press* Info by May 14

Please send your news, notes, photos and comments for the June newsletter to parishpress06460@gmail.com by **Friday, May 14**, or call Ann Eden (203-874-8744).

Still Have 2021 Rice Bowl Donations?

Please contact Maria Tomasetti (203-988-8598, voice/text or atomasetti@snet.net) to arrange for pickup, and thank you again for your generosity.



We Welcome With Love . . .

the newest member of our parish family
Shiloh Lascari

who received the life-giving waters of Baptism on Sunday, April 18, at Saint Gabriel Church.



God bless you, Shiloh. May you grow in faith, in joy, in wisdom and in the love of the Lord.

Help Brighten The Day For Local Health Care Facility Residents

Like so many activities during this otherworldly time of Covid, the sing-a-long and strolling music visits to local health care facilities have been on extended pause.

But our ministers of smiles and song have come up with a great idea. All during the month of May they will be collecting small items to fill colorful gift bags for facility residents. Tucked inside - a variety of small items to lift spirits and brighten the day - things like travel size hand cream, nail polish packets (polishes, file, remover wipes), sun glasses, Chapstick lip balm, greeting cards and seasonal decorations. Additional possibilities: soft chocolates (like Hershey kisses), word search books, adult coloring books and markers/colored pencils.

If you'd like to help, look for collection boxes this month in the vestibules of both Saint Ann Church and Saint Gabriel Church. Thank you for your support!