

# *Bear Wrongs Patiently, Forgive Offenses and Admonish Sinners:*

## **St. Monica Prepares to Celebrate Christmas**



During the Season of Advent, St. Monica prepares room for our Lord Jesus Christ in our lives. We forgive each other for any wrongs which may have happened over the year and gather together and have a wonderful afternoon during the Parish Christmas Dinner/Auction hosted by St. Rose of Lima. This year there were nearly one hundred items in the auction. There were many happy faces as children and adults alike won their favorite items, along with a cheerful visit and chat with Jolly St. Nicholas.

We also took the opportunity to receive the Mercy and Grace from God through the sacrament of reconciliation, to be forgiven for our sins and empty our hearts and souls of those things that burden us, and pushes us away from God.



The parishioners never disappoint with giving Christmas to those who would not receive otherwise. Every year the Angels fly off the Angel tree by the second weekend and return to fill homes with smiles and fun. This year it took three vehicles to deliver all of the wishes including seven bikes !!



Have Mercy!!

## **Many Gifts for Our Church**

The Parishioners of St. Monica do not forget the needs of our parish either. We are so thankful for the generosity from among us who have donated the new Italian Rose Vestment, the many who have responded to the announcement for new Altar Servers Albs and Paul and Helen Vincent for the new candlesticks for the altar and computer for the Receptionist..

We also thank the Ladies Guild for donating our new outdoor nativity set with the manger created by Joe Iovino.

Throughout the year, our Parish is so blessed to receive the gift of time from so many. We would not be the vibrant Parish that we are without YOU. It seems that our dedicated parishioners are always looking to give their gifts, with time, talents or treasures, even on a cold rainy day pressure washing the rectory. So if you see a need, just ask Father how you can offer your gifts.



Blessings from Fr. Amar



Ernie and Annie Pourpore  
Pat and Jimmy Hoey

## **Priceless Gifts Given**

Two examples of many gifts of talent and time given to our Parish are Ernie Poupore, Retired Sexton who kept our problems at bay for our church, other buildings and cemetery for eight years. We are so happy that Ernie and Anne Poupore have decided to retire right here with us!!

Pat Hoey, Retired Secretary/Bookkeeper who also served the Lord for more than eight years of dedication. We all know that, if you needed anything done, call Pat. Somehow it would always get done. What many of you did not realize it was because she never took a vacation in all her years. She was always here to serve the Lord and us. We wish Pat and Jimmy Hoey our best in their new life in Ocala with their family.

Thank you Pat and Ernie and your spouses (Jimmy and Anne) for being there for us!

# Jubilee Year of Mercy

## Feeding the Hungry:

Over thirty years ago the Ministry of St. Monica Pantry was formed by Fr. Joseph Finlay who asked Margaret Gionet to go buy food for the poor. Around 1985, Paul Vincent who had taken over the pantry by this time, found organizations who gave free food and bread to the hungry. Since then St. Monica has continued helping the hungry in the area with food from the free programs **and parishioners' help. Currently, donations are received by FarmShare, USDA, Waste Not Want Not, and the US Postal Food Drive along with continued support by parishioners.** In the last twelve months, our pantry has distributed food to 4,540 families. St. Monica Pantry is open every Tuesday and Thursday and recipients are allowed to receive every two weeks. Over these thirty years it has taken many dedicated volunteers to complete this work of mercy. Many of the volunteers throughout the years have been Knights of Columbus Council #5758.



Since the summer of 2013, St. Monica has partnered up with five different Christian denomination churches in the Downtown Palatka area to distribute food on a monthly basis with a Mobile Pantry. Currently the truck load of approximately 10,000 lbs of food from FarmShare and USDA arrives on the first Wednesday of each month and is distributed to the families in need within three hours. Over the last twelve months 2,400 families have been served with over 120,000 lbs of food.



During this year, parish food drives also helped St. Monica Pantry and families in need. The Knights of Columbus provided Thanksgiving Dinner for all the Parish. Their only request was to bring in canned goods. **Our Children's Christian Formation program also had a food drive and the food was brought up during the Thanksgiving Mass.** And our Parish as a whole, from donations given to the poor, eleven Thanksgiving Baskets were made including a turkey or ham for families who would not have had a traditional Thanksgiving without our initiative.

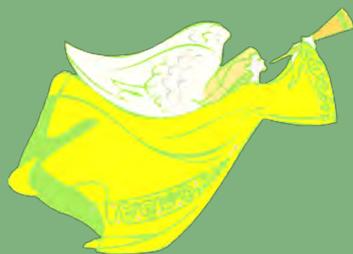


## Clothe the Naked:

Each year St. Monica's Ladies Guild reminds us that we have been blessed more than we deserve and to clean out our closets of our plethora of clothes for their Fall Flea Market. Those extra things we have held onto always seem to fill the whole Parish Enrichment Center and overflow into two classrooms. Even with the ladies selling whole bags of clothes for just \$3.00, along with the other items, they were able to raise \$ 2,300.00 this year. With that success, there was still a truck load of items including clothes which were available to be donated to St. Vincent de Paul. St. Monica Pantry has also offered clothes upon donations.

## Visit the Sick, Imprisoned and Comfort the Afflicted:

Every week our homebound are visited by our dedicated Extraordinary Ministers. Our ministers have learned that not only do the homebound receive the Body of our Lord, but they too receive the blessings of the Lord from seeing the hope and strength of the faith of our homebound. Our Small Christian Communities also pray and send card to their extended members, those who can not physically participate in communities. **Angels of Mercy visit and polish nails at the nursing home. And the Ladies' Guild, annually visits and gives monetary support to the St. Gerard House in St. Augustine. Not to mention our "everready bunny", Father Amar who visits not only our parishioners, but those of St. John the Evangelist, and celebrates Mass for the nursing home and the prison monthly.**



# Saint Monica Messenger

December 2015, Issue Thirty-Six

Bringing the Good News of the Parish to You

## A Message from Our Pastor, Fr. Amar Nath Nagothu MSFS

*“His mercy is from age to age to those who fear Him.. He has helped Israel His servant, remembering His mercy.” (Luke 1:50, 54).*

Heaven and earth sing in exultation because the Lord has come into our world, revealing to the world God’s mercy and offering each of us the love that endures all things.

Saint Monica: our lovely little church, known for her beauty at the banks of St. John’s river is also known for the way it is adorned at every major celebration of the Church. This year as part of our preparations to celebrate Christmas, Chris and her companions began to enhance the beauty our church with all the Christmas decorations and building the ‘Crib’. This year we have a new beautiful ‘Crib’ built facing 4th Street. As I go out in the quiet evenings to play with the bunnies, I stand before the crib looking at the beautiful new statues and I see Jesus.

I see the child Jesus. In him, I see God who has lavished his generosity upon me; but when I look at myself, I am ashamed to see a ‘kindergarten’ heart in an adult body. In him, I see a God who humbled himself to my human level. But I have been like a virtually empty vessel which rattles noisily the small coins it actually has. I see Mary. She is beautiful, on account of the goodness of her heart. I see St. Joseph. He is silent even when Mary is near. This silence is not the absence of sound, but of self. Each has surrendered themselves to God in the manger.

I survey the crib. I see what we regard as essential for modern civilization. There is not even a door or a window (which we moderns keep shut even during the daytime). There is no watchdog that welcomes guests entering a modern house by barking at them, if not in fact biting them. Mary is not wearing slacks, which is not slack enough these days. St. Joseph is not smoking a cigarette, while some of us consume three packets a day, as if they contained all the vitamins necessary. And yet, though civilized things are absent from the crib, we have, here the first civilized persons in the world: Jesus, Mary, Joseph. After all, what use are civilized things without civilized

individuals?

I hear Mary telling Joseph, “I hear people’s gossip about us, having a baby without living together as husband and wife.” Joseph says “Don’t worry, Mary. Worry never accomplishes anything, except wrinkles which gives another thing to worry about. Leave gossip alone; those who gossip are caught in their own mouth trap.”

Mary says, “God could have given us at least a cradle for the baby.” Joseph says, “My dear, at least we have this crib. Some people are so poor that even cockroaches shun them. One advantage of being poor is that it does not cost much. and though those who sleep on the floor never fall out of bed, riches are not always blessings.” Mary says, “Joseph, don’t speak loudly; the baby is sleeping.” Joseph says, “Yes, we mustn’t disturb him. He sleeps soundly even in poor swaddling clothes.” Of course, man’s conscience and not his mattress has most to do with his sleep.

I touch the floor of the crib. It is very cold. We people have become so cold towards one another that God has become a human being to warm us up. Often, we are neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm and a lukewarm Christian makes a good bench warmer although a poor heart warmer.



## Christmas: A Sign of Mercy

Holy Father Pope Francis says, our joyful contemplation of the mystery of Christmas should make us realize that, as God has become one of us, we too are called to become like God: humble, close to others, especially the poor, and ever attentive to their needs.

This Christmas, let us ask Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, to help us see in our neighbor the face of Jesus, God made man. May we be in this world a ray of that light which shone forth from Bethlehem, bringing the joy and peace to the hearts of all men and women.

*Christmas Blessings*

# Our Works of Mercy

## *Bury and Pray for the Dead:*

Here at St. Monica our loved ones are never forgotten, since we have the blessing of having our own cemetery where we can continue to care for them even after their passing. We even celebrate All Souls' Mass at St. Monica Cemetery and have all the graves and niches blessed. Each year the attendance grows and now over flows the pavilion. During this Mass the banner, of the names of all those who were called back to God during the past year, was presented. This banner continued to hang in the front of the church, and in the back of church photos of our dearly departed are displayed for the rest of the month.



Our parishioners are also very faithful about praying for the unborn babies who were loss by abortion and our deceased all year long. The rosary prayed before all Masses in November were prayed with ProLife intentions. This year we even gave a Christian burial in St. Monica Cemetery for an stillborn baby. And we pray for our loved ones, we have not even finished 2015 and we have Mass intentions through May 2016.

## *Counsel the Doubtful and Instruct the Ignorant:*

Our CCF classes are also growing with great excitement for the upcoming years! Our children also reminded the whole community to keep Christ in Christmas during the Palatka Christmas Parade.

The RCIA class of 2016 certainly brought tears of joy to the eyes of our parishioners, since we have the largest class in years. But most of all, that two of our candidates this year have decided to take instructions after living around Catholics for over forty years!!

Our adults parishioners are always given resources, including CDs, videos, written works, parish missions, Days of Reflection and Small Christian Communities to strengthen their faith in order to evangelize the Love of the Lord and clarify misconception of the Catholic Faith.



## **Youth Experience God's Mercy through Gators**

By Lizzie Fortner

The University of Florida Catholic Gators Retreat was a wonderful and renewing experience. It was nice to spend time with people our own age (or a little bit older) who design a retreat that can relate to us more than an adult could. We played a few games, had small group talks, and went to adoration. The UF students shared some of their own experiences with us about their journey to Christ. The main message of the retreat was that there are many things in life that can give us momentary happiness, but only God can give us eternal joy. And the only way to eternal joy with God is through His son, Jesus Christ. **Building a strong relationship with God can have its obstacles but there is nothing more fulfilling than God's love.** This retreat reminded me that all of the worries of the world are nothing if I trust the Lord and live in His love. My favorite part of the retreat was adoration. I don't get much time of complete silence, and being able to get that while kneeling in front of Jesus is very powerful. It reminds you of God's greatness - that He somehow has time for all of us, and for all of His creatures - and that we should always make time for Him.