

St. Mary of the Visitation Catholic Church NEWSLETTER

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Volume 18



Fr. Steve Witt

PASTOR'S LETTER

Article By Fr. Steve Witt

As we begin this New Year, it strikes me that all of us are in some way being negatively affected by the ongoing problem of COVID-19 and its variants. This pandemic (endemic) has in its own way affected the mental health and attitudes that significantly affect how we treat one another. I say this because I have witnessed an increasing number of displays of short temper, agitation and in some cases just out and out cruelty. I suppose I can't place all the blame on COVID. Maybe the time of the year and the weather are part of it too. I guess what I am saying is that we as Catholic Christians are called to be better than that. This is a time when we are supposed to be celebrating the greatest gift ever given to mankind. It is the gift of salvation through the eternal love of our God through His only begotten Son, the Word of God and yet we struggle to be civil to one another.

My friends, it is time for all of us to review our lives and vow to do better. We should also demand that those who represent us in political office locally, statewide and nationally do the same. People will have various opinions on any particular subject and that difference of opinion should be reconciled through civil discourse. We need very badly to change the way we deal with one another and now is the time to begin. Now is the time to make changes in ourselves and now is the time to make the place that we live a better place for all people. It is of the utmost importance that we get beyond ourselves and think of the common good of our communities, our nation and in fact the whole world. Let peace begin with me. Let this be the moment now.

God bless you all and have a happy prosperous and peaceful New Year.

NOW IS THE TIME TO MAKE CHANGES IN OURSELVES AND NOW IS THE TIME TO MAKE THE PLACE THAT WE LIVE A BETTER PLACE FOR ALL PEOPLE.

I read an interesting article in the current edition of America Magazine that spoke to the ongoing feelings of alienation and populism in our country. I was interested in the authors take on both the history and source of the movement and how it has affected the way people treat one another. It led me to the conclusion that we are not giving a lot of thought to our state of mind and certainly not to the way we address what we feel (more than think) are our grievances.

Fr. Steve

Your Input Requested

If you have any comments, concerns, suggestions, ideas, or if you would like to write for the St. Mary's quarterly newsletter, please contact Jeanette Roush-Krafka at jeanette.roush@gmail.com

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Parish Profile: Family and Faith Community

Fr. Bill Roush and Jeanette Roush-Krafka

Article By: Dan Teets



You are not going to want to miss our next presenters for the Faith Journeys Speaker Series: Fr. Bill Roush, former St. Mary's parishioner and pastor of the Cluster Parishes (Holy Family Parish - St. Mary's (Riverside), St. Joseph's (Wellman) and Holy Trinity (Richmond, IA)) and Jeanette Roush-Krafka, parishioner for most of her life and the daughter of Fr. Bill, and the editor of this newsletter. Come hear Fr. Bill and Jeanette share about their Faith Journeys and the ways that they have been involved in service to their faith communities and beyond. Their Faith Journeys talk will be on Sunday, March 20, 2022 at 3:00pm in St. Mary Church.

When Janet and I first registered at St. Mary Church in 1995 with our two oldest daughters, Maria (3+) and Jenny (1+) and another child (Megan) on the way we would attend Mass regularly as a family. One of the first families that we met was the Druva-Roush family (Bill, Cindy, Elisabeth and Jeanette) who helped in the ministry of hospitality (serving coffee and donuts after the morning Masses).

My daughters and I felt that the Mass consisted of three main parts: The Liturgy of the Word; the Liturgy of the Eucharist; and coffee, juice, milk and donuts with fellowship in the parish hall! Going to coffee and donuts was a great opportunity to meet other parishioners and

make connections with other young families. Come to the Faith Journeys talk and hear how Fr. Bill and his family first got involved with the ministry of hospitality, and who first suggested that Bill enter the seminary.

Fr. Bill was born and raised in Conesville, IA, a small farming community between Columbus Junction and Nichols, IA. He graduated from Columbus Junction in 1971, and then attended Muscatine Community College graduating with an AA degree. He worked at his dad's service station (where he had been helping out since he was 12) until he started working at Monsanto in 1975.

In 1997 Bill lost his wife (Cindy) to breast cancer, leaving him by himself to raise his daughters who were 9 and 7 years old at the time. Both daughters are now married and starting families of their own.

At Monsanto, he started on the floor and worked his way up to OSHA Process Safety Management. After 25 years, he retired early from Monsanto and started a couple of small businesses with a close friend. One was an operation building apple cider presses, and the other was a laser engraving business. During this time, he also helped build eight round barns including the much heralded "Celebration Barn" between Iowa City and Solon (to get a peek at his work, just Google "Celebration Barn Solon"). In 2008, Fr. Bill felt a call to the priesthood and was ordained in 2015.

Fr. Bill has done 15 to 20 RAGBRAI's (he has lost count), and has run 4 marathons including the Grandma's Marathon (twice). He also enjoys water skiing, snow skiing, hiking, running, and bicycling and tries to get a 2 or 3 mile run in three times a week. Fr. Bill's other hobbies include woodworking and carpentry.

Jeanette Roush-Krafka grew

up in Iowa City and has been active at St. Mary Church all of her life. Jeanette tells us: As our church family grew, so did our faith. Faith and community brought us through the death of my mother Cindy. My grandmother Dorothy (my mother's mother) came to live with us for a few months after my mother passed. She became foundational, not only in my faith, but who I am as a person. She was a mother figure to my sister and I as well as nearly every person she encountered. She exuded motherly love. In 2002 she also passed due to complications with breast cancer and we were left with the foundation she helped us build with the love she gave us.

Come to the Faith Journeys talk and hear how Jeanette's faith lead her to the Peace Corps where she served in Mozambique for two and a half years teaching English and Biology in Portuguese at a secondary school in Montepuez. Hear how she was reunited with a former co-worker (Ryan Krafka) who eventually became her husband. There may even be a special guest appearance by Liv Knight Roush-Krafka, Jeanette and Ryan's daughter and Fr. Bill's first grandchild! Liv was born on All Souls Day and Dia De Los Muertos November 2, 2021. She was born on the 24th anniversary of Jeanette's mother's death, a day which had previously been plagued with grief but in her presence became joyous and full of light. Her name means life in Danish.

The Faith Journeys talk featuring Fr. Bill Roush and Jeanette Roush-Krafka on Sunday, March 20th, at 3:00pm will be live-streamed on St. Mary's YouTube channel and also available there after the event. In the spirit of hospitality, there will be a cookies and lemonade reception after the talk in the Parish Hall.

Reflections on the Season of Lent

As we know, Ash Wednesday and Easter fall on a different date each year. Why is that? It may be useful to refresh our memories.

There are two factors that determine the date of Ash Wednesday. The first is the date of Easter. Easter Sunday is a “moveable feast”. The Council of Nicaea in 325 CE decided that Easter Sunday shall occur during the period from March 22 through April 25. This year, 2022, Easter falls on April 17, rather “late” in that date range. But, it’s not “late” in terms of God’s plan of creation. Easter always occurs on the first Sunday after the Paschal full moon (in that period). The Paschal full moon is the first full moon that occurs after the vernal equinox, which signifies the beginning of spring in the Northern Hemisphere—or March 21. Springtime! Renewal! Rebirth! The promise of eternal life through the sacrifice of our Savior!

The second factor that determines the date of Ash Wednesday is the length of the Season of Lent. From the earliest days of the Church, Christians have desired to prepare for the celebration of Christ’s Resurrection at Easter through a period of fasting and prayer that mirrors the 40 days that Christ spent in the desert at the beginning of his ministry.

However, since the time of the Apostles fasting has been discouraged on Sunday. While the Lenten fast is 40 days, Sundays are not included in the count, since they are days of feasting not fasting. So Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, falls 46 days before Easter every year – 40 days plus the 6 Sundays. So this year Ash Wednesday falls on March 2nd.

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of a period of preparation for the most significant day in the lives of Christians: the Resurrection! We are called each year to enter a solemn, yet joy-filled time of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving as we draw

even closer to God – and allow Him to draw closer to us.

Ash Wednesday is a time for us to reflect on the extent of our negligence in communicating with our Lord. How negligent have we been in seeking Him out? The ashes on our foreheads (from the burnt palms of the previous Palm Sunday) remind us that it requires work and devotion to be a child of God – to truly live the Gospel. We are asked to make real changes in our hearts - to improve our relationship with God and our relationships with others.

WE ARE CALLED EACH YEAR TO ENTER A SOLEMN, YET JOY-FILLED TIME OF PRAYER, FASTING, AND ALMSGIVING AS WE DRAW EVEN CLOSER TO GOD – AND ALLOW HIM TO DRAW CLOSER TO US.

In light of the significant change we are asked to make, is it enough to simply “give up something” this Lent - or is more required? Giving up something enjoyable is certainly sacrificial, but unless it leads to permanent change, it is meaningless. If we give up candy for Lent, but resume eating it again at Easter, what has changed? Losing 10 pounds may be good for our physical health, but what has changed in our hearts?

In our Gospel passage for Ash Wednesday (Matthew 6:1-6, 6-18), Jesus urges his followers to offer almsgiving, prayer, and fasting for sins against God and neighbor. However, Jesus tells them (and us) to do so “in secret”. He stresses the importance of internal conversion, and a personal - individual - relationship with God. He is our model. Many times in the Gospels, he puts aside his busy ministry, and goes off someplace quiet to pray to His Father.

So our observance and practice of Lent are meant to be very personal. Each of us will develop our own personal ways to communicate with our Lord.

Henri Nouwen, the great Christian spiritualist, was deeply convinced

Article By: Deacon Ward Thompson

that the necessity to pray is not so much based on our desire for God as on God’s desire for us. It is God’s passionate pursuit of us that calls us to prayer - it’s His initiative through His Holy Spirit.

(As one of many written spiritual guides for Lent, let me suggest Henri Nouwen’s “Show Me the Way: Daily Lenten Readings”)

Lent is an excellent time - the best time - to renew our commitment to be more present to our Lord. It

is a great time to sincerely raise questions for guidance in our conversations with God. He urges us to ask: What changes do I need to make to stay ever closer to you? What changes will enable me to make better choices in my life - to be less anxious about the things of this world - to be more available and more loving to others - to help transform the world in small, but meaningful ways?

When we receive ashes on our foreheads this year (March 2nd) the minister will say one of two formulas to us:

“Remember, you are dust, and to dust you will return.” This is a spiritually healthy reminder of our earthly mortality and our total dependence on God for an eternal life of happiness in His presence.

Or: “Repent and believe in the Gospel.” This is a call to action. Renounce the sins of the past. Have a change of heart. Strive to imitate Christ in all you do – in new ways – every day.

Wishing you all a blessed, fruitful, and joyful Ash Wednesday and Lenten Season!

BAPTISMS

BRIAR ROSE
HANRAHAN

ADELAIDE MAE KRALL

NOVAH JEAN SCHMIDT

EMILIA ALEXANDRIA
KOSZTOWSKIARTHUR RAY
STUTZMANHARVEY DAE SANTOS-
HAZELWOOD

GRACIE LOU TRIPLETT

BOOKER MATTHEW
BOHANNONEVELYN ELIZABETH
WALSHKENNEDY GRACE
KETELSENAZELIE JOSEPHINE
NESSLER

PEARL PATRICIA HALL

KENZEE DAWN
HARNEY

MARRIAGES

KRISTEN SELIGMAN
AND ALEXANDER
COFFROTHMARGARET PRYDE
AND LUCAS ELLEFSONJORDYN LEHMAN AND
CHRISTOPHER
DOUGLAS

The History of St. Anthony's Bread



Article By: Mary McCue and Dan Teets

In 1991 there were concerns about how St. Anthony Bread fit into the parish and the Common Fund that was set up by the Ecumenical Consultation of Christian Congregations and distributed to needy people through the Crisis Center Food Bank. There was also concern about whether support given could cause problems for people receiving state and federal funds. An agreement was reached that the case workers at the Food Bank would check first to see that government funds were used first and that other help would be supplemental. The agreement included St. Anthony Bread reporting to the P & J and St. Mary's pastor.

In 1996 Fr. Ken Kuntz, pastor, and Rev. Brian Sheply, with co-workers Kathy Linhardt, Margaret Sohm, Susan Whitsitt, Joan Hart and the Bulgarellis started the Board for St. Anthony's Bread. That same year there was a celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Dedication of St. Anthony's Shrine.

By 2002 Mary McCue had joined the board of SAB and she and Sue Whitsitt handled the day to day requests. Dee Salisbury wrote the bulletin reports of the work of SAB. In 2011 SAB funds were bolstered by a generous donation from the estate of Phyllis Shay.

In 2009 Guido and Adelaide moved to Texas to be near their daughter. Adelaide died on 8/7/12 at the age of 94, and Guido died on 1/26/20 at the ripe old age of 105. They and their family and friends contributed substantially to SAB in their honor.

Recently Mary McCue began planning with Fr. Steve to retire from her role with SAB. Lisa and Bernard Dutchik had offered to help. Fr. Steve also talked to a couple new to St. Mary's: Kathy and Joel Elgin. Between them they have worked out how to handle requests for money from SAB. Lisa will primarily handle the accounting. Kathy will do the day to day work with Mary serving as a sub. Dave Kriz, at Hills Bank, was also a friend of the Bulgarellis and has arranged for SAB to have free checks!

Many thanks to all who have helped with and contributed to St. Anthony's Bread through the last 46 years. We hope that Adelaide and Guido are kicking up their heels in Heaven at the success of a ministry that they started!

Im sure that many of you remember longtime parishioners Guido and Adelaide Bulgarelli. They won the MGM Great Waltz Contest at the Armar Ballroom in Des Moines in 1938. In 1956 they also founded "the Catholic Youth Dancing Club, an organization through which the couple - and Adelaide in particular - taught social graces for 13 years." (Senior Living, An Iowa City Press Citizen Publication, March 2006). One lesson that Adelaide taught young ladies about ballroom etiquette, "You cannot say you're ill for one dance, because you don't like the boy, and then get well for the next dance with another boy."

In 1976 Adelaide and Guido established the shrine with St. Anthony's Bread (SAB) with a statue of St. Anthony they found at Sugar Creek and had restored and placed in the convent at St. Patrick's Church, blessed by Bishop O'Keefe.

In 1983 Fr. Griener offered a place in the back of St. Mary Church, which was being remodeled, to symbolize the church's help to the poor and needy. Adelaide and some helpers were giving help in an informal way. The money came from friends and others in support of the work. They were working most often with the Visiting Nurse Association who put them in touch with those who were "falling through the cracks." Christmas gifts of \$50 were given to these people. St. Mary's Altar and Rosary Society contributed as did many parish members.

In 1987 the Peace and Justice Commission (P & J) at St. Mary's began The Sacrificial Giving program (through which parishioners can ask for part of St. Mary's tithe money on behalf of charitable organizations). A regular amount was provided to St. Anthony's Bread.

March for Life

Article By: Bill Doucette

Give us the Grace...when the sacredness of life before birth is attacked, to stand up and proclaim that no one ever has the authority to destroy unborn life." [St. John Paul II]

In January 1973 the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated laws in 50 states when it made abortion legal throughout the United States in the decision of *Roe v. Wade*. The burden of this decision has been heavy to our country. Using CDC data, the National Right to Life Committee (NRLTC) estimated 62 million abortions have occurred in the U.S. since the *Roe v. Wade* decision – averaging over 1 million annually.

In January 1974, the first March for Life walked on Washington to lobby Congressional leadership to find a legislative solution to the Supreme Court's decision. Soon after realizing congressional protection of the unborn was not on the horizon, leader of the March, Nellie Gray, decided to hold a March for Life every year until *Roe v. Wade* is overturned. The mission of the March for Life is to promote the beauty and dignity of every human life by working to end abortion—uniting, educating, and mobilizing pro-life people in the public square.

With few exceptions, a March for Life has been held annually in Washington, DC and in other cities in the U.S. since 1974. The March for Life in Washington goes from the National Mall to the Supreme Court building, where leaders speak about the need to give voice to respect and support life from conception to natural death. Estimates for number of attendees over the years ranged from tens of thousands to several hundred thousand. There are also other related events that occur over the weekend, including rallies and prayer services.

Iowa City groups, comprised of priests, deacons, adults and youth,



have regularly participated in the National March for Life in Washington, DC. Often, they have taken a bus and traveled out to the March, choosing a pilgrimage approach. For example, one group slept overnight on the gym floor at

62 MILLION ABORTIONS HAVE OCCURRED IN THE U.S. SINCE THE ROE V. WADE DECISION – AVERAGING OVER 1 MILLION ANNUALLY.

Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. Isaac Doucette, a parishioner of St. Mary's, described attending prayer Mass the day before the March at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception—the largest Roman Catholic Church in North America. The National Basilica was full of hundreds of people, with some standing along the walls and aisles for the 2-hour liturgy to pray to God for life for all. It is a memory of love and life he carries with him.

Fr. Jeff Belger has attended the national March for Life a handful of times with groups from the Diocese of Davenport, including those in Iowa City. He finds that attending the March for Life brings us together with thousands of people witnessing to the dignity of all human life, including those still in their mothers' wombs. Fr. Jeff also found it moving to experience one of our nation's shrines that help us reflect on life and death. For example, the groups he was with visited Arlington Cemetery and the Holocaust Museum. Such experiences provide additional insight into how we can encounter conflict between life and death as God lets humans follow their

paths in this world.

Bethany (Teets) Kabat, stated the following. "I have been blessed with the opportunity to make the pilgrimage to the March for Life with Iowans for Life many times. The most memorable experiences were going to Mass at the Basilica, which was always overflowing with people! The main church was packed and so were all of the side chapels and the downstairs Crypt Church. At the March there was a lot of enthusiasm for life present during the March but the cause we march for is serious. St. John Bosco said, 'Be humble and patient

and the Lord Jesus will give you the will and the means.' We need to continue to work to bring an end to the injustice of abortion and all the harm it causes."

Similarly, Valerie Teets said, "It was great to be able to go on the March for Life. I met a lot of new people and made some new friends. It was really something to be part of a huge group of people marching to stand up for the lives of the unborn. The street was filled from side to side and from as far ahead and as far back as I could see. The sounds of the March included singing, praying and enthusiastic chants for life. I was really touched by some women from Silent No More near the end of the March who reached out to thank us for marching and to tell us they regretted having had an abortion. Other marchers were giving them hugs. I was glad to be there to be part of it. All in all, it was a crazy, amazing, exciting experience!"

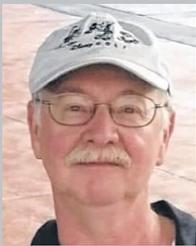
By attending the March for Life, we can walk with others to support the need to change our laws to support life for all, including those in their mothers' wombs.

CONFIRMATIONS

LILY MARIE HUMPAL

RACHEL LINN SHRODE

FUNERALS



JOHN MILDER



JIM JENSEN



PAT FISHER

Catholic Worker Opens Second House of Hospitality



Less than six years after opening Iowa City's first-ever Catholic Worker House of Hospitality on the southeast side, the Iowa City Catholic Worker community on December 28 opened a second hospitality house at 113 S. Johnson Street, in the former Burford House Inn Bed and Breakfast in the heart of downtown.

"St. Mary of the Visitation was our first-ever donor back in 2016, and we couldn't be more humbled or thrilled to open a second Catholic Worker House just a few blocks from the parish," said Emily Sinnwell, a community trustee, co-founder, and St. Patrick Church member.

Four immigrant and refugee families have already moved into the 4,800 square foot, historic Victorian home, renovated in 2013 to include 6 bathrooms and 7 bedrooms. The two houses together currently host 11 families from Central America.

"I fled Nicaragua with my thirteen year old to escape domestic and political violence," said Esther Gonzales Herrera, the new second Catholic Worker House's first guest. "The journey was very difficult and I'm grateful to have a place to stay."

"Each bedroom is like a suite," said Maureen Vasile, the Catholic Worker donations coordinator and St. Thomas More member. "Our new home gives the refugee residents the opportunity to have both serenity and family time in a beautiful setting."

Escucha Mi Voz and the Fund Excluded Workers Movement

In 2021, Iowa City Catholic Workers

Article By: Catholic Worker Staff



sponsored and brought over the border more than 60 refugee families, helping them rebuild their lives in Iowa and across the country.

They also trained and organized hundreds of essential immigrant workers on the front lines of the pandemic, who led a campaign to win \$3.5 million in relief for 'excluded workers' - workers left out of stimulus checks and unemployment insurance during the first two years of Covid-19.

The new Johnson County Direct Assistance Program will disburse \$1,400 checks to up to 2,500 excluded workers living in Johnson County later this year.

The success of the immigrant-led organizing campaign has inspired similar efforts in nearby rural areas. Immigrant workers based out of their Hispanic Catholic parishes in West Liberty, Muscatine, Columbus Junction, and Washington have all launched similar efforts.

"We don't want to only feed and house people when what people really need are good jobs, livable wages, and safe workplaces," Sinnwell said.

St. Mary of the Visitation parishioners are encouraged to join the Iowa City Catholic Worker, share the journey, and walk with both feet of God's love in action - charity and justice. To subscribe to their email list, send a message to iowacitycatholicworker@gmail.com or call 319-499-8929.



Synod 2021 – 2023:

A New Vision for the Church



Synod
2021
2023

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Article By: Robert Tomanek

Historically, a Synod (“coming together” or “walk together”) consisted of local Christian leaders coming together in faith so that their prayers and discussions would reveal God’s will and the means to achieve it. As the power of the papacy increased, regional synods became less important, and ecumenical councils became rare. Most significantly, the Second Vatican Council or “Vatican II” (1962 – 1965) established the Synod of Bishops, which encouraged a broader vision of collegiality and has met 15 times since 1967. However, the vision of Pope Paul VI was more limited than that envisioned by the attendees of Vatican II. The opening of “Synod 2021 – 2023: For a Synodal Church” by Pope Francis is a process that focuses on an expansion of the established institution known as “Synod of Bishops.” A goal of the current synod is to learn by listening, a process that begins in the local churches and which is designed to make church governance more open and inclusive of all its members. Three phases are scheduled: 1) **Diocesan** listening - continues until April 2022; 2) **Continental** (assembling the data from each continent) – from September 2022 until March 2023; and 3) **Universal Church** i.e., culmination in the traditional assembly of Synod Bishops – October 2023. *Vademecum*, the handbook for the Synod, contains details for the three-year process.

Theme for the Synod: Communion, Participation and Mission

Communion: God gathers us together as diverse peoples of one faith, with each person playing a role in discerning and living out God’s call for his people. Our

communion “finds its deepest roots in the love and unity the Trinity. It is Christ who reconciles us to the Father and unites us with each other in the Holy Spirit.” Together we are inspired as we “listen to the word of God, through the living tradition of the Church,” and to dialog with non-Catholic Christians as well.

Participation: There is a call for the involvement of all who belong to the people of God (laity, consecrated and ordained) “to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another.” We are called to “pray, listen, analyze, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions” (corresponding closely to God’s will). We are called to speak with courage and honesty, and to listen with humility. All the faithful are called to serve one another through the gifts received from the Holy Spirit. Efforts to include those who feel excluded are essential.

Mission: “The Church exists to evangelize.” We are called to “witness to the Gospel, especially to those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical and existential peripheries of our world.” The Synodal process includes a deep missionary dimension that is an important path for the Church to accomplish its main purpose of evangelization. All of us share this responsibility.

The Phases of the Synod process

Diocesan: Discussion among parishes, lay movements, schools, and inter-religious movements provides the opportunity to listen to each other, respond to questions, provide suggestions and to integrate the Synodal process into the life of the Church. This

first phase forms a “ground up” opportunity for both the lay and religious members of the Church to contribute to and grow in the faith. This opportunity will enable the parishes and dioceses in developing synodal tools and pathways suited for their local context and become the new style of the local churches.

Continental: Seven final documents, from the seven continents, will be developed and based on the first phase of the Synodal process.

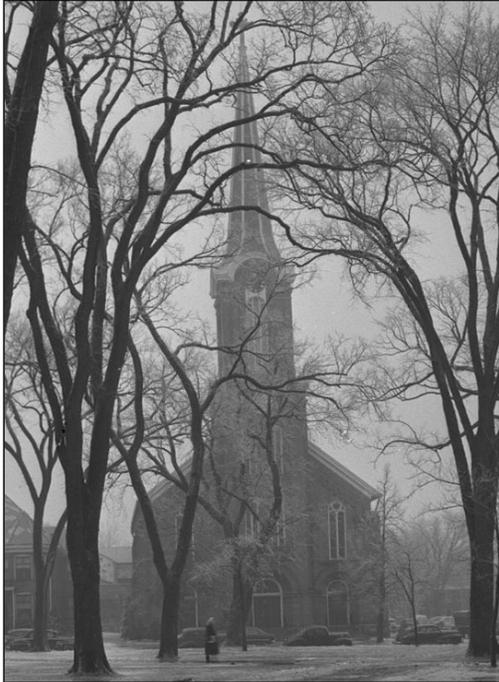
Universal Church (Assembly of the Synod of Bishops): The aim of this gathering is to discern, at a universal level, the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to the entire Church. It is hoped that the experience of the Synodal process, by listening to the entire people, will implement a new style of living out the communion, participation and mission of the church.

Why is this Synod so unique and important?

The purpose of the synod “is not to produce documents, but to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands...” (General Secretariat of Synod of Bishops). Previous synods have been meetings of bishops, whereas Synod 2021-2023 is “for a synodal Church,” an expansion of the Synod of Bishops to include all Catholics from parishioners to monks, nuns and universities. This is a long overdue call from Vatican II to help everyone contribute to the life of the church according to their charisma and to “discern in the spirit of co-responsibility.” Accordingly, the 2021-2023 synod is a unique opportunity to bring all Christian Catholics together to establish the common mission of the Church.

St. Mary of the Visitation Catholic Church

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ST. MARY'S NEWSLETTER VOL. 18

SS. Cyril (827-869) and Methodius (815-884) Feast day: February 14



Every mission Cyril and Methodius went on, every struggle they fought was a result of political battles, not spiritual, and yet the political battles are forgotten and their work lives on in the Slavic peoples and their literature.

They were born "Constantine" and "Michael" to a high-ranking officer in the Byzantine Army, and both studied at the Imperial School

of Constantinople. They each carved out a successful career: Constantine (later Cyril) as professor of philosophy at the Imperial school; Michael, first as governor in Macedonia and then abbot of a monastery in Asia Minor (where he took the name Methodius). Having grown up in Thessalonica, a part of Greece inhabited by many Slavs, these two Greek brothers ultimately became missionaries, teachers, and patrons of the Slavic peoples.

After a brilliant course of studies, Cyril refused the governorship of a district such as his brother had accepted among the Slavic-speaking population. Cyril withdrew to a monastery where his brother Methodius had become a monk after some years in a governmental post.

Their lives were changed when the Prince of Moravia (Rastislav) asked the Eastern Emperor Michael for political independence from German rule and ecclesiastical autonomy. Rastislav, was struggling for independence from German influence and invasion. Christian missionaries from the East, would help Rastislav consolidate power in his own country, especially if they spoke

the Slavonic language. Cyril and Methodius undertook the missionary task. Cyril's first work was to invent the Glagolitic alphabet, still used in some Eastern liturgies. Their disciples then went to South Slavic regions where in the 900s they constructed a new script for Slavic, based on capital Greek letters, with some additions. This later script became known as Cyrillic. Together they translated the Gospels, the psalter, Paul's letters and the liturgical books into Slavonic, and composed a Slavonic liturgy.

Their free use of the vernacular in preaching led to opposition from the German clergy. The bishop refused to consecrate Slavic bishops and priests, and Cyril was forced to appeal to Rome. On the visit to Rome, he and Methodius had the joy of seeing their new liturgy approved by Pope Adrian II. Cyril, long an invalid, died in Rome on February 14, 869 just 50 days after taking the monastic habit.

Methodius continued mission work for 16 more years. Legend has it that in a feverish period of activity, Methodius translated the whole Bible into Slavonic in eight months. He died on Tuesday of Holy Week, surrounded by his disciples, in his cathedral church.

After his death, the work of the brothers in Moravia was ended and their disciples scattered. Their expulsions had the beneficial effect of spreading their spiritual, liturgical, and cultural legacy to Bulgaria, Bohemia and southern Poland. As Patrons of Moravia, and specially venerated by Catholic Czechs, Slovaks, Croatians, Orthodox Serbians and Bulgarians, Cyril and Methodius are uniquely fitted to guard the long-desired unity of East and West. In 1980, Pope John Paul II named them additional co-patrons of Europe.

Article By: Julia Blake