



ST. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE PARISH

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"Faith in action is love and Love in Action is Service"
Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

We have just completed a very busy spring here at St. Matthew the Apostle (SMA), with Lent and our Lenten Mission, outdoor adoration and celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation, Easter and the Holy Week liturgies, and the sacrament season with Confirmation and First Communion (see Becci's article on page 2). We are also sadly preparing for Fr. Francis' departure (see his article on page 6).

However, the primary focus of this newsletter is to invite you once again into ministry. If you already serve in ministry, thank you, and I ask you to be open to additional possibilities. On pages 4 and 5 we have again highlighted all the various ministries at work at SMA, identifying more than 40 ways that you may help serve the Church.



I am personally extending this invitation to ministry as a means of evangelization to each of you. It is through ministry and service that we can grow in our adherence to the teachings of Jesus Christ. These ministries are the manifestation of our faith, demonstrating our answer to Jesus' call to love and serve one another. SMA ministries serve one another; promote service, family life

and vocations; support our youth and young adults; enable us to grow in our faith and give us the opportunity to evangelize and worship. It is only through your support and participation that we can be a witness for each other.

We especially need help in our worship ministries. If you see a worship ministry that you might be interested in, please take the step to take a more active role in our liturgies.

To join a ministry, you can either go to our website and see the link to ministries that will be highlighted in the months of June and July, see the section in the bulletin about ministries, or fill out a ministry card in the back of church and place it in the ministry box. Thank you in advance for your participation.

In our next newsletter we will highlight our new parochial vicar, Fr. Peter Pham, and give you an update on our parish. May you have a blessed and safe summer.

God bless,
Fr. Lee Poche, Pastor

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Parish Youth Update

By Becci Sheptock

God has visited St. Matthew the Apostle this semester!

He did so through sending His Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation, and through giving Himself, body and blood, soul and divinity, to our second graders in the Most Holy Eucharist. The parish has also witnessed God's welcoming embrace in the Sacrament of Baptism and God's powerful love in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

As Catholics, we understand that these are special moments of grace, and that God is really and truly coming to meet us along our journey of life. He is there at the beginning, and the end, and at all moments in between. He accompanies us every step of the way, strengthening us and healing us.



Witnessing these celebrations usually brings to mind my own reception of the Sacraments; sometimes I even dig out a photo of my Baptism or First Communion. This helps me to remember God's work in my own life and to thank Him for giving Himself to me in the Sacraments.

I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on your own story. Do you know the dates of your Baptism and your own First Holy Communion? Do you thank God, in a special way, on the anniversary of those moments, for coming into your life?

I admit, I sometimes forget until the anniversaries have come and gone, but seeing the children in their white dresses and the teens in their red robes, is certainly a good reminder!

So, let's break out those old photos and let them fill our hearts with gratitude. If you're parents, show them to your kids; and if you're grandparents, show them to your grandchildren! Let us not forget that God came to us and still comes to us with this grace and power, his love and his forgiveness, in the Sacraments of the Catholic Church.

Becci Sheptock



Father Lee's First Communion



©LPI



May 7, 2022 • First Communion

Congratulations

WE WELCOME INTO THE CHURCH OUR NEWLY CONFIRMED AND CONGRATULATE THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THEIR VERY FIRST COMMUNION!



May 14, 2022 • First Communion



2022 • Confirmation

Service Ministries

St. Matthew Service ministries provide assistance and support to our parish and community.

Disabilities Ministry provides resources to promote the integration of persons with disabilities into the complete life of the Church. This ministry assists all people in their faith development and participation in Mass and social functions at St. Matthew the Apostle Parish.

Homebound Ministry provides Eucharistic Ministers that are commissioned by the Archdiocese to assist with prayer and the Eucharistic needs of our homebound parishioners.

Hospitality Ministry welcomes everyone into the parish and facilitates a positive and loving experience as members of the parish family. The team reaches out to new parishioners with welcome packets, emails and phone calls, inviting them to fellowship at St. Matthew.

Knights of Columbus is a Catholic men's fraternal organization comprised of men who live their faith through service to the parish and community. The organization was founded on the principles of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism and is the world's largest association of Catholic men. Regular Council meetings are held the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Knights of Columbus Hall.

Home & School Association is an organization of parents of St. Matthew students who volunteer their time and talents for the students, faculty and parents of the school. The Association provides support to the school administration, faculty and parish by working together to promote, organize and execute school and classroom activities, social events, fundraisers, field days, holiday events, etc. General meetings are held quarterly in the Monsignor Bendix Center at 7 p.m.

Prison Ministry seeks to renew and strengthen the faith lives of the imprisoned. The ministry's goal is to be a healing force witnessing the unconditional love of Jesus to the incarcerated and their families. Spiritual enrichment flows to both volunteers and imprisoned through the fellowship of this ministry.

St. Matthew Men's Club brings together men of the parish to help strengthen and support

the parish family. The Men's Club provides services, promotes the spiritual and physical welfare of the parish, and financially supports both the parish and school through various fundraisers and projects. The club meets monthly on the second Wednesday of the month in the Monsignor Bendix Center.

Social Justice Ministry collaborates with parish clergy, staff and connected ministries to implement initiatives grounded in Catholic social teaching, including outreach to the poor; addressing racism, immigration and criminal justice reform; combating human trafficking; and providing advocacy and education on life issues.

St. Vincent de Paul Society assists in providing food, clothing, rent, utility assistance and other aid to the needy within our parish boundaries. They also distribute food baskets at Christmas and Thanksgiving. Membership is open to all. Meetings are held on the third Monday of every month at 7:00 p.m.

Family Life and Vocation Ministries

St. Matthew Family Life and Vocation Ministries promote the understanding of family life and religious life through various programs.

Bereavement Support is a ministry that St. Matthew the Apostle would like to develop to provide for the spiritual and emotional needs of parishioners that have lost family members. Please contact Kim in the parish office if you are interested in being a part of this ministry.

Joy Ministry is a vibrant senior community for persons age 50 or older, or with spouses 50 or over, centered around parish life and offering numerous opportunities for spiritual growth, social interaction, intellectual development, community service and fun.

Family Life and Marriage Ministry nurtures and enriches family life and marriage. The purpose of this ministry is to support family life and to meet the needs of married and engaged couples looking for a deeper relationship with God and each other. Activities include marriage preparation for engaged couples, celebrating wedding anniversaries and organizing couples' groups searching for further spiritual growth. The ministry collaborates with other ministries to facilitate family enrichment and prayer opportunities.

Respect Life Committee (Right to Life) instructs, encourages and facilitates the fight to restore fundamental respect and protection for life, from conception to natural death through prayer, education and service.

St. Matthew the Apostle School serves children six weeks old through 7th grade. The school is a community of educators committed to helping all students develop their God-given potential. Through religious, academic and service programs they seek to instill the knowledge and love of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with a curriculum that challenges the students to meet high academic standards.

Vocations Ministry promotes vocations to the priesthood, religious life (sisters and brothers) and the diaconate here at St. Matthew the Apostle Parish by creating a culture of acceptance to religious life and prayerful support.

Youth & Young Adult Ministries

St. Matthew Youth and Young Adult Ministries support our youth and young adults in growing their faith life and providing service to others.

Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) leads teens closer to God and their peers through prayer, service and friendship. The group is open to all 8th-12th graders who are ready to put their faith in action. All planning, meetings, prayers and events are led by CYO members. Some events include: Mass and meeting, Angel Tree, retreats, Fish Fry, Labor of Love, March for Life, flag football, co-ed cabbageball and volleyball.

Kids 4 Jesus is a Catholic virtue-based program that seeks to empower children to become self-motivated to know, live and love their Catholic faith. This program is offered during the school year at St. Matthew the Apostle School.

Matt's Cats creates fun and engaging opportunities for youth in middle school to encounter Christ through prayer, worship and relationship-building while being mentored by faithful, caring adult leaders. Discipleship is fostered in all aspects of their lives through service to the parish and the community.

Pray Me a Story uses a different popular children's book as a springboard for entering into imaginative prayer and guided reflections.

St. Matthew Service Ministries – Alms In Action

Scouting Organizations help young people develop a commitment to God and country and foster the ideals of serving others.

St. Matthew the Apostle Summer Camp is held in June and July each summer, Monday – Friday from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Information can be found on the school website www.smaschoolnet.

Vacation Bible School is available for children entering PK-4 through 4th grade during the summer months. Activities include music, art, storytelling, crafts, role-playing, etc.

Spiritual Growth and Evangelization Ministries

St. Matthew Spiritual Growth and Evangelization Ministries strive to invigorate and energize our faith community by providing adult education opportunities, promoting stewardship and spreading God's word.

Adult Faith Formation and Bible Study Groups meet at different times and days and study different aspects of the Bible. The parish has a number of different groups that are currently active.

Come Lord Jesus Study Group is a program that follows the Liturgical calendar and actively studies the Sunday readings in a small group setting.

Family Faith Formation (CCD) provides instruction to the children and families of the parish in the Catholic faith and prepares them for the reception of the Sacraments and growth in spiritual life. The CCD team consists of coordinators, teachers and assistants.

Holy Name Society is a ministry for men and women of all ages founded to increase devotion to His Most Holy Name, to the Holy Rosary and to assist in the spiritual needs of the parish as directed by the pastor. The Holy Name Society recites the Rosary once a month live on WVOG (600 AM) at 6:00 pm.

Lord Teach Me to Pray Prayer Group is a three-part Ignatian prayer series developed to meet the desire of men and women for ongoing spiritual growth as they respond to the call to holiness and to a deeper commitment to Jesus Christ.

Missionaries of St. Therese Circle 65 meet every second Monday of the month to pray for the missions and to St. Therese, say the Rosary and socialize.

Sacramental Preparation Team helps prepare individuals to receive the Sacraments, including Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation and Marriage.

Sacred Heart Ministry welcomes the presence of the Heart of Christ, entrusting your home to him. Seek to draw from His open Heart, the many graces so necessary for families today.

St. Matthew Rosary Groups meet at various times throughout the week, check the bulletin for times and locations. Currently groups are meeting Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings outside around the Mary statue. The rosary is recited before the 9:15 a.m. weekday Masses.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the process of welcoming new members of the Catholic faith. RCIA begins each September and continues through the Easter season.

Spirituality Group for Men is currently in development and will focus on building the faith of men of the parish.

Spirituality Group for Women is currently in development and will focus on building the faith of the women of the parish.

St. Matthew Group Retreats may be offered in the future, at the parish, or off-site.

Worship Ministries

St. Matthew Worship Ministries enable parishioners to worship the Lord in a meaningful way and further enhance their relationship with Him.

Adoration is held every Thursday from 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. in the Church. Parishioners are invited to spend an hour or more praising, worshipping and adoring the Our Lord as He is exposed in the Blessed Sacrament on the altar. Prayerfully consider committing to one hour to Adore Our Lord.

Altar Servers is a ministry for girls and boys in grades four through twelve who are

interested in participating in a special way in Mass by assisting the priest and deacon. After training is complete, altar servers assist at liturgies on a rotating schedule.

Altar Society & Floral Committee are a group of dedicated volunteers that clean and maintain the finer details of the church and maintain the floral arrangements for liturgical celebrations and decorate the church for the various seasons.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion assist the presiding priest and deacons in the distribution of Holy Communion at Eucharistic celebrations. Ministers are commissioned for service to the community after receiving approval from the Pastor and in accordance with Archdiocesan guidelines and training. They assist at liturgies on a rotating schedule. (Ministers may also assist in the Homebound Ministry)

Readers are volunteers whose primary duty is to proclaim the Word of God. Readers should be dedicated and responsible individuals with good articulation and reading skills. Each reader is given a book to use in preparation for Mass. Readers assist at liturgies on a rotating schedule.

Sacristans are appointed to assist in the preparation of liturgical celebrations. Sacristans are charged with the care of the sacristy, set-up of the altar, and generally preparing for the Eucharistic celebrations. They assist at liturgies on a rotating schedule. (They may assist with weekly Masses, special liturgies, weddings or funerals.)

Ushers are men and women of all ages who greet people as they arrive at Church. Additionally, they help seat latecomers, collect the offertory gifts, distribute materials that might be necessary for use at a particular celebration, help with the flow of Communion and distribute the bulletins as people leave Mass.

Music Ministry provides leadership, lyrics and music to enrich celebrations and encourage full participation of the congregation. Anyone interested is welcomed to join.



Please prayerfully review the various ministries and sign-up to volunteer to support one or more ministries via our parish website stmatthewtheaposte.net, the QR code in the newsletter or the forms in the foyer of the church. Call Kim in the rectory with any questions.

Thank You, Father Francis



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

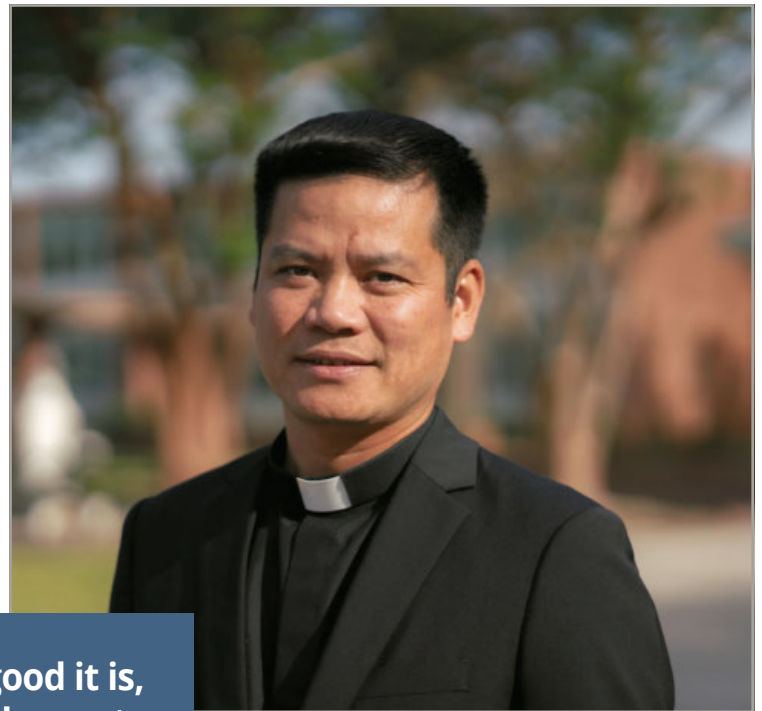
Perhaps you have heard that my time serving here with you will soon be coming to an end. Recently, the Archbishop has given me a new assignment. I want to thank each and every one of you for the kindness and love you have shown me during these years. You have been a blessing to me for the past two very joyous years, serving here at St. Matthew the Apostle Church.

Together, you and I worked to remind our community that God is good all the time. Over these years, I have enjoyed working with all of you in the various ministries of the Church. I have learned so much from so many people, and it has been a great pleasure serving you in every way that I possibly could.

Together, we demonstrated to the community how we are all in Christ. I have baptized, witnessed marriages and offered my prayers and final farewells to many in our Church Family. I have also visited hospitals, St. Francis Villa nursing home and gave the sacrament of anointing to the sick and last rites to the dying. The children's school, CCD's students and youth of St. Matthew's fill me with great hope and encouragement for the future, as I see them respond in faith and generosity in so many ways.

I look back on our time and work together and want to express how good it was to be at SMA. It was a blessing to have encountered all of you. I was delighted to receive your cards, notes and prayers. Your faith and love inspired and challenged me to become a better priest and a better person. My heart is truly filled with joy.

I give thanks to God for the time I have been able to share with you. I would like to thank Archbishop Gregory Aymond, Fr. Lee, the Deacons, staff and all of you for welcoming me and giving me the opportunity to serve here for the last two years. I have come to know so many wonderful people, and there is much that I have learned. I have learned that we worship and serve God together



**"How good it is,
how pleasant
where the
people dwell
as one."**

Psalm 132:1

as a family. It fills my heart to receive the love that you pour out to the clergy. I am grateful to you for your kindness and generosity.

On June 26th, my final weekend here, at 11 o'clock Mass, I would like to personally say thank you. Thank you for your faith, your love and your devotion to Jesus. I am so proud of you. I appreciate you all. You are a wonderful extended family of faith. Even as I go forth to my new

assignment, Mary Queen of Peace in Mandeville, I will always hold you all in my heart, especially at my daily prayers.

The Lord be with you.

Father, Francis Nguyen

Around the Parish



Congratulations 7th Grade graduates



Church decorated for Divine Mercy



The Crawfish Cook-off was a huge success



Everyone enjoyed the Crawfish Cook-off



The St. Matthew St. Louis Medal winners



Senior Altar Servers were recognized for their service



CYO enjoyed fellowship bowling with St. Rita



St. Matthew the Apostle Parish
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River Ridge, LA 70123

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Upcoming

Special Wedding Anniversary Mass

August 14, 2022

St. Matthew the Apostle Feast Day Celebrations

September 24 & 25, 2022

St. Matthew the Apostle Fall Family Festival (Fair)

October 14 & 15, 2022

