

Transformed!

The Good News at St. Hilary Parish

December/January 2024



Marilyn Miller (left) and Suzanne Scarpitti (right) greet parishioners at the Market Street entrance of the church.

Evangelization at the door

Christmas is a time when the church is typically filled. It's a time for far flung relatives and friends to celebrate together one of the holiest days in the Church calendar. It's the perfect time to welcome others, so they will choose to come on Sundays, as well.

As the head of the Greeter Ministry, Marilyn Miller knows all too well the importance of feeling welcomed and passing that on to others. "When we came here 28 years ago there wasn't a lot of interaction. There wasn't that warm fuzzy feeling. But we've come a long way since then as a parish," she said.

Suzanne Scarpitti had a similar experience as a new parishioner in the 1990s. According to Suzanne, the Greeter Ministry was an

outgrowth of a parish council five-year plan. In the succeeding years the ministry thrived. "Now people feel comfortable and welcome here," Marilyn said.

Stressing the importance of greeters, Marilyn explained, "We should be eager to be here to celebrate with each other. We don't know what others are going through, but that greeting of 'good morning' or 'good afternoon' or even a smile could make a huge difference in their lives."

*'You can make
others feel welcome
wherever you sit.'*

Marilyn Miller

The Greeter Ministry thrived before the pandemic, but Covid changed things and forced parishioners to keep one another at a distance. "The pandemic limited our interactions with each other," said Marilyn.

"To celebrate with each other is a powerful human need. God gave us each other as gifts to others to ease our loneliness.

"Anyone can come to church and sit in the pew and then go home and not speak to anyone. But God wants us to interact with people in the pews who could become our friends and be a support to us," she added.

The Greeter Ministry now needs new members. And it's an easy commitment. "I like it because there aren't any meetings. I'm already here for 7:30 Mass. Greeters sign up for their Mass preference using the same system that's used to schedule

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Eucharistic ministers, lectors, and altar servers,” said Suzanne.

Marilyn added, “All you have to do is arrive at Mass about 20 minutes early and sign in at the welcome desk in the Gathering Area. But if you can’t be a formal member of the Greeter Ministry, you can make others feel welcome wherever you sit.

“At one recent 9 a.m. Mass, I noticed that many people were speaking to one another. You don’t have to be an official greeter to make others feel welcome,” she said. “It’s as easy as giving a compliment. Especially with the holidays, making people who have been away from church feel welcome could be the start of a return to going to church. It’s a form of evangelization,” Marilyn continued. “People don’t like that word, but it’s just being kind and friendly. And people can see themselves going here and joining the parish. It makes a huge difference,” she said.

“When we first arrived here, the draw for us was joining the 9 a.m. choir,”

Suzanne Scarpitti welcomes parishioner.



Marilyn said recalling her earliest interactions with LuAnne Toth who directed the group. “At my first faculty meeting at St. Hilary School, I sat across from LuAnne and said to her, that if she wasn’t already, she sure should teach music!” As it so happened, LuAnne also taught music. The two became fast friends and eventually brought musical theater to the school.

“I like being a greeter because it’s part of who we are as a parish. Greeting others makes the experience of Mass and the parish more meaningful for everyone!” said Suzanne.

Anyone can become a member of the Greeter Ministry: individuals, couples, even families can serve together. If you are interested, please contact Marilyn at marigoldmiller@sbcglobal.net.

St. Hilary Welcome Center

St. Hilary’s welcome center emerged out of our previous five-year plan, which aimed to better welcome new parishioners and visitors to the parish. Parish Council adopted it as a primary goal and formed a sub-committee to research best practices at other churches and find the best plan for St. Hilary Parish.



Stewardship Minister Maureen Capellas greets new parishioners at the welcome desk.

Their vision was to create a welcome center at the parish to be staffed by Parish Council members after Mass. The parish purchased a desk, and the committee selected a variety of items to include in a gift bag that would be meaningful and useful for St. Hilary Parish community. The gift bags include blessed decade rosaries made by the Rosary Making and Repairing Ministry; a potholder with the St. Hilary logo; a magnet listing Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, and Reconciliation times; and a St. Hilary pen.

The welcome center, located in the Gathering Area and launched in 2019, is open after every Mass on Donut Sunday weekends. At the conclusion of Mass, Fr. Steve and Fr. Cameron invite new parishioners and visitors to visit the desk and receive a gift. If you notice someone with a gift bag on welcome weekends, please say hello! Introduce yourself and welcome them to St. Hilary. Learn a little bit about them and encourage them to get involved. We are all called to Christian hospitality. A friendly smile goes a long way!



Tom Peltier and Beth Randall-Todd stock the SVDP pantry.

Putting faith into action

St. Hilary's chapter of St. Vincent DePaul Society, established 41 years ago to serve the poor, is changing its focus. While its members still help clients with immediate needs like rent, utilities and food, they are also empowering them to become self-sufficient. According to President Tom Peltier, SVDP has helped over 100 clients gain employment during the last year, and provided over \$63,000 for car repairs in the last two years so clients can continue to work.

The car repairs do come with strings attached. "There are restrictions," said Tom. "The recipient must already have a job and must pay the first \$100 for the repairs. SVDP will contribute up to \$500 and the client comes up with the rest, depending on the final cost of the repairs."

Tom said that of the 12 people the group helps each week, over half are repeat clients. Member Buzz Pelland, who was successful assisting felons to gain employment through his interaction with South Street Ministry, is using his area-wide

business connections and efforts to benefit those seeking help through SVDP. "We want to help them find themselves, not just give them a handout. They need something more. We want to offer career opportunities, not menial jobs," said Buzz.

Pastor Fr. Steve Brunovsky noted, "This is very much in line with one of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, namely, The Dignity of the Worker and Rights of Workers, as meaningful work and just compensation for work gives people a sense of their dignity as human beings. It also reminds them they are made in the image of God, whose work is creation! People are grateful for the opportunity to do for themselves, thus breaking the cycle of poverty."

Those who seek assistance reach the group through a dedicated phone line. It opens at 8 a.m. on Wednesdays and by 8:30 a.m., the 20 available spots for assistance that week are filled. Members of SVDP typically meet every Wednesday at

6:30 p.m. in the Spiritual Center to review cases to evaluate who can receive help that week and decide which pairs of members will visit client families. Their visits usually take place on Friday and Saturday mornings with each pair delivering bags of groceries. These visits enable members to better understand the family's living conditions. "It's what we are meant to do—to help our neighbors," said Tom.

The organization still provides the services they are traditionally known for—help with rent, utilities, and food. During the pandemic, Tom noted, rent costs were down because landlords were prohibited from evicting tenants, and the CARES program helped many individuals. After the pandemic, however, rent costs increased so greatly, that St. Hilary's SVDP partnered with Homeless Prevention and the local Catholic Charities to meet the need. Tom added that money for rent goes to the landlords, not to the client.

"Part of our faith, is to help the less fortunate," recalled Tom. Some years ago, Tom and his wife Nancy put their faith into action by providing books to SVDP clients after learning that the number of prison cells needed in 20 years was related directly to the number of children who were not reading by the third grade. Often, Tom observed in his home visits that children had no books to read. As a result, members take three to four books for each child in the households they visit, which are provided from school book drives, individual donations, and purchases at library book sales.

Interested in meeting the needs of the poor?

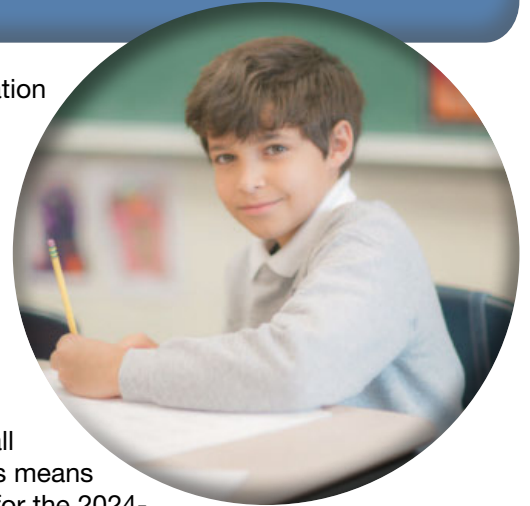
Consider a donation to St. Vincent DePaul as part of your Advent almsgiving. If you'd prefer your giving to be more hands-on, join the group by contacting Tom Peltier at akronbobcat@gmail.com or 330-690-7621.

"GO TO THE POOR: YOU WILL FIND GOD."
— ST. VINCENT DEPAUL



Making a Catholic Education Affordable for All

It has long been part of the mission of St. Hilary Parish to make a Catholic education at St. Hilary School affordable for every family. With the parish subsidizing the difference between tuition collected and the true cost to educate each student, plus providing scholarships and assistance that help families directly, the commitment of the parish has been evident for many years. Yet, some families have still felt that the gift of a Catholic education was out of reach. That is about to change in a big way.



New Funding Expands Access for Every Student

In July 2023, every student in Ohio became eligible to apply for an EdChoice Scholarship. EdChoice Scholarships are available for use at participating private schools, and beginning in the 2024-2025 school year, St. Hilary School will join all elementary schools in the Diocese of Cleveland as an EdChoice participant. This means that all students registering, or re-registering, for enrollment at St. Hilary School for the 2024-2025 school year will have the opportunity to receive an EdChoice Scholarship to offset a portion – and in some cases, all – of their St. Hilary School tuition. This change will significantly expand access to a Catholic education at St. Hilary School for all children, which is a blessing beyond measure.

Importance of Putting Catholic Education in Reach

One of the most important factors in a child's life is his or her school setting. In the words of Bishop Edward Malesic, "As the largest youth ministry of the Church, our schools' mission is to provide the highest quality education for academics, faith formation and holistic development. Catholic education is the heart and soul of what we do as the Church." At St. Hilary School, in addition to a tradition of academic excellence spanning more than 60 years, faith makes the difference in ensuring that what is important at home is also emphasized throughout a child's school life. Today's world is fraught with aspects of society that often contradict the values parents practice and teach at home and threaten to undermine how children are raised. St. Hilary School works as a partner with parents to help provide continuity in exposure to faith-based principles throughout a child's daily life. Now, every family can more easily avail themselves of this partnership to forge a foundation grounded in faith.

Two Ways to Qualify

The EdChoice Scholarship has two forms: a traditional EdChoice Scholarship, based on the public school the student would attend, or an EdChoice Expansion Scholarship, which uses a sliding scale to award incremental amounts based on the percentage of the federal poverty level within which a family's income falls. A listing of designated public schools for

Federal Poverty Levels with Gross Annual Amounts								
Number in Family/ Household	200%	450%	500%	550%	600%	650%	700%	750%
1	\$29,160	\$65,610	\$72,900	\$80,190	\$87,480	\$94,770	\$102,060	\$109,350
2	\$39,440	\$88,740	\$98,600	\$108,460	\$118,320	\$128,180	\$138,040	\$147,900
3	\$49,720	\$111,870	\$124,300	\$136,730	\$149,160	\$161,590	\$174,020	\$186,450
4	\$60,000	\$135,000	\$150,000	\$165,000	\$180,000	\$195,000	\$210,000	\$225,000
5	\$70,280	\$158,130	\$175,700	\$193,270	\$210,840	\$228,410	\$245,980	\$263,550
6	\$80,560	\$181,260	\$201,400	\$221,540	\$241,680	\$261,820	\$281,960	\$302,100
7	\$90,840	\$204,390	\$227,100	\$249,810	\$272,520	\$295,230	\$317,940	\$340,650
8	\$101,120	\$227,520	\$252,800	\$278,080	\$303,360	\$328,640	\$353,920	\$379,200
For each additional person add:	\$10,280	\$23,130	\$25,700	\$28,270	\$30,840	\$33,410	\$35,980	\$38,550

Source: Office of the Asst. Secretary for Planning & Eval/US Dept of HHS

the traditional EdChoice Scholarship is available on the Ohio Department of Education website. The table on page 4 indicates the current federal poverty levels used to determine EdChoice Expansion Scholarship awards.

The sliding scale for 2023-2024 EdChoice Expansion Scholarship awards based on the income levels in the table on page 4 is shown on the table to the right. The sliding scale for 2024-2025 is not yet published, but award amounts are expected to increase.

Commitment to Affordability

With the announcement that St. Hilary School will become an EdChoice provider, tuition rates for the 2024-2025 school year have also been published, with only a moderate increase in the base tuition rate while maintaining discounts for parishioners at St. Hilary, Guardian Angels and St. Victor, and for multiple children in a family. **Under this tuition structure, the school-based traditional EdChoice Scholarship and the income-based EdChoice Expansion Scholarship for families at 450% or less of the federal poverty level will fully cover St. Hilary tuition, regardless of the number of children the family enrolls in the school.** For families in income brackets above 450% of the federal poverty level, other forms of assistance will complete the St. Hilary commitment to affordability by filling gaps between tuition and what is covered by the EdChoice Scholarship. These additional forms of assistance include the Angel Scholarship Fund, St. Hilary Parish Foundation scholarships, and tuition assistance provided by St. Hilary Parish and/or the Diocese of Cleveland. For all of these forms of assistance, the threshold for financial need will be altered as a result of having the EdChoice Scholarship program in place to cover families with the greatest levels of need, making these other assistance dollars available for families in other income tiers. Once the highest levels of need are met, assistance can be distributed to successive levels. Therefore, even families who previously assumed they would not qualify for a scholarship or assistance should apply in order to help fulfill the commitment to keeping a Catholic education at St. Hilary School as affordable as possible for all.

The table below illustrates how the tuition rates, discounts, and potential EdChoice Scholarship amounts will work together for families, with additional assistance outlined above available to help offset the remaining tuition balance.

ST. HILARY SCHOOL TUITION AND EDCHOICE SCHOLARSHIP FAMILY SCENARIOS						
	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	4 Children	5 Children	6 Children
24-25 Tuition	\$5,500	\$10,000	\$14,200	\$16,900	\$18,925	\$18,925
EC Traditional	<\$5,500>	<\$10,000>	<\$14,200>	<\$16,900>	<\$18,925>	<\$18,925>
EC 450% / -	<\$5,500>	<\$10,000>	<\$14,200>	<\$16,900>	<\$18,925>	<\$18,925>
EC 451-500%	<\$5,200>	<\$10,000>	<\$14,200>	<\$16,900>	<\$18,925>	<\$18,925>
EC 501-550%	<\$3,650>	<\$7,300>	<\$10,950>	<\$14,600>	<\$18,250>	<\$18,925>
EC 551-600%	<\$2,600>	<\$5,200>	<\$7,800>	<\$10,400>	<\$13,000>	<\$15,600>
EC 601-650%	<\$1,850>	<\$3,700>	<\$5,500>	<\$7,400>	<\$9,250>	<\$11,100>
EC 651-700%	<\$1,300>	<\$2,600>	<\$3,900>	<\$5,200>	<\$6,500>	<\$7,800>
EC 701-750%	<\$900>	<\$1,800>	<\$2,700>	<\$3,600>	<\$4,500>	<\$5,400>
EC 751% / +	<\$650>	<\$1,300>	<\$1,950>	<\$2,600>	<\$3,250>	<\$3,900>

THESE SCENARIOS USE EDCHOICE FUNDING BASED ON 2023-2024 AWARD AMOUNTS.
 2024-2025 AWARD AMOUNTS ARE EXPECTED TO INCREASE, LOWERING THE UNFUNDED AMOUNTS.

Explore the School

If you would like your child and your family to experience the benefits of a Catholic education at St. Hilary School and the blessing of affordability, now is the ideal time to begin exploring all that the school has to offer. The school will host its popular Kindergarten Kaleidoscope program for prospective 2024-2025 kindergarteners and their parents on January 11, 2024 from 9-11 am. RSVP by December 28, 2023 to attend. An Open House on January 28, 2024 from 12-2 pm is open to all. Stop by to tour the school, visit classrooms and meet teachers. New Student Registration for 2024-2025 will begin online at www.st-hilaryschool.org on January 11, 2024. For more information about enrollment, the EdChoice Scholarship and other forms of assistance, or to RSVP for Kindergarten Kaleidoscope, please contact Debbie Sinopoli, Director of Marketing & Admissions, at 330-867-8720, ext. 343 or dsinopoli@st-hilary.org.





From left: Maryana, Andriys and son Andriys
(not pictured: older son Roman who is studying in Poland)

Follow Me Home

While most Americans' experience of the war between Ukraine and Russia has been limited to sound bites and news stories, the plight of Ukrainians has become personal for Randy and Carol Malick and several parishioners who have sought to ease the burdens of refugees. The couple are the founders of Follow Me Home Resettlement Services, Inc., a non-profit organization begun two years ago with several board members from St. Hilary. Follow Me Home was formed to help rescue Afghans who had helped the Americans during the war with the Taliban and resettle them here, but recently responded to a family from Ukraine when their situation became desperate.

Andriys (pronounced Andrew) Rocknyak became acquainted with Carol when she hired him as a photo editor for her wedding photography

business through an online recruitment service called Upwork. "Andriys is quiet, modest and reserved," said Carol, "but I like to pry. In our daily online conversations, he'd say things like, 'It's cold here. We're struggling.'"

Realities of War

As the war with Russia intensified, Carol learned from Andriys that their electricity was sporadic and that he had to invest in a battery powered computer. Lack of electricity also meant that people like his wife, Maryana, a dental hygienist, no longer had employment. Their finances were dwindling. The family had no heat in the winter other than their fireplace. And dealing with the realities of war meant that non-combatants faced the constant threat of being bombed. When the war started, Andriys often worked 12-

hour shifts transporting the injured to the hospital.

The Rocknyaks initially fled to Poland when a bomb destroyed a neighbor's house. Unfortunately, Andriys had to go back to Ukraine for medical attention for a permanent knee injury, and on his return to Poland found they had to start all over finding housing and work. Poland itself was overrun with refugees and its services were taxed. Coupled with a lack of employment and growing prejudice against Ukrainians, the situation became unbearable for them.

"In a moment of desperation," Carol recalled, "he said, 'Pardon me. I don't mean to bother you. Is there any way you can help us here?'"

Coming to the rescue

Having helped Afghans resettle in America through Follow Me Home, Carol asked Randy if the organization could help rescue the Rocknyaks. Through the Welcome Circles

Program for refugees, an initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the members of Follow Me Home went to work on behalf of Andriys and his family. “Some people think that refugee is a dirty word, but these are people of perseverance who need a hand up—not a handout,” said Carol.

‘With community and trust in God, you can do anything!’

Carol Malick

The Rocknyaks made it to America with a chain of assistance on various levels. On the national level, the US Government’s United for Ukraine handles the vetting process and then reaches out to programs like Welcome Circles to welcome refugees to the US. The USCCB in turn partners with parishes and groups like Follow Me Home to bring Ukrainians to their local communities.

The hand of God at work

In all, the process took four weeks, from the time the paperwork began to the family’s arrival in the Akron area; although, the organization began making resettlement arrangements locally long before

then. Specifically, Follow Me Home provided assistance with documents, transportation from Chicago to the Akron area, arranged for affordable housing and everything the family needed to set up their home such as kitchen housewares and appliances. And through it all Carol said she saw the hand of God at work.

Along the way, Carol discovered that she and the Rocknyaks shared a favorite saint in Padre Pio. While Follow Me Home worked to get them to the US, she encouraged them to continue to pray for St. Pio’s intercession. Obstacles were met with renewed faith in the Providence of God. “The more you give,” said Carol, “the more you get.”

One of the keys of success in helping refugees through Follow Me Home, is reliance on community to meet needs as they arise. For example, a St. Hilary Parish family created an Amazon WishList for household goods, and individuals donated the needed items. When the Rocknyaks arrived, they had an apartment fully stocked thanks to the generosity of strangers. Their apartment was provided by a member of a family that has sponsored refugees since World War II.

Soon after arriving, Andriys found a job as a commercial photographer. He eventually obtained his driver’s license and bought his own car. His wife is employed in child care and their 12-year-old son is attending Coventry Middle School.

“We are happy to be here in the United States,” Andriys said. “It was tough, not so easy, but we did it because of the help of all those people—Welcome Circles and all the Americans who were involved in this process of bringing us here. We feel safe, we feel happy. We are grateful for this help, understanding, support and the generosity of Americans.”

Making the connection between the work of Follow Me Home and the Gospel, Randy explained that the Holy Family became refugees in

Egypt when King Herod slaughtered all of the first-born sons while looking for the Christ Child. Thus, we are called to welcome the refugee, the stranger in our midst.

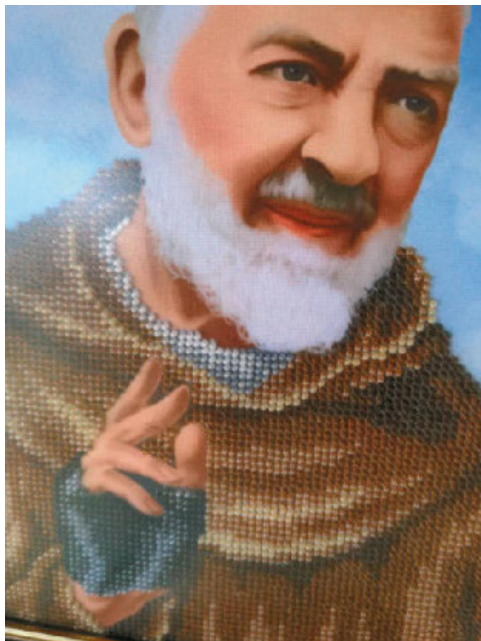
The gift of Padre Pio

And the intercession of St. Pio was not lost on either the Rocknyak family or Carol. As a house warming gift, Carol commissioned an art student from St. Vincent-St. Mary High School to create an illustration of Padre Pio for the Rocknyak family. “I wanted to acknowledge the saint that brought them here!” she said. In the meantime, unbeknownst to Carol, Maryana made her a portrait of the saint using tiny hand-sewn beads, which she presented after their arrival in their new home.

‘We are grateful for this help, understanding, support and the generosity of Americans’

Andriys Rocknyak

“The whole experienced has transformed my faith,” said Carol. “When you bless someone, you are blessed ten-fold! With community and trust in God, you can do anything!” she said.



Maryana’s gift to Carol Malick, a portrait embellished with hand-sewn beads.

Are you interested in getting involved?

While Follow Me Home does not need volunteers at this time, donations are gladly accepted. If interested, contact Randy at rmalick@sthilarychurch.org. If you are more interested in hands-on experience, Carol recommends local organizations that assist recent immigrants such as International Institute.



Transforming Lives for Jesus Christ

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A detailed illustration of the Nativity scene. Mary is kneeling on the right, holding the infant Jesus. Joseph stands on the left, holding a staff. A donkey and ox are visible in the foreground. The background is a dark, starry night sky with a bright star shining down on the manger. The scene is illuminated by a warm, golden light.

ST. HILARY
PARISH
Transforming Lives for Jesus Christ

Come Home for Christmas

4th Sunday in Advent
Sunday, December 24
Masses at 8 a.m., 10 a.m.

Christmas Eve Masses
Sunday, December 24
Masses at 4 p.m.*, 4:00 p.m. (Horning Hall),
6 p.m., and 10 p.m.*

Christmas Day Masses
Monday, December 25
Masses at 9 a.m.* and 11 a.m.*

*Live-streamed at sthilarychurch.org/live

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