



# Concept

Monthly Newsletter

May 2021

Immaculate Conception Catholic Church



## DIOCESAN CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

*Enables Our Parish Community to Pledge in Stewardship*



*The campaign will provide \$3 million to help our newly ordained priests pay off their college tuition loans.*

**C**on the weekend of May 15-16, we have a chance to pledge as stewards through the diocesan Heart of the Shepherd Capital Campaign. It's a valuable opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of our

diocesan priests and seminarians, while also meeting the important needs of Immaculate Conception Parish.

During the campaign weekend, we will be able to respond to the in-pew appeal for Immaculate

Conception's share of the diocesan campaign goal of \$30 million to be raised over three years. Immaculate Conception Parish's goal is \$388,715. From that amount, our parish will receive \$252,000 for targeted projects.

One of the projects earmarked at the diocesan level includes a \$20-million renovation of the St. Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology, and Borromeo Seminary that are just five miles from Immaculate Conception Parish.

"We are fortunate in the Diocese of Cleveland because we are one of 30 dioceses in the United States with a free-standing seminary," says Lauren Costello, of the Catholic Community Foundation, a division of the diocese. "The

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## DIOCESAN CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

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seminaries are a great gift to the diocese and a real advantage to the pastors who come from here."

Renovations are necessary because there have been no upgrades to the buildings over the last 70 years. The rooms have only one electrical outlet in each, and the plumbing is in constant need of repairs. The conditions in the Resurrection Chapel are the same.

Another \$7 million from the campaign will support the pension and retirement fund for our diocesan priests. This means that our parish will have to pay much less into the retirement fund. The campaign will also provide \$3 million to help our newly ordained priests pay off their college tuition loans.

The Heart of the Shepherd Capital Campaign began in the summer of 2019 but was put on hiatus under the COVID-19 restrictions. It was re-started last fall when Immaculate Conception Parish was brought into the effort.

As Fr. Troha began meeting with past parish donors for this campaign, he has pledged himself.

"I find it essential to lead by example in stewardship," he says. "I made a three-year pledge, myself."

The campaign goal set for Immaculate Conception is based on half of last year's offering totals.

"Last year, our offering total was \$777,000, so half is \$388,715," Fr. Troha says. "But I think we can do a half-million dollars. This will be not only for the three campaign goals, but it will be a help for our needs."

The former school building that is used for offices and classrooms is in dire need of a roof. The former classrooms are to be remodeled and equipped to configure proper meeting rooms. Improvements also will be made to offices in the building.

Information about the campaign has been ongoing through our bulletins, the parish website, and Fr. Troha's Friday phone calls.

*One of the projects earmarked at the diocesan level includes a \$20-million renovation of the St. Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology, and Borromeo Seminary.*



There will be a need for volunteers to help as the campaign is completed. Anyone interested in offering assistance may call the parish office at 440-942-4500.



A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

# PENTECOST

## THE “BIRTH” OF STEWARDSHIP

Dear Parishioners,

**A**s we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost on May 23, which is one of the most significant events in the life of the Church, I can't help but relate the outpouring of the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the first disciples as “the birth of stewardship.”

As a stewardship parish, we have come to understand it in our personal lives and our parish life as the work of the Holy Spirit, active and inspiring us to be the disciples Jesus called us to be, just as He did those very first disciples. It just makes sense to once again realize and acknowledge the work of the Holy Spirit in our decisions to be authentic disciples of Jesus Christ.

As every parent knows, birth brings new life to every family, and the “birth of stewardship” here in our parish has brought new life to us, personally and communally, and continues to do so. We had a “Pentecost event” when the message of stewardship was first brought to our parish, and it hasn’t been the same since. Many curious people of our parish and from around the country ask the question, “How did all of this begin?” The only answer is, “moved by conversion, we knew stewardship was going to be the ‘plan’ for our future as disciples and as a parish.” It makes sense.

For some, like me, it took a conversion of sorts to move us from unbelievers to believers, and from fear or suspicion to courage and confidence in the values and ideals of stewardship. Reading the accounts of the Acts of the Apostles, it wasn’t much different for them. Their experience is our experience and continues to encourage us to be open to the Holy Spirit at

work in our lives. That “Spirit” renews the “Pentecost event” in each of us, as we practice discipleship as we know it through the stewardship way of life.

Also, as with each new birth, the life that begins needs to be nourished, nurtured and loved. Through our understanding of the four pillars of parish stewardship — hospitality, prayer, formation and service — we each are called to nourish, nurture and love our parish family with the gifts we bring to each other. And without ever really knowing how much of an impact we have on each other’s spiritual lives, we trust the Holy Spirit to continue the “good work of faithful stewardship” in each of us and to those around us. Isn’t that what the first Pentecost event started, and isn’t that what you see in our parish, especially since our own “birth of stewardship”?

God has blessed our parish family and continues to do so, as the Holy Spirit continues to pour out gifts upon us and send us forth to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. As we grow and mature in our stewardship efforts, how fortunate we are that the stewardship way of life has become our way of life. May we always give thanks to God for the Holy Spirit’s gift to each of us — for, when we do, it seems only natural to be inspired to live discipleship as it was intended to be lived in the first disciples and in each of us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

  
Fr. Michael Troha

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# VBS

## Encountering the *Love of Jesus* at Vacation Bible School

If you walk into our parish during Vacation Bible School (VBS) you will not only see children having loads of fun, but you will also see them taking little steps along the journey to heaven.

"VBS is such a great way for them to deepen their faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ," says Parish Catechetical Leader Sr. Josephine Rasoamampionon. "It gives them such a fun way to come to know His Word, and feel that they are really part of a loving parish family. It gives them an opportunity to explore their Catholic faith alongside other children. They really enjoy the program and have a blast! I enjoy it myself, as well. I hope they keep offering the VBS program for years to come."

Each year, VBS provides an amazing way to catechize our parish children.

"I believe VBS is an important program to offer to our parish youth because it brings various Bible stories to life, helping the children comprehend God's Word and see the significance of it in their lives," says VBS Coordinator Barb Schoen. "Some of the Bible stories we cover during the week they have never heard before, yet some of them they are familiar with and are able to gain a deeper understanding of them."

Vacation Bible School is facilitated by a group of adult and teenage volunteers who generously do their part to make each day a beautiful experience for the children.

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# Vacation Bible School *continued from page 4*

"Our adult volunteers help run each station, which includes planning the activities for each day," Barb says. "Our younger volunteers serve as either group leaders or station assistants."

VBS is an ideal way to lift up the hearts and spirits of all of those who give their time and talent to make it possible.

"Many of our VBS volunteers say that spending the week focusing on the Bible helps renew their faith, and they really enjoy experiencing Bible truths in new ways," Barb says. "For me personally, it has been so rewarding to see the kids come in and enjoy their time at VBS. Throughout the years, we have received a lot of positive feedback from the children as well as from their families. It is wonderful to come together in a setting to celebrate God's goodness."

The typical day at VBS opens up with an assembly, including a prayer and a short video and/or lesson. Throughout the day, the children visit stations featuring activities tailored around a specific Bible teaching point of the day. They also do crafts, have snacks, sing inspirational Christian music, and play outdoor games. The day ends with a closing assembly during which the children share about what they have learned, and enjoy dancing to the song of the day.

At the end of the week, family members come to VBS and have a meal with the children and volunteers.

"The children sing the songs that they learned throughout the week," Barb says. "It is a great send-off!"

This year, VBS will feature the theme "Rainforest Explorers" by Concordia Publishing.

"Kids will learn how Jesus is our ultimate guide in the rainforest and in life," Barb says. "He leads us to the treasures of eternal life, and He will never leave our side!"

More volunteers are needed to help bring the Good News of God's love to our young people. Adult volunteers must have received VIRTUS training.

"Both teenagers and adults are expected to meet several times during the planning process and ideally commit to helping at VBS for the entire week," Barb says. "The volunteers have the opportunity to decorate the various stations in order to bring our VBS theme to life. Most importantly, we are looking for enthusiastic volunteers who enjoy working with children."



*Our last VBS theme was "Roar," where kids discovered that when life is wild, God is good!*



*Kids show off the hats they made in the craft station at VBS.*

If you would like further information, or to volunteer, please contact Barb Schoen at [Barb.Schoen@outlook.com](mailto:Barb.Schoen@outlook.com) or at 440-622-0721. Registration forms will be available at [immaculate.net](http://immaculate.net) beginning in late April.



THIS MONTH,

## We Reflect on Mothers and Stewardship

We celebrate the month of Mary during May, and during this month, we also celebrate Mother's Day. It seems fitting that we honor our mothers during May, since Mary is given to us by God as the example of true Christian motherhood.

Those who are called to be mothers have been blessed by God and called to fulfill a very important responsibility. Mothers are the vehicle through which God brings new life into this world. When we talk about Christian stewardship, we talk about sacrificially returning to God what we have been given. What can more clearly be a demonstration of complete sacrifice than the relationship between mother and child during the nine months of growth in the womb? During these nine months, the child's life depends on the actions of the mother as her energy and nourishment goes directly to the growing baby.

Although this relationship may change to some extent after the child is born, a mother's sacrifice for her child is far from over after the birth. The role of the mother is critical in the child's development — both

spiritually and physically — throughout life. Mothers provide the comfort, nurture and support necessary for their children to become productive citizens and responsible Christians.

The job of a mother is not an easy one. This is a fact that Mary, the mother of Jesus, knew very well. She worried when her young Son appeared to be lost, only to find Him later in His Father's house. She was probably concerned as Jesus began His public ministry — not knowing what difficulties and rejections He would encounter along the way. And, Mary must have experienced great anguish as she watched her Son's body being crucified to a cross.

May all mothers look to Mary as their model for motherhood and ask her intercession as they strive to fulfill their God-given role in their children's lives. During the month of May, let us all take some time to express our appreciation to our mothers for allowing us to come into this world, for loving us, and for serving as an example of what it means to be a steward for life.

# *Fostering* DEVOTION TO MARY THROUGHOUT THE MONTH OF MAY

If you aren't planning on coming to church on Monday, May 10, to honor your Heavenly Mother, who loves you with tender compassion and mercy, you might want to get out your pen and mark your calendar!

"Our Parish School of Religion students and teachers are planning to host the May Crowning on this day," says Parish Catechetical Leader Sister Josephine Rasoamampionon. "All parents and parishioners are invited and encouraged to come. That evening, after we recite the Rosary, I ask each child to put flowers in front of the Blessed Mother. The children usually bring flowers from home or use some I have provided if they do not have any. Lastly, a boy or girl from the second-grade class is chosen to put a crown on the statue of Mary."

Year by year, this simple, but truly beautiful event fosters a genuine sense of Marian devotion in the hearts and souls of all who participate.



*The May Crowning is a wonderful way to pay homage to Mary during the month of May, which is dedicated to her honor.*

"It is very important for the children to learn to be devoted to the Blessed Mother," Sr. Josephine says. "I want them to know that she is special to Jesus — the closest person to Him. I want them to realize they have a wonderful mother in heaven who is

there for them in a spiritual way. Jesus gave her to us, just as He gave her to St. John at the cross. She is His gift to us."

It also brings to life our parish namesake, helping us all to understand what our mission as a parish family really is.

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*Mary was the first disciple of the Church and so, in a very real sense, she was the first steward of the Church. She was grateful to God, accepted His will for her, and gave everything to Him. We can all imitate her faith and love for Jesus." — FR. MICHAEL TROHA*



# Immaculate Conception

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## FOSTERING Devotion to Mary *continued from page 7*

"Our parish is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, therefore any devotion we do in honor of the Blessed Mother we end with the song, 'Immaculate Mary,'" Sr. Josephine says. "I always tell people that when they have family problems, they should talk to Mary because she has been there and she understands all of the sufferings humans go through. She was a widow, she lost her Son, and she was a pregnant teenager. We should not hesitate to go to her and ask her to pray with us and for us."

The May Crowning is a wonderful way to pay homage to Mary during the month of May, which is dedicated to her honor. There are also many other ways in which we can enrich our personal devotion to the Blessed Mother.

"I think the best thing everyone can do is to pray the Rosary every day throughout the year, but especially during the month of May," Fr. Michael Troha says. "Praying the Rosary together each day is a great way to pray together as a family, as well. All authentic Marian devotion

leads us to her Son, Jesus Christ. This is why Marian devotion is so important in our lives as Catholic Christians. Mary was the first disciple of the Church and so, in a very real sense, she was the first steward of the Church. She was grateful to God, accepted His will for her, and gave everything to Him. We can all imitate her faith and love for Jesus."

If you would like more information, please contact Sr. Josephine at 440-942-4500 or at [immaculateconceptionpsr@gmail.com](mailto:immaculateconceptionpsr@gmail.com).  
The May Crowning ceremony is scheduled to begin at about 6:15 p.m.