

Transformed!

The Good News at St. Hilary Parish

March/April 2022



The Martin Family (from left to right): Krista, Nickolas, John, Karen, Thomas, Jill, and Allison

Unity in the family

With St. Hilary parishioner and seminarian James Parisi as his best friend, Thomas Martin knew he'd one day become a Catholic. Their periodic conversations about faith over the years and friendship forged in Boy Scouts eventually led Thomas to join his sisters Jill and Allison in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) process this year.

At the Easter Vigil the three adult siblings will celebrate with their parents, Karen and John, who became Catholic through RCIA here in 2019. Their parents are looking forward to being able to receive the Eucharist together.

"My husband and I are so excited that Allison, Thomas, and Jill are joining the Catholic faith and that

Mark and Michael (Allison and Jill's fiancés respectively) have not only shared their faith, but have also so joyfully supported them during this process," said Karen.

'Being able to go through the RCIA process, receiving the Eucharist and being married in the same year—it's all connected.'

Jill Martin

The Martin family, who had been members of a local United Church of Christ, were originally drawn to their last church's pastor and youth minister. But with a change of leadership there, they felt uncomfortable with the direction of

the church and left, explained Jill. After years of attending bible study at St. Hilary and faith discussions with Randy Malick, John and Karen felt a deep calling to become Catholic. After the Inquiry program, they joyfully participated in RCIA with Sandra and Jeff Kornick as their wonderful sponsors.

"After my parents converted to Catholicism, we started going to Mass with them and I found I really liked St. Hilary," said Jill.

Allison agreed, adding, "I liked the structure. It's a lot more formal. At our services, communion was once a month and was more laid back. I, too, really liked St. Hilary, so the decision for me was whether to become a Catholic or find another church."

continued on page 2

The fact that her fiancé Mark Sutkowky was Catholic factored into Allison’s decision. “Mark has such a strong Catholic faith,” she said. They both felt that sharing the same faith tradition as a married couple was important.

It was Allison who signed up for RCIA first. “I was nervous at the thought of attending RCIA by myself, so I invited my sister Jill to come along.” Jill, she reasoned, would likely be interested since she, too, was marrying a Catholic, Michael Barrette.

It wasn’t hard to convince their brother Thomas to join them. While he was also searching for a new church to call home, it was his long-standing friendship with James Parisi that made becoming Catholic the most likely choice.

Evangelized by a friend

“We had been having these talks about faith since Boy Scouts. He would take me to Catholic services and gave me my first rosary,” said Thomas. It was natural that James would be his sponsor. “What I really like is the history of the Church—that’s what I find meaningful about RCIA. What I find exciting is continuing to grow in my Catholic faith.”

For Allison, “I am most looking forward to being married in a full Catholic Mass.” She and Mark will be married at St. Columbkille, his parish, on October 15.

“Being able to go through the RCIA process, receiving the Eucharist and being married in the same year—it’s all connected,” said Jill. Her wedding takes place August 12 at St. Hilary.

It’s all about family

All three agreed that going through RCIA together has made the process especially meaningful. “We are a super close family,” said Allison. Thomas agreed, adding, “I think it has brought us closer. Our family,

including our oldest brother Nickolas and sister-in-law Krista who live in Chagrin Falls, have Sunday dinners together. RCIA gives Jill, Allison, and I another weekly time to catch up.”

“It’s nice to see each other more,” said Allison. “We are in different small groups in RCIA, but still share as a larger group.”

‘But God always has a plan! I am so excited for three of our four kids to participate in the Easter Vigil Mass and a lifetime of faith and fellowship with the Catholic church!’

Karen Martin

And while they enjoy each other’s company, they are also benefiting from the bonds formed with RCIA team members and deepened relationships with sponsors whom they have known for years. Said Karen, “My dear friends, Mary Beth Waickman and Chris Parisi, as well as Tom’s oldest friend, James, have been the most amazing sponsors, mentoring, supporting, and going to all the meetings.” Jill’s sponsor is Chris, James’ mother, while Mary Beth is sponsoring Allison.

“Everyone on the RCIA team is so great. One of the things I love is sitting with Jim McGuire and Evans Cottman in my small group. And I get so much from Randy. They all have such a breadth of knowledge, so it’s fun to get as many opinions as possible,” said Thomas.

Jill also appreciates having James in the group and the comments he offers on what they are learning. “That’s the James we grew up with. He shares things on the spot, but it is so insightful!” she said. And Allison appreciates Mark’s input. “Mark is in my group, so it’s good to hear his perspective,” said Allison.



Jill Martin



Thomas Martin



Allison Martin



Fiancés revitalize faith

For Mark, the process has given his faith new meaning. “I am glad we are on the same page and look forward to growing our family together in the Catholic faith.” For Michael, “It’s fun being in on the ride. I’m relearning a lot I had forgotten from Sunday school.”

“This has been such a blessing to our whole family,” Karen added. “When John and I joined the Catholic Church only a couple years ago, my only hesitation was that our family wouldn’t be in the same church as we had for all their years of growing up in the Protestant faith. It really bothered me! But God always has a plan! I am so excited for three of our four kids to participate in the Easter Vigil Mass and a lifetime of faith and fellowship with the Catholic church!” she concluded.



Do you know someone who is searching for a spiritual home?

Sometimes a simple invitation to attend Mass together is all it takes to get someone interested in taking the next step. For more information on joining the Church, contact Randy Malick, Director of Faith Formation for Adults at rmalick@sthilarychurch.org.

Save the date for the next RCIA Inquiry Series!

Inquiry is a series of casual conversations about Catholicism, a no-strings-attached approach to get your questions answered. It’s for the inquisitive or those seeking a possible home in the Catholic Church. The series will begin in late June and run intermittently this summer on Wednesday evenings.





Left: Dan Kirkpatrick at one of the Good Samaritan Hunger Centers

Sharing God's blessings with the community

Having experienced the healing benefits of St. Hilary's grief support group after the death of his first wife, Dan Kirkpatrick realized it was time to give back. He had always been financially generous, but now that he was retired, it was payback time—time to serve the people of God.

Meals for needy families

In 2017, he started with the food program at Gennesaret, a non-profit organization that provides housing to needy families as well as meals and groceries to the community. St. Hilary parishioners like Dan, under the leadership of Tim and Debbie Miller, serve meals on the third Saturday of each month.

While volunteering there, Dan met Angelo, "who has been with Gennesaret almost since the beginning and given so much. He's an inspiration in the way he's living the gospel—and he's about 95!" Dan helps Angelo get ready for the grocery distribution, nonperishable items from the Akron-Canton

Regional Food Bank, and the hot lunch now served take-out style due to COVID restrictions. Dan said he starts early to help organize and set out the grocery items on tables.

"Sometimes It's as simple as putting pans of food in the oven to warm up," he added. Dan said the food is cooked the night before and reheated the next day.

Dan also volunteers with Good Samaritan Hunger Center, which is based out of St. Sebastian's Byrider Hall. From there, food is placed on trucks to four community centers in Akron. Dan most often volunteers at Perkins Park and Summit Lake. Each center has a large building and a parking lot where volunteers set up tables with pre-set bags of groceries for clients to pick up drive-through style. Before the pandemic, food was distributed inside the community centers, now that isn't possible.

"The volunteers are mostly retired, but there are some young people

doing service hours," said Dan. "I usually get there 45 minutes ahead to help get the food out of the trucks and onto tables outside the building on the edge of the parking lot. There's time for a quick prayer, then the clients drive through. They are in line waiting. The Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank requires the clients to be residents of Akron, so they have to show an ID at first, and then are placed in a database. You get to know the people in their cars.

For the greater glory of God

"It's Interesting. The people who come through really are appreciative and that's true of those at Gennesaret. And that's what brings volunteers. It's an uplifting thing," said Dan.

But that's not the only reason Dan is attracted to this ministry. "I try to do this for the greater glory of God. In prayer, anything I do is for God's glory and the welfare of the souls in purgatory, not for Dan. I've seen volunteers get frustrated when they feel they are not well utilized. It's not about you or me. It's about what you can do to serve God's people," Dan explained.

'All the blessings in my life come from God and the Holy Spirit. It's my responsibility to use these gifts for the people in this community.'

"For me it's my chance to pay back. I went to good schools and on to graduate school. People of this country financed my education so I could have a successful career, so it's pay back time. All the blessings in my life come from God and the Holy Spirit. It's my responsibility to use these gifts for the people in this community," Dan explained. "The other thing is that it permits me to look at people and see their

humanity. Even in my career, I never held myself above the people who worked under me,” he said. “No matter what the color of their skin or belief system-all are children of God. Every person needs respect for their humanity. If you live by that, a lot of things are taken care of.”



Share your gifts!

St. Hilary has an extensive outreach in the community serving the needy, which include Gennesaret and Good Samaritan Hunger Center. Are you interested in serving meals to the needy? Contact Parish Ministries Coordinator Maureen Capellas at mcapellas@sthilarychurch.org.



The volunteers start with prayer.



Steve and Peg Zimmer



Joe Kienle, Kathy Lloyd, and Carol Brockman

Help Fill the Truck April 9 & 10!

To Benefit The Good Samaritan Hunger Center

Donation Wish List:

peanut butter, jelly in unbreakable containers, fruit cups, individual meal cups like Chef Boyardee, soup with pop top cans, canned vegetables, rice and noodle mixes, spaghetti sauce, pasta, oil, salad dressing

Please bring your donations directly to the truck, parked in the St. Hilary back parking lot, before or after any Palm Sunday weekend Mass, April 9-10.

Thanks to the generosity of our parish community, St. Hilary typically donates over 4,000-5,000 pounds of food each year!

Ministering to the Youth

Matthew Schechter, St. Hilary's new Director of Youth and Young Adult Faith Formation, has plans to turn the young people to whom he ministers, into missionaries. He considers himself a missionary, having spent two years with Damascus Catholic Mission Campus, a retreat center in Central Ohio, honing his evangelization skills.

"I believe my mission is to evangelize the whole St. Hilary community through the youth. Whenever anyone sees a child on fire for God, there is power in that," he said. To carry out this mission, Matthew has been working to expand the parish's youth ministry.

'Whenever anyone sees a child on fire for God, there is power in that.'

The Life Teen program, which was well established when Matthew arrived in August, continues to meet after the 5:30 Mass on Sundays. Life Teen caters to high school students who are already seeking the Christian life in a more intentional way. "The plan is to build small groups for these teens, to spend time with friends, and to answer the hard questions about their lives, such as, 'What is my purpose?'" It has a set curriculum; I take it and pray about it and decide how to adapt it," he explained.

"So far, I have found that they love authentic and engaging environments where it's not teaching, but interacting with one another," Matthew added.

Retreats, usually an integral part of youth ministry, are on hold while groups are starting up. Matthew is planning on taking teens to the Youth Conference at Franciscan University of Steubenville this summer. A week

of service is also coming up in July in Indianapolis.

Middle school is a special area of growth in youth ministry this year. Students in grades six through eight are meeting twice a month on Thursdays after school. Those meetings which began in December, focused on relays, games and sports, and establishing a comfortable atmosphere for sharing faith.

Matthew's plan is to take the middle schoolers through the teachings of Jesus and help apply them to their lives. Topics for future meetings include handling one's emotions as a Christian and developing a personal prayer life.

Bringing ministry to young adults

On the other end of the age spectrum is the Young Adult Ministry, which spans those who are college age into their 30s—single and married. This group meets the second and fourth Thursdays from 6 to 8 p.m. The first meeting of the month focuses on faith formation, especially on evangelization in the workplace and in families. The group shares a meal at their other meeting. So far, they've had a pot luck dinner, but plan to go to restaurants, too.

An additional area of growth in youth ministry is the formation of Alpha groups for middle schoolers, teens and young adults learning how to evangelize their peers. "The Alpha groups are being created for disciplining these different age groups through close relationships with friends and mentors, pushing them towards faith and the harder questions of life," Matthew said.

"For middle schoolers and teens, these meetings are separate from youth group time with four to seven in each group with those specifically interested. Parents are involved



in determining the times they are available. This is in the planning stages. We need parents to help form the groups by getting kids and their friends there and to provide food. Time and day of the week is flexible depending on when participants are available," he explained.

Matthew and his wife Katie came to St. Hilary from Columbus, where both met while attending The Ohio State University. While he originally intended to become a neurologist, Matthew found that God had other plans for him. He says a "face-to-face encounter with God" changed everything.

Hungry for God

"When I went to college, I had the decision to either step into my faith or do something else. I chose the latter. I stopped going to church. I was partying and involved in an impure relationship," he said.

The turning point came in his sophomore year. Even though Matthew was in a relationship, he said he felt "crushingly lonely." He finally realized he was hungry for God.

"I broke up with the girl I was seeing and went back to Mass for the first time in a year and a half. When I walked in I heard a voice speak out loud to me, 'Matthew, welcome home.'

"I looked to see who said it, and there was no one there. Basically, I was so startled and overwhelmed, I wept through Mass under the mercy of God. At that point I received the call to be a missionary for the rest of my life. Jesus told me not to worry about being a neurologist, but to be a doctor of people's hearts."

'Jesus told me not to worry about being a neurologist, but to be a doctor of people's hearts.'

While at OSU, Matt attended a retreat called Buckeye Awakenings, which further nurtured his faith. It was there he met his future wife, Katie, a member of the retreat team. After completing his bachelor's in neuroscience, he spent two years working at Damascus Catholic Mission Campus. Of his time there Matthew said, "St. Paul stuck to my hip the whole journey, and Damascus Catholic Mission was where I went through deeper discipleship and lived out further evangelization," he recalled.

Ready for a change, Matthew and his wife nearly took jobs in ministry in the state of Washington, but instead opted to be closer to Katie's parents who live in North Canton. The youth ministry position at St. Hilary proved the right choice for the couple—and for the youth of St. Hilary.

Join us!

Katie and Matthew



Life Teen Life Night



Are you looking for a way to meet other young Catholics and grow your faith? Contact Matthew Schechter at mschechter@sthilarychurch.org.

Young Adults

College age into 30's, single & married
Meets the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month from 6-8 p.m.

Life Teen

Meets Sunday evenings after the 5:30 p.m. Mass

New Fire Middle School Group

Grades 6-8

Meets twice a month on Thursdays after school



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Lent and Easter Schedule

Rosary of the Seven Sorrows of Mary

Wednesdays March 9-April 6 at 3:15 p.m.

Lenten Evening Prayer

Wednesdays, March 9, 23 and 30
at 7 p.m. in the church

Knights of Columbus Fish Bake

Fridays, March 11 and April 8 from 5-7:30 p.m.

Laetare Sunday Concert

Sunday, March 27 at 7 p.m. in the church

Stations of the Cross

Fridays, March 4-April 11 at 7 p.m.

Holy Thursday, April 14

Mass of the Lord's Supper at 7:30 p.m.
with Adoration until 11 p.m.

Good Friday, April 15

Stations of the Cross at 12 p.m. (Outdoors) & 2 p.m. (Church)
Celebration of the Lord's Passion at 3 p.m.
Stations of the Cross at 7 p.m. (Life Teen)

Holy Saturday, April 16

Blessing of Food at 2 p.m.
Solemn Easter Vigil Mass at 8 p.m.

Easter Sunday, April 17

Masses at 7:15 a.m., 9 a.m., 10:45 a.m., and 12:30 p.m.

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