

# St. Cecilia

CATHOLIC CHURCH

## Regan Stuart-Killion and Family Find Home at St. Cecilia: *“What Every Parish Should Be”*

We are blessed in our country with diverse options for educating our children. Regan Stuart-Killion and her husband, Sean Killion, were familiar with some of these options, having attended public and Catholic schools during their education.

When their children were born, however, Regan and Sean knew that they wanted to give them the gift of a Catholic education.

“We wanted a stable community, or family of sorts, for our children as they grew up here,” Regan says. “There is something different about starting your day with prayer and the families who choose to make the Catholic religion a part of their children’s education.”

Both from large families, Regan and Sean started building a community for their own family when they moved to Ocean Beach in 2005. Family friends and longtime parishioners, the Crudo family, encouraged them to join St. Cecilia.

“The church was big and beautiful, but also warm and welcoming,” Regan says. “All six of the Crudo children had graduated from St. Cecilia, and their father, Paul Crudo, a retired dentist from the area, was still an active parishioner.”

In 2007 and 2009, Regan and Sean welcomed their children, two daughters, and when they were several years old, they joined the Sunday preschool program at St. Cecilia.

“Getting to know the school faculty, parents and children has been everything we hoped for,” Regan says. “I feel like we have found friendships, fun and support from the St. Cecilia community.”



*The Killion family — (clockwise from top) Sean and Regan with Boyd (front right) and Bryce Killion (front left)*

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## Stewardship

### *Becoming Fishers of Men*

Whether you hold a high-profile position, such as parish council president, or have more of a behind-the-scenes role as a coordinator of a parish ministry, God has called you – as a parish leader – to help build His Church.

This challenge is just as important as the call of any other Catholic leader, including the earliest disciples.

When Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee, He urged a group of fishermen, “Come follow me.” Jesus promised if they laid down their nets and followed Him, He would make them fishers of men. These men were among His original disciples, and they knew Christ’s call was so important that they left their secular occupation to follow Him.

Just as He did with the fishermen, Jesus calls each of us today. He is not necessarily asking us to leave our secular careers, but He *is* asking us to put Him first in our lives and to share His message of love with others.

God truly wants us to serve Him and to build His Church through the secular occupations we have chosen. It is through the Church that new disciples are born, and it is in the Church that disciples continue to mature. Forming disciples of Christ is the most important work that can be done on earth, and each of us has been called to play an active role in this work.

So, how do we go about building the Church? Where do we find the plans?

Some people mistakenly think that building the Church – in particular, building our own parish or diocese – is no different than building a successful business. Indeed, the purpose of building the Church is to change hearts – a

goal that only God can accomplish.

Secular society has not prepared us for this work. However, the Holy Spirit – sometimes referred to as the “Architect of the Church” – has the plan. In order to implement this plan, we must become good listeners. We must open ourselves to the workings of the Holy Spirit as He transforms us and guides us to carry out God’s work and to serve as His instruments on earth, building the Church together with Him.

This is where spiritual exercises, such as retreats, come into play. A retreat offers the individual an opportunity to spend time alone with the Lord, allowing God to draw the person deeper into the mystery of who He is, who we are and what He is doing in our lives. Stewardship retreats can offer parish leaders the opportunity each year to spend time with the Lord as He directs them in the ways of discipleship. As leaders, we must take time to meditate on the Scriptures and allow Jesus to open up His Word to us. Then, as we grow deeper in our understanding of what God wants of us, we can exclaim, just as the first disciples did on the road to Emmaus, “Our hearts are burning within us” (Lk 24:32).

God has placed an extremely important call on the lives of all parish leaders, no matter how big or small the role. It is vital to understand how we, as parish leaders, can best answer His call. What, in particular, is the Lord calling each one of us to do? He most likely is not asking us to drop our nets, but to pick them up and become “fishers of men.” We must discern how we can most effectively cast our nets for Him.

## A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

### *Resolve to Give Back to God in 2018*

Dear Parishioners,

Another new year – 2018! There was a time in my life when this date (and others) seemed so far in the future. It is amazing how those dates start to pile up and stream by, isn't it? I have reached a point where measuring one's life by the years and dates is not as significant as many other things.

I recall reading somewhere, "The world around us asks, 'What does a person own?' But God asks, 'How does a person use what he or she has been given?'" This month of January is one filled with reminders of holiness – the official end of the Christmas season; the Epiphany of our Lord; the Baptism of the Lord; and the return to Ordinary Time, which, as we know, is not "ordinary" at all.

At Epiphany we hear, "Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts" (Matthew 2:11), a reference to the Magi and their visit to the Christ Child. The image of the Magi kneeling before the infant Jesus and opening their gifts for Him is one we should all try to follow. Each of us is called to open our gifts before Jesus and offer Him what He needs. I heard a suggestion once that if you have a problem with this thought, you should perhaps keep one of the Magi from your Christmas Nativity set and place it on your desk as a reminder.

During the Baptism of the Lord, God makes it clear when He proclaims from the Heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). God has given us the greatest gift He could give. He gave His only Son. When we think about the enormity of that gift of Jesus sent to save us, in addition to all the other blessings which God has entrusted to us, it is very humbling. God has given us so much. What do we give in return?

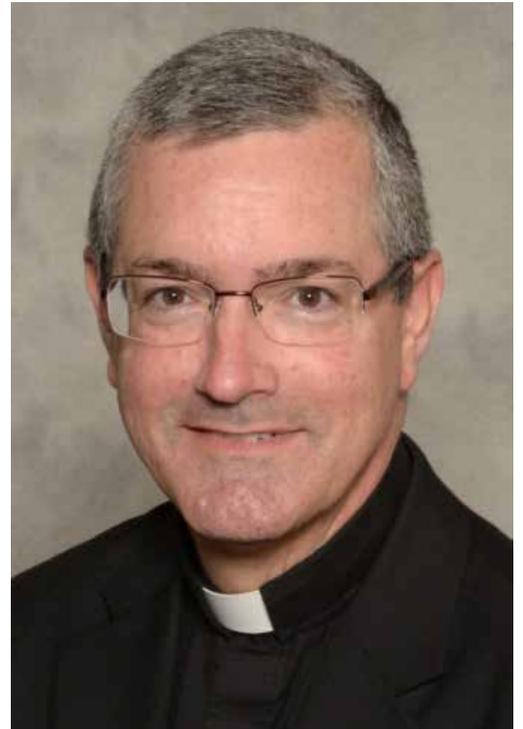
Making resolutions is common at this time of year. We will also hear this month about how Jesus called the first apostles. The Lord calls us as well to follow Him. Let us resolve to try to do that better – all of us. That does not mean we have to leave our work and our families behind, but we do need to put our service to Jesus. That should be our top resolution.

In *The Theology of the Hammer*, Habitat for Humanity co-founder Millard Fuller wrote, "The only truly safe investment one can make in life is what is given away." First and foremost, God wants us. That should be our real resolution – to give ourselves to the Lord. May we all do a better job of that in 2018. God bless you all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Rev. Mark V. Taheny*

Fr. Mark Taheny  
Pastor



## Catholic Schools Week *Cele*

St. Cecilia School will be celebrating Catholic Schools Week from Jan. 28 through Feb. 2 with a wide range of activities to mark the theme of “Catholic Schools: Learn. Serve. Lead. Succeed.” And for fifth-grade teacher Darin Fong, the celebration is a sweet reminder of the community and care he experienced himself as a St. Cecilia student.

“The biggest thing for me, and this is a recurring theme from other alumni and parents, is there is just a strong community feeling at our school,” Mr. Fong says. “Many times, if there’s a crisis or an emergency, this is when the parish community comes to help. There is an outpouring of love and support that is amazing. There is always a strong support system.”

That sense of community at St. Cecilia begins with our youngest kindergarten students and continues all through their years at our school.

“There’s also the bonding in watching the kids growing up from kindergarten to eighth grade,” Mr. Fong says. “And having the parents together in activities like Drama Club Parents, and watching the children going through the Sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation, and then eighth-grade graduation — there is the whole bonding experience all the way up.”

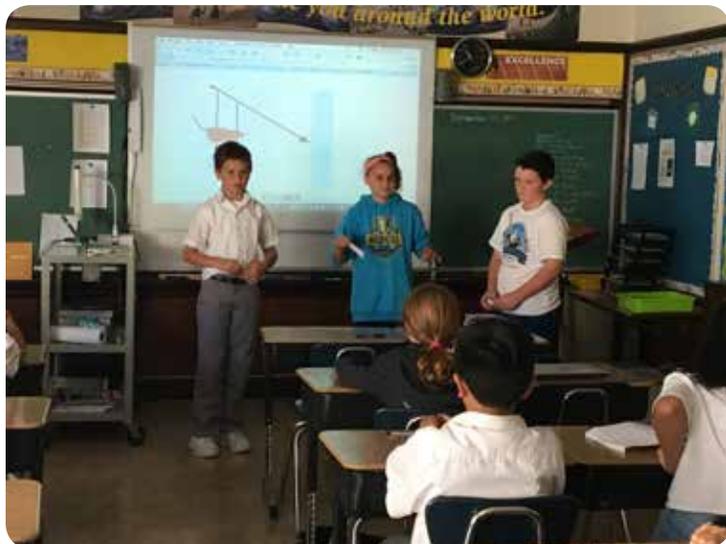
As for the activities to mark Catholic Schools Week, an event celebrated nationally, there will be a special Mass on Jan. 28, followed by an open house with coffee, juice and donuts.

“We invite the parents and families to come to the school after the Sunday Mass to see the school and see what the students have been doing,” Mr. Fong says.

Other activities during the week will be a flag ceremony presented by the St. Cecilia School Boy Scouts, a coat collection and a “state of the school” address.



*St. Cecilia students offer their support.*



*Students at St. Cecilia School learn confidence in presenting to groups, and in this case to their fellow students.*



*Students prepare sandwiches as part of their ongoing work to feed the hungry.*

# *brates* Our School Community

“The students also will be writing letters to the priests and sisters of St. Cecilia thanking them for their service,” Mr. Fong says.

Our parishioners can become involved in the celebration merely by taking the time to attend the Sunday Mass and visit the school. During that visit, we can get a sense of the community that embraces our St. Cecilia students and faculty.

“Going to St. Cecilia, getting a Catholic education, helped me so much,” Mr. Fong says. “I got to know everyone – classmates, families. It is much more a close-knit community. I’m still in contact with a lot of my classmates from high school and grade school. Clearly for that Catholic community, Catholic schools have smaller class size, and interpersonal relations are much stronger, I think.”

Besides learning about St. Cecilia School, we as parishioners can become more involved in our parish by volunteering to serve as Mass greeters, Eucharistic Ministers, and by taking up the collection. Other volunteers help keep the church doors open during the week.



*Catholic education means smaller class sizes and the opportunities for students to form a lifelong community with their classmates. St. Cecilia School is no exception!*

*Anyone interested in enrolling a child at St. Cecilia School may call the school office at 415-731-8400. Anyone interesting in volunteering for the parish may call the office at 415-664-8481.*

## **Regan Stuart-Killion and Family Find Home at St. Cecilia:** *“What Every Parish Should Be”* continued from front cover

Regan soon started volunteering at the school and has been giving her time and talent to the school and church ever since.

“While there is no requirement to volunteer at the school or church, I find it so easy because there is so much need in a big parish,” Regan says. “Any kind of help or skill is welcomed.”

Over the years, Regan has given in many large and small ways – volunteering in classrooms, helping at Mother’s Club events, coaching sports teams and, most recently, joining the Stewardship Committee during our centennial year, 2015.

“I was not sure what a ‘stewardship parish’ even

was at the time I joined, but it really is what every parish should be,” Regan says. “Stewardship is volunteering your time, talent, and treasure, and we all have a bit of those things to offer our parish.”

Through serving the school and parish, Regan and her family have learned so much about what makes a parish family run and have gained an enormous respect for the people who make our faith community as strong as it is.

“I am both grateful and proud to be a part of St. Cecilia,” Regan says. “It will only be that much stronger if every member can find some small or even big way to give of themselves.”

## The Patron Saint of Catholic Schools in America St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

As the first American-born canonized saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton's entrance into history was guided by Divine Providence. Born on Aug. 28, 1774, just months after the Boston Tea Party, Elizabeth's childhood witnessed pivotal events in the formation of our country – the Continental Congress, the *Declaration of Independence*, and the American Revolution. At the time of the foundation of the new Republic, in a society predominately hostile toward Catholicism, a flower blossomed that would forever change the shape of education in the United States.

Elizabeth Seton was born into a wealthy Protestant family in New York City. Her life, although materially blessed, was not without suffering. Elizabeth's biological mother died when she was only 3, and her younger sister, Catherine Josephine, died at the age of 2. A spark of faith, however, was visible even in her early childhood. When questioned about her sadness concerning her sister's death, Elizabeth simply responded, "Kitty is gone up to heaven. I wish I could go there too."

Elizabeth grew into a beautiful woman, courted lavishly by handsome young men from prominent New York families. At the age of 19, she met a charming New York financier, William Seton, and the couple was wed in 1794. They remained in high society until her father-in-law's passing, which left them to care for William's seven younger siblings, along with three children of their own. Consequently, the Seton finances crashed.

The couple traveled to Italy – it was here that William's health failed him, and he died in December 1803. Providentially, Elizabeth was left in the company of a strong Catholic family where she witnessed the practice of the faith. In a letter to her sister, Elizabeth wrote, "My sister dear, how happy would we be,



if we believed what these dear souls believe, that they possess God in the Sacrament, and that He remains in their churches..."

After an eight-month stay, Elizabeth returned to America, and she began to investigate Catholicism more deeply. She was besought by Protestant friends who hoped to dissuade her. At this time, Elizabeth prayed repeatedly, "If I am right, Thy grace impart, still in the right to stay. If I am wrong, oh teach my heart to find the better way."

In 1805, after much interior struggle, Elizabeth became Catholic. Abandoned entirely by her family and friends, she resolved her financial difficulties through teaching.

In 1807, Elizabeth was invited to establish a Catholic school for girls in Baltimore. The task was daunting, and Elizabeth labored intensely, explaining how "from half past five in the morning until nine at night, every moment is full – no space even to be troubled." After winters spent in continual hardship and sacrifice, the school flourished and, within years, Mother Seton planted the seed from which sprang the parochial school system – along with hospitals and orphanages.

Before her death in January 1821, she was the active mother of five – although two of her daughters died young – and the spiritual mother of a full-fledged religious congregation known as the Sisters of Charity. She was canonized in 1975, and her feast day is celebrated on Jan. 4.

Thanks to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the Catholic parochial school system remains vibrant and active. And as we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, we are thankful for the sacrifice of this loving wife, devoted mother, foundress, and all-American saint.

# Bringing Together Faith, Food, and Fellowship: The Italian Catholic Federation

What do prayer and pasta have in common? As it turns out, these are two of the main “ingredients” in many of the meetings of the Italian Catholic Federation, or ICF, held at St. Cecilia Catholic Church! This statewide organization was founded in San Francisco nearly 100 years ago by a group of Italian immigrants seeking to preserve their rich heritage and Catholic faith. Today, the group’s mission remains largely the same – to build families and faith, conduct charitable works, and celebrate the Italian culture.

Branch 365 of the Italian Catholic Federation meets monthly in the Serra Room here at St. Cecilia, and also holds an annual Christmas party for its 25-plus members. Fellowship is certainly very important to the organization – after all, who wouldn’t want to gather around the table to enjoy an Italian meal? Fundraising and charitable giving, however, are also at the heart of this group. With the monies raised through garage sales and other projects, the ICF is able to award scholarships to high school and college students, provide financial aid for Italian language programs in the schools, and donate to other local and global causes.

George Pagni, current President of Branch 365, enjoys being able to preserve the Italian culture his parents instilled in him through his participation in the ICF.

“My parents came to San Francisco from Italy as young adults in the early 1900s,” George explains. “Italian was my first language, and when I went to school, I didn’t know English – but believe me, I learned fast! The culture itself is very good, and of course, so is the food. At school, I used to share my lunch with all the kids because it was such a big lunch and all the kids thought it was so good.”

The tradition of sharing delicious food with great company continues today in the ICF. Just last month, the group gathered for a special potluck Christmas dinner, with members bringing numerous dishes, from spaghetti to salads to various Italian desserts. Each time they pray around a bountiful table together, members of Branch 365 honor the great importance that the Italian culture places on food, fellowship and faith.

Whether they are helping with a 9:30 a.m. Mass and coffee and donuts, providing financial assistance to hard-working students, or aiding the needy, the members of St. Cecilia’s ICF enjoy serving together.

“Camaraderie is very important in the branch, and everybody helps everybody,” George affirms. “We get together and cook food and have parties to raise money to be able to do the things we should be doing. In the Italian Catholic Federation, people come together

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— George Pagni



# St. Cecilia Catholic Church

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## *Bringing Together Faith, Food, and Fellowship: The Italian Catholic Federation*    *continued from front cover*

and share the goods together, have great meetings, and provide good programs for the help of others who may need it.”

With a little pasta and a lot of prayer, fellowship, and service, the IFC is making a big difference in our church and community. Thankful for the presence of this cultural and charitable organization here at St. Cecilia, the only thing left to say is — *grazie mille!*



*Interested in learning more about the Italian Catholic Federation? All Catholics — with or without Italian heritage — are welcome to join. Come share in the faith and fellowship — and yes, the food — of this wonderful charitable organization! Contact George Pagni at 415-566-8333 for more information.*

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### LITURGY SCHEDULE

**Saturday:** 5:00 p.m. (Vigil Mass) **Sunday:** 7:30, 9:30 (Family Mass), & 11:30 a.m.

**Weekdays:** 7:00, 9:00 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.

**Reconciliation (Confessions):** Saturday, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.