

St. Cecilia

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Building a Strong Foundation: *Children's Faith Formation*

For Catholic parents, our single most important task is raising our children in the faith. Surrounded by the mounting pressures of modern day society, now, more than ever, it is vital that we give our children a strong foundation, preparing them to become leaders of our Church and society. We are told in Scripture, "Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

Yet, the beauty of our Catholic faith is that we are not left on our own. Here at St. Cecilia Parish, the Children's Faith Formation (CFF) and Youth Ministry programs are here to support parents in this all-important undertaking, building upon the foundation that has been laid first at Baptism and then further at home.

"We provide something that kids aren't going to get anywhere else - namely, a passion for God," says CFF Coordinator Betty McCuniff. "It benefits the children and, through them, the entire family. Because our students are not in a Catholic school where religion is part of the everyday curriculum, they don't have access to the faith the same way that Catholic school children do. So, this is how they really encounter God, the sacraments, and the teachings of the Catholic Church."

Children's Faith Formation classes



Older Faith Formation students keep a tally of supplies collected for St. Vincent de Paul Society.

are available to preschoolers through eighth-graders. Starting in late September, each child enrolled in CFF classes is able to learn about God, the sacraments, morality, and Church doctrine in a developmentally appropriate and engaging manner. Meanwhile, catechists and adult volunteers are encouraged by the enthusiasm and profound desire for truth that they witness in even the youngest of students.

"They see the kids' curiosity and they see the kids grow and change over the course of the year," Mrs. McCuniff says. "You see kids who are enthusiastic participants and who ask truly profound questions. It's not typical to be able to talk with kids about the faith. It's not something that we generally discuss

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STEWARDSHIP

THE FOUR PILLARS

You've heard about the three Ts of stewardship, but what about the four Ps?

The three Ts — time, talent and treasure — describe the personal gifts we offer to the Church. The four Ps are the “four pillars” of parish stewardship described by the renowned pastor Msgr. Thomas McGread. They are the hallmark of a stewardship parish — hospitality, prayer, formation and service. Let's take a look at each of them to understand how we can improve in each area.

HOSPITALITY

CHRISTIAN KINDNESS

“When I was a stranger, you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35). The Gospel teaches that whenever we welcome the least of our brothers or sisters, we welcome Christ himself. That is why the first mark of a stewardship parish is hospitality. Being friendly is one of the first ways we can be Christ-like toward others.

Modern Catholic parishes are often so large and have so many Masses that many parishioners don't know one another. To create a sense of community, be sure to smile and greet others as you enter and exit the Church. Let's try harder than ever to be a welcoming community.

PRAYER

HEART-TO-HEART WITH GOD

“Do not become so involved in the work of the Lord that you forget the Lord of the work,” a seminary professor once taught. In other words, don't get so caught up with parish projects and outreach efforts that you forget to draw aside to spend time with God in prayer. Every great saint has taught that prayer is the most essential component in the life of the Christian. Through prayer, we nurture our most important relationship — the one that will last for all eternity.

A healthy prayer life should include communal prayer such as Mass, as well as personal prayer and family prayer. The two biggest obstacles to prayer are lack of time and lack of understanding of how to pray. We have to schedule time for prayer just as we would for an important appointment. And we have to learn how to pray from other people. Many saints have written spiritual books that describe different methods of prayer.

FORMATION

CONTINUOUS CONVERSION

Pope John Paul II always emphasized ongoing conversion. From childhood through adulthood, our whole life must be a process of drawing closer to God. He never stops calling us forward to learn more and to examine ourselves more deeply.

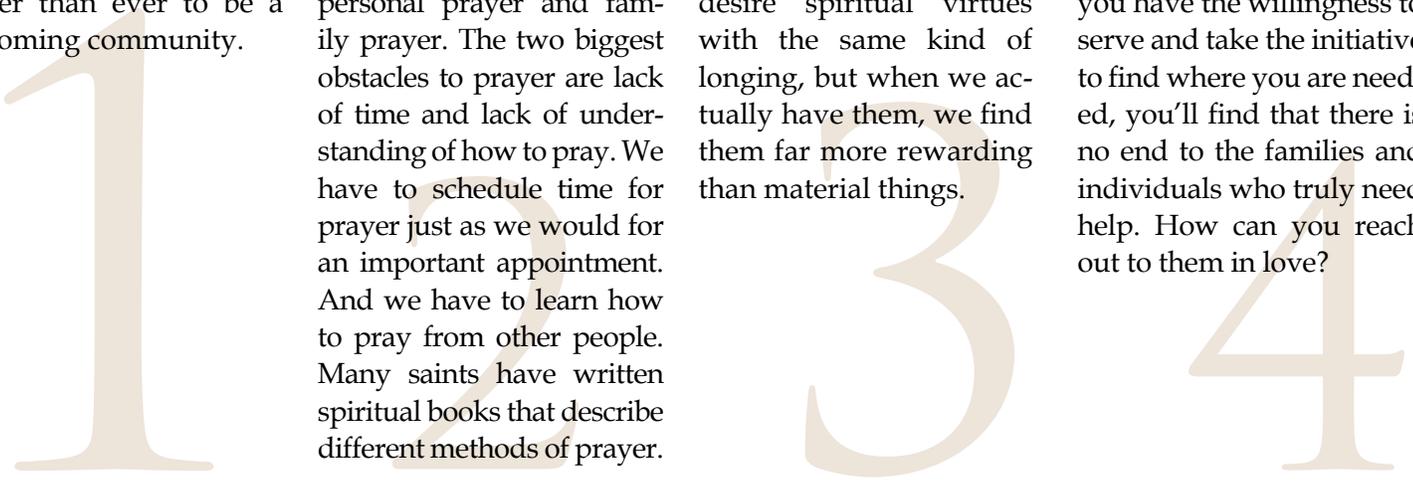
Very often our society values material things more than interior virtues. But as personal experience shows, when we finally acquire the car or house or “toy” that we wanted so badly, it doesn't really satisfy. On the other hand, we don't tend to desire spiritual virtues with the same kind of longing, but when we actually have them, we find them far more rewarding than material things.

SERVICE

LOVE IN ACTION

“Amen I say to you, whatever you did to the least of my brothers, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). This Scripture was one of Mother Teresa's favorites. Each time she picked up a poor and hungry child, she knew she was ministering to Christ. While we may not view ourselves as saints, we too are called to such heroic service right within our own community. As Mother Teresa said, “To be a saint is not the privilege of a few, but the duty of everyone.”

We have many service opportunities right here within our own parish. If you have the willingness to serve and take the initiative to find where you are needed, you'll find that there is no end to the families and individuals who truly need help. How can you reach out to them in love?



A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Save Room on Your Busy Schedules for Stewardship

Dear Parishioners,

I don't know about you, but I still get a surge of adrenalin as the beginning of September approaches. Even though I'm no longer in school, I feel a sense of anticipation when I see the shelves filled with brand-new notebooks, composition books, and all the assorted items students use. I'm aware once again of the great hopes, exciting dreams, and good intentions that a new school year holds.

Even for those parishioners not directly involved in school, September marks new beginnings. Labor Day traditionally marks the unofficial end of the summer vacation season, and our calendars may reflect that. Many of you have calendars a lot like mine, filled year-round with appointments and obligations. But even for us, things get busier in September as various organizations that "took a break" during summer resume their regular round of meetings again.

Nevertheless, I have a request for you as you fill up your fall schedules. First thing, please put in some time to share the talents God has given you. As you are aware, as Christian disciples — as stewards — we are called to return to God a portion of the Time, Talent, and Treasure He has entrusted to us. We should make our commitments to God when we begin our planning, so that we don't offer Him just the scraps of time and energy left over after everything else. This is what offering our "first fruits" means.

Make this September the month you make a



commitment to sing in the choir, including attending rehearsals. Or begin working with our parish religious education in one way or another. Or decide to launder altar linens once a month. Or volunteer to help in the Parish Office one morning a week. Or help care for the parish grounds. Or join the St. Vincent de Paul Society or another social service ministry.

There are many ministries and groups within our parish where you can serve, and you'll find that you receive even as you give. Anyone in the parish can probably find at least one activity that they might enjoy and in which they can participate and which fits their schedule. If you find that you haven't been involved, then make this September

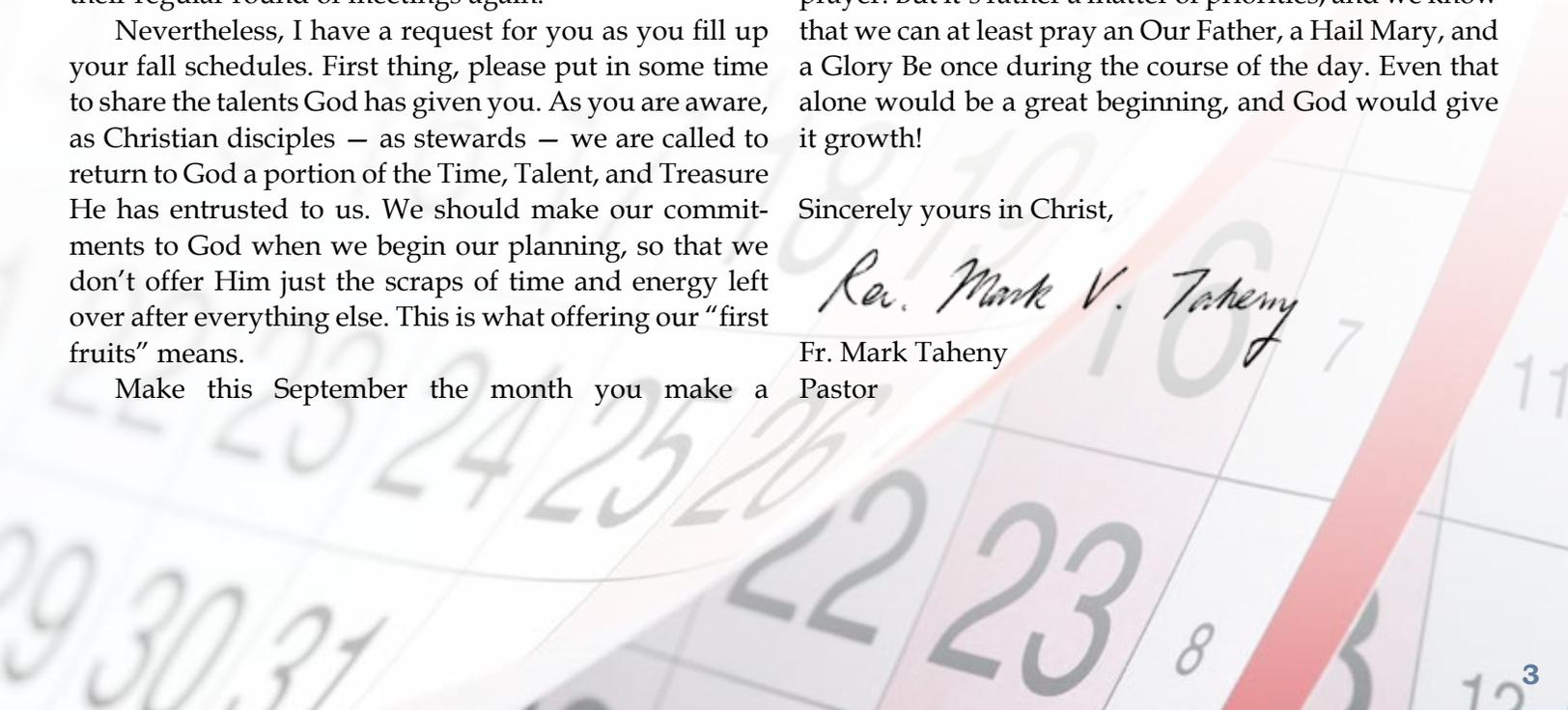
the month to change that.

Some people think that they "don't have time" for prayer. But it's rather a matter of priorities, and we know that we can at least pray an Our Father, a Hail Mary, and a Glory Be once during the course of the day. Even that alone would be a great beginning, and God would give it growth!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Mark V. Taheny

Fr. Mark Taheny
Pastor



St. Cecilia School Is Ready fo

Fr. Jorge Mario Bergoglio SJ, began his career as a Jesuit priest teaching literature and psychology to high school students at Immaculate Conception School in Santa Fe, Argentina. Of course, we know Fr. Jorge better as Pope Francis, but many feel he learned how to communicate and how to structure his message of hope in those early years as a Catholic school teacher.

Speaking to Catholic students and teachers in 2013, the pope said, "Catholic school is one of the educational environments where one grows by learning how to live, how to become grown-up, mature men and women... Following what St. Ignatius teaches us, the main element in Catholic school is learning to be magnanimous... This means having a big heart, having a greatness of soul. It means having grand ideals, the desire to achieve great things in response to what God asks of us and, precisely because of this, doing everyday things, all our daily actions, commitments, and meetings with people well. [It means] doing the little everyday things with a big heart that is open to God and to others."

What the Holy Father had to say closely parallels the goals of St. Cecilia School, as evidenced by the school's mission statement, which reads: "St. Cecilia School is a Catholic elementary school of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, whose purpose is to develop students who are active Christians, lifelong

learners, socially responsible citizens, effective communicators, and problem solvers." We are certainly privileged here in our parish to have a Catholic school of the quality and level of St. Cecilia School.

Mrs. Marian Connelly, who is entering her sixth year as school principal, echoes the pope's words and our school's mission statement.

"St. Cecilia School is the finest, the greatest, and the best," she says. "I say that sincerely. Our families are great, our students are great, the people at this parish are great, and our faculty and staff are great. If you visit with them, you soon understand that they all want to be here, and be a part of this excellent school."

The school year at St. Cecilia School began on Tuesday, Aug. 22. For this school year and beyond, we have several goals in mind.

"When the convent became available to us, we began to think of ways we could use the space effectively to enhance our school," Mrs. Connelly says. "We have embraced something called STEAM and we will be developing it this year and in following years. 'STEAM' is an acronym for 'Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics.'"

And, as Mrs. Connelly points out, STEAM is not a program, but a philosophy.

"In the real world, content knowledge is interwoven,



The first-grade STEAM project.



Good stewards in action!

For the 2017-18 Academic Year

layered and sophisticated, not experienced in isolation such as in traditional educational settings – separate math time, separate science time, etcetera,” she says. “STEAM skills are vital for success in the 21st century and critical to our collective future. The ‘Critical Cs’ of Collaboration, Cooperation and Communication are emphasized through project-based learning, usually through interdisciplinary – across subjects – activities. Our Mothers’ Club has raised more than \$100,000 for us to accomplish this.”

Mrs. Connelly concludes by recognizing the dedicated parents, teachers, and others who are constantly working to make our school better.

“There is no way we can adequately thank them or all the others who contribute in so many ways to make us the excellent school we are,” she says.



The seventh-grade STEAM project

If you are interested in learning more about our school, or if you have any questions, please contact the school office at 415-731-8400.

Building a Strong Foundation continued from front cover

with them on the playground or when we pass them on the street, but here at CFF, that’s what we get to do with them every week.”

After completing their CFF education, high school-aged students are able to move on to begin participating in the parish’s monthly youth gatherings. These meetings occur on Sundays and typically center on modern-day issues within the light of our Catholic faith. Youth gatherings always include fun icebreakers, an open gym where sports and socialization can take place, and snacks. St. Cecilia’s Youth Group is also in charge of a monthly Family Mass at 9:30 a.m., allowing high school youth to participate as greeters, lectors, and gift bearers

while also coordinating the coffee and donut fellowship after Mass. Finally, upperclassman are able to take on greater leadership in the parish by joining the Confirmation Team or the eighth-grade Retreat Team.

Not only do these programs form our youth by providing them with a strong foundation, but they also end up strengthening our entire community. Mrs. McCunniff adds that any time you have the “opportunity to connect with faith-filled people” your own faith can’t help but be deepened.

“These programs enrich our youth, their family life, and then ultimately the entire parish by getting our young people involved,” Mrs. McCunniff says.

Parishioners can look to the bulletin for registration information for Children’s Faith Formation and for Youth Ministry updates. For more information, please call St. Cecilia’s parish office at 415-664-8481.

A Significant Moment in Our Prayer *The Presentation of the Gifts*

Occasionally, you might hear someone jokingly refer to “halftime” during Mass - the interval following the Prayers of the Faithful, as the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins. It can be easy, even tempting, to zone out as you sit, waiting for the collection basket to make its way to your pew.

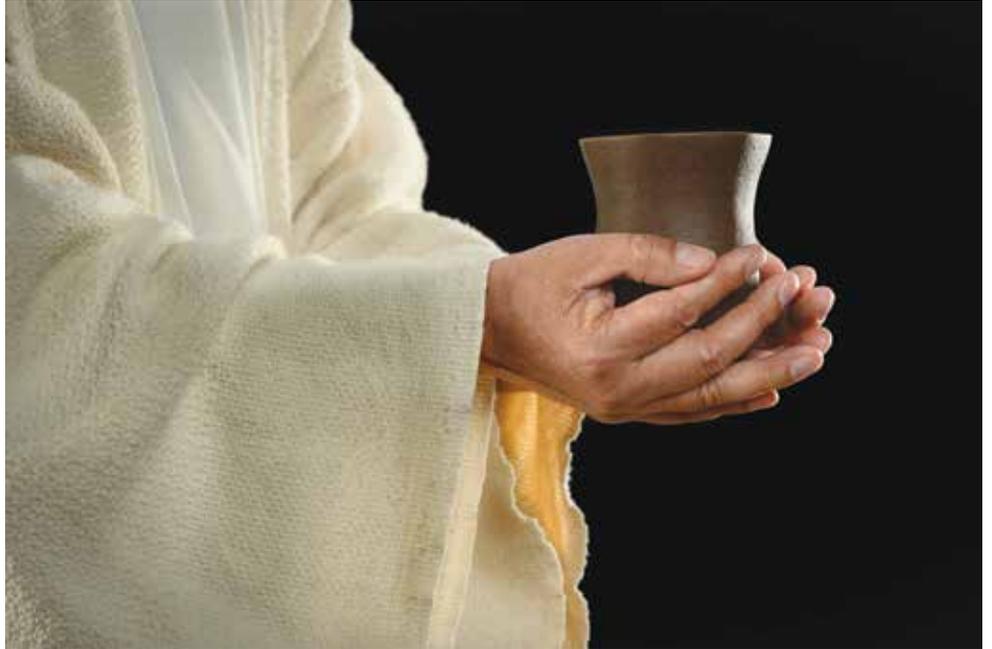
But if you pay attention, you’ll have the opportunity to enter into something deeper - a significant moment in our prayer.

It’s mentioned by St. Justin Martyr, one of the earliest Christian writers, when describing the Mass in the second century, “Bread is brought up and wine and water...”

This practice, of people bringing up the gifts, has been part of our Catholic tradition from the very beginning. Although we might think of this action as being merely practical, in reality, it serves a much deeper spiritual purpose.

Each Sunday Mass, someone is chosen, whether an usher, or another member of the parish, to bring forward “the gifts” - bread, wine, and in many cases, the collection of money that has been gathered moments before, from the generosity of the congregation. These gifts not only symbolize, but also in reality, are the work of human hands. The bread and wine are fruit of God’s creation, which, through the effort of human hands, are made into the gifts that we present to the Lord.

Certainly, the collection that is presented to the priest also serves to represent the work and sacrific-



es of the previous week. Sharing our monetary “treasures” is one of the ways that we embrace stewardship. It’s an opportunity to generously give back to the Lord, from the fruit of our work.

In his book *What Happens At Mass*, Fr. Jeremy Driscoll, OSB explains, “...We should not think of the collection of money at this point as some sort of banal, dirty but necessary affair. Money is our work. Money is hours of our lives. And now we give it away, we sacrifice it, for the work of the Church.”

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul instructs Christians to “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1).

The physical act of carrying the gifts forward to the priest is meant to serve as a tangible reminder of the fact that we are all called to stewardship. We are all called to present to God our lives - our work, our talents, the struggles

and victories of the past week - as an offering and gift to God.

Those who bring forward the gifts each week have the privilege and responsibility of remembering what their action represents - that we are called to give generously of our time, talent and treasure to God, who gives us His very self, at Mass. And for those sitting in the pews, tempted to “check out” for a few minutes, seeing the gifts being brought forward should serve as a powerful reminder to offer our lives back to God, through serving and honoring Him.

So next week, don’t just sit back and wait for the “halftime show.” Come to Mass a few minutes early and approach an usher to ask if you and/or your family may bring up the gifts that week. Don’t be surprised if you start to notice a change in your heart and a desire to be even more generous with God in the coming week!

Meet the Wachowicz Family

Finding a True Home at St. Cecilia Parish and School

Having both been raised in military families, neither Brian nor Mary Wachowicz ever had a single zip code to denote a childhood “home.” However, both their parents made the conscious decision to send their children to Catholic schools, making their faith life a dependable constant in the midst of their many moves. Today, Brian and Mary have carried on this tradition for their own children – Luke, 12; Tommy, 9; and Brendan, 7 – who all attend St. Cecilia School. Staying active in parish life and becoming a part of the church and school community here at St. Cecilia has made San Francisco a true home for the Wachowicz family.

Brian and Mary have lived in San Francisco for over 16 years, and they credit St. Cecilia with keeping them in the city they have come to love.

“We moved here from Los Angeles, and St. Cecilia’s was one of the first places where we met native San Franciscans,” Mary recalls. “It was also the reason we really thought about raising children here instead of moving to the suburbs, like so many of our friends with kids have done. St. Cecilia School has been a major reason for us to stay in the city.”

Now, eight years after their oldest child began attending the parish school, the Wachowicz family feels right at home here. Luke has started seventh grade and was recently elected the Publicity Chair for the Student Council. He also enjoys helping at Mass as an altar server, and both of his brothers look forward to being able to follow in his footsteps one day.

For Brian, it is gratifying to see his sons receive the same benefits from a Catholic education that he did as a child.

“Choosing Catholic school [for our children] was about priorities and the kind of foundation we wanted our kids raised on,” he says. “We spend more time at work during the week than with our families, so to leave our boys in an environment that is safe and secure and have the principles taught that are important to us – as well as the religious component – was important for us as parents.”



Brian and Mary Wachowicz with their sons, (from left) Tommy, Brendan, and Luke

Both Brian and Mary are active in parish life – Brian stays busy helping with the Men’s Club pancake breakfasts and coaching some of the boys’ sports teams, and Mary co-chaired the parish festival for two years. In all of the ways they have served the parish, the couple has enjoyed getting to know other families and forming great friendships with fellow parents and parishioners.

When Brian thinks about what keeps his family rooted in San Francisco, St. Cecilia comes immediately to mind.

“The parish has been a source of friendship and

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St. Cecilia Catholic Church

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Meet the Wachowicz Family *continued from page 7*

camaraderie, and a support group," he affirms. "We've made great connections with people, and we're usually at the school or church, so the parish has become a central meeting place for life. St. Cecilia's for us just felt like a family from early on."

Mary couldn't agree more! As she and Brian don't have any family in the area, Mary is very grateful for the opportunity to raise her boys in a strong "faith family" here at St. Cecilia.

"I think that the blessing comes from seeing our boys do well in the parish - just seeing it be a part of their lives and seeing them continue to keep God in mind, as well as having the parish there for support and prayers in tough times," she says. "Because we don't have family in the city, it's like a family for us."

"The parish has been a source of friendship and camaraderie, and a support group. We've made great connections with people, and we're usually at the school or church, so the parish has become a central meeting place for life. St. Cecilia's for us just felt like a family from early on."
– Brian Wachowicz

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.