

# Society of Mary

## Marists in the United States



December 18, 2020

### ***Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Program at Notre Dame Prep Marist Academy (NDPMA)***

by Mary Watson, Campus Ministry Assistant, NDPMA, Pontiac, Michigan

Over the last four years Notre Dame Prep Marist Academy in Pontiac, Michigan has been rolling out the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) program as an enrichment to their classroom religion lessons. Currently students at the Lower School in Pre-Kindergarten (3 year olds) through fourth graders participate in CGS once a week. CGS is an international faith formation program for children ages 3 to 12 years old that emphasizes the religious potential of the child. Nourishing the joy that children find in relationship with God is an important part of CGS.

Catechists provide an environment called the atrium that allows for contemplation and hands-on experiences. The atrium is a space set aside to be with Jesus. It is a room intentionally set up to not look like a classroom. Throughout the room are different areas with materials to encourage the students to further think about presentations and to develop the ability

to still themselves and focus. The altar area, geography, infancy narratives and parables, Good Shepherd and practical life areas are some of the areas that contain extended works for the child to explore on their own once they have been shown them. The catechist gives selected presentations from scripture and liturgy that are designed to “call forth” a response from the child. The catechist and child journey together as they explore who Jesus is and how much he loves us. Sacred Scripture and the liturgy are the foundation for the program.

Level I for ages 3 to 6 years old focuses on Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Older children come to know how Jesus is the True Vine and the importance of staying connected with Jesus. Time in the atrium is designed to provide opportunities for silence, contemplation, and prayer with our God. In the atrium at NDPMA there is a beautiful statue of Our Blessed Mother hanging on the wall watching over those who enter and reminding us to strive to be like Mary. The peace and calm of the room are a blessing to all that nurtures a relationship with our God. Time spent in the atrium is treasured by the children and adults.

What happens though when you have a hands-on faith formation program and a pandemic strikes? You pray and trust that God is bigger than any problem. While COVID 19 has placed visits to the atrium on hold for now at NDPMA, the work of the Good Shepherd continues. For now weekly Zoom sessions are being held with each class along with quiet time for an individual work. This allows the children to remember their past experiences in the atrium and to continue to contemplate the joys of a relationship with our loving and faithful God.

The Good News of Jesus Christ and His love for each of us fills us with hope and peace. As we wait for the time when we will be together again in the atrium, we know that Jesus is here with us now. The lighting of a candle reminds us that, “Jesus is the light of the world, and there is no darkness that can put out that light.”



**Altar area in atrium**

### BE NICE: OPERATION CANDY CANE CHEER

The Be Nice student group and campus ministry at NDP-MA made this Advent season one to remember for some very special people!

Showing their appreciation to the many health care workers who are tirelessly working for the greater good and risking their mental and physical health for the well-being of others, NDP students placed candy canes and thank you cards (created by the lower school students) in employee parking lots at area hospitals.

Those extraordinary front-line workers are excellent examples of living the words of Jesus, who said, "There is no greater love than to lay down your life for a friend." A little appreciation goes a long way toward one's wellbeing, and the Be Nice students want them to know they see them, they appreciate their efforts, and they are praying for them.



### Christmas Collaboration at NDPMA

A lower and middle school joint project lead to happy seventh-grade elves and even happier first graders.

In a special Christmas version of cross-school collaboration at Notre Dame, first graders in Kim Kriesel's lower school class received written replies from Santa and his "interns" from Meredith Scott's seventh-grade middle school writing class.

The first graders response to getting the letters this morning was amazing, according to Kriesel. "I teach a lesson on friendly letters and had my first graders write letters to Santa," she said. "We brainstormed, made a rough draft, proofread it, edited and wrote our final copy, which basically is the 'writing process' in a nutshell. I gave the letters to Mrs. Scott and she had her seventh-grade students respond as Santa's interns." Kriesel adds that the kids loved receiving the letters from the North Pole! "Their reactions were priceless," she said.

Notre Dame Preparatory's Christmas Choir Concert premieres Monday, Dec. 21, at 8 p.m. (EST) on [YouTube](#) after latest pandemic restrictions have altered the live caroling plans.

[Read](#) more about the upcoming Christmas concert.







Watch the first Virtual Christmas Concert from Notre Dame Des Victoires (NDV) in San Francisco, California

## Marist School

Atlanta, Georgia

### Community Service at Marist School

by Karen Shanahan, Campus Ministry,  
Coordinator of Community Outreach, Marist School

Students and families at Marist School have been involved inservice projects in various ways.

Over 600 pairs of socks were collected for a Socktober event coordinated by Lily Deiters, a 10th grade student. They are being distributed to the homeless, the elderly, children and families.

During the celebration of Veterans Day, students put together candy gift bags and wrote uplifting letters for Veterans who live in an apartment unit.

For the last 34 weeks, the students and families have been



**Carload of food for sandwich-making**

helping to make over 40,000 sandwiches for the homeless community. These have been given to several groups which reach out to the homeless. They are also donating winter jackets, hats, scarves to help keep people warm.

For many years we have volunteered at the night shelter serving hot meals, talking with the men and sharing reflections. Since we have 6 grades (grades 7-12), we have selected 6 nights to bring food to people at the night shelter. Food is collected at school, sorted and bagged by students for the night delivery. The children in the Early Learning Center (preschoolers) hand-made individual cards for the men and women. With the pandemic, the shelter is closed so we are providing breakfast and lunch bags and a hot dinner meal in to-go boxes to give out to our homeless brothers and sisters. The parents from each grade provide the food and the students sort and bag it. A few Marist families distribute the food from a church parking lot.

Trinity House is a 36-bed residential recovery program that serves homeless men who suffer from drug addiction. Students and faculty have been bringing a hot dinner meal once a month. They eat alongside the men and listen to their stories of addiction. The men always say not to start "doing drugs, because we've done it for you." Due to the pandemic, a parent brings the food, along with bags of candy and

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**Trinity House Zoom session**

cards for each of the men. Students and I have had ZOOM sessions with the men. This is a very popular project and students feel safe to share their stories with the men.

Adopt a Family is another ministry that is shared by many Marist families. We receive information about families in need from PATH Academy, the HOPE Community Center and from individuals themselves. Marist families "adopt" one of the special families, purchase clothing and shoes and grant a WISH for everyone in the family. The families deliver the gifts. This is a rewarding and important ministry.

During the pandemic, where safety for the elderly is a high priority, many students wrote Christmas letters to the elderly living in facilities or alone. We will begin to write encouraging letters to the Marist Fathers and Brothers who are living in similar situations.

There are many more projects in which Marist students are involved and we are proud of the Marist spirit they bring when they participate in these projects.



**Watch Marist School's Junior Classical League (JCL) clever take on "Jingle Bells" in Latin!**

### **Prayer Service for HIV/AIDS Awareness Month at Marist School by Nik Rodewald, SM**

On Friday, December 11, 2020, around twenty Marist students, faculty, and staff gathered for a prayer service in honor of HIV/AIDS Awareness Month. This prayer service was largely organized by students Jack Bellows ('22), Austin Frank ('21), Abby Testani ('21), and Lianna Homrich ('22), and followed a fundraising effort which raised over \$600 for AID Atlanta, which provides HIV/AIDS related services, care, and education.

Embracing the liturgical season of Advent, the prayer service included a reading from Isaiah 53, depicting the suffering servant. In his reflection, Jack Bellows highlighted the connection between the coming of Christ which the Church awaits in Advent and the presence of Christ among the victims of the AIDS epidemic:

*"God was particular in who he sent down to save us. Jesus wasn't royalty, he was far from it. He was a non-citizen Jew in the Roman Empire who came from a poor, working class family. He chose to be friends with lepers and prostitutes, and for this, he was ostracized by the rabbis in the temple. He was not particularly fond of the people who had everything society could ever give them and did nothing to help those who society gave nothing to. Instead, he lived with the broken hearted. He lived with the disinherited. He lived with those no one wanted to even look at. If we can truly say that we are followers of Christ, we need to think and act like he does.*

*Jesus is in each and every one of us. He is the sun coming up in the morning and going down at night; that is to say, he shines on everybody on this earth. And ladies and gentlemen, that sun shone on the AIDS lepers of the 80s, and it still shines on us today. That sun shines in us. We are all children of God, and we are called to seek the downtrodden and pushed away. We are called to love our neighbor, and by doing that, cast away hate and fear."*

The prayer service also included a digital art exhibit, curated by Austin Frank, along with a guided meditation, read by Ms. Sarah Conn, which all served not only to hold those who have suffered through the AIDS crisis in prayer, but also to inspire those in attendance to dedicate themselves through a greater pursuit of peace and justice.





## Remembering World AIDs Day in Ranong, Thailand

On December 1, 2020 the students and staff at the Marist Asia Foundation in Ranong, Thailand remembered World AIDs Day with the help of their Health Team. With over 38 million people worldwide, and hundreds of Migrant Families affected by HIV in Ranong, they held a special event calling for compassion not discrimination, education not ignorance, support not fear.



## Celebrating Advent at Notre Dame Academy Duluth, Georgia

The Advent blessings and Christmas spirit are shining throughout the Notre Dame Academy campus!

The second graders in Mrs. Mathews' class made holiday crafts and a basket of snacks for their service learning partner, Country Gardens.

The sixth graders in Mrs. Mancinelli's Religion class made their own Advent calendars!

The Upper School students began Advent by lighting the Advent wreath in Kavanaugh Hall during morning prayer. A generous parent beautifully decorated our Schroeder Hall Christmas tree. Mrs. Jennifer Atkinson, our receptionist, added ornaments with pictures of our faculty and staff members as children.

God's blessings continue to shine everywhere we go. May He bless you during this holy season!



**41 People Consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH), Tampa, Florida**

On December 12, 2020, the parishioners at OLPH celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a very important day for the entire American continent as She was proclaimed on August 24, 1910 by Pope Pius X "Heavenly Patroness of Latin America". Later, Pio XI declared her "Patroness of all the Americas", Pio XII called her "Empress of the Americas" and John XXIII, "The Celestial Missionary of the New World" and "the Mother of the Americas".

Brothers and sisters of different nationalities gathered at OLPH to honor the Virgin Mary. The church was beautifully decorated with diverse flowers that reminded us of that beautiful day when our Lady



*Fr. Hector Cruz, SM with some of the newly consecrated*

appeared in the tilma of San Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin, an Indigenous Aztec, after having asked him in his own language, nahuatl, to ask the Bishop Fray Juan de Zumárraga to build a temple to hear the prayers of her children.

This year the parishioners honored Our Lady with the Consecration of 41 aspirants who for 33 continuous days made their Preparation for the Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary. This project has been supported by Rev. Héctor José Cruz Lesbros, SM, pastor of OLPH. Fr. Cruz has celebrated three other similar Consecration Masses this year.

A particularly exciting moment was when Father Cruz addressed them saying: "Dear aspirants, at this time, at which you are ready to assume this commitment to the Ever Blessed Virgin Mary - the safest Way to Christ - I want to remind you that you commit yourselves to a constant conversion of the heart, perseverance in purity of intention in each of the works you do and a ready spirit to respond to the call of the Church our Mother in the different apostolates in which your collaboration is needed. Therefore, when I call your name, please kneel to do the act of consecration."

The message of Our Lady of Guadalupe, from more than 400 years ago, remains particularly important in these times of the pandemic. Today, as then, Our Lady tells us: "Have understood, my son, the smallest one, that it is nothing that frightens and afflicts you; your heart is not troubled; don't be afraid of this disease or any other illness and distress. Am I not here, that I'm your mother? "Let us return confidently, again and again, and we will find safe haven "Under the name of Mary."



*Organizing Committee: Luz Diaz, Yolanda Trejo, Alfredo Figueroa, and Maria Rosas*



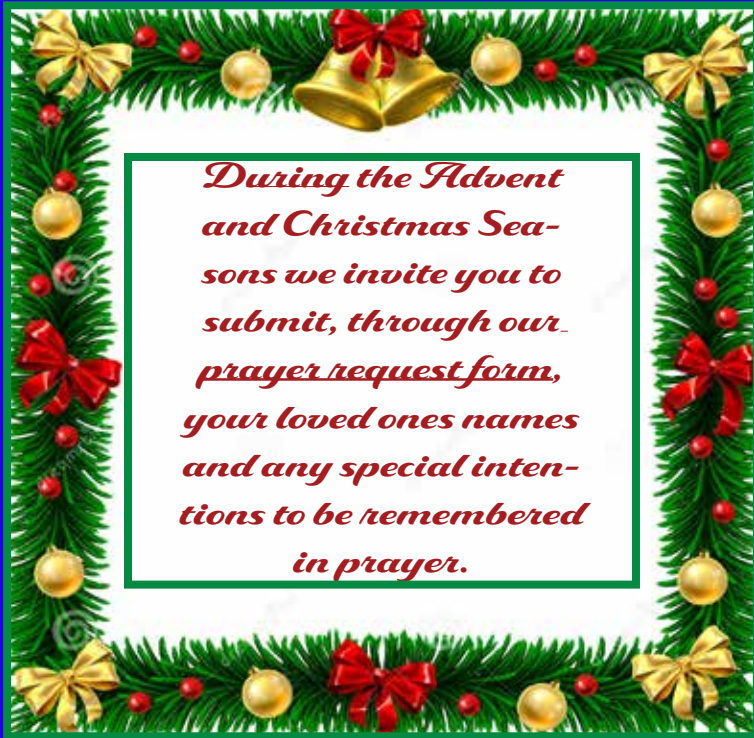
**Celebrating the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at San Felipe de Jesus  
Brownsville, Texas**



**The Start of a Jubilee Year for the Missionary Sister of the Society of Mary (SMSM)**



Fr John Larsen, SM joined the SMSM sisters in Rome on November 15th, as they began their Jubilee Year to celebrate the 175th Anniversary of The Launching of the Movement by Marie Françoise Perroton. She was the first pioneer of the SMSM, who set out from France in 1845. She wrote: "My firm wish is to be at the service of the missions for the rest of my life." She served in the islands of Wallis and Futuna until her death in 1873. Marie Françoise launched the movement that would grow and develop into the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary.



*During the Advent and Christmas Seasons we invite you to submit, through our prayer request form, your loved ones names and any special intentions to be remembered in prayer.*

**Advent & Christmas Reflections Reminder**



For the final Sunday of Advent and Christmas day, we invite you to participate with the Society of Mary (Marists) in reflections from the Creation Care Ministry Team at Our Lady of Assumption Parish, a Marist ministry in Atlanta, Georgia. In remembrance of the 5th Anniversary of Laudato Si', this year's meditations reflect on this Encyclical along with Pope Francis's newest Encyclical, Fratelli Tutti

The reflections will be available on our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page.

In these anxious and challenging times, we pray that all will have a safe and blessed Advent season!

**ADVENT REFLECTIONS...**



What is our contribution to a brighter 2021? Let the crib teach us. We are called to be contemplative, like Our Lady, our mother and our model. We are to choose to live very simply, like the crib-scene itself. We are to find Christ in the company of the poor, the migrants and the "seekers" of our time.

*Fr John Larsen, sm  
Superior General*

**Rare planetary alignment to make "Christmas star" this December**



**Due to the holidays, this will be the last Society of Mary USA E-Newsletter for 2020. We look forward to sharing more news about our Marist ministries with you in 2021!**

**Wishing you a safe and Blessed Christmas and New Year!**