

St. Patrick Parish IN FOCUS

www.stpaturbana.org

December 2023

O Come!

At Evening Prayer, in the last few days before Christmas, many Christians pray the “O Antiphons.” An “antiphon” is a refrain, like the refrain of a hymn. The O Antiphons are refrains used when Mary’s Magnificat is sung during Evening Prayer.



Even if you don’t pray Evening Prayer with the Church, these antiphons will probably sound familiar to you. They are so beautiful and revered that they are used in many places. For example, the hymns “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” (Gather #395) and “My Soul in Stillness Waits (#415) are both paraphrases of the antiphons.

Here they are:

- Dec. 17: O Wisdom, O holy Word of God, you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care. Come and show

your people the way to salvation.

- Dec. 18: O sacred Lord of ancient Israel, who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush, who gave him the holy law on Mount Sinai: Come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.
- Dec. 19: O Flower of Jesse’s stem, you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples. Kings stand silent in your presence. The nations bow down in worship before you. Come, let nothing keep you from coming to our aid.
- Dec. 20: O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel, controlling at your will the gate of heaven: Come break down the prison walls of death, and lead your captive people into freedom.
- Dec. 21: O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light and sun of justice: Shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.
- Dec. 22: O King of all the nations, the only joy of every human heart; O Keystone of the mighty arch of time: Come and save the creature you fashioned from the dust.

See **O Come!** on page 4

Christmas cookies? Really?

Yes, really! The popular Christmas cookie (and other homemade treats, even baskets) sale is scheduled to take place on Sunday, December 10, from 8:00 a.m. to noon. Plans are definitely in the making right now!

The Women of St. Patrick are putting out the call for donations of cookies, and you should soon see your invitation to participate in the parish bulletin. Donations of home-baked goods of all kinds, home-canned goods such as jams and jellies, and homemade crafts and needlework items will be in demand for shoppers, so bring out your favorite recipes and homemade items!

By the time you read this, you may find additional information and updates in the parish bulletin. Know that if you’re not able to be a provider, you can always be a Christmas shopper. This event is for you, no matter how you look at it!

Mark your calendar, save your nickels and dimes, get out your favorite baking recipes – the Christmas cookie (and other homemade treats) sale is coming. Just imagine!



Homeschoolers, take note!

Located in the heart of Urbana, Illinois, St. Patrick's Parish ministry, the Faith & Reason Learning Community (FRLC) is an educational gem. A homeschooling co-op founded in 2019 by two moms, Liza Kaap and Ann Birchenough, this co-op is becoming a beacon for those seeking a classical education with Catholic values.

Homeschooling can be a fantastic choice for many families, but it comes with its own set of obstacles. Some parents may not feel equipped to teach certain subjects, particularly languages and sciences. Homeschooling can also limit a child's socialization opportunities.

Families who meet and work cooperatively to address the needs of homeschooling and achieve common goals can be organized around academics, social time, the arts, activities, crafts, service work, or projects, or some combination of these to form co-ops.

The Faith & Reason Learning Community is a classically structured academic homeschool co-op that offers an array of classes for students in grades PreK 4 to 12th.

Classical education traces its origins back to the grand halls of ancient Greece and Rome, where toga-draped scholars gathered to engage in spirited debates, rooted in a tapestry of Latin and ancient Greek, intertwining literature, philosophy, and mathematics with virtue and character development.

Today's students reside in a digital age where knowledge is at their fingertips with a mere click of a touchpad. To meet the evolving demands of the modern world, Classical education has expanded to encompass a broad spectrum of subjects as many programs integrate language, logic, and reason, into Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (S.T.E.A.M.) studies.

The core of FRLC is a classical model of education that values critical thinking, communication skills, and a love for learning within a framework of Catholic values. It brings together the wisdom of the past with the demands of the digital age.

The FRLC co-op relies on willing parents and community members to serve as tutors for the array of classes provided. To better serve the students, the curriculum is divided into Lower and Upper Schools.

Lower School students, ranging from Pre-K to 6th

grade, benefit from a diverse curriculum designed to provide a comprehensive education. The curriculum includes a range of subjects, such as Science, History, Music, Art, Grammar & Writing (specifically for grades 4-6), and Storytime Theater (tailored for grades K-3). For those interested, Classical Memory work is also available.

The Upper School is tailored for students in grades 7-12, offering a wide range of classes and flexibility to mix and match subjects based on individual family needs. Humanities classes include literature, history, and liberal arts, encompassing levels of logic and rhetoric.

The science curriculum takes a hands-on approach with laboratory-based activities, which rotate to cover topics like Earth Science, General Biology, Chemistry, and Physics for Logic and Rhetoric students.

Furthermore, students participate in a variety of public speaking classes, including Speech, Debate, and Moot Court. Upper studies also include Spanish and Latin, Religion, Upper School Art, and Writing.

All homeschooling families are welcome. Parents can choose the classes that fit their needs, joining sessions for all or part of the learning day. FRLC is dedicated to upholding its Mission Statement:

"Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth – in a word, to know himself – so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves." (Pope St. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*)

In service to the Church and faithfulness to the Magisterium, the mission of Faith and Reason Learning Community is to glorify God by providing community, support, and encouragement to homeschooling families educating their children.

By following the classical model of education and employing God's gifts of our Faith and our Reason, we strive to seek Truth, Beauty and Goodness in all of God's creation and thereby deepen our intimate relationship with Him. All are welcome to join in pursuing this mission. "That they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (John 17:23)

For those who wish to explore the opportunities available, please refer to the FRLC website <https://faithandreasonlc.com> or contact the program's Director, Liza Kaap (faithandreasoncoop@gmail.com).



St. Patrick's Masses available online

You may be aware that most of our Masses at St. Patrick are streamed on the internet so that people who cannot come to Mass can still pray with their parish family. In addition to the Sunday and weekday Masses, we often stream funerals, weddings, and baptisms. It's a wonderful way that we are able to reach out to those who can't be with us.



Did you know that the recordings of Mass are kept for several weeks on the parish website? This opens up many possibilities. Have you ever wished to hear part of a homily again? Would you like to hear a piece of music again? Maybe you'd like to show a friend our beautiful church.

It's easy to find the recordings on the parish website. Go to the parish website, stpaturbana.org, and click on the big button that says "Watch Our Masses Online." Across the top of the screen you'll see "Home," "Videos," "Live," and other options. Click on "Videos," and there you are!

We have a team of eight people who control the cameras and make sure that the recording gets onto the website. You'll often find one of them sitting in the corner near the organ with a laptop. Some of the streamers work from home, so you won't always see someone there. It takes just one person to record a Mass, so each streamer generally streams one Mass per week, except when they cover for each other.

It would be great to have a couple more people who know, or are willing to learn, how to do this valuable outreach. If you're curious about it, say hello to one of the streamers and ask to see what they're doing. Or contact Diane Wilhelm (wilhelmd@earthlink.net); she will be happy to help.

You are precious in my eyes, and glorious, and . . . I love you.
Isaiah 43:4

Vocation Prayer

Lord, in your loving care for us, you give each of us a piece of your saving work to do. Call from among us people who will preach your Word, seek out the lost and lonely, bring healing and reconciliation to those who are crushed in spirit, provide food for those who hunger in body or soul, and bear witness to your love.

Bless those who serve in these ministries. Give them gifts of love, faith, prayer, and friendship, that they may persevere in the life you have given them until you call them home to you.

Welcome to French Mass!

By Alia Rdissi

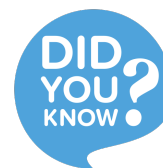
I attended my first French Mass at St. Patrick's church recently. Fr. Julien Esse from St. Matthew's Catholic Church presides over this Mass twice a month, on second and last Sundays, at 12 noon.

I was struck by the energy of the Mass. The Congolese choir, directed by Prisca Mondongo, swayed to the music as they sang. My French is limited, but I felt raised up by the choir's exultant song and the sonorous beat of the conga drums.

I immediately noticed that the women were dressed in colorful attire, and the men in crisp, tailored suits, certainly their Sunday best. Despite the formality of their dress, they projected a casual, welcoming energy.

Fr. Esse delivered an impassioned homily, at times coming in front of the ambo to move about more freely and engage with the congregation.

As I thanked the choir for their service and their beautiful song after Mass, they urged me to bring more guests with me next time! So consider coming to French Mass as an alternative to your usual Mass experience. Even if you don't understand the language, you are sure to be inspired by the welcoming love and earnest proclamation of God's word.



Growing Disciples is Bishop Tylka's process for developing a pastoral plan for the Diocese of Peoria. The first phase deals with parish alignment and the availability of priests. On Oct. 9, meetings were held at parishes throughout the diocese to invite comments on proposed changes. At this time, no major changes are proposed for St. Patrick. If you were unable to attend the meeting, you can read about it here: www.growingdisciplescdop.org/models.

O Come!

From page 1

- Dec. 23: O Emmanuel, king and lawgiver, desire of the nations, Savior of all people: Come and set us free, Lord our God.

You see that each antiphon is addressed to Jesus, giving beautiful images for his name. If you've ever made a Jesse tree, they will be familiar to you. Notice that each image shows Jesus in relationship with humanity, working for our good. Jesus is the wise Word of God spoken to us. He is revealed to us as fire in the burning bush. He gives us the law to show us how to live. He is the Dawn that enlightens our hearts. He is the Flower whose beauty makes us gasp for joy. He is the Key that lets us into heaven. These images give us much to savor.

In the second part of each antiphon, we ask Jesus for his help, and this gives us a series of images for ourselves. We need to learn the way of salvation. We need to be freed from sin and death. We need our Maker, who fashioned us from the dust. We long for his presence. So we ask him, come!

We know Jesus because we meet him in prayer, in the scriptures, in the sacraments, and in one another. But we also know that our knowledge of him is incomplete. Often this is because we don't pay attention to him as diligently as we could. But also, we await his return and the time when he brings his kingdom to completion. The season of Advent reminds us that God isn't finished with us yet. And so we pray, O come!



Parish Council News

At their October Council meeting, members welcomed Gary Scaff, who raises the number of Council members to eleven. Gary is a 4th-degree member of the Knights of Columbus at St. Thomas, and a member of the Cursillo Security Committee.

Discussion continued about opening the church for private prayer. It focused on times this could be arranged without interfering with other uses of the church, e.g., baptisms, confessions, Masses, adoration, socializing after Mass, etc. It was suggested that the parish bulletin and website carry information about the times the church is open for people who wish to stop in to pray.

An evaluation of the Time and Talent process found

that it drew a good response; a second effort may be scheduled in the spring. Having speakers give personal statements about their ministries meanwhile may encourage others to volunteer.

The International Festival also drew a great response from parishioners, although as a fundraiser it brought in only \$750, and some suggestions were offered that might increase donations in the future. Efforts might also include recruiting parishioners to chair subcommittees, much as is done for WSP's Cellar-to-Garret Sale.

The Parish Council received an invitation from Michael Crosby, pastor of The First Mennonite Church, to participate in sending a supportive message for Jews, who have been targeted locally as a result of the warfare in the Middle East. Regrettably, action on this could not be taken before the next day's deadline.

Parish Nurses and you

Have you had your blood pressure checked at St. Patrick lately? If not, you've missed a great opportunity to meet with one of our Parish Nurses, have the satisfaction of an accurate reading of your blood pressure, and learn how the Parish Nurses help our parishioners – beyond blood pressure checks, that is. They can also provide you with information about



healthcare-related community resources. You might want to explore this program to find out all the ways it can help you.

Parish Nurses also make available what's called the Vial of Life, a container designed to hold important medical information that you provide, such as a list of medications, allergies, special needs, and advance directives. It's especially helpful for seniors, people who love alone, and those with chronic illness. It is designed to help emergency personnel provide the best possible care; it can save your life. Ask for one the next time you come for a blood-pressure check.

Ladies Knight Out had a Thanksgiving flavor

the food. Last year they offered a buffet of many hot and cold appetizers with wines and desserts, more than enough to satisfy the genteel Ladies.

This year dinner was again a

Florida they were grateful for “Sunshine on my shoulder.” In New Orleans they felt saintly so they sang “When the saints go marching in” while carrying a fake casket as in a jazz funeral. In Las



The Cath’lic Boys’ performances get more polished with each passing year. There must be a requisite for men joining the Knights of Columbus in our parish – they must be able to carry a tune. Not only does the singing get amazingly better each year, but so does the acting, or hamming it up. They have created a dinner theater in St. Brigid Hall.

The dinner arrangement was different for the third time in as many years. In the past the evening traditionally began with a Knights’ served dinner of salad, steak or

chicken and all the trimmings , wine and dessert. But sad to say, there were not enough Knights to cook and serve all

buffet, but a full, seven-course dinner. There were many meats: roast beef, fajita-spiced chicken, and saucy meatballs. There were fresh veggies, hummus, ranch dressing, and salads. For dessert there were bowls of mixed nuts and delicious little cheesecake squares in many delectable flavors. Wines were served with dinner and coffee after dinner, while the door-prizes were drawn.

The theme of the Cath’lic Boys’ skit this year was traveling our country to celebrate things to be grateful for. The overture showed the Boys dressed up in white shirts and black pants, with red or black hats, and wielding canes while they danced and sang. To start the trip they changed into flannels and sat behind big cardboard steering wheels while they sang “On the road again, Cath’lic Boys on the road again.”

This enthusiastic departure led them to ten different states to find things to be thankful for. In

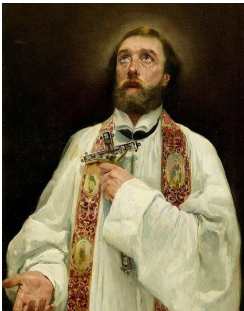
Vegas they sang “Sweet Caroline,” dressed as cabaret singers. When they reached San Francisco, they wore tie-dye tee shirts and sang “A groovy kind of love.”

Feeling nostalgic, the Cath’lic Boys headed home to the Harvest Moon Drive-in in Gibson City. Then Jim Mayer, realizing what is truly important, sang a song of jubilation to love your neighbor, yourself, and the Lord your God. To end on a high note, the Cath’lic Boys sang a rousing rendition of, “When the saints go marching in” as an encore. The Ladies gave them a standing ovation, thankful for another wonderful evening with the Cath’lic Boys.



St. Francis Xavier, first Jesuit missionary

It is a tradition at Holy Cross School that fourth-graders choose a saint of significance to them, dress up as that saint, and deliver a speech about that saint at the All Saints Day school Mass on November 1. My son is in fourth grade at Holy Cross, and he chose St. Francis Xavier as his saint for the simple fact that he happens also to have the name Xavier. Consequently, I chose to research this saint's life for this month's issue of In Focus. Alia Rdissi



Francis Xavier was born Francisco de Jasso y Azpilicueta on April 7, 1506, in the Kingdom of Navarre, now in modern-day northern Spain. He came from a noble family and grew up in Xavier Castle as the youngest son of Don Juan de Jasso y Atondo, president of the Royal Council of

the Kingdom of Navarre.

When he was 19, he went to study at the University of Paris, where he met Ignatius of Loyola. Ignatius tried to convert Francis to a godly life, but Francis resisted, feeling drawn toward worldly achievements. As his relationship with Ignatius continued, his resistance to a priestly calling began to lessen.

In 1534, Francis, Ignatius, and five other devout students made private vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in imitation of Christ and also vowed to go to the Holy Land to convert the infidels. It was that year that Francis began to study theology. He was ordained as a priest three years later, in 1537.

Francis joined a new religious order founded by Ignatius: the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). As the first Jesuit missionary, his missions were mainly to Asia, especially



Japan, Malaysia, and India, making him the “Apostle of the Indies.” He is said to have converted 30,000 people to Christianity, more than anyone else since Paul the Apostle.

On December 3, 1552, Francis died of a fever in China. His body was moved several times before finally being buried in Goa, India, where it was placed in a glass container encased in a silver casket on December 2, 1637. There are 32 silver plates on all four sides of the casket, depicting different episodes from his life, including the miracles, such as resuscitation of individuals who had died, curing the deaf and paralytics, and the sweetening of sea water. His right forearm is in a reliquary at the main Jesuit church in Rome, Il Gesu.

Francis was canonized by Gregory XV on March 12, 1622, at the same time as Ignatius of Loyola. The Novena of Grace is a popular devotion to Francis Xavier, typically prayed either on the nine days before December 3 or on March 4 through 12. Proclaimed the Patron of Catholic Missions, his attributes are the cross, signifying his preaching and missionary works, and a seashell, representing his journeys to the Far East. We celebrate his feast day on December 3.



How did St. Nicholas morph into Santa Claus?

Little is known, apparently, about St. Nicholas other than that he lived sometime during the fourth century and was bishop of the city of Myra in Asia Minor. Many stories exist about him, but one most frequently passed down speaks of a poor man who could not feed or clothe his three daughters, and when St. Nicholas heard of it, he tossed three bags of gold through the poor man's window one evening so he could tend to his daughters' needs.

Modern folklore about Santa Claus, Kris Kringle, and Father Christmas are based on the stories that abound about St. Nicholas and his love for and generosity toward children. But how did he come to be known as Santa Claus? Here's one possibility – though there are many:

Dutch families took the tradition of celebrating the feast day of Saint Nicholas with them to New Amsterdam in the American colonies as early as the 17th century. They referred to him as Sinterklaas, and that name became Santa Claus to the early United States' English-speaking majority. The legend of a kindly old man was united with old Nordic folktales of a magician who punished naughty children and rewarded good children with presents to form the pop-cultural figure of Santa Claus.

We can blame the Dutch immigrants, or we can relax with the image of a kindly man who shared what he had with those who had less.

In thanksgiving: Pat Justice and George Fahey

Pat Justice and George Fahey have recently retired as Parish Trustees, having completed their five-year term. These thanks are for their wholehearted service to their pastor and their parish.



George Fahey



Pat Justice

Parish Trustees, after the initial announcement of their appointment, are rarely mentioned in parish documents (or newsletters like *In Focus*) because their work is usually with the pastor in response to his requests.

However, when we asked about their experiences of the last five years, this is what we learned:

- They were asked for their advice or opinion about such issues as the music space, the role of a parish council, ways to engage parishioners, etc.
- They served as liaisons to the Facility Resource Committee, the Grounds Resource Committee, and the Safety Resource Committee.
- Following Covid, they produced an annual report that gave parishioners a snapshot of what happened the previous year.
- They worked with staff on a number of issues and were always available to them, as well as to parishioners who contacted them on a number of issues.
- They were also appointed to the parish's senior leadership team for Bishop Tylka's program "Growing Disciples." They continue to serve on this team.

So thank you, Pat and George. We are grateful to you for all you have accomplished in these five years, as well as for anything you may have tried and were unable to accomplish. It was God's work that you undertook, and you must know that God is very pleased with you.

First Reconciliation

By Greta Buckley

As I prepare for First Reconciliation with the youngest of my three daughters, I have a lot of emotions of seeing my "baby" growing up. I adore her childlike wonder about God. I'm sure she has more questions coming about her First Reconciliation. Even though we've been through it before, it gives me time to stop and reflect.

Each time we've gone through First Reconciliation with our two older girls, it was a time of spiritual growth. (Or that's the hope, right?) I can't speak for my seventh-grader, fourth-grader, or my husband, but examining my conscience is a strengthening exercise for me. It's like training for that 5k, but you get a better medal! If you're like me, you don't enjoy the preparation before running, but love the feeling after you're done. Same goes for reconciliation.

Before I became Catholic in my mid-20s, I had a shame-filled approach to sins I had committed. Even after I became Catholic, it took me a while to believe that reconciliation of sins really did set you free. I'm still an imperfect, inconsistent visitor to the confessional room, but I've welcomed the expected time for reconciliation with our youngest going through religious education. I hope I'm not alone in this feeling.



We hope that by prioritizing trips to the confessional at an early age, our kids will be more comfortable with the process as they grow older.

I would like to think that someday when one of our children is troubled, they can run to Jesus.

I hope if we set up regular meeting times, it'll be easier for them to access Jesus' mercy. Also, our kids aren't always going to view Mom as the best sounding board, especially if it's one of those times when they weren't honoring our family.

It's an incredible feeling on the day of First Communion – the all-white dresses and suits and the joyful smiles. I hope other fellow parents of First Communicants feel an inner joy for themselves too. It's an accomplishment we can all share and hopefully the start of something truly special.



Quick Fixin's from the kitchen of . . . Cathy Salika



Graham Cracker Nut Cake

3/4 lb walnuts
1/2 lb graham crackers
1/2 t baking powder
10 egg yolks
10 egg whites
1 lb powdered sugar
1 t vanilla

Grind and mix together walnuts, graham crackers, and baking powder; set aside. In a large bowl beat egg yolks, powdered sugar, and vanilla until pale yellow and thick. In another bowl beat egg whites until stiff. Then combine everything in the large bowl with the egg yolk mixture: start with 1/3 of the nut mixture, then carefully fold in 1/3 of the egg whites, then the rest of the egg whites, and finally the rest of the nut mixture. Pour into two 9-inch square baking pans that have been greased and floured, and bake at 350 degrees for about 40 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out clean.

If you have a recipe you'd like to share, please send it to Mary Lou Menches (344-1125, mmenches@illinois.edu). The only requirement is that it be easy and quick to prepare!



St. Patrick now has groups for moms, dads, and families. This past fall, there were monthly Moms' Nights Out, as well as a monthly faith formation group for moms. Dads had Nights Out too, and families got together for several Saturday playdates. The final family event of this season will be the Family Advent Party at St. Patrick's, at 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, December 9. Contact Anna Kinskey (anna.kinskey@gmail.com or 309-530-9210) for more information. And watch the bulletin for future dates for meetings and nights out.

Can you help In Focus happen?

Many people contribute their time and talents to help *In Focus* come out each month. We're happy to have all kinds of help, but we have two special needs right now.

Page Layout: Three or four times a year, you would receive files of edited articles and photos, lay them out using whatever software you prefer, and create a pdf.

Committee Member: We meet monthly (virtually, for now) to brainstorm articles for the next issue. Meetings are usually held on the fourth Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Interested? Contact Cathy Salika at 217-367-7861 or csalika@illinois.edu.

St. Patrick's Parish In Focus is published on the last weekend of the month in Urbana, Illinois. News items and information may be submitted by the first weekend of the month for an upcoming issue. Materials must include the name and telephone number of the person submitting them.

Please send news items to infocusstpats@gmail.com. You may also send them to any Communications Committee member (listed with contact information below). All submissions are subject to review and/or editing by the committee and staff. By-lines are generally omitted.

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The deadline for submitting articles and news items for the next (January) issue of *In Focus* is **Sunday, December 5.**