

ST. MARY PARISH



Ripples of God's love... Through our hearts, to all hearts

312 SOUTH STATE STREET • APPLETON, WI 54911

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BULLETIN REMINDER OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Please call the office if you have any questions.

This Weekend:

- Trustee Treasurer Election: In the pews and at the church exits you will find ballots for the Trustee Treasurer position. Please complete these ballots and put them in the baskets available. This vital parish role is one of the corporate roles for the parish, participates on the finance council and reviews banking transactions.
- St. Joe's food program collection in August 9 & 10. Items being collected are drinks of any type. Please nothing in glass containers, past use by date or anything perishable.
- We are looking for volunteers for Babysitting Ministry, Middle School Catechist, & Elementary Catechist & Aids. Contact the parish office for more information.
- Be a part of the Habitat for Humanity Faith Build! Here are our scheduled dates and tasks: Sept 2 - Siding, Oct 1 - Prepare a Meal, Oct 2 - Wall Rock, Oct 25 - Paint and Stain. To sign up for building activities, please contact Ray Fuchs at rfuchs1944@gmail.com. If you're interested in preparing and/or serving meals, reach out to Sarah Fraley at sfraley@new.rr.com.
- Save the date to Celebrate Our Feast Day Weekend with us. September 13 & 14
- Save the date for the parish roll-out of the Hallow Prayer App on September 20 & 21
- Join us on Sunday for Coffee & Donuts after the 7:45 am and 9:45 am Masses.
- We will have Children's Liturgy of the Word at the 9:45 am Mass on Sunday.

in Joy & SORROW

ST MARY PARISH - APPLETON // 8.10.2025

WITH FR. BILL SWICHTENBERG



Reaching three months into a new pontificate, Pope Leo XIV has risen to the overwhelming task. I recall that early on, before beginning his address, he took the time to apologize to the assembly for being late. I thought it was interesting that his apology was in English. He admitted that learning the ropes of his new job had been a challenge. The assembly chuckled.

Pope Leo has been deliberate about when he speaks in English. I don't know why an apology is deserving of English but I do know that some 1.4 billion people on this small planet understand English. I would encourage the Holy Father to speak in English when he laments over the horror that afflicts some two million Gazans, who are desperate to find something to eat and clean water to drink. Yes, we can wait for the English translation of the Italian but I think the Pope's prophetic message on the insanity of war would reach further in real time if his words were in English. I am just saying.

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This past weekend, every eye was glued on Pope Leo. Approximately one million young people from throughout the world were in Rome for the Jubilee Celebration for Young People. The Pope would be the star attraction for a Prayer Vigil on Saturday evening and for the Mass on Sunday morning. He surprised everyone with a surprise appearance at the Opening Mass for the Jubilee earlier in the week. The crowd was ecstatic.

I was able to catch a bit of the Prayer Vigil last Saturday. Folks, we have a young pope who appears to be in topnotch physical shape. Sixty-nine years of age is young, yes? Doing his ministry as Prefect for the Dicastery of Bishops in Rome for three years before his election, Leo often worked out at the gym, under the guidance of a personal trainer. That trainer had no idea that his patron was Cardinal Robert Prevost. I am sure that he was shocked when the new Pope stepped out onto the balcony of Saint Peter's Basilica on May 8. There was his patron, Bob!

A lot of people were surprised, including yours truly. Here before the world was the first Pope from the US, a fellow Midwesterner from Chicago, a White Sox baseball fan, a graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics from Villanova University in Pennsylvania, and a member of the religious community of men named the Society of Saint Augustine.

Pope Leo's weekend commitments included two extensive tours of the cheering crowd, gathered at Tor Vergata, outside of Rome, riding in the Popemobile. At one of these occasions, someone in the crowd tossed him a tennis ball. The Holy Father must have seen it in his peripheral vision, as he was looking forward, but with his athletic prowess plucked that ball out of the air. He had a bit of a smirk on his face!

Pope Leo still enjoys a game of tennis now and then but finding the time since becoming Pope is a challenge. Even getting a haircut is a challenge. Needing a haircut, he called up his barber in Rome, identifying himself as Bob Prevost, wondering if his stylist could come to his home. Well, that barber was flummoxed when he learned that he was going to the Vatican to cut Pope Leo's hair! Just showing up for lunch with his Augustinian community, which Leo did often when he was a Cardinal, is almost impossible. It is impossible for the Pope to do much on his own, or at the spur of the moment. As you can imagine, the Holy Father goes no place without causing a commotion, and jumpstarting many security measures.

I was flabbergasted to see Pope Leo process into the stadium on Saturday for the Prayer Vigil, carrying high the Cross, with a bounce in his step, confidently managing twenty-nine steps (I counted them!), unassisted, to enter into the worship space.

The prayer revolved around Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, with one million people keeping complete silence for periods of time. There were witness talks and beautiful worship and praise music. Three young people were invited to come to the stage to ask Pope Leo a question. Pope Leo was well prepared and so would have had the questions ahead of time. They centered around friendship, the courage to choose, and the call to do good. I thought Pope Leo's answers were profound. Here are just a few highlights:

- ...today there are algorithms that tell us what we should watch, what we should think, and who our friends should be. And so our relationships become confusing, sometimes anxious. When a tool controls someone, that person becomes a tool: a commodity on the market and, in turn, a piece of merchandise. Only genuine relationships and stable connections can build good lives.

Dear young people, every person naturally desires a good life, just as lungs long for air, but how difficult it is to find it! How difficult it is to find true friendship! Centuries ago, Saint Augustine understood the deepest desire of our hearts, the desire of every human heart, even without the technological developments of today. He too had a restless youth, but he did not settle for less, he did not silence the cry of his heart. Augustine sought the truth, the truth that does not disappoint and the beauty that does not fade. And how did he find it? How did he find true friendship and a love capable of giving hope? By finding the one who was already looking for him, by finding Jesus Christ. How did he build his future? By following the one who had always been his friend. In his own words, friendship is nowhere faithful but in Christ. Saint Augustine tells us there is no friendship that is authentic if that is not in Christ. And the true friendship is always in Jesus Christ with truth, love and respect. Only in him can it be eternal and happy (cf. Against Two Letters of the Pelagians I, I, 1). The one who loves God in his friend, truly loves his friend (cf. Sermon 336), Saint Augustine tells us. Friendship with Christ, which forms the basis of faith, is not just one aid among many others for building the future; it is our guiding star. To live without faith, without a patrimony to defend, without a steady struggle for truth, according to Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati [who will be named a saint by Pope Leo on September 7, along with Blessed Carlo Acutis], is not living, but existing (cf. Letters, 27 February 1925). It is when our friendships reflect this intense bond with Jesus that they really become sincere, generous and true.

- We recognize God's faithfulness in the words of those who truly love, because they have been truly loved. "You are my life, Lord": this is what a priest and a consecrated sister say full of joy and in complete freedom, "You are my life, Lord." "I take you to be my wife and I take you to be my husband": this is the phrase that transforms the love of a man and a woman into an efficacious sign of God's love in marriage. These are radical, meaningful choices: Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Consecrated Life. They express the free and liberating gift of self that makes us truly happy. That is where we find happiness, when we learn to give ourselves, to give our lives for others.

These choices give meaning to our lives, transforming them into the image of the perfect love that created them and redeemed them from all evil, even from death. I say this tonight, thinking of two young women, María, from Spain, who was 20 years old, and Pascale, from Egypt, who was 18 years old. Both chose to come to Rome for the Jubilee of Youth, and both have passed away in these days. Let us together pray for them; let us also pray for their families, friends and communities. May the Risen Jesus receive them into the peace and joy of his Kingdom. And I would also like to ask for your prayers for another friend, a young Spanish man, Ignacio Gonzalvez, who was admitted to the “Bambino Gesù” hospital. Let us pray for him and for his health.

- Dear young people, Jesus is the friend who always accompanies us in the formation of our conscience. If you truly want to encounter the Risen Lord, then listen to his word, which is the Gospel of salvation. Reflect on your way of living, and seek justice in order to build a more humane world. Serve the poor, and so bear witness to the good that we would always like to receive from our neighbours. Be united with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Adore Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, the source of eternal life. Study, work and love according to the example of Jesus, the good Teacher who always walks beside us.

As we seek what is good, let us ask him at every step: "Stay with us, Lord (cf. Lk 24:29). Stay with us, because without you we cannot do the good we desire. You want our good; indeed Lord you are our good. Those who encounter you also want others to encounter you, because your word is a light brighter than any star, illuminating even the darkest night." Pope Benedict XVI liked to say that those who believe are never alone. In other words, we encounter Christ in the Church, that is, in the communion of those who sincerely seek him. The Lord himself gathers us together to form a community, not just any community, but a community of believers who support one another. How much the world needs missionaries of the Gospel who are witnesses of justice and peace! How much the future needs men and women who are witnesses of hope! Dear young people, this is the task that the Risen Lord entrusts to each one of us!

Here is the link if you would like to pray and ponder over Pope Leo's complete responses to our dear young people:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/speeches/2025/august/documents/20250802-veglia-tor-vergata.html>

Please join me in praying for Pope Leo on these important initial days of his new ministry as the 266th successor of Saint Peter.

Lord Jesus, our Gentle and Good Shepherd, place Your loving arms around our dear Pope Leo. Fill his heart with the fire of Your Holy Spirit of love. May his words and actions, always inspired by You, draw the people of the world closer to You and Your Tenderness. When the Holy Father is feeling alone, assure him of our love for him. When the Holy Father is struggling with a hard decision, assure him of Your Spirit's Wisdom and Courage. When the Holy Father is yearning for just a bit of a rest from his many responsibilities, bless him with some time away to play the piano or to pick up his tennis racket for a quick game or to walk with a friend in the Vatican Gardens. Stay with him, dear Jesus! Stay with our dear Pope Leo! - Written by yours truly

Fr. Bill +