

Dates of Interest

*Parish Mission with
Father Maurice Nutt*
March 5 – 4:00 PM
March 6 & 7 – 7:00 PM

Reconciliation - Chapel
Saturdays – 9:00 AM
March 8, 15 & 29 – 6:30 PM
No confessions April 15 and 22

First Penance/Reconciliation
March 20 & March 22 – 7:00 PM

*Communal Reconciliation Service
with Individual Confessions*
April 5 – 7:00 PM
April 8 – 9:00-11:00 AM

Stations of the Cross & Benediction
March 3, 10, 17 & 31 – 7:00 PM
March 24 – 7:00 PM with Adoration
Benediction – 10:00 PM
Living Stations of the Cross
April 7 – 1:30 PM & 7:00 PM

Holy Week Services
Palm Sunday, April 8-9
Mass – 5:30 PM, 8:00 AM, 9:30 AM,
11:30 AM
Holy Thursday, April 13
Mass of the Lord’s Supper – 7:30 PM
Good Friday, April 14
Solemn Passion Service – 3:00 PM

New Pastoral Plan: Building on Past Accomplishments

Have you ever wondered how all the wonderful events and programs at Saint Elizabeth Parish happen? It’s not by happenstance – it’s the product of planning. Now, the Parish Pastoral Council is finalizing the 2017-2020 Pastoral Plan.

In developing this plan, a team of Pastoral Council members gathered input through surveys and direct interviews with a wide range of groups, including volunteer ministry leaders, parish and school administrative staff, and a cross-section of parishioners. The plan includes a new *Vision*, an updated *Mission*, a set of *Core Parish Values*, and six *Pastoral Goals*. Directional objectives for each goal are being developed over the next several months. The plan was introduced to close to 200 parishioners, who participated in one of two open town meetings – the first one on November 15, 2016 and another on January 19, 2017.

“The Pastoral Plan gives direction and purpose to our parish life,” explained Marie Martini, a member of the planning team.

The six pastoral goals include the following:

- **Become a more engaging parish** – to be a faith-filled and inviting Catholic community that welcomes and engages all people wherever they are in their spiritual journey.
- **Expand family faith formation programs** – to develop opportunities at all stages of family life that enrich relationships and bring Christ into our homes.

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Why Knot Pray? Prayers Loosen the Knots of Fellow Parishioners

Lent is the perfect time to reflect on our personal challenges as well as the struggles of those around us. Wouldn't it be comforting to know that we are not alone in our needs and that there are others praying for us?

That was the goal of "Why Knot Pray," Saint Elizabeth's Knotted Shrine honoring Our Lady, *Un-doer of Knots*. Parishioners were invited to offer up a personal struggle or "knot" in prayer by writing it on a piece of cloth and tying it to the Shrine. In return, they were encouraged to read and loosen someone else's knot and pray to Our Lady, *Un-doer of Knots*, to lighten their burden.

Saint Elizabeth Parish's Knotted Shrine was modeled after the Knotted Grotto that was on display at the Basilica of Saints Peter & Paul during the World Meeting of Families and blessed by Pope Francis in September 2015. Pope Francis has a special devotion to Our Lady, *Un-doer of Knots*, and when debriefing after his visit, Saint Elizabeth's World Meeting of Families Committee kept coming back to the Knotted Grotto. "Realizing how important prayer is, the visual and tactile quality of the Knotted Grotto kept speaking to us," explained Diane Shoemaker, chairperson of the committee. "We thought it would be a moving way to get our parishioners and visitors to Saint Elizabeth to offer up prayers for their own and for each other's struggles."

The Knotted Shrine was unveiled last September by the Adult Faith Formation Committee and Family



A second grade EFF student visits Saint Elizabeth's Knotted Shrine.

Life Ministry Team to commemorate the first anniversary of Pope Francis' visit. It stayed up through the end of the Year of Mercy and on the Feast of Christ the King, all 1,104 prayer petitions were presented during the offertory procession at the 9:30 AM Mass.

"After being drawn to the spiritual power of the Knotted Grotto at the World Meeting of Families, I became more aware of the power of Mary's intercession in our lives," reminisced one parishioner. "I was most delighted to see the shrine being set up in our own narthex."

Young and old alike participated in writing and reading prayer petitions, not only in English but also Spanish, French, Italian and Korean. Prayer requests ranging from health and healing, family, marriage, emotional health, ad-

diction, finances, employment, poverty, as well as peace for families, the nation and the world, were all lifted up in prayer for each other.



The Shrine honored Our Lady, Un-doer of Knots.

As the High School Youth Group, Elementary Faith Formation classes, and Adult Faith Formation Committee untied, sorted, and counted the prayer knots, they saw – first-hand – the many struggles within our parish community. They also learned that praying for each other's needs can bring us closer to Jesus and to one another.

Even though our knots are no longer on display and as visible, hopefully we will continue to remember each other's struggles and to support and pray for our fellow parishioners. Knowing that others are offering prayers on our behalf brings our community together in faith and helps lighten everyone's burdens. So ... why knot pray?

~ Rhonda Jones

The Pilgrim Madonna: Fostering Catholic Family Life

This year marks the 100th Anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima to three children who were tending sheep in the hills of Cova de Iria, Portugal. The children later recounted the appearance and the message of Mary to church officials and experienced more of these visions from May 13 to October 13, 1917. Eyewitnesses described the final apparition as “the time the sun danced” and Our Lady repeated her consistent message that war is the punishment for sin and we should pray for world peace. She exhorted the children, and all those willing to listen, that praying the Rosary for peace, and for the conversion of Russia, would change hearts and avert the catastrophe of another, possible world-ending war.

The children, instructed by Our Lady, requested that the local bishop erect the Chapel on the spot of her apparition, now enclosed inside a magnificent cathedral. They further asked the bishop to install a statue of the “beautiful Lady” who spoke to them. The 1946 pilgrimage beginning in Cova de Iria brought the statue to Lisbon, and was the start of an ongoing ritual. This pilgrimage became so popular that replicas of the original statue, now called “the International Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Our Lady of Fatima,” were made to accommodate all the faithful who wanted to continue the devotion.

Today, at Saint Elizabeth Parish, this tradition continues through the Legion of Mary ministry.

“The Legion of Mary instituted its



Madonna coordinator.

Over the last four and a half years, a replica statue has traveled to 193 homes, and has also spent time at renewal weekends and other parish special events. The Pilgrim Madonna team is planning to expand its ‘tour’ to area nursing homes, assisted, and senior living facilities.

This worthwhile endeavor has deepened faith and devotion to Our Lady, especially as our mediator for world peace through recitation of the Family Rosary. “Hosting the statue is a peaceful time for your family,” said parishioners Karen and Scott Patterson. “It helped us maintain a structured prayer time each evening, and our five kids enjoyed hosting. They even wanted to host again!”

“The statue’s presence in our

own traveling statue in 2012 to help parishioners spend more time in prayer and reflection, in their own homes, and to encourage us to follow Our Lady’s direction to pray the Rosary for peace,” explained Candy Scheidel, Pilgrim

homes is a powerful reminder of Our Lady’s presence with us. We still try to say at least one decade of the Rosary each day,” Karen continued.

Each host family has customized their activities with the statue, but a deepening of their commitment to pray and reflect together as a family remains a common thread. Some families have hosted the statue multiple times as they prepared for a child’s reception of a Sacrament of Initiation. “Our Lady wants to visit her children,” said Candy. “She is on a mission to bless, heal, help, and companion.”

The statue is available to spend a week with each family, and comes with rosaries, instruc-



The Greiner family hosts the replica statue of Our Lady of Fatima.

tions, videos and prayer books. The Legion of Mary will deliver it or it can be picked up in the Holy Family Room in the rear of the church. To schedule your time of reflection with the Pilgrim Madonna, please contact Candy Scheidel (610-513-5799 or JMJCandy@Juno.com).

~ Lisa Sheronas

New Pastoral Plan *(cont'd from cover)*

- **Continue to grow our stewardship identity** – to increase participation and strengthen our commitment to live a stewardship way of life by sharing God’s gifts of time, talent, and treasure.
- **Enhance parish-wide communications** – to expand the use of communications and marketing programs and tools to support parish goals and to reach more parishioners, promote parish activities, and become a more informed and connected parish.
- **Encourage leadership development** – to encourage leadership and to develop relevant skills within our parish community, parish school and parish staff to live out our parish mission.

In speaking about the importance of the pastoral plan, Father Mullin said, “Effective pastoral planning ensures that all the activities and programs here at Saint Elizabeth are faithful to our mission and responsive to the spiritual and pastoral needs of our parish community, now and in the years to come.”

As part of the 2017-2020 Pastoral Plan, the parish’s original mission statement from 2002 has been updated and, for the first time, a Vision for the parish community has been articulated (see page 5).

At the first open town meeting in November, it was explained that this new vision statement is a compact expression of the future ideal of our parish community – what

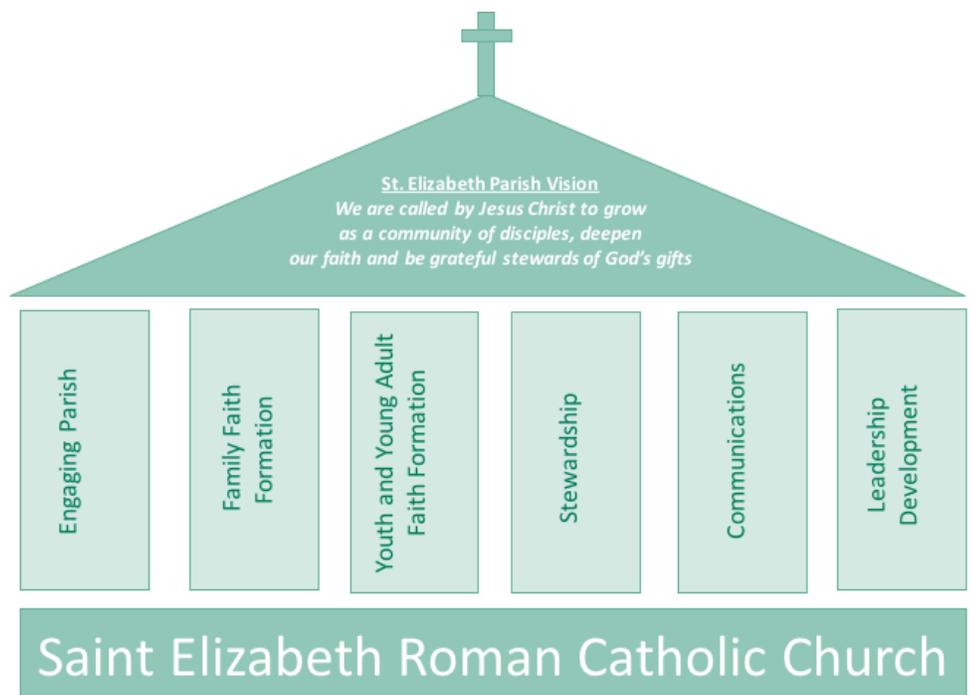


Father Mullin reviews the new Pastoral Plan elements with parishioners at a town hall meeting.

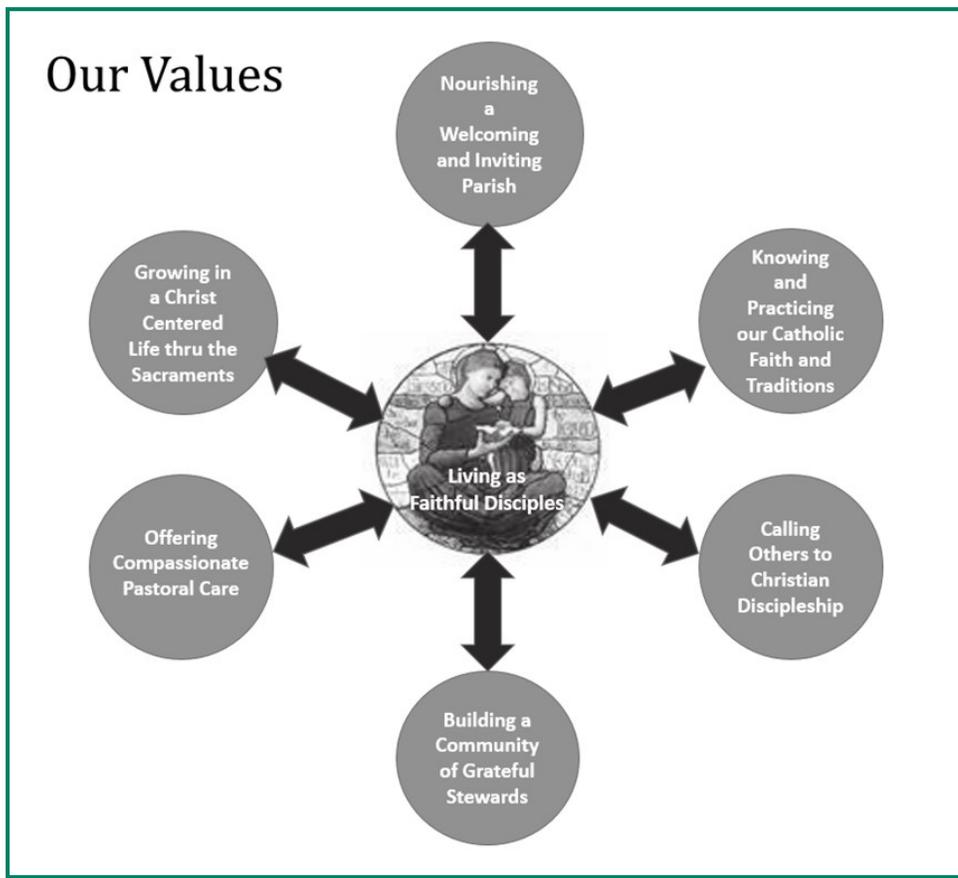
we are called to be – and provides direction on our ongoing journey. It focuses on the future personality of Saint Elizabeth Parish and complements our mission statement.

The updated mission statement, printed on the cover of the weekly parish bulletin along with the

vision statement, is rooted in that vision, focusing on key themes and defining who we are as a parish community. Finally, the Core Parish Values describe the foundational beliefs of our parish community, and “act as a filter for everything we do as a parish,” noted Martini.



The Plan's Values, Vision and Mission



Taken as a whole, the elements of the 2017-2020 Pastoral Plan will provide direction for the commitment of resources in personnel, facilities, time and money to existing and proposed parish activities. For example, decisions about the introduction of new programs or ministries will be made based on the directional objectives delineated in the plan. In recent years, a number of new ministry programs have been inaugurated, including the Christ Renews His Parish overnight renewal program, the Stewardship Day of Service, the Family Life Ministry Team, Catholics Coming Home, a Men's Choir, Chosen Fathers, and more. A full list along with short descriptions of parish ministries is available on the parish website at stelizabeth-parish.org.

The 2017-2020 Pastoral Plan is also posted on the parish website, together with an easy-to-use feedback survey for parishioners to offer their thoughts about the plan. Through the spring, regular updates on the different dimensions of the plan are being included in the weekly parish bulletin. The Pastoral Council encourages all parishioners to take an active part in the community by providing their feedback and insights into the implementation of the pastoral plan over the next several years.

~ Sue Morgan

OUR VISION

We are called by Jesus Christ to grow as a community of disciples, deepen our faith and be grateful stewards of God's gifts.

OUR MISSION

Together with the Lord, we are committed to nourish and grow a holy, faithful and vibrant Catholic community rooted in the Word of God and the Sacraments.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we warmly welcome everyone and invite all to enrich their lives by sharing in the fullness of our Catholic faith.

As a stewardship parish, in grateful acknowledgment of God's abundant gifts, we generously share our time, talent and treasure in service to the needs of others.

By the conviction of our words, the goodness of our deeds and the witness of our lives, we reflect the presence of Jesus living within us. With the grace of the Holy Spirit, we strive to extend God's kingdom every day, one person at a time.

School Spirits: Education is Better When Rooted in Faith

Did you know that 81% of Catholic high school students immediately go on to a four-year college, compared with the national average of 68% (as of 2014)? It's a striking – and telling – statistic that supports the contention that a Catholic school education is well worth the investment. That valuable investment was celebrated here at Saint Elizabeth and all across the country during *Catholic Schools Week* on January 29 thru February 3.

"I have always believed in the power of Catholic education, both for helping establish crucial roots in faith for our students and also for its high-quality academics," explained Dr. Diane Greco, Saint Elizabeth Parish School Principal.

"Catholic schools encourage a more rigorous focus on personal responsibility and self-discipline that, ultimately, leads to a greater mental focus and capacity for learning that may not always be achieved in some public school environments."

The 2017 Catholic Schools Week celebrated both parochial and private Catholic schools, on the elementary, secondary, and collegiate level, as "Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Learning." Father Mullin explained, "The theme of this year's CSW reflects the three essential ingredients of a sound Catholic school education: faith development, academic excellence, and commitment to service. Saint Elizabeth Parish School remains an integral component of the mission and ministry of our parish community."

One significant and well-documented academic advantage of Catholic schools is the traditionally smaller teacher-to-student ratio. Catholic schools in America, on average, offer a 13:1 ratio, which is generally much lower than many public schools can offer in today's environment. So, as a number of educational research professionals attest in their comparative studies (see W.H. Jeynes; H. M. Marks; J. Coleman and others), it's not surprising that the student achievement gap is smaller in Catholic schools than in public schools, and overall academic achievement is higher, too.

Another important and unique benefit of Catholic schooling is the freedom that teachers and staff have to incorporate the teachings of the Church wherever possible. The tenants of our faith are incorporated not only into formal religion classes, but also in nearly every subject in ways that bring faith to life in very real, tangible ways. Naturally throughout all grade levels, Catholic education has the power to instill the discipline needed to remain a strong, lifelong Catholic learner into adulthood.

"Catholic schools are an integral part of the Church and are Christ-centered communities based on gospel values," added Dr.

Greco. "It's education that occurs in a welcoming, inclusive, and connected community."

There are many positive reasons to enroll in Saint Elizabeth Parish School, but most importantly is the fact that Catholic education is a lifelong advantage. In addition to proven academic success, Catholic education fosters a rich sense of community and provides students with a deeper understanding of their faith throughout history and in action today.



The ice cream social was one of many fun activities the parish school hosted to celebrate Catholic Schools Week – and happens to be a student favorite every year!

"Education that's rooted in faith and values not only enriches students with strong academics but also with the strength of spirit that will guide children throughout their entire life journey," concluded Dr. Greco.

~ Lisa Barbadora

Opportunities for Reflection during Lent

Lent is a time of reflection and self-examination to prepare for Easter. Although notions of sacrifice and self-denial often come to mind during this period, Lent is also a wonderful time for spiritual growth and for deepening our relationship with God. Several programs here at Saint Elizabeth Parish provide parishioners the opportunity to explore new and different areas of their faith. Consider a new way to open your heart to an enriching and enlightening experience this Lenten season.

Here are a few options:

Stations of the Cross is a traditional devotion that invites Christian believers to walk a prayerful journey through fourteen stations in the church building. The stations are organized in imitation of the stopping places of prayer for pilgrims walking on the "Via Dolorosa," or "Way of Sadness" in the city of Jerusalem, from Pilate's palace to the hill of Golgotha, to the Holy Sepulcher. This custom, which began in the Middle Ages, retells the story of Jesus' journey to death on the cross. It is an opportunity to reflect and prepare for Holy Week and Easter. During Lent, Stations of the Cross and Benediction will be conducted every Friday evening between March 3 and 31 at 7:00 PM in the church.

On Friday, April 7, the eighth grade students of the parish school will present a special "Living Stations of the Cross" in the church at 1:30 PM and again at 7:00 PM. This is traditionally an extremely moving experience for all who attend and is followed by the Saint Elizabeth Knights of Columbus fish fry.



Adult Bible Study is one of the ways during Lent to grow spiritually and deepen your relationship with God. Pictured from left to right: Bill and Trisha Burke, Fidel Verdugo, Emma Yasick, Cyndy Agsten and Marie Schroth.

Adult Bible Study is an ongoing study of the bible in a relaxed setting. Participants gather for small group discussions and lessons. The group is currently studying the Gospel of Matthew, which will continue throughout April. All are welcome to join at any time, or simply sit in for a few sessions during Lent. Bible Study meets in the parish ministry center on Tuesday mornings at 9:30 AM and Tuesday evenings at 7:00 PM. Contact Eleanor Angstadt at eleanora52@verizon.net, or Beth Riordan in the Religious Education office at 610-646-6545 or via briordan@stelizabethparish.org.

Women at the Well meets weekly on Thursday evenings at 7:00 PM and Friday mornings at 9:00 AM, to discuss scripture readings for the upcoming Sunday. Meetings are a beautiful, prayerful experience with no mandatory assign-

ments or homework, and in a friendly, welcoming environment. All adult women are welcome to attend at any time. For more information on the Thursday evening meetings, contact Leslie Kelso at 610-524-7233, and for Friday meetings, contact Corinne Murphy at 610-524-1910.

~ Julie Krumenacker

More Dates of Interest

Holy Week Services

Holy Saturday, April 15

Blessing of Easter Foods – 11:00 AM

Easter Vigil Liturgy – 8:00 PM

Easter Sunday, April 16

Mass – 8:00 AM, 9:30 AM,
11:30 AM

Confirmation Ceremonies

April 22 – 10:00 AM & 2:00 PM

Stewardship Day of Service

April 29 – 8:30 AM

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Saint Elizabeth parishioners participated in the annual March for Life in January in Washington, D.C.

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