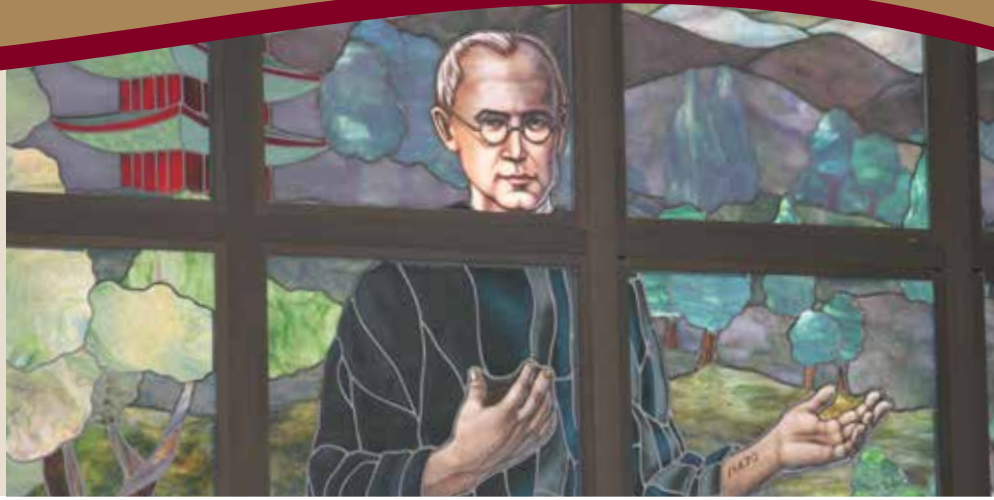


The MODERN SAINT



SAINT MAXIMILIAN KOLBE CATHOLIC CHURCH

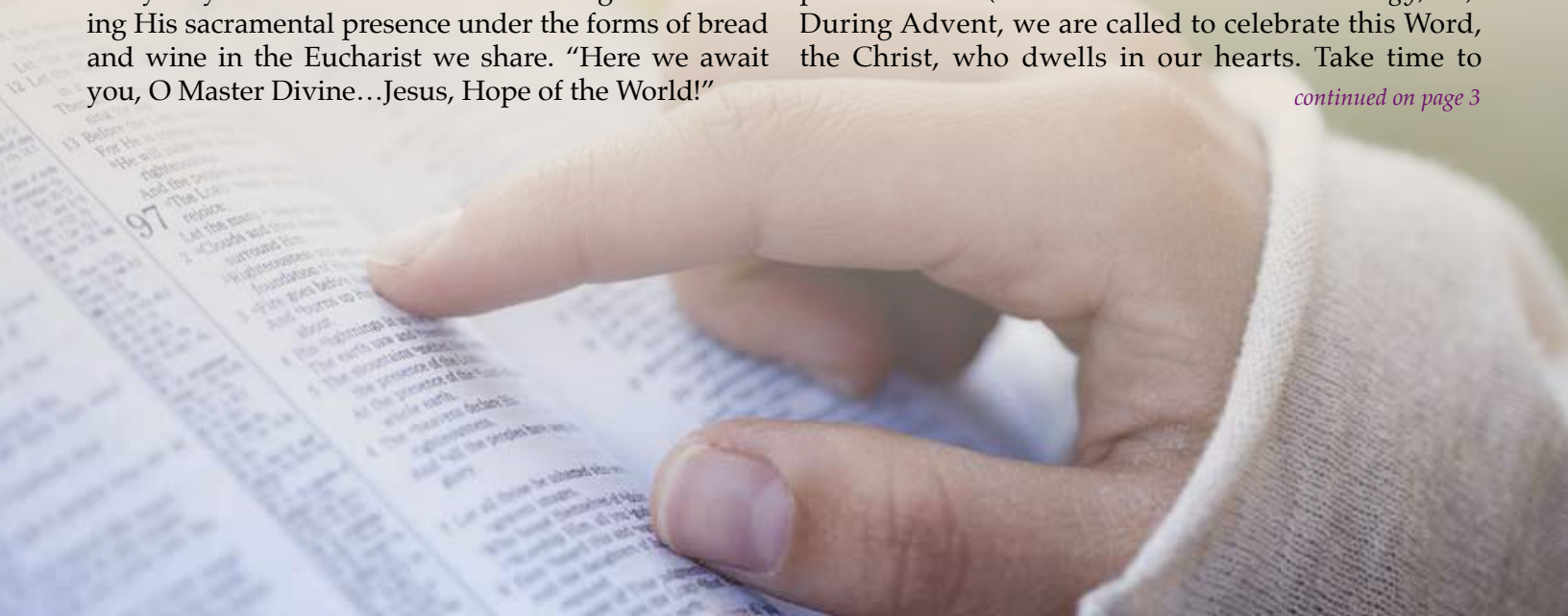
Time to Reflect on Christ's Coming Among Us

UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF ADVENT

Our new liturgical year begins with the season of Advent. This preparatory season gives the Church time to reflect on Christ's coming among us. The Church teaches that "Advent has a two-fold character: as a season to prepare for Christmas when Christ's first coming to us is remembered; as a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. Advent is thus a period for devout and joyful expectation" (*General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, 39). During Advent, we therefore celebrate the many ways in which Christ comes among us – including His sacramental presence under the forms of bread and wine in the Eucharist we share. "Here we await you, O Master Divine...Jesus, Hope of the World!"

Among the many aspects of Advent liturgies (purple, the wreath, light, etc.), perhaps the most important is a focus on the Word. We prepare eagerly to hear, during the Mass of Christmas Day, the beginning of the Gospel according to John: "In the beginning was the Word...and the Word became flesh..." One of the greatest achievements of the Second Vatican Council's liturgical reform – and one of the hallmarks of the *Roman Missal* – was the decree that "the treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that a richer share in God's word" may take place at Mass (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 51). During Advent, we are called to celebrate this Word, the Christ, who dwells in our hearts. Take time to

continued on page 3



The MODERN SAINT

A Letter From Our Pastor



My dear brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ,

*M*other Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit. (Vatican II, Sacrosanctum Concilium, [The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy], 4 December 1963, no. 14)

On the First Sunday of Advent in 1964, the “new Mass” was introduced, meeting varied degrees of welcome and acceptance from clergy and laity alike. The biggest change was for the gathered assembly, the change from being “unengaged spectators” to “active participants.”

The Mass – Dull and Boring? *It Doesn't Have*

What was once just the role of the organist or choir and the altar servers had become the responsibility of all – everyone was supposed to sing and respond. Readings and prayers in the vernacular were now comprehensible – everyone could listen. For the next few decades, the liturgical evolution continued and the faithful were challenged more and more to be engaged in the liturgy both internally and externally.

In essence, this transition simply fulfilled the meaning of the word *liturgy* – from the Greek word *leitourgia* – which was “work of the people.” Whereas beautiful, artistic and ornate churches of the past were basically complete in and of themselves, modern church architecture envisions a feeling and look of incompleteness in a church unless the people are gathered, unless the people “are working.” So just what does this “work of the people” look like? How do we make the liturgy a living entity? By doing “what we are supposed to do” – by singing, listening, responding, observing silence, moving and gesturing. All of these actions and postures are the responsibility of each of us when we gather for the liturgy.

A teenager once told me how boring and dull she thought Mass was, that we “just go to church for an hour and do nothing.” I asked her if she was singing and responding with gusto, if she was listening attentively, if she was deliberately entering into times of sacred silence, if she was purposefully moving

and meaningfully gesturing. I challenged her to be more deliberate in her active participation at Mass for a few weeks and get back with me. She came back after a month and told me how this effort made a huge difference. Today, she is married and she and her husband go to Mass every Sunday with their children – and whenever I see her she always says, “Thanks – it’s never been boring again!”

Another illustration might be comparing the liturgy to a theatrical production. If you were to “pair up” God, the liturgical ministers and the congregation with their theatrical counterparts, I suspect many would deduce that God is the “director,” the ministers are the “actors” and the congregation is the “audience.” Wrong, wrong, wrong! The proper analogy between theater and liturgy is that the ministers are the directors, the congregation is the cast of actors and God is the audience! And whether in a classroom, on a playing field, acting on a stage, or assembled in a church, everyone involved has an important role. And if just one student, one player, one thespian, or one member of the assembly doesn’t fulfill his or her role, it affects everyone else and the classroom experience, the athletic contest, the theatrical production, or the sacred liturgy itself is not as good as it can possibly be.

It is the responsibility of each of us to be active participants at Mass, not just passive spectators. As we begin the new liturgical year this

2 *singing, listening, responding, observing silence, moving and gesturing*

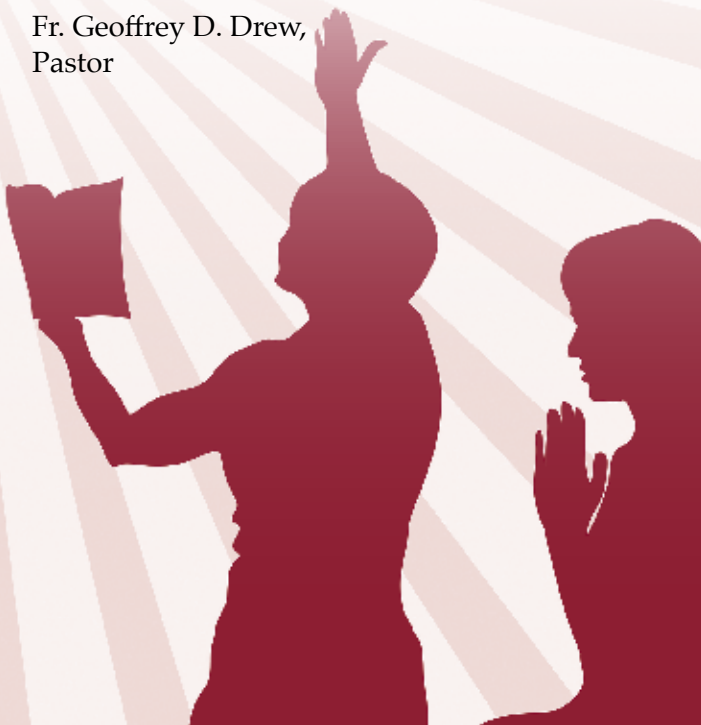
to Be!

Advent season, perhaps everyone can revitalize our attitude towards and reenergize our actions during Sunday Mass. Mass should never be dull and boring – if it is, then perhaps you are just in church “doing nothing.” It is up to each of us to make the liturgy come alive for ourselves and those around us every time we gather for Mass. And our God, who is the audience watching us give praise and thanks to Him, will be giving us a standing ovation!

God bless one and all!



Fr. Geoffrey D. Drew,
Pastor



Time to Reflect on Christ's Coming Among Us

continued from front cover

prepare for Mass by reading the scriptures and reflecting upon their meaning in your life. At Mass, truly be open to the Word that is proclaimed – a Word that is living and effective, truly Christ speaking to His Church!

PREFACE I OF ADVENT

*It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Christ our Lord.*

*For he assumed at his first coming
the lowliness of human flesh,
and so fulfilled the design you formed long ago,
and opened for us the way to eternal salvation,
that, when he comes again in glory and majesty
and all is at last made manifest,
we who watch for that day
may inherit the great promise
in which now we dare to hope.*

*And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim:*

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts...

Have you moved, or do you have a new phone number or new email address?

.....
Please contact the office at 777-4322 ext. 101 or cgroh@saint-max.org to give us an update!

“The Corporal Works of Mercy Become Tangible” *St. Max’s Christmas Food Basket Ministry*

For over 20 years, a thriving program in our parish has offered us an opportunity to extend the spirit of Christmas — the spirit of giving — to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

“Through the Christmas Food Basket Ministry, the Corporal Works of Mercy become tangible at the very table of others!” says Holly Moran, Pastoral Associate for Outreach. “This ministry becomes a true reality through the service of many parishioners.”

Each year, St. Max’s Christmas Food Basket Ministry feeds over 500 local families in need. Preparation for the program begins in October, when its coordinators connect with agencies from the community who work with struggling families in our community.

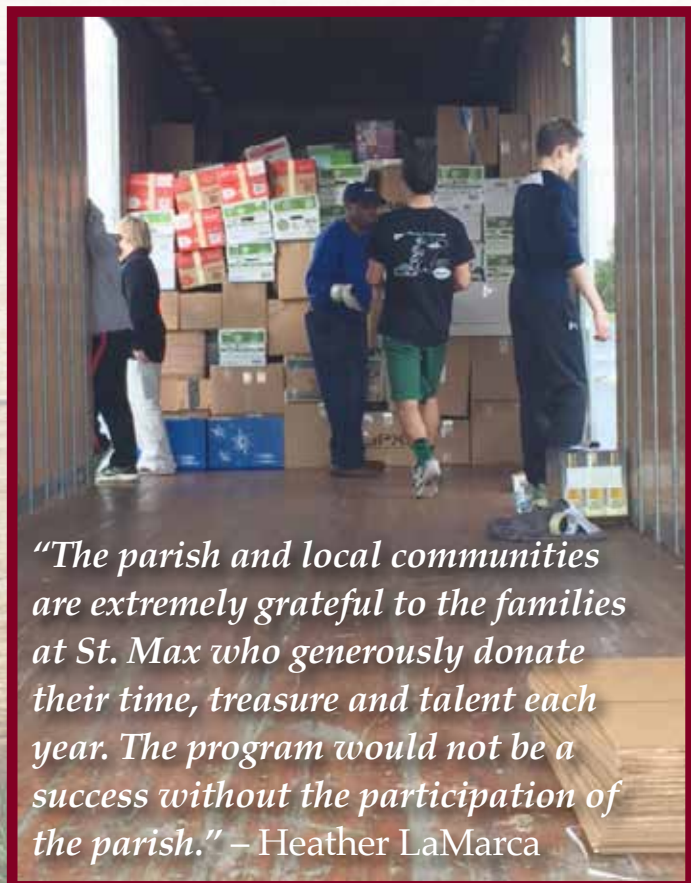
In mid-November, index cards with anonymous information about local families are on display in the

gathering space after Masses. Families can see information such as the family size and the ages and genders of any children in the families.

In December, parishioners deliver baskets with nonperishable food items, hygiene products and cleaning supplies to St. Max’s parking lot, where they are loaded onto trucks for delivery to various agencies. The average suggested amount for each basket is \$35 per family member.

“The parish and local communities are extremely grateful to the families at St. Max who generously donate their time, treasure and talent each year,” Heather LaMarca says. “The program would not be a success without the participation of the parish.”

Thank you to all of the individuals and families of our faith community who have generously given to the Christmas Food Basket Ministry over the years!



For more information about the Christmas Food Basket Ministry, contact Dennis Blake at 513-543-6954, or Heather LaMarca at 513-498-2523 or email ChristmasBaskets@saint-max.org.

Parish ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR July 2015-June 2016

Be strong and steadfast, and go to work; do not fear or be dismayed, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or abandon you before you have completed all the work for the service of the house of the LORD. – 1 Chronicles 28:20

My dear sisters and brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

This Old Testament biblical verse is attributed to King David as he, nearing the end of his life, gives the plans for the building of the temple to his son and heir, Solomon. As we present to you this annual report, I feel our parish has truly and authentically witnessed this 3,000-year-old statement!

When I think of our parish and its parishioners as we strive to tithe (i.e. give to God from our first-fruits) our time in prayer, our talents in involvement and our treasure in fiscal support, I think of the words “strong” and “steadfast” as we go about our work of proclaiming and witnessing God’s kingdom. We can only be strong and steadfast, we can only not fear nor

be dismayed because we believe and trust that our loving and merciful God, who does not fail us or abandon us, is always with us (John 14:18). God will always be with us as we go about serving Him through serving and loving our neighbor (Mark 12:31).

As you can see in this annual report, we here at St. Max – in our evangelization and catechesis, in our outreach, in our parish life and stewardship and in our worship – have been about the Lord’s work very, very much and have done very, very well! Praise be to God!

But that is not to say that there is not more work to do. Building God’s kingdom, encouraging His people to

enter into a more intimate relationship with Him, and inviting His people to be engaged in our parish with His people – all of these must be consistent, dare I say persistent, efforts. We continue on in His work faithfully and confidently, because we know the Lord is with us now and forever!

Thank you to everyone for making St. Max the unique, blessed place it is!

That’s all for now. God bless one and all!



Fr. Geoffrey D. Drew,
Pastor

A Thank You from the Finance Council

St. Max parishioners have again demonstrated a loving generosity! We recognize that *everything* we have – our unique talents, our families, our friends, our possessions, our very existence – is a *gift* from God. We have come to the understanding that good stewardship encompasses the utilization of these gifts, and in so doing, we give glory and honor to our Creator!

In giving of our treasure, our average weekly Sunday offerings were up 3.23 percent from last year. Year-to-date income – including debt reduction contributions, fundraisers, festival proceeds, interest, RFY fees and other income – \$2,529,290. Principal payments, interest payments, capital campaign expenses, payroll expenses and other operating expenses totaled \$2,660,128. The shortfall was covered by our savings.

Some of the larger expenses for the fiscal year included; replacement of four heating and air conditioning units; parking lot repair (that was this year); and the capital campaign expenses, which included an on-site administrative staffer. These

expenses combined amounted to a little under \$270,000.

In practicing good stewardship, the parish also made contributions to outreach programs in our community and around the globe amounting to just over \$67,000. The charitable gifts our parishioners placed in the designated outreach envelopes amounted to another \$112,822! Such practice will continue to grow as we recognize how blessed we are in our community and our need to give of our first fruits!

Special debt reduction events, such as the festival, in addition to Kroger Rewards, Fish Fry proceeds, the Holiday Bazaar, partial proceeds of the fashion show, and the utilization of debt reduction envelopes, helped bring down our outstanding loan principal to \$639,140. With a successful *Together We Grow* capital campaign, we hope to have the debt eliminated in the current fiscal year.

Thank you again for so generously sharing your gifts!

Thank You!

Outreach Commission: Year of Growth in Giving

Outreach Commission is blessed with exponential growth in parishioners' dedication of their time, talent, and treasure. As a support to all 24 Outreach ministries and their many branches of good works, Outreach Commission has achieved success in growing the number of volunteer sign-ups, boosting ministries' exposure, increasing the overall reach of our tithing (locally, nationally and globally), and adding a new Garden Ministry! Furthermore, Outreach Commission steers the parish tithing and CMA rebate funds to support Catholic outreach efforts across our country and world. However, there is always room for growth and giving opportunities. A primary goal is to increase exposure of all outreach ministries allowing opportunities for active volunteer participation at every level of age and ability.

In its second year, our annual signature event, *Just Try It*, experienced strong parishioner turnout last spring with over 500 attendees! This weekend event pairs an opportunity for parishioner families to participate and give generously through our collection of personal care items, as well as a platform to encourage ministry sign-ups. Ministry leaders and members showcase the countless opportunities at every level to become involved in our communities and give back! With the help of our generous church family, we were able to fill over 340 personal care bags to help homeless individuals in Cincinnati and the surrounding areas! This year's *Just Try It* event is scheduled for the weekend of March 25-26, 2017.

For the first time, the commission issued an infographic highlighting parish giving over the past year. It showed a monetary impact of \$58,200 in funds donated through monthly regular church collection tithing (\$31,300) and Catholic Ministry Appeal (\$26,900) rebate funds. This alone represents a 27 percent increase over last year's giving. We're also expecting another large increase this year from the generosity of the St. Max community as we once again more than exceeded our CMA collection goal (each parish has a goal and if exceeded, the parish receives 50 percent of that overage). Our church tithing to the community is three percent of three weeks' averaged Sunday offerings. The commission had a theme this past year to "Feed the Hungry and Help the Poor" to generate more passion for outreach within the parish and

ministries. We participated in the archdiocesan campaign, *Food for All*, as part of the mission to stamp out world hunger.

Our individual ministries have been busier than ever meeting the needs of our community at large. This year, St. Max joined forces with 13 other host congregations and hundreds of volunteers from church communities across the county to launch Family Promise of Butler County, Inc. After securing a director and a day center, FPBC began assisting children and their families experiencing temporary homelessness. An affiliate of the national organization, Family Promise "helps homeless and low-income families achieve sustainable independence through a community based response."



St. Max parishioners donated numerous needed items to host families at St. Max one week at a time, four times a year. September marked the first week that FPBC began hosting families as St. Max housed a beautiful family of four in our classrooms and gym. Each day of our hosting week, parishioners donate three square meals and at least six adult volunteers spend time in fellowship and community with our guests.

Other vital ministries directly aid those among us with basic economic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Charitable IMPACT organizes special collections of goods and coordinates volunteers to aid economic needs and inspire spiritual growth. Likewise, Transitional Living assists adults with mental disabilities in order to live independently by collecting items needed for furnishing their new apartments. CHOSEN volunteers from St. Max provided and

serve monthly hot meals. Meals on Wheels delivers meals to senior citizens in the Liberty Township area. Tender Mercies helps adults with histories of mental illness by providing resources and residency. Christmas Food Baskets volunteers shop for, box and donate complete meals and items to 500 area families.

For those in need of support during a grief process, ministries provide a safe place for comfort and guidance. Companions on a Journey reaches 4,000 people, including children, teens and adults through grief support. The Funeral Lunch Ministry provides meals following 20 funerals. Stephen Ministry added five Stephen Ministers to total 42 trained caregivers who minister to 81-plus people in the church, and growing! The Catholic Divorce Survival Guide offers powerful insight and support to those who experience divorce.

Outreach continues to foster inclusion, fellowship and education. Financial Peace University is exploring the addition of the "Legacy Series." Include Me! provides catechesis and faith formation for 15 students with special needs. Nursing Home Bingo provides family-friendly fun and entertainment to the residents of Doverwood, a local nursing home. Respect Life conducts an annual parish-wide baby bottle campaign and raised more than \$5,000 last year!

Providing care and comfort through personal visits and interactions of the sick and homebound is key to outreach. Living Waters Prayer Shawl Ministry makes shawls while praying for those in need. Nursing Home Rosary prays the Rosary with those in local nursing homes. Pastoral Care of the Sick provides communion to 550 hospital patients. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul continues to serve those in need through person-to-person contact.

Serving those above and beyond everyday needs is what RASKALS (Random Acts of Simple Kindness Affecting Local Seniors) and West Liberty Outreach do best! Twice a year, RASKALS volunteers help elderly adults with outdoor chores around their homes. WLO organizes three, three-day weekend trips per year to complete specific home improvement projects in rural eastern Kentucky.

Thank you for allowing us to serve and spread our wealth, both tangible and intangible, in the community around us!

Worship Commission

At the core of our parish's mission is the celebration of the sacraments. In the Second Vatican Council, the Church affirmed the constant teaching that "the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all the Church's power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made children of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's Supper" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 10).

Each and every Sunday, nearly 3,000 people come to this place to celebrate the Eucharist. They come to experience Christ's presence in the Word proclaimed and in the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. Jesus is also present in the ministry of our priests, deacons, and 700-plus lay liturgical ministers, and truly and really present in the community of believers who gather here.

During the past year, we have worked hard to continue growth in faith through liturgical catechesis – understanding more clearly WHY we do WHAT we do. Our website and each

Sunday's bulletin have featured insights into our liturgical celebration, and our Sunday homilies have been opportunities to reflect upon the liturgy. Our RFY students and their parents have had the chance to pray the Liturgy of the Hours and to delve more deeply into the mysteries we celebrate. We continue to offer several opportunities here at church for you to unpack why we do what we do at Mass, including digital, Web-based liturgical catechesis options.

Our sacramental preparation ministries continue to be robust, as well, preparing several hundred young people for First Penance and First Communion and Confirmation each year. We prepare engaged couples for Marriage and new parents for Baptism. Our RCIA team works with adults and older children who want to be baptized, to become Catholic, or become more faithful disciples.

All are welcome in this place each Sunday as we celebrate the Eucharist. Let's all be welcoming to one another. Let's reach out to those we don't know and get to know them better. Let's each be the face of Christ to all.

Parish Life and Stewardship Commission

The aim of the Parish Life and Stewardship Commission is to foster gratitude for the many needed gifts we receive of our parishioners' time, talents, and treasures, along with extending invitations to share those gifts.

Thank you to the members of the Welcome Ministry, who help newly registered parishioners find their way as they enjoy a tour of our campus and learn to navigate the many activities going on in the parish! Fellowship Weekends have increased as a great way to get to know other parishioners after Mass. On a typical fellowship weekend, we serve 65 dozen donuts and 300 cookies! We are thrilled to continue the Parish Picnic at Niederman Farm each fall. The day is full of good eats, games, face painting, hayrides, and music. The Chili Cook-off, Men's Night Out, Fat Tuesday Pancake Dinner, Holy Thursday Dinner, and Easter Vigil Reception are a few of the major fellowship events offered to fulfill the community and spiritual needs of the parish.

Our annual Lenten Fish Fry has acquired a reputation around Cincinnati as being one of the best! We are so grateful to the dozens of volunteers, as well as the hundreds of people who attend every week. In addition to contributing \$9,500 toward debt reduction last year, the Fish Fry is a wonderful opportunity for fellowship during the Lenten season.

Our Knights of Columbus, the official fish fryers for our Lenten Fish Fry, also prepare and coordinate the Palm Sunday Breakfast and facilitate the Hoxworth Blood Drives at our parish. The Knights also serve our parish in a myriad of other ways. Thank you to this dedicated group of men!

The ladies' Fashion Show is more than just a fantastic event for St. Max women to enjoy fun and fellowship. This year's event contributed to debt reduction (\$2,400) and Family Promise of Butler County (\$2,500). Ladies who would like more regular fellowship with other women in the parish should check out Ladies Fellowship Network, a group of women of all ages who gather monthly for social and service activities.

St. Max charts Cub Scout Pack 944, Boy Scout Troop 944, and American Heritage Girls Troop #OH2513. Many of the parish's beautiful prayer gardens are results of Eagle Scout projects, including the new Marian grotto at the rectory constructed by parishioner Ryan Schnautz. Young people can also participate

in basketball and volleyball supported by our athletic Boosters organization. For adults, our Boosters also offer men's softball, men's basketball, and new this year – Pickleball! For the over-50 crowd, our Young at Heart Ministry offers monthly meetings, speakers, and regular outings, as well as an annual trip.

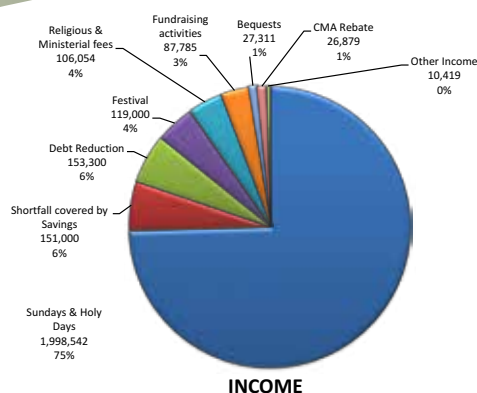
The Adopt-A-Scape ministry consists of individuals, families and groups who maintain sections of our landscaping. Thank you to the members of this ministry for sharing their love of the outdoors through their efforts. Members of the Meal and a Prayer ministry use their time and talent to provide weekly home-cooked meals for our clergy. Even your time spent grocery shopping can benefit our parish, thanks to the many parishioners who have designated St. Max to be the recipient of their Kroger Community Rewards. This year, we received \$8,800 from Kroger through this program. Please don't forget to sign up and annually renew your designation!

Our parish Festival each summer is St. Max's largest fundraiser. The 2015 Festival contributed \$119,000 to parish debt reduction efforts! This fun event runs so smoothly because each year a dedicated team of volunteers starts meeting in January to make preparations.

These events, along with countless others, would not be possible without parishioners' generous stewardship – please don't hesitate to get in touch with the parish office to find an opportunity that needs you!

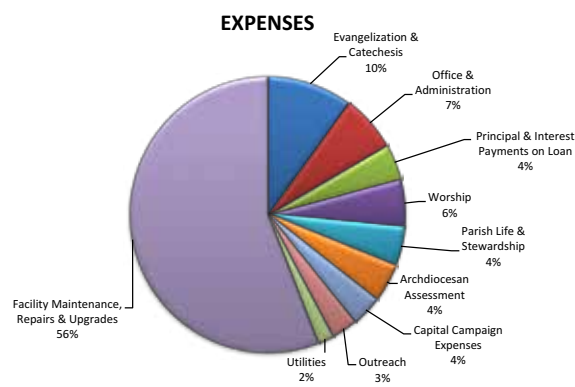
Parish Stats

- # Households – 3151
- # Parishioners – 11980
- # Baptisms – 126
- # Received into full communion with the Catholic Church – 3
- # First Communions – 128
- # Confirmations – 127
- # Weddings – 10
- # Funerals – 20
- # Newly registered households – 129
- # Children in Formation Preschool-Eighth Grade – 688
- # Catechists/Volunteers for RFY – 80



Sundays & Holy Days	1,998,542
Shortfall covered by Savings	151,000
Debt Reduction	153,300
Festival	119,000
Religious & Ministerial fees	106,054
Fundraising activities	87,785
Bequests	27,311
CMA Rebate	26,879
Other Income	10,419

2,680,290



Facility Maintenance Repairs & Upgrades	564,286
Evangelization & Catechesis	480,163
Office & Administration	315,684
Principal & Interest Payments on Loan	199,706
Worship	265,714
Parish Life & Stewardship	213,205
Archdiocesan Assessment	211,838
Capital Campaign Expenses	174,010
Outreach	147,246
Utilities	88,277

2,660,128

Evangelization & Catechesis Commission

“Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize...” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14). With these strong and inspiring words, Pope Paul VI reminded the Church of our purpose in mission. His words echo those of Christ at the Great Commission as he tells us to “Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). The Evangelization and Catechesis quadrant within our parish tries to take these words to heart and help integrate them into the entire life of our parish. Through offering opportunities for faith formation, learning, and spiritual growth, we walk with individuals on their journey of faith, while equipping them to be the Body of Christ in the world.

During the 2015-16 fiscal year, the many ministries within our quadrant continued their important work to build up and strengthen the Body of Christ. These ministries are targeted at a vast array of ages, states in life, and stages along our spiritual journeys.

The children’s religious education program/RFY has continued to form children within our parish through both classroom and summer home study programs. These programs are constantly adapting and improving as we try to form the children of the parish into authentic Catholic disciples. In particular, this past year a strengthened focus on Catholic Social Teaching was introduced along with occasions to experience Adoration. Other opportunities are also provided for youth formation, including Vacation Bible School and Mighty Max. These ministries to children are supported by a large number of dedicated volunteers, catechists and parents.

Our youth ministry programs reach out to the junior high and high school teens within our parish and provide many opportunities for these teens to grow in faith. Retreats, bible studies, large group gatherings, service events, and small-group communities are just a handful of the ways these ministries try to reach teens where they are at and walk with them as they become true disciples.

Our Family Life Ministry and events are continuing to

evolve and grow as we recognize the essential role of the family in forming faith. One of the events with great success was the Seder Meal, where families and teen small groups filled the gym to learn about our Jewish roots and celebrate our faith.

Our ministries focused on adult formation and spiritual growth continue to offer many opportunities for our parishioners to be strengthened as disciples so that they can be Christ in the world. These ministries are targeted at all demographics including young adults, men, women, spouses, mothers, fathers, and the list goes on. One of these ministries newly formed within our parish this past year, Men’s Spiritual Workout, focuses on helping men within our parish be true men of God, and is a much welcomed addition to our already existing outreach to men. Our wide array of ministries includes opportunities for faith sharing, faith formation, and equipping our parishioners to share the faith.

This year our Evangelization and Catechesis Commission also helped drive some parish-wide initiatives to strengthen our culture of faith. One of these initiatives was the launch of the 1% Challenge, which encourages individuals to commit 15 minutes a day to pray with the Word of God. The Parish Mission in the Fall of 2015 also drew hundreds of parishioners to hear about God’s mercy and inspire them to live out their faith each day. Gifts were given to all parishioners in an attempt to reach out and provide opportunities for individual faith growth. These gifts included hundreds of books and CDs given out at Easter and free access to hundreds of hours of inspiring content through our parish subscription to FORMED, an online platform filled with great Catholic media for all ages.

Through all the great work and dedication within the Evangelization and Catechesis quadrant, we are continuing to make St. Maximilian Kolbe a culture of authentic Catholic disciples, driven by faith-filled friendships. All our efforts in living out this shared mission as the Church could not happen without the support of amazing parishioners and staff who truly are Christ to one another.

GRATITUDE IN SERVICE

Parishioners Provide Examples of Stewardship in Action at St. Max

Sometimes, gratitude comes naturally. Other times, it can be the result of hardship. And at other times, it's an overwhelming realization of God's great love and generosity to us. In any case, the response is often the desire to share the joy, the love and the gifts as they pour from one's heart.

Each year, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we choose parishioners who exemplify this abundance of gratitude, to serve as the chair and vice chair of the Parish Life and Stewardship Commission. This year, Jane Rowland and Nancie Ehlert have been asked to serve in this way. Their examples of gratitude in service, along with their dedication to our parish family, serve to model for us the true meaning of stewardship.

Jane Rowland, Chair of the Parish Life and Stewardship Commission

"Stewardship is about being so filled with gratitude that it just overflows and you just want to share it with other people," Jane Rowland says. "That's why I'm here – I am so grateful for my faith."

Jane grew up in the Cincinnati area, and in 2003, she returned after several years away, with her husband, Kevin. In addition to raising their three children – Zachary, 16; Lia, 9; and Kaleb, 7 – Jane has always found ways to be involved at St. Max. From the Parish Life and Stewardship Commission, to the Hearts Afire Ministry, to



Jane Rowland, her husband, Kevin, and their three children – Zachary (16), Lia (9), and Kaleb (7, not pictured) – love being involved at St. Max, which has been their parish since 2003.

Faith Lessons for Moms, and Brown Bag Book Club, Jane loves to express her gratitude by sharing her passion with others.

"I love it that there are so many ways to enjoy fellowship with other people," she says. "St. Max has something for everybody. There are so many opportunities for whatever your personality – there is something that fits that. I appreciate the message that I was created with a certain personality and certain gifts, and I can serve God in that capacity. God doesn't expect me to be different in order to be a disciple – He's

just expecting me to be fully me. At St. Max, there are lots of opportunities to find those paths, no matter what your gifts, no matter what your personality."

Through the commission, Jane hopes to help people move from just "getting involved," to getting involved in ways that will help them grow in their faith.

"Our goal is to foster gratitude for the gifts that people bring and promote the sharing of those gifts," Jane says.

Jane hopes to help others experience the joy she has found through gratitude.

"My time on the commission has been about growing my faith and trying to figure out how I can help people grow in their faith to the point where they realize all the blessings in their life," she says. "I want them to feel that joy and gratitude, to the point where they want to share it."

continued on page 10

GRATITUDE IN SERVICE

continued from page 9

Nancie Ehlert, Vice Chair of the Parish Life and Stewardship Commission

"From a young age, it always resonated with me that I was very lucky and very blessed," Nancie Ehlert says. "I had more than I needed and always felt compelled to share with others. It's matured into the idea that all of this really isn't mine, but it's what God has given to me and it's my job to share it."

That feeling, which began for Nancie as a child, has only increased since she has been a part of our parish family at St. Max. Born in Chicago and raised in Phoenix, Nancie and her husband, Greg, moved to the area two years ago for his job. For Nancie, who works as a social worker for a nonprofit, it was her first time being states away from family. She immediately found ways to get involved, from helping with the festival and fish fry, to joining a book study, and the RCIA team. And, along with finding ways to serve, she found a new "family."

"Most of the friends that we've made and spend most of our time with are from St. Max," Nancie says. "I remember looking around and thinking, 'Wow, this is really what it's all about.' This is what we wanted, putting down roots and building community. We are surrounded by friends who are 'family.' Our church family really is our Ohio family."

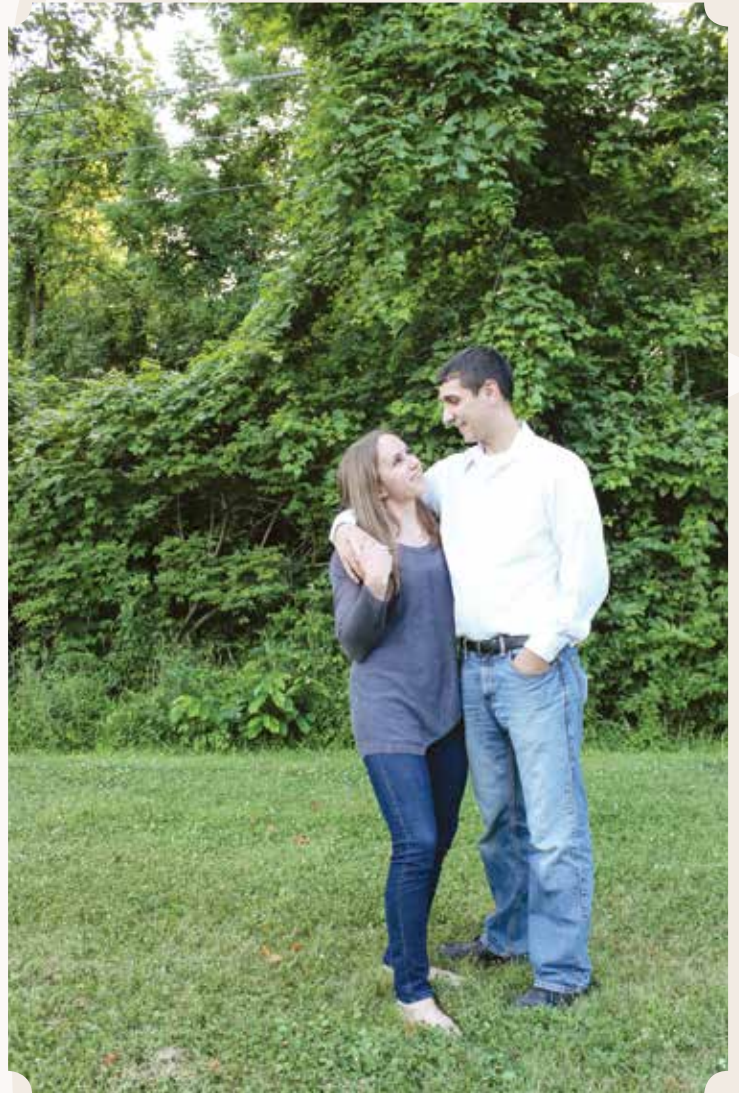
Nancie looks forward to serving the Parish Life and Stewardship Commission as the Vice Chair in the coming year.

"[I look forward to] engaging the parish, building community and giving others the opportunity to make connections and build the community that I've been able to," she says.

Nancie encourages others, especially newcomers, to find ways to become involved in the parish.

"Start small, find something that you like doing," she says. "Take advantage of even the small opportunities to engage."

Thank you to both Jane and Nancie for your willingness and generosity in sharing your gratitude and serving our parish!



Nancie Ehlert and her husband, Greg, moved to the area two years ago, and found their "Ohio family" at St. Max.

For more information about the Parish Life and Stewardship Commission, please contact Jane Rowland at 513-755-0625, Stewardship@saint-max.org, or visit <http://www.saint-max.org/ParishLife/AboutParishLifeStewardship> to learn more

STRENGTHENED THROUGH BROTHERHOOD

After participating in Christ Renews His Parish – or CRHP – for a number of years, parishioner Kevin McGirr was looking for a new way to provide support, fellowship and spiritual enrichment to the men of St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish. Almost providentially, he stumbled across EWTN's program *Crossing the Goal*, a TV series in which former NFL All-Pro Wide Receiver Danny Abramowicz walks men through a physical and spiritual training camp designed to help men strategize, battle and, ultimately, win against the devil.



In the process, men from all different ages and stages of life are able to gain a true sense of brotherhood, supporting one another on the path to holiness.



Each Men's Spiritual Workout gathering centers around one episode from EWTN's show Crossing the Goal.

"I really liked it and thought, 'Let's give this a try,'" Kevin says. "I was looking for something that didn't require a lot of additional work for guys because they are so busy with work and family, but that would also allow us to continue growing spiritually together."

Kevin – along with about 12 other men – began a new ministry entitled Men's Spiritual Workout. Gathering the second and fourth Sunday of each month at 8 p.m. in the parish youth room, this ministry's goal is to provide Christian fellowship for men in order to strengthen their faith and to provide them with the tools needed to resist temptation.

"Our mission is to help each other grow closer to Christ, to strengthen our marriages and families, and to form a community of Catholic men centered on faith," Kevin says.

Each gathering revolves around one episode from the *Crossing the Goal* series, which includes a brief overview of the topic, more in-depth instruction, opportunities for personal reflection and small-group discussion, and intercessory prayer time. Topics range from exploring man's call to evangelization and obedience, to the importance of spiritual support through a "band of brothers." In this way, lasting relationships are formed and members are able to center themselves on what truly matters in life.

"As guys, we get so busy with work and providing for our families that we aren't good at taking care of ourselves – oftentimes, we end up putting our own spiritual life last," Kevin says. "What this does is force us to take time to think about our relationship with God, reflecting on how we are doing as husbands and fathers. Personally, it has been so beneficial, putting me back in that right way of thinking and prompting me to reflect on how I'm doing."

Recognizing that men have many demands on their time, the Men's Spiritual Workout is designed to be a low-pressure opportunity. No prior preparation is required and, because sessions are self-contained, members can easily return after a long absence. Gatherings are also kept relatively brief, so that men can return to their responsibilities and families in a timely manner.

"We work hard to keep this ministry open so that if you are gone for two months, you can come right back and pick up where you left off," Kevin says. "We also try

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STRENGTHENED THROUGH BROTHERHOOD

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to keep meetings both efficient and valuable. Our goal is to always have the guys walking back to their cars by 9:30 p.m."

Open to any male parishioner 18 years or older, the Men's Spiritual Workout consists of men from almost every stage of life. This, says Kevin, has been another great blessing of the group. Older members are able to share their wisdom and experience with young fathers and husbands, while also feeling refreshed by the enthusiasm and new perspectives of the younger men.

"We are all going through struggles, but we aren't going through the same type of struggles," Kevin says. "It is so refreshing and comforting to have someone from the outside share their perspective, saying, 'It's OK, you'll get through it.'"

All adult men of the parish are invited to join in this new ministry, benefitting from the fellowship and being spiritually enriched by the material covered. For more information, please contact Kevin McGirr at 513-759-1665 or MensSpiritualWorkout@saint-max.org

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Sat. Vigil: 4:30 p.m. | **Sun.:** 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m. | **Mon. - Sat.:** 8:30 a.m.
Sacrament of Penance: Saturdays after the 8:30 a.m. Mass & 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.,
Thursdays after the 8:30 a.m. Mass & 6:00 - 6:45 p.m.