
ST MATTHEW

CATHOLIC CHURCH AND NEWMAN CENTER



STATE OF THE PARISH

In His call to the first disciples, Jesus told Simon Peter to, “Cast into the deep waters (Lk 5:4).” After a long night of fruitless effort and nothing to show for his work, Peter’s first response to Jesus was filled with doubt, but his heart was not closed. Peter listened and obeyed the words of Jesus. It was only then that a miracle happened! The fish were so abundant that their nets were not sufficient to haul aboard the catch.

This was the first of many occasions in which Jesus asks His disciples to do things that seem futile at best and foolish at worst. Despite doubt and beyond all fear, Jesus receives our “yes” and responds to us with miraculous generosity—gifts that are both abundant and unhoped for. Like the loaves and fishes, He takes our “yes,” blesses it, and then multiplies its goodness in ways beyond measure and our reckoning. In a word, He never disappoints! He never fails!

Brothers and sisters, our people are hungering and thirsting for something more! They are looking for Jesus Christ! He is the answer to the deepest desires of every human heart! In his message to young Catholics, Pope Benedict XVI tells us that, “If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great.” Echoing the words of his predecessor, Pope St. John Paul II, he tells us to “Be not afraid. Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and He gives you everything. When we give ourselves to Him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life. Amen.”

At St. Matthew Catholic Church and Newman Center, this is our mission field. Our work of Evangelization is simple: to bring Jesus to people and people to Jesus. Dear friends in Christ, I see miracles happening in lives every day. I ask you to join me in prayer and support for our parish and the ongoing work of Evangelization right here in Statesboro, Georgia. Together and without fear, let us, “Cast into the deep water (Lk 5:4)!”

WORSHIP AND PRAYER

As Catholics, we understand that Communion is first and foremost, the Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the source and summit of our faith. It is also a shared meal with our family, both our relatives and our parish family. The dedication of our priests, deacons, music, and pastoral staff as well as lay ministers who serve as lectors, extraordinary Eucharistic ministers, sacristans, ushers, and altar servers create a prayerful environment in which we can worship together.



Each weekend, our parish celebrates four Masses: 5 pm in Spanish on Saturdays, and Masses at 8 am, 10:30 am, and 5 pm on Sunday. In addition to Fr. John Johnson, our pastor, we are blessed to have the assistance of two retired priests: Fr. Tom Nellis, and Fr. Doug Clark, and deacons Mark Girardeau, Mike McGrath, and John O'Malley. Pastoral Assistant Helen Almeter works with the pastors, deacons, and lay ministers to coordinate the celebrant, lector, and extraordinary minister schedules. She also works with the clergy and parishioners to train and communicate with altar servers, lectors, sacristans and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. Deacon John coordinates training of lectors. We are blessed to have lay ministers set up for Mass, care for the sacred linens and vessels, read sacred scripture, serve at the altar, and assist with the flow of traffic, information, and securing our weekly collection. John Gleissner coordinates our livestream of the 10:30 am Mass, which is a source of envy among the priests in our Diocese! A non-Catholic discovered our Livestream and is now inquiring about the faith. In January, we plan to resume the Nursery at the 8 am and 10:30 am Masses for children 0-3 years old.



This year, we held our first Eucharistic Procession on the Feast of Corpus Christi! Many of you shared how moved you were to take part in this tradition, which we hope will be repeated at least twice each year on that Feast Day as well as on Christ the King Sunday. If you are looking for more opportunities to pray with us, we have Eucharistic Adoration on Wednesdays from 7:30 pm until 8:30 pm when the University is in session. Each Wednesday, a group of parishioners gathers in the church at 4:30 pm to pray the rosary. Please see the bulletin or our website for the daily Mass schedule as well as times for confession and other seasonal liturgical events and Holy Days.



FAITH FORMATION



We were thrilled to register over 160 students for Religious Education this year! Children enrolled in Pre-K through 8th grade meet weekly during the school year for religious instruction. Director of Religious Education Helen Almeter coordinates the catechesis (theological education) of children and adults in need of sacramental preparation for Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation. This includes those interested in becoming Catholic. Every year, no matter what our needs are for catechists, the Holy Spirit inspires parishioners to help pass on the faith by serving as teachers. Two part-time youth ministers, Catholic Eagles Thomas Heusel and Lydia Payne, serve as LIFETEEN leaders

for our youth in grades 8-12. In April, 2021 we took the largest group of teens to the Diocesan Youth Conference (DYC) in Valdosta, which inspired some of our youth to begin a summer bible study for teens. Hopefully we will take even MORE teens in April 2022! Parish Administrator Melinda Cannady prepares dinner for LIFETEEN. Four Fellowship of Catholic University Student (FOCUS) missionaries serve the Catholic students at Georgia Southern. In June 2020, we took a leap of faith to add a new part-time position of Catholic Eagles Development Director. Ashley Slaughter was hired for this role to help build our alumni, parent, student, and outside donors to help fund the ministry from sources OUTSIDE the parish. The FOCUS grant, half of which



is paid by the Diocese, helps provide FOUR missionaries to serve fulltime for 10 months of the year. We could not hire ONE person for the same amount of money spent on the grant. This summer, our staff discerned a need for more adult faith formation programs which led to a monthly Parish Nite potluck followed by a "Catholic Apologetics" themed talk. Parish Administrator Melinda Cannady assists with planning and communicating these events via social media, the bulletin, announcements, and our parish website, and provides a lesson for our children during Parish Nite. Melinda and Helen prepare the main dish and drinks for the dinner. Helen also assists in the format for the program and John Gleissner coordinates the livestream of the talk.

FELLOWSHIP

Every 2nd Sunday of the month, we gather for Hospitality Sunday... an opportunity for parishioners to welcome new members, fellowship together, and enjoy coffee and donuts. The All Saints Festival was held October 27, for the 7th year in a row! Parish families enjoyed saint games staffed by LIFETEEN and Catholic Eagles volunteers, ate hot dogs and hamburgers, and decorated their own desserts at the cupcake station. Children received goodie bags filled with treats donated by parishioners. Melinda and Helen put in 30,000 steps that day setting up and were grateful for the help of parishioners to cook and serve food, as well as bake cupcakes. Our Parish Council of Catholic Women (PCCW) meets monthly to present talks, fellowship, and plan outreach programs. The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe provides an opportunity for us to gather for a procession, a special Mass, and mananitas as we celebrate the patron of North America!



OUTREACH

COVID-19 presented many challenges for churches throughout the world, but it also provided opportunities to provide corporal acts of mercy to those in need. St. Matthew Parish tithes 10% of offertory income to the needy. With the support of our parishioners, we were able to provide several meals for the staff at East Georgia Regional Medical Center (EGRMC) and the Bulloch County Health Department as well as snack and drink baskets for the Sylvania Hospital and Bulloch County EMS. Gift baskets were delivered to our Homebound parishioners and the Catholic Eagles organized card writing parties to send notes of encouragement to those parishioners during the height of the pandemic. Area Christians Together in Service shifted from in-person assistance to taking applications via email and phone to provide assistance with utilities and rent to the poor. Currently, four parishioners volunteer at ACTS each week. We also gave "Bereavement Bears" to the Women's Pavillion at EGRMC. Every Thursday, volunteers prepare 27 bags of food for the Backpack Buddies program to send home from school with children in need. Our parish also supports neighboring parishes in Claxton, Metter, and Swainsboro with a monthly stipend and gives monthly support to two local crisis pregnancy centers.



"Although somber, holding onto a teddy bear brings some of our patients comfort, strength, and courage, despite a devastating loss. No teddy bear can replace a child. However, a teddy bear can introduce some meaning and comfort into a situation that is otherwise filled with emptiness, pain and sorrow. We greatly appreciate St. Matthew's support in believing that no mom should ever leave East Georgia Regional Medical Center with empty arms." - EGRMC



WHAT NEXT? MOVING FORWARD AND UPWARD!

We are proud of the St. Matthew Parish Family and all you do to answer the call to discipleship. Together, we combine our financial resources, the hard work of our volunteers, and prayer to accomplish more than our budget would suggest we could get done. However, we know that there are needs among our parishioners and in our community that are not being met. How can we address areas that need growth like adult faith formation, homebound ministry, and youth programs to name a few? In early January, a brief questionnaire will be sent to you to complete. You will be invited to share your thoughts on what you love about our parish and where/how you see us becoming better disciples and a stronger parish. A forum for sharing those thoughts will be provided at a listening session on January 26, 2022. Please take your ideas to the Lord in prayer so that we can be faithful partners in discipleship by following His will for our parish. Mary, Mother of Evangelization, pray for us! St. John Henry Newman, pray for us! St. Matthew, pray for us!

TOWNHALL MEETING: JAN. 26, 2022 AT 6 PM