



# FOR MERCY'S SAKE

## November 2023

the quarterly newsletter of Our Lady of Mercy Church

837 Bartlett Road Harborcreek, PA 16421  
814-899-5342 • [www.ourladyofmercychurch.org](http://www.ourladyofmercychurch.org)  
[www.facebook.com/ourladyofmercyharborcreek](http://www.facebook.com/ourladyofmercyharborcreek)  
[www.youtube.com/ourladyofmercyharborcreek](http://www.youtube.com/ourladyofmercyharborcreek)



## The Season of Advent

**Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception:**

Friday, December 8—Masses 8:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.

**Reconciliation Service:**

Wednesday, December 6 at St. Gregory — 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 17 at St. James — 3:00 p.m.

There will be three priests available



## The Season of Christmas

### MASSES FOR CHRISTMAS

**Christmas Eve: Sunday, December 24**  
6:00 p.m. & 10:00 p.m.

**Christmas Day: Monday, December 25**  
10:00 a.m.

### MASS FOR NEW YEAR'S:

**Feast of the Solemnity of Mary:**

**New Year's Day: Monday, January 1 — 10:00 a.m.**

*We will have no Vigil Mass on Sunday.*



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# Vision Statement

Encountering Christ.

Growing in His Love.

Serving in His Name.



**Where there is no vision,  
the people perish**

*(Proverbs 29:18)*

Back in the summer of 2021, the staff began asking where we were going, what was our purpose? The need for a vision began to surface. During the Feast Day homily quoting from Proverbs that without vision the people perish, Fr. Ritchie talked about where we had been as a parish (our past), who we were (our present) and asked where we were going (our future). He wanted to see the parish grow and become revitalized. The Pastoral Council affirmed the need to revitalize and supported hiring a parish coach to lead us through a visioning process. With a grant from the Catholic Foundation and using some of our John and Barbara Jacquel endowment monies, we hired a parish coach in January of 2022.


Seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance, the Prayer to the Holy Spirit was composed by Council in February 2022. Starting that March, the Vision Team began work on creating our vision statement. Finally, in February 2023, the draft was complete. We then shared the vision with parish leaders and found them to be very supportive.

Wanting to make the vision visible and tangible, we created our Vision Logo that we plan to use in many ways. This logo was printed on tee-shirts that many wore to our 2023 Feast Day when we officially “launched” our vision and the beginning of our journey along this discipleship pathway. “Encounter Christ, Grow in His Love, Serve in His Name” – We extend a special thank you to three of our members who spoke on each of these aspects of our vision at this year’s Feast Day. Steve Brainard recognized that his encounter with Christ grew from examples of several individuals over many years. Andriana Grosch drew analogies with nature and our growth in Christ, encouraging continual renewal and transformation based in His love through all seasons of our lives. Vickie Gilchrest highlighted the many ways of serving by sharing ways she has served in His name, how they have changed over time and the value of the encouragement she received to serve.

So, two years after Fr. Ritchie talked of needing a vision, Fr. Matt launched us on our path of discipleship. ‘A path that is for all of us, for each of us to embrace and to live each moment of every day and when we fall short to begin the journey again.’



## Vision Leadership Summit Key Takeaways

- ◇ There was good support of the vision statement: The 10-word vision is spot on; the explanations made it more concrete, and the words being used are very active, deliberate words.
  - ◇ Personal invitation is key. The way to get new people to participate is through personal invitation from parishioners, Father, staff.
  - ◇ We need to be a multigenerational community reaching youth and young families.
  - ◇ We need to continue our welcoming spirit, to continue to build a welcoming environment.
  - ◇ We need to be open to new opportunities – see new needs.
  - ◇ There was general excitement around the possibility of change so we can grow. Feel the need to build new, quality experiences.
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# **IMPORTANT NEWSLETTER** **INFORMATION**

This will be the **LAST NEWSLETTER MAILING** of our *For Mercy's Sake Newsletter*.

No need to fear though, we will be publishing our newsletter electronically every quarter.

If you do not have access to receive the newsletter electronically and would like to continue receiving your newsletter by mail, please contact Katie in the Parish Office at 814-899-5342 or by email at [secretary@ourladyofmercychurch.org](mailto:secretary@ourladyofmercychurch.org)





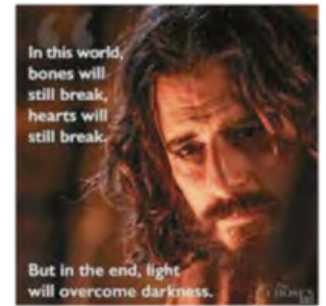
Have you been wanting to watch “The Chosen” but have not had time, do not want to experience it alone, want to share your thoughts with others, cannot go back and watch previous episodes? No matter the reason, we might have just the answer for you!

Join us at Our Lady of Mercy on Thursday nights in January at 6:30 p.m. to start viewing Season One of “The Chosen”.

What does this require from you?  
Absolutely nothing but your presence.

No commitment but your continual growth in your faith and your faith journey.

More information will follow the closer we get to the date.



**COME WATCH AND WALK WITH US ON THIS WONDERFUL JOURNEY OF “THE CHOSEN”.**



**For the  
Religious Ed.  
Ministry**

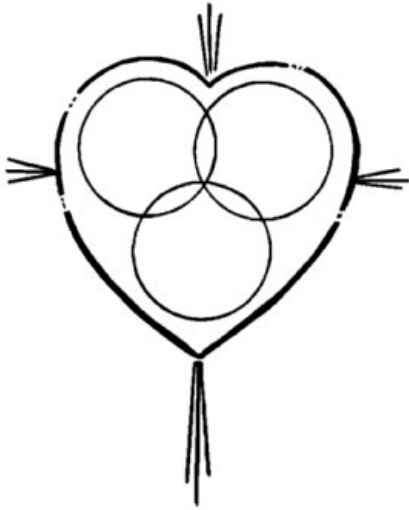
- Spaghetti & Meatballs
- Refreshments
- Salad
- Italian Bread
- Cookies
- Chinese Auction

**SUNDAY,  
FEBRUARY 4  
12:00 - 3:00 p.m.**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

# SANCTUS

*February 17, 2023*



**Retreat! Step back from the hectic pace of life to spend a day with God. Give yourself the gift of time to hear afresh the story of God's great love, to renew your faith and deepen your walk with Christ.**

**Join us for prayer, reflection, sharing and renewal.**

**🔔 Meals are provided 🔔 There is no cost 🔔**

***To register, complete the bottom portion of this flier and return it to the RE Office or in the collection basket by Feb. 1.***

Questions? Call Irene @ 814-899-6132  
or email [ilucas@ourladyofmercychurch.org](mailto:ilucas@ourladyofmercychurch.org)

**Space is limited**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any special needs? \_\_\_\_\_

**Check All That Apply**

Female  Male

Married registering w/ Spouse  Married registering alone

Single  Divorced  Separated  Widowed

Catholic  Non-Catholic

# Our Lady of Mercy - State of the Parish Report

11-4-2023

The parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy have done a remarkable job with managing resources over many years, thanks to our outstanding finance council.

This past year our offertory income was \$427,000 (numbers rounded) and expenses for operating the parish were \$481,000 for operating loss of \$54,000. Parish Festival profits of \$21,000 offset that loss giving us a net loss of \$33,000 for the year. This also demonstrates how important the Parish Festival is to the overall health of the church.

Our capital income of \$125,000 included \$83,000 from CSA contributions, donations from the Knights of Columbus of \$5000, Donations from parishioners of \$1000, and investment income of \$35,000. Our capital expenses totaled \$113,000. This included \$70,000 in CSA payments to the diocese and \$43,000 in various capital expenditures to the buildings and grounds: repairs to the parking lot, concrete walkways, gas line, and portions of the roof.

In light of everything going on with pastoral planning with the diocese, we thought it would be timely to go beyond just the financials of this year and share with you the trends we have been seeing over the past five years. We have included two small spreadsheets showing 5-year trends. The first is our Profit & Loss Statement and the second is an Offertory Recap.

From the P&L Statement we see the offertory numbers have been relatively flat. Unfortunately, during the same period, our expenses continued to rise, due to inflation and also the effects of Covid-19 which changed our lives dramatically. Over 5 years we show a \$55K loss. And although we had to dip into our savings to cover this loss, be assured, that the finance council is very watchful of our expenses. The entire staff is very aware of spending and looking to cut costs.

Our Lady of Mercy 5-Year Trend					
	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Offertory	\$ 421,891	\$ 445,388	\$ 440,145	\$ 408,025	\$ 427,099
Expenses	(453,705)	(464,774)	(446,863)	(443,665)	(480,744)
Net Operating Loss	\$ (31,814)	\$ (19,386)	\$ (6,718)	\$ (35,640)	\$ (53,645)
Festival	\$ 20,109	\$ 20,937	\$ 15,010	\$ 15,450	\$ 21,072
Net Income	\$ (11,705)	\$ 1,551	\$ 8,292	\$ (20,190)	\$ (32,573)

<u>Level of Annual Giving</u>	<u>Number of Families Giving to the Parish per year</u>				
	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
\$0	178	207	216	210	220
Less than \$500	113	99	70	80	69
\$500 - \$999	154	136	130	117	111
\$1,000 +	146	148	163	153	139
Total Contributors	<b>413</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>319</b>
Total Parish Families	<b>591</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>539</b>

These figures in the second chart are also concerning: our parish membership is down by about 9%. However, it is also a real complement to our parish family since our offertory has remained relatively flat. However, the number of families who have been unable to donate has grown dramatically. We certainly understand that some of our families are simply unable to donate based on things they have going on in their lives.



We would ask all of you to take some time and consider the value Our Lady of Mercy brings to you and your families.

Is there anything further you can do to help insure the financial future of our parish?



If there are reasons that weekly or monthly giving simply won't work for you, perhaps you could consider donating to Our Lady of Mercy through **I Give Catholic**. Unlike the annual CSA appeal, all money donated to Our Lady of Mercy through I Give Catholic stays right here in our Parish. This year, I Give Catholic is being held on **November 27, 2023**. You will see more information on this topic as the date gets closer.





OUR LADY OF MERCY PRESENTS

# LAS POSADAS

December 17, 2023

9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
Our Lady of Mercy  
837 Bartlett Rd.  
Harborcreek, PA 16421  
814-899-6132

## Let's Celebrate!

Join us as we journey with our Sister Parish and celebrate Las Posadas with traditional prayer and fun!

## What is Las Posadas?

A religious festival celebrated in Mexico that commemorates the journey that Joseph and Mary made from Nazareth to Bethlehem.





# Jesus and the Eucharist Study

Dear Parishioners,

As we continue the year of parish Eucharistic Revival, we invite you to grow closer to Jesus alongside fellow parishioners from Saint Mark, Mount Calvary, Saint James and Our Lady of Mercy via the *Jesus and the Eucharist* study. Each session is full of rich theological content, powerful testimonies, and timely messages from individual bishops across the country. This is a great opportunity to dive more deeply into the richness of our Eucharistic faith.

## BELOW IS AN OVERVIEW OF EACH SESSION:

### Session 1: What's Our Story?

The Bible is the story of God's love for us. He created us out of love, redeemed us by his love, and transforms us in his love.

### Session 2: Who Is Jesus?

Jesus is both God and man, therefore he reveals who God is in relation to us. Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15) He asks this same question of us: who do you say Jesus is?

### Session 3: Am I Saved?

Salvation is a gift from God through Jesus Christ that requires our "yes."

### Session 4: Why a Church?

Jesus didn't simply leave us a written message or instruction manual to follow. He gave us a living, dynamic Church where we encounter him personally and allow ourselves to be transformed into his likeness.

### Session 5: God Is With Us

God's presence in the Old Testament foreshadows the gift of the Eucharist, one of the seven sacraments of the Church. Jesus established the Eucharist to give us strength and accompany us at every moment of our earthly journey.

### Session 6: The Story of the Eucharist

The story of the Eucharist can be traced throughout Scripture. From Genesis to the present day, this session explores how the Cross is the new Tree of Life, and the Eucharist is its fruit.

### Session 7: Bread for the Journey

The Eucharist sustains us on our spiritual journey. Our participation at Mass through the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist is an offering of thanksgiving to God. We are then sent forth to share what we have received.

Through the generosity of our donors, the content of this study is available free of charge. Additionally, we will be providing you with support to help you and your team be successful in hosting this series at your parish. Visit the Parish Point Person Portal at [eucharisticrevival.org/parishpointperson](http://eucharisticrevival.org/parishpointperson) to access trainings, invitation templates, and other support materials.

**Please sign up with your parish office and join us on Mondays starting January 8, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. for seven consecutive evenings at the locations listed below. Hospitality will be provided, and we hope to see you there!**

January 8: St. Mark the Evangelist  
January 15: St. James  
January 22: Our Lady of Mercy  
January 29: St. Mark the Evangelist

February 5: St. James  
February 12: Our Lady of Mercy  
February 19: St. Mark the Evangelist

# HARBORCREEK COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING SERVICE

## Sunday November 19th 6:00 p.m.

**Harborcreek First Presbyterian  
6724 Buffalo Rd. Harborcreek, PA 16421**





## Prayer Line

We want to thank all of our prayer line callers for their dedication and time given to this ministry. You bring comfort to many and prayers ARE answered. May God bless you as you bless others. Thank you to our many callers who place their faith in our ministry. Please keep one of our own callers, *Gerri Gallagher*, who has passed away recently, in your prayers. Anyone who is interested in being a part of our ministry, please call Katie Stephenson at **814-899-5342 extension 210**.

God Bless!  
Donna Smicker & Gerry Extein



## KNIGHTLY NEWS FALL 2023

### **PRO-LIFE**

It has been another great year for *The Baby-Bottle Campaign* with proceeds exceeding \$75,000 and going toward the operation and maintenance of the new van and equipment purchased last year. This year, Crawford County donations will stay at the pregnancy center in Meadville. There is also talk of hiring new employees. Several lives have been saved as women chose life rather than abortion. Thank you to all who supported this fundraiser.

### **PARISH DANCE FEATURING THE GROOVE**

This annual dance, which in the past has been an overwhelming hit with the parish and community alike, is scheduled for Friday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, which is later this year than in the past, but still in conjunction with the Parish Feast Day. By the time you receive this newsletter, it may have already occurred. It is sponsored by the Knights Council of OLM and as usual a good turnout is expected. Thanks to The Groove who reportedly loves entertaining at our parish, to those who plan to attend or have already attended and to those who work so hard to make sure it is enjoyed by all.

### **TIME TO BE GENEROUS**

*In the future* - As the cool weather approaches, we will begin to hear of coat drives and of the needs of our brothers and sisters during the upcoming winter season and the holidays. All are called to be generous with our giving. The Knights will donate to the Harborcreek Food Pantry and an anonymous OLM family at Christmas time - plus other worthy causes as the need arises.

*In the past* – the natural and man-made disasters just keep on occurring – and we have responded, since that is one of the needs Knights are called to address. One worth mentioning is the fires in Hawaii. We donated in the name of Father Ritchie, especially since he was the Chaplain for the Erie Fire Department.

The first of two annual \$500 donations was made for the *Support of Seminarians*.

A \$100 donation was made to each of the three local fire departments.

### **REMINDERS**

Council meetings are held on the second Wednesday of every month in OLM's Sperry Hall. They begin promptly at 7:00pm and last no longer than one hour. Refreshments follow for those who wish to stay for social time.

We are always looking for new members. Let one of the Knights know if you are interested joining the council.

### **FINALLY**

The council is active and healthy and involved in many initiatives. Meetings are held faithfully and are well-attended with about 25 or more members in attendance. They usually do not exceed one hour, which allows for social time afterward. Some leave right after the meeting, others stay a while longer and some do not leave until the light gets turned off and tells them it's time to go!

Degrees for those becoming new members are held ½ hour prior to the normal monthly meeting. Recent new members are new Scott Gotham & Jay Raydo.

Start your holiday shopping early - at a loss as to what to get those hard to buy for people on your gift list - consider gift cards - easy to wrap and a large variety available!

**Gift Card Order Form**

*Our Lady of Mercy earns cash with every gift card purchased. (1.7% - 14% depending on the gift card)*

The cards listed below are those available in the Parish Office or visit the RaiseRight mobile app or ShopWithScrip.com to see all 750+ brands and available denominations.

3 ways to order:

- ❖ Stop by the parish office after the weekend Masses or during the week between 9 and 2.
- ❖ Fill out the form below and drop it off or mail it to OLM 837 Bartlett Rd Harborcreek PA 16421.
- ❖ Text (814)440-4890 or email pmm1955.erie@gmail.com

**Please make checks payable to: Our Lady of Mercy Church**

For questions or more information please call Pat Marshall at 814-440-4890

In stock  
 Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # Cards \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_  
 or Cash

Store	Denomination	Quantity	Total Cost
Amazon	\$25		
Amazon	\$100		
Apple/iTunes	\$25		
Applebees	\$25		
Arby's	\$10		
Barnes & Noble	\$10		
Bath & Body Works	\$10		
Bath & Body Works	\$25		
Bob Evans	\$10		
Bob Evans	\$25		
Buffalo Wild Wings	\$10		
Buffalo Wild Wings	\$25		
Burger King	\$10		
Chipotle	\$10		
Chipotle	\$25		
Cinnabon-Moes etc	\$25		
Country Fair	\$25		
Country Fair	\$50		
Country Fair	\$100		
Dairy Queen	\$10		
Darden Restaurants	\$25		
Domino's	\$10		
Dunkin	\$10		
Dunkin	\$25		
Giant Eagle	\$25		
Giant Eagle	\$50		
Giant Eagle	\$100		

Store	Denomination	Quantity	Total Cost
Home Depot	\$25		
Kohl's	\$25		
Michaels	\$25		
Old Navy	\$25		
Outback Steakhouse	\$25		
Outback Steakhouse	\$50		
Panera	\$10		
Panera	\$25		
Pizza Hut	\$10		
Sonic	\$10		
Sonic	\$25		
Stan's Garden Center	\$25		
Starbucks	\$10		
Starbucks	\$25		
Subway	\$10		
Target	\$10		
Target	\$25		
Target	\$50		
Tim Hortons	\$10		
Total Wine	\$25		
Ulta	\$25		
Walmart	\$25		
Walmart	\$50		
Walmart	\$100		
Wendy's	\$10		

Customer Info:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

# I KNOW JESUS



While laying in a waiting room in the hospital after a serious accident I saw the dark outline of a face and head on the ceiling. Thinking it was the devil, mentally I asked "what are you doing here?" My question was instantly followed by "NO! It's Jesus! I AM HERE!" He has always been with me. If I hadn't always known, I do now and always will.

-D.S.



Why Are We Here?

What's Life All About?

What Happens When We Die?



## The Search

is an innovative video series that tackles the key questions of every human heart. In seven beautifully filmed episodes, Chris Stefanick and experts from multiple fields of science, medicine, psychology, art, and religion examine our place in the larger story of existence.



### Are you ready for *The Search*?

The young people of our community are invited to join our Parish Impact Coordinator, Nick Heise, for this 7 week session on “The Search”. These sessions will take place on the following dates from **11 a.m. - 12 p.m. in the Ritchie Room.**

December 3rd	What Do You Seek?
December 10th	Who Are You?
December 17th	Why A God?
January 7th	What's Our Story?
January 14th	Who Is Jesus?
January 21st	Am I Saved?
January 28th	Why A Church?

