



St. Rita News

The new monthly newsletter serving Saint Rita Parish

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE: Service Groups in Our Parish; Spotlight on the Knights of Columbus; Events in our Parish and Diocese

How Are You Supporting The Fortnight For Freedom?

by **Lauren Petron**
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From June 21st through July 4th--the vigil of the feast of Saint John Fisher and Saint Thomas More through Independence Day--the bishops of the United States have called upon Catholics to join in a "Fortnight for Freedom," a special period of prayer, catechesis, education, and public action to emphasize our Christian and American heritage of liberty. Religious freedom in America is often called our "First Freedom," because it is enshrined in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Unfortunately, religious liberty is being threatened today in a number of different ways.

Foremost among these threats is a mandate from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, promulgated under the 2010 Affordable Care Act, which requires that nearly all employers provide insurance coverage for contraceptives, sterilization, and abortion-inducing drugs. The mandate includes an extremely narrow exemption for most houses of worship, but still requires Catholic institutions such as hospitals, schools, and universities to provide this objectionable coverage for their employees. As this newsletter goes to print, we are awaiting a ruling from the United States Supreme Court that may invalidate some portions or all of the Affordable Care Act. The case currently before the Supreme Court does not directly involve the Mandate, though, and even if some portions of the law are struck down, the remainder of the law--including the HHS Mandate--may remain in place.

In response to the Mandate, 43 Catholic entities, ranging from large organizations like the Archdiocese of Washington and the University of Notre Dame to smaller charitable groups like Catholic Charities of Jackson, Mississippi and Resurrection Catholic School in the Diocese of Biloxi, Mississippi, have sued the HHS Department. If the Mandate stands, these and hundreds of other Catholic organizations across the country will be forced to either violate their consciences--or face crippling fines. As the bishops have said, it should not be up to the government to determine



which religious organizations are "religious enough" to receive conscience protections.

But the HHS Mandate is not the only current threat to our religious freedom. In a document entitled "Our First, Most Cherished Liberty," the Bishops' Conference outlines a number of other problematic laws that have affected the Catholic Church and other religious believers. These include

Alabama's harsh anti-immigration law, which precludes Catholic organizations from offering Christian charity and pastoral care to undocumented immigrants; gay union laws in Illinois, Massachusetts, and the District of Columbia that forced Catholic Charities in those jurisdictions to shut down their adoption services because they could not in good conscience offer adoptions to same-sex couples; and the Department of Health and Human Services' refusal to renew the USCCB Office of Migration and Refugee Services' contract to provide medical and mental health care to victims of sex trafficking, because MRS would not further victimize these women by offering them contraceptives and abortions.

The Fortnight for Freedom is our opportunity to learn more about these threats, pray and fast to end them, and educate ourselves and others about the wonderful work the Church does to serve the most vulnerable among us. Whether it's offering an extra Rosary for religious freedom both here and around the world, writing your representatives in Congress about what religious liberty means to you, or attending a public rally, what will you do during this Fortnight to stand up for our First Freedom?

For more information about the Fortnight for Freedom, visit www.fortnight4freedom.org or www.arlingtondiocese.org/religiousliberty.

Lauren Petron is stay-at-home mother and has been a Saint Rita's parishioner for six years. Before becoming a mom, she served as counsel to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee. She recently began speaking and writing with Catholic Voices USA, a group of media-friendly and studio-friendly lay Catholics whose aim is to put the Church's case in the public square.

Parish Life



St. Rita's has many wonderful organizations which provide vital services to the parish and to the wider community. Below, we offer an in-depth look into the work these organizations are doing. Many of them would welcome new members! This month, we focus on service groups:

The Gabriel Project

The Gabriel Project is a parish-based pregnancy assistance ministry run by the Office for Family Life of the Diocese of Arlington. Our mission at the St. Rita's chapter is to help any pregnant woman within our parish boundaries (whether Catholic or not) who needs assistance. Assistance can take many forms, depending on the needs of the mother—from preparing dinners and offering our prayers, to providing baby shower items and prenatal care. We work with the diocese, local pregnancy crisis centers, the Tepeyac Center and other parish groups in order to meet each woman's needs. The St. Rita's chapter consists of 20 members, roughly half of whom have completed diocesan "angel" training, to work directly with women in need. The Gabriel Project is always in need of new members; both men and women are welcome to join. There are no regular meetings; volunteers perform a number of different functions on an as-needed basis, and have helped five mothers in need so far this year.

Contact: Jane Holman, 703-728-1871 or jane.holman@gmail.com

Respect Life Group

The mission of the respect life group is to make the respect life message live in the hearts and actions of all Saint Rita parishioners. Restoring respect for human life at all stages from initial conception to natural death is the group's goal. Their program embraces the four foundational aspects of this task as articulated by our Bishop Loverde: prayer, education, action, and sacrifice. The group currently has 16 members and is always seeking more. Activities include

the monthly Saturday Respect Life Mass followed by the Rosary at the Duke Street Abortion Clinic (held every fourth Saturday of the month, including July 28). Activities throughout the year include a Mother's Day baby shower to support local crisis pregnancy centers; participation in the October LIFE CHAIN event; and participation in the Annual March for Life. Membership in the Respect Life group requires only a desire to stop the culture of death and a willingness to volunteer to help with at least one activity during the year.

Contact: Imelda Severdia, 703-684-0142 or ibseverdia@comcast.net

Social Outreach Group

The purpose of Saint Rita's Social Outreach Group is to put the corporal works of mercy into action, and everyone in the parish is considered to be a member. The group is always seeking parishioners to assist with special projects such as clothing and food drives, as well as with its regular projects. The group maintains an extensive list of volunteer opportunities, including things like making bag lunches to be distributed by the Salvation Army, serving dinner at the Carpenter's Shelter or Christ House, visiting the homebound, and assisting with funeral receptions. The group holds one annual meeting, but most business is addressed via email and by phone, with some mini-meetings as needed for special projects.

Contact: Suzanne Arnold, 703-683-5138 or suzannearnold@verizon.net

Funeral Committee

When a bereaved family plans to hold a funeral reception in the St. Rita's parish center, the Funeral Committee sets up the reception, serves food and beverages, and cleans up afterwards. New committee members would be much appreciated; since funerals are usually in the morning, this might be a good opportunity for stay-at-home mothers. Since the group's services are provided on an as-needed basis, there are no regular meetings, and members might only be called upon to help once every few months.

Contact: Kathleen Sullivan, lmsullivan@comcast.net

About Your Parish Newsletter

Do you have ideas for future items in the parish newsletter, or would you like to submit a feature for publication? Is there an upcoming event of interest to St. Rita's parishioners that we should know about? All submissions can be directed to our editors: Catherine Feil (catherine.feil@gmail.com, or 703.671.0402) or Erin Church (erinmchurch@gmail.com).

GO PAPERLESS! It is our hope that this newsletter will be primarily distributed via email, on a monthly basis. Limited paper copies will be available at the church entrances for newcomers and those without access to email. If you would like to receive a copy of the newsletter by email, please contact Catherine Feil (catherine.feil@gmail.com) or Erin Church (erinmchurch@gmail.com).



June Baptisms at St. Rita



- + Cormac Franklin Mirshak, June 2
- + William Edward Burns, June 2
- + Catherine Gloria Lowe, June 2
- + Louis Michael Tenuta, June 2
- + Annette Therese Lanahan, June 15
- + Marcello Nicholas Gabalda & Sophia Maria Gabalda, June 16
- + Siobhán Fatima Maher, June 23

June Funerals at St. Rita

+ Harriet C. Hagen (89) died June 7, Funeral Mass June 11.

+ *May the Souls of the Faithful Departed, through the Mercy of God, Rest in Peace!* +

June Weddings at St. Rita



- + Michael Francis Tamara and Lisa Catherine Gibson, June 9
- + Vignesh Rajan and Maria GraciaPrado-Panglao, June 10
- + Stephen Hughes and Mallory Langhauser, June 22
- + Nicholas Ian Billhimer and Caroline Elizabeth Herman, June 23

Do you know of a parishioner who is ill, and in need of prayers? Or a parishioner who is serving in the armed forces, overseas? We will be happy to publish their names so that fellow parishioners can pray for them. Please contact Catherine Feil (catherine.feil@gmail.com, or 703.671.0402) or Erin Church (erinmchurch@gmail.com).

■ UPCOMING EVENTS IN OUR DIOCESE

Catholic Sports Club Field Day

Sunday, July 15 from 11am to 8pm
Includes burgers and hotdogs, sand volleyball, soccer and football, Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Rd., Fairfax Station.
Contact Erin Kisley, yam@arlingtondiocese.org.

One Mediator between God & Man: A Catholic Understanding of Mary & the Saints

July 10 & 17 @ 7:30 pm
Presenter: Rev. Daniel F. Hanley/Institute for Catholic Culture
Location: St. Michael Church Hall, 7401 Saint Michael's Lane, Annandale, VA 22003
<http://www.instituteofcatholicculture.org/events/>

Saint Paul Story Time

July 12 and 26, August 9 and 23 from 10:30-11am
The Daughters of St. Paul invite you to a free children's story time. There will be faith-filled stories, activities, and songs geared toward 3-5 year-olds with parent or guardian; siblings welcome. Registration appreciated: call 703.549.3806, or email alexandria@paulinemediacom. Held at Pauline Books & Media, 1025 King Street (on the corner of King and Henry), in Old Town Alexandria.

Painting a Path to Heaven: Art in the Life of Faith

July 14 @ 7:30pm
A lecture series sponsored by the Saint Cecilia Group and the John Paul II Fellowship, St. Mary Church Lyceum, 313 Duke St., Alexandria. Part 3 of 3 is July 14. Contact Michelle Gil, mgil@saintceciliagroup.org, or Ever Johnson, ejohnson@jp2fellowship.org, or conta.cc/GKQzvu.

The Nature of Beauty & the Catholic Tradition

Saturday, July 21 @ 10 am
Presenter: Mark Wunsch, PhD/Institute for Catholic Culture
Location: Great Falls Park, 9200 Old Dominion Drive, McLean, VA 22102
<http://www.instituteofcatholicculture.org/events/>

The Nature of Beauty & the Catholic Tradition: Beauty & Sacred Architecture

Time: Sunday, July 29 @ 6 pm
Presenter: Denis McNamara, PhD/Institute for Catholic Culture
Location: St. James Catholic Church – Heller Hall, 905 Park Avenue, Falls Church, VA 22046
<http://www.instituteofcatholicculture.org/events/>

Spotlight On: The Knights of Columbus

Q&A with Myonghwan "Moo" Eiselstein of the St. Rita's Knights of Columbus Council

Can you give a short description of the Knights of Columbus' history, and its current aims?

The Knights of Columbus was founded in 1882 by the Venerable Father Michael J. McGivney, who was a parish priest in a large immigrant community. During the 1800s, there was a lot of anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant sentiment in America, and because of this, Fr. McGivney's parishioners were routinely denied adequate job opportunities and therefore, access to reliable benefits. Fr. McGivney had a special concern for widowed families, so he wanted to create a fraternal benefits society. So, if a member of the Knights passed away, his fraternal brothers would raise and donate money to the family.

Fr. McGivney also wanted to create a fraternity for the male members of his parish. In the 1800s, fraternal organizations were very popular, but because of the anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant sentiment, his male parishioners were denied membership in the local fraternities.

Today, the Knights of Columbus has kept its core goals, while adding those of charity and the defense of the Catholic faith. In 2010, the Knights of Columbus donated over \$154 million to charities, volunteered over 70 million hours of service, and donated over 413,000 pints of blood. We also have national partnerships with several charitable organizations like the Special Olympics, Habitat for Humanity, and the Global Wheelchair Mission.

How did the Knights of Columbus come to St. Rita's?

In July 2010, I began serving as the Deputy Grand Knight of St. Joseph the Worker council in Arlington (based out of Our Lady of Lourdes parish). Fr. Gee became Pastor of St. Rita's around the same time, so I asked my Grand Knight for permission to pursue a Knights of Columbus opportunity at St. Rita's, since it is my home parish (and we did not have our own council). We met with Fr. Gee and he loved the idea (he himself is a 3rd degree member of the Knights of Columbus). He asked me to conduct a series of recruitment drives in January 2011, which I did. Thirty-three men signed up to join the Knights during those presentations, which was enough to petition for our own council (the requirement is 30 members).

We were able to get everyone inducted fairly quickly and the council was officially chartered on March 22nd, 2011. It took a lot of work and dedication from our charter members to found this council!

Who leads the group, and how many members does your group have? Who is eligible to join?

Each local council is led by a Grand Knight. I am the Charter Grand Knight and I will remain as Grand Knight until July 1st, when the newly elected Grand Knight, Thomas Maresh, and his officers begin their term. Traditionally speaking, we try to elect new officers every fraternal year, which runs from July 1st to June 30th. We currently have



53 members, with two recruits awaiting the opportunity to attend the exemplification ceremony. We are always looking for new members! Eligible members will be practical Catholic men (meaning, they practice the teachings of the Church) who are over the age of 18. Applicants are asked to participate in a short, casual interview (often over coffee) to determine that they meet the membership requirements.

How often do you meet? What sort of commitment does membership entail?

Our council meets on the third Tuesday of every month in the parish center. We pray the Rosary together at 7:30 PM and the meeting immediately follows. After the meeting has concluded, we socialize over light snacks and beverages.

There are no time requirements or commitments; we do not keep attendance, or anything like that. However, we do a lot of good work for the parish and community, and this would not be possible without individual participation.

What are some of the benefits of membership?

In keeping with Fr. McGivney's desire to provide for widowed families, members of the Knights of Columbus have access to one of the best insurance programs in the country. They also have a chance to serve alongside like-minded men who love their faith, Church, and community. Everyone has a unique view of what the K. of C. is; some believe it's a philanthropic organization while others believe it's a way for Catholic men to grow in their faith. Thankfully, we are able to accomplish all of this through our works.

What are some recent events you've held or participated in? Do you have any upcoming events?

This past October, we raised over \$2,200 for a pregnancy center called A Woman's Choice. We went to a Special Olympics event in January to show our support for the participants. We committed to a two hour time slot during the most recent 40 Days for Life Vigil, we cooked and served food for the parish festival, we participated in the March for Life, and we donated the Christmas trees that were used to decorate the church this past Christmas. We raised \$500 to donate to a seminarian of the Diocese of Arlington and we've donated a combined \$500 to St. Rita school.

On June 30th, we will "install" our newly elected officers so that they can begin serving on July 1st. July is usually an administrative month for the new officers, so there are no planned activities at this time. However, there are some service projects in the works, so watch the bulletin for announcements!

Anything else you'd like to add?

We really want to thank Fr. Gee for allowing us to form a council at St. Rita's and for all of his support. We also want to thank the parish community for all of their support as well. We've received a lot of compliments from our fellow parishioners and it's very humbling to know that they have embraced our organization!

If you are interested in joining the Knights of Columbus, contact Moo at m.eiselstein@gmail.com or 571-268-0511.