

S a i n t A g n e s



St. Agnes is an inclusive Catholic community dedicated to the love of God and service to others. We rejoice in the Gospel, the celebration of the Liturgy, and the Sacraments. We welcome the opportunity to share God's message and to bring all into the life of Christ.

Pastoral Contacts

Pastor: Rev. Andrew M. Switzer
Pastor Emeritus: Rev. T. Mathew Rowgh
Coordinator of Faith Formation: Bill Donahue
Assistant Administrator: Beth Yates
Accounting: Lizzie Lowe
Liturgy: Helen Harris
Music Ministry: Elaine Rendler-McQueeney

Pastoral Council

Connie Bonner ~ Derek Gallagher
Christine Wiegman-Green ~ Patrick Green
Shaná Harris ~ Colin Hayden ~ Brendan Jarrell
Bill Sagle ~ Gil Sateia
Vanessa Santiago ~ Becky Tokarcik

Finance Council

Pat Barth ~ Steve Bledsoe
Mike Drewes ~ Todd Hershey
Sue Kemnitzer ~ David Matera ~ Arnold Thomas

St. Agnes Church

200 South Duke Street, Shepherdstown

St. Agnes Parish Office

106 South Duke Street, Shepherdstown
P.O. Box 1603, Shepherdstown, WV 25443
Telephone 304-876-6436
Office@StAgnesShepherdstown.org
www.StAgnesShepherdstown.org

St. Agnes Chapel

204 South Church Street, Shepherdstown

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 63:16b-17; 64:1, 3-8
Psalm 80:1ab+2, 14-15, 17-18
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:33-37

Weekly Schedule

Sunday Mass

Saturday, 5:30pm

Sunday, 8am

Sunday, 10:30am

Weekday Mass

Monday & Wednesday at 11am

Ecumenical Advent

Wednesday at 1pm & 7pm

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

Mass at 12noon

Advent Communal & First Reconciliation

Saturday at 4pm

Reconciliation: Saturday, 4:30pm

Parish Office: Monday-Friday, 9am-4pm

Cash Card Sales: Weekdays during office hours
(please call first)

Remember in Prayer

Please pray daily for those serving in the Military, our veterans in recovery, and those recently ill especially Barbara, Mueller, Bill Seymour, Todd Hershey, Stef Hale (friend of Jackie Gore), Jim Keller, Joe Vernice, Maureen Maidhof, Anne Oxford, and Georgette Rush. Names are placed in the bulletin for approximately one month and then those names are placed on the 2nd Friday prayer list and are remembered in prayer each month.

2nd Friday Prayer Group

A list has begun for the 2nd Friday in December. Please contact Judy at any time with names of individuals you would like to add or if you would like to join the group. Judy: 301-432-2276 or jslilga8@gmail.com.

Service, Justice, and Peace Weekend

This weekend is our monthly Service, Justice, and Peace Weekend. It has come to our attention that the chefs preparing the food for the homeless meals are preparing 60 meals each week and donations have decreased. Please think about this ministry. **Feeding the hungry is perhaps the most basic call to our Christian conscience. Your generosity is crucially needed to provide one hot meal from our parish each week. Our chefs volunteer their time preparing and delivering these meals and they need the supplies in order to continue this ministry.**

Parish nurses will be available to take your blood pressure and blood sugar. The Knights of Columbus will hand out blue bags to be returned with supplies for the local food pantry, Shepherd Shares. Before and after all Liturgies donations will be accepted for the Kolofata project, hygiene products and diapers.

Shepherdstown Fire Department Free Community Christmas Dinner And Open House This Weekend

The Shepherdstown Fire Department will be having its annual FREE Community Christmas Dinner and Open House on Sunday, December 3rd from 12noon until 3pm. We will provide a free dinner to all who attend as our gift to you for your continued support of their organization.

The special guest of the day will be Santa Claus. Bring your own camera if you wish.

There will be free gifts for all children, fire safety literature, fire, rescue, and ambulance displays.

This special holiday event is for people of all ages and you won't want to miss it. Come join us at the fire department located at 8052 Martinsburg Pike, just west of Shepherdstown. This Christmas event is our gift to Shepherdstown and the surrounding community to show our appreciation.

Longings of Advent: Praying for Peace and Justice An Ecumenical Contemplative Prayer Series

Each Wednesday in Advent, we will meet in the afternoon for prayer and contemplation, and, each Wednesday evening, we will meet for a form of evening prayer. We also have Taizé on the 3rd Sunday of Advent.

December 6, 1pm: An introduction to the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatias of Loyola led by Denis Woods
St Agnes Catholic Church

December 6, 7pm: Holden Evening Prayer
St Peter's Lutheran Church

December 13, 1pm: Lectio Divina
St Peter's Lutheran Church

December 13, 7pm: Holden Evening Prayer
St Peter's Lutheran Church

December 17, 4pm: Taizé
St Agnes

December 20, 1pm: Contemplative Prayer Stations
New Street Methodist Church

December 20, 7pm: Lessons and Carols
New Street Methodist Church

Donations throughout our Ecumenical Advent Series will go to Doctors Without Borders. Checks should be made out to "Caring Cupboard."

Shepherdstown Shares Toy and Gift Collection

It's that magical time again! Shepherdstown Shares is collecting toys and gifts for our clients and their families: Toys, hats, gloves, scarves, etc. Toy collection boxes can be found at Greentree Realty, Shepherdstown Public Library, St. Agnes Parish Center, Shepherdstown Dollar General, and the Shepherdstown Sweet Shop. Unwrapped toys can be dropped off until December 18th! Thanks! For additional information check out their Facebook page.

Dear Parishioners,

We begin the season of Advent, a season that is supposed to shake us—to wake us up to the presence of the Lord in our daily lives. The season calls us to pay attention for the reign of God that we so long for—a world of peace and justice for all of creation. We are well aware, as we look at Israel and Palestine, Russia and Ukraine, and troubled parts of the world everywhere, how far we are from that reality. May our prayer be, “come Lord Jesus.” Our ecumenical opportunities for prayer are about how the peace and justice we want must begin in our own hearts. I think that as we look at the world it can be difficult to have hope. Yet the purpose of Advent, as we light our candles, is our hope that that light cannot be extinguished; that, ultimately, if we are going to build a better world, that light of Christ needs to grow in us and in our community. The call is to let go of the hatred, violence, selfishness, and greed and be illuminated by the Light. Recently we heard of another act of violence with the shooting in Vermont of three Palestinian young men—Hisham Awartani, Kinnan Abdalhamid, and Tahseen Ahmad. May we pray for their healing and recovery. I read a poem from the one young man, Hisham Awartani, that he wrote in sixth grade. May he be a prophetic voice to us of the Advent call as a community of peace, love, justice, light, and hope. I share that poem with you here.

In sixth grade in 2015, Hisham Awartani wrote:
“Hope dwells in my heart
It shines like a light in darkness
[This] light cannot be smothered
It cannot be drowned out by tears and the screams of the wounded
It only grows in strength
This light can outshine hate
This light can outshine injustice
It outshines segregation and apartheid
As of Greek legend, Pandora opened a box
And when she did that, all the evil escaped
But luckily, Pandora closed the jar before hope could escape
And as long as hope stayed in that jar
Hope would never escape
So I ask you one thing, learn from that story
Learn to never give up hope
Learn to let hope give power
In the darkest of times
And let the light shine.”

Fr. Andy

Prayer Sponsors Needed

We are looking for prayer sponsors. A prayer sponsor is someone who would like to show support and offer prayer for a child preparing to receive their First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. If you are interested in serving as a prayer sponsor, please call or email the parish office. You will be assigned a child, and you faithfully pray for them every day. A prayer sponsor may send a card to them (anonymously) and let them know they are being prayed for, but the giving of gifts is not necessary. We want this to be about the gift of prayer, not material gifts. We ask that if you send a card to sign it “your prayer sponsor.” It is nice to stay anonymous until the First Eucharist celebration. We ask that the prayer sponsor come to the First Eucharist Mass on Sunday, April 28th at 10:30 AM where you can introduce yourself. If interested in being a prayer sponsor, please call the office or contact Bill Donahue at formation@stagnesshepherdstown.org.

Lena Abe
Emma Golden
Augustine Laverick
Roman Leuters
McKenna Pender
Dominic Scarano
Ian Walters
Frances Wilson

Jesse Tree Project—Last Call

We have several gifts tags remaining for this Advent season’s Jesse Project. We are working with twelve different agencies in our local community to provide gifts for young and older people that are less fortunate. If you haven’t yet (or even if you have), these agencies would greatly appreciate it if you would take a tag or more. We need all the tags to be gone by the end of this weekend (December 3) and returned with the requested gift by **12:00 noon, Sunday, December 10**.

If you select a gift tag for a gift card, please bring cash or check and place your donation, along with the gift tag, in the red velvet trimmed basket in the Narthex or bring them to the parish center or place in the collection basket during Mass. St. Agnes volunteers will purchase the gift cards from the Church with your donation. Please indicate “**Jesse Tree GIFT**” on the memo line of the check or on the envelope if your offering is cash. If your tag is for a specific gift, please wrap it and attach the gift tag to the outside and bring it to the **Church or Parish Center**. Any questions? Please contact **Steve Bledsoe at (678)447-1343**. Many thanks for your generosity!

Advent Communal & First Reconciliation

Our Advent Communal Reconciliation together with First Reconciliation will be on Saturday, December 9, at 4pm.

Fr Mat's Kolofata Fundraising Dinner Q&A & Our First Winner

We have our first winner! We'll announce the names of all the winners on December 3, with the total combined amount of all the winning bids. As promised, we won't announce the exact amount of this week's bid but will say that it was more than \$175. That doesn't mean that all the remaining bids need to top this – but then again, if you want to win think long and hard about your bid!

Six, two-person dinner packages will go to the highest bidders. Closed bidding starts on November 18 and ends on December 3. Minimum bid is \$100 per "package." One "early bird" Dinner Package will be awarded on November 19 from the bids received by that date. The remaining bids are included in the bidding for the remaining five dinner packages awarded to the highest bidders on December 3.

How and where do I bid?

There is a wooden locked box for bids located on the table where the Potholder+ items are paid for.

There are bidding forms in the pocket on the front of the box.

May I bid on more than one dinner package?

You may bid on as many dinner packages (up to 6) as you wish. Just indicate on the bid form that this is a bid on "1st dinner package," "2nd dinner package," etc.

May I increase my bid on a dinner package that I have already bid on?

Yes, you can increase your bid. Just note on the later bid you submit that it is an increased bid for the dinner package you previously bid on.

The date (February 4, 2024) and location (Parish Center) of the dinner are listed, but not the time. How come?

Once the high bidders are determined, they and Fr. Mat will mutually agree on a time – afternoon or evening.

The Menu

*Beverages – wine, beer and non-alcoholic –
and Hors d'oeuvres*

Two Soups in a Bowl

Each guest may choose one of the following 3 entrees:

Charbonneau's Beef Bourguignon (meat)

Coquilles Saint Jacques (seafood)

Fennel and Black Olive Risotto

Risotto ai finacchi con olive nere (vegetarian)

Dessert

Coffee or Tea

Cash Cards for Christmas Giving

There is a cash card for everyone on your Christmas gift list! We can order almost anything and have it here in time for Christmas. Check out the available cards at <https://www.raiseright.com/brands>, and call the office with your order. Cards arrive within a week. For arrival by Christmas, please order by December 10th.

St. Agnes Perpetual Mass Memorial



On the first Sunday of each month Mass will be celebrated for all of our family members, loved ones, and friends enrolled in the St. Agnes Perpetual Mass Memorial. Newly enrolled this month:

Anne Therese Jeewek

by Eileen Hedrick

JoAn Maeder

by Jan V. Sengers

Christina Yates

by Jane Edwards

Phil Harmon

by Jane Edwards

Community Safety Training

The Jefferson County Emergency Services Agency offers free **Community CPR and Stop the Bleed** training on December 13 at 6 pm. To register go to : <https://www.jeffersoncountywv.org/county-government/county-agencies/jcesa/community-cpr-first-aid>.

Book Discussion Group

Our December Book Discussion Selection
December 15, 2023 @ 11 in the Parish Center

A couple of years ago we decided that our December selection would be a "lighter" read, a book that would put us into the spirit of the Advent/Christmas season. This year's choice is not exactly "light" but it comes well recommended. Join us in reading *Small Things Like These* by Claire Keegan.

Shoe & Coat Fund Results

Thank you Saint Agnes for your charitable donations to the Jefferson County Shoe and Coat Fund! The generous parishioners of Saint Agnes raised \$3,496.60! Your graciousness will help provide winter items for children right here in Jefferson County this winter.

CFF, AFF, Youth Group & Family
News

CFF: classes will occur this weekend at 9:15 AM in the parish center. Next weekend, Dec. 10 will be an Intergenerational Mass at 5 PM. There will not be CFF classes on Dec. 10th at 9:15 AM. Catechesis will occur on Dec. 10th at the Intergenerational Mass

Youth Group: will meet today at 9:15 AM to plan activities for December.

ADULT Classes: Growing in Faith will meet today at 9:15 AM in the parish center.

Parents of Children in First Reconciliation: The final parent meeting for First Reconciliation is today, Dec. 3 at 9:15 AM in the parish center. At least one parent is asked to be there with your First Reconciliation child.

First Reconciliation will occur for the children, **Saturday, December 9th at 4 PM in the Church.** Children should be at the church by 3:45 PM

RCIA and RCIC will meet today at Noon in the Parish Center today.

Interested in being part of the Intergenerational Winter Musical? Contact Joe Yates, our resident director, at joeyates47@gmail.com. Rehearsals just started so it is not too late to join in. The shows will occur in February.

Keep watching this spot, the Youth Facebook Page, our church calendar and the church website for additional activities. Remember to join the CFF Google Classroom (link was sent to your email). It is a one stop spot to find all the latest forms, classroom information, recorded classes, etc.

Most importantly, if you are a parent and not receiving CFF announcements and emails, please contact the Parish center at 304-876-6436 or contact Bill Donahue at: formation@stagnesshepherdstown.org. Parents are also encouraged to join our Youth Facebook Group. Please email Bill at the above address for the link to the closed group. You won't be able to find Our Youth Facebook Page any other way!

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	5			3	
				9	
		7			
9	6			5	
	1	8			2
					9
			8		7

THE YOUTH CORNER

This Week's Gospel:
Mark 13: 33-37

December 3, 2023

First Sunday of Advent





First Sunday of Advent - Hope
"Be ready"



Feasts of Advent and Christmas

Answer these true-false questions to discover the meaning of the word *Advent*.

- The feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome (November 9) honors an ancient church named for Saint John the Baptist and for the Roman estate on which it sits. The site once belonged to Plautius Lateranus, a Roman who joined in a plot to kill Emperor Nero. The plot was discovered, and Plautius was executed.
If the statement is true, put a "C" in space 1. If false, a "Y."
- The feast of the Presentation of Mary (November 21) honors an ancient tradition that at the age of three, Mary was presented to the holy people of the Jerusalem Temple, where she stayed as she grew into womanhood.
If the statement is true, put an "O" in space 2. If false, an "E."
- The First Sunday of Advent marks the end of the Liturgical Year.
If the statement is true, put an "L" in space 3. If false, an "M."
- On the Third Sunday of Advent, the priest at Mass might wear a rose-colored vestment to show joy because Advent is nearly over and Christmas is almost here.
If the statement is true, put an "I" in space 4. If false, a "U."
- The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12) celebrates the appearance of Mary dressed as an Aztec princess to Juan Diego.
If the statement is true, put an "N" in space 5. If false, a "T."
- Because the feast of the Holy Family is a "movable feast," it can be celebrated on any date the Pope says.
If the statement is true, put an "H" in space 6. If false, a "G."

THE WORD
ADVENT
MEANS...

<input type="checkbox"/>					
1	2	3	4	5	6

Read Mark 13:33-37 as a family and discuss way you can be watchful and alert for the coming of Our Lord.

A Service of **Gospel Weeklies**
Pflaum FFFF FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM

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S	H	P	E	E	L	S	A	R	T
W	M	O	R	E	V	E	N	R	H
O	O	E	M	O	H	R	A	I	G
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C	U	P	K	S	E	A	T	Y	N
K	A	T	O	L	K	N	W	A	D
C	R	I	L	E	A	T	K	T	I
O	D	I	M	E	W	S	I	S	M
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- | | | |
|--------|----------|----------|
| GUARD | AWAKE | ASLEEP |
| ABROAD | HOME | SERVANTS |
| TASK | EVENING | MIDNIGHT |
| DAWN | COCKCROW | KNOW |





The Gospel at Home

This Sunday's Gospel: Mark 13:33-37

The Church's three-year cycle of Lectionary readings begins again on the First Sunday of Advent. We start reading from Cycle B, which is organized around Mark's Gospel. Throughout Advent, we also hear the prophet Isaiah's words in the First Reading. On this first Sunday of the Church year, Jesus speaks of his coming in glory. He cautions us always to be ready for him, to live each day in the light of God. **Note:** Friday is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a holy day of obligation.

Exploring the Gospel Message

Promise (Grades K-1): Advent reminds us of Israel's long wait for the coming of the Messiah—God's promised one. Talk with your child about the Advent calendar he or she received with this week's lesson. Post the calendar and see to it that your child completes one square each day. Make an Advent wreath for your home. Light a new candle each Sunday until all four are burning brightly. Make lighting the candles on the wreath a special meal prayer each day during Advent.

Good News (Grades 2-3): Your child learned about the prophet Isaiah and how his words teach us about the coming of Jesus. Your child has also prepared a little Advent booklet that is a reminder to always be ready for Jesus' arrival. Part of the booklet is a family forgiveness service. Use the forgiveness service as a night prayer some evening during the week. As often as you wish, simply begin with the Sign of the Cross, ask for one another's forgiveness, and close with the Lord's Prayer.

Venture (Grades 4-6): This week, your young person learned about Israel's Exile and the longing of the people to return home. Talk about your personal experiences of wanting to go home, to be with loved ones, or to find someone or something that was lost. Make some family plans for Advent. Your son or daughter can share with you the section of this week's lesson, "What Will Your Advent Be Like?" Ask your child to tell the family about Saint Juan Diego.

Visions (Grades 7-9): In class this week, your teen learned being alert for Jesus' coming by forgiving and reaching out to others in love. The signs and symbols of Advent help us prepare. Ask your young person to share what the class learned. The class also planned activities to do each day during Advent. As a family, plan a simple prayer or action for each day as well. It should be something that can be done easily but that helps focus your family on the coming feast and on serving others.

Pray Together

Plan to have a family Advent wreath. The wreath should have four candles—three violet (purple) and one rose (pink) are traditional, but all white or red candles will do. During the first week of Advent, light one candle each evening, the second week light two, and the third week three. The third week is for the rose candle. Then for the last week, you will have all four candles lit. Say a prayer together that shows how you are eager for the coming of Jesus. It can be as simple as "Come, Lord Jesus, come."

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Scan here for
parent resources
or visit gospelweeklies.com/family



The Word Advent Means:

1. True—C
2. True—O
3. False—M
4. True—I
5. True—N

1	6	4	8	2	7	9	3	5
5	7	2	9	3	4	6	1	8
8	3	9	6	5	1	7	4	2
6	5	7	1	8	3	2	9	4
2	8	1	5	4	9	3	7	6
4	9	3	2	7	6	8	5	1
9	4	6	7	1	2	5	8	3
7	1	8	3	6	5	4	2	9
3	2	5	4	9	8	1	6	7



SOLUTIONS:



S	H	P	E	E	L	S	A	R	T
W	M	O	R	E	V	E	N	R	H
O	O	E	M	O	H	R	A	I	G
R	G	N	I	N	E	V	E	S	I
C	U	P	K	S	E	A	T	Y	N
K	A	T	O	L	K	N	W	A	D
C	R	I	L	E	A	T	K	T	I
O	D	I	M	E	W	S	I	S	M
C	N	I	R	D	A	O	R	B	A
G	T	R	E	T	S	A	M	O	T

St Agnes Racial Justice Initiative News

Here at St. Agnes we benefit from two important initiatives: The Racial Justice Initiative and the Laudato Si' Initiative. As recent studies demonstrate, these two areas of focus are also intertwined. Environmental degradation often aligns with poverty experienced particularly by people of color. In a study led by Christopher J. Schell, an ecologist at the University of California, Berkeley, "Ecological and Evolutionary Consequences of Systemic Racism in Urban Environments," scientists illustrate how patterns of bigotry and inequality affect how other species experience life in cities. Dr. Schell shows that urban heterogeneity is driven by systemic inequities like "oppression, residential segregation, gentrification and displacement, unjust zoning laws, homelessness, and so on." These issues don't only impact people; "how we operate influences the rest of the natural world as well as the social world."

Dr. Schell cites air pollution as one example. "Other animals have lungs. Why would we not expect them to also be inhaling the same amount of pollutants that we generate?" Also, the legacy of redlining neighborhoods with "majority minority" populations as "hazardous" led to ongoing struggles with poverty, unemployment, health problems, and decades of lost wealth and opportunities for these citizens. Redlining also left "ecological fingerprints," including lack of fewer forest birds that signal a healthy and biodiverse ecosystem. The birds, as ornithologist Dr. Eric M. Wood points out, were "an indicator of these broader conditions that are effectively bad for people." Simply put, "patterns of income equality, both past and present, carry over to influence biodiversity." Vertebrates illustrate a similar pattern as wildlife in neighborhoods with greater proportions of white residents had higher levels of genetic diversity and more evidence of connected populations of animals which interbreed and exchange DNA. Genetic diversity is essential for wildlife populations to weather a catastrophe like a pandemic or wildfire.

Madhusudan Katti, an ecologist at North Carolina State University who works at the intersection of biodiversity and conservation and human well-being observes: "Often the interests of other species and marginalized humans align...it is very much a colonial perspective to think about humans and wildlife as separate. We need to start thinking about humans and wildlife together in the landscape and mitigate things that will help both." The scientists mentioned here and others are urging their colleagues to focus research on urban areas and to help accumulate data to support their observations about the relationship between racial inequity and environmental degradation. For more information on how ecologists are tracing the impact of bigoted urban policies adopted decades ago on the unequal distribution of birds and other species, read the *New York Times* article: "Why Warblers Flock to Wealthier Neighborhoods," by Hillary Rosner.

Spotlight on Ministry

My name is Chuck Pierpont. My faith has always been very important to me. I attended a Catholic high school and attended daily Mass. In college, I was part of the Catholic Campus Ministry and attended Mass weekly where I sang in the folk group (Oh, how I miss folk group!). I've often told people that I consider myself a Christian who celebrates in the Catholic tradition. My faith has gotten me through some of the most difficult periods in my life. While I don't always understand why things happen, being able to trust in the Lord gives me comfort.

What ministry or ministries did you choose and why? I have been a member of the St. Agnes community for almost 25 years. I filled out the paperwork to become a member in January of 1999. Shortly afterwards, I was recruited to be a hospitality minister. I also was a cantor for many years. I even sang in the choir for a few years. Since then, I have become a Eucharistic minister and, most recently, a Lector. I am also the coordinator for the after-Mass coffee service. With hospitality and the coffee service, I feel I have contributed to the warm and welcoming atmosphere that St. Agnes is known for. As a Lector, lending my voice to proclaiming the Word of God is very fulfilling. I have enjoyed all the ministries, but I think the one that gives me the most joy is being a Eucharistic Minister. I really enjoy sharing the Body and Blood of Christ with my brothers and sisters. Believe me when I say that I am smiling broadly underneath the mask I am wearing during Communion.

How long have you been involved in ministry?

I believe that music is a ministry, so I have been singing in church since high school, so over 45 years. I sang in the folk group in high school and in my home parish, then also in college. At St. Agnes, I have been in ministry for almost 25 years. I hope to continue for as long as I can.

Please consider joining one of our ministries at St Agnes. There are so many ways to get involved and grow in your faith. Adult and youth Altar Servers are needed. Please contact me, Helen Harris, at liturgy@stagnesshepherdstown.org.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adult) is for those who are interested in learning about the Catholic faith and discerning if they might want to be professed members of the Catholic faith. The goal is to see where the process takes you. If you are interested in learning more or joining the group, please call the office at 304-876-6436.

Ugly Sleeping Bag Ministry

We are always in need of donated **blankets**, and **comforters** (any size) and also used **sleeping bags** (clean and in fair condition). Items can be dropped off at the parish center.

What is the Purpose of VIRTUS Training and Why Is It Important?

The Diocese of Wheeling Charleston is requiring all volunteers to be VIRTUS trained. This is part of the Diocese's Safe Environment policy that St. Agnes is required to follow. All volunteers must be Virtus trained, even those who are not involved with the youth. We must be in compliance by the end of 2023. If you volunteer in any capacity at St Agnes, you must be Virtus trained.

VIRTUS training is designed to help adults recognize the signs that indicate a child might be suffering abuse. It also helps adults by offering key points to help children, who might confide in them, deal with potential situations. Finally, it helps adults know who to contact and what the next steps are if they suspect or discover a child is being abused. All this training is designed to help adults help children through a difficult situation.

Our Coordinator, Bill Donahue, can assist with verifying your training status and/or initiating your training which is 100% online. For questions or concerns, contact Bill at 304-876-6436 or formation@stagnesshepherdstown.org. Please help us achieve full compliance.

The Potholder Plus Sale Update!

The first weekend of the Kolofata Potholder Plus Fundraiser was a HUGE success! We sold out of potholders – all 60 of them – and made a big dent in all the other items on sale. We raised \$665 and received \$135 in Kolofata donations. Our next and final sale dates are December 2 & 3. We'll have more potholders – but only 40 this weekend - and more of all the other items. Come early if you want to be sure to get a potholder. Items will be available starting at 4:30 on Saturday and after all the Masses on December 2 & 3. All items are still \$5 or \$10 and make great Christmas gifts.

100% of the proceeds are used for the educational expenses of the girls in Kolofata. This year we have a match of \$1 for every \$2 we raise which enables us to do even more. Here's your chance to buy lovely homemade gifts and help girls half a world away have a changed future. Thanks for your support!

Shepherdstown Shares Current Needs

Our food pantry collection the 1st weekend of each month goes to Shepherdstown Shares. They can also take donations of non-perishable items in the entryway of the chapel at Trinity Episcopal Church any time for those who would prefer to drop items off themselves. Here are their needs:

- Toilet paper
- Tuna
- Any soup
- Canned peas and green beans

Parish Financial Activity

Collections – Last Week

Offertory Collections	\$4,762
Monthly Mortgage Assistance	\$515
Total (Offertory + Monthly Mortgage Assistance)	\$5,277
Weekly Target (Offertory + Monthly Mortgage Assistance)	\$11,900
Total Collections Compared to Target	↓ -\$6,623

Tithe to help those in need	\$476
<small>(St. Agnes tithes 10% of all offertory donations)</small>	

Collections – Year-To-Date (thru November)

Offertory Collections	\$421,617
Monthly Mortgage Assistance	\$62,468
Total (Offertory + Monthly Mortgage Assistance)	\$484,085
Weekly Target (Offertory + Monthly Mortgage Assistance)	\$571,200
Total Collection Compared to Target	↓ -\$87,115

Tithe to help those in need	\$42,162
<small>(St. Agnes tithes 10% of all offertory donations)</small>	

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston maintains an Office of Safe Environment in accordance with the USCCB's *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. **To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children:** The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing www.reportbishopabuse.org to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit www.reportbishopabuse.org. **To Report to Civil Authorities:** Contact your local law enforcement; numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. **To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** In addition to civil authorities, the diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Very Rev. Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504. In addition to the methods listed above for reporting sexual abuse, the Diocese also has partnered with Navex Global to offer the **EthicsPoint** platform to report other, additional concerns, such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in West Virginia. The EthicsPoint platform can be accessed via www.dwc.org, under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected.

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IRA Charitable Gifts

A gift through your IRA is a great way to support St Agnes. Here is some information on how you can maximize your giving in 2023:

IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)

- Donors age 70½ or older may make a gift of any amount, up to \$100,000 per individual (\$200,000 for couples with individual IRA accounts), from your IRA without paying income tax on the donated amount.
- For donors who have a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), making a gift directly from your IRA to St. Agnes can be counted toward satisfying your RMD for the year, as long as certain rules are met.
- In addition to the benefits of giving to charity, a QCD excludes the amount donated from taxable income, which is unlike regular withdrawals from an IRA. Keeping your taxable income lower may reduce the impact to certain tax credits and deductions, including Social Security and Medicare.
- QCDs don't require that you itemize, which due to the recent tax law changes, means you may decide to take advantage of the higher standard deduction, but still use a QCD for charitable giving.
- Funds should be transferred directly from the donor's financial institution to St. Agnes.

For additional information about giving from your IRA, please check the St Agnes website for [Giving via Stocks and IRA](#).

Thank you for supporting St Agnes!

This information is not intended as legal, accounting, or financial advice. Please consult with your tax, legal, and financial advisors to determine whether this or other gift plans are applicable to your tax and financial needs.

Together in Holiness Marriage Conference

*Married and engaged couples are invited to the 3rd annual **Together in Holiness** marriage conference, presented by the St John Paul II Foundation and the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, on **February 10, 2024 from 10:45 am - 6:00 pm at St. James Catholic Church in Charles Town, WV.** This 1-day conference will help you strengthen your relationship with your spouse and discover God's plan for your family. Registration: \$32/couple and \$5/child for on-site childcare. An Early Bird discount is available through December 11, 2023 as well as scholarships upon request. For more info, visit togetherinholiness.org/wheelingcharleston or email cameron@forlifeandfamily.org.*

Sweats for Vets

St Joe's School is joining the Animal Health Clinic of Funkstown, employer of an SJS parent; VFW Post 1177 in Leesburg, Va.; the Ancient Order of Hibernians; and KOC Council 12791 in Potomac Falls, Va., to collect sweat suits for veterans at the VA Medical Center in Martinsburg. If you would like to, please bring **NEW** sweat suits (sets preferred) in all sizes (with a focus on XL, 2XL, 3XL and 4XL, and colorful sets for women) to the school office through **Friday, Dec. 15**. Please do not wrap the sweats, but instead tie each set with Christmas ribbon. If possible, please put your name on the label. Monetary donations also will be accepted; checks written to Martinsburg VAMC. For more information, call Meg Partington at the at 304-267-6447 or email her at mpartington@sjswv.org.

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