

Star of the Sea

STELLA MARIS PARISH NEWSLETTER

The Conversion of Heart and Mind



Father Rob Reflects...

Happy New Year! In this edition of our parish newsletter, we focus on the topic of “conversion”. In our Catholic tradition, we begin each new year with the Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God. I can’t think of a more wonderful way to begin a new calendar year than reflecting on Mary, whose “yes” to God resulted in the greatest act of Divine Mercy: The Incarnation.

Mary’s “yes” to God’s plan for her life is the model of conversion, which involves turning the heart, mind, and soul entirely to God.

Can we offer our ‘yes’ to God on January 1st, and every day throughout 2025? Because as important as that first ‘yes’ is to God, conversion is not merely a one-time event but a continual process of realigning our lives with God's will. Like Mary, we are called to trust in God's plan well after that first, awe inspiring “yes,” even when it challenges our understanding or disrupts our comfort. True conversion demands humility, courage, and an authentic willingness to leave behind anything that doesn’t align our will to that of the love of Christ.

Later this month, we will begin a parish book study of *33 Days to Eucharistic Glory*. It will be a great way to deepen your “Yes” to Jesus.

In Christ,

Fr. Rob Elford

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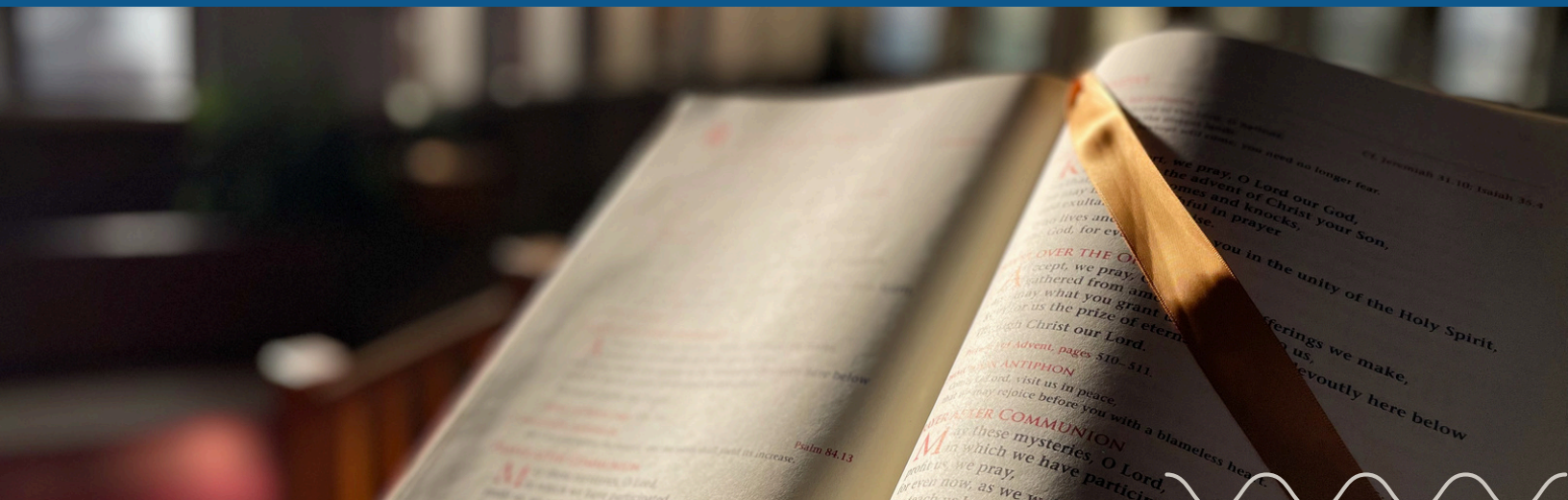
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Mass Times

Saturday Mass: 4pm
Sunday Mass: 8am/10am/4pm
Tuesday/Thursday: 7pm
Wednesday/Friday: 9am
First Saturday: 9am





God Draws Close

Written by Annika McCormick

As a child, I disliked practicing my Catholic faith. I vividly remember throwing a tantrum at four years old because my mother wanted me to wear a brown dress to Mass, and I wanted to wear a pink one. My tantrum was so excessive that my mother stayed home with me while the rest of the family went to Mass. I couldn't believe my luck—I had dodged church!

Thankfully, that changed as I got older. I began to believe in God and chose to go to Mass because I felt it was the right thing to do. My parents were thrilled, especially my mother, who had often been on the receiving end of my outbursts.

To outsiders, it might have seemed like I had a conversion. Many people associate conversion with starting to go to church or believing in God. But what does it truly mean to have a conversion?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: “God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself... freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man.”

God created us to share in His life, which means He created us to have a relationship with Him. While believing in His existence and practicing the faith by living a moral life is important, the Catechism emphasizes that God's ultimate desire is for us to enter into a deep, personal relationship with Him—both now and for eternity in heaven.

St. Pope John Paul II, in his *Theology of the Body*, likens the intimacy of the relationship God desires to have with us to that of a marriage, yet even deeper (Isaiah 62:5). To experience true conversion—a conversion of heart and mind—one must understand in their mind that Jesus desires this kind of relationship with them and then choose in their heart to enter into this kind of friendship with Him.

When I was sixteen, I attended a retreat where there was Eucharistic Adoration. To be honest, I was less focused on Jesus in the Eucharist and more on the cute boys. As I scanned the room, my gaze suddenly stopped on Jesus in the Monstrance.

In that moment, time seemed to slow, and I felt Jesus speak to my heart: “You're longing for a relationship with these guys, thinking it will fill you, but I'm the one who truly can. I'm right here—why not choose a friendship with me?”

I was shocked. I had just heard Jesus speak to me personally. For the first time, I understood in my mind that Jesus was close and desired a relationship with me. And in my heart, I wanted to respond.

That day, I said yes to Jesus, marking my true conversion. This relationship with Him has changed my life. It's funny to think that the same girl who threw a tantrum to avoid church is now beyond grateful to have discovered the joy of living in relationship with Christ—and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Lives Transformed: David's Story

My journey starts back when I was a child - I was baptized and had my first communion at Immaculate Conception Church. I was the child who was a handful for my parents. My mother would feed me cheerios to try to keep me quiet, but that never stopped me from climbing under the pews and causing a ruckus.

Growing up, I served the Church as an altar boy until my teenage years when I chose to stop going to church. While I was a teenager and a young adult, I was disengaged from God and my love for Jesus Christ. As I got older, I felt a calling to return to church but never did. This went on for years until I came across the show "The Chosen", which filled my heart with love for Jesus Christ and inspired this lost sheep to go back to church. I couldn't have picked a better time to go: Easter Sunday, which occurs during Holy Week.

When I sat down and I was listening to the choir prepare for Mass, Fr. Al Ray came out and shouted "Halleluiah! Halleluiah!" At that moment, I felt the Holy Spirit move through me and I asked myself: *David, why did you wait so long?* After, I reached out to Fr. Rob to thank him for the mass and share how it moved me. I told him about my journey, and he praised me for returning. From there I was able to renew my relationship with God and to renew my love for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

If you know someone that is on the fence about either returning to the faith like myself, or becoming a member of the Catholic Faith, please reach out to them.



Stepping Out

AN INVITATION FOR YOU:

Parish Reading Series: 33 Days to Eucharistic Glory by Matthew Kelly

The next book we'll be reading together as a Parish community is Matthew Kelly's book: *33 Days to Eucharistic Glory*. Starting on Tuesday, January 28th, we'll read one chapter a day for 33 days, reflecting on the miraculous and healing gift that is the Eucharist. On March 2nd, the Sunday before Ash Wednesday, we will say the Eucharistic Consecration prayer together at Mass, consecrating Stella Maris Parish to the Eucharist. To join the book study, register on the parish website: stellamarishalifax.com. You can purchase a book through the parish for \$10.00 and pay by either cash or e-transfer to: giving@stellamarishalifax.com.

The Bulletin

EVENTIDE: Cancelled for the month of January

Eventide is cancelled for the month of January. It will resume on Tuesday, February 25th, at 7pm.

COOKS FOR SHELTER MINISTRY:

The Shelter Ministry is in need of volunteers to cook and deliver 1-2 dinners every 4 weeks for the residents living in the emergency shelters. To volunteer, contact Monica at monica@hfx.eastlink.ca, or by phone at 902-809-4142.

WEDNESDAY/FIRST SATURDAY MASS & COFFEE SOCIAL:

Join us on Wednesdays, as well as the first Saturday of each month, for 9am Mass followed by a coffee social. Come on out for Mass and to enjoy some time with the Parish community!

FAITH FORMATION START DATES FOR 2025:

Wednesday School: January 8th, 7pm.

Family Faith Formation: January 12th, 11am.

Adult Faith Formation: January 19th, 11am.

VOLUNTEERS FOR THE 2025 WAY OF STELLA MARIS:

The 2025 Way of Stella Maris will be held June 17th - June 21st. In order to make this happen, we are in need of volunteers. For more information, visit stellamarishalifax.com and click on "The Way of Stella Maris" under the "Community & Youth" tab.

THE ORDINARY JUBILEE YEAR OF 2025:

Pope Francis declared the Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025 in the spring and invites Catholics around the world to enter into this Jubilee year focusing on the theme of hope and being Pilgrims of Hope. To help live as pilgrims of hope, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) announced a series of events, resources, and initiatives in preparation for the Jubilee Year 2025. Visit the CCCB's Jubilee page by visiting www.cccb.ca.

PLEASE SUBMIT BULLETIN ITEMS FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE BY JANUARY 20th, 2025

PARISH RESOURCES

Funeral Information and Bookings: funerals@stellamarishalifax.com

Immigrant Support Committee: newcomers@stellamarishalifax.com

Community Outreach: outreach@stellamarishalifax.com

Home Communion: homecommunion@stellamarishalifax.com

Responsible Ministry: office@stellamarishalifax.com

St. Vincent de Paul: 902-479-0630

Giving: e-transfer to the Parish at: giving@stellamarishalifax.com

GET CONNECTED

Facebook: facebook.com/stellamarishalifax

YouTube: youtube.com/@stellamarishalifax

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MEET THE TEAM!

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WANT TO RECEIVE TEXTS ABOUT PARISH UPDATES?

Text "hi" to +1 (833) 230-3288 and add us to your contacts!