

The Miracle



Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School, as part of the parish faith family, builds a strong foundation by developing the unique, academic, physical, creative, social and spiritual gifts of its students, empowering them to live the mission of Jesus.

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE
WITH GOD

Fall 2019



From the Desk of the Principal

Dear Families and Friends,

Have you ever experienced a miracle? You know, had something wonderful happen that you did not expect was possible? Perhaps it was “acing” a test, hitting a hole-in-one, recovering from an illness, or finding your wallet intact.

A dear friend believes that we all experience miracles daily and encourages me to “look for today’s miracle.” Strangely enough, when I started to look for miracles, they were there. Wow! This can only mean one thing: God is always listening and cares so much about us that He takes an active role in our daily lives!

What better gift can we share with our current families than stories of how God listens, cares, and makes the impossible possible? The theme for this issue is drawn from our school prayer:

Lord Jesus, inspire us - like Mother Mary - to believe that nothing is impossible through the power of Your love and the truth and joy of your Gospel. Amen!

I encourage every member of our school faith-family to reflect on our daily miracles and to join in our school prayer.

Our God is an awesome God!

God bless,

Dr. Anne Penny

PS. This May, our students will be performing the musical, ‘Fiddler on the Roof.’ One of the more poignant songs is the one about miracles sung by the tailor, Motel:

Wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles-
God took up Daniel once again,
Stood by his side and- miracle of miracles-
Walked him through the lions den!

Wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles-
I was afraid that God would frown,
But like he did so long ago, at Jericho,
God just made a wall fall down!

When Moses softened Pharaohs heart, that was a miracle.
When God made the waters of the red sea part, that was a miracle too!
But of all God's miracles large and small,
The most miraculous one of all
Is that out of a worthless lump of clay,
God has made a man today.

Wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles-
God took the tailor by the hand
Turned him around and- miracle of miracles- Led him to the promised land!
When David slew Goliath (yes!), that was a miracle.
When God gave us manna in the wilderness, that was a miracle too.

But of all God's miracles large and small,
The most miraculous one of all
Is the one I thought could never be:
God has given you to me.



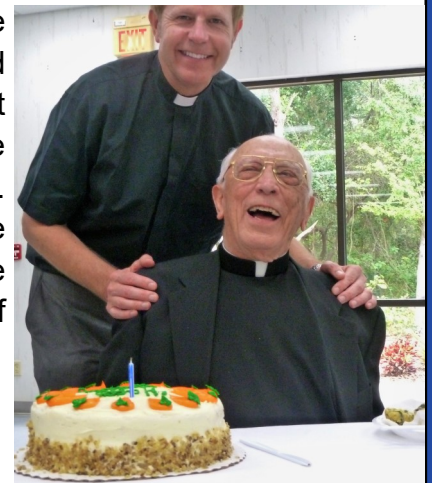


Divine Providence

by Msgr. William Dubois

Unsuccessful in my efforts to find teaching nuns for our school, I was eventually encouraged by another school, which had secured Sisters of Notre Dame from Chardon, Ohio. I wrote to the Provincial Superior in Chardon, suggesting that managing a second school in Florida would be beneficial to the order – the two school communities could provide support and companionship for a larger group of Notre Dame Sisters. My approach included pictures of our church, school, and rectory, and a note that the rectory could be transformed into a convent. I even added the floor plans of the school and rectory with a sketch of the possibilities. When my request reached Chardon, the Mother General from Rome happened to be visiting Chardon. To my surprise, she accompanied the Provincial to Dunedin to inspect our facilities. At one point during their visit, the sisters and I separated. The sisters prayed under one tree, and I under another. My prayer was that they accept the offer, as up until now, I had been both pastor and principal, and the Lord only knew how desperately we needed a different arrangement. Imagine my delight when the sisters came across the field to tell me they had been praying a prayer of thanksgiving for this opportunity! The result was the promise of nuns to staff our school. The combination of circumstances impressed me as a miracle of God's providence.

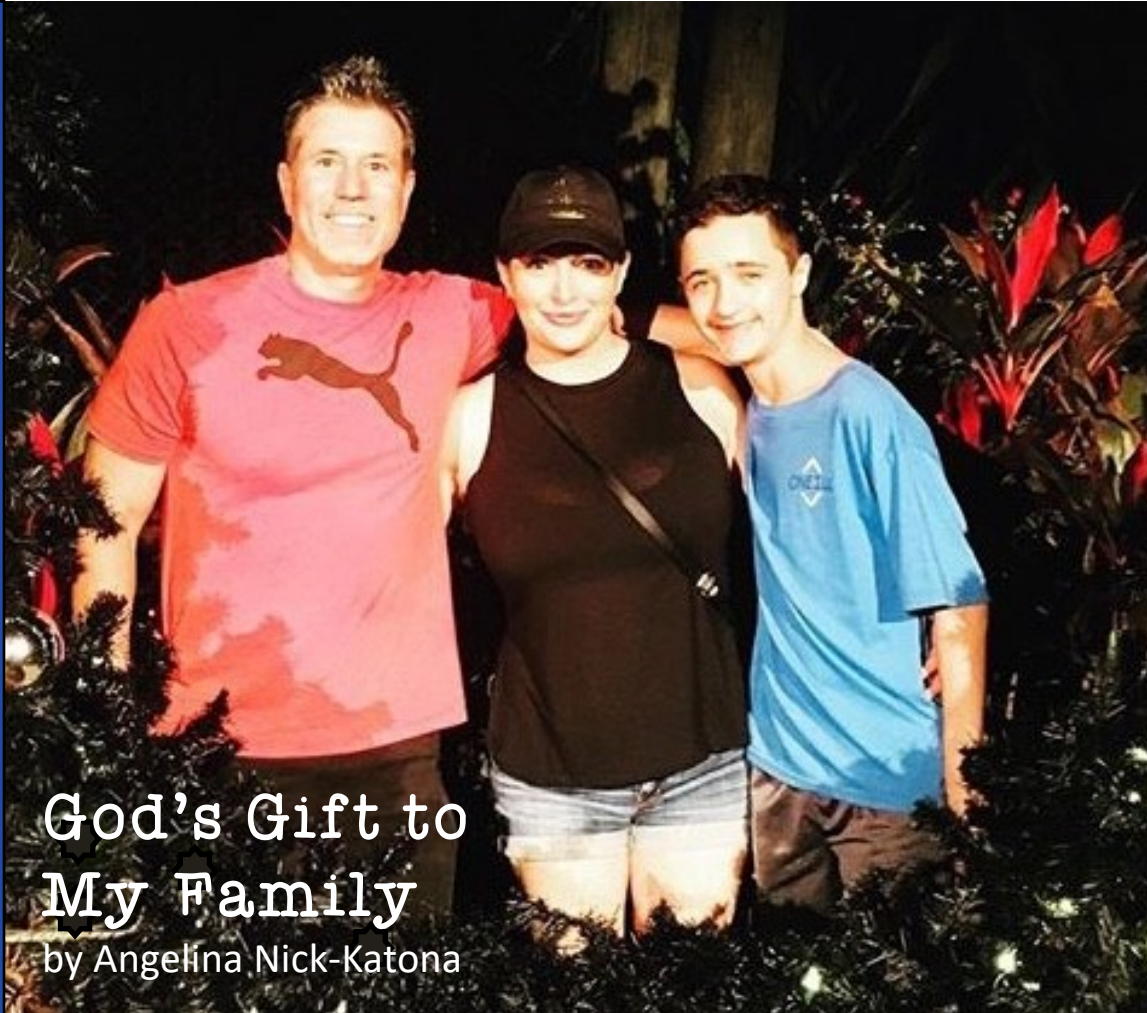
Msgr. Dubois is the founder of Our Lady of Lourdes Church and School, and its first Pastor and Principal.



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God's Gift to My Family by Angelina Nick-Katona

I graduated from Our Lady of Lourdes School in 1998. I am not only an alumnus of this amazing school, but my son Anthony currently attends school here, and will be graduating eighth grade at the end of this school year. After attending Our Lady of Lourdes, I went on to graduate from Palm Harbor University High School's Medical Program, and then became a registered nurse in my twenties. I am currently an operating room nurse for several local neurosurgeons - and the Room Mom for the eighth grade class!

I am so grateful for my years at Our Lady of Lourdes School because it shaped me into the woman I am today. I knew my teachers loved and cared for me and wanted the best for me educationally and spiritually. I was taught accountability and discipline, and these skills have not only helped me in my career as a nurse, but in my personal life as well. My faith foundation was nurtured and built during my years at Our Lady of Lourdes.

When choosing a school for my son, Our Lady of Lourdes was first on the list. It was important to me for him to have the same faith-based education with which I grew up. I wanted him to attend a school where I knew he would have a top-notch education and have teachers who loved him like he was one of their own children or grandchildren. I wanted him to have the same sense of community and faith with which I grew up. When Anthony was in fourth grade, my (now) husband proposed to me and we moved into his home about 30 minutes away from the school. I knew in my heart I couldn't switch schools, so we decided to make it work and keep Anthony at Our Lady of Lourdes.

When people ask me how and why I drive my son so far to school, I tell them that Our Lady of Lourdes is not only a school, it's a family, and that there is something special about it. Not only has my son built lifelong bonds during his time at Our Lady of Lourdes, I, as a mom, have met some of the best mom friends a woman could have. Many women can tell you that is not easy to do at any school. This school, this church, this parish family is one of the greatest gifts God has given to my family. I thank my parents to this day for sending me to Our Lady of Lourdes School all those years ago, and I hope and pray my son feels the same when he is a father raising his family!

Angelina Nick-Katona is a school parent and eighth grade room mother.

The Miracle



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The Power of God's Love and Grace

by Ellen Ficarotta

There have been many times when I know that God touched my life in a very special way with miracles both big and small.

My husband and I have just celebrated our 58th wedding anniversary. Any couple who has been married that long understands the importance of love and dedication to each other in making a marriage work. It takes lots of prayers and miracles!

As I reflect now on our years of marriage and the raising of our three children, I realize how often I have turned to God and to the Blessed Mother for help. The births of our children were miracles celebrated with great joy and anticipation – miracles remembered with each birthday celebration. But the responsibility for raising and guiding them to be adults who are children of God was awesome.

Thank God there were lots of people around to help. I believe God works His miracles through the people He sends into our lives. As a family, we had great support from our extended families, friends, community, and church. All were important, but I think one of the most important decisions we made was sending our children to Our Lady of Lourdes School. At times we wondered whether the money spent on tuition could be used for something else, but the educational and prayerful experiences that our children had in school were invaluable, and established a foundation that continues to guide their lives today.

We enjoyed many wonderful and rewarding experiences with our children. But as parents, we encountered new challenges almost every day. Trying to cope with a “crisis” in a son’s or daughter’s life often sent me to prayer. At times I was left astounded and amazed at the way things miraculously worked out. I know that it was the power of God’s love and grace that brought us and our children through many difficult times.

These miracles are too personal and private for me to share here. But suffice it to say that the Blessed Mother knows that she is still tasked with protecting and guiding my children – even as adults today. As a mother, I have far less influence on their lives now, but I believe that the foundation that they have in their faith will guide them through the rest of their lives. And I trust that when they turn to God in prayer, they too will be amazed by the awesome power of God’s love.

Ellen Ficarotta is a former teacher of Our Lady of Lourdes School and a parishioner.

Gratitude for Everyday Miracles



by Rachel Hearn

After a year of talking and light planning, my husband and I decided we would move to Florida after I completed my school year in Delaware. We knew it would be a huge move and that we would be starting a new chapter of life away from the majority of our family and friends. We prayed to God for guidance and help, and of course, He was there for us.

In May I submitted my resignation to my school and began looking for a new teaching job in Florida. This was my opportunity to finally teach in a Catholic setting, and I immediately found the opening at Our Lady of Lourdes. I applied, had a telephone interview, and was hired! This all happened within a week's time. It was a miracle! I felt so blessed in that moment. Soon enough, the end of my school year in Delaware arrived. At that point we had two weeks to pack our belongings, drive down the Atlantic coast (with our 12 year old cat), and settle into our new home before my husband went back to Delaware to his job as ship's officer for three more months.

Even though we were moving far from our friends and family, they helped and supported us throughout our move. With their loving support, as well as with God's help and loving guidance, our move went smoothly and we were able to enjoy a few days of leisure time exploring our new town before Michael left. We are so grateful for God's miracles and for the kindness from our loved ones.

Rachel Hearn joined the school this year as the English/Language Arts and 6th Grade Homeroom Teacher.



by Jane Meliah-Zona

One very dark night, with no moon in the sky, my oldest daughter and I were driving back from Tallahassee on US 19. Both sides of the road were filled with only trees and fields, and you felt a sense of blankness being miles from the nearest town. Suddenly, my car stopped working, the alternator went out, which meant no light in the car. By the grace of God, there in the middle of nowhere, was a convenience store. My car just coasted into the parking lot and stopped moving right by the front door. Many of the customers that came into the store that night offered to help. That is just one of the many small miracles I experienced owning my old car. There was also the time my radiator started leaking when I was on my way to a job fair. I never made it to the fair, but soon after that, the former principal offered me a job at Our Lady of Lourdes. Another time, that same car died in the middle of Belcher Road. Many people stopped to offer me help, including a school family, the Magadans, who just happened to be driving by. A couple of police officers also came by and helped me push the car off the road. One of them waited with me until the tow truck arrived.

The lesson I learned from owning an older car is that the kindness of strangers emerges when you are in need. God sends us these little miracles every day to remind us that there is good in the world, and He is watching out for us.

Jane Meliah-Zona is the Media Specialist at Our Lady of Lourdes School.



by Heather Gracy

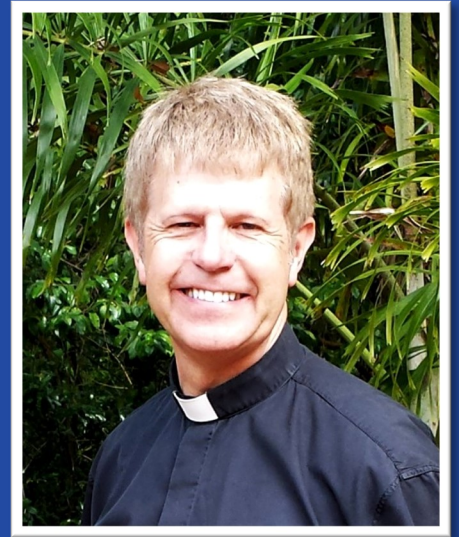
"Tony, Tony, turn around, something's lost and can't be found." I said repeatedly as we were driving our freshman daughter to college and she realized she did not have her wallet. After leaving her at the University of Central Florida without her ID or any identifiable credentials, we returned home that evening and searched every corner of our home with no luck.

The next morning, still praying over the missing wallet, I left our house through the front door and was shocked to find, sitting on our front porch step, the wallet with a note that said, "this looks important, I'm a parent too!" I think of that kind parent each year as we plan our back to school trips! Thank you St. Anthony!

Heather Gracy is a parishioner and Commissioner for the City of Dunedin.

The Miracle

From the Desk of the Pastor



Dear Miracle Workers,

For some people the glass is always half empty rather than half full! It can be a glorious sunny day, but they will notice a cloud in the sky rather than the array of blue covering the land. For Mother Mary the glass was always half full, not half empty. When she was asked to be the Mother of our Savior, she obviously had her concerns and questions. "How can this be?" she asked. Gabriel assured her all would be well, and, despite the magnitude of the request, not to let fear invade her heart. Once fear invades our hearts, or directs our decisions, we become paralyzed, unable to put one foot in front of the other without feeling insecure. Mary was secure in her faith. It was not a blind faith, but one which trusted that nothing is impossible for God. Our School Prayer asks the Lord Jesus to inspire us to have that same quality of faith. Through the power of Christ's love, and the truth and joy of the Gospel, nothing is impossible. Now this does not mean we will become the best athlete or able to climb Mount Everest simply because we have faith. But it does mean that through the gift of faith we will always be able to find hope despite the challenges, difficulties, frustrations, hurt, and suffering we encounter in life. Faith does not shield us from reality, but gives reality purpose and direction, embracing us in God's eternal love.

As Matthew Kelly writes in his book 'Rediscover Jesus': "Christians should be the ultimate people of possibility. But too often we are negative, with our eyes cast downward and backward, lacking joy and behaving like people of impossibility. Christianity has never failed, it is incapable of failure. Throughout history, when someone has wholeheartedly embraced Jesus and his teachings, that person has been transformed from a shadow of their real self into a shining example of what the human person is actually capable of when we allow God to direct our lives."

That's Mother Mary! She allowed God to direct her life, her choices, friends and decisions. Her faith never allowed her to compromise who she was as a daughter of God. This is why she had the courage and resolve to embrace the invitation of Gabriel and say "YES" to what God was asking. Mary's faith was also affirmed in her family. She went to her cousin Elizabeth not only because she was with child, but also because she was a woman who believed in possibility. We need to surround ourselves with the same kind of people, the same kind of friends, who don't limit God's horizons.

Thank you for opening my eyes and heart to God's possibilities!

Blessings and prayers,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gary Dowsey".

Father Gary (Dowsey), Pastor





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