



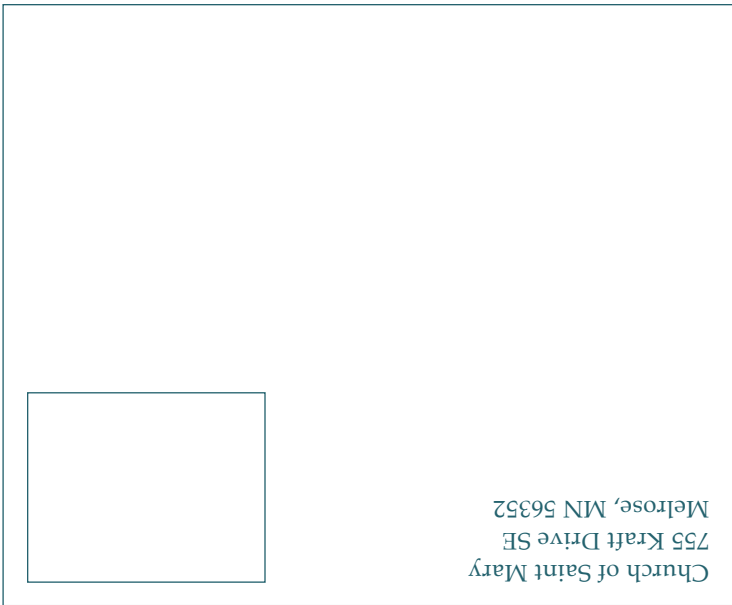
CHURCH OF

# Saint Mary

## Meet Parishioner Antolin Garcia

*Blessed to Share Musical Talents and Live Out the Faith in Community*

“**A**bre mis ojos... Que qui ver como tu. Open my eyes, Lord... Help me to see your face.” This popular hymn titled *Open My Eyes Lord* is a favorite for Antolin Garcia. It’s a song with which he’s very familiar, having played guitar in church choirs on and off for much of his adult life.



Church of Saint Mary  
755 Kraft Drive SE  
Melrose, MN 56352

**MASS TIMES:**

Saturday: 5:00 p.m. (English)

Sunday: 10:00 a.m. (English) & 12:30 p.m. (Spanish)

**DAILY MASS:**

Monday: 6:30 p.m.

Friday: 8:30 a.m.

Antolin plays guitar for the Spanish Mass adult choir, Santa Maria de Melrose Choir. He has a talent for playing guitar and is passionate in his belief that he needs to use that talent to praise our Lord.

It was about 20 years ago, when Antolin came to the United States from Zacualpa, Guatemala, for better employment opportunities. He and his wife, Margarita, have four children – three boys and a girl. Antolin’s father and a brother and sister still live in Guatemala. Upon his arrival in the U.S., Antolin lived in California, and he has since lived in several places throughout Minnesota. One common thread is that he has almost always found a choir for which he can play the guitar.

“I’ve been playing the guitar since I was 14,” he says. “I love to play at Mass.”

Antolin is currently studying at Saint John’s University as part of the Emmaus Institute for Ministry Formation. This four-year program focuses on formation for lay people. He is so thankful to be living in Melrose and practicing his faith in our beautiful church.



*Antolin Garcia and his wife, Margarita*

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## The Importance of Loving God More Deeply at Mass

**W**hen young people see a person that intrigues them, that attraction becomes the topic of conversation at every opportunity. This attraction alters behavior so that we become enthralled with the other and desire to share our enthusiasm.

Imagine if we were more enthralled with the presence of Christ in our lives. Imagine if we fully recognized that Christ is truly present to us in His precious Body and Blood, and present as well in the proclamation of His Word and in the gathering of our community, praying and singing (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy], para. 14). Recognizing the living Christ in all these ways would awaken in us the desire to be with the One who is the object of our most fundamental, pure, and holy attraction to our merciful, loving, and gracious Savior.

If we were to recognize the presence of Christ in these beautiful ways, wouldn't our desire to be more completely in His presence increase? Surely our desire to be better stewards of our time with the Lord would grow. Our attention to the readings and other prayers of the Mass would bring about within us deeper

communion with the One who suffered and died for us. If I recognized that God is the answer to all my pangs of hunger, that Christ is my way to the Father, and that the Holy Spirit works to convert my heart and soul every day, would I not seek to fill that hunger at the banquet of the Lamb?

While active participation in Sunday Mass is an obligation for Catholics, we also will do well to see the lovely, motherly care the Church shows us in establishing that requirement. The *Code of Canon Law* states clearly in paragraph 1247, "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass." Sometimes, we might hear that as an overbearing rule. But it might more correctly be understood as our Mother, the Church, helping us learn what is best for us. At Mass, we hear the living Word of God proclaimed. He speaks to us. We receive as hungry, needy sinners, the precious Body and Blood of Christ. We encounter Christ's living presence in our brothers and sisters worshiping God with us. If we truly understood that amazing truth, then how might it affect our lives? How might it affect our relationships? How might it impact

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*A Letter From Our Pastor*

## THE WORD OF GOD: *How Do We Hear It? And How Do We Respond to It?*

Dear Parishioners,

A few short weeks ago, we completed our Christmas season. We are now in what we call Ordinary Time – but before long, we will begin Lent. This is one of those rare years when Ash Wednesday is in March – so, Lent does not, of course, begin in February this year.

The Gospel of John begins with the statement, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” We speak often of the Word in the Church. As most of you are aware, the first part of our Mass is called the Liturgy of the Word. What does that mean to us?

Basically, there are four parts of our celebration of Mass: Introductory Rites; Liturgy of the Word; Liturgy of the Eucharist; and Concluding Rites. My focus in this reflection is that second part – the Liturgy of the Word. The main parts of that are a First Reading, a Responsorial Psalm, a Second Reading, the Gospel, and a Homily.

We draw on Holy Scripture from the Bible for the readings. As Catholics, we do not consider that these readings are about God, or about the Church, or about our faith, or a history lesson, or a nice story from long ago. We consider them to be God speaking directly to us. Thus, our attentiveness to what is being proclaimed is important. Are we



listening? Do we hear? And then, do we respond in our lives? All of those should be facets of how we approach the Word of God.

For us, the Word of God is the living Word. God is speaking to us as a community, and He asks us to be faithful to His Word. If we pay attention and truly listen, God can nourish our spirit, and Christ can be more real and present to us. The Homily, the Responsorial Psalm, the Profession of Faith, and the Intercessions develop the Word further and complete it. The Profession

of Faith is our acceptance of God’s Word.

However, the question for us is, how do we respond to the Word? Does it change our lives? Does it bring us to the conversion necessary to live lives of stewardship and service? It is not easy, I know. Being able to listen, to hear and then to act requires time, practice, commitment, and a desire to fulfill all of this. That is one of my prayers for us – that we can hear the Word, and that we can bring it to life in our own lives and in the lives of others.

In Christ,

Fr. Marvin Enneking  
Pastor



## The Annual Auction A Night to Celebrate an

On March 5, St. Mary's School will hold its annual Auction 4 Education, both in-person at the Melrose American Legion, as well as online. This year's theme, "Tailgating for 20 years," celebrates the number of years this annual fundraiser has been held.

In keeping with the tailgating theme, all are welcome to enjoy tailgating food like turkey and pulled pork sandwiches, and are encouraged to come dressed in their tailgating best — from letterman jackets to jerseys, football helmets to foam fingers! One thing different this year is that there will be a free-will offering — no tickets are needed for the meal.

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and food will be served until 8:30 p.m. The second annual raffle drawing, with a grand prize of \$20,000, will take place at 7 p.m. The online silent auction begins a week before, and closes at 8:30 p.m. on March 5. At that time, the classroom projects will be auctioned off in person.

"The goal of the auction is to bring the community together to celebrate and raise funds for the school," says Auction Chair Jodi Maus, who leads a parent committee of over 20 parents which meets monthly.

"It is amazing to see a group of different people come together and each contribute in their own way," Jodi says. "Some enjoy marketing, and design the brochures. Some coordinate donations. Others plan the food. Some ensure the website is updated, others ensure that the technology on the evening of the auction works. Still others serve food at the event."

But it's not just the parents who make this event successful year after year — it takes the whole community.

Educating students from pre-K through sixth grade, St. Mary's School serves close to 80 families, but roughly 200 families and businesses donate to the auction.

"Local businesses and community members contribute by sharing their talents through items they make or experiences they create to be auctioned off," Jodi says.

Everything from the food being served — which is courtesy of local businesses — to the brochures and items up for auction, are provided by donations of time and talent.

Items available for bidding include a progressive dinner on a pontoon; furniture, such as tables, chairs and benches; an Oktoberfest experience; and two walleye dinners with Fr. Marv! Winners of each dinner will have the chance to cook and share a meal of fresh walleye caught by Fr. Marv.

Additionally, thanks to the creativity of parent Elisha Seanger, each class has created projects to be auctioned.

# Auction 4 Education: and Support Our School

"Elisha is an outstanding volunteer in the community," Jodi says. "She goes into each classroom and helps the teacher and students come up with the idea of what they want to make. In the past, these projects have included decorating an Adirondack chair built by a parent, with paint and their handprints; a Nativity scene; and a quilt that contains a photo of each student in the class. Elisha is very gifted in creativity and coordination."

Guests will also be treated to great entertainment for the evening, provided by local musicians and the St. Mary's staff, who will perform a skit written by sixth-grade teacher Sue Pundsack.

This year's auction promises to be a fun night of stewardship and community, all with the goal of supporting the formation of the next generation of disciples. Auction 4 Education is the number one fundraiser for St. Mary's School.

"The auction really helps support the school financially," Jodi says. "It helps us raise essential funds to support our learners and further the school's programs. With the support of businesses and parents, we are able to make the improvements we need in our school.

"We have used the money from our auctions in order to cover operating expenses and to buy items for the classrooms, such as interactive flat panels," Jodi adds.

Of course, stewardship plays an essential role in the annual fundraiser.

"Local businesses and community members contribute by sharing their talents through items they've made or experiences they create to be auctioned off," Jodi says. "Others choose to donate their treasures to support the school. The goal is to ensure our children are getting a Catholic education, being raised with Christ in their daily education. Raising these human beings to be followers of Christ is the future of our parish and our world."

*Please join us on March 5 at the Melrose American Legion or via our virtual site to make a donation, or view the silent auction items at <https://one.bidpal.net/smsmelrose>. If you would like to donate your time and talent to next year's auction, please reach out to Jodi Maus at 320-290-2456 or [jmaus@meltel.net](mailto:jmaus@meltel.net).*



## Meet Parishioner Antolin Garcia *continued from front cover*

"I just love being a part of the choir," Antolin says. "I have gotten to know people and built a community. I love that."

Being a very social person, active participation is important to Antolin. Practicing the faith is also important.

"When Christ walked among us, He gathered the disciples," Antolin says. "This is the church which He started – that's why I am here."

Antolin hopes to spend more time studying the Bible in the future, and he implores us all to do the same.

"We might be asking, 'What is my mission here, what am I meant to do?'" he says. "The answer is in the Bible. How can we get the answer if we don't understand the Bible?"

As Antolin looks forward to the future, he knows one thing for certain – he will play the guitar at Mass for as long as is possible. He feels that it is the least he can do for all the gifts he has been given.

"God has given everything to me – my family, my kids," Antolin says. "What can I do to help His church? Sing, play guitar and work together with God. We are His hands and His feet."

*"When Christ walked among us, He gathered the disciples. This is the church which He started – that's why I am here." – ANTOLIN GARCIA*

## The Importance of *Loving God More Deeply* at Mass

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our decision to bring our children along to Mass? How might it awaken within us a deeper attraction, fascination, desire for the Lord?

Generally, when we find ourselves fascinated with someone, we do not decide to spend as little time as possible with them. We do not ration our time with them. We want to spend time with them, to see them, to listen to them, to get to know them, to develop a healthy, loving relationship with them.

Considering our reliance on the Lord of life and love, our fascination with His mercy, His goodness, His willingness to call us to Himself, maybe we should ask ourselves about what happens in us at Mass. As I prepare to come to Church, do I find my mind turning to a receptive welcome of the Lord, just as I'll be welcomed at the door of Church? Have I dressed for the important weekly (or daily) moment of meeting my King? Do I expect some profound wisdom from God in the readings? Am I open to correction, to challenge, to affirmation in the readings of

God's Word? Do I intently pray along with the priest presider throughout the Mass? Do I make an offering of my life, along with the bread and wine? Do I genuinely hunger for the Body and Blood of Christ? And do I long for that blessing that sends me on my way with the mission to build the Kingdom?

Instead of worrying about what "counts" when it comes to Sunday Mass, maybe we should work hard at fostering our love for the Eucharist, our desire for eternal life, our attraction to the Master who calls us into a life of active discipleship. Instead of a merely heavy-handed requirement, maybe we can see more clearly that being at Mass together helps nourish us for a whole week of building God's Kingdom. Coming with those expectations, desires, and hopes, leaving early when unnecessary would disappear as a temptation instantly. Coming late because other things have taken priority would not typically happen, other obligations notwithstanding. Christ desires our company at Mass, from beginning to end. Let's draw near to Him.