Our Catholic faith tells us that Jesus’ grace enables us to love one another. The sacraments of faith are God’s outward signs of his love and grace.

The concept of grace is often difficult for children to understand. In the Children’s Religious Education (CRE) program our children know that grace and the sacraments have much in common. We talk often about the importance of grace for a pure soul that will enable us to get to heaven for everlasting life with Jesus.

During each year of faith formation the CRE program expands on the concept of obtaining God’s grace by receiving the sacraments. We start with the kindergarten and first graders who are able to list each sacrament and on through the eighth and ninth graders who fully understand the sacraments and receive their 4th sacrament, Confirmation.

In the past few weeks, 35 of the Cathedral’s CRE students have received God’s grace for the first time through the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist as well as the sacrament of Confirmation, for the only time. The catechists this year were: Julie Estvander kindergarten and 1st grade, Sherri Rachael, assisted by Kiera Nesmith, 2nd and 3rd grade Reconciliation and Eucharist preparation, Kristin Ensley 3rd and 4th grades, Ana Lisa Marcantonio 5th and 6th grades and Amy Schuler, assisted by Jenna Kullman, 7-9th grades Confirmation preparation.

Also, Elizabeth Clappin and Betsy Blalock provided back up for the catechists whenever needed. They are a fantastic group of volunteers who teach our faith with great enthusiasm and knowledge. We all thank them for their commitment to our parish children.

This year we took on the challenge of providing a Confirmation retreat at the Cathedral for 14 of the students preparing for the Sacrament of the Holy Spirit. It turned out to be an extremely full day which included a scavenger hunt to find specific symbols of our Catholic faith among the murals, stained glass and carvings throughout the Cathedral, interactive games to show understanding of the fruits of the Holy Spirit and their saints’ names as well as a matching game regarding the Beatitudes.

The favorite part of the day, other than the pizza lunch, may have been when we played charades while competing as the Disciples and the Saints. The day also included Mass and Reconciliation.
I would like to thank their catechist, Amy Schuler, for her outstanding directing skills and Ana Lisa Maracantonio and Elizabeth Clappin who acted as spiritual guides throughout the day. Also, we all thank Cassie Reynold’s mother for providing brownies and fruit for our afternoon energy boost.

The day will surely be a long term memory for these wonderful young Catholics. The retreat also helped to prepare the Confirmation candidates for the gentle probing from Bishop Hartmayer during Confirmation. He asked each candidate very specific questions about the saint they chose as their inspiration in front of everyone at the ceremony. They all performed well in spite of the pressure. Whew.

To end the year, we had a pageant for the parents to show off what we learned about the Mass in Sunday school. Ms. Kristin’s class processed in while holding candles made in the classroom and then recited the Gloria. Ms. Ana Lisa’s class presented the concepts behind the Liturgy of the Word while Ms. Amy’s class gave us the Nicene Creed. Ms. Julie’s class
explained the Our Father and Ms. Sherri’s class told us about the Communion Rite, of course.

Also, Jazmine Green, a CRE student, played the flute while we all sang hymns of praise. It was a wonderful opportunity to perform for the parents, Father Schreck and the other students. It was thrilling to see such a memorable pageant.

I gave the catechists the idea and they gave us an inspirational program. Thank you to the parents for their dedication to our faith by trusting us with their children every Sunday and attending the end of the year program. We appreciate all the positive comments regarding our CRE program that the parents give us throughout the year. Their children may have some difficulty understanding what grace means but they know what love is through their parent’s actions and commitment to their faith well-being.

Also, a huge thank you to the Cathedral’s Counsel of Catholic Women who organized a fabulous after Confirmation dinner for the newly confirmed, their family, sponsors, catechists, clergy and friends on May 9th. It was
delicious, flawlessly served and perfectly presented. You are wonderful role models for our parish.

In conclusion, I thank Father Schreck for his support throughout the year. He was there during the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation as well as the Confirmation retreat, the children’s Mass and the end of year pageant. Father Schreck embodies a disciple of Jesus for the children.

They love to answer his questions whenever he visits the classrooms and ask him many questions in return. Thank you Father, we are graced by your support.

The Sunday school program starts up again in September. There will be information regarding registration in the bulletin in August.

Faith formation is a process that starts at birth and goes on throughout our lifetime. It is very important that our parish children are enrolled in a Catholic school or our CRE program throughout childhood years. Please call the Cathedral office if you would like more information about CRE.

Have a great summer. Remember to take your children to Mass at least every Sunday and Reconciliation at least once during the summer. God’s grace is there for our encouragement, our pure soul and our life of love whether we receive the sacraments for the first time or many times. God Bless you all.
The music program at the Cathedral serves to facilitate meditation upon the sacred mystery of Christ’s dying, rising and coming again, as well as the participation in the gift of the Eucharistic banquet. All cathedrals, being their bishop’s church, are charged with a responsibility of modeling liturgical and sacramental practices for not only the diocesan parishes, but for the entire collective community.

The congregation of the Cathedral, the diocese, visitors and guests are offered, through a weaving of unique but distinctly Catholic Cathedral liturgical music, an opportunity to participate intently in the journey of the Mass through both singing and listening. In order to facilitate this task, our Cathedral enjoys a full-time Director of Music, as well as an Organist.

Our current Cathedral Organist, Heidi Ordaz, will leave our Cathedral following the Ordination Mass on June 4th. Because of her wonderful experience at the Cathedral, Ms. Ordaz will be leaving to attend Andrew’s University in Michigan to pursue a Masters in Church Music.

In 2012, upon the retirement of Mrs. Patricia Schreck, Interim Director of Music Kelly Balmaceda recruited Heidi to be the choral accompanist and organist for our newly formed Cathedral mixed choir. Her first Mass on Christmas Eve 2012, was no small feat! Organ was not Heidi’s main instrument, in fact both of her degrees are in piano performance. Even so, she began playing the organ while pursuing a graduate degree at Georgia Southern. She describes her first experiences with the organ as being very challenging.

Just as the choir’s skill has improved in the three years since they have been singing, Heidi’s skill at the organ has increased dramatically. Her leadership at the organ and assistance to the Director of Music have been invaluable.

Through the ministry of music, and with the support of Heidi and the other Cathedral musicians, many people have been connected to the celebration of liturgy with their own life of faith. These connections, most obvious for funerals, weddings or at particular feasts and seasons, are facilitated by a staff of volunteers and paid persons who have spent countless hours rehearsing and preparing for ministry through music.

Because music is linked so strongly to the life of the community, the members of our parish are formed to carry on the mission of Christ. To join in song, whether through cantoring, singing in the choir, playing the organ or singing from the pews is to make a commitment to the mystery of the Christ that we celebrate.

We thank Heidi for her gift of time and talent to the Cathedral Parish and wish her all the best in her ministry of music.
The Church has a rich history of exercising rigorous logic and philosophic wisdom in her dogmas. But there is one dogma that transcends reason, and would have remained out of human reach, were it not divinely revealed. That dogma is the Mystery of the Trinity.

The Dogma of the Trinity is a “Central mystery of Christian faith and life,” according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 234). But it is “inaccessible to reason alone” (CCC 237). Other dogmas of the Church are supported extensively by chains of logic, metaphysics and natural sciences, but the Trinity is one that cannot be arrived at through philosophical rigor. We are told in the scriptures by God many times that the Creator’s nature is three persons in one God.

We celebrated Trinity Sunday on May 22. The purpose behind setting aside a Holy Day devoted to the Trinity is to call attention to God’s divine and mysterious nature. The Creed itself is constructed around the revealed truth of the Trinity: I believe in one God, the Father … his only Son … the Holy Spirit.

Jesus reveals the triune nature of God most explicitly in the New Testament. We see all three persons together at his baptism, and he commands the Apostles to “make disciple of all nations, baptizing them in the name (singular) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ….” (Matt. 28:19).

Although the full revelation of the Trinity comes to us through Jesus in the New Testament, the ancient Hebrews were recipients of many hints about God’s triune nature throughout the Old Testament. As early as the writing of Genesis Chapter 1, God speaks of himself in the plural form: “Let us make human kind in our image, according to our likeness ….” (Gen. 1:26).

Many Messianic texts of the Old Testaments, especially in the writings of the Prophets, describe a Messiah that holds divine attributes. The Prophet Isaiah wrote this about the Messiah: that “a child has been born to us” and that “he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace ….” (Isa. 9:6). In another prominent place the Prophet Daniel wrote, “I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed. …” (Dan. 7: 13-14).

The Holy Spirit of God also has numerous appearances in the Old Testament. In David’s penitent prayer he pleads to God that his Holy Spirit not be taken from him (Psalm 51). When foretelling the New Covenant, the Prophet Ezekiel recorded God’s words saying, “I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances ….” (Eze. 36:27).

Yet, despite prophecies that seem to suggest distinct divine beings, God, in the strongest terms, gave Moses explicit teaching about his oneness in the text that Jesus identified as the greatest command: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone ….” (Deut. 6:4). And in the first saying of the Decalogue we read, “you shall have no other gods before me,” (Exd. 20: 2-3).

When it comes to the mystery of the Trinity one can’t help but recall the story of St. Augustine, walking on the beach contemplating the Trinity. He sees a boy who had dug a hole in the sand and was going out to the sea again and again, bringing a pail of water to pour into the hole. St. Augustine asked him, “What are you doing?” “I’m going to pour the entire ocean into this hole.” “That is impossible, the whole ocean will not fit in the hole” said St. Augustine. The boy replied, “And you cannot fit the Trinity in your tiny little brain.”
On a beautiful Saturday morning in April, downtown Savannah was quite busy as hundreds of Susan Komen race participants made their way through the streets and past the Cathedral. In the midst of all of this pink, some very dedicated people arrived at the Parish Hall to prepare for the first event held by the Serving Seniors Ministry. This SS committee arranged tables and chairs, decorated the room and the tables, cleaned up the courtyard outside, helped setup the information fair, prepared the registration materials, and assisted in the kitchen. By 11am all was ready and our guests began to arrive.

As each guest arrived they were greeted at the registration table with a name tag and a folder to hold all of the information they would collect during the morning. Most guests then made their way immediately to the Health Check table and parishioner Charlie Jolivette for a blood pressure check. Amazingly everyone involved – guests and committee – had great blood pressure numbers (although we did find the reason was that most were on medication and had been sure to take it before coming!). Health and nutrition information from St Joseph’s and Memorial hospitals, discount information from AARP, coverage information from the Social Security Administration, welcome brochure from the CCW, and information about the ministries and activities of the parish were available and most guests left with bulging folders.

Monsignor O’Neill offered the blessing and the luncheon plates were delivered to guests at the table by lovely young ladies from St Vincent’s Academy. The delicious lunch, followed by real Savannah banana pudding, was provided by another Cathedral parishioner, Vicki McCuen. Spring flowers and pastel candies decorated the tables and guests were given small bags to take an assortment of candies home with them. Braelyn Snow, one of our newest parishioners, provided music during the meal, singing some favorite hymns.

After lunch, Lara Eller, another Cathedral parishioner, introduced herself and her topic, Social Security – Disability and Retirement Benefits, What’s New and What’s Changing. An informed and engaging presenter, she made even the dry facts of Social Security interesting. Lara answered questions and made sure everyone was comfortable with understanding what they were receiving.

Although attendance was lower than anticipated, everyone had a nice time and several suggestions were made for future events. Many thanks to the other committee members Mary and Joe Moriarty, Pam Smith, Chrissy Ruscoe, Patty Williams, Mattie Faircloth, Sunetha Panda, and William Brooks.
The Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a moveable feast, which means that it depends on the date of Easter. It is celebrated 19 days after Pentecost Sunday, which falls on the 50th day of Easter. In 2016, The Feast of the Sacred Heart fell on Friday the 3rd of June.

The Sacred Heart Shrine located in the chapel on the left side of the main altar has a statue of Jesus atop the Tabernacle which contains the Most Blessed Sacrament.

One of the stained glass windows in the chapel depicts the appearance of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, Patron of those who practice devotion to the Sacred Heart. The original window, circa 1886, had the following dedication: This diocese was solemnly consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus May 7, 1872, the first in America to have this honor.

St. Margaret Mary was born on July 22, 1647 at L’Hautecour, Burgundy, France. She died October 17, 1690. Exceptionally virtuous from childhood, Margaret Mary experienced the presence of Christ during her life as a Nun of the Order of the Visitation. She began conversing with Christ through prayer after entering the Order of the Visitation and learned of the devotion from Jesus during a series of apparitions to her between 1673 and 1675. Her spiritual director, Reverend Claude La Colombière, led an investigation which validated her experiences and aided in her canonization. Devotion to the Sacred Heart was approved by Pope Clement XIII in 1765. Approval of the devotion came after a thorough evaluation proving that St. Margaret Mary’s experience did not conflict with Christian teaching.

The devotion, in essence, relies on an understanding of the symbolic meaning of the word “heart.” St. Margaret Mary used the word “heart” as a reference to Jesus’ love for all people. Because his love is often rejected, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is depicted as a wounded heart.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart (also known as the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Sacratissimi Cordis Iesu in Latin) is one of the most widely practiced and well-known devotions, taking Jesus Christ’s physical heart as the representation of his divine love for humanity.

This devotion is predominantly observed in the Catholic Church and among some high-church Anglicans as well as by Lutherans. The devotion is especially concerned with what the Church deems to be the love and compassion of the heart of Christ towards humanity, and its long suffering.

Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

O most holy heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore you, I love you, and with lively sorrow for my sins I offer you this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure and wholly obedient to your will.

Grant, Good Jesus, that I may live in you and for you. Protect me in the midst of danger. Comfort me in my afflictions. Give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, your blessing on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death. Amen
While it may be easier to keep your Catholicism limited to the things “thou shall not” do it is much more empowering to focus on the things you will do. Centering our spirituality on not doing what is forbidden limits our spiritual growth and transformation because the path to God is even more defined by what we demonstrate. The importance of social justice to Jesus can be seen in his Sermon on the Mount where he gave us the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are our path to happiness. They are the “promises of happiness made by Christ to those who faithfully accept his teaching and follow his divine example,” according to Fr. John A. Hardon in the Modern Catholic Dictionary. Feel free to substitute the word “happy” when you read the word blessed.

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12)

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.
Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.
Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God.
Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.

All Catholics are called to advance the causes of social justice. According to Rev. C. J. McCloskey III, “Catholic social teachings are nothing less than the Beatitudes of the Gospel refined for action in the world. As such, the social doctrine is magisterial, and the laity have a serious obligation to put it into effect in their own lives, in society, their culture, and country.” The National Conference of Catholic Bishops articulates seven major themes on social justice that are to be accepted as an essential part of our faith.

Seven Major Catholic Social Justice Themes:
1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person (Abortion, Euthanasia, cloning, etc.)
2. Call to Family, Community and Participation (The person is not only sacred but social.)
3. Rights and Responsibilities (Observe our duty to one another, our families, and society.)
4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable (A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring.)
5. Dignity of Work and the Rights of workers (The economy must serve the people, not the other way around.)
6. Solidarity (Our love for all should demand that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.)
7. Care of God’s creation (Care for the Earth and environment.)

Practicing the Beatitudes and contributing time, money, and energy to social justice issues takes courage, commitment and perseverance. Getting involved in any project working on these issues may feel like service at first, but once you get engaged it quickly becomes a reward and you will likely find yourself more served than serving.

Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed, “Christ’s Gospel responds positively to man’s thirst for justice, but in an unexpected and surprising way. He does not propose a social or political revolution but rather one of love, which he has already brought about with his cross and his Resurrection. It is on these that are founded the Beatitudes, which present a new horizon of justice, unveiled at Easter, thanks to which we can become just and build a better world.”
The Feast of St. John the Baptist, Patron Saint of the Cathedral, is celebrated on June 24th.

In *Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs* by Francis X. Weiser, S.J., we learn that “St. John the Baptist was highly honored throughout the whole Church from the beginning. Being the precursor of our Lord, he was accorded the same honor as the first great saints of the Christian era, although he belonged to the Old Covenant. The fact that Christ praised him so highly: ‘I tell you, among those born of women, no one is greater than John....’ (Matthew 11:11), encouraged a special veneration.”

According to Catholics Online-Saints and Angels, John the Baptist was born through the intercession of God to Zechariah and Elizabeth, who was otherwise too old to bear children. The Angel Gabriel visited them to announce they would have a son and should name him John. Zechariah was skeptical and was rendered mute until the time his son was born and named John, in fulfillment of God’s will.

When Elizabeth was pregnant with John, she was visited by Mary, and John leapt in her womb. This revealed to Elizabeth that the child Mary carried was to be the Son of God. It was the firm belief among the faithful that when John was born, he had already been freed from original sin. St. Luke proclaimed, “even from his mother’s womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit.” (Luke 1, 15).

John used baptism as the central sacrament of his messianic movement. He began public ministry around 30 AD, and was known for attracting large crowds in Judaea and around the Jordan River. When Jesus came to him to be baptized, John recognized him and said, “It is I who need baptism from you.” Jesus told John to baptize Him anyway, which he did, whereupon the heavens opened, and the Spirit of God was seen like a dove. The voice of God spoke, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” John instructed his followers to turn to Christ, calling Him the “Lamb of God” and these people were among the first Christians.

Following his baptism of Christ, John’s popularity grew so much that he alarmed King Herod, who ordered him arrested and imprisoned. John the Baptist was beheaded by King Herod sometime between 33 and 36 AD.

Fr. Weber continues, “The Church celebrates his natural birth by a festival of his ‘nativity,’ six months before the nativity of Christ, since John was six months older than the Lord according to the Gospel of Luke. Generally, the day of a Saint’s death is celebrated as his or her feast day, but Saint John the Baptist is an exception to this rule; other exceptions are Jesus and the Virgin Mary. This is because St. John was born free from original sin, he was a prophet who foretold the coming of Jesus and he also baptized Jesus.”

Established in the year 506, by the Council of Agde, the nativity of Saint John the Baptist was regarded among the highest feasts of the year, a day on which all faithful had to attend Mass and abstain from servile work.

Ed. Note: August 29th, the death of St. John the Baptist, is also honored as the *Feast of the Beheading*. 
June 2016

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LEFT: The P.A.C.K. project has taken on a new initiative – duffle bags filled with soft blankets, pajamas, stuffed animals, book, and toiletries – for DFACS to give to children who are removed from their homes by the police. Children were very involved in this new initiative. RIGHT: The Mother’s Day Baby Bottle Campaign to benefit the Savannah Care Center, which concluded on Mothers Day, raised $4,200 for this worthy cause to help provide for the needs of women in crisis pregnancies in our city.

Photo by, Melanie Brooks