At no time during a Catholic child’s life do we focus more on the word “Amen” than while we prepare them to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. This year, in our Children’s Religious Education (CRE) program, we prepared 17 children to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist and 11 children to receive the sacrament of Confirmation under the skillful direction of catechists Shannon Lancaster with her assistant Caroline Whalen and Amy Schuler respectively.

The children in Ms. Lancaster’s class worked hard to learn their prayers in order to recite them quietly after receiving their First Reconciliation penance. Each child said “Amen” after their prayers to state that they believe what they memorized. Just before they received the sacrament of Eucharist for the first time on May 11 they again recited “Amen” after Father Schreck and Deacon Smith presented the body or blood of Christ. This “Amen” told everyone that they believe that this bread and wine are truly the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The children in Mrs. Schuler’s class worked hard to understand how the Holy Spirit is ever present in their lives while preparing to receive the sacrament
of Confirmation and every day afterwards. When Bishop Kevin Boland conveyed the sacrament of Confirmation he said “Be Sealed with the Holy Spirit”. After he said this, each Confirmation candidate said to all present “Amen” which again told everyone that they truly believe that the Holy Spirit is present in them for the rest of their lives. After the Confirmation ceremony the Cathedral’s Council of Catholic Women presented a wonderful meal for all as we continued to celebrate the newly confirmed, their sponsors and their family and friends.

During the last class of the year the CRE children presented a pageant for their parents titled, “What I learned in Sunday School.” This year we heard about the gifts of the Holy Spirit from the kindergarten and 1st graders led by catechist Julies Estvander, Ms. Lancaster’s class presented the 10 commandments, Ms. Christine Wacta and assistant Rory Schuler’s 3rd and 4th grade class presented the Last Supper, the 5th and 6th graders under the direction of Bill Schuler and Carol Luetzow presented information on the Holy Rosary and Mrs. Schuler’s class provided insight into their Confirmation patron saints. It was a wonderful opportunity for the parents to see their
children speak proudly of what they learned about their Catholic faith. The entire CRE program is delighted to have a part in assisting the parents in the faith formation of these beautiful children while preparing them to be life-long disciples of Jesus through the sacraments they received this year and will every year in the future.

Also, we want to thank Father Schreck for his support throughout the CRE school year. The children love to see him in their classrooms as he helps them focus on the important beliefs of our catholic faith. For this we all say “Amen”.

The Sunday school program starts up again in September. There will be information in the bulletin in August regarding CRE registration. Remember to keep our Catholic faith alive in your children during the summer while taking them to Mass every Sunday and to Reconciliation at least once during the summer. God bless you always.
Cathedral Easter Egg Hunt

Article and Photos by Carol Herb

The Cathedral parish along with the Knights of Columbus Council 631 sponsored an Easter Egg Hunt and luncheon on Saturday, April 20. The cool temperature and bright sunshine made it a perfect day for this annual event held in Lafayette Square. Members of the Cathedral Council of Catholic Women, the Parish Life Committee and the Knights of Columbus Women’s Auxiliary helped hide over four hundred eggs filled with special treats for the children.

The crowd of families began to gather on the plaza of the Cathedral anxiously waiting for the hunt to begin. The Easter Bunny was also on hand to visit and pose for pictures with the children and their families. At 10 AM, Fr. Schreck greeted the crowd wishing them all a Happy Easter and sent them off to the hunt.

A luncheon in the Parish Hall followed the hunt. The guests were treated to a picnic style lunch including hot dogs, potato chips, drinks, and cupcakes.

It was so heartwarming to see the excitement and joy that this simple celebration brings to so many of the precious children in our parish.
Over the first weekend in April, thirty college students from the Diocese of Savannah came together at Camp Grace in Robberta, GA for a Spring Retreat. This year our guest speaker was Catholic Life Coach, Jansen Bagwell from Whole Catholic. His talk focused principally on forgiveness and how when we forgive ourselves and others, we let go of all the burdens we carry and are able to grow closer to God. He gave the students a step by step process on how to unlock their own personal healing and pray for forgiveness. Below is the process that he described to free us from unforgiveness.

Pray: Holy Spirit reveal to me any area that I need to forgive (Name a person).
What did be/she do?
What did be/she not do?
What does be/she owe me?
What were any false expectations that be/she put on me?

He encouraged the students to start with their dad because many times our relationship with our earthly father affects our relationship with our heavenly Father. He also advised them to journal any memories or thoughts that come up when praying over these questions. “When you’re done with your dad, move on to your mom, siblings, teacher, friend, coach, yourself, or anyone else who has offended you. Once you have answered all the questions and pointed out every area that you have unforgiveness, to then close with this prayer,” he suggested:

“Pray: Lord Jesus, as an act of my will, I willingly choose to forgive (person/self) for (name every area that you journaled down). Jesus, I hate their demons but I forgive them.”

The students left the retreat with burdens lifted from their shoulders and many realized the unforgiveness they have held on to.

Bishop Hartmayer joined the students for dinner and they had a great open discussion with him. They asked him questions and then he asked them questions. One of the questions he asked was “What can I do for young people to help them feel wanted, needed in the church, to make them come to Mass, sacraments, etc.” Many students responded with a variety of answers.

SCAD student Jeannine Mari pointed out that misconceptions of the Catholic Faith lead people away from the Church and that we need to find new ways to evangelize. “Find what people enjoy and integrate them with the Catholic Faith like Theology on Tap. We need to show the beauty of Catholicism,” she said.

Another SCAD student, Katie Collins, pointed out that a lot of ex-Catholics don’t have religion as their priority and they were never exposed to the full teaching of our Catholic Faith.

Another response was to be welcoming in the parish. Many students attend Sunday Mass but no one knows them. No one says hi, asks their name, asks how they’re doing. Nobody shows that they care for one another and for this reason many people leave the Catholic church and attend protestant churches.

A student from Valdosta pointed out that many LGBT people
are Catholics who feel they are not welcomed by the church. The Bishop said that the Catholic view of the LGBT community has been misunderstood but Pope Francis has done his best to clarify that view. Homosexuality is not a sin but homosexual and heterosexual acts outside of marriage are a sin. “They need to be welcomed, because they are all children of God.”

At the end of the discussion and retreat, we all agreed that being Catholic is a challenge, but it’s a challenge worth fighting for.

Ed. Note: As a Cathedral usher I would hope that all SCAD students feel welcomed when they attend Mass. I would also invite them to join us at Coffee and Doughnuts or a Parish Supper to feel more a part of our parish family.

Meet a couple of our college student parishioners.

Katelyn Yoder — Left
A senior illustration major at SCAD Katelyn is known for her pattern prints and hand lettering. You may see her at daily Mass at the Cathedral. Follow her on Instagram @work_of_he.art_ and visit her website to see her work https://www.katelynyoder.com/.

Patricia Covarrubia — Right
Senior at SCAD majoring in Graphic Design. Patricia is talented in the work she creates. She always manages to think outside the box when creating her projects. Check out her website to view more of her work https://patcova.com/ or follow her on Instagram @patcova for inspiration.
That inquiry triggered a detailed examination of our historical sources to see if we could come up with a definitive explanation for why we have three murals filling the open wall spaces between the stained glass windows in the apse of the Sacred Heart Chapel.

In a letter dated April 9, 1898 to the Chairman of the Building Committee, Captain John Flannery, (Flannery O’Connor’s Aunt Kate’s father), Baldwin and Price, the architects in charge of rebuilding the Cathedral after the fire described the changes planned for the two side chapels as follows:

“You will please note that certain radical changes have been made in the two side chapels, by removal of the two clerestory galleries and small sacristies, and also taking down the northeast turret and extending the chapel by the addition of a small apse thus forming two large side chapels.”

An examination of a recent overhead photo of the Cathedral shows the turret of the southeast side of church, however the turret on the northeast side has been removed and in its place we have the new apse.

On February 13, 1898, a week after the fire, Bishop Thomas Becker sent an appeal to the clergy of the United States advising them that the magnificent Cathedral of St. John the Baptist was entirely destroyed by fire and enlisting their financial assistance in rebuilding the church. In anticipation of their fraternal charity, he promised them that a Chapel and Altar would be erected and dedicated to the Priests of the United States.

In his letter to the Parish on April 19, 1900, Bishop Benjamin Keiley states “The Sacred Heart Altar is a present to the Cathedral from my fellow priests throughout the United States, many of whom generously gave of their poverty to help us in our need and at the same time gave public evidence of their zeal for the honor due the Adorable Heart of our Lord.”

The inscription at the base of the Sacred Heart Altar, "From His Priests to the Great High Priest" commemorates the generosity of the priests and bishops from throughout the United States, who in response to Bishop Becker’s appeal, donated funds to rebuild the Cathedral after the fire of 1898.

In his letter Bishop Keiley goes on to mention the various stained glass windows that will be purchased for the Sacred Heart Chapel including the “2 windows behind the altar have been included in the gift of the altar.”

According to the records of the Tyrolese Art Glass Company, Bishop Keiley or-
dered these two small windows for the apse of the Sacred Heart Chapel at the price of $225.00 for both windows.

The structural drawing of the church shows the five sided apse at the end of the Sacred Heart Chapel created by Baldwin and Price with only two windows shown. This was ultimately confirmed by looking at the architectural blueprints and the outside wall of the apse to validate that there are only two external window openings so that is why no additional windows were ordered.

In 1911, Christopher Murphy received a commission to conceptualize and implement a program of mural decoration for the Cathedral and he engaged Paul Gutschke, an artist who had worked on the Library of Congress project, to create oil paintings for the church. At that time the empty spaces in the wall of the apse of the Sacred Heart Chapel were filled with three murals, dedicated to the High Priest ac-
cording to the Order of Melchisedech, consistent with Bishop Becker’s promise.

On the left is the Mural of Melchisedech. According to Genesis 14:18-19, Abram was returning victoriously from combat with enemies of the Jews when he encountered the holy man named Melchisedech. The man was known by other titles including “the high priest of God” and “King of Salem.” Melchisedech greeted Abram with a blessing and offered him bread and wine. Abram responded by paying a tithe to the holy man, thus showing that the priest was the one of the two men with more authority. Because of the Eucharistic nature of the meeting, Christians view Melchisedech as a prefigure to Christ.

The Mural of King David is hidden behind the Sacred Heart Altar and cannot be seen from the nave. The mural depicts David, who, at God’s command, was anointed and granted total authority as King of Judah. Given his special place with God, David might have been expected to commit less serious sins than he did. It seems inconsistent that God’s anointed could commit murder driven by lust. But David fell into the depths of human brokenness. Eventually, he sought forgiveness for his sins and was restored to God’s company. The story of David shows God’s willingness to forgive all people regardless of the level of depravity. Christians believe Jesus’ human lineage originates with David.

On the right is the Mural of an Old Testament Priest. According to Old Testament law, members of the Tribe of Levi served under the direction of Aaron when performing religious rites of ancient Hebrews. The Book of Numbers explains that these men would safeguard and manage the holy areas for worship including caring for the Ark of the Covenant which held the tablet of the Ten Commandments.

In the Old Testament book of Exodus, Chapter 39, a description of priestly clothing is given. Fine linen and gold were woven and sewn into robes. A breastplate was fashioned with gold settings to hold twelve gemstones which served to remember the Twelve Tribes of Israel. The priests stood before God as representatives of the Israelites.

In addition, priests offered sacrifices on behalf of the Hebrews as prescribed in the Old Testament. For Christians, the sacrificial lamb shown in this mural foretells the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, namely Jesus.

Although we have not definitely answered Fr. Schreck’s question, it seems that window openings were only constructed in the two walls which were visible from the Cathedral. The other wall spaces, which were not able to be viewed from the church, were solid and destined for other decoration, ultimately the murals we have today.
In the last issue of Twin Spires we reported that a new feature had been added to the Cathedral web site. A couple of months ago, Jim Simick and his wife Jeanne visited the Cathedral from Pompano Beach, FL. During his visit, Jim who is an accomplished videographer, took a video of John Pryor giving his standard tour presentation to a large group.

Jim shared it with John and at Jim’s request we sent him some photos of various Cathedral elements which he incorporated into the video and would show specific features while John was talking about them. Ultimately the video was posted on the Cathedral web site.

But John had a cold that day and he coughed a lot during his presentation. Plus, Jim wasn’t satisfied with the audio quality, so he returned on April 4 to reshoot it.

Jim got all set up and fitted John with a portable microphone he had brought so the audio portion would have improved quality. Then it was show time. Jim shot several different videos of John giving his tour to different groups until he was satisfied with the quality.

I asked John why Jim does this? What’s in it for him?

According to John, “Jim and Jeanne feel it is a duty of theirs to assist in growing the interest in our Catholic faith and in particular our beautiful Cathedral. They believe that they can use their artistic talents to promote Catholicism in general as well as our Cathedral’s beauty and holiness.

“They have toured many Catholic sites in our country and consider the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist to be one of the most beautiful and worthy of more recognition due to its position in the south. They are believers who want to spread the word that Catholicism is the way to Christ.”

Thank you Jim for shooting a beautiful video of our Cathedral which we can share with others on our Cathedral web site.

You can find it under the Visit Tab. Just click on Docent-Led Tour. Why don’t you take a look?
June 24 will be the Feast Day of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the Patron Saint of the Cathedral. He has been our patron since the establishment of the Savannah’s first Catholic parish in the late 1700s, the Congrégation de Saint Jean-Baptiste, by French émigrés fleeing France after the French Revolution.

The Nativity of John the Baptist on June 24 comes three months after the celebration of the Annunciation on March 25, when the angel Gabriel told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy, and six months before the Christmas celebration of the birth of Jesus. The purpose of these festivals is not to celebrate the exact dates of these events, but simply to commemorate them in an interlinking way. The Nativity of John the Baptist anticipates the Feast of Christmas.

Christians have long interpreted the life of John the Baptist as a preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ, and the circumstances of his birth, as recorded in the New Testament, are miraculous. John’s pivotal place in the gospel is seen in the emphasis Luke gives to the announcement of his birth and the event itself, both set in prominent parallel to the same occurrences in the life of Jesus.

At the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary to inform her that she would conceive of the Holy Ghost, he also informed her that Elizabeth, her cousin, was already six months pregnant. Mary then journeyed to visit Elizabeth.

It is recorded in St. Luke’s Gospel, “And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe [St. John the Baptist] leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 1:41).

Here in the Cathedral we commemorate John’s role as the one who prepared the way of the Lord through repentance and baptism with the three stained glass windows in the apse. He made ready the way for Christ by calling people to acknowledge their sins and their need for salvation. His baptism was a purification ceremony meant to ready the peoples’ hearts to receive their Savior.

And so we celebrate his birth to acknowledge what Jesus said to honor the prophet John, “Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist.” (MT 11:11)

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The Birth of St. John the Baptist, was painted by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. Copies of his images adorn the Cathedral in the Assumption stained glass window as well as the St. Anthony and Flight into Egypt murals.

In the center foreground of his canvas sits a middle-aged nurse who supports the newborn child on her lap while gently drying him following his first bath. A servant girl turns toward the father, Zechariah, who gestures at his son. In the background to the right, an exhausted Saint Elizabeth lies in bed, attended by a woman.

Two ethereal sources illuminate the scene: the saintly child, who radiates an intense brilliance, and a cluster of angels, who emit a golden glow as they peer down from the heavens at the beatific infant.

Although various events from the life of Saint John the Baptist are recorded in all four gospels, only Luke describes the circumstances of his birth. Murillo’s scene, with its depiction of the infant’s first bath, highlights the Baptist’s future vocation.