

The Fatima Faithful newsletter is published once a month and is available in the bulletin, on our website, and accessible through Facebook. Let us know what you think! Email [newsletter@ourladyoffatima.org](mailto:newsletter@ourladyoffatima.org) with suggestions and pictures. The Newsletter Team: Vicki Johnson, Angie Feltz and Guest Columnists.

## Take a Closer Look at April

It was the second month of the Roman calendar (March the first). Around 450 BCE, April was rearranged into the fourth slot and assigned 29 days. With the introduction of the Gregorian calendar by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582, an extra day was added.

Being confident about the origin of a word that's been around since before 1150 isn't so simple. The English word April comes from the Latin Aprilis, the name given to the month by the ancient Romans. No one knows for certain why the Romans named it as they did. Some Roman authors thought that Aprilis was related to the Latin verb aperire meaning "to open," because April "opened" the buds of leaves and flowers. A more likely theory is that the name was based on Apru, an Etruscan form of the name of the Greek goddess Aphrodite. We've come out of the desert; we've walked with Christ to Calvary and been richly rewarded for our faithfulness: HE IS RISEN! Every year we celebrate new beginnings in April. The flowers and trees take our breath away with the richness of color, abundance of blossoms and fragrance. It is a month for introspection, spiritual resurgence and rebirth. Christ urges us embrace our Lenten journey growth and see ourselves as new creations. In this season of transformation, Like the fresh blooms of April, believers are made new through faith, leaving behind the old and embracing a new identity in Christ. "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Cor 5:17). It serves as a reminder that despite the difficulties we encounter, God is always there and that His promises are still real. This month is a chance to realign priorities and refocus on God's purpose for our lives; trusting God, being obedient, and being faithful help direct our hearts as we strive to live according to His will. "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10)

And as Mark Twain reminds us "This is the day upon which we are reminded of what we are on the other 364." Twain was referring to the first day of April or, as it's often known, April Fools' Day! Let US be fools for Jesus, our savior!

## Watered Gardens? by Fr. Joe Austin

One's soul can be envisioned as a spiritual garden. There is beautiful growth taking place that we desire to cultivate, as well as the occasional weed that catches our attention as if it were announcing, "Intruder alert!" As far as dealing with any snakes that might appear in the garden, we can look to Genesis to find the perfect counterexample for our edification. In her Spiritual Autobiography (SA), St. Theresa of Avila offers four ways to water one's spiritual garden. These four ways move from being a more active worker in the garden to being one who rests in God. This movement is not one of increased and permissive laziness, but rather a shift in perspective by which one recognizes that all good things come from God, even the good fruits of one's own efforts. This cultivates the reason for the garden — the human person. As the human person grows in the realization that their own work in the spiritual garden is supplied in every respect by the Divine Gardener, that same realization blooms forth as a hybrid flower — a hybrid flower that shows forth the dignity of our humble place in Christ Jesus.

First, there is water that is from the well. This method of acquiring water is the most laborious on our part. Water from the well applies to the recollection taking place in the mind whereby one tries to discover God's presence in the moments of one's life. As one recollects, one has to work to be rid of distractions that prevent one from meeting with success in their work of recollecting God's presence and activity. This recollection can also result in sadness as one remembers those times when one did not act as well as they could as a good

spiritual gardener, perhaps remembering those times when a snake in the garden was treated with similar trust as that which we discover in that story from Genesis.

Second, there is the water wheel. With the well, the gardener looks down toward the earth for water. With the water wheel, the gardener looks to the mountain. The mountain is now seen as a source of water, water which flows from the heights of the mountain toward the gardener who now only needs to build a water wheel to allow the water to reach the garden. By relying on the mountain, the gardener no longer controls the amount of water nor when that water comes to nourish the spiritual garden. The gardener relies less on the gardener's own efforts and begins to trust in the water that comes from the mountain. Here, the individual is entering more deeply into spiritual trust with God which is manifested through a change in prayer. With the well, prayer may be more about asking God to prevent bad things from happening as we try to accomplish the good. With the water wheel, prayer becomes more about asking God to supply us for what we need as we still work to accomplish the good.

Thirdly and fourthly on St. Theresa's list — well, I encourage you to discover for yourself the final two ways in which our spiritual gardens may be watered. I have run out of space in the garden of this article!

"Let us know, let us strive to know the Lord; as certain as the dawn is his coming. He will come to us like the rain, like spring rain that waters the earth." (Hosea 6:3)

## The Helping Hand



Do you have a favorite podcast?

Is there a book that everyone should read?

Is there a website that contains a wealth of material for spiritual growth?

Is there an author you are particularly fond of?

We would love to have your input on resources for understanding our faith better and growing in holiness! Send suggestions to [newsletter@OurLadyofFatima.org](mailto:newsletter@OurLadyofFatima.org)

# KoC Trivia Night



# OCIA Scrutiny



# Lenten Meals



# Focolare Pot Luck



# St Joseph Feast Day



# Monsignor Gahagan Lenten Music



# Divine Mercy Retreat



# Living Stations Practice



# Stations of the Cross



# Spring



## The Loving Option Adoption by Jim Everett

My first exposure to the *LOA* was at their 2nd Annual Barn Dance fundraiser last September and I was struck by the beauty and importance of their mission. *LOA* is the adoption ministry of Catholic Charities of East Tennessee (CCETN) and is a full-service, child-placing agency licensed in the state of Tennessee servicing all 36 counties within our Diocese. There is no requirement to be Catholic to work with *LOA* but all potential adoptive parents agree to uphold the Gospel values in their home and plan to instill those values in their parenting.

The CCETN adoption program was forced to close several years ago but had a rebirth as *LOA* in 2022 following a U.S. Supreme Court decision enabling faith-based adoption programs. *LOA* matched seven babies and families in fiscal year 2024-25 representing a 600% increase from the previous year. This ministry is bringing hope to mothers with unplanned pregnancies in our region who for personal reasons are unable to parent their child, and to couples who desire to build their families through adoption. *LOA* works effectively across the adoption triad: the child, birth parents, and adoptive parents; seamlessly uniting them for a successful adoption.

Choosing to place a baby for adoption is one of the most significant, difficult, brave, painful, and loving decisions a mother can make. *LOA* provides mothers with a dedicated Birth Parent Specialist who walks them throughout the entire process including selecting the potential adoptive couple. This support also can include ensuring she has insurance, health care, food, safe shelter, utilities, transportation to prenatal appointments, a support person in the delivery room, or someone to care for their other child/children while they attend appointments, legal fees, counsel, love and support.

*LOA* is doing God's work, providing help, hope, and light at a time when many women see only darkness. *LOA* notes that while they pour their hearts into the lives of those they serve, ultimately it is God who places children in families. From start to finish, each step reveals His divine sovereignty in the lives of the child, the birth family and the adoptive family. As one adoptive family said, "Without them (*LOA*) following the leading of our Lord, we would not be parents to our beautiful son today... May God richly bless this organization and their ministry."

If you would like more information or want to support *LOA* financially, see their website at [www.alovingoptionadoption.org](http://www.alovingoptionadoption.org).

## Saint of the Month by the Sellers Family

Saint Monica of Hippo is one of the most admired figures in early Christian history, having displayed immense amounts of patience, faith, and unwavering dedication for her family's conversion. She was born around 331 A.D. in Tagaste, in what is now modern-day Algeria. Raised in a Christian household, Monica developed strong religious values from a young age that would guide her throughout her life. Monica was married off at the approximate age of 22 to a Roman pagan named Patricius who was known for his temper. Despite the challenges in their marriage, Monica remained devoted to him, and steadfast in her faith. Through her patience she eventually influenced her husband and her mother-in-law to convert to Christianity. Monica struggled much in her life, having overcoming alcohol addiction, domestic abuse and adultery. She wept often over her eldest son, Augustine, but was famously comforted by the bishop of Milan, St. Ambrose. He said to her, "It is not possible that the son of so many tears should perish" and advised her to "Speak less to Augustine about God and more to God about Augustine." With the help of the bishop, Augustine did convert and was baptized shortly before his mother died. Days before her death, St. Monica told her son "My son, as for me, I have no further delight in anything in this life. What I am still to do here, and why I am here, I do not know, now that my hopes in this world are fulfilled. There was indeed one thing for which I desired to linger a little while in this life, and that was that I might see you a Catholic Christian before I died. My God has granted me this in abundance." Today, St. Monica only has a simple tombstone to mark her original burial site in Ostia; her relics are kept in the Basilica of St. Augustine. St. Monica is the patron saint of victims of abuse, victims of adultery, alcoholics, and married women. Her life continues to inspire faithful Catholics everywhere.



## Spotlight on Fatima Families by Zach Nickerson

Over the past several years, our parish has been blessed with a joyful and unmistakable trend: the number of young families in our parish has been steadily and visibly growing. Sunday Masses are filled with the beautiful sounds of children, faith formation classes are overflowing, and parents are doing their best to shepherd little hearts toward Jesus. With this beautiful growth came a shared desire among many families—a desire for deeper connection, stronger support, and a vibrant community rooted in the faith. From that desire, Fatima Families was born.

In its first year, Fatima Families has quickly become a thriving ministry dedicated to strengthening Christian family life. Our mission is threefold: to provide a network of support for families, to offer spiritual formation for families and couples, and to host enriching community-building events that help families grow together in joy and holiness. In just one school year, the ministry has already begun to bear remarkable fruit.

One of the most cherished initiatives has been the introduction of Family Holy Half Hours, where parents and children come before the Blessed Sacrament in a peaceful, welcoming environment. These mornings help children grow comfortable in prayer while giving parents a chance to ground their family life in Christ. Fatima Families has also fostered small groups that meet for Bible/book study, prayer, and fellowship—spaces where men and women can walk together through the blessings and challenges of family life. The ministry's spirit of support is also lived out through meal trains for families welcoming new babies,

ensuring that no family journeys through early parenthood alone. And throughout the year, Fatima Families has hosted joyful, liturgically-linked parish events that bring children and adults together to celebrate the life of the Church: Trunk-or-Treat in October, the Christmas Pageant in January, the Easter Egg Hunt in spring, and special gatherings honoring great family patrons—St. Joseph in March and our Blessed Mother in May. Collaboration has been key to the ministry's success. Fatima Families has worked closely with other parish groups and ministries—Faith Formation, Youth Ministry, the Hispanic Ministry, Martha's Hands, Respect Life Committee, and others—to build a parish culture where family life is supported, celebrated, and nurtured. Together, we are helping Our Lady of Fatima become a home where families of all ages and stages feel welcomed and strengthened in their journey of faith.

And there is room for you!

If you are a family—from the day your first child is born until the day your youngest heads out into the world—Fatima Families wants you involved! Whether you're seeking fellowship, formation, support, or fun, this ministry is here for you.

If you're part of another ministry or parish group and want to collaborate to help family life flourish, we want you involved as well! Fatima Families thrives when the whole parish works together. To learn more or get connected, please contact Sarah Parsons in the parish office or email [fatima\\_families@ourladyoffatima.org](mailto:fatima_families@ourladyoffatima.org). Come grow with us—your family belongs here.