

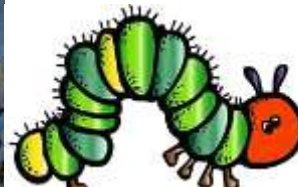
The St. Michael, Poplar Springs-Mt. Airy, Church Library Media Center

With National Library Week (April 7-13, 2019) and the new Follett Destiny Library Management System in operation, let's look more closely at the church library media center!

"Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing." (Ps 126:5) "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit." (Jn 12:24) Like the farmer, I sow the seed; like the fisherman, I wait patiently. Winter's dormancy and germination are over; it's spring once again! New life, new possibilities! While many have visited the church library these past sixteen years, lots of folks may not even be aware of its existence and purpose. It's time to give it some well-deserved attention and publicity and to invite greater exploration and use. This is my hope and expectation!

I believe the insatiable thirst for knowledge and passionate love of learning are connected with the holy longing for God, the Source of truth, beauty, and goodness.

What is unique about the church library is that, in addition to traditional content, i.e., biblical commentaries, lives of the saints, Catechism of the Catholic Church, Canon Law, philosophy and theology, etc., folks will discover interfaith studies, world religions, nature, science, history, the performing arts, artistic and inspiring sculptures of human figures and natural wildlife. Thus Christian disciples are moved to awe and wonder and encouraged to view all creatures great and small as redeemed in the risen, ascended, and glorified Christ.



The multi-media library is **free** and available to anyone with an inquisitive curiosity about the world ... for anyone who is captivated by nature ... spellbound by adventure ... intrigued by history, or fascinated by faraway places. It's a treasure-trove of knowledge on plants, animals and people; children's classics, religion and science, culture, and global challenges. It offers award-winning programs (Dove Foundation Approved and Parent Choice Award) that enrich anyone who reveres God and enjoys his power at work in the universe. Plenty here for budding young explorers, naturalists, and scientists!



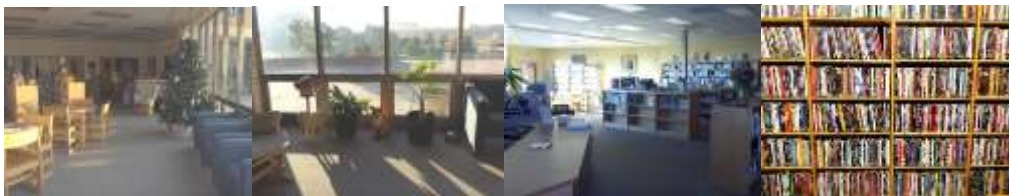
God our Father, open our eyes to see your hand at work in the splendor of creation, in the beauty of human life. Touched by your hand our world is holy. Help us to cherish the gifts that surround us, to share your blessings with our brothers and sisters, and to experience the joy of life in your presence.

The borrower will discover great video courses by renowned teachers, talks by retreat masters and theologians; important documentaries; a variety of children's songs, sacred, classical, and contemporary Christian music CDs.

Why a church library, when there are fine public libraries in Carroll, Frederick, Howard and Montgomery Counties? Because, as teacher, I want to nurture a broad, multi-dimensional, multi-layered approach to ministry that is *catholicos* (universal, general, ecumenical) in outlook. In an age of ecumenism and interfaith dialogue and cooperation, we have opportunity to hear trustworthy and wonderful scholars and popular authors and speakers among our separated brethren who present rich insight into the word of God that is timeless and relevant to Christian living. Many marriages are *mixed religion marriages* (between a Catholic and a baptized person from another Christian tradition) or *disparity of cult marriages* (between a Catholic and a Jew or Muslim, etc.) Just the other day a visitor to the library was reading up on one of the world religions to better understand her friend.



Rooted in the Christian Scriptures and formed in the documents of Vatican Council II, I am familiar with Jewish and Christian biblical scholarship and have participated in clergy associations with pastors from the Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian and Episcopal traditions. Indeed, with the library now posted on our website, it is my hope that members from neighboring Catholic and non-Catholic churches might also have access to the library, particularly in light of evangelism and sharing of resources and learning opportunities among Pastorates.



The church media center can support pastoral ministers, parents, catechists, children and youth in preschool, Sunday school, and high school of religion (SOR); offer programs for small faith-sharing groups; support spiritual edification and enrichment for the whole parish, as we *re-mission, re-imagine* and make faith witness *exciting* and *relevant* in the 21st century!

Lawrence Cardinal Shehan ordained me in 1969 and in the 70s and 80s appointed me associate pastor to large Baltimore County parishes with parochial schools. As a young teaching priest I was frustrated at times by the lack of resources available to church leaders and parishioners for training and formation in ministry. The school libraries were limited in scope and accessible only to students and faculty. I did, however, maintain the church pamphlet racks and conduct religious book sales to serve educational needs.

But now, in God's providence, St. Michael Catholic Church has been blessed with its *own* library, broad in scope and culture and easily accessible to the whole parish! Access is available whenever the church is open for worship, religious education classes, meetings and events. The self-service check-out and return procedure is simple and straightforward, with directions and sign-out forms on the circulation desk – an opportune and quick process for parents dropping off or waiting for their children. Patrons can place returned materials in the drop box in the desk to be checked in and re-shelved. With wifi and the new Follett Library Management System folks will now be able to search the whole inventory electronically!



Since mom was known by many as an avid reader, it was kind of Don D'Valle, who served on the Pastoral Council, to move that the church library be named in memory of Clementine Victoria Ruane, who died in 2005, fifty-one days shy of 103! You can see her picture at 100-years-old on the dedication plaque.

The vast majority of library materials have been personally funded by me, as a gift entrusted to St. Michael of Poplar Springs Roman Catholic Congregation, Inc. There are lots of new items stored at the rectory that will enhance and enrich the inventory. That is why, from the beginning, due to limited shelf-space and storage, the policy has been not to accept used books.



I appreciate the past *gift of hours* by librarian, Lynda Gaidis, and IT mentors, Peter and Lori Churchyard. I am so grateful for present help in time of need from volunteer extraordinaire, Nancy Curtin, and librarians Alyssa Smith and Mary Mendiola. Alyssa Smith has a degree in library science and management for 24 years with Baltimore County Schools. Mary Mendiola is librarian at a major government agency. Other helpers include the Danchiks, Dottie Kaczmarek, Ricky Smith, Clay and Samantha Buckman. Donna Binney, business manager, has effectively worked with Nancy, Mary, Alyssa, and with Jerry O’Keefe from Go-Consulting on the procurement and installation of the Follett Destiny Library Management System, which is a powerful tool for patrons and library managers; Alyssa Smith, having spent much time on it already, is familiar with the software. Notable, too, is the newly-purchased Samsung UHD 55” TV, with Blu-Ray Disc Player/DVD Player on a multi-functional mobile TV cart!



*Nancy Curtin . Mary Mendiola . Alyssa Smith
Accompanying him were some women who provided support out of their own means (cf. Lk 8:1, 3).*

There is need for enthusiastic library workers to make this parish resource better known and more widely used. Particularly, persons with library skills and experience are invited to contact Alyssa Smith and take the next step in their *gift of hours*. Visitors who come to St. Michael’s for meetings, workshops and conventions find the multi-media resource center remarkable. Our intention is to build on and develop what already has been achieved, to impress folks with the library’s potential, and to encourage folks to become more proficient in its use.

It would be useful information to have consistently available stats on the number of users over the past sixteen years. The last numbers I was given nine years ago were 283 patrons; 2,776 checkouts!



The multi-media resource center is a warm, comfortable, and welcoming space for relaxation, reading or laptop work. Visitors to our campus have been impressed with the quantity and quality of materials, the beautiful furnishings, the ambience and picture-window view of fields and farmland and the four seasons. Upon touring the library on a pastoral visit, William Cardinal O’Brien remarked, “What a lot of work!”

The word disciple from the Latin *discipulus* means *pupil* or *one who learns*. I do admire the Dominican motto: “*Contemplata aliis tradere,*” i.e., *to hand on to others the fruits of contemplation*. At St. Michael Catholic Church, Poplar Springs-Mount Airy, may we celebrate what is good in our culture, promote reverence and care for God’s creation, encourage dialogue and interface between faith and science, and celebrate the depth and the joy of the Gospel.

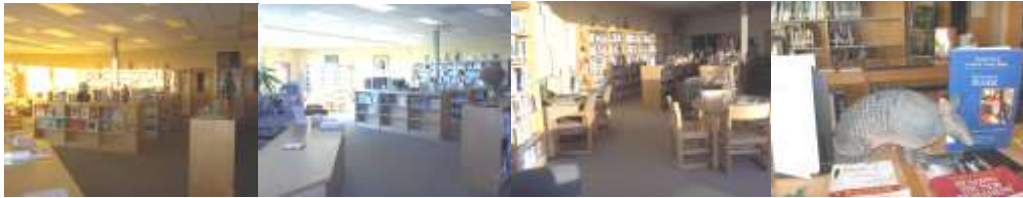
“Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?” (Lk 12:4)



Why then a church library? From my perspective, to provide access to Christian educational resources not likely found in the public libraries. To affirm God’s presence and goodness in creation, in religion, the sciences, arts and humanities. To share material blessings. To provide a place for quiet research, reading, study, and reflection. To provide reference materials that catechists and students can use in preparing their religious instruction and class projects. To provide resources that uplift, challenge and inspire; teach and instruct; enable and empower, and equip church leaders and lay ecclesial ministers as *ambassadors* for Christ in the 21st century. We are commissioned to represent Christ. Remember, all is of

grace. He is the one who produces the change of heart, the growth of the Church, and the Gospel success. *"I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"* (Jn 8:12).

Church Libraries = Strong Communities: to help people better understand and embrace the healing Gospel of Christ in our beautiful but broken world. To provide access to Christian faith-based feature films of enduring value and substance that are suitable for family viewing. To promote goodwill and a spirit of ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue and understanding. To provide multi-media materials helpful to parents in bringing up their children in the practice of the Catholic Faith. To provide appropriate resources for folks of all ages at significant stages and transitions in their life journey. To encourage an intense desire for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and a deeper understanding of the world around us. And to offer alternative viewing and wholesome entertainment, e.g., animated and live-action movies that are family-friendly!



At present I am steward of the church library, responsible for policy and accountable for the content and suitability of the materials. Nancy Curtin, Alyssa Smith, Mary Mendiola and others freely help when personal schedules permit. Many tasks have already been accomplished. They train dedicated volunteers and task circulation and information, entering inventory on the Follett Library Management System, cataloguing and shelving books, ordering library supplies, monitoring stats on check-outs and returns, publicity and displays to familiarize people with the layout and resources available, etc. Just this past Sunday, in observance of National Library Week, folks were invited to see the library.

What about propriety of materials? Normally, that will be at the discretion of the librarians. The Pastor should be kept informed of materials going into the library. Any problematic materials should be left finally to the decision of the Pastor.

What about library design, layout, furnishings, and capacity? The 1485 sq. ft. library contains a book circulation/reception counter (made by Tad Brooks), round tables with chairs, reading area with lounge chairs, computer work center, and standard library shelves and multi-media display units to hold 6,688+ books, CDs, DVDs, magazines, newspapers, periodicals. Doug Pindell, purchasing officer for Howard County Schools, helped in procuring matching shelving and furnishings that were funded by generous donors. Jim Costello made and installed the beautiful shelves in Room A109 to hold the expanded DVD collection.

What about funding for the library? The vast majority of materials have been funded by me. The Parish purchased the Follett Library Management System and pamphlet racks for which I am grateful. There is a budget process for administrative upkeep submitted by the library volunteer workers in consultation with the business manager, reviewed by the Finance Committee, and ultimately recommended by the Pastoral Council for the Pastor's approval and acceptance. Monetary gifts designated for library support are always welcome.

A Dream Realized: Before construction of the new Religious Education Wing/Multi-Purpose Building, I offered parishioners religious book sales and managed the VHS lending library in Room 113 in the B or Butler Building. By God's favor, having our own church family library is truly a dream realized. If public libraries equal strong communities, I believe our Church Library/Multi-Media Resource Center is a major asset to the parish community, as outlined in this report. It is my hope that it be a place where, younger and older disciples in mission will continue to learn, to equip for and enhance ministry, and effectively relate the joy and depth of the Gospel to folks in our culture.



*"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last" (Jn 15:16).
"Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind..." (1 Pt 1:13).*

In Christ our Light,

Fr. Mike