



MAY 2026

LIVING MY

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From the Ocean Side 

Hey Friends,

This past month honestly knocked me off my feet — in both beautiful and exhausting ways — and I'm so grateful to finally step into the slower rhythm of summer.

Because I work both at the parish and with the college students at the Catholic Center, our schedules naturally mirror the school year. Which means summer becomes a season where I can finally take my foot off the gas pedal and breathe a little deeper.

Now, that doesn't mean the work stops.
It simply becomes quieter.

Less noise.

Less events.

Less constant movement.

And in that quiet, something really sacred happens.

Summer becomes the season of preparation. A season of listening. A season where I get to sit in my little bubble with the Holy Spirit — dreaming, discerning, visioning, and praying about how the Lord wants to move through our parish and the Catholic Center in the coming year.



Helping souls encounter Jesus through Mary.



DEZIRÉE SLUSHER

Catholic Missionary



One of the challenges I experienced this year at the Catholic Center was not being as present in relational ministry as I wanted to be.

This year, we were blessed to have FOCUS missionaries who deeply walk with the students in their faith, lead Bible studies, and intentionally invest in relationships. Their presence allowed me to focus more on operations and donor development behind the scenes—which honestly fits my personality well as a triple introvert. But somewhere throughout the year, I realized how much I missed building deeper personal relationships with the students.

One student in particular, Jaden, really opened my eyes to this.

Jaden is newer to the Catholic Center this year, though she's been Catholic her whole life. She has a joyful personality that naturally fills a room. She invited me six different times to attend her spring concert with the United Voices Gospel Choir.

Six times.

And honestly, I learned two powerful lessons from her persistence: first, persistence almost always wins. Second, why did it take six invitations for me to finally slow down enough to pay attention?

Her invitations reminded me how important it is to be fully present—not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually attentive to the people God places in front of me. Ironically, it also became a funny reminder for donor development: apparently people need to hear from me at least six times too. LOL.

What surprised me most was realizing how little I actually knew her. I had no idea this beautiful soul could sing—and not only sing, but truly perform.

The room was filled with Christians from many different denominations, and I genuinely felt united with my brothers and sisters in Christ. At one point, I was invited to speak on behalf of our Catholic organization and share some of the victories we've experienced at the Catholic Center.

I shared how our ministry began in 2020 with just five students, and today we regularly see around forty students involved. I shared how more than 4,000 people entered the Church in Atlanta this Easter Vigil, and how we're witnessing a new movement among young adults choosing Christ over hookup culture and searching for something deeper and holier.

As each ministry shared their stories and victories, the entire room cheered. It honestly felt like Heaven smiling.



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A SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD I NEVER EXPECTED



On April 30, the day finally came.

Honestly, it felt like a wedding day.

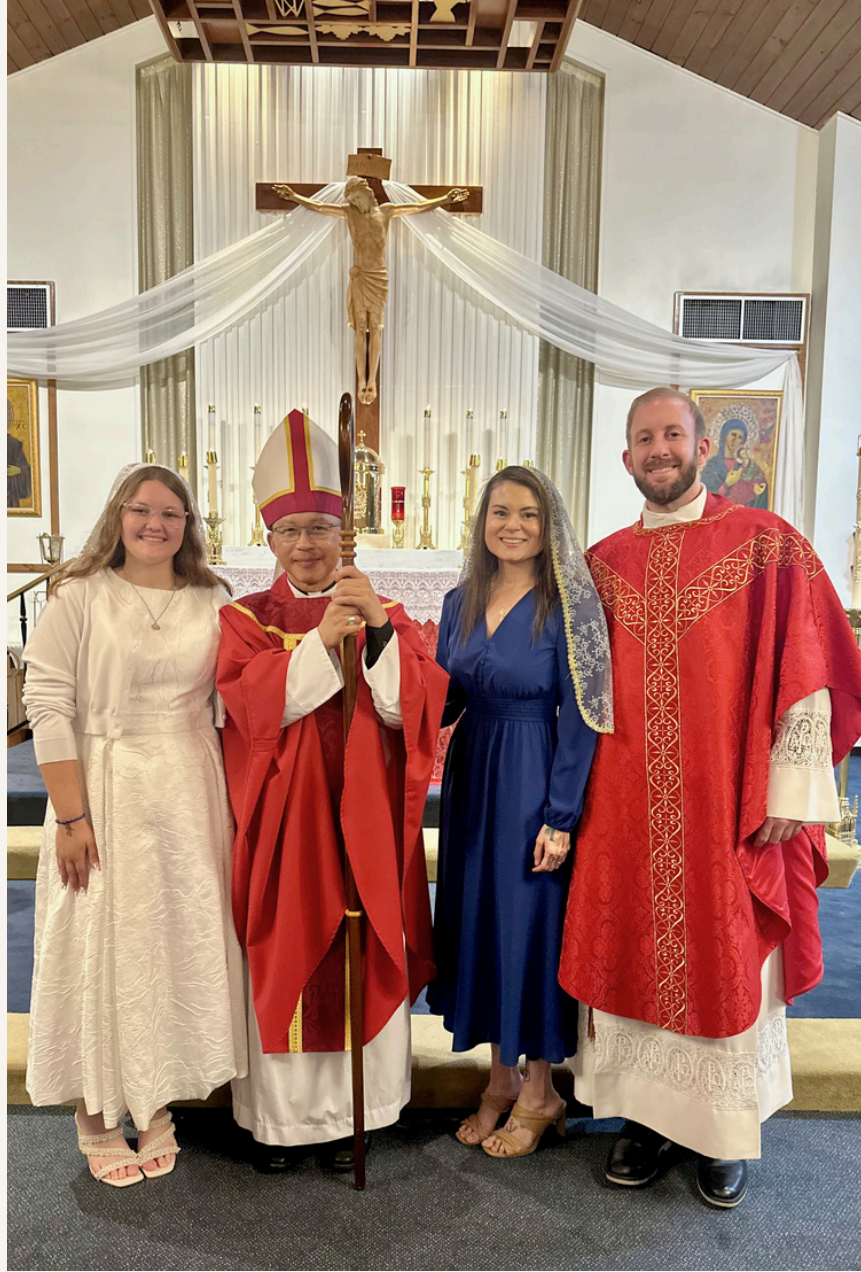
There she was in a beautiful white dress, her hair done, her nails freshly done for the very first time, standing nervously but joyfully before the altar. And me? I was trying not to cry watching her walk toward something so sacred.

But Kyleigh beat all of us to it.

She cried through almost the entire Mass.

Not the kind of tears that come from sadness, but the kind that come when the soul knows something holy is happening. It was one of the most beautiful things I've ever witnessed — a teenager freely choosing Christ.

In a world constantly pulling young people in every direction, there is something deeply moving about watching a young woman say “yes” to God.



This past year I had the honor of walking beside her as her Confirmation sponsor. We talked about faith, life, prayer, struggles, discernment, and everything in between. But somewhere along the journey, both of us quietly knew this wasn't going to end at Confirmation.

**This was becoming something deeper.
A lifelong commitment.
Spiritual motherhood.**

I think before becoming Catholic, I viewed sponsorship as simply guiding someone through a sacrament. But now I see it differently. Spiritual motherhood means standing beside someone for the long haul. It means praying for them, protecting them, encouraging them when needed, and reminding them of the truth when they forget. It means loving them like Christ loves them.

It is one of the greatest callings I never saw coming.





The Women *Are Thirsty*

One of the greatest joys of this year has been witnessing the women's ministry at OLPH begin to bloom.

We recently celebrated our first Women's Tea as a way to close out the year — and honestly, it felt like so much more than tea and pretty decorations. It felt like a celebration of growth, friendship, healing, vulnerability, and women saying "yes" to going deeper with Christ together.

As I looked around the room watching women laugh, embrace, pray, and share life, I found myself quietly thanking God.

Because only He could have written this story.

If I'm being honest, I'm probably the last person I ever imagined helping lead a women's ministry. I'm an introvert. I've always preferred deep one-on-one conversations or smaller intimate groups over large gatherings. I thrive in meaningful connection, not crowds.

But leading this ministry alongside my sister-from-another-mother, Angel, has stretched me in ways I didn't expect.

And maybe that's what the Lord does.

He gently calls us beyond what feels comfortable and into places where we become fully alive.

And I think many women have spent years carrying silent loneliness while sitting in pews every Sunday.

They've attended Mass faithfully but still longed for deeper spiritual friendship and discipleship.

This ministry has reminded me that women don't just want events.



“*Jesus answered and said to her, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. — John 4:13-14*



*Something beautiful is unfolding
at OLPH
Not because of us — but because
the Holy Spirit is moving.*