

NEVER FORGET THE POOR

Fr. Jeffrey Kirby is a busy man. In addition to his pastoral responsibilities at Our Lady of Grace Parish near Lancaster, South Carolina, he is an author (13 books), radio and television speaker, adjunct professor of theology, and weekly contributor to the CRUX news site “Taking the Catholic Pulse”.

He earned a BA in History and an MA in Philosophy at Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio. From there he went to Rome to earn a Theology degree at the Pontifical Gregorian University, an MA in Bioethics at the Pontifical Athenaeum Queen of the Apostles, a Licentiate in Moral Theology at *Santa Croce*, and finally a Doctorate in Sacred Theology from *Santa Croce* in 2016.

Since his ordination in 2007, he has been a high school chaplain, scout chaplain, religion teacher, and the Vocations Director for South Carolina. Considering the discipline required to manage all these activities, it is not surprising that Fr. Kirby grew up in a military family and served for six years

in the Army National Guard.

Today he is the pastor of a large parish about an hour south of Charlotte, NC, a city that is experiencing rapid growth as a center for banking and other businesses. Although only 4% of people in South Carolina are Catholics, the parish is steadily increasing. People from Mexico and South America immigrate to the area to fill construction jobs, and retirees and young families from the Northeast and Midwest arrive looking for a low-cost and low-tax place to live.

Drawing from his time at *Santa Croce*, Fr. Kirby cites three lessons that guide his pastoral work:

1. Be holy where you are now (not worrying about the future)
2. Always seek to be a leader in every situation
3. Never forget the poor or those in need



In October 2016, Fr. Jeffrey Kirby was honored with the Order of the Palmetto from the Governor of South Carolina for his work with young adults. As the vocations director for the Diocese of Charleston from 2010 – 2015, he saw his job as offering “discipleship leading to discernment”, whether to the priesthood or any other vocation. Part of the call to discipleship included service to the poor.

speaking sister parish, which is also supported by Our Lady of Grace.

To keep up with all the demands of a busy parish, Fr. Kirby abstains from modern distractions such as television or video games. He also finds inspiration from the life and spirituality of St. Josemaría, the founder of Opus Dei, as well as the impact of his professors and classmates from *Santa Croce*.

“Never forget what one Christian can do,” he says, “It’s not rocket science. You just have to say ‘yes’ and stay focused.” 🙏



Our Lady of Grace parish was built in 2016 as the spiritual home to 300 families. Today there are 1,000 families enrolled. They have purchased 53 acres of land with the intention of expanding parish facilities.

Our Lady of Grace tithes their weekly income to local charities with whom they partner in social outreach, in addition to having its own vibrant soup kitchen ministry, prison ministry, and pro-life ministry. These are called “non-negotiables” says Fr. Kirby since 63% of the people in Lancaster County live below the poverty line. This includes the people of a Spanish-



Fr. Kirby on EWTN