

# Hagerstown parishioner takes Francis to heart

*"A true Christian (must) have this zeal inside ... and for this reason they aren't afraid of getting their hands dirty."*

- Pope Francis in his homily, Nov. 6, 2014

**By Father Collin Poston**

## *Special to the Review*

As a pastor and as a priest, it always gives me great hope and inspiration when one of my "flock" chooses to do something bold that will make a visible impact and a lasting difference for others - especially when this person happens to be one of my youths.

Cole Trippett, a young man who was recently confirmed and graduated from our school at St. Mary in Hagerstown, came to me in Advent of 2014 and inquired about the possibility of creating a "Mary Garden," featuring a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Cole is an Eagle Scout, and wanted his Scout project to do something good for the parish and be a witness of our Catholic faith to the Hagerstown community. He wanted to place the bright Mary statue facing into the busy intersection at West Washington Street, where the National Pike passes our church. Most inspired by his zeal and generosity in spirit, I happily accepted.

After much searching, Cole was able, locally, to find a beautiful statue, about 5-feet tall and offered to him at a discount. He then created the design of the garden, which is surrounded by elegant black fence. Mostly by himself, but with a few close "helpers" (among them his parents, Mike and Thi; a landscaper; and his fellow Scouts from Troop 4), Cole raised money through donations, and contacted some businesses for estimates.

Then, to use the words of Pope Francis, he "got his hands dirty" - quite literally - as he laid down mulch and planted some rose flowers to adorn the garden. The statue was erected in May, the month of Mary. It was blessed July 18 and dedicated, to School Sister of Notre Dame Corda Mullenix, a longtime teacher at our St. Mary Catholic School who has been an inspiration to Cole.

"The parish has been so nice to us, so I wanted to give back to the church," said Cole, who will attend Mount St. Joseph High School in Baltimore in the fall. "Some will put a rosary there and pray; it beautifies the campus. Many people see it."

When I asked Cole what he thought Jesus and his Mother thought of the statue, he

simply and humbly said: "They are happy that a young adult is helping the church to spread the word and beautify the church."

I think he's right: when you look at the statue, it appears that Mary has a smile on her face.

And I, as Cole's pastor, have one, too.

*Father Collin Poston is the pastor of St. Mary in Hagerstown and the creator of the "Inspire/Ask the Pastor" faith vignettes, as seen here.*

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