



# From the Heart

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## Crosswinds

**W**e live in a time of tremendous personal uneasiness. When I talk with people, I perceive an underlying sentiment that silently speaks of discontent. Perhaps it is a product of our times. We rush to accomplish and meet deadlines, yet we remain unfulfilled.

A number of years ago the Broadway show, "Stop the World...I Want To Get Off" expressed this feeling in its title. Perhaps we've all felt that at some time in our lives. It normally occurs at mid-life and it's called a crisis. We suddenly come to the realization that life is passing too quickly. We're getting older and feeling it. We look at our lives and fail to see what we've accomplished and how we've grown. Instead, we dwell on what we've missed and how much better we'd be without obligations, responsibilities and accountability to others. We daydream about "what ifs" and kid ourselves into

thinking that everything would be better if only we weren't trapped in our situation.

There was once an old farmer who sat in a rocking chair on the porch of his dilapidated house. A stranger approached him requesting water. Making pleasant conversation, the stranger asked, "How's the weather for cotton?"

"Didn't plant none!" replied the farmer.

"Why not?"

"'Fraid of weevils," said the farmer.

"Well," asked the stranger, "did you do well with your corn?"

"Didn't plant none of that neither," said the farmer. "'Fraid there weren't goin' to be no rain."

"Really?" mused the stranger. "Well, I mean, what did you plant?"

"Nothing," said the farmer. "I jest played it safe!"

Often our lives are similar to that farmer's. We play it safe. We don't take risks, won't go out on a limb; we settle for the familiar and deny our po-

tential. After a time we begin to feel unfulfilled, and we compound the problem by telling ourselves it's too late.

The same is true about our spiritual lives. We tell ourselves we believe, trust and have faith. Yet, we confine our spiritual life to a particular day and time, separating it from our everyday life. We have ignored or failed to see the very unnerving and somewhat dangerous thing that Jesus did. He proclaimed the fulfillment of the Scripture in himself and did it among the people who knew him.

How often do we stop our activity and really consider whether we seek to fulfill scripture by the way we live? Living the Gospel is risky, but do we even begin to take those small risks, or do we, like the farmer, play it safe? Scripture is fulfilled in Jesus Christ not in us. But when Christ is truly living in us, then we begin to experience fulfillment every day.

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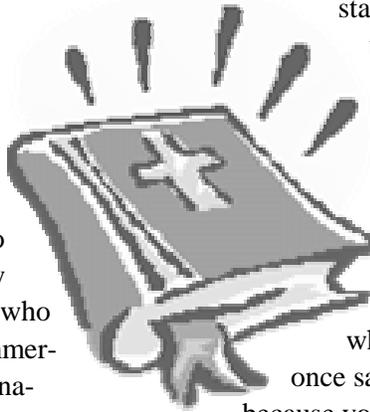
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## Crosswinds

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John Wanamaker, the founder of the famous Philadelphia department store, once addressed a gathering of business tycoons who had paid a substantial fee to hear him speak. The tycoons breathlessly awaited the hints and advice of this man who had become a legend, having built a commercial empire. Many did not know that Wanamaker, even after being appointed Postmaster General, still returned to Philadelphia every weekend to teach Sunday school classes.

When it came time to share his secrets for business success, he began by saying, "The best investment I ever made was when I was a boy. I spent \$2.75 for a Bible and



started to live for Christ according to the Bible teachings." In essence, each of us, no matter who we are or where we stand in the ranks of humanity, can allow Christ to fulfill the Scripture through us and proclaim that the lord is alive!

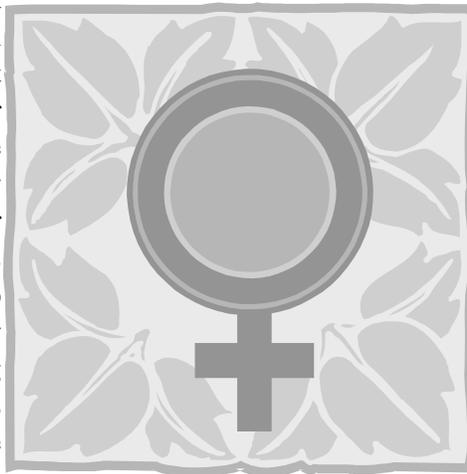
What we need to remember is that whether we are able to do a lot or a little for Christ, the amount does not matter. What does matter is whether or not he is alive in us today. Someone once said, "It's the greatest of mistakes to do nothing because you can only do a little. Do what you can. With Christ in us, it is possible to take risks, to reach out, to love, to proclaim by our words, actions, and presence the good news of Jesus Christ. In doing that we will come to know what fulfillment is. This is so much better than the farmer "jest playing it safe."

## Women of Faith

I love Tuesday mornings. After getting my husband off to work and my school-age children on the bus, I tell my 3 year old son, Jack that it's time to get dressed. It's the day mommy spends time with the ladies. Are we rushing out the door to breakfast, or to the mall or to the tennis courts? No, we're on our way to Sacred Heart Church for the Women's Only sessions.

Jack and I arrive at 9:15 and I get him settled with the wonderful Columbiette volunteers who baby-sit (Joan Mallon baby-sits the older children) and head out to have coffee and muffins with the ladies for a few minutes. At 9:30 we all gather in our prayer circle to sing a few hymns accompanied by Patty Richards, who plays piano for several of the Sunday masses. We each take turns thanking God for the things he has given us and asking for prayers for those whom we know in need. I hear women asking for prayers for a friend whose young daughter died unexpectedly, for neighbors battling cancer, relatives in the hospital, for the Whitehouse family whose newborn son has undergone many surgeries and the Pearson family whose son has been very ill for over a

year. Being in this prayer circle is a real wake-up call for me. How can I be so absorbed in my own little world and blow the little day-to-day annoyances so out of proportion when there are many people right around me suffering and in so much pain? I stop and thank God for giving me such a wonderful husband and four healthy children and for my many other blessings.



I have realized that God does things for a reason. He may put a person in your path that you need to know. I have found this out first hand. God has touched my life through several of the women I have met in the Women's Only group. One of them, a nurse, was so helpful when my sister-in-law was diagnosed with terminal cancer. I was able to ask her questions and get advice. Another shared a wonderful book with me, and another woman and I became friends and spent many enjoyable hours at the park last spring with our toddlers while watching our daughters play softball and discussing God and our faith.

Every few weeks we have a speaker. Father McCarthy came while we were studying his book, *A Personal Rela-*

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## Women of Faith

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*relationship With Jesus*, and told us about the power of prayer in his life and how God has always provided for his needs. Sister Jewel Renna came and spoke to us about her bible study classes, and Eileen Dignazio shared with us how the power of the rosary has changed her life. Some women in our group told the most moving stories of tragedy after tragedy in their lives—their feelings of hopelessness, confusion, anger and depression. Only through their faith, trust in God and the power of prayer were they able to overcome their dark night of the soul and find peace with themselves and with God.

Through the readings we have done I have come to understand that God has a plan for us all, and we do not have enough knowledge to explain or understand why

things happen the way they do. We have to rise above our humanness through faith. Every trial he sends is for our own good...to strengthen us in our faith.

The Women Only group has greatly enriched my life and aided me in my spiritual journey. I have made new friends both young and old. I have found people I can turn to in times of crisis and also found people I can help in my community. I have learned of bible study courses and ways to enrich myself as well as my family in our faith. I can say to people “God loves you”, and “I will pray for you”, and really mean and understand it. I find myself getting the most out of every Mass and leaving with a wonderful sense of God at work in my life. I know I am a better person for having met so many wonderful and caring women in my community.

*Diane Tomas*

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## *Reflections on a Man of God... Brendan Donnelly*

**I**t hardly seems possible that so many years have past since my first encounter with a man who became a missionary, transplanting himself from Ireland to Africa, and then again from Africa to the United States where he traveled raising money for the work of his fellow missionaries. Like so many others before him, a time

came when nine years of fund-raising became a drudgery, and the call to actively nurture souls led him to become a pastor in Florida and the founder of a new parish in the small and sparsely Catholic town of Mount Dora.

My first recollection of Father Brendan is of a summer day when a silver Nissan Maxima drove up the rectory

driveway. The white-haired driver was accompanied by his trusty companions and protectors, Heather and Frosty, two pure white West Highland terriers. As a recently transplanted priest to the north, and the hills of Heritage Crest, Father Brendan had gone to St. Teresa's in Woodbury offering his services to the Pastor, only to be told that was not the parish to which he should belong.

Fortunately for us, he found Sacred Heart and said he would love to help out in any way. Since those first days, the Irish charm and the leprechaunian demeanor of Father Brendan has been an integral part of our parish life.

Many throughout the years have been aware of Father Brendan's affinity to get wrapped up in his words of wisdom and homiletic reflections and have felt free to offer comments. It became somewhat comical to hear a remark being passed on the way into church, “I have a roast in the oven and I like it medium rare!” The retort would always be the same, “Don't worry, my dear, it will be just right!”

Whether it was a wave of the hand coming down the aisle, a pat on the shoulder, or simply a cheerful, caring disposition about someone's problem, Father Brendan displayed his love of God and his love of God's people.

Having suffered from back problems over a period of years, it finally became necessary for him to undergo a second surgery for a degenerative disc. During his post-surgical recuperation, Father was required to wear a back brace. One of the funniest episodes I recall involved the brace. One day, Father had removed it while sitting in the confessional. He asked if I would adjust it before he entered church for Mass and, unknowingly, I had tightened it more than usual. All of a sudden as the procession began, he blurted out, “My britches are falling off!” Without skipping a beat, he stepped out of his trousers and kept on going, only to begin Mass by announcing to everyone, “Today is a first. I'm saying Mass without my britches!” From the rear of the church, I concurred by saying, “and I've got them,” as I held them up in the air.

The time came when Father Brendan felt the need to sell his condominium, and he strongly considered returning to Ireland to live with his family. Instead, he accepted

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## A Man of God

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an invitation to come and live at the rectory and continue to assist in the care of the souls at Sacred Heart. With no housekeeper or cook to care for our many needs, the rectory soon became the residence of the contemporary "odd couple". That living and ministering arrangement has gone on for the past seven years and, they have been extremely pleasant ones.

With the rapid onset of what Father Brendan humorously refers to as "anno dominates" (old age in Latin) and a lessening of his physical health and stamina, he has decided that now is the best time to return to his native Ireland. His relatives there are very eager to have him return home and are happy to care for him in his golden years. It will be difficult for all of us to bid adieu and *vio con dios* to this man of God, small in stature but mighty in faith and dedication. We may be saddened, but it is good for Father Brendan to renew and enjoy the bonds of family love and to be totally free to relax for the first time in 78 years of life and 50 years of priestly ministry.

For all that you have brought into our lives of faith, Father Donnelly, we thank you profoundly. May your well-deserved retirement allow others to love and serve you now in the same magnanimous way that you have served God, the Church and its people as Christ's representative on earth.

God bless you always and may he continue to hold you in the palm of his hand.

*Ad multos annos*



## Respect Life

The purpose of the Respect Life Ministry is to promote respect and reverence for all life, and to create awareness of the respect life issues (abortion, infanticide, euthanasia and capital punishment). This is accomplished through education, prayer and promotion of pro-life legislation.

"The pro-life movement is not simply anti-abortion. We are pro-life, pro the mystery, wonder and the joy of life. We need to bring the Gospel of Life to the heart of every man and woman and to make it penetrate every part of society. This involves the proclamation of a living God, who is close to us, who calls us to profound communion with himself and who awakens in us the certain hope of eternal life. It is the presentation of human life, as a gift of God, the fruit and sign of his love; it is the proclamation that Jesus has a unique relationship with every person, which enables us to see in every human face, the face of Christ.

"Perhaps the cleverest ploy of the anti-life movement has been to insist that the issue has nothing to do with religion, nothing to do with God. Many of us, with the best of intentions, have agreed. We are afraid of being branded, and ridiculed. So we devise ways to avoid having to say what we believe - that God is life and all life comes from him, that a culture of death is simply a culture without God..."

From *In God's Image: Building a Culture of Life* by Cardinal John J. O'Connor.

Some of the ways The Respect Life Committee achieves its mission is to host speakers, organize prayer events, and to notify the congregation of pending legislation effecting pro-life issues. Watch the bulletin for details on a program scheduled for April 2001.

In March of last year, all were invited to spiritually adopt an unborn child through prayer. The first nine months of the unborn child's life was described in the bulletin, and a poster depicted the growth of the child. The prayer cards are still available.

Every January on the anniversary of the Supreme Court decision of *Roe vs. Wade* (which legalized abortion in the United States) the Respect Life Committee sponsors adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and a holy hour. We remember the innocent lives lost to abortion. We pray for the success of the annual "March For Life" held in Washington, DC on January 22, and that our government will enact laws that respect life.

October is RESPECT LIFE month. After every Mass on Respect Life Sunday we lead parishioners in saying the Rosary For Life.

The committee meets in the library the first Thursday of the month. New members are always welcome.

*Bernadette McGarry*

# From the Library of Deacon Mike

“The man who fears to be alone will never be anything but lonely, no matter how much he may surround himself with people. But the man who learns, in solitude and recollection, to be at peace with his own loneliness, and to prefer its reality to the illusion of merely natural companionship, comes to know the invisible companionship of God.”

-Thomas Merton

One of the most rewarding, yet challenging, efforts in my spiritual journey has been to find the sacred in my everyday world – to blend my spiritual life with my worldly life. One of the most useful ways I have discovered to accomplish this “blending” is through literature – that “in solitude and recollection” I can come to know and feel the “invisible companionship of God.” If I may, I would like to share one of the books that has helped me in this faith journey. I welcome your thoughts and comments so that, as companions on our journey to God, we may find the sacred in our earthly existence.

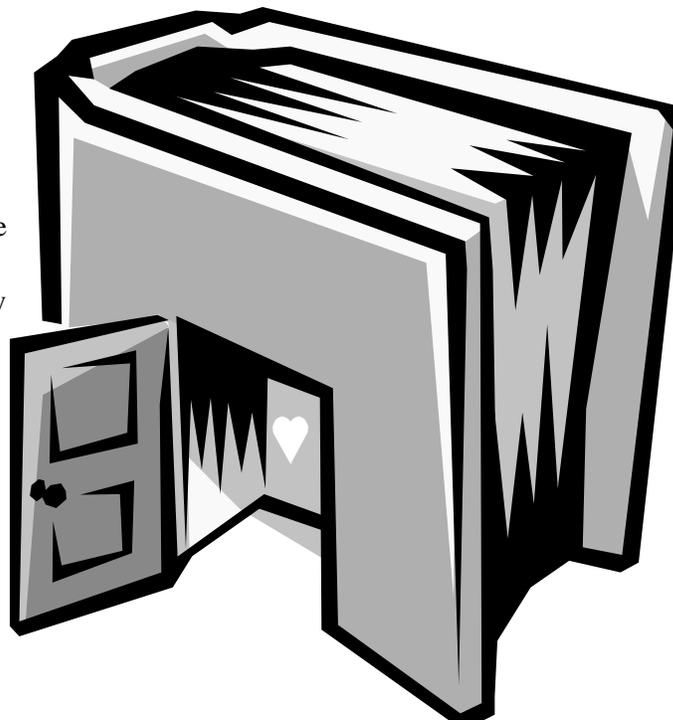
One of my favorite selections is a book written by Father James E. Sullivan entitled: *The Relentless Hunger – The Heart’s Search for Love*. Father Sullivan is a priest in the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York. He has counseled a vast number of people for many years as a parish priest and as director of the Religious Consultation Center. In *The Relentless Hunger*, Father Sullivan explains that the heart’s relentless hunger for love is wonderful because it constantly urges us to become what we were intended to be – deeply alive human beings. It is our human nature to care and to try to relate to others with a sense of warmth. And yet love is a terrible hunger because it seems to bring pain

as often as it brings joy. It can leave us frustrated, misunderstood, alienated and defensive as often as it builds bridges of warmth and acceptance. In his book, Father Sullivan helps us to explore our own relationships. With numerous stories, Father Sullivan looks at how love can be present at a variety of levels of commitment and intimacy and provides practical questions to help us live in our relationships with a sense of sincerity and truth.

In the preface, Father Sullivan writes: “Love is possible for every human being. And like God’s love, human love can do absolutely beautiful things. It can create. It can heal. It can add color to drab lives. It can even redeem. It can call others forth to fuller life, the way Jesus called forth Lazarus from the tomb – to a life of greater self-esteem and joy. Love can accomplish all of this but only for those who are willing to pay the price in order to make it happen in their lives. Love can be beautiful. Love can be terrible. Neither experience is certain. The one thing that is certain about this deep hunger of mine is that it never goes away. There is no dodging it or killing it. The hunger is relentless whether I succeed at love or fail... The more I know about the nature of love and its process, the more I recognize the pitfalls to intimacy and the resources I can call upon to achieve intimacy, the greater chance I have to make my hunger a beautiful experience.”

The book is readily available at Barnes and Noble. It will probably require a special order by your favorite local bookstore, but it is well worth the wait and effort. (If all else fails it is always available through the many resources on the net). I hope you enjoy the book as much as I did. Happy reading.

*Deacon Mike Kulas*



## Spotlight on Youth

Hey there, everyone! Remember me? Last year, I wrote to you, the parish family, informing you of the new youth group that was starting in the church. Sitting here, with piles of papers and books surrounding me as I prepare for my midterms, I realized it was time for an update on this youth group of ours. So, shoving aside physics and pre-calculus notes, I dug out my folder of various meeting minutes, agendas, and updates to see just what we've done this past year, and I realized we've grown tremendously!

After deciding to dub ourselves S.H.Y.G. (pronounced *shiiig*; short for Sacred Heart Youth Group) last spring, we took a tornado-like approach to coming up with new and fun activities for the youth of Sacred Heart Church. We celebrated the Lenten Season, by holding the first ever Holy Thursday retreat, right at the church. Before mass, we had a traditional seder supper to remember our Jewish roots, as well as to role-play the Last Supper of Christ. After attending Holy Thursday Mass, we retired to the church hall, where we spent the night talking about what Holy Week meant to us, and how we felt about the approaching death of Christ the following day. Throughout the night, Deacon Chuck came to speak with us as well. He spoke about what the season should mean to each of us and how we should be truly grateful for the tremendous sacrifice Jesus made for us. After going through the Stations of the Cross, and acting out the Passion, we retired to pray and rest for the following day, when we all took part in the Faith Walk.

In May, the youth group had a fundraiser for Mother's Day, and we sold roses. That was a big success and we plan to do it again this year. We ended the school year with our Summer Kick-Off Extravaganza on June 25<sup>th</sup>. We had an outdoor teen Mass, several local bands, numerous games and activities, and a moonwalk!

We began this school year by attending a hayride and prayer service at the Lourdes of Litchfield on October 13<sup>th</sup>. We enjoyed the evening sitting around a huge bonfire, roasting marshmallows, listening to some awesome music, and meeting new people from other churches. At the end of the month, we held the first ever Boo Mass. The evening was quite a blast, with a huge Twister tournament, Bible Who Wants to be a Millionaire, and a performance by the band, Angel Baby. In November, the youth group had its first S.H.Y.G. (*shig*) Dig, a gathering, where church youth members could hang out and watch a movie. We've continued to hold it on the first Friday of every month, so come join us! The youth group also organized an ice cream/movie social for the parish 6<sup>th</sup> graders, who are often left out of events. Our most recent event was the Christmas Pageant, which could not have happened without the direction and hard work of Joseph Zukoski. He took charge of the pageant and organized the entire thing. The Republican-American also recognized him for his outstanding work, with two articles and numerous photos.

For now, we plan to repeat most of the successful events from last year. Our next event will be the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade dance on February 19<sup>th</sup>.

Following that will be our Snowflake Ball, a semi-formal for the high school students, which was very popular last year. This year, local band, The Little Rich Boys, will be providing music for the occasion. The youth group also plans to hold another Holy Thursday retreat, a Mother's Day flower sale, a talent show (late May), and another summer kick-off picnic.

We, the S.H.Y.G., would like to thank everyone who has contributed to our mission; especially the devoted parents who help make things possible. We pray that the life of the Sacred Heart Youth Group will be long and bountiful. Thank you. God Bless.

*Christopher Tocco*

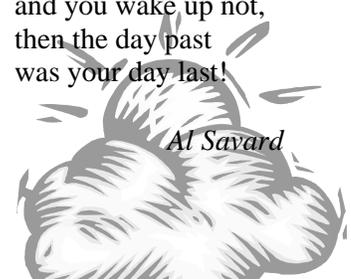
## Life is

Life is a day by day process.  
If the day passes  
and you lived it  
and the next day dawns  
and you woke up,  
then consider this

You now have another day.

Live it, waste it not.

For if the day dawns  
and you wake up not,  
then the day past  
was your day last!



# A Play Called Lent

I was just about to turn on the living room TV one evening a decade ago, when I realized that I heard nothing, yet there were four children in the house. Why was there silence? But shouldn't I enjoy the sound of tranquility?

My rapture ended abruptly when I heard the following conversation from Lauren's room. Home on her Christmas break, my first-born was in a mood most foul, having to return to Fordham University in just a few days. Accordingly, her tone matched her disposition.

"Lentus, Lenti, Lento, Lentum, Lento. There I have declined, with proper Latin grammar, Lent, the noun."

"That is the stupidest thing I have ever heard," retorted my brave Tommy, a playwright in training and a Junior at Fordham Prep.

"You doubt me? Then why don't you ask Dad! Also, the priest angle in your play is terrible. It should come out."

As a point, you should be aware that one offers a critical analysis of anything Tommy writes at his own peril. Lauren was assuredly aware of this, and as I said, she was in mood most foul.

Certain there would be a volley of locker room epitaphs from Tommy, I gave up on the idea of peaceful TV watching and moved quickly to Lauren's room. Tommy informed me regarding the disagreement.

Serving in the occupation of father is no easy thing and so there comes a time when, on a rare, infrequent occasion, glorious principles of fatherhood, those filled with honesty, trustworthiness etc. etc. must be sac-

rificed for the family's greater common good. Agree with Lauren and there is peace. Agree with Tommy there will be generated a young lady in a snit, meals in her room and the usual overreaction from a nineteen year old female, feeling betrayed by her father. In this case, I perceived the family's greater good cried out for sacrifices.

"Of course, Lauren is correct." I answered without hesitation. Tommy was probably right, but at least Lauren was sincere in her mistake.

"Tommy, maybe if I had any clue what this is all about, I could offer some assistance."

"Well, Lauren, wants some of the priests to speak a few words of church Latin, you know, to show the audience that they are priests." Tommy was right. This was pretty stupid.

"And so daughter, you suggested that one of the priests, declines Lent in Latin to show he is a priest. Right?" When you live with the little folk, you begin to think like them.

"Yep, church Latin, priests, they go hand in hand!" replied Lauren most proudly. Not any more I thought, but I was not about to get into a historical discussion on the Second Ecumenical Council.

"I am writing a play about Lent for drama class. Five priests are sitting around a table discussing at various levels the concept of Lent. Interesting, huh?"

Somehow I sensed this play would never reach Broadway. "No pie in the face? No tripping over clerical robes? No good old fashion yucks, appealing only to Catholics?" I inquired. Tommy was not amused.

"Tommy, why do you need

priests at all?" asked Lauren, triumphant in her victory of the Latin declination of Lent. Tommy turned ever so slowly to face his sister, whom I thought up to this moment, he loved dearly. I didn't know if there was murder in his heart, but why trust to the fates? I intervened.

"An inspiration, number one son. What would happen if five youths, who don't speak Latin incidentally, stumbled across Jesus and his followers at the Garden of Gethsemane? Jesus loved all children, and I am sure that included teenagers (my sarcasm went unnoted). They could witness Jesus' manifestation regarding his suffering and see the discouragement he exhibited watching the failure of his disciples to maintain a prayer vigil as he asked of them. Finally, you can depict what the teenagers reflected after seeing Jesus just hours before his arrest. There is so much you can write about, in play form, depicting his agony; all of this a prelude to what we now call Lent."

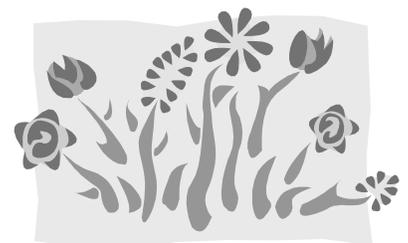
There was a gleam of creativity in his eyes as he left Lauren and me.

I patted myself on the back for putting out a family fire. But then Lauren smugly yelled out, "I told you the priests should be out."

Tommy's answer was the resounding slam of his door.

Oh well...certain things will never change.

*Dennis J. McLaughlin*



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# Stewardship Update

Quoted below is an article appearing in a recent newsletter from the Archdiocesan Steward Committee: “Although the Archdiocese of Hartford concludes its formal three-year stewardship initiative this month, the *Stewardship Way of Life* will certainly continue in our two hundred and nineteen parishes. Conversion, however, will not take place overnight.

“Stewardship calls us to strengthen our relationship with God and his people. This process will include education, formation through study, reflection, prayer and action. It is not a program that is only addressed with commitment cards and ministry fairs once a year. It is a life long journey with many steps along the way. It is a way of life that calls us to be conscious of our role as Christians every day. Continuing religious education of our laity must be promoted on a regular basis through homilies, bulletin inserts, community gatherings, group discussions, newsletters, etc.

“Although the stewardship conversion is deliberate and may remain unfamiliar to some, the Archdiocese is committed to nurturing these principles. Please walk with us as we continue our journey together to build God’s kingdom by preaching and teaching the *Stewardship Way of Life*.”

At a recent Parish Stewardship Committee meeting, it was reported that 300 parishioners responded with a time and talent commitment; and 498 made a treasure commitment – not very encouraging numbers considering there are some 2200 enrolled parishioners! We realize this is a personal and moral challenge for each of us to consider in deciding what return to make to the Lord for his many blessings. At this meeting, Father Flynn emphasized that we must rely on the presence of the Holy Spirit to motivate us to become instruments of God, and that is the prayerful wish of all of us on the stewardship committee!

*Jean Brickey*

## *From the Heart*

**Managing Editor:** Katherine Pavone

**Editors:** Dolores Matzen and Deb McGrath

**Production Editor:** Jean Brickey

**Communications Committee Members:** Barb Cushnie, Trisha Beault, Barry Bonetti, Tony DiTamaso, John Dulina, Kathryn Ellis, Roseanne Franco, Susan Laselli, Stuart McKaige, Dennis McLaughlin, Jim Moran, Dee Nazelrod, Al Savard, Zita Seymour, Rich Stephens, Ernie Swanberg, Diane Tomas, George Vachris

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