

The Beauty of God's House

The Buildings and Grounds Ministry was formed as a result of our stewardship initiative last October. It was established to plan, oversee and enhance the maintenance and beauty of our parish facilities and grounds, including the church, rectory and cemetery.

Administrative meetings are held monthly to plan new work as needed and follow up on existing projects. Every committee member has a list of the 28 participating parishioners along with their skills, interests and equipment available for use. This information is used as a guide for recruiting work teams. In order to minimize the requirement for meetings and to facilitate project completion, a core committee of eight members was established to take responsibility for projects, assist the chairperson in follow-up, and take leadership roles. Every four or five months a general meeting of all commit-

tee members is scheduled to assure ongoing communications and involvement. The minutes of every meeting, along with a list of all projects and their status, are sent to the members.

At our first meeting in January, eleven projects were identified. These ranged from making repairs to the rectory to moving speakers in the church hall. Currently, we have 22 projects underway. A few examples include:

- Painting rooms at the back of the church hall
- Adding lighting for the new rear parking lot
- Enforcing planting policies at the cemetery
- Beautifying the back of the church and perimeter of the new parking lot
- Resolving a persistent water problem at the rectory
- Replacing emergency lighting at the church
- Restoring the "Crosswinds"

sign at the rectory

- Cleaning rectory shed
- Listing major capital projects that will require financial planning

Every project has a leader who is responsible for recruiting and scheduling a work team. Thus far over ten projects have been completed, and our method of operation appears to be working quite well. Cooperation and enthusiasm have been excellent with many members volunteering to work on projects or to take responsibility for them. These people have answered the call to stewardship and are giving of their time and talent.

The Sacred Heart Buildings and Grounds Ministry is off to a great start and has many plans for the future. We welcome new members to join us in keeping our facilities and grounds looking beautiful and in good repair.

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Ministry Promotes Wellness

The Parish Nurse is not just a registered nurse located in the church. She is in fact, a skilled professional who, as a person of faith, is committed to promoting the integration of body, mind, and spirit, teaching us to enjoy the optimal health given to us by God. Parish Nurse programs, a concept developed in 1983 by an Illinois physician/clergyman, have been reaching out to people across the country, bridging the gap between medical and faith communities. Large programs flourish on either side of us, in The Valley and in Danbury. We at Sacred Heart can be more than pleased with the progress of our own Parish Nurse Ministry, in its first year.

Talk to Elizabeth Tishion, R.N., our Parish Nurse, for a few minutes, and you will understand what the Parish Nurse can mean in the daily life of a parishioner. Her enthusiasm for this program and her own joy, shared so generously, lift the spirit of her listener whom she quickly puts at ease. You know she really believes that we can all work to regain the healthy bodies God intended us to enjoy, abundantly. Tish and her fellow nurses don't pass out pills; they pass out education and caring, helping us focus on our own health issues so that we can "run and not grow weary, . . . walk and not grow faint." (Isaiah 40:37)

Tish and the Parish Nurse Task Force are very aware of the enormous amount of work still left to do before this ministry is fully able to meet the needs of Sacred Heart. In 1998, Father Mark and Tish were talking together about the need to continue the Parish Nurse program begun by Jan Sharkey. Tish knew God would lead her if He wanted her for this ministry, and then He would provide her with the strength and fellow workers to make

the program a success. Twenty parishioners came to the first meeting after the Stewardship Fair; six stayed on as the Task Force, pooling their knowledge of health and safety issues to shape a structure working toward a Health Cabinet, the group of parishioners who will eventually determine the programs needed at Sacred Heart.

Task Force members Betsy Neidel, Mary Marcantoni, Mary Wanag, Karen Kaplita, Dr. Jean Harder and Tish already have two programs fully operational. The blood pressure screenings after Mass have served more than 120 parishioners. In a private, yet familiar setting of the church, nurses doing blood pressure screening can also provide confidential answers about scheduling medications, locating community health services and gaining or maintaining total wellness.

The Weight Management program, Exodus, Out of Egypt, has completed two twelve week sessions in which the members have lost a combined weight of over 100 pounds without tuna, lettuce or exercise. Members lose weight through a spiritual awakening, freeing them from being slaves to food. The next program will begin in September when many more of us will learn how to be "free at last!"

A Health Needs Assessment Survey has been prepared by the Parish Nurse Task Force. All parishioners will be asked to indicate what they see as health needs in our faith community, and new programs will be developed accordingly. Some ideas currently being discussed are a respite program, whose goal will be to give a break to care givers whose own wellness is tested by the daunting task they perform. A blood drive is pending for the fall, much needed because Connecticut's blood supply remains low. Hopefully a resource health manual will be developed.

Most of all, our Parish Nurses look forward to an increase in the number of nursing and non-nursing volunteers. Tish mentions the tremendous pool of specialists in the Sacred Heart family. People who get involved will have an increased sense of ownership of the ministry, creating the precious trust factor which will bring even more Sacred Heart family members to seek out the Parish Nurse Program. Tish's eyes sparkle as she looks forward to more communication with other nurses in the parish. And then, she mentions "the van" from which Valley Parish Nurses minister on wheels to those who need their services. Well, perhaps not this year, but... maybe someday.

Barb Arendt



Crosswinds

It hardly seems like more than two years since the letter arrived. I looked at the return address on the embossed envelope, and as the letter opener hit the flap, I thought, "What will this be?" To my surprise, it was not about an increased cathedradicum (the amount each parish is taxed by the Archdiocese every year), nor was it the dreaded "Dear Father, you have been hereby assigned as Pastor to St. Fiaora's Parish effective June 1, 2000." No, it was none of the above; it was an invitational mandate to attend a meeting about what would soon be an Archdiocesan initiative called "Stewardship." I must honestly admit that the prospect of another Archdiocese-initiated movement didn't excite or thrill me in the least. Frankly, as I perused the accompanying material detailing the program, I was a bit put out that in these days of fewer clergy and greater demands, one more expectation was being placed on me.

You need to understand. I had already lived through the mandatory "Emmaus" program (priest sharing groups) and Renew" (parishioner faith sharing groups). What more could be asked? I held the answer to that question in my hands! There it was in black and white, a three-year initiative to make parishes stronger and more vibrant by fostering greater participation: "Stewardship." Since that time and my initial, somewhat reluctant response, I have learned a great deal, and I have come to appreciate and understand why stewardship is so much more than a program or a process. It is a way of life; the only way one can truly live the life of a Christian in the world. I have also become a part of the Archdiocesan Stewardship Team, working with the Bishop to coordinate efforts to present this relatively new concept. Stewardship is a life-altering path that leads to a real conversion. Through it our faith takes on a reality and responds to the

gospel...a message that we've heard so often and yet, for whatever reason, we've remained uncommitted.

It's really hard to know the reasons that so many Catholics continue to be unmoved by faith. I'm sure that most consider themselves good people and professing Catholics: attend weekly Mass, receive the sacraments on a regular basis, enroll their children in the religious education program, and occasionally participate in an adult education presentation. Yet, they remain on the fringes of church involvement, attend on the fence, preferring to be "anonymous Christians". Unfortunately, they never learned that



anonymity is anomalous to faith. Jesus warned, "You don't light a lamp and put it under a basket. No, you put it in a place for all to see." He is telling us we must put faith into action by committing ourselves in obvious, apparent and recognizable ways. By becoming *stewards* of Christ's kingdom and committing our time, talent and resources, our faith becomes real. This has been

proven over and over again in countless lives and parishes where the stewardship way of life has been embraced.

Even though multiple ministries and opportunities for involvement have existed for years in our parish, these past two years have seen stewardship discussed, promoted and undertaken to a much greater degree. So many have responded by committing their time, talent and resources as never before. They have opened themselves and accepted the conversion experience, consciously becoming disciples of Christ.

At the end of June, as part of the preparation for this fall's re-commitment campaign, a meeting was held and presentations were made to all the members of the parish stewardship committees throughout the archdiocese. Some 767 people attended. At the conclusion, Bishop Macaluso, a member of the

Archdiocesan Stewardship Committee, spoke of how effective this approach to living our faith has proven itself to be throughout the archdiocese. He gave examples of what has happened and how lives and parishes have been transformed. He concluded by saying, "Although this way of Christian life has shown great beginnings, as we continue to grow in our awareness of who we are and what faith requires, there is one parish that must be mentioned for its response to stewardship. That parish is Sacred Heart in Southbury which has 1541 individuals involved in ministries—the largest group of all the parishes of the Archdiocese."

Needless to say, my immediate reaction and surprise was like that of a proud parent. Then I began to think, as wonderful as that is, we have almost 2300 registered families, about 6500 individuals, so that number is a relatively small percentage when you look at the whole picture. What has left so many untouched, unmoved, and uncommitted? I don't honestly know. But I do know that I believe in God, who will always give me what I need when I'm overwhelmed, stressed, or feeling insecure or too inadequate to do anything. He'll give me his Spirit and help, the grace I need to do whatever needs to be done.

This fall we will have our annual Ministry Fair and the opportunity to recommit to this stewardship way of authentic Christian life. To all who have said, "yes" in the past and live it everyday...thank you. The many ways your search to know and share your faith has inspired us to be and do more. To those who read this and still remain fearful, reluctant or simply unmoved...ask God what he wants from you as stewards, and know in your hearts He will help you do it. In the doing you will come to know how good it is, and what a difference it makes...this way of life!

Father Flynn

What's In a Word?

Spirit: We are called to follow Christ with our bodies, minds and souls. Stewardship is a call to discipleship requiring a conversion of heart. Child of God, follower of Christ, steward of faith are all images of Christian spirituality.

Touching: We are called by name to be followers of Christ. Christ summons unique individuals, not a faceless crowd. The time, talent and treasure that Christ has given to each of us are different and unique. How do we use them to reach out and touch the lives of others?

Evangelization: Christ said, "Go forth and teach – proclaim the Good News." He is calling us to be evangelists. We must begin in our own homes by practicing our faith, teaching our children and praying together as a family.

Way of Life: We humbly accept the fact that all that we are and have comes from God. We recognize that our lives will not be truly happy until we share with God and others the first portion of what he has given us.

Affirmation: We have a duty to be stewards of the Church. We see the Church as universal, and we see ourselves as Church. We feel an inner peace and experience great and lasting joy when we give ourselves in service to those in need.

Response: Everything we have has been given to us in trust. The decision to give back the first portion is a faith decision. We trust that God will provide for our needs; he can never be outdone in generosity.

Discipline: We must be accountable to God. Stewardship involves planning. It provides the structure and serves as the reminder to keep God first in our lives. For example, if we don't plan to attend Mass while on vacation, we probably won't.

Service: Our mission is to serve. Stewardship involves embracing, enjoying, sharing and giving. We are told to use our time, talent and treasure to serve one another as true followers of Christ.

Holistic: To be a whole person we must be one in body, mind and spirit. Stewardship is not something we try and discard or pick and choose; it is a way of life. We are all stewards. The question is what kind of stewards are we?

Involvement: "Come, follow me." Through Baptism and Confirmation we are Catholic. We have promised to serve God, his Church and his people. We have a personal need to give. By actively participating in our faith and sharing our gifts with one another, we pass our faith on to others.

Parish: Our faith centers on the Eucharist. We gather together as a faith community to worship God and practice our faith. Our parish is our spiritual development center, but it also needs us and our unselfishly given gifts.

We must think of stewardship as an opportunity to give back to God in gratitude a portion of the blessings he has freely given to us.

Submitted by Tony DelNegro

In the Footsteps of St. Francis

St. Francis of Assisi, "the mirror of Christ", is undeniably the most recognized saint of the Christian world. When he renounced his comfortable, pleasure-filled life style in the early 13th century and instituted the Order of Friars Minor, he had no idea the changes his ideals of simplicity and peace would have on his world and the world of the future.

A few followed in his footsteps, giving up all their possessions, donning simple robes, praying, preaching and attending to the downtrodden of their society. Soon, the few

became hundreds and then thousands.

Francis' friend Clare was so taken by him and his follow-

ers that she too abandoned her family, and taking the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, planted the seeds for the second order, the Poor Clares.

The movement became so popular, that in the year 1221, the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi was founded for lay men and women who felt called to follow St. Francis' way of life but could not leave their work and families. At the time, they were known as the Brothers and Sisters of Penitence, and they were called to live in harmony with all. In time, the roll of Secular Franciscans would lengthen with names of the great and humble: King Louis of France and Queen Elizabeth of Hungary; Blessed Peter of

Siena; Matt Talbot of Dublin, the day laborer. There would be artists such as Michelangelo, Dante and Giotto; statesmen such as St. Thomas More; and scientists such as Ampere and Faraday. Popes, cardinals and parish priests, explorers and peasants, merchants and artisans were professed in the Third Order. They changed the face of the feudal system that had lasted for a thousand years. The crusades had sapped the strength of feudalism, but the Third Order of Saint Francis dealt it a deathblow.

Now, eight hundred years

"I have done what was mine to do. May Christ teach you what you are to do"

Francesco Bernadone, Saint of Assisi

later, the Franciscan orders continue to build strength throughout the world. In 1991, a small, inspired group of parishioners here at Sacred Heart were encouraged to develop their interest in Franciscanism and began the lengthy and complicated process of forming a new Secular Franciscan Fraternity. With the canonical authority of the Archdiocese of Hartford and the support of Father Flynn, the small group of five studied for more than a year under the guidance of professed Secular Franciscans from Bridgeport and Danbury. The group achieved its goal, and on September 16, 1992, they were professed as Secular

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Spotlight on Youth

I have often heard that the commencement of one's college years can be a time of excitement, stress, and chaos. Last September, as I prepared to start my first year at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, I found out what an understatement that is. I had never imagined that the seemingly simple task of moving many of my personal belongings from one place to another could be so difficult! I thought I might be able to fit everything into one Isuzu Trooper, yet quickly discovered how foolish that thought had been (end result: the Trooper AND a minivan packed to the brim). In addition, the notion that my childhood was officially, completely, and eternally finished kept entering my mind. I was finally an adult (actually, more of a quasi-adult) and would finally be able to enjoy the fruits of that deliciously succulent word high school kids dream about—*independence*.

After a couple of weeks, however, I longed for that simple, peaceful time when my life was pretty much dictated by school and family. The task of managing the academic demands imposed by Dartmouth paled in comparison with that other, more important task of managing my life in general. I had no one to tell me when to eat, what to eat, what not to wear that day because it was too cold, and, of course, no one to make sure that I went to church. Dartmouth, like most colleges and universities, has ample facilities to meet the demands of Roman Catholic students. Specifically, Dartmouth has the Aquinas House (commonly called the AQ), a rather large complex consisting of a chapel, a rectory, meeting and banquet rooms, a kitchen, study areas, and a library chock full of Catholic literature. The staff and students of the Aquinas House made enormous efforts to advertise the AQ's services to the incoming first-year class. Besides the summer mailings, there were flyers in mailboxes, receptions, and numerous mass e-mails. There was daily mass at 10:00

PM, a 5:00 PM Saturday vigil, an 11:00 AM Sunday Mass, and a 7:30 PM "sinner's Mass," also on Sunday. Dartmouth College had definitely extended a welcoming hand to its incoming Roman Catholic students.

The task of grasping that outstretched hand is more difficult than most realize. First off, college students passionately cherish each moment of unburdened relaxation, and Mass obviously cuts into that. Secondly, we are lazy, and the AQ is inconveniently situated at the farthest point on campus from the dormitories (while the regular Hanover Catholic Church is right across the street). Finally, we were overloaded with new experiences and opportunities, so we often forgot about the simple things that are essential in life. As first-year students continued to adjust throughout October and November, many simply did not find time to frequent the AQ.

However, by mid-November things started to change. Maybe we realized that with the privilege of independence comes the responsibility of maintaining emotional and physical well-being. Or maybe we realized that the passion and emphatic effort we place in other activities might as well be directed towards religion. Many realized the importance religion played in their lives, and that they had always taken it for granted. Many started to appreciate the large opportunities afforded to Roman Catholic students regarding religious worship just by being on this college campus. Whatever the cause, more and more students

discovered the Aquinas House.

Once students had safely positioned themselves in the social community of the AQ, they began to appreciate the wide array of activities offered. Besides giving Mass, the Aquinas House sponsors discussions, forums, social petitions, interfaith functions, community service activities, and other venues in which students exercise their Catholic beliefs. Dartmouth Catholics constantly go into the countryside to build and repair houses for those who need help, or travel to area parishes to organize youth activities. I remember attending a discussion with Guido Calabresi, the former Dean of Yale Law School, during which he explained why capital punishment should be abolished. I vividly recall the Easter Vigil Mass, during which two students were baptized as their families and friends watched. The Christmas tree and menorah lightings are also etched into my memory as sentimental reminders of my faith. In September, I had wondered why students would go out of their way to attend AQ functions; by December I was wondering how on earth they could possibly not.

Practicing religion at any college or university can be challenging, for it is both dependent upon the student's beliefs as well as the environment. I am fortunate to have a place, which embraces and encourages the practice of all religious beliefs. For me, Roman Catholicism continues to be a necessity, yet I now realize that it is a gift and a privilege as well. I am most grateful for receiving this gift here in Southbury, and I shall do my utmost to cherish, preserve, and maintain it amongst the majestic mountains of New Hampshire.

Joseph S. Ackley



Saint Francis

(continued from page 4)

Franciscans by Fr. Bart Karwacki, OFM Conventual, and formed the Rosa Mystica (Mystical Rose) Fraternity in honor of the Blessed Mother. It is one of hundreds comprising the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States and among numerous fraternities of the Fr. Solanus Casey Regional Fraternity. Rosa Mystica has grown to 18 active members, and currently there are three inquirers seeking membership. Fr. James Stewart, OFM Capuchin, who has graciously agreed to travel from Westchester County, New York, to attend monthly meetings as his schedule permits, provides Franciscan spiritual guidance and instruction.

The Secular Franciscan Order consists of people from all walks of life. Membership is open to all practicing Catholics who have a calling to follow St. Francis and to know more about the Franciscan charisma. Membership requires a pre-inquirer period of three months, and an inquirer period of six months. If accepted, inquirers are then received and invested as candidates for at least one year of study and training. When the candidates and the fraternity council feel that they are ready, they are professed

for life in a ceremony, simpler than an ordination, within the context of a Mass. The candidate does not take vows but makes solemn promises to God.

The Secular Franciscan Order is a rewarding and fulfilling way of life, based on applying the Gospels to daily living. The entire Bible, the writings of Francis and writings by other saints and Franciscans provide material for spiritual growth.

The monthly meeting is comprised of shared prayer, instruction, social time, and whatever business is necessary. The instructions are complete and very informative, helping to bring the secular life in close alignment with the religious. Following daily in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi, the Secular Franciscan brings life to the Gospel and the Gospel to life.

If you are searching for a way to renew your baptismal commitment, enhance your faith, and deepen your relationship with the Lord, Christ may be calling you to be a Secular Franciscan. If so, call Connie Moran SFO, the Rosa Mystica information director at 264-8354, and place your future path in the footsteps of St. Francis.

Father Asks

Since it's summer and nobody seems to have any pressing questions that need answers, I thought this might be a good time for a "Father Asks" column. So take a few moments to test your knowledge and your vision.

Can you find the books of the Bible? The names of 16 books of the Bible are mentioned in the paragraph below. See how many you can find (a minister found 15 books in 20 minutes, but it took him weeks to find the 16th one). See how much time it takes you to do the same. Ignore capitalization, punctuation and spaces between words. Check your answers with those at the bottom.

I once made a remark about the hidden books in the Bible. It was a lulu; kept people looking so hard for facts...and for others it was a revelation. Some were in a jam, especially since the names of the books were not capitalized. But, the truth finally struck home to numbers of our readers. To others it was a real job. We want it to be a most fascinating few moments for you. Yes, there will be some really easy ones to spot. Others may require judges to help them. I will quickly admit it usually takes a minister to find one of them, and there will be loud lamentations when it is found. A little lady says she brews a cup of tea, so she can concentrate better. See how well you can compete. Relax now, for there really are 16 names of books of the Bible in this paragraph.

a Mrs. Moran
the H. Segler



Stewardship
*The umbrella that helps
us come together and focus
on our duties and responsibilities
as Catholics.*



Jim Moran S.F.O.

Socially Concerned

It's difficult to write meaningfully about a group of dedicated people who for many years, have worked diligently through the Social Concerns Committee to provide the tenets of social justice needed in our own parish and the greater community. There is a labor of love! The description of that love is what makes the writing difficult.

Some years ago, the committee made an effort to design a ministry symbol that would depict the meaning of the Social Concerns Committee. The result is a very well done artistic portrayal of the committee and its actions.

The basic concept is that of a tree with strong roots, a trunk and a canopy of sheltering branches. The roots are based on the "Corporal Works of Mercy" from the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, who, by the way, also wrote the "Spiritual Works of Mercy." This concept is a strong base for a ministry of social justice. It follows that the trunk represents the committee and the strength of purpose such a supporting group provides the varying efforts of its members.

Finally, the tree's branches show the variety of the committee's interests at the time the ministry symbol was created. Surely the present committee would edit those to reflect today's direction. At the least, Covenant to Care, which has become a separate ministry, would be replaced with Neighbors Helping Neighbors, a group currently struggling to define itself in the social fabric of our parish.

The Social Concerns Committee has been fortunate to have some strong additions to its membership as a direct result of last fall's Ministry Sunday stewardship effort. There are now about 19 members on the planning committee and many others who provide that special effort during food drives and other projects requiring many hands.

In October of 2000 another opportunity to join the committee will be presented. Meanwhile, anyone interested may attend the committee meetings held on the second Monday of each month (except July and August) at 7:30 PM in Room B at the church.

Instigated by the Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1999, the committee is currently spearheading a renewal of an old Catholic justice effort. Members of the Social Concerns Committee represented our parish at the initial meeting of Action For Justice in Connecticut last winter and will introduce it to the parish at this fall's Ministry Weekend. It is hoped that the group will take on the aspects of a separate ministry with strong leadership stepping forward.

The Social Concerns Committee has instigated a spark in our parish which all hope will kindle a flame that, when joined with those of the Catholic faith across America, will fan a fire of

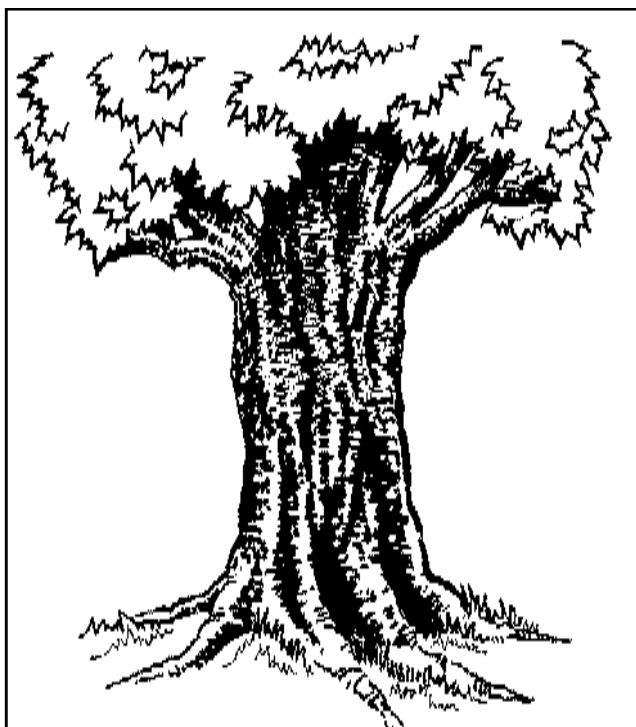
Catholic social justice. We hope this fire will influence those in power to enact laws that reflect social justice.

Those in the early Church who stood up for their Christian beliefs were often martyred. Making our beliefs known to our elected officials will probably not produce martyrs, but will at least make them aware of "the Catholic conscience". Mercy is said to be "a virtue of influencing one's will to have compassion for, and if possible, to alleviate another's misfortunes." Hopefully those who choose to participate in Action For Justice will understand that definition and have the conviction to act accordingly.

Perhaps now the reason I find it difficult to write about this ministry is clearer. Their efforts fill a wide range of both spiritual and physical needs from providing sandwiches for the soup kitchen to making our parish aware of the issues of life in abortion and euthanasia; from participating with our faith communities in an AmeriCares construction project to attending prayer services and healing Masses for the elderly of our parish and the greater

Southbury community. Neighbors Helping Neighbors has yet to be felt, but is striving to serve the needs of those who can't help themselves. The "parish legislative network" defines the Social Concerns Committee as a strong parish ministry centered in love and justice.

Ernie Swanberg



Corporal Works of Mercy

- | Feed the hungry
- | Give drink to the thirsty
- | Clothe the naked
- | Harbor the harborless
- | Visit the sick
- | Ransom the captive
- | Bury the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

- | Instruct the ignorant
- | Counsel the doubtful
- | Admonish sinners
- | Bear wrongs patiently
- | Forgive offences willingly
- | Comfort the afflicted
- | Pray for the living and the dead

Gettysburg and Memories

Sometimes the idea for a vacation visit does not spring from enjoyment but rather from necessity. In this family's case, there were two factors: one, my daughter Lauren, then a lively Junior at Mount St. Ursula High School for Young Women controlled/dictated by the Sisters of Charity, and two, my personal heritage/relationship with the Irish Brigade made famous in the Civil War.

As I recall, Lauren announced that she was assigned by "my history nun," the good sister remaining nameless even to this day, to write a term paper on the battle dynamic to the Civil War. It would have been easy had it been left at that, but apparently, so Lauren claimed (then as well as now) since I had announced to the entire family one night that I had a relative who fought with the Irish Brigade at Gettysburg, she wanted to view her heritage. Lauren is gifted with a memory that should be examined by those experts selling Ginkgo Biloba.

My, but what webs our fabrications weave, to paraphrase a philosophical saying. In other words, I was in deep dog poop.

Undaunted, the family, with great excitement, made plans to call upon Gettysburg and then take a short skip and a hop to Washington D.C., a scant hour away.

"Imagine actually seeing a piece of McLaughlin history," said Tommy. Frankly, I think it was one of the few times he was actually proud of the namesake. Tommy (my oldest son) volunteered (in the true Army sense) to serve as navigator, and so we left Bronxville at five o'clock in the morning one Thursday. Contrary to Lauren's prediction, we did not end up in Toronto, but instead, at 2:00 PM we pulled into Gettysburg National Military Park, alive and well.

Driving through the various battle-grounds, we came upon a statue just off

the main road that actually caused me to stop the car for a closer examination. Where had I seen this statue before? It was a monument depicting a standing priest with his right hand extended as if in blessing.

I looked at the statue's inscription and what it said, as I recall, was that on this site on July 2, 1863, Father William Corby C.S.C., at the request of Colonel Patrick Kelly, the Commander of the Irish Brigade (regiments from New York) gave absolution to the so-called "Irish Brigade." Furthermore, Father Corby supposedly said, "The Catholic Church refuses a Christian burial to the soldier who turns his back on the foe or deserts his flag." Now there was a "win one for the Gipper" motivational speech 70 years ahead of its time.

I now know where I had seen the statue before. Arriving at Notre Dame University for the first time, one of the very first scenes you observe is indeed, this same statue of Father Corby standing and giving final absolution. And here I thought the statue's purpose was to remind the incoming students, "Abandon all hope forever, ye who enter these grounds." Having spent my junior year living at Corby hall, how could I forget the monument? Was I having a senior moment at such a young age?

I wisely kept my mouth shut, thus avoiding the, "Dad is having one of his days, again," comment which could emanate from any

one of my children, other than Sean, the very youngest, who was appointed as "lookout" for a bathroom.

The battleground that had the deepest effect on us was the site of Pickett's charge. We stood by the trees and hedges, and as I recall, I think we heard cannonade and rifle fire. We imagined we saw through the acrid smoke 15,000 troops from the south marching smartly over open ground as if they were in evening parade, and then felt the devastating answer of rifle and cannon fire from the 10,000 federal troops. The slaughter of men from the south was inevitable. Thousands of young people were killed on that day, at Pickett's Charge.

As a fact, the Irish Brigade did not participate in that battle, but the day before, perhaps as an aftermath to Father Corby's blessing, they valiantly held their own at the Battle of the Wheatfield. The battle was not as famous as Pickett's Charge, but young men died there too.

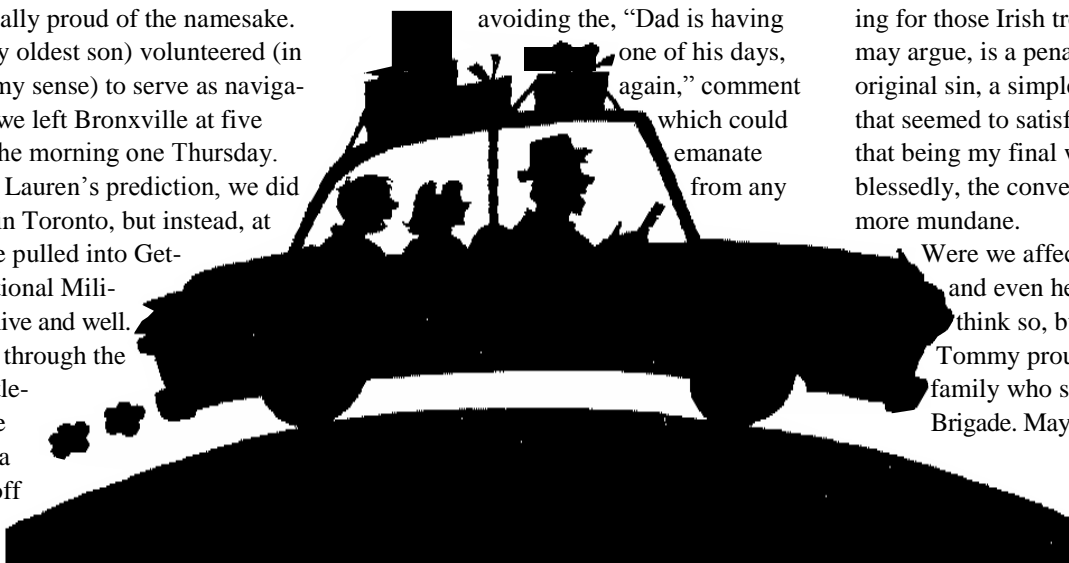
"Gee Dad, did any of our relatives die there?" asked Tommy.

I remember giving an inaudible response. Fortunately, Tommy did not press me further.

During our trip to Washington D.C., the conversation briefly centered about man's inhumanity to man, and why did God allow all of this to happen, and thank heavens for Father Corby's blessing for those Irish troops. Death, one may argue, is a penalty we endure for original sin, a simple answer, but one that seemed to satisfy the group. With that being my final word on the subject, blessedly, the conversation turned to the more mundane.

Were we affected by what we saw and even heard? I would like to think so, but to this day, Tommy proudly speaks of having family who served in the Irish Brigade. May God ever forgive me.

Dennis McLaughlin



A Busy Parish Couple

“Who will take the parish family interview?” I timidly raised my hand and was duly appointed. Another member of our committee suggested loudly that we interview Jim and Meg Walsh. This also was quickly accepted. With that, an article written by Lisa Hoffman for the Republican American about Meg as volunteer cooking instructor at the Senior Center was thrust into my hands.

Fortunately, I knew Meg well enough to say hello. I called her at her home in Heritage Village, and in spite of their busy schedules, we were able to set up a meeting time.

Their condo reflects a couple who, over their 45 years of marriage and several moves, have kept those things that matter to them. The atmosphere is warm and comfortable. I explained that I had some of their background, but was more interested in the spiritual aspects of their lives rather than the temporal.

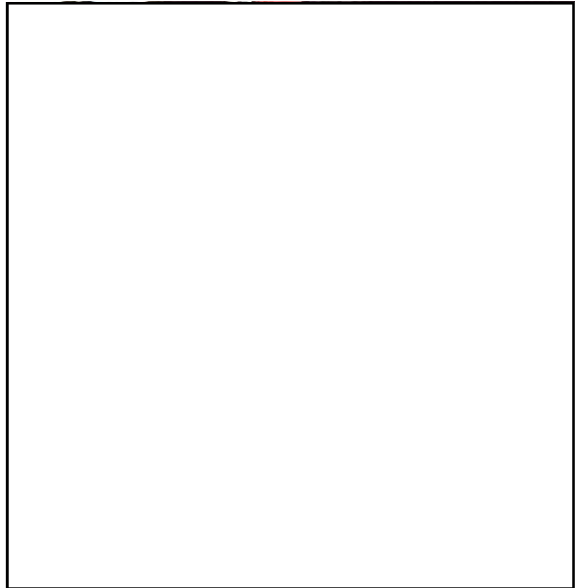
Meg started by recalling her first contact with “those Catholics” when she was 13 and an active Presbyterian. She had invited a friend to accompany her to a dance, but the friend could only go after the “the stations”—it was the Lenten season. With her mother’s permission, Meg attended the Lenten service with her Catholic friend and recalls feeling a presence at that service that started her interest in the Catholic Church. It culminated in her conversion to the faith while she was still in college in Albany, shortly before her marriage to Jim in 1955. Jim, who had been brought up Catholic, had graduated from Siena College.

They started their lives together in Albany, but the corporation for which Jim worked, Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States, moved them to Connecticut. Their family was

growing toward six children when they eventually moved to Newtown and attended St. Rose at the very beginning of the Eucharistic Minister Program in the Church. Both Jim and Meg took instruction for the program and recalled with some humor how difficult it was for parishioners of the early seventies to accept touching the host and receiving it from laymen, especially women.

The company again moved them, this time to Florida. The community of Winter Springs where they settled became the center of the Diocesan efforts to set up a new parish. To accomplish this, the Bishop appointed a very outgoing priest. As he went door-to-door in search of the new congregation, he found Meg and Jim who in turn found themselves signed up for the Building Steering Committee, an environmental sub-committee, and the overall stewardship program. So, at age 50 Meg enrolled in Seminole Community College, for interior design in order to best serve the new church. Jim, of course, was still working, but took on the role of Director of Physical Plant at the church. He emphasized that, as a result of the strong stewardship program, he had a volunteer list of 3000 families who did everything from cleaning toilets to weeding, and repairs to the facility. Everything was accomplished without any charges billed to the church.

During their time in Florida, Jim went into semi-retirement. Because their interests were back in Connecticut, they decided to move north, and upon a friend’s recommendation, to Heritage Village. In the winter of 1994, they brought their busy lives and their spiritu-



Jim and Meg Walsh

ality to Southbury. Listening with interest about being grandparents to eighteen (10 boys and 8 girls), Jim working with his son, Meg and Jim both volunteering for the ambulance at Heritage Village and the Eucharistic Ministry at Sacred Heart, I could then understand why it was difficult to schedule our interview.

Meg seems to enjoy her religion; embrace may be a more correct term. She begins her day early with the daily readings in her quiet living room corner. She enjoys this time, but the practice started out of self-defense. She was often abruptly called upon to read at daily Mass in her Florida parish, and found that by having read the passages ahead of time she could give more meaning to the readings. Meg’s enthusiasm has gotten her deeply involved with our parish. She was elected to co-chair the Parish Council; she works with the Communications Committee, Extend-A-Hand, Respect Life, and has a special relationship with the Covenant To Care Group. She finds the experience of taking the

(Continued on page 10)

Fun for All at Sacred Heart

There is a new, old ministry at Sacred Heart, the Social Activities Committee, which is in the process of planning wonderful activities for the parish designed just for fun, not fund raising. Mary Korsu, the chairperson of the committee, has been coordinating these events for years, but since the ministry fair last fall, she now has a committee to help her.

The first event will be the parish picnic to take place on Sunday, September 24, 2000 after the 11:00 AM Mass. There will be food, games, prizes, and a D.J., Steve Milek. It will be a great way for the parish family to come together for a day of fun. The cost will be \$5.00 per person with a limit of \$20.00 for families with young children.

Our second event will be a dance on Friday, October 27, from 7:30 to 11:30 PM, for parishioners 18 and up at a cost of \$10.00 per person. Again, Steve Milek, the D.J. will supply the music. Coffee and dessert will be served.

Other proposed outings include a trip to the Bushnell in March to see "Promises – Promises", a train trip to New York in December, dinner theater parties, a trip on the Essex steam train, a possible golf tournament, and other activities as interest warrants. If the trip to the Bushnell is of interest to you, please contact Mary Korsu at the rectory for more information and to reserve a place. Reservations will have to be made early to get the best seats.

Check the Sunday bulletin for coming events. It is hoped a good time will be had by all!

Katherine Pavone



The Walshes

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Eucharist to two nursing homes very humbling and supporting of her faith. During our discussions, it became apparent that the church activities are predominately Meg's, while both Meg and Jim are active in "the village" activities, such as theater etc. Jim smiled and indicated he is "Meg's husband." From my point of view it takes a lot of support to make any relationship go on after half a lifetime.

When asked how she finds the strength to undertake so many church activities, Meg made a comment that can benefit us all. "Daily Mass is important to me; in my many weaknesses God is my help, the Eucharist my strength." Her writings in the Lenten reflections booklet and her articles for From The Heart reflect that dependence on God's help. It's difficult to pin down the reasons for one's spiritual values, but both Jim and Meg believe the seeds were planted at the outset of their relationship by the Franciscans, especially during Meg's conversion, an intense year of study and one-to-one communication with the priest.

This couple compliments each other in every way. They give each other what they need to find the avenue to God.

A Simple Gesture

A simple gesture
a genuflection, a soft
brush of lip across cold
wood. A bloodless gesture
to venerate a bloody deed.

A wipe of cloth, a pass
at sanitary considerations.
The clank of a nail in
a metal pot echoes the sounds
of the hammer at that moment.

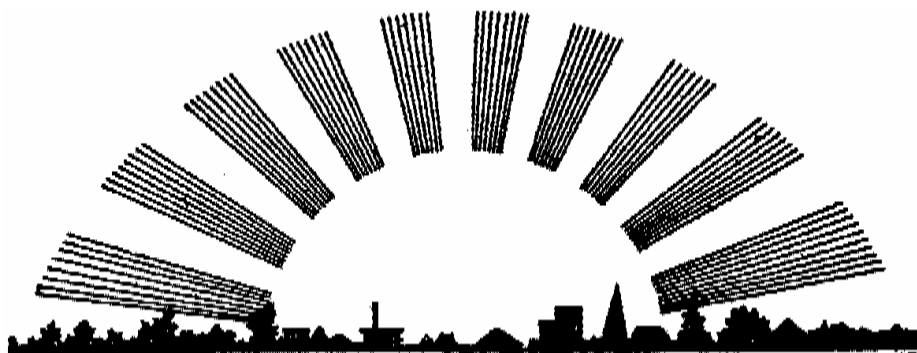
Our quiet measured time
in a beautiful house of worship
is a sharp contrast to the dusty
hot Skull Hill, called Golgotha,
outside the walls of Jerusalem.

The hill is still there, buried now
within another beautiful house of worship.
Yet another ornate structure sanitizes
the tomb, and we line up and duck to
enter unbidden into another time. But

the sad walk, the public exhibition,
the sordid execution and quick burial
overwhelm the senses and with sober
eyes we genuflect, a bloodless gesture
to venerate a bloody deed and step out

into a hot Jerusalem sun.

Al Savard



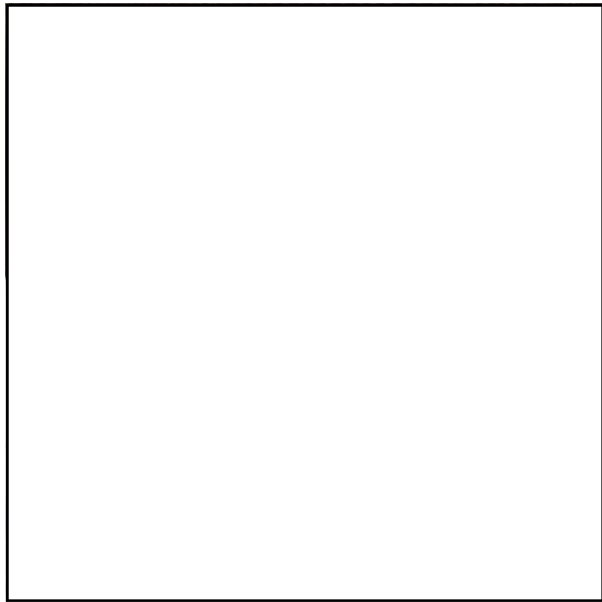
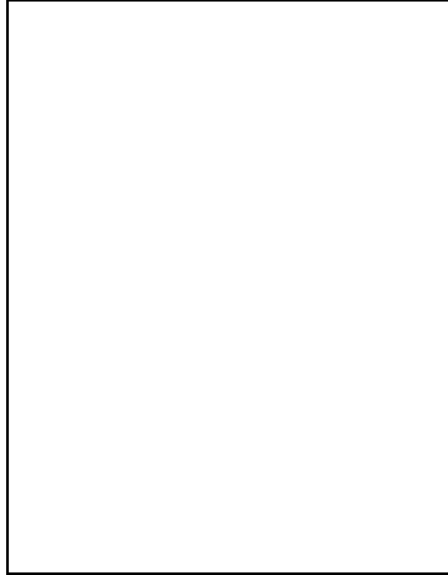
Hail and Farewell

Hail to Denelle White, who has been named Youth Minister at Sacred Heart, replacing Kacey Tessitore who retired on June 30th.

Denelle was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. She attended DeKalb College where she received surgical training and spent four years as a surgical technologist.

For the past 18 months, Denelle has been a youth leader at Good Shepherd Church in Hamden. It is there that she learned to love this ministry. She said, "I have a great love for God and especially for his teens."

Welcome Denelle!



Farewell to Kacey Tessitore, who is retiring as Sacred Heart Youth Minister after 12 years of loyal service. Parishioners honored Kacey at a recent reception.

When asked her plans for the future, Kacey said, "I'm looking forward to spending more time with my family." Kacey and her husband Paul have four children and four grandchildren. They will continue as Sacred Heart parishioners.

Thank you, Kacey, and much happiness in retirement!

Jean Brickey



Come to the Ministry Fair on October 21 and 22!



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