



From the Heart

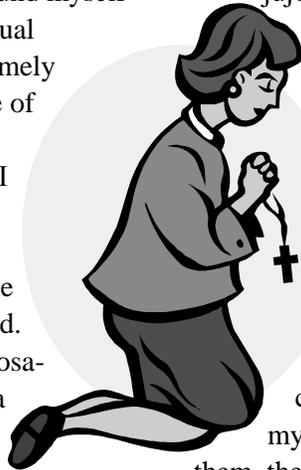
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My Journey to Mary

I no longer believe in coincidences. I have learned that God puts people and events in our lives for a reason. If we look hard enough and are in tune with our own spirituality, the Lord gives us obvious signs of what he wants us to do. This happened to me last winter.

After the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, in the still cold and raw weeks of the New Year, I found myself in urgent need of more spiritual nourishment. It was an extremely difficult time for me because of an unforeseen family crisis.

Through Women's Only I learned of a one-day retreat and quickly decided to go. During the bus ride, everyone began saying the rosary aloud. Most people had their own rosaries, but my friend Rosalinda and I did not. Jean, the woman who organized the retreat, let us both use sets of hers. Rosalinda commented on how lovely they were, and Jean told us she had bought them at Medjugore, Yugoslavia when she made the pilgrimage there. She told us the story of how for the past twenty years the Blessed Mother has been appearing daily to several children, and although not officially recognized by the Catholic Church, Medjugore has become the Fatima and Lourdes of the Twentieth Century.



When the retreat ended, Jean gave her rosary to Rosalinda. I was amazed. Later I learned that it is common practice among people who have made the pilgrimage to Medjugore to give their rosaries to others because they feel the call to do so. The Blessed Mother wants the rosary to be said by an ever-increasing number of people.

Not a week later, I happened to be in the parish library and saw a book on Medjugore sitting prominently on the shelf. How odd. I had never heard of this place, and now had experienced two encounters with it in one week! I borrowed the book and found it fascinating reading. Upon returning it, I saw an audiocassette entitled "Praying the Rosary With Mary," a wonderful set of tapes. The next week I went to the dry cleaner to pick up some coats for my sister-in-law. When I paid for them, the girl at the counter put a set of rosary beads in my hand and told me she had found them in one of the pockets.

By this time I began to see a pattern. The Blessed Mother and rosary beads were popping up in my life quite frequently.

With Lent rapidly approaching, I decided to say the rosary daily, and whenever possible to say it in church. After a tenuous start and warding off many temptations to

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Journey to Mary

(Continued from cover)

do errands while my three year old was in preschool, I began looking forward to the quiet time meditating on the lives of Jesus and Mary.

Shortly thereafter, I saw in the bulletin that the blessed picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe was circulating in our parish. Anxious for the blessings that occur for families who gather to pray the novena accompanying the picture, I put my name on the list and waited my turn to receive it in my home.

The story of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a wonderful one. In Mexico in 1531, Our Lady appeared to a man named Juan Diego and instructed him to tell the bishop that she wanted a church built on Tepeyac Hill. When the bishop was skeptical of Juan's story, Mary provided a sign to prove that she was the Blessed Mother. Roses bloomed on a rocky hill where none bloomed before. At Mary's instruction, Juan gathered as many as he could, and she arranged them in his cactus cloak for presentation to the bishop. As Juan opened the cloak, the roses dropped to the floor, leaving the image of Our Lady on the cloak in colorful detail. That image is still visible, the cloak having outlasted the normal lifespan of the cactus fiber.

The following heartwarming words were spoken to Juan by the Blessed Mother. I have found them to be an inspiration as I continue my journey to Mary.

*Hear, and let it penetrate into your heart —
let nothing discourage you, nothing depress you.
Let nothing alter your heart or your countenance.*

*Also, do not fear any illness or vexation,
anxiety or pain.*

Am I not your mother?

*Are you not under my shadow and
protection?*

Am I not your fountain of life?

*Are you not in the folds of my
mantle, in the crossing of my arms?*

Is there anything else you need?



Diane Tomas

Sara's Dreams

As night takes the sky,
Closing curtains on the day,
You lie in slumber,
Letting your thoughts run wild!
Soaring through the stars
Or running on a beach,
You dare to become
A completely different child.
Your dreams are your freedom,
Allowing you to fly,
Living your fantasies long denied by day.
But dreams are too fleeting, leaving you wanting more,
As sunrise snatches
Magical powers away.

Sara is living her dreams forever.

When I wrote this poem I thought about how my sister, Sara, was confined by her wheelchair. She was unable to express herself verbally, and I constantly wondered what she dreamed about. I felt that in her dreams, and certainly now in heaven, she is able to overstep the boundaries of her disabilities and reach her potential. Despite her handicaps, Sara was able to express herself, love others, and teach us to enjoy life.

Many of us are also confined. Our jealousy, selfishness and fear prevent us from taking the risk to love one another, defend our beliefs and work for justice.

Our Confirmation class of 2002 is taking a journey of faith together. Each of us seeks the courage to live our faith fully, as God intended. Each of us must dare to become completely different children of God.

Caitlin Farrell



The late Sara Farrell, front, shown with her parents Brian and Joanne, and her sister Caitlin.

Crosswinds

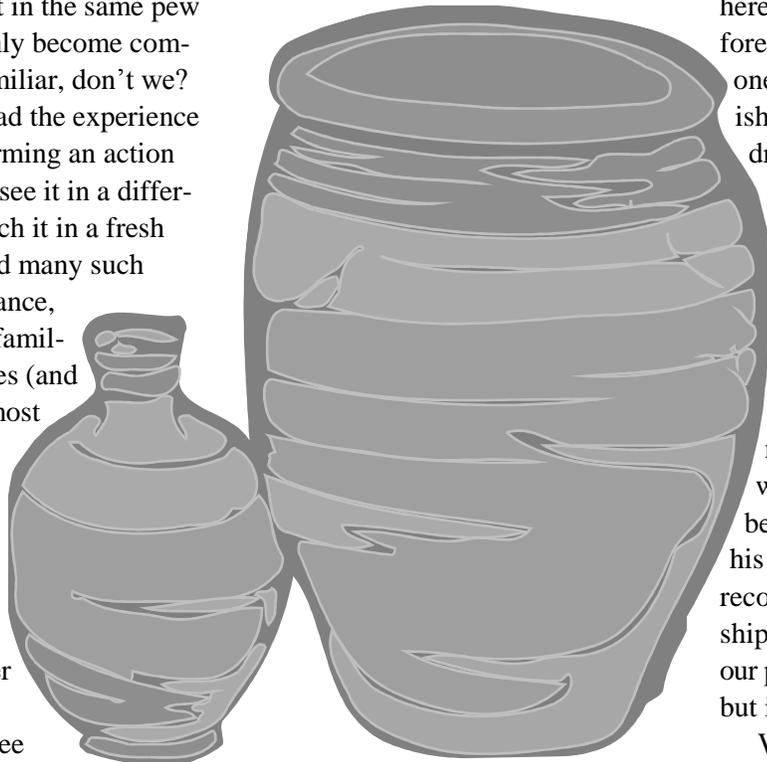
It's really amazing that despite our individuality, we have so much in common. One of the most outstanding similarities among people is that we are creatures of habit. Think about the things you do. Isn't it true that most of the time you shop at the same stores or begin the day with a cup of coffee? Do you tend to watch the same television programs or even sit in the same pew at Mass? We certainly become comfortable with the familiar, don't we?

Have you ever had the experience of mindlessly performing an action when suddenly you see it in a different light and approach it in a fresh new way? I have had many such epiphanies. For instance, although I am very familiar with the scriptures (and I should be after almost thirty years of reading and preaching them) I am amazed that every time I read them I find a different concept or realization that never before struck me.

Over the past three years, we have been hearing a great deal about "STEWARDSHIP." For some it is new. For others it is frightening because it challenges us to make our faith a living reality. For still others it is threatening because it asks us to witness to our faith and make it real.

Is it any wonder that some people are threatened? Stewardship implies that going to church on Sunday doesn't make anyone "the good enough Catholic." We are asked to sacrifice time that is already insufficient. We

are asked to share our talents, but many of us feel insecure about our talents and are uncomfortable belonging to committees. What we fail to discover is that by our baptism into Christ, we form his body and are special in God's eyes. If we could appreciate that, we would become willing, enthusiastic stewards of the kingdom.



"Stewardship" is not a concept, nor is it a program. Stewardship is a way of life, a method through which we grow in faith, a way of looking at faith in a new light. We manifest that faith every day in our willingness to commit ourselves over and over again to seek the face of Christ and hear his call. We have an epiphany when we realize that faith is not something that we embrace on a particular day at a certain hour in our regular seat in church. Faith is that on-going force within us that

prompts us to seek more, to do more, to give more, to make a difference. Ironically, everyone who has taken that step away from the habitual into the different and often uncertain realm of stewardship will tell you that faith has a totally new meaning. They are alive for the first time; reborn in their realization of what faith is.

Since the time I was appointed here as your pastor, my first and foremost desire was to have everyone involved in the life of this parish community. Of course that is a dream, and probably an unattainable ideal; there will always be those who only want a faith based on what it can do for them when they need it. Yet, I am continually inspired and renewed in my own enthusiasm as I see the Spirit at work within me and within so many others who have accepted Christ's call to be his voice, his hands, his face, his heart as faithful stewards who recognize that the cost of discipleship is indeed very high. It demands our precious time, talent and resources, but it gives us back so much more.

We are the vessels God has fashioned by his incredible hand. Remember, he chose us; we did not choose him. I think often of a poem written by B.V. Cornwall, and share it for your reflection, that perhaps you will better appreciate what kind of vessel you are for the Lord.

Fr. Mark Flynn

(Please turn to page 4 for poem.)

The Chosen Vessel

By B. V. Cornwell



The Master was searching for a vessel to use
On the shelf there are many—which one would he choose?
“Take me,” cried the gold one. “I’m shiny and bright,
I’m of great value and I do things just right.
My beauty and luster will outshine the rest,
And for someone like you, Master, gold would be best.”

The Master passed on with no word at all
He looked at a silver urn, narrow and tall,
“I’ll serve you, dear Master, I’ll pour out your wine
And I’ll be at your table whenever you dine;
My lines are so graceful, my carvings so true,
And silver will always complement you.”
Unheeding the Master passed on to the brass
It was wide mouthed and shallow and polished like glass.

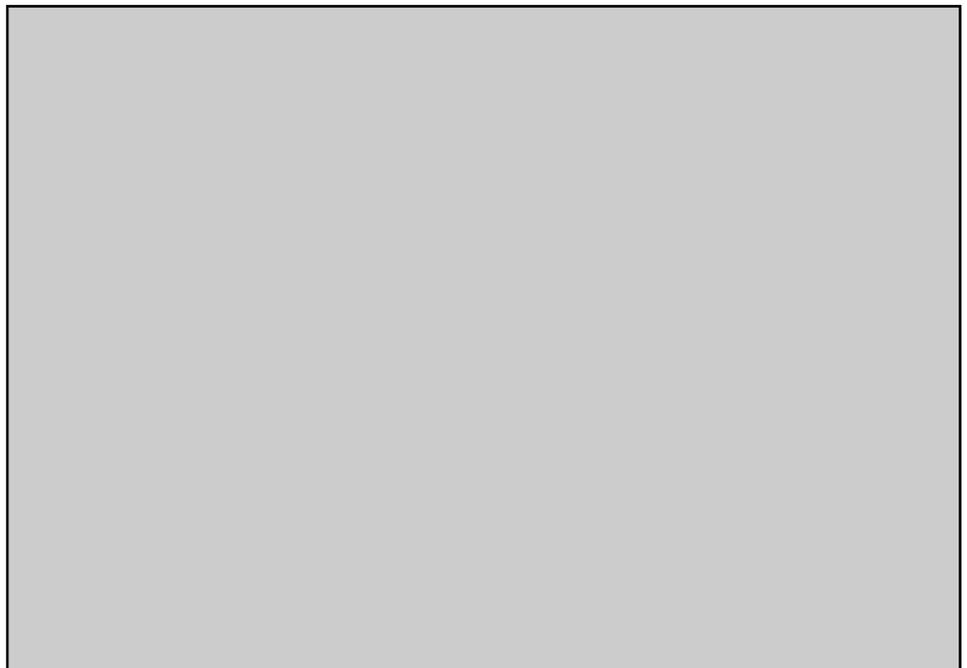
“Here, Here” cried the vessel, “I know I will do,
Place me on your table for all men to view.”
“Look at me,” called the goblet of crystal so clear,
“My transparency shows my contents so dear.
Though fragile am I, I will serve you with pride,
And I’m sure I’ll be happy in your house to abide.”

The Master came next to a vessel of wood,
Polished and carved, it solidly stood.
“You may use me, dear Master,” the wooden bowl said,
“But I’d rather you used me for fruit, not for bread.”
Then the Master looked down and saw a vessel of clay,
Empty and broken it helplessly lay;
No hope had the vessel that the Master might choose;
To cleanse and make whole, to fill and to use.

“Ah this is the vessel I’ve been hoping to find
I will mend and use it and make it all mine.”
“I need not the vessel with pride of itself;
Nor the one who is narrow to sit on the shelf;
Nor one who is big mouthed and shallow and loud;
Nor one who displays his contents so proud;
Nor the one who thinks he can do all things just right;
But this plain earthy vessel filled with my power and might.”

Then gently He lifted the vessel of clay,
Mended and cleansed it and filled it that day,
Spoke to it kindly, “There’s work you must do,
Just pour out to others as I pour into you.”

Parish Council Elects Officers:
(front row) Lori DePalma, Secretary, Jeanne Tillinghast, Chairperson, Andrew MacDonald, Vice Chairperson; (back row) Lina Savard, Gino Albertario, Meg Walsh, Sharon Guck, Diane Tomas, Ray Thompson and Joe Stango. Missing from photo: George Davy, Cindy Harris, Paul LeMay and Tom Magrane.



Knights of Columbus Corvette Raffle

The Knights of Columbus Council 5066 has launched its fifth triennial Corvette raffle, its primary fundraiser. The raffle prize, a red 2002 Corvette coupe with black leather interior and a generous list of equipment including a removable roof panel and automatic transmission is valued at \$40,000. The Corvette is America's premier high performance luxury sports car. The drawing will take place at 2 P.M. on Saturday October 27, at West Chevrolet in Woodbury, where the car will be on display starting in September.

The funds from the raffle support two scholarships the Knights grant annually to high school seniors continuing their education. Scholarships are also funded for seminarians preparing for the priesthood and for children of K of C members. In addition, Council 5066 makes donations to other charities including Morality In The Media, Carolyn's Place, Southbury Food Bank, Little Sisters Of The Poor, and others. In recent years the Knights have donated equipment to the church, and have supported activities at the Southbury



Training School. The Knights take no funds from the church.

Raffle tickets are \$20.00 each, and are available from K of C members and many local businesses. Tickets will also be available after the masses close to the drawing date. Only 3,750 tickets will be sold.

Vince Pavone

Stewardship—A Personal Perspective

Musings of a Former Church Mouse

For years I was an observer of church. By this I mean, I attended Mass on Sunday (except for the period when I dabbled in other religions), but I was content to slide into a back pew and scurry out unnoticed, choosing anonymity and the quiet corners of the church.

I let others say "yes" to committee requests and let others shoulder the financial burdens through their commitments to support church programs. Sure, I dropped a few dollars in the collection basket each time I was there, but it was a mindless act, borne of habit, unrelated to stewardship, and without awareness of the church's need to budget and forecast just as any household does.

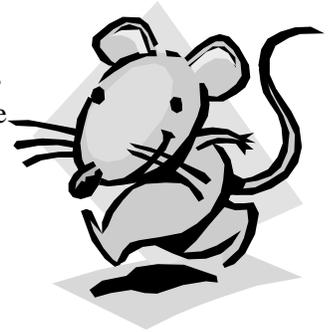
What made this mouse finally decide to roar, or rather squeak a little? It was a place called Sacred Heart, where a congregation hums with cooperative action, and a man called Father Flynn whose words and example hit the right nerve, and it was the incessant prodding, poking and pushing of the magnificent Spirit who led me to this place and would no longer tolerate my observation of church as a substitute for participation.

I entered softly, volunteering for the Communication Committee. I have a particular passion for writing, so it was no sacrifice at all. Next, fulfilling a promise I made

to myself when my father was in a nursing home, I joined the ministry to Mediplex and committed one hour per month to help with the Communion service. What I have gotten from those dear, sweet people far exceeds the cost of that hour. Involvement in other ministries and services followed, each with its own benefits.

The financial commitment was the most challenging, but I have not suffered as a result. The mortgage payment is made each month; the bills are always paid, and somehow I have more now than I did before. It's some kind of magic multiplication that God performs; you know, like loaves and fishes and wine at a wedding.

The most amazing thing of all is that the demands of involvement are far less than the rewards, and I have come to realize that stewardship is just an extension of my every day life. It's so simple that I can't believe it took me so long – it's not like I had to give up a lung or a kidney. I'm just sharing the talents and treasures I have in a very natural and uncomplicated way.



Family Focus

For over twenty years, Bob and Bernie McGarry have lived in Southbury, raising three fine children; Katie, Kevin, and Theresa. Now they're empty nesters. But empty doesn't describe any part of the life of the McGarrys. Theirs has been and continues to be a life full of the richness our faith provides, a true celebration of life.

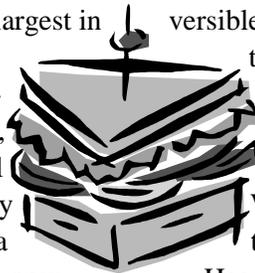
You'll find that both Bob and Bernie possess a wonderful spirit of adventure and a delightful sense of humor. They like to camp and hike, enjoying the grandeur and peace of God's creation. Bob has walked quite a bit of the Appalachian Trail. Their recent trip to the mountains of Shenandoah even included an encounter with a black bear...a big black bear according to Bernie. Their humor is not usually slapstick in nature, but a more thoughtful kind of funny...a kind of story telling. Bob enjoys riddles and he recently challenged my kids with a few that really had them thinking. Getting us to think about things is what Bob and Bernie hope to accomplish through their participation in parish ministries.

While studying the Scriptures in the Renew program here at Sacred Heart during the mid 80's, Bob and Bernie realized how important it was to get involved. Each of us is an instrument in helping our parish reach out to others. When Fr. Flynn invited a representative from the Office of Urban Affairs to give a presentation about social concerns, about 50 people attended, including the McGar-

rys. Instead of giving them an itemized list of what to do, the representative told them to determine what was needed in their own parishes and communities by listening and observing, then to develop strategies to fulfill the needs. Apparently getting involved to that extent scared a lot of people and the original 50 dwindled to about 6, including Bob and Bernie. A determined Bernie became the first chairperson of that fledgling Social Concerns Committee as they identified the major social issues of the community and began addressing them. One early event that Bernie remembers was a spaghetti supper given to aid an unemployed parishioner. The success of that dinner encouraged them to undertake other similar projects. Having learned that the St. Vincent DePaul Shelter in Waterbury, the largest in Connecticut and the only one that takes care of individuals as well as families, needed sandwiches, Social Concerns responded. Every month, a thousand bologna and cheese sandwiches are now delivered to the shelter.

With respect for life and teen pregnancy being identified as areas of concern, Bernie became our parish representative for pro-life, and the Respect Life Committee was formed. As advocates for public policies and laws that reflect Christian values and the protection of human life and dignity, you often see Bob and Bernie

handing out informative pamphlets, seeking our signatures on a petition, or asking us to contact our representatives about important issues. They are eager to have people learn more about Respect Life and to seriously think before they make rash or irreversible decisions. With that in mind, the Respect Life Committee has invited representatives from Carolyn's Place, a pregnancy crisis center in Waterbury, to give educational presentations at Sacred Heart. In addition to speaking with our teens, they will soon be coming to talk about sexuality with our grade school kids and with parents about how to talk with their own children about sexuality. Having raised those three kids, Bob and Bernie both realize how important it is for parents to communicate with their children and to be actively involved in raising them.





With an unwavering commitment to those in need and after reading an article in the Catholic Transcript about Covenant to Care and the Adopt a Social Worker Program, Bernie arranged for a representative to make a presentation to the Social Concerns Committee. The members liked what they saw and with the blessing of the parish council, our Covenant to Care program was established. Among many other things, they make up kits for children being taken to foster homes; provide backpacks for kids going back to school; and provide wish-list gifts at Christmas.

And always eager to help, Bernie uses her nursing skills helping with our Parish Nurse Ministry blood pressure screenings.

About ten years ago, Bob became a commissioned lay minister for the elderly (not an elderly lay minister) and started the Elderly Ministry at Sacred Heart. As its main activity, the ministry sponsors the annual Mass of the anointing of the sick and elderly, which will be held on October 20, this year. After the Mass, Social Concerns prepares a luncheon for which youth group members set up and serve.

Bob is also a eucharistic minister. Some time ago, he was asked to help with the Eucharistic service at Mediplex and he's been serving there ever since. Like our other ministers, Bob also goes to people's homes to bring them the Eucharist, and this is the job Bob likes best. Seeing Jesus in each of them, Bob does whatever he can to help ease their pains...administering the Eucharist, a simple talk, a little prayer.

As a hobby, Bob designed and implemented our parish web site. Now Bob and the Web Committee update this important communication tool for our parish. The web site offers general parish information, ministry descriptions and opportunities, and a list of upcoming events. Past Pastor's Desk articles are also available as well as recommended reading from Deacon Mike. There is a great section on the youth group. And now there are even interactive opportunities available via the Theophilus tab, which offers weekly scriptural references (selected by Bob) for your reflection and comments. Check out what Bob started on-line at www.rc.net/hartford/sacredheart and let the Web Committee know what you think.

Bob is also an active member of the Knights of Columbus and never misses an opportunity to help out with the many charitable events that they sponsor. What the Knights do fits in well with his commitment to being socially concerned. He is particularly pleased with the K of C's strong stance on respect for life and the family.

In an effort to reach out to even more people, Bob and Bernie helped establish the Southbury Interfaith Social Concerns Committee. That group's first event was the Tour de Tribury Bike-a-thon that is held to raise funds for the Southbury Fuel Bank. That event, which will be held on September 29, this year, is celebrating its ninth anniversary. Linda

Fanelli's idea to have a Thanksgiving dinner for those who otherwise would have to spend that day alone became another sponsored event for the Interfaith Group. Bob helps cook the turkeys for over 100 people. The interfaith group also sponsors an Americares day project in which volunteers refurbish a home in the local area. Bob does a great job as a recruiter for the project as well as its official photographer. Interfaith Social Concerns also sponsors educational sessions and/or discussions on current topics and pressing issues.

This article probably reads like a list of ministries, but what it hopes to show is how inseparable our physical and spiritual lives really can and should be. I've tried to give you a small glimpse into a family that has incorporated Christ's teachings and Christian values into its very heart, soul, and actions. Bob and Bernie do not do what they do to gain notoriety. They just quietly but effectively do what is right. For the McGarrys, social ministry is an integral part of their everyday lives. It is neither a distraction nor an option; it is a joy. Can we say the same?

Barry Bonetti



Catholic Biblical School Graduation



Four years of Bible study classes every Thursday came to an end on June 24, for those who participated in the first CBS class held at Sacred Heart. This experience has left us in awe of the living word of God. It has been a marvelous privilege to learn, share, love and bond spiritually with one another. We will forever be grateful to Sister Jewel Renna, C.N.D. who worked so hard putting this program into motion and who was our teacher the first year. Don Gray, not a stranger to Sacred Heart, guided us so gently and knowledgeably in the last three years. We love you, Don, for all you have explained to us with such patience. We greatly admire you as a teacher, theologian and Christian.

Each class opened with prayer. We then shared our biblical homework and our spiritual insights. In a similar fashion, the following is a sharing from the Sacred Heart graduates of the class.

Just when I thought I had made the transition into total retirement, I sensed the Lord was nudging me to accept a new challenge. When the diocese offered the four-year Bible study course, I couldn't resist the invitation to delve more deeply into his word. I did have some misgivings about the burden of homework, tests, and a commitment to 30 weeks of classes each year, but my husband, Bob was a great support, and our children and grandchildren were a source of encouragement. In retrospect, I know this was God's plan for me, and I thank him for directing me to this program.

I am blessed by the caring people he has placed in my life, and I will forever be grateful for the gift of knowing Gail Gracey who started the classes with us. She is an indelible memory, a glowing example of trust and hope, a saint with a pure faith in God throughout her illness.

This has been the most fruitful four years of my life. I have come away knowing that I have a God of love who directs every circumstance of my life and wants only the best for me. "My God will fulfill all my needs out of the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

Margaret Strong

I enjoyed our group discussions every week. Each person provided insights from his own perspective, as though each individual had a piece of a big puzzle.

Peggy Morgan

Through these past four years I have learned to embrace the Old Testament and love it! I have found the root of our faith and the connection we share with other faiths.

I feel blessed to have developed wonderful spiritual friends through this program. We have laughed and cried together, sharing death and new life, and supporting each other in times of personal crises.

One of my special memories is of walking with a partner on a prayer day. She shared some of her painful moments that kept her from knowing God the way she desired. In these past years, I have watched her embrace her faith in God, grow stronger and give strength to others.

Sharon Wlodarczyk

During these past four years, I have deepened my understanding and love for God's words while reflecting on their meaning for my life's journey. I encourage everyone to take the CBS course.

Rosemary Fay

Although I learned a great many facts in the last four years, what I value most is the knowledge of how deeply God loves us.

When King David's son Absalom, tried to kill his father and was himself killed in the process, David mourned him deeply. I thought then that God feels the same. No matter how seriously we offend him, he still loves us and is ready to forgive a contrite heart.

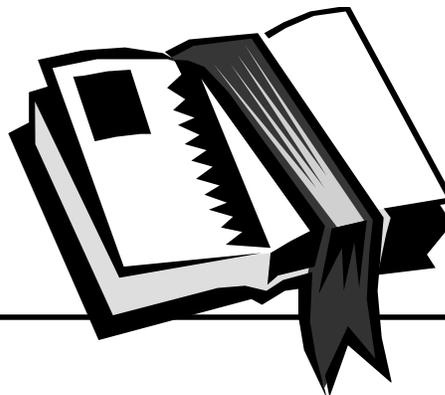
Leigh Hudson

Taking this class was the best thing I've ever done for myself. I relished every moment of the hours studying the greatest book ever written. The readings and music at Mass are so much more meaningful for me. Daily prayer with the scripture is now alive and real. I've met and know intimately a God who loves me tenderly and cares about every aspect of my life. The responsibility and the challenge we all face now are carrying the words God has placed in our hearts to others.

Connie Moran

The Catholic Bible School is sponsored by the Archdiocese of Hartford Office of Religious Education. It is a continuing program and new classes are forming each fall. If you are interested in enrolling, please contact the archdiocesan coordinator, Sr. Jewel Renna, at 860 667-0891. It is a great program and you will be glad you did.

Jim Moran



Sacred Space

Are you a bit depressed for no special reason? Did you lose patience with one of the children—the one who always pushes you just a little too far? Was your day at the office more frustrating than usual? Take a deep breath, go to your computer and type in www.jesuit.ie/prayer/

On your screen will appear a website created by a group of Jesuits in Ireland. It's also called *Sacred Space*. Click on "Prayer for Today" and then follow the commands at your own pace.

One of the most helpful reflections is called "Consciousness" and it reads: "I exist in a web of relationships—links to nature,



people, God. I trace these links giving thanks for the life that flows through

them. Some links are twisted or broken. I may feel regret, anger, and disappointment. I pray for the Gift of acceptance and forgiveness."

When you have read the Scripture for the day and the meditation, move on. There are a number of links, one called Living Space; one that leads you to a place where students can ask questions and explore their faith. One link you don't want to miss is their feedback page. Here you will read e-mails from all over the world: one from a woman in Tennessee who is going through the RCIA program with her 15-year old son. Another says, "I'm glad I found you, even though it seems strange to be praying in front of a screen." It is signed "Homesick South African living in Canada."

A college student in Texas has shared the gift of Sacred Space with friends and he says, "Thank you for

your efforts to connect people of all ages, nationalities, and denominations through the love of our Lord."

A woman in England, lonely and frightened and ill, visited Sacred Space. "Now I can go to bed in peace knowing I am not alone." A new convert in Helsinki, Finland, says: "You have had a major role in my way toward Catholic spirituality."

Running through all these e-mails is the theme of peace and union with God. Imagine that at any time, morning, noon, or night, through the magic of the Internet—or better, through the grace of the Holy Spirit—you can hear from people struggling, just as we all are, on this journey of faith.

It's virtually mind-boggling!

Kathleen Janson

The Secret of Almsgiving

According to Sean

Simply speaking, great theological events take place through God's blessing, at any time and at any place. And so, with the acceptance of this truism, one should not be surprised at the following narration involving, and I say this most proudly, my daughter, Lauren (a freshman at Mount St. Ursula) and my youngest son, Sean. I was present, but merely to serve as a discussion guide.

Let me be more specific. Within the Irish section of the Bronx, at the corner of 205th Street and Perry Avenue, there is located St. Brendan's R.C. Church. It was here that the revelation took place. In early summer, 1980, the three of us were going through the front doors of the Atrium for 9 A.M. Sunday Mass, when Lauren suddenly asked, "Is almsgiving important to be a Catholic?" So inquired my eldest child, who liked to refer to herself in public as "my father's daughter." The fact that Lauren is my only daughter was almost always left unsaid, except when reminded by any one of her brothers, sometimes collectively. "Good grief," I thought, "What brought this on?" To this day I have no clue, except that it must be another mystery of God.

We had now stopped just at the entrance doors to the inner church. "Generally speaking, it means helping the poor financially, if we define poor as being economically deprived," I answered. Glancing down at my first grader Sean, I knew I was in trouble. Before he could ask, as I knew he would, I said, "By economically deprived, I mean no money or," pausing to look at Sean, "in other words, they can't go to McDonald's when they want to."

"Aaah," acknowledged Sean. He knowingly nodded, then frowned. "Then what does it mean when one is poor in spirit?" asked Sean. "Or poor in compassion?" Lauren added.

"Tragically, there are poor all around us and caring for the poor is also referred to in the Bible; therefore, almsgiving is a very major part of our stewardship service to the church." I was absolutely delighted with my response and I just knew my Jesuit forefathers were shouting with

glee from heaven, that is, if Jesuits are allowed there.

Sean looked at me. "So it is not merely money! If I made someone laugh, would I make that person less poor in spirit? It's free and cheaper than giving money." Somehow I felt we were rapidly losing the religious aspect to this conversation, but Sean continued. "How easy it is to make someone smile, help someone or just listen to them. Aren't I helping the poor? God is everywhere and it certainly would make his job easier." And there it happened—the visit from the Holy Spirit, or revelation completed. "Now why didn't I ever think of that?" I thought. (In retrospect, I have come to realize just why Sean was so active in the youth ministries at Boston College.) "Less prayers he has to answer," chimed in Lauren, with her usual womanly wisdom, expressed even at that young age.

As we genuflected before entering the pew, I recall wondering just which one of us was the parent, and which one of us was the child, a thought that occurred to me over the years, probably a lot more times than I care to remember.

Dennis J. McLaughlin



Suggestion Box

P

lease take note of the suggestion box in the church atrium. Any suggestions, comments or questions regarding faith, the Church or our parish will be answered individually by the appropriate committee or by Father Flynn. Each entry must include name,

From the Library of Deacon Mike

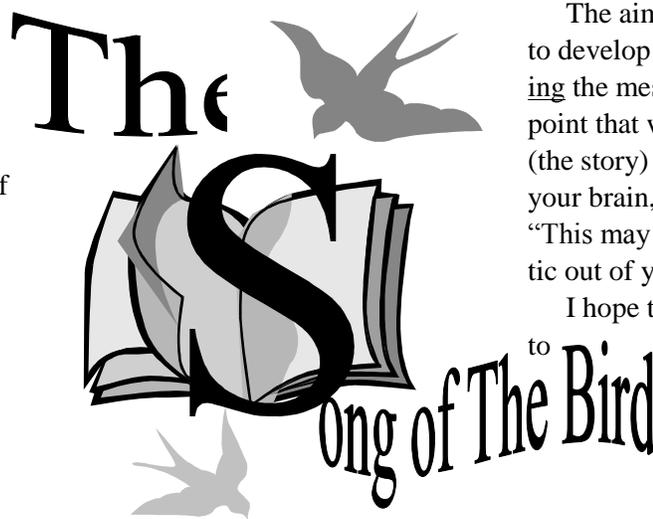
"We have what we seek. We don't have to rush after it. It was there all the time, and if we give it time it will make itself known to us."

Thomas Merton

If you had the opportunity to read He Leadeth Me, which I reviewed in my previous column, I hope you enjoyed it as much as I. Before we move on to my next selection, permit me to summarize in Fr. Walter Ciszek's own words the simple yet profound message he has left us. "Many people, from newsmen to housewives, asked me over and over again how I managed to survive the years in Soviet prisons and the labor camps of Siberia. My answer has always been that I survived on the basis of the faith others may find too simple and naïve...the terrible thing about all divine truth, indeed, is its simplicity. Whether it be the secrets of the physical universe he has created, or the Ten Commandments, or the Beatitudes, or the truth we learned in the catechism—all can be simply stated. Man was created to praise, reverence, and serve God in this world and to be happy with him forever in the next. That is the fact of the matter; you believe it or you don't—and that is the end of it. It is the first truth of the faith, and those who have the faith accept it; those who do not, do not. I cannot myself convince anyone of it, but I believe it...that is the only secret I have come to know. It is not mine alone; Christ himself spoke of it, the saints have practiced it, others have written about it far better than I. I can only

hope that what I have written will strike a responsive chord in some, will prove to help others, however few. **And I pray that you may be one of them.**"

My next recommendation is more than just a story, in fact, it is 124 stories and parables from a variety of traditions—Buddhist, Christian, Zen, Hasidic, Russian, Chinese, Hindu, Sufi. Stories ancient and contemporary, they all contain a special quality: They will produce spiritual growth, if read in a certain manner. The book is The Song of The Bird by Fr. Anthony de Mello. Each of the stories is a single lesson that teaches inescapable truths about our world and ourselves. As often as I have returned to this book, I have barely begun to capture the depth and profound richness of this truly magnificent piece of literature. Permit me to share just one story:



Don't Change

I was a neurotic for years. I was anxious and selfish. Everyone kept telling me to change. I resented them, and I agreed with them, and I wanted to change, but simply couldn't, no matter how hard I tried.

What hurt the most was that, like the others, my best friend kept insisting that I change. So I felt powerless and trapped.

Then, one day, he said to me, "Don't change, I love you Just as you are."

These words were music to my ears: "Don't change. Don't change. Don't change...I love you just as you are."

I relaxed. I came alive. And suddenly I changed!

Now I know that I couldn't really change until I found someone who would love me whether I changed or not.

Is this how you love me God?

The aim of Fr. de Mello is for us to develop the art of tasting and feeling the message of each story to the point that we are transformed. "Let (the story) speak to your heart, not your brain," Fr. de Mello tells us. "This may make something of a mystic out of you."

I hope this book will be a treasure to last a lifetime for you. I know it is for me!

Peace. Mike

Be sure to mark these dates!

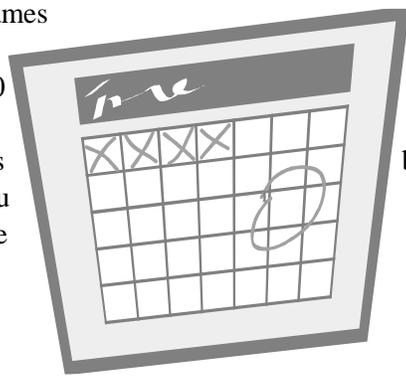
Upcoming Events at Sacred Heart This Fall

Saturday, September 29, Parish Picnic

Traditionally the picnic is on a Sunday, but this year it will be held on SATURDAY, September 29, at Ballentine Park, Southbury. It will begin at noon, and will conclude (weather permitting) with Mass at the park at 5:00 P.M. There will be a D.J., plenty of food, bingo, games and prizes. What a great way for the parish family to come together for a day of fun! The cost is \$5.00 per person with a limit of \$20.00 for families with young children. The Social Activities Committee is planning the event and is looking for helpers. If you can assist in any way, please call Mary Korsu at the rectory 264-5071.

October 6 & 7, Ministry Weekend

The ministry fair will be the weekend after the picnic, October 6th and 7th in the church hall after each Mass. A display will be set up by each ministry to explain the work of its group. Don't miss this opportunity to learn about the 27 different ministries at Sacred Heart and to become involved in any that you choose. You will learn how easy it is to become "a steward of God!"



Jean Brickey

From the Heart

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