

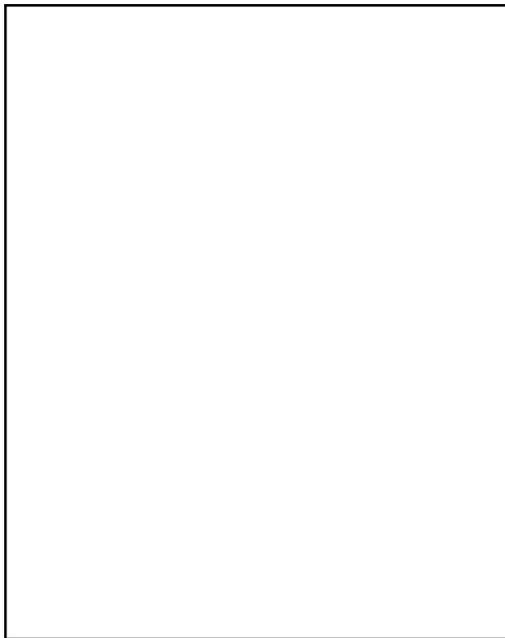


From the Heart

Published by Sacred Heart Parish • Main Street South, P.O. Box 686 • Southbury, CT 06488

The Journey

Last September 17 to December 3, Sacred Heart was privileged to have Father Edward J. McLean, Executive Director of the Catholic Information Center for the Archdiocese of Hartford, share his humor and wisdom as he led us on a 12 week journey, *From the Head to the Heart*, “the longest 18 inches in the world,” as Fr. McLean points out.



Father Edward McLean

Teaching us the art of communication with God, in ever-so-subtle ways, each week he prompted us to come to quiet and find that place deep within where God dwells and speaks to us. The journey was amazing! Fr. McLean is an extraordinary tour guide, a consummate storyteller, a gentle-voiced pilot, a seminar engineer, carefully leading, gently guiding, purposefully revealing the truths of love and peace for which we all thirst. As God’s instrument, he spoke, the message descending, rising and settling on so many levels, reaching each person according to his need and his readiness to accept the guidance of the Spirit.

The sessions built on one another and were so well orchestrated that nothing was presented too early, nothing too late, and no one was left unchanged.

Father McLean spoke, sang, whispered, and captivated us week after week, compelling us to want more, to want God, to want the fire of passion for justice and peace, generosity and love. His gently animated body gave

visual impact to the stories and lessons, helping to embed them more deeply on our hearts and minds. His delivery conveyed a sense of the sacred as we explored the Mass, forgiveness, and love, and as he encouraged us to be Eucharist for each other.

We laughed; we sang; we cried; we pondered. Through stories and letters we were inspired to embrace our faith in a new way. The Mass and care for others became urgent needs, not obligations. Love replaced guilt, and we were transformed, going home each week more tolerant of

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The Journey

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others and more able to meet the demands of our everyday lives.

Scripture came to life before our eyes as 21st century reality. And we gained a new reality as we moved our images of God from our heads to our hearts, where we do indeed find the treasure and experience intimacy, joy, and his all embracing love. The Mass we offered on the final night of the journey was a true celebration, so deep was the reverence and so real the presence of God, that for many of us it was like attending Mass for the first time.

The twelve weeks flew by and the journey was over, but it had only just begun. It is the journey of a lifetime, and we were privileged to have taken this leg of it together.

Dolores Matzen

If any of you missed this extraordinary event, tapes of the journey are available in the parish library.



St. Patrick

Despite all the fanfare of the St. Patrick's Day parades, and the widely recognized legends of shamrocks and snakes, very little is known about St. Patrick. Even though he is the patron saint of Ireland he was actually born in Britain in the year 389 AD. His father was a British official for the Christian church and Patrick was brought up Christian.

When he was 16 he was taken captive by Irish raiders and sold into slavery in Ireland, a place he described, "the ultimate ends of the earth." In Patrick's time Ireland was a wild, densely forested, heathen country ruled by kings and tribal chieftains. Many people worshiped the sun. The powerful Druids, an ancient Celtic priesthood, had rituals involving beliefs in immortality, reincarnation and human sacrifice.

Patrick was enslaved for six years and said later that he considered these years crucial to his spiritual growth. After a vision telling him he would soon be returning home, he began making plans for his escape. He walked across the country to the town of Wicklow, 30 miles south of Dublin and was taken aboard a heathen ship as a crewman. He did a bit of preaching about God while on board. After several days, the ship landed on an unknown shore and the crew began to walk for many weeks through deserted land. Eventually they ran out of food, and when asked what Patrick's God was going to do about this, he replied, "Nothing is impossible to the Lord my God. Turn to him truly, that he may send you food in your path this day... for he has plenty in all places." Shortly,

thereafter, a herd of pigs appeared and enough were killed to eat for days. Even Patrick seemed surprised at this miracle.

Still searching for his way home, he spent several years at a cloister. Finally arriving back in Britain, he was warmly greeted by his family. He studied at a monastery and was ordained around 417. After 10 years

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From the Heart

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New members, ideas and Ask Father questions are welcome throughout the year. Please contact the rectory or Katherine Pavone at 264-6599.



Crosswinds

We all experience times and events that cause us to question life's purpose. That was probably the feeling of the first disciples immediately after the crucifixion. Why did they even bother? Was it worth leaving everything and everyone to follow Jesus? What did they get out of it except the possibility of their own imprisonment and eventual death by association? I have always been struck by the intense activity of the disciples on the day they heard the outlandish rumor that the Lord had been raised from the dead, and that he would meet them in Jerusalem. They seemed to be going from place to place with great speed and even greater desperation. They had seen him nailed to the cross, his side lanced by a spear and his body removed from the cross. They had watched as the stone was placed across the tomb entrance. He was dead. There had been no last minute show of power, no incredible miracle to astound his persecutors and make them believers. Yes, he had raised his friend from a three-day death, but himself he could not save. I

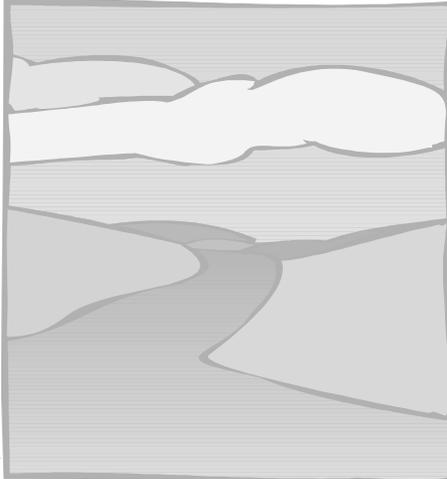
always picture the disciples talking animatedly among themselves as they scurry about, yet even in the midst of their personal devastation and fear, they share with a stranger along the way the faith they didn't even realize they had. In three short years, they had indeed become disciples.

How fortunate they were to have walked with the Lord, to have heard his words of hope and comfort, to be witnesses to his compassionate power and healing. If only we too could have the Lord appear to us and reassure us. We would no doubt be more dedicated to discipleship, wouldn't we?

We travel many roads through life, perhaps not one marked "Emmaus," but we journey with just as many questions and anxious fears as the disciples did after Jesus' death and resurrection. I believe that we are in the very same situation as the disciples were so many centuries ago.

Let me share a true story to illustrate my point. A young medical student had been away from his fiancé for

a month while he took the comprehensive exams in his last year of college. This separation was agony for him. Sad and depressed, he was traveling on a bus from Ithaca, New York to New Haven, Connecticut, and the bus stopped at the Greyhound station, itself a depressing and dreary place. He sat down on an unraveling, revolving seat at a dirty U-shaped counter. He found himself sitting across from an old woman who initiated a conversation. "Honey, you sure look depressed." He acknowledged that he was, and before he knew it tears were running down



his face. The woman reached her soiled hand across the counter to pat his cheek. He recoiled when he saw her dirt-encrusted fingernails. She simply asked, "What's wrong, honey?" He told her about his fiancé and how much he loved and missed her. He even showed the stranger her picture. The woman said, "Oh, I don't think I've ever seen a more beautiful woman." Then she went on to tell him about her own marriage to a traveling salesman who had since passed away. She told how they both would weep each time he had to go on a

business trip, but how happy they were when he returned. She said, "Marriage is wonderful and you're going to have a beautiful marriage."

She suggested he might feel better if he had something to eat, so she ordered a donut from under the scratched plastic dome. The woman took the donut, broke it, and gave it to him. As she did, an announcement came over the loudspeaker, and she said, "Oh my goodness! My bus is here." With that, she disappeared. It was then that his eyes were opened and he recognized the visitation in the breaking of the donut. God had come to him in the form of a stranger and had put his sadness in another place.

He continues to do the same with each of us. Perhaps we don't recognize him because we're so caught up in our thoughts and worries, but he does come to us in very distinct ways. We simply need to keep our eyes and ears open for he tells us the same thing he told his disciples on the road to Emmaus, "I am with you always!"

Fr. Mark Flynn

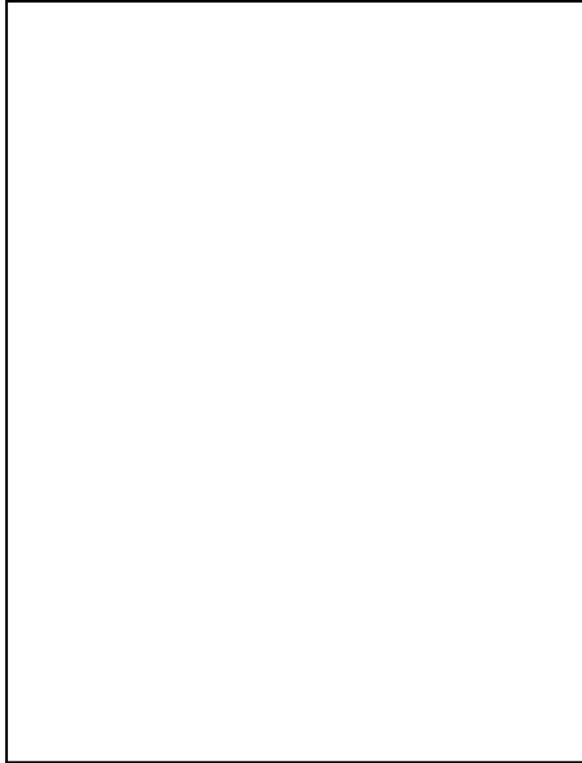
Parish and Family Life Balance

It's difficult, to say the least, to be the "inquiring reporter" interviewing a family about their closely held thoughts on something so personal as religion. In doing these Family Focus interviews, I have found some surprising people of faith, who live the way that Christ preaches in the Gospel.

For this *From the Heart*, I was asked to interview the Adams family and immediately had some preconceived ideas. To my pleasant relief it was a smiling Marilee who opened the door, not Lurch as I had feared. Taking my coat, she brought me into their living room to meet her husband Paul, who stepped forward to shake my hand and offered me a seat on the sofa. They then introduced Brennen 11, a student at Rochambeau Middle School, and Brianne 8, who attends Pomperaug Elementary. Ryan 17, a senior in Pomperaug High School, was out that evening at hockey practice.

I started the interview by trying to set all at ease. "Our spotlight is not to embarrass anyone, but rather to let our parish get to know a family that we feel is participating at Sacred Heart." The Adams's tiny puppy, a lively Christmas gift, took an exceptional interest in my ears, but then settled in Brennen's lap, somehow knowing that playtime was over.

The Adams family has been in Southbury and part of Sacred Heart for four years, with each year bringing more involvement in our parish. I had met Marilee when she signed up for the Social Concerns committee on one of the parish stewardship weekends. She subsequently took over the coordination of a new parish program, Neighbors Helping Neighbors, and really made that function. Marilee believes that with a new co-chair, and several more people on board to provide the needed assistance, the program will become even more active. We spoke of how hard it is for some people to ask for help, not realizing that it is



(left to right, in front) Brennen and Brianne, (back row) Paul, Marilee, and Ryan Adams.

given freely as part of our Christian faith. Marilee agreed it is often difficult to explain that there is no charge, and that Neighbors Helping Neighbors is volunteer-based. She said that they would continue to reach out to whomever needs assistance.

When the Adams family came to Southbury from Newtown, PA in 1998, their transition to living here was made easier through their association with Sacred Heart and its liturgy. Marilee immediately joined Women in Faith, where she made her first friends in the parish.

Subsequently she started teaching CCD and has continued with that commitment.

After serving in the Army as an officer for seven years, Paul joined civilian life where he now directs a sales group for Boeringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals in Ridgefield. His avocation is sports and is fortunate that all of their children share that interest. Paul served as board member and coach of the Southbury Soccer Club. Ryan's and Brennen's participation in ice hockey has given them an opportunity to make new friends in the community. To support Ryan, who in his senior year is the captain of both the soccer and the ice hockey teams, Paul has volunteered as president of both team booster clubs.

Feeling that his involvement with sports was one sided, Paul felt that he should become more involved in Sacred Heart. He joined the weekly meetings of Men's Prayer Group, which has given a real boost to his spiritual well-being. Last spring he was elected to the Parish Council where he's gaining a broader perspective on Sacred Heart. After assisting with teaching the

seventh-grade CCD, he has volunteered for his own sixth-grade class this year. He is also a lector, packing a great deal into a very demanding modern life.

I looked at the younger Adamases next. Ryan assists with the children's liturgy and has attended activities with Young Life, but his main focuses as a high school senior are sports, college selection and his community service projects as part of the National Honor Society. Brennen took part in the children's chorus, and is thinking of becoming an altar server. Brianne has participated in

the Christmas Pageant and enjoys helping her mother with her community service projects.

Asked their feelings about the church in crisis today, they respond as one, expressing the fact that the church has gone through many shining and dark moments since its inception. While our current problems are trying, they are no more or less challenging than many in history. We all agreed that we must pray that these current difficulties will be weathered, but that we must concentrate on the teaching of Christ and remain hopeful that we can depend

on the guidance of our clergy. We must continue to have faith in God and our church.

This is a modern family, with all those demands which society has placed in the way of devotion to the church. Balancing the demands of the secular with those of the spiritual life is difficult and not without its compromises. Again, from the perspective of this inquiring reporter, they are well handled by the Adamases.

Ernie Swanberg

Spread the Word

A general rule of thumb to help you avoid parting with good friends on bad terms is never to discuss politics or religion. This is what most of us have been taught, either directly through our parents, or indirectly through the will of society. God only knows why Americans don't like to reveal opinions or project their beliefs into a sociable conversation, but that's just how our social structure is. At some time you'll have a different viewpoint than your friends', but you'll feel pressured not to speak your mind. Don't make this mistake.

There is a danger in not voicing your opinion. The "silent majority" is the group of people who could have a lasting affect on history, but are held silent by a "tyranny of the minority," a small group of active people who make decisions for the whole, even though they represent only a miniscule percentage of it. How many times in your life have you failed to stand up for your beliefs because they were seemingly unpopular? Is it not true that the uneasy silence of submission is uglier than the brash uncertainty of resistance?

We have a complex social system. Sometimes we are drawn to act, speak, and believe things with which

we might not otherwise agree. Simply remember that every time you choose not to comment on items of discussion, you are letting other people gain a false perception of who you truly are. What do you think about abortion? Did you hear that they are cloning humans? How about this war we are getting into? Do you know about the latest scandal...? Are these things we should be avoiding to be polite? Does our indifference make us better friends and mentors? Or do our honest perspectives towards such controversies define who we are as individuals?

All it takes for evil to succeed is for good people to stand by and do nothing (paraphrased from Edmund Burke, 1795). As an American, you have the freedom of speech; use it wisely. Why shy away from discussing politics and religion? Those are the only interesting things to talk about! Your friends will respect your beliefs, if you respect theirs. It's about time that we discontinue the plight of the silent majority by ending the silence! Everyone has something to say, whether it's a lesson, an experience, a belief, or an eternal truth; everyone has at least one message to spread. All you have to do is find your message, then go out and spread it.

Mark Adam Prybylski

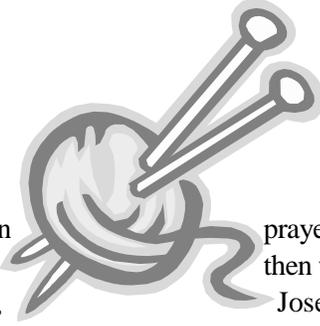
Wrapped in Prayer

The Prayer Shawl Ministry

On November 4, 2002 a Prayer Shawl Ministry began at Sacred Heart Parish. Janet Bristow and Victoria Gab, two graduates of the Women's Leadership Institute, a program in applied feminist spirituality at The Hartford (CT) Seminary, began the first prayer shawl ministry in 1998. After spending a year exploring the feminine face of God, they found a way to reach out to people with their talents and gifts.

The result, inspired by others, came in the form of knitting shawls. Women all over the world have worn shawls. They enfold, comfort, cover, wrap, give solace, warm, hug, shelter, and beautify, symbolic of God, who gives us constant unconditional love.

There were over 30 women at the first meeting at Sacred Heart with their yarn and knitting needles ready to click. We sat around tables and began by lighting candles, one for each of us, and tying a strand of yarn around each other's wrists indicating fellowship. The instructor read a story, and we prayed. While listening to serene music, we began with a simple knit stitch, or for those who crochet, a simple crochet stitch. Soft, cuddly homespun yarn is used with highlights of different colors. We told our stories—about learning how to knit, and that produced a few laughs. We were encouraged to pray while we knitted. For the first 3 knit stitches, our table



prayed to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, then we changed to Jesus, Mary and Joseph for the 3 pearl stitches. Even though some of us had not knitted for years, we tried to keep praying even when we made mistakes and were tempted to say other words.

We stopped for a brief lunch, which we had brought, and the committee provided coffee and sweets. While peaceful music played, we had another silent period of knitting. It was a beautiful sight—women with serene faces seated around tables making the soft sound of clicking with their needles.

The ripple effect of this ministry is spreading across the world as prayer shawl circles are formed. The concept is to pray for the person who will receive the shawl, but that person is a mystery. Will it go to a cancer patient, an expectant mother, a homeless person in a shelter, or perhaps someone in our own parish who is mourning? This ministry has inspired some to knit additional shawls for persons they do know.

We have to thank Elizabeth Tishion, our parish nurse, and two coordinators, Mary Comstock and Joan Shalvoy, for getting this ministry started in our parish. Come join the group. Men and women, giver and receiver will benefit by this token of love. Some of the results on those

who create these shawls are reduced stress, tranquility, creative inspiration and an overall sense of well-being. This form of knitting can be a method of contemplation as well as a fine craft. I know that many new relationships will be formed within the group, and between the group and the shawl recipients.

So powerful is this ministry that we are already seeing positive results. Gail Bunce, one of the members of the group reports, "I was so incredibly touched by how my second shawl was received by our ballroom teacher who is fighting cancer. She called me weeping, telling me that of the many gifts she has received, this was the most personal. Her husband said she finds it so comforting to wrap herself in the shawl while saying her daily prayers."

The second meeting was held on Dec. 4, 2002 in the parish hall, and subsequent meetings are the first Wednesday of every month. Hopefully, as our skill increases, the shawls will be a bit longer than they were at our first session. Pray one, knit one etc. Keep clicking sisters!

Dina Carella

FROM THE LIBRARY OF DEACON MIKE

"The utter powerlessness of God is that God forgives. I hold myself in a position of power by not forgiving myself or others. God does not hold on to that position of power."

-Richard Rohr, O.F.M.

If I had to choose one book as the most comforting and consoling of my spiritual journey—a book that I return to again and again—I would have to name *The Spirituality of Imperfection, Storytelling and the Journey to Wholeness*, by Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketcham. John Bradshaw was not far off the mark when he said, "I think this book comes closer to the real meaning of spirituality than anything I've looked at in the last twenty years."

To appreciate *The Spirituality of Imperfection* fully, it helps to begin with an acknowledgement: "I am not perfect." That is a simple statement of profound truth, the first step toward understanding the human condition. To deny our essential imperfection is to deny our own humanity and ourselves. To acknowledge our essential imperfection is to take the first step toward truth. *The Spirituality of Imperfection*, steeped in the rich traditions of the Hebrew prophets, Greek thinkers, Buddhist sages, and Christian disciples, is a message as timeless as it is timely. This insightful modern work draws on the wisdom stories of the ages to provide an extraordinary wellspring of hope and inspiration to anyone who is looking for spiritual growth and guidance in troubled times.

Who are we? Why do we so often fall short of our goals and desires? By seeking to understand our limitations and accept the inevitability of failure and pain, we begin to ease the hurt and move toward serenity and self-awareness.

In *The Spirituality of Imperfection* Kurtz and Ketcham bring together stories from many spiritual and philosophical paths. The authors weave traditions into a spirituality and a way of thinking and living that work today and speak to anyone who yearns to find meaning within suffering. Beyond theory and technique, this remarkable book offers a way of thinking and living that enables a truly human experience.

If you really want to experience and feel the words of Richard Rohr, "The utter powerlessness of God is that God forgives. I hold myself in a position of power by not forgiving myself or others. God does not hold on to that position of power," do yourself a great service and read *The Spirituality of Imperfection*, a remarkable book.

God Bless



Lauren and the Bishop

“Dummy, how could you not get the joke?” inquired an impatient Lauren.

Although having reached the age of only twelve, my daughter relished the role of the “big sister” and all the requisite perks which attended it, one of which was brow beater. In the utilization of this perk, Lauren was a true master.

So much for a quiet evening of musing in our Bronxville cooperative, I, in the living room and Paul now six years old and Lauren in the large formal dining room we were blessed to have. As an aside, after spending not an inconsiderable sum of money providing desks and chairs (and privacy) for the boys’ (Tommy and Paul) and Lauren’s rooms, (Sean joined our group five years later) somehow this group preferred to transform the dining room into a study hall.

Lauren’s reign of terror worked with Paul in those days, but not with Tommy. Occasionally, as in all Irish families, the adage “might is right” overrules. Although Tommy was three years younger than Lauren, he was now bigger, stronger and faster which all culminated on one occasion in the sudden appearance of a black eye that Lauren indignantly wore. Needless to say, I am sure Tommy was spared the castigation, which Paul now endured from his sister.

I heard the shuffling of dining room chairs which meant that Paul and Lauren were about to join me in my safe haven whether I was encouraging them or not.

Lauren thrust a book into my lap titled *Life is Worth Living* by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen.

“Have you ever heard of him?”

“Oh, yes, Lauren. On occasion, back in the 50’s, I used to watch him on television, Tuesday night from 8 to 8:30. The picture was in black and white. I presume the joke came from the book?”

“No color!” exclaimed a dumbfounded Paul. With Paul, if there ever was an uncertainty about the year of my birth, it was now clear to him that it was sometime right after the Civil War.

“Yeah. It is pretty funny even if ‘he whose wits are dim didn’t get it.’” Lauren nodded in the general direction of Paul.

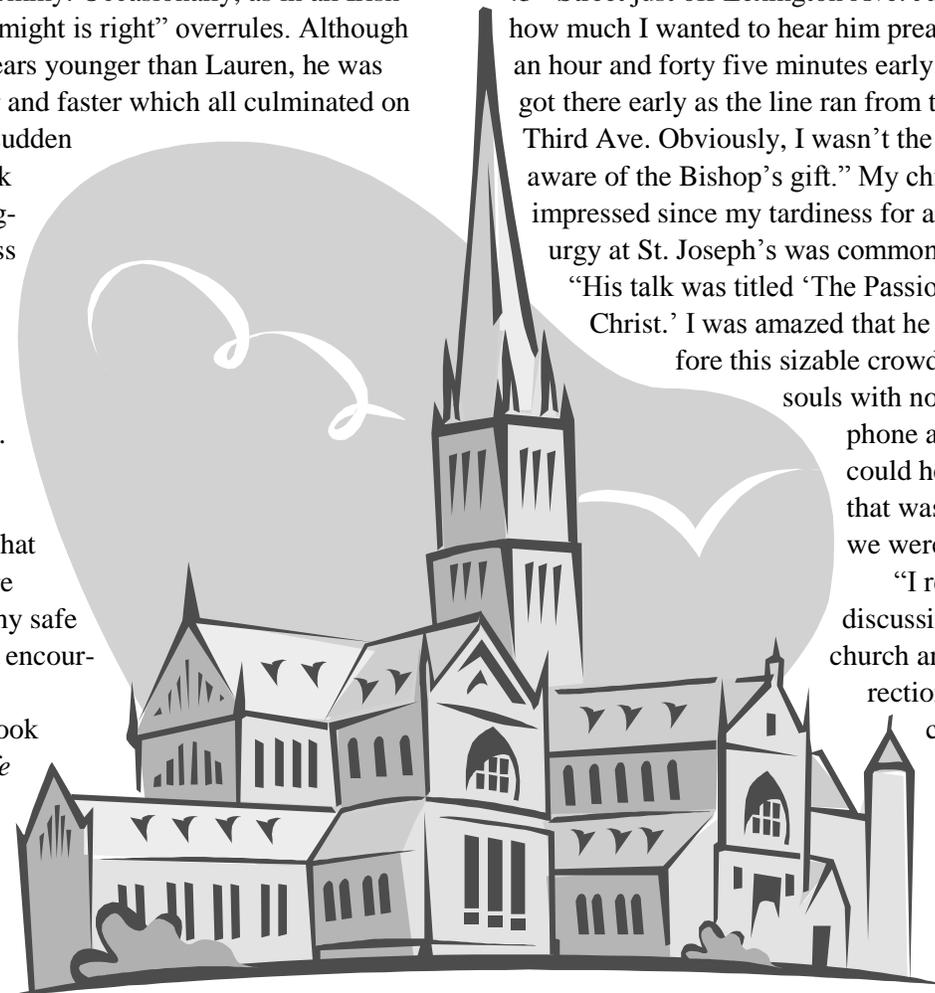
“Sit and I will tell you a little bit about the Bishop!

“Two years ago, at the suggestion of one of my law partners (a Protestant, believe it or not) I was advised that I should hear Bishop Sheen give a talk from noon to three P.M. on Good Friday. And so, at 10:15 a.m., I found myself waiting in line to get into St. Agnes Church on 43rd Street just off Lexington Ave. Just to show you how much I wanted to hear him preach, I was actually an hour and forty five minutes early. Thank heavens I got there early as the line ran from the church east to Third Ave. Obviously, I wasn’t the only one who was aware of the Bishop’s gift.” My children looked impressed since my tardiness for any religious liturgy at St. Joseph’s was common knowledge.

“His talk was titled ‘The Passion and Death of Christ.’ I was amazed that he could stand before this sizable crowd of five hundred

souls with no notes or microphone and talk. You could hear a pin drop, that was how spell bound we were listening to him.

“I remember him discussing the early church and how the resurrection caused the church to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus. But what he stressed, and this I will never forget, was just how impor-



Spotlight on Youth

SHYG and the Message of Easter

tant and central Jesus' resurrection was to our faith and salvation. He joked about the early fathers creating 'Christology.' And before you ask, Lauren, this is the theological study of Jesus Christ. You find out all about this when the Jesuits get their hands on you.

"I recall at the end of his sermon, which went so quickly, he said, (and I am paraphrasing) dramatically raising his voice while looking at the crucifix, 'Jesus is the Christ, Son of Man, Son of God and the Word. We shall never truly understand this until we are in heaven when all things will be revealed to us.' And then he paused and turning to look at us, his privileged audience, he said, 'God Bless you and when you get to heaven may God greet you with a smile.'

"We instinctively realized that he had finished. There were a few seconds of silence and then we stood and applauded and applauded and applauded. Bishop Fulton Sheen never moved except to briefly acknowledge our thunderous appreciation with a slight nod."

I looked over at my two cherubs. "Does that tell you a little about the man, Lauren?"

Paul looked at his sister. "The joke still isn't funny."

"Jerk!"

"No, you're a jerk!"

"No, you're a bigger jerk."

So much for my eloquent remembrance of a Good Friday event.

And life goes on.

Dennis J. McLaughlin

Not too long ago we were celebrating Jesus' birth; now we find ourselves commemorating his death and resurrection. When you first hear the word Easter, you probably think Easter Bunny, candy, eggs; just like at Christmas time, its common to think presents, advertisements, and shopping. It's unfortunate that when we think of Easter, Jesus doesn't pop into our minds right away. In hopes of correcting that thinking, the Sacred Heart Youth Group, a.k.a SHYG, along with the help of Eileen Diganzio are planning events for the Easter season to help children better understand this sacred time in our church's history.

To get the season started, SHYG is holding the Stations of the Cross. On March 7 there will be Stations for teens, but this year it will be a little different. Instead of mandatory participation, kids will be allowed to decide if they want to attend or not. The idea is that, people should come and participate because they want to, not because they have to. It should be an enjoyable and relaxing experience. Two additional Stations will be held, one on March 14 for adults and one on April 4, for Scouts.

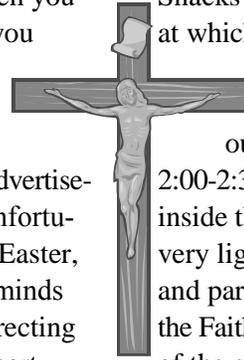
After the stations on March 7, SHYG will hold a lock-in retreat for grades 9-12. During the lock-in, preparations will be made for Holy Thursday and Good Friday events, but the focus of the lock-in is on Lent and your relationship with Jesus. The next retreat is on Holy Thursday for

grades seven and up. The seder supper will kick off everything; Mass will follow, then the retreat will begin. Snacks will be served until midnight, at which time everyone will begin to fast. During the night, sandwiches will be made to help out the food shelter, and around 2:00-2:30 a.m. all will go to sleep inside the church. In the morning a very light breakfast will be served and participants will get ready for the Faith Walk which is the portrayal of the events that took place while Jesus was on his way to Calvary. It starts at Saint Peter's Lutheran Church and comes to an emotional end at Sacred Heart.

SHYG does a great job in offering opportunities for everyone in our community to come closer to God, closer to each other, and to learn more about our religion. Recently the group held a coffee house with an "open mic" at the church. Varieties of Starbucks coffee were served, and people were invited to bring instruments, which they could play and sing along. SHYG is also starting to plan fundraising activities so that kids can go to work camp in Elmira, NY, where they will participate in helping out the community there.

With all these upcoming activities for the youth, hopefully, the next time we hear the word Easter we aren't controlled by an overwhelming craving for a Cadbury egg, but rather have a greater appreciation for our religion.

Matthew LeFurge



Esther, a Jewish Queen

In the midst of a life of great wealth, the Old Testament queen Esther fasted and prayed, prepared and gathered strength, to serve her people and her God. She is what is called in literature and theology a type, an example whose story expresses different levels of ideas, from the historical to the allegorical to the symbolic. Her story has Lenten sacrificial themes, and culminates, like Easter, in a celebration of deliverance.

Susan Tierney

The Old Testament Book of Esther has all the ingredients of a modern best-selling novel: intrigue, hate, love, deception, and excitement. It is a tale that opens in the splendor of a Persian palace some time between 404 and 358 B.C. Esther has been controversial because not once does it use the name of God, but the story became important in Jewish history for depicting the victory of truth and justice over persecution. Esther, whose name means star, became the heroine in a story of salvation for her people.

Esther was a young and beautiful girl who came from a noble Jewish family living in Palestine. She was an orphan reared by her cousin Mordecai, an official at the palace gate.

King Ahasuerus of Persia lived in a sumptuous palace filled with gold and servants. Queen Vashti was a woman of nobility and honor who had the courage to refuse the king's

request when he summoned her to his feast. She refused to be humiliated when the king wanted to show off her beauty. Infuriated, the king immediately deposed her.

Mordecai acted quickly when he learned the queen had been removed and the king had issued an order that beautiful young virgins were to be



assembled. The maiden who most pleased the king would replace Vashti. Mordecai urged Esther to join the assembly, but not reveal her Jewish identity. When Esther was presented to the king, he chose her above all the others because of her outstanding beauty. A Jewish orphan became queen of a powerful empire. Queen Esther soon gained the people's re-

spect and love through her sound judgment, self-control, and the ability to think of others first.

A short time after becoming queen, Esther discovered that Haman, the king's vizier and favorite, hated the Jews. Haman demanded that everyone bow down to him, but Mordecai refused, knowing how much this evil man despised his people. As a result, Haman plotted the destruction of all the Jews in the empire. Mordecai told Esther she must speak to the king. "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" But the king had not summoned her to his chambers for 30 days and the palace law said that anyone who entered into the inner court without being called was to be put to death—unless the king offered forgiveness by holding out the golden scepter. To prepare for the ordeal ahead, Esther ordered all the Jews to fast. After her fast, she put on her most beautiful robes to appear as queenly and beautiful as possible. She entered the king's chamber. He held out the golden scepter. She was saved.

Esther wisely knew the king would react emotionally, not rationally, as he had with Vashti. When the king told Esther she could have anything she wanted, she asked him to invite Haman to a banquet in her quarters. Haman was pleased that the queen thought so highly of him. Af-

ter the banquet, the king called for the Book of Memorable Deeds, where he found the story that Mordecai had once saved his life when two palace eunuchs had plotted to destroy him. Mordecai had never been rewarded for the deed. Haman meanwhile plotted to have Mordecai hanged and was surprised to learn that the king instead desired to honor Mordecai.

At a second banquet, Queen Esther pleased the king so much he asked what he could do for her. She fell at his feet and cried, "We are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain. The adversary is this wicked Haman." Haman threw himself at her feet begging for his life, but the king ordered Haman to be hanged on the gallows prepared for Mordecai. The king gave Esther the power

and wealth of the House of Haman, named Mordecai vizier, and wrote into the law in the Roll of Esther that Jews could defend themselves and slay their enemies.

All the Jews in Persia celebrated this deliverance with the celebration of Purim, named because Haman had cast pur—a lot—to pick a favorable day for killing the Jews. At Purim, March 14-15, the Roll of Esther is read in synagogues all over the world. Esther is admired for her fearlessness, intelligence, deep insight, and prudence. "For such a time as this," Mordecai told Esther, she was born. She did what she could to save her people. We too are called to bring people to the God who is always ready to save us.

Dina Carella



The Mirror

In spots I should be flat I bulge;
Where I should bulge I sag.
The very best designer frocks
Fit like a burlap bag.

I went to buy a slinky dress—
The type that drives men wild.
I looked into the mirror
And thought I was with child.

When it comes to buying fancy clothes,
A glamour gal I'm not.
So I just do the best I can
To cover what I've got.

Irma Rilling

St. Patrick

(Continued from page 2)

he became a bishop and went back to Ireland. Although it may seem surprising that he went back to where he was once a slave, Patrick said he had a vision where Irish children begged him to come back and preach the Gospel.

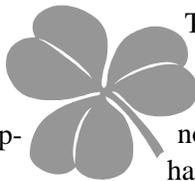
He journeyed far and wide throughout Ireland baptizing and confirming with untiring zeal. The many miracles he performed enabled him to convert much of the country. His ardor and deep faith made him a persuasive preacher and his courage so impressed Loigaire, the Irish king, that Patrick was given the king's protection.

He established a cathedral at Armagh, which became the center of the church in Ireland. He is sometimes known as Patrick of Armagh. In the 30 years he spent in Ireland, he

established churches and monasteries, raised the standards of learning and brought Ireland in step with other countries allied with Rome.

What about the shamrocks and snakes? It is said Patrick used the three-leafed shamrock; the national flower of Ireland, to explain the Holy Trinity to unbelievers by showing them the three leaves growing from one stem. Although there is no historical documentation, legend has it that St. Patrick gathered all the snakes in Ireland together, threw them in a box and tossed the box into the Irish Sea. That is why there are no snakes in Ireland today and why the Irish Sea is so turbulent. All the snakes are tossing about in their box trying to get out!

St. Patrick's feast day is March 17, which is the day of his death.



Diane Tomas

Accept Us As We Are!

My brothers and sisters,
Accept us as we are, men, who like you, need the mercy of God—poor men, weak, sinful, with faults and talents.

Though we are men called by God, chosen by him to be the servants of the altar in your holy community, we too grope through the darkness of the world. All we can do is travel with you into the light of God, our Father, who loves us, forgives us, and sends himself in Jesus Christ and in the grace of the Holy Spirit.

So you see, you must carry us just as we must carry you. And we can only beg of you: Pray for us. Have patience with us. Carry us. Accept God's word and his holy mysteries from us.

Karl Rahner

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