



From the Heart

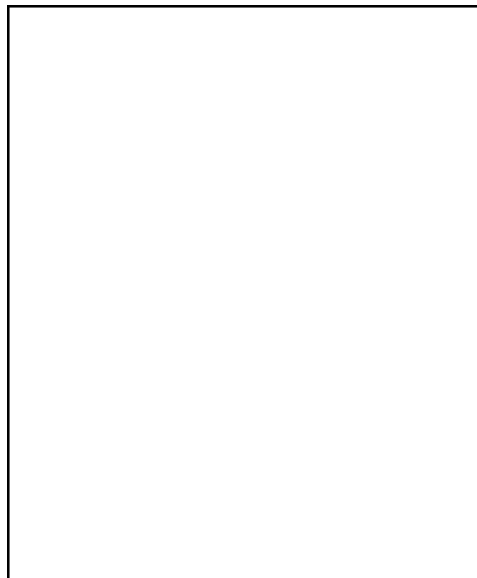
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Hail and Farewell

For the first time since 1984, Sacred Heart Parish welcomes a new pastor, Father Joseph Donnelly. This Waterbury native and graduate of Sacred Heart High School was a classmate of Father Flynn in St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, Connecticut where he was later Spiritual Director. His ministry was largely non pastoral, teaching at St. Joseph's College in Connecticut and North American College in Rome, Italy until he was appointed pastor on a collaborative team ministry to St. Bridget's Church in Manchester, where he served for the past 13 years until being sent to pastor us here.

Father Joe, as he likes to be called, is pleased that this, his second parish, is so attractive, well-organized and active in ministries. He sees this as a springboard to take our faith community to the next step. But first, he wants to "listen to the story" of Sacred Heart so that we can go forward and "make church together." His philosophy reflects his collaborative pastoral style knowing that the people of God bring together "many gifts but the same spirit, since *we* are the church."

He likens the Eucharist to coming together for a family dinner. Being a true member of the church is not only "believing but belonging." To this end, he is a staunch advocate of the church's



Father Joseph Donnelly

presence in the larger community, in social ministry, to the poor, in welfare reform, to help shape social culture. He is also a proponent of Small Christian Communities as a means for "scripture and life to connect," and as a means of "doing parish differently." Father Joe also sees the potential for the parish web site as a newly effective vehicle to communicate to the parish and beyond, especially to the youth. His goal is to "build upon the great tradition that is Sacred Heart Parish" with a collaborative style of social awareness, making faith

(Continued on page 2)

Vol. 14, No. 3
August 2003

Inside this issue:

Family Focus

Page 3

Spotlight on Youth

Page 4

Return to Steubenville

Page 4

Parish Men's Retreat

Page 5

Time to Awaken...

Page 6

Women in the Bible

Page 7

Givers and Takers

Page 8

Benedict and Scholastica

Page 9

From the Library...

Page 10

And My Cherubs...

Page 11

Hail and Farewell

(Continued from cover)

more real through sharing it with others, that is, “being religious in a different way.”

We welcome Fr. Donnelly as our new shepherd and look forward to getting to know him and working with him as we continue to develop a closer relationship with Christ and his teachings.

Father Mark Flynn came here in 1984 to build a church for a growing parish and that he did—a gathering place to worship with its pews surrounding an altar with the risen Christ above, the Blessed Mother (with child) in a special space, the walk-in Baptismal font and other touches only he could devise with an atrium to gather in Christian fellowship as well. But more than a church he built a faith community. Under his direction twenty-nine (29!) still

active ministries were established. He brought 80 adults into the Roman Catholic faith through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program, many of whom were baptized by emersion, in the aforementioned font. During his 19 years here at Sacred Heart, there were 1,112 Baptisms, 1,750 First Communions, 1,014 Confirmations, 315 marriages and 840 funeral Masses.

He brought us together with spiritual liturgies especially during the Easter Triduum, initiated the Good Friday Faith Walk as an ecumenical Southbury tradition, and touched our lives in countless other ways. We can’t thank him enough for all he has done for us, but he views it as a “growing experience” in his faith journey. As he states, “I came here to help the parishioners of Sacred

Heart, but they ended up doing more for me than I could ever do for them.”

We all wish Father Flynn only the best as the new pastor of St. Patrick’s in Farmington. He was called there to build a new church but as we all know, guided again by the Holy Spirit, he will build a new faith community for his fortunate new parishioners.

Rich Stephens

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.



In July, Father Flynn handed Father Donnelly the keys to Sacred Heart Church as he bid this parish farewell and welcomed its new pastor.

“Hail Mary full of Grace...”

This beginning of the prayer to the Blessed Virgin was the inspiration for the name of Barry and Marge Griffin’s new daughter, Grace. This precocious, intelligent, bright three and half year old is the center of their family. When asked about her brother Neil, Grace responded without pause, “He always does good things for me.”

Barry and Marge lived in Southington for sixteen years after their marriage, following Barry’s employment as an accountant. They were pleased to move to Southbury in 1996, where Marge grew up, even though it is quite a commute for Barry, who now manages accounts receivable for a group of orthopedic doctors in Wallingford.

Initially seemingly shy, Grace met me in the driveway of their home along with her dad and brother. After our greeting, they led me to a spot on their deck overlooking the pool. Settling down with cool drinks on this steamy June evening, I said, “Tell me about your involvement in our Sacred Heart Parish.”

Barry responded quickly that he found himself in a supportive role, and that it is really Marge who makes the effort for the Griffins. Neil, their fifteen-year old son, said much the same, while Grace helped herself to more blackberries.

Having met Marge while serving on the parish council, which she was later to chair, I really didn’t have any idea of her accomplishments. It started by teaching CCD during her sixteen-year tenure as a teacher in Region 15, long before her days on the council. From there she was asked to assume the duties of eucharistic minister, which she has expanded to serve those in need at Mediplex and East Hill Woods.

She became involved with Women of Faith; works for the Action for Justice causes and currently has a special interest in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a Montessori religious education course. With all these varied interests, which include tutoring in Spanish in her secular life, one might think that is enough. However, she has now accepted the position of youth minister for the parish. With the new assignment she will oversee the ninth and tenth

grade confirmation and general youth activities. She certainly deserves our prayers.

I asked Neil what he did and found his reply different from what I expected. He has an interest in science and enjoys school, but typical of a sophomore, he is not sure where this will lead. Otherwise he has interests in track and field where he has done well in the pole vault. Not many have the agility required, and he could carry such skill right into college. He was rightfully proud of having been chosen student ambassador last year, which meant an extended trip in Europe where he was able to see the full spectrum of man’s nature, with stops at the Maunthausen Concentration Camp and The Vatican. The whole trip will be long remembered, I’m sure.

Neil is an altar server at Sacred Heart and has most recently participated in the Steubenville experience, a youth conclave in Massachusetts.

I couldn’t help but ask a couple of questions about our Catholic Church, one regarding the media attention to our misdemeanors and the second more personal, our change in leadership at Sacred Heart. I’m sure most will have an opinion on the latter by the time this interview hits the press. To the former, the Griffins responded that our church is made up of many people who administer to the spiritual and temporal needs of the congregation. We can only pray that those men who made mistakes will learn from them, and that the church will be stronger for it. As for our new pastor, Fr. Donnelly, “Until we know him, we will hold our opinion.”

When you observe Marge in her robes, pixel in one hand and Grace in the other heading for her “ladies” at East Hills Woods, be assured that those ladies receive a double dose of the Lord’s grace from the Eucharist and the love of Grace.

Ernie Swanberg



Spotlight on Youth

On the Journey to Priesthood

Joe Zukoski's First Year at Seminary

Many of us have chosen or will choose to attend college in order to study a variety of different subjects. It's common to see students studying to be engineers, artists or scientists these days, but what isn't seen as often is a student studying to be a priest. Southbury and Sacred Heart are lucky to have a young man who is on his journey to becoming a priest.

Joe Zukoski, who has been an active member at Sacred Heart, has just completed his first year at St. John's Seminary College in Boston. He attended this school along with no more than 100 other students. There were about 20 students in the college division and about 60 more in the theology division, which is the next step to becoming a priest. At college, Joe was given his own room

for personal reflection and prayer. His typical day started at 7:00 am with a morning prayer and ended with a communal Lectio Divina, a 30-minute quiet prayer service just before dinner.

Joe commented that the classes were very intense and a lot was expected from the students, but the professors were always very helpful. Although Joe took most of his courses at St. John's, he took a few general courses at nearby Boston College.

A few days each week he participated in formation night where all the students would get together for discussions and prayer services to help them with their vocation. The Seminarians also participated in Christian services (better known to the students as "field-ed") that involved volunteering a few hours each week in a Christian-based organization. Joe assisted the youth group, which planned events for teens.

Each seminarian was also given a spiritual director, a priest counselor who helps with prayer life and personal issues. The seminarians are encouraged to meet with them at least once every two weeks.

Although Joe especially enjoyed his first year at St. John's Seminary College, the school will be closing, and all the seminarians from Hartford will transfer to St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia to continue their education. Joe plans to stay at St. Charles until he graduates the college division, and then it is up to the Bishop to decide where he will be sent next.

Even though these guys are studying to become priests they are still just like any other college students; they all like to have fun. They enjoying going to the movies, going out to dinner or just chilling with their friends.

Matt LaFurge

Return to Steubenville East

Six Sacred Heart teens and three chaperones spent a glorious faith filled weekend at the Steubenville East Conference in July along with approximately 3000 other Catholic youth. Fired by the Holy Spirit, all in attendance were transformed by his love, and many expressed the deep desire for more youthful praise and worship gatherings and a need for Bible study to more intimately connect with Jesus.

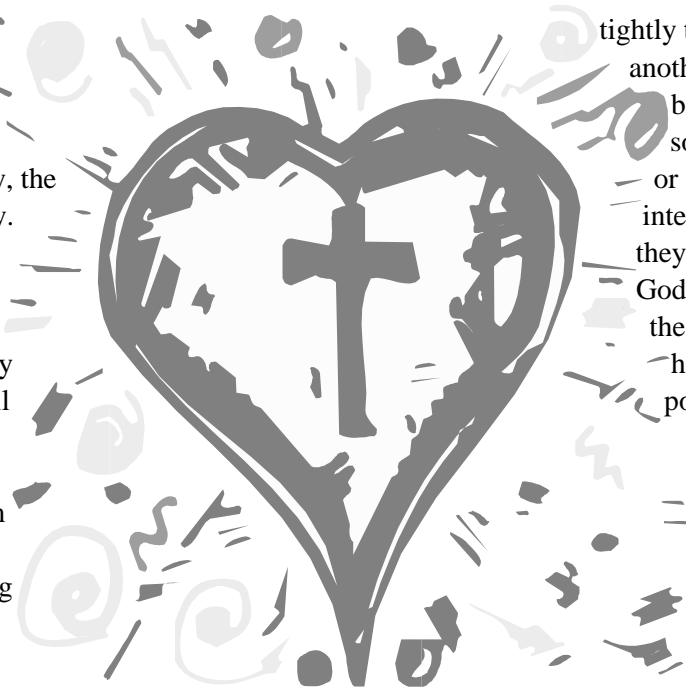
What keeps many of the youth returning to this event in Attleboro, Massachusetts each year despite the "roughing it" conditions? (This was the third year for two

of our six participants). Perhaps it is the general feeling of acceptance, understanding and love that permeates the large tent as people participate in adoration, and Mass and listen to dynamic speakers who inspire emotion and awe. The young listened to Christian bands play music in all modern styles; they sang, danced, clapped hands, bounced beach balls, and leapt for joy as they were filled with the transforming love of God.

Sue Gannon, one of the three Sacred Heart chaperones, remarked, "Actions speak louder than words. The youth from our parish participated in every activity, and

even stayed an extra hour after Mass on Sunday, wanting to hear God speak to their hearts.” Chaperoning with Sue Gannon were her husband Larry, the lead chaperone, and Pam Curley.

Everyone had a great time and many will return next year. To get a real feel for the awesomeness of the experience, why not ask those who attended: Neil Griffin, Faye Wilson, Melissa Marchionna, Katie Keefe, and Thomas and Patrick Curley. I’m sure they will tell you about the giant sleeping tents (one housing the boys and one for girls) where their sleeping bags fit so



tightly together they could feel one another’s breathing, or about the box lunch/pizza meals that some liked and some did not, or about the great time they had interacting with other kids, or they might even tell you that God was so real, so present, that they were very much a part of him, as they felt his healing power and awesome majesty.

Dolores Matzen

Parish Men’s Retreat

All but three grammar school years, all high school, college and graduate school spent in Catholic institutions, almost twenty years active in Sacred Heart ministries, and never once in all that time had I attended a retreat! Maybe because I felt they were for “holy rollers” or feared the discomfort of introspection, probably both, but I successfully avoided them despite encouragement from my spouse and other well-intentioned prodders over the years.

For those of you who have heard Deacon Mike Kulas preach or have the good fortune to know him, you will understand why I couldn’t refuse his invitation to join him on the Sacred Heart Men’s retreat weekend last fall at Holy Family Retreat House.

I was negatively predisposed (see above) and in the throes of a long sought and stressful job (sound fa-

miliar?), and very dependent on my weekends, chores and all, to get much needed diversion and relief. But for Mike—I had to say yes, but thought “Oh No!” Well, I’m here to say that I now wonder what took me so long?

I can’t say that I had an “epiphany” or spiritual renewal of any kind. What I can say is that I had a peaceful period of time away, a time to think and maybe even pray a bit, away from family, responsibilities, worries, etc. This was a good thing. I spent time getting to know a good acquaintance that became a good friend (I strongly recommend going with someone you know if possible). The musical liturgies, both the singing and instrumentation were excellent. The talks were relevant and thought provoking, and the food was plentiful and good. The camaraderie was the best part! I made new friends not just from Sacred

Heart but also from other parishes that participate in the same weekend each year. I came away refreshed, glad that I accepted Mike’s invitation and eager to participate again October 24-26, 2003.

Take it from someone who was probably a lot like you (since our parish’s attendance is regularly sparse), give yourself a break, perhaps ask a friend to go with you on retreat, and maybe next year you will want to write this article.

Please call Gerry Voity at 203 264 9828 or e-mail gvoity@aol.com if you have any questions or to make a reservation. Or if you like, you may contact me at 203 264-0672, and we can form a group.

Rich Stephens



Time to Awaken the Greatest Generation

Legion of Decency, where are you when we need you? When many of us were in grammar school, the Catholic Church published a list of those motion pictures and, I believe, books that were considered unfit, primarily for the youth. This became the must-see list for teens, and parents had to keep watchful eyes to be sure that those were not the ones seen. Those of us who were the youth of that time realize in retrospect that there were some fine classic works on that list.

Most of us choose to ignore those truly indecent and

immoral things in today's society. We feel that by not buying into them we have done our part, not so! Recently Good Morning America featured some new video games, and let me tell you, it ain't Pacman anymore, for those of you who relate to that gobbling smiling face. These new videos that 9 to 15 year old kids, predominantly boys will play are mindless killing games, and in most cases the targets are scantily clad women.

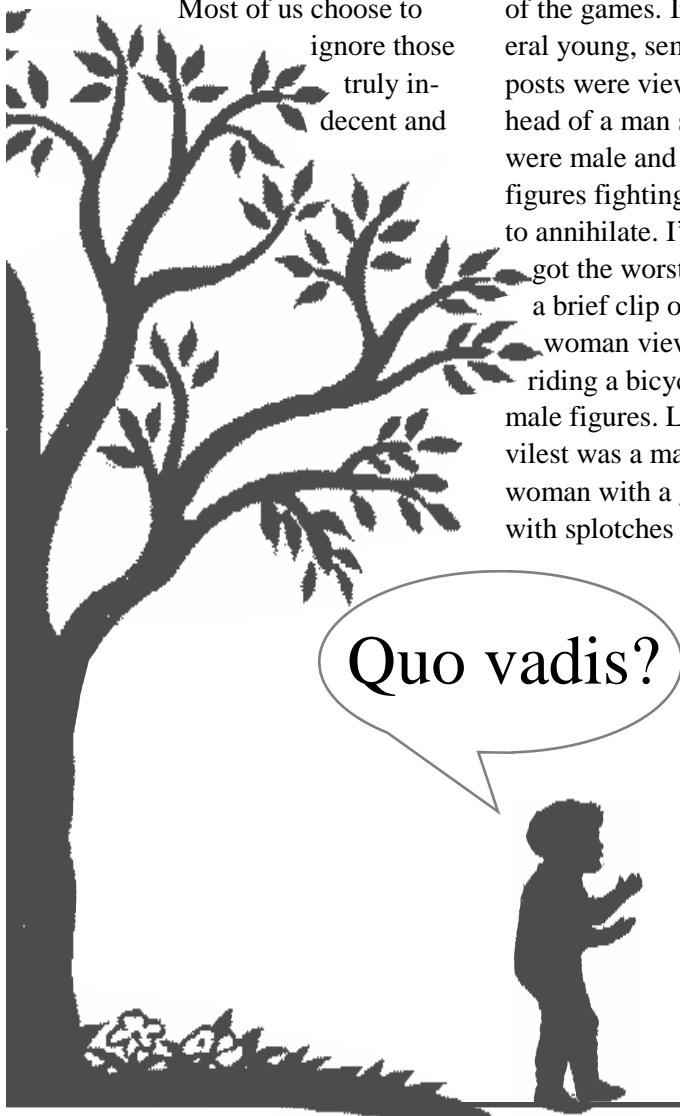
The program presented snippets of the games. In the first game several young, seminude, women tied to posts were viewed from over the head of a man shooting at them. Next were male and female martial arts figures fighting, not just to win, but to annihilate. I'll let you guess who got the worst of it. Then there was a brief clip of a mostly naked woman viewed from the rear, riding a bicycle and running over male figures. Last and perhaps the vilest was a male figure beating a woman with a golf club, complete with splotches of red blood. What's

next, a wood chipper?

I can only remember Jane Russell in *The Outlaw* and not her companion in that hay scene which put that picture on "the list." Even in *From Here to Eternity* Burt Lancaster wrestled with a very willing Deborah Kerr. In either case there was no sadistic treatment of women for public pleasure and entertainment. The advent of the computer has brought an onslaught of porn, and the ACLU defends it as freedom of speech or expression. If our society has to put up with these outrageously depraved items for entertainment, they should be sold only in the "adult shop" marked with poison labels carrying warnings as do liquor and tobacco.

When giving your grandson that \$20 for his birthday, ask what he will do with it. If he says video games ask what game; ask if you can buy it; ask to preview the game to be sure it is to your liking and in keeping with the values you set for your grandson.

Ernie Swanberg



Lydia Conducts Business as Usual

A successful businesswoman, Lydia represented the “new woman” in her era around 50-60 AD. Her marital status is unknown since no husband is mentioned in the Bible. She was a woman of charm, determination, foresight and generosity. In those days women did not travel as she did to sell her purple cloth and dye.

Lydia lived in Philippi, a Roman colony and a leading trade center in the district of Macedonia. A Gentile, she was one of a few that believed in one God. This shows her determination and independence since she worked with pagans and idolaters.

When St. Paul traveled to Macedonia to preach the Gospel, he met Lydia with a group of women who often spent time on the bank at Philippi. These women listened to Paul as he related the new Gospel proclaimed in Jerusalem by Jesus Christ. Lydia accepted the good news and became the first European to be baptized. Eventually her entire household followed her example.

By not considering the impact her conversion might have had on her business, she demonstrated that Christ came first in her life. Because Lydia was a woman of

means (she dealt with the elite in her transactions), people paid attention to her. They knew she had good judgment because of the way she conducted her business affairs. She opened her home to Paul, allowing him to preach, and soon many people came to her house, believed and were baptized. She was a strong force in spreading the Gospel through Europe and even further westward.

Another remarkable thing about this woman is that even when Paul was released from prison, she still allowed him in her home to teach the Gospel.

This did not make good business sense because not everyone accepted the Gospel teachings. For God's glory, however, it made very good sense. Is it any wonder in Paul's letter to the Philippians that he wrote with such joy, deep feelings and love towards these people of Philippi who with Lydia responded so well to the “good news.”

Businessmen and women today would do well to use Lydia as their role model.

Dina Carella



Parish Council

(from left) Newly elected Chairperson Paul Adams, Joseph Stango, Diane Tomas, Sally Knauf, Victoria Cavalea, Elaine Hendrickson, LoriDePalma and George Davy. Missing from photo are Gino Albertario, Joe Adonizio, Rosemary Butterly and Tom Kokinchak.

Givers and Takers

One of the first lessons we are ever taught is to share our toys. It's an action that we could say is fundamental to the survival of a civilized society because giving is crucial to having healthy, meaningful relationships with other people. Taking for one's self has been more popular than giving to others in our society at times. Our duty as disciples of Christ is to give in as many ways as we can for the sake of humanity, and so that we may improve ourselves to better follow his example.

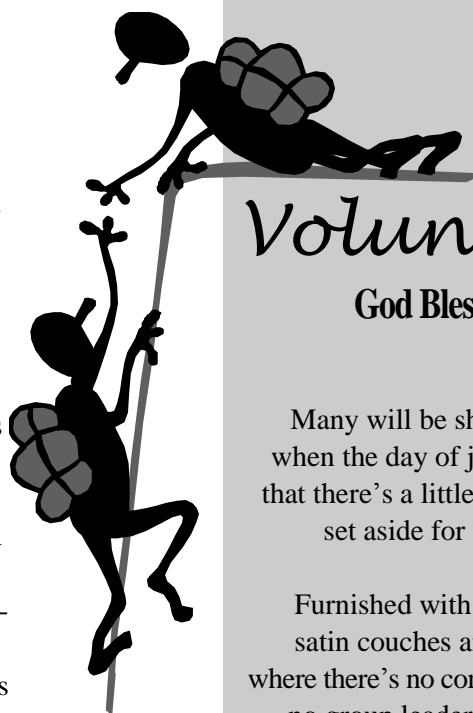
There are two broad types of personalities that people tend to develop—givers and takers. Everyone has sentimental objects that they don't want to share with others, but this behavior can easily lead to a path of personal isolation and insecurity when it applies to strength of will, love and affection, and even material objects. Jesus warned people about materialism, which can be defined as putting the value of objects above people.

There is no doubt in my mind that this nation has some serious issues with materialism. Money cannot make us happy, and the sooner we wake up to this fact the happier we will be. Jesus was acutely aware of the problems that greed caused his people, and he warned us against it. In his wisdom he knew that when we die we would not be taking our objects of wealth with us—they would mean nothing in the afterlife. There is no point in being selfish because we ALL die and melt away from the physical plane of existence into a spiritual one.

The givers are few and far between these days, rarities so delightful to encounter, but so difficult to find. A giver is a person who thinks of others first. They are very unusual because most of us are wired to think of our own needs first. Our existence and survival depend on our actions so we do things to improve our own welfare. After we are satisfied, then we help others. A true giver helps others first, often to his or her own disadvantage.

We should all strive to develop more of the giver in us, not because it will lead us to fame, fortune, or glory (it won't), but because it's the righteous path to take. It is the ultimate sign of security, confidence, and achievement when no worldly goods can weigh down a person's spirits. I've met quite a few chronic "takers" and I'm sure you have as well, slightly angry, bitter, unpleasant to be around and generally ungrateful. It's not the type of person I want or strive to be, nor is it what the world needs. It is our duty—and should be our pleasure—to give in as many ways as possible using the gifts God has provided us. In the end, the person that gives freely and unconditionally will be in great favor with God.

Mark Adam Prybylski



Volunteers

God Bless Them

Many will be shocked to find when the day of judgment nears, that there's a little place in heaven set aside for volunteers.

Furnished with big recliners, satin couches and footstools, where there's no committee chairmen, no group leaders or car pools.

No eager team that needs a coach, no bazaar and no bake sale, there will be nothing to staple, not one thing to fold or mail.

Telephone lists will be outlawed, but a finger snap will bring cool drinks and gourmet dinners and treats fit for a king.

“Who'll serve these privileged few and work for all they're worth?”
Why...all those who reaped the benefits and not once volunteered on earth!

Irma Rilling

Benedict and Scholastica, Twin Saints

There are several sibling saints such as James and John and Martha, Mary and Lazarus, whom we know from the Bible, but Benedict and Scholastica are the only known twins. Much of what we know about them comes from *Dialogues* written by Pope Saint Gregory the Great.

The twins were born in 480 in Nursia, Italy; their mother died in childbirth. From her youth, Scholastica was consecrated to the Lord and led a holy and devout life. She stayed at home with her father, when Benedict left for Rome to continue his education at age 17. Increasingly revolted by the moral depravity and corruption he found there, Benedict left and journeyed 30 miles to the mountainous village of Enfide, but after a few years there, he heard God asking him to totally abandon the world. In search of a solitary life Benedict proceeded to Subiaco, where he dwelt in a cave for three years, tempted constantly by the devil. Eventually, disciples began to hear of Benedict's sanctity and miraculous powers and flocked to him. He came out of seclusion and organized those who wished to follow him into 12 monasteries, making Subiaco a center for learning and spirituality.

In 525 Benedict left Subiaco and went to Monte Cassino where he brought Christianity back to the people and built the most famous abbey in the world, known as the birthplace of western monasticism. It was there he wrote his famous Benedictine Rule that prescribed common sense, a life of strict denial, prayer, study and work. Benedict was renowned for his holiness and wisdom. He counseled rulers and Popes, cured the sick, gave food to the poor and raised people from the dead.

Upon their father's death, Scholastica went to Monte

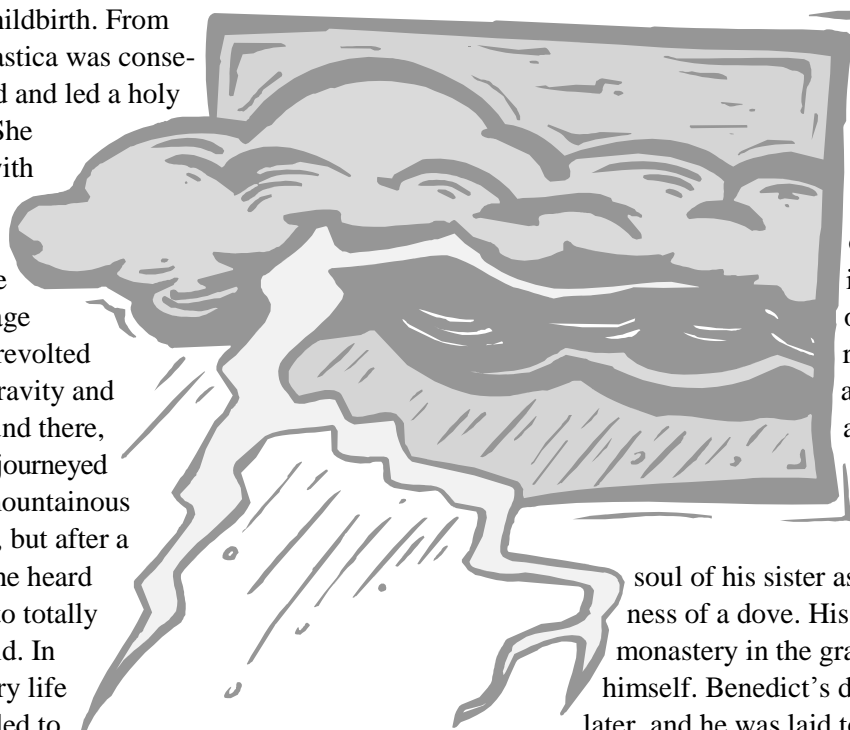
Cassino and joined her brother in his holy work. She established a nunnery about five miles away from her brother's monastery and is considered the first Benedictine nun.

The twins would meet once a year in a house halfway between their two communities and spend time in prayer and conversation. In *Dialogues* a wonderful story is told about their last meeting.

The day was coming to an end, and Scholastica, sensing the end of her life was near, asked her brother to stay the night and talk more on spiritual matters, including heaven. Citing the rules of the monastery, Benedict refused. Scholastica prayed, and immediately there began a thunderstorm so violent that Benedict could not leave.

Three days later Scholastica died, and Benedict saw the soul of his sister ascend into heaven in the likeness of a dove. His monks buried her body at the monastery in the grave Benedict had prepared for himself. Benedict's death followed four years later, and he was laid to rest with his sister.

There is much debate over the historical nature of *Dialogues*, and some suggest St. Gregory wrote it to teach spiritual truths. The story of Benedict and Scholastica is full of symbols and messages. Benedict means "blessed" and Scholastica means "student or teacher." Their names together symbolize wholeness between the active and contemplative life. Benedict shows compassion and love, but when he meets with his sister the roles are reversed. God answers Scholastica's prayers to spend more time with her brother by sending the storm, while Benedict becomes angry because he is unable to adhere to his strict monastic rule of not spending the night outside of the monastery. This story teaches us that it is important and necessary to follow laws, but sometimes love and compassion need to overrule them.



Diane Tomas

FROM THE LIBRARY OF DEACON MIKE

“The hardest lesson to learn in life is unconditional love...everything is bearable when there is love...my (final) wish is that you try to give more people more love. It is the only thing that lives forever.”

Conclusion of *The Wheel of Life: A Memoir of Living and Dying* by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

A book that I often return to for inspiration and one that I eagerly recommend for your reading is the exquisitely beautiful book by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, M.D., *The Wheel of Life: A Memoir of Living and Dying*.

In 1969 psychiatrist Kubler-Ross wrote *On Death and Dying*, a book in which she presented dialogues with dying patients on what it was like to be terminally ill, and identified what came to be known worldwide as “near-death experiences.” Until then, Kubler-Ross contends, the medical establishment had not only ignored the subject of death, but had actively avoided it due to its implication of medical failure.

Now, after ten books that empa-

thetically tracked our culture’s ways of dealing with sickness, death and spirituality, Kubler-Ross offers her own story in what would be her final book. The firstborn of triplet girls, she describes a childhood surrounded by mountains, wildflowers and a loving family in Switzerland. She shares stories of her marriage and motherhood, her deep desire to help others and to restore humanity to medicine, her explorations of out-of-body experiences and encounters with spirit guides, and the extreme resistance to her never-realized plan of caring for AIDS babies on her Virginia farm.

Kubler-Ross seems to have lived several lifetimes in one, but a series of strokes had slowed her down to the point where a reporter asked her if she was ready to retire. She pointed to the stacks of letters in her office and said, “You get a letter from a parent whose child has been murdered. How can you say, ‘I’m retiring now.’” Would she do anything differently if she had her life to live over? She abruptly rose and went inside her office. When she returned

she handed the reporter a letter. It was from a 50-year-old woman dying of cancer. The letter read, in part: **“If I had my life to live over again, I would take more time to smell the roses. I would be more of a risk-taker. I would pick more blueberries and wildflowers. And I would eat more chocolate. Lots more chocolate.”** Elisabeth Kubler-Ross grinned and said, “There’s your answer.”

She says the one question that everyone must answer at the end of life is, **“What have you done to help?”** In a culture that often prefers to sweep death under a carpet and hide it there, Kubler-Ross consistently defied common wisdom to bring it into the light and hold it there for us to see and **not be afraid.** Driven by compassion, undeterred by obstacles, she has shown me through this story of her remarkable life that free will is our greatest gift and that our goal is spiritual evolution.

May this book bring to you as much comfort, consolation and joy as it has brought to me.

God Bless

Parish Picnic



Mark your calendars! The Sacred Heart Parish picnic will be held at Ballentine Park on Sunday, September 14, 2003, following the 11:00 am Mass, which will also be held at the park weather permitting. Expect plenty of fun as well as good food, music, bingo, a 50/50 raffle, and for the kids, face painting, balloons, games and pony rides.

The cost has remained the same as in previous years, \$5.00 per person, with a maximum charge of \$20.00 for families with children under 16.

Tickets will be on sale after all weekend Masses, and can also be purchased at the door. Won’t you join us for a great time with your parish family?

And My Cherubs Went off to School

“Alleluia! Hosanna in the Highest! The little cherubs go back to school tomorrow,” I exclaimed to the silence of my living room as I sat in my easy chair one September Sunday evening a long time ago. Knowing me, I probably fixed myself another martini, happy that the responsibility of their education, religious and otherwise, was being returned to those who are ensconced in the hallowed and sacred halls of St. Joseph’s Grammar School, Bronxville, New York.

That was the first reason to celebrate. The second reason was to offer a thanksgiving to the One who is loving to all of us in that we had all come back to Bronxville from a summer at the Irish Riviera (Spring Lake, New Jersey to the non-Irish reader) without suffering bodily injury, hearing from outraged fathers regarding the conduct of my sons, hearing from outraged mothers regarding the conduct of my daughter on the shore, but most important to me, not one child was the subject of a police report.

I closed my eyes as I took another swallow of my cocktail. Yes indeed God is good!

And then...

“She terrorizes us, Dad,” proclaimed a most unhappy Tommy.

So much for my quiet reflection, and I opened my eyes.

Standing in front of me from left to right was Tommy, the eldest male child and apparent spokesman, Paul, the middle son and Sean recently accepted to St. Joseph’s Kindergarten. Sean nodded in agreement. I was amused by Sean’s display of concurrence since to the best of my knowledge, he had never been to a school in his life. I also knew that Sean would agree to anything that Tommy would say as he was mindful of the terrible things that would be inflicted upon him, should he issue a peep in contradiction. Paul was somewhat more independent being physically larger of course.

Standing at the entrance to the living room was the accused.

“So I make them hold hands and stay in front of me

when we walk to school. Now what’s wrong about that? And Sean is going to have to learn the rules too!” replied a glowering Lauren.

“Hold his hand?” questioned Sean. I sensed, even at the age of six, this event was not meeting his expectation of a manly man.

“Oh Yeah!” responded Paul. “Tell Dad what you made us do when I told you I had to go the bathroom.” Knowing about Paul’s use of the more seedy side of the English language, I could imagine that conversation.

“We stopped at Topp’s Bakery and I asked Louise whether the little moron could use the bathroom because I was afraid he was going to wet his pants. Then I thought, well if one had to go, how about the other, and so I made Tommy go in there with him,” so announced a future mother. It all seemed perfectly logical to her.

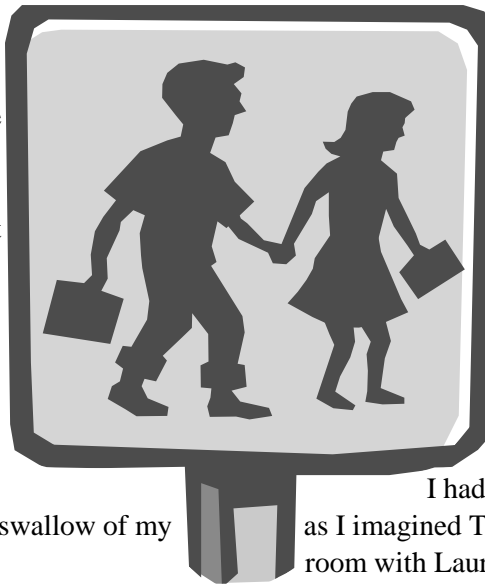
I could see that a Solomon I was going to have to be, but I had to admit

I had a difficult time keeping a straight face as I imagined Tommy and Paul together in the bathroom with Lauren acting as a sentry. Then a thought suddenly flickered in my mind, “Ah, Lauren. I trust you closed the...”

“Naturally. They are my brothers,” Lauren answered with the appropriate righteous indignation.

Brothers said Lauren. Did I hear right? This coming from the very same sister who refers to them collectively as morons. It was well known within the family lore this very same person would refuse to enter into the Boys’ Rooms being convinced that there were living creatures other than her siblings residing there; little Miss Dainty had no intention of being a target of some disease, festering and ready to pounce upon an innocent, gorgeous, and ravishing thirteen year old female.

“My mission was simple. All I had to do was to get them there and back in one piece. Don’t forget that I did forgo my friendship with my girl friends to make sure that they got home alive.”



(Continued on back)

Cherubs

(Continued from page 11)

Since I paid Lauren's rather large monthly telephone bills, I could conclude that little Lauren was not suffering that much.

Now the Irish Solomon spoke. "Lauren, a job well done, but there comes a time when the mission has to be passed down through the ranks," and looking at Tommy I said, "Congratulations, you are now officially Big Brother. Don't let the promotion go to your head."

"You mean I have to watch these little morons?" said a disbelieving Tommy. I noted the apple does not fall far from the tree.

"Pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance. You'll manage the responsibility well I think."

And Tommy did over the next few years. He exhibited such care and patience with Paul and Sean that I was quite frankly surprised. We never know our children; I mean really know them, although I suspect there may have been an occasional intercession by a guardian angel during those times. What a parent doesn't know increases our age expectancy.

I telephoned Lauren, now a mother of two, and I told her that I was going to write about the episode concerning the changing of the guard. Lauren said that she remembered that conversation very well. "And Dad, just to keep your remembrance honest, I kept the bathroom door open."

Why was I not surprised, I thought. The real surprise, I suppose is that they all still talk to each other.

And so life goes on.

Dennis J. McLaughlin

