

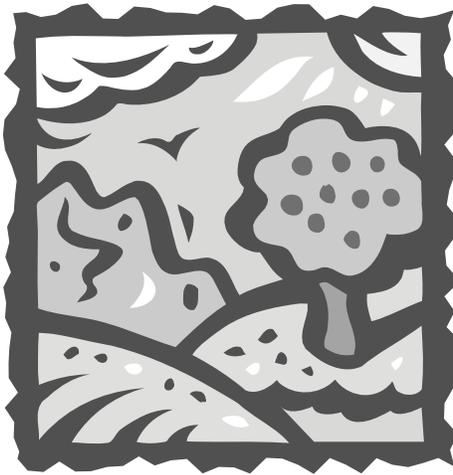
# From the Heart

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## Retreat to a Place of Tranquility

**H**ave you ever been asked to go on a retreat? If so, you might have responded, “Why should I go on a retreat? I have a million things to do, and I just don’t have the time.”

That is precisely why you should go on a retreat. The projects will always be there, but you owe it to yourself to stop and rest awhile. Life today is very busy. Most of us are consumed with numerous obligations and activities: work,



school, projects, visiting family, visiting friends, graduations, weddings, funerals, picnics, camp, travel, sports, paying bills and the list goes on and on. There is a place where one can escape, pause and take a breath. That place is Holy Family Passionist Retreat Center in West Hartford.

Holy Family sits on 48 acres in a serene country setting, surrounded by woods and walking trails. It is the perfect place to find peace and tranquility. Retreats are offered throughout the year for men, women and teens, and the 5-member retreat team

headed by Father David Cinquegrani provides an enriching weekend experience for all. Sacred Heart’s own Brandon Nappi is part of the retreat team. (Brandon and his wife Susan

and two children, Sophia and Ellie, live in Middlebury). From the moment you arrive on Friday evening, you are made to feel very welcome; the atmosphere is warm and relaxed. After looking over the itinerary, it quickly becomes evident that the retreat weekend is

very thoughtfully prepared and planned. Father David, Brandon and the other team members are gifted speakers each with a nice sense of humor. They blend thoughtful presentations of spirituality and ethics with contemporary issues.

The retreat experience is a combination of interesting workshops, discussions, video presentations, outstanding meals with a friendly staff, a beautiful facility in a peaceful environment, and of course, Mass, with

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## Tranquility

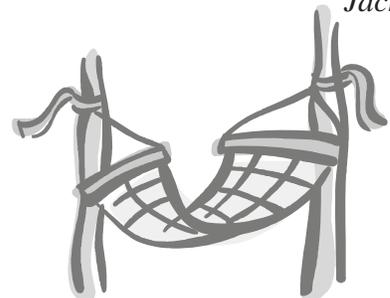
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the wonderful music and acoustics of the chapel. You might choose some quiet time outdoors by walking the labyrinth (a helpful reminder that life is a journey guided by God) or by visiting the outdoor

Stations of the Cross. You may prefer some quiet time in the lounge, or select a book to read in the library or in your room. And yes, you can still read a newspaper or magazine if you desire!

Whatever you choose to do at Holy Family, I can assure you that you'll find peace, and when you depart after Sunday morning Mass and brunch, you'll feel like a richer person, and you can't help but appreciate more fully the beauty of God's creation. If you would like more information, Holy Family may be reached at (860) 521-0440 or online at [www.holyfamilyretreat.org](http://www.holyfamilyretreat.org). The men's retreat for our parish is in October; do yourself a favor and go. You'll be glad you did.

Jack Ellis



## Are you Looking for a Great Investment?

Who isn't these days, especially one that pays monthly dividends, is great for your self-esteem, makes you feel younger and brings you up when you're feeling down. This little-known investment vehicle is the Ministry to River Glen, where for a minimal investment of 1 ½ hours per month you will make friends and feel great about your life. Note that I'm not mentioning the joy you bring to others; oh, yes, you'll bring that too, but not nearly as much as you will bring to yourself.

The investment criteria is simple. Once a month, you wheel the Catholic residents of River Glen from their rooms to the basement recreation facility for the Catholic Communion service. You stay for the short service, assisting if needed, and finally you take the participants to the area where they are served lunch.

How the rewards work is also simple. The residents recognize you and look forward to seeing you. Let me give you some concrete examples. As the third Sunday volunteer, I arrived on July 19 and was enthusiastically greeted by one woman who said, "I recognize your face. It's so pretty." Well if you don't think that gives a 60 something year old woman a boost, think again! Then there were the two men in wheel

chairs eagerly competing to see which of them would get my attention first. Both of them marveled at my ingenious inventiveness (putting my sandals in the path of the elevator door to keep it open while I wheeled them in. It's not rocket science, but I welcome their awe; it's a simple pleasure. On our elevator journey, one of them noticed and commented with obvious approval that I had painted my toenails. Another resident, a prolific artist, always shows me his most recent work and gives me a drawing to take along.

And those dividends like patience and tolerance and objective introspective analysis that we struggle to accrue are suddenly, quietly and magically present. It's quite a miracle really, that when we focus with intensity on the needs and comfort of others, these virtues effortlessly become part of us.

Maybe you won't get rich this way, or maybe you will. I guess it depends on your definition of rich and your understanding of how these little treasures add up to a really big deal.

So if you're interested in making this investment a part of your portfolio, please call Dolores Matzen at (203) 267-1677.

Dolores Matzen

### *From the Heart*

**Managing Editor:** Katherine Pavone  
**Editors:** Dolores Matzen, Deb McGrath  
**Production Editor:** Jean Brickey

**Communications Committee Members:**  
Barry Bonetti, Dina Carella, Colleen Kelly, Laura Marchionna, Dennis McLaughlin, Dom Narducci III, Irma Rilling, Rich Stephens, Eileen Strange, Debra Tansey, Diane Tomas, George Vachris

**Distribution:** Mary Alongi, Deborah Bonetti, Chris Doran, Mary Kay Flaherty, Pat Joy, Liz Kellenbach, Jim Kowalski, Madeline Murphy, Domenic Narducci, Josephine Narducci, Cynthia O'Connell, Patricia Philbin, Kelly Richardson, Lina Savard, Liv Shiya, Magdalene Shuster, Ernie Swanberg

**Layout:** Selena Carella  
**Photos:** Jean Brickey

*New members and ideas are welcome throughout the year. Please contact the parish office, 264-5071, or Katherine Pavone at 264-6599.*

# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

It is hard to believe that I have been pastor of Sacred Heart Church for six years! They say that time flies when you are enjoying yourself, and that certainly has been the case for me. According to our guidelines each pastor can apply for a second six year term if he wishes, and I did just that. The personnel director for the archdiocese asked me to gather a group of 15-20 people who have worked with me from Pastoral Council, Finance Council, and other parish committees to meet with him for a conversation to elicit input for the archbishop about whether it would be advisable for me and for the parish that I be given a second term. I invited a cross-section of people to that meeting which I did not attend. The personnel director then wrote a report on their input and met with the archbishop. I received a phone call followed by an official letter from the archbishop appointing me to a second six-year term as pastor of Sacred Heart Parish.

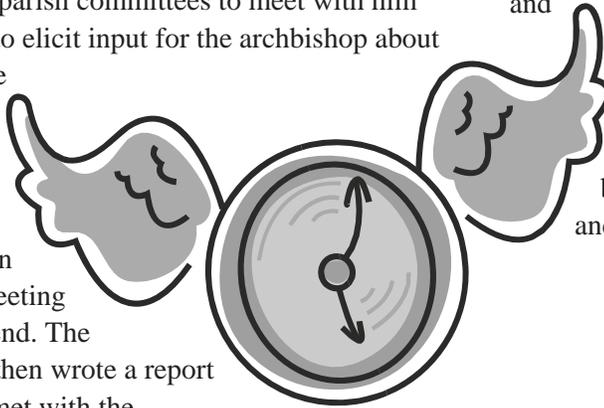
Needless to say I am very happy to be able to serve as your pastor for another term. As I look back at the last six years I recognize how I have grown and matured as a priest and a pastor with your inspiration, patience and understanding. I appreciate your collaboration and your support of my pastoral leadership, especially your insightful feedback and response to my homilies. I also appreciate your understanding whenever I have not been the pastor you deserve. Together we have accomplished many things that continue to invigorate the life, faith and ministry of Sacred Heart Parish, such as the establishment of the GIFT program, the decision to twin with a parish in Haiti, the offering of life-giving and prayerful liturgy, the establishment of the Mustard Seed Fund and the Catholics Coming Home program. This is a blessed community of faith and I feel blessed to serve you as pastor.

As we move ahead we will initiate a strategic planning process this fall to focus and guide our efforts as well as the use of our resources of time, talent and treasure. At that time the Pastoral Council will be suspended for a year as a planning committee consisting of representatives

of the pastoral staff, Pastoral Council, Finance Council and others will lead us in creating this plan for the future of Sacred Heart Parish. There will be ample opportunity for wider input for the plan as we progress. We will draft a two to three year plan by spring 2010 that we will update each year responding to the unique circumstances that present themselves. Paul Butler, a parishioner who facilitates such processes for non-profits professionally and a Pastoral Council member, has graciously offered to facilitate our process. As this process comes together I will keep you all informed and involved.

So onward we go into the future! May God bless us and our efforts to continue the mission and ministry of Jesus!

*Father Joe*



## Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Neighbors Helping Neighbors is a ministry at Sacred Heart

which reaches out to those among us who need help in many ways such as shopping, doing yard work getting to church or appointments, etc. If you are in need, know someone who is, or if you would like to help, please call: Marilee Adams at 267-5775 or Sue Houlihan at 267-5516.



# Russia and Religion

Evidence that religion is alive and well in Russia is not difficult to find. Churches, conversations and even license plates tell the story. In Yaroslavl, a prosperous city of about 650,000, among cars parked along a street, one bore a license plate with both theological and political implications, “In God we trust.”

Restoration of Russian Orthodox churches and cathedrals is taking place in major cities and in small villages. Scaffolding may envelop a bell tower, mark the replacement of foundation stones, or provide artists with a perch for careful preservation of murals to rival those of the Sistine Chapel. (Not all such murals or icons are properly protected; many merely offer a shadow of past beauty and devotion.)

Conversation includes statements such as: “I am a believer, however I don’t practice faithfully.” “I grew up without a religious background, but I have baptized my children.” The telling point of these statements is not spoken. In the ordinary home there is still to be found the Icon corner, adorned with flowers or other indications of religious observation. The practice was common in the days before the Soviet period of Russian history and has been resumed in these post-Soviet days.

Within the active churches, convents and monasteries, worshippers are packed for services or simply for reverent visitation. Since the early 1990’s churches and monasteries that had been the object of virulent anti-religious acts have been resurrected. A good example would be the monastery of the Holy Trinity of St.



Sergius of Radonezh. Located about 60 miles from Moscow, this monastery has been the center for Russia’s spiritual life for the past 600 years. Some refer to it as the Russian Orthodox Vatican. During the Soviet period the center was known as Zagorsk. If one visited the monastery during the 1970’s, as I first did, the impression that remained was of devotion by a small group of the Orthodox clergy and a few elderly women. Tapers lit the darkened interiors, permitting a few glimpses of the magnificent iconostasis (a wall of icons) and religious paintings. A musical memory remains as well, since it seems that these believers are blessed with exquisite voices. A group of five or six make the churches resonate with acapella sacred songs.

In 2009 a thriving theological seminary at St. Sergius houses and instructs some 300 seminarians. Priests and their families join congregants and visitors on the park like-grounds of the complex to find a reflective moment of rest. The sacred spring of St. Sergius provides believ-

ers with a source of holy water in a spirit akin to that of Lourdes.

Today throngs of worshippers make the services within the Lavra or monastic complex, resonate with music and the prayers of pilgrims from throughout the world. Divine Liturgies follow one after another in the multiple churches and cathedrals. Light streams into the sacred space from chandeliers and tapers alike. The Catholic visitor might find both the familiar and the different within these magnificent walls; as Russian Orthodoxy throughout the centuries resisted Catholic Christianity that came with the invading forces of Russia’s enemies.

*Colleen A. Kelly*

## • NOW AVAILABLE •

A complete listing, description, and contact information for all Sacred Heart parish ministries and services is on the website: [sacredheartchurch.info](http://sacredheartchurch.info)

Or, if you prefer, you can pick up a booklet from the Parish Library with the same detailed information.



“The Church lives in the parish.”

*Communities of Salt and Light*  
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

## SPOTLIGHT ON YOUTH

Dear *From the Heart* Readers,

**M**y name is Juliette Wallerstein. I'm a 2009 graduate from Pomperaug High School as well as an involved member of Sacred Heart Church! This summer on June 29th I will have left for West Point Military Academy's boot camp, nick-named "Beast Barracks," and this will last about six and a half weeks before the school year begins. Having done martial arts for nine and a half years and consequently receiving black belt/instructor status, I have always been drawn to extreme sports and activities that require a lot of physical and mental stamina. Keeping this in mind, it came as no surprise to my friends when I started talking about how I wanted to go to West Point for my college education (and to swim on their D1 team). "Just think," I would say, "I would be working out intensely two to three times a day and I would be putting my intelligence to the test with all of the difficult math and science classes! That would be my dream come true!" Despite the fact that I have always wanted to go to USMA, it DID come as a surprise to my parents when I told them that I seriously wanted to pursue the complicated and time consuming admissions process. Even though at first they were hesitant about letting me continue with the process (for obvious reasons—potential to be deployed after graduation), they backed me up one hundred percent because they realized how much I wanted to go.

Now, as cool as it seemed to me to be able to go to a college where I would be able to completely submerge myself in hard physical and mental work, the most important reason that I wanted to dedicate myself to the military academy is much deeper. I want to be part of why everyday citizens (such as yourselves) are able to wake up every morning and not have to worry about losing your freedom or that of your children. I can't even explain

how truly amazing the feeling will be when I am able to look at myself in the mirror and say, "You are a cadet in the United States Military Academy (and eventually an officer in the army), and you are part of an elite group of young men and women who protect and defend, without hesitation, the people of the United States of America."

After four years at the academy, I will graduate as an officer in the US Army and will therefore be on active duty for the next five years followed by three years of inactive duty. It is my plan to major in either physics or life science and compete for the "medical school option." If I am accepted (20 students from West Point are accepted/per year based on grades and the med. school test score), I will go to medical school for surgery right after graduation. After completing my graduate work

I will have seven years of active duty tacked on to the previous five years and from there I will go to Airborne School.

I am extremely excited and nervous to be starting a new life with a group of people whom I've never met. It is honestly a blessing to know that the people in Sacred Heart Church will be thinking about me, if even for a moment when they read this column. Knowing that Sacred Heart stands behind me, will give me the strength to push myself beyond my limits and never give up.

*Juliette Nicole Wallerstein (USMA '13)*



# Angels and Demons

A Book of Fiction by Dan Brown

**A** Book Review from Dennis McLaughlin—Here we go and no spoiler alert either.

## The Cast of Characters:

The Hero—the forty year old Robert Langdon, a Professor of Religious Iconology at Harvard – “... wisps of grey in his thick black hair, probing blue eyes, an arresting deep voice...with a toned six-foot physique” and oh yes, terribly brilliant.

The Heroine—Vittoria Vetra, a Bio-Entanglement Physicist (whatever occupation that is) – “not overly beautiful but possessing full earthy features...that seem to exude a raw sensuality...” studies Hatha yoga and she’s terribly brilliant, too.

Janus—the incredibly evil Mastermind who moves the plot along keeping all on their toes especially the Swiss Guard.

Hassassin—an evil agent of Janus who loves to announce he is the “Messenger of the ILLUMINATI” while slaughtering people in the most inventive ways.

Illuminati—a virulent anti-catholic group.

The Camerlengo Carlo Ventresca—A priest who is the Pope’s Chamberlain.

Pot Boiler—a story where the lulls in the plot are minimum and the pace of the story is so action packed, the reader might have to take a break just to catch his/her breath.

If any of you have previously read a pot boiler and want to read another one, Angels and Demons is it.

In the story, we find antimatter-matter atoms and their relationship with God’s creation, particle accelerators, a concise history of the Illuminati (at least according to Dan Brown), fist fights, murders, red herrings galore, feats of deduction from the Hero and Heroine that defy logic, or at least attest to God’s intercession. I must mention that God’s presence is never acknowledged by them or the four missing Cardinals from the Conclave (convened in accordance with past church traditions to elect a Pope).

The book’s theme, the idea all the moving parts center about, is, and I quote one of the characters, “Science and religion are not at odds, science is simply too young to understand.” The author’s lecturing on this theme, which he frequently does, could have been burdensome, but he stops just before the reader’s eyes begin to glaze.

I found Dan Brown’s description of the inside workings of Vatican City caused by the death of the Pope, fascinating. Incidentally, it is the Pope’s death which initiates our story and quite a story it is.

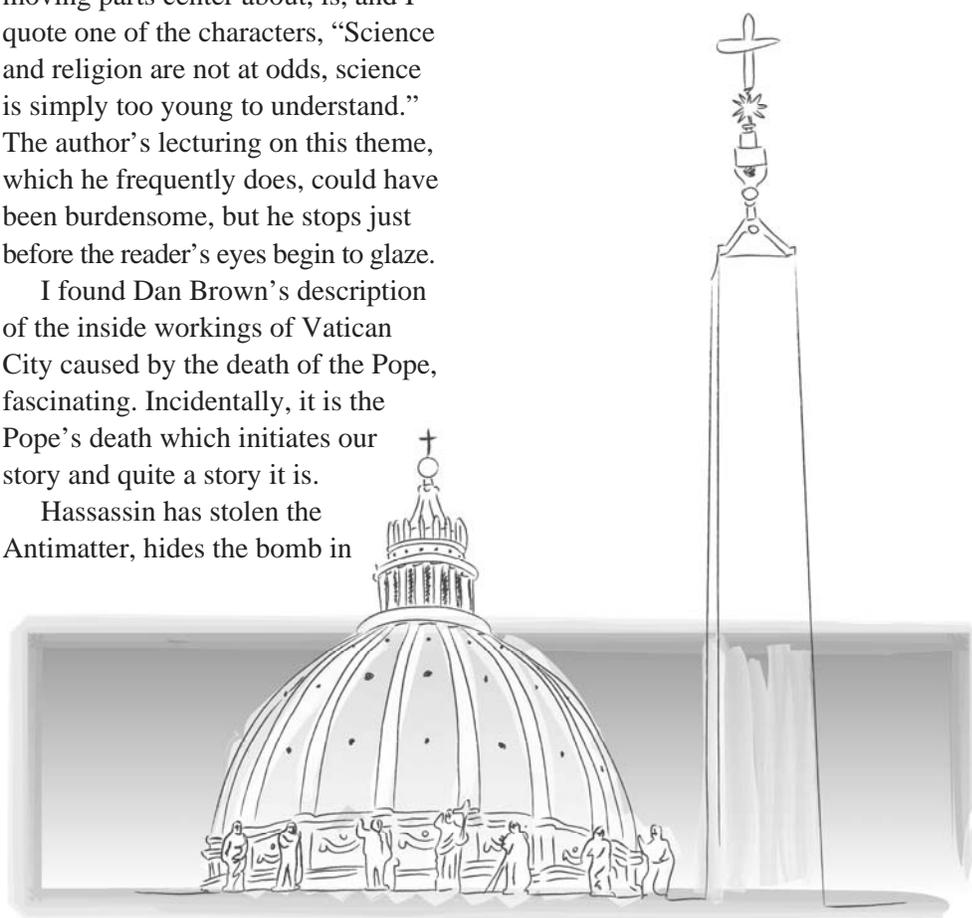
Hassassin has stolen the Antimatter, hides the bomb in

Vatican City to destroy it along with the attending Cardinals. This theft causes our protagonists to enter the scene, Vatican City to be more accurate, and save the day. My guess is you may have figured that out already.

Did I mention that in six hours, measured from the time when Hassassin hides the Antimatter, Vatican City will go boom? What’s a little pressure on our brilliant heroes?

I absolutely guarantee the final 150 pages will leave you breathless.

Read and enjoy!



# Interview Your Grandparents

One recent day while walking through the Heritage Village activities building, I noticed a man using his laptop. Curious about what seemed to be a photography project, I introduced myself, and we briefly shared some experiences about family photography. He was working on a family story—what I like to call growing up and winding down. Since I have an interest in and have had experience with such projects, we agreed to meet at Friendly’s another day for coffee and to discuss it in more detail.

When we met again, we discussed planning and production. How do we handle scope and depth of the story? What interview techniques are best? How is a storyboard effective for organizing details and planning time? What are the major dos and don’ts? The following is my recipe for producing the story, modified for young Catholics. Start now to interview, photograph and scrapbook a very personalized story about older relatives, particularly grandparents before it is too late. All you need is one digital camera. Each child in the family participating in the project can have a memory card. Swap the card when you use the camera. Each photo will have a unique ID no matter which card is in the camera.

Before the interview, draw a time line across the paper from left to right for each person in the story. On the left, write the birth year, on the right, the present year. Put some ticks (small vertical marks) on the line. Label these ticks, preschool, elementary, middle and high school, college, military, employment and retirement. Be sure to include events like baptism, first communion and confirmation. How was it different then? Did more families go to church together then?

Select some of these items to list on 3 x 5 cards for the host (interviewer) or the guest (interviewed person). Remember when interviewing anyone who is 70 or older, that these family members grew up before cell phones, Internet, home computers, calculators, and digital cameras. Use cards to jot questions for the interview. Let me give you some suggestions for areas to cover: house, indoor/outdoor plumbing, central heat such as wood, coal or kerosene, baking bread, making clothes from the flour and feed sacks. Was there a telephone? What about daily vendors making home deliveries of milk, bread, coffee and tea, produce? Include source of news such as newspaper, radio or newsreels at the local movie house. You

might ask, “Did you have a car with starter on the floor, gearshift on the floor, clutch pedal, light dimmer on the floor? Did your windshield wipers slow down as you climbed a hill?”

Did mom cook and preserve food using mason-canning jars, Certo for thickening jellies, dried beans, pickled food and root cellars? Other questions might be: did you say a blessing before eating? Did you learn grade school math, with fractions and decimals, all done by mental math or long hand? Did you use logarithms tables for high school math and geometry? What about learning to type? Was it on a manual typewriter with carbon paper. Today you can use Word for your project. Type in text and insert still photos. Save ink and paper by printing in PDF. Send PDF easily by email to family for comments.

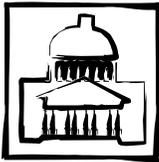
The accepted tool for planning the interview and doing video clips is a production planning technique called the storyboard. You list the sessions for the interview, still photo shots, video clips and the time allowed in minutes and seconds. Do not just run the camera or camcorder and say, “Tell me about your life.” Use the host and guest method. The host will speak with some background information and then ask some planned questions from the above checklist or 3x5 cards. Use hand signals to show remaining time.

Vary the location for the interview. Indoors is good for some, but also try outdoors. Let the person walk and talk for a few seconds while making a video clip. Does the person have some difficulty with posture, hip or knee? It is part of the character of the story. Another plus for a video clip is to let the host point to a framed picture on the wall and comment briefly on it. If there is no copy to scan, consider taking a picture of a picture. I used one of those pictures in a WWII story about my wife’s family who had four brothers in WWII. Bill was Army; Ken, Army Air Force(Right rear, B24 Bomber crew); Bernie and Harold Navy. During the Korean Conflict, John was Army and Mary, USAF. After the recording, use the yellow cable to review playback on TV.

When should you start? The best answer is: do it now!



*Lou Alongi*



# Sacred Spaces 101

## Part IV

**O**K! This is our 4th class, one more and we're done.

During the first 2 sessions, we discussed the plan organization of early Christian churches.

Remember: Atrium, Narthex, Nave, Transepts, Apse

And how can you forget: Latin Crosses and Powerpoints!

During the last class, we started a mental walk-thru of imaginary, old (circa 450 AD) St. Leo's, just outside the walls, in Rome. We compared its atrium and narthex spaces to descendant spaces in our own Sacred Heart.

### Let's Continue That Walk!

We're standing in the Narthex of old St. Leo's. We're now about to pass through a screen of columns into the nave.

Finally - into the **Nave** we go.

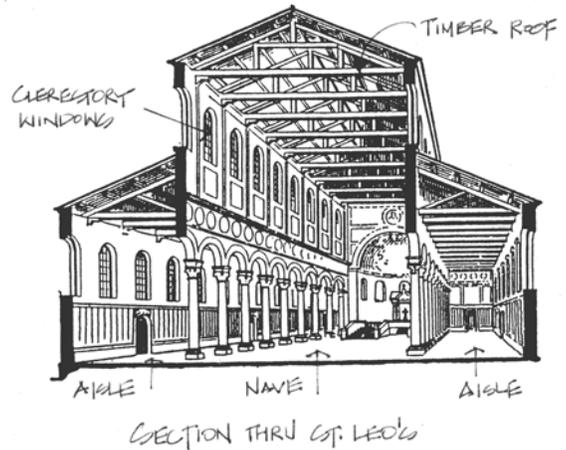
*At St. Leo's (SL):* We've left the unbaptized behind—they can't enter the nave and will be taking in the ceremony from the narthex.

OK—We made it! We're now in the church proper—the sanctuary. It consists of 2 primary spaces—the nave (sometimes with side aisles) and the apse. As we discussed earlier, these 2 spaces are typical to all early Christian churches. St. Leo's nave includes this long, tall central space that we're standing in and single side aisles. The nave is narrower than it is tall—in fact these proportions make it feel taller than its 3-story height. Notice the high clerestory windows. Overhead we can see the wood timbers that make up the roof. Notice that a row of columns under each of the clerestory walls

separates the side aisles from the central nave.

Stone is the primary material. We see it in the floor, walls and structure. There is no heating system—so for most of the year this is a cold, dimly lit space. The minimal daylight that enters at the clerestory and at aisle windows is supplemented by candlelight. People are streaming in—service begins shortly. Men are gathering on the left and women to the right. And they're all standing. Yes, that's right—there are no seats. Pews or wooden benches aren't going to make the scene for about a thousand years.

Lastly, notice that the nave is very axial—that is, long in one direction. This longitudinal axis creates an intense focus on the altar (remember the powerpoint) in front of us. It reinforces our sense of journey as represented by our passage from the outside world, through the atrium, the narthex and now into the nave. In reality, this axis is not the result of a "journey" concept made real by designers or builders. Rather, it is the result of the inherent structural limitations of timber and eventually the masonry vaulting roof systems of the day. Spanning capabilities were limited and therefore the nave width was limited. So, the way to create larger spaces, when the roof span (from clerestory wall to clerestory wall) had to remain about the same was to "grow" the building in



one direction, along the nave's long axis. The soaring spaces created by the long, tall naves of the large early churches would exhilarate and humble visitors for centuries to come.

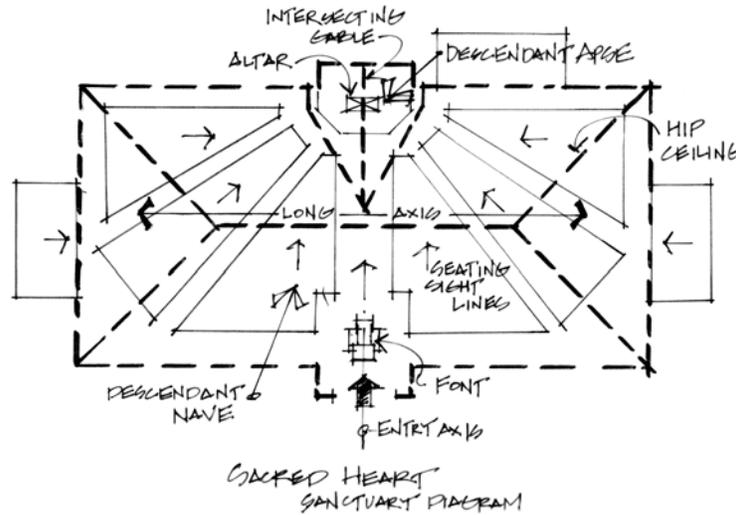
### At Sacred Heart

Let's zoom forward, to our time. We entered the atrium, ours being a bit different than St. Leo's because it's an interior space. Then we passed through a small space that contains the baptismal font. In our last class I tried to convince you that this space is really a descendant of St. Leo's narthex! You weren't really buying it. I explained that it worked sequentially, but lacked the control purpose, and therefore the importance of the classic narthex.

As we step into Sacred Heart's sanctuary, we're in a large space which is really the descendant of St. Leo's nave. Having just come from St. Leo's several things are noticeable. This space is warm, bright and there's seating for everyone. But, set these technological advances aside and look only at the geometry of the space. Notice that the apse end is

directly opposite our entry point, but the long axis of the space is actually perpendicular to the entry/apse axis. Look up at the ceiling and you'll see that it is like looking at the underside of a simple hipped roof. The only interruption of this simple geometry is the ceiling over the apse—a gable form that thrusts itself into the main ceiling trumpeting the importance of the altar space below.

These intersecting ceiling elements mark Sacred Heart's Powerpoint; recall the Powerpoint created in old Christian churches where the nave



axis and the transepts intersected. Last point: The designers and builders of Sacred Heart were not constrained by the span limitations

of 4<sup>th</sup> century roof systems. They could make the roof form be whatever they wanted—modern day materials and methods allow that. Sadly, the semi-concentric seating geometry relates poorly with the ceiling (or vice versa). The cross axis of the main ceiling and the general rigidity of the ceiling geometry are at odds with the dynamics of the seating layout.

OK. That's it for this session. Next we finish with a look at the apse.

*D.A. Narducci III*

## Mustard Seed Grants

The Sacred Heart Mustard Seed Fund was established several years ago through a grant made possible by the generosity of two Sacred Heart parishioners. It began a tradition of other parishioners contributing to the fund as honorarium and memorial gifts. This has allowed the parish to give out scholarships and charitable grants yearly.

This year, twelve \$1000.00 scholarships were given to those already in school or entering this fall. In addition, twenty-four charitable grants, totaling \$33,854.00, were given to organizations both near and far, such as: Southbury Needy Fund, St. Vincent DePaul Mission, Waterbury Youth Services, St. Bonaventure Indian Mission School, St. Charles Brazilian Children, and others.

Scholarship recipients are shown in this photo with Fr. Joseph Don-



nelly, from left: Alexandra DeRosa, Ed Wlodarczyk, Rebecca Bonetti, Amber Tillinghast, Danielle Greco, Lauren McCrory, Lindsey Weaving, and Brennen Adams. Missing from the photo are: Michael Francke, Emily Heusted, Richard Kokinchak, and Michelle Meyer.

*Wonder  
is the desire for  
knowledge.*

*—Saint Thomas Aquinas*

# A Road Less Traveled by Default—Part 2



So as not to make this little monologue applicable only to me personally, let me touch further upon aspects of the journey I am sure each of us is going through or has gone through. I refer to them as “bumps” in “A Road Less Traveled.” Each bump is magnified in our own life because no one else seems to be undergoing the same drama at the same time, in the same way, at least as far as we know.

The bumps are as follows:

Despair due to increased negativity in life.

Lack of trust in Jesus. (Faith always seems to come later)

Failure to hear or understand any answer from Him to prayer.

This is some road we are traveling on, isn't it?

If you have paid any attention to the Pastor's homilies (and I know you have) he has touched upon each of them from time to time, but he did not necessarily refer to the dramas as bumps. I'd like to think that Father, Sister and I are in the same ballpark, but I'm in the stands while they are in the field.

I want to look at these above three aspects of our lives from the point of view of “Everyman.”

Let me start here: do you and I have to live in an existence in which we are filled with longing for *something*? Heaven's inspiration is required to enable us to count the number of treatises exploring just this question (especially from the Jesuits, whom, in my opinion, seem to be more in need than most priests.)

When terrible events happen to us, how are we to react? Accept it as being part of God's plan? A bump in the road that one must tolerate? You don't understand how God can be so cruel to you? The offered answer—you aren't meant to understand. God's ways are not your ways etc, etc. And there we are, back to the Church's demand for faith and trust. No answers! Only questions!

That brings us to Lack of Trust. You may remember, in that small locked upstairs room with the gathering of eleven Apostles and servants (poetic license taken since John's Gospel does not mention any servants in his narrative), Thomas expressed what I like to characterize as the doubt heard around the world.

I would have been one of those servants, perhaps even standing next to Thomas, nodding in total agreement with his pronouncement (and I paraphrase) seeing is believing.

And then as John reports, a week later Jesus appears again and says, before Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet would have come to believe.” (John 20: 29).

That would be me alright, “A Johnny-come lately-believer.” I can't stop there. Remember the Centurion with his famous acclamation of faith. The one we recall at every mass, “Lord I am not worthy but merely say the word and my servant shall be healed.” (Matthew 8:8). What marvelous evidence of faith and trust. I don't know whether I could say those words when Jesus passed me in a crowd (See the May 2007 *From the Heart* for more of my examination of this very point.)

You may think that's awful, but I don't beat myself about having doubts anymore since I know I'm not alone.

Let me cut to the chase. I suggest that all bump removals start with earnest prayer.

It is so simple—a quiet moment to reflect upon all that is going on in my life, good or bad. Notice I'm not asking for anything. What a surprise! Boy! My guardian angel would be in shock over the last statement.

I remember Deacon Chuck saying during one of his homilies, our problem in prayer is we don't listen.

Is silence an answer? Do we expect a slap in the back of the head to show us that he is there and more importantly, he is listening?

For little ole me? Prayer is the answer. I can't tell you how to pray, but I know angels can.

The one thing I don't want this article to be is preachy. I want the reading Catholic Community to know from this “Everyman,” who is standing humbly in front of the tabernacle, they are not alone in their search.

This is a road which we Catholics have elected to take, trusting God to provide us with a vehicle, called prayer, to simply assist us in our travels and not necessarily to demonstrate or emphasize with a slap in the back of the head. I chuckle as I write these last few words remembering my late mother saying far too often to suit me, “Pain is good. It helps you understand.”

I hope my Mother was right.

Shalom

*Dennis McLaughlin*

# Support in Times of Loss

*“Come to me, all you who labor and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you.”*

*(Mt. 11:28 – 30)*

**W**ith this line from the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus reminds us that we do not have to be alone in our pain. Jesus invites us to bring our burdens, our grief, our suffering to him.

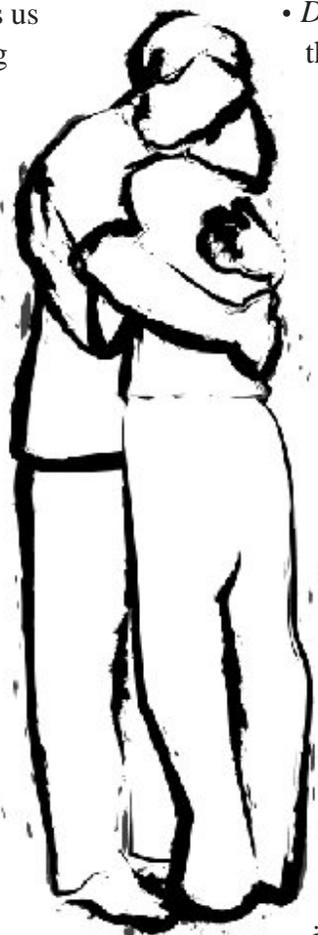
We at Sacred Heart Church realize the importance of reaching out to those who are experiencing a particular loss in their lives and we want to extend a hand and be there with and for those who are suffering. Listed below are some of the ways that we do this through the support groups that we offer.

**Bereavement Groups** operate on the premise that a grief shared is a grief diminished. The support group is not therapy. It is an opportunity to share one’s personal experience of grief with others who find themselves in a similar circumstance.

One parishioner who had lost four family members in the course of two years, ten years ago recently asked when the grieving stops. She thought she had dealt with her grief; yet even as she tried to ask if the support groups would be helpful for her, she welled up. There is no timetable when it comes to grief, and the support groups are open and available to everyone.

Maria thought she didn’t need a support group. Her sister’s husband died and she came to the group to support her sister. In the middle of one session she realized that she was there for herself too. She was missing her brother-in-law! The support group was there for Maria and her sister.

We have three bereavement groups that meet here at SHC.



- **New Day:** meets once a week for ten sessions, beginning Tuesday, September 15 at 7 p.m. For information and registration, please call Michele DelGuercio 264-9614.

- **Evening Monthly Support Group:** meets the second Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m.

- **Daytime Monthly Support Group:** meets the second Tuesday of the month at 1:30 p.m. For information and registration please call Catherine Hughes, 758-5421.

**Divorced and Separated:** Marriages can end quickly with the sudden revelation that one spouse wants out of the relationship, or marriage can end slowly, dying over many years. The end of the marital relationship causes trauma on many levels. You may feel the loss of a way of life, or a loss of the sense of yourself. You may even miss the person who left, even though you are filled with a variety of emotions. You may feel like your Church is abandoning you or your fellow parishioners are looking at you differently. If this is so, please consider participating in this support. In September we are beginning a divorced and separated support group that will meet for ten weeks starting Thursday, September 17 at 7 p.m. The trained facilitators of this group are Eileen Omundsen and Lynn Tidgewell. For more information, please call Sister Pat at 264-5071.

**Catholics Coming Home:** Through our welcoming Catholics home process we are discovering that those who leave the church community are experiencing another kind of loss, one that is not so easy to name. One participant in the last Catholics Coming Home session said there was a feeling like “something was missing” from her life. She felt that

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## Support

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God continued to be a part of her life but it “wasn’t enough.” Coming back she found “the more” that she was looking for. If you have drifted away from the Church and are feeling that sense of loss or listlessness, consider this an invitation to come and see what we have to offer at Sacred Heart Church. Please call Sister Pat at 264-5071. A new session begins October 5 at 7 p.m.

All of these groups create a safe space where you can meet with others who are in a similar life situation and understand each other’s present sense of loss. One participant said of the bereavement support group, “Everyone seemed to know what I was talking about, even though some of the details were different. They knew it on the inside. I can’t seem to talk to my family about it in the same way.”

If there is any way that we as a faith community can support you through the tough times, please call us.

*Sister Pat*



## An Invitation

**W**e know of many parishioners here at Sacred Heart, who have had spiritually uplifting experiences while in service to others. An example is the faith building that happens when our young people go on their yearly mission trip. They always come back with a renewed sense of God in their lives.

We at *From the Heart* would love to be able to share some of these experiences with our faith community. If you have had one of these faith-renewing experiences and would be willing to share it with the parish, please contact Katherine Pavone at 264-6599. You can write the article yourself, or we will interview you if you prefer.

Perhaps sharing your experience can help someone else along his or her faith journey.



*From the Heart*

Sacred Heart Parish  
910 Main Street South  
Southbury, CT 06488

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