



Stewardship Highlights:

A Tradition of Faith and Privileged to Serve

By Andrea Murray

When choosing who to highlight for their acts of stewardship for this issue, we chose Laura Spencer not only because of how she helps out at St. Mary's, but also for her faith and spirit of giving which she infuses into her everyday life.

Laura shares her talent with St. Mary's by artfully designing the posters announcing our annual picnic, golf tournament, the Triduum, fundraisers, and numerous other special events. She also hand paints the ornaments that hang on St. Mary's Christmas tree with the name of the parishioners and the sacrament they received during the year. Another Christmas tradition we can thank Laura for is the idea of having St. Nick visit us during the season of Advent.

Holiday traditions were a big part of Laura's life growing up and she's continued them with her husband David and children, Kristina and Sarah. During the season of Advent, they recognize each of their good deeds by putting a piece of straw in the manger. This builds a sense of pride within their family as they prepare a soft bed for the arrival of Jesus on Christmas Day. On Easter morning, when most children are eagerly searching for their baskets, the first one awake in Laura's home is excited to be able to take Jonah out of the whale's belly, after being put there three days earlier on Good Friday. These traditions started by her parents, have become meaningful parts of their lives.

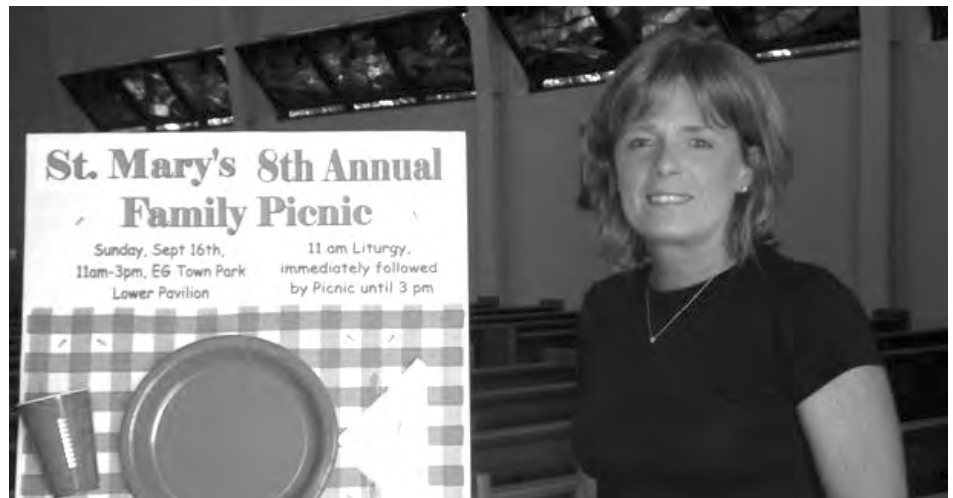
Laura also serves as a lector and has given of her time by volunteering to help with faith formation, children's liturgy,

and serving on the Cassidy Krenzer Fund committee. She feels that the spirit of giving is not an obligation, but a privilege. "It takes effort, a human connection," she says, but "For what you give, you get tenfold back."

Always wanting herself and her family to have a rightful place in the parish, Laura feels that by participating in mass, social events, and ministries, they have all become connected and have taken an active responsibility for their faith. She shares that "we are so lucky for our deep faith," which keeps them grounded and keeps her children centered.

Laura's children also share their time and talent with St. Mary's. They are altar servers and have also participated in, and even initiated fundraisers for, the Cassidy Krenzer Fund, making and selling jewelry and crafts, organizing school projects, attending committee meetings, and soliciting prizes from area businesses for the Chinese auction.

Laura and her family exemplify stewardship with their strong sense of faith, gifts back to the community, and lifelong and meaningful traditions. Thank you for sharing your time, talent, and treasure with the St. Mary's community!



Laura Spencer

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Pastor's Corner

Father David R. LeFort

While I've been here only a few months, I've shared with you more blessings than I can shake a stick at! From blessings of new families, wedding anniversaries, catechists, college students, new homes, and various ministers. To solemn blessings, like the anointing of Kassidy Krenzer (what great peace that brought to her and to us) and more informal ones, like the blessing of animals on the feast of St. Francis. (Thanks for taking all your little creatures back home with you!) Yes, we've been truly blessed these last few months.

And as we prepare to celebrate the great festivities of Thanksgiving, aren't we in awe as we recall and offer thanks for the many and varied blessings that God shares with us? Of food, of family, of faith...each of these and many more are poured out before us by a generous Lord.

But when is it *not* a season of blessings? Each and every moment of our lives, whether in turmoil and strife or rejoicing and festivity, God is there to light, guide, encourage and strengthen us on our path to an ever-greater friendship and life with Him. Truly, these are heavenly gifts.

One of the gifts I thank God for is the wonderfully warm and heartfelt welcome you have given me. Even though you had to say a tearful 'goodbye' to a priest who served you so beautifully for the last decade, you still reached out to me in friendship, warmth and hospitality. For these gifts, I am truly grateful to each of you.

Before we know it, the feast of Christmas will be here with yet another bountiful gift of inestimable value shared with us in our Emmanuel—God with us. From this commemoration, we'll share gifts and blessings with those around us, under the tree, through the mail, around the warmth of the crèche, and through our prayers.

As you give thanks and share with others, know that I'll be remembering each of you in my prayers of Thanksgiving and praise to God. You are certainly blessings He has placed on my path...and I am really happy because of you. May the blessings you share with me, be returned to you a hundredfold. And may the blessings of joy, peace and God above always be with us!

Fr. David

Do You Know? By Jackie Stack

Do You Know Why We Celebrate the Feasts of All Saints and All Souls?

The dead have been commemorated on the anniversary of their birth since prehistoric times. Pre-Christian Celts believed that the souls of the dead returned for a visit on November 1 and 2, which is why October 31 was called All Hallows Eve. Today we call it Halloween.

Beginning in the fourth century, the solemnity of All Saints and the Commemoration of All the Faithfully Departed (All Souls) began to overlap. In the eleventh century, November 2 became a day of prayer for all the souls in purgatory, and in the thirteenth

century it was placed on the liturgical calendar immediately after All Saints Day "so that the entire communion of saints might be celebrated together."

According to *Rite* magazine, "The communion of saints can be expressed in the unending relationship among the living faithful, the departed awaiting purification and the blessed already in the bosom of God.

Yesterday they were what we are today, and tomorrow by the grace of God, we will be what they are now. We, the living, ask prayers of and for one another, pray for those who have died, and ask prayers of the holy ones already beholding God."

Do you have any questions about being a Catholic? If so, drop me a note in the collection basket or email me at jajadave@nycap.rr.com and I'll try to find the answer for you!

MISSION STATEMENT

The Church of St. Mary is a Catholic Community, united in faith and Eucharist with the Diocese of Albany, New York, and the Church throughout the world.

As a Catholic Community, we believe in and model our lives on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are committed to active worship and prayer, lifelong faith formation, and the physical and spiritual support of those in need. All are welcome into our community.

Because of our belief in God's abiding presence, and with the support of the Holy Spirit, we share a common commitment to Stewardship which invites disciples of Jesus Christ to acknowledge their gifts from God and to share those gifts of time, talent and treasure justly and charitably in the service of the parish community and the local and global community.

Behind the Scenes

By Stephanie Scheibly

We are fortunate as parishioners to be surrounded by people who work humbly behind the scenes and expect no acknowledgement for their service. Peter Arnos is one of those people. We want to take this opportunity to recognize Peter for all that he does for our parish.



Although Peter Arnos has never been baptized, hasn't made his First Communion or been confirmed, at least not yet, he under-

stands the Catholic faith and practices it so well that many of us could learn from him. Peter serves Jesus in so many ways and truly knows what it means to give of himself to others. He is the kind of person who just jumps in and helps wherever he can, expecting nothing in return.

At St. Mary's, Peter checks in about every other day after morning mass, which he attends daily, to see what needs to be done. Peter was a tremendous help to Father Jerry when he was moving to his new church and continues to assist our Facilities Manager, Ross Wilber. Recently, Peter has taken on more responsibility for helping to maintain St. Mary's because Ross underwent knee surgery.

Ross describes Peter as a "dedicated parishioner who drops what he's doing to help others, with no strings attached. He just believes in people helping people." One of the jobs Peter has taken on is

mowing the back lawn at the church, which is very time consuming. Peter does this four hour job every Thursday.

Many of us know Peter as the retired owner of Fashion Care Cleaners in East Greenbush. Through his business, Peter also helped St. Mary's, and other local organizations, by posting community announcements on the sign in front of his shop and by cleaning flags, Santa suits and other items free of charge.

Peter is also a catechumen in the RCIA program and is sponsored by his wife Edna Mae. On Holy Saturday in 2008, he will become a fully confirmed member of the Catholic Faith.

We are very fortunate that Peter has chosen us as his faith family. Thank you Peter for sharing your time and talent with us! And by the way, there are many parishioners who would like to give you their addresses in case you run out of things to do around St. Mary's!

Welcome to St. Mary's



Eugenia Zukosky



Mundy Zullo and Peter Heim



Valerie Leighton

Getting to Know Each Other Better

By Shannon Hutton

Father David LeFort

Father David is many things to many people. For St. Mary's, he's our new parish priest. For the Diocese, he is the Director of Seminarian Formation. For those in the diocese preparing for priesthood, he is a mentor responsible for promoting their human, academic, pastoral and spiritual formation. For his family, he is a brother, son and travel companion to international locations.

After receiving a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy from Nazareth College, Father David went to Vatican City to begin his seminary studies in 1993. He received degrees in Moral Theology and teaching and was ordained in 1998.

As the Director of Seminarian Formation, Father David assists those preparing for priesthood by evaluating their strengths and weaknesses, visiting their current seminary placement, and influencing parish assignments and which seminary they attend to help promote their spiritual, academic, human and pastoral formation.

Prior to coming to St. Mary's, Father David was the parish priest at Our Lady of Hope Church in Whitehall, NY and at St. Ann's Church in Fort Ann, NY for five years. He also served at The Chapel of the Assumption in Huletts Landing on Lake George during the summer.

Where is your hometown?

I grew up in Ballston Lake.

How do you enjoy spending your free time?

I like to socialize with friends and family and walk my dog. I also love to cook. I used to do more biking, skiing, and playing soccer, bocce, and poker, with bingo chips of course!

Where is your favorite place on earth? Why?

I really like Western Europe because the language is romantic, the food is savory and the people are delightful, warm and open when they know you want to learn from them.

What books have influenced you? Why?

I have three. [The Priests for the Third Millennium](#) by Timothy Dolan because he was my Formation Director in Rome and the book is a compilation of the stories and lectures he gave us. [The Joy of Priesthood](#) by Stephen Rossetti because it was about his life as a priest in the midst of working with difficult issues. [St. Augustine's Confessions](#) because it was about how the greatest sinner became a saint. I also love murder mysteries, but I've read so many that I can't remember titles!



What accomplishment in your life are you most proud of?

I would say surviving my years of study and being able to take all that I've learned and apply it well; to adapt academics practically and still relate to others.

What is something people would be surprised to learn about you?

That I grew up on a farm, met Mother Teresa, served Mass with Pope John Paul II, and know our current Pope personally because we routinely had coffee together when I lived in Rome.

Who in your life has had the greatest impact on you? Why?

My Dad. He was a great thinker and always joyful about our faith. He taught each of his four children faith formation one to two hours a week. I got my passion for study and the ability to connect it to real life from my Dad.

What do you see in St. Mary's future?

The changes with pastoral planning affects every parish, so I see opportunities for St. Mary's to meet certain challenges. I hope we'll be welcoming, forgiving and able to adapt easily.

Is there anything else you'd like parishioners to know about you?

I think the people of St. Mary's have been very welcoming. They are very generous with their time and the ministries are very professional.

St. Mary's Annual Picnic



Many Hands Make Light Work

By Stephanie Scheibly

The parishioners of St. Mary's have really made an impression on Father David, who is impressed by how much time and talent we give to our ministries. If you are interested in giving back to your church community, please consider joining a St. Mary's ministry. You will reap the rewards in so many ways!

Volunteer Opportunity: Good Samaritans

This ministry prepares and delivers meals to families in need. Typically members of this ministry are called to help out about once a month. Specifically, this ministry is looking for a new Chairperson/s, which includes being available in an "on-call" capacity.

If interested, please contact Doreen Frank at 479-4570 or Pat Rizzo at 449-2232.

Who am I?

- I was born in Italy over 800 years ago.
- I grew up in a wealthy family and as a young man bought anything I wanted.
- I joined the military and was taken prisoner. When I was released, I changed my life.
- I gave away all of my things and lived simply.
- Animals were drawn to me by my gentle nature and sweet words.
- I helped the poor and sick, even the lepers who many avoided.
- I invented the Nativity scene.
- Later in life, I received the stigmata, the real and painful wounds of Christ in my hands, feet and side.
- In 1979, I was designated the Patron Saint of Ecology by Pope John Paul II.
- My feast day is October 4th.

Kids' Spot

By Sonia Haney

Answer: St. Francis of Assisi

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