



## Stewardship Highlights:

# Serving God Starts at a Young Age!

By Andrea Murray

In each issue of *Blessings*, we highlight an individual or group of parishioners for sharing their time and talent with the St. Mary's community. In this issue, we're recognizing our altar servers for demonstrating that acts of stewardship can begin at a young age!

St. Mary's altar servers range in age from 8-16 years old, with their time of service ranging from a couple of months to more than seven years. When asked why they chose to become altar servers, some explained that their older siblings had been altar servers, while others shared that they looked up to the older altar servers as "role models" and felt that being an altar server was an act of stewardship. When asked what they enjoyed about being altar servers, some answered that it has helped them understand Mass better and be more involved in it. One altar server added "It makes me feel good," and others commented that parishioners have thanked them at the end of Mass.

When I met with several of the altar servers, they explained that their primary responsibility was to serve Father David, the Church, and most importantly, God. Father David agreed, saying altar servers "facilitate my ability to lead and let me do more fully the work I am supposed to do." While some of the altar servers joked that their role involves "trying not to drop anything," one look at the guidelines established for altar servers and you realize it's not a responsibility they take lightly. Training to become an altar server involves three or four practice sessions and a period of shadowing an experienced altar server. Carol Tenzyk, who coordinates the training and sched-

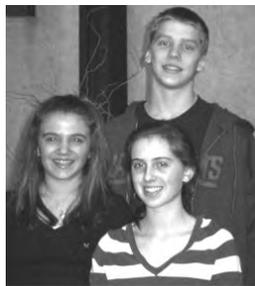
uling of altar servers, shared that she is "impressed that, at such a young age, they are willing to serve our community, and in doing so, they are serving God."

When Father David came to St. Mary's, the role of altar servers changed to a degree, but both Father David and Carol commented that despite their ages, they've all been able to adapt well to their new roles. The altar servers shared that serving Father David during Mass has helped them get to know him better.

We are very grateful to the following altar servers, not only for their faithful

service to St. Mary's, but for showing us that stewardship can start at a young age:

*Kayla Bonanni, Jamie Buell, Joshua and Kayla Carlin, Andrew Cellini, Andrew Cleveland, Tyler Daoust, Gabrielle D'Alessandro, Jake and Luke Hallenbeck, Katie Hutton, Patrick Knerr, Jennifer and Jeffrey Knox, Keenan Krenzer, Aly and Olivia Lang, Hannah May, Teresa Memole, Kristen and Trevor Molineaux, Matt Mullin, Lindsay Muzio, Phyllis Rinella, Siobhan Shea, Kristina and Sarah Spencer, Katie Teal, Jennifer Van Gelder, Margaret Warrington, and Melissa and Heather Zimmerman.*



Andrew Cleveland  
Sarah and Kristina Spencer



top row – Trevor Molineaux, Katie Teal, Jamie Buell, Margaret Warrington, Patrick Knerr; bottom row – Teresa Memole, Aly Lang, Olivia Lang, Gabrielle D'Alessandro



top row – Jennifer Knox and Jeffrey Knox; bottom row – Tyler Daoust, Phyllis Rinella, Siobhan Shea, Jennifer Van Gelder, Katie Hutton, Heather Zimmerman

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## For Kids Do You Know?

By Sonia Haney

*We are very saddened by the loss of Jackie Stack who used to write this section for the newsletter. In Jackie's honor, we are continuing her legacy with a Do You Know section for kids.*

### Do You Know About the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist?

The Holy Eucharist is the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. During Mass, the priest says the following words of consecration over the bread and wine to transform both into Jesus Christ: "This is my body. This is my blood. Do this in memory of me." When we receive the Holy Eucharist, or Holy Communion,

we receive Jesus Himself. He comes to live in us. He comes to help us. Holy Communion is food for our soul.

The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist connects today's Catholics to the Last Supper when Jesus first blessed bread and wine and told his followers to do as he did as a way of remembering him.

A child is ready to receive the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist for the first time at about the age of seven at the rite called the First Holy Communion. When children receive their First Holy Communion, they are being included in one of the most important rites of the Catholic Church. For children, it may feel like being invited to sit at the grown-ups' table at Thanksgiving. Sharing the Eucharist helps Catholics feel closer to other Catholics, just as a family feels closer when they sit down and share a meal together.

## A Letter to St. Mary's

For forty years, Ray and I have been parishioners of St. Mary's. Early on, we went to the Sunday morning liturgies and developed long-lasting friendships over coffee and donuts in the school cafeteria while our four children attended faith formation classes. By the time our kids were in college, we had found our place at the Saturday afternoon liturgy, fourth pew on the right. We became part of a small, friendly, caring group of the faithful within the larger parish community. We were there for each other, sharing the joys of retirements, marriages of our children, and births of our grandchildren. We were there for each other, supportive when illness and death troubled our lives. The 4:30 was more to us than just another Mass.

When Father David explained that the proposed recommendation was to eliminate OUR 4:30, I was overcome with a real sense of loss. My immediate parish family would disintegrate. I wouldn't have a place in it anymore or a seat. No more fourth pew on the right!

By the time we were driving home, hysteria had been replaced by reason. We will still have OUR beloved St. Mary's church, OUR beautiful liturgies, OUR wonderful music, OUR Catholic traditions and of course OUR "handsome" Father David. That's a lot to be thankful for.

What is 4:30 really? It's just a time.

So come January 2009, we're staking our claim at the 11:00 a.m. Mass – fourth pew on the right! We hope to find some of our old friends there and we're anxious to make new ones to help us on our faith journey. I hope you'll welcome us. Ray is the quiet, semi-bald one and I'm the chatty one, old enough to be gray, but not.

Can't wait to meet you!

**Mary Tesiero**



### 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

Over the years, the buildings of St. Mary's have been beautifully transformed. At the heart of all this work are **Jerry Bolduc**, master carpenter, and **Ron Pepin**, professional painter. Both men have spent countless hours creating a peaceful worship space for our parishioners and living space for our pastors.

Jerry Bolduc's first project was to build a platform to elevate our altar. Once that was completed, Jerry tackled a lengthy list of other projects including reconfiguring the church entryway by taking down the glass partitions, building the confession room, creating closet storage, and remodeling the sacristy with new cabinets, sink, crown moldings and lighting. That's not all! Jerry also added recessed lighting to the walls on either side of the altar, handcrafted the bible holders on the wall, the bookstand in the entryway, and even handcrafted the wainscoting using old oak kneelers found in the basement of the church!

More recently, Jerry created a tranquil chapel and an inviting new conference

room by installing new dry wall and shelves in each room and cutting windows into the existing doors. Jerry also replaced the old closets to create attrac-



Jerry Bolduc



Ron Pepin

tive storage space in the new chapel. In the Rectory, Jerry gutted and remodeled a bathroom, and worked with Fr. David to remodel the Delaney Room, turning this big room into a sitting area and a bedroom for Seminarian Brian Kennedy. Jerry even installed a dog door so Fr. David's dog could get out to the side yard!

Ron Pepin is not far behind once Jerry is through with his work. His artistry can

be seen as the finishing touches to many of the remodeling jobs mentioned above, including the chapel and conference room. In addition, Ron repainted the interior entry way of the Rectory and spruced up the staircase going up to the second floor by refinishing the banister and newel post. Ron also painted the office area and the downstairs back bedroom and living area now used by Father David.

In addition to improving the inside of the Rectory, Ron greatly improved its "curb appeal" by removing layers of old paint, installing new pillars on the porch railing, and installing and staining a new front door. That's not all! Ron also painted all the eaves on the church and school to match the existing green trim work on the outside of the building, and sanded and repainted all the lampposts and window trim as well.

So the next time you notice the beautiful appearance of St. Mary's, remember these two craftsmen who have given generously of their time and talent! Thank you Jerry and Ron!

## Welcome to St. Mary's



The LeFebvre Family



Dawn Bakerian



Stephanie Oster and fiancé Ryan Doherty



Brian and Valerie Kucan



Lisa D'Adamo-Weinstein and son Alexander (Gideon Weinstein not available for photo)

St. Mary's would like to also welcome Marjorie Martin, Andrea Warburton & fiancé David Broussard, Caitlin White, and Sean & Suann Kipp.

# Reflections on Pastoral Planning

By Father David LeFort

I don't have to tell any of you that life offers lots of lessons. And one of life's lessons is that change can be difficult. Probably because it takes away the comfort of what we know; possibly because the outcome of change is uncertain; perhaps the sense of loss overshadows the potential for gain. Whatever the reason, I understand that change can be difficult and that some of us are in pain because of the proposal to eliminate the Saturday Mass at St. Mary's.

While I know this period of change will be very challenging to us as a faith community, God-willing, it can also be a very graceful time of patience, love and peace. My sincere hope is that after some time and thoughtful prayer, each of us may be able to see the proposed changes as opportunities for us to support one another, to foster growth in our faith, and to work together to build a stronger, more lively and faith-filled community at St. Mary's.

In order to help parishioners understand the rationale behind the proposed changes, I want to reiterate the issues we considered when creating the following proposed Mass schedule, expected to begin January 1, 2009:

## Saturday Vigils

4:00 p.m. – Holy Spirit, East Greenbush

4:00 p.m. – St. Joseph, Rensselaer

4:30 p.m. – Sacred Heart, Castleton

## Sundays

**8:30 a.m. – Church of St. Mary, Clinton Heights**

9:30 a.m. – Holy Spirit, East Greenbush

10:00 a.m. – St. John the Evangelist, Rensselaer

10:30 a.m. – Sacred Heart, Castleton

**11:00 a.m. – Church of St. Mary, Clinton Heights**

7:00 p.m. – Holy Spirit, East Greenbush

First, the four priests of our area took into consideration the “non-negotiables,” or factors we have no control over:

**1. One of the four priests, serving the four local parishes (5 churches), will be reassigned.** Although we don't know which priest will be reassigned, or when, we need to prepare for the eventuality of having **only three priests.**

**2. Beginning in 2009, parishes must provide their own priest coverage** because the number of priests throughout the diocese is dwindling. This means when a resident priest is sick or away, the other two priests in the area will need to provide coverage.

**3. A priest is allowed to celebrate only three Masses a weekend.** This existing rule protects the integrity of the sacramental celebration and the vibrancy of the priest because of the very real danger that priests will see Mass as merely “routine” and “mechanical” if they celebrate

more than three Masses a weekend. This limitation placed on a priest encourages thoughtful, meaningful, and inspiring celebrations of Mass for himself and his parishioners.

In addition to the factors beyond our control, we considered the following “negotiable” elements:

**1. No one wanted to see their parish closed or absorbed into a mega-parish** because our individual parishes are important to our Catholic faithful.

**2. The weekend Celebration of the Eucharist (or Mass) is essential** because the Eucharistic Celebration promotes the healthy and holy lives of parishioners and is the life-blood of a parish.

After taking into consideration all of the factors listed above, it became very clear that it's paramount that each of our parishes remain distinct, and therefore we decided not to recommend to the Bishop any parish closures or mergers. However, in order to accommodate four separate parishes with a total of five churches, with only three priests, we needed to reduce the number of Masses to abide by the rule that limits a priest to three Masses a weekend.

In order to decide which Masses to eliminate, we considered several factors, including the:

- number of families and parishioners served at each parish
- normal seating capacity of each church building
- number of worshippers at each particular Mass for each parish
- growth/decline in the number of worshippers at each parish over the last several years
- projected growth in population of certain areas within our planning group
- financial viability of each parish
- condition of physical buildings and the physical location of each property
- ease of access/parking for each of the buildings
- current Mass schedules at each parish

In summary, this was the process we priests undertook over the last several months to create the proposed Mass schedule. While I know these proposed changes are causing some parishioners in our faith family to feel a sense of loss, I beg each of you to be patient, to hope and pray for the best, and to continue to work for the great good of our common Catholic faith. Yes, it's going to be a challenging task, but I believe that we can meet these challenges together and, in the end, become stronger Catholics and a stronger Church.

God bless each of you,

*Fr. David*

# *Our Holy Week Parish Photos*



*The Washing of the Feet Holy Thursday*



*Easter Vigil*



*Brendan Carr on Easter Sunday*



*Father David and Kayla Bonanni on Easter Sunday*



*Rite of Election at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception*

# Many Hands Make Light Work

By Stephanie Scheibly

## Volunteer Opportunities:

### RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults)

RCIA is looking for Catechists and Sponsors for those wishing to become members of our faith community. All you need is a strong faith and a willingness to share it! The time commitment will depend on the number of candidates we have. Please contact Joanne Cimma at 479-4552.

### Bereavement Ministry

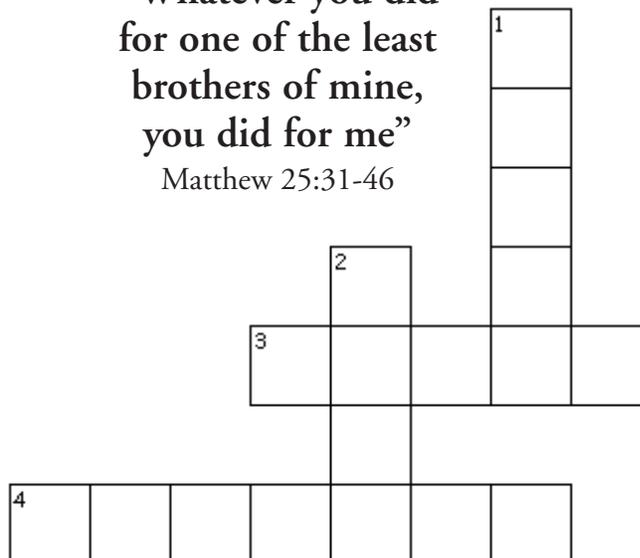
The Bereavement Ministry is looking for new members to help honor the soul of the departed, comfort family and friends in a dignified and spiritual manner, and serve at the liturgy by dispensing programs, placing and removing the pall, being an altar server, lector, assisting with Eucharist and presenting the Book of the Dead to the family for signing. Contact Mary Lou Flavin at 449-2333 or flavma8@verizon.net.

### Our Lady of Medugorje Prayer Ministry

Our Lady of Medugorje Prayer Ministry is looking for new members dedicated to praying for world peace and the needs of our parish families. Contact Mary Lou Flavin at 449-2333 or flavma8@verizon.net.

“Whatever you did  
for one of the least  
brothers of mine,  
you did for me”

Matthew 25:31-46



Kids' Spot

By Sonia Haney

### Across

3. In this gospel reading, Jesus speaks of separating the sheep from the \_\_\_\_\_
4. Jesus says the blessed will inherit the \_\_\_\_\_ prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

### Down

1. Jesus says when we help one of the \_\_\_\_\_ brothers, we do it for Him.
2. What we are called to give the hungry.

Answers  
can be found  
in your bible,  
Matthew  
25:31-46

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