



Volume 5 Issue 1 • April 2010

st. mary's *Blessings*

Church of St. Mary Parish Newsletter



Stewardship Highlights: The Body of Christ

By Andrea S. Murray

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.” (1 Corinthians 12: 12-14)

As we sit at Mass each week we may take for granted the true value of this establishment called the Church of St. Mary's. Yes, we have a beautiful building with all its aesthetic improvements, but “We are the Church, and our building only symbolizes the people who gather there. What is true of the building is true of the people.” (Turner, 2010).

It only takes one glance at the weekly bulletin to see that the parishioners of St. Mary's are generous with their time, talent, and treasure. In addition to our several ministries, we recently raised thousands of dollars in one weekend to help Haiti, and we often donate to CoNSERNS-U, Community Maternity Services, blood drives, Midnight Runs to care for the homeless, and to care packages to send to military personnel, just to name a few.

The warm and welcoming *community* that we have created at St. Mary's is undeniable. **We** are the Body of Christ. The Eucharist provides us with both physical and spiritual nourishment each week and through the Home (Communion) Visitation program, we, the Body of Christ, are also able to bring that nourishment to our parishioners who can't

join us each week. We are the body, we are the individuals who make up the congregation that gives strength to each other, the reason most of us keep coming back each week.

Perhaps you or a member of your family has benefited from the giving spirit of the St. Mary's community. Perhaps like Shelby Harrison, a longtime member who endured a difficult stem cell transplant this winter, you have felt the love and support of St. Mary's. Shelby shares that she received countless cards, phone calls, well wishes, food, books, and prayers, and that she feels cared about and missed when she is not able to attend Mass. Shelby says that St. Mary's is a “real community, where people care about you, even if they don't know you.”

Maybe you have a similar story, one in which you have felt the spirit of giving and love, the spiritual nourishment provided by St. Mary's. Perhaps you have had a family member who was ill

or in need. I ask that you recall the prayers you received, the emotional, the spiritual and perhaps financial support you were given at that time of need. If you have not had this experience, doesn't it feel wonderful to know that if you ever needed ANYTHING, we,

the Church of St. Mary's, would be there for you?

So, take pride in this Body of Christ that you have created, this whole, this family, this community of giving that wouldn't be possible without each of its individual members.

“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have equal concern for each other. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” (1 Corinthians 12: 25-27).

Turner, P. (March, 2010). *What Church Is. Ministry & Liturgy; Volume 37, Number 2.* Pages 9-10



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Published two times a year and mailed free of charge to the entire parish community.

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For Kids

Do You Know? By Teresa Memole

Do You Know the Story of the Good Thief?

When Jesus was dying on the cross on Good Friday, there were two thieves crucified with him. One thief asked Jesus to save them, stating that if Jesus was really the Son of God then He should be able to do that. The other thief, called Dismas, simply asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus came into His kingdom. Jesus then promised Dismas, the “good thief,” Eternal Life in heaven because of his faith. This story shows us that God will always forgive us if we

are truly sorry and have faith in Him.

It's possible that Dismas learned to have faith in God years earlier. Legend has it that during the Holy Family's flight to Egypt, Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus stayed in a forest filled with thieves. Among them was a man named Dismas, who planned to attack and rob the Holy Family. However, when he saw the Christ Child he was struck with adoration, and instead of robbing them, he let them stay in his cave. Mary told him that his actions were good and that he would find reward before death. Dismas always remembered this promise and likely believed it was fulfilled on Good Friday at Calvary.



Pastor's Corner

Father David R. LeFort

As I write this, we're in the midst of a few winter storms during the first full week of Lent and very much looking forward to Easter and springtime. I hope that each of us has experienced a Lent of renewal: maybe our commitments to

faith are stronger; maybe our families and friendships have been strengthened with new commitments to share our lives more deeply with those close to us; maybe our desire to serve God and neighbor has been bolstered. No matter what the growth, I pray that each of us can rejoice in the new life that Christ is offering us this Easter!

Personally, I've enjoyed a new kind of "springtime" these last few months. After being away for four months earlier this year, it has been a true blessing to be back with you these last five months. Realizing that old stressors which caused anxieties within me no longer need to dominate my daily living, I've found that sharing parish and ministerial responsibilities with others is actually quite liberating. In fact, here at St. Mary's, parishioners of all kinds make sharing ministry a real delight! In the past few months, I've found myself often reflecting on the many and varied gifts and talents that hundreds of parishioners share within our community each week, and I realize even more, how blessed I am to be part of this wonderful parish community. All of these realizations prompt me to offer my heartfelt and sincere "thank you" for being parishioners of such a valuable and faithful Catholic community and I'm so blessed to be here among you.

A blessed Easter and springtime to each and every one!

Fr. David

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.

Getting to Know Each Other Better By Shannon Hutton

spotlight



Alex Pelli

Many of you may recognize Alex as the young man who greets you at the 11:00 a.m. Mass or as the usher who brings the collection to the altar. You may also know him as the new father of twin girls. Since Alex is so involved at St. Mary's, you may not realize that St. Mary's wasn't the first church Alex came to when he moved to Albany to go to college at RPI. In fact, Alex tried three other churches in the area, but none of them offered Alex what he was looking for . . . a home away from home. But when he came to St. Mary's, he knew he belonged here.

It was important for Alex to find a welcoming church to belong to because growing up in a small farming town, he was used to being part of a community. After attending his first Mass at St. Mary's, Alex realized that St. Mary's

was "as close to that as I'd seen in years." People noticed when you walked in and were glad you were there. Once Alex decided to make St. Mary's his parish home, he took the initiative to get involved. He helped redesign the website and became

a Eucharistic Minister and member of the Hospitality Ministry.

Where is your hometown?
Ashland, Maine (population about 900).

How do you enjoy spending your free time?

As quietly as possible. I like watching the History Channel, Discovery Channel and home repair shows. But if I could, I would be snowmobiling 24/7! I go on a week long trip every year with my Dad to snowmobile in Maine and Canada.

Where is your favorite place on earth? Why?

The Interconnected Trail System. It's a 24 mile snowmobiling trail that connects my house in Maine to my best friend's house.

What accomplishment in your life are you most proud of?

I've been successful starting my own business. I created something from nothing.

I've always wanted to do that since high school. (Alex owns

Prospect Genius and eQueos.)

What books have influenced you? Why?

Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . And Others Don't by Jim Collins. It's a research book about different leadership styles in business. I took the lessons to heart and it panned out pretty well for me.

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

I'd be happy living on a 5,000 acre plot with just my family, being a farmer and growing my own food. Coming to church forces me to come out of my shell.

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

I wish I could model my life after my Dad. His moral compass points North and it has never waived. There's no way to get him to do anything unethical. He's an upstanding dude.

What made you decide to make St. Mary's your parish home?

It's the only place that felt like home. St. Mary's has a Christian way of welcoming people. When you come here, there's no hiding in the back.

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

I don't think we'll see a lot of changes. We've figured out how to be a strong community. Unfortunately though there's a small core of parishioners who supports all the rest. It's fantastic we have that core, but I hope what changes is that more people get involved.

What do you hope to hear God say when you enter heaven?

Hopefully "welcome" and not "get out of my house." I always worry I'm not doing enough. I may do more than some, but I'm not confident I'm doing enough to win God's favor.

Easter Traditions

Easter traditions make the holiday special, but they also help us live our faith by giving us opportunities to focus on the significance of this blessed season. Here's how a few St. Mary's families live their faith.

Pat and Bill Brusco: The Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross illustrate the suffering of Jesus in his final hours and can be seen on the walls of St. Mary's. Beginning on the first Friday following Ash Wednesday and continuing through Good Friday, parishioners are encouraged to pray at each of the fourteen scenes to reflect on the significance of the season of Lent.

Pat and Bill Brusco, both educated in Catholic schools, try to attend The Stations of the Cross as often as they can during the six weeks of Lent, but always attend on Good Friday at 12 p.m. because it is believed that Jesus was on the cross between 12 p.m. and 3 p.m. The Bruscos also make a point of attending the "live" Stations of the Cross depicted by members of St. Mary's youth ministry.

Pat says that praying The Stations of the Cross allows her to realize more fully the great sacrifice that Jesus made for us all. She hopes that more people will make The Stations of the Cross part of their journey to Easter.



The Prendergast Family: The Lenten Promise

When Cathy Prendergast was a child she followed the tradition of making a sacrifice during Lent, which her family called the Lenten promise. Now Cathy has passed this Easter tradition on to her own children, Erin (age 10) and Haley (age 6). This year her two daughters have given up candy for Lent. If you have children, you know this is no easy task for them!

Following a discussion about what it means to make a sacrifice and abstain, Cathy put away the big jar of treats that is off limits until Easter Sunday. Every day presents a small challenge that Erin and Haley must



face, but every small sacrifice they make helps them better understand the sacrifice that Jesus made for them. So when Easter Sunday arrives with its celebrations, Easter baskets and treats, Erin and Haley will be enjoying them with a sense of accomplishment and a better understanding of what Easter is all about.

Cookie DeFruscio and Family: Easter Traditions

Cookie DeFruscio raised eight children in an Italian household where traditions run deep. Here are some of the Easter traditions Cookie practiced while raising her family.

Cookie and her daughters turned palm branches into beautiful crosses and then gave them to people they'd had disagreements with as a sign of, or request for, forgiveness. These palm branches were also placed on the graves of deceased family members.

On Holy Thursday, after attending Mass, they visited neighboring churches to view the enshrined Eucharist and see how each church was decorated.

On Good Friday, Cookie asked her children to be silent from 12 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. as a sign of reverence to Jesus. That evening they would attend The Stations of the Cross.

In preparation for Easter Sunday, they baked rice pies and made baskets out of cookie dough with an egg baked into the basket. With so many wonderful traditions and happy memories, Cookie is pleased that, "each of her kids does some of these things and adds their own touches."



Our Parish Family Photos



Faith Formation Parade



Leader of Prayer Service on Ash Wednesday

Welcome to St. Mary's

Our Parish Family: Over the last year or so, with all of the developments and challenges that we've faced in pastoral planning, it's been a grace for us to host so many new worshippers to St. Mary's. Whether coming from other parishes, being new to the area, or returning to our community after a hiatus, welcome to St. Mary's! One of the blessings our parish enjoys is the commitment to liturgical ministry by so many of our parishioners. We invite and encourage each person who worships with us to become involved in whatever ministry to which they feel blessed and called. If you haven't taken the opportunity to formally register with our parish, please feel welcome to call Pat Rizzo at our parish office (449-2232, ext. 11) and she'll be happy to help you become more united with us as a member of our parish family. And if any parishioner knows someone who has not been to church in awhile, please extend an invitation to them; they would be most welcome to gather for prayer with us!

Fr. David



Deborah, Rebecca, and Alexander Smith



Kathleen Walker



Ray, Tuiza, and Macrina Flickinger



Catherine, Greg, and Andrew Van Orden



Scott and Caitlin Mullins



Scott, Valerie, and Jacob Hennessy

Many Hands Make Light Work

By Stephanie Scheibly

The following St. Mary's ministries need your help! Please consider sharing your time and talent.

Volunteer Opportunities:

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults:

RCIA always welcomes people interested in being catechists and sponsors for our candidates who are working to become Catholics. For more information contact Joanne Cimma at 479-4552.

Evangelization & Catechesis: Contact Maureen Smith at 449-2232 for details on the following needs:

Administrative / Technology Support

Hospitality / Events/ Gatherings

Drivers / Chaperones

Aides / Gatekeepers for Faith Formation

A full listing of all the ministries at St. Mary's is available in the bulletin and on the website along with names and phone numbers of the ministry heads. Feel free to contact them!

The Season of Easter

U W R K P R T N Z Y Q C D C A
 C N R E W E V W A G R B O K Y
 R X E Q T E T D K O K B O D X
 C U S Y T S I E S Y T Y G G O
 G W U O Z R A S R H L I X V B
 N I R B F I H E U O K V D S J
 V T R A C V J R H R K C I T E
 N R E Y X N S Y R A V L A C S
 G W C J R D N H O J C T U X U
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CALVARY

CROSS

DISMAS

EASTER

FRIDAY

GOOD

HOLY

JESUS

JOHN

MARY

PETER

RESURRECTION

SIMON

THURSDAY

Kids' Spot

By Teresa Memole

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