

Our Christian Walk

The Gazette Of Grace

Fall Issue 2013

Serving The Community Of Our Lady Of Grace



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Deacon Frank's Note

After more years of Catholic school than I choose to acknowledge, it's difficult to admit that I just learned of a new title for Mary: "Mary Untier of Knots."

Although I was ignorant of this title, devotion to the Blessed Virgin by this name has been common in Germany for centuries. My attention was drawn to it with the election of Pope Francis who has fostered this devotion for decades in Argentina.

The story goes that the title comes from a painting commissioned by a nobleman to give thanks to Mary for saving the marriage of his grandfather. On the verge of divorce, the couple went to a priest for help. The priest prayed before an image of Mary that all the knots in the marriage be loosed. Sure enough, they were.

As depicted in that painting, Mary is shown with a knotted white ribbon which she is patiently untying. She is assisted by two angels, one presenting the knots of our lives to her and the other presenting the ribbon, now freed of knots, to us. Pope Francis saw the painting when he was a student in Germany. He took a copy of it back home and promoted the devotion.

What wonderful image of how Mary works in our lives! No thunder or lightening just the slow patient unfailing untying of the knots of our lives: discord in families or between parent and child; anguish and despair; our addictions or those of a loved one. Actually, the knots of our lives are anything that beats us down and separates us from God and the joy that God desires for us.

I am sure that as Pope, Francis will be joining Mary in untying those contentious knots that scandalize many and divide the Church. Perhaps we can join our prayers to his for the success of his papacy. (See painting on page 3)

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OLG Mission Statement

We are a welcoming community of believers, being disciples of Christ through worship, the Sacraments, ongoing faith formation, evangelization and Christian service to others!

Alligators, Elephants and Front-end Loaders- OH MY!

By Peter Notch

Question:

What do five American alligators, one African elephant, one small frontend loader and the OLG monthly food drives have in common?

Answer:

They all weigh in at about 5,000 pounds!

Yes, between April 2010 and July 2013, in a little over 3 years, the generous parishioners of Our Lady of Grace have donated over 5,000 pounds of non-perishable food items to the SICM Food Pantry!

While the food can be dropped off at the church at any time, it is collected on the third Sunday of the month after the 10:15 Mass and delivered to the Food Pantry on Albany Street in Schenectady. There, it is weighed in before it gets sorted and added to the bags for the clients at the Pantry. That's how we know that we have crossed the 5,000 pound mark.

Our 5,000 pounds (about 150 pounds a month) may sound like a lot, (I know, because I have loaded most of it into my car), but it does not last long. The need for food assistance is great and has continued to increase in the past 3 ½ years. The Pantry is capable of serving about 100 families each day, and once that maximum has been reached, the Pantry must close its doors for the day, often shortly after they are opened. OLG's food drives are vital to serving those 100 families per day. Our contributions, as well as those of other congregations and community groups and the food purchased from the Regional Food Bank, allow the Pantry to operate.

During the months of October, November and December, our food drives focus on the needs of the OLG parish community, when Thanksgiving

and Christmas baskets are prepared. While this food is not weighed, and we can't make comparisons to alligators and front-end loaders, it is equally important because it helps create a special holiday meal for those in our own community, and a box with a "little extra food" to help during the holiday season.

When we established a monthly food drive in our parish 3 ½ years ago, we never expected that it would be so successful that comparisons to alligators, front-end loaders or elephants would come into play. Thank you for your continued generosity.

(More information about the monthly food drives is available from the parish office or contact Peter Notch- notchp@nycap.rr.com.)



Mary, Untier of Knots

Youth Ministry and First-Hand Accounts of Their Retreat Experiences

By Erin Fenton
Pastoral Associate for Youth Ministry

There are so many ways to get involved in Youth Ministry here at OLG. There are service opportunities, leadership opportunities and always ways to have some fun and talk about faith. This June a group of young people at Our Lady of Grace (who were involved as much as they could be as volunteers, peer leaders, and catechists) graduated. Just before graduation I took these dedicated graduating seniors, and a couple of recent grads, who had just finished up their first year of college and were also peer leaders and catechists, on a retreat up at Pyramid Lake. It gave them a break from the stress of getting ready to graduate and it gave them a chance to sit and reflect on the changes ahead of them. The recent grads shared stories of their first years and also how they had a lot of the same worries when they graduated the year before. I even had them do a creative project to explore how changes can be a positive thing, even when they are difficult. They took “perfect” squares of cardstock, cut or ripped them up and then created something new and interesting out of the pieces that revealed something of who they are and who they wanted to become. **The photos show the results on page 4 and are incredible!**

I have also asked a couple of these young people to share a bit about their experiences:

“When I first got involved in youth ministry my sophomore year, I had originally been thinking, “this will look great on a college application.” While I was too young to peer lead since I was a participant on the retreats, I was still allowed to attend meetings to plan events and just talk. By the time my junior year rolled around, I realized I wanted to be a peer leader, not just because it could help me when applying to college. I had enjoyed the retreats I went on between 7th and 10th grade, and the peer leaders always seemed to have such a good time. Before my senior year, I decided I also wanted to teach a second grade class. Not only was it incredibly fun, but helping children to make their First Communion made me remember why I got involved in youth ministry to begin with. Peer leading and teaching has provided me with the

chance to help others enjoy their time, and it has also helped me to forge friendships I would not have without it. It also helped me to renew my faith, and gain a better sense of myself before I go to college.

After the school year was over, I went on a retreat with other graduating seniors, and a couple current college freshmen. I viewed the retreat as a way to spend time with everyone there, but also to answer my questions and worries. While on the retreat, we talked about college, adjusting to a new setting, and how to maintain your faith. The advice I received from people that had already experienced their freshman year reassured me that I had nothing to worry about. Going on the retreat made me realize that I should be excited, not fearful of college, and that no matter how far away I was, I would always find a home in Burnt Hills.” –Lauren Munday

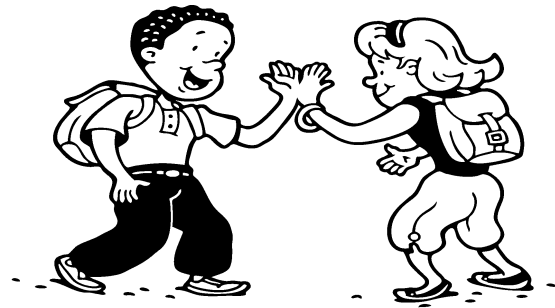
“Being a Peer Leader at OLG has been such a great experience. It has allowed me to learn more about myself and my spirituality. I loved working with the kids, as well as my fellow Peer Leaders and Erin. I was so glad to be able to go on a Senior Retreat with Erin, Lauren Munday, Breann Litwa, Caroline Martin, Deana Hopeck and Morgan Dubois. We went to Pyramid Life Center, a place I've been to many times with OLG and for CLI. Erin let us have plenty of free time when we got there, which was really nice. We spent a lot of the day kayaking around the lake and hanging out on the island. It was great to have the opportunity to just relax in such a beautiful place.

We ate dinner in the dining hall and then got to the spiritual aspect of the retreat, which involved some prayer and self-reflection, as well as a fun opportunity to let out our creative sides with a paper activity. This really allowed us to see who among us was artistic and who was not (I was in the latter group). We concluded the retreat the next day with affirmations written by our fellow peer leaders. This was really special because after knowing each other for so long, we got a chance to tell one another how much we value them. The Senior Retreat was a perfect way to end so many years of service at Our Lady of Grace.” –Annie Pape

We are always looking for more young people to get involved. Our program wouldn't be what it is without the youth leadership. If you are interested in getting more involved at Our Lady of Grace, please let me know!



Kids Korner



September

If you observe other kids bullying, imagine how it feels, and support the kid being bullied! How? You choose! The important thing is for YOU to take a stand against bullying because it is wrong! Be alert, be strong, and if you see this happening, ask God for help as well as a parent or friend!



National Catholic Youth Conference *(The excitement is building!)*

By Jacob Goslin

On November 21, 2013 Rebecca Catelli, Marina Hands, Elizabeth Sammons, and I, who are parishioners at Our Lady of Grace and seniors at Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake High School, will travel to Indianapolis, Indiana to participate in the National Catholic Youth Conference. There we will participate with 27,000 other youth from across the country in 3 days of workshops, Masses and prayer. I cannot speak for everyone, but I chose to go to NCYC to learn more about my faith and meet other people who share my beliefs. We ask for your support through prayer and participation in fundraising efforts. We will need to raise \$1,500 in order to make this possible. Please support us if you can.

Senior Retreatants



This artwork is soul-food!



Can you see the delight?



Baptism and The Ultimate Question!

By Sr. Cathy Kruegler, CSJ
Pastoral Associate for
Faith Formation



Most of us do not remember our baptism as infants. Although I don't remember my own, I know I was baptized on December 10th. I was raised in a culture of faith in my family and I grew to love that date because it is right between the feast of the Immaculate Conception on 12/8 and Our Lady of Guadalupe on 12/12. Unfortunately, my parents chose a godmother who moved out of the area and she was not part of my life. In the last months of my mother's life, my godmother reconnected and began to write and call. One day she sent me a most precious gift – a photo of my baptism, with my parents and godparents. I never knew one existed! Many take their own baptism for granted. We didn't have to prepare or work for it. It just happened to us. Because of the Sacrament of Baptism we are new creations, graced with God's very life, now and for eternity: and as new members of the Body of Christ, we are anointed for very special work.

Part of that special work is to share our faith. We have in our midst at OLG, a young adult who has never been baptized, and who, since Lent, has been participating in sessions to explore what it might mean to become Catholic. We call this process "**The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults**". Ideally this process is a journey that should last a full liturgical year.

This time of introduction is called the **Period of Inquiry** which is a time of reflection when the inquirer can look at one's own life story in light of the gospels and ask any questions about Christian faith. The next step in this journey for our candidate will be to ask for **Acceptance into the Order of the Catechumenate**.

If all goes well sometime in early fall our candidate will knock loudly at our Church doors and express a desire to follow the way of Jesus. We will welcome our candidate into the household of faith as a **Catechumen**, the name given to adults preparing for baptism since the early church. When we celebrate this ceremony for our special young person, ask yourself, "Do I need to move forward, take a faith risk, and share, in gratitude for this great gift of Baptism in Christ?"

Till We Meet Again

by Sr. Madeline Powers

There are no words that can adequately thank you for the many ways you have lived the Gospel message of love that graced my life for the past fourteen years here at Our Lady of Grace.

I have experienced Christ in each of you as welcoming, loving, compassionate, sorrowing, enjoying-a-good party, joyful, suffering, laughing, and so much more.

My prayer for you is expressed in Sister Kathy Sherman's song—"*May love be with you, may peace surround you and may the presence of God be with you always.*"

Thank you and God bless you.



Women's Day of Reflection

Open to all women of Our Lady of Grace...bring a friend!

Monday, September 9, 2013 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Theme: "Be Still and Know that I Am God"

A one day retreat to explore how we listen, not just hear, but truly listen...to God and each other. Join us as we open ourselves up to be instruments of the Holy Spirit...to be present, aid in another's healing and hear God's voice as He guides our lives.....listen, listen.....

Presenter: Claire L. Bradley, Personal Spiritual Growth counselor, Retreat Director, Educator

Location: Home of Janet Troidle
35 Lundy Lane on Ballston Lake, NY

For further inquiries, and to make reservations before 9-5-2013 (for planning purposes) contact

Janet Troidle, 399-3861 or
jantroidle@gmail.com

Our Sunrise

By Robert Gering

The Sunrise and the Sunset
 shine at the opposite sides of the day.
 Yet both are beautiful and bright in their way.
 The life aborning and the life long-lived.

The dawn with its bright colors, sounds and warmth,
 the herald of something new and exciting—
 children running and laughing
 people hurrying about.

The heat of the day is gone.
 The sun is setting but with color and beauty as born.
 The streets are quiet flickers of light.
 The children asleep await a new dawn.

The birds have settled down
 secure in the arms of the tree.
 Then, at the end of the day
 my love's face shines radiant, peaceful, and calm
 in the last glowing rays.

The light of my day is gone, but the night is not dark.
 It sparkles with diamonds,
 Memories of the day past.
 The clouds drift on
 aglow in the mystic light of the moon.
 The world alive but at rest
 with a beauty which beckons us on
 to where the sunset heralds
 something new and exciting...

Our Sunrise.



Trick or What? Beggar's Night!

By Carol Harblin

Halloween is a holiday that people feel obligated to encourage by purchasing candy. They invite children to their front door, distribute candy to them because of their costumes: but what is Halloween and what does it have to do with Christians and a recognized holiday?

In a couple mid-west states of Iowa and Ohio, as well as a New England state of Massachusetts, the popular "trick-or-treating" was referred to as "Beggar's Night." Wearing costumes and begging door-to-door for treats on holidays goes back to the Middle Ages. Trick-or-treating resembled the late medieval practice of "souling," receiving food in return for prayers for the dead on All Souls Day. It originated in Ireland and Britain, although similar practices for the souls of the dead were found as far south as Italy.

Halloween is actually a very Western world holiday. Its roots actually make it a Christian holiday. It is not a holiday like Easter or Christmas but is celebrated as a seasonal break between Autumn and Christmas.

Going outside "trick or treating" or even bobbing for apples and having an autumn bonfire are ways of saying good-bye to the year before hibernating inside all winter. It is a sort of last hoorah in the great outdoors for the year before snow and Christmas is upon us.

The festival of Samhain (ancient Celtic festival known as Samhain), is a celebration of the end of the harvest season in Gaelic culture. Samhain was a time used by the ancient pagans to take stock of supplies and prepare for winter. The ancient Gaels believed that on October 31, the boundaries between the worlds of the living and the dead overlapped and the deceased would come back to life and cause havoc such as sickness or damaged crops.

Over the years, Halloween has gotten very commercialized, just as Christmas is being associated with Santa Claus instead of the birth of Jesus. In 835, Pope Gregory IV moved the celebration for all the martyrs (later all saints) from May 13 to November 1. The night before became known as All Hallows' Eve or holy evening. Eventually the name was shortened to the current Halloween. On November 2, the Church celebrates All Souls Day.

Thanksgiving

By Alison Norton

When my friend Jan asked me to write about Thanksgiving for this newsletter, at first I drew a big blank. The subject matter seemed so broad and a little intimidating. What could I really say about Thanksgiving that would be different or unique? I realized that most of the things that I am thankful for, I also tend to take for granted.

Family

I wonder what I did to deserve such joy when I think about my family. Nothing in my life has had more meaning or importance as my happy home, brimming with laughter, little girl voices and playful curiosity. Brushing away thoughts of impending tragedies, accidents and things beyond my control, I focus on what I can control and that is my patience, my love and my understanding for my family. When I think of Thanksgiving, I will strive to be more thankful for the gifts of a happy family when there are so many who suffer loss and loneliness.

Health

I am thankful for my health and the good health of my family. A recent health crisis touched my immediate family and made me realize the fragile nature of the human body. There is often a ripple effect when sickness strikes in a family and it can be a strengthening event that helps pull loved ones together. I will strive to be more thankful for the gift of good health and more compassionate toward those in ill health.

Freedom

In this amazing country we have an enormous amount of freedom that we often take for granted. We have freedoms ranging from free speech, freedom of religion, the right to bear arms, to the freedom to quit your job and backpack across Europe. One can get coffee at two in the morning and buy an outfit online at three in the afternoon. We have freedoms that many others across the world do not have and we should be grateful for a government that allows us such privileges. I will strive to be more appreciative of the luxury of living in a free democratic society.

Faith

Most importantly, I am thankful for being watched over by a loving, compassionate God. Bestowed by so many blessings in my life, I know that our Lord is a loving, understanding, omnipresent and patient God. In so many ways He shows us how much He loves us from a simple pleasure of a colorful sunset to a joyous reunion between estranged loved ones. We have so much to be thankful for and our glorious Lord always hears us even when we take for granted that He is listening. I will strive to be more thankful for the ever present love of Jesus who is always by our side to hold our hand through triumph and tragedy.

Thanksgiving is such a treasured day. Hopefully we won't allow our materialistic society to push the Christmas rush upon us. This day is an opportunity to just be, **be grateful for all our blessings!** Please join us for Mass on Thanksgiving Day. The church bulletin will provide up-to-date information. See you there!

Prayer is not asking, it is a longing of the soul. It is a daily admission of one's weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words, than words without a heart.

Mahatma Gandhi



Do you have questions or suggestions you wish raised at the pastoral council meeting? Contact one of the members.

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Adults are always asking little kids what they want to be when they grow up because they're looking for ideas!

Paula Poundstone

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Our Cluster Parishes:

Saint Joseph's Website:
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Immaculate Conception Website:
<http://www.ic-glenville.com/>

: