

Our Christian Walk

The Gazette Of Grace

Spring

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Serving The Community Of Our Lady Of Grace



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Dorothy's Note

Dorothy Sokol, Parish Life Director

Welcome to Judy Conway, Secretary for Faith Formation

Bishop Henri Neumann is quoted as saying, "To live is to change. And to live well is to change often."

So it is with the staff here at OLG. With the retirement of Pat Mahoney, we have hired a new part-time secretary for the Faith Formation program. The new smiling face is Judy Conway.

She comes to us after years of work as a Unit Secretary in a hospital. She knows how to juggle phones, use strange computer programs and deal with patients, nurses and doctors. Judy was looking to leave a high-pressured atmosphere and work with a small team. Do you think she can handle us?

The duties include record-keeping of the Sacraments, producing our music programs for the weekend Masses as well as all things Faith Formation. When you need a sponsor form, call Judy. When you register as a new parishioner, Judy will take care of your information. If something goes wrong, we'll say it was "Judy."

Just minutes away in Clifton Park, she is helping her mom and walking mom's two dogs. She also looks forward to time with her granddaughters!

Please make her feel welcome!

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!



73 Midline Road
Ballston Lake, NY 12019
Parish Office: 399-5713
Fax: 399-5761

[http://www.rcda.org/
churches/olgchurch](http://www.rcda.org/churches/olgchurch)

My Walk With God...and Wanda

as remembered

by Maura Schreiner

They say that sports build character but maybe sports build relationships with God. At least they did for me. Everything was clear and simple to me as a child. There were 2 seasons: basketball and softball. Math was an excellent subject. English was at best an exercise in Christian sacrifice. Consequently, I have no diary to draw upon but I do submit these excerpts from my unwritten memoirs as evidence that God walks with each of us, even a rigidly focused pre-teen in 1970's Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

... My softball team had another game tonight and we lost. Again. By a lot. Like a hugely embarrassing a lot. We can't possibly ever win. All town athletics are organized by the churches and so the teams are drawn up according to which church your family attends. This being a southern town, St. Mary's has barely enough girls to field a team. I suppose if I applied myself more in English class, I'd find it ironic that the Catholic team is the only one without uniforms. Instead, I just think it stinks that Central Baptist has a whole extra team sitting on the bench. With full uniforms. Tops and bottoms! ...

...Tonight we played Kern Methodist. I thought maybe, just maybe, we might finally win since they were the only other un-victorious team in the league. I did everything I could, diving left and right at shortstop, stopping every ground ball that came to my side of the field. I'd then wing the ball over to first base where my teammate Wanda would—wait for it—give a little scream and flee the bag before the ball actually reached her.

..... I thought—no, I *knew*—Wanda should be benched but instead Coach told me to throw the ball gently. Gently! (*snort!*) So I'd throw these puffballs that a snail could leg out while Wanda closed her eyes and ducked. ...

... Imagine our surprise and excitement tonight when the Spurgeon Chapel pitcher walked 3 consecutive batters and we found ourselves in a bona fide scoring situation. It just seemed wrong that Wanda was the runner perched on third, prepared to score our team's *first run of the season!* But, hey, a run's a run and I'll take one however we can get it. The next batter squiggled the ball into the outfield and Wanda merrily skipped home. Or more accurately, Wanda merrily skipped toward home, over home, past home, but never actually on home. She was ruled out as she obliviously high-fived teammates on the bench and we still have not scored a run. I've changed my mind about benching Wanda. She should be banished from the team! The league! All organized athletics! ...

... I think I have solved the Wanda problem! I was shooting balled up socks into the laundry hamper when it dawned on me. God alone is greater than Wanda's blundering incompetence.

... I will promise God that I will say a rosary after every game we win. Ahhh, yes. That's the ticket! ... (*a moment of reflection*) That sounds like I'm trying to bribe God. That's not good. ... (*sigh*) And it was such a good plan. ... Ah-hah! It won't be a bribe if I say a rosary after every game, win or lose. Sort of a good faith agreement. This is a bigger commitment on my part than I want but these games are that important to me. I'll do it.

... Besides, my bedtime is so ridiculously early and I've got nothing else to do while I'm lying awake in bed for so long. I wonder how God is going to accomplish these wins, though. Mom has strictly forbidden me to pray for anyone's—even Wanda's—early demise. God will just have to find another solution. ...



Opening up the Conversation about Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

By Grace Fay, Pastoral Associate for Youth Ministry

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

As I write this our BH-BL community is mourning the loss of another young person, who has taken their own life. By my understanding this is the third young person between the ages of 15-25 to take their life in the last year.

This is extremely saddening, confusing, and frustrating to me... as I'm sure it is to many of you. As a Catholic, who has struggled with mental health as part of my journey, my first reaction is to jump on my soap box and put a big spotlight on the lack of conversation and communication that is happening in our community about mental health and suicide prevention.

We, as adults in the community and as Catholics, are given the responsibility and the privilege to have these conversations with our young people...to help them shine a light in dark corners of their lives. These are not easy conversations to have, I will admit. There are lots of emotions, stigma, darkness, and fear around these issues...they can definitely be high intensity conversations, but that should not stop us from having the conversations. There are many resources and support groups out there for people who are struggling with mental health issues, thoughts of suicide, and those who are supporting them.

The only way to help our young people who are struggling with mental health issues and thoughts of suicide is to talk about them. We, as a community, need to help bring these issues out of the darkness that they thrive in and shine God's healing, supportive light on them. The more we talk about it, the more we can chip away at the stigma that surrounds them.

If you are struggling, please speak up! Many people struggling with mental health and thoughts of suicide do so in silence. This community wants to help and support you, but we can't do that if we don't know that it is happening. Know that you are loved and you are not alone in your struggle. God is always with you, especially in the darkness.

Let us start the conversation about mental health and suicide prevention! If you are interested in helping to be part of the conversation, start with just listening to the people in your life. The more open you are in conversation, the more willing they will be to share their struggles with you.

If you are in need of help with the conversation or are considering taking your life, please contact one of the following organizations:

Resources for Suicide and Mental Health Resources:

- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 24/7 crisis support hotline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- New York State Office of Mental Health: www.omh.ny.gov 1-800-597-8481
- Crisis Chat: Support chat for anyone who is depressed, going through a hard time, thinking about suicide or just needs to talk. www.crisischat.org
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: www.AFSP.org
- Suicide Prevention Center of NYS: www.preventsuicide.org

Did you know?

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) states that suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S. and the 3rd leading cause of death in people ages 10-24 in the state of New York. It is estimated that over twice as many people die from suicide annually in New York State than by homicide (AFSP).

Nationally, AFSP research shows that there are at least 25 suicide attempts for every death by suicide in youth.

Prayer for those suffering from Mental Illness, Depression and Suicide

God of Light, bring light and love into the inner darkness of those who are suffering and struggling with mental illness or thoughts of suicide. Help them to focus on you and see your light in their lives. May your loving embrace surround them and help them to know that they are not alone. Help them to ask for support and give them the strength to shed light into their darkness. Be with their family and friends as they help and support them. Be with them as they work through the pain of mental illness and work to find balance in their lives. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

NOTES RECORDED FROM WOMEN'S DAY OF REFLECTION

THEME: FROM FEAR TO FAITH

Suzanne Allegretti, presenter

Last fall, there was a gathering of 18 women for a fall retreat, to listen to Suzanne Allegretti facilitate the topic of fear and faith. Following is a summary of the day's presentation.

Most of us live by a script of how our life should be, an agenda. Why do we have it? We are all born with beautiful, open hearts (no script). Then, life HAPPENS, and our hearts start to close down to protect ourselves. It is then we start to develop a script: it is a natural process of protection. (Regardless, we are all little children at heart. Recognizing this, we call out "Oh Lord, rest in me so I can do my work!")

Thus, we see that life and God do not follow our script. (How can I trust a God who allows this to happen?). Our suffering erupts from our need to have life a certain way. With our hearts closing down, fears erupt.

Where does fear come from?

It begins in our heads and moves down into our bodies which hold all hurt, in our most vulnerable places. (Physical issues indicate our response.). To avoid physical problems, we are called to move toward, not away from, our fear --- with tenderness and compassion. We lay ourselves open to the process, in spite of all the feelings that accompany fear (inadequacy, denial, feeling trapped, anxious.)

How do we do this?

Look within and recognize where there is blindness. Am I bound, or do I isolate myself from others to avoid the pain? The "script" of what others do to us also binds us. Our bodies hold all our fears and are our best teachers. But we WANT to live in fearlessness!

Here is where FAITH brings us the freedom we so desire. Let go and let God. Being grateful every day brings us to awareness. God is PRESENCE! I AM WHO AM. God is Benevolence. So, recognize and face what scares you, and move from fear to faith. Although there will be discomfort for a period of time, there will be great rewards. The spiritual path is about opening new doors.

There are times in life that are very difficult--living with Malox, Nexium, Paxil. These are the key moments to remove the blindfolds and experience PRESENCE.

The spiritual path is the path of great athletes. For example, St. Paul walked hundreds of miles and finally commented, "I've run the good race." Our lives take us to a place of change "to become." Only God can give us what we really want. We open ourselves up to receive that love and thus love others "as they are". (Love me as I am, not the way you want to love me.)

In faith, our expectations change, and we step forth on shaky ground, not knowing the result. Faith is relying on something you cannot see. Without disrespect, God is dog spelled backwards. YOUR BEST FRIEND! Thinking positive with trust is experiencing God. We cannot place our vision of God in a box because we are human. **IT IS THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD AND HOW I ACT AS A HUMAN THAT DESCRIBES MY VISION OF GOD!**

Life offers little firm ground to stand on; however, there is a key to living a life that makes a difference to you and others. We need to be OK with the unpredictable aspect of life, to notice when life is scary. When we feel trapped, we need to walk through the fear and take each step in faith. Faith makes suffering tolerable. Be open to pursuing help. Through counseling, you teach your body new responses to anxiety. The beauty of psychiatric medicine is that it slows down response time, allowing one to relax and feel/be more reasonable.

The best lessons we learn are those we have experienced ourselves. We are all little children at heart. Recognizing this, we call out "Oh Lord, rest in me so I can do my work!") Trust in God as you journey forward, be open to what your body teaches you, and always remember to be grateful for everything!



Just a partial group picture of retreatants 9-22-16

News from the Coffee Cart

By Liz Marchinko



The coffee selling team would like to thank all of our loyal customers and supporters who purchased coffee or made donations this past year. Each purchase of Earth Friendly coffee ensures the resources needed to continue helping the indigenous farmers of Guatemala.

For many years the Mayan descendants have not been allowed to roast and export their own coffee into a finished product. However, recently, Rotary International provided the farmers with their own commercial roasting facility. And now, with your help, the Maya Ixil are being trained to process their extraordinary coffee from seed to cup, earning them 30-50% more of the specialty coffee dollar.

Fair Trade practices are based on remembering that there are people behind all of the things we consume every day. So we would like to tell you a little bit about some of the coffee farmers you are helping with your coffee purchases.

When Gaspar Raymundo Melendrez joined the cooperative in 2009, he was only producing 5 quintales (500 kilograms) of low quality coffee. After receiving agricultural training he now produces 30 quintales (3000 kilograms) of high quality organic rainforest coffee and through the cooperative receives an excellent premium for his coffee.

Catarina and Susana Rodriguez have benefitted from the microcredit program that provides small business loans. Funding through the cooperative has enabled them to send their children to school. They work with their husbands picking the coffee and selecting, washing and drying the beans. They are now able to provide better lives for their families.

Remember these hardworking people when you enjoy your next cup of Earth Friendly coffee!

Faith Formation News

By Susan Carbone,
Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation

Last year at this time, I looked out my office window and saw a lot of snow that never seemed to melt. This year, I'm wondering where is the snow!! It's nice to know that God has a very good sense of humor. I did get some great pictures of the big snow in Long Island.

The Faith Formation Program has been going very well. The Grade 2 students received their First Reconciliation in the beginning of December. They are continuing their preparation for First Eucharist which will be in May.

The Kindergarten/First Grade classes put on a Christmas play for their parents and families. It was great day for them. They were thrilled that their picture was printed in the Evangelist.

All classes K-5 and the parish are participating in a new sock drive during Lent. These donations will be going to the Shelters of Saratoga. Thanks to all for your support.

In keeping with the theme of mercy:

- there are three Adult Education opportunities being offered in Lent. The dates are February 24th, March 3rd and March 8th.
- The students will be praying the Stations of the Cross on Monday, March 14th. All are welcome.

Please check the bulletin for further details.

The year has been flying by. In no time, "winter" will turn into spring and then another Faith Formation year will be over. By the way, will we have a spring or will we go right into summer? Only time will tell.



***We are not alone: we do not walk alone.
We are part of the one flock of Christ that
walks together.*** - Pope Francis

Keep the Faith Formation!

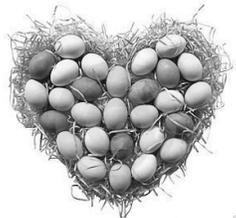
AN EASTER HEART

By Janet Troidle

Mercy shows its face
As we wend our way
Through life's toils
Scrutinizing the unknown

When the fray feels fraught
And doubt fills emptiness

We anticipate...
We pray
For the possibility
Of an Easter heart.



dreamstime.com

Doubt becomes hope

**Join in the celebration of 50 years of
priestly ministry for**

**Fr. Jack Varno
Sunday, May 29, 2016**

Noon Mass with reception to follow.

First Communion--

May 15 Sunday 10:15 a.m. Mass
Pray for our little ones as they journey toward
JESUS!

SUMMER FUN!

Check bulletin for dates.

Pyramid Lake July 25-29 Vacation for
the whole family! Contact Harry Thornhill for
more information. harrythornhill@hotmail.com



Easter Calendar Save the Dates

LENT

First Sunday of Lent 10:15 a.m.
'Rite of Sending' for Tom Skyer

Mar 15 Tuesday 7 p.m. at Immaculate Conception
Communal Sacrament of Reconciliation

REFLECTIONS OF MERCY at OLG

Feb 24 Wednesday 7 p.m.
Jesus' 'Mission of Mercy' with Tom Acemoglu

Mar 3 Thursday 7 p.m.
Forgiveness and Mercy with Grace Fay

Mar 8 Tuesday 7 p.m.
Songs and Psalms of Mercy
with Susan Carbone and Dorothy Sokol

HOLY WEEK

Mar 24 Holy Thursday 6 p.m. Mass
Followed by pot luck supper

Mar 25 Good Friday
Noon Stations of the Cross
7 p.m. Passion of Our Lord

Mar 26 Easter Vigil 8 p.m. Mass

Mar 27 Easter Sunday 8:15/10:15 a.m. Mass

PRAISE AND WORSHIP ADORATION FOR OLG, ICC AND ST. JOSEPH'S

April 4 Monday 7-8:30 p.m. at Immaculate
Conception

SPIRITUAL BOOK CLUB

Join the spiritual book club in late spring. Watch for dates and book
choice. Great fun and personal growth!





Our Christian Walk Contacts:

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

Jacob Goslin, Technical Advisor
jmgoslin@gmail.com

Note From Editor:

We welcome your comments, suggestions and contributions. We would like to use this newsletter to share the faith and Christian action of our parishioners. Please send stories about your ministry, e-mail photos; tell us about a person, or bible passages which have had a positive influence on you or your family, your poetry, your journey.

We are published quarterly, with deadlines as follows:

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
Dec-Jan-Feb /winter	Nov 5
Mar-Apr-May /spring	Feb 5
Jun-Jul-Aug /summer	May 5
Sept-Oct-Nov /fall	Aug 5

Our Cluster Parishes:
Saint Joseph's : 518-346-2316
<http://www.stjosephschurchscotia.net>

Immaculate Conception : 518-399-9168
<http://www.ic-glenville.com/>

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

Pastoral Council Members

-Shauna Bryk 393-6655
sbryk@gmail.com

-Chris Bushee 952-7348
cbushee@saratogapublishing.com

-David Cote 399-4511
dcote5@nycap.rr.com or

-Geoff Cramer 877-6073
geoffrey.cramer@ssa.gov

-Susan Daly 428-8830
dalyfuneralhome@hotmail.com

-Tad Darling 399-7229
harrydarling@verizon.net

-Suzanne DeVito 384-0121
sdevito@nycap.rr.com

-Joanne Lorenc 441-4630

-Judith Gibson 899-6105
judygibson9@aol.com

-Katie Gibson 899-6105

-Marina Jerry (Y) 384-2514
Marinajerry@hotmail.com

-John Spellman 882-1250
jspellman@nycap.rr.com

-Steve Zarelli 399-8919
stevezarelli@gmail.com

-John Lorenc, ex-officio
399-2973
john.lorencphd@gmail.com

-Donna Merchant, ex-officio
399-7542
merchant@ge.com

-Deacon Frank Thomas, ex-officio
fjtnok@verizon.net

-Dorothy Sokol 393-7969
sokold@nycap.rr.com

I love you
because of
who you are,
and because
of who I AM
when I am

Our Lady Of Grace Contacts

Parish Office
399-5713

Dorothy Sokol ext 1
sokold@nycap.rr.com
Parish Life Director

Rev. John Varno
Sacramental Minister

Deacon Frank Thomas
fjtnok@verizon.net

Lucille Feeser ext 0
feeserl@nycap.rr.com
Parish and Financial Secretary

Faith Formation Office
384-0109

Susan Carbone ext 2
carbonesm@nycap.rr.com
Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation

Grace Fay ext 3
olgsjym@gmail.com
Pastoral Associate for Youth Ministry

Judy Conway ext 4
conwayj@nycap.rr.com
Faith Formation Secretary

Find Us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/Our-Lady-of-Grace-Church-Ballston-Lake-NY-152683414767419/>

Music Ministry
399-6316

Patricia Neumann
Director of Liturgical Music
lvmusik@nycap.rr.com