

Our Christian Walk

The Gazette Of Grace

Winter Dec-Jan-Feb Issue 2012-2013

Serving The Community Of Our Lady Of Grace



Sr. Cathy's Note

Cathy Kruegler CSJ, Pastoral Associate Faith Formation

Inside this issue:

My Walk With God By: Tim Sinnenberg Ministry Fair	2
Book Review By: Alison Norton Forgiveness By: Janet Troidle	3
Kids Korner St. Nicholas Breakfast	4
Youth Ministry By: Erin Fenton	5
Winter Thoughts About Mary By: Sr. Cathy Kruegler	6
Important Dates Mardi Gras Information	7
Parish Contacts	8

May the Blessings of the Advent ~ Christmas Season be yours!

During the four months that I have been with you at our Lady of Grace, I have had the pleasure of sharing with you the 90th Anniversary Celebrations. I have enjoyed the August Picnic, The September Retreat days and the wonderful November Choir Concert, "Agape". I continue to grow in appreciation for all the children of the parish who reflect the formation of you their families in their simple wisdom and knowledge and respect of one another.

At the beginning of Advent which is my most favorite liturgical season, I am drawn to reflect on how my parents helped me to learn to wait and be filled with hope, expectation and anticipation which is really what this season is all about- helping us to yearn for the coming of the Lord Jesus in our hearts and world today and at the end of time.

One Christmas when I was about eight, I really wanted a bike for Christmas. My Dad in his wisdom spread a deck of cards out on a poster board. When I had completed each of my chores around the house, he would turn over a card. I did receive that beautiful bike for Christmas, but I treasured it because I had waited for it as I watched the cards change from a few turned over to half turned over to almost all turned over.

No tree ever went up in Advent in the Kruegler household until Christmas Eve. My Dad would come home at noon and we would start to decorate. It was placed in a room with double doors. When we were finished the doors would close and the stockings would be hung on the outside. My brother and I were both in a robed parish choir. After supper we would go to bed until 10:00 pm. then we would have a snack and go to sing for Midnight Mass. When we came home after 1:00 am we would have a snack and go back to bed until Mass on Christmas Day. Breakfast followed morning Mass and only after that did those doors open for us to see our Christmas. So much anticipation built up we could hardly stand it! We learned that the waiting was more fun than the actual presents under the tree. To this day I treasure this time of Advent.

Parents can prove their love for their children in the quality time spent with them and the seasonal activities enjoyed together. These times are more valuable than any of the crazy running around you do at the mall. This Christmas, why not make beautiful certificates of the talents you can share with one another like a promise to shovel the snow or wash Dad's car or maybe some evenings of free babysitting or a promise to play board games with a brother or sister? Then wrap them up beautifully to put under the tree. My favorite is to give to a charity like Heifer International or Habitat for Humanity Capital District or North Country Mission of Hope. More information on each of these great works of compassion can be found on their websites. Then sit back and enjoy these wonderful days with your children and families.

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My Walk with God

By Tim Sinenberg

When asked to write this article last summer, I didn't realize the challenges of putting down my thoughts into some semblance of order. The task brought back memories of my life as a Christian, from a boy, to a college student, and on to an adult.

As a boy, I went to Immaculate Conception Church with my family in Glenville. It is a large parish, and one that encourages participation. I was the type that liked to be involved, and I quickly became an active participant in the mass. I started as an altar boy in second grade. I remember ringing the bell during communion, processing through the church at the beginning and end of mass, and especially wearing the thick robes. At first I thought it would be cool to wear the robes, not realizing how hot they were. Several times throughout the years, in the heat of the summer, I would faint on the altar from a combination of the heat and trying to keep still.

Other cherished memories from this time in my life are the trips many of the altar boys would take to Father Stark's camp on Saratoga Lake. We would sleep overnight at the camp, and enjoy swimming and boating during the day. Father Starks taught me how to water ski, which was a huge accomplishment!

At Immaculate Conception, we also had junior lectors who would read the first and second readings at Mass. I also was in the junior choir when I was in high school, and we were in charge of music for the 9:00 a.m. mass every Sunday. The members of the choir and I got to choose songs, and determine cantors and soloists for the mass. Some of our favorite songs were "Prayer of Saint Francis," "Here I Am Lord," and "On Eagles Wings," and we sang them as often as possible!

My experiences at Immaculate Conception helped me realize that by taking an active role in the mass, I was more attentive to the word, and I became an active part of the community. I learned so much from Father Starks, such as how important it is to treat all with respect, and to give of yourself so you can share your gifts.

After being part of such as supportive church growing up, I knew that I really wanted the same type of community from my college experience. I was lucky to find LeMoyne College in Syracuse, New York. LeMoyne was a perfect fit for me. I found the other students at LeMoyne to be incredibly kind, and faith was very important to many. Every Sunday evening, hundreds would attend mass. Church was an event, and I found the homilies to be perfectly targeted to what we were experiencing as a student. The Jesuit priests made the mass meaningful and relevant to my life.

I was fortunate to take a variety of religion and philosophy courses during my tenure at the college, which taught me about the history of the church, and how the Word of God has been proclaimed throughout the years. These courses also taught me how to think about issues ethically so I can make good choices for myself and others.

One popular excursion was to go on a retreat during special weekends throughout the year. There was a limit of 20 students, and spaces went really quickly, so I felt fortunate to attend one of the retreats as a junior. The actual name of the weekend was the "Emmaus Retreat," and we reflected on our time together, and how we can make our journey with Christ special. The theme of the weekend was based on the story of men walking to Emmaus after watching Jesus die on the cross. The men were deeply saddened by his death, and did not realize that Jesus was walking with them all the way. The weekend made me realize that Jesus is always with us, through great sadness, but also in good times. We can see him in the laughter of our friends and in the beauty of a fall day with orange and yellow leaves falling to the ground. I also learned more deeply that we need to take time to speak with God, and let him know our thoughts, hopes and our sorrows.

These lessons served me well as I came back to Burnt Hills and met my future wife, Ellen. Ellen and I decided to join Our Lady of Grace, mostly due to the wonderful presence of Father Tony. Ellen had known Father Tony from singing in a chorus together, and when we attended mass at OLG for the first time, it felt like being back at LeMoyne College with heartfelt homilies that spoke directly to me and the experiences I was living at the time.

Ellen and I have felt so fortunate to have the community of Our Lady of Grace help us raise our two sons to know Christ. We are hoping they can see the importance of prayer in their life. It has also been special to have the gift of involvement imparted on my two sons, as Father Starks helped me realize 30 years ago. With prayer and reflection, we take this walk together at Our Lady of Grace.

Ministry Fair at OLG
December 8-9
December 15-16

All Ministry Representatives will be available to describe their ministry and invite newcomers to join them if interested. Each of us are called by name, (you are the hands and feet of Christ), and we have many from which to choose. Perhaps you have an idea for a new ministry at OLG. Come one, come all, there is something for all ages!

BOOK REVIEW

By: ALISON NORTON

Book Title:

**Amish Grace: How Forgiveness
Transcended Tragedy**

This non-fiction book is an in-depth look into the Amish history and culture following the influx of publicity and attention of the tragic shooting which occurred in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania on October 2, 2006. On that day, Charles Carl Roberts IV, a non-Amish man, entered an Amish schoolhouse and forever shattered the illusion of safety within the close knit community. After dismissing the male schoolchildren, Roberts shot the remaining ten schoolgirls, killing five and wounding five, then committed suicide before police apprehension. The reaction of the families of the Amish community, both directly and indirectly affected, was not of rage, anger or thirst for revenge. Shockingly, it was forgiveness; not only for the shooter, but for his widow and extended family. To most of us, this act of forgiveness in the raw moments after such a grievous crime seems almost unthinkable.

The origins of the Amish faith and the core values and beliefs are traced in painstaking detail by the authors. Most importantly, they explain the importance of The Lord's Prayer in their daily life. "To the Amish, granting forgiveness to one's debtors is an act that God requires of those who seek divine forgiveness." The authors carefully distinguish between forgiveness, pardon and reconciliation. Forgiveness relinquishes one's right to vengeance, while pardon forfeits punishment and reconciliation restores the relationship of victim and offender.

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!

AMISH GRACE is broken into small chapters, full of insightful and intelligent looks into the life of the Amish people. It offers outsiders a rare glimpse into a mysterious world which we know little of due to the Amish aversion to publicity. It walks the reader through the events of the tragedy, the days, weeks and months that followed and the critical reaction of the outside world.

Often emotionally charged and thought provoking, this book held my attention and thoroughly explained why forgiveness is so important to the people of Amish faith. Forgiveness is not a one-time event and takes much courage and strength to uphold. The Amish suffer loss and pain just like all of us and their ability to rely on their faith in such times of turmoil is a concept that is both intriguing and challenging. Often sad and inspiring, the stories told within this book can be used as a guide for strengthening one's faith and ability to empathize with all of mankind.

Note: All authors hold doctorate degrees; two are professors and have extensive knowledge of the Amish history and culture.

Forgiveness

By Janet Troidle

I laid my broken heart
upon an oval sterling platter
and handed it to my Lord

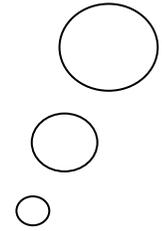
He whispered,
"I know this broken heart,
we will *peace* it back together."

We shall sew it with forgiveness
and tie knots at the ends of mistrust.

Wholeness in Me
will soften dark memory,
Forgiveness with Me
will give new life!

Kids Korner

Christmas is coming...think about what you can do to keep Christ in Christmas! How about filling up a colorful box with your written ideas, papers which can be chosen daily by each family member. "Give Mom a Hug"... "Do something special for Dad"... "Do someone a favor in secret." are some suggestions. Have fun and remember...."Jesus is the reason for the season!"



Breakfast With St. Nicholas

Saturday, December 8, 9-10 a.m. breakfast
10 a.m. visit with St. Nicholas

Stories and gifts for our little children.

Seating is limited, sign up today!
No charge for meal;
a free will offering will be accepted.

Go to: www.stnicholascenter.org





The Shepherds and the Angel

What did the angel of the Lord say to the shepherds?
(Luke 2:11)

Write the first letter of each picture on the lines.

“

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

”

Answer: Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you.



Youth Ministry

By Erin Fenton, Pastoral Associate for Youth Ministry

“Youth Ministry is the response of the Christian Community to the needs of young people and the sharing of the unique gifts of youth with the larger community.” This quote is from a document called “Renewing the Vision-A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry” written by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Renewing the Vision challenges all of us to work towards these three goals:

- 1.To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.
- 2.To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the catholic community.
- 3.To foster the personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

Here at Our Lady of Grace our vision is drawn from these goals that have been set out for us by the USCCB. We believe that in developing strong faith foundations in our youth, they will then go forward into their futures, bringing with them strong Christian characteristics and values. This foundation will help them to lead more fulfilling lives for themselves and others, creating a more positive impact on the world around them.

In keeping with our vision and our goals we follow a comprehensive approach to youth ministry. It is so much more than just going to “religion classes,” as catechesis is just one of 8 components that the Bishops outline for us in Renewing the Vision. Each of these 8 components- advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, and prayer and worship- are covered in one way or another throughout our program here at OLG.

For all young people in grades 7-12, we hope to offer connections to the community in some way. More specifically, in grades 7-10 we do offer a more formal catechetical program. That will help them discover more about what it means to be Catholic. In 7th grade we focus on Jesus, his life, his teachings and what it all means for us today. In 8th grade we focus on Catholic morality, how we should live our lives as Catholics-connecting our faith with our everyday lives. In 9th grade, we give an overview of some of our major Catholic beliefs and practices. We look at the creed, the liturgy, prayer, the sacraments and even our community of saints. In 10th grade we focus on Justice and Peace. As baptized Catholics, we are all called to live lives of service in one way or another and this topic looks at how we see our world and how we can work together to make it even just a little bit better.

Young people in middle school and high school today are so busy, with many things to pull them from one place to another during the week. It is important to be flexible, giving them opportunities to connect without being a burden to them. We offer the topics in 8 one and a half hour sessions, 4 in the fall and 4 in the spring, on either Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings. We also offer a chance for Retreat during the winter months as well. Each grade level is given two options for a day of retreat. These retreats are an opportunity to bring some more of those 8 components into focus. We strive to build community, give the youth a voice, celebrate their gifts, and of course have some fun! It is a chance for them to open up about their faith experiences and to hopefully discover new connections between their faith and their lives.

It seems as though the older we all get, the more busy our lives become. Junior year is one of the more demanding years in high school. It is also the year when we typically begin preparing our youth for the sacrament of Confirmation. We try to be as flexible as possible, while still meeting the requirements from the diocese and giving enough opportunities for reflection, learning, discussion, prayer and worship, and of course service. The program consists of 4 rituals that include a liturgical experience as well as some discussion time, several service opportunities (though if they are already doing service on their own, we encourage this as much as possible), two retreat options, and a chance to discern their readiness, all of these spread throughout the year.

In an attempt to offer connections to those in their senior year, we have a peer leader program here at OLG. Young people in grades 10 and up are able to participate. They help with the retreats for the different grade levels and the seniors specifically help with the Confirmation retreats. We also have seniors who help to serve as catechists for some of our younger grade levels.

In addition to helping within the Youth Ministry and Faith Formation programs, the youth are able to be involved in many ways throughout our parish community. They are in the choir, they serve on the parish council, as altar servers, lectors, greeters and so much more.

I would like to challenge the entire community here at OLG to join together in this vision to help our youth grow in faith. As individuals, as families, as a parish community, we all have a responsibility to make connections with our youth, in order to meet the needs of each one of us.



Winter Thoughts About Mary...

Our Mother, Our Lady of Grace

By Sr. Cathy Kruegler, CSJ Pastoral Associate Faith Formation

Mary stands with John the Baptist at the head of this Advent season, calling us to prepare our hearts for the coming of the Lord. She is calling us with our actions to clear away the obstacles for His coming into our lives.

On December 8th we celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. This is a title which means that even when Mary was still in the mind of God, she was chosen, she was conceived without sin so that she could be the pure mother of the Son of God. But as all human beings are given a free will Mary had to say “yes” to this invitation. Mary probably was more mature than girls in their early teens of our day. She lived in a territory occupied by an oppressive Roman government and military. She had a woman’s responsibilities at home and she was engaged to be married. Mary was fully formed in her Jewish faith and with her people was waiting – was longing, for the messiah – one who would come to save her people. Mary was strong and courageous, humble and open to God. So when Mary is confronted with God’s invitation, the scriptures don’t say that Mary went off to ask permission of her parents or the temple priests or the ruling army – all powerful authorities of her day. No, confronted by the Angel of God and open to the Holy Spirit, in the full strength of her faith Mary simply said “yes” “I am the servant of the Lord.”

In 1531, the indigenous people of Mexico had already been massacred within their own temple and conquered by the Spaniards. No longer a great nation, they were living a collective despair of surviving as a people, a race. As we celebrate the feast and title of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12th, we see Mary’s appearance on Mount Tepeyac to a simple campesino, JuanDiego, a resurrection moment that raises all the poor of Mexico and the world. Mary, in her compassion lifts up this abandoned people, symbolically all of us, as a mother lifts up her own child and says “do not be afraid, am I not your mother”?

On January 1st we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary Our Mother, again, as a reminder as she cares for her newborn infant son that she is always there for us, that we are not alone. Then on February 2nd, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord – we see Simeon, a devout old man who had waited his whole life to see the messiah, tell Mary that “Jesus was destined for the rise and fall of many” and “that a sword would pierce her own heart”. Not even Mary, chosen by God was exempt from suffering. She did not get a “pass go” or “get out of jail free” card.” Again she stands at the head of this month as an example of courage and strength of what we can accomplish when we put all our trust in God.

At the beginning of this new liturgical year, go to Mary, our patron. She will shower upon you the many graces you need to fully participate in the life of Christ, as her sons and daughters.

Mardi Gras – OLG Style

By Dorothy Sokol



The Fundraising Committee would like to invite you to the second OLG Mardi Gras celebration on Friday, Feb. 8, 2012.

The first part of the festivities involves going to dinner, hosted by a parishioner. With a Mardi Gras blessing to start, food and fun will be had by all. Your donation for dinner goes to the church.

Separate from dinner, dessert will be served at the church for those who wish to come. The Dessert Party includes music, mask making, door prizes, lots and lots of sweet things plus some raffles.

You can do dinner. You can come for dessert. But you will enjoy both.

We will be looking for dinner hosts and dessert makers.

Mark your calendars for February 8th!!



P. S. Would you like to join a fun group who are always looking for new ideas to support the church and hands to help? Consider joining the Fundraising Committee. We'd love to have you!

Other plans for 2013:

- ◆ Pot-of-Gold grab bag
- ◆ Soup sales
- ◆ Spring Fling Raffle
- ◆ Tea Party
- ◆ Yard Sale

Important Dates

Feast of the Immaculate Conception
Friday, December 7
5:30 p.m.

Advent/First Reconciliation Service
Tuesday, December 11
7:00 p.m.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Saturday, December 22
5:00 p.m. Mass
Sunday, December 23
10:00 a.m. Mass only

Christmas Eve, Monday, December 24
4:30 p.m. Carols
5:00 p.m. Children's Mass
7:30 p.m. Carols
8:00 p.m. Vigil Mass

Christmas Day, Tuesday, December 25
9:45 a.m. Carols
10:00 a.m. Mass

Feast of the Holy Family
Saturday, December 29
5:00 p.m. Mass
Sunday, December 30
8:15 & 10:15 a.m. Masses

World Peace/Feast of Mary, Mother of God
Tuesday, January 1, 2013,
10:00 a.m. Mass only

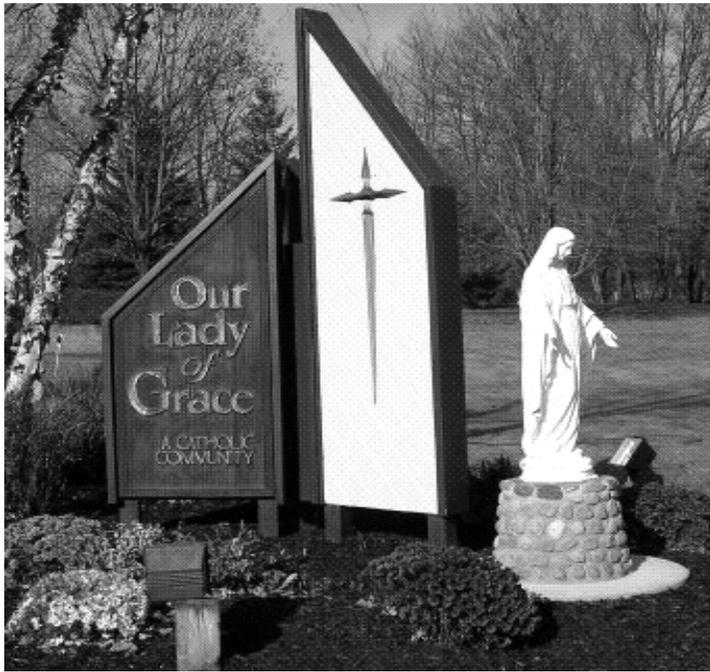


Winter Prep For Easter

Ash Wednesday, February 13, 2013
The first day of Lent

Easter Sunday, March 31, 2012
Alleluia!





It is challenging to think about Lent now, in this winter issue, as we enter Advent and preparation for the coming of the Christ Child. But as we view the bigger picture, these two beautiful celebrations are indelibly linked. In our personal prayer life, we are invited to contemplate and pray through these seasons, fully aware of the blessing cup we have received from both the birth and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

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The entire staff of OLG extend their warmest wishes to each parishioner of OLG for a blessed and spirit-filled Christmas season.

May the Newborn Christ Child warm your hearts with His loving smile.



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We welcome your comments, suggestions and contributions. Please email or call Janet Troidle.

You can access the weekly bulletin with all current parish activity and this newsletter at:
<http://www.rcda.org/churches/olgchurch>

Do you have questions or suggestions you wish raised at the pastoral council meeting? Contact one of the members listed at the right. They represent the membership of Our Lady of Grace.

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