

Our Christian Walk

The Gazette Of Grace

WINTER ISSUE

Jan-Feb-Mar 2018

Serving The Community Of Our Lady Of Grace



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Fr. Peter's Note

Rev. Peter Russo, Pastor

From the Pastor's Desk:

Greetings! By the time you receive this note the Advent and Christmas seasons will have passed. A new church year and a new civil year 2018 are underway. A NEW BEGINNING, old things have passed away and the Lord makes all things new. As I look forward to the challenges of the new year, I am thankful to the many individuals who have contributed to the mission of Our Lady of Grace through their time, talent and treasure. If Our Lady of Grace is to grow and be a more vibrant witness for Christ in the future even more members, especially younger members with families need to become involved. In today's busy world, I know this is not an easy task. In the past only about one third of the parish members attend or support the work of the parish.

There are numerous committees, activities and ministries available for members to participate in. These opportunities are listed in a booklet parishioners can pick up at the church. The parish has a small professional staff that needs YOUR active support and involvement. How many of us have expressed our gratitude to them? In all honesty the parish could not function without the dedication of Lucille Feeser our Associate for Administration and Finance. There would be no Faith Formation or Youth Ministry without Roberta Quinn and Grace Fay, their secretary, Donna Mayer and their team of dedicated teachers and aides. Let's not forget the silent work of the Pastoral Associate for Property Management, Mr. James Repice. What would the weekend Mass be like without Patty Dolezal-Neumann and the music group to say nothing of the dedicated services of Fr. Jack Varno and Deacon Frank Thomas.

As a part-time pastor, I depend on all of these individuals. It is essential for the life of the parish that every member embraces the present and actively work toward the future. I know you are out there and I invite you to come forward with your ideas. It is truly fitting, as the new year dawns, that the parishioners fully embrace the fulfillment of their mission as evangelists for Christ.

Sincerely,

Fr. Peter

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!

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COFFEE UPDATE *by Liz Marcinko*

The MAYA LXIL People, Their coffee, and You



(I am forwarding this email letter I received to update you about the good news!)

To Our Supporters and Friends...

When things are going great; it's easy to write you all an update. Everyone likes good news. But when a project starts running into "bumps," it is a challenge to sit down and email you. So....

In the coffee industry, indigenous farmers have always had to sell their coffee as a raw commodity. Raw commodity sales only serve to extend their life of abject poverty. When instead, the farmers learn to roast their coffee into an excellent, finished product—they can earn from 30-50% more of the specialty coffee dollar. This single economic difference can provide a life of personal achievement instead of one that lacks all hope.

When last we wrote, the Maya Ixil cooperative in Quiche, Guatemala, had received their own commercial roasting facility—right in their tribal village. We had gotten the grant to purchase this roasting equipment through the 501c3 that we'd established, through some caring church folks and through Rotary International.

The roaster arrived with some reliability issues. And, the Maya Ixil live in the Rainforest over 6 hours from the City. So, it took time to get these issues resolved—as very few equipment repair people wanted to make that arduous trip. Both the Ixil and I felt devastated. Ultimately, after many delays, the reliability issues were addressed and overcome. However, in order to be a success, this project required getting the farmers trained:

- to operate their new equipment,
- to repair the inevitable breakdowns that roasters have,
- to roast and package their coffee into a finished, value added product that they could first sell to a domestic market..

Once the farmers achieved the above, they needed to perfect a world worthy roasted coffee that could be exported and sold to coffee consumers around the globe. Well folks, the Ixil are finally taking their coffee from seed to cup. They have started selling their roasted, finished, value added coffee to the domestic market. They are within months of exporting their roasted coffee to the U.S....and, exporting their roasted coffee is the historic piece for which we have all been waiting.



Thanks to the work of HELPING HANDS, the undressed tree reflects the generosity of the membership of OLG!

MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

Suzanne DeVito and Aleks Lorenc spearheaded a new ministry this year, Operation Christmas Child.

Thanks to them, and the generosity of our parish family, they collected 124 filled shoe boxes to be distributed to children all over the world (the amazing journey of a shoebox results in evangelism, discipleship and multiplication.)

There are hundreds of ways we can make a positive impact in our world. Do you have an idea to spearhead or share? The existing ministry list is available in the gathering area. After you review it, perhaps you, too, can become a small part of our wide wide world by sharing your gifts! We are all

“Lord, When Did We See You Hungry and Give You Food?” (Mt. 25:35) Volunteering at the Regional Food Bank

By Mary Salm

Have you ever thought about the many times you feed the hungry? There are numerous opportunities for parishioners of Our Lady of Grace to “feed the hungry”: Serving meals at City Mission; preparing and serving meals at Salvation Army; donating food items for the Food Pantry, Thanksgiving, and Christmas food baskets; and yes, preparing meals and feeding families at home. Volunteering at the Regional Food Bank is another way to feed the hungry, as volunteers sort and pack food items, weigh boxes, and finally stack pounds of food products onto pallets. These items are then distributed to shelters, food pantries, and non-profit agencies, all which help to feed the hungry. These goods also provide assistance to communities in times of need.

Volunteers include families with young children, students from Faith Formation classes and Youth Ministry groups and their parents, along with other adult parishioners of all ages. Parishioners volunteer at the Food Bank, 2 hours, 5-7 pm, on the fourth Tuesday of each month. From July 2016 through July 2017, 27 parishioners volunteered a total of 266 hours, with the average number of 11 volunteers each month. Over the years, this number of volunteers has steadily increased as parishioners have joined together, living their faith through Christian service. A recent letter from the Regional Food Bank stated:

“Since the beginning of 2017, here is a breakdown of what Our Lady of Grace has packed so far this year.

- ◆ 27,143 pounds of assorted freezer products including meats, deli, seafood pre-cooked meals and desserts.
- ◆ 3,567 pounds of assorted non-perishable food items.
- ◆ 10,882 pounds of non-food items, including baby diapers and items, bedding and bath items, toys, school and art supplies, pet supplies and personal hygiene items.
- ◆ This totals: 41,592 pounds of product that was distributed back to members in our communities who need it!

Feeding America, the national non-profit that oversees all food banks in the country, states that if you divide the total number of pounds packed by 1.2, you could get the rough equivalent of how many meals that weight equals.

Our Lady of Grace has helped provide (in essence) 34,660 meals to the community, simply donating 2 hours of time, monthly, for the past seven months.”

Volunteers realize that their contributions of time and energy not only provide food to those in need, but redirects food items and repurposes goods that might otherwise be discarded in local landfills. Working together, volunteers have formed new friendships, building community and strengthening their faith within the parish; worked with other volunteers from the greater Capital District; and lived out the call of discipleship as they enjoy their volunteer time at the Food Bank. It is heartwarming to see siblings working together, lifting or pushing a box, and notice the look of love and gratitude on the face of their parent.

Over the years, our work experience has been varied, and has included more than sorting and packing just canned or frozen foods. One memorable evening was spent packing 6,000 pounds of eggplant. All of the volunteers left that evening surprised by the many varieties of eggplant. Another evening, we sorted and packed individual bottles of water, making sure that the date on each bottle had not expired. Volunteers walk out of the building every month tired and laughing, and wondering “What will we be sorting next month?”

Parishioners help as their schedules allow. Some help one time, others help occasionally and other volunteers are “regulars”. Many volunteers meet at Our Lady of Grace at 4:15 pm, and carpool, while others meet at the Food Bank. Physical work? Definitely! Do we actually see the people who receive our labors? No. Yes. Maybe. Over 20 years ago, volunteers from Youth Ministry packed a specific food item. A few weeks later, some of the same group were helping to deliver food items to a local food pantry. While there, they spotted the identical packaged food items on the shelf, ready for distribution. They realized their original volunteer work was now going into someone’s home for a meal. The needs of others are great and continue throughout the year. Is this a time that you might consider volunteering? A sincere “Thank you” to the many dedicated volunteers who have helped over the years, and to the current group of dedicated volunteers who gather each month. If you would like additional information regarding the Regional Food Bank, please call Mary Salm at (518) 882-9313.

The staff at the Food Bank is welcoming to new volunteers, understanding of our questions, of the evening project, and appreciative of our help. It is a privilege and joy to serve together each month from Our Lady of Grace. Friendships have been formed and renewed, enriching our faith as we serve. Many blessings we experience in our everyday life.



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Kids Korner

FRIENDSHIP CARDS



This month, don't just *send* valentines; *be* a valentine! Create these Friendship Cards to express love through kind acts for your loved ones — all month long.



What you need:

- 29 index cards
- A small box or container
- Colored pens or glitter pens
- Stickers

What you do:

1. On each card, write something nice you can do for other people. Ideas include “Give someone a hug,” “Clean someone’s room,” “Read to someone” and so on. You can use colored pens to draw a picture.
2. Decorate the box or container. Place the cards inside.
3. Each day in February, select a card and do that nice thing for someone!



BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS! Oct 3rd



National Catholic Youth Conference
Nov 15-19, 2017

What fun Grace Fay had with her team of teens at the youth conference in Indiana!

Blessings of laughter and grace poured over everyone!

SPRING FESTIVAL NEWS

It is hard to believe that Spring is right around the corner, but the tulips will be blooming before you know it! So, it is time to start planning our 2nd Annual OLG Spring Festival! Mark your calendars for <TBA>. We had a very successful first year for this event with a plethora of vendors, bounce houses, car wash, and even an Elvis impersonator! But, we are looking to make it even BETTER for 2018! If you would like to help in the planning, please contact David Cote at dcote5@nycap.rr.com or [518-399-4511](tel:518-399-4511).



Regional Food Bank Volunteers led by Mary Salm!
See article on page 3.

Can you help us save on postage by receiving this newsletter via email? If so, email Jmgoslin@gmail.com

The Nurse's Corner
How to Beat the Winter Blues or
Manage Seasonal Affective Disorder

By Nancy Michela, RN

It's dark at 6AM and dark at 430PM. Do you feel like a bear ready for hibernation? This feeling is a valid response to the time change and change of seasons. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is faced by many people throughout the year (September –March).

There are approximate 25 Million people who experience SAD-with women affected 4x as often as men. Canadians are 8x more affected as Mexicans. Decreased sunlight can decrease the serotonin hormone level in the body. Symptoms may include: feeling tired or fatigued; weight gain (because of increased appetite); or suffer irritability; or have decreased energy or concentration or restlessness; and want to sleep more than the usual pattern.

Don't despair!

Here are some health tips from the American Psychiatric Association (apa.org) to alleviate some of those pesky symptoms:

- eat a balanced diet-eat more complex carbohydrates; (popcorn, oatmeal, nuts and/or peanut butter)
- get exercise-go outside and get some fresh air and sunshine; (15 minutes/day will help-!)
- join in social activities; (bowling league, play bridge or poker, volunteer)
- use light therapy (with health provider prescription- rent or purchase device) (10-15minutes/day)
- take prescribed medications (selected serotonin reuptake inhibitors-SSRI) (as indicated by health care professional)

Check with your health care provider before you make any big changes. For more information: National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.org) or American Psychiatric Association

HAVE fun and  will be here

Faith and Self Care

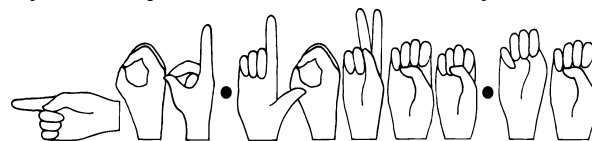
By Grace Fay

Pastoral Associate for Youth Ministry

As Catholic Christians, we are taught that we are called to serve others. Strong emphasis is put on the message that Jesus calls us to serve those in need and those around us. But, by focusing so strongly on this message, we, as a Church, unintentionally send the message that serving others is everything. This is not to say that serving others isn't important. Jesus left us with the most amazing example of servant leadership, and the importance of service as part of being a Christian; but Jesus also left us with the wonderful example of the importance of taking care of ourselves.

Scripture gives us many examples of Jesus taking time away from the crowds, time separate from his disciples, and time in solitary prayer. In Mark 12:30-31 Jesus gives us the greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these." Most of us, as people of faith, focus on the first and second parts; service to God and service to others. We focus on it so much that we forget about the third part, the qualifier for the first two parts: service to ourselves. Jesus tells us that we can only serve and love each other if we first love and care about ourselves. This is not permission to be selfish or not to care about the world, but it is proof that God understood the nature of human beings. He knew that we would be unable to adequately take care of others and serve the Lord if we don't take care of ourselves first.

In a world where we are constantly in motion and are surrounded by the "busyness" of life, we forget that as human beings and as people of faith, we are given permission to take care of ourselves. In order to take care of ourselves, we need to be aware of our boundaries and accept the fact that we cannot be everywhere or be doing everything. We need to leave time in our day, or at least our week, to take time and refill/recharge ourselves. For some, that might be taking a walk, a hike, or doing something athletic, for others it may be playing music, writing or painting, still for others it might be sitting in silence on the top of a mountain, on the beach, or at a lake, or it may just be taking time for prayer. Whatever it may be for each of us individually, we need to take the time to actually do it. This can be difficult in the midst of family, work, and other obligations; but it is important. It is so important that God made it part of His commandment to us. So, take a moment, as you sit here reading this article, and think about what brings you joy, what recharges your batteries, what refills your soul, so that you can take on the things that God brings you. How can you make some of those things part of your week, if not part of your daily life? And remember, God wants you to take care of yourself, just as much as He wants you to serve others.



GOD LOVES ME



FALL CONCERT OCT 13, 2017

Our famously talented music director, Patty Neumann, and her team of music-makers delivered a beautiful afternoon of traditional and contemporary music to the delight of a happy audience.

Thank you to all who practiced and sung magnificently for a most appreciative audience!.....and those gourmet desserts!



“May the road rise to meet you, may the wind be always at your back...” as we said goodbye to a wonderful afternoon!

Over \$1400. Was raised by our Music Ministry for Helping Hands from free will donations and delicious desserts!



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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>
Jan-Feb-Mar	Nov 25
Apr-May-Jun	Mar 1
Jul-Aug-Sept	Jun 1

Our Cluster Parishes:
 Saint Joseph's Website:
<http://www.stjosephschurchscotia.net>
 Immaculate Conception Website:

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