

Our Christian Walk

The Gazette Of Grace


Winter

Jan-Feb-Mar Issue 2020



Serving The Community Of Our Lady Of Grace

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Dear Fellow Parishioners:



Welcome to a new church year. As you know, with the retirement of Father Russo, the diocese has turned to the trustees and the Council to be more involved in deciding what will happen in the Parish. The Council and the trustees agree we need more open communication and participation from the parishioners to find OLG's Path Forward.

To aid in communication, our first Path Forward conversation was held on November 3rd after Mass. Norms for the meeting were established and reports from the ministries were made, allowing for updating the parish profile. These reports help us to have a greater understanding of the wonderful work being done by the ministries at OLG. We did not have time to discuss everything on the agenda.

Two suggestions were made. First, that we consider finding a volunteer coordinator. Second, that we continue this conversation via quarterly meetings, including a potluck meal at our next meeting on Sunday January 12 after 10:30 Mass. Thank you to everyone who attended. We realize that your thoughts, ideas may not wait until the next parish meeting, so a suggestion box has been set up in the gathering area. Please let us know your ideas by completing a form and dropping it in the box, emailing one of us, or talking to us after Mass. Each suggestion will be prayerfully considered for how it can be incorporated into our parish life. Mark your calendar for attending our "Pot Luck Path Forward" meeting 1-12 after 10:30 Mass. We are eager to listen to you and allow you to be part of our path forward.

On Tuesday, November 19th the Interim Team from OLG and Saint Joseph's met with representatives from the Diocesan Pastoral Planning Office to discuss how things are progressing. It continues to be clear that the parishioners will have a greater role in growing this wonderful community!

We will continue to update you on the progress being made in the Council and the Interim Team. Thank you for your resiliency by rising to the challenge of change. With the help of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we will find our Path Forward and be stronger than ever! New Year blessings to everyone from Fr. Jack and all of us.

Polly Van Nostrand and John Lorenc, Trustees



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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ENCOUNTERING CHRIST DURING LENT 2020

Does it ever feel like you go through life on autopilot?



We get up each morning, have breakfast, get the kids off to school, get ourselves off to work, then home after work. If we're lucky we might have dinner with the family. We tie up loose ends around the house, watch TV or read, go to bed then rise into the same routine. *There has to be more to this life!!*

There is – when we “encounter Christ” in our daily lives, not just on Sunday morning!!



During Lent 2020 we are very excited to be offering a new 6 week Adult Faith Formation Program. While Lent may seem like it is months away why not make a New Years' resolution to do something special for your relationship with the Lord. Mark your calendars now.

“Encountering Christ” will take place on six consecutive Wednesday evenings starting March 4, 2020. The program will start at 7PM and run for one hour. It will be offered to parishioners of both OLG and St Josephs'. Bring a friend! We encourage you to make a commitment to attend all six sessions: or come to as many sessions as you can. More info to follow.

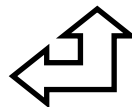
Update from OLG Pastoral Council

By Paul Fanning

The OLG pastoral council met in September, October and November as scheduled. The September meeting was the last one attended by our former pastor, Fr. Peter Russo who retired at the end of that month.

Over the weekend of September 21 and 22, letters from the Bishop were read aloud during masses at OLG and St. Joseph's church. Fr. Jack Varno was appointed interim priest and Debbie Griffith from St. Joseph's was appointed interim administrator. We are now two months into the period pending the identification of a new pastor for both communities.

The OLG pastoral council remains focused on preparing the parish for a new future by reviewing current practices, assessing needs and developing ideas to address them. Over the past year, the finance committee led by Phil Salm has shown that decreasing mass attendance has led to declining offertory donations and we have also been falling behind in meeting Bishop's Appeal assessments.



In response, the finance committee successfully proposed the sale of the house OLG owned in order to bolster the parish reserve and pay our debt to the diocese. With the approval of the Bishop, the house was sold in the fall and, per plan, the debt was paid and the parish reserve has been strengthened

While this was happening, OLG launched its Reigniting Our Faith Campaign at the end of August and the committee has now completed direct appeal efforts in advance of the Advent season. (Please see the campaign article also in this newsletter.)

Trustees John Lorenc and Polly Van Nostrand have continued to meet with Deacon Frank Berning at the Diocese Pastoral Planning Office and initiated a series of meetings with council members and trustees of St. Joseph's Church. The purpose was to share information, best practices and seek opportunities to work together as the interim period continues.

During this time council members and trustees are working to keep OLG functioning with necessary changes. The level of communication has grown significantly between trustees, council members, OLG staff and parishioners. All of this is being done in recognition that more of the responsibilities of running the parish has to be born by parishioners. This is very much a work in progress.

WELCOME: New Parishioners Edward and MaryJean Neary. They moved from Colonie to Ballston Lake to be closer to their children. They visited several parishes before joining OLG where we “feel at home!”





Reigniting Our Faith Campaign Reaches Milestone

By Paul Fanning, campaign co-chair



Our parish has reached a major milestone since the launch of the Reigniting Our Faith Campaign back at the end of August. More than 60 families have returned commitment forms and the campaign pledge total to date is now \$211,150. This is a remarkable response and on behalf of OLG the campaign committee is very grateful to those who have responded as well as those who are planning to respond in the future.

The campaign will run over a 5-year period and the expectation is that most participants will submit installment donations over time. Seventy percent of the proceeds will remain with our parish so that necessary improvements and investments in our building can be made and so that the parish can perform outreach efforts to grow participation and membership. The remaining thirty percent of proceeds are needed by the diocese to support retired priests, educate new ones and help address needs affecting all parishes in the diocese going forward.

From the beginning, the campaign committee has stressed that participation is voluntary and financial support is above and beyond weekly offertory submissions and contributions to the Bishop's Appeal assessment. These efforts must also be sustained. Campaign proceeds are meant to address needs the weekly offertory collection cannot support.

A tailored Case Statement was created by the committee with input from the pastoral council and trustees. In addition, every effort was made to coordinate campaign messages with those coming from the council and trustees during the period when our former pastor retired. The parish entered the existing adjustment period, with an interim priest and parish administrator appointed by the diocese.

We have been doing our best to explain the campaign during the receptions, mostly following Mass, in bulletin inserts, fact sheets and regular progress reports. Following our campaign plan, the committee stopped direct appeal efforts at the end of November, roughly 3 months after the campaign was launched. We decided to conclude this portion of the effort before the Advent season began. As of the time this article was prepared, the committee is considering an additional mailing to parishioners who have not participated yet and may want to. There will be a supply of forms, fact sheets and case statements in the lobby area so anyone who wants copies in the weeks to come can help themselves.

During a presentation over the commitment weekend before Thanksgiving, I explained that OLG will mark its centennial in March 2022. Our campaign objective is to obtain financial resources so that we not only reach that milestone but go well beyond. This is an opportunity for all parishioners to join in. We set a participation goal of 100 families or households and now we are well past half-way. We hope more families participate in the weeks ahead to help bring us to that goal. This can be for a one-time donation in any amount, or a pledge for periodic donations on a schedule over the 5-year campaign period.

We feel the goal of 100 families represents a good-faith effort on behalf of our community and will serve as a strong base of support in the further hope that others can contribute later. And, while we have ended direct appeal efforts during receptions, we will keep parishioners informed as our participation level grows and our pledge total increases.



We are always working to update our e-mail list. Please assure we have your accurate address by contacting Jacob Goslin jmgoslin@gmail.com

NCYC 2019- BLESSED, BROKEN, GIVEN

On November 20th, five teens and two adults from St. Joseph’s and Our Lady of Grace travelled to Indianapolis, Indiana to take part in the National Catholic Youth Conference. Alongside 255 other people from the Albany Diocese and 20,000 of young people from around the country. This year’s theme was “Blessed, Broken, and Given. Here are some quotes from the teens from our parish who were there and some pictures.



“NCYC was an experience I will never forget. Adoration, with 20,000 other people in a stadium, definitely brought be closer to God.”- Maddie D.



“NCYC gives you a change in heart and an eye-opening to the love of God.” -Shelby M.

“NCYC affects you in ways you wouldn’t expect. The sense of community is beautiful and truly shows you how not alone in our faith we are.”- Anne A.

“This trip took all the words that I thought I’d use, right out of my mouth...it hit so many emotions that I didn’t think I had any more.” -Danny B.



“This is the best experience ever. Hearing stories from the keynotes and the breakout session were inspiring.” - Rhyan L





Let's Play Tag by Nancy O'Keeffe



In the fall of 2016, at the same time that Fr. Peter was joining Our Lady of Grace as pastor, our community was also adjusting to a new Mass schedule. Not only did we welcome a new pastor but also we had a new Mass schedule, which meant different people in our church seats or sitting around us at a new time!

In an attempt to help everyone adjust and give Fr. Peter a chance to get to know the wonderful community he was becoming a part of, it was decided to have an extension of nametag Sunday and use name tags from the 1st Sunday of Advent, the beginning of the Church year, until Easter.

Nametags were bought, pens provided and sign up tables were staffed. Parishioners were positive the first 2 weeks but had questions by the 3rd and 4th weeks. Some of the comments were: "How long are we going to do this? I have been here forever, everyone knows me and I know everyone." The plan was that from Advent to Easter name tags could help everyone get used to new seats and new seat mates and give Fr. Peter a chance to get to know his parishioners by name. Even if you have been at OLG forever and lots of people know you and you know everyone.....sometimes when we see people out of context...like sitting in a different seat at a different Mass there may be a temporary memory lapse! Nametags can also be helpful to new parishioners meeting the community and as a way for the community to welcome new parishioners. So that was the plan...but the Spirit works in mysterious ways

One Saturday evening while encouraging people to make their name tag, a woman I recognized from the front row, choir side who came with her husband but whose name I did not know, (despite having been a part of the community for 7 years!) said.... "I can make permanent nametags and I have all the supplies needed to do that." WOW, what a gift...the woman was Donna Merchant, a parish trustee and long-time member of OLG along with her husband Ken.... see name tags work. So, permanent nametags began.

Parishioners signed a list, and it was sent to Donna; generally by the following Saturday, a nametag was available for the parishioner requesting it... a gift from Donna and the Holy Spirit. Display cases were found and after Easter, permanent nametags were part of attending Mass and other OLG events...optional of course. When new members registered, parish staff notified Donna, she would work her magic and new parishioners were incorporated into the OLG community.

Some of the unexpected side effects of nametags were that not only did Fr. Peter learn our names but also visiting priests had the chance to call us by name at Eucharist. Feedback from Eucharistic ministers was perhaps the biggest surprise. They too could call people by name as they offered the body and blood of Christ. At the the sign of peace we have the opportunity to name the person in front of us, next to us and behind us. We can identify people by name not just by where they seat or what Mass they attend. Newcomers are absorbed into the community and hopefully nametags have helped us to become a more welcoming and cohesive parish.

In the 3 years since permanent nametags were introduced Donna and Ken Merchant have moved to Florida. Other people have come and gone, nametags have been misplaced and we are again waiting for a pastor. As we start a new church year, this seems to be the perfect time to regroup with nametags. A sign up sheet will be on the name tag table for anyone to sign up for a new nametag...in case you missed the first sign up or your nametag has been misplaced or gone missing. You don't even have to be a registered member or attend OLG all the time to have a nametag...we invite you too to have one. It can usually can be ready in a week; they will appear in alphabetized display cases under your last name.

If you already have one, please consider wearing it on a regular basis. We have new members (and long-time members) who would like to know your name. Fr. Jack's winter retreat is approaching so we will have visiting celebrants who might wish to call you by name and nametags make that possible. I believe they are one way Our Lady of Grace can demonstrate that we are an active, alive parish ready to reach out and welcome new members and our new pastor. So please give that nametag a try! Any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at 518-382-5671 or find me at Church.... I will have my nametag on!



Happy Birthday Fran!!!



Thanksgiving Mass, brimming with bountiful gratitude and heavenly mounds of delicious bread!

Thank you Sue Hartman and her elves who decorate so beautifully for Thanksgiving and Christmas.



Women's Day of Reflection 11-22-19.

Do not be
anxious
about
anything.
Philippians 4:6

Worry and Prayer facilitated by Claire Bradley

Twenty-two women gathered for a day of reflection, to encounter the worry in their lives and do something about it.

Definition: worry gives way to anxiety or unease. Allows one to DWELL on difficulty or trouble. It is chronic: persistent, long lasting, a particularly bad habit. To break the cycle, be in the moment...feel the earth beneath my feet, notice light and shadows...anchoring me in the present. This day is all we have to work with, the past is flown away, the future is unknown.

Today we look at solutions to the cycle of worry, and how to convert it as a vehicle to come closer to the God of your understanding.

It is mental chatter that starts with a thought in the head, and it **develops** as the mind writes a story about the thought. **Ask yourself, is it true for this moment, or are you manufacturing it in your mind!**

Inside of us, each of us are little children: the original concern or "thought" generates a barrage of worries! For example: The state of our world: what worries generate from this thought? Or finances: will I have enough to live on till I die; will I be poor: what does poor mean: the story continues...what if my money disappears, where will I go, will anyone help me..... In the middle of the night, you find yourself fixated on an issue that does not help sleep. Worrying does not solve the problem (creates more problems): if you focus on something too much, it creates your reality. "If you worry, why pray. If you pray, why worry."

List each of your worries...did I talk to God about them? Can I resolve them soon?

Is worry affecting your physical health? Absolutely! How are they affecting you spiritually? Are they drawing you further from God or closer to God? It can be vehicle to become closer to God. Jesus was always turning to his Father, asking for help! Call upon the Holy Spirit to help and solve the problem. She/He is your wisdom if you ask.

Worries cause high blood pressure, crabby: tired, headaches, cannot think clearly, depressed, anxious (anxiety is a product of the working of the mind.). Worries lead people to drinking, prescription drugs. Are you a person you don't like because you worry all of the time. What is the payoff of worrying? Mostly negative. Become self-aware.

Consider... Concern vs. worry.

Sometimes when you give it to God, and He doesn't answer, you take it back. Sleeping and not sleeping due to worry a big issue. This may be a time we are called to prayer. **"The bed is not a place of worry: it is a place of peace."** **The bed is a "no worry zone!!!** How do we shut down our mind from continuing the story. If you cannot sleep, get up in the night, read, and do something that allows you to not be a victim of your worries. Anything to distract your mind from "I can't sleep." The thought becomes the controller itself. Breathing can also release tension, focusing on your body parts relaxing from toe to head. Breathe in Jesus, breathe out fear!

Worry can become an addiction, a habit. Anything we do repetitively to soothe ourselves, sometimes in a negative way. A regular practice of anything negative is very hard to give up! Is your worry a habit or an addiction, obsessive thinking, or a preoccupation with a substance or thing. The consequence is anxiety, loss of valuable positive time, loss of sleep, health, emotional distress, depression, anxiety....) If this happens, you seek some form of relief and then it turns on you!

When you have a problem you spend time trying to solve it. Although helpless, and want to do something, which gives a false sense of power. "At least I'm doing something! Discernment can be an obstacle: I pray, and then, not sure of the difference between my decision or God's wisdom. The challenge is whether to do something yourself, or go to someone you TRUST for their insights.

Control, arrogance, feeds the spider who weaves the spider web (a limitless story) of worry growing wider and wider! As anxiety intensifies, the web grows and grows.

You worry less, surrender and pray more. Does worry interfere with your life? If so, what can I do about it! Take it and fall into prayer. Another idea--Give yourself permission to worry for 15 minutes a day, **and That's It!**

You recognize you cannot control it and thus you can opt by turning to the Lord. You worry less, surrender and pray more. Does it interfere with your life? If so, what can I do about it! Take it and fall into prayer. Another idea--Give yourself permission to worry for 15 minutes a day, **and That's It!**

In your worry state, you send negative energy! When we pray, we send out positive energy, sending out the light of God. Project the positive to others, for others. God is a positive force in life: why would you spew out negativity instead of seeing God in others and loving their souls, allowing yourself to be instrument of God's peace?

Since God is so good, what if all our worrying has been allowed by God to draw us closer to Him. We can look at it as one more thing we can use in our spiritual journey! Worry can be a tool. See/or purchase the TINY BUDDHAS Worry journal/book. Think about the day you were free of worry. You knew God is control of everything in your life and taken care of, like the birds of the air! Have you been in bondage with worry? List your worries: than next to it, see how they can work to your advantage. How we look at it is helpful. Do I worry about my children because I think that is the way to love them? It's all about the perception. To stop brings freedom.

Acceptance that you are a chronic worrier is the first step. What would I need to give up? (Does worry help you feel connected or useful to your family.). You cannot see God with worry in this way! Try to embrace it, befriend it, move next to it, and open the avenue of sight to God: then your worry becomes much less of what it seems to you! Then when you see God, the "story of worry" does not block your vision. You've acknowledged it but have not allowed it to block your vision of inner peace. Draw a picture of your worry: what do you see? Awareness is so valuable!

Community is an important factor in reduction of worry: our whole society is so fragmented now for dozens of valid reasons, we do not know how to depend upon each other, talk to each other, support each other. Ask yourself, the scared child, what you need to do to reduce or stop weaving the worry story. We might need to ask for forgiveness for putting our attention on our worries instead of turning it over to God. You need to be free, and not allow it to immobilize you!

End of Day Thoughts From Participants:

- Like the spider who starts spinning her web, one worry or thought weaves a negative story that can be unending....what if this, what if that, how, when, where, why? The web grows and grows!
- the word "concern" is a valuable substitute for a worry, and then, try to not let it spill over into a worry story. Discernment and self- awareness brings us freedom and inner peace when worry knocks at our door.
- ask yourself, "Am I driving the worry train"? Is there anything I can do in this moment or the very near future to solve the problem? Define the items (or thoughts) that I cannot act upon, and LET THEM GO! Awareness brings change and inner peace. Again, talk to God if you want inner peace. **Be a warrior against worry!**

"Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength"! By Corrie ten Boom.



I am a spider, frequently caught in the web of my subconscious delusions.
So, I asked "Spider-Self, why do you allow life's worries to stifle your inner freedom?"
She replied..... "You know the way out! Dust away your sticky thoughts with gloves of perseverance, prayer, trust in the Lord, and patience.

Don't ask! JUST DO IT! **Be a warrior against worry!**

Janet Troidle



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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.

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