



Spirit & Life

The Call to a New Evangelization: Go and make Disciples.

Spring 2015

From the Desk of the Pastor

My dear parish family, although it is hard to believe, as you read this newsletter we are in the beginning days of Lent.

This Lent, I urge you to take advantage of all that we offer at St. Gregory's. I hope you came to our Parish Retreat with Deacon Ralph Poyo. We now have our small faith-sharing groups meeting since the retreat. You may want to join one if you have not done so already. We have our new "Night of Recollection with the Pastor" series during Lent, which will be in the Church at 7:00 pm and will last about an hour. Each evening will have a particular focus. They are as follows: February 26 will be for Married Couples; March 12 will be for Single Adults; March 19 will be for Parents and their Teenage Children; and March 26 will be for all Professionals to look at the challenge of faith in the marketplace.

Lent is a great time to get on track, and there is no better way to receive God's gift of forgiveness and experience His mercy than in the Sacrament of Penance. Our parish penance service will be on Tuesday, March 24 at 7:00 pm in the Church. Of course, each Friday during Lent we will have some fellowship during our weekly Fish Fry, which will be followed by the Stations of the Cross at 7:00 pm and a Holy Hour for Vocations at 7:30 pm. Lent is also a great time to try to get to Mass even more frequently than on the weekend. You may wish to try to pick just one more day of the week to make it to one of the daily Masses. Finally, a trip to our Adoration Chapel, which is open 24/7, is a great way to relax in the presence of our Lord and let God touch you, heal you and renew you.

In the 22 years that I have been a priest, I have observed that we are often tired and worn out. Our busy lifestyle - including our professional life, school life, sports, extracurricular activities, community involvement and more - just keeps us on the run, and we often can see "the Church" or "going to Church" as just one more thing to do. In reality, our experience of Mass and the opportunity to be a parish family is the direct opposite. I hope and pray you see St. Gregory's as a place to come to be renewed and refreshed. Just as Jesus went to the desert to pray to be renewed with the Father, and just as Jesus went to Bethany to rest with Martha, Mary and Lazarus, I hope you see your experience at St. Gregory's as one of renewal and refreshment especially this Lent. If we enter into the renewal of Lent, we will experience a greater joy at Easter!

May God bless you, our Mother Mary watch over you and St. Gregory the Great intercede for you, always.

Nourish your body and soul this Lent: Stop in our Catholic Store and Café!

Looking for some spiritual reading for Lent? Our Catholic Store has a variety of suggested books from daily prayers to inspirational books to help make Lent a prayerful, holy time. Wednesdays and Fridays throughout Lent our Café will be serving pierogis, meatless soups, grilled cheese and other meatless paninis. Our Café continues to be a popular ministry at St. Gregory's for parishioners and friends to stop for friendship as well as food and beverage. We invite you to stop by during Lent and enjoy our specials with your family, friends and fellow parishioners.



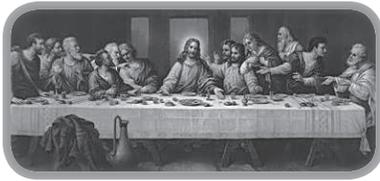
First Communion and Confirmations are coming up! Stop in your Catholic Store for gifts, cards, books, etc. Don't forget about gifts you will be giving for Easter, Mother's and Father's day and graduations, too! We have cards, gifts, keepsakes and books for all occasions. Why not give a "holy reminder" that helps your loved ones come closer to Jesus?



FISH FRY FRIDAYS!

All are welcome to join us for St. Gregory's Fish Fry Fridays during Lent. Dine-in, take-out or drive-up to the School Gym from 4:00 to 7:00 pm on February 20, 27, March 6, 13, 20 and 27. Fish or breaded shrimp dinners are \$9.00 each (pre-sale) and include potato salad, cole slaw, roll and butter, drink and homemade dessert. Baked fish will again be available this year for the same price and will include rice, green beans, roll and butter, drink and homemade dessert. Pizza will be available for children for \$1 a slice. Tickets at the door are \$10.00 each.

If you are looking for ways to become more involved in parish life, or if you have been and want to continue, our Fish Fry Fridays are a wonderful opportunity to socialize with others in our church community. Be sure to get your tickets today in any of our Parish Offices, the Catholic Store or Café!



*Jesus of Nazareth
Cordially invites you to share
in the celebration of
His Last Supper
on Holy Thursday, April 2
at 5:15 PM
in the Ministry Center*

Holy Thursday Shared Supper

In keeping with the spirit of the First Holy Thursday when Our Lord gathered His community of followers to share in the Passover meal, St. Gregory's Social/Hospitality committee invites all parishioners to participate in our annual potluck "Shared Supper." We will provide salads, rolls, beverages, desserts and serving utensils. Please plan to bring a dish to feed your family and six others (suggestions: sliced meats, pasta dishes, potatoes, vegetables, casseroles, etc.) in ready-to-serve, disposable containers only, to allow volunteers to attend Mass. To facilitate our planning, and assure you of a seat, please RSVP to: Roe Spano 689-6224 by Monday, March 30.

Join us for our 2nd Annual Holy Thursday vigil to Seven Churches

Once again on Holy Thursday, Father Leon will lead us on a prayerful pilgrimage to seven area churches to keep vigil with our Lord and enter into the Holy Triduum.

Immediately after the Mass of the Lord's Supper, three buses will depart from St. Gregory's parking lot. At each church, one of the seven Penitential Psalms will be read followed by a few moments of silent prayer. We will end back at St. Gregory's in the Gathering Rooms, beautifully decorated as the Altar of Repose. Last year at the conclusion of the vigil, everyone seemed to echo the same thought: "too bad we can't keep going all night."

As of press time the specific churches to be visited had not been chosen, so you will have to come along for the surprise! Please watch the Bulletin for details and to make your reservations.

EASTER TRIDUUM SCHEDULE

HOLY THURSDAY, APRIL 2

9:00 am – Morning Prayer

5:15 pm – Parish Shared Supper

7:00 pm – Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

8:30 pm – Seven Churches Bus Trip

Adoration until 11:00 pm in the Gathering Room

HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 4

9:00 am – Morning Prayer

12:00 noon – Blessing of Easter Baskets

8:00 pm – Easter Vigil Mass

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3

9:00 am – Morning Prayer

12:00 noon – Seven Last Words of Christ

3:00 pm – Celebration of the Lord's Passion

7:00 pm – Living Stations of the Cross

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 5

Masses at: 8:00 am, 9:30 am (Church and School Gym), 11:00 am and 12:30 pm



St. Gregory the Great Faith Community

Journey Home With Us This Lent!

Fish Fry Fridays – Join us for Food & Fellowship

Every Friday night, February 20 – March 27: 4:00 - 7:00 pm in the School Cafeteria

Come and Pray the Stations of the Cross

Every Friday, February 20, 27, March 6, 13, 20 and 27, at 7:00 pm in the Church
Also February 27, March 6, 13, 20 and 27, with the school children at 1:20 pm in the Church

Holy Hour for Vocations

Every Friday at 7:30 pm in the Church after Stations of the Cross

Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with us

Parish Service: Tuesday, March 24 at 7:00 pm in the Church

Join us for Liturgy of the Hours

Evening Prayer (Vespers) Every Tuesday Evening, February 24 – March 31: 6:30 pm in the Church

Join us for Lectio Divina

Prepare for Sunday Mass this Lenten Season by reading, praying and discussing the Gospel
Wednesdays in Gathering Room 2: 9:00 – 10:00 am

Night of Recollection with the Pastor for:

*Married Couples: Thursday, February 26

*Single Adults: Thursday, March 12

*Teens and Parents: Thursday, March 19

*Professionals: Thursday, March 26

**These four evangelization presentations will be held Thursday evenings in the Church at 7:00 pm with a reception to follow*

Exploring our Faith with Fr. Francis

Brown Bag lunch series: Fridays, February 27, March 13 and 20: 12:30 – 1:30 pm in Gathering Room 1

Family Faith Formation Children's Lenten Pageant

Saturday, March 28: 9:15 am in the Church

Vicariate Lenten Lecture Series

Monday nights, 7:30 pm at various church locations (See the Bulletin for details.)

Seven Churches Bus Trip

Holy Thursday, April 2: 8:30 pm to various churches (See the Bulletin for details and sign-up form.)



Meet Melissa, our new Parish Nurse!

Spirit & Life” caught up with our busy new parish nurse, Melissa Byron, RN FCN. Here is your chance to get to know her. When you see her, please welcome her to our parish family!



I have worked in medical/surgical nursing, primary care, endocrinology and care coordination for high-risk patients. I have been a faith community nurse at St. Benedict’s in Eggertsville for a little over a year. Last spring I completed the faith community nurse training program offered through Trocaire College and the Catholic Health System.

The wonderful thing about faith community nursing is that it can be whatever the parish needs it to be. Caring for the homebound is a big part of the ministry at St. Gregory’s and really helps to fill a void for people in the community who aren’t sure where to turn or how to get the help that they need. The monthly respite is also an incredible program. There are so many wonderful volunteers that do such an amazing job. It’s amazing to be a part of such a great service to the community.

I’m also looking forward to having speakers come in to discuss various health-related issues. Right now I’m working on having someone come in to speak about end of life issues and how to handle them in a way that is in line with our Catholic faith and values. I would also like to offer some programs that will engage younger members of

the parish. Ideas are welcome! This ministry is here for everyone, and I really want to provide resources and education for parishioners at all different ages and stages of life.

I am a native Western New Yorker. Other than a year spent in swampy north-central Florida, I have been here my whole life. My husband and I live less than a mile from our parents and the houses we grew up in. We both feel so fortunate to have remained close to our families and in a community that we love.

I grew up going to St Benedict’s Parish, attending CCD there through elementary and middle school. I’ve really “come home” to the Catholic faith as an adult, though, and actually made the decision to become confirmed in my late 20s.

Thank you, Melissa, for joining us in ministry here at St. Gregory’s!

Welcome to our new

Her new parish role is like a “roll” ~ sweet, comforting and nutty

By Arlene Meyerhofer, our new Administrative Assistant to the Pastoral Associate

I was raised in Elma and grew up attending Immaculate Conception parish. As a teen, I joined friends at Annunciation parish, where I became involved in prayer meetings and first became a catechist.

My husband, George, and I met as students at Canisius College, where we both earned degrees in biology and, later, MBAs. I then managed the college’s biology labs for 13 years. After being married at Annunciation, we moved to Amherst and joined St. Leo the Great parish, where we were invited to attend Mission Renewal. That wonderful experience quickly made St. Leo’s our spiritual home. I served that parish for many years in various roles as Mission lead, as well as Eucharistic minister, catechist, children’s liturgy committee member, altar server coordinator, Renew core team member and Renew small-group participant. We are also active members of the People of Praise.



Although we had moved into the St. Gregory’s neighborhood much earlier, we actually joined this parish about 10 years ago when we were between sacramental programs for our three children. We have thoroughly enjoyed the many activities of this vibrant faith community. I have been honored to serve on the Family Faith Formation Board and recently filled a temporary opening with the high school program.

Asked what my new “roll” would be here, my first thought was that I would like it to be a sticky bun with nuts – sweet, comforting, a little twisted and very nutty! Stop in and introduce yourself and see if that description is accurate. I am excited to be able to work with many of the ministries that care for the needs of so many of our parishioners.



Welcome Sister Shawn, Our New Pastoral Associate

Spirit & Life sat down with our new Pastoral Associate, Sister Shawn Czyzycki, to learn more about her and her road to St. Gregory the Great Parish:

Sister Shawn grew up in Utica, N.Y., at St. Stanislaus, a small parish where she also attended school, taught by Felician sisters. Her mother was a full-time homemaker, which was a great blessing, and her father was an engineer. Her family lived in a building downstairs from their grandmother, another blessing not too many experience these days. She has one married sister who has three children. A beautiful example of a “late vocation,” Sister Shawn has “only” been a Felician sister for 15 years. Before that, she had a long and successful career as a banker. Starting out as a teller and eventually achieving the position of vice president in charge of human resources, as well as serving as an adjunct professor at Morrisville College, she had realized all of her goals.

Spirituality was always an important part of her life. As a daily communicant, she was open to a new way the Lord was leading her. One day a Felician sister came to offer a vocation talk at her parish. Afterward, Sister met with her individually and was invited to a retreat. On the retreat she loved being a part of the sisters’ community prayer life, but the thought of giving up all that she had in her private life was daunting. As the desire to follow this new call grew, Sister asked the Lord, “What is a banker going to do in a convent?” Sister made the choice to become a Felician. Since then

parish staff!

God has been showing her, in strange and wonderful ways, how He can use all of our gifts, talents and desires for His purposes.

Sister Shawn’s first position as a Felician was director of Continuing Education at Villa Maria College, where God used her corporate training background. After this she was hired as director of Human Resources for the Diocese of Buffalo, where she served for eight years. Sister then had a growing desire to experience parish life. She had heard many wonderful things about St. Gregory’s, so she gave her friend, Fr. Leon, a call to see if her gifts were needed here. They certainly were and together, Fr. Leon and Sister Shawn drew up plans for Sister to serve for one year on five projects regarding our staffing needs. However, just one month later, after having fallen in love with our parish, our priests, staff and parishioners, Sister prayed for a way to make the placement more permanent. Sister is most attracted to a “longing for deep spirituality,” which she sees in the parishioners of St. Gregory’s.



After much prayer and talking it over with trusted friends, and with the permission of her Provincial, Sister Shawn has made the leap and joined us at St. Gregory’s in a position that is a culmination of all of her education and experience: Pastoral Associate. In this role, Sister supports our priests, staff, ministries and, perhaps most of all, the individual spiritual needs of the parishioners. Her “yes” to this position has given her peace.

Amazed by how close-knit a big parish can be, Sister would like to especially shine a light on the hard work that Fr. Joe Gatto, Eileen Warner and Laraine Leardon contributed to create a sense of parish unity. They, too, were willing to take risks, and the fruit of their labors is the flourishing of both old and new ministries in our parish life. Sister would also like everyone to know how blessed we are to have four priests who are exceptional “spiritual beings.” Her deepest goal is to be present to each member of this parish in whatever way God is calling her. To contact Sister Shawn here at St. Gregory’s please call 688-5678, extension 335 or email her at sczyzycki@stgregs.org.

Thank you, Sister Shawn, for the many, ongoing and courageous times you have said “yes” to Jesus. We hope you feel welcomed and loved. We are so grateful to have you here! Please be assured of our prayers for yourself and your ministry as you continue to settle into life here at St. Gregory’s.



WOMEN'S ENRICHMENT DAY - COMING SOON! SATURDAY, MAY 2

By Joycelyn Bila

How we have longed for spring! Come and bloom in God's garden along with the Women's Enrichment ministry as they host a day of relaxation, faith, fellowship and fun for ALL WOMEN. This special day of spiritual renewal, titled "God, the Master Gardener," will take place Saturday, May 2 and will



feature a special guest speaker, music, prayer, a box lunch, as well as spiritual activities. Refreshments will be served throughout the day. Don't miss out as seating will be limited for this special event. Watch the Bulletin for more details and registration forms.

WHY A CONFIRMATION RETREAT?

By Joan Rischmiller



Over the many years that I have been involved in the faith formation of our youth, I have never been more impressed than I was with the faith of the 34 young people who were on our January Confirmation retreat at Christ the King Seminary.

Our pastor, Fr. Leon Biernat, has given up his time to direct four overnight retreats for our 150 Confirmation students. The youth of our parish are very fortunate to have Fr. Leon as their spiritual leader. He is the only pastor I know who does this.

Fr. Leon directed discussions and activities that were intended to excite and engage our youth in living out their Confirmation and to enhance their faith life. They were challenged to discover what God's plan is for them and how they will respond to that plan. The candidates were encouraged to acknowledge the obstacles in their life that might prevent

them from following God's plan. In their small-group discussions, they used their knowledge of Church teachings to evaluate the seriousness of current moral issues in our society.

Fr. Leon also helped them discover God's blessings in their lives by giving them time to prayerfully reflect on them. The retreat was enriched with the presence of our awesome Youth Ministry team of Adam Jarosz and Jen Kilo, who helped with faith-filled skits, activities and fun.

The spiritual highlight of this retreat was Fr. Leon's guided meditation followed by Eucharistic Adoration. The retreat concluded with a Mass as we sent 35 faith-filled young people to go forth and become disciples in the world.

Why a Confirmation retreat? This spiritual experience will leave a lasting impression on these candidates because of Fr. Leon's loving concern for our youth.



Post-Dyngus Day Dinner Dance

Saturday, April 11, Ministry Center Gym

\$25 Per Person Includes: Family-Style Catering from salad to dessert by Nowak's, Beer and Wine

Doors open at 5:00 pm with cocktails; Dinner will be served at 6:15 pm. Live Music by The Buffalo Touch

Tickets can be purchased at the Parish Office or by mailing a form to: St. Gregory the Great, Attn: Dyngus Day, 200 St. Gregory Court, Williamsville, NY 14221. Tickets must be purchased by March 30. No tickets will be sold at the door.

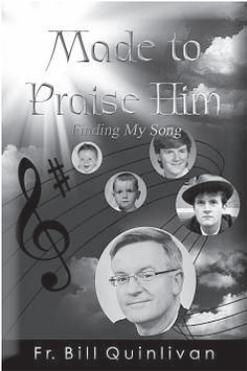
All proceeds benefit the St. Gregory's Jamaica Mission Trip





Catholic Reading: “Made to Praise Him, Finding My Song”

Fr. Bill Quinlivan, pastor of Blessed Sacrament Church in Tonawanda and a former pastoral associate at St. Gregory’s, has written a book, “Made to Praise Him, Finding My Song,” an autobiography focusing on his call to priesthood. Recently, “Spirit & Life” caught up with our talented friend and asked him a few questions about his book and his calling.



“Late” vocations are becoming more common, but when you were discerning they were not as common. What benefits have you seen in God’s perfect timing?

One thing that came to my attention while writing my autobiography was the overview of my vocation. We tend to measure time in terms of the present and being ready for the future. But the perspective of looking back showed me God’s timing in my life in clearer view and more vibrant colors. People used to call a vocation story like mine “late” or “delayed,” but I now know that as much as I thought I had to figure my life’s calling out, I simply had to ask my God. Then, the answer came quickly! Before I discovered that the call to priesthood I first heard in my heart at about age 10 was real, I searched a lot. My book details some of the changes of gears, fields of work and dreams. Isn’t one of the most wonderful things about the Lord’s way is that He allows us to find it? Vocations are not merely the call to priesthood and religious life. Each and every person has a calling to something, and that’s how we praise the Lord. We’re made to praise Him...now and forever more.

Sometimes people think of priests as living and working only in the Sacristy and the Church. You tell a different story. What would you like people to know about a priest’s life?

From my childhood I was a practicing Catholic and attended Mass. But it actually wasn’t until I came to know a priest as a person (my late friend Fr. John Kilian) that I ever considered priesthood myself. What I would share with others is that the daily life of a priest is quite exciting and unpredictable. The celibate life helps us be available to others. The Mass schedule is the basic guideline, and besides pastoral duties, priests can develop interests and hobbies in a variety of activities. Ministry within a parish can also be quite varied. I’ve worked with virtually all ages of people, and always enjoy when something new grows in a parish setting. A need is identified and we draw people together to address it.

Music has been a big part of your life, of your story, of your witness. Why do you think that is?

Growing up in a family that loved music, and having enjoyed sing-alongs in the car, it always just seemed to be a natural way of expression. There was a parallel in the way I developed my own tastes in music and began to be defined as an individual in a big family. Everyone had their own records, and saved allowances could give you choices at the record store. Then, I found that I sought out friends who enjoyed the same music. Contemporary Christian music had a huge impact on me, and it ended up being the inspiration for attempting to write my own songs. My favorite singer/songwriter, Amy Grant, is the same age as me, and I feel like the things our life journeys have in common are about the musical journey as well as our relationships with God.

Many of the “characters” in your life’s story are priests. How important is it for young people to get to know “real-live” priests?

I believe that this is part of God’s providence for the Church: the gifts and interests of one priest will help people know and remember him. I have never stopped studying the priesthood. Meeting priests and getting to know their story only solidifies my wonder at this vocation. And yet, gathered at a cathedral or stadium for large gatherings, we all pray the same words and represent the same person, the Great High Priest Jesus Christ. Lay people are diverse in their expectations of what a priest has to offer them. Some will call for an appointment to talk privately; others may never have a one-on-one with us other than a hello at the church door. I laugh to myself when I realize that I am the priest at the door. After almost 20 years, it often feels like I just got here, just started this “song,” and have many more verses to write.

God bless you, Fr. Bill. We can’t wait to see what wonderful new “songs” our Lord has you sing!

Editor’s note: “Made to Praise Him” is available at St. Gregory’s Catholic Store.

SAVE THE DATES FOR 2015!

Great Race: Friday, June 19

Great Dinner Auction: November 7

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Saint Gregory the Great Catholic Church

What's Inside This Issue?

- Meet our New Parish Staff
- Confirmation Retreat Re-cap
- Lenten Opportunities & Easter Triduum Schedules
- Save the Dates!

Mark Your Calendar For These Upcoming Events:

March

6, 13, 20, 27 - Fish Fry Fridays,
Stations of the Cross and Prayer
Hour for Vocations
12 - Night of Recollection with
the Pastor for Single Adults
16 - End of Life Issues
Presentation
19 - Night of Recollection with
the Pastor for Teens and Parents
24 - Parish Penance Service

26 - Night of Recollection with
the Pastor for Professionals
28 - FFF Lenten Pageant

April

2 - Parish Shared Supper
4 - Blessing of Easter Food
5 - Easter Sunday
11 - Post-Dyngus Day Dinner
Dance
12 - Divine Mercy Sunday
21, 22 - Confirmation
25 - 1500 Club Fundraiser

May

2 - Women's Day of Enrichment
2 - Mulch Sale
3 - Parish May Crowning
9 - First Communions
9, 10 - Baby Item Drive for St.
Gianna Molla Center
15 - School Father/Daughter
Dance
17 - Health Ministry Health Fair
24 - St. Gregory's Twelve
Celebration

Spirit & Life Staff: Elizabeth Astridge, Fr. Leon Biernat, Suellen Brewster, Mrene Corra, Donna Callaghan, Dawn Curazatto, Sr. Shawn Czyzycki, Bill Grunert, Jacqueline Hanley, Felix Labaki, Carla Mangone, Mike Pesarchick, Camille Pontrello, Rick Reinhart, Joan Rischmiller, and Mary Toerne. Published bi-monthly by St. Gregory the Great Parish. If you have any questions or comments, please contact the Parish Office at 688-5678 or write the *Spirit & Life* Newsletter c/o St. Gregory the Great Church, 200 St. Gregory Ct., Williamsville, NY 14221. We are grateful to Liturgical Publications, whose generosity and benevolence allow us to provide *Spirit & Life* at minimal cost to our parishioners.