*Saint Gregory the Great Catholic Church* *Parish Newsletter*

# Spirit & Life

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

*Spring/Summer 2017*

## Did You Miss This?

1)

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1) On April 24, the Canisius College Chorale performed for our parishioners in what was Director Frank Scinta's final "away" performance before returning to an academic role.

2) During Middle-School Mayhem our middle-school students had a private Mass for them at midnight.

3) On January 29 we celebrated Father Sibby's 30th Anniverary of Ordination to the Priesthood.

4) St. Greg's School welcomed back St. Greg's alum, Emily Regan, gold-medalist in rowing at the 2016 Summer Olympic Games held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

5) At LifeTeen, our high-schoolers celebrated the end of the season with a pie-eating contest.

6) Every Monday, St. Greg's 8th Grade students visit Brookdale residents to play games, read and cook.

# From the Desk of the Pastor

May is a beautiful time in Western New York. The snow has finally passed and the April rains, and we had a lot of April rains, have made our community come alive with green grass, trees, flowers and more! Academically, we see the beginning of graduation season, especially for our college and university students. In the Church, May is also a beautiful month as we traditionally celebrate First Holy Communion for our children and Confirmation for our teenagers. In the Church, May is especially a time to honor our Blessed Mother Mary. One of the Catholic customs for May is the Crowning of the Statue of Mary, which we observe at St. Gregory's. Mary's crowning reminds us that Mary is our Queen Mother.

It is unfortunate that many do not understand the importance of our Blessed Mother. Some who are not Catholic question us as to why we honor Mary so greatly in our Catholic Church? Our Blessed Mother Mary is not worshipped; but she is honored. It is important to note that we only worship God and we honor the saints. Mary, of course, is preeminent among all of the saints.

Our Blessed Mother Mary is our Mother, because she was entrusted to the Beloved Disciple at the foot of the Cross: "Woman behold your son; son behold your Mother." In addition to being our Mother, she was Jesus' Mother. One of Mary's roles as "Mother" is that of intercessor. This is often misunderstood. Many skeptics of this belief will simply question, "Why we do not just go directly to God the Father or Jesus?" The answer is simple; Mary is our intercessor just as the queens of Old Testament times were intercessors. In ancient times, the king had several wives, but he only had one Mother and so the Queen was usually the King's Mother and not one of his wives. It was the role of "Queen-Mother" to intercede to her son, the king, on behalf of the people. As the people sought assistance they tried to win a hearing with the queen. If the queen agreed with the request she carried it to her son, the king, and interceded with him on behalf of his faithful people who asked for help. One of the titles of Jesus is "Christ the King." Jesus is our King; Pilate wrote upon the Cross, "Here is the King of the Jews." If Jesus is our King, then Mary is our Queen and her true role as "Queen-Mother" is to intercede on behalf of her Son's faithful people. A basic understanding of Old Testament culture will disclose this fact clearly. Our Blessed Mother is "Queen-Mother" and intercessor.

We see Mary's role as intercessor in Chapter 2 of John's Gospel in the story of the wedding feast of Cana. Mary, as intercessor, goes to her Son, Jesus, to inform Him that there is no more wine. We know the story well, that Jesus turns the water into wine; the best wine, as the wine steward acknowledges. Of course, we do not know who actually got married in this story. Chapter 2 begins with "On the third day there was a wedding at Cana…" What does "On the third day mean?" Looking at John's Gospel, chapter one delineates what Jesus did on days one, two, three and four of His ministry. Linguistically studying the text, it would appear that it is now the third day in chapter two since the fourth day in the end of chapter one. Four plus three equals seven. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. Also, Genesis begins with the seven days of creation that ends with Eve giving Adam the forbidden fruit to eat, thus ushering sin into the world. In John's Gospel, Mary ushers in redemption as the "new Eve" as she intercedes with Jesus, the "new Adam." Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant as she carries Jesus in her womb and she is the new Eve as she is the instrument invited by God to bear Jesus. This is really a story about the nuptial union of heaven.

This May, I encourage you to not only pray through the intercession of Mary, but I encourage you to actually study the importance of our Blessed Mother in the process of Salvation History. Daily, people come to me and ask: "Father, will you please pray for me?" They wish me to intercede in prayer for a job, passing an exam, a successful surgery, healings of many kinds and so on. In the same way, we approach Mary with the same humble request of prayerful intercession to her Son, Jesus.

We need to trust that Mary, Jesus' Mother and our Mother, will intercede and in faith we must trust that both Mary and Jesus will look out for what is best for us. Mary will always do what is best for us. Why, you may ask? Because she is the perfect Mother and what mother would not do what is best for her child? Finally, Jesus will always respond to His Mother, Mary. Why, you may ask? My mom always taught me: "What son would ever refuse his mother something she asks?" Simple thoughts, simple theology; but I believe the basis to really understanding our relationship with Mary.

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

# INVITATION TO MISSION 36

*Looking to be revitalized and refreshed in your Faith this summer? We invite you to join us for our seven-night Retreat beginning Sunday, July 16th. Mission retreat consists of seven nights of inspiring talks and liturgies and an opportunity for discussion and fellowship. The first evening begins at 6:00 pm, weeknights begin at 7:00 pm and Saturday will begin at 3:30 pm, until about 10:00 pm each evening. Each night builds on the preceding, so we ask that you commit to attend all seven nights. Reservations are necessary and space is limited. To reserve a spot at this summer's Mission, call Jo Pierino at St. Gregory's Parish Office at 688-5678. For more information call Jerry and Eileen Hodson at 863-4800.*

*At the Easter Vigil Mass on Saturday, April 15, at 7:00pm, three children and five adults received the Sacraments of Initiation. Please pray for them as we welcome them into the Church.*

(From Left to Right)
Michael C. Rafter - Sacrament of First Communion
Catarina A. Pedro-Ionita - Sacrament of First Communion
Matthew L. Rafter - Sacrament of First Communion

(From Left to Right)
*Sacraments of Baptism, First Communion & Confirmation*
Elena Patterson, Beth Ann Rafter and Myles Faith
*Sacraments of First Communion & Confirmation*
Pamela Subryan and Stacey Subryan

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Visit the App Store or Play Store and search
*"St. Gregory the Great"*

## Painting the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe
## By Joycelyn (Joy) Bila

"If you were to meet Jesus on earth, what is the greatest gift you could give Him?" This question was proposed to me many years ago. My answer was, "I would give our Lord the greatest painting I have ever done". It was the only thing I could think of that came directly from me, by my own hands, using my God-given gift. In 2015, I was approached by a fellow parishioner who asked me to paint an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Patroness of Life and the Unborn, to be placed in the parish nursery. Another parishioner heard that I was going to undertake this project and donated a 4' X 5' canvas that she no longer wanted. Painting Our Lady was no easy task as I faced many challenges along the way. The first was self doubt, that little voice of the enemy that comes into your head and says, "You're doing it all wrong!" After much frustration and prayer I heard the Blessed Mother tell me to "just paint". Then came health issues including problems with one of my eyes that required surgery. These challenges made me all the more determined. I asked the Holy Spirit for help and Our Lady of Guadalupe to pray for me. I began painting only during the hour of Divine Mercy. At 3:00pm I would turn on W.L.O.F. for the Quiet Waters Holy Hour. It brought me great peace and the painting flowed into how I believe the Holy Spirit wanted it to be. Through much prayer and perseverance the painting was completed in a little over a year. Everyone who saw it deemed it too beautiful and too big to be placed in the nursery and that it belonged in the church. Nine months passed from the time the painting was beautifully blessed by Father Sibby and prayed about by so many, until it was approved to be placed in the church. The painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe was installed on All Saints Day, November 1, 2016, directly opposite the image of Divine Mercy, her Son, Jesus. I am truly humbled, honored and blessed to have the painting I created under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with love, devotion and prayer, in St. Gregory's, my beloved parish. I am extremely touched and humbled at how the painting of Our Lady has affected the community by its presence and am truly grateful to God for this. I am also grateful to Father Leon, Father Sibby, Father Tom and Sister Shawn for their support and acceptance of my donation to our parish through God's grace and mercy. I thank my husband, everyone who prayed or had a part in it. It has truly been a lesson in faith, trust and humility that Jesus allowed me to present Him the gift of the painting of His Beloved Mother that now resides in His home.

# As you make your summer plans...

...be sure to consider many of the events and ministries that we are offering here at St. Gregory's:

**Summer Mission Retreat (Adult/Young Adult): July 16 - 22**
**Mass, Lunch & Games (Middle School) Every Friday in Summer**
**St. Greg's Great Race: Friday, June 16, at 7:00pm**
**St. Greg's Annual Car Show: Labor Day, Monday, September 5**
**Josh Blakesley Concert: Friday, September 8**
**Buffalo Bills Food Truck Party: Sunday, September 17**
**School Welcome Back Food Trucks & Book Fair: Friday, September 22**

## St. Greg's 22nd Annual Great Race

Join us for the annual Great Race on Friday, June 16. Sign up today as a 5K runner or 1 Mile Fun Walk participant. You may register online at www.stgregs.org/greatrace.

The race begins at 7:00 pm with a post-race party in the Ministry Center parking lot. Buffalo's premiere party band, HIT n RUN, will entertain with great music throughout the evening.

Don't miss the summer's most family-friendly 5K and party.

## RSVP for Father Leon's Celebration

Join us in thanksgiving for the 25th Ordination Anniversary of Father Leon on Sunday, June 4, after the 12:30pm Mass. Please rsvp to Jo Pierino in the Parish Office with the number of individuals attending. You may also drop this slip in the collection basket. Any questions, please call Jo Pierino at 688-5678.

_____ # of people attending the 12:30pm Mass of Thanksgiving

_____ # of people attending the reception honoring Father Leon on the front field of the Parish

# St. Gregory the Great School

## A Young Catholic's Perspective on Faith

*By: Ania Krzyzanska, St. Greg's 8th Grade Student*

It sure has been a long journey, but finally, Jesus has risen. I like to picture the stations of the cross as our life, figuratively. I feel like everyone has a feeling now and then. A deep inner feeling that you're not living life right. Great opportunities pass us by, and we make mistakes we regret. It's as though we have a great life planned out for us, we're just not living it the right way. I, personally, think that I'm stuck at the fourteenth station, where it seems that there is no hope. Jesus has died, and many believe that it's all over. Every day I wake up destined for greatness, and go to bed wondering, what happened? We're stuck in a constant, perpetual cycle of sinning and failing and not meeting our own expectations. Sometimes, I feel like the human race has given up. We don't even expect ourselves to be capable of not sinning. I think the fifteenth station is not necessarily something we can achieve in our lifetimes, but it's the hope that we can be better than who we are today. It's the realization that yesterday we made mistakes, today we learn from them and tomorrow can be perfect. The resurrection is finally achieving your goals and finding that a new road of opportunity lies ahead.

Honestly, I find it rather depressing that people have so little faith in what they can accomplish. I find myself surrounded by doubt and despair. Whether someone says they won't get a hundred on a test or claims that they're definitely not the best player on the team, I can't help but wonder if we are the ones that put limitations on ourselves. I do it too. I tell myself I can't, I'm not, I never will be. The fifteenth station tells us we can, we are, we will be. Every person I ever met has been better than me, and I mean it. I know some say that I'm just doubting myself, but I kind of have too. I've grown up in a world where I can do anything I want, and I often use my power unwisely. Free will isn't a gift, it is a test. We have to use it in everything we do and it's hard to believe that we may one day use it right for once.

We all grow up in a world where we are told about great people. The geniuses, prodigies and MVPs of this world can make it seem like there is no room for an average ordinary person to do great things. The fifteenth station is all about the impossible. Now looking at all of you, I know that my whole life all the greats have been here. I know next year I'll be gone but I'm not worried about forgetting any of you. I know in a good twenty years or so, your names will be all over the papers and in school textbooks. You will be the ones to cure cancer, stop global warming, and end world hunger. There it is. I think you all know what I'm talking about. It's doubt. That "yeah, right" feeling we all have inside of us. Well, I'm telling you right now, just get rid of it. If everyone else has that feeling, then the least you can do is put it aside and be the person you want to be. The Resurrection wasn't something believed to be possible. Even Jesus's most faithful disciples began to feel that He was gone. If Jesus can conquer death and open the gates of Heaven, then I know, each and every one of you, the wonderful people sitting before me, can do the impossible too. So stop putting limitations on yourself, I know that I will. Change doesn't happen over time, it happens quickly, and suddenly. I know all of you will bring changes to this world and will go down in history. After all, part of being a follower, is striving to become the leader.

~ Ania

***Did You Know?***

The St. Gregory's Science Olympiad team placed seventh at the New York State Science Olympiad competition in Syracuse, NY. Our students took home 11 medals in 25 categories.

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**Join us for the Official Kick-Off to Summer!**
**Great Race: Friday, June 16**

*Saint Gregory the Great Catholic Church*

# Save the Date!

**18th Annual Great Dinner Auction: Saturday, November 5, at Salvatore's Italian Gardens**

# Mark Your Calendar For These Upcoming Events:

## *June*

*4 - Fr. Leon's 25th Anniversary Celebration*
*7 – Grief & Loss Ministry Meeting*
*9 - School Walk-a-thon*
*15 – Kindergarten Celebration*
*16 – Great Race*
*17 – 8th Grade Graduation*
*25 - 9:30am Family Mass*
*25 - Farewell Reception for Principal Patty Freund*
*26 – SPLASH Begins*

## *July*

*5 – Grief & Loss Ministry Meeting*
*9 – New Parishioner Social*
*10-14 – Vacation Bible School*
*15 – Families with Disabilities Picnic*
*16-22 – Summer Mission Retreat*
*17-21 – Disciple Cam*
*23 – Disciple Camp Car Wash*

## *August*

*2 – Grief & Loss Ministry Meeting*
*5 - 12 Jamaica Mission Trip*
*8 - Josh Blakesley Concert*
*13 – New Parishioner Social*
*15 – Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

## *September*

*4 - Car Show*
*17 - Parish Buffalo Bills Party*
*22 - Welcome Back to School Event with Food Trucks*

***Spirit & Life Staff***: Greg Smith, Joe Deck, Fr. Leon Biernat. 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 *Spirt & Life* at minimal cost to our parishioners.