



Spirit & Life

"Do This in Memory of Me"

January/February 2012

A Note From Our Pastor: Your Vocation - Living in the Mystery of Love!

January is National Vocation Awareness Month and I want to share with you one of the joys of my life – helping men and woman discern their vocations. Cardinal Joseph Bernardin once stated that the heart of any vocation is not an identification marker for ourselves, but rather we become a signal or pointer to the mystery we serve, Christ Himself. When you search for and begin to discover your vocation, you are not simply figuring out what you will “do” with your life, but who you will “be” for Christ and His people. Christ wants you to become for Him – for whatever vocation you choose – a “pointer” that identifies you with the mystery that Christ holds out to the world, the all-encompassing love of the Father. As a priest, consecrated religious or deacon you are being asked to live your life within this mystery, you are submerged, challenged and called to serve from the heart of the mystery of love between the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. What a place to live – dwell – serve.

Dwelling within the mystery of love between the Father, the Son and Spirit does not eliminate our individual talents or gifts, but rather, nourishes, enhances and directs them so that they may bring forth new followers for Christ. Each man and woman, by their vocation, becomes the bridge to the very mystery that is God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When a man or woman, by the full commitment of their lives, realizes that they are sharers and not the center or focus point of any vocation, then it is possible for us to serve the real source of grace, the One who called us from our birth. God’s people are waiting for each of us to accept our call to holiness and live in His love – this is the birthplace of every vocation.

Celebrate Catholic Schools!

St. Gregory the Great School Open House: January 29, 10:30 am - 12:30 pm

Open House at St. Gregory the Great School on Sunday, January 29, from 10:30 am - 12:30 pm kicks off our celebration of **National Catholic Schools Week**. The theme, *Catholic Schools - Faith. Academics. Service.*, focuses on three priorities that make Catholic schools stand out. Children are taught *Faith* – not just the basics of Christianity, but how to have a relationship with God. *Academics*, are held to very high standards and each child is helped to reach his or her potential. *Service*, the giving of one’s time and effort to help others, is taught both as an expression of faith and good citizenship.

The children of St. Gregory the Great School visit nursing homes, reach out to soldiers by writing letters and providing personal care items, adopt families in the Family-to-Family Christmas program, collect toys for underprivileged children, and bring gifts and decorations to Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital. They deliver food to outreach centers across Buffalo, partner with the Response to Love Center by providing turkey dinners at Thanksgiving and serve meals there every week. Through these and other actions, our children learn that it is our mission to use our gifts to serve others. *(continued on page 2)*

See our special insert pullout section on the Catholic Mass!

This insert article can help all of us to grow in our understanding and appreciation of the Mass. We hope that you find a deeper meaning in your experience of the Mass, and we encourage you to pass this along to a friend or loved one who may have questions about the Mass.



Discerning a Vocation

By William Grunert

Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. – Matthew 4:19

With this powerful invitation, Christ called the Apostles to follow Him into a life of service to mankind – ultimately becoming the first priests of the Church. Christ still extends these invitation to people in St. Gregory’s parish, in the Diocese of Buffalo and throughout the world. Hearing, understanding and heeding this “call” is a challenge in today’s secular society. The Vocations Office of our Diocese can help!

Fr. Walter Szczesny, vocations director (phone 847-5535), welcomes the opportunity to help you discern your vocation through discussion and counseling and, perhaps, through participation in discussion groups at Christ the King Seminary. When *Spirit & Life* recently talked with Fr. Walt, he offered these suggestions:

* **Find a mentor.** In many cases, seminarians recall a priest who served as a role model, offering guidance and encouragement as well as insights into the life of a priest. Talking to seminarians can also help. St. Gregory’s is blessed to have two studying at Christ the King: Sam Giangreco and Richard Pantano.

* **Get Involved in Service.** Search for service opportunities within your parish or community, locally or as part of a mission team. Do you experience joy and enrichment through serving others? Can you envision a life’s work of service as a priest or religious (sister; brother)?

* **Pray.** Frequent prayer, in its many forms, is essential to the discerning process. It may be more formal prayer, alone or in a group. It may also be simply sitting quietly in the Adoration Chapel at St. Gregory’s, being open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As Rich Pantano stated, “I would not have heard my vocation without sitting in the silence with Him.”

If you feel you are experiencing a “call,” respond and take action. Calling Fr. Walt is a good first step. Whatever your ultimate decision, you will know that you gave it thoughtful and prayerful consideration. Trust, also, that your fellow parishioners at St. Gregory’s will be praying for you along the way.

Celebrate Catholic Schools!

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In these challenging financial times, Fr. Joe has made it a priority to continue to offer a vibrant Catholic school education for our parish community. He recognizes how important it is for parents to have the support of their faith community in raising their children with morals, values, and a strong Catholic foundation in the school setting. **Fr. Joe ensures that any child who wishes to attend our Catholic school will not be denied because of economic constraints by offering financial aid.** Many of our graduates receive academic scholarships to Catholic schools.

The faculty, administration and school parents truly are achieving the school’s mission: *Creating a Christ-centered faith community, committed to the moral and spiritual formation of students in the Roman Catholic faith, striving for academic excellence, personal development and service to others in the spirit of Christ.*

We invite you to become a part of this community. Please come and check us out!



Pictured left: Our Kindergarten Students and their 6th Grade peer partners at St. Gregory the Great School made holiday wreaths to be given to the residents at Emertus Retirement Home for Christmas.



A Day in the Life of Fr. David Richards

7:00 am - I awoke to the sound of the 97 Rock radio station as my alarm went off. The timer for the coffee maker allowed me to have a cup of coffee at 7:00 am. This week I'm presiding at the 8:00 am Mass. I try to be in the sacristy 20 minutes prior to vest and will usually sit at the presider's chair to pray over the readings to get an idea for the homily.

(Each week is different in terms of our Mass schedule. Options for daily Masses are 7:00, 8:00 am and 12 noon, so we rotate each week.)

8:00 am - Celebrated Mass. Following Mass, my typical pattern is to process to the back of the church to meet and greet the congregation and wish them well as they begin their day. When I'm able, I'll try to pray the Rosary with the people. Usually, I can catch the last decade or two.

9:00 am - Prayed the Office of Readings and Morning Prayer from the Breviary.

9:30 am - Went to the Parish Office to prep for the day and take care of loose ends.

10:00 am - Met with a family to prepare the funeral Mass of their loved one. I take time to learn a bit about the deceased in order to have some background in terms of homily preparation. This entails going over Scripture readings and music that they would like.

11:00 am - Popped into the School Cafeteria to say "hey" to the kids.

Noon - Lunch. Each day the staff will have lunch together in the Rectory kitchen. Personally, I see this fellowship as a practical and productive way of building unity.

1:30 pm - Spiritual direction. An encouraged practice for priests is spiritual direction. It's an opportunity to bring anything, whether the issues are personal, pastoral or spiritual, to the director. The director's role is to listen and help the directee process things with the expectation to grow in a deeper relationship with God.

3:00 pm - Met with an engaged couple. The engaged couple seeking to get married meets with the priest to go through a list of questions, in addition to discussing the details of the wedding Mass.

4:00 pm - Took a walk for 30 minutes to clear my head and get some exercise.

4:45 pm - Met for Evening Prayer with brother priests.

5:30 pm - Supper.

7:00 pm - Vocations Committee meeting.

8:00 pm - Stopped into the Ministry Center and shot hoops with some teens who had a youth group meeting.

8:30 pm - Back to my room to relax for a bit.

9:30 pm - Went to the Chapel for night prayer and meditation.

10:30 pm - Watched the news.

11:00 pm - Went to sleep.



Understanding God's Role In Suffering

This workshop, which takes place **Saturday, January 21, from 8:30 am - 1:30 pm**, will address questions, regarding the paradox of a loving God and the amount of suffering in life. We will look at why suffering happens, God's response to all of the pain in our world, and what He promises for us in our darkest moments. We will also explore what positive purpose pain and suffering can serve and how we can support others who are struggling with their faith amid their suffering.

Eileen Warner, the presenter and our Director of Pastoral Ministry, holds a master's degree from Christ the King Seminary and has served as an adjunct professor at Canisius College, where she has taught courses on the theology of suffering. Light refreshments will be served. Please contact the parish office if you plan to attend.



Discernment, Prayers, Support Lead to the Blessings of Marriage

By Kelly Chernowski

It started as a ruse – we pretended to date because our friends thought we would make a cute couple. It didn't take long for us to realize that we actually liked each other. But our first dates as freshmen at John Carroll University were to “Vocare” meetings – a group organized by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) vocations director. This may be strange, but right from the outset we knew that religious life was on the table for each other.

Both of us had been active in our home parishes as seniors in high school, and we immediately became active in different ministry opportunities at John Carroll. I knew before Joe that I wasn't called to enter religious life, but up to his senior year Joe was strongly discerning whether to join the Jesuits. He often felt he was “dating” me and the



Jesuits at the same time.

Our relationship with each other and with Christ grew as we prayed together most nights at the St. Francis Xavier Chapel on campus. We surrounded ourselves with faith-filled people – friends, Jesuits, parents and teachers – who supported us in our discernment and in our drive for a holy relationship. We knew we had people praying for us, asking us good questions and encouraging us.

The prayers and support carried us through college and paved the way to our wedding day on August 19, 2000. In many ways, the prayers and support are still carrying us today as we joyfully live out our marital vocation. I always knew what I was in for with Joe, and with working for the Church in some capacity (currently at St. Gregory's). Along with five awesome children, we have had continual blessings in our marriage.

Eucharistic Adorations

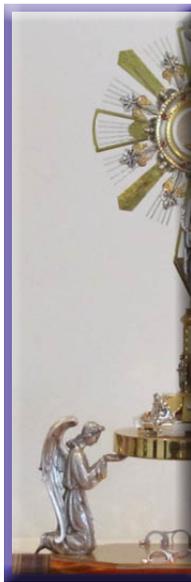
By Dawn

Let us never forget that an age prospers or dwindles in the measure of its spiritual life and its faith, of its charity

To discern God's call, especially a call to the priesthood and dedicate more time to prayer. There is no better way than Eucharistic Adoration to meet with Jesus personally. This is how we “listen” to the promptings of the Holy Spirit for direction.

It is not a coincidence that you will find the answers to your prayers in the Real Presence. The new springtime of Christianity is the birth to many religious vocations.

Eucharistic Adoration is not a “something” – it is a “someone.” Try it at the Chapel at St. Gregory's. Try it. You will find the peace and



Vocation Discernment

Richard Pantano, 30, has been a parishioner at St. Gregory's. He was in the priestly formation program at Christ the King Seminary. He asked Fr. Joseph Gatto to shed light on the elusive “discernment process:”

Have you always been very involved in your faith?

Yes, for the most part. There were times in high school when I wasn't, but once I came to St. Greg's my faith really took off.

When did you first consider the possibility that God was calling you to the priesthood?

Probably when I was around 19 years old, but I seriously considered it when I was 25.

Was your first answer to this call, “YES!!”?

While I was serving during Fr. Joseph Gatto's Eucharistic Adoration, I experienced the presence of God so strongly, and when Father chanted “Through



The Font of Vocations!

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in proportion to its devotion to the Holy Eucharist. This is its strength and its virtue. – St. Peter Julian Eymard
To lead a secular or religious life, we must withdraw from external activities. The way to do this is not to go before the Blessed Sacrament in a hurry, but in a place where you open your heart to the divine will of God and

ask the greatest questions in your life when you go to Jesus. The answers will bloom through Eucharistic Adoration, which will give

us the strength to say, "Someone!" We are blessed to have a Perpetual Adoration where the answers you seek as you allow God to work in your life.



Focus: The Priesthood

Richard entered the priesthood for seven years. This past August, Richard entered the priesthood in East Aurora. *Spirit & Life* posed some questions for

me when I wasn't as on fire as you are. I took off.

What was calling you to the priest-

hood? Did you seriously consider it when I



asked me to do a eucharistic celebration one Sunday, as I knelt there I felt the presence of Christ with Him, with Him and in Him" I said "Yes" in that moment!

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Saying Yes to a Vocation of Religious Life

I'm Katie Delaney, and I have recently said "Yes" to a vocation of religious life. I have attended St. Gregory the Great Parish since before I was born. I came full circle from being a struggling student to being a teacher at St. Gregory's these past five years. Spending time each day alone with Christ in the Eucharistic Adoration Chapel and going to confession regularly has definitely brought me closer to God. Jesus has revealed Himself through the sacraments and through talking about my journey with family, friends and a spiritual director.



God cannot be outdone in generosity, and shortly after saying yes to Him and giving Him my will, I received peace that God is calling me to a life of holiness at the Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George in Illinois. May God bless you on your journey toward discerning His will and living a life for Him.

Here are some questions Katie answered for *Spirit & Life* on discerning vocations:

Have you always been very involved in your faith?

For most of my life I went to Mass every weekend, except for my senior year in college. In high school I went on some retreats, but I really became more involved after returning home.

When did you first consider the possibility that God was calling you to religious life?

A couple years ago, I started saying that I would either get married or enter religious life, even though I thought I really wanted marriage.

Was your first answer to this call "YES"?

This past year, when I started to share my call with my family, quit my job and visited different orders, was when I really started saying "Yes." It took me a while to get there, but after visiting the Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George, it was definitely "Yes."

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THE ROMAN MISSAL: OPPORTUNITY FOR RENEWED UNDERSTANDING AND DEEPENED FAITH

Now that we have a few revised Masses under our belts, let's review a bit.

The Roman Missal is the text governing the celebration of the Mass. According to the Vatican website, the Roman Missal was promulgated in 1570 by Pope Pius V by decree of the Council of Trent, and its general arrangement goes back to our very own St. Gregory the Great. Significant revisions were decided upon in 1965 at the Second Vatican Council. In the year 2000, Pope John Paul II announced the Third Edition of the Roman Missal, which came into use at St. Gregory's and across the United States on the First Sunday of Advent. The United States was the first English-speaking country to adopt this revision, which actually realigns the wording to that used by the rest of the Church.

We will all need time to become completely famil-

iar with the revisions. Our parish has provided various resources, including laminated cards in the pews, to assist with the transition. The changes provide an opportunity to renew and deepen our understanding of the Sacred Liturgy. This is a chance to develop a renewed appreciation for our Eucharistic celebration and grow closer to Our Lord.

For additional information, visit these websites:

- <http://www.buffalodiocese.org/Portals/0/Worship/Nov%202011%20WNYC.pdf>
- <http://www.buffalodiocese.org/Evangelization/Worship/NewRomanMissal.aspx>
- http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-vi_apc_19690403_missale-romanum_en.html

"While it takes some getting used to the new verbiage, I find myself paying closer attention to the Mass, and have a deeper appreciation for the language and meaning of the Eucharistic Prayers, as well as receiving Holy Communion." – Robert

WHAT ARE PARISHIONERS SAYING ABOUT RM III?

"I love it. It is rich and full of depth. It is making me pay close attention to what is being said, which is very good, so that I get more out of the Mass which I love." – Cheryl

"It has caused me to think about what I am saying and I really like the changes. I believe the wording is deeper in meaning and more beautiful. There are not that many changes, but the changes are more reverent." – Jeanne

Gracieland

by Ellen Toole Austin and Jimmy Gownley



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Vocation Discernment Focus: The Priesthood

(Richard Pantano, continued from page 5)

Did Eucharistic Adoration play a part?

Absolutely! We are so blessed to have Adoration at St. Greg’s 24 hours a day. I would not have heard my vocation without sitting in silence with Him. Often God’s voice is a still, small voice. I believe that’s how a vocation grows, in silence.

What has been the biggest surprise since you made the decision to enter formation?

It’s amazing how many people come up to me to ask questions and wish me well. I am extremely impressed, especially with the amount of young people at St. Greg’s who inspire me by their faith. It’s nice to hear from them that I am inspiring them. However, as Fr. Dave Richards says, “Priests need to be like John the Baptist, to point people to Christ – then get out of His way.”

Do you have any advice for young adults trying to discern their vocations?

Yes, for anyone discerning the vocation of priesthood or the religious life, do not be afraid! We need young men and women now who are willing to sacrifice their life for Christ, because this world has been infused with a great evil, and I challenge our young people today to dare to make a difference.

Thank you, Richard, and please know that we, your St. Greg’s family, are praying for you and are so grateful to your “yes” to enter the seminary!

Saying Yes to a Vocation of Religious Life

(Katie Delaney, continued from page 5)

Was there anyone in your life who encouraged you in this regard?

My spiritual director, family and friends – as well as the grace-filled responses from others in my life when they heard that I was discerning a religious life.

Did Eucharistic Adoration play a part?

Yes, Eucharistic Adoration has been extremely important!

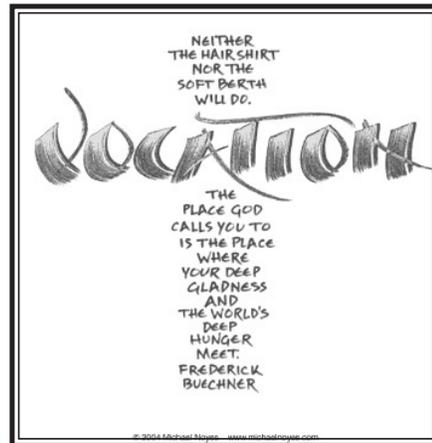
What has been the biggest surprise since you made the decision to enter religious life?

The peace that has filled my life with my “Yes” to God.

Do you have any advice for young adults trying to discern their vocations?

Spending time in the Eucharistic Adoration Chapel and going to confession regularly with the same priest, if possible, is important.

Thank you, Katie. May God richly bless you as you become His spouse.



Health Ministry Presentation on Senior Housing

Join the St. Gregory’s Health Ministry as it presents “Understanding Senior Housing,” a free 60-minute informational seminar on Saturday, January 28, from 10:00 to 11:30 am in the Gathering Room.

Mike Olear, from MJ Peterson/Olear Realty Group, and other local housing professionals will discuss the living options available for senior citizens. An attorney who specializes in senior citizens law also will be on hand to discuss planning considerations and Medicaid rules.

Call Maureen Couche 688-5678, ext. 339, or email mcouche@stgregs.org to register or if you have questions.

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January is Vocation Awareness Month!



Saint Gregory the Great Catholic Church

What's Inside This Issue?

- Special Vocations Issue: Read about marriage, religious life and priesthood
- EXTRA: Pullout section on the Catholic Mass!
- Celebrate Catholic Schools!
- Parishioner comments on the New Roman Missal
- Understanding God's Role in Suffering

Mark Your Calendar For These Upcoming Events:

January

15 - Pancake Breakfast
21 - Presentation on Suffering
21, 22 - Anniversary of Roe v. Wade
29 - School Open House
29 - 10th Anniversary of Perpetual Adoration

February

4 - Marriage Vow Renewal at 5:30 pm Mass

5 - Scout Sunday

10 - School Family Movie Night
11 - Presentation on Anxiety & Depression
11, 12 - Heart-to-Heart Food Drive
12 - HSA Spaghetti Dinner
22 - Ash Wednesday
24 - Lenten Stations of the Cross and Holy Hour for Vocations Begins
24 - Parish Lenten Fish Fry Fridays begin

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