

Spirit & Life

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

Winter 2015

From the Desk of the Pastor

My dear parish family, as you read this message we are a couple weeks into writing Christmas cards, baking cookies and fruit cakes, decorating, and shopping for that "right gift" for everyone we know. Oh, wait a minute: I mean, we are a couple weeks into the new Church year, a couple weeks into the Season of Advent, and just a few days into the "Year of Mercy" called for by our Holy Father, Pope Francis. This "Year of Mercy" began on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (December 8) and will conclude on Christ the King Sunday (November 20, 2016), which is the last Sunday of this current Church year.

What is the "Year of Mercy?" What is the meaning of mercy?

I believe our Holy Father is calling us to reflect upon just that. We are being called to deepen our own understanding, experience, and commitment to live lives of mercy, as we also grow in allowing God's Mercy to touch us personally. And that is just the beginning of what we are being invited to do this year!

I urge you, as we begin this Year of Mercy, to get a notebook and make it your Mercy Journal. Begin now by writing down your understanding of mercy. After that, begin to reflect daily, journal on the meaning of mercy and actually do some reading of the Scripture and other writings from the Saints, as well as contemporary books or short reflections on the subject. I urge you to please attend our monthly speaker/reflection series at St. Gregory's on different aspects of mercy. We already began on Wednesday, December 9, with an Advent Evening of Reflection to open up the meaning of mercy. Deacon John Gaulin led us in that night of recollection and if you missed it, you can watch it on our website.

In February and March, we will welcome Deacon John back to St. Gregory's to lead us in our Parish Lenten retreat, which will focus on deepening our understanding of God's Mercy and developing an ability to live that mercy in our own relationships. The retreat will be Monday, February 29, Tuesday, March 1, and Wednesday, March 2, and will be given two times each day in the Church (once at 12:45pm immediately after our noon Mass and also at 7:00pm). You will find Deacon John to be animated, alive, passionate, spiritual and captivating. Plan to come. If you are unable to be there in person, you will be able to watch online using the livestreaming webcam on St. Greg's website: www.stgregs.org. Plan to be a part of this retreat experience!

(continued on page 7)

Bring Christ into Christmas and your home with gifts for the whole family from our Catholic Store!



- Artwork, Statues*
- Great Stocking Stuffers*
- Advent Wreaths and Candles*
- Manger Sets*
- Religious Cards*

- Music CDs for everyone*
- Family-Friendly DVDs for all ages*
- Books for all ages*
- Jewelry*

SAVE THE DATE!

Celebrate Catholic Schools Week!



St. Gregory the Great School Open House:
January 31,
10:00am - 1:00pm



Welcome to our new Middle School Youth Minister

St. Greg's has a new Middle School Youth Minister. Nicole Janecek will be joining Adam Jarosz in our Youth Ministry Department. Recently, S&L sat down with Nicole to find out who she really is...

S&L: *What inspired you to apply for the position of Middle School Youth Minister?*

Nicole: I was very inspired to apply for the position by working with the middle-school youth since I was 15 years old. The experiences that I have had with these youth have really helped me develop my faith and inspire me every day, through the prayers and discussions I have had with the middle-school youth. I am always so proud when I hear a 6th through 8th Grader express their love for Christ. The specific event that inspired me actually occurred this summer when a group from the Youth Ministry department went to something called "CYMC" (Catholic Youth Minister Convention). During this week-long convention, I had a chance to meet other middle-school CORE members and youth ministers who understood the middle-school youth ministry and pushed me to pursue the Youth Minister position. During adoration, I heard the call from God to be the Youth Minister here at St. Greg's and I answered with a yes.

S&L: *You've been a part of St. Greg's Youth Ministry for a while now: what excited you the most about being on the other side and now coordinating all of the events?*

Nicole: I am so excited to be coordinating all the events for the middle-school youth because it will allow me to develop relationships with the youth that help foster a relationship with Christ. I have had so many ideas swim through my head the last couple years and now I am able to finally use them.

S&L: *In your free time, do you have any hobbies you particularly enjoy?*

Nicole: I really enjoy music, specifically singing. I have been singing since I was in high school and have sung in Glory Beats for a while now. I love to just praise and worship with my voice. The other hobby I have is martial arts. I actually have a third degree black belt in Taekwondo and have been training for about 13 years. I have also taught Taekwondo for about seven years.

S&L: *What did you study in college?*

Nicole: My current degree is Elementary Education Regular Ed/Special Ed with an area of concentration in history and a minor in Spanish. Yes, it is a very long degree, but my ultimate goal is to use my education degree to help as many students as I can, including teaching them about Jesus.

S&L: *What is your goal and vision for the Youth Ministry at St. Gregory's?*

Nicole: My goal is to make a community where all the youth feel welcome and are free to be themselves in the journey towards their Faith.





Family Faith Formation Update



WE MADE OUR GOAL!!

by: Joan Rischmiller

St. Gregory's Parish was asked to collect 2,000 boxes of Macaroni & Cheese for Peaceprints of WNY. We collected 2,085 boxes. The late Sister Karen Klimczak started this ministry over 20 years ago. We are part of several Catholic churches that are involved in this annual Holiday Prison Package Project campaign.



These packages have given hope to men and women incarcerated through the holiday season. For many, this will be the only gift they receive all year. Thanks to your support, over two thousand men and women from Wende and Albion correctional facilities will receive hope-filled holiday packages consisting of a hand-decorated bag full of comfort items and a note of encouragement. These packages serve as a small token of inspiration, encouraging individuals to keep hope alive in their hearts.



Jamaica Mission Trip 2016

by: Elizabeth Astridge

Are you interested in an international adventure centered on sharing God's love, helping the needy, and spiritual contemplation? For several years now, a group of parishioners has traveled to Jamaica for a week during the summer to serve some of the most vulnerable people in society and to challenge themselves spiritually. This transformative experience is spent working to improve the living conditions and to connect through faith and love with adults and children with disabilities who have been abandoned by their society. The trip is in collaboration with Mustard Seed Communities, an international non-profit

that has been organizing these mission trips for over 30 years.



Our work will be done in a setting of prayer, adoration and reflection, which will allow for everyone involved to embrace God's love. This ministry is open to adults ages 21 and over, and requires financial, meeting time and most importantly, a spiritual commitment. An informational meeting will be held early in 2016: please see the Bulletin for details. If you have any questions, please contact Elizabeth at eastridge@stgregs.org.



God's blessings to Father Francis. May God give you renewed strength and peace. Thank you for a wonderful and memorable 8 years at St. Gregory's. We will miss you, Father.





Join us for Mass during this Holy Season of Advent & Christmas

Christmas Eve Masses

**4:00 pm in the Church, 4:00 pm in the
Ministry Center and 4:00 pm in the School Gym**

**6:00 pm in the Church
Midnight Mass in the Church**

Christmas Day Masses

Mass Schedule: 8:00 am, 9:30 am, 11:00 am, 12:30 pm

New Year's Masses

Thursday, December 31: 5:30 pm Vigil Mass

Friday, January 1, 2016: 8:00 am, 10:00 am, 12:00 noon



Seventh Annual Living Nativity

Looking for a way to “keep Christ in Christmas” this year? Come experience the Living Nativity at St. Gregory’s! For the seventh consecutive year, the Living Nativity will be presented on Saturday and Sunday, December 26, 7:00 - 9:00pm, and December 27, 6:00 to 8:00pm. Attendees are greeted in the Gathering Room. A “shepherd” then leads each group on the 20-minute tour, which winds through part of the school and concludes with the Nativity scene in the gym. Along the way, many key moments of the Nativity experience are portrayed by parish volunteers in historically appropriate costume. Over 400 people visit the Living Nativity each year. Consider inviting friends to join you, particularly those who may desire to reconnect with the real meaning of Christmas. It will be a beautiful, enriching experience for them and for you.



Jeff and Mary Criden can always use help for set-up, and people to serve as greeters and guides (shepherds). Please contact them (phone: 207-4878 or e-mail: jeffrcrd@aol.com) to offer your services. They will be most grateful.





17th Annual Great Dinner Auction ~ Success!

The 17th Annual Great Dinner Auction was held on Saturday, November 7. 500 guests attended at Salvatore's Italian Gardens to bid on over 400 silent auction items, enjoy cocktails and hors d'oeuvres and an evening of dinner, live auction and dancing. During the cocktail hour guests bid on many items such as tickets to Sabres games, jewelry, graduation seats, hover boards and so much more. As they entered the ballroom for dinner, guests were enchanted with the "Under the Sea" theme with blue undertones and bubble centerpieces to give that feel of under the sea. Live-auction items included a jersey signed by the Sabres, a weekend getaway for 20 on Canadigua Lake, a Jack Eichel autographed jersey, a week in Elicottville and so much more. What a great night for the school and parish, all presented by Chair-couples Diane & Ryan Denhaese, Melissa & Kevin Deakin, Stephanie & Thomas Grillo and Susan & Ed Militello. If you missed this year's event, save the date for next year: November 5, 2016!



St. Gregory's Students Visit Buffalo Orienteering Society

On Saturday, September 26, ninety students from St. Gregory the Great school joined the Buffalo Orienteering Society in Ellicottville at the Ellicottville Adventure Run and Hike. Students learned the use of maps and compasses to find their way from point-to-point in the woods at Holiday Valley. These fun adventures reinforced critical map reading and problem solving skills.





From the Desk of the Pastor:

(continued from page 1)

There will be a full list of the monthly speakers and topics furnished in our Bulletin and on our website soon.

In November, I had the privilege to lead our Boy Scouts from St. Gregory's and from the entire Diocese on a Day of Retreat. That retreat focused on the Year of Mercy. At the beginning of the retreat I asked our scouts to put into their minds their own definition of mercy and to see if, and how, that definition changed over the course of the day. After every part of the retreat I asked some of the guys if their definition had changed and in every case the answer was "yes." I saw great change in them after just one day. Begin to imagine the transformation that is possible in your personal life, as well as in our community, if we dedicate ourselves to the same task for one year.

To get us started, I think we often define mercy as what we expect from God, especially on the day we will stand before Him for judgment. Although that is correct, I know we are called to imitate His Mercy in our judgement of others. I believe the "Our Father" prayer holds a point of reflection on mercy: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us..." This is an invitation for us to be generous in mercy as we hope God will be generous in mercy towards us. There are many other Scripture passages indicating this same thought. Matthew 7:2 offers a similar reflection: "For as you judge, so will you be judged, and the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you." I believe the starting point for an understanding of mercy is that element of God's forgiveness and our own call to forgive. However, it goes much further. Mercy is tied to love. Mercy is not pity, but compassion. Mercy is not condemnation, but it is compassion when we realize we are dealing with brothers and sisters, and not someone beneath ourselves. Mercy is a gift. We will hopefully open and enjoy many gifts in the coming weeks for Christmas; may we really open and enjoy the gift of Mercy and give the gift of Mercy this coming year and beyond.

What does mercy mean to you, and how will you answer that same question one year from now when I will pose it again?

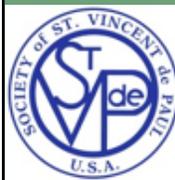
May God bless you, our Mother Mary watch over you and St. Gregory the Great intercede for you, always! May you experience a renewal this Advent and in so doing understand the joy of Christmas.

LADIES OF CHARITY

Membership meetings are generally held on the 4th Monday of each month at 1:00pm. New members are always welcome! Please join us at one of our meetings to see if it might be a ministry you would like to contribute your time to. Some of our ministry activities include:

- Distributions to Food Pantries
 - Sewing Wheelchair/Walker Bags
 - Household Goods Collection
 - Volunteering at Lots of Clothes Thrift Store
 - Donations for food at Thanksgiving and Easter
 - Making Rosaries for St. Gregory's
- First Communicants**
- Care of the Church Missal and Song Books
 - Christmas for Children and Seniors Activities
 - Catholic Charities' Fresh Start Program
 - Backpack Distribution
 - Advocacy issues
 - Reading Enrichment Program
- Ministry Contact: Judy Huber, 688-8170**

St. Vincent de Paul Society



We are a Catholic lay organization whose members seek to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person assistance to the poor, the suffering, and the forgotten.

The St. Gregory the Great conference organizes food and clothing drives, maintains the magazine rack in the Church vestibule, and makes visits to the sick at Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital and to those in nursing homes. Our members meet the first and third Thursdays of every month at 6:30pm. We maintain a food pantry at St. Gregory's "White House" for assistance (on a confidential basis) to those in need in our parish and in the inner-city. We have a furniture pick-up program through which we help stock our Diocesan warehouse on Main St. in Buffalo.

Ministry Contact: John Gnann, 688-5678, Ext. 423

200 St. Gregory Court

Williamsville, NY 14221

716-688-5678

www.stgregs.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NON- PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Buffalo, NY
Permit No. 3344



Saint Gregory the Great Catholic Church

What's Inside This Issue?

- Meet Our New Youth Minister: Nicole Janecek
- Christmas Mass Schedule
- Family Faith Collects Food for Peaceprints of WNY
- St. Gregory's Students Get in Touch with Nature

Mark Your Calendar For These Upcoming Events:

December

15 - *Advent Penance Service*
26, 27 - *Living Nativity*

January

2,3 - *UNYTS Blood Drive*
10 - *Parishioner Social*
22 - *MOMS for Life*
23, 24 - *Anniversary of Roe v. Wade*
31 - *School Open House*
31 - *14th Anniversary of Perpetual Adoration*
8 - *HSA Spaghetti Dinner*

February

6, 7 - *Heart-to-Heart Food Drive*
7 - *Scout Sunday*
14 - *Pancake Breakfast*
10 - *Ash Wednesday*
12 - *Fish-Fry Fridays begin*
12 - *Stations of the Cross, Holy Hour for Vocations*
16 - *Marriage Preparation Class Session #1*
19 - *MOMS Daughters of Mercy, Mothers of Mercy*
19, 26 - *Fish Fry Fridays, Stations of the Cross and Prayer Hour for Vocations*
23 - *Marriage Preparation Class Session #2*
29 - *Mar. 2 - Lenten Parish Retreat with Deacon John Gaulin*

Spirit & Life Staff: Greg Smith, Fr. Leon Biernat and Joe Deck. 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.