

Spirit & Life

Celebrating a Year of Faith! "Your Faith makes us Strong in Christ"

Spring 2014

Meet Fr. Leon Biernat, our New Pastor!

Welcome back to St. Gregory's, Father Leon! We are so excited to see what God has in store for all of us in this new season of grace. We will be praying for you!

Father Leon J. Biernat has served as a priest of our Diocese for over two decades. Throughout his priestly ministry one of his main focuses has been bringing young people closer to Christ and His Church. Whether through the Life Teen program, taking students to Steubenville Conferences, youth conventions or other organizations he either started or became involved in, young Catholics have benefited from his boundless energy and zeal. The son of the late Leon and Sophie Biernat and brother of Cathy, who is married with two children, Father is a product of the Black Rock community and most especially Assumption Parish. He received his Sacraments at the parish where his family has belonged since the late 1800s. Father Leon graduated from the parish grammar school and Riverside High School. He received a bachelor's degree in accounting from Canisius College in 1987 and a master of divinity degree from Christ the King Seminary. On May 30, 1992, he was ordained a priest at his home parish and assigned to serve as parochial vicar at Holy Spirit in North Buffalo.



After serving three years at Holy Spirit, Father was transferred to St. Amelia's. When he arrived, there was a small Life Teen program of 20 young people. Four years later, when he left the parish, there were more than 250 high school teens in a four-day-a-week program of weekly teen Masses, education nights, socials, athletic teams, teen prayer groups, trips and retreats.

In February 1999, Father Leon was appointed Director of Vocations for the Diocese. With a great deal of energy and enthusiasm, he embarked on new and innovative ways of emphasizing the attractiveness of a life lived for Jesus Christ. For eight years he traveled extensively to parishes, parochial schools, Catholic high schools, parish religious education programs, Confirmation programs and college campuses to let young men everywhere know that God is calling and that they should "be not afraid" to answer.

On the national level, Father served as the vice president of the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors. He also served as a faculty member for the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program and on the Board of Trustees at Christ the King Seminary. He served as chaplain and trustee for Cardinal O'Hara High School for three years. *(continued on page 6)*

Stop in the Catholic Store for Lent, Easter and Seasonal Gifts

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? Stop by soon!

Lenten Menu at our Café

Back by popular demand, the Café will be offering a Lenten menu on Ash Wednesday and every Friday throughout Lent. This tasty menu includes pierogies, tomato soup and grilled cheese sandwiches. Don't fast on fellowship; come and see us!



ALL ARE WELCOME - FISH FRY FRIDAYS! NEW THIS YEAR...BAKED FISH!

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 March 7, 14, 21, 28, April 4 and 11. Fish or breaded shrimp dinners are \$9.00 each (pre-sale) and include French fries, cole slaw, roll and butter, drink and homemade dessert. Baked fish will 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!

Have you or a loved one been away from the Church?

Consider coming home this Lent! We are offering a series of evangelization presentations that will cover some important topics that will address points of concern or confusion for many individuals. *All of these presentations will be held at 7:00 pm in St. Gregory's Church.*

- On Thursday, March 20, Fr. Bob Zilliox from the Diocesan Tribunal Ministry will share pastoral information, clear up confusion and offer clarity about how the Church welcomes the **Divorced and Separated**. Many Catholics have left the Church because they think they are not welcome. Come be inspired and informed!
- So many people struggle with trying to reconcile **Science and Religion**. Join us for "Science Tests Faith" presentations on March 23 and 24 with National Speaker Tim Francis, a weight lifter married to a beautiful model, who was living as a "cultural Christian." Tim had a lot of cynicism about our faith until his mother showed him a video, "Signs from God - Science Tests Faith." It answered so many questions for Tim and gave him a conviction about his faith that no longer wavers. Skeptics and doubting Thomases, this one is for you! Come and hear his story and see this inspiring video.
- On Tuesday, April 1, our topic is "**Suffering**." How could God let this happen to me? If God is so loving,

why do we suffer? Have you ever asked those questions? Be prepared to have them answered by St. Gregory's Eileen Warner, who taught theology courses at Canisius College and has a master's degree from Christ the King Seminary. Eileen's insights will help us understand God's role in suffering as she unlocks many of the mysteries of suffering!

- Finally, on Thursday, April 10, the presentation is on Real Presence: "**How is Jesus actually present in the Eucharist?**" Dawn Curazzato, an evangelizing witness speaker, will share her personal story about "Two Children and a Miracle." One was healed and the other is in the process of becoming a saint. It is an inspiring first-hand account that witnesses to the miracle of the Easter story. Come to hear how a Eucharistic miracle changed someone's life and gave her an unwavering conviction about the real presence. Her faith story will inspire you to understand and appreciate more fully the profound miracle of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist!

Our faith community prays that many will find their way back to the Church this Lent. Please consider joining us and encouraging a friend, relative, loved one or neighbor to join us for these inspiring and enlightening presentations. All are welcome!

EASTER TRIDUUM SCHEDULE

HOLY THURSDAY, APRIL 17

9:00 am – Morning Prayer

5:45 pm – Parish Shared Supper

7:30 pm – Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

Adoration until 11:00 pm at the Altar of

Repose in the Gathering Rooms

HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 19

9:00 a.m. – Morning Prayer

12:00 noon – Blessing of Easter Baskets

8:00 pm – Easter Vigil Mass

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 18

9:00 am – Morning Prayer

12:00 noon – Seven Last Words of Christ

1:00 pm – Stations of the Cross

2:00 pm – Celebration of the Lord's Passion

7:00 pm – Stations of the Cross

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 20

Regular Mass Schedule: 8:00 am,

9:30 am (Church and School Gym),

11:00 am, 12:30 pm, 4:30 pm



St. Gregory the Great Faith Community

Journey Home With Us This Lent!

Distribution of Ashes: Wednesday, March 5

Masses (with distribution of Ashes): 7:00 am, 8:00 am, 12 noon, 7:00 pm
Prayer Services (with distribution of Ashes): 2:00 pm, 4:00 pm, 5:00 pm, 6:00 pm
Priests will be available for Confessions throughout the day

Fish Fry Fridays – Join us for Food & Fellowship

Every Friday night, March 7 – April 11: 4:00 - 7:00 pm in the School Cafeteria

Come and Pray the Stations of the Cross

Every Friday at 7:00 pm in the Church
Also March 7, 21, 28 and April 4 and 11, with the school children at 1:20 pm in the Church

Holy Hour for Vocations

Every Friday at 7:30 pm in the Church

Join us for Liturgy of the Hours

Morning Prayer (Lauds) Every Saturday Morning, March 8 – April 12: 7:30 am in the Church
Evening Prayer (Vespers) Every Tuesday Evening, March 11 – April 15: 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

Join us and invite others back into our Faith this Lent!

These four evangelization presentations will be held in the Church at 7:00 pm

Divorce & Separation: “**The Church Welcomes You!**” – Fr. Bob Zilliox, Thursday, March 20

Science & Religion: “**Science Tests Faith**” – National Speaker Tim Francis, March 23 and 24

Suffering: “**How could God let this happen to me?**” – Eileen Warner, Tuesday, April 1

Real Presence: “**How is Jesus actually present in the Eucharist?**” – Dawn Curazzato, Thursday, April 10

Exploring our Faith with Fr. Francis

Brown Bag lunch series: Fridays, March 14, April 4 and April 11: 12:30 – 1:30 pm in Gathering Room 1

Rome Sweet Home Book Discussion Sessions

Be sure to read the book that was given out on Ash Wednesday and share your insights with others.
Friday, March 28: 12:30 pm or 7:30 pm in the Gathering Rooms

Family Faith Formation Children’s Lenten Pageant

Saturday, April 5: 9:15 am in the Church

Vicariate Lenten Lecture Series

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



A Towel Wrapped Around His “Yes”...

In one of his last daily Mass homilies at St. Gregory’s, Father Joe was teaching us about our personal walk with Jesus and His call in our lives. In a slip of the tongue, Father, describing Jesus washing the Apostles’ feet, said, “With a towel wrapped around His “Yes”... Father then corrected himself, changing the “Yes” to “waist.” This immediately struck me as a fitting description of Father Joe’s own call and priesthood. He lives life as a fully engaged servant of his beloved Jesus. One needs only have one or two encounters with Father to feel his love for Jesus. He serves Jesus’ people, us, with great love and humility. Father Joe has a servant’s heart.

With a towel wrapped around his “Yes,” he prepared thoughtful homily after homily. With a towel wrapped around his “Yes” he applied himself to less enjoyable tasks involving budgets and planning. With a towel wrapped around his “Yes,” at the end of an already overfilled day, he found time to counsel one more soul, to attend one more bedside, to offer one more prayer. With a towel wrapped around his “Yes,” Father served Jesus through us. And we are most graciously blessed.

For all that you are and all that you do, for your “Yes” to Bishop Malone in leading our seminarians and the future of our Diocese, for your great love and your humble service, Father Joe, we thank you. We already miss you so. Thanks be to God you will not be far away. Keep your eye out because we will be coming to visit you...soon and often.

With much love and many prayers,
Suellen and the Spirit & Life Committee



Our Prayers and Gratitude



Father Joe,

Of all the gifts that God has given you as our pastor, one of the most instrumental has been the gift of inspiring us to something greater than ourselves. That inspiration has come from the fact that you didn’t just preach about service to Our Lord; rather, you lived it, every day by your example. Whether that meant a powerful homily, insightful counsel, welcoming newcomers, or rolling up your sleeves to wash dishes after a parish celebration, your entire day was spent in service to God’s people. All we needed to do was to observe you practice what you preach to realize that we were being fed the truth. That was what inspired us to imitate you. We knew if we followed you, we were following the One to whom you were leading us. Thank you for living out what Christ intended when He instituted the priesthood!

-- Mrene Corra



Godspeed, Fr. Joe!

Thank you, Fr. Joe, for all you have done for our St. Gregory's parish family. You led us...you inspired us...you worked with us...you prayed with us through these past 7½ years. By your example and action, you have left an indelible mark on our parish. With God's help and the leadership of our new pastor, Fr. Leon, the St. Gregory the Great faith community will continue to grow spiritually and in our ministries. And we will always be known as a parish where "ALL are welcome."
God Bless You, Bill & Lee Grunert



to Fr. Joseph Gatto



Dear Father Joe,

How does one say goodbye to a special pastor who has breathed so much life and energy into our parish? You have been instrumental in bringing about many beautiful changes to St. Gregory's, both physical and spiritual, to make it the vibrant, welcoming parish it has become.

P - Is for your Preaching style so unique and effective, filled with the love and joy of God's word.

A - Is for your Administrative ability to guide the many ministries and organizations, as well as a vital school.

S - Is for your Spirituality and Service to God and all of us; you are Special & gifted in so many ways!

T - Is for Truth, which you preach and live, sharing with us your Time, Talent and Treasure, for which we are Thankful.

O - Is for Organizational skills, so necessary in keeping a large parish afloat, which calls for Objectiveness & Openness.

R - Is for Respect, dear PASTOR, and you have earned all of ours! May God bless you in your new venture.

You will be sorely missed, but the best way to honor you is to keep all that you have begun going and growing in the Light of Christ! Christus Super Omnia! As you leave, may you hear our Father in heaven's voice speak to your heart: "This is my beloved son, and in him I am well pleased!" You are the Good Shepherd, and we thank you and wish you well!



Love & Prayers,
Dawn C. and all the
Ladies of the Lord

Dear Father Joe,

"Welcome to St. Gregory's! What can YOU do for US?" was your greeting when we first met almost two years ago. My husband, Nicky, and I had moved here from Long Island the year before and knew no one, so we were coming in to St. Gregory's as strangers. My goal was to introduce myself to you, get to know you a little better as the pastor and find out a little more about this wonderful parish the Holy Spirit led us to. After a year of doubts and much prayer, I also hoped you would be open to the ministry that I wanted to share with the women of the parish: the Women's Enrichment Ministry. You listened intently as I explained and you were open, the rest, as they say, is history! With your blessing and God's grace along with the amazing welcome I received from women in parish leadership, as well as with the help of the fabulous women who so graciously came forward and said "yes" to giving of their time and talent as facilitators, our ministry has been warmly embraced by those who have attended our "Women's Day" retreats. On behalf of the Women's Enrichment Facilitators, I cannot thank you enough for that "yes" which set things in motion, bringing an abundance of graces and an overflow of blessings which allow us to say, "My cup runneth over." Nicky and I thank you for all you have done for us as parishioners and all you have done for our magnificent parish! We will miss you, but we hold you in our hearts and our prayers as our pastor, our priest, our friend and brother in Christ, and we will continue to pray for you as President Rector at the Seminary.



In The Love of Christ,
Joycelyn (Joy) Bila
Chairperson, Women's Enrichment Ministry



NATIONAL EDUCATORS HONOR ST. GREGORY'S SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Patricia Freund, principal of our parish school, has received the Distinguished Elementary School Principal Award for 2014 from the National Catholic Education Association. This annual award recognizes the vital leadership role that principals play in Catholic education. It is given to a principal whose school demonstrates a commitment to excellence. Mrs. Freund was chosen because she is active in professional associations, is respected by students, colleagues, parents and the community at large, distinguishes herself as a civic, religious and humanitarian leader, shows strong educational leadership, maintains an orderly, purposeful learning environment, and has evidenced outstanding contributions to the well-being of St. Gregory the Great School. Mrs. Freund will be receiving this Award at the National Catholic Education Association Conference in Pittsburgh this April.



ment, but it doesn't begin to scratch the surface of who Mrs. Freund is or what she means to our school and our parish. Her love of Jesus and desire to serve Him through her work at the school are the real reasons for all of her success and the success of our students. We are all blessed that she continues to share her gifts

and talents with us here at St. Gregory's! With every challenge or changing of the times she continues to rise to the occasion and excels in guiding us through. Mrs. Freund is on the forefront of evangelization and forming this young generation of Catholics into the responsible faith-filled students who are so integral to our faith community. Please keep her, and all of our school's faculty and staff, in your prayers as they form and educate our precious children.

Thank you, Mrs. Freund, and congratulations on a well-deserved honor. You are a great blessing. May God richly bless you in return!

Welcome, Fr. Leon

(continued from page 1)

In 2005 Father Leon came to St. Gregory's as parochial vicar while continuing his other assignments. In 2006 he was named pastor of Our Lady of Pompeii Parish in Lancaster. In addition to his parish responsibilities, he served on the Board of Trustees of St. Mary's High School and on the Town of Lancaster Youth Board.

For Father Leon, a good game of racquetball is just the thing to relieve stress. He also enjoys photography and entertaining friends. On his day off he likes to reconnect with other priest friends. Father finds celebrating the Eucharist and the other Sacraments to be the most rewarding part of priesthood, and balancing the spiritual call with administrative responsibilities to be the most challenging. Father Leon continues to be a model for people young and old. He is a happy and vibrant priest who is a wonderful example of God's love and care.

To read more about Fr. Leon please go to the site from which this article was referenced: <http://www.buffalovocations.org/my-story/archived-parish-priest-stories/> and page down to May 2009.

Post-Dyngus Day Dinner Dance

Saturday, April 26
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

**Polka Dancing Lessons and 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 April 14. No tickets will be sold at the door.

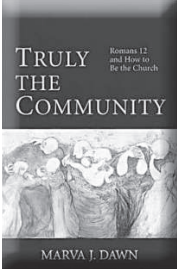
For more information, contact Elizabeth at 688-5678 x 303.

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



Inspiring Catholic Reading: A “Hilarious” Community, “Rebuilt”

In “Truly the Community: Romans 12 and How to Be the Church” Marva Dawn introduces a new use of an overused word, hilarity, “to describe the spirit of Christian community...to name the glad hope that could characterize God’s people.” This word is Paul’s choice in Roman’s 12:8 for gladness or cheerfulness, not the raucous, over-the-top meaning of the latest big-budget comedy. Our Church, living hilarity, could be a gleaming alternative to the isolation and materialism of the world.



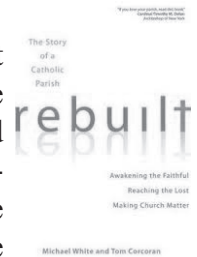
Dawn takes us through Romans 12 using each verse as instruction for “How to Be Church” and build a community strong enough to resist the mighty pull of the swamp culture of our day. One mire Dawn sees many churches falling into is fear-of-failure/limbo:

“Nowhere in the Bible does Jesus call us to be successful. Greatly to the contrary, he calls us to be faithful – and faithfulness in ministry might result in failure according to society’s standards.

We want to withstand the pressures of societal systems for raising money, for building ostentatiously, for elevating the rich and neglecting the poor, for choosing programs over spending time with persons, for preaching humanitarian gunkety-gunk rather than the Scriptures, which decisively confront us with our failure to be the Church.”

Dawn offers our own hilarious, differing gifts (“all vital!”) to give to our Church and world and urges us to use them with a Pauline “healthy imbalance,” that is, “without human hesitation.” As St. Marguerite D’Youville prayed, “O Father of wisdom and truth, preserve us from the prudence of worldlings and from all illusions.” When we trust Jesus and step out for Him, even our apparent failures are eternal successes.

Reading “Rebuilt” alongside “Truly” has been a study in the ways men and women look at the same problem (vive la difference!). “Rebuilt” focuses on diagnosis (congregants have become “consumers” instead of “disciples”) and remedy. “Truly” is a thoughtful critique, a vision, couched in an exegesis of St. Paul’s words on living as Church. Both offer substance over quantity, relationships over programs. Read together they offer a prayerful mindset for creating a community, one which others will want to join (“I want what you have!”). Read one or both and ask Jesus how He would like you to serve as His disciple.



WOMEN’S ENRICHMENT MINISTRY WELCOMES SR. LOUISE ALFF, OSF

By Joycelyn Bila

On Saturday, March 8, Women’s Enrichment Ministry is hosting a Women’s Day Retreat titled, “Roll Away the Stones” from 10:00 am until 3:00 pm. This special day of reflection and renewal features prayer, music, spiritual and fun activities, a presentation by a special guest speaker as well as wonderful morning and afternoon refreshments and a box lunch.

Sister Louise Alff, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of the Neumann Communities, is our speaker. She will lead us through a reflection on what the “stones” are in our lives that hold us back from the

fullness of life and faith. Sister Louise is a national speaker on various topics of evangelization, which she calls her “first love.” She comes to us from Syracuse, where she is the general councilor of her community. You may remember Sister from the evangelization presentations that she offered at St. Gregory’s back in 2008.

If you are interested in attending the retreat, please contact Joy Bila at 834-0128 or call the Parish Office for registration information.

SAVE THE DATES FOR 2014!
Great Race: Friday, June 20
Great Dinner Auction: October 25

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www.stgregs.org

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Welcome, Fr. Leon Biernat!



Saint Gregory the Great Catholic Church

What's Inside This Issue?

- Meet our New Pastor, Fr. Leon Biernat!
- Distinguished Principal Award for Patricia Freund
- Lenten Opportunities & Easter Triduum Schedules
- Thank you to Fr. Joseph Gatto

Mark Your Calendar For These Upcoming Events:

March

5 - Ash Wednesday
7, 14, 21, 28 - Fish Fry Fridays,
Stations of the Cross and Prayer
Hour for Vocations
20 - Divorced & Separated
Presentation
23, 24 - Science Tests Faith
Presentations
28 - Rome Sweet Home Book
Discussions

April

1 - Suffering Presentation
4, 11 - Fish Fry Fridays, Stations
of the Cross and Prayer Hour for
Vocations
5 - FFF Lenten Pageant
7 - Lenten Penance Service
10 - Real Presence Presentation
17 - Parish Shared Supper
19 - Blessing of Easter Food
20 - Easter Sunday

26 - Post-Dyngus Day Dinner
Dance
27 - Divine Mercy Sunday

May

3 - Mulch Sale
3, 4 - Mother's Day Plant Sale
4 - Parish May Crowning
10 - First Communions
10, 11 - Baby Item Drive for St.
Gianna Molla Center
13, 14 - Confirmation

Spirit & Life Staff: Elizabeth Astridge, Trish Beagle, Suellen Brewster, Mrene Corra, Donna Callaghan, Dawn Curazatto, Bill Grunert, Jacqueline Hanley, Felix Labaki, Carla Mangone, Mike Pesarchick, Camille Pontrello, Rick Reinhart, Joan Rischmiller, Mary Toerne and Eileen Warner. 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.