

Spirit & Life

"Your Faith makes us Strong in Christ"

Summer 2014

From the Desk of the Pastor

My dear parish family, we have just passed the 100-day anniversary of my arrival at St. Gregory the Great Parish and, I am glad to report, it appears that we have all SURVIVED! I had every confidence upon my arrival that we would blend well together as parish family. I am most grateful to Bishop Malone for his confidence in appointing me as the fifth pastor of St. Gregory the Great and I am most grateful to my brother priests, Fathers Sibby, Dave and Francis, for their great priestly fraternity, support and ministry here at St. Gregory's!

It goes without saying that our parish is strong and we are blessed in many ways. As I write this first article for our parish newsletter, I simply wish to remind you of the three basic requests that I made when I preached at all of the Masses the weekend of February 8th and 9th. As you may recall, I asked that we make the commitment to pray for each other daily; that we speak well of one another always and, if there are any concerns that we have regarding our relationships at St. Gregory's, that we discuss them face to face. I promise to remain on track with these promises and I trust that you will do the same as we bring stronger unity to our parish family and to the Body of Christ.

There is one simple point for reflection that I wish to offer for consideration. What is your own commitment to daily prayer? I have been so impressed with those who come to our daily adoration chapel, but I also realize that those coming are few in number in comparison to the size of our entire parish family. Of course, many pray in the confines of home and the Sacred Scripture reminds us to do that, too. We are told to "go to our inner room, close the door and to pray to our Father in private" and our Father who sees what is done in private will respond to us. It is also a reality that we lead busy lives and from time to time the natural "busy-ness" of life may whittle away the time we spend in prayer. I ask you to regularly evaluate where you are in your life of prayer. I regularly evaluate myself in this regard. In a homily a couple of weeks ago, I mentioned that the most effective Catholics I know begin their day in prayer. How do you begin your day? (continued on page 5)



19th Annual Great Race: Friday, June 20

Summer is coming!! St. Gregory's will be hosting our 19th Annual Great Race on Friday, June 20. Race start time is at 7:00 pm with a post race party until 11:00 pm with food, drinks and lots of family fun. JOYRYDE, voted Best Top 40 Band at the Buffalo Music Awards for the last five years, will be providing live entertainment. The Great Race has once again been included in the Buffalo News "Runner of the Year" elite

series along with being part of the Fab 5 Racing Series. For more detailed information visit our website at: www.stgregs.org/greatrace and "Like" us on our Facebook page: St. Gregory's Great Race. This is an excellent opportunity to get in front of thousands who race and attend!! If you are interested in sponsorship, please contact Cheryl Bertovich at cbertovich1@gmail.com or Allegra Perna at amperna53@gmail.com.



Food Shuttle: Can You Spare an Hour?

Are you looking for concrete ways to follow our Christian calling to “live the Gospel?” To truly feed the poor and shelter the homeless? We are blessed to have an incredible team of volunteers who live this out every day in the greater Buffalo area. Twenty-five years ago, parishioners from St. Gregory’s recognized the need and found a way to meet that need by organizing a system for transporting surplus food from grocery stores, banquet facilities and bakeries right to those in most dire need. The cornerstone for making this happen is for volunteers to shuttle the food from the donated location to one of the outreach facilities that stores the food or serves the meals to those in need. Those that have volunteered for years continue to say that this is a significant ministry and they are humbled by the impact that their volunteer commitment of an hour or two a week can make in the lives of others.



Please consider joining us by supporting this ministry of the Food Shuttle of WNY. Driving commitments are flexible--ranging from weekly to monthly to as-needed substitute--and can be selected by you based on your personal schedule. Any and all assistance is gratefully accepted.

No driving commitment is too small!

Since its beginning here at St. Gregory’s 25 years ago, we have grown into an all-volunteer, non-profit organization with over 400 volunteers who serve over 130 charitable organizations across Western New York. We deliver over 1 million pounds of food a year to people right here in our community who need it the most.

We depend solely on our dedicated group of drivers to complete over 75 deliveries a week and are stretched thin to save all the surplus food available. To miss out on even one weekly donation of food that we aren’t able to pick up impacts families in our community that would have been well served by that food donation. That’s why we are urgently asking for your help. If you are looking

for a way to volunteer to help others in your community, and to truly live the Gospel, please contact us about becoming a driver. There is no heavy lifting involved, most sites load your vehicle for you and volunteers at the outreach agencies will unload your donations. We can be reached at our hotline 688-2527 or email FoodShuttleWNY@gmail.com.

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:

SPLASH (High School Students): June 27 - July 2

Vacation Bible School (Ages 3 1/2 - Grade 5): July 14 - 18

Summer Mission Retreat (Adult/Young Adult): July 13 - 19

Kingdom Bound (High School and College Students): August 3 - 6

Disciple Camp (Grades 5-8): August 4 - 8

Young Christians at Work (High School service opportunities around the Diocese): August 18-20



The 16th Annual Great Dinner Auction November 1, 2014 - Puttin’ on the Ritz

We are pleased to announce the Chair Couples for our 16th Annual Great Dinner Auction, themed Puttin’ on the Ritz: Jim & Mary Beth Basil, Rob & Carolyn Bates, Mike & Pam Smith and Sam & Carla Pantano. This year’s Dinner Auction will take place Saturday, November 1, at Salvatore’s Italian Gardens. If you are interested in helping, please contact the Auction Office at 688-5678, ext. 337 or dinnerauction@gmail.com.



MISSION: JAMAICA



God's call to serve rang in the ears of 18 adults from St. Gregory's, who responded with a "yes" to care for one of the world's most vulnerable populations this August. Led by Maureen and Allison Couche, the team will travel to Mustard Seed Communities in Moneague, Jamaica, where they will work with adults who have mental and physical disabilities and have been abandoned. They will share their faith and love with these people while also completing different work projects to improve the places where they live, learn and play. They will stay at Jacob's Ladder, which is home to nearly 50 young adults with both physical and mental disabilities. In Jamaica, there are no

facilities available for this population after the age of 18, so it's purpose is to provide young adults with mental and physical disabilities a home where they can live out their lives. Accommodations will be very basic.

Prayers would be appreciated for those participating in the trip, and especially for the poor, the disabled and the abandoned people our group will serve. If you are interested in joining the "home team" to pray the Rosary at St. Gregory's while they are gone, please contact Elizabeth at 688-5678, ext. 303 or eastridge@stgregs.org. Financial support for this mission is also welcome. Checks may be made payable to St. Gregory the Great Church. Please indicate "Jamaica Mission" on the check or envelope. Thank you so much for your prayers and kindness!

Spirit & Life spoke with some of the missionaries and asked, how were you called to participate in this Mission Trip?



On the day of our wedding, separated by a door, we joined hands and prayed. We knew that this marriage would not work without God at the center. Now God works through us as husband and wife, as a team. Our desire to help others is something we do in small ways and have a shared passion to someday make big things happen.

Simplicity has guided our life together. Our honeymoon was an East Coast road trip with nothing but a map and our bags. For our first year of marriage we lived in a studio apartment (with our black lab!); we don't have iPhones, cable or flat screen TV's. We have learned that

practicing gratitude allows us to recognize we have everything we truly 'need.'

To say 'YES!' to this mission trip in Jamaica means everything to us. It means we have the opportunity to serve, grow together, and allow God to use our hands and hearts in small and big ways. We don't fully know what to expect, but that's life. We didn't know what to expect in marriage either, but God has shown us His love and grace in remarkable ways. We look forward to serving side-by-side during our time in Jamaica and every day in our marriage. - Kevin and Jennifer Kilo

Why me? I have contemplated a foreign mission trip for 20 years, but it just never seemed the right time... so many excuses. When I saw the Mission Trip announcement in the Bulletin, I knew in my head and heart immediately that this was my time. My time to get out of my safe little suburban bubble box right now. Our children are now grown, I was blessed with good health and a lot of energy, my family business was running smoothly and my wife Judi approved. So I am answering the call. I am very excited and apprehensive at the same time. I realize we have many needs right here in WNY, but I was being called to this Mustard Seed Community in Jamaica to help the adults with disabilities. I may be farming, gardening, playing a game of chess or helping build a new cottage as a construction laborer in the 90+ August heat and humidity. I figure I can handle anything for one week. I want to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ while I can. This is our calling as Catholic Christians. Please pray for all 18 of us. Jamaica, here we come! - Bob Moses



Why volunteer? The obvious reason is that I have a lot to be thankful for and I want to give back. How else could I thank God for the many blessings I have received? I was blessed with loving parents that provided a nurturing home life and a strong faith-filled foundation. I have been happily married for over 30 years, with three healthy, successful children. Over the years, I have donated my free time in various ways - first coaching my kid's sports teams; then spending time at Roswell Park escorting a therapy dog in the pediatric ward; and for the last few years working with the People of Acts at St. Gregory's. When I reflect on each of those experiences, I realize another benefit of volunteering - helping others increased my own personal happiness. I am excited to work at the orphanage in the Mustard Seed Community and I hope my efforts there will have some small effect on the happiness of the children and residents of that area. - Dennis LaGree



Centralized Service & Outreach

Unexpectedly free on a weekday or Saturday afternoon and not sure what to do with your spare time? Looking to do service as a family and don't know where to go? Interested in Mission work within the United States and/or abroad? Look no further than our newly expanded St. Gregory's Service & Outreach Ministry, coming this Fall!

With over 80 ministries here at St. Gregory's and hundreds of volunteer opportunities each year, there was an obvious need to centralize Service & Outreach here at the parish. We recognized a growing interest and desire among our parishioners and whole families to engage in more service. Part of our identity as Catholics is to go into the world and be Christ's hands and feet for others, and show charity toward others through the corporal works of mercy. Centralizing Service & Outreach here at St. Gregory's will not only allow us to maximize the number of volunteer opportunities for our parishioners, but will also offer an easy way to find those opportunities at a time that is convenient for them via a web interface.

When you first visit the web interface, you will be asked to create your user profile based on your own availability, skill set, what you are interested in doing and the population you are interested in serving. It will then filter the opportunities available to you based on the criteria you entered, and you can sign up right there on the spot. Instructions for the volunteer opportunity will be right there and all you need to do is show up and serve! It will have the ability to track volunteers and their hours served for those who need high school service hours, and offers many connections to social media that will allow for reminders and reaching a broader audience. For those who are not as web savvy, we plan to have a new Service & Outreach column in our Parish Bulletin that will let people know about upcoming opportunities and direct them to the proper person to reach in order to volunteer.

A unique aspect of this ministry involves keeping our service rooted in prayer. We will also be offering back-

ground in Catholic social teaching and social justice influences that impact some of the populations that we will be serving. We also plan to integrate prayer and reflection as part of our service experience, to understand the population we are serving, to pray for God's guidance as we serve and interact with them and to reflect on where we saw the face of Christ in those we met. Our hope is that individuals and families will be encouraged to engage in service more often and to have it be an extension of their prayer lives.

This is a tremendous endeavor that we plan to start very gradually and add more

opportunities as the ministry grows. We will begin with St. Gregory's volunteer opportunities, as well as a few Greater Buffalo Service area opportunities. From there, we plan to expand to include the family service opportunities, mission trips, as well as eventually a *St. Gregory's Day of Service* where hundreds will go and serve at various locations in Buffalo throughout the day.

We have an incredible team of parishioners overseeing this huge endeavor, but as the saying goes, "many hands make light work." If you are interested in joining our leadership team, we have a variety of roles that need support. Please contact Elizabeth Astridge at 688-5678, ext. 303 or eastridge@stgregs.org if you are interested. We ask that you keep us in your prayers as we work together to help serve the people of St. Gregory's and those in our greater community!



Summer Mission Retreat

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 13. 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 Deacon John or Laraine at 689-2924.



Next year...get on the bus!

Fr. Leon leads us on a Holy Thursday vigil to Seven Churches

By Suellen Brewster

Though it is often thought of as a local tradition based in the Polish American community, the pious practice of visiting seven churches on Holy Thursday night dates back to the early Church. The first Christians visited the actual sites of Jesus' Passion, commemorating the events while they prayed. Later, the tradition spread to Rome, using the seven ancient Roman basilicas. These days the devotion is practiced in small pockets throughout the Christian world, especially in the Philippines, Europe and right here in WNY!

Immediately following the Mass of the Lord's Supper this past Holy Thursday our pastor, Fr. Leon, led three buses on a vigil tour of seven area churches, as a way to further enter into the sacred mysteries of the Holy Triduum. A varied group of parishioners, ranging from families with children, to young friends, to life-long parishioners, boarded the buses at St. Gregory's and traveled to Christ the King, Snyder, St. Peter and Paul, Williamsville, Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Harris Hill, Sacred Heart, Bowmansville, Our Lady of Pompeii, Lancaster, Infant of Prague and St. Aloysius Gonzaga, both in Cheektowaga. We concluded our evening of visitations with prayer back at St. Gregory's.

At each church a different pilgrim read an introduction to one of the seven Penitential Psalms, which were then prayed as a group. After a few moments of silent prayer, we re-boarded the buses and moved on to the next church. Though it was a good deal of stair climbing for our older parishioners and a lot of quiet time for our younger ones, everyone seemed to have the same final thoughts, "too bad we can't keep going all night!"

The services of the Triduum have been likened to attending a wake, and this solemn, prayerful and powerful sensation was also present in the visit to the Seven Churches. Next year, keep an eye on the bulletin for information about this special vigil and consider gifting yourself and your family with this moving entre into the most Holy Days. Thank you, Father Leon and all who helped, for this wonderful addition to our parish's commemoration of Our Lord's Passion.



From the Desk of the Pastor *(continued from page 1)*

In my life, when I begin the day with reading my e-mail or text messages, or if I begin the day with listening to the news, I am often set in a negative direction. Inadvertently, there will be an e-mail, text message or news story that will concern, anger or upset me in some way and chart a more difficult course for my day. When I begin my day in prayer, my day is set in a very positive direction. The prayer may be to go to the Adoration Chapel or our chapel in the rectory to be in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. My prayer may be to sit with my Breviary and pray the Liturgy of the Hours with my morning cup of coffee. I suppose it is "coffee talk with God" for me in the morning.

I encourage you to make the first thing you do in the morning (not including hitting the snooze bar) to really be some quiet time of prayer – even if it is only 10 or 15 minutes. I guarantee you will have a very different type of day and, in the long run, a more fulfilled life. I find it helpful to write out a commitment of prayer. To "schedule," if you will, your time with God and to be sure it is a commitment that you will not break.

Please know that I love you and that I am most grateful to be your Pastor. Please know that I am committed to serving you. Finally, please know that I am committed to praying daily for you and ask you to do the same for me and for one another here in the family of St. Gregory the Great.

May God our Father bless you, Our Blessed Mother Mary watch over you and may St. Gregory the Great intercede for you, always!

Rev. Leon J. Biernat, Pastor



Welcome to the Faith!

By Tina LaMendola

What do a college student, retired police officer, former atheist, and newly married man all have in common? They all received their Sacraments and were fully welcomed into the Catholic church at the Easter Vigil!

The RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) program is for any teen or adult who wishes to learn about the Catholic faith and receive Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and/or Confirmation. Witnessing the journey of these amazing people has been one of the most holy and humbling experiences that I have ever been a part of.



Like many RCIA team members, I too, became a Catholic 10 years ago and began helping in this ministry shortly after receiving my Sacraments. I can honestly say that teaching these candidates and catechumens has changed my life! As they deepen their personal relationship with Christ, they are so inspiring and bring a sense of awe to all those who come in contact with them. The blessings of this special ministry deepen and renew

my faith on a daily basis.

If you have questions about the Catholic faith, have ever thought about becoming a Catholic, or are interested in being a part of this beautiful program, please contact me at tlamendola72@gmail.com or Jerry Hodson at jerry@morewireless.com. New team members are always welcome, too! On behalf of the RCIA team and St. Gregory's parishioners and staff, we welcome you into our Catholic family!



THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN DAILY LIFE: Experience the Freedom!

By Suellen Brewster

Accompanying Christ, remaining with Him, requires a "stepping outside," a stepping beyond. Stepping outside of ourselves, of a tired routine way of living the faith, of the temptation to withdraw into pre-established patterns that end up closing our horizon to the creative action of God. God stepped outside of Himself to come among us. He pitched His tent among us to bring the mercy of God that saves and gives hope. -Pope Francis

One way of answering out Pastor's call to deeper daily prayer is the Ignatian Retreat. When Gini Schultz invited me, for probably the fifth or sixth time, to consider taking this "Ignatian Retreat" through the Jesuits at St. Michael's Church in Buffalo and their companions, I of course prayed about it. In a year when our family was planning a move and I was still settling in to part-time employment and the usual commitments of family and ministry, I was amazed that the Spirit confirmed in me, "Yes, this is the year; jump in!"



The Ignatian Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life is an in-depth experience of praying with Scripture to lead us toward spiritual freedom. It involves daily prayer using selected Scripture passages and small group meetings, weekly for the first month then twice a month for seven months. Pope Francis, a Jesuit himself, has made the full (30 consecutive day) Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius

Retreat at least two times in his life. Since 1986 hundreds of people in our diocese, including many of the "on fire folks" from our own parish, have made this special retreat.

Perhaps we have all been in situations where the use of poetry, images, objects, group sharing or singing have seemed forced and even a bit awkward. I don't think I can properly convey how thoroughly this is not the case with this Spirit-led Retreat. God's gentle touch and loving presence has been in every detail of each meeting from the first at St. Michael's through each subsequent meeting in the private home where our small group meets. The group itself has become a spiritual family. The changes, revelations and holiness we have been blessed to witness have created a bond that will last eternally.

If you are seeking to find God's will, want more structure in your prayer life, or desire to grow in your relationship with God and others, this retreat might be for you. The format requires a serious commitment to daily prayer, and to the small group meetings. This small sacrifice bears such tremendous fruit in the heart. For information contact: Fr. Dick Hoar, SJ at 854-6726 ext. 19 or Gini Schultz at 837-6020. I might also add that if you want more information from a retreatant's perspective, I would love to spread the good word. You can reach me at 565-9321 or sbrewster1@verizon.net



Save the Date - October 7 Renowned Chastity Speaker: Jason Evert!

Back by popular demand! International chastity speaker Jason Evert will be making a return visit to the Buffalo area this October. We are fortunate that he will be offering two speaking sessions here at St. Gregory's. We are still working out details with the Diocesan team that is bringing him in, however we are planning for a Youth Session called *Love or Lust?* where Jason explains the vision of God's plan for human sexuality on Monday October 7, from 5:30 -7:00 pm. We will also be hosting a Diocese-wide Adult Session on "Guarding Ourselves and our Families from the Media Influence of Pornography" on Monday, October 7, 7:30-9:00 pm. Jason is a dynamic and engaging speaker who shares the truth of our Catholic teachings on sexuality, and offers hope and affirmation for our young people and adults who strive to live their faith in today's culture.



Classic Car Show

What comes to your mind when you think of summer? Warm weather, hot dogs, sunshine, boating, beaches, Classic Car Shows, and summer fun! With this in mind, St. Gregory the Great Parish will be celebrating the wonder of summer time with a Classic Car Show on Labor Day, Monday, September 1. It will be held in St. Gregory's Ministry Center parking lot beginning at noon until 5:00 pm. This event is being sponsored by Joe Basil Chevrolet, and is a great opportunity for people to come and view classic cars of past eras, visit with parishioners and friends, listen to the music of the 50's, and celebrate summertime fun.

To enter a classic car in the Car Show the registration fee is \$13.00 prior to the event and \$15.00 the day of the event. Trophies will be awarded: 25 Best of Show, 100 Various Categories, and Five \$100 Cash Prizes. Admission is free. There will be food, beverages, ice cream, a 50/50 split club raffle, and fun activities for children. Funds raised will support the next parish Mission Trip and Catholic Education.

Come and enjoy the camaraderie of a day with fellow parishioners and those we welcome to our parish campus as we enjoy the blessings of summer!



TRANSITION OF CARE WORKSHOP

By Maureen Couche, Parish Nurse

St. Gregory's Parish Health Ministry is hosting a Transition of Care Workshop, sponsored by Erie County Caregiver Coalition, on Thursday, July 24. What does a family caregiver need to know when a loved one's care needs change and more assistance is required? Can the person still remain safely at home? When is re-location to a care facility the best choice? Join Sarah Harlock from the Alzheimer's Disease Assistance Center of WNY and Jane Nogowski of Park Creek Assisted Living Center as they explore the op-

tions. Registration and dinner begin at 5:30 pm. The program runs from 6:00 – 8:00 pm. Register to attend the Dinner Workshop by calling Catholic Health Connection Line 447-6205 or Department of Senior Services at 858-2177. You can also contact St. Gregory's Health Ministry, Maureen Couche, RN, at 688-5678, ext. 339 for more information. Respite Care for memory-impaired older adults will be provided. Community resource materials will also be available.

200 St. Gregory Court

Williamsville, NY 14221

716-688-5678

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Join us for the Official
Kick-Off to Summer!
Great Race: Friday, June 20



Saint Gregory the Great Catholic Church

What's Inside This Issue?

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Mark Your Calendar For These Upcoming Events:

<i>June</i>		
1 - Household Goods Collection	25 - 8th Grade Graduation	26 - Jamaica Mission Trip
6 - School Walk-a-thom	27 - SPLASH Begins	Commissioning Mass
8 - Youth Ministry Car Wash	29 - Red Cross Blood Drive	
8 - St. Gregory's 12 Celebration		
8 - New Parishioner Social after the 9:30 am Mass	<i>July</i>	
14, 15 - SVDP Food Drive	11 - Wine Tasting Party	2-9 - Jamaica Mission Trip
19 - Kindergarten Celebration	12 - Family Disabilities Picnic	4-8 - Disciple Camp
20 - Great Race	13 - New Parishioner Social after the 9:30 am Mass	10 - Disciple Camp Car Wash for Nicaragua
22 - New Parishioner Social after the 9:30 am Mass	13-19 - Summer Mission Retreat	15 - Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
	14-18 - Vacation Bible School	17 - New Parishioner Social after the 9:30 am Mass
	20 - Youth Ministry Car Wash	

Spirit & Life Staff: Elizabeth Astridge, Trish Beagle, Rev. Leon J. Biernat, 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.