

Spirit & Life

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

Spring 2016

From the Desk of the Pastor

Each year brings new challenges and opportunities. I am sure you are aware of the new initiative presented to us by our Bishop, Most Reverend Richard Malone. As was recently reported in the news, Bishop Malone has called all Catholics to reflect on their individual commitment to the Church; their commitment to their own parish and to the Diocese as a whole. Bishop Malone has called us to begin a process of reflection on the ministerial and physical needs of our own parish as well as the ministerial and structural needs of the Diocese. This initiative is called "Upon this Rock."

The term "Upon this Rock" refers to the words of Jesus to Peter, after Peter confessed his faith and identified Jesus as the promised Messiah. We recall from the Gospel that Jesus asks the Apostles "who do people say that I am?" The Apostles begin to reply by stating, "some say you are John the Baptist, others Elijah and still others one of the prophets of old." Jesus then changes the question and asks the Apostles: "who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter immediately replies, "You are the Savior, the Messiah, the one who is to come into the world." Jesus' response to Peter was: "No mere man has revealed this to you, but only my Heavenly Father. I declare that you are rock and upon this rock I will build my church."

In the Diocese of Buffalo, we are blessed to have many Catholic spiritual treasures. We have many beautiful parishes whose parishioners are offering tremendous ministries for every age group and for spiritual, academic and personal enrichment. Here at St. Gregory's we have over 80 such ministries. Among our parishes, we have treasures of church architecture and within the Diocese treasures of schools, hospitals, social service agencies and more! By and large, the majority of us did not sacrifice to build these institutions and programs. I am aware that at St. Gregory's we are blest to still have many original founding members, but probably 90% of us at St. Gregory's have inherited what we possess here and did not participate in the building of our beautiful campus.

As a life-long Buffalonian in his early 50's, I can honestly say that my generation has never really been asked to sacrificially give to our church. We especially have never been asked to give financially in a sacrificial way beyond a renovation fund or special need.



(continued on page 6)

Nourish your body and soul this Spring: Stop in our Catholic Store and Café!



First Communions 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?





Peer Challenge: Pursue Sainthood In College

By: Maria Suchyna

I was born into a devout Catholic household. My Catholic faith is currently the most important part of my life; it is the hub at which everything revolves around. I don't have any great conversion story, nor intense enlightening experiences that led me to the Church, as many of the great saints do. I never really had to work and suffer through trials to find God in the Catholic faith. As an adolescent I often took my faith for granted as well as my relationship with Christ. I could have been capable of attaining this relationship if I had not been so blind. I struggled with embracing the magnitude of how beautiful it is to call the Catholic Church my home and family. I'm just an ordinary "Cradle Catholic." Nothing special. Just another Catholic girl.

Growing up in a big family I constantly experienced the pressure of living up to other siblings. I'm smack dab in the middle of five. I wanted to be just as accomplished and scholarly as my oldest brother, yet physically strong and fit, like my other older brother. My little brother was the cute and funny one. My youngest sibling was the gentle, sensitive, and feminine one. I wanted to have something special about myself; something that made me

unique. Instead, I was constantly comparing myself to them. I often felt exhausted from trying to be like each one of them, yet I also wanted to find my own identity. I experienced a sense of mediocrity. When I was a young girl I would occasionally ask myself, "Who am I really?" or "Do I really have any gifts?"

I would tag along with my older brothers on their youth retreats. I went to Mass with my family every Sunday and attended a Catholic grade-school. I was involved in youth ministry. I learned the facts in religion class and mastered the definitions of Eucharist, penance, love, mercy, baptism, gifts of the holy spirit, my body is a temple of the holy spirit, etc... I memorized material, earned desired grades, and acknowledged the truth that I was loved by an omnipotent God and that I had to love him back.

As a high-school student my identity started to grow, however, I still noticed something was missing. Although I had formed somewhat of a relationship with Christ, I continued to compare myself to everyone around me. I was known as "the good Catholic girl" in my public high-school. Peers came to me to ask questions about the Church, and I gladly answered, thoroughly enjoying sharing this part of myself. Something was still missing. I looked at the people around me and saw them

all merely breathing; they weren't living. All these people, who I was constantly comparing myself to, were also missing something. I started asking myself, "Who are the people around me that are fully alive; who were truly living?"

This search revealed that the people who were constantly striving for holiness were truly living, not just breathing. They lived with purpose, conviction, peace and contentment even though some of them were in the midst of great suffering. They didn't have to love Jesus, they chose to! Once again, I started asking the question, "How can I be like them?"

The turning point in my relationship with Christ involved many factors, but one of the most significant sprouted from a simple conversation. I asked one of these holy people, "How can I live more fully, like you?" He replied, "You need to be the Saint you were called to be." I thought, "WHAT?! Me, a Saint?" That was never something I could ever have imagined myself becoming.... Ever... How could I be meant for Sainthood? I was just hoping, at the very least, I could squeeze my way into purgatory. After observing my surprised expression, he wisely said, "It's true; you are a Catholic. You have been baptized; God has already called you."

As previously stated, I don't have some great conversion story, nor can I say that I've ever completely overcome my struggle of comparing myself to others. I've just found a new path; a new way to channel this weakness towards discovering the great plans God has in store for me. Interestingly enough, rather than comparing myself to those around me, I am now striving to be more like.... dead people... but in all actuality, they are far more alive now than they ever were physically on Earth. Obviously, I refer to the Saints. This is the most daunting task I have ever placed upon myself. I often compare myself to Saints like St. John Paul II, St. Faustina, St. Theresa of Avila and even the Mother of Christ herself, Mary. At times this can be overwhelming to just come close to their greatness.

(continued on page 3)





(continued from page 2) In the midst of conquering the obstacles comes a peace, and I remember, God doesn't want me to be a St. Faustina, or a St. Catherine of Sienna, or a St. Maximillian Kolbe; he wants me to be St. Maria. The best part is that St. Maria will be just enough for him. I have found my uniqueness and individuality flourish when I maintain this perspective. For the first time in my life I have felt a peace about God's mission for me and I am finding my unique part to play in the body of Christ, our Church. All I desire now is to please Him. When I get preoccupied with my flaws, my tendency to compare myself to others, or the suffering I will have to endure, I say the words, "Fiat voluntas tua." (Your will be done). Whatever God wants for me, I want.

I now live with an eternal purpose. It was one thing for me to know God, but it's another entire thing to fall in love with Him. We are all meant to be citizens of the Kingdom. You too are meant to be a Saint! The Saints were not perfect people; they were just people who acknowledged they were sinners. They never stopped striving for holiness.

To be a saint we must abandon our lukewarm lifestyles. We must go all in and be not afraid of the plans God has for us, even if they involve great sufferings. I started to realize God was truly molding me into His saint when I noticed my desire for worldly pleasures decrease. My soul yearned for something deeper; this resulted in my true love and desire turning so ardently towards the Holy Eucharist. The Eucharist is my everything. Mary, my mother, also plays an imperative role towards my journey to heaven. I so intensely wish to be like her. She is my greatest saintly role model.

I now challenge you, just as I was challenged by my holy friend: Become the Saint you were meant to be. Do not accept a life of mediocrity when you were made for the greatness of the Kingdom of Heaven. Fall so deeply in love with Christ, not because you have to, but because you want to. Allow him to take you over. Don't just breath. Start living. Be a Saint.

Totus Tuus,
Your Sister in the Body of Christ.

Maria

Maria is a Buffalo born 19 year old girl striving for Sainthood. "I love people! I hope to become a Catholic Counselor for marriages and teen relationships, and to help women suffering from post abortive depression." She loves to read, attend daily mass and eat Oreos. In her opinion, the best sports to compete in are soccer and basketball. Painting and oil pastels are pretty sweet, too. Her greatest devotions are to the Blessed Mother and Divine Mercy!

At the Easter Vigil Mass on Saturday, March 26, at 8:00pm, nine children and eleven adults will receive the Sacraments of Initiation. Please pray for them as we welcome them into the Church.



*TOP ROW (from left to right) -
Amanda Allen - the Sacrament of Eucharist,
Maria Wheeler - the Sacrament of Eucharist
Theo Kozara - Baptism and the Sacrament of Eucharist
Lily Kozara - Baptism and the Sacrament of Eucharist
Alex VanDuzer - the Sacrament of Eucharist
BOTTOM ROW (from left to right) -
Lexi Brannen - the Sacrament of Eucharist
Felix Warrington - the Sacrament of Eucharist
Aiden Bruch - the Sacrament of Eucharist
Jack Zimmer - the Sacrament of Eucharist*

*FRONT ROW (left to right) -
Melissa Patterson, Tetan Brannen, Rachel Paige, Daniela Falca,
Yarmil Falca
Back row (left to right) -
Curt Seyferth, Daniel Christmann, William Busler, Chad Wamsley,
Gary Witten, Pablo Falca*





St. Gregory the Great Faith Community
Journey Home With Us This Lent!
Easter Triduum Schedule

Reminder: there are no regular daily Masses celebrated during the Triduum

Holy Thursday: March 24

- 9:00 am – Morning Prayer
- 5:00 pm – Parish Shared Supper,
Ministry Center
- 7:00 pm – Evening Mass of the
Lord’s Supper
- 8:30 pm – Seven Churches bus trip
- *** Adoration until 11:00 pm in the Gath-
ering Rooms ***

Holy Saturday: March 26

- 9:00 am – Morning Prayer
- 12:00 noon – Blessing of Easter Baskets
- 8:00 pm – Easter Vigil Mass

Good Friday: March 25

- 9:00 am – Morning Prayer
- 12:00 noon – Seven Last Words of Christ
- 3:00 pm – Celebration of the Lord’s Passion
- 7:00 pm – Living Stations of the Cross



Easter Sunday: March 27

- Masses at:
- 8:00 am (Church and School Gym)
 - 9:30 am (Church and School Gym)
 - 11:00 am (Church and School Gym)
 - 12:30 pm (Church)

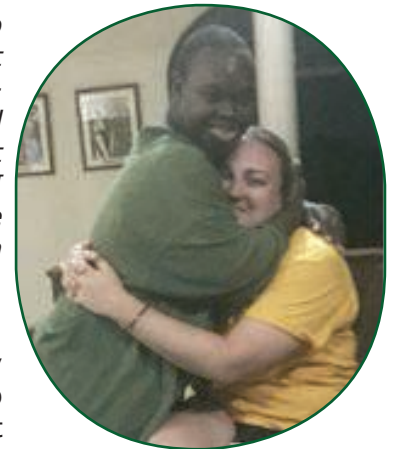


Jamaica Mission Trip: Mission Moment

Pictured is a resident from mustard seed. He is one of the residents who was unable to communicate verbally. We had many moments throughout the week, and this one was my favorite. As I became upset that I was unable to do more for this community than I was doing, he was there and simply gave me a big smile and hugged me so hard without letting go. It was that moment, that I realized I was making a difference. He knew that I was doing all that I could. I could feel it. The ability for us to communicate through a language barrier and be one with one another is truly a gift from God.

We are a link in a chain. ~ Jillian Kajdas

Please keep our Jamaica Mission Trip team in your prayers as they prepare for their journey this August. If you are interested in donating trip supplies or sponsoring one of our missionaries, please contact Elizabeth at eastridge@stgregs.org. Thank you for your support!



SAVE THE DATES FOR 2016!
Great Race: Friday, June 17
Great Dinner Auction: Saturday, November 5



The Spirit in Caregiving

By: Melissa Byron

Over the next 20 to 30 years, the number of Americans ages 65 and older is projected to double. This will find many of us of trying to help our loved ones age with dignity, peace and happiness. While we look towards the future to large numbers of us needing assistance, many of us are already involved in the care of a spouse, parent, extended family member or friend.

Caregiving can be a confusing and often times lonely road to travel. We struggle with how to best care for our loved one while still maintaining some sort of balance in our own lives. We are often thrust into positions of control over people who have been independent and active and who, in many cases, at one time cared for us. I have seen many caregivers burnt out, emotionally and physically exhausted and feeling helpless. Caring for those who need our help is the work of Jesus, but we also have to remember to show his love to ourselves so that we may better serve him. While there is no greater gift we can give than our love and attention, we have to remember that it's okay to ask for help. Many times, taking some of the responsibility off of ourselves will allow us to once again become our loved ones partner, child or friend, and once again experience the richness of these relationships where roles have been reversed.

Support is a huge piece of this caregiving puzzle and one of the best things caregivers can do for themselves is to find a support group. While it may be difficult or intimidating to walk into a room of people with such openness, keep in mind everyone is there because they are going through turmoil and need help; no different from you. Wonderful supportive relationships are formed in support groups among people who really have walked in each other's shoes. We have a wonderful group at St. Gregory's that meets the first Tuesday of the month in the Café. Please see the bulletin or call the Health Ministry office for more details. We would love for you to join us.



I am always here to help you navigate these waters as well. As St. Gregory's parish nurse, part of my ministry is to be a helping hand when life doesn't go as planned. Fortunately there are many resources available to seniors and their families in Western New York. At times it can be difficult to know exactly what we need, how to obtain help and who to trust. Cost is also a factor for many people and there are services available that cover a wide range of financial needs. There are local respite programs, companion care agencies and volunteer groups, as well as higher levels of care available. Various resources are available for veterans and their spouses as well. I am more than happy just to listen if that's what you need, or to help you find services when the time is right. Please call me in my office anytime at 688-5678 ext. 339. I can also be reached by email at mbyron@stgregs.org. It would be my privilege to help. I can come to you at home or wherever you may be and we can, of course, always meet for a coffee in our café. No matter what, you are not alone.

'Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.' Philipians 2:1-2



Post-Dyngus Day Dinner Dance



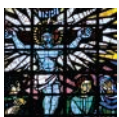
Saturday, April 2 - Ministry Center Gym

\$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. 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 March 21. No tickets will be sold at the door.

All proceeds benefit the World Youth Day Pilgrims



OUR CATHOLIC FAITH “FAMILY-STYLE”

By: Joan Rischmiller

The Generations of Faith approach involves the whole family (children, parents or grandparents) in a parish faith formation setting that equips parents with the knowledge and skills they need for sharing faith at home. This program gives parents the opportunity to learn together with their children by providing activities and resources to help families celebrate our rich Catholic traditions and rituals, learn how to pray together, serve others, work for justice and enrich their relationships as a family. Generations of Faith is an events-centered catechesis that meets monthly from September through April. Parents and children continue faith-sharing at home with lessons to work on together during the other three weeks of the month when GOF doesn't meet.

Our theme this year has been Pope Francis's "Year of Mercy." Parents had speakers on mercy and forgiveness themes presented by Deacon Bill Hynes (Religion teacher St. Joe's Collegiate Institute), Eileen Warner (Director of Mission & Pastoral Outreach CK Seminary), Sister Johnice (Executive Director of the "Response to Love Center"), Deacon Peter Donnelly (St. Gregory's Parish), Sister Mary McCarrick, OSF (Diocesan Director of Catholic Charities) and Denice Mahaney, (Diocesan Director of

Evangelization and Family Life.)

This past session each month the families participated in a designated outreach which included: school supplies to School 33, Macaroni & Cheese for Sister Karen's prison ministry, Thanksgiving Food Drive (St. Vincent dePaul), Christmas gifts for School 33, warm children's coats, hats, gloves, etc. (Jericho Road Missions), "Heart to Heart" Food Drive (St. Vincent dePaul), Catholic Charities (children saved coins to contribute and families assembled personal care packages for various Catholic Charities shelters), First Communion suits & dresses and "Sunday Best" children's clothing (Nicaragua Missions & Response to Love Center).

"The home is where faith is learned and grows." *Pope Francis "World Meeting of Families" (September 2015)*



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

The "Upon this Rock" initiative is calling all Catholics to examine what we can sacrificially contribute, not only to maintaining, but to furthering and insuring for generations to come, the Catholic faith and ministry of Western New York.

Bishop Malone is asking us, the people of the Diocese of Buffalo, to raise \$100 million, to assist our own parish and the ministries of the Diocese including, but not limited to, Catholic Charities, Christ the King Seminary, Mother Teresa Home for pregnant women who need a place to live, Catholic Education and to really begin the New Evangelization process of calling home our brothers and sisters who have left active practice of the Faith. At St. Gregory's, we have a goal of \$5,750,000 for the "Upon this Rock" campaign. Thirty-five percent of what we will raise will stay here at St. Gregory's and the other 65% will go to fund and endow various Diocesan ministries from which we all benefit. This is a time to remember that we not only "belong" to St. Gregory's, but we are St. Gregory's. This is a time to remember that we not only "belong" to the Diocese of Buffalo, but we are the Diocese of Buffalo. This is not someone else's responsibility, but our own.

As the year unfolds, you will be made more and more aware of your invitation to this initiative. At St. Gregory's we have already begun this campaign and in the coming months each and every person will be invited to participate. For now, I invite you to reflect on how important it is that our Church is here? Please reflect with gratitude for all those who sacrificed to provide all that we have. Finally, please begin to pray and reflect on what you can sacrifice for the present and future generations of Catholics here at St. Gregory's and throughout the Diocese of Buffalo.

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



WOMEN'S ENRICHMENT DAY - COMING SOON! SATURDAY, APRIL 30

By: Joycelyn Bila

Women's Enrichment Days of Spiritual Renewal - Past and Future

This past October 2015, the Women's Enrichment Ministry helped guests from St. Gregory's and across the Diocese usher in the Jubilee Year of Mercy with a spirit and grace-filled day of spiritual renewal titled: *God's Touchable, Merciful Healing Love for His Daughters; Jesus, the Divine Physician*. Those attending were uplifted, informed and energized by the presentation on God's agape love and mercy for us from special guest speaker, Sister Mary Ellen Twist, RSM. Joy Bila also gave a poignant presentation on how God's love and mercy has seen



her through a life filled with uncertainties, as well as tremendous joys.

Another exciting Women's Day of Spiritual Renewal, *Come Draw from the Well of God's Mercy*, is planned for Saturday, April 30. Special guest speaker, Gloria Ulterino, author of two books, storyteller, creator and leader of Women at the Well Ministries in Rochester, presents stories of Biblical women touched by Jesus' extraordinary treatment and mercy. A gourmet box lunch and refreshments are included. Watch the bulletin and St. Gregory's online event calendar for more details, as well as registration forms. All women are welcome!

Healthy Ministry Book Club

By: Melissa Byron

By the time this newsletter finds you it will be March and three months since many of us made our New Years resolutions. I'm not sure about you but sticking to mine hasn't gone as planned! When I reflect on why, the answer jumps right out at me- I don't have time! I'm usually pondering what went wrong as I'm in the middle of grabbing some convenience food between appointments, aware that I'm not making a good choice, breaking my resolution to lead a healthier life. Or when I'm running out the door to another commitment I said "yes" too and don't really have my whole heart in it, instead of keeping the promise to myself that I would spend more time with me and in developing my relationship with God. I think many of us between our jobs, homes, kids and other commitments feel like we're always on the run, never quite able to reach the finish line and never quite able to give our best because we are so overwhelmed!

I do want to make a commitment to myself to slow down, smell the roses and enjoy the gift of this beautiful life God has given me, instead of feeling like it's passing me by. Health is not just comprised of the state of our bodies, but of our minds and spirits as well. This is what led me to the first selection for the Health Ministry book club, *The Best Yes* by Lysa TerKeurst. Lysa is president of Proverbs 31 Ministries and a New York Times bestselling author. In her book Lysa shares how she is learning that there is a big difference between saying yes to everyone and saying yes to God. In *The Best Yes*, Lysa will help you:

- Cure the disease to please with a biblical understanding of the command to love
- Escape the guilt of disappointing others by learning the secret of the small no
- Overcome the agony of hard choices by embracing a wisdom based decision-making process
- Rise above the rush of endless demands and discover your best yes today

Now giving you another commitment would defeat the whole purpose here which is why I want this to be as easy as possible! We will have one meeting to discuss the book on Wednesday, April 6, in the Ministry Center room 2 at 6:45pm. It's pizza night in the Café so the evening will be family friendly! There is also an online discussion group which can be found on facebook at "SGG Health Ministry Book Club." Participate as much or as little as you would like. I hope you will be able to join us! Please call me in the health ministry office at 688-5678 ext. 339 or email me at mbyron@stgregs.org with any questions.

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. 4869



Saint Gregory the Great Catholic Church

What's Inside This Issue?

- Pursue Sainthood in College
- What is Generations of Faith?
- Women's Enrichment Day
- The Spirit of Caregiving

Mark Your Calendar For These Upcoming Events:

March

20 - Palm Sunday
20 - Family Mass
24 - Parish Shared Supper
24 - Altar of Repose
25 - Seven Last Words of Christ
25 - Celebration of the
Lord's Passion
26 - Blessing of Easter Food
27 - Easter Sunday

April

3 - Divine Mercy Sunday
10 - Parishioner Social
13, 14 - Confirmation
16 - Kate Hahn's Consecrated
Virgin Celebration
17 - Family Mass
18 - Year of Mercy Speaker Series
23 - 1500 Club Fundraiser
30 - Mulch Sale
30 - Women's Day of Enrichment

May

5 - Ascension Thursday
7 - First Communions
7, 8 - Baby Item Drive for
St. Gianna Molla Center
8 - Parishioner Social
8 - Family Mass
13 - School Father/Daughter
Dance
15 - St. Gregory's
Twelve Celebration
28 - Sam Giangreco's Priesthood
Ordination Celebration

Spirit & Life Staff: Greg Smith, Fr. Leon Biernat. Published bi-monthly by St. Gregory the Great Parish. If you have any questions or comments, please contact the Parish Office at 688-5678 or write the *Spirit & Life* Newsletter c/o St. Gregory the Great Church, 200 St. Gregory Ct., Williamsville, NY 14221. We are grateful to Liturgical Publications, whose generosity and benevolence allow us to provide *Spirit & Life* at minimal cost to our parishioners.