

Spirit & Life

"Do This in Memory of Me"

July/August 2012

From the Desk of the Pastor

The Bishops of the United States have called for a "Fortnight for Freedom," from June 21 – the vigil of the Feasts of St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More – to July 4, Independence Day, for all Catholics to stand up for religious freedom. During this time, St. Gregory the Great is offering many prayer opportunities as our ministerial/spiritual response to this call from our Bishops. We plan to continue with many of these opportunities to put our faith in action throughout the coming months. Please see page six for further details.

St. Gregory's will be having a special *Fortnight for Freedom Evening of Prayer* outdoors by the Holy Family Statue on Maple Road on Thursday, June 28, from 5:30 until 9:00 pm. The evening of prayer will include live music by our young adult ministry, recitation of the Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, presentations on *Our Ministerial Response as Catholics*, and will close with a Holy Hour of Adoration. Please be sure to join us for this inspired night as we stand up for our Catholic Faith and our cherished Religious Freedom!

In addition to this summer's observance, the bishops are urging that the Solemnity of Christ the King – a feast born out of resistance to totalitarian incursions against religious liberty – be a day specifically employed by bishops and priests to preach about religious liberty, both here and abroad. This is not an election year event – but a summons to recognize the on-going responsibility to protect the inherent religious liberty and freedom of each person and religion. Therefore, to all our fellow Catholics, we urge an intensification of your prayers and fasting for a new birth of freedom in our beloved country.



What is Mission 31?

By Donna Callaghan

Seventeen years ago an idea was born at St. Gregory's - a mission retreat to deepen our faith. That tradition will once again prevail at our parish from July 22 to 28.

Our Mission retreat has enriched the souls of thousands. Parishioners speak of Mission as: "a much needed catalyst for helping one to expand their comfort zone within the Church," "a stirring experience to see our youth become involved with their religion," "helping me to mature within my religion and my marriage," "taking one's faith to the next level," and "a wonderful way to meet and become an integral part of the parish community."

Mission 31 will be led by Bill and Lee Grunert (689-

0903). Extensive planning is necessary to make the week a success. The nights are filled with prayer, music, guest speakers, liturgy, food and fellowship. Each evening contains inspirational activities.

Deacon John and Laraine Leardon are the spiritual advisers for this week-long journey of growth within the Catholic faith. It is truly a week to relax and enjoy all that has been planned for you — a chance to get away from our complicated lives for a while.

To sign up, please call Jo Pierino in the Parish Office at 688-5678. I hope to see you at 6:00 pm on Sunday, July 22, as we begin our summer Mission 31!



WE WELCOME FR. SIBBY!

St. Gregory's welcomed Father Sebastian Pierro on June 1. Spirit & Life editor Suellen Brewster asked him a few questions:

You've been in a few different parish situations. What are you looking forward to experiencing at St. Gregory's?

I'm very excited about coming to share the blessing of my 30 years of priesthood. I've heard about and witnessed firsthand this wonderful community's commitment and actions: to care for one another; to reach out to the poor; to empower the young people of the community to ministry in the parish and outside of it as well; to celebrate the richness of the Church as a family; to experience the Church as the focal point of each of our lives as we come together to share prayer and sacraments; and to reflect the image of a family that prays, laughs, loves and cares about one another. I look forward to sharing in the life of the school and faith formation programs as we make the education of our young people the key to the future of the Church in our parish - and simply to relax, share a meal and hear stories about families.

I understand you and Fr. Joe go way back. Do you have any funny stories to share?

Fr. Joe and I have been friends for over 35 years, going back to when we began our journey to the priesthood at Wadhams Hall Seminary College. You may wonder how we met. That summer there was a dinner for Italian clergy at St. Columbia Bridget parish, and the pastors were encouraged to bring their Italian seminarians to the dinner. It was there that we met and became instant friends. His pastor at his home parish, Holy Trinity, at the time was Fr. Richard Amico, and after dinner he said, "Keep an eye on Joe when you are away at school." I had known Fr. Amico from my home parish, Holy Cross, where he had served as a priest for some time. As we were all leaving dinner, I said to Joe, "We'll see you in a couple weeks at Wadhams." He

replied, "If I'm not there, start without me." And I, in return, said to him that if he did not show up, I was coming to Dunkirk to bring him to the seminary myself. Nonetheless, we all showed up together, and it was the start of a great friendship and journey to the priesthood.

What would you like parishioners to know about you, Father?

I am 57 years old, and my birthday is March 3, 1955. I have been a priest for 30 years, having been ordained on January 30, 1982, at Holy Cross Church. As for my family, my father, Nick, passed away on February 24, 2010, from cancer; my mother, Connie, lives in our family home in the Town of Tonawanda; and my brother, Joseph, is a doctor of radiology and lives with his wife, Joann (an intensive-care nurse), and their children in St. Louis. My parish assignments have been at Nativity of Our Lord in Orchard Park; SS. Peter and Paul in Hamburg; Christ the King in Amherst; Holy Trinity in Dunkirk; St. Peter's in Lewiston; a three-month sabbatical; and most recently back at SS. Peter and Paul in Hamburg.

One of the best things about being a priest is praying with and for people. Another is celebrating the Eucharist and sharing the precious gift of Christ's love for us in His body broken and His blood poured out. Also, it is wonderful to experience in complete humility the healing grace of reconciliation; to laugh and to enjoy the blessings of people's friendship and homes; and simply to share the gifts and blessings of priesthood with the people of God.

I am an avid sports fan. I like to relax by reading, listening to music and cooking. But my favorite way is to enjoy my classic 1955 Chevrolet. I am a car enthusiast - it is a great hobby and diversion!

Thank you for your "yes" to serve Jesus through His people. We are blessed to have you and look forward to getting to know you, Father Sibby!



Women's Enrichment: Stay Tuned!

A new spiritual ministry connecting women in a wonderful and exciting way is coming to St. Greg's. This ministry, called "Women's Enrichment," will be open to all women, bringing them together through special mini-retreats held in our parish. Joycelyn Bila brings us this ministry from her former parish on Long Island. Watch for more information in the Bulletin. Welcome, Joycelyn, and thank you for sharing your gifts with us!



SAVE THE DATE! JOHNNETTE BENKOVIC, LIVE AT ST. GREGORY'S

Don't miss what is certain to be a deeply spiritual day on Saturday, September 8, at St. Gregory's. Starting after 8:00 am Mass in the Church, Johnnette S. Benkovic, founder and president of Women of Grace and Living His Life Abundantly International, will present a conference titled "In the Footsteps of Mary."

Johnnette's apostolate reaches out to women through conferences, media, study groups and more.

After being a non-practicing Catholic for years, Johnnette experienced a deep call back to the faith in 1981. This sparked a new vocation: sharing the Gospel message through media.

Always well informed, lively and full of joy, Johnnette is on fire for the faith. The conference will include lunch

and four talks by Johnnette, and will end at 3:30 pm.



The talks are:

- The Prodigal Daughter Returns - Johnnette's Testimony
- Mary...Our Life, Our Sweetness and Our Hope
- Mary and the Holy Spirit, Pattern for Living
- The Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Living in the Breath of Divine Life

What a perfect way to spend our Blessed Mother's birthday. Come and catch the spark!

For more information on this one-day conference, co-sponsored by Magnificat and St. Gregory's, please contact Shirley at 283-0646 or visit www.magnificat.catholicweb.com.



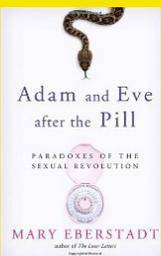
Hot Reads for the Season



Looking for some good reading over the summer? Brandon Vogt recommends 10 books in the May 27 issue of "Our Sunday Visitor." We've included two available at our very own Catholic store! For the complete list, visit www.osv.com:

* **"Adam and Eve After the Pill: Paradoxes of the Sexual Revolution"** by Mary Eberstadt (Ignatius Press, \$19.95, available at our bookstore)

Fifty years after use of the pill became widespread, many are gravely concerned about its effects. Are women better off in our "post-liberation" world? Are families stronger, dignity more protected, and relationships healthier now that contraception is widely available?



Stanford researcher Mary Eberstadt provides a firm "no" in this important book. Her ground-breaking text draws on secular research from sociology, philosophy and culture to show how the pill has been one of the most disastrous inventions in history. According to Eberstadt, "no single event since Eve first took the apple has been as consequential for relations between the sexes as the arrival of modern contraception."

Eberstadt demonstrates that the increase in divorce, pornography and unhappiness - and the prevalence of abortion, date rapes, hookups and binge drinking - all flow directly from the sexual revolution. She also shows how Pope Paul VI's ground-breaking encyclical, Huma-

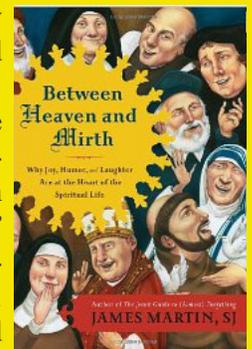
nae Vitae ("Of Human Life"), has proved prophetic in its dark vision of a contraceptive culture.

* **"Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor, and Laughter are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life"** by Father James Martin (HarperOne, \$25.99)

This entertaining book couldn't have had a better author. Father Martin is one of the funniest, joyous, most light-hearted religious figures in America - and the official "Colbert Show chaplain." You'll rarely find him without a smile, and his new book captures his marvelous sense of humor.

Father Martin explores the humor of Jesus, something we often miss. Jesus' jokes are tinged with first-century Jewish wit, so they often fly right over our heads. To fix this, Father Martin shows how Jesus meant them to be lighthearted and, yes, even funny.

Father Martin also turns to the saints, who too often are falsely depicted in art as always serious, even morose. "A sad nun is a bad nun," says St. Teresa of Avila. Father Martin provides plenty of alternatives. Many saints were full of mirth, and he teaches how we can apply it to our own lives. Overall, "Between Heaven and Mirth" is a guide to spiritual joy that will have you laughing (and praying) all summer.



For books, movies and media for the younger set, check out www.10kids.com



St. Gregory's Catholic Store Is Open To Serve All

By Mary Toerne

The new Catholic Store in the St. Gregory's Ministry Center has opened its doors. S&L interviewed manager Kathy Delaney to learn more:

S&L: *What sparked the idea for the St. Gregory the Great Catholic Store?*

KD: Father Joe! He had a vision for the store ever since he first arrived at St. Gregory's. Raising funds, designing, building and working out logistics have taken some time, but it all started with his vision.

S&L: *What is the mission of the store?*

KD: The mission of the store is to evangelize, to give people a place to find Catholic items for all occasions, and to educate, inspire and help families and individuals grow in their faith. Long term, we'd like the store to continue to grow, to supplement tuition for the parish school, and to fill the needs of the parish.

S&L: *What items does the store sell?*

KD: We carry items for all special occasions, for every day or just for fun. We have books, Bibles, catechisms for all ages - plus daily missals, daily prayer books or meditations. We have gifts for everyone from babies to grandparents. We offer greeting cards, holy cards, rosaries, rosary bracelets, patron saint medals, statues and artwork, unique jewelry with antique holy medals, CDs and DVDs for families, and much more. Stop in and see! We can also special-order for you.

S&L: *What's been the most popular seller so far?*

KD: It's hard to say. The patron saint medals seem to be a big seller, along with the rosary bracelets, jewelry and artwork. Also, books are big sellers since it is hard to find good Catholic books at other stores.

S&L: *Are there plans to integrate with the Café next door?*

KD: There are many plans to integrate the Café. Shelley Femia, manager of the Café, and I plan to keep our hours similar so customers can shop, have some good food and drink, and gather as a community. We may have children's story time, movie time and other events to bring the community together as well. Stay tuned!

S&L: *What are the store hours?*

KD: Stores hours for now are Monday, Thursday and Friday, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm; Tuesday, closed; Wednesday, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm and 5:30 to 8:30 pm; and Saturday and Sunday, 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. Please stop by and introduce yourself!



S&L: *What else would you like the Catholic community to know about the store?*

KD: We are here for many of their needs. Not only do we sell things, we are here to listen to their story, help in times of need, pray for them and help strengthen their faith. We have a prayer intention book and encourage people to write their intentions. At the start of each day, we pray for all those intentions and for all who enter that day. I would like to let people know that there are many Catholic resources for help. This is truly a ministry of faith. We welcome all!

ST. GREGORY'S CAFÉ NOW OPEN!



Join us for coffee and conversation in our new Café! Hours are:

Monday, Thursday, Friday	7:30 am - 2:00 pm
Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	7:30 am - 2:00 pm and 5:30 - 8:30 pm
Saturday & Sunday	8:30 am - 2:00 pm

Join us for a special Open House on Saturday, June 23, 7:00 - 9:00 pm. Other special evening hours and theme nights will be announced soon! Offerings at the Café include: fair trade organic coffee and tea, cappuccino, water, soda, juice, yogurt, bagels, muffins, pastries, soup, paninis, cookies and desserts. With the purchase of our coffee, you are supporting fair trade economics and organic farming in coffee-producing countries around the world (to find out more, visit: www.groundsforchange.com).



To Your Health

By Bill Grunert

On any given weekend you are likely to find news about our Health Ministry in the parish Bulletin. In its relatively short existence of a year and a half, this ministry has significantly affected the lives of many St. Gregory's parishioners.

Maureen Couche fills the roles of parish nurse and coordinator of the Health Ministry. Maureen, her husband, Mike, and their four children are longtime St. Gregory's parishioners. She received her registered nursing diploma from Sisters Hospital and has broad health-care experience in such diverse areas as home care, health-care administration and health insurance issues.

In a recent discussion with Spirit & Life, Maureen commented on several Health Ministry issues:

Mission and Objectives: "Our focus is on serving the senior population of our parish through health-care education and advocacy, most often working one-on-one with individuals or couples to meet their specific needs." Maureen adds, "Prayer is at the center of all that this ministry does."

Greatest Satisfaction: "Seeing the positive responses of the people we have been able to

help, and knowing that our efforts have made a difference in their lives."

Challenges Ahead: "We need to attract more volunteers who can work directly with the people in need. Also, we are constantly trying to identify resources that can help the 'people in the middle' – those who do not require full nursing care but, rather, need a 'little help' to adequately meet their health needs."

Future Activities: "We are hosting the Erie County Caregivers Coalition's "Transitions of Care" educational seminar, which is open to everyone, on August 18. A diabetes education program and a senior housing seminar will be held in September. A disability workshop and a flu clinic are planned for October. See below or consult the parish Bulletin for specifics as the dates get closer."



Please contact Maureen at the Parish Office (phone: 688-5678, Ext. 339, or e-mail: mcouche@stgregs.org) if you wish to volunteer or if you encounter parishioners who may benefit from this ministry. In either case, Maureen will welcome your call.

Upcoming Health Ministry Events

The Health Ministry is sponsoring several upcoming events as it promotes wellness of mind, body and spirit.

- We are fortunate to have a counselor from BryLin here at St. Gregory's on the third Tuesday of every month for a Depression and Anxiety Support group. It is held in the Ministry Center from 7:00 to 8:00 pm. The group is open to new participants each month but is limited in size, so please call Maureen Couche to register at 688-5678 Ext. 339 or email mcouche@stgregs.org. The next two dates are July 17 and August 21.
- We are also very excited to host a program sponsored by the Erie County Caregivers Coalition: *Transitions of Care*. What do you need to know when your loved one's needs change and they move from one level of care to another? Can they still stay safely at home? What is assisted living? When is long-term placement the best choice? Explore the options at a FREE workshop Saturday, August 18. Registration begins at 1:00 pm. There will also be a resource table available before the program, which will be held from 1:30 to 3:30 pm in the Gathering Room. Although there is no cost for the workshop, reservations are required. Supervision for memory impaired adults is available; inquire when making reservations at 858-2177 or email caregiver@erie.gov to RSVP.

Watch the next Spirit & Life and the parish Bulletin for more details about upcoming events in September: Diabetes Education on September 12 and Senior Housing Fair on September 29. Health Ministry events are open to everyone!



FORTNIGHT FOR FREEDOM

Calling it an attack on religious freedom, our Catholic bishops are organizing opposition to the federal mandate that effectively requires all employers to pay for contraception, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs in their employee health insurance plans. This includes all faith-based employers, who must provide such birth control coverage - even in violation of deeply held religious principles.

From June 21 to July 4, we are called to demonstrate our objection to the attack on religious freedom imposed by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The activities begin with the feasts of two



St. John Fisher

English martyrs, St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher, who were executed for refusing to take King Henry VIII's oath of supremacy, which split England from the Catholic Church. They are among many great martyrs who were oppressed by political powers but remained steadfast in faith.

The HHS mandate threat-

ens the religious freedom, enshrined in the First Amendment, of all our Christian brothers and sisters, regardless of denomination, as we are one body in Christ. Under the Constitution, the government has no right to force churches to abide by laws that violate their moral beliefs. If the mandate is not opposed, the consequences will be grave and the teachings of our Church severely compromised.

This mandate is not just a faith issue; it is an "American" issue, as it concerns our contribution to the common good of all Americans. In light of this, our bishops are calling us to a special time of prayer, study and catechesis. Dioceses and parishes around the country are encouraged to have assemblies of prayer, teaching and witnessing for religious liberty.

Won't you join in? Please check the Respect Life section of the weekly church Bulletin for details on what you can do. It is a matter of "Life" or "Death!"



St. Thomas More

Prayer Opportunities offered by St. Gregory's for the Fortnight for Freedom

All are welcome to join us for the following events as we put our faith in action throughout the coming months:

- In addition to the daily Chaplet said after the daily Masses, we invite parishioners to join us to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy in the Grotto at 7:00 pm throughout those two weeks (we will relocate to the Church in the event of inclement weather).
- Our daily Rosary groups will include prayers for Religious Freedom in their intentions.
- We will have a binder in the Church for parishioners to sign up to offer a special Holy Hour in the Adoration chapel during this Fortnight.
- We will be reciting a special prayer from the Catholic Bishops at all of our weekend Masses.
- We encourage our parish family to fast on Fridays during these two weeks, (with the option to continue Friday Fasts right up until the Feast of Christ the King in November.)
- Watch the Bulletin for a column on "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" where we will offer information detailing the social justice issues that face our community and the Catholic understanding and response to them.
- We are encouraging parishioners to contact our political leaders letting them know where we stand on these issues: <http://actions.nchla.org/Core/core.aspx?APP=GAC&AID=970&IssueID=25200&SiteID=-1>, 148



An Evening of Franciscan Spirituality

On May 7 our parish hosted a beautiful night of church history, spirituality and prayer. In addition to our beloved resident Franciscan, Fr. Francis, we were graced with the presence of his provincial, Fr. James McCurry, and his guardian, Fr. Mike Syda. Fr. McCurry gave a talk on St. Francis, his spirituality and devotions, the Franciscan orders and how they are displayed in our parish's "new" stained glass window.



Fr. McCurry explained how appropriate it is that the window came from Our Lady of the Angels monastery, because St. Francis had great devotion to Our Lady of the Angels and to the angels themselves. This "Portiuncula" (or "Little Portion") window depicts the small chapel St. Francis repaired early in his conversion but later came to allude more generally to the virtue of poverty the Franciscans live so deeply.

Fr. McCurry was heavily influenced in his own life by Mother Teresa, who considered herself "Franciscan at heart." A story from Mother Teresa's life has her saying three little words to an important cardinal at St. Peter's Basilica: "give God permission." A sort of simplified consecration, giving God permission is what St. Francis is seen doing with his life in our window. Under the protection of Our Lady of the Angels, St. Francis gave God permission to use his

life as He saw fit. With the freedom that came from this abandonment of will, St. Francis grew closer to Jesus daily and accomplished the true "rebuilding of the Church" Jesus had asked for at the little chapel.

In addition to the history and details of St. Francis and his orders, Fr. McCurry explained the indulgence related to the Portiuncula. After concluding his talk, father blessed the window. Because of this Franciscan blessing, a plenary indulgence can be gained right at St. Gregory's each August 2 by anyone who visits with the intention of honoring Our Lady of the Angels and who satisfies the other usual requirements. No need to fly to Assisi! Accompanied by our parish Knights of Columbus, Fr. McCurry also did another great thing for our parish: he blessed our renovated Stations of the Cross (another Franciscan devotion), creating another in-parish opportunity for plenary indulgences.



Fr. McCurry's talk continued with additional excellent information. The video is available online at www.stgregs.org for those who weren't able to attend. St. Francis, all you Franciscan saints, all you Holy Angels and Our Lady of the Angels, pray for us!

14th Annual Great Dinner Auction: Dinner at Tiffany's Saturday, October 20

The Great Dinner Auction, the largest social event of the year at St. Gregory's, is focused on bringing our parish community together. So, save the date of Saturday, October 20, for this year's auction, "*Dinner at Tiffany's*," at Samuel's Grande Manor on Main Street in Williamsville.

Better yet, get involved early and join us on Friday, July 13, for the Family Faith Formation Wine Tasting at the Ministry Center to benefit the auction. The annual car raffle kicks off at this event, too. Volunteers are needed to join committees or to host gift-gathering parties to include all members of the parish family.

Parishioner involvement and attendance are vital to making the auction a success. Please contact the auction office at 688-5678, Ext. 337 or at dinnerauction@gmail.com for information or to volunteer. Proceeds from the auction benefit the entire parish. Be part of making it a great success!

Passion & Purpose Retreat with Matthew Kelly Saturday, October 27

"Being a Dynamic Catholic means knowing how to apply the incredible genius of Catholicism to our everyday lives." Come hear the author of "Rediscover Catholicism" and creator of "Called to Joy" speak on how to live as a dynamic Catholic. We are very excited to be co-hosting this event, which will be held at St. Leo's Church. Matthew Kelly's retreat will run from 9:00 am - 1:30 pm. To learn more about this event, please call Eileen in our Parish Office at 688-5678.



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Saint Gregory the Great Catholic Church

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Mark Your Calendar For These Upcoming Events:

July

- 1-3 - Youth Ministry Service - Catholics In Action
- 11 - Senior Citizens Meeting
- 9-13 - Vacation Bible School
- 13 - Wine Tasting Party
- 14 - Diocesan Disabilities & Persons with Special Needs Family Picnic
- 15 - Parish Social/New Parishioner Orientation after 9:30 am Mass
- 16-20 - Jr. High School Adventure Week
- 17 - Depression and Anxiety Support Group Meeting
- 22-28 - Mission Retreat

August

- 6-10 - Disciple Camp
- 12 - Parish Social/New Parishioner Orientation after 9:30 am Mass
- 13 - Youth Ministry Mass in the Grass
- 15 - Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Holy Day of Obligation)
- 18 - Transitions of Care Presentation
- 21 - Depression and Anxiety Support Group Meeting
- 26 - Parish Social/New Parishioner Orientation after 9:30 am Mass

Spirit & Life Staff: Elizabeth Astridge, Trish Beagle, Suellen Brewster, Mrene Corra, Donna Callaghan, Dawn Curazatto, Fr. Joseph Gatto, 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.