

Spirit & Life

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

Winter 2013

From the Desk of the Pastor: New Evangelization

As we enter the upcoming Christmas season, I can't help but reflect on how significant it is to be mindful of our Pope's initiative to live out the New Evangelization. There are so many opportunities to be bearers of the Good News amid the busyness of this season.

I invite you to be mindful of the ways in which we can bring Christ to others during this time of year. Perhaps we have family members, or friends with whom we will visit during the holidays; pray for God's grace and wisdom for ways you can share your faith with them and perhaps be that nudge that they need to return to their faith or the Church. The holidays are often times for sharing our memories and stories. It is my hope that we will continue to share the story of our Catholic faith with others, and not be afraid to share our personal stories of faith as an invitation for them to begin to recognize God within their midst.

Consider giving religious books or items as Christmas gifts, inviting others to come to Mass with you, or sharing Catholic inspirational CDs that will ignite their faith or help them open their hearts to Christ's message of love. Please take time this Advent to pray for the Lord's guidance and inspiration for ways in which we can be heralds of God's love and continue to bring others to the Christ Child.



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



Advent wreaths and candles -- Manger sets -- Artwork, Statues

Great Stocking Stuffers – prayers cards, novena books, pocket statues, pocket prayer books, Christmas ornaments

Religious Cards – Boxed religious Christmas cards, single Christmas cards; DaySpring Cards & Journals

Family-Friendly DVDs for all ages – Value-oriented movies as well as animated movies for children

Music CDs for everyone – Including many contemporary Christian artists

Books for all ages – prayer, daily meditation, missals, Bibles, inspirational reading, books on saints



Jewelry – precious stone necklaces and bracelets with antique holy medals; Rosary bracelets, wooden saint bracelets, rings, sterling silver or pewter patron saint medals

An Advent Evening of Reflection with Mother Olga

Sunday, December 8, at 7:00 pm in the Church

By Joycelyn Bila

Join us on Sunday, December 8, at 7:00 pm in the Church for some quiet time away from the bustle and consumerism of the season and to reflect on the meaning of Christ's birth in our world. Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart in Boston, MA, is an engaging speaker who inspires hearts and minds. She will be sharing a message of hope, wisdom and insight as she breaks open the story of Bethlehem for us. If you haven't heard her before, you are in for a wonderful experience!

Born in 1966 near Kirkuk, in northern Iraq, Mother Olga has lived through four wars, losing family and friends through separation, starvation and thirst. Her desire to be a Ro-



man Catholic nun began when she was 14. She grew up serving the Muslim and Christian communities, becoming known as the "Mother Theresa of Baghdad." She came to America on a scholarship, without knowing English, and earned a master's degree in pastoral ministry in just two years. She has served as Catholic chaplain at Boston University, where she developed a special rapport with the youth, who lovingly called her "Blue Lightning."

Be sure to invite family and friends and consider inviting that neighbor, co-worker or loved one who has been away from the Church who may be inspired by her message of hope this Christmas.

Living Nativity at Christmas

By William Grunert



A special way of "keeping Christ in Christmas" is to experience the Living Nativity at St. Gregory's. For the sixth consecutive year, the Living Nativity will be presented on Thursday and Friday, December 26 and 27, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm each evening.

Attendees are greeted in the Gathering Room. A "shepherd" then leads each group on the 20-minute tour, which winds through part of the school and concludes with the Nativity scene in the gym. Along the way, many key moments of the Nativity experience are portrayed by parish volunteers in historically appropriate costume. Between 400

and 500 people visit the Living Nativity each year.

Spirit & Life met with Jeff Criden to learn more about this ministry. Jeff noted that, "It has been a labor of love for me and my wife, Mary, to lead this ministry. We are blessed by the support of our pastor, Fr. Joe, and 50 to 60 parish volunteers. Each successive year has become a little easier thanks to our dedicated and experienced team."

Jeff also noted, "Each fall I listen for young babies' cries in church. Then I locate the family at the end of Mass and ask if they might consider playing the 'starring roles' in the Living Nativity. I have had great responses from some beautiful families over the years." (continued on page 3)



Family Faith Formation...Opening the Doors to Faith

By Joan Rischmiller

FFF LESSONS ON THE GO

Recently our Family Faith Formation junior high students visited Our Lady of Victory Basilica, Temple Beth Zion, St. Louis Church and St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church. They learned firsthand the history of OLV and Fr. Baker, the history of St. Louis and the Diocese of Buffalo, our roots in the Jewish faith and they celebrated a liturgy in an Eastern rite of the Catholic Church.



A MOUNTAIN OF PASTA

Our fall outreach was to collect 1,500 boxes of macaroni & cheese for the Peaceprints Prison Ministry that Sr. Karen Klimczak started many year ago. Our donations will be included with other food items in Christmas gift baskets at Blessed Trinity church on December 6.



"THE CARPENTER FROM NAZARETH"

Our annual Christmas Pageant will be presented on Saturday, December 14, at 9:15 am in the Church. The pageant is under the direction of Jeff Criden, and our "Angel Choir" is directed by Consuelo DeLosSantos. All are welcome!



SAVE THE DATE:

Celebrate Catholic Schools Week!

St. Gregory the Great School Open House:

January 26, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Living Nativity (cont'd)

(continued from page 2) Jeff and Mary can always use help for set-up and people to serve as greeters and guides (shepherds). Please contact them (phone: 207-4878 or e-mail: jeffcrd@aol.com) to offer your services. They will be most grateful.

Most importantly, please plan to visit the Living Nativity this Christmas as a family. And consider inviting friends to join you, particularly those who may desire to reconnect with the real meaning of Christmas. It will be a beautiful, enriching experience for them and for you.



Prepare for the Coming of Christ!

An Evening of Reflection with Mother Olga
Sunday, December 8: 7:00 pm in the Church

Donate to those in Need this Christmas
Parish Christmas Gift Collection
after all Masses December 7 and 8
Family-to-Family Christmas: December 10

Family Faith Formation Children's Advent Pageant
Saturday, December 14: 9:15 am in the Church

Advent Celebration for Children
Saturday, December 14: 11:00 am in the Ministry Center Gym

Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with us
Parish Service: Monday, December 16, at 7:00 pm

Bambinelli Sunday - Blessing of the Baby Jesus from your Manger
During each Mass on December 14 and 15

Celebrate Christ's Birth with a Walk-Through Living Nativity
December 26 and 27: 7:00 pm beginning in the Gathering Room



Grief & Loss during the Holidays

The Grief and Loss Ministry is offered to all who are struggling with the death of loved ones, loss of marriages through death, separation or divorce, loss of job or any other of life's losses. Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month, 7:00 to 8:30 pm in Gathering Room 1. Christmas is often an especially difficult time to cope with loss while the world is telling you to be happy. Please join us for "Coping with Grief/Loss during the Holidays" at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, December 4, to find the support you need and deserve.

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

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

(Not a Holy Day of Obligation)

Monday, December 9

Regular Mass Schedule: 7:00 am, 8:00 am, 12 noon

Parish Advent Penance Service

Monday, December 16: 7:00 pm

Christmas Eve Masses

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

6:00 pm in the Church

Midnight Mass in the Church

Christmas Day Masses

Regular Mass Schedule: 8:00 am, 9:30 am, 11:00 am, 12:30 pm, 4:30 pm

New Year's Masses

Tuesday, December 31: 5:30 pm Vigil Mass

Wednesday, January 1, 2014: 7:00 am, 8:00 am, 12 noon



SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES



Are you looking for a way to use your God-given talents? Or maybe you are feeling a strong urge to give to those in need this Advent? We invite you to participate in our service



opportunities this Advent as you and your families prepare for the coming of Christ! Our offerings range from “adopting” a family in our Family-to-Family Christmas program, simply donating a single gift to our Christmas Manger gift-giving program, or volunteering in our Living Nativity. Please see page 4 of this publication for a listing of dates, and be sure to visit our website at www.stgregs.org

to see how you and your family can extend the love of Christ to those in need this Christmas!



Rebuilt: The Growth of a Parish

By William Grunert

“Rebuilt,” a book written by Fr. Michael White and lay associate Tom Corcoran, describes the rejuvenation of a Catholic parish, Church of the Nativity, in Timonium, Md. At Fr. Joe’s urging, this book has been read by the pastoral and administrative staff as well as a number of parishioners at St. Gregory’s. *Spirit & Life* met with Fr. Joe to get his impressions of this book and how it may relate to the growth and direction of St. Gregory’s. Fr. Joe’s comments:

I have known Fr. White since our time together at the North American College in Rome. When he became pastor of Church of the Nativity, he inherited a traditional parish of the 1960s – in a “maintenance mode” and resistant to change. Through a rather extensive “deconstruction/reconstruction” process extending over a number of years, the parish has grown from approximately 600 families to its current 3,000 families. How has this happened? Parish priority changed from a maintenance mode to an evangelizing mode. Parishioners are challenged to grow in their faith and discipleship and work toward making new disciples (evangelizing).

Rather than the deconstruct/construct process used at Church of the Nativity, our growth at St. Gregory’s has been more evolutionary in nature, i.e., building on what we already have in place. Many of the strategies discussed in “Rebuilt” are continually being addressed at St. Gregory’s. To cite a few examples:

Communications: Modern technology can reach many people very quickly, and is used effectively to get our message out to our parish community and beyond. Video-streaming of our liturgies and related parish

events has literally reached around the world. E-mail and text messaging with over 500 young adults, away at college or working outside the Buffalo area, is an added connection to their parish and their faith.

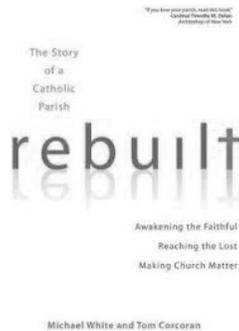
Liturgies: Our liturgies, particularly the weekend Masses, include music that invites parishioner participation and homilies that are warm, personal, and strongly reinforce the Gospel message. Special liturgies (weddings; funerals), prayer groups and the Adoration chapel can be powerful influences and a way to reconnect people with the Church.

Small faith communities: Many of our over-85 ministries function as small faith communities within our parish, allowing for in-depth discussion and action focused on specific issues. The work of these groups profoundly affects our parish community and all who are “touched” by them.

Finally, as a parish community, we must:

1. Be diligent in sustaining and growing what we have: Liturgy; Family Faith Formation; School; Ministry
2. “Get out of the pews” - get involved with service ministry, and give expression to our faith.
3. Adopt an “evangelizing attitude.” How much do you talk about your faith; your parish? Do you love it enough to talk about it to others?
4. Evangelize – reach out to the “unchurched,” those who are disenchanting and staying away. How do we do this?

- Don’t overlook the simple things.
- Use what we already have.
- ALL ARE WELCOME!



Coming Soon to www.stgregs.org: Spirit & Life Newsfeed!

With a cost-saving reduction from six to four print issues of *Spirit & Life* per year, we are looking to increase our ability to communicate all of the good things going on at St. Gregory’s through our website. To this end, we will be starting a “newsfeed” on ministries, offices, functions and folks at St. Gregory’s designed to share news (of course), information, ideas, reflections, photos, needs, i.e. celebrate the life of our parish family.

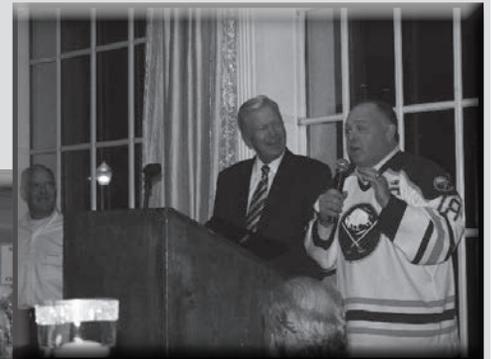
We will be starting small with a few ministries, but we plan to expand step-by-step by offering space to every facet of life at St. Gregory’s parish faith community. The hope is to have everything from articles on upcoming retreat speakers to recipes for that delicious coffee cake you had at last week’s MOMS meeting. In short, to have a more interactive and timely window into the Spirit & Life of St. Gregory’s!

If you are interested in submitting something for your ministry or office, please contact Suellen Brewster at sbrewster1@verizon.net or 565-9321. Thank you!

Success at the 15th Annual Great Dinner Auction:

The Crystal Ball

The 15th Annual Dinner Auction was held on Saturday, October 26 at Samuel's Grande Manor. In keeping with anniversary traditions, the *Crystal Ball* was elegantly chaired by Jody & Mary Lomeo and Michael & Amy Gilbert. The night, filled with silent and live auction and dancing to music by Joy Ryde and the Hitmen Horns, was a huge success! Host Danny Gare was the guest auctioneer and Fr. Joe Gatto was the Fund-an-Item auctioneer. The night raised money for our Parish and School and its many Ministries. A special fund was solicited for laptops and iPads for the classrooms in the school. Overall, the evening was a brilliant success thanks to your support!



Encouragement for Parents with Young Children in Church

In a recent post to her blog (<http://www.iamtotallythatmom.blogspot.com/>) Jamie Bruesehoff encourages parents of young children, saying:

You are doing something really, really important. I know it's not easy. I see you with your arms overflowing, and I know you came to church already tired. Parenting is tiring. Really tiring. I watch you bounce and sway trying to keep the baby quiet, juggling the infant car seat and the diaper bag as you find a seat. I see you wince as your child cries. I see you anxiously pull things out of your bag of tricks to try to quiet them.

...When you are here, the church is filled with a joyful noise. When you are here, the Body of Christ is more fully present...When you are here, I have hope that these pews won't be empty in 10 years when your kids are old enough to sit quietly and behave in worship. I know that they are learning how and why we worship now, before it's too late. They are learning that worship is important.

To those of us who are not caring for young children while we worship, please be charitable. We do not want sterile, empty pews. Jesus said, "Let the children come to me." But He didn't say "only when they are quiet and well behaved."

If we truly are a people of life, we need to encourage and assist our young families in the difficult and most important work they do: bringing their children to Mass. So please refrain from the unkind glances; offer a prayer for the tired mom and dad instead. One of those active little boys or girls may bring you a Sacrament one day.



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Saint Gregory the Great Catholic Church

What's Inside This Issue?

- Support for Parents with Young Kids in Church
- Upcoming Service Opportunities
- Advent Opportunities to Grow in Your Faith
- Christmas Mass Schedule

Mark Your Calendar For These Upcoming Events:

December

- 4 - *Grief and the Holidays Presentation*
- 7, 8 - *Parish Christmas Gift Collection*
- 8 - *Advent Evening of Reflection with Mother Olga*
- 10 - *Family-to-Family Christmas Donations*
- 14 - *Children's Advent Pageant*
- 14 - *Advent Celebration for Children*
- 16 - *Advent Penance Service*
- 26, 27 - *Living Nativity*

January

- 18, 19 - *Anniversary of Roe v. Wade*
- 26 - *School Open House*
- 26 - *12th Anniversary of Perpetual Adoration*

February

- 2 - *Scout Sunday*
- 8, 9 - *Heart-to-Heart Food Drive*
- 9 - *HSA Spaghetti Dinner*
- 16 - *Pancake Breakfast*
- 18,20 - *Marriage Preparation Sessions #1 and #2*

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