



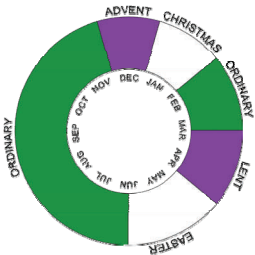
The Canticle

Archdiocese of Boston - Dracut, MA



Lent / Easter 2007

**Liturgical
Year
Calendar**



We are in the Seasons of
Lent / Easter

Repent! For the Kingdom of God is at hand...

- ✠ Lent—forty days before Easter, from Ash Wednesday to Holy Thursday afternoon.
- ✠ Triduum—The Great Three Days. The Triduum begins on the evening of Holy Thursday and continues until the evening of Easter Sunday.
- ✠ Easter—fifty days from Easter Sunday until Pentecost.

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“St. Francis Parish Outreach” *Charity Begins At Home But Spreads Throughout Our Community*

*By
Debbie Hovanasian*
St. Francis Parish enjoys a reputation for being welcoming, vibrant, caring and active -- both within our own church community and outside.

Within our community, there is a high level of volunteerism; outside our community, there is active outreach, with a growing number of opportunities for God to work through the people of St. Francis to care for His people in need.

The enthusiastic response from our parish community to any request for volunteers for outreach programs reflects well the example of our patron saint, St. Francis of Assisi, who passionately lived out the teachings of Christ to help the poor and feed the hungry.

COR UNUM MEAL CENTER

The latest example of our outreach is the Cor Unum Meal Center, which opened in September at St. Patrick Church in Law-

rence to feed the many hungry families in one of the poorest cities in the country.

Due to an amazing response to a request for volunteers, especially for the 4:00 p.m. start time, we currently we have four teams of 9 or 10 parishioners each, covering every Thursday night of the month.

And others are still coming forward -- prayer groups that want to sign on together, Florida winter residents who want to volunteer when they return, entire families who want to serve together.

But the best part? They *really want to do it.*

Our Cor Unum volunteers represent many vocations, including our own pastor, teachers, nurses, a fire chief, business owners, social workers, office workers, executives, retirees, even a numismatist!

Most work all day and come directly to Cor Unum, many getting dispensation to leave work early to volunteer their time.

As the coordinator of this volunteer effort, my pride in watching our parish family in action is tremendous.

On a recent Thursday evening, as I served plates of food from the kitchen, our wait staff parishioners came to the window smiling, laughing, joking.

Their joy in helping others showed on their faces and their energy levels never dimmed.

Volunteers busing tables passed by regularly, carrying heavy bins of dirty dishes to the dishwasher and prepping tables for more guests. They could have been anywhere else doing anything else, but they chose to be at Cor Unum, serving those who need it most.

(Continued on Page 5)





By
Michael K. Cockrell
 Editor-in-Chief

Easter for Catholics is unlike Easter for most people. It is a Holy Day, not merely a holiday characterized by pink bunnies, flowered bonnets, brightly-colored wicker baskets, or chocolate eggs.

For Catholics, Easter is described as *“the single most unitive”* feast of the entire liturgical year. “Unitive” in the sense that the singular mission and message of that one weekend culminates in the concept of oneness; of union... between Heaven and Earth; between The Old Testament and The New; of Condemnation and Resurrection and, by extension, the union or perhaps more correctly the re-union of God with Man.

Indeed, Easter is the core event that characterizes our faith and validates what we believe as Catholics that, like Jesus, we have hope that, through His Resurrection, we too shall rise again if we have persevered in faith and love for one another.

We might imagine that this whole notion was daunting and indeed unnerving to the understanding of Jesus’ disciples.

Consider the scene first looked upon by Mary Magdalene on that first Easter...

She; who stood in sight of the Cross and watched as Jesus breathed His last; who had gone to the place where the body of Jesus was to have been laid in death and found that place empty; first believed the worst ... that His body had been stolen. Was she or the other Apostles aware that Joseph of Arimathea had gone to Pilate

and had asked him for Jesus’ body when it had been taken down from the Cross? We can’t know for sure, but based on her reaction following her discovery, it is unlikely that she, or the other Apostles, had knowledge of this arrangement between Joseph of Arimathea and Pilate.

But their ominous speculation was quickly allayed by an angel (one of two who were present); who seeing their confusion concerning what had happened, reassured them by asking, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? The one you seek is not here!” “He Is Risen!” (*loc. cit. : Luke 24; Vs. 6-12*)

And when Peter and John likewise came to the tomb at Mary’s urging, bent down and peered in to find an empty tomb, they too believed the worst had happened.

In reality, the opposite was true--the best had happened... just as Jesus had said it would and the angel had confirmed it! His body had not been stolen after all, but was raised! Raised from the dead!

Has the optimism of this message been lost on us?

Is it harder for us to accept the reality evidenced by the Resurrection than it was for the Apostles and other contemporaries of Jesus’ time? To our modern ways, is it enlightened or cynical to consider, embrace, and ultimately be content knowing that the single most unselfish act of one man sacrificing his life to save, from the hopeless finality of the grave, every other life that had gone before, existed in His time, or would exist far into the future?

God doesn’t expect any of us to die as

Christ died, but He does want us to live as Christ lived...spending our time and giving our talents and resources as gifts freely and in imitation of the One who gives us all the good gifts we need to live a life of loving service.

To paraphrase Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), “[We]...should live our lives with so much joy that even the undertaker should shed a tear upon hearing of our passing.”

For Catholics, the tears and blood of Good Friday shed for the expiation of sin are the same tears and blood that wash us clean in the triumph over death in The Resurrection of Easter Sunday where Death has no sting and the grave; no final victory!

Hmmm...I think I’m going to need a bigger basket to hold this gift which is not only better for the waistline, but sweeter for the soul as well!

In this issue we have chosen to demonstrate and illustrate the vibrancy of our parish outreach as we strive to live out the mandate of loving service that both imitates and gives meaning to our actions to build up God’s Kingdom.

Perhaps you will recognize yourself or others in your acquaintance assisting us in that mission as you peruse this issue.

We hope you do! And I would like to extend to all who are reading this, a Happy and Blessed Easter!

Alleluia! He Is Risen !

We should live like we believe it’s true. Why? Because that’s what Easter is.. for Catholics!

The Canticle

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Published quarterly with additional supplements during Christmas and Easter



By
Deacon John C. Hunt Jr.

The Diaconate: Ministry of Service and Charity



The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes the nature of Orders and what constitutes diaconal service in the following terms: "Deacons share in Christ's mission and grace in a special way."

The sacrament of Holy Orders marks them with an imprint (character) which cannot be removed and which configures them to Christ, who made himself the 'deacon' or servant of all. Among other tasks, it is the task of the deacons to assist the Bishop and priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries, above all the Eucharist, in the distribution of Holy Communion, in assisting at and blessing marriages, in the proclamation of the Gospel and preaching, in presiding over funerals, blessing sacramentals and in dedicating themselves to the various ministries of charity.

Dedicated to the works of charity and functions of administration, deacons should recall the admonition of St. Polycarp: "Let them be merciful and zealous, and let them walk according to the truth of the Lord who became servant of all." (Lumen Gentium, #29)

The ministry of a deacon is similar to but different from that of a priest or bishop. A deacon is ordained and missioned by Christ through the bishop to minister to the needy and the poor and to be a minister of Word and Sacrament, working in obedience to his bishop and in close fraternal cooperation with priests. While all Christians are called to serve others, the deacon is an official sign of this service, and he solemnly promises to be a living example of such service for others.

The ministry of Deacons is precisely to devote themselves to works of charity and to the service of those in need of comfort and help. They are bound by "ordination" not only to carry out "Works

of spiritual and temporal mercy", but also to make themselves the voice – with the ministry of preaching – of those who have no voice in society, to assume the defense of the weak and the oppressed, and to promote the cause of social justice.

I have heard many times from my friends who are priests and other priests I have known in my life when they mentioned the priests who were very instrumental in their vocations as priests. I have had a similar experience with my vocation as a deacon. Many great priests have been an inspiration in my life growing up in the former St. Peter's Parish in Lowell. I felt called by the Lord to serve his people since a very young age, by getting involved in parish and civil activities.

In the summer of 1980, I went to work in the section of New York called the Bronx.

I had the great privilege of working with some wonderful priests from the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

This is the same religious order that assists us at St. Francis with great priests like Fathers Gagnon, Fillion and Sheehan.

While in the Bronx, I worked with the Sisters from the Missionaries of Charity who were working with children from the local housing projects, in the evening at soup kitchens that supplied a nice hot meal for those among us who were homeless.

It was then that I had one of the greatest blessings in my life. I had the great honor of meeting and speaking with Mother Theresa of Calcutta. She was the perfect example of what *diaconia* (service) was all about.

I came home that summer with a strong desire to accomplish the service of charity. Being 20 years old at the time, I inquired into the Permanent diaconate, and learned that I needed to be 35 years old at the time of ordination. Guess what? I

was too young. However, that vocational call never left me, and it was then that I met a deacon who was one of the strongest influences in my life. His name was Deacon Donald LePage. Deacon Don was a man of prayer and possessed a great love for the church. I loved his sense of humor, his joy, and his great dedication to his diaconal call. Being in his presence filled my heart with great joy.

Before my ordination, Deacon Don became ill with cancer and he eventually went home to the Lord.

The day of ordination was filled with great happiness; however, there was an absence that I felt, when I noticed his wife Theresa sitting in the Cathedral without her husband, and the deacon that I wanted to vest me for the first time as deacon would not be there. Seeing Theresa reminded me how great a deacon he was. Deacon Don was a man of charity and service. I truly miss him.

To accomplish the service of charity in all its aspects, firmness, a spirit of sacrifice and a heroic degree of love are necessary: to obtain these virtues from God, we must have frequent recourse to prayer. Praying the Liturgy of the Hours daily for the church as a whole, especially for Fr. Bob Blaney and all the parishioners is something required by ordination.

I am honored to be working with such wonderful priests especially Fr. Blaney who sets such a great example to the importance of prayer.

Please pray to the patron of our parish – St. Francis of Assisi, deacon, that I may be a faithful, loving and holy deacon to serve you.



Lenten Sacrifice — Deprivation With Noble Intention

By

Rev. Robert M. Blaney

Pastor

Typically, we look to the season of Lent from the “winter” side of Ash Wednesday.

What are we going to give up? What extras will I do for God?

Although such questions are important, we can feel a sense of uneasiness as the day of ashes approaches, wondering if we have the perseverance to hold out until Easter. The noble task of sacrifice can seem daunting.

At the same time, it is easy to lose focus. That is, that our sacrifices have a purpose beyond themselves. The purpose will only be seen if we look at Lent from the spring side of Ash Wednesday.

In preparing for Lent this year, might I suggest that you start not with Ash Wednesday, but with Easter, then work backwards.

After all, this is how the season of Lent was invented to begin with.

The celebration of the Lord’s Resurrection at Easter was the highlight of the year for early Christians.

As the feast grew over the generations, our ancestors in the faith recognized the need for a period of preparation for Easter.

This began with time of intense prayer for those who were preparing for Baptism. Baptisms normally took place only at Easter.

As the centuries progressed, this period of preparation for Baptism shifted focus to a time for conversion for those already baptized.

This period was as short as a few days and as long as a couple of months.

Somewhere in the middle ages, the Church settled on a period of six weeks, which we now call Lent (meaning spring-time).

Starting with Easter then, what do you need to do to make that day (and days to

follow) a celebration of your faith in the Risen Christ? It would seem to me that you begin with how you will celebrate the day. Where and when will you share the Eucharist that day? Will you have a family meal? Who will be there? To help with the preparation of the feast, you need to have a period of fasting, where we give something up, or sacrifice something pleasurable, to intensify the atmosphere of feasting. Many people give up some favorite food for Lent, or desserts all together. We need not only fast from food, but from favorite activities like watching TV, going to the movies, going out to eat, video games, going to the mall. By depriving our selves of these enjoyable things, we sensitize ourselves to those who are deprived of basic life resources and also to our own need for God to provide for us. Living each day indulging in everything makes us think that we don’t need God. The practice of fasting during Lent helps to teach our mind and heart that without God, we are nothing.

Along with fasting, another important aspect of Lent is prayer. A lot of us pray everyday. How much more praying can we do? I don’t think there is a satisfactory answer to this question. The point is that during Lent we are asked by the Church to increase our prayer.

There are many ways to do this: daily Mass (or Mass more often than Sunday), making a personal or parish-wide retreat, adopting a devotion, such as the Rosary, Divine Mercy chaplet or Stations of the Cross, or making it a point to visit a Church during the week for quiet time before the Blessed Sacrament.

The only effect of prayer is that we draw closer to God.

The third practice or discipline the Church asks us to do during Lent is give alms, that is, to care for the poor.

Typically, the way this works is that whatever money is saved by our Lenten fasting is given to someone who needs it.

In doing this, our sacrifices are not in vain, but actually benefit someone else. If I give up going to the movies during Lent, the money I save from not going to the movies I give to a charity. At our parish we usually adopt a common charity to benefit from our fasting. Last year we gave our proceeds to the Archdiocese of New Orleans to help with parishes which suffered damage from the storm. The year before that, we gave to Catholic Relief Services to help care for the victims of the tsunami.

This year we will give our offering to the Heifer project. This non-profit organization raises funds to buy livestock for needy families in developing nations. For \$500, we could buy a cow for a family which would provide gallons of milk each day for their offspring. This may sound trivial, but such a gift would actually raise the economic status of a family. Considering that we gave almost \$10,000 last year for hurricane relief, we could do a lot of good for several families by donating to this effort.

Whilst doing all this, we must always keep before us Easter.

Without Easter, Lent means nothing. More dramatically stated, if Christ had not been raised from the dead, then our faith is in vain.

I encourage all the families of the parish to participate in the liturgies of *The Sacred Triduum*: Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday, Service of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday and Solemn Vigil of Easter on the eve of Easter.

These three liturgies are the highlight of the Church’s year, and thus of everything we do as a parish community.

Plan your calendar now to let yourself and your family experience these solemn events.



“St. Francis Parish Outreach”

(Continued from Page 1)

While Cor Unum is just one of several outreach programs at St. Francis Parish, it serves as a wonderful example of the good things that can happen when people put the needs of others above their own; work together as a team; and help lighten the burdens of those who -- for any number of reasons -- are in need of a warm welcome, a smiling face and a hot, nutritious meal.

LAZARUS HOUSE

Under the direction of Janice Ledbetter, our 10th graders in the confirmation program have been learning about those who are less fortunate than they are through a required community service project at Lazarus House in Lawrence, a homeless shelter for families, single people, men, women, teens and children.

Lazarus House operates a Christian-based program where guests are allowed to stay up to six months -- considered enough time to acquire employment, save some money and find a place to live, Ledbetter said. All guests must be in school or working.

St. Francis Parish is assigned to the third Saturday of each month, with programs running all year long. While at the shelter, our confirmation students -- usually about seven per visit -- assist with the evening meal, including cooking, serving and clean-up. They are also encouraged to interact with the children at the shelter, Ledbetter said.

The outreach program appears to be successfully tapping into the students' compassion and sense of service to those in need.

“Most kids express the desire to go back,” Ledbetter said. “For the most part, the kids seem to really like the experience. It certainly opens their eyes to what it is like to be less fortunate. It's a very rewarding experience.”

HOUSE OF HOPE

Joanna Bazzinotti, coordinator of our parish's outreach program at Lowell's House of Hope -- an emergency shelter for homeless families -- believes that St. Francis has “the most amazing young people. I am honored to work beside them in our Project Compassion Mission at the House of Hope.”

A group of four to six of our young people accompany Bazzinotti every other Sunday to House of Hope, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Some interact with the resident children in the group playroom (giving the mothers a break), while the others cook a full breakfast of pancakes, bacon, eggs and toast, or start lunch preparation.

“We try to serve everyone that comes to us a little treat,” said Bazzanotti. “We clean up all dishes, work area, and eating areas, as well as the playroom before we leave.”

Bazzanotti adds that “our wonderful young students” have also taken on a big initiative to gather school supplies for the children, and have organized a big cookie bake. The students brought ingredients for the cookies, and later baked plates of cookies for the children to eat and decorate; other students made chocolate chip pancakes.

“The residents and staff were so happy,” said Bazzanotti.

The group also donated a large white board to the little “school” that the older students run -- affectionately named the Hope Charter School.

“The most amazing part is to see the children interact with one another and the residents. God is there...this is truly the work of Jesus,” said Bazzinotti. “From His wishes to our hands, how fortunate are we to have this ongoing effort to pray with Jesus. We talk about compassion and love, grace and goodness on our ride over; and on the way back we laugh about funny stories -- sweet kids and togetherness. Most of them want to come back again, some of them every week. God is good.”

LOWELL TRANSITIONAL LIVING CENTER — MIDDLESEX SHELTER

For several years now, St. Francis parishioners have been providing outreach at the Middlesex Shelter, now called the Lowell Transitional Living Center. The center is a nonprofit temporary shelter for single adult homeless men and women.

Lorraine Gorby coordinates a group of St. Francis volunteers -- about 14 in total -- to serve in groups of three every fourth Tuesday of the month. The group meets in the St. Francis parking lot and leaves together to help serve, says Gorby.

From 5:30 to 6:45, the trio of volunteers works in the kitchen, serving up plates of hot, nutritious food -- which is prepared earlier by staff members and other volunteers -- to the residents.

“This past Tuesday we served about 150 people who are always very appreciative of our services,” said Gorby. “I know that we all feel that volunteering is great for the heart, especially when we are able to help other people who are in need.”

For more information on any of the above volunteer activities, please call the office at 978-452-6611.

Did You Know?

St. Francis has a vibrant youth group for all students of Jr. High age! Come check us out! We go on fun trips like snow tubing, do outreach work, pray together and have fun. We meet in the Conference Room in the Parish Hall on select Saturday evenings from 5-7pm.

Our next meeting dates are:
March 3, 17 and 31, as well as April 14 and 28.

Join us!

Parish
Pastoral
Corner

Looking Inward, Reaching Outward

By

Chuck Putney

Parish Pastoral Council member

Since joining the parish, my wife Karen and I have been struck by the love, generosity, and abundant talents of the people that comprise the St. Francis Parish family. These feelings have been strongly affirmed by my experiences as a new member of Parish Pastoral Council, where I have encountered a wonderful sense of community (including friendship, humor, and honesty) and a sincere concern for where we are as a parish and where we are headed. St. Francis has been blessed with a beautiful church, a vibrant parish, a wonderful pastor, and a talented leadership and staff, all of which have enabled us to forge many strong programs/ministries and a strong sense of family.

In the spirit of preparing for the Resurrection of Christ, Lent is an opportune time to look inward, both as individuals and as a parish, at our failings and weaknesses, and identify where and how we can do better. In my short time on the Council, I have witnessed the degree to which the Pastoral Council takes its role and responsibilities to heart. We have grappled with numerous issues/questions, and are working to identify more that will make us stronger as a parish, including:

- How can we, as individuals and as a Parish, reach out to those who may feel alienated by the Church, or who may not feel welcomed by the parish?
- How can we come together in a meaningful way as a faith-centered community?
- How can we reach out to the greater community?
- How can we better serve the various groups that make up our parish?
- How can we ensure that the parish has the financial resources to best fulfill our mission and our ministries, today and well into the future?

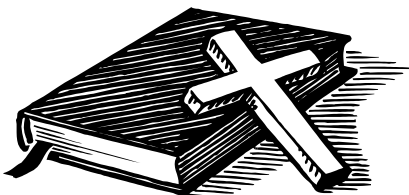
Sometimes the answers are simple and can be achieved with additional focus and minimal effort. Sometimes the answers are much more complicated and need to be addressed over the long-term. And sometimes there are no immediate answers (at least that we can discern), although we have begun several important dialogues that will have an important impact on our parish.

As a Council, we are attempting to embrace a more visible role and presence at parish events, where we will be identifiable as Council members by nametags. (And please, by all means, if you see me wearing the nametag afterward at the grocery store or another random place, please remind me to remove it.)

As we continue to build on the strengths of our parish and address our weaknesses, I encourage you to reach out to me and other Parish Council members (whose names are listed in the weekly bulletin) with your thoughts, concerns, ideas, and insights (or simply to say "Hello.")

Continuing to look inward and to reach outward will help as we seek to best serve Christ, our parish, and each other.

Here's to a reflective Lent!!



St. Francis Parish Lenten Retreat

March 19-22, 2007

"What Return Can I Make?"

Receive ✞ Return ✞ Reconcile ✞ Rejoice

There will be a Penance Service on the Wednesday evening, March 21st.

Join us in the Church each night at 7 p.m. as we prayerfully explore what we can give to the Lord during this holy season of Lent.

“The Check’s in the Mail”—

Reflecting on Our Financial Commitment to Our Parish



By
Chuck Putney

This January, as part of our role as one of the leadership couples in the Pre-Cana marriage preparation program, my wife and I were responsible for giving a talk to the engaged couples on financial communication (which my father-in-law cleverly dubbed “the sermon on the amount”).

As a part of the discussion, we distributed a copy of our household budget to illustrate our various expenses and how much we allotted to cover them. While we do a pretty good job of budgeting and saving, we were somewhat embarrassed to be giving out the relatively paltry amount we earmark for charitable giving. Let’s just say that it’s well below the 10% called for by tithing and leave it at that. It was particularly embarrassing to me personally, seeing as I’m serving on a working committee to explore ways to improve the parish’s offertory collection program.

Although we do participate in the envelope program, we do so inconsistently. Too often it’s an afterthought, done without much reflection or sacrifice. In recent weeks, for a variety of reasons, we have been forced to further reflect on our financial commitment to our parish and ask ourselves if we are, in fact, doing enough to support the programs

and infrastructure that enable St. Francis Parish to provide the pastoral care that is essential for a vibrant, faith-based community.

A Lenten Call to Action...(actually, A Lenten Call to Reflection and Potential Action)

While St. Francis Parish is relatively financially healthy, it does experience cash flow problems and certain financial limitations. If we are to continue to grow and thrive, we need to increase the amount of the offertory. Lent offers a wonderful opportunity to reflect on our faith lives in a number of areas. Hopefully, one of the areas for reflection is how well we fulfill our financial obligation to our parish. Do we take this commitment seriously and consider it prayerfully in the context of the many blessings we receive, individually and as a community?

I am asking you, during Lent, to look inward and seriously consider your financial commitment to the parish. This isn’t about how much you are giving.... well, ok, a large part of it is, because as a parish we rely on these donations to fulfill the mission of the church. But it’s also about the manner in which you give – the thought and careful discernment that goes into your commitment. While many have probably already gone through this process and are doing what they can, there’s a concern that

many may be treating the offertory as an afterthought, giving what’s left over.

One immediate step we can take during Lent is to increase participation in the envelope system. A fraction of registered parishioners utilize this system, which is an important component of parish support and enables the church to more effectively track offertory income and provide a better financial picture of the parish. If you are not signed up to use the envelope system, please consider doing so, using it as a vehicle to budget and plan your donations – whether you make a donation once a week, once a month, or on a different payment schedule. And if you are signed up to use envelopes but do so haphazardly and inconsistently (as my wife and I have done in the past), please consider using them more consistently as a means to carefully consider the amount and frequency of your donations. During Lent, watch the bulletin for further information on how to sign up for the envelope system, or simply inquire in the office.

New Offertory Guidelines for 2007

Beginning this year, the IRS has informed us that only those who use offertory envelopes will receive a statement of their offering. Thus, it is now necessary to use the envelopes system in order to receive tax credit. Thank you for your support!



Spotlight On...

The Marriage Preparation Program

The Marriage Preparation Program, also called Pre-Cana, is a workshop for engaged couples intending a sacramental marriage in the Church.



The sessions focus on communication, finances, moral decision making, Natural Family Planning, parenting, and other issues intended for the engaged couples to discuss before their marriage.

Here at St. Francis, eight engaged couples recently completed our three-session program with the help of our Pastor and four leader couples, all with varying amounts of years of marital experience.

The leader couples gave talks and guided the engaged couples in their discussions as well as provided wisdom and humor on the many facets of married life. It is important for us, as Christians, to provide guidance and support to those who are bold enough to have the desire to want to be married before God and His church.

After such a successful session, we pray for our engaged couples as they begin their journey of life together!

Congratulations to our engaged couples who recently completed Pre Cana!

John Daigle & Amanda Guthrie-Rob Laferriere & Danielle Way-Brian Seidl & Robyn Whalen-Melissa Gallant & Patrick O’Brien-Christine Rogers & Eric Johnson-Michelle Jones & Greg Champagne-Meghan Connolly & Derek Walsh-Rebecca Marcotte & Andrew Hackett

Mark Your Calendars for Upcoming St. Francis Parish Events!

St. Patrick's Day Celebration

Saturday, March 17th

Come wear your green and join the festivities from 7-11 pm in the Parish Hall as we celebrate Saint Patrick's Day! We will have light refreshments, including traditional corned beef sandwiches. Beer and wine will also be served.

"Chapter 11" featuring Dave Keefe, Andy Garside and Brian Weeks will provide musical entertainment. Door prizes and a 50/50 raffle. Watch bulletin for ticket sales. Tickets are \$10 each. *Tickets will not be available at the door.*



Reminder to all
Children and Religious
Education Students:

Children's Prayer Service With Ashes



*Wednesday, February 21, 2007
4pm*

Looking for a creative way to help out your Parish?

The Canticle is looking for writers, photographers, and anyone else willing to help with the output of our future issues. If you have a talent that you'd like to share with us, e-mail Mike Cockrell at mkcockrell@comcast.net.



Pam Stenzel
Is coming to tell
you...
"Sex Has A Price
Tag!"

March 18th at
3:00pm and 5:00pm
St. Francis

All Confirmation students will attend the 5pm session!

(Even bring a friend!)

7th & 8th Grade students may attend with their parents!

A \$5 donation is suggested.

“Señor’s Goat”: *A Reflection on the Heifer Project*

By
Jessica Smith



Recently at our Parish staff meeting, Fr. Blaney mentioned that, as a Lenten offering this year, our parish would be donating all monies collected to the Heifer Project.

While the Project itself is not widely known, I myself was immediately transported to a tiny mountain village in Peru approximately eight years ago.

Along with other students from my college, I spent ten days that year during Spring Break doing various mission work in and around Chulucanas, an extremely small and very poor village hundreds of miles from the closest major city.

I remember that as I climbed the steep, rocky path with my schoolmates to another village that morning, I was already a bit shaken.

I had just crossed a raging river in an antiquated Jeep, which had promptly stalled smack in the middle of the water at the river’s deepest part.

Right before plunging heartily into the water, I called to the guide in his native tongue, “Are we crossing in...this?” indicating our broken-down vehicle, which had no roof or doors, let alone reliable tires.

“Of course!” he called back to me. “Let’s go!” with a shake of his fist. True to my forebodings, our Jeep was quickly flooded, and we began to float as the Jeep was being inundated. Clearly this had happened before.

Almost instantly, four men appeared at the side of the semi-submerged Jeep with a wooden raft and motioned for us to hop on.

Backpacks on our heads and prayers echoing in our minds, the other two

passengers and I climbed aboard and were led safely across just a few minutes later. I sat down on a rock to wring out my socks, and chatted with our guide. “What will we do today?” I asked him.

“Well,” he responded “you all must see Señor’s goat.”



“Oh yes!” chimed in a passerby, nodding vigorously. “Señor’s goat! And his pig as well!”

I was surprised, actually. It was

very uncommon for a person in a village the likes of which we were visiting to be able to afford livestock. Most people begged to get by; others lived off of what they could grow, which wasn’t much in mountainous, rocky soil.

The malnourishment was appalling. I towered over even the tallest man of the village. When that same man begged for a pair of shoes from us so that he could work in the fields to provide for his family without getting burns on the bottom of his feet from the heat-soaked soil, the only pair that fit him came from the most petite young girl in our group. She wore a size 5 shoe.

True to his word, the first place our guide took us on our journey that day was to see Señor’s goat. We were introduced to Señor and his wife as well as their five children.

They lived in a one-room house that can only be described as a mere shack, with the wife’s parents and another relative of the family. They welcomed us so warmly, and were eager to share with us the riches they’d been given

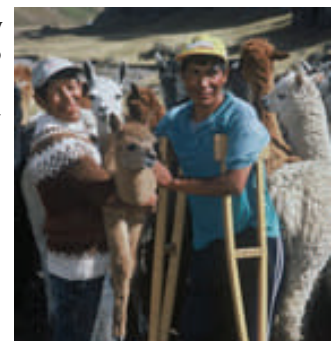
Around the back of their house, in a makeshift pen, was a dirty goat and the biggest pig I’d ever seen.

The guide told us that the family had been chosen to be part of the Heifer project, and had been gifted the year before with two goats and a pig. These animals were to help them provide milk for their families, breed offspring for trade, and to use as meat if need be. The goat in its pen was actually their third. They had managed to breed the two goats originally given to them, who were then sold off to help pay for the family’s needs. Though still poor and hungry, this family was thriving. Their children were strong and able to help their family work; their acquisition of livestock had made the father a sort of figurehead in the community. The next week, two other families were to be gifted with cows, with Señor himself showing them how to keep and care for the animals. These animals were not just livestock to these people. They were food, status, a source of morale for their tiny community, and most of all, hope. It was clear to me how important the Heifer Project’s mission was, however unconventional. Yet, here it was, played out before my eyes. A poor family thriving; a village coming together to help each other.

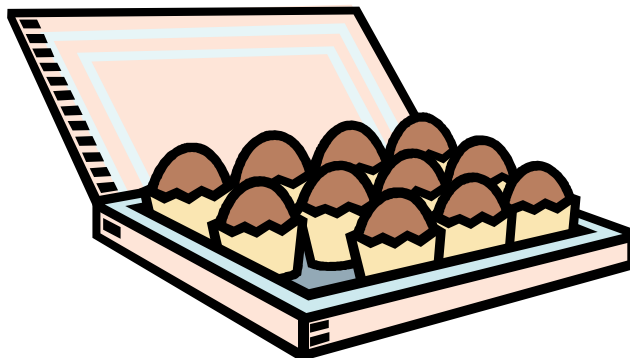
I was listening to the wife talk animatedly about caring for their animals when a classmate of mine stooped down to get a closer look at the pig. “Does it have a name?” she asked the oldest son. “Yes,” he said. “We call it ‘the pig’.” “But for us,” the wife broke in, “it has become our life.”

During this Lent, we have a chance to participate in that life. As we feel blessed for the things in our own lives that are life-giving, let us also

generously give life to others—rather, to a whole village—through the mission of the Heifer Project.



Chocolate for Lent



This Lent, indulge the soul!

cravings of your

A Lenten Journey for Women Only

March 1st, 8th, 15th & 29th

St. Dominic's Conference Room at 7:00 p.m.

Before we start our Lenten journey, we will gather together on "Fat Tuesday", February 20th at 6:30pm in the Parish Hall to watch the movie "Chocolat", starring Johnny Depp and Juliette Binoche, while feasting on chocolate treats! Please register by calling the Parish Office at (978) 452-6611.

Join us!



Boston Catholic Men's and Women's Conferences



Boston Convention and Exhibition Center

Men's: Saturday, March 17, 2007

Women's: Sunday, March 18, 2007

Tickets are available in the Parish Office for \$25 each

\$20 for students.

For more information on the flow of the day, excellent speakers and spiritual events, visit www.bostoncatholicmen.org or

www.bostoncatholicwomen.org



Generations of Faith Festival
“What do Catholics do that make them Catholic?”



*Join us on: April 21 from 4-7pm,
April 22 from 10am -1pm, April 24 from 5:30-
7:30pm, or April 26 from 5:30-7:30pm*

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