



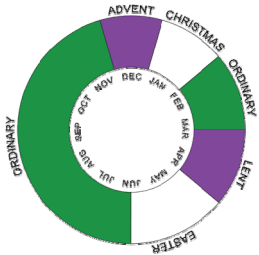
The Canticle

Archdiocese of Boston — Dracut, Massachusetts



Summer Supplement 2007

**Liturgical
Year
Calendar**



We are in ...
Ordinary Time

✠ Coming Next Issue:

- A look at our new and improved Baptismal Preparation Program
- What's happening with our Offertory Finance Committee
- A word from our Pastoral Associate and D.R.E., Kathy Long

...Plus much more!

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A Summer Journey

By
Collette Piché

We planned for months! The St. Francis Parish Council, along with other enthusiastic parishioners, planned an evening celebration under the stars. It was a night of giving thanks to all the parish volunteers who endlessly give of themselves to the parish.

On that June 23rd evening, the Feast of St. John the Baptist, a sunset Mass was celebrated by Father Bob Blaney. The beautiful candlelight Mass was a perfect beginning for an evening of gratitude. As St. John the Baptist once preached that *changes are to come*, so too the same words could be heard at St. Francis Parish, as the night of giving thanks was also a night of farewell to Father Blaney, our pastor of 5 ½ years.

As we gathered under the stars, surrounded by candles in the plaza, we were giving Father Blaney our best wishes for his new journey to St. Jerome's Parish in North Weymouth, MA.

The feelings of change and

growth in our parish began that weekend, for with our farewell came a welcome. We welcome our new pastor, Father Robert Connors, whom we will share with Ste. Marguerite D'Youville Parish located in Dracut. We also welcome Father Christopher Casey, the new Parochial Vicar and Father James Lyons, the Senior Priest in Residence, to our parish community.

We embrace our new journey with them!

ROAD TO CHANGES

On June 6th in the St. Francis Church Hall, the Parish Council, as well as the Parish Staff, the Finance Council and Development Council met for a Joint Meeting with Ste. Marguerite's Parish Council, Parish Staff and Finance Council. This was our first opportunity to meet Father Connors and Father Casey. Father Connors' focus was for us to get to know each other and to discuss the future of both parishes. It was clearly stated that we will remain as two separate

individual parishes sharing a pastor and a priest.

We quickly learned that our new parish leaders are very caring priests who want the best for both parishes.

One of the first items for discussion at the Joint Meeting was the location of residency for Fathers Connors, Casey and Lyons. With an open vote by a show of hands, it was decided that the priests will reside at St. Francis rectory.

Rev. Hervé Gagnon, OMI, Rev. Norman Fillion, OMI and Rev. William Sheehan, OMI will continue to celebrate Mass at St. Francis Parish. Deacon John Hunt will remain at St. Francis Parish as well.

The meeting ended with a spirit of commitment and community. It continues to be a positive commitment, combined with a spirit of faith.

(Continued on page 9)



Change and Growth

By

Michael K. Cockrell

Editor-in-Chief

Writing this column...the first of the new publication year, has been especially difficult and poignant for me this time.

Why? Because as I write this, it has been one week since my father died. Talk about change!

A lot can happen in a year's time in the life of a person and in the life of a parish ...

A year ago last July, my father and mother celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at a cottage owned by my great aunt on the shores of Deep Creek Lake in Maryland. There was laughter and singing and family and good food and liberal libation for all to enjoy.

This latest event had that too, but certain things had changed and I guess, however imperceptibly, came growth as well...growth in perspective, growth in awareness and growth in me as well.

Because, whereas before I was the eldest only son of my father, in some ways I have assumed his role, in his place and I hope in some recognizable sense, in his footsteps and in his honor and dignity as a man, a soldier, and a husband.

It was a little more than a year ago, too, that the parish sought to learn where growth was needed and changes sought via a questionnaire whose results appeared within these pages.

At that time I suggested that change is perceived by people in various ways...some loathe it, others embrace it; some think it a blessing; others, a curse, but none seem ambivalent in their feelings toward it. At least not those who have experienced it in the past or are in its throes now.

Such is the circumstance in which St. Francis Parish again finds itself. We have experienced growth and most recently along with that growth we have been confronted by changes.

We have bid farewell to our former pastor, Father Robert Blaney, and welcomed a new one, Father Bob Connors, in a style befitting our parish tradition.

We have said farewell to office staff and good friends and faithful parishioners, no longer in our midst who have left this world in death to receive the gift of eternal life in the next.

In this group, too, I count my own father, for he was also in this company.

And through it all we have grown, in faith and in number and like it or not, we have embraced change and found it warm and inviting in some ways we might not have imagined, even while we shied away from the uncertainty it initially created in us.

And let me be clear... I don't mean to imply that change for its own sake is neces-

sary or desirable without a good reason. Growth and maturity of thought and action are both good reasons, as is growth for improvement. It is at this crossroad which we find ourselves... do we turn back like Lot's wife and yearn to be where we were, frozen in place, or do we fix our gaze on a new horizon, and look forward to a new day and new opportunities for growth...in faith and service to one another as people and parish?

It is a question worth asking now and in the future if for no other reason than that of self-examination to assess where we have been, where we are now, and where we are going.

I know of no tiny acorn which eschews becoming an imposing oak; nor crawling tot who does not wish to try his legs and walk upright

For growth is change and change is proof of life.

Only that which is alive can grow and change and that is a good way to know if you are indeed alive.

I am still growing and changing because I am still living. And Saint Francis Parish, with God's guidance and the strength of the Holy Spirit living in its parishioners, will continue to do likewise.

The Canticle

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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.





A Note From Our Pastor

Fr. Bob Connors

The most frequent comment I received in joining St. Francis Parish was, “I don’t know how you are going to do it.”

That show of concern tells me that people are offering their prayers and support to the priests who are about to get into the “year” with all its activity. We appreciate it. I want to thank all the people of the parish for their wonderful welcome.

Moreover, it is important to acknowledge the excellent staff in the parish. We are about to begin a new way of “being parish” and “being pastor/priest” and our mutual cooperation and patience will be critical as we figure out “how we **are** going to do it.”

The most important challenge is equilibrium. With two independent parishes, the priests have to keep a balance between the two – not only in supporting the programs, but especially in maintaining a relationship with the people.

In these first few months, we are very aware of the effort involved in interacting consistently with two parishes.

Realistically, we have to spread ourselves thin. The examples are numerous. Recently, a woman asked me when I would say the 4pm Saturday liturgy again. I shared with her that with ten masses and my being assigned to two per weekend, I have the liturgy every five weeks. Coupled with the liturgical schedule is our trying to be “present” at the Sunday liturgies without running back and forth.

With time, we will establish a routine. However, as valuable as it is to be present, the most important thing is that you know **we are available**.

Sadness touches my heart when someone says, “I wanted to call you, but I know how busy you are.” PLEASE – we are here for you! Let us work out the problems of “busyness”. If you need to talk or meet, call and make an appointment.

This dual interaction will affect other changes as well. There will be more responsibility placed on the staffs and volun-

teers to keep the programs going.

This is as it should be.

As pastor, I want to encourage leadership and active involvement in the parish. Lots can happen without the priest present.

Good evangelization, effective programs, deep prayer moments and increased growth can happen without the priest present. We support you. We rely on the staffs, volunteers and the advice of the Parish Councils and Finance Committees to keep the parish running smoothly. After all, the parish is the people.

What is happening is a change in our ecclesiology – that is, how we understand “church” (and therefore, “parish”). When the parish was defined in terms of the priests, then “less” priestly presence meant “less” parish.

But if the parish is defined as “the people”, then a new and exciting dynamic can happen.

One element of this new arrangement of one pastor and two parishes is that it is a challenge to administration, interaction and balance – but that is what makes it exciting to me! How it will play out over the coming year, we will all have to wait and see and process the issues as they arise. I am confident that the good work of both parishes will continue – and I pray – grow even greater.

We will work as hard as we can, and I ask that you do as well.

Above all, we need a lot more people to come to the forefront and volunteer and get involved with their parish. Let me end my first contribution to “The Canticle” by sharing a few perspectives for this year...

The New Offices

With Fr. Chris and I here at the same time, we have done some reconfiguration of the parish hall in order to provide more office space. A minimal amount of space was taken from the hall, but a more efficient use of the space was gained.

The Religious Education Staff will occupy the new space. One thing is clear: the meeting space in the parish is minimal and we are going to have to think about future expansion as our parish continues to grow.

Liturgy

I am most impressed by the excellent organization of liturgical ministers in the parish. It really makes celebrating much better to have so many volunteering.

But ...we need more. Please consider volunteering to be a liturgical minister – Eucharist Minister, Lector, Altar Server, Sacristan or Choir member.

Over the coming months we will be attempting to establish a consistency of liturgical practice between the two parishes so that they are celebrated the same. In support of those offering their time and service, on October 1, we will have an Evening of Prayer and Practice for all our ministers. This will be a time to work out some of those details and make some changes.

For the time being, we are trying to keep the Mass schedule for both parishes, but I suspect in the near future that we may have to revise the schedule due to the amount of priests available.

Please know that we are doing our best to serve you as well as we can. That is always our goal. We are here for you.

If we can be of help, call us. If you have some suggestions and ideas, please call us.

It is your parish.

May God continue to bless you and the entire parish and its priests as we move forward together.

Fr. Bob Connors





A Farewell Note from Fr. Bob Blaney

(Editor's Note: Reprinted below is the text of a letter published in the bulletin reflecting on the experience had by Father Blaney at St. Francis Parish as he left to assume his new pastorate at St. Jerome Parish in Weymouth.

We included it because it comports with the "change and growth" perspective of this issue and at the same time serves as recollection of the various events from May onward that brought us to this time and place in our parish experience).—MKC

This past week I marked fifteen years of priesthood. Perhaps the greatest blessing of priesthood is the perpetual sense of gratitude I have for such a profound gift.

In the months leading up to ordination, with the excitement building, I wondered what life would be like when I didn't have ordination to look forward to.

It seemed that everything in the world was focused on ordination. I imagined that there would be a big let-down after it was over, and parish life would become routine without any excitement.

To my surprise, however, there has never been that letdown. Certainly, the novelty of priesthood has passed. (So much so that it's hard to remember what it was like not being a priest!) However, the excitement has turned into a deep passion. Before ordination, I *thought and felt* that God was calling me to the priesthood. After fifteen years, such thoughts and feelings have turned into a confident conviction.

All of this is to say, that my time here at St. Francis Parish has instilled within me a greater love for the priesthood. This is because you

have allowed me to be a priest for you. All that for which I hoped and imagined has been realized here among you. You have welcomed me into your community and allowed me to make my home here. You have invited me into your families, to share your joys and sorrows, struggles and triumphs. To be with you at birth and baptism, grade school and high school graduations, engagements and weddings, new homes, new jobs, even sickness and death, indeed has been a privilege... a privilege, mind you, that very few people will ever know. You have taught me to be a pastor and I leave the parish today with confidence and high expectations for life in the Body of Christ.

Thank you.

Thank you for sharing with me your faith, love for Jesus Christ and his Church.

Thank you for teaching me about love and priesthood. Thank you for showing me how to forgive and ask for forgiveness. Thank you for standing with me in dark moments and pointing to the light. Thank you for reminding me of what this is all about and keeping me rooted in Christ. Thank you for praying with me and offering God our faithful praise in the Eucharist.

You reflect so beautifully God's love for the whole Church. This is a wonderful faith community; vibrant and creative. God has given you abundant graces. Like all blessings, they are never just for ourselves, and are meant to be shared to help build up the Kingdom. I think something is being asked of you now; that is, to share your graces.

Perhaps my proudest moment as pastor here

came a few weeks ago during a parish council meeting in which the arrangement of sharing a pastor with Ste. Marguerite Parish was being discussed. Many concerns and objections were raised. Questions were posed and frustration articulated. Statistics were offered about the future of parish life in our archdiocese and around the country.

In the midst of all that someone said, "This is a parish that is strong and alive. We can be a parish that teaches other parishes how to make this work!" At that moment I thought to myself that all the teaching and preaching isn't just pious platitudes. This is how the Kingdom is built.

It is hard to leave. I know that the reality of this will not really touch me for some time. Thank you for all you have given me. I am forever grateful.

With profound love,

Fr. Bob



FIRST FRIDAY NOVENA



Beginning Friday, September 7th at 7pm, there will be a 1st Friday Novena each month for vocations to the priesthood and for all who serve in the priestly ministry. The evening will include adoration and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, as well as veneration of the relic of St. John Vianney. Refreshments will follow in the Parish Hall. Please join us!

An Evening With the Angels



Join us on **Monday, September 17th at 7pm** in the Church for an evening of prayer and a talk given by our own Deacon John Hunt. During a time of year that is extremely busy for many of us, take time out to slow down, pray and reflect on the whisperings of the angels in your life.



The Beginning of a Journey

Fr. Chris Casey

As many of you know, I was ordained a priest on Saturday, May 26, 2007 by Sean Cardinal O'Malley in the Cathedral in Boston. It was an exciting day, followed by my First Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Michael's Church in North Andover, where I had served as a seminarian, then as a Deacon for almost two years.

I found out I was being assigned to two parishes in Dracut the night before ordination. Cardinal Sean told me my assignment the night before ordination after dinner with him and the other men to be ordained. As soon as he told me I was coming to Dracut, I was thrilled. A native of Lawrence, I was happy to be in the Merrimack Valley. I also had connections with Father Bob Connors, who was my Pastor in Newburyport when I applied for the seminary and wrote me a letter of recommendation for my application to the Archdiocese. The Vocations Director at that time was Father Bob Blaney, who handled my initial application. As you all know, Father Blaney left the Vocations Office to come here to St. Francis Parish. And finally, I had met Father Lyons through his friendship with the priests at St. Michael's, so I was thrilled, too, to be assigned to Dracut where I knew and respected the priests serving the community

When I arrived at both St. Marguerite and St. Francis Parishes, I was impressed with the community and the willingness of the people to welcome me in the midst of all the changes going on around them. I have enjoyed getting to know the people who worship and work at St. Francis Parish and at St. Marguerite. It has been a busy summer. I felt grateful for the seminary formation I received at Blessed John XXIII National Seminary in Weston, MA where I went to school. I immediately appreciated all that I learned there as I began life as a priest and found myself "in the deep end of the pool" and able to keep my head above water! I am grateful for the priests here who have been generous with their advice and counsel, the staffs of both parishes who have done so much to help me get up on my feet, and all the volun-

teers, especially all the sacristans and liturgical ministers, who make celebrating the Eucharist such a pleasure.

We are all getting used to having priests shared between the two parishes. I am getting used to that, too! It has been challenging at times to try to get used to two parishes and to keep up with the emergency calls, as well as to keep the Mass schedule straight in my head. But in such a supportive environment, I am doing fine.

When I came to Dracut, I lived in the "grand old house" that was St. Louis Rectory and enjoyed it. It was a beautiful, old, quiet, house... an oasis in a busy section of Lowell, and I loved being near the school. I wouldn't want to heat it in the winter, though! We moved to the rectory at St. Francis a few weeks ago, and I have loved living here. The house is beautiful and new, with a wonderful kitchen and of course with beautiful views and sunsets. I look forward to seeing more of the fabled wildlife... so far I have had an encounter with only a frog, who I found under my hand one night coming in the back stairs. The next day he hopped on to my foot while I was watching the sunset. That night I found him on my screen looking into my bedroom, which surprised me because I live on the third floor!

So far I have thoroughly enjoyed my first few months as a priest. I look forward to serving you all as your parish priest in my first assignment. I will always hold the memories of my time in Dracut dear, because you are my first assignment, but also because you have all been so nice, so Christ-like in your welcome. I am grateful to all of you for the opportunity to be one of your priests!

God bless!
Father Chris

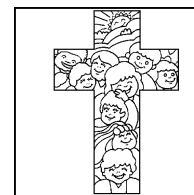
New Name...New Time... SAME GREAT PROGRAM!

The S.M.A.R.T. Program is getting a facelift! Join us now for **S.P.A.R.K.S.**, Supporting Parents And Raising Kids in the Spirit! We all want our children to live with the light of Christ within them...it's up to us as parents and people who care about them to start the SPARK of that light!

Join us **each Wednesday from 9:30-11am in the Parish Hall** for circle time, Bible stories, crafts, snacks and free play. Parents and children Preschool age and younger are welcome!

Our new program will begin on **Wednesday, September 26th at 9:30am**. Join us! The cost is \$20 per family for each 8-week session.

For more information or to sign up, contact Jessica Smith in the Parish Office (evenings only) at 978-452-6611.



“Making It Happen”

By

Pamela Lupien

Making it happen is what the parishioners of St. Francis are very good at, and we are truly blessed to have five remarkable women who lead us, guide us, support us, and most importantly share in every happening. These women take us full circle in our parish life from Baptism through death: we know them as Sharon Chelton, Dawn Bastien, Nancy Mandarin, Jessica Smith, and Joan Vinal; or simply “the office.”

Let’s begin this circle of parish life with Sharon Chelton – our Business Manager. “Heart and Soul” are the words Sharon uses to describe her position in overseeing the business aspect of the parish, and she does it all without ever missing a beat. Her official duties include: human resources, payroll, and maintaining the supplies needed for the Church hall, office, kitchen, and parish finances. “You’ve come a long way, baby,” would certainly be a great cliché to describe Sharon’s career at St. Francis which began in 1990 as a volunteer secretary. She was in charge of putting together the weekly bulletin, (where she readily admits and chuckles that she had never used a computer), and how now completed a seven-month business manager training through the Archdiocese studying business, Canon Law, and the documentation of the Second Vatican Council. But it is not the business side of Sharon that we see on a daily basis; what we see is the soul of Sharon – the event coordinator. Though it is not listed in her official job description, on any given day, Sharon can be found preparing the Church from the simplest flowers during ordinary time to our lavish decorations at our most holiest of celebrations. Whatever the parish event may be, Sharon puts it into action. From coordinating volunteers, decorating, printing billboards and tickets—whatever the event calls for, Sharon is there in the beat of it all, volunteering as many if not more than her salaried hours. When asked what her favorite spiritual quote is, it was not surprising to hear her quote our patron Saint Francis, who said, “Preach the Gospel at all times; and when necessary use words.” Upon meeting Sharon, you instantly know these words are part of her “heart and soul”, and we as a parish immensely benefit from her reflecting it into everything she does.

Next stop is the desk of Dawn Bastien, our Religious Education secretary. This official title is an understatement for all that Dawn does. Detailing what Dawn does for our religious education program would be quite simple if it

was viewed from the lens of what she does *not* do; but if this were the case, the page would be blank and I certainly would never be asked again to write for this publication. Dawn is the “dot the *i* and cross the *t*” portion of the Religious Education team. Dawn reviews every registration, paying careful attention to every request when developing the classes. She also coordinates the catechist retreats and the 2nd grade retreats with Kathy, as well as tracking all the information for our confirmandi in their multiple service projects and retreats. Dawn also makes sure that each confirmand and 2nd grader preparing for First Eucharist have all the required paperwork and necessary hours needed for completion. Dawn is responsible for books, classroom supplies, attendance, all notices, catechist CORI forms, scheduling the “Talking About Touching” program with catechists, calling in catechist subs, organizing and cleaning classroom closets, and visiting each class to verify a CORIed adult is in the room at the onset of each class. Generations of Faith highlights Dawn’s amazing organizational skills. Dawn tracks the attendance for each event and accomplishes purchasing enough food for everyone. She organizes the kitchen volunteers for each event and many times is found in the kitchen very early in the day preparing desserts, meat sauces, cooking veggie dishes, or all three. Dawn also organizes the necessary sitting with maintenance which is required for each event, and once the tables and chairs are set, Dawn completes the tables with their necessary settings, centerpieces, name tags, placemats (which, by the way, Dawn creates and copies), pens and crayons. Dawn also does all of the shopping and putting together, copying, and folding of the take-home booklet which reinforces each event. The words Dawn lives and works by are: “Whatsoever you do the least of my brothers, that you do unto me.” How humbly Dawn lives these words every day, which is why she is as much a volunteer as an office employee. By the way, Dawn started in 2000 volunteering in the office 4 hrs. a day, 5 days a week doing whatever needed to be done. She, too, has come a long way!

Our third stop, which in actuality is the first stop you make upon entering the office, is our parish secretary, Nancy Mandarin. As parish secretary, Nancy’s day can be equated to an emotional roller coaster ride: one moment laughing with someone wanting to schedule a room for a meeting to the next moment booking an anniversary or memorial Mass for a lost loved one. Welcoming, answering the phone, Mass cards, and maintaining the Church calendar are all part of Nancy’s day. Then there are the lists: lists of parishioners, lists of volunteers,

lists of building fund contributors, lists of Annual Catholic Appeal participants, parishioner lists for offertory envelopes, and lists for Virtus training and CORI forms. Thank God for the age of computers; otherwise, you might never see Nancy behind all of these lists. Besides continually updating these lists, Nancy is responsible for sending thank you notices where necessary, forwarding reports to the Archdiocese offices when applicable, coordinating all of the parish’s mailings, and coordinating and scheduling Altar servers, Lectors, and Extraordinary Ministers. Nancy’s favorite Gospel message is: John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son.” So, it is not difficult to see why Nancy adheres to a position where she supports everyone else. When Nancy leaves for the day, our evening secretary Jessica Smith steps in.

Jessica is not only our evening secretary, but is also the editor and designer of our weekly bulletin. Though Jessica’s position is considered part time, she accomplishes the task of a full time position. Jessica sees her position as always helping the parishioners in whatever their need, which at times must be quite daunting, as we all have experienced needing something after normal business hours.

So, with a willing heart and an infectious smile, she drops everything, even if the bulletin deadline is looming. Other duties include sacramental records and overseeing the paperwork for baptisms and weddings. Along with her husband Tim, Jessica oversees the Marriage Prep program and with friend Stacy Dolliver, runs the pre-school SMART Program on Wednesday mornings. Her talent for details is widely seen in her role as layout editor of the Canticle. To sum up Jessica’s philosophy in life, one need look no further than the words of Scripture which guide her: “We know all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28).

(Continued on Page 11)



Lay Ecclesial Ministry

By

Pamela Lupien

*Spotlight on Kathy Long —
Pastoral Associate & Director of
Religious Education*

Kathy Long is our Pastoral Associate and Director of Religious Education. Kathy's favorite Scripture passage is Psalm 139:1-6: "Lord, you have probed me, you know me: you know when I sit and stand; you understand my thoughts from afar. My travels and my rest you mark; with all my ways you are familiar. Even before a word is on my tongue, Lord, you know it all. Behind and before you encircle me and rest your hand upon me. Such knowledge is beyond me, far too lofty for me to reach." This clearly explains the path of educator and counselor the Spirit has highlighted for Kathy. Kathy holds a Masters degree in Education, a Masters degree in Pastoral Ministry with a concentration in Pastoral Care and Counseling, and has completed 1 unit of study as a hospital Chaplain in Worcester. She has also completed a 2-year program called "Companions in Prayer", working with children and adults to develop their relationship with Christ through prayer and contemplation, and has attended programs

at various retreat houses in spiritual direction over the span of a year. Clearly, as much as the Lord probes Kathy, Kathy in turn continuously probes the Lord and the result is witnessed in her dual role. As the title indicates, the role of Pastoral Associate is to assist the pastor, which entails being part of the Baptismal prep team, the RCIA program, Liturgical assistance, visiting the sick whether at home or in the hospital, supporting and comforting families in their times of mourning along with leading them in prayer at wakes and committal services, and adult faith formation. Kathy says she "feels called to serve", and serve she does. In support of adult faith formation, Kathy oversees Scripture study classes, day retreats, the Spiritual Life Commission, Contemplative Prayer Group, and Women's Spirituality events. She is constantly looking through new lenses in developing new approaches to faith formation which guide us into a deeper probing of our faith. "Being there" are the words Kathy uses to describe her role as pastoral associate. Being there to listen, to talk, to comfort, to counsel and to educate is what the parish gains by Kathy "being there."

The second half of Kathy's role is that of D.R.E. As DRE, she not only oversees the

K-12 program, but is quite often seen teaching a class as a substitute. Twice a week Kathy can be found in the Church with our 7th & 8th graders, leading them in prayer, discussing the sacraments, teaching them how to pray with Scripture (Lectio Divina), guiding meditations, or reading a children's story and having these young teens piece together the Christian values and morals which are enclosed within the story. The "R" in DRE should stand for retreats. Kathy is always preparing for any number of retreats held throughout the year: Confirmation, 7th and 8th grade, reconciliation, Eucharistic parent and child retreats for the 2nd grade classes, and catechist retreats. Additional programs Kathy oversees are the youth group, peer leaders, and Generations of Faith. As an added bonus to our parish, Kathy also serves on the Pastoral Associates Advisory Board for the Archdiocese of Boston and the Education Sub-Committee of the IOAC (Implementation and Oversight of the Advocacy for Child Protective Services). As a member of these two boards, Kathy is readily prepared to bring to our parish any and all new visions of the Archdiocese.

"Sharing Martha's Gift"

A new ministry at St. Francis Parish

By:

Ellen Anstey

"In the course of their journey he came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving, came to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered, 'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her.'" Luke 10:38-42

According to the Pastoral Associate Kathy Long, "We all need a little Martha and a little Mary in our lives." Martha's gift of hospitality was Kathy's inspiration to create a new ministry at St. Francis Parish called the "Martha Ministry." The "Martha Ministry" would provide a meal for families in severe crisis. "Prayers are needed for a crisis, but physical food is necessary too." said Kathy. Kathy has

enlisted the help of parishioner Linda Malnati to help coordinate this new venture for the parish. Examples of a family in need of a meal would include a child in the hospital, a family with a member undergoing chemotherapy or other medical treatment, parents welcoming home a newborn or parents with a serious illness. Kathy sees this short term, temporary commitment as providing outreach directly from parishioners to help other parishioners. Volunteers would be asked to provide a dinner for such occasions so families would be able to come home to a home-cooked meal. The family could then concentrate on their family's urgent needs to get through the crisis, rather than worrying what is for dinner. Volunteers are invited to call the parish office at 978-452-6611 to offer to be put on the list for making a meal for the "Martha Ministry". Those in need of receiving the services of the "Martha Ministry" are encouraged to call the parish office as well.

Continued from Page 1

On June 17th, the minutes of the Joint Meeting were published in the Saint Francis and Ste. Marguerite's bulletins.

On June 9th and 10th, members of St. Francis' Parish Council addressed the parishioners at all the Masses. We briefly spoke about being asked to "experience pastoral leadership differently than what we have known in the past." We were excited about the new adventure and wanted to share the news.

On June 10th, a parish-wide meeting was held by the Parish Council. At this meeting, we detailed all the information that we had learned from Father Connors. The parishioners that were present voiced their questions and concerns. We also made ourselves available after all the Masses to listen to the parishioners' thoughts and concerns.

On July 10th, Father Connors held a second Joint Meeting. This time he met with the Saint Francis Parish office staff, Finance Council, Development Council and Parish Council. We immediately remarked that we were feeling encouraged about the future of our parish. Our minds and hearts had been opened to the new challenges and

new ideas. We encourage support of our pastor and priest who will have commitments in 2 parishes.

ROAD TO GROWTH

Saint Francis Parish has gone through many changes over the years. Many parishioners have witnessed tremendous growth in the parish. So much so that in 1995, they joined to build a much needed larger church. The new St. Francis Church was not only a place of worship, but a symbol of faith. The project helped to form a deep-rooted bond of parish unity.

The shortage of priests has changed parish life in many Catholic Churches. We have come to learn that sharing a pastor and priest means that we will be relying on the laity for assistance. As in 1995 with the building of a new church, this will help us to carry on our deep-rooted bond of parish unity.

Our pastor realizes that we have concerns about future growth and changes. He came to our parish relying on the voices of all parishioners. From his heart come the words..."this is your parish."

With the growth of our parish, there is a need for more office and classroom spaces. To quote Father Connors, "We need more

space. What a wonderful problem for a parish to have. God is good!"

We will continue to grow in a spirit of community. It is that spirit that has carried the parish throughout the years. Our focus is on God and we are the Church. That will not change. That we know for certain!

THE ROAD AHEAD


As we travel the road ahead, the members of the Parish Council welcome your thoughts and concerns. We invite you to share them with us. Information on how to reach a council member can be found in the parish bulletin and on the parish web site.

Together with the Development and Finance Councils and combined with your voices, we will continue to work together for the good of the parish.

We support Father Connors' philosophy of open dialogue, communication and sharing of ideas. Our parish will learn in this new growth that this is a time of compromise and adjustment. We will balance the changes together – as a strong parish family.

REMINDER!

The first day of Religious Education Classes for grades K-8 is Tuesday, October 9, 2007. The first day for 10th graders is Sunday, September 30 at 5:30pm. Confirmation for 11th graders will be held on Saturday, Sept. 15th at 11am.



Children's Liturgy of the Word

Beginning in October, each week at the 10am Mass, we will offer a chance for children in grades K-5 to hear a Bible reading from the Children's Lectionary and a homily geared especially for them downstairs in the Parish Hall while parents listen to and reflect on the homily upstairs in Mass. Children will re-join their parents to celebrate the Eucharist. Join us!



SPOTLIGHT ON...

DRACUT FOOD PANTRY

By

Ellen Anstey

“This Cupboard Isn’t ‘Bare’ ”



St. Francis Parish is a parish of plenty – plenty of volunteers, that is! More than two months before opening, the Dracut Food Pantry has a great volunteer base of 40-50 people, many of whom are parishioners from St. Francis Parish. They have signed up to help those who do not have plenty and are in need of a helping hand.

Thanks to generous donations of time, space, money, and food, the Dracut Food Pantry is tentatively scheduled to open on Saturday, October 27, 2007 at 1934 Lakeview Avenue in Dracut.

Organizers say the Pantry will be open one Saturday per month from 10am – 1pm and hope that in time, the hours will be expanded. Many St. Francis Parishioners are helping to make sure this happens, because it is important to all people in the town of Dracut.

Several St. Francis parishioners took up leadership positions for this project. Jim O’Loughlin is the chairman, Jim Carr is the treasurer and Debbie Hovanasian is the director of volunteers.

Parishioners, along with partners from the Christ Church United, the Town of Dracut, the Knights of Columbus, Dracut Golf Charities, and the Dracut Post Office have been working hard to make this idea a reality.

Monetary donations have also been coming in. In fact, as gifts at a surprise birthday party for parishioner Joan Vinal last January, donations were made to the Dracut Food Pantry. “Wow!!!!” was Joan’s reaction to the amount donated in her honor!

Currently electrical work is being completed and shelves are being installed. Shelves are also being stocked thanks to a large donation of food from the Dracut Post Office from a collection they held this past spring. Details regarding eligibility to receive food from the Pantry are still being worked out, but those in need will be required to be residents of Dracut.



Plans for helping the Food Pantry include food drives organized through the religious education program and several fundraisers. Half of the proceeds from this year’s parish show on September 29th and 30th will be donated to the Pantry.

According to Volunteer Director Debbie Hovanasian, “We’ve been blessed with tremendous volunteer interest in the pantry, and we are so grateful for that. We do currently have some St. Francis parishioners signed up, and as we expand the pantry’s hours of operation, we will seek out even more.”

Organizers are asking all parishioners to watch the bulletin for announcements of food drives, calls for volunteers and especially to help with prayers for completion and continued success of this worthwhile

THE SHOW GOES ON!!

By: Linda Trouville

As the end of September nears each year, the excitement of the cast of the annual Parish Show grows by leaps and bounds! Practices get more intense, members hustle to learn their dance routines and script lines, and everyone works hard to prepare a program book that will identify supporters and parishioners who offer of themselves to help others in need.

This year’s 9th annual Parish Show, entitled “Gone with the Breeze.com” is about a hit show looking for a female “star”. The director and writer of the show are looking for a young actress, but have some problems when a veteran actress, Peggy Tempest, who insists on having the role as she believes that the money will “roll in” with her face on the screen. The antics she displays, as well as the sneaky plan that the director creates to keep

Peggy out of the show, will keep you laughing!

All of the cast members want to encourage you to support their efforts by attending this year’s show that will take place at Dracut High School on **Saturday, September 29, 2007 at 8:00 p.m. and Sunday, September 30, 2007 at 2:00 p.m.** Tickets will be sold after the Masses in September and will cost \$12.00. In addition, for \$5.00, you may want to have a line printed in the program book with some words of support. These will be sold after Masses as well.

This year’s show will definitely be one you won’t want to miss. There will be dancing, laughter, and a segment dedicated to the veterans of the wars that the United States has experienced. Cast members have decided that, as long as the United States is involved in a conflict, we will take time in our show to honor our heroes. We are looking for veterans who

might have a picture of themselves in uniform. We would like to display these pictures on a screen, along with name and rank, while we sing a moving rendition of a beautiful song. We would like to offer a ticket to these veterans in order that they may attend the show so that we might have our audiences say “Thank You”. All pictures can be brought in or mailed to the church office.

Help us “break a leg” and make this year’s show another success to help others in need (the Dracut Food Pantry and Cor Unum Meal Center in Lawrence).





“Why Do Catholics Do That?”

By
Kristin MacCauley

Back in the spring, I started to think about an article I wanted to write. Perhaps I should have sat right down and written it as the Spirit was asking. Because now, my brain is unclear and muddled about the topic that I selected, “Why do Catholics do that?” (which, I found out in fact, is the title of a book by Kevin Orlin Johnson, PH.D.)

I’ve tried since the week of Vacation Bible School to meld and mold what I would write. I’ve searched the Internet for additional resources (Did you know there is a book [Catholicism for Dummies?](#)) and asked to borrow “scholarly” books (a plethora of material) so that what I write is grounded in the teachings of the Catholic Church. I browsed through the Catechism of the Catholic Church, but still found further confusion.

As I turned my brain to the writing part again, I kept hearing the refrain “Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night”, ringing through my head. Of course, I should have known that prayer would be the best place to start instead.

Last fall, I attended a 5-week series that St. Francis offered with Dr. Barbara Redmond on prayer. She spoke about all the varieties of prayer. One of the things I took away from our time with Dr. Redmond was the need to pray *at least* 15 minutes a day (that was our target & one she assigned to the high school students she used

“Making It Happen”

(Continued from Page 6)

Completing the circle is Joan Vinal.

Though a member of the staff since 1998, Joan has chosen to work strictly as a volunteer.

Joan coordinates and schedules all the ministries involved in daily Mass, friendly visitations for the homebound (including administration of the Eucharist), Monday Adoration, providing prayer of the Rosary and Eucharist at Willow Manor and Fairhaven Health Care Centers, and the Ministry of Consolation.

to teach as well) and preferably in your own “quiet” space.

As a working mom with two children, finding that “quiet” space can be tricky sometimes. But I realize that when I take that time for myself, I’m much more at peace and know that I can get through the trying parts of the day because I am NOT alone.

I was born and raised a Catholic, the second of five children. We attended Sunday Mass and I even helped teach a First Communion class for two years with Sister Eugene, who had taught my First Communion class ten years earlier. But I don’t remember anyone really teaching me how to pray. As is more common, we memorized prayers.

It wasn’t until college and a Lenten experience (Renew) with faith sharing that I realized that God was available for me to talk to... in other words... to pray. Now that I’ve been blessed with two children, I find myself at a new juncture. Not only must I continue to build and nurture my own prayer life, but I need to teach them how to pray as well.

My children have helped strengthen my faith in ways that I never imagined they would. I suppose their “inquiring minds that have to know” have tripped me up on a variety of topics including the traditions, symbols, and practices of our Catholic Church, which brings me back to the topic that I thought of learning and writing more about in the spring, “Why Do Catholics Do That?”

I’m hoping that for future articles, and even perhaps a corner in the bulletin, I can highlight some of the traditions, symbols, and practices that have not merely raised

The Ministry of Consolation includes meeting with the members of a grieving family, offering condolences and support, planning the funeral liturgy, attending the wake, and contacting the coordinators of the Mercy Meal team.

“Just for fun” is how Joan describes her role in co-producing the parish show.

When asked for her favorite Gospel passage, Joan did not hesitate in responding with the Road to Emmaus, adding “the lack of recognition until the breaking of the bread” strengthens all her ministries which are centered around the Eucharist.

inquiries and stirred my curiosity but served to deepen my knowledge and understanding of my faith as well.

Do you have a question about the Catholic Church that has stumped you (either that you’ve asked or been asked)? I know that you are not alone and I would be happy to research an answer for you. You can contact me through the parish office – jot the question down & I’ll see what I can find out.

At the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, 1884, the Precepts of the Church were originally approved. At the Spring “Generations of Faith” event, we discussed five precepts which follow to start us out on:

You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation and rest from labor.

You shall confess your [serious] sins at least once a year.

You shall receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season

You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.

You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.

(*The Catholic Source Book* – Harcourt Religion Publishers, p. 84)

Fun fact:

A-Choo

“God bless you.”

Thank you, Saint Gregory. During a pestilence in which a sneeze was a mortal symptom, it is said Saint Gregory originated this blessing and recommended its prayerful use.

The Catholic Source Book – Harcourt

We’ve now come full circle, highlighting each of these five remarkable women’s roles in supporting, supplying, and serving every possible need of the parishioners.

Yet, I would be remiss if I did not mention the loving friendship these women share; not only amongst themselves where laughter seems to be the best policy, but more importantly how they make it happen that everyone entering into the office is welcomed as a family member.

Generations of Faith
ANNUAL PARISH PICNIC

Sunday, September 23rd
 Beginning with 10AM Mass



FAITH, FOOD, FELLOWSHIP AND FUN!

-All Religious Education students are encouraged to attend-

TICKETS ON SALE SOON IN THE PARISH OFFICE

ADULTS: \$6 CHILDREN 5 and OLDER: \$3



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