



A Look Inside St. Mary's Parish Community Connection

WINTER 2006



Margie Gallagher: *St. Mary's Frontline*

Basic employee training manuals emphasize the importance of the first person whom the public will encounter when they contact an organization. Whether

by telephone or at the entrance, that initial contact person becomes the frontline of the organization. St. Mary's is extremely blessed to have our Parish Secretary, Margie Gallagher, at the frontline, greeting callers with her smiling face and compassionate ear. Father Chris would be the first to agree with this description of Margie. As he puts it, "I think Margie is awesome. She sees her job as more than just answering the phone. Margie is the first person we meet and she puts on a great face for the parish. She represents the warm and loving spirit of St. Mary's very well, both on the phone and in person."

Although as Parish Secretary, Margie has many duties, she will tell you that the most important ones are "the phone and people that are coming through that door." The calls could be to make funeral arrangements; someone is dying and requests a blessing from Father Chris or Father Connor; a person has just found out he or she has cancer and wants to talk to a priest; or someone in

trouble needs some counseling. Then there are the happy times when a bride calls to book a wedding, new parents want to have their child baptized, someone wants to tell of a good experience here at St. Mary's or become a new member of the parish.

"Margie's the center of the operation. We'd be lost without her. She's a great secretary and a great representative of the parish."

No matter what, Margie handles all calls with her unique brand of tender loving care. As Margie says, "When that phone rings, you just never know who is going to be on the other end. It's a very busy parish. It always has been busy, but because our parish has grown in the past two years, the office is busier than ever."

Because there are so many requests for the priests, Margie's top priority is "whatever I can do for Father Chris and Father Connor." She schedules their appointments, does paper work such as baptismal records, puts together the weekly bulletin, is the contact person for reserving the parish center and other meeting places for gatherings and events. When asked about Margie,

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A Message from Fr. Chris



Dear Parishioners,

Recently, I had a parishioner approach me to tell me why he and his wife are making St. Mary's their new parish. In a word, he said St. Mary's is welcoming! He went on to

explain that he feels his spiritual journey is greatly nourished by the community. He feels the weekend liturgy sustains him from week to week, and was in search of a welcoming parish, especially at Sunday Mass.

I am proud to report that he said his search was completed at St. Mary of the Sacred Heart. While he complimented Father Connor and I, as well as the music and uplifting liturgy, he noted that the most important factor was the wonderful welcome of all the parishioners. Your warm and enthusiastic presence has helped many in their journey. Father Connor and I feel honored to be part of this effort.

What a wonderful recurring theme to have in the newsletter; that our inviting attitude helps others to pray. I believe we are truly fulfilling our mission when we receive accolades such as we have in these last months. Thank you so much for all you do to make St. Mary's the special and holy place it is.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Fr. Chris".

Father Chris

Life in the Spirit Seminar

“When you call to me and come and pray to me, I will listen to you. You will find me when you seek me with all your heart.” (*Jeremiah 29:11-13*)

Too often it is easy for us to get caught up in our everyday responsibilities: work, school, bills, etc. Our lives have become more and more fast-paced today.

It is easy for us to forget that, as Christians, God is always with us. He longs for us to have our own personal relationship with Him no matter how close we are to Him or how far away it seems He is.

The Life in the Spirit seminar at St. Mary's gives us a special chance to experience God in every aspect of our lives. Through fellowship, talks, group discussions, personal testimony, and prayer, each week is a rewarding experience for all who participate. Topics such as God's Love, Salvation, New Life, Receiving God's gifts, Baptism, Growth, and Transformation in Christ gives us a deeper understanding of God, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Barbara Tobin, who helps run the seminar, describes it as “making us more aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit in all aspects of our lives.” It gives us an understanding of “how valuable He is in directing our lives.” She says that one of the most powerful parts of the Seminar is the discussion groups where you can share and listen to how God has worked in each other. Barbara says that it emphasizes the fact that Jesus is the source of all Love, Joy and Strength.

Many who have attended a Life in the Spirit seminar have experienced the Holy Spirit in a way they never had before. People leave each week with understanding the fact that when we put Jesus in the center of our lives, regardless of trials and tribulations, we can live in more peace and comfort that His Love is unending and unconditional.

The seven week seminar also includes a Release of the Holy Spirit mass.

The Life in the Spirit Seminar is held at St. Mary's twice a year. The next seminar will start April 3, 2007. All are welcomed. For more information, please contact Barbara Tobin at 826-4955.

St. Mary's Gets an EDGE

This year at St. Mary's, sixth and seventh graders can attend an exciting new Religious Education experience called the Edge. Pete McNulty who is the Assistant Youth Minister runs the Edge. This program is a national program designed to bring middle school kids closer to Jesus, the church, and become more confident. The Edge program's goals are to have adolescents experience their religion in a fun, interactive way. They will become true members of the parish and faithful young adults, and gain an understanding and appreciation of what the Catholic Church teaches and believes.

Pete McNulty is a senior at Boston College. He is majoring in Political Science with a minor in history. He first met Father Chris 10 years ago at St. Mary's Parish in Dedham when LifeTeen was adopted there. Pete grew up in that program and embraced Fr. Chris' philosophy. Last Easter, Fr. Chris asked Pete for his help with the middle school program. Now Pete is the Assistant Youth Minister.

Edge night occurs approximately every other Tuesday evening from 6:30 – 8:00pm during the school year. There are approximately 260 kids enrolled, as well as 40 adult and teen Edge Core volunteers.

Edge night typically starts with an icebreaker activity like a game or a skit. Then the topic of the evening is introduced. The members then meet in small groups for discussion.

The Edge also has social activities to create a greater sense of community among middle



Edge members gather for Edge night at St. Mary's

schoolers, to have fun and enjoy themselves in a church setting and also a social environment. They get to know their peers in a truly Christian environment. For example, in October, 35 EDGE members took a bus into Boston and went to the California Pizza Kitchen for dinner and then went to The OMNI theatre.

Edge members are encouraged to attend LifeTeen Mass on Sundays at 6pm. They have their own section behind the high school students.

If you have any questions about the Edge, please contact Pete at 781-826-4059 or by email at mcnultyp@bc.edu. Also, be sure to check the LifeTeen website, www.lifeteenhanover.com for scheduled middle school social activities that occur during the month.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

For those of us who grew up in the Catholic faith, being Catholic is probably second nature. It is a part of who we are.

Each year, thousands of people convert to Catholicism. They come for different reasons, they come from all walks of life and their ages range from the very young to the elderly. Many were born into different religions and traditions and have decided that Roman Catholicism aligns with their own personal value systems. Some have attended mass with a loved one and decided it was time to join the faith. Others have had a major event occur in their life that has helped them see the importance of having Christ play a significant role in their life. People arrive at the same conclusion for very different and deeply personal reasons, all equally special.

The journey, however, is similar for each person. Following are five steps along the path to joining our faith:

The Period of Inquiry: This step provides interested people an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about Catholicism. They learn about the Scripture and about Jesus Christ and his role in the lives of Catholics. This time period can take as long as one needs. When the person is ready, they simply write a letter to their Parish stating that they would like to convert.

Period of Catechumenate: To begin this phase, a person must accept Jesus Christ as his/her Savior. They start by attending mass each week. They reflect deeply about how becoming a Catholic will impact their life.

Period of Purification or Illumination: This period typically coincides with the season of Lent. It begins 6 weeks prior to Easter and is the time when the prospective Catholic reflects, prays and prepares to become a Catholic. This timeframe starts with the Rite of Election, which is celebrated by the Diocese Bishop. The Rite accepts them as candidates for the Sacraments, presided and allows them to demonstrate that the decision to become Catholic is theirs alone. The candidates are then known as the Elect. Typically, this Rite takes place on the first Sunday of Lent, in which the parish offers special prayers in support of the Elect.

The Sacraments of Initiation: The Sacraments of Initiation are celebrated at the Easter Vigil. Through the waters of Baptism, a candidate passes into the new life of grace and becomes Catholic. Those who are already baptized receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Holy Communion and are confirmed. They are anointed with Holy Oil (called Chrism) that seals the initiation through the Holy Spirit and they receive Holy Communion, which marks their membership in church.

The Period of Mystagogy: This final period lasts from Easter Sunday until the completion of the Easter Season on Pentecost Sunday. During this time, the newly initiated members (now called Neophytes) reflect on becoming a Catholic and look to the future as they share in the mission of Christ.



**“As I sat listening to group’s experiences and perspectives,
I came to realize how special this group of people
and this experience truly was.”**

Recently, I had an opportunity to sit in on St. Mary’s own RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) group. The evening’s discussion topic was Faith.

It was an amazing experience that took a very different turn from what I expected. I sat down, expecting only to get a few quotes from the people there and I could go home and plug them into the article I had already written in my head.

As I sat listening to group’s experiences and perspectives, I came to realize how special this group of people and this experience truly was. I thought about how fortunate I was to meet them. I was awed by their passion. I found myself thinking that I should have the commitment and values I experienced in that room that night.

After the meeting, the leader, Ellen McDonough, explained that anyone from the community could join the group, regardless of where they were on their journey to receive the sacraments. She encouraged me to come back (and I will) and also suggested that those members of our parish who are interested could also attend. All are welcome.

I told her how fortunate we are to have such a wonderful family here at St. Mary’s and how truly blessed our parish is to have the members of RCIA join our family.

Christmas Mass Schedule

Sunday, December 24 **Sunday Masses:** 8:30 am; 10:30 am

Christmas Eve Masses: 4:00 pm; 5:30 pm; 7:30 pm; 12:00 midnight

There will be a choir concert at 7:00 pm, prior to the 7:30 pm Mass.

Monday, December 25 **Christmas Day Masses:** 8:30 am; 10:30 am

Please note that the times for the regular Sunday Masses have changed, and that there will be only two Masses.

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Father Connor sings her praises. He stated, “Margie’s the center of the operation. We’d be lost without her. She’s a great secretary and a great representative of the parish.”

Margie has worked in her current position as Parish Secretary for almost five years, beginning with our former pastor, Father Doherty, with whom she had a great relationship. When she started the job she worked in the offices at the rectory. Now you can find her in her office at the parish center. Although the move to the parish center was done partly because the diocese

Margie feels that she is very fortunate. She loves the parish, her job and the people with whom she works. She shares her bird’s eye view of the team of Father Chris and Father Connor. “The combination of the two is awesome!! They work very well together. Over the past two years there have been many good changes and updates made in our parish. The offertory and parishioner count has gone up and that is credit to Father Chris and Father Connor. It has been a pleasure and a rewarding challenge working with them.

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wants parish offices in a separate location, Margie sees the benefit of having all the administration of the parish in one place. It works well for Father Chris and Father Connor as well as for parishioners and visitors to the parish, a kind of one-stop access to many of the parish’s services.

Margie and her husband Barry have been a part of St. Mary’s parish for 25 years. They raised a son, Paul, and a daughter, Maggie, here. Margie has been involved in parish life in one way or another for more than just her nearly five years as Parish Secretary. She and her husband, Barry, worked as a team for many years handling the maintenance of the parish property. When called on, Margie also filled in occasionally at the rectory when the secretary or housekeeper was away.

Indeed Margie has had many roles over the years at St. Mary’s, but the one that many remember her for is the one at the front-line of St. Mary’s Holiday Bazaar. For many, Margie Gallagher was synonymous with the Bazaar. She recalls when she first became Bazaar Chairperson in the early ’80s, preparation for the Bazaar would begin in January when she oversaw the weekly craft workshops in the hall at the parish center. She was assisted by Edna McNulty who coordinated ceramics workshops in the classrooms. Many came together faithfully week after week to prepare items for the Bazaar and had the extra bonus of socializing with their fellow parishioners. Margie reminisces, “I loved the weekly workshops, because you had one-on-one contact with other parishioners. In reflecting a little more on the past importance of the Bazaar to the parish, Margie says, “For that period of time, we didn’t have any social events. The Bazaar was our social, and I think that was what made it so special.”

“Also in the past two years many new social events have been introduced and have proven very successful and enjoyed by many. Due to the great LifeTeen Program here at St Mary’s, we see many teens attending Mass and becoming involved in our different ministries. We all know that the Catholic Church has been through some very difficult times in the past few years but I feel very confident that things are finally moving in the right direction. Our new Chancellor, Jim McDonough will help our parish, the Archdiocese of Boston, and all of our priests receive the support that is necessary to continue to strengthen our faith in the Catholic Church.”

When asked if there’s anything she would change in the parish, Margie says that she would like to see more appreciation for our priests. “Father Connor and Father Chris are here for all of us seven days a week, 24 hours a day... They’re jobs are very demanding... I see so much that they both do. We are truly blessed to have two such wonderful priests here at St. Mary’s. They give their heart and soul to the parishioners. How beautiful is that?”

Beautiful, too, is St. Mary’s being blessed with Margie Gallagher in her frontline position as Parish Secretary. Margie invites everyone, especially the younger families, to get more involved and find out how rewarding it is to be more of a part of this great parish. And for those who have left St Mary’s, for whatever reason, hopefully they will always remember that the doors to St. Mary’s are always open!!

Lifeteen Hanover: *a place of prayer, friendship, and love*

by Joanna Riley

LifeTeen is more to me than a religious group that meets several times a week to pray and hang out. It is not just a place where you meet the most loving people such as Father Chris, the Core, and the Teens. To me LifeTeen depicts many things. It is a place of prayer, friendship, and love. It is like balance. It cannot be described it must be experienced.

I will admit that when LifeTeen first started in Hanover I was not as excited as many were. I attended the very first meeting in the rectory with Fr. Chris and several teens from Hanover and Dedham and, at that time, I was excited about the new program. But as time wore on I lost my interest. At first I was frustrated. The time for the Sunday mass had changed and I had previous commitments that conflicted with the time change. I was upset that, although mass was a regular part of my life, I could not participate in the program consistently and felt jealous. I justified my loss saying the mass was too social and not reverent enough for me. I wasn't going to mass to be entertained.

The best thing about LifeTeen is watching how this ministry has evolved from a social, curious group of teens attending mass to a significantly more reverent, prayerful acknowledgement of Jesus. We learned how to participate in adoration, prayer nights, and share our emotions. At this time I was attending teen mass more often but had not yet experienced the passion Fr. Chris was hoping for.

This ended when I went to Germany. In Germany I experienced the joy of praying with others, at the mass in a church that was hundreds of years old, and praying next to the Rhine River with the cathedral in the background. The experience brought my spirituality to a higher level. Then came Pope Benedict XVI.

It was the day we went to Marienfield Field. We walked six miles with all our overnight gear along with thousands of other people. The vigil mass was scheduled later that night with the Pope. There was a lot of commotion going on when the big screen showed that Pope Benedict XVI had arrived. Meghan Hannigan and I tried to get as close to the front as possible to see what was happening. As we maneuvered through the crowds, we probably got to about 100 rows back. Meghan and I got separated among all the people once the vigil had started, but we both kept moving our way towards the

front. As people left we filled in their spots and soon I found her again several rows ahead of me. From there we were about 30 rows back and still pushing until we made it to the front row. The only ones between the Pope and us was the security. From our groups location you could only see the Pope on the screens. It took us hours to work through the crowd to get close enough to see him in person. This was the moment that strengthened me spiritually. I saw the man that God sent to spread his love and words. He was up on a hill, candles were lit throughout the fields, it was pitch black except on the stage where the Pope was. At the end of the mass I could feel God's presence at the mass. Pope Benedict XVI came to the front of the stage and reached out his arms as if he was taking all of God's children and sending God's love to us. It was a breathtaking moment.

After the four-hour long mass, which was in several different languages, Meghan and I returned to our campsite. I could not wait to tell everyone what we had just experienced. I could not explain my true feelings of the miracle that just happened to me. It could not have been described through words or even pictures.

Back in Hanover I found I was more comfortable expressing myself in prayer and less intimidated to participate more fully in prayer nights and adorations.

The people of LifeTeen touch my heart everyday, whether it is at mass, Pizza and Prayer, school, or any of the other trips we go on. These teens show me what love really is. They show me how to love. I always felt terrible when I missed mass when I was younger because I knew my mom would be mad and I felt unholy. Now when I miss Teen Mass something feels wrong all week. I feel closer to God than ever before and it is because of Fr. Chris, John and the rest of the Core, and the Teens. I would like to thank all of you for leaving an impact on my life and for always being by my side. Remember, "If you miss a little, you miss a lot." Someday you may be touched in some way like I was in Germany, so make sure you don't miss that chance. "I love you, God loves you, Pass it on!"

Love,

Joanna Riley

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TOP TEN REASONS TO ATTEND CHRISTMAS MASS

- 10 Chance to see our magnificent church decorated in its holiday finest.
- 9 Enjoy the beautiful and moving Christmas music.
- 8 Get away from the crass commercialism of the holidays, if just for a while.
- 7 Teach your children to count their blessings, instead of counting the number of Christmas presents they receive.
- 6 Only one collection.
- 5 Because the real Christmas story is better than another rerun of "It's a Wonderful Life."
- 4 The walk from the far end of the parking lot will do you good.
- 3 Church is a "fruitcake tree" zone.
- 2 Share the joy of the season with family, friends and neighbors.
- 1 To see if anything has changed since Easter!