



A Look Inside St. Mary's Parish Community

Connection

CHRISTMAS 2008

Deacon Chris Reilly: *A Valuable Spiritual Asset to St. Mary's*

Many of us have encountered Christopher Reilly—"Deacon Chris"—the Permanent Deacon assigned to St. Mary of the Sacred Heart parish. Many might not know the journey that Deacon Chris traveled to reach this destination. He was born in England of English parents and was baptized in the Church of England and did not move to the U.S until 1969. You may listen for a hint of an accent, but nine years of speech therapy as a child negated that.

Although he was raised Catholic here, when Deacon Chris went back to England to visit family, he also went back to the Church of England. When Chris was a teenager he decided for himself, once and for all, to make a commitment to the Catholic Church. During his young adult years he began to focus on whether or not he "had a vocation." Then he "discovered college and women" and thus made the decision that the priesthood was not for him.

After college, marriage and three children, Chris Reilly had become a

successful businessman living in Scituate. Then his calling to a vocation 'redialed' and he decided that he would like to become a Permanent Deacon in the Catholic Church. For a man who seeks this ministry, the decision to add four and a half years of seminary studies to his and his family's already busy life is not a frivolous one. The Church feels the same way.

The Archdiocese requires that the first half year of preparation is a time of "discernment" before actually being accepted to the program of study. Deacon Chris points out that this discernment is two-sided. First from the perspective of the would-be deacon and his family: they must look deeply into whether or not one is ready to commit to the Diaconate. Then from the Church's viewpoint, the prospective deacon is scrutinized to determine if he truly does have a call and is it an appropriate one.

Deacon Chris tells us that for a prospective deacon, even though you may be fully accepted into the program after the six months, discernment does

not end there. For the next full year, you are a continually discerning "aspirant," taking in talks by priests, deacons and teachers from the seminary and writing papers on various topics. After the aspirant year, the next three years (the candidate, reader and acolyte years, respectively) involve formal seminary classes.

When talking to Deacon Chris about how he juggled a family, working a full-time job and doing seminary studies, he tells us "It was quite a challenge trying to balance that." One particularly challenging aspect that Deacon Chris relates is the field work where the deacon in training is required to spend 100 hours over a summer as a chaplain in a prison or a hospital. Deacon Chris undertook his summer of fieldwork as a chaplain on an oncology ward at Brigham and Women's hospital in Boston. The work was rewarding. Deacon Chris says, it was, "kind of like being thrown into the deep end of the pool."

Upon completion of his training Chris Reilly was ordained a Permanent Deacon. He was assigned to our parish,

A Message from Fr. Chris



As the year comes to an end, Father Connor, Deacon Chris and I would like to thank you for your gifts of

time, talent and treasure that you have so generously given to our parish. We are thankful for your presence, and the way in which you pray, which continues to help affirm us in our ministry. We hope that you will make attendance at Mass a priority during this holy Advent season.

Our journey this summer to World Youth Day in Australia to see the Pope was an experience of a lifetime, not only for our teens, but also for me, Deacon Chris, and the LifeTeen Core Members. It was a time of renewal for all of us. You and your families were prayed for during the entire time. Your support helped make this pilgrimage possible.

We thank you for your continued support especially during these difficult economic times.

We have been very fortunate to have many new members join our family here at St. Mary's during the past year. Our vision, with your help, is to continue to make St. Mary's a warm and welcoming parish. May God's blessing be with all of you and your family during this Christmas Season.

In Christ's Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Chris".

Father Chris

Deacon Chris Reilly > continued from page 1

“Deacon Chris has a wonderful spiritual personality and brings a great joy to the rectory. He is a super addition to the house.”

— Fr. Chris Hickey

which was the start of a mutually beneficial relationship. Deacon Chris has proven himself a great help in his service to St. Mary's in performing the works that a deacon is allowed to do. To explain what the general differences between what the Church allows a deacon to do versus a priest, he sums it up with “A deacon's faculties allow baptisms, preaching at Mass, marriages, funerals, prayer services and benedictions.” On the other hand, a deacon cannot consecrate, hear confessions or anoint the sick.

This help is greatly appreciated by our pastor, Fr. Chris. In his words, “Deacon Chris is very valuable to Fr. Connor and me. He is a great help sacramentally, especially with baptisms, this being such a busy parish.”

When asked what part of his duties that he enjoys, Deacon Chris answers “I can't say that there is a part that I don't.” Prompted further, he shares that he loves baptisms, but is still nervous about preaching. It seems strange that Deacon Chris would be nervous about preaching considering that he speaks in front of people all the time when he conducts business meetings. He responds, “This is different. You're trying to open the Word of God for people in a way that honors God. That's totally different than trying to teach people at work how to read a profit and loss statement.”

The parishioners of St. Mary's have impressed Deacon Chris, and have made him feel right at home. He says, “The welcome here has been beyond anything I could have imagined.” There is a lot of opportunity at St. Mary's for Deacon Chris to be of service. He is at Mass every Sunday, including the LifeTeen Mass. He will usually be at Mass on Monday morning, too. And he relishes the Sunday baptisms after the 11:30 Mass.

Deacon Chris appreciates what LifeTeen offers our young people as he had experienced a youth-oriented ministry during his own teenage years. His impression of LifeTeen at St. Mary's is that it is “an energy and excitement around being Catholic for young people that I have never seen.” When comparing it to the church where he grew up, Deacon Chris says, “I thought we had a dynamic parish in Illinois for young people, but this (St. Mary's) is incredible.” He finds the sincerity and eagerness of the teens as they express their spirituality to be “infectious.”

Deacon Chris underwent a full immersion of life among teenagers this summer when he accompanied the LifeTeen pilgrims from St. Mary's on their trip to World Youth Day in Australia. When John Barata was not able to attend due to the impending birth of his new baby, Deacon Chris went from being a stand-by participant to being fully on board.

It was difficult for him to be away from his own children and from his work for such a long time, but he also felt privileged to be part of this gathering of youth from all over the world.

Having been so busy right up to the time of departure, Deacon Chris had no time to contemplate what to expect of the experience. He recalls how Fr. Chris set the tone for the trip by telling everyone to set aside their expectations and, as Deacon Chris relates it, “be open to where the Spirit’s going to take you.” And take them it did. Deacon Chris was touched by how St. Mary’s LifeTeen pilgrims had “no shyness about proclaiming that they were from Boston or about proclaiming their faith.”

This exposure to teenagers has been beneficial to Deacon Chris as a father of three who have not yet reached that age. With a daughter, 11, and two sons, 9 and 4, the teenage years are looming. But interacting with the teenagers at St. Mary’s LifeTeen, and in particular during the World Youth Day trip, it seems he has discovered that adolescents are not so scary. In fact, his observation after the Australia trip was that their energy and enthusiasm “refreshes your spirit.” It is obvious that Deacon Chris is a loving and proud father of his own children.

Deacon Chris brings a comforting manner and a sympathetic ear to his dealings with parishioners young and old. Fr. Chris and Fr. Connor see this

in the great fraternal relationship that they have with Deacon Chris. Fr. Chris will tell you that besides his being valued help with the sacraments and with preaching, Deacon Chris “has a wonderful spiritual personality and brings a great joy to the rectory. He is a super addition to the house.”

In Chris Reilly’s day-to-day world of property management, real estate properties are key assets. During his tenure here as Deacon Chris in our parish, he has proven to be a valuable spiritual asset for St. Mary’s. •

Over the Edge at St. Mary’s

By Pete McNulty, Youth Minister

What could be better than trying to quiet down and organize over 200 noisy, energetic, and excited sixth and seventh grade students on a Sunday afternoon? Nothing, if you ask me! The Edge program has entered its third year here at St. Mary’s, and the program has grown even more fun and successful than when we started in the fall of 2006.

The Edge program is religious education for sixth and seventh graders that meets twice a month on Sundays before LifeTeen Mass. The Edge is much different than any other religious education program; there are no textbooks, no classrooms, and no teachers. Instead, students are assigned small groups for the year and are led by a team of two Core members: one teen from the LifeTeen program and one adult. It is a new model of middle school religious education and one that has caught on here at St. Mary’s.

Since our Catholic faith is so rich and blessed by the grace of God, it is only natural that our faith be communicated in such a way that sixth and seventh graders can understand, appreciate,

and hopefully grow to love their Church. As such, Edge nights are fast-paced; with games, icebreakers, large and small group activities, guest speakers, music, and prayer. Edge nights are scheduled right before the LifeTeen Mass in hopes that students will also partake in the 6:00 PM liturgy that is devoted and directed at teens. The religious education component of the Edge, coupled with a devotion to relational youth ministry and monthly social activities, make the Edge program at uniquely built to serve our youth.

The hope of the Edge and our youth ministry programming is twofold: we treat our teens in as adults in the Church and contributing members of the parish family, not as “future” members of the church, and as an effort to plant the seed for practicing Catholics with deep affection for the Church that will give back to their parish communities for years to come as they enter adulthood. In the meantime, there are just over 250 registered Edge students learning about their faith in a fun and interactive environment, and it is a joy to teach and interact with them!

St. Mary of the Sacred Heart Church
392 Hanover Street
Hanover, MA 02339

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Christmas Schedule

Monday, December 8

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

7:30 AM

4:45 PM

7:15 PM

Thursday, December 18

Advent Adoration and Penance Service

7:15 PM

Christmas Eve

4:00 PM

5:30 PM Children's Choir and Pageant

7:30 PM Preceded by Festival Choir concert at 7:00

Midnight Life Teen

Christmas Morning

NO 7:30 Mass!

9:30 AM

11:30 AM

*For details call Margie Gallagher
at the Parish Center, (781)826-4303.*

