

ST. CLARE of ASSISI PARISH

August 2014

*Ministry Works to Provide Programs and
Resources for Those With Disabilities*

Apostolate to the Handicapped

The Apostolate to the Handicapped Ministry was founded in 1967 when Bishop Cletus F. O'Donnell appointed Fr. Thomas Campion to begin a ministry to reach out to the handicapped in and around the Diocese of Madison. Fr. Campion began by organizing a televised Mass, which first aired on Channel 3 on the first Sunday of Advent in 1967, and still airs each Sunday at 7 a.m.

Fr. Campion continued his work with the Apostolate to the Handicapped Ministry until his death in 2010. At that time our pastor, Fr. Larry Bakke, was appointed director. Fr. Larry is currently working on developing new programs and searching for untapped resources for the aged, disabled and challenged in and around the diocese.

"I'm working to develop a greater amount of resources for our parishes to help us to be aware of existing programs and to create programs and ministries with and for people with disabilities – everything from making sure facilities are accessible to starting different catechetical ministries," Fr. Larry says. "We have a new advisory council that's meeting to look at a bigger, wider vision for the ministry."

Each year, the Apostolate to the Handicapped Ministry hosts two big events for the community – the Day at the Dells and the Advent/Christmas Party. The Day at the Dells, which takes place on Aug. 22 this year, is



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hosted by the Tommy Bartlett Show. This event is open to everyone in the diocese, and has always been a much-loved event for the disabled and their families.

"The purpose of this event is to gather people together for a lot of fun, and to have a larger connection with people who often spend time alone, whether they are homebound or in nursing homes," Fr. Larry says. "It's a great way to bring people together in a large venue, to have a fun and enjoyable day for a lot of people. It's also a great benefit for all the people who volunteer to serve."

The Advent/Christmas Party will be held on Saturday, Dec. 6 this year at the Monroe High School gymnasium. The day begins with a Mass at 10:45 a.m., followed by a wonderful turkey dinner for all the guests.

"Often our bishop presides with several priests," Fr. Larry says. "We have our diocesan choir providing music ministry, which is wonderful. We celebrate a Mass, and volunteers serve a turkey dinner to all the guests. We have Santa and Mrs. Claus come and visit, and we have a gift for everybody, packaged by the MHS girls basketball team the week before. The set-up and take-down is done by a huge amount of Monroe youth and adults. People really love gathering, even when the weather's not so great in Wisconsin in December."

Both events are huge gatherings, averaging between 700 and 800 guests from all over the diocese. These events are wonderful opportunities for parishioners to volunteer their time and talent to the diocese and the community at large.

"We have a large team of volunteers who help with these events," Fr. Larry says. "For the Day at the Dells, we prepare bag lunches for 1,000 the night before. There are volunteers who are drivers, who bring people to the event, caretakers, and nurses. A lot of youth get involved by helping people to their seats and distributing sack lunches. For the Advent/Christmas party, it's a plated dinner, so we need volunteers to help serve the dinner. There is always a need for more volunteers!"

For more information on the Apostolate to the Handicapped Ministry, or to find out how to offer your time and talent to its wonderful efforts, please contact Linda Faessler at 608-328-8371.

A Letter From Our Pastor

Growing Together as the Body of Christ

Dear Parishioners,

In November 2013, our parish embarked on a rather new adventure meant to help all of us grow and develop stewardship as a way of life. At that time, the 900-plus households of St. Clare of Assisi Parish began receiving the monthly newsletter as a means of communication and education about the various ministries and organizations of our parish. As I wrote in that first newsletter, "I pray that the newsletter will be a vehicle through which you are kept informed, your spiritual growth is challenged and you are encouraged to become more actively involved in parish life." The newsletter goes to every household in the parish, whereas the weekly bulletin is only received by those who come to Mass at the parish on a given weekend.

Another important part of our stewardship initiative was the Parish Survey, which was sent to each household in March. I am so pleased that the response level was 35 percent of our households, which is great since there is usually an 8-10 percent response rate to such instruments. The July 2014 newsletter shared the percentage results of the survey. In June, Eric McArdle of Catholic Stewardship Consultants facilitated an evening with members of the parish Pastoral, Finance, and Stewardship Councils, and our Staff. The intent of the meeting was to help us understand your input via the survey, and to begin planning goals and objectives in response to suggestions that were made by you. Staff and Councils are focusing on the following during the coming months:

1. To further outreach to the entire parish by the development of a "mapping" system that helps us identify where our registered parishioners live; from that, to create smaller groupings of members into "neighborhoods," and then to identify some people in the "neighborhoods" who would facilitate a more personal connection with the parish.
2. The staff faith formation team is meeting to make adjustments to our programs for the coming year for our young people, as well as formation opportunities for adults.



3. Staff will share practical resources to assist adult spiritual development, and that of our children/youth, as well as information about what children are leaning towards in our faith formation (catechetical) programs.
4. You will again see a summary of the financial status/needs of the parish in the parish bulletin and newsletter.
5. Information to help everyone understand what it means to be an "active" Catholic as defined by the Roman Catholic Church, and to define what a responsible member of this parish is called to be.

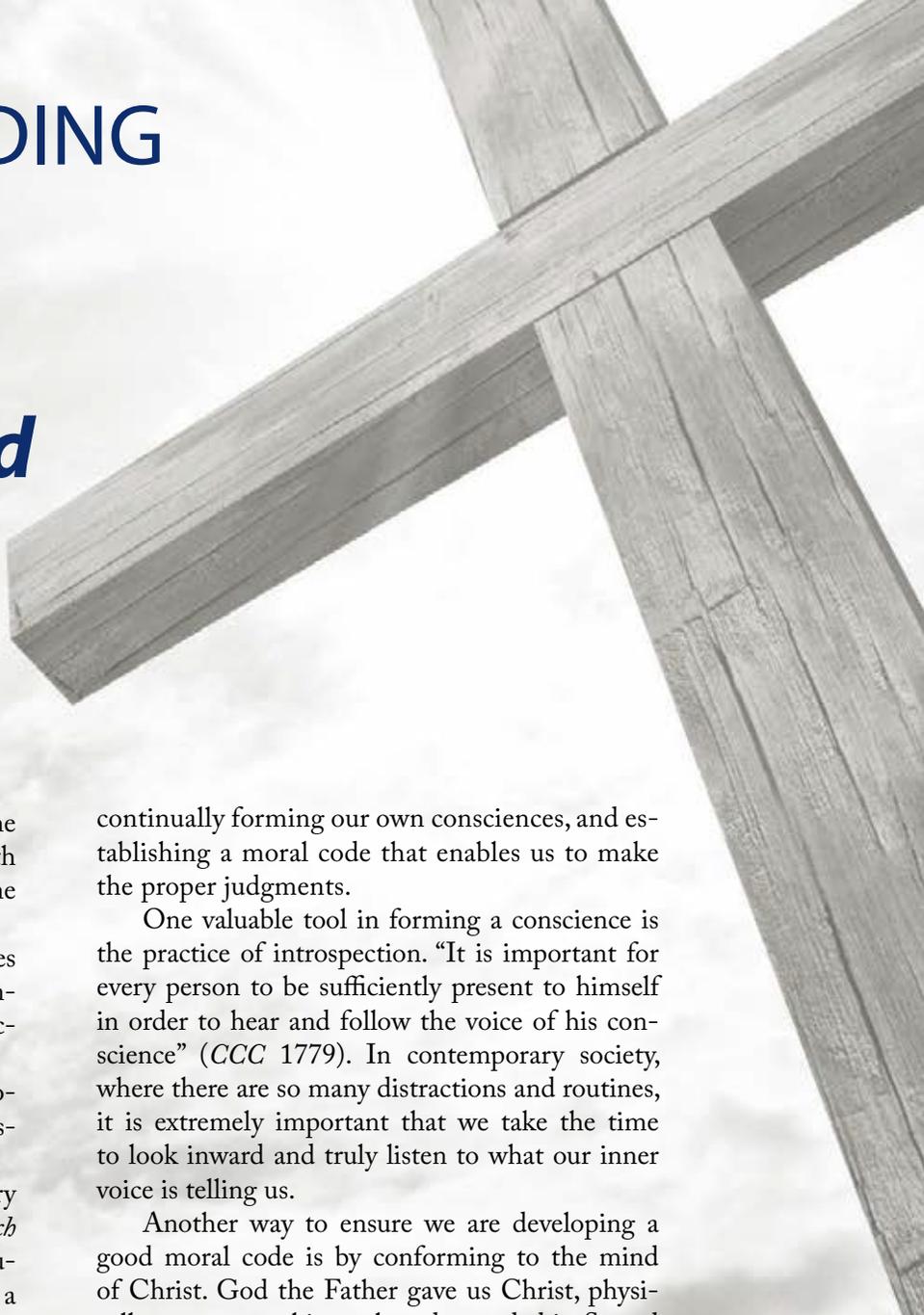
The bottom line of all that we are about in the Church is to help us become intentional disciples of Jesus Christ, a people committed to stewardship as the road map for our lives in this world, keeping focused on the truth of eternal life in heaven. We are about growing together as the Body of Christ, celebrating our lives and faith, and continually inviting those who are not really connected to the Lord, or to the Church! Thanks for reading this, and for reading every page of our monthly newsletter.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Larry M. Bakke
Pastor

LIVING ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL

Forming a Conscience and Moral Code



As Christians, it is important to recognize the difference between right and wrong – both morally and ethically. Sometimes, though, this line can become blurred.

Many situations we encounter in our lives include variables that can leave us internally conflicted and unsure of how to move forward, in accordance with God's will.

So how do we work through these moral conundrums? One way is to develop a solid Christian conscience.

A moral conscience exists in the heart of every individual. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking. Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed" (CCC, 1777, 1778).

Think of your conscience as the "angelic" version of yourself sitting on your shoulder, giving you sound advice.

While everyone is blessed with a conscience, each individual has a responsibility to develop this conscience from the time they are young. Parents obviously play an important role in developing their children's consciences. As the primary educators of their children on ethical issues and the Catholic faith, parents have a responsibility to teach virtue to their children and help them to avoid fear, selfishness and pride. As we grow older, we take on the lifelong challenge of

continually forming our own consciences, and establishing a moral code that enables us to make the proper judgments.

One valuable tool in forming a conscience is the practice of introspection. "It is important for every person to be sufficiently present to himself in order to hear and follow the voice of his conscience" (CCC 1779). In contemporary society, where there are so many distractions and routines, it is extremely important that we take the time to look inward and truly listen to what our inner voice is telling us.

Another way to ensure we are developing a good moral code is by conforming to the mind of Christ. God the Father gave us Christ, physically present on this earth and recorded in Sacred Scripture, as the ultimate example of what to do and how to behave according to God's will. As Bishop Donald W. Wuerl aptly states in *The Teaching of Christ*, "To conform to the mind of Christ is to conform to the mind of the Father" (p. 244). In other words, when we act in loving imitation of Christ, we are certain to make practical judgments of conscience.

The next time you are faced with a moral dilemma, take some quiet time to look inward, weigh the positive and negative outcomes, and listen to the voice of your conscience. Read the Gospels for examples of Christ's teaching. By making this a regular practice, you will find that the voice of your conscience will come in louder and more clearly than you may have initially expected.

Dedicated Volunteers Lend a Hand at Lunchtime



On school days, lunch can certainly be a busy, hectic time. However, at St. Victor School, a dedicated group of volunteers is always there to help week-in and week-out, so that the lunch program staff can serve school students in a fast and efficient manner.

“Right now we have about eight or nine people – most are parishioners, though we do have a few that are not,” says Pat Sleiter, supervisor/cook for the school lunch program. “Most of them come in on the same day each week, which we let them determine. Usually, in the fall, I’ll look at what days I need someone, and we’ll figure out how that works into everyone’s schedule. We also have some subs that fill in when needed, or others who say they’ll help out whenever we need some extra help.”

On their designated day, one to three volunteers will arrive at the school at about 11 a.m. Volunteers often help with some last-minute food preparation before they serve the students, who eat lunch in two different shifts. Afterwards, the volunteers also assist with clean-up tasks, such as washing trays or running the dishwasher. Volunteers are also provided with lunch, and are usually done for the day around 1 p.m.

School lunch volunteers also provide assistance when the school hosts larger meals or events, such as Thanksgiving or the school’s Book Fair event.

“I use more volunteers then, because it takes a lot more work to get it all done,” Pat says. “It’s great to have people who can help out on those days.”

Giving of their time and talent to the school lunch program allows the volunteers to get to know others in the community, as well as lend a much-needed hand to the lunch program staff.

“They just love seeing the children, being able to converse with them,” Pat says. “Many have grandchildren at the school. The volunteers are very important to us because it really helps our day to go a lot smoother and faster. There’s a possibility that if we didn’t have the volunteers, we’d have to employ another person. The volunteers really are wonderful.”

All parishioners are invited to volunteer for the school lunch program, either on a regular weekly basis or as a substitute. For more information, please contact Pat Sleiter at 608-325-1464, or St. Victor School at 608-325-3395.

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– Pat Sleiter, supervisor/cook for the St. Victor School lunch program

The Assumption of Mary: *A Time to Celebrate!*

Can a pile of bones really be that exciting? Every year, tens of thousands of pilgrims visit St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, eager to glimpse the spot in which the alleged bones of St. Peter, our first pope, remain to this day.

The relics of saints have been venerated throughout the ages in every corner of the world – yet, the bones of the very first Christian, the Mystical Rose, are nowhere to be found. Where are the remains of the Queen of all Saints?

When it comes to the day, manner, or year of the Blessed Virgin Mary's death, nothing is certain. No account is given in Scripture. The Church turns instead to Tradition for an answer.

Since the birth of the Church, no Marian relics have ever been venerated – nor can they ever be – because her body was assumed, or taken up, into heaven. There exist, therefore, no remains of the Blessed Virgin's body on this earth. She lives, right now, body and soul, in heavenly glory.

Although the particular dogma of the Assumption cannot be found in the writings of Scripture, if we look at many other writings by the early Christians, it is clear that the Church has always held this dogma to be true. Even more, though there is no statement of fact in the Bible itself that Mary was assumed body and soul, the truths that we do know about Mary from Scripture simply serve to back up the reality that she was assumed into heaven. She gave herself wholly to the Lord and followed His will for her life, perfectly, to the end.

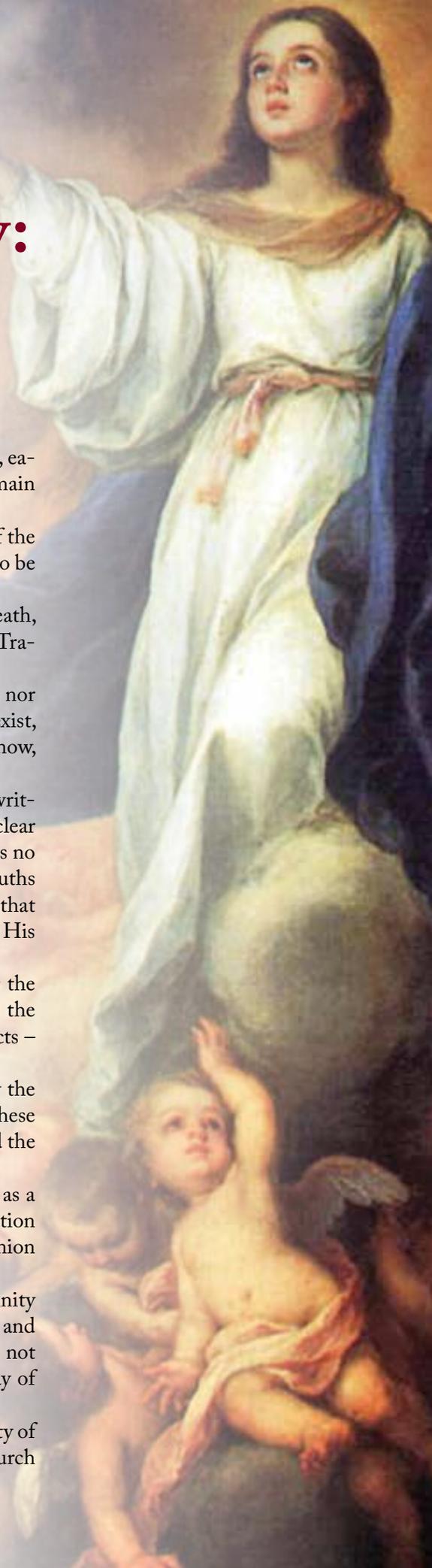
The Assumption of Mary reveals that the promises of the Lord – including the resurrection of the body – were fulfilled in Mary. She shared most intimately in the life, death, and resurrection of her son, and was free from original sin and its effects – including corruption of the body at death.

It was no surprise, therefore, in 1950 when Pope Pius XII declared infallibly the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a dogma of the Catholic faith with these words: "The Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heaven."

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is observed on the liturgical calendar as a solemnity – of higher importance than a feast. On Aug. 15, this wonderful celebration is accompanied by great hope in the resurrection of the body and everlasting union with God in heaven.

In the words of Pope Benedict XVI during his homily Mass on the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary in 2006: "Mary is 'blessed' because – totally, in body and soul and forever – she became the Lord's dwelling place. If this is true, Mary does not merely invite our admiration and veneration, but she guides us, shows us the way of life, shows us how we can become blessed, how to find the path of happiness."

Alongside Catholics throughout the country, be sure to celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption on Aug. 15. This is a declared Holy Day of Obligation in the Church and a great liturgical feast. Mark your calendars!



Leading Teens to Christ Through Youth Ministry

Garret Martin, our new coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, first became involved with youth ministry when he was in college.

“Ever since my high school days, I always had a big passion for my own faith formation,” Garret says. “But when I was in high school, I didn’t have a ton of available options for pursuing that. So when I got to college, I really became invested in working with the youth on forming their own faith. I became really passionate about building relationships with those students and sharing my own faith experiences and what I gained from them. I never had a young adult share those things with me when I was a high-schooler, and I wish I had.”

For the past several years, Garret has been involved in the Newman Center at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, where he attended college, helping out with the Confirmation and Youth Ministry programs, and helping to develop a program for the juniors and seniors where there was previously none.

“It wasn’t until college that I realized it was that relationship that made all the difference. It changed my life in such a way that I want to help give the youth an opportunity to experience a relationship with God that can change their lives, too. I really wish I had that before college, so I want to give the youth that chance as early as they’ll take it.” – Garret Martin, Youth and Young Adult Ministry coordinator

After graduating in December, Garret was looking for the next step and found out about an opportunity to join St. Clare’s when looking into summer youth programs such as Love Begins Here.

As our new coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Garret plans to use his experience to provide the youth of our parish with the opportunity to grow in understanding of the faith and in their relationship with God.

“My experience growing up in the Catholic Church was very religious, but wasn’t all about having a real, deep relationship with God,” Garret says. “It wasn’t until college that I realized it was that relationship that made all the difference. It changed my life in such a way that I want to help give the youth an opportunity to experience a relationship with God that can change their lives, too. I really wish I had that before college, so I want to give the youth that chance as early as they’ll take it.”

The Church plays a crucial role in forming young Catholics’ faith in



*Garret Martin, Youth and Young Adult
Ministry coordinator*

today’s world through youth ministry, and Garret hopes to show the youth what the Catholic Church really is.

“A big part of what I want to do in this position is to really share the depth and beauty of the Catholic Church, especially what it means to be wholly and fully loved by our God,” he says. “I want to show the youth that the Catholic faith has so much more to offer than just a list of rules or this one hour of ‘boring’ church every Sunday – to really help them experience the depth of what the Catholic Church offers. And to show them that it doesn’t have to be boring! Being a Catholic can be fun, too!”

If you would like more information about Youth and Young Adult Ministry at our parish, or to volunteer, please contact Garret Martin at 608-325-9506.



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The Meaning of RCIA

What is RCIA, really?

You could say that RCIA is a code word that we presume people understand. Perhaps some do and some don't – so here is a brief explanation.

RCIA stands for "Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults." Now, that is a mouthful! Translated, it consists of classes explaining the Catholic faith to interested non-Catholics. We begin meeting in the fall on a weekly basis. During Easter week, those who want to be accepted into the Catholic faith are received by Fr. Larry and the community.

More information about time and dates will follow in the bulletin.

If you know someone who might be interested, encourage him or her to join! Please contact the Parish Center office if interested, or if you need more information – call 325-9506 and ask for Jane, or email faithcoordrv@gmail.com.

