

# ST. CLARE *of* ASSISI PARISH

January/February 2016

## An Evening for Fellowship, Fun and Fundraising *The Eighth Annual Mardi Gras Gala and Benefit Auction*

**I**s the date of Feb. 6 marked on your calendar yet? That evening, we will be celebrating the Eighth Annual Mardi Gras Gala and Benefit Auction. This wonderful event, which benefits St. Victor School, is one that you will certainly not want to miss!

“Mardi Gras is a chance to have a wonderful and fun-filled evening with other adults while at the same time supporting a good cause,” says Amy Lewis, who runs the Technology department at St. Victor’s and is part of the planning committee for the event.

The Mardi Gras Gala and Benefit Auction is the primary fundraiser hosted by St. Victor School. Year after year, the event has supported the growing needs and mission of this vibrant and thriving parish school.

“It is encouraging to see the community come together for an event to support the growth and development of our children,” Amy says. “Mardi Gras is a chance to get to know others outside of Sunday Mass and enjoy a fun-filled evening of fellowship. It helps to show and build the vision of our parish and school.”

This year’s Mardi Gras event will help support St. Victor School in four ways – improvements to the STEM curriculum; technology updates to ensure that students are prepared for the future; financial contributions to the



scholarship fund; and renovation to the school entrance and administrative offices to improve safety and handicap accessibility.

As with previous years, the evening will feature great food, drinks, games, a raffle, and a live and silent auction. There will also be some new entertainment this year, as well.

“New this year, we will have Madison’s number one rock and roll band, Midlife Crisis, to provide live musical entertainment,” Amy says.

The auctions have plenty of special prizes, as well – vacation packages, the highly sought-after “Principal for a Day,” and authentic home-cooked meals, just to name a few.

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## Giving Back to God During the “Golden Years”

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Ask any newly married Catholic couple what they remember most about the marriage preparation process, and they are bound to tell you one particular thing — communication.

As with any relationship, communication is a key element of the equation. Poor or nonexistent communication leads to bitterness and confusion, separating individuals from their spouses. Good communication allows husbands and wives to grow closer together, deeper in love, while reinforcing their union as man and wife.

Prayer is a particularly fruitful form of communication between spouses and God. When one prays on behalf of his or her spouse, graces are bestowed on both individuals. Prayer is also a sign of love — the man who prays for his wife indirectly communicates that he wishes the best for her, and that he is putting her first in his communication with God. Prayer can also be a wonderful expression of stewardship, especially for senior couples who can no longer participate in parish ministries.

As one of the “three Ts” of stewardship, prayer is time spent with God. During prayer, one builds a relationship with the Lord, sharing with Him one’s deepest desires, cares, hurts, fears, and thanksgivings. Prayer is something we all should do, regardless of our place in life. But for many senior couples, it becomes their primary form of stewardship during the “golden years.”

Prayer is unique in that it benefits the individual who is offering the prayer, as well as those being prayed for and those in the surrounding community. Consider this — a parish offers its parishioners Perpetual Adoration. This means that, for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year, someone in the parish is praying. While the prayers being offered will



most certainly not be focused on every individual in the parish, the whole parish benefits because someone is communicating with God, and God is at work in the community. Adoration is also a wonderful way to spend time with one’s spouse before Our Lord, present in the Eucharist.

There are many other ways in which senior couples can participate in prayer. First and foremost is the Holy Mass. As the principal prayer of the Catholic faith, Mass attendance not only allows us to communicate with God, but also physically receive Him through the Eucharist. When God took on the form of man, He entered into the human life. We can complete the circle and enter into the divine life by receiving God during Communion. And Mass doesn’t have to be a once-a-week type of activity. Daily Mass is

available for those whose schedules permit, and it often becomes the stepping-stone toward a greater prayer life and, ultimately, a deeper relationship with God.

In addition to Mass, the seniors of our parish — particularly those who are homebound — can participate in prayer ministries, such as prayer lines, the Legion of Mary, Rosary groups and more. These ministries offer members the opportunity to participate without ever leaving home. They also connect these parishioners with the rest of the parish, which is a true blessing for the sick and homebound.

If you are a senior parishioner, and are searching for a way to live out stewardship with your spouse, consider joining a prayer ministry, attending adoration or daily Mass, or simply set aside time during the day to pray with your spouse. If none of these opportunities exist, take the initiative to start one. God will surely bless your efforts!

*A Letter From Our Pastor*

Resolve to be  
*Merciful*

Dear Parishioners,

Most of you are aware that we launched a Holy Year of Mercy on Dec. 8, 2015, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. You are most likely also cognizant of Pope Francis' motivation for proclaiming this year. In his announcement the Holy Father stated, "It is indeed my wish that the Jubilee be a living experience of the closeness of the Father, whose tenderness is almost tangible, so that the faith of every believer may be strengthened and thus testimony to it be ever more effective."

If we do nothing else during this Holy Year, each of us must seek forgiveness from the Lord; and we also need to make an effort to forgive others. Mercy is, after all, a two-way street. We receive it, but we must as well show it. In fact, during this month when many make resolutions, let us each resolve to be merciful.

That, of course, is not always easy, and sometimes may not even be convenient. Being able to be merciful requires us to look beyond the emotional, past the self-centeredness that may lead us to be angry and unforgiving. The story is related that soon after becoming pope, an interviewer asked Francis to describe himself – the pope immediately answered, "A sinner." However, he quickly added, "Who has been looked upon by the face of mercy."

Each of us can recall when we have been "looked upon by the face of mercy." This needs to be our motivation for showing to others what we have received. Also, in his letter announcing this Holy Year, the pope called us to have a "deep desire for true conversion." This is what stewardship is all about – not being self-centered, but God-centered. It asks us to recognize, acknowledge, and share our many gifts. Nevertheless, to do that effectively requires a conversion on our part. That needs to be part of our purpose for this year, too.

Stewardship always seems to come back to the concept of "love for one another." One of the misnomers – and a conclusion many have drawn from the Year of Mercy – is that God's essential characteristic is mercy.



The Lord's fundamental attribute is love. Mercy is what love looks like when we show it.

Therefore, let us resolve to show mercy and love to all we meet, all we know, and all with whom we may work.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Msgr. Larry M. Bakke*

Msgr. Larry M. Bakke  
Pastor

# Allowing Our Youth to Experience



*The Frassati Fest provides an opportunity for the youth of our parish to connect with Christ and their peers in a social setting.*



*Our youth on the way to the Kalahari Resort for last year's Frassati Fest*

Do you have a “favorite” saint – one whose personal faith journey and response to God’s love inspires your own faith and relationship with God?

For our youth and young adults, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati provides a wonderful example of a life faithfully lived through social action, charity and prayer. In turn, his witness to a life of holiness has inspired countless youth groups, retreats, and conferences where youth are invited to respond boldly to God’s calling, just like Frassati Fest, our annual diocesan youth conference named after this saint.

Garret Martin, Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for St. Clare of Assisi, views youth conferences such as the Frassati Fest as pivotal moments for youth to experience Christ’s love. Frassati Fest also helps youth make a personal decision to live out their Christian calling instead of simply going through the motions because it is what they have always done and what they are simply told they must do.

“I truly believe that opportunities like this one can completely change the way we see our faith,” Garret says. “When you’re able to join together with hundreds of other youth, many of whom have the exact same perspective of their faith, and witness all that happens on a weekend conference, things change.”

The Frassati Fest, a diocesan-wide conference for high-schoolers, is held each year at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells. More than 300 youth from all over the Diocese of Madison attend this three-day weekend filled with water park fun, games, great talks and presentations, and deep prayer.

“For many of our youth, this might be the first time they truly encounter Jesus in their faith,” Garret says. “It might be the first time they witness a community of like-minded people all experiencing the same sort of conversion of heart. This might be what changes their whole understanding of our Church and of the role that faith has in their lives.”

Last year, 15 youth from our parish attended this event, and this year we are hoping to send around 10 youth. This year’s conference takes place Feb. 5-7, with the event theme

# Experience Conversion Together

of “Surrender.” The event website describes the theme by stating, “We will surrender to fun at the water park, surrender our fear and create authentic friendships with other Catholic teens, and ultimately have the chance to surrender to the joy and happiness found in a relationship with Jesus Christ while learning about the beauty of our Faith!”

Each year, about 20 youth from across the Diocese of Madison come together as a planning committee and work with Lindsay Becher, the Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Formation for the diocese, to

plan this event. Thus, teens are planning the event for the fellow teens, which helps make it such a hit.

“This is a unique opportunity to see our youth get outside of their own comfort zones and connect with kids from other towns,” Garret says. “It’s an environment that they can be themselves in, but still see the importance of faith. It’s a much different presentation of the faith than what they are used to.”

Please keep the youth of St. Clare of Assisi and the Diocese of Madison in your prayers as they prepare for this wonderful event!

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*– Garret Martin, Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministry*



*Sharing in fun and fellowship at Frassati Fest*



*The Frassati Fest is packed with fun games, great talks, delicious food, and deep prayer.*

*Would you like to support our youth by making a donation toward funding this event?  
If so, please contact Garret Martin at the parish office, 608-325-9506.*

## Tackle the Year of Mercy

**N**eed time to put together a good game plan for actively celebrating the Year of Mercy? We are definitely in need of some energetic running backs to put the year in gear. Come join us as we explore the depth of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. We will investigate these pearls of great price through the eyes of the Scriptures, and the lives of Dorothy Day, Oscar Romero and Mother Teresa. They certainly can help us put the “X’s and O’s” in our game plans. The day will be Saturday, Feb. 27, from 10 to 4 p.m. with 4:30 Mass to follow. A noon meal will be provided. The facilitator will be Jane McAuliffe, who is working in our parish. Jane has her Master’s Degree in Biblical Theology from the University of Notre Dame. Come join us for the day!



## A Look Back on Our Brunch With Santa

**I**n December our community shared in a wonderful Christmastime celebration during the Brunch With Santa. We thank all who attended, making this year’s event a resounding success!



## Parish Mission to Embrace Mercy and Faithfulness

On the surface, Lent may not seem like something we would look forward to. With many focused on giving up certain things, it's easy to forget that we can – and should – look at this time as a purposeful moment of rest and spiritual renewal.

For the first time in recent years, St. Clare of Assisi will host a parish mission, from March 12-15 – right at the very heart of Lent. As Msgr. Larry Bakke explains, the heart is exactly what he's hoping parishioners will explore as they join in this special event.

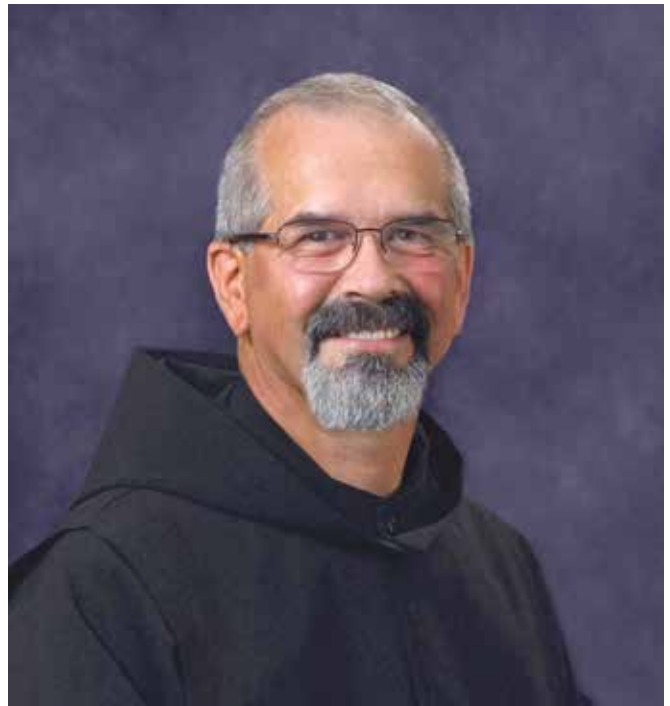
"Parish missions have a long tradition in the Catholic Church as a special invitation for people to be able to commit some extra time in reflection and prayer," he says. "They can happen any time during the calendar year, but a special time is during the season of Lent when we reflect on the goodness of our Baptism, and our sinfulness and open our hearts to this renewed season with God."

The theme for the upcoming mission is "Mercy and Faithfulness Have Met (Psalm 85:10)." Fr. John Meoska, OSB, will serve as director for each night of the mission. Msgr. Larry says Fr. John's presentations will focus on the mercy and faithfulness that God shows His people, and our call to answer Him in the same way. The message will allow parishioners to reflect on the challenges we face in living out our Catholic faith, ways that we can be good stewards of God's faith and mercy, and how we can open our hearts to grow more deeply in our experience of faith and mercy.

Fr. John serves as Formation Director and Novice Master at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minn. He lived a contemplative life for 21 years at the Spiritual Life Institute and has previously given retreats and parish missions in not only the Diocese of Madison, but also throughout the U.S., Canada and Ireland.

"We really hope we have a good response for people to take advantage of this special opportunity," Msgr. Larry says. "There hasn't been a mission at this parish for many years, so it's welcoming people to a new fresh experience."

Fr. John will at preach all Masses the weekend of March 12-13. Special mission presentations will follow on March 13 and 14, at 6:30 p.m. each evening. The mission will conclude with a communal Reconciliation service on the March 15, also at 6:30 p.m.



*Fr. John Meoska, OSB, will visit St. Clare of Assisi from March 12-15 to host our parish mission.*

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*Msgr. Larry notes parishioners should watch the bulletin for more information as the mission dates draw closer. Those with questions are welcome to contact the parish office at 608-325-9506.*



# ST. CLARE of ASSISI PARISH

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## The Eighth Annual Mardi Gras Gala and Benefit Auction *continued from front cover*

“Each class at St. Victor’s has been working on a project – anything from a painted chair, to a blanket with photos – to be auctioned off at the event,” Amy says.

St. Victor School invites parishioners, families of students and the community of Monroe to join in the celebration of the Eighth Annual Mardi Gras Gala and Benefit Auction. Call a babysitter and invite your friends – the more the merrier! – for an exciting evening filled with entertainment and games, a delicious meal, fellowship, and supporting the mission of St. Victor School.



*Be sure to mark your calendars for Feb. 6! As in years past, the evening will be held at the historic Turner Hall in Monroe beginning at 5 p.m. Tickets are \$60 per person and can be purchased through the school or on the St. Victor School website. We hope to see you there!*

