

ST. CLARE of ASSISI PARISH

March/April 2016

Men's Choir

Leading Music at Mass in Joyful Song

Psalm 100 tells us to “make a joyful noise to the Lord” and “come before His presence with singing.” The Men's Choir of St. Clare of Assisi is doing all it can to do just that!

Consisting of male parishioners of all ages and vocal abilities, the Men's Choir can be found leading music during at least one Sunday Mass each month.

As Choir Director Cindy Blanc explains, a choir has two roles during Mass – to lead the congregation in song during designated moments, and to offer time and talent to God.

“Singing and music is a ministry to the congregation that should provide appropriate music for prayer, reflection and meditation,” she says. “It's not entertainment or performance, but a beautiful form of prayer that hopefully can move others to pray. Full participation in music and spoken responses is everyone's responsibility, and a choir should encourage and support the congregation by its presence. I think our Men's Choir does a great job with that.”

Bass section member Mark O'Leary originally started the choir. Cindy says Mark and his wife, Ann, and daughters – Emily, Callie, Sadie, and



Members of the St. Clare of Assisi Men's Choir entertained Brunch With Santa guests with Christmas carols in December at St. Victor School.

Naomi – have been involved with music ministry for a number of years as a family.

“Mark did all the initial recruiting for the choir, and the fruits of his efforts are evident in the commitment the choir members have made,” Cindy says.

Practice for the Men's Choir takes place 45 minutes before the gentleman are scheduled to sing during Mass, and again for about an hour after one Sunday 10 a.m. Mass each month.

Cindy says working with these choir members is truly a joy.

“There are few musical things better than a group of male voices singing together,” she says. “They work very hard to

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Volunteer Appreciation Dinners

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Feast of St. Joseph, Husband of Mary

March 19

Devotion to St. Joseph began relatively late in Church history, primarily because his role of husband to Mary and head of the Holy Family was underplayed in early Christianity by many unauthenticated legends of Christ's childhood. These legends almost always portrayed Joseph as an old man, a simple guardian of Mary and Jesus.

Modern theology places Joseph in a much more important position. Because of his valid marriage to Mary, Joseph shared in Mary's parenthood – Joseph was a father to Jesus in every way except biological. Joseph appeared publicly as the natural father of Jesus, thus shielding the virginity of Mary and the reputation of Jesus. Joseph's fatherly love, authority and watchful service were all necessary circumstances in God's plan for the Incarnation.

Joseph was born in Judea or Galilee in the first century B.C. Little is stated in the Bible about the influence Joseph had on Jesus. History tells us that he brought Mary and Jesus to the temple each Passover and taught Jesus the carpentry trade. He seems to be the silent family man who shows his love for his family by providing them with security. The very safety of Mary and Jesus was guarded by Joseph when he took his family into Egypt to avoid the massacre of male babies ordered by King Herod.

In the history of the Church, Western veneration of Joseph began with the introduction of the Feast of St. Joseph in the late 15th century.

In 1870, at the end of the First Vatican Council, Pope Pius IX declared St. Joseph to be the patron of the Universal Church. He is also the patron of carpenters, workers, fathers, and a happy death given that he died in the presence of Mary and Jesus. The title of Joseph's March 19 feast day is "Husband of Mary." Pope Pius XII later declared May 1 to be the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, to counteract the Communist May Day holiday.

A traditional prayer to St. Joseph

O Blessed St. Joseph, faithful guardian and protector of virgins, to whom God entrusted Jesus and Mary, I implore you by the love which you did bear them, to preserve me from every defilement of soul and body, that I may always serve them in holiness and purity of love. Amen.

A Letter From Our Pastor

Make Prayer and Hospitality Pillars of Your Lenten Journey

Dear Parishioners,

In the coming weeks, we will conclude our Lenten observance, experience Holy Week, and celebrate the joy of Easter. Of course, I hope that you have made some effort to make this Lenten season special and significant, but if you have not, it is never too late to accomplish that goal.

With thoughts of Lent, Easter and the Year of Mercy at the top of my mind, I offer a couple suggestions to help carry you to the end of your Lenten journey.

As you know, prayer is foundational to stewardship, as it is one of the Four Pillars of a stewardship parish — along with hospitality, formation and service. With this in mind, here are some suggestions on how you might make your prayers even more consequential.

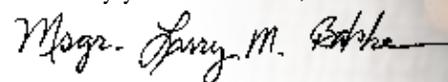
Pick someone to pray for, perhaps even someone you don't get along with. Just pray for them. You do not have to tell them you are praying for them, but the exercise is good for you, and for them, as well. If possible, find a time this month to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, especially if this is something you do not normally do. Pray every morning shortly after you get up, and again each evening before you turn in. It does not have to be a long prayer, but it does need to be done consistently.

In terms of the pillar of hospitality, there is also much we can do in this area, both as a parish and as individuals and families. Here is a suggestion that involves hospitality — one that is also connected to gratitude and even the Year of Mercy. Many of us spend time at a computer. It is a way for us to stay connected to those who are close to us, and to the world around us. Why not begin and end each week emailing someone a note of thanksgiving? Again, it does not have to be lengthy, but when we think about it, each of our lives is filled with people to whom we should be grateful.

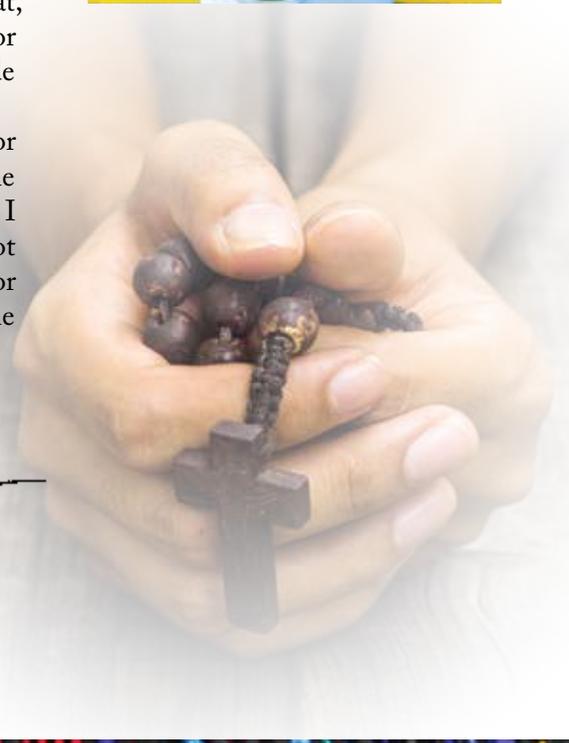
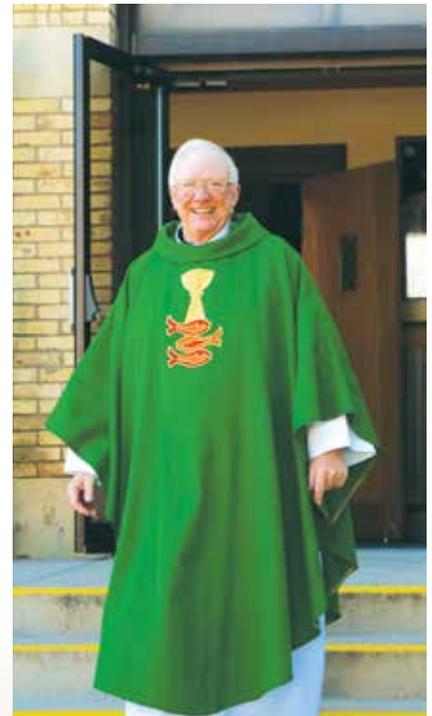
Just send that someone a note thanking them for something specifically, or in general. By starting and ending each week like that, our minds are in the right place for prayer and for having the attitude that Christ asks us to have.

I thank you for all you do, for our parish, for the Church, for one another, and for me personally. I am blessed. Like most, I may not express it often enough. I pray for you, and I ask you to pray for me during this holy time.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Msgr. Larry M. Bakke
Pastor





Reaching Our Youth Through I

In today's world, teens face many obstacles in their daily lives that are designed to pull them away from their faith. Peer pressure, television and movies, and even the music they hear on the radio as they drive back and forth to school all serve as roadblocks on the journey towards Christ. That is where St. Clare of Assisi's EDGE program comes in!

"EDGE is a Middle School faith formation program, produced by the company LifeTeen," says our Coordinator of Youth Ministry, Garret Martin. "We currently host EDGE faith formation classes for our sixth and seventh-grade youth. What I love about this program is that the curriculum is designed in a way to specifically target middle school youth. The publishers of this program, almost all of whom are either

currently working or have previously worked with middle school youth in faith formation, have firsthand knowledge of what kind of content and what kind of delivery works best for this age group."

First, as Garret notes, the lessons begin with a fun and engaging game or activity.

"This lets loose some stray energy, helps break down walls, and helps draw in the youth to focus on the session," he says. "Next is a short 'lesson' – a talk delivered by one of our seven leaders, usually including video and media resources to engage the youth. Following the talk is a time for small-group discussion, where the class spends some time in more intimate and deeper conversation about the content of the session and how it relates to their lives. This small-group time is

an awesome opportunity for them to get to know each other better, and for the leaders to get to know a few of the kids much better. Finally, it ends with a prayer that ties it all together."

This year is a trial run for EDGE at our parish, and Garret says that, so far, our youth really love the program. The classes are part of our parish Religious Education program, and are held every Wednesday at 6 p.m. The classes are broken up into three categories, which provide the students with faith formation, fellowship and fun.

"The content of 'EDGE Nights' are also divided into three categories – catechetical nights, issue nights and social nights," Garret says. "The catechetical nights are focused on delivering more of the 'meaty' education regarding



For more information on the EDGE program here at St. Clare of Assisi, please contact



Formation, Fellowship and Fun

the Church and our faith. Issue nights focus on current and relevant events or topics that middle-schoolers deal with in their everyday lives and ties it into their faith. Social nights are purely fun – just a sort of ‘break’ that happens every now and then to have fun and grow in fellowship together!”

For Garret, it has been a joy to see the content and the delivery methods applied through the EDGE program really work for the youth. He has seen their hearts and minds opened in the short time they have used EDGE, because EDGE helps the students relate their faith to the rest of their lives.

“I think it works particularly well with this age group because of how active and engaging it is, and because it’s very personal,” Garret

says. “Our seven leaders – four of whom are actually high-schoolers – clearly care about these youth, and that is obvious when they deliver their content and even more obvious in the small group discussions. It’s a great opportunity for these youth to see that people in the Church really do care about them, personally, *and* about their faith education. They can see that we’re not here to force pages and pages full of ‘boring’ information into their heads, but, rather, are making it a point to help them see why this content is significant to them – why their faith matters. I think that the delivery of this content is much more efficient. They get what we talk about, because it is delivered right to them in a way that is relevant. For many of our youth, it seems that this

might be a ‘new’ thing for them – feeling like ‘Church class’ has information that matters to them.”

Garret is blessed to have adult and high school-aged volunteers helping deliver the EDGE lessons each week. However, he would like to enlist the entire parish to help make EDGE a success!

“Parishioners can help by praying!” Garret says. “It seems like it’s easy to forget about the incredible value and significance of prayer! We owe it to our youth to lift them up in prayer – that they will remain open to opportunities to respond to God’s invitation to get to know Him better. And we’re always happy to have parents or other adults who are willing to step in as ‘substitute’ small group leaders!”



ct Garret Martin at 608-325-9506, or via email at gmartin@stclaregreencounty.org.

Seminarian Learning Pastoral Challenges on the Road to the Priesthood

Since his arrival at our parish at the end of August, seminarian Bill Van Wagner has become involved in life here at St. Clare, all the while learning in depth about the vocation God called him to when he was still a teen.

Bill, of Madison, has spent the last two years at the Pontifical North American College in Rome, and before that, he spent four years at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary in Winona, Minn. His education here has meant that he has been gaining a better understanding of what daily parish life is like for a pastor, thanks to working with Msgr. Bakke. Bill has also been working with Youth Ministry, Youth Faith Formation, teaching fifth-grade catechism, coordinating funeral liturgies, and spending time at St. Victor School.

“The biggest challenge for a pastor is the balance of the different roles expected of a pastor,” Bill says. “There are a lot of administrative tasks, taking care of the temporal goods, the office, being ‘boss’ to the staffers – and here, we have 30, including the school, the finance administration. And [then], handling all that before the priestly functions – taking care of people’s spiritual lives and guiding the flock through moments in their lives. There are a lot of different hats to wear as a pastor.”

One of the favorite activities Bill has found at St. Clare is working along with Garrett Martin with the High School Youth Ministry.

“The kids come in on Wednesday nights at 7:30 p.m. and stay to about 9:30 p.m.,” Bill says. “We have discussions about relevant topics to their lives, pray together, have spiritual conversations, play games, and talk. Sometimes, we do special activities like caroling at Christmas-time, ice skating at the local hockey rink, things like that.”

As he has been working with the teens, Bill says he finds the teens are facing challenges that were not part of his world, when he was the same age.



Bill Van Wagner

“They don’t live in a world that supports practicing religion, especially Catholic Christianity,” he says. “They face a lot of pressures that they are not equipped to deal with at that age. With the age of technology, they are exposed to things they don’t know how to handle, and they are unfairly expected to figure out things early on.”

Bill also has found that there are parents who don’t support their teens in their faith development.

“They’re left to figure things out on their own, a lot,” he says. “I’m 25, and out of high school about eight years, and I don’t remember the same type of challenges they have, and facing soci-

ety’s challenging notions of religion for young people, as they’re trying to live a moral life according to the teachings of Jesus. I don’t remember experiencing these things that they are today.”

Bill began hearing God’s call in his mid-teens, and he found he was able to really hear that call during cherished summers spent at Camp Gray, the Catholic camp near Madison. He knew he had to make a decision whether to embrace God’s call to become a priest. When he graduated from high school, the catalyst for him to face that decision came when he was able to spend time in prayer and conversation with the Lord in the chapel at Camp Gray.

“After putting [the decision] off for awhile, it was in the midst of adoration at the chapel at camp,” he says. “I said, ‘I’m willing to do what you want me to do.’ I felt peace and the joy of trusting in the Lord and His will. I applied to the seminary, and I’ve been at it ever since.”

Bill expects to spend a year here at St. Clare, and after his time with us is over, he will return to seminary for two more years of formation. He is hoping to be ordained to the priesthood in June 2018. We welcome Bill to our parish family, and we pray as he proceeds on his vocational and spiritual journey!

Upcoming Events at St. Clare of Assisi

Prayer Service for Peace
March 6
6 p.m.

Confession
March 23
Noon-1 p.m. and 5-6 p.m.

Parish Mission
March 12-15

Stations of the Cross
Every Friday, noon

Living Stations of the Cross
March 16
2 p.m. and 6:15 p.m.

MIME, Passion of Christ
March 23 and March 25
7 p.m.

Holy Thursday – March 24
6:30 p.m.

Good Friday – March 25
Noon and 7 p.m.

Easter Vigil, March 26
8 p.m.

Easter Sunday, March 27
6:30 a.m., 8 a.m. and 10 a.m.

Volunteer Appreciation Dinners

St. Clare of Assisi Parish and St. Victor School could not fulfill its mission without dedicated volunteers. With heartfelt appreciation, we would like to invite all volunteers to join us as we celebrate service in ministry at our parish and school.

Adult volunteers, please join us for our Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 6:30 p.m. at St. Victor School gym. Please RSVP by May 1, 2016, by completing the form below. For more information, please contact the church office 608-325-9506.

Youth volunteers, please join us for our Youth Volunteer Appreciation Cookout on June 15, 2016, 4:30 p.m. Stay tuned for more information on this cookout! If you are interested, please contact Garret Martin at 608-325-9506 or gmartin@stclaregreencounty.org.



Name(s): _____ will attend the Adult Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on May 11.

Please return this form to the Parish Center or the Sunday collection basket by May 1, 2016.



ST. CLARE of ASSISI PARISH

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Men's Choir *continued from front cover*

prepare the hymns and acclamations for Mass. As ministers of music, they are developing our talents in service of the liturgy. But it's not all serious business in the choir loft. This is a very fun – not to mention funny – group of male singers. They have, individually and collectively, a great sense of humor. They keep me on my toes, that's for sure. They always bring me coffee, which is very smart."

And as Cindy notes, the choir is always seeking new members.

"If you are you a man of any singing ability, you are more than welcome to join us," she says. "You will find the guys to be very welcoming. There is always room in the loft for more singers."

"Singing and music is a ministry to the congregation that should provide appropriate music for prayer, reflection and meditation. It's not entertainment or performance, but a beautiful form of prayer that hopefully can move others to pray. Full participation in music and spoken responses is everyone's responsibility, and a choir should encourage and support the congregation by its presence. I think our Men's Choir does a great job with that."

– Cindy Blanc, Choir Director

Any gentlemen parishioners of St. Clare of Assisi who are interested in becoming members of the Men's Choir may contact Cindy Blanc at edit1@tds.net or 608-214-1652.