



# The Guardian

*St. Michael Parish Newsletter*

Summer 2007

*Extending a Warm Welcome to All*

North Andover, MA 01845

## Teens Find 'Something More' in Mini-Retreats



A high school team plays "Catholic Jeopardy" during "Something More."

*By Jane C. Demers*

Eager to explore her newfound faith more deeply after a transformative St. Michael's Confirmation retreat this spring, a young teen voiced her desire for "something more" to build upon that experience. Hearing this, Margo Morin, director of the Youth Ministry, knew this was the spark she had been waiting for.

She quickly moved to form a youth group called, aptly, "Something More." Intended to run only during Lent, the group proved to be so popular and has

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## Thank You!



St. Michael held two appreciation dinners this spring for the 1,700 parishioners who volunteer their time in various ministries. The dinners were marked by prayer, song and lots of camaraderie.

*Photo by Julie Bloise*

**More Appreciation Dinner Photos,  
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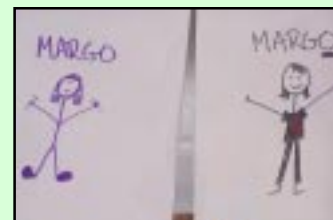


### On the Road

Joe Simone and many other parishioners smile when you talk about the "Friendly Drivers Circle."

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What do the sacraments and curly hair have in common? **Page 9.**



## This Is No Ordinary Time

By *Mary Alice Rock*  
*Director of Faith Formation*

It was only a month ago that I drove up to my brother's vacation home in Meredith, N.H. All along Interstate 93 everything was brown and gray — the grass, the bushes and the seemingly lifeless trees. When I drove up there last week, just four weeks later—wow! What a difference! Everywhere I looked it was luscious green.



Father Chris Casey, who recently served as a deacon at St. Michael Parish, blesses a well-wisher following his ordination to the priesthood at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Boston on May 26. Father Casey has been assigned to the Saint Marguerite D'Youville and Saint Francis of Assisi parishes in Dracut, Mass.

In nature, we are in our season of growth. The grass is growing so fast that sometimes we have to mow it even before a whole week passes. All the leaves of the trees are now fully extended. Flowers are popping up everywhere — right along with those nasty weeds.

The green of this beautiful season of growth is also reflected on the colors used on the altar and in the vestments the priests wear. We have begun, again, the season of Ordinary Time. And although called “ordinary,” the season is quite extraordinary. It is a time, as our parish motto states, for *becoming more fully alive in Christ*. During this season, we hear the familiar stories of the Gospels — the sinful woman who bathes the feet of Jesus with her tears; Zechariah naming his son “John”; Jesus teaching us how to pray; and Jesus giving us the Great Commandment to love God and one another. These Gospels reflect lessons of mercy, openness, prayerfulness and living the way of Jesus.

If we take the time to really reflect on these lessons; if we take the time to be in community with God and God's people at Eucharist; and if we take the time to pray, then this will be no ordinary time for us. It will become a time in which we grow confident of God's presence in our lives and recognize God's incredible love for us. Then, almost inevitably, will spring forth our love for one another and our desire to make a positive difference in our families, our neighborhoods, our workplace, our communities and the world. After all, it is in the ordinary, day-to-day practice of love that life truly becomes EXTRAordinary. ▲

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Photo by Anne Marie Guggenberger



Patty Bartfay drives Joe Simone to visit his wife in Andover.

## Friendly Drivers help others maintain their quality of life

By Anne Marie Guggenberger

When Fr. John Delaney came to St. Michael Parish in 2000, he brought some wonderful ministry ideas from his former parish in Needham. One of these, the “Friendly Drivers Circle,” is an outreach ministry that provides transportation to area senior citizens. This quiet ministry serves a sometimes unrecognized need for the elderly, many of whom would have difficulty getting out at all if it were not for the Friendly Drivers.

Susan Calabrese has coordinated the Friendly Drivers Circle for the last four years. There are 12 “friendly drivers” at St. Michael who provide an average of 400 rides annually. A biochemist, Susan was drawn to an ad in the church bulletin seeking drivers. Like many mothers of school-age children, Susan spent a lot of time in her car and found that her schedule and the needs of the ministry were a good match. She has enjoyed being part of this ministry and says she has been enriched by this work. “The seniors have fascinating life stories to share, and many of them know a lot about the history of this area,” says Susan. “As long as I’m in my car, it is simple to give a ride to one of our seniors. Giving up their drivers’

licenses and much of their independence is a major change for seniors, and helping to maintain their quality of life through rides is one of the missions of our ministry. The riders are so appreciative of the service we provide.”

There are generally two types of rides requested of the Friendly Drivers: standing appointments and one-time calls. Most of the rides are standing appointments where the rider requests to go to the same place at the same time every week. The

most frequently requested ride destinations are the North Andover Senior Center, area nursing homes to visit spouses and grocery stores and hairdressers. The rides are all generally within North Andover and Andover area. The Friendly Drivers do not drive to medical appointments, because a service through the local senior center provides that transportation.

To request a ride with the Friendly Drivers, the rider calls the Pastoral Center and leaves a message with the receptionist. At least 48 hours advance notice is requested to coordinate a ride. Calabrese then contacts drivers with the details. Once a driver has been identified, the driver calls the rider to coordinate the final arrangements. Sometimes a driver provides round-trip transportation; in some instances two different drivers do so. Rides are provided for parishioners and non-parishioners alike. Susan said the Interfaith Caregivers and other local churches are trying to set up similar driving ministries to provide a larger network of resources for the growing number of area seniors. “We can always use more drivers,” Susan says. “We are able to honor almost every request for rides, but it would be wonderful to have a larger pool of drivers to draw from.”

To become a Friendly Driver is simple, and the commitment is extremely flexible. Some drivers provide several rides weekly, and some

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## 'Something More' Provides Weekly Mini-Reteats

*Continued from page 1*

filled such a need in the lives of its participants that Morin decided to make the group a permanent feature of the Youth Ministry. "The kids didn't want to stop."

In planning for Something More, Morin and other members of her staff follow a now-standard format. At a recent Tuesday night meeting, two dozen sophomores, juniors and seniors from seven area high schools, some coming straight from school sporting events and still dressed in their team uniforms, sprawl on the carpeted floor or settle into the five couches and many easy chairs arrayed around the cheerfully lit room at the Youth Ministry offices. Morin, seated on the floor, starts the meeting with the usual introductions, this time with a "super-power" twist.

Each member of the group says their name, their school and their grade, and on this night, announces the super power they would most like to have. Other nights it might be saying their favorite hair product or favorite candy bar. Tonight they want to be able to see through walls, breathe underwater, stop time, be invisible, time travel and fly. When one boy announced that he would like to be able to think about a favorite food and make it instantly, Morin quipped, "You want to be a microwave?"

Then the games begin. The group divides into four teams for a scavenger hunt. Good-natured, raucous competition ensues as teams battle to come up with pictures of three political leaders (think dollar bills), or a face without eyes (a watch) or a set of colored teeth (think elastic bands on braces

or a colorful zipper).

Next comes a group favorite, "Ask Anthony," in which the teens write questions on a piece of paper and insert them into a decorated shoe box labeled, "Ask Anthony." A well-liked and charismatic senior at North Andover High School, Anthony fishes out the first question: "Why are boys so mean?"

After some thought, Anthony asks he if can return to the question after he thinks about it some more. He reads the second question: "What was your most embarrassing moment?" Again, Anthony is stumped, but Scott Morin, Margo's husband and a youth minister at a parish in Malden, has just arrived, and he playfully calls out, "How about that top-and-shorts combination you chose to wear today?" The room erupts in laughter. Anthony tackles a final question, "How tall was George Washington?" before he returns to the mean-boy question. "Boys can be immature and insecure, and that is why they are mean sometimes." The group agrees.

Next up is the guest speaker, a member of the group chosen at the previous meeting. As the evening takes on a more spiritual tone, the group is asked to listen to and reflect upon Carrie

Underwood's song, "Jesus Take the Wheel." The speaker, a senior at North Andover High, says she listens to the song for comfort and inspiration during hard times and believes that faced with a difficult situation, she has to take the initiative and



Katie asks a question during "Catholic Jeopardy."



Vince keeps score!

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## Teens Desire 'Something More'

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want to make a change. She finishes by sharing one of her favorite sayings: "God helps those who help themselves."

Morin thanked the speaker and asked the teens to break into smaller groups "to discuss the times in your life when you needed help from Jesus."

Removing herself from the quiet discussions, Morin talked about Something More, which started out with 15 members and has grown to about 25. "When someone wants to be a youth minister, this [a group like Something More] is what they want to do. What is unique about this group is that it came from the kids. It is kid-based."

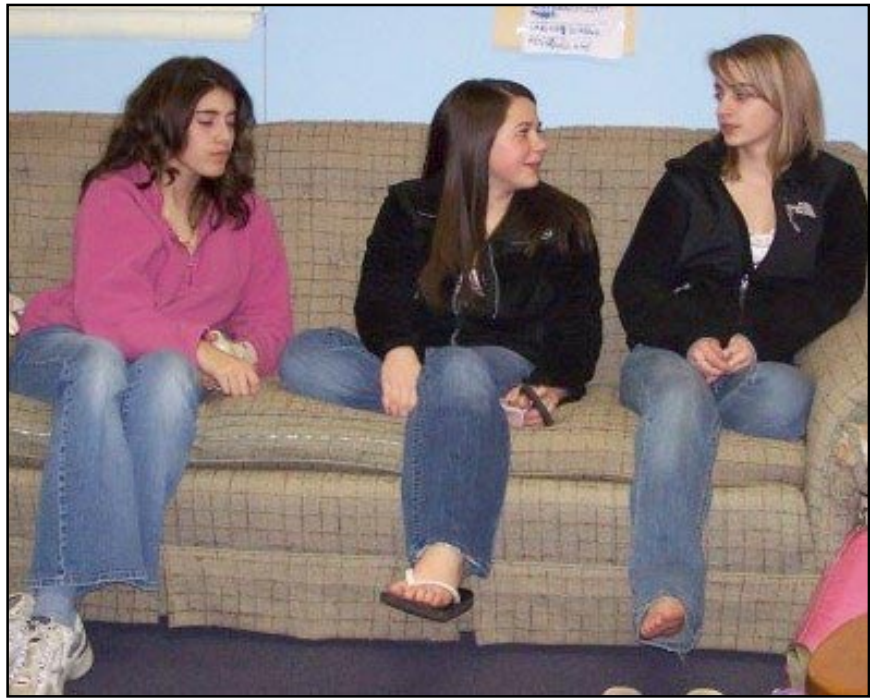
When asked how they feel about Morin's

Each member of the group says their name, their school and their grade, and on this night, announces the super power they would most like to have.

trespassing into traditional teen territory with the creation of a blog for St. Michael's Youth Ministry, the teens rise to her defense: "Margo isn't like a parent; she is like a sister to us. We can tell her anything."

When asked what they like about the group, several teens said they get something from these meetings that they don't get anywhere else. Something More gives them a safe place to explore their faith and find out what others are thinking.

Morin draws from her own experiences to help the group understand how they can lead faith-filled lives in an increasingly secular world. Her talks are on topics group members request. The two most popular topics



Relaxing, chatting and sharing are all part of Something More.

concern relationships and turning to God in tough times. Morin recounted a popular talk she gave recently on "All the Bad Boy-friends I've Had." Her message was how to have a God-centered relationship.

As the meeting drew to a close, one girl began passing around a crucifix so that each person could close with a personal prayer to end the meeting. As the crucifix circled the room, everyone shared what they were thankful for and what they wanted the group to pray for. The prayers formed a powerful litany of tenderness and hope and a clear connection and remarkable respect for each other.

One boy said he was thankful for his single mother who is struggling as she does the best she can to raise him; another asked the group to pray for her mother's friend who was gravely ill with breast cancer. One boy ended the meeting with, "I am thankful for having this place to come to and having a place to relax." ▲

Editor's Note: Although Youth Minister Margo Morin is leaving the parish, Something More will continue to be a program within the Youth Ministry.

## Volunteer Appreciation Dinner



Volunteers were thanked for their contributions to the parish on April 28 and May 3. The program included prayer, singing, reflection and lots of tasty food. Parish statistics show that volunteers serve on an average of two ministries each.



*Photos by Julie Bloise*



## Deacon Joe's Relentless Path to the Priesthood

By Larry Curran

Being a former high school teacher, it's not surprising that Deacon Joe Arsenault — as part of his studies for the priesthood — asked to be assigned to a large, busy parish that included a school. He got his wish when he was officially assigned to St. Michael in May.

The path to the priesthood has admittedly been a challenging one, Deacon Joe says. It began when he was 18 and entered a Marist seminary; it will conclude — a few decades later — next May when he graduates from Blessed John XXIII Seminary. During the intervening period, Deacon Joe, who has a master's degree in psychology, with a concentration in special needs education, taught at Curry College in Milton and at Millis High School.

Then, four years ago, he endured a virus-induced kidney disease prior to receiving a kidney transplant. Deacon Joe's kidneys had been attacked by a virus that he says essentially dissolves the vital organs. That serious ailment marked a particularly traumatic point in Deacon Joe's life. "[While in the hospital] a priest came to tell me that I wasn't going to live. That night I had a transforming experience with God; somehow I knew that I was going to be all right." Ultimately, Deacon Joe was required to undergo four-hour dialysis treatments three times a week. It's because of his health history that he receives only the host at communion. He says sharing the chalice could potentially compromise his now-suppressed immune system.

As a result of life's detours, Deacon Joe has served as a deacon for 19 years. But one of the positive tradeoffs was the discovery that he "loved teaching." He says he developed a particular affinity for special needs students, such as those with language difficulties, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and dyslexia. His exposure to such students, he says, "triggered my fascination with how people learn."

Deacon Joe's resume also includes the teaching of homiletics, or the art of preaching, at St. John's Seminary in Brighton; serving as a chaplain at Harvard University;

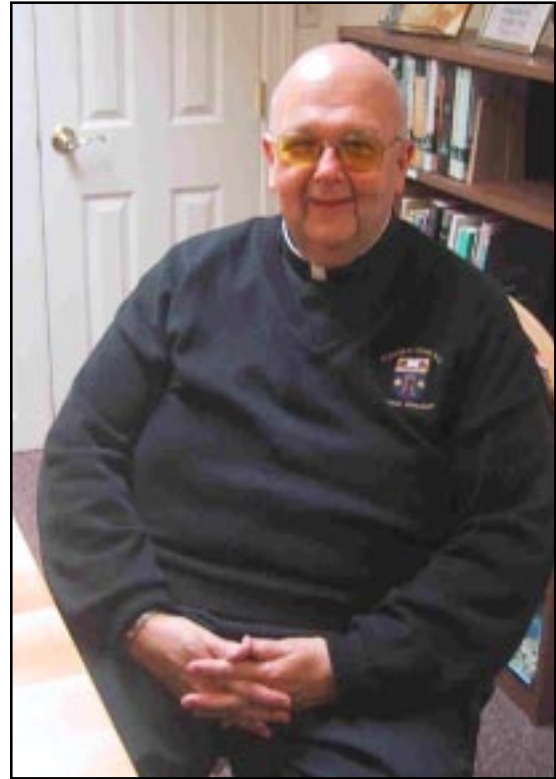


Photo by Larry Curran

**Deacon Joe Arsenault**

and teaching psychology and ethics at Walpole State Prison.

As for St. Michael Parish, Deacon Joe says that he's "excited to be in a parish known for being active with a wide variety of ministries. It's a church that can be the center of a nurturing life [for many people in the Merrimack Valley]." ▲

### Looking Ahead... to 'Looking Back'



Many longtime parishioners will remember the late Monsignor William Long, pastor of St. Michael Parish from 1956 to 1974.

The next issue of *The Guardian* will look back at his tenure. ▲

## Sister Mary's Retirement Marks End of an Era



Sister Mary, seen here reading to first graders, is the last Sister of Charity to teach at St. Michael School.

*By Sue Rogge  
St. Michael School*

More than 30 years ago, our school and parish received a very special gift. Sister Mary Manning, a Sister of Charity, joined our community as a first-grade teacher. For 10 years, Sister Mary was the first person many students met at St. Michael School. Under her loving guidance, literally hundreds of six-year-old students learned to read and write, perform mathematical equations and become educated about their Catholic faith.

Following a decade of teaching, Sister Mary Manning moved to the principal's office where she served for more than 20 years as a valuable secretary; in that capacity, Sister Mary was the very first person parents of prospective students would meet when applying to the school. She gave tours, answered phones, acted as the school nurse, kept accurate records on all of the students and much, much more.

A common refrain among parents was that they ultimately chose to send their children to St. Michael School because of the warm and positive impression they experienced upon being greeted by Sister Mary.

In April, Sister Mary retired and moved to an assisted living facility in Wellesley that is run by the Sisters of Charity. She says she dearly misses the school children, their families and the school staff very much. And she says she's hoping to welcome many visitors from the parish to her new home.

Sister Mary's departure brings about a new phase at the school. She was the last Sister of Charity to work with the students. All current staff and faculty are lay people. But Sister Mary's goodness lingers on because she has permanently instilled every member of our school staff with the gracious spirit for which the Sisters of Charity are renowned — a spirit that dates to the school's founding in 1950.

Our school community will be forever grateful to Sister Mary Manning for all she brought to our school. She reminded each of us to appreciate the natural beauty that surrounds us, to be thankful for all that God provides and to lead our lives as disciples of Jesus by helping those in need.

Sister Mary will be remembered in our daily prayers, and we all extend our warmest wishes for a happy and healthy retirement. ▲

## Like New Curls, Our Souls Need Constant Care

By Margo Morin

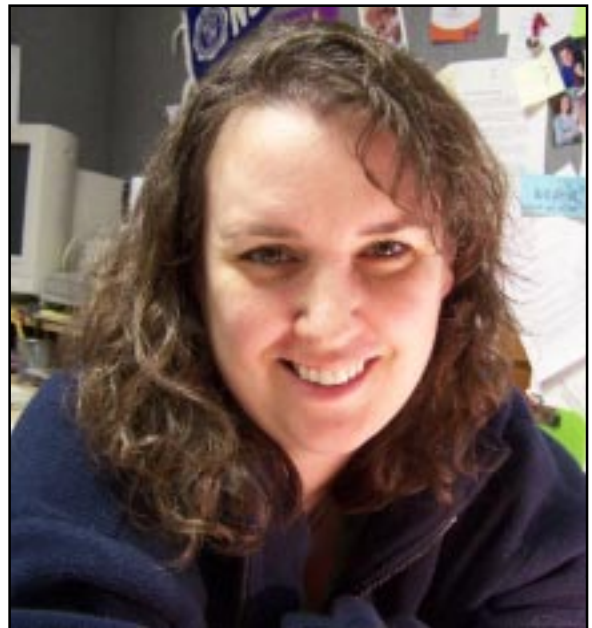
**A**s you may be able to tell by my new picture, I recently had my hair permed. I have naturally stick-straight hair, which stubbornly maintains its straightness and flatness despite any attempts at curling or waving or fluffing it. So I finally worked up the courage to make a change.

I did some research, looking at pictures of actresses' curly hairstyles, thumbing through those hairstyle magazines in the grocery store and even reading about perms and the perming process on the Internet. When the day came to report to the salon, I went in straight and came out curly. I was really happy with how my new curls looked, and couldn't wait for my first shampoo, which would have to wait until 48 hours later.

But what I quickly realized was that I had no idea how to care for curly hair. Did I need a new kind of shampoo? Should I condition? Should I not wash it as often as I had before? And how did I style it? What kind of product did I need to add after washing? Suddenly my own hair was perplexing.

I think our newly confirmed and newly baptized and First Communion participants and their families may be feeling the same way. Our Catholic Church is so great at preparing us for the sacraments. We learn what it's all about, what will be happening that day, and we even rehearse our parts for the ceremony. Once celebrated, however, what do we do? What now?

Just like my new curls, our newly sacramented souls need certain care and feeding, too. The fire and excitement that we felt on our special days needs work and effort to be maintained. In Luke's telling of the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-43), we hear how the disciples begged to stay on the mountaintop after being exposed to great joy and truth. They wanted to stick there, where the good thing had happened, and settle in. But Jesus told them that the point of what they had seen and heard was to go back down the mountain and share. Mountaintop experiences — like sacraments — are important and beautiful, but the most important part is what we do after the initial celebration.



**Margo's New Curly Look!**

In order to keep my curls curly, I have to go back to the salon for trims. And after receiving the sacraments, we need to keep going back to the Source for nourishment too—by making prayer a daily discipline in our lives, by reconnecting with God and our parish family through attending Mass each week and by continuing to learn about our church and about God. It's the Church's job to offer us the mountaintop experience, and it's God's job to connect with us through the sacraments, but it's our job to maintain what we've been given through the continual care and feeding of our spirituality — and to encourage others to do the same thing.

So enjoy this new phase in your life, or in the life of your beloved child, and remember, it's Lather, Rinse and Repeat.

*PS: There are a lot of opportunities in our parish Youth Ministry and Faith Formation programs to strengthen your own faith and pass it on! Just contact our friendly staff members to find out how you can get involved. ▲*

Editor's Note: Margo Morin will be leaving St. Michael this summer to join the Faith Formation Team at Immaculate Conception Parish in Malden, where her husband, Scott, is the youth minister.

## Celebrate Your Gifts While Serving Others

By Jean Guyer  
Pastoral Outreach Services

Growing up, there was a poster that hung in our basement where my brothers, sister and I would play and watch TV. It was a picture of an orange poppy field and a message that read: "What you are is God's gift to you. What you will become is your gift to God." The poster still hangs in my parents' home today. Many years have passed since this poster made an impression on me, though I still read it with the same fascination and awe today. Who am I? What are my gifts? Why does it matter?



I've come to realize, especially in recent years, why it matters. Coming to terms with family tragedies, being a witness to great suffering and attempting to be a good parent amidst the many challenges have caused me great pause. The need to keep redefining who I am, where I am going and what my gifts are have become critically important in how I live my life. Coming to terms with these challenges has meant reflecting on what life is all about, making tough choices contemplating how to fit in and how to make a difference.

My role here at the parish allows me many opportunities to encounter, share and affirm the gifts and goodness in others. Assisting parishioners in this process is a gratifying experience, and everyone has something to offer. There are more than 20 outreach ministries at St. Michael Parish. Opportunities are available in our parish community, while others are in surrounding communities.

Our homebound ministry, for example, gives people the opportunities to connect with elders who are often lonely and frail. A friendly visitor can brighten their day, if not their whole week! Reaching out to caregivers by getting involved with our Interfaith group provides caregivers and their families the resources and support they need to navigate the challenges of debilitating illnesses and short- and long-term care.

Knitting shawls, sending cards to the bereaved, teaching a class, donating toys and diapers, facilitating programs, baking brownies, offering a ride, being a "Good Neighbor" — all of these outreach opportunities send a powerful message. It's a message that we care, a message that we are part of a larger community, a message that we have compassion even for those we know little about, or in many cases, nothing at all. Other opportunities outside our church are in hospitals, nursing homes, the Lazarus House, Hancock Projects — this list is long, and the jobs are many. ▲

## Friendly Drivers

*Continued from page 3*  
can drive only once a month. All generally like to interact with senior citizens. As with any parish ministry, all volunteers must attend a Protecting God's Children workshop and complete an annual CORI check.

Some members of the Friendly Drivers Circle are mothers with young or school-age children who typically spend a lot of time driving. Others are retirees who have flexible schedules and enjoy the company and friendship of those they transport.

Patty Bartfay has been a member of the Friendly Drivers Circle for two years. A stay-at-home mom with twin daughters in grade school, she says she has the time in her day to

give back. "The Friendly Drivers Circle, for me, helps to complete the circle of life," says Patty, who drives 87-year-old Joe Simone to Andover once a week to visit his wife, who is living in a nursing home. "If it weren't for the Friendly Drivers, I don't know how I would see my wife," says Joe, a retired chef. He receives two rides a week to see his wife and would love to be able to visit her more often.

The Friendly Drivers Circle is another way the people of St. Michael Parish are committed to the mission of serving others. To learn more about getting involved with the ministry, parishioners may contact Susan Calabrese by leaving a message at the pastoral center (978-686-4050). ▲

## Confirmation...2007

A total of 208 students received the sacrament of Confirmation during three celebrations this year. Bishop Emilio Allue officiated. Pictured clockwise: Candidates enter the church; Evan LoRe and his aunt, Nancy; Samantha Shea and her sponsoring aunt, Bonnie Edgerly; Rachelle Green presenting her younger sister, Stephanie, with a silver cross.

*Photos by Julie Bloise*



## Men's Retreat Places Focus on Real-Life Issues

*By Ken Tokarz*

When Bob Tweedie first heard about the 5th annual Lenten men's retreat earlier this year, his first thoughts were: "I don't know if that's for me." But with some active prodding from his wife, Bob joined 61 other male parishioners at this year's event.

Now, as a result of his experience, Bob says he would definitely "do it again" next year. "I thought I might feel uncomfortable being in a spiritual type of environment. But I had a fantastic time. There were great speakers. I met lots of other wonderful guys, and it was a totally uplifting experience that left me completely energized."

The theme for this year's retreat was leadership, says Tony Conti, one of its organizers. The theme explored what type of behavior Catholic men should present at home, at work and among friends. "We dealt with real issues and attempted to show men how their Catholic faith is relevant to all aspects of their lives."

Conti says men can be perplexed as how

to lead Christian lives these days, given the questionable and scandalous examples of behavior that surround them. The Enron and Tyco scandals, he says, present two such examples within the business world. "All our talks at the retreat revolved around what's the right thing to do in our lives. They weren't exercises in piety but discussions that were rooted in reality. Everything we talked about was practical in nature."

Among those to address the group were Fr. Paul Keyes of St. Michael; Deacon John MacMillan, who serves on staff at St. Basil's Seminary in Methuen where the one-day retreat was held; and Dr. Joe Kelley, provost and vice president for mission effectiveness at Merrimack College.

Bob Tweedie also pointed out that the retreat was punctuated with "lots of good humor." And he revealed an additional bias as to why he will likely be drawn to next year's event. "The food was great! One of the guys, Mike McAndrews, is a baker and brought lots of great desserts." ▲



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Following their Confirmation, students — accompanied by their sponsors and members of their families — can now celebrate receipt of their new sacrament.

**More photos, page 11.**



*Photo by Julie Bloise*