



The Guardian

St. Michael Parish Newsletter

Spring 2007

Extending a Warm Welcome to All

North Andover, MA 01845

Special Lenten Parish Mission

An Opportunity to Reduce Confusion in Your Life

By Ken Tokarz

When parishioner Marcia Minott attended a church mission four years ago conducted by three representatives from the Thomas More Center in Wisconsin, she admits being a bit nonplused about the program. But before the sessions ended, Marcia had become “a happy and reborn” Christian.

From March 10-15, that same trio of speakers will be conducting a weeklong Lenten mission at St. Michael

titled “Spirituality for the New Millennium.” The mission will feature daily presentations by Father Mike Champlin, Sister Joan Bukrey, and Father Nick Punch that are based on Sacred Scripture. Each session will be followed by an “anything goes” question-and-answer session. (*See the Sunday bulletin for details.*)

To say Father Mike, Sister Joan, and Father Nick give religious presentations is like saying that Tiger Woods plays golf, according to Minott. “They are the most positive incredible threesome you’ll ever

hear. They are so friendly that you can’t help but want to get to know them. They enjoy a good laugh and are incredibly sensitive.”

Marcia adds: “Father Mike says it like it is; he is there for you! Sister Joan brings a

feminine quality to the trio and gives such a feeling of caring. And Father Nick never stops smiling.”

In an interview with *The Guardian*, Father Mike says that Catholics have “lots of catching up to do with

respect to obtaining a better understanding of Scripture.” He characterizes Scripture as a “handbook” all Catholics should use to reduce confusion and uncertainty in their lives. Toward that end, Father Mike notes that “Spirituality for the New Millennium” aims to provide Catholics with a contemporary interpretation of Scripture.

Minott says: “The presentations bring Scripture down to a truly understandable level. Fathers Mike and Nick and Sister Joan are definitely in step with the times.” ▲



Parishioner Marcia Minott (second from left) and her parents, Paul and Anne Murray, are big fans of Father Nick (left) and Father Mike (right), who will conduct a special program during Lent at St. Michael. Paul and Anne Murray are members of a parish in Connecticut where Fathers Nick and Mike have conducted similar programs.

Photo by Sister Joan Bukrey

Generous Parishioners Brighten Others' Lives

By Larry Curran

The Christmas holidays are a fading memory for most parishioners, but not so for the hundreds of beneficiaries who were the recipients of their generosity through the gift-giving program sponsored by the parish's St. Vincent de Paul Society.

St. Michael parishioners donated more than 2,500 gifts for those in need in December, according to Tom Ippolito, secretary of the local chapter.

Although the Society's mission is highlighted during the Christmas holiday season, its work is a year-round activity, Ippolito says. "Our mission is to get individuals or families over the hump in difficult circumstances — no matter what time of year," Ippolito says. In most instances, Ippolito says individuals require temporary assistance. However, he notes, there are times when ongoing support and care are called for. In every instance, the Society strives for total anonymity to avoid any potential embarrassment to those receiving support. By way of example, Ippolito says all Society members are asked to refrain from visiting clients while driving an expensive car or wearing jewelry. It's a policy Ippolito established during the six years he served as the Society's president.

"Some parishioners have asked us if we visit clients in a truck bearing the Society's name or if we wear uniforms," Ippolito says. "We assure them that we don't. Discretion is our byword, as is the need to maintain every client's pride and confidentiality." Reflecting a true Christian spirit, Ippolito says clients are never asked if they are members of St.

Michael Parish.

In another seasonal activity, the local parish chapter distributes "share meals" during the Christmas and Thanksgiving holidays. These complete dinners are provided by Boston Archdiocese and are routinely augmented by Society members on an anonymous basis. In fact, Ippolito says much of the Society's work is done without fanfare. He says members of the Society will quietly act as direct sponsors for specific families, while parishioners in general have been known to contribute as much as \$3,000 for specific gifts.

As the largest parish in the Boston Archdiocese, Ippolito says St. Michael has an equally large Christian duty to help others. "We all have gifts, and a great many people out there are really hurting. It's very satisfying for me to witness the parish's charitable efforts." ▲



St. Vincent de Paul Society members with a sampling of gifts distributed to needy families during the Christmas holidays. From left are Barbara Klanderman, Nancy Norbedo, Ann Marie Erler, and Ann Wilde.

Photo by Larry Curran

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Past issues of *The Guardian* can be found at:

<http://www.saint-michael.org/guardian.htm>

300 Children To Receive First Communion

By Julie Bloise

With a record 300 children preparing to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Communion this year, St. Michael's three parish priests knew it would be virtually impossible to meet individually with each of the candidates and their families.

So Father Paul Keyes, Father Jerry Hogan, Father John Delaney, and the Religious Education Team came up with an idea – break the large number into smaller groups and chat for an hour over bagels, pizza and juice.

“It’s a chance for us to come and share a meal and get to know one another and gain a deeper awareness as to what the Eucharist is all about,” said Father John.

First Communion Family Preparation is also a way for parents to spend time with their children and talk about faith, says Bonnie Spurr, a Religious Education staff member. “We’re trying to involve the families as well. We’re trying to build community.”

Each of the children and their families attended one of six hour-long preparation sessions, in which they learned about the sacraments and were able to talk with the parish’s clergy. “This is the

first time we’ve done this,” says Father Jerry. “Trying to meet individually would have taken too long, and (this) gives us a chance to meet with everyone.” Last year, 250 children received these sacraments.

St. Elizabeth Hospitality Ministry coordinated the meals – which were an important part of the lesson, says Father John. “We



Eight-year-old Jessica Giuffrida and mom, Sharon, talk about Jesus.

Photos by Julie Bloise

nourish our bodies as well as our spirit.”

Also new this year, families will have an opportunity to create a special missalette for their children. A professional photographer will take pictures of each child and their photo and name will be printed on the cover of the missalette. The book will include photos of St. Michael Church and the parish priests, said Nancy Riley, a Religious Education staff member.

All the candidates will celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation during March and then—over a period of four days in May—will receive their First Communion. ▲



Daniel Holmes, age 7, discusses religion with his mom, Katherine.

'Certify' Your Teaching Abilities During Lent

By *Margo Morin*

I was recently talking with my older brother, who lives out of state, about his kids and their parish faith formation program. Because of conflicting schedules, he was in the difficult position of having to choose between enrolling his young son in a town basketball program or keeping him enrolled in his parish faith formation program.

My brother is a lifelong Catholic. He attends Mass weekly with his kids, celebrates the Holy Days, and prays Grace at dinner with them. I asked him what options might be available through his parish's faith formation program. Did they offer a home schooling option that could carry his son through basketball season? My brother, the cradle Catholic, responded immediately: "Oh, I don't think I could do that. I'm not qualified to teach the Catholic faith!"

Thinking we aren't qualified to teach our kids the Catholic faith is often the result of comparing ourselves with our parents, who seemed better versed on the topic; we also seem to question our abilities to teach because many of us can't recite Catholic dogma on demand.

If you're feeling the need to bone up on your basics, the Church is offering you a great opportunity to do so by joining with our kids and the rest of the St. Michael community to remember, celebrate, and re-familiarize yourself with the central mystery of our faith during Holy Week—a time that will focus on Jesus' triumphant return to Jerusalem, His crucifixion, His death, and His resurrection.

Holy Week, which begins on Palm Sunday and concludes on Easter, tells the whole story of our faith through re-enacting, remembering, and re-experiencing Christ's last week as a man. On Palm Sunday, we hear the Passion story and receive blessed palms to help us remember Christ's victory over sin and death. On Holy Thursday, we celebrate the birth of the priesthood and remember Jesus' command for us to serve others the humble way He showed us—through washing the feet of his disciples. On

Good Friday, we recognize the pain and suffering Jesus experienced before his death, and are reminded of the respect and reverence we need to have for the Cross on which he was crucified. The Holy Saturday Mass (Easter Vigil) is the most beautiful

"Thinking we aren't qualified to teach our kids the Catholic faith is often the result of comparing ourselves with our parents, who seemed better versed on the topic..."



celebration of the year (in my opinion!). On this day before Easter, we gather around a fire as the Easter candle is lit. We start this Saturday vigil in darkness and listen to all the Old Testament stories on which our faith has been built...it's a "Cliffs Notes" version of our entire faith story! Then, when we are told of the Good News of Christ's resurrection, the lights are brilliantly illuminated and the church sings "Alleluia!" in joyful celebration.

The culmination of this emotional and beautiful week, of course, are the glorious Easter Sunday services that complete the joy and celebration of Christ's victory over all that could ever separate us from God's love.

Join us for the Holy Week services here at St. Michael this year. Watch the weekly Sunday bulletin for the schedule of events. And bring your kids! It's a great faith-refresher. And the experience will likely help you feel more qualified to share your Catholic faith tradition with your kids. ▲

Middle School Youth Minister Has 'Perfect Job'

By Jane C. Demers

Kim Silk, the new coordinator of the Middle School Youth Ministry at St. Michael has found her calling and her perfect job. And she couldn't be more thrilled.

"I'm excited, and I hope I show that excitement to the kids because it is for them."

After graduating from Tewksbury High School and marrying her high school sweetheart, Stephen, a project manager in Boston, Kim spent the next 21 years raising her children, Dustin, 21; Stephanie, 19; Jake, 12; and Julia, 7.

After moving to North Andover 16 years ago, Kim joined St. Michael and attended Mass as regularly as a mother of four active and involved children could. When she signed her oldest up for religious education classes, Kim signed up along with him, as his teacher. Now, 14 years later, she is still teaching!

Silk considered it her obligation to teach each of her children about their faith. When asked about her experience, she says simply: "Moms are teachers." Through teaching, she learned more about her own faith and further nurtured it through Cursillo and attendance at Women of Faith Conferences.

Asked about her childhood religious experiences, Silk says her family attended Sunday Mass at St. William's in Tewksbury and that—while religion was a part of her life—it was having children that triggered a deepening of her faith. "I became more interested in my faith after becoming a parent. It became more important to me."

With her youngest now in first grade, Kim decided to reenter the work force last fall. She had experience as a florist and a waitress. However, when she thought about her life going forward, Kim focused on three endeavors she truly enjoyed: teaching, St. Michael Parish activities, and floral design.

She initially thought she found the perfect job with a local florist but was upset to learn that they required her to work until closing time at 5 p.m. She couldn't do that with two children still at home. Days later, she received a call from a good friend who worked at St. Michael's Youth Office. She learned the parish was looking for a middle school youth minister to develop a middle school youth group

and take over the religious education program for that age group. Was she interested?

Was she ever. She had been preparing for this for the past 21 years. The position combined her love of children, teaching, faith, and St. Michael. And scheduling was flexible. What's more, since Silk would already be teaching her two youngest children's religious education classes, she was going to be there anyway. It was perfect.

Last November, Silk took over "a great" middle school

religious education program—one that was developed by Margo Morin, the youth minister. She likes the course books, the schedule of the three six-week class sessions, and she loves the kids. "They are so sweet." Middle schoolers sweet? "So sweet. I know so many of them because my son is in middle school. They are wonderful."

She has called the parents of each middle school student enrolled in St. Michael's religious education classes to introduce herself, offer support, and solicit their ideas for improvement. Even though Morin has given her license to make changes, Silk plans to keep the program intact while she learns more about it. Certain things won't change, though, like the hands-down favorite warm-up game of "You've Got Mail," which helps kids get to know one another through an updated version of the standard birthday party game of Musical Chairs.




Kim Silk

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Take a chance...
Win a 2007 Honda Civic Coupe LX
 or \$10,000!

\$100 per ticket



Tickets available at
 Saint Michael School and
 after weekend masses at
 Saint Michael Parish


Drawing held at the



Saint Michael School
SPRING SOIRÉE
 March 24, 2007
 (winner need not be present)

Proceeds to benefit
Saint Michael School PTO

Winner may choose one of the following:
 2007 Honda Civic LX or \$10,000



Terms, Conditions and Disclosures

- * Must be at least 18 years old to participate.
- * Checks for a prize ticket should be payable to St. Michael School PTO
- * Winner has the option to use their prize proceeds as payment toward another vehicle sold through Commonwealth Motors (Honda, Chevrolet, Kia)
- * The vehicle will be available for inspection at select St. Michael Parish Masses, St. Michael School events, or at Commonwealth Motors, Lawrence, MA
- * The drawing for the prize will be held at the St. Michael School Spring Soiree at Sal's Function Facility, Lawrence, MA, on March 24, 2007
- * All taxes, registration, transfer fees, licenses and any other related expenses are the responsibility of the winner.
- * If a minimum of 150 tickets are not sold, then the ticket cost will be refunded to each ticket holder via a check mailed after March 24, 2007.
- * The value of the prize will be treated as ordinary income to the winner for federal and state income tax purposes. The winner may be required to pre-pay a portion of the tax liability prior to receiving the prize.
- * The IRS does not consider any portion of the price of the ticket to be a charitable contribution for federal income tax purposes.
- * The St. Michael School PTO reserves the right to cancel the drawing and refund money to ticket holders.
- * 100% of the net proceeds will go to the St. Michael School PTO.

Youth Ministry Sponsors Blood Drive



THAT WAS EASY!

Ayesha Najmi, a Red Cross technician, helps parishioner Beth Hancock prepare to donate blood during an American Red Cross Blood Drive in January.

KEEPING TALLY

Youth Ministry volunteers Molly Walsh and Chandler Dunn, both 11, help record donors' time...and hand out snacks.



Photos by Julie Bloise

Kim Silk 'Excited' to Work with Middle Schoolers

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The Middle School Youth Group, which has a parent advisory counsel, already has hosted several fun activities, including a pizza party, a Christmas caroling presentation, and a volunteer blood drive. A Mardi Gras-themed party and a service project at the Senior Center were scheduled for February school vacation week.

Silk believes in harnessing the wonderful talents and programs already in place in the parish to help with the Middle School Youth Group. She wants to connect the Peer

Ministers with her middle schoolers and invite members of Nimble Thimbles to share their talents with interested middle schoolers.

"I feel like I have the best job because of the wonderful people I work with. Margo [Morin] has so many resources, and everyone is so supportive." An added benefit is that Silk's faith has deepened even further. "Working at St. Michael has made me more spiritual. I put my faith first now and everything else is golden as a result. It is such a good lesson for my kids. It's huge." ▲

Bread & Roses Ministry: Feeding Our Neighbors

By Anne Marie Guggenberger

On the second Saturday of every month, there is a flurry of activity in and out of the Pastoral Center as members of the St. Michael Bread & Roses Outreach Ministry arrive to drop off food items to be served that evening at the Bread & Roses soup kitchen in Lawrence. By mid-afternoon, the church's kitchen is bursting with the delicious aromas of bread, soup, cold cuts, gravy, and condiments.

Once readied, the food is delivered to Bread & Roses where nearly 200 hungry people will enjoy a hearty and healthy dinner that night.

Bread & Roses opened in 1980 and welcomed 35 guests for its very first dinner. The soup kitchen has a strong and rich tradition of being a center of hope and caring to people of the Merrimack Valley who are struggling to survive. The primary purpose of Bread & Roses, as the 85 members of the ministry are acutely aware, is to ease the hunger of people in the community by providing a nutritious evening meal. There is no cost for the meal, and no questions are asked of those who partake. The rules for participation are simple: No alcohol, no drugs, no weapons, and no violence. Respect for the dignity of every individual is a hallmark of the Bread & Roses community.

Bread & Roses takes its name from a song written about the Lawrence mill strike in 1912. The song's lyrics chronicle the courageous women who participated in the strike and their call for bread for themselves and their starving families, as well as their request for "roses" – or their need for dignity, beauty, and love. One verse from the song that seems to capture their plea best: "Hearts starve as well as bodies, give us bread but give us roses."

Bread & Roses is a nonprofit, charitable

organization that is completely supported by private donations. From its beginning, the support and strength of Bread & Roses has come from people of different backgrounds, creeds, and experiences. That diversity is welcomed by the organization, which realizes that the coming together of disparate people is the first step toward breaking down social barriers and contributing to world peace.

St. Michael Parish began its Bread & Roses Outreach Ministry in 1995. The program was coordinated by Donna Hughes

Photo by Anne Marie Guggenberger



Karin Molino, a Bread & Roses volunteer

and Dorothy Kenniker. Now, 12 years later, the ministry continues to thrive and attract volunteers. In 1998, a request in the parish bulletin for new coordinators caught the attention of Karin Molino. Looking for a program that her daughters could participate in to fulfill their CCD community service hours, Karin discovered that Bread & Roses would be the perfect fit. Her daughters, Diana and Denise, are now in graduate school but continue to contribute their time and effort to help their mom keep the ministry running smoothly.

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How You Can Help Make St. Michael Care for Everyone

St. Michael is a “servant church.” More than 1,000 parishioners volunteer to serve the elderly, the youth, those who are ill, and those who are mourning the loss of a loved one. The list goes on and on.

The parish family has grown to more than 4,700 households, and it is still growing. With such a booming population, more needs arise. It seems that more than any other year, St. Michael’s Parish was asked last year to offer assistance to several families whose members were undergoing severe health problems and, as a result, were unable to keep up with their mounting bills. Because of the generosity of our parishioners, however, St. Michael was able to help those families through their trying times.

Due to today’s mobile society, the “extended family” has become extinct. Now, more and more families count on the support of their parish when dealing with the care of an elderly parent or a spouse who’s losing their orientation. Because of the generosity of our parishioners, St. Michael has been able to offer support programs for these families as well.

There is so much more that the parish can do to serve individuals and families, but to do so requires the financial support of each and every family.

Five years ago, St. Michael began its

Offertory Commitment Program (OCP). This program made it easier for parishioners to give according to their preferences: weekly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually. Parishioners can elect to mail their donations, deposit them in the offertory basket, or have their offertory automatically transferred from their banking account. To date, fewer than half of St. Michael families participate in OCP.

Jack McManus, a member of the Finance Committee, asks that parishioners consider their own households or businesses when weighing whether to participate in the OCP. “If you didn’t know what your income will be from month to month, it would be difficult to make decisions on how to spend and budget funds for your family or employees. Similarly, the OCP helps tremendously with the parish’s planning process.”

McManus notes that the parish currently has 60 different ministries that provide outreach to the entire St. Michael community and beyond. “Either directly or indirectly, it’s likely that every single parishioner is affected by the parish’s budgeting and planning process.”

With the aim of being able to make more definitive plans in a timely manner for all parish operations, McManus says the Finance Committee has been urging all parishioners to participate in OCP. “Our ultimate goal is to be as welcoming and nurturing a parish as we can be for all of our members, and that’s what 100 percent participation in OCP will help us to do — serve every parishioner.” ▲

Bread & Roses

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Volunteers Welcome

Volunteers for the Bread & Roses Ministry receive a reminder card about needed food items to be delivered to the St. Michael kitchen on the second Saturday of each month. Ministry members Ginny Burns and Tish Bouldin alternate packing meals and delivering them to Lawrence. Once deliv-

ered, meals are served that evening by the Bread & Roses staff.

The St. Michael Bread & Roses Outreach Ministry is another example of how parishioners are responding to Jesus’ call to serve others. The ministry welcomes new volunteers. Anyone who would like to learn more about volunteering should contact Karin Molino at 978-682-6308. ▲

Seton Life Center Needed for Busy Parish

By Larry Curran

Initial plans are under way to create the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Life Center where the former convent and current youth center stand. Mary Alice Rock, director of Faith Formation, says the planned three-story structure, whose main entrance will face the Water Street parking lot, may be ready for occupancy in 2008-09.

Rock points out that the Life Center is urgently needed. She says that the former convent, built in 1950, is a “tired building that is not conducive to promoting learning and spiritual growth.”

What’s more, the number of youngsters who need to be accommodated in parish facilities has grown. By way of example, Rock says confirmation students have been routinely overflowing into multiple meeting spaces in the Pastoral Center, which has placed limitations on the ability of other groups to meet each week. For perspective, Rock notes that there are more than 2,000 children in grades 1 through 10 who are members of the St. Michael Parish Religious Education Program. And, she says, that number is growing.

Preliminary plans for the Life Center call for 20 to 24 classrooms, with flexible partitions that can be opened or closed to

accommodate 15 to 30 people. Rock says it’s also possible that the center could include a hall to accommodate up to 200 people for assemblies or classes. “But, having a place to form our youth in their faith is just the beginning of the potential uses for the new Seton Center. The possibilities are boundless,” she says.

The proposed hall would also include a new kitchen so that the parish could provide regular meals to those in need. It will also be the new home for the parish’s 60 ministries, as well as any others that are formed in the future. “We hope to offer more youth and adult retreats in the new center and establish a new food pantry for the St. Vincent de Paul Society.”

Fundraising for the new Life Center may begin this fall, with the goal of raising \$3 million to \$5 million. Rock points out that parishioners generously donated \$5.5 million toward the \$8 million needed to construct the new school and church over the past decade. As a result, she believes the proposed project is “not an impossible dream because, historically, the people of St. Michael Parish center their lives around the Table of Eucharist and share their goodness out of a spirit of Thanksgiving.” ▲

Looking for Another Fun Evening Out?

Tickets are now on sale for the Saint Michael School Spring Soiree, which will feature an evening of cocktails, dinner, and dancing—as well as a live auction and the selection of the winner of a Honda car raffle. The event will be held on March 24 at Sal’s Restaurant, 354 Merrimack St., Lawrence. Tickets are \$125 per couple and may be purchased at St. Michael School after weekend Masses.



The St. Vincent de Paul Society sponsored a Country Hoedown in January. The fun-filled evening featured dinner and—of course—some fancy two-stepping by many of St. Michael’s parishioners.

Photo by Jim Fernandez

Looking Back Inside the Church's Exterior

St. Michael Church was a modest wooden building when the Rev. George W. Haley was appointed its third pastor in 1918. Aided by the generosity of the McKone family, Pastor Haley was able to enlarge the church and construct a new main altar. And it was also Pastor Haley who was responsible for giving St. Michael its unique stucco finish.

Although the parish's commemorative book* does not offer an explanation for surfacing the church's exterior with stucco, legend has it that it was selected to reflect the mission churches in California...since the church, at the time, was a "mission church" of Lawrence. However, it may also have been that Father Haley opted to take advantage of a popular construction trend at that time. In the years following World War I, the United States became a major exporter of lumber to Europe, where widespread reconstruction efforts were under way. The great demand for lumber caused its price to double. Stucco became a highly attractive



Fr. Haley

construction material and it became known as an up-to-date look, required less maintenance, and its fireproof characteristics often meant a building's owners could obtain lower insurance rates.

The enlargement of St. Michael had not been completed when Father Haley died in 1928. And it's likely that final construction would have foundered had it not been for Louis McAloon Sr., a parishioner and contractor who stepped forward to supervise the completion of all remaining work. McAloon's generous nature obviously rubbed off on his son because—two decades later—it was Louis McAloon Jr. who built—at cost—the "original" new school as well as the convent behind the rectory. The convent was built to serve as the home of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax who were then teaching at St. Michael School. ▲

(*St. Michael's, Ecclesiastical Publishers, 1969)

Casting Call

More than 110 students at St. Michael School will be participating in their own unique rendition of a play about Snow White. It will mark the Drama Club's 12th annual musical presentation. The creative interpretation replaces the seven dwarfs with a rock band that is hounded by the paparazzi. The audience will also be entertained by talking cats and talking trees. Several members of the school band will also represent an "orchestra pit."

Performances are scheduled for April 27, 28, and 29.



Some of the eighth-grade cast members: back row, Kassandra Pasovschi, Peter Gohn, Maura Pinard, Maeghan Foye, Stephanie Ota, Shannon Timmons, Danny Provost, Devon Smolak, James Connolly, Jennifer Guimond, and Stephanie Twomey. Front row, Christianna Greenberg, Camille Serelus, Kim Curran, Abby Matses, Alexis Demoulas, and Toria Carlin.

Photo by Sue Rogge



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First Communion Discussion

Three hundred children from St. Michael Parish will be making their First Communion this spring. That's a record number! Among those who will be receiving the Sacrament is Saleste Brazeau, age 8. Here Saleste participates in a First Communion Family Preparation session with staff member Bonnie Spurr.



Photo by Julie Bloise