



The Guardian

St. Michael Parish Newsletter

Spring 2008

Extending a Warm Welcome to All

North Andover, MA 01845

A Joyous Reason to Sing Aloud!



Students who received their First Communion on May 10 sing "Joy, Joy, Joy." A total of six First Communion celebrations were held this year, with 280 second-grade students receiving the sacrament. A special First Communion was also held in May for eight Junior Christ-Seekers who were in grades 3-6 and had not had the opportunity to receive the sacrament while they were in the second grade.

Photo by Al Pereira

Parishioner Attends Unforgettable Papal Mass

By Jim Fernandez

My journey with my wife, Mary Beth, to attend the Papal Mass at Yankee Stadium on April 20 began in early February. That's when we requested tickets for the event through the Archdiocese of Boston's website. We thought our chances for getting tickets were slim because an article in *The Pilot* had stated that only 3,000 tickets would be available for the entire Archdiocese.

However, a few weeks later, on March 17, we received an e-mail notifying us that

we would be receiving tickets. We were elated! Our tickets arrived in the mail nearly a month later. It was only then — when we were actually holding the tickets — that we knew we were truly going to be able to participate in a Mass celebrated by our pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI.

Our departure from Merrimack College on the day of the Mass proved to be nerve-racking. There were about 150 of us who were supposed to travel to New York on three buses that were scheduled to leave at 6

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A Chance to Learn the Practical Side of the Gospels

Parishioners who want to learn how to apply the gospel readings in a practical way to their everyday lives will have the opportunity to do so this fall when St. Michael introduces a series of casual gatherings called “Arise Together in Christ.”

The program, developed by a New Jersey-based organization called RENEW International, will be structured so that groups of

10 to 12 parishioners can meet for discussions at convenient locations of their choosing. They could be held in parish meeting rooms or, as Mary Alice Rock, Director of Faith Formation, explains: “Young mothers could gather at one of their homes, or elderly parishioners could meet at their assisted living complexes.”

All participants in the program will receive booklets with readings intended to stimulate their conversations. And each group will have a designated facilitator who is expected to maintain a low profile so that the group can interact as candidly as possible.

RENEW International designed “Arise” specifically for the Archdiocese of Boston’s bicentennial celebration.

Founded 30 years ago, RENEW’s mission is to foster spiritual renewal among Catholics. The organization’s basic spiritual renewal program has been used by more than 270 dioceses in the U.S. and has touched the lives of more than 25 million people. The program has also been used abroad in six continents.

The Archdiocese of Boston had “Arise” designed after a far-reaching survey revealed a need for such real-world spirituality discussions in the region. The

program was developed following an examination of the history, culture, spirituality and needs of the Archdiocese. Once completed, Cardinal Sean

O’Malley called upon churches to adopt the program and have it serve as a way to celebrate the archdiocese’s bicentennial anniversary in a practical manner.

Prior to joining St. Michael, Tony Conti participated in two RENEW programs in New Hampshire and in Georgia. “They were terrific meetings,” Conti says. “The discussions were all relevant to everyday life, and they were all comfortable and informal. It’s also a tremendous way to get to know some of your fellow parishioners and experience a greater sense of community.”

Mary Alice Rock says sign-up for the program will be held in September, and the program will begin on October 4.♦

“...a tremendous way to get to know some of your fellow parishioners and experience a greater sense of community.”

—Tony Conti, parishioner

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Past issues of *The Guardian* can be found at:
<http://www.saint-michael.org/guardian.htm>

Teens Hear Riveting Presentation about Chastity

By Ken Tokarz

This was not your everyday talk being given at St. Michael. There was, for example, a humorous reflection on how flirting between boys and girls generally begins in the second grade, with the throwing of rocks in the general direction of the person being admired, and how it progresses to the less-dangerous phase of note passing in classrooms.

The conversation then moved on to more serious topics surrounding sexual attraction and chastity, such as how the media and early childhood development toys can negatively influence people's views about morality, and how studies have linked birth control pills to life-threatening diseases. There was even a surprise quiz: What's the most common sexually transmitted disease?

As for the quiz, many guesses were made by the 400 or so middle- and high-school students jammed into the church pews. None, however, was correct. According to Jason Evert, the evening's guest speaker, it's the human papillomavirus (HPV), a condition that causes genital warts and is believed to play an important part in triggering cervical cancer.

Evert's presentation was titled "Romance without Regret." It's a talk he's given to more than 45,000 students within the Archdiocese of Boston since 2005—and still many times that number at church and school venues outside of Massachusetts. Still many others have listened to the presentation by visiting his website (www.pureloveclub.com).

One question Evert says he's repeat-

edly asked is: "How far is too far to go with a girl?"

Asking for a male volunteer to join him near the front of the altar and then "prettying him up" with a matted, blonde woman's wig, Evert hoisted the teen across his shoulders and stepped slowly toward the edge of the altar steps. He asked everyone

to imagine that the steps represented the edge of the Grand Canyon. "How far is going too far with a girl?" he asked, inching closer and closer to the imagined precipice. The answer, Evert said, can be found in the answer to yet another question: "How far will you take your sexual behavior before you endanger someone's life?"

Evert pointed out that boys are conditioned from their earliest years to establish their manhood by sexually conquering girls. Meanwhile, girls are widely conditioned to attract boys with their physical appearance. As proof of the latter, Evert displayed a

scantly dressed Barbie doll. He noted how glamour magazines and musical lyrics tell girls that they should be sexually exploited. And, of course, peer pressure also plays a central role in attacking morality. Those who opt to remain chaste, Evert noted, are often accused of being prudes or, ironically, being "too good" for the group. Still others have their sexual orientation questioned.

Armed with enough anecdotes and statistics to fill a four-subject college notebook, Evert often rattled off numerous, attention-getting statistics...80 percent of people who live together prior to marriage

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Jason Evert answered questions one-on-one from teenagers following his discussion about chastity.

Photo by Ken Tokarz

Fr. Keyes Receives Vianney Award

Fr. Paul Keyes was honored for his service to the Archdiocese of Boston and presented with the St. John Vianney Award by Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley at a luncheon held at St. John Seminary in Brighton in March.

The award, which is presented to two diocesan priests annually, is named for the patron saint of priests. St. John Vianney was ordained a priest in 1815 and was made a parish priest three years later in the remote French hamlet of Ars. St. Vianney's life was filled with works of charity and love. He died in 1859 and was canonized in 1925. According to a spokesman for *The Pilot*, priests are nominated for the award by their peers, and a committee submits names to the Cardinal for final selections.

This year, the award was also presented to Fr. James Lyons, who is retired but in residence at St. Marguerite D'Youville Parish in Dracut. Both Fr. Keyes and Fr. Lyons were given large wooden crucifixes.

Upon accepting his award, Fr. Keyes recited Psalm 23 ("The Lord is My Shepherd..."), which he says he has prayed daily since his second-grade public school teacher had the class memorize it. Fr. Keyes also told the gathering: "I believe and I hope you believe that our goodness and our kindness to the people entrusted to our care will bring us, as good shepherds, to live in the house of God forever."

The annual luncheon is held during Holy



Fr. Paul Keyes and Cardinal Sean O'Malley

Photo by Gregory Tracy, The Pilot

Week following the Chrism Mass. It's at that Mass that the sacramental oils are consecrated for use at baptisms, confirmations, ordinations and the anointing of the sick during the coming year. In addition, priests renew their vows of priestly service, and the names of priests who died during the past year are read. This year, 400 priests attended the Mass, held at Holy Cross Cathedral in Boston.♦

Chastity: A Gift Available for the Asking

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get divorced...46 percent of girls who have only one premarital sexual partner acquire a sexually transmitted disease...the use of condoms will not protect up to 87 percent of the individuals using them.

Describing chastity as a gift from Jesus and one that is available for the asking, Evert told his fully attentive audi-

Evert pointed out that boys are conditioned from their earliest years to establish their manhood by sexually conquering girls. Meanwhile, girls are widely conditioned to attract boys with their physical appearance.

ence, "It's never too late to turn your life around. What matters is where you go from here." For those looking for support and moral strength, he offered a number of tips: "Find good friends, date people with the same values, receive the Eucharist, experience the

healing grace of confession, say the rosary, and pray for each other."♦

An Unforgettable Papal Mass

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a.m. Due to mechanical problems, however, only two buses showed, and both were late. Ultimately, it was decided that we would fill the two buses. My wife and I were among those who were able to board. Our group of travelers prayed en route that the third bus would show up. Happily, we later learned that the third bus did arrive and that everyone would be able to attend the Papal Mass.

We arrived at Yankee Stadium around 11:30 in the morning; after going through security we found our seats. We were in the first row tier box behind the Yankees' dugout. The seats were better than anything we could have ever imagined!

As we sat in our seats, we marveled at how Yankee Stadium had been transformed into a beautiful chapel. The ads on the outfield stadium walls had been covered in white, purple and gold decorations. A beautiful altar was positioned over second base and the papal seal — surrounded by white and gold ribbons — covered the pitcher's mound. The atmosphere inside the stadium felt party-like. People were randomly singing *Alleluia*. When one group stopped singing, another would often start chanting "Ben-e-dic-to" followed by a rhythmic clapping of their hands.

Shortly after 2 p.m., a flock of white doves was released from behind the altar. Then, a few minutes later, the Popemobile entered the stadium and circled the entire perimeter of the field. Pope Benedict could be seen continually waving to the crowd. The sound made by the nearly 60,000 in the stadium was nearly deafening. And everyone was excitedly yelling, "We love you Pope Benedict!" It was truly an electrifying time.

The excitement and energy of the moment

brought tears to many of our eyes. After a few minutes, Pope Benedict headed to the altar, accompanied by an entourage of cardinals, bishops, priests and deacons.

The Mass was a beautiful celebration. Pope Benedict's homily touched on unity, faith and hope in Christ, truth and freedom.



Photos of Papal Mass at Yankee Stadium by Jim Fernandez



"True freedom is found only in the self-surrender which is part of the mystery of love," the pope said. "Only by losing ourselves, the Lord tells us, do we truly find ourselves."

With an obvious reference to his American audience, the pope said, "In this land of freedom and opportunity, the Church has united a widely diverse flock in the profession of the faith and, through her many educational, charitable and social works, has also contributed significantly to the growth of American society as a whole."

My wife and I feel blessed for the opportunity to have taken part in this once-in-a-lifetime event. It was an experience we will never forget. ♦

We're Blessed to Have Such Caring Youths

*By Rick Chasse
Director of Youth Ministry*

This past year, I joined the staff of St. Michael Parish as the Youth Minister and Director of Confirmation for Grades 9-12. I came from a much smaller parish and have been both challenged and amazed at all of the wonderful opportunities at St Michael. As a youth minister for more than 15 years, I have always sought the opportunity to create and develop a Peer Ministry Team—and I was overjoyed to find, upon my arrival here, a very vibrant ministry effort already in place.



Peer Ministry is a shared faith experience, which includes listening to others and the giving and sharing of one's time, talents and gifts. The ministry is also all-welcoming and calls for the opening of minds and hearts to bring youths closer to Jesus Christ.

A very important and meaningful aspect of the Confirmation program in our parish is the overnight retreat. The retreat experience has proven to be an integral part of the training for those about to be confirmed, or our Confirmandi. Conducting the retreats would not be possible without the generous support of the Peer Ministry Team, a group of junior and senior high school students who already have been Confirmed. Each individual in the group is answering the call to serve others by eagerly offering to share their sacramental experiences with those following in their footsteps.

We are truly blessed at St. Michael to have such caring youth. I was amazed not only at how eagerly they came forward to offer assistance but at the maturity of their support as well. They were very welcoming to me and were totally accepting of my perspective and suggestions for the retreat. The team conducted welcoming "ice-breakers" with the Confirmandi, prepared and delivered amazing talks, and kept the tone of the retreat fun, without any loss of

overall reverence. Several of the retreat participants said it was amazing to hear their peers speak about their faith. It was a perspective they had not readily heard before.

I hope to expand the Peer Ministry program at St. Michael so that it can include opportunities for middle school and other students in our church community. Toward that end, we recently conducted a leadership-building and spiritual sharing retreat to build on the many skills these amazing team members already possess.

Anyone interested in getting involved with the Peer Ministry program is welcomed and may call the Youth Office at 978-557-9044. Or, send me an e-mail: rick_chasse@saintmichael.com. As always, we ask the parish to keep our Peer Ministry youth in its prayers, and we will keep the parish in ours. God Bless.♦

Parishioners Rally to Help 'Chickaroo'



Since parishioners Rick and Sarah Hamilton first learned last year that their then 6-year-old daughter, Caroline, had a plum-sized tumor lodged deep inside her brain, their lives have been forever changed.

The Hamilton family says being a part of the St. Michael School and parish communities has been a blessing as they attempt to deal with Caroline's tumor. "I can't imagine being anywhere other than St. Michael's school and parish," says Sarah. "...the meals delivered for nearly a year of Tuesdays...the friendships, the prayers, the love and support of people we have never met... [everyone has been] so giving and loving."

Parishioners interested in learning more about Caroline (nicknamed Chickaroo) can visit the family's website: www.chickaroo.org. The site also provides details about a golf tournament that will be held in Methuen on July 14 to benefit Caroline.♦

Video Taping Allows Homebound to Attend Weekly Mass

By *Larry Curran*

Nursing home residents throughout the North Andover area are able to “attend” Sunday Mass because of the efforts of Tom Ippolito and his team, who tape the 10:30 a.m. Mass at St.

Michael each week for playback each Sunday at 12:30 p.m., and on Thursdays at 11 a.m. on a local community access channel.

Aides at area nursing homes turn on television sets to Channel 22 at the appropriate times each week.

Tom, who has been with parish maintenance for more than 10 years, began taping the Mass about three years ago at the request of the Rev. Paul T. Keyes.

Tom is assisted on a rotating schedule of Sundays by Dom and Vince Terranova, Steve D’Onofrio, John Firriello, Jack Ferres and Jim McAloon.



Tom Ippolito

Tom uses the same kind of three-gun, 8-mm camera used by many commercial TV stations as a backup to news team equipment. The camera’s videotape is fed directly to the NACAM (North Andover Community Access and Media) studio at North Andover High School, where the tape content is converted to disk format for playback on Channel 22.

NACAM is a nonprofit corporation, which Tom says is continuously updating its operational hardware. Its facilities are available for public use.

Thinking ahead, however, he adds that he would like to acquire hardware similar to the three-camera, seven-microphone set-up in the North Andover Town Hall.

Tom uses that equipment to feed live video and sound into the cable system of meetings of the North Andover Planning Board and the North Andover Zoning Board on three evenings each month. “I would like to get that kind of set-up here at St. Michael,” he says.

Tom is a member of the St. Vincent dePaul Society and the Pastoral Council. He is a member of the North Andover Zoning Board, the Recreation Committee, the cable committee, and is on the board of directors of NACAM, as well as being a video operator for NACAM. He is also a member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) and the North Andover Lions Club.♦



Let's Party!

More than 100 parishioners and guests attended the festive Mardi Gras Family Party at St. Michael in February, including Cardinal Sean O'Malley (at left) who posed for photos at the event after celebrating a 4 p.m. Mass.

Photos by Jim Fernandez



Artists Who Create with Needle and Thread

By Jane C. Demers

We read about them in the bulletin and see their handiwork in the church in the altar cloths, the purificators which are used to wipe out the chalices, the altar banners and the enchanting baptismal bibs given to every newly christened baby at St. Michael.

Their stitching skills can also be seen in the kneeler in the adoration chapel and can be appreciated in the unseen repairs that are occasionally made to the church's choir robes.

But other than their obvious skill and passion for the magic they find in a needle and thread, what really inspires the ladies who make up the Nimble Thimbles ministry? The answer seems to lie in helping and supporting the needs of others — both inside and outside the church. As partial evidence are the hundreds of quilts the group has made over the years for people in need of some tangible comfort in their lives — quilts that are now, for example, resting on laps of residents in area nursing homes or keeping babies warm in nurseries in the Merrimack Valley.

About 15 years ago, Nimble Thimbles was formed by two parishioners in response to St. Michael's need for linens and vestments that would otherwise need to be purchased from a liturgical store at great expense.

They identified themselves as "church people" who joined to help St. Michael's and those in need by doing what they love to do, namely sew. Many were retired from careers in teaching and nursing and were looking to provide solace to others who were ill or in difficult circumstances. In between fulfilling orders for church linens, the group began to make quilts for anyone in need requesting one.

Nimble Thimbles meets every Wednesday in the Youth Ministry Center from 9 a.m. to noon, with as many as nine women. They all gather around a large central table. Quilts hang on the walls, and the shelving covering one wall is overflowing with boxes and bolts



Pat Murdock, Claire Graham and Grace Mistretta focus on the task at hand. Inset photo features an example of the ministry's artistic handiwork.

Photos by Jim Fernandez

of brightly colored cloth and plastic containers with hundreds of spools of multi-hued thread and clouds of white batting. On the table sit piles of fabric of varying patterns that are all cut into small, perfect squares. Boxes of needles and thread and scissors and rulers and sewing paraphernalia abound.

One member of the ministry, Edith (Edie) Charest, is a former garment worker and licensed practical nurse (a medical vocation she took up at age 55). Edie operates a late-model sewing machine that's situated by a window while simultaneously providing spirited color commentary on the scene unfolding around her. Sitting next to her is Grace Mistretta who—after hand-stitching a stack of cotton squares together into a long segmented strip—hands it over to Edie, who expertly runs several finished strips through the machine, binding them to each other to create the background for a much-sought-after quilt.

When asked why all the sewing isn't done by machine, various members of the group explained that it was a matter of personal preference and skills—just as are other components of the sewing process, such as design and overall assembly. Marguerite

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Nimble Thimbles Welcome Anyone with Sewing Interest

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Cooper, for example, likes to put all the pieces of the quilt together to make the final product. Ultimately, everyone's creative responsibility is assigned by the ministry's leader, Sandy Costanzo, who is also a receptionist and rectory cook.

Sandy was an obvious choice to lead the group, its members say, because of her "creative genius." Said one member: "She does all the cutting and planning for the quilts, she assigns us our jobs, she does the shopping for the group, and more." Anyone attempting to gauge Sandy's passion for needlework need only to learn that she has eight sewing machines at home.

While acknowledging her leadership role and her love of sewing, Sandy is quick to compliment the rest of the group, saying that all are gifted quilters.

The shared experience of making and giving away so many quilts over the years has created a strong bond among the women in the ministry. They continually keep in touch through e-mail and phone calls. And when anyone becomes sick, the others send



Nimble Thimble craftspeople (from left) are: Pat Murdock, Sandy Costanzo, Edith Charest, Grace Mistretta, Claire Graham, Kaye Olenio, and Marguerite Cooper. Missing from photo is Jennie Marino.

Photo by Jim Fernandez

flowers and make inquiries as to any needs.

Anyone interesting in joining the group would be most welcomed. When asked if men would be welcome, Edie burst out laughing, saying she would love to have men as group members. And, whether male or female, only very basic sewing experience is necessary. Simply leave a message with the receptionist... who very well could be Sandy! ♦

SPRING FLING!

Nearly 150 people attended the 2nd Annual Spring Fling in April.

Sponsored by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the event raised \$2,500 for needy families in the community.



Photos by Jim Fernandez

Saint Michael School Reaches Out to Neighbors ...Even Thousands of Miles Away

Susan Reidy

Principal, St. Michael School

The students at St. Michael School have been reaching out to their local, national and world-wide communities this year. Our school mission has encouraged our students to provide community outreach as a means of carrying on the traditions of faith, love and service initiated by the Sisters of Charity of Halifax, who founded the school in 1950.

Locally, our school students, teachers and parents have provided outreach to Lazarus House, Si Se Puede, local food pantries, the retired Sisters of Charity in Wellesley, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Jimmy Fund, Boston Children's Hospital, the Lawrence Police collection for Toys for Tots and more. We've held "Dress Down Days" to raise money for charity; we've collected food and clothing; we've made crafts and cards for the retired Sisters, and so much more. The students have seen how their giving benefits their local neighbors.

Nationally, the outreach we have provided has benefited schools in need. We sent school supplies and textbooks to schools in New Orleans that continue to need assistance during the post-hurricane rebuilding process. In addition, our kindergarten students collect loose change throughout the year to send to St. Michael School in Ari-



Visiting with retired teacher Sr. Mary at the Sisters of Charity convent in Wellesley are (from left): Kayla Andrewchuk, Colleen Sullivan, Abby Stanton, Noah Stanton, Grace Stanton and Jeffrey Donahue.

zona, which is in an impoverished area.

Our school community has had several parents, aunts, uncles and other relatives assigned to military duty in the Middle East, so providing outreach to those in the military has also always been important to our students. This year, our students made cards and care packages to ship overseas. We received several thank-you cards from service men and women who had no relation to our school but who wanted to share their gratitude for remembering them. In addition, we learned from one of our student's uncles that Afghanistan families were suffering due to a very cold winter and were in need of blankets, jackets and warm clothing. The school children immediately jumped into action and had a clothing drive set up at school the very next day. The clothing was shipped off one week later, and the students were able to make a difference in the lives of complete strangers who live halfway across the world.

Giving back and providing outreach on a local, national and world-wide level is something we strive to teach our students in addition to the academic and religion curriculum at the school. We are always overwhelmed by our students' generosity and their understanding of the need to reach out and help others. ♦



Carrying presents for Toys for Tots are (from left): Lucy Devlin, Jeremy Garneau, Courtney Wilson, Jeffrey Donahue and Theresa Connolly.

Photos by Sue Rogge

A Mass Rich with Many Blessings

By Jean Guyer

Each spring our priests and staff invite all our parishioners who are unable to attend Mass regularly to the Mass of Blessing. This special Mass, specifically designed for our elderly who are homebound or living in nursing home and assisted living communities, offers an opportunity to celebrate and pray once again as part of our parish family.

The Mass has been so welcomed that people start inquiring months in advance as to when it will be celebrated. For many, the occasion will be their only opportunity to attend Mass at Saint Michael during the year. For others it is a rare and special occasion to see old friends, visit with parish staff and priests and feel a part of our church community of faith. We welcome and celebrate them in all ways possible on this happy occasion.

All attendees are greeted at the doors of

the church by many of our youth who welcome, assist and accompany them to their pews. The altar is adorned with flowers, gifts from parishioners who kindly donated them to be taken home and enjoyed. Father Keyes, Father John and Father Jerry concelebrate this Mass with a thoughtful and affirming message of healing and hope. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered before Mass and the Sacrament of Anointing after Communion. Brian Kingsley, the organist, soothes and comforts those at Mass with hymns that parishioners remember and long to hear and sing again.

Our Saint Elizabeth Hospitality Ministry takes special pride in providing refreshments following Mass for those who want to visit with friends and to make new ones. The Friendly Driving Circle plays a critical role in providing rides to folks who otherwise would not have transportation.

Family, friends, health-care providers, caregivers and drivers are all welcome to celebrate this Mass rich with many blessings.♦

11 Parishes to Participate in 2008 Annual Picnic

This year's annual parish picnic on September 7 promises to provide a potpourri of sights and sounds as parishioners from St. Michael, as well as those from 10 other churches in the local archdiocese district, come together to celebrate their history and cultural diversity.

The area churches scheduled to participate in this year's picnic are: Corpus Christi, Saint Mary of the Assumption, and Saint Patrick, all in Lawrence; Our Lady of Good Counsel, Saint Lucy and Saint Monica, all in Methuen; Saint Augustine and Saint Robert Bellarmine, both in Andover; and Saint Dorothy and Saint Thomas of Villanova, both in Wilmington.

Each church has been invited to display banners and historical information to help explain their founding and ongoing growth and development. Additionally, the youth ministries from

each of the parishes will be joining together to participate in combined, fun-filled activities.

The picnic will begin following a noontime Mass at St. Michael. Fr. Kevin Dwyer, OSA, is scheduled to give the homily at that Mass. A native of the Merrimack Valley, Fr. Dwyer is a professor at Merrimack College and a respected local historian.

The picnic will be held on the church and school grounds on Main Street, and it will feature the standard cookout fare of hamburgers and hotdogs, with desserts being provided by the various church parishioners.

Food tickets will be \$5 per person or \$15 for families. Transportation will be arranged for elderly parishioners in need of rides. In the event of rain, all activities will be moved indoors, under tents and to the parish hall and St. Michael School.♦



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First Communion Celebration



Photo by Al Pereira

Parents, relatives and friends of children who received First Communion in May sing "Awesome God" while swaying their hands to the rhythm of the music. Related photo, Page 1.