

Northern Lights

of Mercer & Auglaize Counties

www.stmarysdeanery.com

*St. Aloysius * St. Joseph (Wapakoneta) * St. Francis

*St. Joseph (Egypt) *St. Anthony *mmaculate Conception

*St. Bernard *St. Henry *St. Augustine *St. Wendelin

*Precious Blood *St. Rose *St. Patrick *St. John (Fryburg)

* St. Joseph (St. Joseph) *St. Teresa *St. Peter *St. Mary

*St. John the Baptist *Holy Trinity *St. Paul *St. Sebastian

*Our Lady of Guadalupe *Holy Redeemer *Holy Rosary

*Mary Help of Christians *Nativity of the Blessed Virgin

Fall 2011—Volume 53

Newsletter for the People of the St. Marys Deanery

From the Desk of the Dean



For many of us, the fall season is the most welcome of all the seasons. The weather moderates and cools down, and the high school and college football seasons warm up. Not a bad combo, to be sure!

Fall also brings a new season into the 27 parishes of the St. Mary's Deanery. Our parish religious education programs begin a new year of instruction and formation for our young people. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (R.C.I.A.) begins a new season of inquiry for those are not Catholic who are inquiring into full communion with the Catholic Church. And with the new English translation of the Roman Missal beginning this Advent, our parishes are intensifying efforts to prepare their membership for the altered prayers and responses used at Mass. I would urge any parishioner to take advantage of whatever preparation activity their parish has to offer. For all of us, it will be an opportunity for spiritual growth and a renewal of faith.

The new season also sees a change in pastors of our deanery. Fr. Jim Dugal, C.P.P.S. has completed his service at Our Lady of Guadalupe, Montezuma, and begins a new phase in his priestly life. We are grateful for Fr. Jim's many years of devoted service to the people of Montezuma and the St. Mary's Deanery. We also welcome Fr. Rick Friebel, C.P.P.S. as the new pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Fr. Rick comes with extensive experience pastoring in urban settings. His last assignment was at Holy Trinity Parish in downtown Dayton. I asked how he liked his new rural setting. He said to me, "I love it here. The only problem is at night. It's so quiet here that it's hard to sleep!"

Enjoy this edition of Northern Lights. Please remember to pray for the clergy, religious, and lay men and women who serve the mission of Christ in the St. Mary's Deanery.

Fr. Tom Mannebach



Welcome

Fr. Rick Friebel

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Montezuma, has welcomed Fr. Rick Friebel to their parish after a reluctant farewell to Fr. Jim Dugal who recently retired to St. Charles Center.

Fr. Rick was born in Shelby, Ohio near Mansfield. He states, "I was born a small town boy and lived in an urban setting since I was eight years old—thirty-three of them as a pastor. I feel I have come full circle, from starting my life in a rural setting and now back. I find it all very interesting, we can't plan life."

As the hedge trimmer buzzed outside the window of Fr. Rick's office the new pastor stated, "I am finding so many generous people willing to help here. I am growing accustomed to the quiet and serenity, with a rural area I am challenged to change my style of ministry, it is not as fast paced here. Learning the names of everyone is also a challenge. Recently I took a walk in the parish cemetery and discovered many last names are the same as current parishioners." Our Lady of Guadalupe's mass schedule includes three weekend masses which Fr. Rick states are full. He speculates that many attending are ancestors of the founders of the parish as well as visitors to the adjacent Grand Lake and nearby communities who find the mass schedule convenient.

Fr. Rick, the oldest of three boys, shared that he was called into his priestly vocation at a young age during a difficult time in the life of his family. "Dad had us pray the rosary around the table every day. He was seeking full custody of us children from my mother who had mental health issues. We had moved in with my grandparents for a year while he went to find more brick laying work in the city. He came back every weekend to see us until we moved together to Cleveland."

continued on page 6



Encouragement

by: Fr. Ken Schnipke

I have often been asked by parents, grandparents and others, **“what can we do to encourage vocations to the priesthood and religious life?”** I usually begin my reply cautioning that there are no “silver bullet” answers, but rather a variety of approaches to create a culture of discernment.

The basic idea of any vocation is that God is the one who calls, we respond. And God is still calling today! Discernment is a process that helps young people listen more closely for Lord’s voice in their hearts.

We help young people discern their vocation by helping them see the options that are out there. As parents and grandparents, share with your children and grandchildren what it means to be in love, what it means to live a life of faithfulness and raise a family, but also help them to see and appreciate that religious life is also an option, a vocation that is life giving and fulfilling. Talk about the priests, brothers and sisters who have been a part of your life, the impact they have had and the witness of faith they have shared.

Second, help young people identify and appreciate the gifts they are blessed with. Help them to name what they are good at and how they can best use their gifts. And remember to invite, invite young people to consider the religious life. “You have a gift of compassion, a listening ear, have you ever thought about being a sister or brother? Or, you have a deep love for the Eucharist and helping others, have you ever thought about being a priest?”

Third, be open. A number of years ago a study revealed that most parents were willing to encourage religious vocations, as long as they were not from their own family. Be open to God speaking in the heart of your son or daughter, or grandchild.

And always remember, the foundation of all our vocation efforts is prayer. As St. Paul encourages, be fervent, persistent and joyful in prayer. Pray vocation prayers with your community at Church and in your home. God is listening!

Our vocation in life is a gift from God that is revealed in the deepest desires of hearts. It is a response to the God who loves us and it is a commitment to a way of life that is meant to be fulfilling and truly joyful in the eyes of God. My hunch is that if we took more seriously the challenge to create a culture of discernment, to help people listen to the choices of their hearts and follow through on those choices, and commit to regular prayer for vocations, there would be a lot more happy people and more vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

I encourage you to pray for vocations to the religious life, to consider if God may be calling you, and to encourage and invite young people to consider the possibility.

My Story

by: Joe Gehret



It’s funny as I sit here typing this, my criteria gave me only a half a page to tell the story of my whole life, past, present and future. It seems I may need to settle for the abridged version, which, surprisingly, is a difficult task. To be told properly, my story has to be told in conjunction with the whole history of salvation, from the Creation to the End of Time. Only then can you really comprehend the awesome power of my story.

The truth is, as a seminarian, and even more so, as a Christian, vocation doesn’t just mean whether I’m meant to be priest, religious, married, or single. No, those are instrumental into something much bigger going on. At the grandest sense, my story, and your story, and everyone else’s story are not really ours, but chapters in a bigger story, God’s story. The marvel of vocation is that the unfathomably marvelous God, to whom the vastness of the universe is nothing more than a speck, and all of time is as nothing to him; that same God loves me and you to an even greater degree than the unfathomable depths of space and eons of time. All of our collective lives on earth have been overshadowed by God’s relentless plan for our salvation, culminating in the mystery of Jesus Christ, true God and true man. And the greatest part is, I’m part of that plan, I’m part of that story. Whether it is as a priest, religious, husband or single man, I have a distinct and integral role that God wants me to carry out for love of him. That’s mind boggling, that’s dumbfounding, and that is the reassurance I have in Christ.

continued on page 3

Vocation as a Journey

by: Matt Keller



“While growing up I always felt attracted to the priesthood, so it was only natural for me to choose the priesthood as the subject of my eight grade career project,” stated Matt Keller of Maria Stein.

To fulfill the requirements of the assignment Matt interviewed Fr. Ken Schroeder, his pastor at St. John the Baptist, one of the five parishes in the Marion Catholic Cluster. With the interview and research about Catholic Priests in hand Matt completed the assignment and felt he had learned a little bit about the priesthood. But in his heart he knew there was more.

With entering high school the idea of the priesthood and his interest were put on the back burner. He had envisioned his future to include marriage, children and a possible career in construction until the middle of his sophomore year when he began receiving letters and publications from the Vocation Office of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. Matt mentioned it was a little scary to be getting these mailings but assumed it was normal and similar to the mailings from military recruiting offices and colleges. Little did he know that Fr. Ken had placed his name on the mailing list to help nurture the interest Matt had expressed during that eight grade interview.



St. Gaspar del Bufalo, was born in Rome. In his missionary travels of Italy, he invited the faithful to reflect upon and to adore the Precious Blood of Christ. In 1815 he founded the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood (C.P.P.S) His feast day is October 21.

Even though Matt threw away most of the correspondence he recalled an invitation in the spring of his sophomore year inviting him to St. Charles for “*some guys making their professions*”. He had planned to let this go by the way side as well until his parents encouraged him to attend. Matt said, “Going to St. Charles that day I thought was very neat. While there I met the Vocation Director, Fr. Ken Schnipke, who now pastors at Immaculate Conception in Celina. This is when I realized that Fr. Schroeder was

“In reflection upon my vocation journey I feel three important things stand out:

- 1– to have a good spiritual life, meaning one needs to pray and be in communication with God
- 2- we need each other for support, I would not be where I am today without the support of family and friends.
- 3– to hear the direction of the call—for me, I feel the call to do mission work during this vocational call time I felt the call to missionary work.”

the one who put me on the mailing list at the Vocation Office. I could have requested my name be removed but I didn’t. The fall of my Junior year I attended a Discernment Retreat at St. Charles which Fr. Schroeder had written me a letter about and said that this may be something I would be interested in attending. I got a lot out of that weekend.”

After High school Matt entered the House of Discernment at the Gaspar House in Dayton with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. “This was a year to see what it was like to live in formation. I also began taking college classes at Sinclair Community College. At the end of that year I entered into Initial Formation,” added Matt.

My Story continued from page 2

So for now, I let that plan unfold for me, patiently, prayerfully, understanding that it’s in the silence of my heart that God waits to speak to me. For now, that will be at the Spiritual Center of Maria Stein, working with the fine staff there to do whatever it is I can, big or small, to help bring the many retreatants that go through our doors closer to God. Come fall, I return to the college seminary, to a life of studying, prayer, and preparation for ministry as a priest. Regardless of where I am, I always keep before me the reminder that God still has a plan for me, just as he does for you. Keep me and my brother seminarians, and the Spiritual Center of Maria Stein in your prayers

Joe Gehret is a college seminarian for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati studying at Bishop Simon Brute College Seminary. He spent this past summer working with the staff of the Spiritual Center of Maria Stein. He is from St. Denis Parish in Versailles.

Great Joy & Gratitude

by: Tess Mescher



Sister Martha Bertke recently celebrated her Golden Anniversary as a Religious Sister and shared the following insight into her chosen vocation.

"It is with great joy and deep gratitude that I celebrate fifty years as a Sister of the Precious Blood. Each day is an opportunity to be thankful to God for our blessings."

Sister Martha was the sixth child born to Ivo and Christine (Albers) Bertke, in Maria Stein, Ohio. She was baptized as Lucille Frances at St. John the Baptist parish on March 28, 1940 and grew up with her sister and brothers on the family dairy farm. Following her graduation from the Marion Local school system, where she was taught by

Precious Blood Sisters, she was hired by Celina Mutual Insurance Company. After two years she joined the Sisters of the Precious Blood on August 28, 1960.

For the first five years Lucille was in formation at Salem Heights in Dayton, where upon becoming a novice she was given the name: Sister Martha. At that time it was common to be given a new name in Religious Life. During those years Sister Martha attended the University of Dayton where she earned a Bachelors degree in Elementary Education. For ten years she taught in Catholic schools in Dayton, Ft. Wayne, IN and Ottawa, OH.

During four summers she studied at Webster University in St. Louis, earning a master's degree in education and changed her ministry from classroom educator to that of a Director of Religious Education. For twenty-one years Sister Martha served in this capacity at various parishes in Michigan and Ohio. "These were wonderful, challenging and exciting years! How blessed I was to be a part of the spiritual formation of so many people." Sister Martha worked together with pastors, principals, music directors, parish staff and served on a variety of committees, boards and parish councils which she feels helped her to development and broadened her personally and in her service to and with others.

Later Sister Martha served as Pastoral Associate working with and providing pastoral care as she directed Adult Education programs, organized faith sharing groups and retreats, visited the sick and involved people in social justice concerns. In 2004 she took a Sabbatical Program near Santa Fe to be renewed and refreshed. Followed by a new ministry, that of manager of Saint Charles Senior Living Community, in Carthegena. "How blessed I am to be there," Sister said.

As I celebrate my golden anniversary I am grateful to God, my family and my community of prayerful and committed women. My heart is filled with joy!

In reflection Sister Martha concluded, *"It is wonderful to be a Sister of the Precious Blood! For me Precious Blood spirituality is at the center of our faith. It is at the heart of our faith. It is focused on the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a Sister of the Precious Blood I have dedicated myself to God and the Church., Through prayer I deepen my relationship with God and then strive to serve others and be a life-giving presence to people."*



St. Dymphna: Patron of those suffering from nervous and mental afflictions; feast day: May 15.

Dymphna was fourteen when her mother died. Her father, Damon, said to have been afflicted with mental illness, brought on by his grief, he sent messengers throughout his town and other lands to find some woman of noble birth, resembling his wife, who was willing to marry him. When none could be found, his evil advisers told him to marry his own daughter, Dymphna. She fled from her castle together with St. Gerebran, her confessor and two friends. Damon found them in Belgium and gave orders that the priest's head be cut off. Then Damon tried to pursue his daughter to return to Ireland with him. When she refused, he drew his sword and struck off her head. She was fifteen years of age. Dymphna received the crown of martyrdom in defense of her purity about the year 620.

On page one: a statue of St. Dymphna can be seen to the right of Fr. Friebe, she is one of his favorite saints.

Twining with Grenada

by: Chris Killian



A hurricane devastating a distant southern Caribbean island has little effect on the folks in West Central Ohio.

Or does it? Well, that would have been the case more than 12 years ago for Holy Redeemer Church in New Bremen but around 1999 they began a twinning relationship with St. Dominic's Church in Grenada. And since, a budding relationship between the two has made a significant impact on the members of both church communities and significant events like the hurricane are felt by both.

Back in the late 1990's, the relationship was formed through connection with the now deceased Fr. Ed Conlon, uncle of Bishop Conlon of Joliet, IL and former pastor of Holy Redeemer. Early work in the twinning relationship focused on providing support for the church and schools. But then, in September 2004, Hurricane Ivan ripped through the island with a direct hit and there were few buildings and virtually no lives on the island that went untouched. And lives in New Bremen were touched as well and a new mission quickly came into focus. St. Dominic's church was virtually destroyed with the loss of the roof and devastation of the interior of the church, including pews that were previously provided from Ohio. In the 7.5 years since, the twinning committee from Holy Redeemer worked to raise funds and provide materials to help rebuild the

church as well as to build relationships across the miles by facilitating visits of various groups from Grenada to Ohio and Ohio to Grenada.

The culmination of the work to rebuild the church was realized on June 26, 2011. On invitation from St. Dominic's, a group of five people representing Holy Redeemer traveled to Grenada to help celebrate the rededication of the refurbished church. The group included Holy Redeemer Pastor Rev. Tom Mannebach, twinning committee members Dick Falkner and Chris Killian and parishioners Larry and Nancy Topp. The travelers were received with immeasurable warmth and hospitality and were welcomed into private homes for the four day stay. The visit afforded the opportunity for the travelers to experience Grenadian culture and traditions first hand. The visit started by celebrating the feast of Corpus Christi with Eucharistic liturgy and a two mile, hour and a half procession through the hilly and winding roads of Perdmontemps with the Blessed Sacrament. The procession was a joyful celebration with music and singing that caught the attention of many bystanders along the way. The highlight of the visit was, of course, the rededication of St. Dominic's Church which was attended by many of the island's clergy, high level government officials and of course the faithful of the parish, many of whom had to celebrate from outdoors since the church was overflowing.



The expression of appreciation to Holy Redeemer for the support in rebuilding the church was demonstrated through words and actions of hospitality throughout the visit and is difficult to convey to everyone here at home. Perhaps it is best understood in reflecting on how the travelers experienced a true sense of what it means to be members of the Body of Christ. And so it is clearer than ever that relationship in Christ is at the heart of our twinning efforts and will outlast any past or future material support.

Saint Dominic (1170 – Aug. 6, 1221) was the founder of the Friars Preachers or the Order of Preachers. It is said that the spread of the Rosary is attributed to the preaching of St. Dominic and for centuries at the heart of the Dominican Order. St. Dominic is the patron saint of astronomers, astronomy, and the falsely accused.



“Caring for the Caregiver”

Wednesday, September 21, 8:30 a.m.—12:00 noon

A workshop for those who help care for someone—whether in the workplace or a loved one. \$10 includes continental breakfast; for those needing CEUs = \$25 includes 3 Continue Education Units & continental breakfast. Please register by September 13th for this workshop by calling the Spiritual Center at: 419-925-7625.

“The Perfectly Imperfect Woman”

A retreat for women only ~ led by Jamie Schmiesing

Friday, November 4—Saturday, November 5 7:00 p.m. until 10:00 a.m.

Spend time with your friends at this truly unique retreat designed just for women.

Come spend time in prayer, listen to speakers on topics for women of all ages, get a head start on fall and Christmas shopping at exhibit booths from area businesses and home sales businesses, participate in a quarter auction and win great prizes. Stay as long as you like or spend the night. Stay up late and watch old Christmas movies. Just have a good and relaxing time! Do as much or as little as you want!

Commuter \$10/person
Private room \$55/person
Double room \$30/person
Price includes breakfast

Please register by Oct.31 by calling 419-925-7625

Event sponsored by: The Spiritual Center
Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley
and the St. Marys Deanery Center

France, Germany, Switzerland 2012—Catholic Pilgrimage

Catholic Pilgrimage to FRANCE, GERMANY, SWITZERLAND

June 10 – June 21, 2012 with Fr. Tony Fortman visiting many cities and shrines with highlights of: Paris, Aachen, Cologne, Trier, Moselle River Valley, Metz, Mont Ste. Odile, Strasbourg, Colmer, Mariastein, Lucerne, Einsiedeln and Zurich.

Limit of 48 seats; sign up deadline Oct. 3rd. For itinerary and sign up contact Tour Host: Tess Mescher 419-305-0106 or dtkka@watchtv.net. Cost will be \$4,450 which includes: air, motor coach, river cruise, hotels, meals twice daily.

Fr. Friebel

continued from page 1

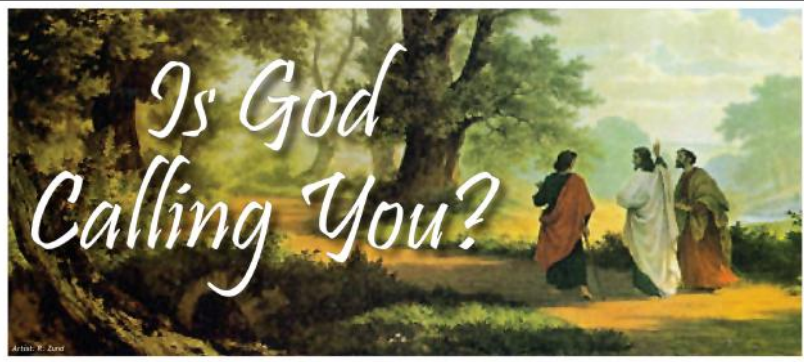
“When I was young I played Mass and my extended family watched and supported me. Then in seventh grade we had Precious Blood Sisters as our teachers and they were instrumental in encouraging attendance at Brunnerdale High School Seminary. I left home at age 14 for Brunnerdale and am what is playfully referred to as a “Lifer” - someone who started seminary in high school and went straight through.” Right out of college at special formation Fr. Rick wasn’t sure if he wanted to continue towards the priesthood or to become a religious brother or to the vocation of “girls” he jokingly referred to as the vocation of marriage.

“While in 1973 I had many friends and there were some girls interested in me but I continued on into the priesthood. I am still in touch with many friends from those days and have helped to celebrate many Sacraments with them. I love to celebrate the Sacraments with people. I think the Sacraments are a great time to celebrate in happiness and also in sadness,” said Fr. Friebel.

When asked about the biggest challenge he sees in his vocation Fr. Rick replied, “Is to make the Kingdom of God come alive in the world today so that it is real and alive for everyone. In particular for our young people. I really want to see them regularly in the pew on Sunday and for them to really get turned on to their faith. That is the challenge for the priest at the pulpit.”

Maria Stein Shrine of the Holy Relics

by: Sister Carolyn Hoying



Finding God's Voice

The question was posed to me, "How can I keep at bay the material world, that driving force and pressure in today's society: how I look, what I wear, what latest technological gadget is in my purse. Our world is becoming so filled with the noises and distractions of life that it is no wonder the young adults are having a hard time trying to figure out a direction in life. In the midst of all the voices and con-

stant noise, is there room for them to hear the voice of God speaking within their hearts of His unconditional love for them?

Recently, a young woman told me how difficult it was for her to listen to what her heart was saying to her since the voices all around were so loud and the environment so filled with noise that she was distracted and got caught up in all that society says is desirable. The more involved she was in sports, video games, and even Facebook, she was lured to believe that these would bring her happiness. Mysterious as it may seem, she realized that she was not happy because she had strayed too far from the real values in life. She had to answer the questions "What makes me happy?" and "What do I really want to do with the rest of my life?"-- two very good questions.

First, it is important to know yourself. Second, begin to build a relationship with God through prayer and attending Mass on a regular basis. Set aside some quiet time in your day which will allow space for the sacred to move in. Everyone craves quiet time; however, we have been programmed to fill every minute of every hour with some kind of busyness or activity which eats away at the silence we desire. How can we become counter-cultural in the family when it comes to secularism and materialism? Perhaps turn off the TV set, computer games or Facebook for an hour each day to allow for reading or family conversation. Eat the family meal together to bond your relationships. How about nourishing yourself with Scripture and Sunday's Mass readings? Find the support of friends who will be prayer partners. These are some ways to help your family focus on God's intimate presence in each of their hearts.

New Serra Club Forming

by: Beth Dammeyer

We are excited to announce that the New Serra Club of the St. Marys/ Sidney Deaneries will be officially chartered with 28 members from 11 of our parishes. The celebration will take place this October with Bishop Binzer officiating.

The Serrans are an active group of caring Catholics that realize the need to foster and promote vocations from within our parishes and support our priests in their sacred ministries. Membership is open to lay men and women of all ages who are looking for a way to answer their baptismal call and fulfill their Christian vocation to service.

The new Serra Club will be hosting an orientation open to all who are interested in learning more about Serra. This will take place on Thursday, November 10th. after the 7:00 p.m. Mass at Holy Redeemer Church, New Bremen, in the parish hall. We are all aware of the urgent need here in our part of "God's country" so we hope to see many of you from the various parishes come out to meet us and let us share with you this wonderful ministry. Refreshments will be served.

Any inquiries may be made by contacting Beth Dammeyer at 937 526 9088 or Pam Kaiser at 419-629-1337.



God Gives Us Choices

by: Tess Mescher

Hope Rethman, St. John the Baptist parishioner and catechist, recently published a children's book based on a conversation she had with her son. During this conversation Hope remembers feeling the weight of her responsibilities as a mother to answer her son's question appropriately - as God would want her to do. Later, as she pondered the conversation in her heart she wrote it down as a mother adding all the things she wanted to say.

Hope taught in Wapakoneta prior to taking a leave of absence to stay home with her children. During this time she became a catechist at St. John the Baptist parish. While creating lesson plans Hope re-wrote the conversation from her son's perspective and added snap-shots to help the students see the connection of sin and free will. The children liked the book and grasped the lesson although they requested more pictures.

While at their children's softball game Hope talked with a friend, Jackie Arling, and asked if she might illustrate a few pictures for the book. Hope envisioned a book to give to her second grade students as a gift for their First Holy Communion. Jackie, an art teacher, agreed. As others saw the finished product they encouraged Hope to go further and have the book professionally published and available for sale.

Hope does not think of herself as an author but as a mother and teacher who felt God's encouragement to publish "God Gives Us Choices". Her book is available at several local book stores and online.

Hope recently returned to the classroom as an intervention teacher. She and her husband reside in Maria Stein with their four children.



"God Gives Us Choices" captures a powerful moment between a young boy and his mother as they share a conversation sparked by a question: "Why does God let bad stuff happen?"