

Northern Lights

of Mercer & Auglaize Counties

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

*St. Joseph (Egypt) *St. Anthony *Immaculate 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

Winter 2012—Volume 54

Newsletter for the People of the St. Marys Deanery

From the Desk of the Dean



The new year of 2012 brings with it not just a new number but a new spirit. Our salvation in Christ has grown one year closer to its fulfillment. I'm sure all of us are made well aware of the chal-

lenges that face our nation, our world, and our own lives. I hope we all recognize that the passing of time brings with it the deepening of Christ's saving action in our personal and collective history. People often resist the passing of time, preferring instead to long for the "good old days." But from the standpoint of Christian faith, time is not our enemy but our ally. To be sure, we may lament the aches, pains, and wrinkles that come with growing older. Yet, when we accept them in the right spirit, time allows us to grow closer to the Lord and to one another united in the Church. And that is a sure recipe for hope.

The articles you see in this edition of Northern Lights represent some of the reasons we welcome the passage of time. We see that with each new day, week, month and year, God is doing something new in the lives of the people of the St. Marys Deanery. I invite you to read about these various ways, and to consider for yourself how the Lord may be calling you to grow more deeply in His reconciling love as we enter a new year of salvation.

Fr. Tom Mannebach



All in a Good Book

by: Tess Mescher

As with many successful parish programs they often start out slowly and then gain momentum. This was true for the humble beginnings of the Holy Redeemer Book Club who will be celebrating their third year of existence this month.

The foundress, Becky Koverman of New Bremen, is grateful for the support of her pastor, Fr. Tom Mannebach, who gave the go ahead to form the club and offer a parish wide invitation for the initial meeting. Even though the attendance at that first meeting was rather slim the small group had faith and persevered. Current monthly attendance is now in the double digits and primarily female, although the group welcomes men to join and share their perspective and insights.



The group plans together the books they wish to read which are often borrowed from the library, purchased, shared between members or loaded electronically to their eReaders. During the majority of the hour meeting held in October the group discussed the book "23 Minutes in Hell" by Bill Wiese. Members are welcome to share as much as they are comfortable. At this meeting the group of avid readers referenced past books they had read or referenced the Bible for consistency and credibility.

The members feel the diversity of their group encourages them to read books they may not normally have planned to. During conversations on the many books they have read they share their faith, their life experiences and thoughts that the books may have evoked.

Cont.: page 4

The Perfectly Imperfect Woman Retreat by: Tess Mescher

The Perfectly Imperfect Woman's Retreat was a collaborative effort of the St. Marys Deanery Center, Catholic Social Services of Miami Valley and The Spiritual Center of Maria Stein. This retreat brought women of all ages and backgrounds together first to listen as Jamie Schmiesing gave a wonderfully inspiring keynote speech which drew laughter, tears and reflection on God's immense love for each of us. Several breakout sessions were offered throughout the Friday/Saturday retreat and vendors were available for the women to get a head start on their Christmas shopping.

The attendees commented that they shared joy and sorrow, learned new things and made new friends. They had time for prayer and reflection and were invited to accept that God has made them each in His divine image and that His love for them has no boundaries. That it is "O.K." to not be perfect as the world defines "perfect" but that they are perfect because they are made by Him in His image.

During initial plans for this retreat the organizers projected attendance to be around 40 women, happily attendance was near 200. "The women gave great evaluations and suggestions for the 2012 "Perfectly Imperfect Woman's Retreat" so next fall we anticipate a full house again," commented Robin of the Spiritual Center.



Keynote speaker Jamie Schmiesing, of Minster, is pictured speaking to the women on Friday evening about her life with her husband, John, as they raise their eleven children.

Jamie writes on her blog: *"I am a Catholic wife, and mother of eleven, plus one in heaven (ages 11 and under including 3 sets of twins.) John and I spent the first 4+ years of our marriage wanting and waiting for children. When hope seemed to be slipping, I turned my life over to God, asking His will be done. And so now, we celebrate His abundant blessings and love. May you find renewed hope and joy through my stories."*

Luke 12:6-7 Are not five sparrows sold for two small coins? Yet not one of them has escaped the notice of God. Even the hairs of your head have all been counted. Do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.

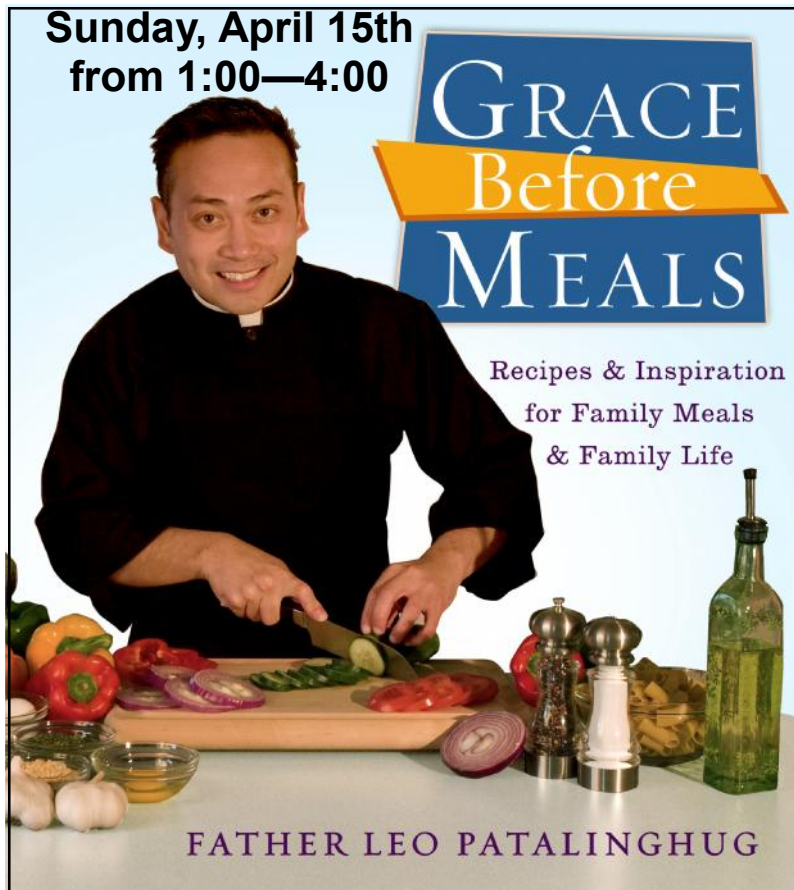


Saturday morning a group of women participate in Zumba

“Grace Before Meals”

A collaborative effort of The Spiritual Center; Catholic Social Services of Miami Valley and the St. Marys Deanery Center

**Sunday, April 15th
from 1:00—4:00**



The simple act of eating a regular family meal can have incredible positive effects on family dynamics. With insights on the spiritual component of food, as well as impressive data on this subject, Fr. Leo Patalinghug is able to make important connections on food, faith, family, and fun in this

Dynamic presentation. What may look and sound like a “cooking show” is actually an opportunity to grow in Body, Mind and Soul !

“Grace Before Meals” with Father Leo Patalinghug

This day retreat will begin with a one hour talk and cooking demonstration for the entire family on the importance of eating meals together. There will be a Q&A time with Father Leo and the day will end with Mass.

Fr. Leo Patalinghug is a priest of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and professor of pastoral theology at Mount St. Mary's University and Seminary. He is an internationally known conference speaker, popular TV and Radio personality. Fr. Leo is the creator and host of the movement, "Grace Before Meals" which inspires and strengthens family relationships around the dinner table. Although he is a priest, he also has a unique background as a former martial arts championship title holder and choreographer for an award winning breakdancing group. All of these things have provided him unique experiences and insights that have caught the attention and acclamation of diverse audiences, including PBS, ABC, CBS and the Food Network. If you watch the Food Network you may have seen Fr. Leo defeat world famous chef Bobby Flay in a surprise cooking competition on "Throw Down with Bobby Flay." Fr. Leo continues to spread the "good news" about the importance of family meals around the world.

\$5.00 donation/person

Call today to register for this event 419-925-7625

Please register no later than April 10

Instructed by Jesus

by: Fr. Tom Hemm

The holy order of deacon has been part of Catholic Church since the beginning. (*Philemon 1:1 & 1 Timothy 3:8-13*). However for the last thousand years this ministry was minimally exercised as a transitional stage for candidates toward the priesthood. With the Second Vatican Council it has once again become a “permanent” form of ministry, and one that is now conferred to married men.

The restoration of this form of ministry has contributed significantly to the spiritual growth of the Church—especially in this country. Today there are more than 30,000 Roman Catholic deacons in the world. Nearly half of these serve here in the United States.

The three orders of service in the Church are the order of Deacon, the order of Presbyter (*or Priest*), and the order of Bishop. No one becomes priest or bishop without first becoming a deacon, which means “servant” as Jesus himself instructed.

Jesus made his role clear shortly before he was to die. At the Last Supper he told his disciples not to act like kings but, “let the greatest among you be as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. For who is greater: the one seated at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one seated at table? *Yet, I am among you as the one who serves.*” (*Luke 22: 24-27*)

Then to make his point crystal clear he got up from the table got down on his hands and knees like a slave and began to wash the disciples’ feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He explained his action: “If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.” (*John 13: 4 – 15*)

I believe that the presence of deacons in our cluster parishes will be crucial for a healthy future. Please pray for other men who may be considering this vocation in their future. May the Lord of the harvest inspire generosity and courage to those called to this valuable ministry! And may God bless our deacons and their families.

Fr. Tom

Curiosity — It Is A Good Thing

“Have you ever been curious about the Lay Pastoral Ministry Program or the Deaconate Formation Program?”

On Sunday, January 29th from 2:00—4:00 Deacon Hal Belcher and Barry Mersmann will give an overview of both these programs and answer your questions in a relaxed atmosphere at St. Charles Center in the Gaspar Room. All who are interested are welcome, as are spouses.

Registration is not required but will assure an adequate supply of materials and refreshments.
419-925-5022 or smdeanery@bright.net

All in a Good Book continued from page one:

The group meets monthly in classroom #1 at Holy Redeemer, typically on the third or fourth Tuesday of the month when the coordination of their schedules permit. For anyone interested in learning more about joining the Holy Redeemer book club or to gain insight into beginning one within their parish may contact Becky Koverman at 419-629-3470 or email her at sissy5@nktelco.net



A Magnificent Tree

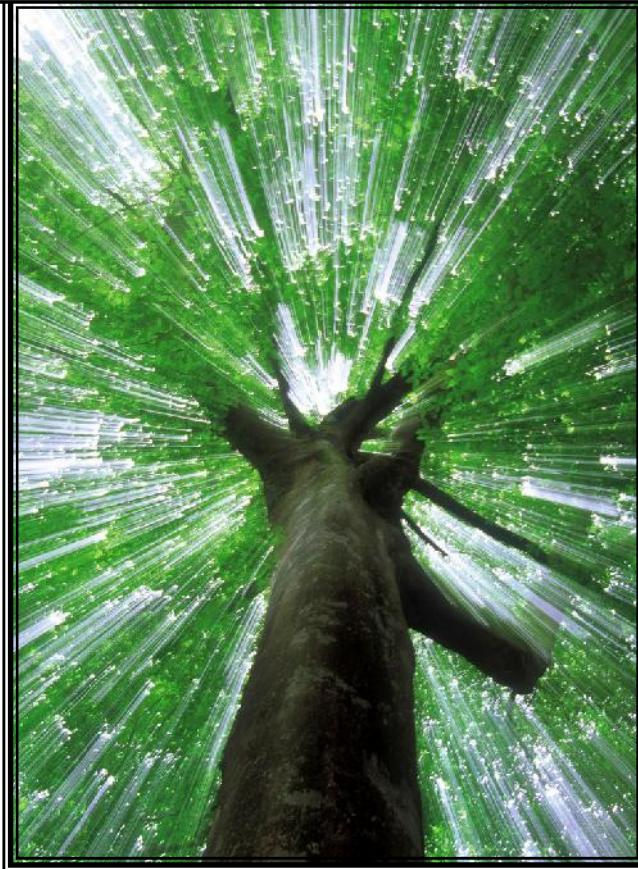
by : Tess Mescher

Over the past several years I have taken notice of a very large tree on the east side of the St. Charles Center. This healthy old tree makes a quiet statement of strength and welcome as a natural threshold from the farmyard to the main building.

Over the past century I imagine this tree profuse with leaves offering a shaded respite for those laboring on the farm. Or, possibly for the young seminarian to lean against as he writes a letter to his family as young farm kittens tangle around his legs.

Seasonally I witness the beauty of this tree and the reminders of how God is present in every aspect of our lives. In spring the tiny green buds give new hope, in the summer the branches, full of leaves offer, needed shade and shelter. With fall God's reminder of how beauty changes and evolves into winter. When this tree stands straight and seemingly unaffected by the driving winds and drifts gathering around its base. Since this tree sprouted from a seed it has grown and changed just as each person who has passed by it has grown and changed facing the gentle warm breezes and harsh storms of life.

In "*Pick Up Stuff*", a book written by the late Fr. Ernie Ranly, he recalls the young seminarians who would walk from St. Charles to the Ranly family farm for a visit. No doubt these young men walked past this tree as they began their two mile journey. At this time large classes of young men were ordained and each parish enjoyed a fulltime priest to attend to their spiritual needs.



In those days transportation to Mass was on foot, hoof or the wheels of a crank to start car. Sundays were spent visiting with family and friends between feeding and milking responsibilities. No doubt the concerns and worries of today mirror those experienced by generations before us when this tree was much smaller. Those who sat beneath have said the same prayers for health, for family and friends and for a safe and abundant harvest. Prayers for guidance and prayers for government leadership during war and peaceful times. In the midst of the many uncertainties in our world and in our lives prayer has been the constant.

Elsewhere in the farm yard are new young trees planted recently and I wonder over their

lifetime what changes will be seen, what innovations in farming, machinery and technology those who pass by them will be experiencing. And, what the generations to follow will have on their hearts as they sit below the profuse green canopies and think there thoughts, pray their prayers and reflect on the life God has set before them.

During these winter months inclement weather may not allow us to recline beneath a magnificent tree for rest, prayer and reflection. Instead may we center ourselves near a window within view of a magnificent tree to ponder what God is calling us to do in our lives and allow Him to fill us with *Hope* and *Strength* the acceptance of His plan for us.

God Bless You and may 2012 bring a crisper view of God's call to each of us and a loving open heart to welcome His perfect plan.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe ! Plans to give you a future full of hope.

Spiritual Center of Maria Stein

by: Robin Goettemoel-



A beautiful winter sunrise captured by a Spiritual Center guest.

What exactly is "hope"? The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit." The pope spoke about the importance of the virtue of hope in 2005, when he addressed Mexican bishops on their "ad limina" visits to Rome. "Confronted by today's changing and complex panorama, the virtue of hope is subject to harsh trials in the community of believers. For this very reason, we must be apostles who are filled with hope and joyful trust in God's promises," the pope told the bishops. He added, "Hope means reminding Christians that God never abandons his people and is alive and active in the world."

The Spiritual Center of Maria Stein strives to be a place where you can come to find hope. Jacinta Mergler, from the University of Dayton was recently at the Spiritual Center to direct a *Lalanne* retreat. She spent a weekend in prayer and sent this message upon her return to Dayton. "Two of us were out for an early morning walk to pray and welcome the day. Attached is a picture I took of the sunrise. When I look at the beauty of the color of the sky that morning it is a sign of hope, God's greatest gift to us. Because we have hope in an all loving and merciful God we can believe in something we can't yet see." While we're pretty sure everyone who comes here for a retreat or event doesn't have this same reaction, we're hopeful that you will agree that this beautiful picture of the Mercer County skies along with her words are a great reminder that God is always with us!

Robin

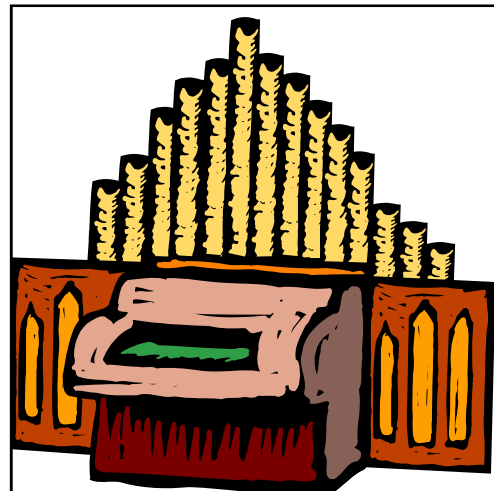
"Don't Let the Chaos Get You Down"

Evening Retreat led by Rev. Bob Skipper. Tuesday, March 6th from 7:00-9:00 pm
419-925-7625 www.spiritualcenter.net

Historic Designation

The 1960 Holtkamp organ at St. Charles Center has been designated an historic organ by the Organ Historical Society.

To celebrate, the organ will be featured in a recital by Dr. Stephen Schnurr on April 17, 2012, at 7:00 p.m.



Maria Stein Shrine of the Holy Relics

by: Don Rosenbeck, Administrator

While Advent may be over by the time you are reading this, it would still be good to reflect on how we did during this annual time of preparation. Our preparation during Advent likely included a great deal of hope. For young children, hope for all those things they wished Santa would bring. For parents, their hope may have included a desire for a wonderful gathering of family with safe travel for any who may have come long distances to attend.

At another level, our hope may have been for a greater presence of Christ in our lives and that He become an even more active part of our lives. The hymn "Christ Circle Round Us" speaks to these thought of hope. From its verses we hear ...

*Come, O Gate of **HOPE**, holy door of heaven's throne. Come Key of David, open wide the pathway home.*

*Come, Emanuel, cherished **HOPE** of Israel. Come live among us, ever in our hearts to dwell.*

*Come, Lord Jesus Christ, long awaited Prince of Peace. Come, **HOPE** of Nations, ever make our Love increase.*

We at the Maria Stein Shrine hope that you had a fruitful Advent and that the coming year be filled with abundant blessings for you!

St. Charles Senior Living Community

by: Sister Martha Bertke



As I reflected on this word, I recalled that sometime in my life someone told me, hope is an orientation of the heart. It is an ability to work for something because it is good. People who are hopeful have an inner strength that sees the world as bursting with possibilities. They are fully engaged with living in the present and yet they plan for tomorrow. They are open to others and are willing to learn from them and if needed re-shape their attitudes. Persons of hope often offer a vision for a changed future.

As you look at your calendar for 2012, I invite you to reflect upon this year that is before us with hope in your heart. There are many challenges that lie ahead of us which can pull us down and perhaps cause a sense of fear or worry or despair. Daily we hear of nations at war with one another. We see people who suffer from unemployment or are underemployed. We learn of serious illnesses or tragedies in the lives of some people. Yet, we are called to be hopeful people.

Winter is a season of waiting and striving to remain hopeful. Sometimes it requires great trust and a willingness to believe that the darkness of winter will not last forever. While we are in this winter space, we may be tempted to give up, to lose hope because the days can be dark and dreary. Winter asks us only to be, to wait patiently. Each day may challenge us to carry hope in our hearts no matter of the sparse signs of life in our external world and of our inner stirrings.

Hope means a looking forward to always something good and favorable. We often hope for goodness and peace; for better weather, for dry roads, for a warmer climate. We hope for good health, for an end to suffering, for cures of illnesses. Most of all our hope is in the Lord, Jesus, who is our Savior and our God. We continue to hope in almighty goodness, in gracious presence and in abiding love. Our hope remains strong and we trust that when we pass from this life, we will be blessed with eternal life which lasts forever.

For more information about Saint Charles Senior Living Community, contact Sr. Martha Bertke, C.PP.S., 419-925-4516, ext. 112 or by e-mail: smbertke@bright.net, or go to www.st-charles-cpps.org

ST. JUDE — *helper and keeper of the hope(less) pray for me!*

St. Jude is invoked in desperate situations because his New Testament letter stresses that the faithful should persevere in the environment of harsh, difficult circumstances, just as their forefathers had done before them. Therefore, he is the patron saint of desperate cases and his feast day is October 28. Saint Jude is not the same person as Judas Iscariot who betrayed Our Lord and despaired because of his great sin and lack of trust in God's mercy.



Winter Blues? Saints, Depression & Hope (*and lunch!*)

Saturday, January 28th at the Shrine of the Holy Relics from 9:00—2:30
419-925-4532 or a.mcguire@mariasteinshrine.org