

Spring 2009

OUR LADY OF MERCY PARISH NEWSLETTER

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How I Spent My Summer Vacation

By Kevin Carroll

Paradise! I have a wonderful Aunt Gloria who is convinced that her home in Florida is paradise. I was planning on visiting her last year to see paradise for myself. Instead I went with our parish delegation to Haiti. Representing OLM in Haiti was a great honor and when I was asked to write about my experience, I thought about my original destination ... paradise. I knew from the testimonies of those who went to Haiti before me that I was not headed for paradise, and that this vacation would be a challenging and difficult one. As I made the journey and met with the people, I couldn't help but wonder about paradise.

As you fly from Port au Prince to Cape Haitien, you are granted an aerial view of the country and see the azure blue coastal waters and the magnificent greenery of the mountains. The country is truly breathtaking from both the air and on the ground. The journey by car from Cape



Kevin "Quixote" Carroll aboard his trusty steed

Haitian to Vallieres was captivating not only for the scenery but for the people as well. Women carried items purchased in the city to their homes or to sell in their villages. Men and women were busy building homes and roads throughout the drive. The country is alive with activity. The roads are lined with modest homes, some might call them shacks or hovels when compared to American standards; however, taken in the context of Haiti, they are nice homes. It is very easy to be disheartened and saddened by the conditions in Haiti when the United States is the standard you measure against. In a very real and physical sense, Haiti is a tropical paradise.

Culture shock is often a frequent complaint from travelers visiting foreign countries. In Haiti the

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culture shock is associated with a simple lifestyle that is a result of very basic living conditions. I had heard stories from my parents and grandparents about the world in which they grew up and I imagine that Haiti is not all that much different. The school children walk long distances through difficult terrain to attend school. Indoor plumbing, electricity and refrigeration are all luxuries that most Haitians do not have. The big meal of the day is lunch, and while food is scarce, meals are social events. TV, radio and all the other distractions that have become common at the dinner table in the U.S. do not exist in Haiti and as a result people talk and listen to each other. The meals shared with the OLM contingent to Haiti and the pastor of St. Vincent's were one of the many high points of my trip. The conversations were thought provoking and my pronunciation of Creole provided entertainment for all. I came to appreciate the value of conversation and to realize the distracting effect of the mass media on American mealtime.

In my brief stay in Vallieres, I was privileged to witness the preparation or administration of almost all of the sacraments. The feast of Corpus Christi was celebrated at a local village some distance away from Vallieres, and many sacraments were administered while the priest was there. A young couple was married, a baby was baptized and a



Kevin learns the importance of getting to Mass on time

group of angelic looking children received their First Communion. The most startling thing for me was the Mass itself. Perhaps because it was a special feast or First Communion, but I can tell you without exaggeration that these people CELEBRATE Mass. The small church was packed with people of every age. It was awesome to see how these people incorporated their culture into the liturgy. I know that I would be shocked to see dance as part of the liturgy at OLM, but in Haiti it somehow not only made sense but it was also appropriate. The hymns were vastly different from the traditional ones used in the U.S. The rhythms and beats were strange and unfamiliar yet I sang and danced along as if I had spent my whole life there. The offertory procession was led by a group of dancers, and in addition to the bread and wine the choicest fruits and vegetables were offered to the priest. The offertory procession consisted of 10 to 12 people dancing in unison up the center aisle with the fruits and vegetables balanced on their heads.

My experiences in Haiti were awesome, in the most literal interpretation of the word. I was and still am in awe of the people of Haiti and of the parishioners of OLM for all that have been and continues to be done. The people of Vallieres are learning how to become self-sufficient in large part because of the generosity of people like you. Your commitment is very obvious in their improved living conditions, such as through the installation of more latrines. Your financial assistance has led to greater independence, especially through the small business loans program. They have the promise of a bright future in the children that the parishioners of OLM have so generously committed to educate. After reflecting on my experiences in Haiti, I feel compelled to call my Aunt Gloria and let her know that while Florida may seem like paradise, the only true and lasting paradise is found by helping those less fortunate than we.

The Year of St. Paul

The Year of St. Paul comes to a close soon! Pope Benedict XVI declared that the Church would observe a celebration in honor of St. Paul the Apostle, from June 28, 2008, to June 29, 2009.

Why a Year of St. Paul? Periodically, the Church sets aside an entire year to encourage all of us to focus on some particular and important aspect of our Faith.

This year, we have been given an opportunity to honor one of the great saints and founders of the early Church — the Apostle Paul.

Saints' days are usually associated with their deaths. Paul's is the only feast in the Church calendar commemorating a saint's conversion. Why is this particular conversion so important to the Church?

Book of Acts

The Book of Acts tells how Jesus apprehended Paul on the road to Damascus and shows just how critical that event was to the Church's beginnings. This tireless convert, once a Church opponent, became what some call "the second founder of Christianity," after Christ himself.

St. Paul's epistles, which comprise approximately one-fourth of the New Testament, are primary and monumental sources of the development of Christian theology. Several of them may not have had Paul as their actual author, but evidence of the Pauline tradition behind them is strong. The letters to the Colossians, Philippians, Ephesians and Philemon have been called the "Captivity Letters" because of a tradition that they were written while Paul was under house arrest or another form of detention. We are encouraged to study St. Paul in Scripture so we can revitalize our faith in the light of his teachings and life.

For more information regarding The Year of Apostle Paul, visit *Our Sunday Visitor* website at <http://www.osv.com/> and click on the Parish Resource tab.



St. Paul ...

A Reflection by Father Turro

It is ironic that Paul should be tagged as a misogynist - a woman hater. The facts show that some of his closest collaborators and friends were women.

Prisca, the wife of Aquila, could serve as an example of Paul's appreciation of women. She labored alongside her husband and Paul in the work of evangelization in the cities of Corinth and Ephesus. For a time Paul worked in the tent-making business of Prisca and her husband. Paul makes mention of them in his letter to the Romans. It would seem that he sent the two of them on ahead of him to prepare for his arrival in Rome. It is thought by some scholars that Prisca and her husband made Paul aware of the problems that he copes with in his letter to the Romans. It is significant that Paul frequently makes mention of Prisca before her husband.

Another woman that figures in Paul's correspondence is Phoebe. She is the only person, as far as we know, for whom Paul wrote a letter of recommendation.

Mention could also be made of Chloe, apparently a woman of some wealth who supported Paul's work in Corinth. It was she that made Paul aware of the condition of the Church in Corinth after Paul moved on to Ephesus.

Garry Wills in his book "What Paul Meant" had this to remark about Paul's relationship with women: "Paul gives every kind of honor to the women he works with as emissaries... or attendants. They are not second-class citizens in the gatherings he knows or in the ideals he holds up for them."

Book Review**A Faith for Grown-Ups: A Midlife Conversation About What Really Matters**

By Robert L. Lockwood
Loyola Press, Chicago, 2004

Reviewed by Cos Ferrara

Is the faith of our childhood enough to sustain us in our maturity? *A Faith for Grown-Ups: A Midlife Conversation about What Really Matters*, by Robert L. Lockwood, answers that question with a resounding NO. The faith we learned growing up in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, based largely on the Baltimore Catechism, was a great start, Lockwood says, but it is inadequate to meet the demands of adults living in a challenging world.

Director of Communications for the Diocese of Pittsburgh, past publisher of and current contributor to *Our Sunday Visitor*, Lockwood presents a very readable treatise on faith. Many readers, particularly those from his generation (Baby Boomers), will recognize how the faith of our childhood can easily dissipate, and how easy it is to drift away, as the author did despite 16 years of Catholic schooling. Readers will be encouraged, however, by Lockwood's account of how his faith has been restored and can be for others.

The Basic Principles Are the Same

The task the author sets for himself in his book is to take an adult look at faith. He focuses on the Apostles' Creed, as the basis for our Catholic faith. Specifically, he examines the Creed's four fundamental tenets of faith: belief in God the Father, belief in Christ, belief in the Holy Spirit received through the grace of the sacraments that open a new life for us, and belief in the church that is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. In the process Lockwood takes us from where we were as children (and may still be), such as holding childish images of God: God as policeman, ready to pounce on every fault; God as parent, wrathful and tyrannical; God as Grand Old Man, Michelangelo's view of an old man with flowing beard.

These images of God, which may have worked with children, are "too small" for adults, the author says. For a fuller understanding of a loving, living God, we must turn to Christ, and Lockwood gives a detailed account of the life of Christ as found in Luke's gospel. The Scripture shows us the way to God and to leading a life that can make us great. God wants us to be great but we often settle for mediocrity, which is easier. Living life as if we really believe in a loving God is not easy but it can make us great—much better than good.

Lockwood takes an unusual approach to writing about faith by beginning each chapter with a personal narrative—life in Yonkers, New York, attending Christ the King grammar school and later Fairfield University, facing the stumbling blocks to a love of God. These anecdotes are sometimes touching, sometimes humorous, but generally meaningful in introducing the chapter's theme.

By challenging some age-old practices and concepts, this book may rattle some readers. But they should continue reading. By following through his analyses, readers may see how they can enrich their own sense of faith, wherever they may be on the belief continuum.

Atop Mount Tabor

By Carol Taege

The travel to Mount Tabor in Israel had been horrendous, and the cold weather had added discomfort to our journey. As we went along the dirt road filled with twists and turns, it was clear that there were no guardrails to protect us from going off the cliff as we went up the mountain. Since the driver had not been going slowly, my heart was in my mouth as we approached our destination.



Carol Taege at the Church of the Transfiguration

Isabel, Lucille and I joined other pilgrims to prepare for the Mass which would be offered by Msgr. Turro at the Church of the Transfiguration atop Mount Tabor. In preparation for the Mass in this beautiful church we had all dressed appropriately to withstand the frigid temperatures that were expected. As you can see from the picture, I am bundled up to my chin.

Yet as Msgr. Turro intoned the words of the Mass, I experienced an overwhelming warmth. It felt as if someone was pouring water over me. The warm feeling started on the top of my head, spread through my upper arms, continued throughout my body, and down my legs.

I did not mention this to anyone for a few days, until I told Lucille. She said it was the Holy Spirit flowing through me.

I have told my story to a few other people, and they have said the same thing. I felt I had been blessed and for this I am grateful. What an awesome feeling and experience!

The Social Justice Ministry

By Liz Olynick

Many OLM parishioners know of the efforts of the Social Justice Ministry (SJM), but some might be wondering, "What is this all about?" The mission statement of the Social Justice Ministry identifies its direction in our parish.

"The purpose of this ministry is to raise awareness locally and globally where God's people are marginalized, oppressed, or in need. We pray that our actions inspire others to join us in building relationships that promote peace and justice on a physical and spiritual level."

One can see this mission put into practice at OLM in many ways. Food and other necessities are collected three-to-four times a year and distributed to those in need via local food pantries and Blessed Sacrament Parish in Newark. Excess bread is collected from local groceries and distributed to the

Social Justice Ministry from page 5

hungry in our local communities. Gently used coats are collected every other year and distributed as well. SJM serves as a focal point to unite those in need of furniture and other household goods with those who would like to donate them. Following hurricane Katrina, SJM provided support to St. Rosalie's parish in Louisiana. These are just a few of the ways that the ministry addresses the physical needs of those in our community and beyond.

A Range of Activities

Other ongoing outreach efforts include participation in local ESL instruction and hospitality at parish missions. Each fall, SJM sponsors a sale of international goods from Handcrafting Justice. This activity not only offers beautiful Christmas gifts for our parishioners, but benefits women and others who are disenfranchised in the third world. Both the Advent Giving Trees and the Angels programs at the holidays collect gifts for Christmas giving. The former collects for various charities and the latter collects and distributes gifts in our local area. These programs teach and remind us of the true meaning of giving.

Educational needs are addressed by this ministry as well. SJM sponsors many speakers; most recently a series on the Beatitudes was presented. At election time, SJM compiles voting guidelines based on Catholic teaching.

SJM History

The history of this group is as rich as its present activities. In the past, SJM has sponsored healing masses complete with transportation for the participants and the Sacrament of the Sick administered. Easter basket distribution, complete with Easter dinner, was another program that ministered to those in need. SJM



Social Justice Ministry Logo

has also sponsored letter-writing advocacy campaigns for issues about which it felt strongly. With the right leadership, these activities could be reestablished.

Some other ministries began as Social Justice projects and took on new life as their own ministries. The twinning program that matched OLM with St. Vincent's parish in Vallieres, Haiti started in 1996. This has grown to a multi-faceted program, including education, business, and agriculture support. The Projecto Guadalupano, an outreach to our Hispanic community, has made great progress. Don't miss the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe each December 12.

An Open Invitation

After reading all that SJM does, you may ask how the group gets all these activities accomplished. The answer, of course, is with the help of all of the parishioners of OLM. SJM is always open to new members. Meetings are held one evening a month at 7:15pm. Check the OLM website or the bulletin for the dates. Those interested may also help via the One Day One Ministry program on an as-needed basis. New ideas, prayers, and volunteers are encouraged to add to this exciting ministry. Will you unite with SJM for peace and justice in our world today?

Ad Altari Dei Medal

By Karen Markle

On Sunday, February 8, 2009, his Excellency the Most Reverend John Joseph Myers, Archbishop of Newark and the Archdiocesan Catholic Committee on Scouting, presented the Catholic Scouting Emblems to over 320 Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts and Venturing Scouts. Among the recipients were Our Lady of Mercy parishioners Vincent Lemba and Kevin Markle, both Life Scouts at Troop 80, sponsored by the Elks Lodge in Park Ridge. Both are sophomores in high school and have been active in Troop 80 since the fifth grade – Vincent attends Park Ridge High School, and Kevin is enrolled at Bergen Catholic.



Vincent Lemba and Kevin Markle

Dock in Fort Lee, study and service to their parish and community.

Both Vincent and Kevin received their Ad Altari Dei medals at the ceremony celebrated at the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark, New Jersey. The medal, meaning “Unto the Altar of God,” is the Catholic Scouting religious emblem focusing on in-depth instruction and reflection of the seven sacraments. With the recommendations of Father Charles, Father Bob, Scoutmaster Ken Dutcher, and under the instruction of Michaelene Mason and Father Michael Hansen from Assumption Church in Emerson, both boys completed the program this past fall. During that time, each boy worked to complete the requirements that included faith enrichment, a retreat at Ross

The Boy Scouts of America annually celebrates its founding on February 8, 1910, based on the program started by Lord Baden Powell in England on August 1, 1907. Scout Sunday was added to the Scout celebration in the mid-1940s. The Scout Law says that a “Scout is Reverent,” and scouts of all ages promise to do their “Duty to God” when they join the troop. These values strengthen character in family, community, and faith.

In Memoriam

Paul Sheganoski, a staff member, had been a parishioner for nine years and was a member of the Knights of Columbus. His kind spirit will be missed by all.

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COME JOIN US TO WORK ON THE NEXT EDITION OF THE PARISH NEWSLETTER.

Prayer to the Apostle Paul



Glorious St. Paul,
Most zealous Apostle,
Martyr for the love of Christ,
Give us a deep faith,
A steadfast hope,
A burning love for our Lord;
So that we can proclaim with you,
“It is no longer I who live, but Christ
who lives in me.”

Help us to become apostles
Serving the Church with a pure
heart,
Witnesses to her truth and beauty
Amidst the darkness of our days.
With you we praise God our Father:
“To Him be the glory, in the Church
and in Christ, now and forever.”

Amen

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The Year of the Priest Begins on June 19!