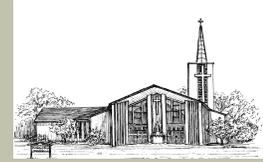


OUR LADY OF MERCY PARISH NEWSLETTER



OUR LADY OF MERCY CHURCH, 2 FREMONT AVENUE, PARK RIDGE, NJ 07656

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The Oberammergau Passion Play

A Once In A Lifetime Event

By: Melva Angeles

“Blest are those whose strength is in You, who have set their hearts on a pilgrimage.” (Psalm 84:6)

It was during the year 2000 when I first heard of the Passion Play at Oberammergau. Since then I had nursed a strong desire to be able to witness it. Finally, this year my husband, Bernie, and I made it to our first pilgrimage.

The first seven days of our journey were filled with prayer, Masses in chapels, cathedrals and monasteries, and visits to historic and holy sites. We traveled through Milan, Turin, Assisi, Padua, and then to Salzburg, Vienna, Prague, and Regensburg. We enjoyed the mountains, music, food, folklore, and architecture as we made our way from city to city.

On day eight after breakfast, we headed to the quaint village of Oberammergau, the highlight of our trip. It is a picturesque village situated on the banks of the River Ammer, surrounded by mountains. A cross that was planted atop its highest peak symbolized the vow made by the people in 1633, when the history of the Passion Play began. It was during the 30 Years War that the Black Plague broke out in Europe. About

fifty percent of the population died. But one town escaped—Oberammergau. The townspeople made a vow that if they were spared, they would present a play about the “Passion of Christ” every 10 years. The fact that they were saved remains one of the most amazing mysteries in history. The Passion Play takes place outdoors where the sky and mountains are the backdrop. This is the 41st time for the community to perform the play. There are more than 2000 actors who perform the story of Jesus of Nazareth in a five-hour show on the impressive open air stage of the Passion Play Theater. All the roles are played by local villagers who start growing long hair and beards and sew their costumes years before the performance.

The Passion Play depicts the Passion of Jesus Christ both as a drama and as an opportunity for meditation. Inserted between some of the scenes into the play are “Living Images,” with actors in motionless scenes, pointing to Old Testament events that are intended to serve as a focus for meditation. At the same time the music enralls the audience through the combined power of the choir, orchestra and the soloists. With great commitment the people of Oberammergau have tackled the Passion Play of 2010. Once again they kept the vow of their ancestors in a way that remains true to the original promise—a play of redemption.

As I left the play and the village, I was struck by the religious spirit that marked the play. When I think of the present state of our country and the world, I can only offer a prayer:

“Dear Father in Heaven, I beseech You to have mercy on this nation and our people for we have truly betrayed You. We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment. Impart to us Your passion for good over evil. I beg You to restore this nation to Your divine mercy and reconciliation. This I pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”

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The Spiritual Direction

Sharing the Journey of Spirit

By: Sunday Ruvolo

History of Spiritual Direction

The practice of Spiritual Direction is not new as some may think. It is not New Age spirituality. The ancient practice of spiritual companionship was first modeled by the fourth-century desert mothers and fathers. Today, spiritual direction helps us to follow the call to universal holiness found in the document from Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*.

What is Spiritual Direction?

A person in search of a deeper meaning in ordinary life meets regularly with a director or spiritual guide. Spiritual directors are trained in disciplines such as theology, spiritual traditions and basic psychology. Though there are similarities to psychological counseling, spiritual direction is not another form of therapy. Spiritual guides witness to our beauty, fragility, and pain in a spiritual context. A spiritual companion reflects our truth and place in the community of life.

How is spiritual direction accomplished? You usually meet once a month for about an hour. During that time, you can explore and talk about every dimension of your life story. You choose the topics to bring to spiritual direction. Conversation and sharing can encompass prayer practices, hopes, dreams, struggles, grief, loneliness, and vocation. You explore your relationship with God as it is now, as it has been throughout your life, and how you desire for it to be in the future. Spiritual direction is not meant to be a replacement for your participation in Mass or a faith sharing small group. It is meant to enhance those experiences.



What can Spiritual Direction do for me?

Spiritual direction can help you enrich your prayer life and improve your relationship with God in new ways. Meeting regularly with a spiritual director will likely lead you to deepen your experience of being alive. It will also nurture your ongoing desire to grow in your relationship with God. Spiritual direction helps us to listen, to pray, and to engage all the moments of life. Some seekers live outwardly successful lives but may feel something is missing. Others experience vulnerability after traumatic events such as divorce or job loss that faith becomes truly important. In times of uncertainty, people are drawn into an inner well to find their stability, to find their core relationship with God and what God desires of them. Spiritual direction can help you identify and trust your own experiences of God and integrate spirituality into your daily life.

How to find a Spiritual Director?

Many priests are spiritual directors or they can refer you to someone. Also, you can visit the Spiritual Directors International Web Site at www.sdiworld.org. Currently, there are about 5,000 members worldwide. The website also has information about retreats, programs, conferences and other events related to spiritual companionship. A local source to contact is the Thomas Merton Spiritual Center in Hillsdale, 201.666.2707.

Quote from Henri Nouwen: “There are as many ways to pray as there are moments in life. Sometimes we seek out a quiet spot and want to be alone, sometimes we prefer music. Sometimes we want to sing out with hundreds, sometimes only whisper with a few. Sometimes we want to say it with words, sometimes in deep silence. In all these moments, we gradually make our lives more of a prayer and we open our hands to be led by God even to places we would rather not go.”

Sunday Ruvolo earned her certificate as a spiritual director in 2007. She can be reached at 201.236.9868 or atrsmr@optonline.net.

Book Review

Called to Life

By: Fr. Jacques Philippe

c2008. Scepter Publishers, Inc. 117 pp.

Reviewed by Celeste T. Villegas

Called to Life by Fr. Jacques Philippe is recommended reading for those who want to approach life in a more meaningful way. The book provides some thought-provoking answers to the question many of us struggle with in difficult times. How do we find fulfillment and obtain happiness amidst trials, tragedies and disasters of catastrophic proportions?

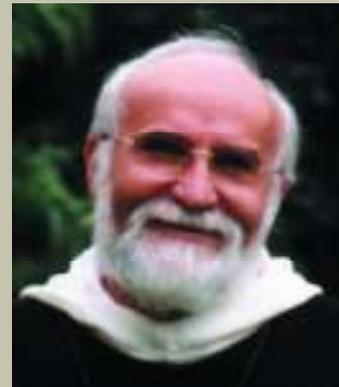
“Call,” according to the author, is the key word of this book. As created beings, we are called to live, that is, to recognize the real value of every life. We are also called through God’s Word, the Scriptures to identify with Christ “which is the ultimate meaning of human existence.” Through the motion of the Holy Spirit, in God’s Word, we are called as well and inspired to overcome our superficial desires. Fr. Philippe emphasizes that true fulfillment and happiness as human beings can be attained, but only to the degree we are open and receptive to these calls.

These calls, according to Fr. Philippe, are essentially invitations. Happy events are invitations to give thanks. Sorrowful events are invitations to “faith, hope and conversion.” As with St. Thérèse of Lisieux, so with us: “Welcoming the calls of grace, even in small things, bears much fruit.”

“The book provides some thought-provoking answers to the question many of us struggle with in difficult times. How do we find fulfillment and obtain happiness amidst trials, tragedies and disasters of catastrophic proportions?”

Fr. Philippe suggests that we adopt certain attitudes to make us more receptive to God’s calls. The attitude of prayer, for instance, or the practice of “Lectio Divina” will develop sensitivity to God’s inspiration. In having the attitude of faith, we can learn to live with questions we cannot answer. The attitude of thanksgiving, which finds its highest expression in the celebration of the Eucharist, will make “our life like that of Mary ... entirely a ‘magnificat.’”

Fr. Philippe’s *Called to Life* can lead us to live more fully human lives by helping us understand our vocation as created beings. It is traced to the call which comes from beyond ourselves, and it will rescue us from fixation upon the self. Life’s deepest meaning will be revealed and, in the end, we will be brought to fulfillment.

About the Author

Fr. Jacques Philippe is a member of the Community of the Beatitudes, which has a contemplative vocation based on Carmelite spirituality. In recent years, he has devoted himself primarily to spiritual direction and preaching retreats.



Hackensack Soup Kitchen

Following the Corporal Works of Mercy

By: Florence Craffey

Come, you whom my Father blessed, says the Lord: I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers or sisters, you did for me. (Matthew 25:34, 40)

Fourteen years ago at the invitation of The Interreligious Fellowship for the Homeless in Bergen County, the churches, synagogues and various organizations throughout the County came together at a meeting to address the problem of feeding the poor and homeless. They had a plan to provide meals for the clients 365 days a year. Each volunteer group would be assigned six dates yearly to provide and serve meals to the folks who arrive at their Walk-In Dinner Program.

We decided to involve our OLM faith community in the project. One of our parishioners supplied us with two bulletin boards to solicit items for meals we intended to serve. Another parishioner provided expertise in meal planning. We posted the plans in our parish bulletin and set up the boards that contained the menu for an estimated seventy clients. OLM parishioners came forward and satisfied all our needs.

This past October, the Housing, Health and Human Service Center of Bergen County opened the doors to its brand new facility in Hackensack. Located on South River Street, across from the county jail, it offers housing, psychiatric evaluations, medical and dental treatment, employment, and food for the homeless in the county. In this state-of-the-art kitchen facility, we continue to serve the clients who arrive at the facility daily.

As we prepare for our next dinner which has grown to approximately one-hundred and fifty meals, our needs continue to be the following: prepared meals, plastic flatware wrapped in napkins, paper plates, plastic cups for hot and cold drinks, coffee, tea bags, salt and pepper, sugar, milk, iced tea and butter. Through the generosity of the OLM community, we continue to receive all of the items necessary to serve those who arrive at the facility.

Our special thanks go to the Girl Scout and Brownie Troops who have baked brownies and cupcakes, to the high school students who serve with us, the Religious Education staff who make sure our supplies and food are safely stored until picked up on the days that we serve, and to our volunteer servers who give generously of their time. Lastly, we thank you, our faithful parishioners, for the hundreds of meals you have cooked, baked and contributed during these past years. Each time we serve at the Walk-In Dinner Program, we receive a rousing applause from the clients who are enriched by the meals we serve. We are pleased to take this opportunity to pass on their sincere gratitude to the folks at Our Lady of Mercy Parish. BRAVO!

OLM hosts the Soup Kitchen in Hackensack on a regular basis. Advance notice is published in the parish bulletin. For more information, please call Florence Craffey (201.391.8185) or Ann Mayer (201.391.7993).

It started with a bag of hot dog rolls

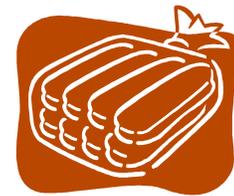
By: Chelsea Coleman

A sticky summer afternoon in Our Lady of Mercy parking lot was probably the last place one would expect to find me. The heat was unbearable, like a slap in the face. I felt overwhelmed and exhausted as we made our way through the Community Center with a plethora of the season's most classic food: hot dogs, baked beans, and for dessert, Key Lime pie. My grandmother, Anne Mayer, was a veteran at this, and a blissful one at that. Me? I was just a rookie, despondent and inundated by the chaos that followed me around, breathing heavily on my neck. With the cars loaded and ready to go, we set off for the thirty-minute drive to Hackensack, during which I mused about the experience upon which I was embarking.

As we approached the soup kitchen, I felt very nervous as the stress of the less fortunate seeped through the windows of my grandmother's light-blue Buick. "I thought they were supposed to eat the food, not me!" was all I could think. As I apprehensively closed the car door and began unloading the food from the trunk, an older man with a slight limp and disheveled hair offered to open the back door for me. With a smile he said, "It's the least I can do." I smiled back and replied, "Thank you, sir," thinking this wouldn't be so awful after all.

Setting up was a pain, but that old man's smile was fresh and lively in my mind, even though he was missing a few teeth. As five o'clock rolled around, I found myself antsy behind the dessert table as Irene opened the door to welcome the hungry people inside. My eyes marveled as people kept trudging through the door, much as I had plodded through the church parking lot. This time though, I wasn't overwhelmed. Nor was I miserable, fearful, or even bored. I was the exact opposite of everything I thought I would be: I was happy. I held a piece of homemade pie in the palm of my left hand, something I took for granted every time my mom would bake an apple pie. This simple slice

was where these people would find comfort, help, and love. As I realized what I was really doing here, an unending wave of people washed up onto the floor in front of me, starving and ready to eat, I was still zoning out when a heavy-set middle-aged man belched out, "Hey, lady, you gonna hand me that pie or what?" I laughed at myself as I handed it to him, noticing the drool coming from the corner of his lip. With each slice of pie I handed out, I learned more and more about the person I was becoming.



As we cleaned up about an hour and a half later, I thought about all the people I had met. Some were friendly, some were bitter, and some were simply indifferent. Many of our guests offered "thank you's" and a few didn't respond at all, but all of their faces were clear in my mind. In part, I wasn't even unsettled by the fact that some didn't respond to my friendly gestures. I felt as if I was making a difference in their lives, whether they acknowledged it or not. Even so, I couldn't help but feel important to them because in reality, they were even more important in my own life. I had learned so much about myself and others through this experience, and I discovered a love for helping, teaching and learning. At the end of the day there were over one-hundred and fifty happily stuffed people, six tired but smiling volunteers, and an unforgettable experience to which I will always hold on.

Chelsea started volunteering when she was fourteen. She wrote this article when she was sixteen. She is now a sophomore at Rutgers University.

Little Rock Scripture Study

Sharing the Word of God

By: Carolyn McNamara



Little Rock Scripture Study was created in the Diocese of Little Rock in Arkansas and continues as a ministry of that diocese today, in partnership with Liturgical Press in Minnesota.

The first study groups began in 1974 and today continues in thousands of US parishes, including about 15 in the Newark Archdiocese.

The program is in keeping with the methods of research and study encouraged by Pope Pius XII in “*Divino Afflante Spiritu*” (1943) and the teaching of Vatican II in “*Dei Verbum*” (1965).

The Little Rock Scripture Study is designed to bring people to a greater understanding of the Bible, an awareness of God’s living presence in Sacred Scripture, and an appreciation of how the Bible can be applied to daily life.

Eileen Ballanco shares what the Little Rock Scripture Study program has meant to her.

“I have been a part of the Little Rock Scripture Study program since it began in OLM about 8 years ago. I still have so much to learn. Before that, I had been in a Neighborhood Bible study. A few of the members attended an Evangelical Bible Church. And they really knew their Bible! It was a bit intimidating at first, but after several sessions, I became more familiar with the Bible and could add to the discussion. (I’m of the generation when Bible study was not encouraged.) When I read about a Catholic program called ‘Little Rock Scripture Study,’ I was eager to join.

One of my favorite studies in Little Rock was the Book of Wisdom. Wisdom is one thing I always prayed for while I was raising my ten children. This book is very poetic and complex. The author (unknown) writes of problems and fears not very different from what we face today, with so many people turning away from God. But the author trusts fully in the Lord and sees hope for all of us. I could not have read and understood it without a study guide and discussion group.

I have learned a great deal about the Bible, our Catholic faith, my own faith, and how closely connected we are to the Jewish people.

The Little Rock Scripture Study is a group you can join at any time. Each six to eight week session is a separate study. We start on time and end on time. We conclude with a wrap-up video that summarizes the lesson. If you would like to learn more about the Bible, please join us.”



Inter-Faith Thanksgiving Service

The Upper Pascack Valley Clergy Association is sponsoring its annual Inter-Faith Thanksgiving Service on November 21 at Temple Beth Or, 66 Ridgewood Road, Washington Township. If you haven’t attended before, you will be in for a treat. OLM parishioners get together with their Pascack Valley neighbors and give thanks to God. It is a wonderful experience. Look for more information in the parish bulletin.



The Rosary Society Celebrates the Year For Priests

By: Norine Mohle and Jeannette Warhol

On June 5, the Rosary Society honored our priests and deacon in commemoration of the Year For Priests. The event was a brunch held in the Gathering Space. Msgr. Carl Hinrichsen, Rev. Charles Granstrand, and Rev. Robert Ulak (pictured above) were present. Although Msgr. James Turro and Deacon George Rice were unable to attend, they were honored as well.

The celebration was a fine opportunity to honor each of our priests as individuals, as they are so loved and admired for who they are as people, not solely in their role as priests. It was requested that they each speak informally to our group about an issue personal to them. Coincidentally, Father Carl and Father Bob, were also celebrating milestone anniversaries in the priesthood. Father Carl has served fifty-five years as a priest. Later that evening, Father Bob was recognized for his forty years in the priesthood. We wish both Msgr. Carl and Father Bob congratulations and blessings upon these very significant achievements.

Following the presentations by the priests, petitions were read for the intentions of priests around the

world, for our priests, and for vocations. A plaque was then presented to our distinguished guests with the names of our priests and our deacon with the inscription "Year For Priests – 2010." The event ended in prayer and thankfulness for the wonderful men whom we are so fortunate to have as our spiritual leaders at Our Lady of Mercy.

The Rosary Society is open to adult parishioners of all ages. The group meets on the first Saturday of the month. After the 8:30 a.m. Mass we take part in the Novena to the Blessed Mother. Then, as a group, we recite the Rosary. Later we move onto an enjoyable community breakfast at the Parish Center for camaraderie and community news. The participants are a warm and welcoming group of women. Men are always invited for breakfast or to join as well. We are enthusiastic about engaging new members and encouraging a spirit of love, community, and generosity among ourselves and within the parish.

Please call Jeannette Warhol to inquire about the Rosary Society at 201.573.0010, or just come and join us after the first Saturday Mass.

Newsletter Staff: Carolyn McNamara, Coordinator, 201-746-0315

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Photographer: Laretta Miller

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

We're on the web. Visit us at www.urolm.org.

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Origin of the Miraculous Medal

By: Bette Sheganoski

Zoë Labouré lived on a farm in France. Her mother died when she was a young girl and Zoë then chose the Blessed Virgin to be her mother. She had a calling to the religious life and became a Sister of Charity in 1830, when she received the name of Catherine and was sent to the order's convent in Paris. Shortly thereafter, Sister Catherine began to have multiple visions: Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, St. Vincent, and the Blessed Virgin Mary. The following are her words:

"I saw the Blessed Virgin standing on a globe, Her face was beautiful beyond words. Rays of dazzling light were streaming from gems on Her heard a voice say: 'Behold the down on all who ask Me for surrounded Our Lady on which I Mary, conceived without sin, Thee!' The oval frame turned and enclosed in a frame of twelve cross with a bar beneath. Below Jesus and Mary, one surrounded pierced by a sword. I heard a medal struck according to this model. Those who wear it, when it is blessed, will receive great graces, especially if they wear it around their necks. There will be graces in abundance for all who wear it with confidence."



The Miraculous Medal Novena is recited after the 8:30 a.m. Mass on Saturdays in the Sacred Heart Chapel at Our Lady of Mercy Church. Additional information can be found at <http://www.catholic-pages.com/bvm/miracmedal.asp>.