

OUR LADY OF MERCY PARISH NEWSLETTER



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Year of Faith A Joyous Rediscovery

By Celeste T. Villegas

Finding God in Chaos

All too familiar nowadays is the shared human experience of extremes – severe weather, the onset and recurrences of health issues, terrorism, the recession and unemployment. How do we counter life’s chaos? Nothing will ever work better than faith! Faith builds a foundation and prayer “helps piece the puzzle together.” Essentially, faith is “finding God in chaos.” A strong and a renewed faith is very much needed in critical times.

This is why *Porta Fidei*, Pope Benedict XVI’s Apostolic Letter of October 2011, declaring a Year of Faith, becomes really important and timely. Also, this is what makes the Year of Faith, which began on October 11, 2012 and ends on November 24, 2013, a truly eventful celebration.

“Renewed conversion to the Lord Jesus and to the rediscovery of faith,” according to Pope Benedict, will “lead those many people who are seeking it to the ‘door of faith.’” A joyous rediscovery of faith will be a cure for “the crisis of faith – the spiritual poverty affecting so many of our contemporaries,” Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, further explains.

“There are times,” the author, Pat Livingston, emphasizes “when the best prayer echoes the father praying for the healing of his son in *Mark 9:25*: ‘I do have faith. Help the little faith I have.’”

Celebration Highlights

The Year of Faith celebration coincides with the following:

1. The fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of Vatican Council II;
2. The twentieth anniversary of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*;
3. The canonization of seven faithful, among them that of Kateri Tekakwitha, whose statue appears on the grounds of OLM Church (choir section side entrance).

A proposed faith consolidation, on the level of the universal church and on the episcopal and diocesan levels, helps the wider family of the church understand the contents of Catholic doctrine. At the parish level, the Year of Faith “is a good opportunity to intensify the celebration of the *faith* in the liturgy, especially the Eucharist.” The plan is to distribute the catechism in parishes so that pastors can offer guidance in reading the document to groups of faithful.

Laity as Disciples in the World

When Jesus does His work in the world through the Body of Christ, “that work is done not merely by priests, bishops and popes, but most especially by laity who make up roughly 98% of the Body of Christ.” Many can hear the Gospel and know Christ through the laity. *Porta Fidei*’s special message in the Year of Faith, is “that we must live in reality as ‘the salt of the earth,’ instilling and defending what is right and be ‘the light of the world’ leading men to Christ.” In times of chaos, great stress and significant testing, we can find comfort in prayer and in a common core belief that confirms we are not alone. Yes, we need a renewed and joyous faith in a God who is always with us and “who breaks into the chaos, with blessing.”

For more information on the Year of Faith, please view the following link from the Newark Archdiocese:

www.yearoffaitharchnewark.org/links.htm. The link will provide the Vatican Resources as well as other websites dedicated to the Year of Faith.

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Deacons: A Special Role to Play in the World

By now you have probably seen around our parish a couple of new faces. OLM has been blessed with two deacons: Gary Tankard and Joseph Romano. As deacons, they assist in the needs of our parish community within three areas of diaconal services: Ministry of Charity and Justice, Ministry of the Word, and Ministry of Liturgy. Newsletter staff member, Cos Ferrara, interviewed Deacons Gary and Joseph to explore what being a deacon means to them.



Deacon Gary F. Tankard

A Bridge between the Congregation and the Altar

Deacon Gary F. Tankard sees himself as a bridge between the congregation and the altar, bringing added experience from his time as teacher, husband, father, and grandfather. New to OLM this year, he says his role is one of service to the people, which is the theology of the diaconate.

Deacon Gary grew up in Queens, New York, and attended Catholic grammar (Our Lady of Mount Carmel) and high school (Rice). He has a Bachelor's degree in History from Iona College, an MA in History from Fordham, and an MA in Philosophy from NYU. He spent 19 years as a Social Studies teacher and Assistant Principal at Christ the King High School in Queens and 20 years teaching Social Studies at Teaneck High School.

He was ordained a deacon in the Newark diocese in 2002. "I've always wanted to help people and felt I could do that through the diaconate program." And that he has done. He has served people—including the terminally ill—in hospitals for a number of years. He is eager to

serve the people of OLM through teaching, visiting, assisting at food pantries, and other endeavors. Deacon Gary has a facility with the Spanish language and would happily help parishioners learning English and gaining citizenship.

Deacon Gary is quick to note that he and his wife Peggy have been married for 39 years, and that the wives are the unsung heroes of the diaconate. None of his service would have been possible without the untiring support of Peggy.



"Taking an active part in society belongs to the baptismal mission of every Christian in accordance with his or her state in life, but the permanent deacon has a special witness to give. The sacramental grace of his ordination is meant to strengthen him and to make his efforts fruitful, even as his secular occupation gives him entry into the temporal sphere in a way that is normally not appropriate for other members of the clergy."

—Pope John Paul II in his address to the Deacons of the United States

Deacon Joseph S. Romano

Making a Difference

The path to permanent diaconate is hardly ever direct, but for Joseph S. Romano it was indeed circuitous. His vocation, however, was not surprising to many who knew him, because growing up in Union City and Hasbrouck Heights, church was a large part of life for him and his family.

Educated in public schools, he graduated from Manhattan College with a degree in accounting and later earned an MBA. But he experienced little passion working as an accountant and went



to work in the family jewelry business. He became involved with Scull and Company, Inc., an organization that was something akin to a “think tank” for jewelers. Joseph found his niche helping jewelers get the information needed to plan and manage their businesses. What he found most gratifying was making a significant difference in people’s lives, facilitating group sessions and working one-on-one in what he sees as “business retreats.” He thought, “if I can help people reach their goals in business, why not help them get closer to God?”

He discussed the idea at length with his wife, Mary, who was very supportive, as well as friends, relatives, and clergymen. His father had been a permanent deacon and Joseph has a brother-in-law active in ministry today. So Joseph was familiar with the commitment he would have to make and the demands that would be placed on his time. He was ordained Permanent Deacon in May 2011. “One of the mantras of the diaconate formation program in the Newark diocese,” he says, “is the emphasis on balance—family first, then work, then ministry.”

He sees his role as one of service, bringing people closer to God through his preaching, proclaiming the Good News, being visible and accessible in the parish, bringing viaticum to the sick and interacting with parishioners. He also serves as a volunteer at Bergen County Medical Center.

“At OLM,” he said, “The faithful are inspiring Christian models and I am honored to work with such a gifted pastoral team.”

WHAT DOES A DEACON DO?

MINISTRY OF CHARITY AND JUSTICE

- Serves through his person-to-person encounters.
- Ministers to the poor, the aged, the sick, prisoners (Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy).
- Participates in programs dealing with community problems like substance or child abuse.
- Works with youth and young adults in various parish and/or community programs.

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

- Evangelizes, that is, proclaims the Gospel.
- Preaches at liturgical gatherings.
- Teaches in religious education programs, sacramental preparation programs, i.e. baptism, marriage, RCIA.

MINISTRY OF LITURGY

- Assists at the Eucharistic Celebration.
- Administers baptism, witnesses marriages.
- Presides over wakes, funerals and burials.
- Presides at prayer services, i.e. communion services and benedictions.

The summons of his bishop, the needs of the community, the deacon’s own specific competence and the guidance of the church’s pastor will help him decide how to use his resources wisely and effectively.

Excerpts from *The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States* and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Sacramento, CA.



Book Review

Reviewed by John Dalton

Born on a Blue Day

Inside the Extraordinary Mind of an Autistic Savant

By Daniel Tammet

Autism is a condition defined by the presence of impairments affecting social interactions, communication, and imagination (problems with abstract or flexible thought and empathy, for example). Unlike many other disorders, diagnosis is not easy and cannot be made by a blood test, brain scan, etc. Doctors must depend on observed behavior and developmental history. Autism is a broad scale of disorders, with no one case exactly like another.

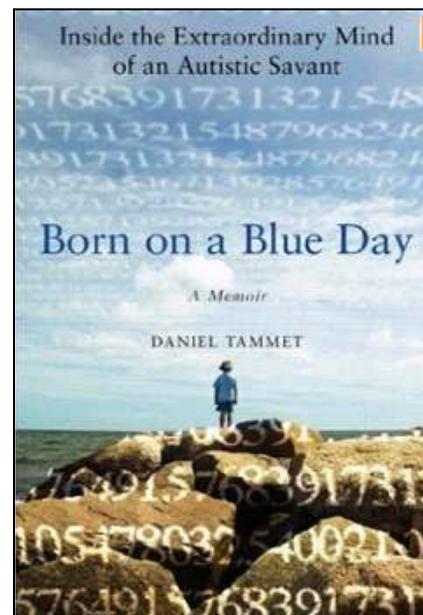
Daniel Tammet's *Born On A Blue Day* is about a young man afflicted with Asperger's Syndrome. People with Asperger's often have good language skills and are able to lead relatively normal lives. Many have above-average IQ's and excel in areas that involve logical or visual thinking. In addition to Asperger's, Daniel Tammet also has savant syndrome, a unique condition often allowing the patient to do amazing calculations without using any mechanical equipment.

What makes Daniel unique is that, unlike most savants, he is able to explain how his mind works. In this book, he explains how his mind synthesizes his senses and allows him to see words and numbers in colors and shapes. He also explains how he has learned to use his gift with numbers to help him adjust to different experiences and relate to the emotions in others.

You travel with Daniel as he progresses through a painful childhood to become a young adult who learns to control himself and live independently. Eventually, Daniel is able to form a very close relationship with another person. He has written this memoir to inspire others with this disability and to show that their disabilities need not always interfere with overall development and potential. You will find Daniel to be articulate, soft-spoken, modest, gentle, and polite.

What touched me most in Daniel's story is his sharing of how lonely he felt as a child and how desperately he wanted to have a friend. He struggled so hard to master all those little skills we take for granted: carrying on a simple conversation; keeping eye contact; understanding when he was expected to make a reply; being able to stay focused, since various words would trigger memories of other conversations. And lastly, in my view, the most painful experience was the cruelty children often exhibit towards others who are different.

Having said this, I would remind the reader that all people who suffer with autism are not like Daniel Tammet. His accomplishments are his, and do not reflect the reality of others on the wide spectrum of autism. What I do hope is that Daniel's experience will educate and inspire you. *Born On A Blue Day* will not only expel many myths and fears that people often have about those who live with autism, but will also create a more understanding and accepting attitude in the reader and will encourage a greater degree of compassion for those with autism and the families who love them.



The Lily of the Mohawks: Kateri Tekakwitha

The First Native American Saint

By Mary Frances Martin

On February 18, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI announced that Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha (along with six others) would be canonized at the Vatican on October 21, 2012. Thus she became the first Native American saint. But who was this holy woman and what kind of example does she set for Catholics today some three hundred thirty-two years after her death at the young age of only 24?

Kateri Tekakwitha was born in about 1656 in the Mohawk village of Ossernenon, near present day Auriesville, New York. She was born to an Algonquin Roman Catholic mother and a Mohawk Chief. That was only ten years after the martyrdom of St. Isaac Jogues and St. John Lalande and fourteen years after the martyrdom of St. Rene Goupil in this very village. (This is now the location of the Shrine of the North American Martyrs.) Therefore it would seem that, to paraphrase Tertullian, the blood of these martyrs was the seed that brought forth this saint.

When she was about four years old, a small pox epidemic spread throughout the village killing Tekakwitha's parents and brother. It also permanently damaged her eyesight and scarred her face badly. She was adopted by her uncle and his family. In 1666, due to conflicts with a war party of French soldiers and hostile Indians from Canada, the entire village moved to a more secure location in nearby Fonda, New York. (Today this is the site of the major Kateri Tekakwitha shrine in the USA.)

Long before she was baptized, Tekakwitha exhibited a strong attraction to Christianity. She had her first encounter with Jesuit missionaries at the age of eleven and was fascinated by their teachings. When she was thirteen she shocked her relatives by refusing to consider marriage to someone they had picked out for her. She had decided even then that she wanted to dedicate her life to God. When she was eighteen and more French Jesuit missionaries were visiting the village, she began instruction in the Catholic faith. This was done in secret at first, however, since her uncle was extremely opposed to Christianity. She was baptized on Easter Sunday in

1676 taking the name Kateri (Catherine, in honor of St. Catherine of Siena). Her uncle had allowed this provided that she stay in the village. But, during the next six months, others in the village became so hostile towards her for becoming a Christian, to the point that her life was threatened and false accusations were made against her, that she had to escape to the mission of St. Francis Xavier, a settlement of Christian Indians in Kahnawake which is outside of Montreal, Canada. This was a dangerous journey of several hundred miles.

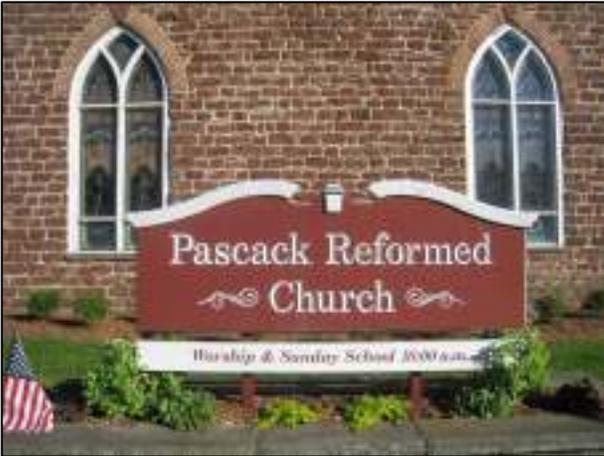


Even in the mission, she was pressured to marry but she steadily refused. It was here that, on Christmas Day in 1677, she made her first Holy Communion. On the feast of the Annunciation in 1679 Kateri made a vow of perpetual virginity and asked Mary to "accept her as a daughter." She is quoted as having said: "I have deliberated enough. For a long time my decision on what I will do has been made. I have consecrated myself entirely to Jesus and Mary, I have chosen Him for a husband and He alone will take me as a wife." She is known as the "Lily of the Mohawks" because of her vow of virginity and the lily has long been a symbol of virginity in Christian art. In this way too, soon to be St. Kateri Tekakwitha is recognized as the first consecrated virgin of North America.

In summary, St. Kateri Tekakwitha was known for her gentleness, kindness and good humor even when faced with hostility. When not in prayer she spent her time taking care of the children, the sick and the elderly in the mission. She had great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Mother.

She died at Kahnawake on April 17, 1680 at the age of twenty-four saying: "Jesus, Mary I Love You." Witnesses said that immediately upon death, all of the small pox scars vanished from her face. St. Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us!

Happy Bicentennial to Our Neighbor!



You may have noticed the cemetery across the street from our church. Maybe you have been to the site of the Pascack Food Pantry or know where the Montessori school in Park Ridge is located. Also known for its locally quarried sandstone exterior, a Tiffany window, and its distinguished history, the Pascack Reformed Church is, and has been, a good neighbor.

The first pastor, Rev. Stephen Goetschius, rode his horse between his Saddle River congregation at the Old Stone Church on East Saddle River Road and Park Ridge. He lived in what is now known as the Hopper-Goetschius House at the northwest corner of Lake Street and East Saddle River Road. Today, the Reverend Paul G. Janssen continues in the footsteps of his predecessor serving as pastor for the past 21 years.

Over the last two centuries several plans were made to build a new church but none succeeded. However, a few renovations and additions on the property have taken place. In the late 1890's, a new bell was added and used as the first fire alarm for the new Park Ridge Fire Department. As additional land was obtained, they built a parsonage on the site of the present one and a Sunday School building. Some of this purchase would later become Woodland Gardens

on Sulak Lane. A schoolhouse at the north end became the site of Park Ridge High School.

The cemetery is a treasure of local history—full of names we see all around this area—including Banta, Demarest, and Campbell. The first burial was of six-year-old Katherine Blauvelt in 1813. Her gravestone is still legible. Gravestones can be seen from all the decades in its history. Members of the families of Bergen County's free blacks of the pre Civil War period, as well as veterans of that War, are buried in an area adjacent to the cemetery building. Native Americans are also buried there.

Annual tours of the church and cemetery are offered. The year long bicentennial celebration will conclude on May 4 and 5, 2013, including a town-wide Historic Day.

We thank Carl W. Weil, church historian, for assistance with this article. The complete history of the church and cemetery is on their web site, www.pascackreformedchurch.org. Click on "History" and then on the two pictures.





Women's Cornerstone Prayer Circle

By Kim Grande

One of the benefits of membership in the Women's Cornerstone Retreat community has been the ongoing connection with all of the women in the parish who have made this retreat. It has united us as Sisters in Christ. We have been encouraged to work together in different ministries, inspiring us to make full use of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. In these ways, we are fulfilling the mission of Cornerstone as stated in the guidebook: "... United by the grace of God ... we as community support and serve one another...."

A happy outcome from this ongoing Cornerstone connection is the current prayer circle we share. We have been blessed by the opportunity to pray for one another's intentions. I'm not sure how it actually started. Perhaps, I received a request from someone asking for prayers for a loved one who was ill and/or suffering. Regardless of its origin, we now have a devoted prayer circle that is a source of faith and comfort to our members. *Philippians 4:6-7*, in Scripture, tells us, "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by

prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

We prayerfully reach out to each other and we lift up to God those in need of healing, be it physical, mental or emotional. Updates are provided on those who are being prayed for and, some times, written prayers are shared as well. All of these are accomplished through e-mail. We are using our modern technology to help us in the practice of our spiritual communication. The bond we have formed through our communal prayer is quite powerful. It is truly appreciated as a gift and a blessing. Our prayerful intercessions fulfill the consolation described in *Psalms 33:20-22*: "Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and shield. Our heart is glad in Him, because we trust in His holy name. Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you."

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SYMBOLISM IN OLM'S STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS

Do you ever wonder what the 12 stained-glass panels behind the altar represent? Did someone say the Twelve Apostles? The symbolism of each panel (centered in New Testament events or tradition) was described in an OLM publication over a decade ago, based on the research of two OLM parishioners. For those of us who never saw that article, the panels are explained here. (Alternate or supplemental names are given parenthetically.)



MATTHEW: The former tax-collector and author of the first Gospel is represented by an axe, with which he was beheaded in Ethiopia.



PHILIP: The basket recalls this Apostle's role in the feeding of the multitude (*John* 6:5); the cross represents his martyrdom by crucifixion.



THOMAS: Martyred in India after missionary work, this Apostle is traditionally represented by the lance, arrows and stones which killed him.



JAMES: (The Greater; Son of Zebedee) First Apostle to be martyred. Tradition has it that his body reposes in Compostela, Spain, a pilgrimage site. He is represented by a pilgrim's hat and staff.



JUDE: (Thaddeus) Preaching widely in Mesopotamia and Persia. The travels of this Apostle are represented by a ship.



PETER: After acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah this Apostle was promised the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and became our first Pope.

MATTHIAS: Chosen to take the place of Judas Iscariot. This Apostle was beheaded after missionary work and preaching. He is represented by a Bible and an axe.

BARTHOLOMEW: (Nathaniel) Jesus saw this Apostle sitting under a tree and is represented by a fig tree branch.

JAMES: (The Less; Son of Alphaeus) The Epistle of this Apostle reflects his efforts to battle the evils of the world. The windmill represents these struggles.

JOHN: The author of the fourth Gospel. This Apostle is represented by a scroll of the Gospel of John.

SIMON: (The Zealot) This Apostle had a fervor for righteousness, becoming a great "fisher of men." He is represented by a fish and a Bible.

ANDREW: The patron saint of fishermen, this Apostle was crucified on an X-shaped cross. He is represented by fish crossed in an X shape.

