

OUR LADY OF MERCY PARISH NEWSLETTER



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

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NEW HOPE, INC.

Conceived, Born, and Bred at OLM
and in the Pascack Valley

By Carol Lavis

A young lady rang the bell at our new New Hope Pregnancy Resource Center in Englewood, said “Hello” and then announced that she was there to get information about obtaining an abortion. Her friend, intense and fragile looking, stood at her side. Before we even got to the interview room, the friend, let’s call her Ann, said to the three of us staffing the Center that morning, “She thinks she’s pregnant, but I don’t think she is.” Well, pregnancy tests are pretty accurate these days; so, when Carla (not her real name) had the test and saw a positive result, the only one surprised was Ann. Other physical signs mentioned by Carla confirmed the results and pointed to a second trimester pregnancy.

It was time for us three New Hope volunteers - a counselor with 30 years’ experience, a mentor with one year’s experience, and a recent college graduate present for an orientation day- to sit down and explore the situation. While the fetal models of a 4.5 month preborn baby and a 5 month pre-born baby rested in the middle of the round table in the sunlit room, we talked for over an hour.



NaTishia Aromire, Carol Lavis and Irma McDarby check out copy for the new edition of New Hope’s Handbook.

Being compassionate and non-judgmental are the hallmarks of these intimate conversations. Our counselors and our mentors are great listeners. The first option we offer these needy women is the one of adoption, a life-affirming choice. For those confused about their possible job opportunities, we offer vocational testing. Subsidies to all in need are offered for education, childcare, and rent and our distribution of clothes, diapers, wipes, and all baby items helps ease financial struggles. Any funds that can be saved are placed into a small savings account for the child. A mentor is assigned to work with the young woman for three years: This is a unique aspect of the New Hope program.

Carla was a very intelligent 18-year-old. She had a short-term goal of a college education and a long-term goal of obtaining a Doctorate degree. She also had done her homework about what exactly happens in an abortion procedure, i.e., from the dismemberment that takes place in an early abortion to the even more heart-wrenching procedure called a partial-birth abortion done on a pre-born baby at the stage of Carla’s pregnancy. She had heard the haunting stories of life-long regret

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Book Review

Reviewed By Arthur Lavis

Benedict XVI Light of the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald

It has not been a practice of the papacy to submit to interviews with journalists who ask difficult and far-ranging questions. German journalist and Catholic convert Peter Seewald does exactly that in *Benedict XVI Light of the World, A Conversation With Peter Seewald*, Copyright 2010, San Francisco: Ignatius Press. Before Benedict became Pope, these two men held similar wide-ranging discussions which became the best selling books, *Salt of the Earth* and *God and the World*. Prior to his encounters with Benedict, Seewald had been a secular journalist.

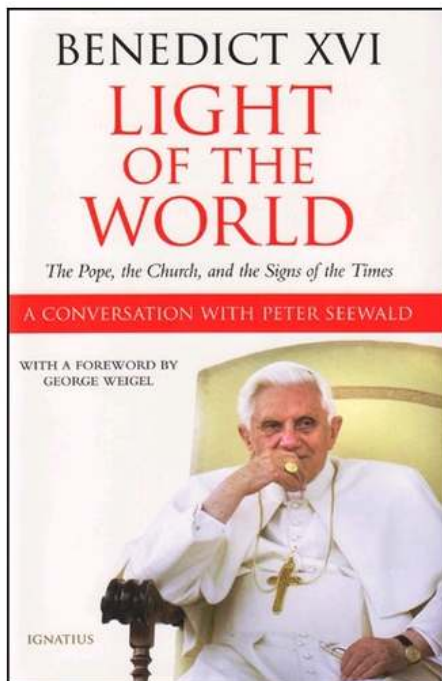
Seewald pulls no punches in this latest volume and Benedict responds with great clarity and thoughtfulness. If you have been intimidated by the complexity of Benedict's theological writings, be not afraid to pick up this book. In *Benedict*, we see a combination of a great intellect, a profound theologian, a gentle pastor, and a man of spiritual depth seeking to bring Christ to an increasingly secular world. Topics addressed in the book include the clergy abuse crisis, the dictatorship of relativism, priestly

celibacy, the ordination of women, contraception, same-sex relationships, the environment, ecumenism, Church renewal, and proclaiming the Gospel in today's world. Benedict discusses these issues with frankness, clarity and compassion.

In his introduction, Seewald describes what the Pope is like, up close and personal. "This is no Prince of the Church, but rather a servant of the Church, a great giver who completely exhausts himself in his giving ... If you are sitting beside him, you sense the precision of his thinking and the hope that comes from faith. In a special way, a radiance becomes visible - a radiance from the face of Jesus Christ who wants to encounter each one of us and excludes no one."

In the chapter on "The Dictatorship of Relativism," the Pope asserts that "A new intolerance is spreading. When in the name of non-discrimination people try to force the Catholic Church to change her positions on homosexuality or the ordination of women, then that means that she is no longer allowed to live out her own identity. Instead, a negative religion is being made into a tyrannical standard that everyone must follow. In the name of tolerance, tolerance is being abolished. No one is forced to be a Christian. But no one should be forced to live according to the 'new religion' as though it alone were definitive and obligatory for all." This tension is very much alive in our country, as the government mandates health care coverage incompatible with Church teaching.

Seewald asks the Pope a blunt question about the Church in today's world. "Couldn't we assume that after two thousand years Christianity has played itself out?" Part of the Pope's response states: "Christianity is the vital force without which even other things would not continue. In this regard, thanks to what I myself am able to see and experience. I am quite optimistic that Christianity is on the verge of a new dynamic."



Please see *Benedict XVI Light of the World* on page 4



Another Patrick

A Story of Hope and Consolation

By Aunt Janet

This is a story about my nephew, Patrick, who passed away on September 21, 2003. It is my hope that it brings hope and consolation to others who have lost a loved one. At some point, I had begun praying to Our Lady of Mercy for Pat. She is regarded as the Patroness of Prisoners and is usually shown holding broken chains in her hands to signify that she has set them free.

In September 1999, Patrick asked me to pray that he would be released for parole. Since it was during the week of Mary's feast day, I prayed to her under the title of Our Lady of Mercy and felt so strongly that the prayer was heard. I sent Pat a Mass card and attached a picture of Mary holding the broken chains. Imagine my disappointment when he was not paroled, and the card was returned, stamped with the words "No Cards Allowed." He would have to wait nine more months to be released from prison.

I put the card away and forgot all about it. It was not until after Patrick passed away that I came across it. I was trying to gather some mementos to bring to the funeral parlor when I found it. I had never opened it. It was still sealed just as it was the day it was returned to me. As I opened the envelope, the picture of Mary emerged, the broken chains in her hands. The date on the card was September 24, 1999; the date I opened it was September 24, 2003—exactly four years later on the feast of Our Lady of Mercy! I was stunned! Mary had kept her promise and had set Pat free, but not in the way I expected.

During those four years, I believe Our Lady of Mercy came to Pat's aid many times. In 2002, I had requested a Mass in thanksgiving to her. It was to be offered on September 26, 2003. That day would turn out to be the day of Pat's wake. I recently made an interesting discovery about Our Lady of Mercy. In Europe, she is referred to as Our Lady of Ransom and is portrayed with two small bags of

coins in her hands which she uses to ransom prisoners. She must have purchased Pat's freedom. The Mass of Thanksgiving in her honor was very appropriate.

The week of Pat's passing also included the feast days of some other very prominent people. The day of his death, September 21, happens to be the feast of Matthew the Evangelist. What a great way to remember Pat. At one point in his life, he was determined to educate himself in the *Bible*. Not only did he read it from cover to cover, but he completed two *Bible* correspondence courses and achieved perfect test scores.

And what about the other major figure in his life, Padre Pio, whose feast day is also that week—September 23? I'll never forget the time we were giving Patrick a ride in our car. Another car passed in front of us with the license plate PADRE PIO. My husband and I thought it was odd and kind of amusing. Not Patrick. From the back seat he announced boldly, "Padre Pio is the one who saved me; he saved my life!" Before writing this story, I did a little research. There are approximately 11 million registered vehicles in the State of New York, each with a unique license plate. The one and only car with the license plate that said PADRE PIO was driving in front of us that day during one of the rare times that Pat was in our car. Pretty unbelievable! Padre Pio must have really loved him.

And could anyone have foreseen that Pat would be buried on September 27th, the feast of his beloved saint, Vincent de Paul? Patrick named his own son Vincent in honor of the Saint, and now the Saint would return the favor and embrace his remains. Add to that the fact that the cemetery chosen for burial, because of its proximity, was The Cemetery of St. Vincent. Remarkable!

Hope Inc. *(continued from page 1)*

and even watched young women on YouTube expressing the pangs of remorse that all too often accompany this “legalized choice.” Yet, she felt that the Doctorate degree would be unattainable if she had a child. This was a perfect time for the experienced counselor to tell Carla about the doctor, the dentist and the osteopath who had been in our New Hope program. Each had testified that their babies had become the ultimate joy of their lives!

Carla left with a big batch of material to review. She called a week later saying she had an appointment at an adoption agency that day. God is good!

Seeing the day-to-day events in this faith-based program, New Hope volunteers experience many small miracles and opportunities in the crises that come to our young moms. Most often, when families’ see the support we can give these moms for

three years, they, in turn, become more supportive. Our monthly subsidies to those we help at New Hope are tied to a contractual promise that they will abstain from drugs, alcohol, and sexual activity while in the program. For some it is more difficult, although it works for all!

Our number of moms and babies has tripled in the year since we opened our blessed Center, as has our all-volunteer staff. We invite you to plan a visit and consider volunteering. Come and see how “Generosity warms both giver and receiver alike.”

God bless OLM’s staff and parishioners for their ongoing support. Please call 201 408-4726 or e-mail newhopeinc@verizon.net for more information. Also, please check out our website: www.newhope4lifeweb.org. (New Hope, Inc. Officers: Administrator, Carol Lavis; Assistant Administrator, Marilyn Laquidara and Treasurer, Tim Dougherty.)

Benedict XVI Light of the World *(continued from page 2)*

On the Second Vatican Council, the Pope says: “The Council carried out its mission of defining in a new way the Church's purpose as well as her relation to the modern era. The Council came into the world in the interpretation devised by the media, more than with its own documents.” The Pope has spoken similarly in another context on the “hermeneutics of discontinuity” manifested in the Church after the Council.

If you want to spend some time with the man at the heart of the Church, and to understand his perspective and his enormous responsibilities, then read this book. He is the indispensable leader for our times. May God spare him for a few more years to bring about the renewal of the Church.

The volume is available in the Parish Library. For more information, please visit the Ignatius Press website at www.ignatius.com/Products/LIWO-light-of-the-world.aspx.

Another Patrick *(continued from page 3)*

I can remember September 21st, the day of Patrick’s death, very well. I suddenly had the urge to go for a walk. It was exactly 3 o’clock—when the Chaplet of Divine Mercy is supposed to be said. I prayed it and offered it for Pat, who was now missing for over two weeks. The next day, we received the news of his tragic death. He had been the victim of a hit-and-run accident and had lain in a hospital, unconscious and unidentified all the while. Only the promise of Divine Mercy could sustain us at that time. Because of the sorrowful Passion of Jesus, there would be

mercy, and salvation, and resurrection.

We do have a lot to rejoice about. Pat’s struggle is over; he is in the hands of God. We have “to celebrate and rejoice! This brother of (ours) was dead, and has come back to life. He was lost, and is found.” (*Luke 15:32*) The Blood of Jesus has made it all possible. May Patrick rest in peace. Good Friday is over. The Redeemer lives!

The unabridged story can be requested at: reflectionsjb@gmail.com.

Discipleship: Three Simple Ways

By Celeste T. Villegas



Discipleship, the universal call to holiness, has a basic ingredient: knowing Jesus. When people come to know Jesus, experience conversion and become disciples, they will be an example to others who, in turn, may be inspired to follow Him, too. Following are three simple ways to discipleship.

Stand Next to Jesus Christ

John 21:5-6 “Jesus said to them, ‘Children, have you caught anything to eat?’ They answered him, ‘No.’ So he said to them, ‘Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something.’ So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish.”

How is it that when Jesus becomes present to the disciples, and when the disciples hear the words and act accordingly, it is then that the nets are filled? This is proof that it is vital to keep Christ in view in our day-to-day existence, if we are to be His disciple. It means having faith in God. By standing next to Jesus and looking with “eyes of faith” at all the events, things and persons in our environment, we will be encouraged towards a continuous prayer of thanksgiving. We will be able to fulfill the duties of our state in life with fidelity and also sanctify our work by offering it to God.

Discipleship is born when we get to know Jesus. He is the light that we have to shine forth and the truth that we have to teach. To be Christ’s disciple, we will need to see things by the light of faith, so that we will know how to always find God, even in difficult times.

Pray with Jesus Christ

John 8:31-32 “Jesus then said to those Jews who believed in him, ‘If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”

A disciple of Jesus thinks, lives and breathes the Word of God. But praying “with” and “to” Jesus is of special importance. In accepting weakness and suffering, Jesus has shown us how “to be fully human” and that gives us hope. When we pray to Jesus, we can then make our prayer “up close and personal,” like having an everyday conversation with Him, even with little being said.

We can find the courage to be Christ’s disciple. We must pray to Him for the courage “to empty ourselves” in order “to be filled” and to become more like Jesus.

Follow in the Footsteps of Jesus Christ

John 15:5, 8 “I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing ... By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.”

If we expect to be a disciple of Jesus, we have to “bear fruit.” We can begin by “reaping” souls into the kingdom of God. We can simply encourage a colleague to believe and stand firm in what he or she knows. We can also pray for a relative wanting to be helped or healed. Certainly, we can share with a friend what Jesus has done for us.

When we follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we will notice the character of Christ forming in us. In great consistency, either we will show love, joy, diligence and faithfulness, or we will become the source of peace, for ourselves and for others. Most importantly, we will begin to live a life of virtue.

Discipleship at OLM

At Our Lady of Mercy, people are invited to do what is “do-able.” We are called to fulfill our Baptismal promises in homilies, to be a person-for-others, to Baptism and to Scripture readings. We are called, in ministries, to make a difference in someone else’s life and in the life of our world. Like true disciples, at OLM, “we enter to worship and exit to serve.”

Mothers Prayers of the Solace Community

By Pat Fitzgerald



The Prayer Group, Mothers Prayers, was launched in England in 1995. At that time, two grandmothers, Veronica and her sister-in-law Sandra, both from England, felt led by the Lord to pray in a special way for their children. Through prayer, they learned that Jesus wishes all mothers to surrender their children into His care, to take away pain from the mothers and to pour blessings on their children.

Mothers Prayers has now spread throughout the world and is active in over 80 countries. There have been many wonderful answers to prayers.

A prayer group may be started with only two mothers, with a maximum of eight. Usually, members meet every week. They obey the strict rule of confidentiality which requires that anything said at the meeting must never be repeated.

As members learn to trust each other, through their prayers and shared reflections, their burdens become lighter.

If you would like to know more, please contact one of the following:

Pat Fitzgerald, 201-782-0563
 Kim Grande, 845-753-5082
 Bernadette Klein, 201-573-0469
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 Jean Nicolich, 201-391-4023
 Maureen Stacey, 201-391-9419
 Betty Stapleton, 201-391-9292
 Joni von Autenried, 201-930-1421

They will be delighted to advise you and welcome you to Mothers Prayers.

Following is a prayer from the Mothers Prayers handbook:

“Lord, they live in a troubled world – a world that does not always acknowledge You, a world that may sometimes cause them to be laughed at if they admit to belief in you. Help them to be strong, Lord.”

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

Women at the Well

2012 Cornerstone Retreat

By Celeste T. Villegas

Christ as the Cornerstone



John 4:1-40 talks about a woman at the well who was a Samaritan woman coming from a mixed race of people despised by the Jews. Today, she would be described as a stereotype and dismissed by some as a lost cause. She came to draw water at the hottest part of the day, away from the other women who shunned and rejected her for her immorality. Upon reflection, however, we see the very human tendency to judge others, in not seeing them as valuable in their own right and unworthy of knowing about the gospel.

But Jesus reaches out to the Samaritan woman, saying, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.” *John 4:10*.

With the love and acceptance that Jesus shows to the woman at the well, we come to understand that Jesus’ mission was to the entire earth, to both Jew and Gentile. That is how Christ, “the stone rejected by the builders, became the cornerstone.” *Luke 20:17*.

Connections to the Cornerstone

“Women at the Well” was an invitation for all to the spiritual life. Gathering with others helped in sharing and reflecting on the spiritual thirst that the human heart has, for goodness and truth

- a never-ending thirst that is only quenched in the presence of God. It is the life-giving water that the parable refers to as “grace,” or God’s life within the soul.

The beauty of the Cornerstone Retreat was approaching spirituality in a remarkably down-to-earth way. We were provided with a venue for respite from everyday routine as well as with a variety of sources of spiritual refreshment.

And whose faith has not been challenged in the present day? The natural disasters and personal upheavals we sometimes face are calls to faith. Did Moses, in Scripture, not strike the rock twice to bring forth water for the Israelites? Moses also doubted God.

There are a myriad of ways of seeing through the darkness that will help to heal our lack of faith, and they will be different for you and me. What is crucial is making the initial connection, so that we can deepen our faith and we can find God to help “quench the thirst.” For me, choosing to attend the retreat was a grace in itself. It was the beginning of an increased faith in a God who may keep shaking things up in order to teach me not to rely on easy answers but, rather, to rely on His mercy and His love.

The benefit of a Cornerstone Retreat comes intuitively, through making all sorts of connections – with some stories of the *Bible*, with the teachings of the Catholic Church, with you, with others and with Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became man and fully shared in our human experience. This merits repetition – “It will just be a beginning.” Therefore, we will have work to do after the retreat. But the ultimate reward is knowing that God will be up to something in our life.



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Women's Cornerstone Book Club



Celebrating 50 Books Read

Women's Cornerstone Book Club celebrated the reading of their 50th book on September 20, 2011, where all enjoyed *One Thousand White Women* by Jim Fergus. The Book Club has been meeting almost monthly since the fall of 2006.

Formed as an offshoot of Women's Cornerstone, the group has read books of all genres. Some of the favorites thus far have been: *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett, *Prayers for Sale* by Sandra Dallas, *Left to Tell* by Immaculee Ilibagiza, *My Life with the Saints* by James Martin, and *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd.

All women are welcome to join us! For more information, contact Joni von Autenried at 201-930-1421 or Kim Grande at 845-753-5082, or leave your name at the rectory.