



Annual Craft Fair

by Shelly Carr

Where can you go and find delicious food, unique crafts, a fabulous basket raffle, Scholastic Book Fair, and Santa all under one roof? It's the OLC Early Learning Center Annual Craft Fair, of course. This year, the staff and volunteers at OLC-ELC ended the day with our highest profit in years. The monies earned at this event go toward the everyday expenses of the Early Learning Center. The basket raffle money (each class creates a theme basket) goes towards the Scholarship Fund at the school.

We want to thank everyone who comes out each year to support this event. We couldn't do it without our staff, parents, and church family. This is truly a day for everyone of all ages and abilities to chip in...and they do! Our teens "run" crafters' goods in from their cars and help them pack up at the end of the day. They also take and deliver lunch orders to each crafter. One woman is quoted as saying, "I look forward to this craft fair each year. You don't get this treatment anywhere else. And I go to a lot of fairs." The parent volunteers put up signs before the event, donate items for the baskets and bake table, and show up on the day to go wherever

they are needed. Our church family volunteers go where needed as well.

We invite you to put this event on your calendar for next year. It always takes place the Saturday before Thanksgiving. It's a great way to start your Christmas shopping, open your heart (and wallets) to local crafters, and support the Early Learning Center.

CAFE CORNER

Advent Study Group by Sue Brown

This fall, twenty members of our parish took part in an Advent Study sponsored by CAFÉ, our faith enrichment group. We met on Tuesday evenings to review the Scripture readings for each of the Sundays of Advent. Our textbook provided some good discussion questions, and also offered two meditation readings each week that were related to the liturgical theme. Before concluding, we looked at some suggestions for how to grow closer to God during the upcoming week. These included ideas such as choosing a spiritual book to read from each day, setting up an Advent wreath in your home, fasting from electronics and social media for an evening, or contacting someone who has led you closer to God and thanking them for that. When we came together the next week, we were invited to talk about what we did and how it worked out.

Everyone agreed that coming together as a faith-sharing community helped make their Advent more special. The weeks before Christmas are often so hectic with all the preparations, and taking time out to contemplate the real meaning of the Incarnation was a welcome break.

Participant Nancy McNamara, shared, "The Advent Group helped me to put aside a specific time to spiritually prepare for the coming of Christmas. Because of the group's support and suggested activities, my heart feels joyful and ready to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus. I thank Our Lady of Consolation parish for this opportunity!"

Cafe's Lenten Study begins Tuesday, March 4, and will meet weekly through April 8. If you would like to join us, please send a message to olccafeteam@gmail.com or call Sue Brown at 610-857-2026.



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OUR PASTOR'S PONDERINGS by Father Victor J. Eschbach

Not unlike just about everyone else in the world, I too am smitten with our Holy Father, Pope Francis I. His genuine warmth, easy smile and obvious personalism charm me. His love for the poor and call for justice inspires me. But, more than all of that, what fascinates me about Pope Francis is the underlying spirituality that has formed him and which guides and motivates him.

Pope Francis is a Jesuit, a member of the Society of Jesus, a spiritual son of St. Ignatius. To have a sense of what this means is to recognize that his papacy will be unlike any other. Jesuits, including Pope Francis, are formed within the framework of the Spiritual Exercises enunciated by St. Ignatius of Loyola. The First Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises, and for that matter, the Society of Jesus itself, as given by Ignatius is, "Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. The other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him in attainment of his end, and he must rid himself of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to him. Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things. Our own desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created."

Ignatius found The Spiritual Exercises to be the means by which a person could align his or her will to the Divine Will, and thereby attain peace and happiness in this life, as well as that for which they were created -- union with God. Through these Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius believed a person could discern the movement of the Spirit within leading him or her to make the correct choices or decisions that would allow them to be in harmony with God. I believe Pope Francis, like every other Jesuit, is guided by these principles. What makes him different from other Popes that we have known? Well, having lived through the papacies of Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul I, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and now into that of Francis I, I would say that those who have gone before him were more emphatically theological, whereas Francis is more emphatically spiritual.

Now, I am not saying those who preceded him were not holy men -- obviously they were -- as Francis is making absolutely clear by raising Pope John XXII and Pope John Paul II to sainthood. Rather, what I am suggesting is that previous Popes were primarily guided by the theology of the Church, which they sought to enunciate and clarify in leading the People of God. Francis, I am suggesting, will be leading the Church by pastorally acknowledging God's presence in our lives -- as we are, and in our world, as it is -- and inviting us to welcome the God who dwells in our midst, and serve Him with all our hearts.

Again, the difference is one of emphasis. I am not saying one is right or wrong. Rather, I believe each approach is what God has determined is right for each age. By way of example, Pope Benedict was a student and scholar of the theology of St. Augustine, the great Doctor of the Church, who refuted the heresies that arose in the Church in the 4th century. His Papacy, therefore, was marked by his leading the Church to stand against the evils of our time -- moral relativism and secular humanism.

Pope Francis, on the other hand, embraces the spirituality of St. Ignatius, who came along a thousand years after St. Augustine, who sought to help people discern how the Spirit of God who lives in them is leading them to fulfill their true purpose -- the end for which they were created -- "to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul."

Finally, the very uniqueness of Pope Benedict's retirement and Pope Francis' elevation to be Supreme Pontiff, suggests that God Himself is leading us, His Holy People, down a different path that His Church has never traveled. I am excited to see where it will lead. And I am not alone in this. Father John recently told me, "I am so glad to have lived long enough to see a man like this Francis be the Pope."

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

Father Eschbach

*P.S. If you would like to learn more about the spirituality that motivates Pope Francis, I highly recommend *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality for Real Life* by James Martin, S.J.*



Holiday Happenings

The 2013 holiday season was full of joy, laughter, charity and love. Our parish children celebrated the true meaning of the season and also enjoyed a visit from Santa. We even captured several parish adults hanging out with him! Our craft fair was a huge success and our PCCO efforts helped many families in the community. Thank you to all who participated. May God bless your generosity throughout this New Year!



PHOTOS BY DONNA IMBIEROWICZ

DO IT FOR THE KIDS

Discovering our parish during a difficult time in her life inspired parishioner Donna Imbierowicz to come up with a unique way to heal her grief -- and inspire the youth of our parish in the process.

In 2011, shortly after the deaths of her 45-year-old sister-in-law, Sarah to breast cancer and her 20-year-old godson Ben to an accident, Donna attended Mass at St. Malachi's. She walked the grounds afterwards and felt drawn to the Children's Garden section of the cemetery. While there, she reflected on her deep feelings of grief. The recent losses had triggered feelings of sadness over the loss of other children in Donna's life. In the Children's Garden, Donna prayed for a way to heal her pain and to help other children at the same time. "Right then and there, the idea came to me. The phrase 'Do It for the Kids' popped into my mind and the process of healing began for me."

Donna's plan was simple: She would do what she could with the talents and resources she had available to help build confidence in the children around her. She would demonstrate the awesome powers of Faith, Hope and Love and inspire those children to pay it forward to others.

Inspired by her sister-in-law Sarah, Donna began by taking photographs at her children's sporting events and sharing copies with team members so they could feel proud of their accomplishments. Then, Donna's Swedish Oberhasli milking goat, Party Girl, lost her first two kids to premature birth. This traumatic event caused feelings of grief to creep back in. That's when Donna decided to do something special with Party Girl's milk. The 175th Anniversary of St. Malachi's seemed like the perfect time to learn how to make soap!

"With the help of our children and the guidance of Heaven above, our Saint Malachi of Doe Run Lavender and Iris Goat Soap was created." Donna's family -- husband Matt, son Andy and daughter Carly -- were all on board and actively involved in the making of soap.

Donna knew her goat was meant to help children when she remembered the reason the family who bred her named her Party Girl. She was born during a birthday party for one of their children and everyone immediately fell in love with her!

Everything about this endeavor feels *meant to be* by Donna. Finding St. Malachi's Church and praying for a healthy way to grieve transformed her feelings of sadness and loss into something positive. According to Donna, "That church came into my life when I needed it the most. Everybody's life has challenges and we all suffer loss. My healing process began in the Children's Garden that day."

Donna and her family have raised over \$500 in soap sales with 100% of the profits going directly to programs for the children of the OLC Parish.

According to Donna, "If we can inspire and encourage kids to become confident and truly rely on the power of Faith, Hope and Love, they in turn can make a difference in the lives of others. They've certainly made a difference in mine!"



PARTY GIRL

PCCO • 2013 Year in Review

Thanks to the generosity of local businesses, organizations, individuals and Parkesburg Churches Community Outreach (PCCO) member churches, PCCO was able to provide the following assistance to residents in 2013:

- Back to School Backpacks to 80 children
- Octorara Area Food Cupboard fed 3,001 individuals in 994 families
- Winter Coat Collection of 450 coats
- Thanksgiving (OAFCC) donated 360 frozen turkeys with trimmings
- Thanksgiving Day 202 cooked dinners with dessert
- Electric bills paid for 21 families
- Heating oil provided to 6 families
- Rent paid for 30 families
- Water bill paid for 1 family
- Emergency Food provided to 15 to 25 families per month
- PCCO Christmas Giving for 316 children (132 provided by OLC)

In addition, the OLC church family provided Christmas gifts to 100 children of Mission Santa Maria, Madre De Dios parish in Avondale. To all who worked to make this outreach possible and to everyone who contributed in any way - thank you, thank you, thank you! May God bless your generosity throughout the New Year!

Article by Alan Reger, Chairman of the 13-member Parkesburg Churches Community Outreach (PCCO)

60 Years of Love

James and Dorothy Hurley, parishioners of Our Lady of Consolation Church, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary surrounded by family. Married on October 17, 1953, at OLC by Father Walsh, their long and beautiful union has blessed them with 7 children, 12 grandchildren, and 8 great grandchildren.



Family members celebrated and honored James and Dorothy's milestone anniversary through "acts of love" -- including participating in charity events, donating their time and talents, and lending support to those in need.

When asked, James and Dorothy attribute their long and happy marriage to their faith and trust in God.

