



Our Lady of Consolation Catholic Church • Fall / Winter 2016

Our Lady of Consolation's Jubilee Year of Mercy

"It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty. And let us enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy. Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples."

-- Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*

MISSION TRIP · FIRST LOVE

by Sandy Hodorovich, Mission Trip Planner & Leader

In July, our Life Teen group took a week-long mission trip to Warrensburg, NY through YouthWorks, a Christian-based mission organization. While our "home base" was in Warrensburg, we served surrounding communities -- in some cases driving an additional ½ hour to reach our destination. We divided into separate groups so that we worked alongside other church groups. This allowed us each to have a different experience every day.

We worked on projects in a variety of locations such as alpaca farms, Christian-based camp grounds, a ski resort, a kids' club, a senior center and a soup kitchen. We painted, mulched, built fences, cleared debris, sang and played with youth and seniors, prepared food and cleaned up meals. Each night had a special activity so that we could enjoy some of the community. We also spent quality time with each other -- growing closer as a group.

Each day it was evident how Jesus was working through us and with us to assist this community

with whatever was needed. We were there to serve Jesus, but ultimately to understand how we can impact each other through service. The theme of the week was "FIRST LOVE." We discussed how "We love because God first loved us." (1 John 4:19) Our ability to show compassion, understanding, devotion and love is because God first loved us. All of the teens showed amazing commitment to the task each day. We all made great friends and shared an experience that will stay with us for many years to come.

"We love because God first loved us."

— 1 John 4:19

God is so good to us, and I hope that our teens continue to serve communities, each other and the Lord for the rest of their lives!



Life Teen Mission Trip

by Corey Hodorovich
Awesome Teenager & Trip Participant

During our mission trip to Warrensburg, NY, we learned a lot as a group and individually. Throughout the week, we formed new relationships with people from different parts of the country, but we also had a chance to form new relationships with each other. It's amazing how so many people who don't know anything about each other can come together and worship the Lord! Just being there was an honor and a blessing.

OLC missionaries were split into different groups with kids from five different churches.

We spent all day in groups serving the community in various ways. Whether it was planting flowers, entertaining kids, building fences or just putting a smile on a community member's face, we were happy to do what we could to help.

The Lord was always with us during these activities. We had time every day for song, devotions, and sharing how the Lord was with us during our day. Everyone loved hearing how Jesus was with them in different ways. For some of us, he came in the form of the energetic dog named Rocky we met at a camp. This dog was the friendliest animal I've ever seen, happier than most people! He ran around saying "hi" to every person and when he was done he'd come back around for round two. Besides the work we did, we had time at night for activities. We went for a hike, walked around a local town and went swimming in the lake.

The week was a fantastic learning experience for spiritual and life lessons. It was a week that I'm sure we'll never forget. Thank you for all the support you gave us, this trip couldn't have been possible without the help of our parish!



MERCIFUL LIKE THE FATHER



OUR PASTOR'S PONDERINGS by Father Victor J. Eschbach

In speaking of The Church of Mercy, our Holy Father has said, "If we—all of us—accept the grace of Jesus Christ, he changes our hearts and from sinners makes us saints. To become holy, we do not need to turn our eyes away and look somewhere else, or have as it were the face on a holy card. No! No! That is not necessary. To become saints only one thing is necessary -- to accept the grace that the Father gives us in Jesus Christ. This grace changes our hearts...it is this immense grace that changes our hearts."

Pope Francis has also proclaimed, "Mercy is God's Name!"

As I've pondered on how this Mercy of God is reflected in the life of our parish, names and faces that will never appear on holy cards came to mind in how the rejuvenation of our Parish Church Hall came about. It has been a long and arduous journey that has taken place in fits and starts, but it has now come about because real people whose hearts responded to God's grace gave freely of themselves, their time, their talents, and their treasure. They didn't have to, but to paraphrase our Holy Father, they did not turn away their eyes and look somewhere else. No, they saw a need that our parish had and they responded to it. Most did not wait to be asked. They gave freely of themselves and their resources without expecting or receiving payment. More than \$25,000.00 was contributed, none of which came from our parish's operating funds. In excess of \$100,000.00 in goods, services, and labor were donated, without expecting return. That is the face of mercy—"accepting the grace that the Father gives us in Jesus Christ."

In preparing this, I started writing about all the individual efforts that have gone into refurbishing our Parish Church Hall, but I realized by the third page that the stories of mercy that have gone into this work for the church would have taken up this entire newsletter. Suffice it to express my deep gratitude and that of our whole parish to these who have shown "servants' hearts" in giving so freely and generously of themselves. You, I, and our Blessed Lord know your individual contributions. You, my dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, are the face of mercy to our parish in this great work which is still ongoing, but will be accomplished to the glory of God.

While there is not room here to thank the more than 80 contributors of chairs, furniture, and kitchen utensils, you will be acknowledged on a plaque to be erected in the hall upon its completion.

If, indeed, as Pope Francis tells us, "Mercy is God's Name," it is beautifully reflected in the names of these who have responded so graciously and generously to "the grace given by the Father in Jesus Christ."

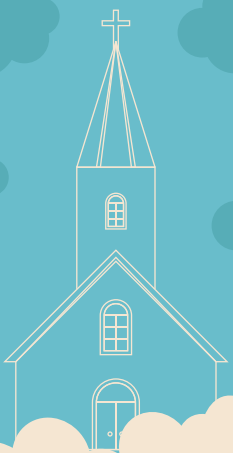
Love,

Father Eschbach

Fr. Eschbach

Invariably, in naming names, I may inadvertently miss someone. If that is the case, please understand it is not for the lack of appreciation, but rather, the fault of my aging mind. In no particular order, other than a place in my grateful heart, I acknowledge the following individuals:

- The Knights of Columbus
- Tom Henderson
- Jim & Carol Egan
- Joe Ward
- Michael Ward
- Joseph Ward
- Doug Rohrer
- Rob Wishneski
- Pete & Sun-ai Muldoon
- Benny Rigoroso
- Tom Halter
- Jim Halter
- George Evans
- Joe Disciullo
- Gary Fedor
- Greta Festerman
- Steve Festerman
- Barry & Sigrid Snow
- Ed Corcoran
- Scott Ray
- Our Hispanic Community
- Chuck Buckwalter
- Dave Carr
- OLC Life Teen
- Mark Agen
- Andrew Agen
- St. Joseph's Guild
- Dave Raabe



Meet Scott & Sharon Ray

OLC RCIA CLASS OF 2016 GRADUATES

What led to your decision to join the Catholic Church? Was this decision made as a couple?

"Let the risen Jesus enter your life -- welcome him as a friend, with trust: he is life! If up till now you have kept him at a distance, step forward. He will receive you with open arms. If you have been indifferent, take a risk; you won't be disappointed. If following him seems difficult, don't be afraid. Trust him, be confident that he is close to you, he is with you, and he will give you the peace you are looking for and the strength to live as he would have you do."

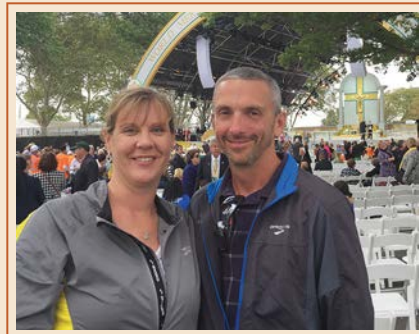
—Pope Francis

Scott: "I have always had a spiritual side and believed in God. However, I had some issues with organized religion. I think, like a lot of people, I believed that as long as I stayed true to my moral code and lived what I believed was "the right way," my relationship with God was simply between Him and me and I did not need to be part of an organized church. However, I never truly felt at peace, and I did not know why. Carly Imbierowicz (daughter of parishioners Donna and Matt Imbierowicz) had been our oldest son's closest friend since they were in fourth grade. When she passed away in November 2014, he really struggled. What I found was I was struggling, too, and I did not know how to help him or myself. I had a number of conversations with parishioner Joe Dagney. Joe introduced me to Father Eschbach who was also kind enough to spend a lot of time with me. By then, I had started attending Mass regularly and reading, a lot. I found that as I spent more time talking, reading, and learning, I began to feel a sense of ease and contentment that I had not known in a long time. There were still tough days, but I had started developing a foundation of faith to help me through.

It was a little before Easter 2015 that I first began thinking about the possibility of joining the church. However, at that point, Sharon and I had not talked about it. We were both raised Methodist, had both fallen away from church, and we were just kind of finding our way at our own individual paces. As I began to think more and more about the idea of joining, I became worried about what Sharon's reaction would be – only because we had not talked about it together. What I found was that my fear was completely misguided. If I am being completely honest, it was because of me that we fell away from church. Sharon had been feeling the desire for a while to get involved again, but was waiting for me to make peace with my own past demons. Once we had the conversation, I believe we both felt a sense of relief and knew we were on the right path. From there, it was pretty easy to make the decision together to go forward."

Sharon: "I also have had some issues with organized religion due to personal experiences. Although I was turned off by these experiences, my personal faith remained strong and I liked the idea that one day we would find our way back to the 'right' church. I did not push the idea because Scott did not hold the same opinion. When we entered St. Malachi's for Carly's funeral, I truly believed that I was entering a church with Scott for the last time. My thinking was that any faith that Scott had was now gone. What ended up happening was exactly the opposite. The strength that we saw around us and Father Eschbach's service gave us both a sense of healing.

Scott attended Mass with the boys and me at St. Malachi's that Christmas Eve and then went back by himself for Midnight Mass at OLC. He told me that he felt a tremendous amount of peace during that Mass and from there he started reading and learning. He jumped in with two feet and began reading everything he could and this sparked many conversations. Scott initiated the conversation about joining the Catholic Church. From that point forward, there was never any doubt that we would both join. But if I am completely honest, I was a little overwhelmed at first by the speed that everything was moving because I felt like I didn't have a complete understanding. Luckily, Scott and I have a very honest and trusting relationship and the RCIA class helped me with a lot of the things I did not understand before."

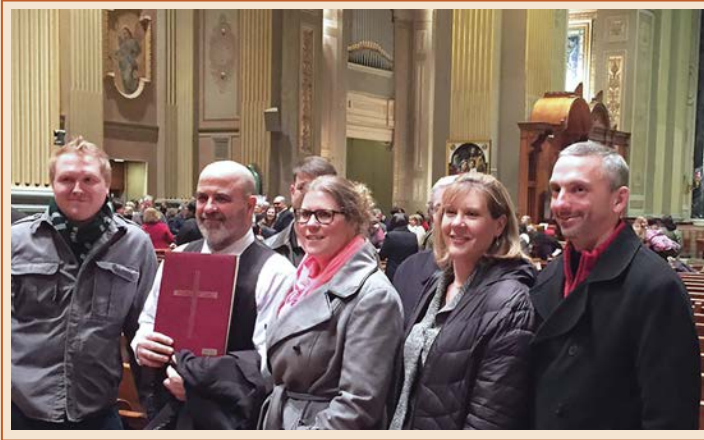


Sharon and Scott Ray attending Papal Mass on Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia on September 27, 2015

Did going through the RCIA program together enhance the experience for you?

Scott: I think going through RCIA with Sharon was incredible. I looked forward to going to Mass with her each week and then to our class. Even more, I really enjoyed sitting around with her afterwards and talking about the things we had heard and learned that day. There is so much to Catholicism and I readily admit it can be overwhelming. However, going through it together allowed us to discover things as a couple, support each other when we had questions and bounce ideas off one another when we wanted or needed a different outlook. This led to some great conversations about subjects and perspectives that we'd never discussed before.

Sharon: It absolutely enhanced the experience. Scott loves to read and I love to listen! We spent hours after class talking about the questions we discussed as a group. Scott would apply specific scripture or a quote he had read and I would focus on the perspectives everyone brought to the discussion. This led us to many deep discussions and helped us realize even more that we were making the right decision in joining the church.



Has becoming members of the Church strengthened your relationship with Christ?

Both: “Yes, without a doubt. It is difficult to have a “strong” relationship when you do not know someone. As we continued down this spiritual path, we found that we did not know or understand near as much about Jesus as we thought we did. It was actually very humbling. As time went on, we both found there were a number of things that we gained a better understanding of, while at the same time coming to grips with the fact there was a lot that we simply needed to accept on faith alone. This combination of deeper knowing and stronger faith has definitely made our relationship with Christ stronger.”

RCIA 2016 Class at Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul. From left: Robb Graves, RCIA leader Jack Reece, Heather Smith, Sharon Ray and Scott Ray

Have you felt welcomed by your OLC parish family both during your RCIA training and now that you are parishioners?

Both: Absolutely. Everyone has been incredibly welcoming from the beginning. We knew a number of people in the parish that supported us. What kind of caught us off guard was the number of people that we met that were genuinely happy we were joining and offered to help us in any way that they could. The OLC family is a very special one, filled with some amazing people.

Do you feel drawn to participate in specific parish ministries either individually or together?

Scott: Yes. In terms of outreach, I would really like to find a way to work with the poor and the disadvantaged. I've always known that Sharon, the boys and I were very fortunate. However, the last 18 months have really shown me just how much. I would like to find a way to give back and help people that may not be in the same circumstances. Within the church, I would like to try to get involved with Catholic education, be it with future RCIA classes or adult or youth classes. I have truly enjoyed what I have learned (and continue to learn) – from personal reading, study groups and conversations with other people – and I would like to help others who want to make these discoveries, too.

And, finally, do you have any advice for those who may be considering joining the Catholic Church?

Both: We would offer three pieces of advice. First, if you believe that you want to join, enroll in the RCIA class. The class allows you to learn about the Catholic faith without forcing a commitment to join the church. If during the course, you discover it's not for you, or you're not ready, that is absolutely fine. However, we believe most will find that going through the class will reinforce the initial thoughts about joining. Second, do not hesitate to talk to others. There are so many people within our church who are kind and open, and we found they are more than willing to talk about their experiences and answer any questions we had. They are an incredible resource for people who are considering joining. Lastly, try not to allow yourself to be overwhelmed by everything. As we have both said, there is just so much that it's easy to go into sensory overload. There have been so many times that each of us has felt that we were just never going to get it. However, we feel a little more comfortable each day. During a recent conversation, Father Rossi said “Love God and love your neighbor. Do that and everything else will fall into place.” It is great advice.

Prayer of Pope Francis for the Jubilee Year of Mercy

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.

Show us your face and we will be saved.

Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: "If you knew the gift of God!"

You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests His power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.



You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with His anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy, you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

Amen.



Parish Church Hall Renovation

Have you had a chance to enjoy the newly renovated Parish Church Hall yet? We have a completely refinished hall with plenty of banquet room, a brand new kitchen with modern upgrades and lots of comfortable gathering spaces. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this project - especially our driving force behind it - Greta Festerman (pictured right).

