

St. Patrick Parish IN FOCUS



www.stpaturbana.org

March 2026

Lent: Plan B

Here we are, a quarter of the way through Lent. How is it going? Perhaps you feel that you have engaged with the traditional practices of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, and that, with God's help, they will enable you to approach Easter with fresh vigor. Our celebration of Jesus' victory over death deserves this kind of thoughtful, prayerful preparation. Just as we celebrate Easter as a community, we need to keep Lent in a way that has an impact on other people, not just ourselves. Our goal



is that everyone comes to Easter refreshed, even those in our world who do not know God. Christians are here to change the world!

If you hope to pray more during Lent, think about how your prayer could touch others. You might come to weekday Mass or Stations of the Cross so that you can pray with others. You might pray more with your family. You might pray for others with special needs or ask others to

pray with you. Our parish Prayer Tree (see www.stpaturbana.org/get-involved-in-parish-life) is a way to do these things.

Almsgiving is a challenge if you feel you have nothing to spare. That's why it often goes hand-in-hand with fasting. When we set aside something, even something that we need ourselves, we find we have something to share. But there are other things you can give besides money. You could make a practice of giving a smile, a word of

encouragement, a bit of help, or a listening heart. So many people need these things!

Fasting from food is problematic for people with certain medical conditions or for those who do not have enough to eat, but could you fast from a time-consuming activity to make time for others?

Make a gift of time by visiting someone in nursing care, connecting with someone you've drifted away from, or serving others. Use it to express your faith-formed values in our civic life. Clear out a closet and share your non-essentials with others who need them.

Perhaps, despite your good intentions, you're feeling like you haven't really gotten started on Lent yet. It's

see **Lent: Plan B** on page 8

Pray For Our OCIA Catechumens

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of faith and for the Catholic Church. It is your will to establish everything in Christ and to draw us into his all-embracing love. Guide our catechumens and



candidates in the days and weeks ahead: strengthen them in their vocation, build them into the kingdom of your Son, and seal them with the Spirit of your promise. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) is the process used by the Catholic Church to present the beliefs of our faith to those adults who have made a conscious decision to explore coming into full communion with the Church. Since Her early days, the Church in Her wisdom has gifted us with this time of inquiry, discernment, and instruction to prepare Her newest members to be welcomed home.

St. Patrick's currently has ten OCIA individual catechumens and a family of six catechumens preparing to enter the Church. Our catechumens are a diverse group in ages and backgrounds. You may have already seen or met some of them at Sunday Mass on November 30 for the Rite of Acceptance. Candidates each stated before our parish community their commitment to becoming a baptized member of the Catholic Church.

see **Catechumens** on page 5

St. Patrick's is a fertile ground for vocations



St. Patrick's Parish has nurtured many vocations over the years. In addition to the countless vocations to the married and single life, we are grateful for the many men and women who have responded with courage and generosity to God's call to serve him and his people as priests, deacons, and religious women and men.

The first on record is Msgr. Paul Kinder, who was ordained from St. Patrick's in 1935.

He was known for his kindness and generosity – once bringing a person from



South America to Urbana for an urgently needed operation. In 1969 he was awarded the honorary title of monsignor. In his first retirement, he assisted Fr. Doug Hennessy, then pastor of St. Patrick's, until his service was cut short by a heart attack. Upon recovery, he assisted Fr. George Remm with the sacramental needs of the parish until a severe heart attack ended his "second retirement," taking his life.

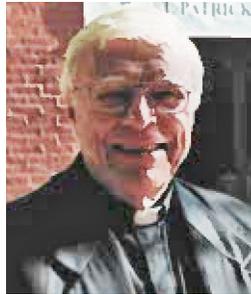
In 1952, parishioner Frank

Wuellner was ordained for the Diocese of Peoria and celebrated his first Mass on July 7 at St. Patrick's church. Just a couple of years later, Fr. Frank Wuellner was followed by his brother



Fr. Frank Wuellner

George, who was ordained in 1954. Fr. George Wuellner celebrated his first Mass at St. Patrick's church on June 13. Little is known today about



Fr. George Wuellner

their years of priestly ministry, but Fr. George Wuellner moved back to Urbana in his retirement and, with transportation provided by parishioners, was enabled to celebrate Mass with us daily. (And you will have seen his monthly cartoons of saints in issues of In Focus.)

When Fr. Gene Kane, retired, introduced himself to St. Patrick's parishioners at weekend Masses in 1994, he spoke of it as "coming home." He had grown up in our parish, had left it to



become a priest, and now was home again. He also introduced himself as a "recovering alcoholic," offering counsel and companionship to anyone afflicted by this addiction. He felt that this was the best of himself that he could make available to parishioners. When he was no longer able to assist with the sacramental needs of the parish, a group of parishioners provided transportation that enabled him to celebrate daily Mass with us.

Fr. Alex Millar was ordained for the diocese in 2015. Parishioners had many opportunities to talk with



him while a seminarian, when he spent a year at St. Patrick's parish helping with a variety of projects. His many assignments since then have given him a great deal

of pastoral experience, once with several parishes on the same assignment. He has celebrated with us on many occasions, most recently at the rededication of our church.

We know of only one male parishioner who entered a religious community. Joe Siegel, after a long discernment, entered the Augustinian community of priests and brothers in Chicago in 2011 and made his first profession of vows there in 2014.

Joe was ecstatic at his reception into the Augustinians; he felt truly "at home" there. We've no later information about Joe but can imagine his happiness at the election of Augustinian Pope Leo XIV.

In the next issue of In Focus we'll bring you up to date on our deacons and the women from St. Patrick's parish who have entered religious life. There have been many, and you will know – or at least have heard about – some of them. If you know of other men who were ordained from St. Patrick's parish, please let us know (mmenches@illinois.edu or 217-344-1125).



Vocation Prayer

What is it that God made you for? What awakens your passion, your creativity, and your sense of being true to yourself? In other words, what is your calling, your vocation?

Dear Father, let me be of service to you and your people. Give me courage in times of uncertainty and self-doubt. I surrender to you my old notions of who I should be or could be; I trust in your plan. Lead me safely on this journey so that I may serve you in serving your people..

The music of Lent

As we enter the solemn penitential season of Lent, the music used for Mass reflects the contemplative mood of the season. This year, Lent began on February 18, with the distribution of ashes as a reminder of our mortality. The changes in the music began on that day.

During Lent, we pause and reflect on our human nature, repent our sins, and abide by the teachings of the Church for fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. We seek silence and remember the forty days Jesus spent in the desert. The teachings of the Roman Missal direct us to omit the Gloria and the Alleluia, and instead we focus on the penitential words of the Kyrie and a simple Gospel Acclamation. To maintain the solemnity of the season, the pastor and music director also make choices, such as the use of chant, some in Latin, for the service parts of the Mass, and an opening and closing without music.

All Masses during Lent this year begin with a simple and prayerful ringing of handbells. The parish choirs and cantors will continue to sing hymns suitable for the season. The Gloria and the word “alleluia” are omitted because they are joyful and celebratory. We may long to hear them, but the longing is a part of the nature of Lent and allows us to look forward to the joy of the Resurrection. The “Gloria” sings the words of the angels at the birth of Jesus. The word “alleluia” comes from Hebrew for “Praise the Lord,” and, while we never stop praising the Lord, we retreat inwardly during Lent to the times the Israelites wandered the desert in search of the Promised Land and both John the Baptist and Jesus himself retreated and confronted temptation.

The psalms sung during Lent reflect times of suffering and trial and longing. The Mass setting used for Lent is the Mass of Remembrance by Marty Haugen, a setting our parish also uses for all funerals. This setting is lyrical and beautiful but also subdued. The Gospel Acclamation for Lent states: “Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection, you have set us free.” All of the music expresses our longing for salvation.

Finally, our parish has added a musical setting for “The Lord’s Prayer,” composed by Steven C. Warner, and available in our hymnal. Everyone practiced this setting before all Masses for the three weekends preceding Ash Wednesday. It is a calm and peaceful musical setting. Steven C. Warner was the Founder and Director of the Notre Dame Folk Choir and was part of Notre Dame Campus Ministry staff for more than 35 years. He has composed a variety of music, including “Lead, Kindly Light,” a choir favorite.

Masses during Lent will end in silence.



Help! Really!

In Focus comes together each month because of a dedicated group of volunteers who make it happen. We really need a couple of new people who know how to do page layout. We might need you 3 or 4 times per year, and you’ll know when it’s your turn months in advance. We’ll give you files with edited text, photos, and graphics. You will have about 3 days to do the layout and create an 8-page pdf using whatever software you already know. No meetings! Can you help? Contact Cathy Salika (csalika@illinois.edu). Thank you! Really!



The earliest records of an Altar and Rosary Society, renamed several times over the years and now known as The Women of St. Patrick, are from 1926. (Happy 100th anniversary!) The organization may, however, have been formed even earlier, in the very early years of the parish, to care for the altar and sanctuary and to promote devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

*It was not you who chose me,
it was I who chose you
to go forth and bear fruit.
Your fruit must endure,
so that all you ask the Father in
my name
he will give you.
John 15:16*



Deadline for submission of articles and news items for the next issue of *In Focus* (March) is **Sunday, March 8.**

Saint Thomas More students attend the March for Life

For Saint Thomas More students, the 2026 March for Life pilgrimage trip started on January 21 with Mass at 7 a.m. During the bus ride to Washington, D.C., they prayed the rosary, watched “The 1916 Project,” sang along to “Frozen,” and spent a tense hour stuck along the side of the road in Maryland when they encountered the mountains and snow. The chartered bus could not get traction going up the mountain. In her 23 years of driving a bus, the driver said she had never experienced anything like it!

Group leaders Jessica McMahon and Joanna Yallaly describe the group’s first day in Washington, D.C.: “Our first stop was the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, where Father Jack celebrated Mass in a beautiful side chapel. The group had some time after Mass to tour the Basilica before boarding the bus for the National Mall. Groups visited the monuments, the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian museums, and the Holocaust Museum during free time. After unpacking and having dinner at our host school, we headed to the Life Is Good Evening of Prayer rally, held at George Mason University. The keynote speaker was Sister Elfie Del Rosario. MC Oscar Rivera, Scythian and Seph Schlueter rounded out the evening with their respective bands. The highlight of the evening was adoration!”

The day of the March began with visits to the Martin Luther King, Jr., memorial and to Ford’s Theatre. The group heard many messages of hope, support, and encouragement from President Trump, Vice President Vance, and others. Pope Leo XIV sent a message: “I send warm greetings to those of you participating in the 2026 March for Life. I likewise express heartfelt appreciation and assure you of my spiritual closeness as you gather for this elo-

quent public witness to affirm that the protection of the right to life constitutes the indispensable foundation of every other human right.” He also imparted an Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of abundant heavenly graces. Pope Leo attended one of the first Marches for Life while a college student at Villanova University in Philadelphia and was a founding member of Villanovans for Life.

The day after the March, the men’s group at the host parish cooked the group a hot breakfast and gave a presentation about a free pro-life clinic in the area that was previously an abortion clinic. Some of the men in the group were involved in transforming the clinic and running it.

After learning about the winter storm heading their way, Jessica, Joanna, and Father Jack decided it was best to start the trip home soon, so sadly the decision was made to cancel participation in the wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown. Trying to outrun the storm, they traveled straight through, arriving at STM at about 10 p.m. “We were exhausted and glad to be home safely with our hearts and spirits full of joy. All of us on the pilgrimage were happy to hear that God blessed us with a snow day Monday.”

One chaperone wrote after the trip that “it was a great experience as always. I think this goes a long way for the [pro-life] cause since things like this are needed to keep the spirit of the movement alive in states like Illinois. Because even if the kids are in a Catholic School setting, they are still living in a largely abortion state (and one that is still pushing it more and more), which makes these kids the frontline, so to speak, of the cause.



Reflections on Centering Prayer

by David Sandel

Mother Angelica famously said about prayer, “You can always go to New York by way of California, which is what most of do in our prayer lives.” She also said you can go on roller skates or jet. Her “jet” of prayer was what she called the “prayer of the sacred moment,” which she thought was best accomplished through meditation.

At 7 p.m. on Monday nights a group gathers via Zoom for centering prayer, which is what Mother Angelica called meditation. A second group meets on Thursdays at 11:00 a.m. in the family room at the back of the church.

This opportunity for centering prayer has been offered at St. Patrick’s for many, many years—40 years or more. It is a sweet, hour-long experience of settling into the presence of God.

Fr. Thomas Keating wrote about centering prayer in his book *Open Mind, Open Heart*. Opening your mind and heart is a skill learned best by repetition. Rather than focusing on a prayer idea, during centering we release each thought as it arises and return to quiet. It is good to

spend time with others doing this, because the quiet is catching.

We begin with what is called “lectio divina,” reflecting on a passage from the following Sunday’s readings. We read it several times, sharing short thoughts and prayers about what we perceive as God’s personal invitation to us through the scripture passage.

Afterward we are quiet together for twenty minutes – “sitting with God,” as Sr. Audrey Cleary once described it, aware of God’s presence and open to whatever God asks of us.

At first it is “dis”-quieting to sit without speaking, either aloud or in our thoughts, for an extended time. Then it becomes more comfortable. And gradually this silence threads its way into our everyday lives. The car radio is off rather than on. The television sits unnoticed. And Jesus’ admonition not to worry about tomorrow comes to be the way we more easily embrace as our own way to live.

We pray personally, and we pray pastorally. Centering prayer is personal preparation for our own

pastoral prayer. After the twenty minutes of silence, we pray the Our Father. Then we each offer our own supplications for our loved ones, for those around us, for the world. “Lord, hear our prayer.”

After these prayers it is good to speak again with one another, perhaps sharing our reflections on a paragraph or two from Henri Nouwen or another writer, which we read and discuss for a few minutes, relating stories from our own lives.

This mix of personal prayer, pastoral prayer, and fellowship is wonderful. It blesses, edifies, and touches our souls. We are made larger by our experience. We leave refreshed and alive. It is a good thing, this centering prayer. Come and see.

Heavenly Father
Open my heart to the
Silent Presence of the
Spirit of your Son.
Lead me into that
Mysterious silence
Where your Love is
Revealed to all who call
Come Lord Jesus.

Catechumens

from page 1

After our parish assembly affirmed their desires, the candidates became catechumens.

Our catechumens have been attending weekly classes at St. Matthew’s Feeney Hall since late August and will continue up to the Easter Vigil. The OCIA Team includes pastors, parochial vicars, deacons, and staff members from both parishes. Classes meet Wednesday evenings from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., and all materials, including a Catholic Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, are provided free of charge. There are audio and visual materials provided and assistance available for anyone making up for a missed class. Catechumens and candidates

are also expected to attend either the Saturday Vigil Mass or a Sunday Mass each week.

In addition to this traditional time frame, there are “ongoing” catechumens and candidates who may not be ready to enter fully into the Church at the Easter Vigil. These catechumens and candidates are being assisted by their pastors and others in completing OCIA and hope to enter fully into the Church later in the year.

At the Mass for the First Sunday of Lent, on February 22, the Church formally ratified the catechumens’ readiness for the sacraments of initiation, and the catechumens, now the elect, expressed the will to receive these sacraments. This is referred to as the Enrollment of Names. At the

Mass for the Third Sunday of Lent, on March 8, the first Scrutiny will be celebrated. At the following Sunday’s Mass, the second Scrutiny will be celebrated, and at the next Sunday’s Mass, on March 22, the third Scrutiny will be celebrated leading our catechumens to full communion with the Church at the Easter Vigil Mass on Saturday evening, April 1.

Please be prepared to personally greet and welcome these new brothers and sisters in Christ to our St. Patrick’s family!

St. Joseph, protector of the Church, guard our catechumens and candidates as they prepare for their initiation. Help them to be as devoted to the will of the Father as you were, preparing their hearts to receive the sacraments.

Q&A

Q: Why are the Stations of the Cross posted outside the church? The Stations inside have very evocative images to help with our reflection and prayer, and are generally available.

A: The wooden crosses outdoors that represent the Stations are mounted by the parking lot to enable people who are unable to enter the church to make the Way of the Cross. Images of the Stations have also been posted on the fence to enable (encourage) people to make the Way of the Cross while walking past.

Why Fridays? Friday is observed as the day that Christ suffered and died on the Cross – hence the Stations of the Cross as well as the fasting and abstinence on the Fridays of Lent, a small act of self-denial in memory of Christ's suffering and death for our salvation.

Are you able join other parishioners in praying the Stations on Fridays during Lent? The Knights of Columbus invite you to enjoy a Lenten supper afterwards in the parish center.

*"You are precious in my eyes
And glorious, and I love you."*

Isaiah 43:4

St. Casimir, patron saint of Poland and Lithuania

Do you immediately think of Casimir Pulaski when you hear the name St. Casimir? If you are from Chicago, you probably do. Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, in 1986, made the first Monday in February a holiday in honor of Casimir Pulaski, a Polish hero who fought in America's Revolutionary War. Chicago has the largest Polish population outside of Poland.

St. Casimir lived more than 500 years before Casimir Pulaski. Casimir Jagiellon was born on October 3, 1458, in Wawel Castle in Krakow, Poland. He was the second son of King Casimir IV, becoming Prince of the Kingdom of Poland and of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. He grew up to be a young man of exceptional intelligence, humility, and politeness, known for his piety, devotion to God, and generosity towards the sick and the poor.

At sixteen Prince Casimir completed his formal education. He now spent most of his time with his father as heir to the throne of Poland and Lithuania. His father

wanted him to marry the daughter of Emperor Frederick III, but the prince refused the match because he wanted to remain celibate.

Casimir contracted lung disease, which was attributed to a long fast or to kneeling in the predawn at the church gates waiting for the priest to open them for Mass. Casimir finally succumbed to tuberculosis at the age of 25, dying March 4, 1484, in Grodno, Lithuania. His remains are interred in Vilnius Cathedral, Lithuanian. The chapel named for him was dedicated in 1636.

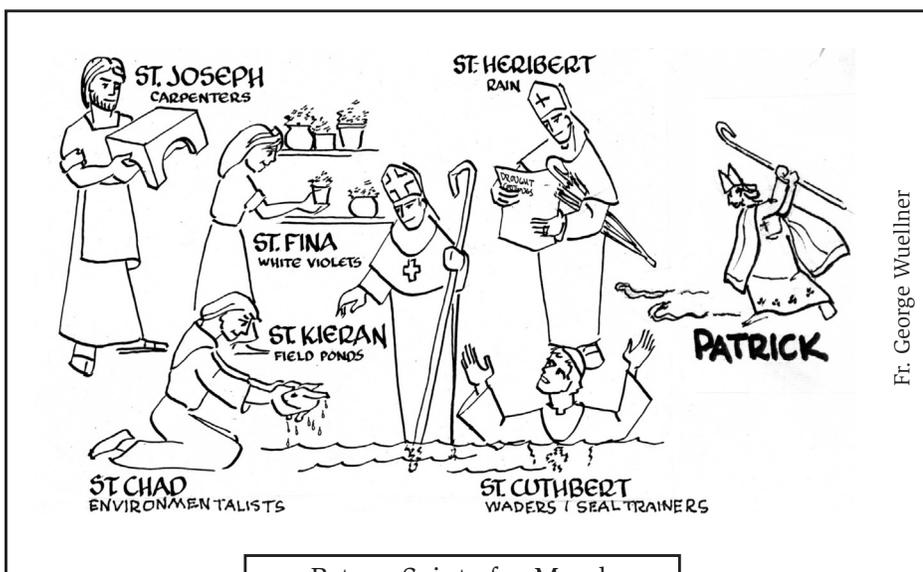
Numerous miracles were attributed to St. Casimir. One of the first occurred in 1518: he appeared before Lithuanian troops during the siege of Polotsk and showed them where they could safely cross the Daugava River to defeat the Russians.

St. Casimir was canonized in both 1521 by Pope Leo X and later in 1602 by Pope Clement VIII, when his feast day, March 4, was confirmed. There are over 50 churches in Poland and Lithuania named after St. Casimir, the same number in America.

In paintings St. Casimir is shown wearing a long red robe lined with ermine fur. He sometimes wears the red cap of the Grand Duke of Lithuania and is often depicted holding a white lily, the symbol of virginity, innocence, and purity.

St. Casimir's relics became very popular and are spread throughout Europe. His bones were cut into smaller and smaller pieces to satisfy the demand from prominent figures, societies, and churches.

St. Casimir is the patron saint of Poland and Lithuania. On June 11, 1948, when many Lithuanians were displaced World War II refugees, Pope Pius XII named him the special patron of Lithuanian youth.



Patron Saints for March

Fr. George Wuellner

Parish Council News



The January Council meeting focused primarily on the 125th Anniversary celebration. Bishop Lou Tylka has accepted our invitation to this event and will preside at the 4:00 p.m. Mass on July 18.

Research is being conducted on preparation of a multi-lingual Mass program for the event. The Offertory Procession will also reflect the ethnic diversity of our parish, with food donations brought up for our Food Pantry. Jim Rossi will be consulted about the possibility of a multi-cultural choir for the occasion, with hymns selected that include verses in other languages as well as English. The Communications Committee will be consulted about creating a parish history to be printed a month prior to the July 18 celebration, using information gathered from parishioners and ministry groups.

Members also discussed the potential numbers of parishioners for seating at the Mass and for the following reception. Ideas included indoor and outdoor seating, tickets to help determine the number to be accommodated, tickets designed as a commemorative keepsake, and much more. Further discussion was deferred to the next Council meeting.

Recalling the Young Professionals request for a retreat, suggested retreat facilitators included Fr. Schubb and Fr. Joe Hogan. The agenda for the February Council meeting will include this subject as well as that of a Parish Council retreat.

Do you see now just how much you can contribute to the functioning of our parish by becoming a member of the Council? There are three vacancies, and one of them is waiting for you!

Is God calling?

The following message was written by Sr. Lori Kirchman, who was for too short a time the Music Director of St. Patrick's. Some years ago she celebrated her 25th anniversary as a religious.

Some of us share God's love through marriage, some through religious life or the priesthood or diaconate, others through a single life. All of these life-styles are important; none is better than another. All are important, all are dependent on one another, all are needed to radiate the beauty of God's love for the world.

Since I'm a religious, I'm going to talk about my particular life-style. When I entered the convent, I was 24. I was teaching music at a public school, I had my own apartment, I had experienced falling in love, I enjoyed being with my friends. But something was missing for me. I wanted something more. I wanted to share my passion for God with other people. I wanted to belong to something bigger than myself.

When I prayed with our sisters for the first time at our motherhouse, I knew I had found what I was looking for. These women prayed together, worked together, lived together. And they seemed very happy. That day I knew I could dedicate myself to that, and this life-style still excites and energizes me.

If you've ever been attracted to a consecrated life, if you've ever thought that God was calling you in that direction, do pursue it. It can be an option for you. If you'd like to talk it over with a priest or religious, or a good friend, you'll find them good listeners who will pray that you find your way to discern and respond to that call.

If you are a parent and your child seems interested in consecrated life as a priest or religious, encourage them. God calls each of us, but we decide if we will listen.



Sr. Lori Kirchman

The Pro-Life Ecumenical Prayer Vigil

by Megan Logsdon

On the day before January's severe cold snap, St. Patrick's parish joined other local congregations in a memorial honoring the lives lost to abortion. The Pro-Life Ecumenical Prayer Vigil, hosted by Savoy United Methodist Church, brought together members of many faith communities, including numerous familiar faces from our own parish.

Centered on the theme "Choosing Life, Choosing Hope," the vigil included scripture readings and prayers that honored these lives while thoughtfully inviting reflection on the meaning and consequences of choice in regard to abortion. A highlight of the evening was the testimony of our guest speaker, an abortion survivor, whose powerful witness offered a deeply moving reminder of the dignity of every human life and the hope found in choosing life.

The gathering concluded with a time of fellowship, as participants shared conversation and enjoyed a generous assortment of delicious treats.

We continue to pray for hearts and minds to be changed and for an end to abortion.

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never too late. Start now on something good. Don't worry about picking the perfect way to serve or pray or fast. Pick something, and ask God to guide you as you go. Pay attention to how your deeds affect yourself and others. God can use this to

guide you into ways that make more of a difference. And then, perhaps, when you come to Easter, you will find that God's work of conquering evil and death has been at work in you too!



Members of the upcoming First Communion class spent some time decorating chalices.

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St. Patrick's Parish In Focus is published on the last weekend of the month in Urbana, Illinois. News items and information may be submitted by the first weekend of the month for an upcoming issue. Materials must include the name and telephone number of the person submitting them.

Please send news items to info-cusstpats@gmail.com. You may also send them to any Communications Committee member (listed below). All submissions are subject to review and/or editing by the committee and staff. Bylines are generally omitted.

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Quick fixin's from the kitchen of . . . Mary Kay Fonner



Tomato Chowder

Part 1

2 c diced potatoes
3/4 c onion
2 c diced celery
1 large can diced tomatoes
1 t salt
1/4 t pepper
1/4 t oregano
2 1/2 c water

Part 2

3 T margarine, melted
1 t Worcester sauce
1/4 c flour
1 T parsley
3/4 t salt
2 c milk
1/2 t dried mustard
1 1/2 c shredded cheese (cheddar)

Combine and simmer Part 1 ingredients until veggies are tender. Mix Part 2 ingredients as for a cream sauce. Combine Parts 1 and 2. Do not boil – milk will curdle.

* * * * *

Do you have a favorite quick and easy recipe to share? Maybe something your family and friends really enjoy? Please send it to Mary Lou Menches (mmenches@illinois.edu) — our readers are always looking for that great addition to a meal!