

St. Patrick Parish IN FOCUS

www.stpaturbana.org

March 2013

Lent: Spring Planting

Spring planting is hard work. Whether you do it on top of a tractor in the fields or on your knees in the back yard, it's tough.



It takes time and effort, and you're likely to be sore the next day. It is satisfying to look at your work and see that it's well done, but that's all the reward you get for now. You're at the mercy of the weather. If the sun and the rain come in the right balance, and if you're willing to wait for it, you know you'll get lots of food or flowers for yourself and for others. No rain? You could put in more work and water. Too much rain? That's harder. There's no guarantee that you'll get a crop, but one thing is sure: if you don't plant, you'll have nothing but weeds.

Lent is spring planting. It takes time and effort, and it's satisfy-

ing to know that you've done what you can. You might see the fruit of it this year, years from now, or never—there are no guarantees. But one thing is sure: If you don't plant, there will be nothing but weeds.

But there's one important difference between planting during Lent and planting in the fields. God is both the sun and the rain, and you are at his mercy. He's not an indifferent rain cloud. He cares deeply for you. If you plant good seed, he wants it to grow, and he'll pour himself into it just as you pour your effort into planting. He wants it so much that sometimes, even if you don't choose your seed well, he'll make a valuable crop grow. You might not see the results in forty days; it might take years, but you can trust God to give you abundance at the harvest.

What seeds are you planting this Lent? What do you hope will grow from them?



Living Faith Bringing Jesus to the sick in hospital

I was asked to write a few words on serving as an extraordinary minister of communion at Carle Hospital. Serving in this role takes a few hours one day a month—and a few



Joe Hinchliffe

hours to reflect on what has happened. A primer on serving as a Eucharistic minister described bringing Communion to the sick as "the most important thing you'll do that day. That assessment is probably right.

When I first began, I worried a good deal about doing this task properly. A parishioner who does this volunteer work walked me through the process, and others have offered pointers. Prayer is a good way to start before collecting hosts from the tabernacle.

I have come to realize that this ministry is a community expression helping the relationship between God and a communicant. I just help, watch, and make deliveries. An illustration may make this point

see **Living Faith** on page 12

Cath'lic Boys delighted a capacity crowd

"I laughed so hard my cheeks hurt now," said one parishioner after Ladies Knight Out on Saturday, February 9. Each woman received a rose as she entered the parish hall.

Lively conversation flowed as the women enjoyed wine and appetizers of cheese, crackers, and vegetables. A salad bar was followed by a meal of steak or chicken, baked potato, roll, and asparagus—and cheesecake. The attendees were served by cheerful and efficient men of the parish, who kept the tables well-supplied.

The Cath'lic Boys provided the entertainment for the evening, as

they have for more than twenty years. Their story began when Gary Wszalek purchased a gently used confessional box at the Cellar-to-Garret sale. Amazingly, the confes-

"two tablets" with Moses, danced with Abraham and his seven sons, witnessed Samson's haircut, donned white robes for John the Baptist and Jesus, and moved beyond Bibli-

cal events to meet Sts. Francis and Patrick. "Bible guru" Nick Koch provided enlightenment and commentary along the way, in case any spectator

had forgotten the significance of a specific character or story.

In the end, "the Boys" only made it as far back as the 1970s. Plan to come next year to see their continuing adventures!



sional box turned out to be a time machine, and "the Boys" took off for visits to various times and places in the Bible and beyond.

They met Adam and some of the wonderful creatures God made, took

CREW Theatre brought down the house

Teens delighted an audience gathered in the parish center Jan. 25 and 27 to see Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The play was edited to a family-friendly mixture of poetry and pratfalls by parishioner Mardia Bishop, experienced director and theater historian. The young cast performed with intelligence and energy. In his first stage appearance, Fr. Joel Phelps lent propriety to the role of Duke of Athens. The teen

stage crew and adult help created a sense of realism to the setting with few props and no curtain.

Kudos to Peggy Loftus, to professional and amateur theatre experts, to St. Patrick's teens and parents, and to appreciative parishioners, all of whom made "Midsummer" a midwinter success!



Reflections on leaving the Parish Council

From Judy Altaner:

When I joined the Parish Council in 2010, Pam Donze De Ley was the new president. She was very welcoming at the meetings, and made sure everyone knew the ropes. Parish Council members discussed topics with enthusiasm, especially when there were differing points of view.

During my first two years as the Worship Ministries Team representative, I became familiar with the changes in the Roman Missal that took effect during Advent in 2011, and reported on team activities and discussions to the Council. It was a pleasure to work with Laura Theby and the rest of the team.

This past year, I have represented the Ministry of Faith Development, a very active ministry with something always going on. From Great Dates to Children's Masses and more, we are a very active parish.

As my term comes to a close, I think the best part of serving on the Parish Council for me has been getting to know many members of St. Patrick's parish I would not other-

wise have met. The next few years should be a very exciting time for our parish as we finish our Capital Campaign and start construction on the church expansion.

Do you feel called to serve on the Parish Council?

From Mark Cousert:

It has been a blessing for me to have served on the Parish Council the last three years. In reflecting on the challenges that the parish has undertaken during this time, I have no doubt about the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit in the expansion of our church, the addition of Father Joe's responsibilities as pastor of St. Mary's, and the addition of two priests into our parish family.

One lesson that my council experience has taught me is the need to practice the gift of Holy Listening: although we may not agree with all opinions, we are to pray and discern about others' needs and feelings, and remember that we are here to serve.



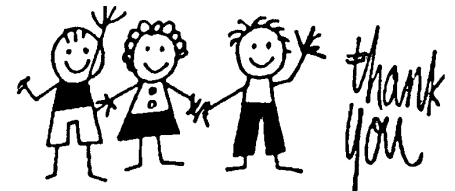
Judy Altaner



Mark Cousert

Special volunteer opportunities

- Who sets out hosts and wine for Sunday Mass—the priest? No! Parishioners just like you do this! Currently there is real and present need for a parishioner (or a parishioner couple) to **set up for the 7:30 Mass** once or twice a month. If you've ever wanted a very special way to serve your parish priests and people, this is it! *Mary Lou Menches, 344-1125 or mmenches@illinois.edu*
- Can you assist with **funeral liturgies** by greeting family and friends of the deceased as they arrive, providing worship aids, perhaps helping those unfamiliar with our church to find the restroom? These are just very simple things, but it takes someone to do them. *Nancy Olson, nancybolson@gmail.com or 359-6424*



Parish groups or individuals can submit entries for this column to the Communications Committee or contact Mary Lou Menches (344-1125 or mmenches@illinois.edu). Provide your name and telephone number or e-mail address with a brief description of the kind of help being sought.

Top o' the mornin' to ya!

Welcome to March, our parish's favorite month, when we honor and celebrate our patron saint. This year, once again, we can celebrate St. Patrick's Day on the very day itself, Sunday, March 17, at festivities hosted by the Parish Party Ministry.

At 3:00 p.m., the celebration begins with games and activities including a leprechaun leap, modified Irish road bowling, a trivia challenge, and a children's Irish dancing

performance. An Irish dinner is served at 4:30 p.m.; it will include corned beef and cabbage, colcannon and bangers, and something more American for those not so brave of heart.

Following dinner will be the Reader's Theatre, starring the dinner participants. The evening will conclude with the awarding of door prizes and raffle drawings from the trivia challenge.

Tickets are \$5 per person or \$17 for a family. Tickets are available for purchase after Mass or at the parish office.

Surely you'll be there—after all, there's a little Irish in all of us on St. Paddy's Day!





Q: I hear that St. Patrick's has a parish library. Where is it, and can I take books out?

A: Yes, St.

Patrick's has a very nice library, maintained by parishioner Megan Raab, who volunteers her time and librarian skills to keep it up-to-date and well-organized.

The library is at the north end of the classroom wing of the parish center. Since the library computer was stolen a little over a year ago, access to the library has been somewhat restricted. The door to the library is kept locked, but a key for access can be obtained from the parish secretary during office hours. During the school year, the library is used as a classroom for religious education on the first three Sundays of the month, but it is open on the fourth and fifth Sundays from 8:30 to 10:45 a.m. for those who would like to browse or sign out library materials.

Books are organized by "Call Number" according to the Dewey Decimal System, but labels have been added to shelves identifying subjects of interest to help those readers not familiar with the system. The collection includes a section of Catholic fiction as well as a section devoted to children's books. New acquisitions are often displayed on top of the shelves.

The library keeps back issues of several Catholic magazines, among them *America*, *U.S. Catholic*, *Commonweal*, *The Tablet*, *Weavings*, *Spiritual Life*, and *Journey and the Joy*. You will also find copies of our diocesan newspaper, *The Catholic Post*, and the national independent Catholic newspaper *National Catholic Reporter*. Many of these are donated by parishioners; look for the blacked-out delivery address to indicate a periodical that is free to take—read and pass it along to someone else, or return it to the library for other parishioners to enjoy.

To check out a book, simply write your name and date on the card inside the book's front cover and put the card in the box beside the com-



in our parish library

Discover St. Patrick

Top o' the mornin' to ya! Sure and you know that March marks the month of the feast day of our parish's patron saint, St. Patrick, famous for the legend of driving the snakes from Ireland—and other miraculous doings!

Patrick was born on December 18, 387, in Scotland. At the age of 14 he was captured by Irish troops during a war and taken to live in Ireland. It was during his time in captivity that Patrick turned to God.

Following the war, Patrick entered the priesthood in the year 425 and began to preach the word of God, performing many miracles by the power of God. The shamrock is commonly thought to be St. Patrick's explanation of one God with three divine Persons—the Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The snake associated with St. Patrick is thought to represent his attempt to drive the Devil, often depicted as a serpent, from Ireland using his staff. He lived a very full life until the year 464, when he died of natural causes at the age of 77.

For additional reading on the life and miraculous works of St. Patrick, you may want to pick up one or more of the following books available in the parish library:

- ***The Spirituality of St. Patrick***, by Lesley Whiteside, explores the personality and spirituality of St. Patrick and focuses on the Trinity. (270.2 Whi)
- ***St. Patrick of Ireland: A Biography***, by Philip Freeman, brings the story of our famous patron saint to life. (270.2 Fre)
- ***Discovering St. Patrick***, by Thomas O'Loughlin, presents some of the author's research on St. Patrick and his miracles. (270.2 Olo)
- ***The Real St. Patrick***, by J. M. Holmes, is a brief read focusing on St. Patrick's mission of certainty, hope, and joy for all humankind. (921 Pat)
- ***The Cry of the Deer***, by David Adam, takes a deeper look at the meditations and practical exercises that can bring us closer to God. These meditations are based on the translation of the Hymn of St. Patrick, also known as "The Deer's Cry." (242 Ada)

* * *


As always, if you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact parish librarian Megan Raab (mer1987@sbcglobal.net), and she will be happy to assist you. Scanning the shelves and looking for subject labels may also prove fruitful in finding something you'd enjoy reading. The parish library is available on weekdays during office hours—ask for a key at the parish office. It is also open on the fourth and fifth Sundays between 8:30-10:30 a.m.

puter. Although there are no "late fees," books are generally considered due 30 days after checkout.

For more information or help in using the parish library, please contact our parish library coordinator, Megan Raab (mer1987@sbcglobal.net). She will be happy to assist you in making good use of this wonderful parish resource.

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Questions about Catholic practice or Catholic teaching may be sent to the Communications Committee in care of the parish office.



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

Parish Mission: Our relationship to Father, Son, and Spirit

Traveling here from his friary in St. Francis Village near Crowley, Texas, Fr. Albert Haase preached our parish mission in February to a church that held more parishioners every night.

Since the third century, Christians have made the sign of the cross to remind themselves of the closeness of God. Fr. Albert preached for forty-five minutes each night, first on the Father, then on the Son, and finally on the Holy Spirit. Our image of God, he said, colors everything we think and everything we do.

As God is our Father, we are all family. “To ignore God in our neighbor is blasphemy,” Fr. Albert said. With God as our Father, “no one is left behind in the ditch. My soul is at peace in the night.” (Romans 8:14-17, Psalm 100, Luke 10:25-37)

As God is Son, Jesus came to earth as the “divine reminder” of God’s dream for the world. Jesus calls out to us, “Do you think you could come to trust me enough to love me? Do you think you could come to love me enough to give me your heart?” (Romans 8:31-39, Psalm 25, Matthew 14:22-33)

On Wednesday, Fr. Albert spoke of the Gifts of the Spirit, our “vitamin pills, our booster shots.” With them we have “everything we need to carry the dream everywhere we go.”

The word “Christian” literally means “little Christ.” As little Christs, we are all, like Jesus, dream-keepers. We keep alive what God has always dreamed for the world he created: his mercy, his justice, his love in all things and all ways. (Isaiah 11:1-3, Psalm 104, Luke 4:16-21)

Following each presentation, parishioners (joined by some from other local parishes) gathered in the parish center for refreshments. Over treats provided by people from various parish ministries, many shared reflections from Father’s presentation and, for some, how they expected new understandings to affect their relationships with God and with others.

Fr. Albert is the author of several books. He brought copies of some, which he gladly signed for purchasers. Some recent titles include *Living the Lord’s Prayer*, *Coming Home to Your True Self*, and soon-to-be-published *Catching Fire, Becoming Flame*. You can hear more of Fr. Albert, with his Cajun-accented energy and infectious laughter, on his weekly radio show, “Spirit and Life,” which he co-hosts with Sister Bridget Haase. You can listen to or download the show at the Relevant Radio website (www.relevantradio.com/).



From the Parish Nurses: A Lenten focus on eating

During our Lenten season of prayer and reflection, we make sacrifices to honor God that often involve the food we eat. Ensuring that you continue to eat a healthy diet can be part of that devotion—after all, we need to respect the bodies that God gave us. March has been named National Nutrition Month, with encouragement to focus on the health aspects of our food choices. But we should expand our focus to include how we can eat prayerfully and honor God with our nutritional choices.

When we eat prayerfully, we focus on the beauty and flavor of the food God has created for us. Be aware of the variety of colors and textures of the fruits and vegetables on your plate. Embrace the natural flavors of God’s creation and experiment with flavoring your food with fresh herbs. Try to avoid heavily processed or fried foods. Focus on grilled or baked fish, steamed or raw vegetables, and fresh fruits.

Eating simple yet nourishing meals in solidarity with the poor is also an important value to recognize during

Lent.

Most importantly, pray each time you eat. Give thanks to God for the care and love he shows us by providing such beautiful and flavorful food.



St. Frances of Rome, faithful to family and the poor

Frances was born in 1384 to a wealthy noble family during the time of the Hundred Years' War, the Great Schism, great divisions of wealth, plague, and a period when the pope was the most powerful political

secret chapel in their palace where they prayed together. With their husbands' blessing and support, they took baskets of food to the poor in the city, visited prisoners, and served in hospitals.

Frances sold her clothes and her jewels to buy whatever the sick might possibly need, and when their own resources were exhausted the two went begging door to door.

Then life was changed: Rome was split by civil war, and Lorenzo went into exile. Their son Battista was held hostage by the invaders, and their palace was ransacked, much of it burned. A plague took their son Evangelista, and Agnes died a year later. Then Frances opened a section of the palace as a hospital, where she nursed the sick and the dying.

Convinced that this way of life was necessary for the world, she requested and received permission to found a society of women who were not bound by vows, but simply offered themselves to God and to serving the poor. When Lorenzo and Battista were able to return home, Frances chose to live at home with her husband instead of with the community. But Lorenzo's health had been ruined and he died a few years later. She then came to live the remainder of her life with the society she founded, serving the poorest of the poor.

We celebrate Frances' life and devotion to family and the poor on March 9.

St. Frances, help us to see the difference between what we want to do and what God wants of us.

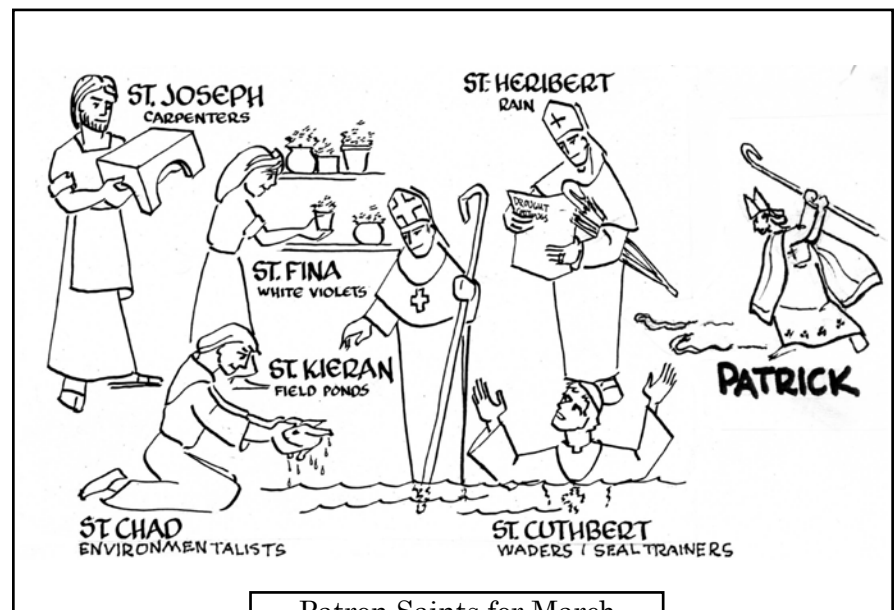


figure in Europe. She was blessed with her mother's quiet manner and devotion to God, and her father's strong will.

When she was eleven years old, Frances told her father that she wanted to be a nun; he told her she was too young to know this, and he proceeded to promise her in marriage to Lorenzo Ponziani, son of another wealthy noble family. At this time in Rome a father's word was law; albeit reluctantly, Frances entered into marriage at age twelve and was thrust into a life of parties, banquets, elaborate dresses, and jewels. But she wanted none of these things; she fell ill and lay close to death for months, unable to move or speak. During her illness she had a vision of St. Alexis that helped her realize she needed to recover in order to fulfill God's will.

Frances discovered that her sister-in-law, Vannoza, also had a deep devotion to the Lord. Although they maintained an active social calendar, they also went to Mass and set up a

Frances and Lorenzo were devoted to each other and were blessed with two boys and a girl, Battista, Giovanni Evangelista, and Agnes. When a flood spread disease and famine throughout Rome, Frances and her sister-in-law helped the poor with corn, wine, oil, and clothing.



Patron Saints for March

Mega Work-a-Thon planned by empty tomb

Empty tomb has planned a Mega Work-A-Thon on Saturday, March 2, from 8 a.m. until noon at the former Hobby Lobby building (rear of County Market on Mattis Avenue) to assemble 400 cupboards for



needy children to provide them with a storage place for their clothes and books.

The Work-A-Thon offers discipleship opportunities for Christians of all churches and denominations to put their faith in action by working together as one body in Christ. It also serves as a fundraiser to strengthen the financial stability of empty tomb so expenses can be paid on time.

Last year, the Work-A-Thon built over 100 dressers for needy children. This year, 400 dressers will be made, painted, assembled, and delivered to children with a personalized name plate, a copy of the Gospel of John, and a note from empty tomb. St. Patrick's and St. Mary's each provided a team last year.

The preparation and painting continues every day so that volunteers can perform the final assembly on March 2. Over a dozen parishioners have already been involved in this pre-work on Saturday mornings, and it would be nice if St. Patrick's could arrange teams of five or six volunteers to register for the Work-A-Thon. No carpentry experience is necessary, but it would be appreciated if each team could come with a hammer and a power drill.

The Work-A-Thon is an excel-

lent opportunity for the members of the Social Action Committee, the Knights of Columbus, the That Man Is You men's program, and the parish CREW Mission Trip participants, as well as all parish organizations within the apostolate of social action to help the less-privileged members of our community.

Registration forms are available at the parish office or from Richard Keane (rd-keane@illinois.edu).

Members of St. Patrick's who have participated in this project so far this year are Steve Beckett, Joe Costa, Ron Eagan, Denise and Chris Freidhof, Richard Keane, Nicholas Koch, Chuck Shaw, Chris Stohr, Linda and Bill Weber, Chris and David Whippo, and Joseph Youakim. Please consider joining them to help empty tomb achieve this year's goal.



Did you know?

- For several years, beginning in the early 1980s, Children's Liturgy and weekday Masses were celebrated in the multipurpose room. After 25 years or so, even with children and parents sitting on the floor to make more room, participants in Children's Liturgy spilled out into the hall beyond. On weekdays it grew difficult to accommodate the 45-50 who came for Mass. Eventually, then, Mass was moved back to the church—and youngsters grew accustomed to Mass in "the big church."
- Young men and women from St. Patrick's are responding to God's call to the priesthood and religious life. **Alex Millar**, who served as a Eucharistic minister for some time here, is finishing his second year as a seminarian. **Jackie Gitonga**, who came regularly to weekday Mass before going on to her classes at the U of I (she also wrote occasionally for *In Focus*), is preparing to make her first vows as a Daughter of St. Paul. **Joe Siegel** was received into the Church at St. Patrick's through the RCIA process and was accepted by the Augustinians, satisfying a longstanding desire. And **David Mendoza, Jr.**, plans to study for the priesthood. *All will be grateful for your prayers!*



March for Life, 2013 The High School of St. Thomas More sent a group of students to Washing-

ton, D.C., to participate in the March for Life. The peaceful demonstration occurs every year on or around the anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion. This is the tenth year the school has participated in the March for Life, which draws participants from all over the nation—in recent years as many as 400,000. “Several of our diocesan high schools send delegations each year,” said Fr. Robert Lampitt, school chaplain and the trip’s organizer. “This year I was excited to have a full bus, with 38 students, myself, and 8 chaperons.”

The group left on the evening of Wednesday, January 23, and traveled overnight to DC, stopping along the way to visit Gettysburg. The next day, they participated in a youth rally, Mass, and the March for Life. On Saturday, they visited the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, where they joined other pilgrims in celebrating human life. Participating St. Patrick’s parishioners included Jessica Elliott, Matthew Ramaly, Sarah Johnson, and Theresa and Julia Welle.

Catholic Schools Week The week of January 27 through February 2 was designated as National Catholic Schools Week. This year’s theme was “Catholic Schools Raise the Standards,” and STM celebrated in a variety of ways. The students and staff collected donations to support “C-U at Home,” a local organization that works to combat homelessness. The class that collected the most had a dress-down day on February 8. Other events included:

- Student Appreciation Day: Students were challenged to share their faith or to investigate an aspect of their faith with family and friends.
- Faculty/Staff Appreciation Day: The movie *The Mighty Macs* was shown; it tells the story of Immaculata College and its women’s basketball coach, who was dedicated to pushing her players towards excellence.
- Parent Appreciation Day: Students and their families were encouraged to pray together, and students wrote notes of appreciation and encouragement to seminarians, novices, and area priests and religious sisters.
- Alumni Appreciation Day: Letters were written by students to lobby elected officials or to express appreciation for their work.
- Benefactor Appreciation Day: Concluded the school’s winter drive for “C-U at Home”; also students wrote letters of appreciation to a number of school benefactors.

Academic Letter Awards The Academic Letter Awards Ceremony was hosted by the administration and the National Honor Society on October 3, 2012. Academic Letters were presented to upperclass students maintaining a cumulative GPA above a 3.0 or 3.5, depending on their year in school. Recipients included eleven St. Patrick’s parishioners; congratulations to Elizabeth Fahey, Ian Niccum, Chris

Tate, Megan Porter, Molly Smith, George Pennacchi, Sarah Johnson, Madeline Kangas, Matthew Ramaly, Theresa Welle, and Chase Kangas.

Holy Cross Happenings



The second quarter at Holy Cross School ended on January 11. The school recognized students who made Honors, High Honors, and Highest Honors at Mass on Friday, January 25. The St. Patrick’s parishioners receiving **Honors** were Rachel Loftus, Hannah

Niccum, Jessica Hood, Brianna Hopper, Ethan Smith, Maris Wszalek, and Elie Nyembo. Those receiving **High Honors**: Nate Baker, Luke Herzog, Morgan Saunders, Justin Smith, Austin Ford, Van Gundersen, Nicholas Jackson, and Shelby Turner. Those receiving **Highest Honors**: Connor Whittington, Jon Gibas, and Kyle Rasmussen. *Congratulations, one and all!*

Catholic Schools Week was celebrated the week of January 28 with a variety of activities that brought the theme of “Raising the Standards” to the entire school through writing letters to a Catholic school affected by Hurricane Sandy and presenting a Catholic Trivia Bee. This celebratory school week was capped by the all-school talent show on February 1.

The entire school came together on the night of February 2 for a Sock Hop that included dancing in the gym, a dinner in the cafeteria, and a raffle for the children.



St Patrick’s parishioners Lisa Altaner (left) and Josie Kuennig (right), joined by Holy Cross parishioner Karlee Feinen, sing “Party in the USA” at the Holy Cross Talent Show.



Hannah Niccum and friends at the Sock Hop.

Religious education is for everyone at St. Patrick's

Our parish gives top priority to religious education, and for everyone, for all of us, for parishioners of all ages. You've heard the saying "Put your money where your mouth is"? Well, we do that! A high percentage of the parish budget, approximately 35%, is evidence that we take this matter seriously.

St. Patrick's provides a number of religious education programs in house, as well as through the local Catholic schools. In house, we start with baptism classes for parents of infants or young children and carry on faith development throughout life with bible studies, marriage enrichment, and social justice classes.

Parents can take advantage of religious education classes for children from four years old through 6th grade on Sunday mornings at St. Patrick's or on Wednesday evenings

at the St. Joseph Middle School. Second-graders spend the year focusing on their First Reconciliation and First Communion.



"For now, let's just go with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—they don't have much of an attention span."

CREW and Vivo—our programs for senior high and junior high students, respectively—strive to offer engaging and relevant religious education to lay a solid foundation for their future in living out their faith. Confirmation classes for high-schoolers, offered every other year, requires a year-long commitment to

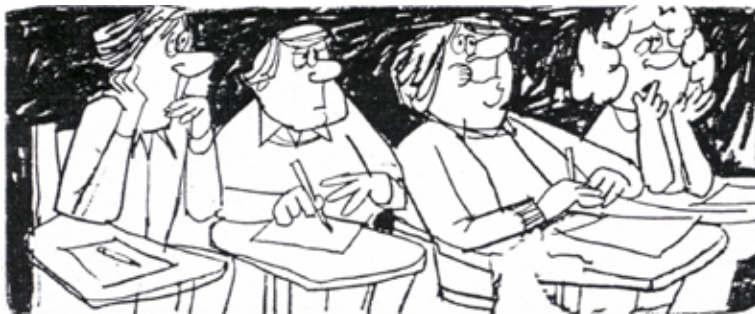
approximately 20 religious education classes and a weekend retreat, culminating in Confirmation by Bishop Jenky in late April or early May. Both CREW and Vivo offer service activities for teens throughout the year that engage them in activities in the parish and in the local community, and CREW students are eligible to participate in a supervised

Mission Trip in the summer to provide tangible help to people in need elsewhere.

St. Patrick's has a vibrant RCIA program that provides an in-depth understanding of Catholicism to adults who are discerning their response to God's call in their journey of faith. Adults have many opportunities for spiritual growth and in understanding and applying their faith in real-life situations through bible study, sacramental programs, parish renewal programs, social justice programs, and the like. From time to time a special program is offered, such as this year's video series "Catholicism," by Fr. Robert Barron, enriched by Fr. Joe's scriptural underlining of the themes following each viewing.

In addition to in-house religious education offerings, St. Patrick's also provides opportunities for our children to attend local parochial schools, Holy Cross and St. Thomas in Philo for children K-8th grade, and The High School of St. Thomas More for high-schoolers.

All of these offerings show a great commitment on the part of St. Patrick's to provide opportunities for continued growth in faith for parishioners of all ages. Through articles in the next few issues of In Focus the Financial Affairs Committee will try to flesh out the bare bones of this outline, to show just how our commitment in dollars make it all possible.



Catholic Teen Connection held its spring event

CREW teens offered snacks and fabulous prizes in a Teen Trivia competition in the Spring CTC event open to all high school teens and held at St. Patrick's on Sunday, Feb. 24. The first-place team won a \$10 iTunes gift card and the second-place team won a \$5 movie gift card. Participants celebrated a Teen Mass at 5:00 p.m. with music provided by the CREW Praise Band, and all enjoyed a taco dinner afterward.



Vietnamese welcome spring and the Year of the Snake

For Vietnamese, 2013 is the Year of the Snake. People born under this sign are said to be ambitious and powerful, creative, diligent, and excellent problem solvers who thrive under pressure.



The Vietnamese Association in East Central Illinois will have a gathering to welcome spring and the Year of the Snake. The event will take place on Saturday, March 2, at 6:00 p.m. in St. Patrick's Fellowship Hall. There will be food, entertainment, and raffles. And we're all invited!

Include a Meager Meal in your Lenten journey

During Lent, Catholics follow practices such as fasting that may help us to feel more solidarity with the poor. The Lenten practice of alms-giving helps

keep the poor in our awareness. Do we really know who the poor are? What assumptions do we make about which of our

neighbors is poor and why? What do we really know about poverty in our community and surrounding areas?

On Wednesday, March 6, St. Patrick's parishioners will have an opportunity to learn more about poverty and hunger in Champaign County. The Peace and Justice Ministry and the St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Patrick are co-sponsoring a presentation by Jim Hires, director of the



Eastern Illinois Foodbank (EIF), who will address these issues.

Jim Hires has spoken at Peace and Justice Ministry meetings in the

past, sharing his story of how his faith led him to his work and describing the challenges EIF faces in trying to supply many agencies that

serve those in need, including our parish's St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry. He has also reported on studies of poverty and hunger in Illinois, particularly in Champaign County. Some of this information goes against common assumptions about poverty. For example, many of us are probably not aware that although Champaign County has a lower unemployment rate than some other

counties, it has a larger percentage of people living in extreme poverty than any other county in Illinois.

Before the presentation, members of the Peace and Justice Ministry and St. Vincent de Paul will be reviving the tradition of sharing a Meager Meal. Some years ago, weekly Meager Meals were presented in the parish throughout Lent. These meals lived up to their name, consisting only of soup, bread, and water.

Those attending would make a free-will donation for the poor, contributing the amount of money they might otherwise have spent on a meal.

The March 6 Meager Meal will begin at 6:00 p.m. and will include chicken- or vegetable-based soup, bread, and water. Free-will offerings will be shared equally by the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry and the Eastern Illinois Foodbank. The presentation by Jim Hires will start at 7:00 p.m.

Couples give each other a late Valentine

Couples participating in the Great Dates program enjoy a romantic "night out" at this year's Men in Black Café, served by our own "men in black," Fr. Joe, Fr. Joel, and Fr.

Dennis. Babies, toddlers, and youngsters were cared for by CREW teens, enabling their parents a care-free evening together.



Vocation Prayer

*The divine call is not simply
to do something great
but to live close to God,
to share God's loving intentions
for the world.*

Loving Father, I pray that I may be of service to you and your people. I ask for courage in times of uncertainty and self-doubt. I surrender to you my old notions of who I thought I should be or could be; I trust in your plan. Lead me safely on this journey so that I may be your instrument.

Girl Scouts don't just sell cookies

Although St. Patrick's does not sponsor individual Boy Scout or Girl Scout troops, the parish does pro-

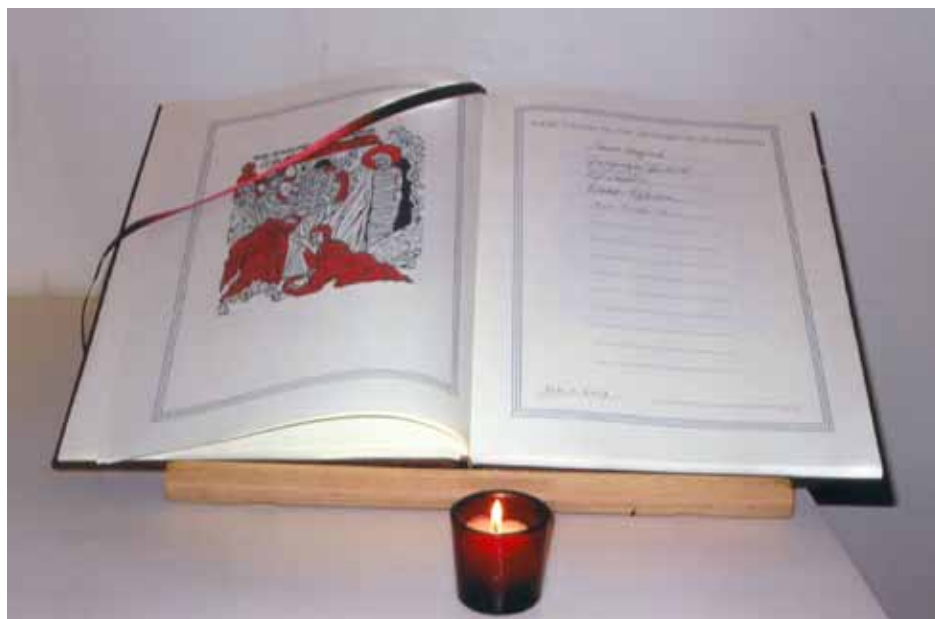
vide meeting space for some scout troops. Just ask Peggy Loftus about the troop she leads. On February 10,

scouts were recognized at the 10:30 a.m. Mass where two third-graders, Ellen Loftus and Maddie McCoy, received Catholic Scouting "Family of God" medals. Eagle Scouts Dan Schuele and Willie Campbell were also recognized together with Girl Scout Mary Frances Campbell, who earned her Silver Award.

On February 18, St. Patrick's hosted the Girl Scouts of Central Illinois service area team event for World Thinking Day where five troops showcased five countries: Ireland, Malawi, Jordan, Pakistan, and Venezuela. Peggy's troop hosted one of the tables. The event included a sing-along activity and an opening and closing flag ceremony.



Fr. Joe interviews Mary Frances Campbell, Dan Schuele, and Willie Campbell about their Scouting honors and how they were achieved.



Pray for our Elect, those men and women who have responded to God's call to know, love, and serve him on their faith journey as a Roman Catholic.

Living Faith from page 1

a bit clearer. I don't speak a word of Spanish, but when I've walked into the room of a Spanish-speaking Catholic who wants to receive Communion, there's usually a family member to translate. If not, when I take out the pyx (the container for carrying the Eucharist), the communicant immediately recognizes why I'm there and makes the sign of the cross. Then we begin—me in English and the patient in Spanish. It's not me. It's the faith community, this person, and God making a connection.

The busy nurses and staff make it possible for me to visit with patients, and they tell me who is able medically to receive Communion. Sometimes they suggest I wear a mask and gloves. Other times, they add a patient to the list of people who want to receive. Once in a while, they ask to receive Communion themselves.

Mostly, patients are very pleased to see me. For them, the Lamb of God is an old friend, and I'm the lucky friend of that Friend along on the visit. After Communion we say a prayer, visit for a few moments, and then I head off to see someone else.

Offered Communion, some patients say, "No, thank you." A few muse aloud on the state of their soul. A couple of them have wanted to confess their sins; I stop them and

tell them that hearing confessions is a job for the "Men in Black." I pass those requests, and other issues that arise, to a priest. When all is done, I head for the chapel and say a prayer for the people I've met.

In bringing Communion to the sick, I get to perform a work of mercy, but the sick instruct me by their example about my relationship with God and the Church. I can see connections with God in dozens of ways: the happy mother with her family joyously welcoming a new baby, young adults surprised to be in the hospital confronting an unexpected illness or accident, more mature adults alone and frightened—maybe awaiting a visit from their own pastor, and others who are settled and content with their circumstances. Each reveals something about relating to God. I remember visiting with an elderly gentleman, and after delivering Communion, I began to say a prayer for his speedy recovery. He interrupted, "Pray, rather, for an easy death." He died a short time later.

The primer is right. On the days I deliver Communion, it really is the most important thing I do that day. The work itself is good, but reflecting on the work nearly always fills what remains of my day.

—Joe Hinchliffe

St. Patrick Parish IN FOCUS

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 mid-month for the next issue. Materials must include the name and telephone number of the person submitting them.

Please send news items to a Communications Committee member, leave them in the committee's mailbox in the parish center, or call a committee member. All submissions are subject to review and/or editing by the committee and staff. By-lines are generally omitted.

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Quick fixin's from the kitchen of . . . Kathy McKenzie

Taco Soup

48-oz jar or can Great Northern beans with juice
1 can diced tomatoes with juice
1 cup water
1 can corn, drained
1 pkg ranch salad dressing seasoning
1 pkg taco seasoning

Mix ingredients well and simmer for 40 minutes.

* * *

If you have a recipe you'd like to share, please send it to Ellen Noonan (403-0979 or eknoon@comcast.net). The only requirement is that it be easy and quick to prepare!

