

St. Patrick Parish IN FOCUS

www.stpaturbana.org

February 2021

The spring muddiness of Lent

Lent always seems to begin cold and muddy around here. The early spring days aren't very appealing unless there's a fresh snowfall or lots of sunshine. The days are growing longer so slowly that you almost can't tell that it's happening. It looks like not-quite-winter-not-quite-spring will go on forever.

But go for a walk and look around carefully. The sap is starting



to run in the maples. You may see a damp spot under a broken branch, or see a squirrel climbing along the underside of a branch, licking the sweetness as it goes. You may see the early spring bulbs peeking out of the mud and beginning to respond to the sunlight. You may smell the change from the dry crispness of winter to the rich, damp loamy scent of spring.

These are the experiences of both spring and Lent. We begin with the stark mud of ashes on our foreheads, and it looks like Lent will go on forever. We get through it by sticking together. With so many people isolated by cold and Covid-19, is there someone to whom you can bring a bit of sweetness, the first sign of spring? With so many people hungry, is there a way that you can share more of what you have to ease someone's worry and

pain?

We get through it by clinging to God. We gather on Sundays to hear the stories of how God brings about a change in our lives. We wander through the Scriptures and other reading during our daily prayer time, looking for the signs that God is at work in us.

As the days become brighter, we may see yardwork that needs doing. As the air becomes warmer, we may open the windows to freshen the winter mustiness within. As we see God at work in us, we may find that spring cleaning is needed in our hearts and spirits, and turn to God in reconciliation so that he can refresh us.

And as the season progresses, the days do become warmer and the first flowers arise. The hope that these things give us is like the approach of Easter. We come at last to the remembrance of all Jesus did for our salvation. We take heart in recalling his love for us. We are reminded to hope that we will enter heaven because Jesus opened a way for us.

The passage from cold, muddy February to Easter is worth taking. It brings us new life and reminds us to live in hope. It calls us to love God and one another more deeply.

Have a happy and blessed Lent!

You will be greatly missed, Jim!

by Eileen Mathy

When I was asked to write a reflection on Jim Urban and his service to our parish, I jumped at the chance. I couldn't think of anything easier to write. How delightful it is to write about genuine goodness. To write about



an uncomplicated ability to sit in the divinity of all that lives and breathes, that is what I think of when I picture my friend and fellow servant of the Catholic social gospel.

Jim and I grew up in the same era in the Church. I once asked Jim what attracted him to the social teachings of the Church, and together we reminisced about our days in the youth choir at Mass, guitars and choruses that spoke of a new accessibility to the gospel and to the Mass. Songs that reminded us of our common humanity as racial unrest broke out across our land, and refugees flew in from

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Jim Urban from page 1

Saigon and Nicaragua. We were kids then, but it was the mother's milk on which we were raised. Few words were exchanged in that conversation, but we both understood the fire that burned in our bellies and where it came from.

Jim can be a man of few words, and because I am sometimes full of words, I wanted to poke him with a stick sometimes to get him to join me in our fight for



justice. But his heart is gentle and kind when mine is sometimes full of unbridled drive. Some wanted him to break out in spontaneous prayer, while Jim needed a moment to find the right prayer card, or traditional meditation. You had to take Jim as he was because to do otherwise would mean to deny him his God-ordained shyness and pace at life. He wasn't "evangelical" in the current sense of the word, but never did I doubt his connection to God and his ability to discern the direction we should take as a ministry. I also understood the constraints under which he worked.

In his previous life, Jim was a landscape architect, as was my father. Some of my favorite memories of Jim were in picking out flowers for a display, or in hearing about his vision for our SVDP garden. I get that connection to nature and that subtle but sacramental moment when connecting to color and contrast and texture in the garden of flora and fauna that God has blessed us with. It is a form of prayer. Perhaps it was how Jim prayed best.

Jim was also a person who showed up. He was there when my mother died. As I talked during her funeral about her childhood in Appalachia and her struggle to feel accepted in the Church, I looked up and there was Jim. When we presented artwork that reflected

the angst of survivors and those laity moved by the sex abuse scandal, with tears in his eyes and a gentle hug, Jim stood in silent observation and respect for the expressions he witnessed. When my Black, homeless son moved in with us and was seeking employment, Jim greeted him warmly at the parish. And when that son died a tragic death, one of the first cards I received was from Jim and his wife, Anna.

So often in church life we are sidetracked by politics and power plays, manipulative bullying, and the pushing of agendas. If you are about that, Jim is not your man. Nope. But if you are about being a gentle soul, reaching out to the homeless man who stumbles into Mass, or the African grandma who struggles with English, or the transgendered teenager who just wants to belong, I can think of no one I would rather have at the doors of our parish but Jim Urban.

You will be deeply missed, my friend. Godspeed as you and Anna enjoy your new life of retirement.

* * *

The many other ministries that Jim served so often and so well as staff liaison join Eileen Mathy in her appreciation for the years of Jim's service for the people of St. Patrick's, and pray that his retirement is grace-filled

CREW's Christmas fundraiser brightened homes

In December 2020 CREW sold Christmas wreaths and door swags from Sherwood Forest Farms. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, all ordering was online, and the foliage was delivered directly to homes.



CREW raised about \$485 toward their next mission trip. In Advent 2021 they plan to repeat the greenery sales and hope that improving health conditions may then allow a more personal touch, with

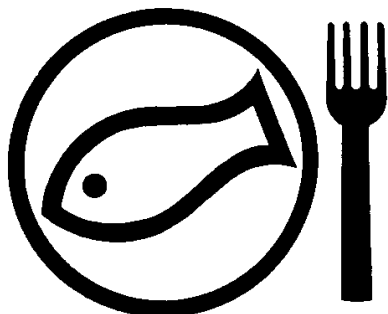
a return to in-person signups in the church's gathering space. CREW also looks forward to the time that they can plan their next mission trip!

Lenten events planned for this year

In just two weeks Lent begins on February 17, Ash Wednesday. Our parish staff is busy making plans for several events. Although we will still be hampered by Covid-19 regulations, more of our older parishioners will be vaccinated by then and may feel safer attending Mass and the Stations of the Cross in person.

The Stations of the Cross will be held in church on each Friday evening during Lent. Please check the bulletin or parish website for the exact time. Parishioners may attend the Stations in person or participate online.

The Knights of Columbus will be offering a fish sandwich takeout as



an alternative to the Lenten dinners traditionally held in St. Bridget Hall. The menu has not been finalized, but fish sandwiches will be available for pick up on Fridays from 6:00 to

7:30 p.m. You will place your orders just as you did last fall for the pork chop sandwiches. Call Jack Parisi (217-649-2332) to give your name and order.

The food will be distributed from

the northeast door of St. Bridget Hall. There will be a cash table and runners to bring your order to your car. The sandwich meal will cost \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors, and \$6 for children.

The fish sandwich will be breaded,

but the Knights are working on an unbreaded option or a two-fish-taco option. The Knights' chefs are also experimenting on homemade coleslaw and homemade baked chips. Each dinner will have a side of coleslaw, a baggie of chips, and a dessert.

The parish staff is discussing a possible Lenten study. Please check the church bulletin, Facebook, or announcements from the altar for specifics regarding this study. Also, the Lenten Mass booklets will be freely available in church on the table at the east entrance to the church.

Our parish is trying to make this Lenten season as normal as possible. God willing, next year we may be able to gather as loving, fearless parishioners to experience Lent together.

Our sick and their caregivers need our prayers

The World Day of the Sick is observed, appropriately enough, on Feb. 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. It is a special occasion to reflect on redemptive suffering, pastoral care, love of neighbor, and respect for human life, and to pray for our sick and their caregivers.



Especially during this time when the pandemic is so prevalent, remember to pray for all our sick and their caregivers. Try to find ways that you can involve yourself in that care, even if for only brief periods of time. Many of our parishioners are suffering from Covid-19, are chronically or terminally ill, recovering from surgery, homebound by age or frailty. Many of them are lonely

and suffer from the lack of connectedness to our parish community.

Pray for them especially now during the pandemic, but do continue to pray, even daily, after the pandemic has become history, for prayer is a great healer of body and spirit.

Here is a prayer to Mary for the sick; perhaps it will help you get started:

*Mary, mother of God and our mother,
be at the bedside of our sick ones:
those who are unconscious and dying,
who have abandoned all hope of a cure,
who weep and cry out in pain,
who have no money for care,
who ought to be resting but must work,
who pass long nights sleeplessly,
who seek in vain for a less painful position,
who know the cares of a family in distress,
who must renounce cherished plans,
those, above all, who during this pandemic
have no one to help them.
Bring them ease of body and peace of mind,
secure in the knowledge that they are loved
beyond all measure
by the One who made them.*



Q: As a Catholic, can I decline to take the Covid-19 vaccine? I have some

reservations about its safety.

A: Delivery of an effective and safe vaccine against coronavirus is a triumph of modern science. The task of reaching every vulnerable member of the population—much less every member of the population—will not be straightforward. There are still many who have reservations about safety despite assurances from the CDC and public health authorities.

Some also question the morality of using vaccines that have some connection to cell lines that originated with tissue taken from aborted human embryos some forty years ago. Cells derived from this original batch are still in use in the production process but have been eliminated from the final product. Such processes have long been used in the preparation of vaccines.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has issued guidance three times in recent months. Its latest statement says: “In view of the gravity of the current pandemic and the lack of availability of alternative vaccines,

the reasons to accept the new COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna are sufficiently serious to justify their use, despite their remote connection to morally compromised cell lines.”

It adds: “If the choice is made not to receive this vaccination, then the person must make other provision to mitigate the risk of harm to the life or health of others and to that of their own.”

And finally: “Receiving one of the COVID-19 vaccines ought to be understood as an act of charity toward the other members of our community. In this way, being vaccinated safely against COVID-19 should be considered an act of love of our neighbor and part of our moral responsibility for the common good.”

Vocation Prayer

Loving Father, continue calling me until I hear what it is you want of me! When I am slow to respond, keep nudging, keep whispering, keep pestering, provoking, prodding—keep inviting response, until my heart is open to your guiding Spirit and willing to follow, step by step, where you lead.

Parish Council news

The Parish Council has begun a six-week study of the Second Vatican Council document *Apostolicam Actuositatem*. This document explains the role of the laity in carrying out the mission of the Church. Soon the entire parish will be invited to do the same. Fr. Anthony has summarized the chapters and provided study questions to help with discussion. We are excited to see what insights we may discover that can be applied in our own parish ministries.

Read In Focus online

Did you know you can read *In Focus* online at the parish web site? Click on the image of *In Focus*, or go directly to <http://www.stpaturbana.org/focus/>.

From there you can

- Read recent issues
- Subscribe to receive an email when future issues are available
- Review our complete archive of issues going back to 1981
- Search the archive

It's a great resource for history buffs, genealogists, and people who love the story of our parish!

A priest's Christmas gift to his people

A priest in Germany, knowing that because of the pandemic he could not celebrate a Mass on Christmas Eve for the thousand or so parishioners who would normally fill his church, planned to celebrate a dozen one-hour Masses for the hundred people allowed to be present in the church for each Mass.

Mass-goers would not have to register first but would pick up clothes pegs from a basket at the church entrance, then return them after Mass for the next person to pick up -- pegs and basket to be disinfected after each Mass.



Patron Saints for February

Our lives during the pandemic

Christmas 2020 at the Olsons

by Nancy Olson

For some people, the time of pandemic has brought many difficult changes to life. Faith helps us to keep a hopeful perspective and to continue to do our best in challenging circumstances. Certainly Christmas, with all of its rituals and traditions, was very different for many of us.

For some of us it was not terribly different from years past. With no children of our own and no family members closer than an eight-hour drive, Christmas has always been quiet for the Olson family, and this year



was no exception. We were blessed to be able to attend a parking lot Christmas Eve service at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and to see many friends and neighbors, if only through the car windows. On Christmas Day we joined those watching Mass from Heart of the Nation on the computer, as we have every Sunday and holy day since March.

The change for Christmas 2020 was not having people joining us around the dinner table. Before his death, Fr. Richard Mullen was always a Christmas guest. And because of our relationship with students in the School of Chemical Sciences on campus, we were often also privileged to share the holiday meal with a graduate student or two who would otherwise have been alone. This year we raised a glass of wine to each other and had lots of leftovers for the coming week!



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Our Christmas was different in 2020

by David Sandel

We had to work harder, seemed like. Smaller events took bigger planning. We wore masks when we wanted to kiss each other. We bumped elbows when we wanted to hug long and deep. We didn't get together in large gatherings, super-spreaders, the news called them. Or if we did get together, we felt guilty. Weren't we making everyone around us sick?

Might we not get sick ourselves, and even die?

With our friends, we Zoomed, and with our families, we Zoomed. Zoom was always better than nothing,

but sometimes not much better. And when could get together, we did. Our family had two small gatherings, one in Urbana and the other in Austin, Texas. We ate ham and pizza, we opened gifts under Christmas trees that were decorated and lit.

What was missing, mostly, was the pizzazz provided by camaraderie with the Rest of Us, parties down the



street, prayers in churches at midnight attended by throngs of worshippers, and the thought-provoking freedom of imagining Santa visiting all of us without a mask, getting home to Mother early on Christmas morning, and settling into his long winter's nap. Did he do all that this year? Wouldn't he get sick if he did all that? Did Santa die?

Our kids' questions might have been our own, if our imaginations were up to it. And while I grieve my own wilted imagination, I ask God to wake me up again. Remember Scrooge? For him every Christmas was a pandemic Christmas. He

didn't wear a mask, but he avoided everyone. He went home alone on Christmas Eve, or intended to anyway. The ghosts of Christmas paid his intentions no mind,

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Olson Christmas

from page 5

Each day, we count our blessings that the pandemic has not strongly impacted our lives. We are also blessed that no one in our immediate families have become sick or had their lives changed in difficult or unmanageable ways. We put ourselves into the hands of a loving and provident God and let the gift of the miracle of Emmanuel—God with us—lead the way. Deo gratias!

Different Christmas

from page 5

however, and in the early hours of Christmas Day Scrooge was transformed. I can just imagine Charles Dickens, so angry with his creation at first, but then ...

Dickens softens toward the old man. God's grace falls lightly at last upon Scrooge's shoulders. Given God's famous second chance, Scrooge claims it, Scrooge rejoices in it, Scrooge will not let it go. He bought the biggest turkey in the shop and had it sent post haste to the Cratchit kitchen.

By the end, Mr. Dickens fell in love with his old man: *To Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world.*

And so this can be my story too, right, and yours? Does God stop with Scrooge? Not on your life, cries Charles Dickens, not on your ever-loving life! God pours out both conviction and forgiveness from his never-emptied glass. All the differences wrought by our pandemic come to nothing in the end. Drink up this Grace, this gift of Grace, and sing. Christmas is coming, Christmas has come, Jesus is with us always.

David Sandel writes thoughts every day centered on the Lectionary on his blog, www.davesandel.net.

Can you help *In Focus* happen?

Many people contribute their time and talents to help *In Focus* come out each month. We're happy to have all kinds of help, but we have two special needs right now.

Page Layout: Three or four times a year, you would receive files of edited articles and photos, lay them out using whatever software you prefer, and create a PDF.

Committee Member: We meet monthly (virtually, for now) to brainstorm articles for the next issue. Meetings are usually held on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7 p.m.

Interested? Contact Cathy Salika at 367-78761 or csalika@illinois.edu.

SVDP food pantry keeps serving, safely

Throughout the pandemic, our parish's SVDP food pantry has continued to serve the Champaign-Urbana community. A healthy, brave group of volunteers distribute groceries to our food pantry guests in a COVID-safe manner in the parking lot on Mondays and Thursdays from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.

In late spring and early summer, the food pantry began a "temporary" partnership with Channing-Murray Foundation. They receive referrals from several



agencies in town and deliver groceries from the pantry plus a hot meal to those households on Wednesday afternoons. This partnership will continue for as long as it serves the needs of both groups.

The food pantry serves an average of about 100 families each week. The number of people served fluctuates with little rhyme or reason, although more people tend to come toward the end of the month as their funds run low, and fewer show up when there is bad weather or a recent COVID-19 surge.

SVDP also continues to help with rent, utilities, and other financial needs on an individual request basis. One request is allowed per person per year. SVDP volunteers use this personal contact to encourage the use of the food pantry service to help with the person's monthly budget. Many factors play in granting monetary assistance and it is difficult to help those in real need and turn away some individuals, or to not provide as much financial assistance as those requesting it feel they need. Nobody likes this part of the job!

According to Food Pantry Coordinator Sally Czapar, she and the volunteers as a group have stayed healthy and vigilant to the requirements to operate in a COVID-safe manner. She is happy to report that only one volunteer has had COVID---although not from exposure at the pantry---and has since recovered and returned to her pantry duties.

Sally adds that if you would like to make a donation, the pantry has an ongoing need for toilet paper, spaghetti and other pasta, and rice.

Many thanks to all of you who support this vital work!

Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.

—Matthew 25:40

Did You Know?

The feast of St. Blase, on Feb. 3, is traditionally observed at St. Patrick's by the blessing of throats. If you are unable to receive this blessing in person, however, don't let the pandemic prevent you from praying to St. Blase for his protection. The prayer the Church offers can easily be modified to reflect our current circumstances: *Through the intercession of Saint Blase, bishop and martyr, may God deliver [me] from every disease of the throat and from every other illness, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

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 infocusstpats@gmail.com. You may also send them 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. Bylines are generally omitted.

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Articles, information, and photos for this issue were provided by Terry Beaudoin, Sally Czapar, Judy Fierke, Denise Green, Elizabeth Hendricks, Anna Kasten, Eileen Mathy, Mary Lou Menches, Nancy Olson, Cathy Salika, David Sandel, and Mary Tate. Patron Saints by Fr. George Wuellner. This issue was edited by Jerry Walsh; page layout by John Colombo.

Quick fixin's from the kitchen of . . .

Terry Beaudoin



Mom's Orange French Toast

8 eggs
1 c orange juice
1/2 c orange liqueur
1/2 c milk
1/4 c sugar
1/2 t vanilla
1/2 t salt
Zest of 1 orange
9 slices (1-in thick) French bread
3-4 T butter
Powdered sugar
Maple syrup
Butter

Beat eggs in large bowl, add orange juice, orange liqueur, milk, sugar, vanilla, salt, and orange zest, and mix well. Dip bread slices into egg mixture, turning to coat all surfaces well. Transfer to a 9 x 13-inch baking dish in a single layer, and pour any remaining egg mixture over all. Cover and refrigerate overnight (liquid will be absorbed). The next day, melt butter in a large skillet over medium or medium-high heat. Add bread slices in batches and cook until browned, about 8 minutes. Turn and continue cooking until browned, about 8 minutes. Arrange bread slices on platter and sprinkle with powdered sugar. Serve immediately with the butter and maple syrup

* * *

If you have a recipe you'd like to share, please send it to Mary Lou Menches (344-1125, mmenches@illinois.edu). The only requirement is that it be easy and quick to prepare!

To our readers:



Happy Valentine's Day!



Deadline for submission of articles and news items for the next issue of In Focus is **Sunday, February 7.**

Our lives before the pandemic

