

# St. Patrick Parish IN FOCUS



www.stpaturbana.org

December 2024

## Patience!

The commercial world around us is in such a hurry. Christmas goods start appearing in the stores as early as September. On December

after year, in the hope that, if we keep trying, we may eventually begin to understand.

What has happened is that God



26, Christmas items go on clearance and the Valentines come out. This is exactly the opposite of how our faith tradition prepares for and celebrates the birth of our Lord.

Christians don't celebrate Christmas because we like cookies, carols, lights, and gifts. We may enjoy all these things but they're not why we celebrate. We celebrate because something incomprehensible has happened. And we celebrate, year

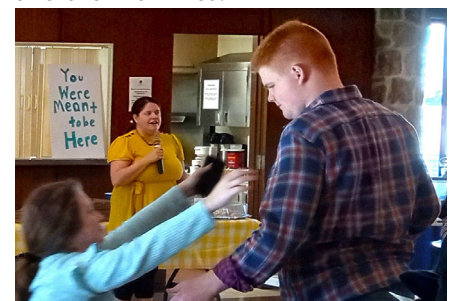
has chosen to become human and live among us. He came out of his immense love for us, to be as close to us as possible, to be someone we could see and touch and smell and hear. He came as our Savior, to overcome our sinfulness and our tendency to shy away from God's love. He came as Teacher, to show us what is most important in our lives with God and each other, to

see **Patience** on page 5

## A much-needed ministry starts up at St. Patrick's

St. Patrick's Able Group, a new ministry in the parish, had its inaugural lunch on Sunday, November 10, after the 10:00 a.m. Mass. The group is made up of families of people living with unique learning needs across a wide spectrum that includes autism and epilepsy, among others.

The ministry aims to provide support and mentorship to those with special needs and their families within the Church community. It also seeks to share knowledge, experience, and resources that will be needed by special needs persons and their families.



For the wider community of St. Patrick's, the ministry seeks to foster a greater understanding of the needs of special needs persons and to build adaptations within the community that will allow persons with special needs to share in the same opportunities as other members. The ministry also wishes to foster and encourage other parishes to start similar initiatives so that the spiritual needs

see **Able Group** on page 4

## The Knights' ladies dine at the Round Tables

One of the highlights of our parish year is Ladies Knight Out. It began at 5:00 right after the 4:00 Mass. The parking lot was jammed with cars of Mass goers and people from other parishes and faiths, since the reputation of this event has spread throughout the whole C-U community. Everyone stops at the table set up in the classroom hall to turn in their tickets and get a long-stemmed rose and raffle ticket.



St. Brigid Hall was full of round tables surrounding a long buffet table. Each table was elegantly dressed with a burgundy table cloth, glassware, silverware nestled into burgundy napkins, and a vase of more long-stemmed roses. The appetizers were waiting on each table: succulent shrimp with cocktail sauce, tortilla chips with salsa, and little, round buns with pats of butter. Soon the formally dressed waiters were circulating with bottles of wine and pitchers of ice water.

Everyone was in a happy mood, conversing and eating appetizers. The tables were soon called two by two to line up at the buffet. The buffet started with a huge bowl of salad greens, little bowls of cherry tomatoes and cucumber slices, plus bowls of Italian and ranch dressing. There were plates of different salamis and cheeses and crackers, then a big bowl of couscous salad and warm veggies. The entree was a chafing pan of cut up chicken breasts, and another of beef pieces. There was barbecue sauce for the meat, which was so tender you could cut it with a fork. And for dessert, those delicious little squares of various flavors of cheesecake. For fruit lovers there were grapes and the biggest blueberries ever.

As dinner was winding down, the evening's emcee, Steve Beckett, Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus Council 5752, called the kitchen crew to the stage. These knights took turns drawing raffle tickets for door prizes of booze and gift certificates.

Now came what the Ladies were breathlessly waiting for: "Cath'lic Boys and the Mystic Portal." The Portal mystery? Where had the wives of the Knights disappeared to? Terry Bosley introduced each skit and performed in most. Jim Mayer wondered how the missing wives went down the transfer portal, and he sang with Gary Wszalek the Beatles song "She's Got a Ticket to Ride," while another Knight passed out paper tickets to Ladies in the audience.

With each skit a Knight crossed the stage holding a

placard displaying a stage of grieving word. This grieving stage was "Pleading," and four "Elvi" imitators came out and sang Elvis' "Don't Be Cruel," and "Blue Suede Shoes."

The next skit represented "Grief Sets In," and the Knights sang, "It's My Heartache and I'll Cry if I Want To." Then for "Confusion," Gary Bosley sang a lovely, sweet song he wrote himself. For "Self-Deprecation" Jim Mayer sang, "That's Why the Fella (Lady) Is a Tramp."

Before the ending, Jim Mayer and Gary Wszalek involved the audience in "My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean." The Ladies were instructed to stand up, then sit down each time they heard the name Bonnie. The Knights repeated the chorus faster and faster as the Ladies tried to sit or stand each time they heard Bonnie.

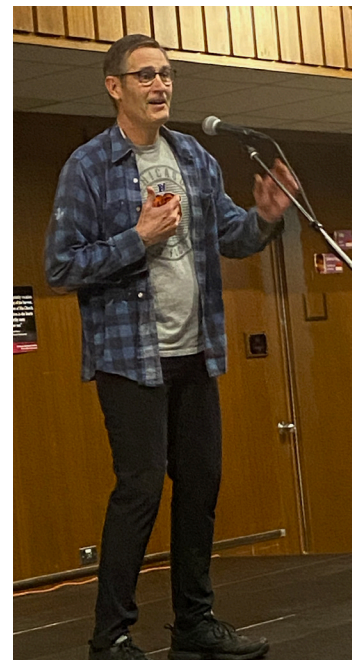
The last stage of grief was "Anticipation" with Gary Wszalek singing the song and Jim Mayer and the Bosley brothers as backup.

Several times during the song a Knight crossed the stage with a bottle of Heinz ketchup, shaking it over a plate to no avail.

Before the last song, Terry Bosley admitted that the lost wives were in the audience all the time. He added that the outcome was better than the overused and lame excuse that it was only a dream. Then all eight singing Knights returned to the stage wearing their tux tee shirts and bowler hats and canes to sing the Beatles' "She

Loves You, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah," followed by "All My Life Is a Circle," which the audience was invited to join in singing.

There was much applause and cheering because the audience didn't want it to end. What's not to like about a delicious meal, wine, and a funny, talented performance? A professional dinner theater experience could never match it! See you next year!



## A Busy Year for Women of St. Patrick

The Women of St. Patrick are concluding a busy year of spiritual, service, and social activities with their annual Cookies and Craft sale on Sunday, December 15, from 8 a.m. until noon. All parish bakers, crafters, and artists are encouraged to continue their dedication and generosity in supporting this popular event.

Details for donating, assisting at the sale, and purchasing the many baked goods and crafts will appear in the parish bulletin and in flyers and posters around the



parish. All proceeds will be used to benefit the parish in a variety of ways. Since 2024 has been exceptionally active, a review of activities and accomplishments, as well as future initiatives, is in order.

As a service project during Lent, the Board voted to approve a proposal to contribute \$100 each month in household cleaning products and personal care items to the St. Vincent DePaul Food Pantry. Various members of the Board shop each month and deliver the merchandise to the pantry for the “pick two” shelves. The original vote limited this project to one year, but it will be reviewed in 2025 for a vote to continue, with a possible increase. The Board works closely with Sally Czapar to provide goods most needed by the guests of the food pantry.

This summer’s Cellar to Garret sale, which took place August 8-10, was a highly successful event thanks to the leadership of Bernadette Nelson, Anna Connor, and the co-chairs for set-up, tear-down, food for volunteers, volunteer organization, and publicity. The number of people attending increased from 2023, and the final proceeds exceeded \$11,000.

This event serves a community of people in need of the clothing and household goods, and many attendees express their appreciation.

During the spring, the parish dishwasher broke down beyond repair, and the parish purchased a new one. The bulk of the total cost was covered by WSP, contributing \$9174.00

of the purchase and installation price. Purchasing a dishwasher was essential because of the parish funeral luncheons, as well as the many events held at the parish.

ish.

The Women of St. Patrick coordinate all the funeral luncheons held at the parish, under the leadership of Anna Connor. A list of the parish “bakers” who supply the many salads, side dishes, and desserts is maintained electronically. Anyone willing to share their culinary talents is encouraged to sign up. Choosing to provide a food item for a funeral is completely voluntary, and there is no obligation to contribute to every funeral. With the exception of a small cost for the purchase of the meats, these luncheons are completely free to grieving parishioners due to the generosity of the many volunteers.

One of the initiatives of the Board of the Women of St. Patrick is to update the by-laws and the form used for requesting grants. The newly updated by-laws were completed and approved by the membership at the October general meeting, following a soup, salad, and dessert luncheon. The grant form does not require approval, and the only modification was to make the deadlines more open and realistic. All forms are shared through the general email list

for WSP, and anyone who wishes to be included on this list may contact Roxanne Munch (Roxanne\_munch@sbcglobal.net). Since October is the month for donating to World Missions, the general membership also voted to contribute \$5000 to the Maryknoll Lay Missioners. Dr. Susan Nagele provided a brief overview of their continuing work and her own many years of dedicated service in the Sudan.

A final and ongoing activity of the Board and the WSP membership is a review of organizational finances. The policies of the Diocese of Peoria have been shared and studied, and the Board will continue to act in keeping with these policies and the WSP by-laws in serving the parish.

## Donuts with Santa himself!

On December 8 you can have free donuts while talking with Santa and Mrs. Claus! How would your kids enjoy telling Santa himself what they want for Christmas? They would have a blast while you parents can chat and enjoy coffee. Have fun while your kids do too! Remember to bring your cameras to capture these special moments!



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

## What is an EMHC commissioning?

At our All Saints Day Masses this year, Father Anthony asked all the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) to come forward for a special “commissioning” blessing. What was that all about?



Commissioning of EMHCs includes the following steps: attending an orientation session, completing and signing both the St. Patrick’s EMHC Commissioning Pledge and the Diocesan EMHC Affidavit, and receiving a commissioning blessing from our pastor. Then, of course, you accept an assignment that reflects your commitment to the ministry. Scheduled assignments are reviewed periodically throughout the year to adjust to changes in your personal needs and any changes in the ministry’s commitments.

Our EMHCs are commissioned through the Peoria diocese to serve at a specific parish for a period of three years. You can serve at Mass (liturgical), bring the Eucharist to the sick and homebound (pastoral care), or serve in both liturgical and pastoral care ministries. EMHCs are encouraged to participate as they feel called.

Our last group commissioning took place three years ago, in November 2021, and it was time for our liturgical and pastoral EMHCs to be re-commissioned. In preparation, all current EMHCs were invited to attend a Fall Renewal Re-commissioning Program. This year’s program was held on Saturday morning, October 19.

We gathered in Trinity Hall for light morning refreshments and fellowship at 8:30 a.m. Our renewal leader, Ana Rodas, began our program by helping us to reflect on the following:

- Why does God allow us to participate in the ministries of the Mass?
- The weight of the call to be an EMHC
- The Father’s love for you
- Why participate in the Mass?
- Discipline and piety

After Ana’s presentation, we moved to the church for an Adoration Hour of prayer and reflection. We concluded our morning with a brief review/update of EMHC procedures and by signing our commissioning documents.

Our renewal program showered us with the graces we need to serve our parish community during the next three years. The following comment from Mary Lee Brady, one of our EMHC attendees, provides a beautiful summary:

“Just wanted to let you know that I really appreciated

the renewal morning. The speaker was interesting and inspirational and the Eucharistic adoration portion was very important to me. It helped solidify the awesomeness of our mission as ministers of the Holy Eucharist, and the reverence we should have when sharing the body and blood of Christ with our fellow Catholics. Thank you for that very special morning.”

EMHCs, you are truly needed! Thank you for your service to our parishioners, and the faithful witness you give to the Eucharistic presence. Your service during each liturgy – and in bringing Jesus to our family of communicants who are not able to attend Mass – blesses our parish!

\* \* \*

Of course, many more EMHCs are needed. We are currently unable to serve Catholic patients at Carle Hospital as regularly as we’d like. Often it takes what seems a long time to get around to all our homebound parishioners waiting to receive Communion and maybe enjoy a brief visit. At weekend Masses it is sometimes challenging to fill all our liturgical spots, especially during the holidays when EMHCs wish to celebrate with visiting family members and friends. If you are called to this ministry, please contact Diane Wilhelm, coordinator of St. Patrick’s EMHC ministry (wilhelmd@earthlink.net, 630-292-3028). She will be happy to hear from you and to answer any questions you may have.

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## Able Group from page 1

of all the children of God are met.

At the inaugural launch members shared the resources available in the Champaign-Urbana community for persons with special needs to find support and help. These included:

1. Epilepsy support group meetings for Champaign County on the first Monday of each month.
2. Sensory Friendly Emergency Department room at Carle Emergency Department. There is also a sensory friendly gym called the Paulie Palermo gym for occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy at Carle North Annex.
3. Hope Heals Camp in Alabama; a free camp for people of all ages of disabilities and their families. It provides an open, welcoming, and accommodating environment for all. It was founded by Katherine Wolf and her husband. Katherine became paralyzed and overcame her challenges as an adult.

The luncheon was attended by families caring for and living with special needs and by volunteers who have worked with special needs children for many years.

This ministry welcomes ideas and participation from members of our faith community. For more information or to become a volunteer, contact Larissa Metz (larissapmetz@gmail.com).

## St. Patrick Children's First Reconciliation

On the evening of Tuesday, November 12, eighteen St. Patrick families celebrated a son's or daughter's First Reconciliation. Preparation for this blessed celebration was a family journey. On October 22 a retreat for parents and kids was held at St. Patrick. While Jon McCoy, Religious Education Director, led the parents in faith formation, the catechists began teaching the kids about Reconciliation. Materials were sent home with the families, including Reconciliation cards and mock Reconciliation activities. Over the next several weeks parents and kids diligently prayed and practiced these activities and exercises.



The First Reconciliation service was joyful and reverent for everyone in attendance. After the hymn "I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light" and an opening prayer, Fr. Anthony read the Gospel (Luke 15: 1-7) and gave a brief homily followed by the Lord's Prayer. Families were then escorted, one at a time, to a Reconciliation room to see Fr. Anthony, Fr. Phelps, Fr. O'Brien, or Msgr. Brownsey.

The kids were nervous as they waited, but as Jon McCoy said afterward, "They always come out with such a look of joy on their faces." One of these young penitents, Chiamaka Christabel Ugwu, was asked, "How do you think Jesus will feel after you celebrate Reconciliation?" She responded with great energy and joy beaming from her smiling face with, "HAPPY! REALLY HAPPY!" Her words and joy describe how all of us felt.

Jon asks all of us to keep praying for our kids. "While First Reconciliation is great, we want them to go to their second, their 10th, their 50th, and so on! We want them to participate in this sacrament as much as they (and we) possibly can. God created them (and us) to encounter him, so he can remind us, "Hey, I'm here. I love you."

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Tell the timid to take heart.  
The Lord our God will come!  
—Monastic liturgy

## Patience! from page 1

show us how to live in a way that prepares us to live with him in joy for eternity.

That's a lot to reflect on and there's not much in our secular celebrations to help us. So how does the Church do it?

First of all, we have the weeks of Advent. We spend these weeks remembering how desperately we needed Jesus to come into the world. We remember generations of our faith ancestors who hoped that God would find a way to heal the world. We remember their hope, but also their sadness that they died without seeing the Messiah. And we remember that, all the while, unknown by them, God was at work, preparing them to receive his Son.

We don't spend Advent pretending that we don't know that his Son will come. We know that he has come and is with us still. But there needs to be some sense of not-yet-ness in our Advent lives so that we experience a sense of newness in our celebration of Jesus' birth. So do your baking, but maybe save the cookies for Christmas. Put up your creche, but maybe don't put Jesus in place until Christmas. Decorate your home, but maybe don't turn on the tree lights until dusk on Christmas Eve. Enjoy the music, but maybe keep one carol that your family won't sing until the creche scene is completed and the lights are lit.

And don't forget to prepare your heart. Savor the daily Advent scripture readings no matter how busy your other preparations become. Receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist to welcome God into your heart. Look to the people around you for ways to help them prepare for Christmas. Give to the poor. Invite the lonely. Make peace in uneasy relationships. Bring forgiveness to old hurts. Reach out to those who have become distant.

Be patient with the holiday frenzy around you, and don't let it draw you away from Advent. Be patient with God, who prepares good things for us even when we don't notice his work. Be patient with yourself, trusting in God's care for you. Be patient with the season of Advent, and wait for the coming of our Lord!

### Vocation Prayer

*Father, bless our parish by raising up dedicated and generous men and women from our families and friends who will give their lives in service to your people, as priests, brothers and sisters, deacons, and lay ministers. Help me to understand how I can help you in your plan for St. Patrick's church.*



**Q: What is the immaculate conception?**

**A:** In the Gospel of Luke an angel visits a young woman in Nazareth named Mary and asks if she will bear the Messiah. Mary says yes, and she becomes pregnant with Jesus. This is known as the immaculate conception, right?

Wrong! This doctrine refers to something different. It isn't about how Mary became pregnant with Jesus, it's about how Mary's mother became pregnant with Mary. It was deemed immaculate because there was no transmission of original sin. Now follow this reasoning closely:

If the Church for centuries was correct in teaching that sexual intercourse transmitted original sin, then Mary while in the womb would be stained by original sin. If so, then she could not have carried the sinless Son of God in her womb without exposing him to original sin. And if Jesus was born with original sin, then he could not serve as the appropriate sacrifice on the cross to atone for a wounded world. If Jesus was exposed to original sin, there would be no possibility of salvation for humankind.

Pope Pius IX and his theologians proposed a solution to this conundrum: the immaculate conception of Mary. By doing this they protected the sinlessness of Jesus—and thus the possibility of salvation for humankind—and further elevated the most venerated and beloved of all the saints: Mary of Nazareth.

Pope Pius IX declared the doctrine of the immaculate conception in his 1854 apostolic constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*, and it was grandfathered into the First Vatican Council's declaration of papal infallibility in 1870. It is one of only two teachings to be declared *ex cathedra*, or infallibly, by a pope. The other is Mary's bodily assumption into heaven, declared by Pope Pius XII in 1950.

Today we remember that Mary conceived Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. Her courageous assent to a strange pregnancy and her yes to God's plan are important, but the doctrine of the immaculate conception does not refer to Mary's pregnancy with Jesus. It refers to when Mary herself was conceived by her parents and God intervened to stop the transmission of original sin.

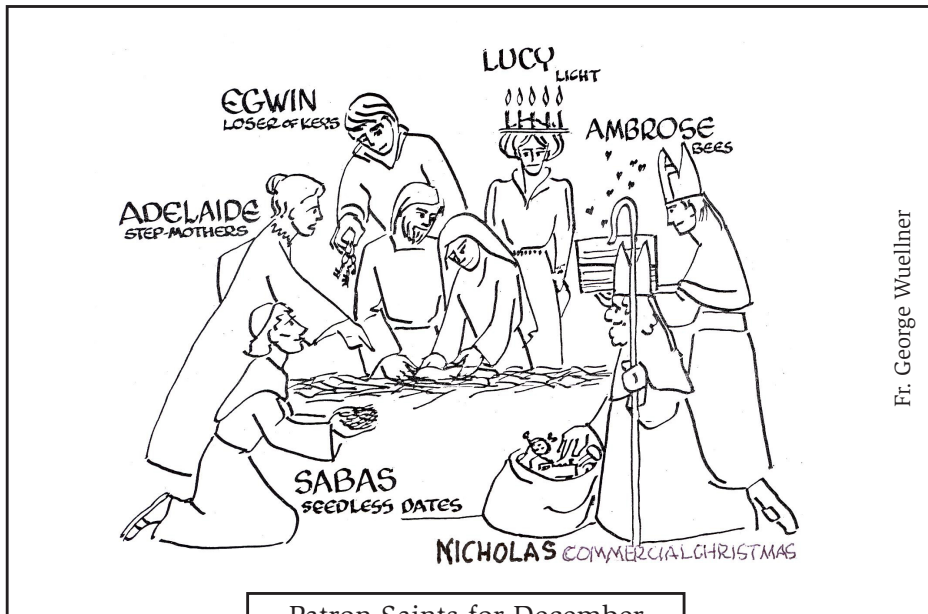
## Parish Council News



At their November meeting, Council members discussed – and brainstormed – ways to improve response rates to the Time and Talent sign-ups. No decisions have been made yet, but ideas suggested include having sign-ups more than once a year, making good use of communication tools (Flocknote, FB, etc.), and doing ministry spotlights throughout the year. The general idea is to make Time and Talent more of a continual process rather than a once-a-year event.

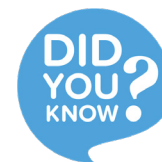
As for the next movie night, know that it's coming, but what movie? And when? Stay tuned!

Directories are also coming. A second round of corrections was submitted in October, and the word is that it's soon to be printed. No firm date on arrival, but . . .



Fr. George Wuellner

Patron Saints for December



Under usual circumstances the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary is observed on December 8. Because this year Decem-

ber 8 falls on a Sunday in Advent and because nothing takes precedence to the Sundays of Advent, its observance has been moved to the following Monday, December 9. Mary's feast will be celebrated in an explanatory Mass on that day at 11:30 a.m. Fr. Millar from St. John's will be the celebrant, and our Faith and Reason Schola will be singing at the Mass. Everyone is invited. Can you join in this special celebration?

## Our Lady of Loreto

The feast day of Our Lady of Loreto celebrates the Holy House of Loreto, where it is believed that the Virgin Mary was born, where the Annunciation took place, and where the Holy Family lived.



The house, called the *Sancta Casa* in Italian, is enshrined in the Basilica della Santa Casa in the northern Italian town of Loreto. Legends say that the house was flown by angels from Nazareth to modern-day Croatia, then on to Italy. For this reason, Our Lady of Loreto is the patron saint of air travelers and auspicious travel.

It is a modest three-walled building with no foundation and measures about 31 x 13 feet.

Some historians believe that rather than angels, a family called the Ageli was responsible for bringing the house over by ship. Archeologists in the 1960s determined that the *Sancta Casa*'s stone is from Palestine, as are bits of pollen found in the stone. In addition, measurements of the remains of the foundation in Nazareth perfectly match the *Sancta Casa*.

Over two hundred saints have made pilgrimages to Loreto, including Ignatius of Loyola, Charles Borromeo, Thérèse of Lisieux, Frances Xavier Cabrini, Louis de Montfort, François de Sales, and John Paul II.

Pope Francis decreed in 2019 that we celebrate the feast day annually in the Roman Calendar on December 10th. The timing during Advent is no coincidence. Loreto is a reminder that God did not choose a mighty, otherworldly being to bear his son, or even a rich and powerful empress. Rather, he chose Mary. He let his son's mother enter this world in a small stone house in an outpost of the Roman Empire. She did chores there, raised her son there, and cooked his meals there. It is also where she welcomed the Angel Gabriel and agreed to give birth to the Messiah.

In decreeing the feast day, the Vatican stated that "This celebration will help all people, especially families, youth, and religious to imitate the virtues of that perfect

disciple of the Gospel, the Virgin Mother, who, in conceiving the Head of the Church also accepted us as her own."

May we be reminded, especially during Advent, of the grace and peace that each family can bring to our broken world when we look to the example of the woman who answered God's invitation to bear the Prince of Peace.

## Helping couples prepare for marriage

Would you like to help engaged couples get their marriages off to a good start and perhaps improve your own marriage in the process? Consider becoming a part of St. Patrick's marriage preparation ministry.

The ministry assigns married couples to work with engaged couples on one of the requirements in preparation for marriage in the Church: taking the FOCCUS inventory. Each individual completes this online survey, which



has questions concerning lifestyle expectations, communication, personality match, and many other topics (see [www.foccusinc.com](http://www.foccusinc.com) for sample questions).

As a mentor couple, you can meet with the engaged couple in your home, at the church, or virtually via Zoom to help them to reflect on their responses to the inventory and to support the couple as they address issues and problem solve. Some engaged couples are young people getting married for the first time, while others are older couples preparing for a second marriage and blending families.

Are you a busy couple? No problem. You set the appointment times to meet with the engaged couple. Meeting with one to two couples a year should take only about six hours total.

"Each couple we have met with has been so grateful for the experience," says Joyce Wagner. She feels that it has rejuvenated her own marriage. "This is one of those ministries where you receive as much as you give!"

Would you like to help with this wonderful ministry? To find out more about it or to sign up, please contact Joyce Wagner (217-337-7571 or [wagner1989@comcast.net](mailto:wagner1989@comcast.net)), or call the parish office (217-367-2665).

## Help Needed!

*In Focus* has been going strong for 43 years now, and we can do this because of the many people who pitch in. We have three special needs right now:

**LAYOUT** A few times a year, scheduled in advance, you'd receive files of edited text, photos, and graphics. You'd have three days to do the layout and create a pdf using whatever publishing software you're already familiar with.

**WRITERS** Every couple of months, you'd receive a topic, knowledgeable contact people, and Web resources. You'd have about 10 days to write 400-600 words on a topic.

**PHOTO EDITOR** Photos give vibrancy to *In Focus*, but it takes time to select them each month. You'd read the draft of *In Focus* and select photos to help tell the story of our parish life.

Can you help? Contact Cathy Salika at [csalika@illinois.edu](mailto:csalika@illinois.edu).

## Morning Prayer

So far today, God, I've done all right. I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper, haven't been greedy, grumpy, selfish, or self-indulgent.

I'm very grateful for that.

But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of this bed. And from then on, I'm probably going to need a lot more help.

Amen.

## Quick fixin's from the kitchen of . . . Cathy Salika

### Conner Prairie Apple Slump

Heat to boiling in a pot with a tight-fitting lid

6 apples, cored and sliced

½ c sugar or sweetener

1 t cinnamon

½ c water

Stir together with enough milk to make a soft dough:

1 ½ c flour

¼ t salt

1 ½ t baking powder

½ c milk (approximate)

Drop the dough in 6 or 8 spots on top of the apple mixture. Cover tightly and simmer 30 minutes. Serve warm with cream.



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

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