

SPIRIT & LIFE

Summer 2024—St. Gregory the Great Parish

SALT OF THE EARTH

OLPI

ST. PIUS X MERGER AND FAMILY FAITH FORMATION



BY MICHAEL RUSZALA
Director, Family Faith Formation

We have embarked on a new chapter in Faith Formation within our Family of Parishes. Representatives from St. Pius X, Good Shepherd, and St. Greg’s, along with the Forming Disciples Pillar, have been collaborating to enhance our Faith Formation efforts. Fr. Rob Wozniak, our Faith Formation Moderator, has been actively involved in shaping these programs and proposals. However, the announcement of proposed closures across the diocese, including St. Pius X, has brought unexpected challenges. This proposal will take effect in due

time, marking a difficult period for parishioners who have spent much of their lives at St. Pius X.

Starting this school year, families from St. Pius X are invited to join the various programs at St. Greg’s, and Catechists from St. Pius X are encouraged to continue their roles at St. Greg’s. The curriculum and format, decided together with the Forming Disciples Pillar, will proceed as planned. Meanwhile, the Mass schedule at St. Pius X continues, and you might see me playing piano at the 4:00 pm Masses.

For those who received their sacraments in the beautiful light of the stained-glass windows off North French

Know you are welcome here. You are important here.

Road, no church can replace their home parish in their hearts. However, we want families of St. Pius X to know you are welcome here. **You are important here. We will ensure that the St. Pius X faith community remains vibrant.** At St. Greg’s, our classes are small and close-knit. Catechists know and love their students, and we offer numerous format and time options, including classes similar to at St. Pius X.

Pam Rankin, the Coordinator of Faith Formation at St. Pius X, has been working to help families *Continued p. 2...*

VOICES OF FAITH: SUMMER SPEAKERS



BY BRIAN RUH
Director of Evangelization

On June 5, St. Greg’s wel-

comed back Mike Sacilowski to present his latest one-man performance, **SHE DID IT ALL!**, honoring the Venerable Father Nelson Baker and his devotion to Our Lady of Victory. With audio and visual effects, Mike skillfully brought to life the period when Fr. Baker served the people of Lackawanna, Buffalo, and beyond.

Fr. Baker’s path to sainthood began in 1987 when he was named a “Servant of God.” Recognized for his holy and virtuous life, he was conferred the title “Venerable” on January 14, 2011. Once a

first miracle attributed to him is confirmed, he will be called “Blessed,” and with a second miracle, we will have ourselves a Buffalo-born “Saint!”

It is amazing what Fr. Baker accomplished. This “Padre of the Poor” was the driving force behind establishing an orphanage, a boys’ protectory, a home for unwed mothers and their infants, a hospital, a grade school, a high school, a nurses’ home, a farm to help feed the hungry, a soup kitchen that served 450,000+ meals during the first three years of the Great Depression, and Our Lady of Victory Basilica, now a national shrine and pilgrimage site.

If you’re interested in *Continued p. 2...*

MORE INSIDE:

PILLAR UPDATES P.3

GOOD SHEPHERD PARISH P.4

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS P.4

ST. PIUS X PARISH P.5

PARISHIONER WITNESS P.5

GREAT RACE P.5

SCHOOL UPDATE P.6

RON BERTOVICH P.6

UPCOMING EVENTS P.6-7

MINISTRY UPDATES P.7

SALT OF THE EARTH P.8

“...Family Faith Formation” From p. 1

transition to St. Greg’s and remain active in Faith Formation. Families have already begun registering. Some Catechists are signing up to teach, others are joining the sub list or volunteering for special projects.

This summer, St. Greg’s hosted vibrant programs that marked a new chapter of collaborative **FAITH FORMATION** across the Shepherd and Saints Roman Catholic Family. Children, teens, and Catechists from St. Greg’s, St. Pius X, and Good Shepherd came together, bringing a sense of hope and excitement for building the young Church.



DISCIPLE CAMP welcomed 65 youth from

Grades 5-10 for a week-long immersion into parish life. The theme focused on defending the Faith. Each day highlighting a particular sacrament. Mornings began with Scripture meditation

and activities led by Youth Ministers, followed by classes taught by Catechists, daily Mass with themed music, various activities, and different forms of prayer. The week ended with Adoration, led by Fr. Rob.

Youth shared how Disciple Camp made the Faith more relatable, and many began participating in LifeTeen and Edge soon after. The following Sunday, Disciple Camp youth organized a **CAR WASH** to support the **JAMAICA MISSION TRIP** and the **FAMILY FAITH FORMATION** program, raising \$1,340.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL (VBS) was a convergence point for the Family of Parishes, **YOUTH MINISTRY**, families from **ST. GREG’S SCHOOL**, and various ministries. Elements and leadership from the VBS program at St. Pius X were integrated. **211 children, 91 teen Volunteers, 14 adult Volunteers, and six Faith Formation Staff** “dove into friendship with God” with *Scuba: Totally Catholic VBS*.



One of the most memorable moments was watching over 200 kids enthusiastically singing Bible-themed lyrics and dancing with hand motions. Kids said, “This is the best day ever!” This was the first year my son Joseph participated. He loved it, especially the races at the School Track led by our **seminarian Andy Erdman**, who interacted with the children throughout the week.

This year, every child and teen at VBS received a blue drawstring backpack with the name of our Family of Parishes and each of our three parishes. **The message**



we want families and children to know is we are all together now. These are challenging times, but there is also great potential for our Family. ■

“...Voices of Faith” From p. 1

visiting the OLV National Shrine, it is open to visitors of all faiths from **6:30 am - 7:00 pm on weekdays and Sundays, and until 7:30 pm on Saturdays.** The basilica is wheelchair accessible.

Tours of the breathtaking OLV Basilica are free of charge, although donations are accepted for ongoing maintenance. Group tours may be scheduled **between 1:00 pm and 5:00 pm throughout the week, except Fridays.** To schedule a tour, contact Carolyn at (716) 828-9444. Please allow ample time when calling to schedule. They do their best to accommodate requests!



On June 11, St. Greg’s welcomed **PAUL AND BETH ZUCARELLI** to share their

remarkable story. Paul, an ordinary person who had an extraordinary experience, believes his ‘near-death experience’ is a blessing meant to be shared.

Paul and his wife Beth are Buffalonians. Paul graduated from Canisius College, earned his CPA, married his high school sweetheart, and moved to Tucson, AZ. He found success in the healthcare industry, balancing his priorities of God, family, and work, in that order.

However, things took a dramatic turn after Paul underwent open-heart surgery. One moment he was conversing with his sister, and the next, he stopped breathing, his body went limp, and alarms went off. What Paul experienced next is difficult to describe, but he speaks of an “illumination of conscience,” a “brilliant bright light,” “peaceful silence,” “metaphysical warmth,” and “unconditional love.”

The experience transformed Paul, leading him to share five key lessons:

- 1) **Life is a gift.**
- 2) **Faith grows in relationships.**
- 3) **Prayer matters to God.**
- 4) **Focus on your soul.**
- 5) **There is salvation in suffering.**

Paul kindly left some copies of his book, *Faith Understood – An Ordinary Man’s Journey to the Presence of God*. If you would like to get a copy for yourself or loved ones, please contact Brian Ruh at the Parish Office at (716) 688-5678, ext. 313. You can also view Paul’s talk online at: youtu.be/2F1k_QPTvcw

We encourage everyone to continue exploring the themes presented by our speakers. They challenge us to live with purpose and deep faith. Whether by reading Paul’s book, visiting OLV Basilica, or discussing how we can be the Salt of the Earth, there are many ways to keep growing. ■

Live with purpose, compassion, and deep faith.

SPIRITUAL LIFE PILLAR—THE ALPHA PROGRAM

who
will
you invite?



with Alpha USA. For Shepherd and Saints Roman Catholic Family of Parishes, Alpha will run on **Thursday evenings from 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm at Good Shepherd, beginning September 19.**

- 2) **Offering hospitality in the form of food preparation.**
- 3) **Learning more about helping as a team member.**

BY RENEE BOLTRI

Spiritual Life Pillar

I write this on a very stormy afternoon, mindful of the storms that we face as a diocese and Family of Parishes. But looking out my window, I see a hint of blue sky and sunlight. Storms always give way to clearing. God is good!

Our Pillar has the awesome responsibility of offering **ALPHA**, an international program of radical hospitality and introduction to the basics of Christian life. This is part of a diocesan partnership

Many of us are familiar with the basics of Christian life. But you may not be familiar with the term “radical hospitality.” It involves welcoming all with lavish generosity of spirit, attending to the details of physical comforts of a meal, an inviting setting, and people noticing and responding to what others need.

Right now, we are looking for parishioners from all our parishes to be involved in one or more of the following ways:

- 1) **Praying for the success of Alpha.**

This first round of Alpha will help us gauge timing, location, size of group, etc. Please pray about answering this invitation, and begin to think about who you know who could truly benefit from an opportunity for radical hospitality and growth.

Please stay tuned for additional information. If you want to get involved, **please reach out to your Parish Office with your name and number**, and someone from our team will contact you. Thank you and God bless! ■

STEWARDSHIP PILLAR—TIME AND TALENT



STEWARDSHIP OF TALENT

I am interested in obtaining more information about:

Altar Servers

- Adult
 Youth

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

- Homebound Ministers
 For Nursing Homes (St. Pius X or Good Shepherd)

- Children's Liturgy of the Word (St. Pius X or St. Greg's)

- Lectors
 Music
 Sacristans
 Ushers
 Greeters

Name (Please Print) _____
Phone _____
Email _____
Parish _____

Please drop this card in the Collection basket, and a ministry leader will contact you.

showcasing opportunities for parishioners to utilize their God-given abilities. These cards have been collected and forwarded to the respective Ministry Leaders for follow-up. Additionally, Ministry Leaders were available after Masses to discuss with those interested in contributing their talents.

The Stewardship Pillar extends heartfelt thanks to all who responded to our call to share their unique talents and gifts!

We recognize the recent changes, including the closure of St. Augustine's

and the consolidation of St. Pius X with St. Greg's, may cause delays. We ask for patience if a Ministry Leader has not reached out to you yet.

The Stewardship of Time and Talent initiative has concluded. The Stewardship of Treasure will soon be introduced at St. Greg's. We continuously welcome the sharing of time, talent, and treasure by our parishioners.

In early August, the Stewardship Pillar will convene to discuss the future of Stewardship and plan next steps. ■

BY ERIC BANNOCHIE

Stewardship Pillar

The Stewardship Pillar recently distributed cards detailing various Liturgical Ministries within our Family of Parishes,

OUTREACH/INREACH PILLAR—MEET THE PRIESTS



BY CATHY MCMASTER
Outreach/Inreach Pillar

On July 13, the Outreach/Inreach Pillar with help from the Spiritual Life Pillar, hosted the **MEET THE PRIESTS NIGHT** at the Good Shepherd Parish Hall. The evening provided an opportunity to learn more about our priests, meet new people

within our Family, and enjoy a free spaghetti dinner.

Fr. Leon, Fr. Dan, and Fr. Dave attended in person, while Fr. Rob, who was on the **JAMAICAN MISSION TRIP**, sent a pre-recorded greeting for the event. Throughout the night, we learned about their favorite foods, what made them decide to go into the priesthood, and even whether they have ever witnessed a miracle.

The Outreach/Inreach Pillar would like to thank Brian Ruh for being the Emcee; Adam Jarosz for his ice-breaking abilities; and Margaret Lucas, Renee Boltri, Kathy Budnik, Janet Lombardi, and Erin McMaster for their help in the kitchen and setting up. We could not have pulled the dinner off without everyone's help. The Pillar plans on looking at the Homebound Ministry in our upcoming meetings. ■

GOOD SHEPHERD PARISH—FROM CANAL-SIDE TO TODAY



BY ANNE WHITEHEAD
Good Shepherd Parish Secretary



The early history of Good Shepherd Parish in Pendleton coincides with the development of WNY. In the early 1830s, German immigrants settled and tilled the land. French from Canada, Lorraine, and Alsace, along with Irish and German laborers on the Erie Canal, settled along its banks.

Many of these settlers were Roman Catholics. Their spiritual needs were difficult to meet, as New York was a single Roman Catholic Diocese with the Episcopal seat in New York City, 450 miles away.



In 1836, Bishop John Dubois sent a young priest, John Henry Neumann, to WNY via the newly opened Erie Canal. When John Neumann was stationed in Williamsville in 1836, he visited Pendleton and said Mass in the homes of two German Catholics settlers.

In 1847, Bishop John Timon became the first bishop of a new diocese, covering many parts of WNY, including Pendleton. That year, “The Church on the Canal” (future Good Shepherd Parish) was established on the banks of the Tonawanda Creek-Erie Canal. Masses were held in family homes.

Bishop Timon urged Fr. Kramer to construct a church, but the congregation lacked the financial means. In the 1850s, Pendleton and Swormville congregations merged briefly, with Fr. Ulrich traveling between them. In 1853, Pendleton’s congre-

gation appealed to separate from Swormville, and 60 Catholic families along the canal were granted independent parish status with a permanent pastor.

In 1849, Fr. Fritsch, urged by Bishop Timon, proposed to the parishioners that they construct a log building, “The Little Church,” on four acres purchased by the community and deeded to the bishop. At that time, eight Catholic families were in the neighborhood. On December 30, 1849, Fr. Fritsch celebrated the first Mass in the new church building. For five years, the log cabin building served as both school and church.



In September 1854, parishioners began work on a new brick church, inspired by a Mission retreat conducted by a visiting priest, Father Werninger. Present for the Mission were 80 men, 92 women, 36 young ladies, 22 young boys, and 25 children. At the end of the Mission, Fr. Werninger donated \$100 toward construction of the new church. The foundation was laid on September 25, 1854, and the cornerstone was blessed on October 3, 1854.

On December 2, 1855, the congregation sat in new pews, and it was announced that a pew rent of \$2 per year would be charged. Those who did not pay lost title to their seats.



Today, a statue in honor of John Neumann stands regally beside the church, and the burial site in the back is named “St. John Neumann Cemetery” in his honor. ■

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS UPDATE — BRICK AND MORTAR



BY MARY BETH PFEIFFER
Director, Parish Operations

We are excited to share photos of the brick and mortar work funded by the Capital Improvement Fund Drive from December 2023. This work was per-

formed by Select Construction, which also completed the exterior work on the Church and the Ministry Center.

The photos showcase the before and after of the School inlay replacement, which not only looks much nicer but also is now a much more stable building exterior.

Thank you to all who have supported the parish’s **CAPITAL FUND DRIVE**. We are most grateful for your continued support in maintaining our campus! ■



Before (left) and after (right) photos of School inlay replacement.

ST. PIUS X—SALT OF THE EARTH



BY LYNN KNOOP-KNUTSEN

*Secretary/Bookkeeper,
St. Pius X Parish*

St. Pius X Roman Catholic Parish was established on June 2, 1958, with the first Mass held at the Getzville Fire Hall. Father Joseph Weber was appointed the first pastor. He was also the only pastor this writer failed to meet, since he left St. Pius in 1964 when Father Francis Trapp was appointed the second pastor. I was born in 1963. St Pius X was and is my home.

Father Weber purchased the 15-acres of earth we are currently on. He was responsible for the hall now named after him (1958). Father Trapp was the force behind the building of the church (1969). Under its roof, count-



less weddings, baptisms, first communions, reconciliations, confirmations, and funerals

have taken place. Today, however, funerals outnumber baptisms and weddings today.

Matthew 5:13 says, “You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no

longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.”

Despite the dedicated efforts of the priests who have served St. Pius X—Msgr. James Connelly (1977-1987), Msgr. George B. Yiengst (1987-2009), Father James O’Connor (2009-2015), Father Jay McGinnis (2015-2020), Father Robert Wozniak (2020-2023), and now Father Leon Biernat—the parish has seen a decline from 1,400 active families to approximately 550. This number includes those who have been with the parish since the beginning, those who have returned (like myself) and those who love the family-like atmosphere of the parish.

I was hired by Father Jay McGinnis in June 2017. Over the years, I have come to deeply appreciate both the beautiful **earth** our parish stands on and the **salt** that has preserved it for over 65 years. We are survivors!

Father Leon Biernat has assured us that St. Pius X will always have a place at St. Gregory the Great. We will not be abandoned. Father Weber’s legacy will be remembered. Our earth may change, but we can continue to offer an enhanced taste to the salt. Christ will see us through. ■



WITNESS OF FAITH—KETTY GRESS



FORGED AND BELOVED came together for a unique night with special guest Ketty Gress. Ketty

is a long-time parishioner with an amazing story to tell, as she and her husband have endured many trials since their time growing up in Jerusalem, and they remained faithful through each twist and turn. Ketty

and Edward belong to the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre and have sponsored the upkeep and restoration of our beautiful Adoration Chapel. Watch her talk on our Youth Ministry YouTube channel: [tinyurl.com/ForgedBelovedKettyGress](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtinyurl.com/ForgedBelovedKettyGress) ■



GREAT RACE TOPS 700 PARTICIPANTS



BY CHERYL BERTOVICH

Co-Director, Great Race

The 27th Annual Great Race, held June 14, welcomed over 700 participants to the St. Greg's campus, the largest number since pre-Covid. The 5K race attracted 621 runners, up 30% over last year. The Kids 1K race and the 1K Fun Walk generated smiles in all age groups.

The WNY-favorite band Hit 'n Run performed for the 1,000+ in attendance. Guests enjoyed numerous attractions, with the newest smile-generator being a Kids Petting Zoo, allowing for feeding the animals and selfies with the crowd-favorite alpaca.

Top Male Finisher and Fastest Parishioner was Michael Brannigan (14:52). Top Female was Jennifer Boerner (18:30). Fastest Female parishioner was Brooke Podgorski. Fastest St. Greg's Male Student was Alex Horner. Fastest SGG Female Student was Greta Sendlak. Fastest Team was Runmore.

Net proceeds topped \$35,000, supporting the parish’s many ministries. Co-Directors Cheryl Bertovich and Allegra Perna wish to thank all the generous sponsors, over 100 volunteers, participants and partygoers, and St. Greg’s Parish Office and Maintenance Staff. A special thanks to Committee members Jim Ginnane, Maria and Steve Glamuzina, Joe LaBuda, Earl Leising, Mary Beth Pfeiffer, Sue and Joe Tirone, and Aimeelyn Zaccaria. ■



PRESERVING TRADITION AND INSPIRING GROWTH



Molly White, Interim Principal for Early Childhood & Elementary; Daniel Drechsel, Interim Principal for Middle School

BY KERI DEL VECCHIO
St. Greg's School Director of Admissions/Communications

As we embark on a new academic year at St. Gregory the Great School, we are reminded of Jesus' call to be the Salt of the Earth. This theme aligns with our mission to enrich the lives of our students, families, and community through faith, education, and service. In this spirit, we warmly welcome Molly White and Dan Drechsel as our Interim Principals.

Molly White brings extensive experience in early childhood and elementary education, administrative leadership, and a deep commitment to holistic student development. She embodies the virtues of dedication and compassion. Her vision for St. Greg's aligns perfectly with our mission to be a beacon of light and hope. Molly's focus on nurturing a supportive and inclusive environment will ensure every student feels valued and empowered to reach their full potential. She aims to build upon our strong foundation and lead our school community with grace and integrity.

Dan Drechsel is equally dedicated to our school's growth and success. His enthusiasm for new teaching methodologies and enhancing our curriculum, technology, and building safety reflects his belief in the transformative power of education. Dan is committed to equipping our students with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in an ever-changing world while staying rooted in our Catholic values.

Together, Molly and Dan are dedicated to upholding the high standards of excellence St. Gregory the Great School is known for. Their collaborative leadership and shared commitment to our school's mission will undoubtedly strengthen our community, bring out the best in each child, and help them grow academically, spiritually, and personally.

A Look Ahead to 2024-25

- New Library Unveiling and Dedication
- Further House System Integration
- Outdoor Play Space Planning and Implementation

We are excited about the opportunities this year holds under the guidance of our new Interim Principals. With their leadership, St. Gregory the Great School will continue to flourish, providing a nurturing environment where faith and knowledge go hand in hand. ■

MEET RON BERTOVICH, FUNDRAISING COORDINATOR



My wife Cheryl and I joined St. Gregory the Great Parish in 1994. For over 30 years, we have been involved in many ways in the parish and school (daughters Meghan Class of 2000, and Kim Class of 2001).

With family roots in Western PA, I was blessed to attend Catholic schools at every level, including St. Francis College in PA. My professional experiences have primarily focused on the business side of sports on the professional, collegiate, and high school levels. From Commissioner of the Atlantic 10 Conference (1986-94), to Vice-President/GM of Empire Sports Network (1994-98), to Executive VP of the Buffalo Sabres/HSBC Arena (1998-2003), to a return to college athletics (2003-2017), to most recently the Director of Operations at Bishop Timon HS (2017-2024), I have been blessed to work with some of the most talented and passionate business executives in those industries. Revenue generation through sponsorship sales and customer relations has always been the highest priority.

As I am replacing a SGG legend in Cindy Reitebach, I appreciate the importance of fundraising at St. Greg's and accept the challenges and the opportunities we will face together. I believe the talent, love, and passion of parish leadership and parishioners will guide us forward as one Family.

The initial plan is to retain some traditional fundraisers while forming focus groups to identify new forms of parishioner and community engagement. Stay tuned, and God bless! ■

2024 CRAFT SHOW



Mark your calendars for **Friday, November 29, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm**, and **Saturday, November 30, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm** and join us for the highly-anticipated **2024 CHRISTMAS CRAFT SHOW!**

This event attracts huge crowds and showcases amazing and unique gift items to shop local for Christmas!

BECOME A SPONSOR! Support St. Greg's at this incredible event and gain exposure across WNY:

- † **TITLE SPONSOR** - \$2,000 (2 Available)
- † **ENTERTAINMENT SPONSOR** - \$1,500 (1 Available)
- † **DISPLAY SPONSORS** - \$1,000 (2 Available)
- † **GENERAL SPONSORS** - \$300 (8-15 Available)

Be part of the magic! stgregs.org/christmas-craft-show



EUCCHARISTIC MINISTRY

Thomas Ahearn

The first weekend of July, we began to distribute the Precious Blood of our Lord again at St. Gregory the Great. This had not been done since before Covid. The response from parishioners has been so positive that beginning in August, we will open the two remaining Cup Stations. This will help the flow of the Eucharistic celebration to be smooth for all of us.

To receive our Lord's gift to us in both species, the Body and the Blood, is a true blessing from Him to us. We as Catholics believe in the True Presence of the Eucharist, which is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. May we continue to receive and be blessed by his sacrifice and sacrament for the repentance of our sins. ■



MOMS MINISTRY *Dawn Iacono*

If you are a Catholic mom of any age and stage, you BEE-long! We want to welcome you to BEE part of this BEE-autiful hive of women. Let's sip life's sweet MOMents over coffee one Friday

morning a month while BEE-ing uplifted. There's one member of the hive we can't do without: the Queen Bee (Mary). We celebrate, imitate, and follow her lead. This year, look forward to popular events like Christmas shopping with Catholic vendors, MOMStations in Lent, and our annual St. Joseph's Table. In this time of great uncertainty, let's take some time to stop buzzing, and just BEE together; BEE-lieving, BEE-ing positive, and BEE-ing yourself, with BEE-ATTITUDE! See you **September 27, 9:30 am**, St. Greg's Gathering Room. Free babysitting upon request. stgregsmoms@gmail.com ■



AMERICAN HERITAGE GIRLS

Katie Wild

On June 20, American Heritage Girls Troop 3129 held a tea party at St. Greg's School cafeteria. The troop invited prospective girl members and families to meet current members and learn about the fun and camaraderie AHG offers. The event was a wonderful success, with delicious tea and refreshments, and many new friends we hope to see again in the fall! American Heritage Girls is a scouting organization, supporting girls as they grow to become women of character and purpose. Christ is present in all we do. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Troop Coordinator Lauren Masse at laurenkmasse@gmail.com. ■



CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Through your work, St. Gregory the Great Church contributed

\$465,076.34 to Appeal 2024! These are resources that will provide life-changing services to people right in your parish and beyond. ■



OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE NOVENA

St. Gregory the Great is participating in a nine-month Novena to Our Lady of Guadalupe, per the request of Cardinal Raymond

Leo Burke to Catholics world-over. All are welcome to join, for any duration! This Novena involves 2x/month reflections and a daily Rosary and prayer.

This will conclude with Mass on December 12, the Solemnity of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Printed prayer cards are located in St. Greg's Church next to the Guadalupe picture and in the Vestibule. Sign up at novena.cardinalburke.com. ■



UPCOMING EVENTS—SAVE THE DATES!



ST GREGORY THE GREAT PRESENTS

an evening in an

ENCHANTED GARDEN

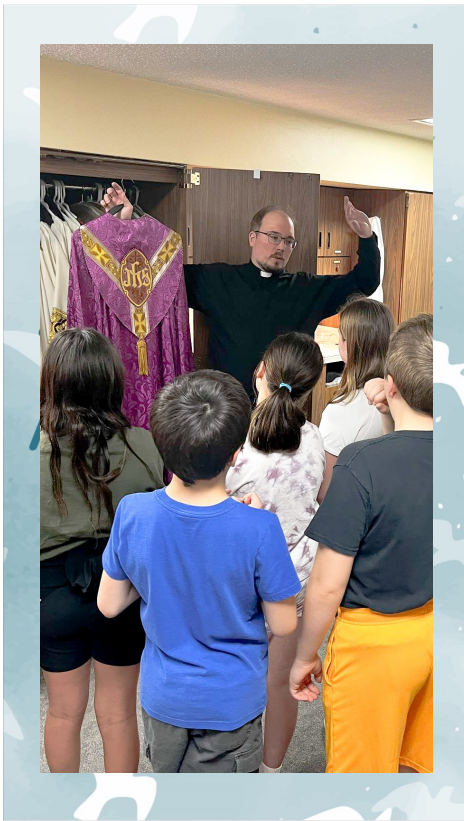
November 2nd 2024

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT PARISH

200 ST. GREGORY COURT
WILLIAMSVILLE, NY 14221

Parish Office: (716) 688-5678
Faith Formation: (716) 688-5760
School Office: (716) 688-5323
www.stgregs.org

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Buffalo, NY
Permit NO. 4869



Fr. Dan Ulmer takes Grade 5 students at St. Greg's "behind the scenes" to learn all about special vessels and vestments used at Mass.

Spirit and Life is a quarterly publication of St. Gregory the Great Parish. Your comments, questions, and suggestions are invited. Editor: Grace Suchyna (gsuchyna@stgregs.org). We are grateful to Liturgical Publications, whose benevolence enables us to provide this service to our parishioners.

OUR CALL TO BE SALT OF THE EARTH



BY FR. DANIEL ULMER

God often reveals His plan to us gradually. St. Teresa of Avila wrote, "God writes straight with crooked lines." We may miss the Holy Spirit's work in the moment, but reflection reveals God's presence in our lives.

I grew up in a devout Catholic family, attending Mass and praying the Rosary regularly. At two, my grandparents declared I would be the next priest in the family. However, a book about Abraham Lincoln in second grade inspired me to become a lawyer. In high school and college, I joined pre-law clubs and majored in Political Science and English.

At 20, I received a call during an evening class that my father had been in a motorcycle accident. He was delivering church flyers when he swerved to avoid a car and lost control. He was airlifted to a hospital in Erie, PA, where he passed away two days later. I took that semester off to reconsider my commitment to law before investing in law school.

After graduating from Canisius, I worked as a paralegal and quickly realized I liked the idea of law more than its practice. Around this time, I joined the choir at St. Joseph Cathedral

and started dating a girl. One Sunday, I invited her to hear me sing. She was raised Catholic. But she was so against going into a church that she wouldn't come. I remember thinking, "Wow, people will do all sorts of crazy things, like go skydiving, but they won't enter a church." Later, she excitedly told me she had gone skydiving that week. This was too much to be a coincidence. It was a God-incidence, and it made me realize I wanted to share my relationship with God with others. I called the Diocesan Vocations Director that week and began seminary formation that fall.

I was blessed to know fully that Our Lord was calling me to serve as a priest. (I'm sometimes thick-headed, so the Lord has to be direct with me!) Often, our discernment lacks clear direction. But true peace comes from following Christ's will. Pray about decisions and notice the Holy Spirit's promptings. Does a direction bring peace, or anxiety? Lead you closer to God, or away? Cultivate virtue, or sin?

The Lord often calls us to follow the more difficult path and enter the narrow gate. Our call to be the Salt of the Earth reminds us to stay steadfast and bold in faith, even when it is challenging. May we remain open to the Holy Spirit's guidance and have the courage to seek Christ's peace. ■