

# The Weave

Advent 2015

Volume 20 Issue 1

A Newsletter of St. Mary Parish Family, Franklin MA

## Walking as Disciples, We Begin

by Fr. Brian Manning

During these last 6 to 8 months, our Parish and faith community continues its journey as "Disciples in Mission" in a less obvious and less public way. All of us know that all good things take time, thought, preparation, growth, and especially if it is the Lord's work, lots of dedicated prayer. So, although things seem quiet in terms of "Phase Three Disciples in Mission" in our Parish daily life, much below the surface is moving, growing and changing. I have attended many Pastoral Leadership Meetings in the last 6 months. Father Jack has also done so. In fact, the two of us together have attended meetings to help us develop mutually supporting pastoral perspectives and ministerial styles. Now we enter the next phase of this learning and growing process: the Staff and also the Lay Leadership of our Parish will be giving up Saturdays and nights to be formed in the work of being a Disciple.

There are three Lay Groups in particular who will be attending special formation meetings. They are The Parish

Pastoral Council, the Parish Finance Council and the Pastoral Plan Committee. Our two Councils have already been in existence and have been providing direction and advice to me through the years. Our Parish has great vitality and strength because of the constant leadership of



Archdiocese of Boston

these councils. Our Parish is quite alive and strong because our Councils also are examples of service to us. The wisdom and advice they offer is more than matched by the commitment and service to all of us. The Pastoral Plan Committee, however, is new. These members will represent all of our Parish in helping to develop a major Pastoral Plan that will guide the next three to five years of our faith community's life. The Committee will include a Pastoral Council and Finance Council member, but also include other people to help broaden our leadership. This wider group will help offer a brighter and larger vision for all of us. In most parishes, many times someone thinks that their particular issue or concern is the most im-

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## The Gift of Opening Doors

by Joan McGuire

Over the years I have been in and observed many Christmas Pageants. The most desired part after Mary and Joseph was that of the Innkeeper. The actor in this part took great delight in sternly saying "There is no room" and forcefully slamming the door on the weary couple. He is possibly one of the most maligned characters in the Christmas story.

While visiting the Holy Land, I had the opportunity to visit a replica of the house and most likely an inn of the time of Christ. It consisted of a large front room where the guests ate and then rolled out their mats on the floor to sleep for the night. The back room was where the animals that provided food for the family were kept warm at night. The back door led to the yard where these animals were kept during the day. These animals provided the milk and food for the family and were essential to their survival. My idea of the "inn scene" changed greatly after that excursion.

The innkeeper looked at the very pregnant Mary and realized she needed greater privacy than the large front room with the sleeping people crowded together on the floor could afford her. Compassionately, he suggested that they go to the back door (They couldn't climb over all the people sleeping closely on the floor)

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## Touchstones and Traditions

by John M. Ristaino

The seasons of Advent and Christmas are falling upon us faster than the green leaves of summer turned the bright golds, vibrant oranges and rich rusts of autumn. It is a time of year cherished by some and feared by others. The Liturgical Year begins anew on the first Sunday of Advent and very shortly thereafter, the Christmas Season begins in earnest. It is a season and time of gathering with family and friends. It is a season of assisting others. It is a season of preparing. It is a season of reflection. It is a season to celebrate and to reflect. Touchstones and traditions can assist us during this season.

By definition, a touchstone is “a standard or criterion by which something is judged or recognized.” This can be very true about this season. When we use touchstones as criterion to evaluate, they can lead us down dark paths. Touchstones can be used to evaluate our “successes” and “failures” of the past year. Touchstones can be used to “compare” ourselves to others, our neighbors, our families and our friends. Using touchstones in this manner of reflection and evaluation can lead to an increased self-righteousness or can lead to deflated ego and depression. When we use touchstones as a manner by which to recognize and remember, they can enhance our celebrating this passing of time.

There are many touchstones we can use during Advent and Christmas (as well as throughout the year) to remind us of our God and our Catholic faith. Traditions

can serve as touchstones. They can help us to celebrate and to remember. The Advent Wreath is a touchstone/tradition which can begin our marking the seasons of Advent and Christmas in a faith-filled and peaceful manner. I remember the tradition of the Advent Wreath in my home growing up and have continued it every year in my home. Growing up there was such excitement when the Advent Wreath was assembled and put on the kitchen table. Being one of six children, my parents had us each take turns lighting the candles every night prior to supper. The candles were lit and prayers were said. With each additional week passing and a new candle being lit; what JOY was created in the minds and hearts of my brothers and sisters (and I bet in those of my parents too). As an adult living alone, I still assemble an Advent Wreath each year. The tradition of the Advent Wreath, and lighting it each evening at supper (or during breakfast or lunch) gives me a built in period of time of quiet to simply stop, reflect and pray. Do you have an Advent Wreath tradition? It’s never too late to start one if you don’t!

One truly unique touchstone at this time of year is that of the Christmas crèche. Again, it is a tradition I enjoyed growing up in my parents’ home. My aunt made my mom and dad a ceramic nativity set and every year it was lovingly displayed in the living room. Of all the wonderful Christmas decorations in my parents’ home, the nativity set was the most cherished. I can remember how my mom first taught us about Mary and Joseph’s journey to David’s City of Bethlehem. She would have us start Mary, Joseph and the donkey figurines upstairs. Each week, they would move closer to the manger lovingly set up on a table in the living room. It was always with excitement that we would follow their journey. Our Christmas decorations can be tools to help instill in children and adults a sense of wonder and understanding about our faith.

I inherited my parents’ nativity set. Each year as I put out the cherished figurines, I remember wonderful family times. I

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## Help Wanted!!

by Karen Ackles

Each summer all of us at the Religious Education Office look forward to the children coming in to pick up their books for their upcoming classes in the fall. We get to chat with so many of them and hear all about their adventures from the summer. This past summer I had an amazing conversation with one of our friends, Jack MacKinnon, a sixth grade student at Horace Mann Middle School.



Jack MacKinnon.

When Jack came in I asked him how his summer was and what he was doing, he replied, “I am working for Jesus this summer!” Now, if you know Jack, you would also know that he can be a little joker, so I wasn’t quite sure what he meant. I thought he was volunteering to work at St. Rocco but that was not the case. He was completely serious and was very proud to tell me about what he was doing.

I recently sat down with Jack and had him explain his “summer job” to me. Jack told me that working for Jesus meant that he was doing more chores for his “Nana.” “She is my only grandparent so I go to her house and stay with her and help her at home and at her beach club. I also did more chores for my family than I normally would do. I do these chores without being asked - most of the time. At the beginning of the summer I would need Mom to ask

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### The Weave

Published three times a year  
(February, July  
and November)

by Saint Mary Parish, Franklin MA



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## ...Disciples in Mission

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portant. (Often called “it is all about me”) As a result unless we carefully reflect, pray and discuss what the most important activities are for our faith community and then decide to focus on these elements, we end up with just greasing the squeaky wheel or else nothing is done properly and everyone is unhappy. Four years ago, our Pastoral Council helped to decide what we should focus on as a parish. It is now time again to do this. This time we will be using the “Disciples in Mission Plan” as announced by Cardinal Sean and ratified as the process for the parishes of our Archdiocese. Although we are a “stand alone” Collaborative of one, we also need to plan how we will be “Disciples in Mission” to the Lord.

Two of the formation programs for the Staff and Lay Leaders are called: Forming Disciples in Mission and Forming

Leaders for Mission. These programs will help all of us to come to understand the priorities of being a believer in our faith community today and how we can witness to our faith in the Lord Jesus. At some point we will be offering an electronic survey for the entire parish to take. This survey is called a “Disciple Index Maker”. This survey will help the Committee to come to understand the spiritual needs of all of us and help us to set our priorities and programs for the next few years in our Parish. All of this work will be taking place over the next eighteen to twenty four months.

Are things really quiet at the moment? Hardly! All that we have to do each day and weekend on our parish life is still going on, and now people are adding even more work and commitment to their lives so that you and all of us may be faithful and good “Disciples of the Lord.”

## View From the Pew

by Joan McGuire

### Unexpected Choices

Many years ago Fr. Ray Brown introduced me to the genealogy of Jesus from Matthew. I had two reactions. The first was gratitude that it was the gospel and I wouldn't have to read all those tongue twisting names. I was recently told by someone who was taught by Father Jack that his students were in awe as he read all those names with such ease that they could have been his relatives. The second was confusion as to what this had to do with the birth of Christ as I knew it. Fr Brown's insights have opened myriad meditative doors for me. To quote him: “The Messiah did not come without a preparatory period of Israel's history or without the preparatory response of fidelity by Mary and Joseph. I had to look up many of the stated ancestors and found that some of his relatives were definitely flawed. What puzzled me was the choice of those named. Primogeniture was always important to the Jews and yet Isaac is named over his older brother Esau and Judah, over his ever faithful brother Joseph. Matthew shows us that God manifests His unpredictable graciousness and he can use the liars, betrayers even the immoral to do His works. God writes straight with crooked lines.

Most unusual was the naming of five women to the genealogy. They were not the saintly wives of the patriarchs - Sarah, Rebekah or Rachel. Instead some were not even Jews. Tamar and Rahab, both Canaanites, Ruth a Moabite and the unfaithful Bathsheba not directly named but called by title, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. All these women had histories that contained elements of scorn. Mary the last woman mentioned could have been stoned by law for her pregnancy if Joseph hadn't protected her.

The message of the proclamation of the genealogy during Advent is designed to give hope to all of us. No one is too unimportant or insignificant to play a role in God's Plan. The message is an enabling invitation. We are the Apostles of today. Jesus called Andrew. Andrew called Peter. You were called by someone's example and you in turn must by your actions call someone else.

## ...Help Wanted

(Continued from page 2)

me to do these things but by the end of the summer, I got the hang of it and didn't need to be asked.”

Jack further explained that he was trying to be kinder to his family. He spent more time with his sister and even gave her compliments. That idea continued when he was out with his family and their friends; just trying to be polite and nicer to people all the time.

I asked Jack if this idea of “working for Jesus” has continued past his summer vacation and he assures me that it has, although his “chores have slowed down a bit because of his homework!”

My friend, Jack, really impressed me with his ideas and desire to be kind to people. All of these things seem so simple and yet they help to make the world a better place for everyone - let's hope we can all “work for Jesus” and as Jack says, “obey your conscience.”

### A Christmas Blessing for the Home

Loving God, as we gather at Christmas around the manger, which reminds us of the birth of your Son, we ask you to dwell in our hearts and our home.

Bless every member of our family, and strengthen the bond of love among us.

May we joyfully praise you like the angel choir that announced the birth of your Son to the shepherds watching over their flocks.

May we show your love to others with the same brightness of the star that guided the Wise Men to offer gifts to the newborn King.

Make our family holy, just like Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, so that we may always live in peace and love. Amen.



## Mark Your Parish Calendar

- Nov. 26 Thanksgiving Day  
Mass at 8am
- Nov. 28 Christmas Pageant rehearsal  
9am
- Nov. 28 Nativity Display
- Nov. 29 Nativity Display
- Nov. 29 Baptism
- Dec. 2 Mass at The Estate
- Dec. 4 First Friday - Adoration and  
Benediction after 7am Mass
- Dec. 6 Caring Tree gifts due
- Dec. 6 Baptisms, 1:30
- Dec. 7 Vigil of the Immaculate  
Conception - 4pm Mass
- Dec. 8 **Immaculate Conception  
Masses - 7am & 7:30pm**
- Dec. 9 Mass at Forge Hill
- Dec. 10 CWC Meeting, 7pm
- Dec. 12 Pageant Rehearsal, 9am
- Dec. 13 Baptismal Catechesis, 1:30
- Dec. 13 **Lessons and Carols** - 3pm
- Dec. 15 Prayer Shawl Meeting, 10am
- Dec. 15 Book Club, 7pm
- Dec. 19 Pageant rehearsal, 9am
- Dec. 20 Baptisms, 1:30
- Dec. 22 Mass at nursing home
- Dec. 24 **NO 7am Mass**  
**Christmas Eve Masses:**  
4pm upstairs & downstairs  
4pm Christmas Pageant  
Mass at Horace Mann  
Auditorium  
**6:00pm, 7:30pm and  
Midnight Mass**
- Dec. 25 **Christmas Day Masses:**  
**9am & 10:30am**
- Dec. 27 Baptisms, 1:30
- Dec. 31 **New Year's Eve  
4pm Mass**
- Jan. 1 **Mary, the Mother of God  
Masses: 9am & 10:30am**
- Jan. 3 Baptisms, 1:30
- Jan. 6 Mass at The Estate
- Jan. 10 Baptisms, 1:30
- Jan. 13 Mass at Forge Hill
- Jan. 17 Baptisms, 1:30
- Jan. 19 Prayer Shawl Meeting, 10am
- Jan. 19 Book Club, 7pm
- Jan. 21 CWC Meeting, 7pm
- Jan. 24 Baptisms, 1:30
- Jan. 24 **Prolatio Singers Concert,**  
7:30pm
- Jan. 31 Baptisms, 1:30
- Feb. 3 Mass at The Estate
- Feb. 3 First Penance
- Feb. 7 Baptisms, 1:30
- Feb. 10 **Ash Wednesday**

## Advent and Christmas Events

**Advent and Christmas  
Liturgical Celebrations**

**Lessons and Carols  
December 13  
3:00pm**

**Christmas Eve  
Masses:**  
**4pm (3 Masses); upper church, low-  
er church, Horace Mann Auditori-  
um with the Children's Pageant  
6pm, 7:30pm**

**\*\*Midnight Mass\*\***

**Christmas Day  
Masses: 9am and 10:30am**

**New Year's Eve  
4:00pm**

**New Year's Day  
Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary,  
Mother of God  
9:00am, 10:30am**



**A Festival of Lessons and Carols**

**Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup>**  
at 3:00 p.m. in the Upper Church.

"Lessons and Carols" is a ceremony  
of sacred readings and music of the  
Advent and Christmas Season.

Please come and Rejoice on  
"Gaudete Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup>"  
in preparation of the  
birth of the Holy Child!!

## O Come, Let Us Adore Him

### Nativity Display

Preparing for  
Christmas



**November 28/29  
Sacred Heart Hall**

Come to the lower church hall  
after Mass

See a display of Nativity scenes  
from members of our parish

Marvel at the variety

See Nativity scenes from  
many countries and cultures



Learn the family story  
behind each display.

### Don't Forget

**Caring Tree presents  
are due back  
by  
December  
6<sup>th</sup>.**





## Let Us Show Mercy

by Nan Rafter, Parish Nurse

As I am sitting writing my Weave article this October, I find myself reflecting on Respect Life Month and the upcoming Holy "Year of Mercy" beginning in December. In our troubled world and yes, even our little town of Franklin, I sometimes lose sight as to how precious life is. This special gift of life which God has given us can be extinguished in one brief moment as evidenced by the so many sudden deaths and losses that our St Mary Parish family has experienced this year.

Yes, life is precious and we are called by God to care for ourselves and each other, not only in a time of crisis or sadness, but every day. In St Luke's Gospel about the story of the Good Samaritan, the question Jesus asks us is "*Which of these, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?*" He answered. "*The one who treated him with mercy.*" Jesus said to him. "*Go and do likewise.*" Showing mercy to others for me means being kind and caring, helping others in need, not judging when mistakes or wrong decisions are made, sharing in a

time of joy and a time of sorrow. Pope Francis invites us to enter into the Year of Mercy. I invite you to look at the life you are living and encourage you to begin to incorporate the Corporal and Spiritual works of Mercy into your daily life.

The Corporal Works of Mercy The Corporal Works of Mercy are the kind acts by which we can help our neighbors with their physical and emotional needs.

Feed the Hungry; Give drink to the thirsty; Clothe the Naked; Shelter the Homeless. Every day our St Vincent de Paul volunteers help those in need of food, shelter, clothing, furniture, assistance with rent or help with utility bills. Please consider bringing non-perishable food to the receptacles near the side doors of the church or sending in a weekly or monthly monetary donation to help them do their good works of mercy. You in turn will be helping your neighbor.

Visiting the Sick; Our Pastoral Visitors visit people who are homebound, in Hospitals, Nursing Homes and Assisted

Living facilities to bring Communion, pray and help them to stay connected to their church. Several people from St Mary's visit those who are now living in prisons. Please keep those who are sick, homebound and incarcerated in your prayers along with those who care for and visit them. You may feel called to visit a family member you haven't seen in a while or the shut-in neighbor. Your presence can be a welcomed guest to those who are lonely or feel forgotten.

Bury our dead: Our bereavement ministry visits and ministers to those who have lost loved ones and assist them in planning the funeral liturgy, which helps begin their healing. St Mary's bereavement support group offers a safe and caring place for those in need of healing from their loss. Our yearly Mass of Remembrance brings families and parishioners together to pray for all who have died throughout the year. Is there someone in your life in need of healing? It may be you. Please reach out to us here at St Mary's.

Spiritual Works of Mercy are the acts of compassions by which we help our neighbors with their emotional and spiritual needs. Some of these include; comforting the afflicted, forgiving offenses, bearing wrongs patiently, praying for those who are living and those who have died. Is there someone you need to forgive? Is it you?

Let us pray... God, I pray that as I go through my day that you will help me to see those who are in need, those who are heavily burdened, those who have worries and fears, and those who are sad and grieving. Help me to have an understanding heart, recognizing that others burdens are many times heavier than the ones that I carry; Help me to be kind and gentle, showing mercy to others and that I may reach out with an open heart to bring care and healing to those in their time of need. Amen.

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### PARISH COMMUNICATION

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This parish is very large and active. It is important for us to be able to give you accurate information and for you to be able to contact us as needed. If you wish to contact anyone at the rectory we can be reached by phone, 508-528-0020; Fax, 508-528-1641; or email. Here are email addresses for the clergy, Religious Education and rectory staff:

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If your parish group or organization would like to place a notice in the bulletin, we must receive it **in writing (email is preferred)** by 5pm Sunday afternoon for the following weekend. Information can also be submitted for inclusion on the parish website at any time. Bulletin or website information can be emailed to [parishpublishing@stmarysfranklin.org](mailto:parishpublishing@stmarysfranklin.org)

**If your organization is planning to use any parish facilities**, such as the church, church hall, lower church meeting rooms or the school, for your meetings, events, etc. it is **necessary** that you call and reserve the time and place that you want. This is the **only** way that you can be assured of having your activity at the desired location.

**CHECK OUT OUR PARISH WEBSITE:** [www.stmarysfranklin.org](http://www.stmarysfranklin.org). There is a wealth of information available there.

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## St. Mary's Music Notes!!

by Terry Kerr

**Adult Choir:** The St. Mary Adult Choir has begun their 2014-2015 Choral Season and rehearsals in preparation of the Advent and Christmas seasons! The Adult Choir is always looking for new members. The Adult Choir rehearses on Thursday Evenings in the Upper Church Choir Loft from 7:30-9:00 p.m.

**A Festival of Lessons and Carols:** St. Mary Parish will present our Second Annual "Festival of Lessons and Carols for Advent & Christmas" on Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m. in the Upper Church. "Lessons and Carols" is a ceremony of sacred readings and music of the Advent and Christmas Season. Please come and Rejoice on "Gaudete Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup>" in preparation of the birth of the Holy Child!!

**Children's Choir:** The St. Mary Children's Choir has begun the 2014-2015 Choral Season, too! We are very excited in preparing for singing at our Christmas Eve Liturgy at St. Mary's!

If you are interested in having your child participate in the St. Mary Children's Choir Program, please come to rehearsals at St. Mary Church on Thursday afternoons in the Upper Church from 5:15 p.m.-6:00 p.m.

## St. Mary's Parish Scouts Put Faith Into Action

by John M. Ristaino

St. Mary Parish is blessed in many ways. We are rich in parishioners of all generations who love and live our Catholic Faith. Some of our young parishioners celebrate our Faith through the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts. In various troops, these scouts perform service to our community. As the calendar year draws to a close, let's remember and celebrate the recent successes of scouts from our parish.

On August 1, 2015 three parishioners received their Eagle Scout award in a Court of Honor Ceremony. Patrick Cunniff, son of Chris and Claudia Cunniff and a member of the Xaverian Brothers High School Class of 2015 constructed softball dugouts for Town of Franklin as his Eagle Scout ser-



Recent Eagle Scout recipients Jonathan Tomaso, Joseph Kroon, John Ristaino (who represented St. Mary Parish) and Patrick Cunniff at their Court of Honor Ceremony this summer.

vice project. Patrick is now a freshman at the University of Notre Dame. Jonathan Tomaso, son of Michael Tomaso and Catherine Salaki Tomaso, a senior at Bishop Feehan High School constructed a stone walkway for Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School to earn his Eagle Scout Award. Joseph Kroon constructed an arched foot bridge for the Town of Franklin disc golf course for his Eagle Scout Service Project. Joe is in his

junior year at Franklin High School and is the son of Tom and Mary Kroon. These Eagle Scouts are members of Troop 99.

Austin and Riley

Conatser recently completed their Eagle Scout requirements. Their Court of Honor Ceremony will occur on November 28. Austin's project was clearing and marking trails, as well as creating a new trail. Riley's project involved making and installing walkways on the hiking paths in Dacey Field. Both are seniors in Franklin High School and are the twin sons of Daniel and Cynthia Conatser.

Among other recent Eagle Scouts from St. Mary Parish are; Christopher Jenkins, son of Leon and Joy Jenkins who cataloged all the music equipment for the Franklin Music Department and is also a member of Troop 99. Mike Landry built the new outdoor nativity structure for St. Mary Parish. Mike is the son of Mike and Christine Landry. Nick Stinehour built a storage shed for Franklin Youth Soccer as his community service for the

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## ...The Gift of Opening Doors

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and enter the second room where the animals would provide warmth and she could have the preferred privacy for the birth.

As with the innkeeper there are many ways to interpret the actions of others or to misinterpret and judge them harshly because they have different ways of seeing things, Tensions arise because of different cultures, customs or upbringing. People may come across as aloof and unfriendly because of the many insecurities and personal problems that they are enduring. Snobbery even oc-

curred in Jesus' time. Remember the saying "Can any good come out of Galilee?"

A second thought arising from this event. In the Gospel of John (10:9) Jesus is referred to as the gate opener. When we sometimes pray for a special intention, the door that is opened leads to unexpected places. Trust that in the end it will come out according to His Plan. If you invite Him, he will open new landscapes of your soul to explore.

In one of her poems Emily Dickinson expressed with great insight "Not knowing when the dawn will come, I open every door."

## ...St. Mary's Parish Scouts Put Faith Into Action

*(Continued from page 6)*

Eagle Scout Award. Nick is the son of Mark and Amy Stinehour. Mike and Nick belong to Troop 126. All three of these Eagle Scouts are alumni of the Franklin High School Class of 2015 and are attending Bryant College, UMass Lowell and Seattle University respectively.

Girl Scouts also thrive in our community. Several young parishioners have recently distinguished themselves through the Girl Scouts of America Program. Anna Kroon, daughter of Tom and Mary Kroon earned her Girl Scout Gold Award this year. An alumna of the Franklin High School Class of 2015 and one of the 2015 St. Mary Parish Baccalaureate Mass Speakers, Anna's service initiative while a member of Troop 80637 was called Project Princess. This was a series of workshops on self-confidence for middle school age girls focusing on the aspects of attitude, actions and appearances. Anna now attends the University of New Haven. Bri-

anna Metras, daughter of Marty and Theresa Metras and a graduate of the Bishop Feehan Class of 2015, now attending UMass Boston, was a proud member of Girl Scout Troop 80637.

Scouting is thriving in our community as evidenced by the contributions of these wonderful young parishioners. Annually St. Mary Parish celebrates those currently involved in scouting as part of the national Scout Sunday. In 2016 Scout Sunday is February 7. Here at St. Mary's the 9:00 Mass that morning will honor scouting in our community. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this Mass and see the future Eagle Scouts and Gold Medal Girl Scouts.

Congratulations and thank you to all these fine young people and their families. Your involvement in the various scouting programs enrich both our community and our parish.



**Christmas  
on the Common  
Sunday, November 29  
4pm**

**Tree Lighting and  
Visit with Santa**

**Free Refreshments**

**Children will have  
the opportunity to visit with  
Santa and "Jingles the Elf."**

**Thanks to the  
Franklin High Hockey Team  
who has decorated the Com-  
mon for this event since 1992.**

*(In case of inclement weather the festi-  
vities will be held across the street in  
the Ben Franklin School building.)*

## ...Touchstones and Traditions

*(Continued from page 2)*

also reflect on the meaning of each piece; the shepherds are symbolic that Jesus came first to the poor, the three kings tell that Jesus came to the entire world, the angel celebrates heaven's joy at the birth of Christ and the wooden manger, with hay to rest on, lies the Savior of the World. "For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father Forever, Prince of Peace." (IS 9:4). The figurines are a powerful symbol of the true meaning of this season. Our Savior is born! Sinners are saved. Tidings of comfort and joy!

As the years have evolved, I have enhanced the tradition of assembling the nativity scene in my home. I use it as a time to remember loved ones who have died. I put the prayer cards I get when I attend wakes or funeral of family and friends in the stable next to the Holy Family. As I place these prayer cards in the stable I pray. I say a prayer for each person whose

prayer card I place near the Holy Family. It is a reminder of the love I shared with that person and it is also a reminder that Jesus came to save and to open heaven's doors to those who love him. I enjoy this touchstone and how its tradition has enhanced my faith. A priest at St. Mary Parish once made the point in a Homily that nativity sets are simply reminders to us of our Faith, much like the crucifix. There is no wrong time to display either. So, put out your crèche whenever you are ready and leave it up for as long as you like. Touchstones lead us to reflect. Reflection leads to prayer. Prayer enhances faith.

There are many, many other touchstones during this wonderful season. Remember the Christmas Wreath is a touchstone. The wreath, as a circle, symbolizes God's unending love for us. There is no beginning and no end. The greens of the wreath symbolize God's love for us that never dies. The red ribbons and berries on the Christmas Wreath are a reminder of Christ's blood, shed during his Passion, as ransom for our sins.

Traditions surround our minds and hearts at this time of year. Celebrating at Mass during this wonderful season of light is both a touchstone and a tradition. If you haven't been to Mass lately, it's a great time to check it out again! The doors of the Church and the arms of the Christ Child are always open to you. If you attend Mass regularly, welcome those who will fill the pews to celebrate Christmas. Remember, the Holy Family sheltered in a barn because many told them there was "no room" for them. Let us make room this Advent and Christmas for the stranger, the poor, the lowly and the forgotten. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. (IS 9:1)." May the Light of Christ shine in your heart this season and may you find the touchstones which do not lead you to evaluate but lead you to reflect and celebrate and to create and to continue traditions which bring you joy and enhance your Faith.

## Meet the Seminarians



### Frank D'Amato

My name is Frank D'Amato and I come from Deerfield Beach, FL. I grew up in the Florida sunshine with my parents, one brother, one sister, three nieces, two nephews, and many cousins.

I worked at the historic Boca Raton Resort and Club which is a luxury resort and country club. I also travelled the world organizing meetings and conventions for corporate America.

While working with sick pilgrims in Lourdes, France I heard the first call of a vocation. I spent three years in religious life with the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor, Custody of the Holy Land which brought me to Washington, DC, Italy, and then the Holy Land. I am currently studying for the priesthood for the Diocese of Palm Beach in south Florida.

I look forward to working with Nan and your parish to grow in my pastoral ministry skills. I hope to learn how to minister better to the sick or lonely and also to learn from Nan's

many years of experience as a nurse and pastoral associate.



### Alberto González

I was born on January 23, 1983 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. I am the oldest of two and studied for a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism at the University of Puerto Rico in San Juan, Puerto Rico. I

worked for El Nuevo Día, the largest circulation newspaper in the Island, from 2005 to 2008 as an Entertainment Reporter, making news coverage about Artists, Fashion Shows, Beauty Pageants, and Lifestyles.

In 2011, I was recruited to work for El Visitante, the Catholic Newspaper of the Puerto Rico Conference of Catholic Bishops. I went from communicating the world to communicating Christ. It was there that I started to feel the first signs of a call to Priesthood.

After one year of discernment in 2013, I was accepted as a Seminarian for the Diocese of Mayaguez, PR, and enrolled in Pope St. John

XXIII National Seminary in Weston, MA. I am now studying in my Second Year in Theology and I am expecting in my Pastoral Assignment in St. Mary's Parish to learn more about the Healthcare Ministry, especially dealing with difficult situations, facing death, and coping with people that have a different set of beliefs than the ones I have.

I love to do fitness at the gym, go to the movies, and enjoyed dancing salsa for 7 years.



# The Weave

St. Mary Parish Family  
One Church Square  
Franklin MA 02038

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