

# The Weave

Advent/Christmas 2016

Volume 21 Issue 1

A Newsletter of St. Mary Parish Family, Franklin MA

## Disciples in Mission

by Fr. Brian Manning

It is very hard to believe how quickly time passes. I am now well into my seventh year as Pastor of this wonderful Parish of Saint Mary. In the Weave, I have been reporting on the progress of our Parish as a “stand alone Collaborative Parish” for the last two years. Our Parish is in the third Phase of the Cardinal Sean’s “Disciples in Mission” Plan for the Archdiocese of Boston. This Plan is to help strengthen our Parishes as communities of faith. I have informed you that our Parish Pastoral Council began remote preparations over three years ago. We began by prayer, presentations by experts in Parish Planning, attending workshops and conferences, directed readings and discussions and also along with direct consultation of you as parish members in dialogue and, in addition, a special survey. I appointed a special very broad-based group, the Plan Writing Team, to take on the task, in particular, in creating a Plan for our parish. Some of you will easily recall the electronic Survey (or paper if needed) called Disciples on Mission Survey that was conducted in our Parish. The Plan Writing Team has used this very successful survey as a major instrument in its reflections and

deliberations in envisioning and creating a plan for us.

All through this summer there have been special meetings of the Plan Writing Team to help develop this plan for our Parish that will help direct us as a community of faith in Jesus Christ in the Catholic Tradition. Members of the Committee



Archdiocese of Boston

are: Barbara Brunelli, Pandora Carlucci, Daniel Fleming, Mary Ellen Hasenfuss and Monica Baker as members of the parish, John Ristaino as a delegate of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), Thomas Seery as a delegate of the Parish Financial Council (PFC), Nan Rafter as delegate of the Pastoral/Ministerial Staff and also Father Jack, Father Chris and myself. This committee represents the various constituencies of our Parish from parishioner to elected and also appointed Representatives and also our Staff. Pandora Carlucci, as former member and Vice-Chair of the PPC and, as importantly, a skilled and experienced Leader of Planning Processes and Groups, has been the leader of our Team.

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## Advent: A Time of Hope

by Joan McGuire

Recently I was told by a very disheartened parishioner that Christmas was a time for children before they could read the newspapers. The headlines in papers seem to say that our lives and times are hopeless. Most likely that attitude was held by many of the people of Israel at the time of Christ's birth, even without a newspaper. Cruel monarchs performed random acts of murder and cruelty. Rome controlled their land and their daily lives were hard.

Even though the sources of both the infant narratives of Matthew and Luke are unknown and they disagree on details, both Matthew and Luke agree that Jesus could claim descent from David through Joseph lineage and was a Son of David. They also agree that Mary conceived by the creative power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore Jesus was truly Son of God from the moment of his creation. That God became man is the source of all our hope. Matthew also gives a list of Jesus' ancestry, both men and woman, who do not represent the obvious saints of their time. Yet they were the instruments of God's spirit and grace in preserving Israel. This too is a source of great hope for all of us.

Advent is also a time for reorienting our lives directly towards God. Take up the challenge to “put on Christ.” This means allowing ourselves to be shaped by our knowledge of Christ. Daily reading of Scripture encourages us to go beyond

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# Let's Give Fruit for Christmas This Year!

by John M. Ristaino

Happy New Year! Indeed, each year when we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, a Church year ends and the next Sunday when the first week of Advent arrives, a new Church begins. When you are reading this we will either be getting ready to end a Church year or will be starting a new one. This year as the 2016 Church year ends, so too will the special year of Divine Mercy. It has been a wonder and faith-filled year for Catholics. As I write this the United States is entering the final stages of a national election. So, there are endings which have occurred and there are beginnings around the corner.

This is the time of year when many of us begin to ponder what gifts we will be giving to those we love this year for Christmas. In no time at all some of us will begin the "sprint to the finish" to find the perfect Christmas gift. A few of us will hit panic mode about gift buying. In so doing we will miss the beauty of the season. We won't hear the laughter and the joy. We won't be able to feel the love. We will rush through our days in the quest for the perfect gift. Well, I can save many of you lots of time and money. This Christmas just give fruit! The fruit I am suggesting you give cannot necessarily be found on the shelves of any store. The fruit I am suggesting can't fit in a pretty basket. The fruit I am writing about does not spoil, cannot spoil and will not spoil. The fruit I am suggesting we give can only be seen, smelled, heard, tasted and felt in the human heart and soul. The fruit I suggest we give costs no money but is more valuable than any gift which money can buy. I am talking about giving the Fruit

of the Holy Spirit this Christmas.

The Fruit of the Holy Spirit sums up nine attributes of a Christian life according to St. Paul the Apostle in his Letter to the Galatians: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Doesn't this sound like a GREAT gift to give and receive? I think it does and it is truly the essence of this season. The Fruit of the Holy Spirit is found embodied in that baby in the stable. Let's examine this fruit and figure out how we can find some ways to give pieces of it this Christmas.

**Love.** Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta is given credit for saying many wonderful things during her life. One such quote is "We have not been created to just pass through life without aim. And that greater aim is to love and be loved." How can we find ways to love and to be loved this Christmas? Love will be found, given and received by everyone in wonderful and unique ways. Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta also advised that "love is an active verb." This Advent and Christmas love others and as important; let others love you too!

**Joy.** "Joy to the world, the Lord is come! ... And heaven and nature sing!" Do you sing out to others the great joy you find in Jesus? Do your neighbors know you are Catholic and that you celebrate regularly at Mass? Are your friends and family aware that you are an actively practicing Catholic? Share the joy of the season by singing out to others your participation in your Catholic faith!

**Peace.** Peace can take many forms. I suggest you give yourself peace this Advent season by experiencing the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Being forgiven of your sins brings peace to you. When you know peace, you are more ready to share peace with and give peace to others.

**Forbearance.** When we practice forbearance we are practicing love and peace! It has been a rough and tumble year of politics. Many of your family and friends might have held different

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**Advent and Christmas Liturgical Celebrations**

**Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary**  
**Vigil Mass: Wed., Dec. 7 at 4pm**  
**Holyday Masses: Thurs. Dec. 8, 7am and 7:30pm**

**Lessons and Carols December 11 3:00pm**

**Christmas Eve Masses: 4pm (3 Masses); upper church, lower church, Horace Mann Auditorium 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 7:30am, 9:00am, 10:30am, noon**



**Christmas on the Common Sunday, November 28, 4pm**

**Tree Lighting and Visit with Santa**

**Free Refreshments**

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

(In case of inclement weather the festivities will be held across the street in the Ben Franklin School building.)

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**Franklin Holiday Stroll Thursday, December 1, 4-8pm**

**Downtown Franklin**

**Entertainment for children and families.**

**Tree Lighting at 4pm**

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**Parish Publishing**  
 Publisher Father Brian Manning  
 Editor Joan McGuire  
 Layout Editor Paula Coughlin  
 Proof Editor Fr. Jack Sullivan  
 Contributing Editors:  
 Terry Kerr  
 Deneen Georgette  
 Nick Georgette  
 Roger Gullo  
 Nan Rafter  
 John Ristaino



## ...Disciples in Mission

(Continued from page 1)

Under the direction of Denise Ehrlen, a Consultant of the Catholic Leadership Institute from Philadelphia, PA, our Team has been praying, working, discussing and helping not only to envision the future reality of our Parish, but also to ultimately develop a plan with priorities that will assist us to achieve practical goals and steps that help make us a more vibrant faith community. All of us know that our culture and ways of life are rap-

idly changing and our parish needs to reflect those changes in how we assist people to live out this role as believers and disciples of Jesus Christ. We need to be able to provide the services and programs that people need, want and will commit to in faith.

The invitation of Jesus is to walk with him and do as He did. The invitation is personal. It is to each one of us. This whole process that we are undergoing is to help us, each one of us, to be a faithful Disciple in Mission for Jesus Christ.

## ...Give Fruit for Christmas

(Continued from page 2)

political views than you this year. Give forbearance to them and that forbearance will bring peace to you and them. It will show them love and will allow you to know love in return. We live in an ever changing society. Forbearance allows us to accept others and to live in harmony with those who differ from us. It is a great season to remember that understanding and tolerance are actions which lead to peace and love. The people in our lives are too important not to give them the gift of forbearance this Christmas.

**Kindness and goodness.** It is a season when showing kindness and goodness can take many forms. Here are a few ways you might give kindness and goodness this Christmas. 1. Take an ornament from the St. Mary Giving Tree and provide a gift to the struggling in our community. 2. Make a donation of money or food to the St. Vincent DePaul Society (or give both money and food). 3. Be courteous when driving to and from work and in the shopping mall parking lots. 4. Call a friend or family member you have not spoken with in more than a year. 5. Say "hello" to strangers you see on the sidewalk, in the corridors at work or school and in the stores at the mall. Kindness and goodness are gifts which are contagious. Be careful; others might just catch the Christmas spirit too!

**Faithfulness.** Jesus came to save! The Christ Child's birth we celebrate each Christmas is a reminder that Jesus came to save each of us and all of us. The wood of his cradle will become the wood of his Holy Cross in a few months. The story of

Jesus and the lessons of Jesus are at the heart of Sunday Mass. I like Father Brian's timely reminders which go something like this. The Readings and Gospels remain the same. We hear the same words. If we listen, truly listen; what changes is us. We are at a different place in life than the last time we heard the words of the Readings and Gospels. We actually hear the prayers and the words of the songs differently too. We are each at a different place on our journeys. If we are present, truly present, the words can and will change us. Jesus speaks to us in new and wonderful ways because we are different. We change, He remains constant. His words and love are the same. Why not make an extra effort to attend Mass each and every Sunday in Advent? You may just hear something new! The fruit of faithfulness feeds the heart and soul for the journey of life.

**Gentleness.** Be gentle with yourself this Christmas season. You are doing the best you can. If you need help; God is just a prayer away. Prayer is a powerful gift to give to yourself, to those you love and to complete strangers this Christmas and always. All it costs is a little time.

**Self-control.** This is an area which we all sense with the new calendar year every January. So, plan your New Year's Resolution to help you in an area you would like to improve!

May the Advent and Christmas seasons bring you the Fruit of the Holy Spirit as you give the Fruit of the Holy Spirit to those in your life. Merry Christmas!

## View From the Pew

by Joan McGuire

### Carve Out Time

Advent is a time to prepare for the coming of Christ. This is not really accurate. He came once in time and in taking on our humanity united with us forever. He didn't just come to "die for our sins" but to become one with our humanity. This is the season to set aside time to prepare for the ever-seeking Jesus to find us ready to embrace him in our present life. As a child when friends came from a distance to see us we put balloons on our mail box so they could find us. What will our balloons be and how will we find the time to get them together?

When I attended Cathedral H.S we adopted a Maryknoll missionary named Father Plum Blossom. When he came back to the US for his family sabbatical in December, he spent time at Cathedral. We had a school assembly to hear of his adventures. We were all assembled and the stage curtain opened and there was Fr PB with the largest round of cheese we had ever seen. He proceeded to silently carve a crude stable and some animals from the cheese. He went to the podium and began "Each of us have only 24 hours in a day and they are most likely productively filled. So we must examine our day and carve out time to receive the Jesus who seeks us." During lunch as we ate our macaroni and cheese (a last minute addition to our menu) we discussed how we could carve out the time. Since most of us didn't live in Manhattan we had long trips twice a day to get to school. I had a 45 minute trip each way and many had more, this became my God time then and long after Advent was over. I remember that conference and how, as young as we were, we were given the responsibility to give God daily time.

Advent is a "make room for God time." In our minds we can learn to quiet down and listen to Him. Make time to read the scripture and learn to imitate Him in His words and actions. Remember God is a gentleman, if you fill the time with verbal prayers talking at Him, He will never interrupt you. Mary and Joseph needed the kindness of others before, during and after the birth. Make room in your heart for Him by looking around and helping someone who might need to be connected in this time. This is a season of family. Many people have illness at home, have lost loved ones or have people far away and this season is particularly difficult for them. During Advent this year let us transform ourselves to welcome the Prince of Peace with balloons marked - Waiting, Loving, Caring.



**Mark Your Parish  
Calendar**

- Nov. 24 **Thanksgiving**
- Nov. 25 K of C Movie Night
- Nov. 27 Baptisms
- Dec. 1 Festival Choir Practice, 5:15
- Dec. 3/4 Food Collection Weekend
- Dec. 3 Christmas Pageant rehearsal
- Dec. 4 Caring Tree Gifts due
- Dec. 4 Baptisms, 1:30
- Dec. 4 Baptismal Catechesis, 1:30
- Dec. 7 Mass at The Estate
- Dec. 7 **Vigil Mass for Immaculate Conception, 4pm**
- Dec. 8 **Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Masses: 7am, 7:30pm**
- Dec. 8 Festival Choir Practice, 5:15
- Dec. 10 Christmas Pageant rehearsal
- Dec. 11 Lessons and Carols, 3pm
- Dec. 14 Mass at Forge Hill
- Dec. 15 CWC Meeting, 7pm
- Dec. 17 Christmas Pageant rehearsal
- Dec. 18 K of C Coffee & Donuts
- Dec. 18 Baptisms, 1:30
- Dec. 24 **NO Morning Mass**
- Dec. 24 **Christmas Eve**  
**Masses: 4pm, 6pm, 7:30pm, Midnight**
- Dec. 25 **Christmas Day**  
**Masses 9am, 10:30am**
- Dec. 27 Mass at nursing home
- Jan. 4 Mass at The Estate
- Jan. 8 Baptisms
- Jan. 8 Baptismal Catechesis, 1:30
- Jan. 15 K of C Coffee & Donuts
- Jan. 15 Baptisms
- Jan. 18 Mass at Magnolia Heights
- Jan. 19 CWC Meeting, 7pm
- Jan. 22 Baptisms
- Jan. 24 Mass at nursing home
- Jan. 29 Baptisms
- Feb. 1 Mass at The Estate
- Feb. 5 Scout Sunday
- Feb. 5 Baptisms
- Feb. 5 Baptismal Catechesis, 1:30
- Feb. 8 Mass at Forge Hill
- Feb. 12 Baptisms
- Feb. 15 Mass at Magnolia Heights
- Feb. 19 K of C Coffee & Donuts
- Feb. 19 Baptisms
- Feb. 21 Mass at nursing home
- Feb. 26 Baptisms
- Mar. 1 **Ash Wednesday**  
**Masses: 7am, 7:30pm**  
**Prayer Service: 12:10pm**
- Mar. 3 Stations of the Cross, 5:45pm
- Mar. 5 K of C Coffee & Donuts
- Mar. 5 Baptisms
- Mar. 8 Mass at Forge Hill
- Mar. 8 Confession, 6:30-8pm
- Mar. 10 Stations of the Cross, 5:45pm
- Mar. 12 Baptisms
- Mar. 12 Baptismal Catechesis, 1:30
- Mar. 15 Confession, 6:30-8
- Mar. 17 Stations of the Cross, 5:45pm
- Mar. 19 K of C 100th Anniversary



**A Festival of Lessons  
and Carols**

**Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup>**  
at 3:00pm 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 11<sup>th</sup> in preparation of the birth of the Holy Child!!



**St. Mary's Choir  
Christmas CD**

**On sale after all weekend Masses until Christmas Eve and at the rectory during normal business hours**  
Call 508-528-0020 for information

**They make great Christmas Gifts**  
1 for \$20, 2 for \$35, 3 or more \$15 ea.

**All proceeds benefit  
St. Mary Parish**



- Mar. 22 Mass at The Estate
- Mar. 22 Confessions, 6:30-8pm
- Mar. 24 Stations of the Cross, 5:45pm
- Mar. 26 CWC Communion Breakfast
- Mar. 26 Baptisms
- Mar. 28 Mass at nursing home
- Mar. 29 Confessions, 6:30-8pm
- Mar. 31 Stations of the Cross, 5:45pm
- Apr. 2 K of C Coffee & Donuts
- Apr. 2 Baptisms
- Apr. 5 Mass at The Estate
- Apr. 5 Confessions, 6:30-8pm
- Apr. 7 Stations of the Cross, 5:45pm
- Apr. 9 **Palm Sunday**
- Apr. 9 Baptisms
- Apr. 9 Baptismal Catechesis, 1:30

**God From God,  
Light From Light**

*by Father Jack Sullivan*

New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art filled a gap in its collection of Italian art by purchasing a seven hundred year old painting by Duccio of Siena. The museum spent over forty-five million dollars to buy this painting of the Madonna holding the baby Jesus. The New York Times reported that many people were astonished at the small size of this painting, approximately eight by eleven inches, and predicted that some visitors would look at this Madonna and child and wonder whether it was worth forty-five million dollars.

At Christmas we continue to marvel at this small masterpiece - the birth of the infant Jesus who is the Son of God and the Son of Mary in the little town of Bethlehem. See how our God makes himself known. God catches our attention by sending his Son Jesus as a newborn baby. God draws near to us so that we, in turn, might approach God with devotion and love.

Like the curators of the museum in New York City, our God noticed a gap – so to speak – in the heavenly collection of treasures. There were angels in heaven, but no human creatures of flesh and blood had yet become residents. The gates of heaven were closed to humanity, the descendants of Adam and Eve. God made a costly investment to gain human beings as residents in heaven. God the Father generously spent Trinitarian treasure when He sent the Son to be born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea. As the one eternal Savior, Jesus makes us worthy to share his life now and to enjoy his company forever in heaven.

John's Gospel resembles a museum docent who teaches us about this masterpiece and what we should notice in this event. “And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The sacred author and the community behind John's Gospel have “gazed upon the visible manifestation of God, in the enfleshed Word, the only Son from the Father, the fullness of a gift that is

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## “Celebrating” the Holidays When You Have Lost a Loved One

by Nan Rafter, Parish Nurse

The holidays are fast approaching and for someone who has lost a loved one they can't go by fast enough. The decorations and carols remind us of happier times. You can be shopping for food and suddenly hear your loved one's favorite carol or find their favorite holiday food and you are brought to tears. The holidays are going to happen no matter what you are going through or how you feel, so you need to take control to protect yourself as best you can. It may not be a time to celebrate the holidays but instead “get through them” and you will.

Several ways that you can get through the holidays include:

- Let the little things go...decide what is important and let go of the rest at least for now.
- You may need to change traditions (at least for just this year) and create new ones.
- Assign Thanksgiving and Christmas tasks to others.
- Shop on-line to avoid the crowds and hearing holiday music.
- Focus on helping others like adopting a family in need through our St. Vincent de Paul Society.
- Attend Mass at a different time. Go to the Fatima Shrine and light a candle in memory of your loved one.

(Just remember that the Christmas lights are on in the evening.)

- Open presents at a different time (Christmas Eve instead of Christmas Day).
- If possible, share joyous memories of your loved one.
- Do something to honor your loved one. Donate to their favorite charity. Have a family member or friend say a prayer or make a toast at the holiday meal. Light a candle in remembrance of them.
- Cry...Jesus has won the victory over suffering and death, yet these are real and painful experiences. The scriptures remind us that even Jesus cried at the death of His dear friend Lazarus (Jn. 11:35). When we allow ourselves to cry we feel better. Many times tears appear when our soul is overwhelmed with feelings that words cannot describe. However, it is not important to know what the tears are about. It is important to release them. Give yourself the gift of tears.

It is important to make a plan. Losing a loved one can make you feel out of control. However it is also important for your plans to be flexible. If you make plans with family or friends and when the time comes you want to be alone,

tell them you need this alone time. Just for now take the words **MUST** and **SHOULD** out of your vocabulary. You do not have to do anything other than eat, sleep, hydrate with water and **BREATHE**. You may choose to be busy to keep your mind off of your loss but also remember to rest and care for yourself.

“Come to me all who are burdened and you will be comforted.” (Mt. 11:28)



### ...God from God

(Continued from page 4)  
truth” (Francis J. Moloney, The Gospel of John, p. 39).

Throughout the Christmas season, we sing to Jesus and express our faith in Jesus as “God in flesh made manifest” (the refrain to “Songs of thankfulness and praise”). At the conclusion of John’s Gospel, the Risen Jesus addresses these words to us and to all believers: “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed” (John 20:29).

Saint Augustine (354 – 430) delights in reminding us that we have received benefits, “such splendid goods,” from the Lord Jesus Christ. “The Lord Christ is forever, without beginning with the Father. And yet ask what today is; it’s a birthday. Whose? The Lord’s. Has he really got a birthday? He has. The Word in the beginning, God with God, has a birthday? Yes, he has. Unless he had a human birth, we would never attain to the divine rebirth; he was born that we might be reborn. Let nobody hesitate to be reborn; Christ has been born; born, with no need of being reborn” (sermon 189).

### PARISH COMMUNICATION

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:

Father Brian Manning: [bmanning@stmarysfranklin.org](mailto:bmanning@stmarysfranklin.org)

Father Jack Sullivan: [jsullivan@stmarysfranklin.org](mailto:jsullivan@stmarysfranklin.org)

Father Chris Bae: [cbae@stmarysfranklin.org](mailto:cbae@stmarysfranklin.org)

Karen Ackles: [reled.director@stmarysfranklin.org](mailto:reled.director@stmarysfranklin.org)

Roger Gullo: [confirmation.director@stmarysfranklin.org](mailto:confirmation.director@stmarysfranklin.org)

Liz Bertoni: [reled.secretary@stmarysfranklin.org](mailto:reled.secretary@stmarysfranklin.org)

Paula Baker: [reled.registration@stmarysfranklin.org](mailto:reled.registration@stmarysfranklin.org)

Paula Coughlin: [parishpublishing@stmarysfranklin.org](mailto:parishpublishing@stmarysfranklin.org)

Patricia Murphy: [businessmanager@stmarysfranklin.org](mailto:businessmanager@stmarysfranklin.org)

Paulette Thomas: [pthomas@stmarysfranklin.org](mailto:pthomas@stmarysfranklin.org)

Nan Rafter: [nrafter@stmarysfranklin.org](mailto:nrafter@stmarysfranklin.org)

Terry Kerr, Music Director: [terry.kerr@att.net](mailto:terry.kerr@att.net) 508-541-3286

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.



## St. Mary's Music Notes!!

by Terry Kerr

**Adult Choir:** The St. Mary Adult Choir has begun their 2016 – 2017 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 Third Annual "Festival of Lessons and Carols for Advent & Christmas" on Sunday, December 11<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 11<sup>th</sup> What a great way to prepare for the upcoming Christmas season!!!

**Children's Festival Choir:** The St. Mary Children's Festival Choir will soon begin conducting rehearsals in preparation for the 4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Liturgy at the Horace Mann School!

Rehearsals will be held from 5:15 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. in the Upper Church on the following Thursdays:

December 1  
December 8  
December 15

### **Glory to the Newborn King:**

St. Mary's Adult Choir has produced a Christmas CD that is available for purchase after all Masses, beginning the weekend of November 5/6. The CDs will be sold until Christmas Eve (for all those last minute shoppers). Please pick one up, enjoy the music, and support your parish!

### **...Advent: A Time of Hope**

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our narrow self interest and to work for understanding and peace in our daily lives. This has an expanding effect like ripples of water extending outward to our own community and even beyond. There is no limit to the power of God working in us.

## Evangelization Happens!

Submitted by Deneen and Nick Georgette  
with an introduction by John M. Ristaino

As Catholics and as Christians, we are followers of Christ. As such we are called to share the good news of Jesus Christ to others. In other words; to evangelize. When we hear the call to evangelize the good news of Jesus Christ to others, some of us get a bit confused, uncomfortable and maybe even scared. It is my honor to introduce you to two Parishioners of St. Mary's: Deneen Georgette and her son Nick. Residents of Wrentham, they have agreed to share the stories of their Faith journeys with us. As you read their witness to the Faith, I hope the word "evangelize" becomes less confusing, less uncomfortable and less frightening. Their words tell a story of Faith, hope and love which are all wonderful gifts to share at this special time of year.

### **Deneen's story:**

As a very young girl, I would tell you we had it all. An Italian immigrant family living in East Boston in a triple-decker family home, with great-grandparents, grandparents and us on the first floor. My aunt lived close by. Every Saturday we made pasta and on Sunday we would eat together as a family. Our life was extremely close and God was a big part of it. We had little or no money, but what we had was each other and our faith, food and family. My grandmother was devoted to church and we sometimes made fun of her devotion (boy were we stupid).

As years went by, things changed as it related to our faith. Sure, we received our First Communion and Confirmation, but we weren't quite as connected. I felt like the only time I prayed was when I needed something. My faith was 'seasonal' at best.

About 4 years ago, we went to Easter Mass, my son's first Mass. Nick was 15 years old. He was freaking out. His hands were sweating. He didn't know what to do or say. It was his first time in church. Also, at this point in time, I met Tracy Hickey at a pilates class. I laugh, as I don't think she liked me at first. I was a runner and we don't stretch so flexibility wasn't there, but she took the time to watch over me at class, you know to make sure I wasn't hurting myself. But I noticed there was something

so different about this woman. Yes, she is beautiful, but she radiated peace, kindness and something I could not put my finger on, until recently. We started a friendship and little did I know that not only was she transforming my body, but my heart and soul as well. She knew how troubled I was and a little lost. She suggested I come to St. Mary Church and I was truly amazed by her faith in God. I was so caught up in giving my son all the material things in life including a good education, I forgot about his soul and his connection with the church.

So I came to St. Mary Parish here in Franklin. And from the moment I entered the church, and saw my good friend, I knew I was where I was supposed to be. That first Mass was also the Mass my beautiful friend gave me the Eucharist. She said "the Body of Christ," I said "Amen." She grabbed my wrist and I looked into her eyes and I felt warmth and peace. Something I hadn't felt in 20 or so years. Father Brian was the priest who celebrated that Mass. His Homily was amazing. He spoke about how we measure our self, our reflection. He pointed out that we were all special in our own way, which is God's gift to us. I felt he was speaking to me, to my heart. My connection with the Church was being restored.

I spoke to Nick about the Mass and he said he was open to learning more about our Faith. Tracy mentioned the RCIA program. I knew he would be nervous and I wasn't so sure I wanted him to go alone. So I contacted Eileen Groncki and expressed that Nick was interested in learning more about our Faith, but I would like to go through the program with him together. I can't tell you how much I still cherish those Thursday nights together with the RCIA team. Not only was Nick learning, so was I. They became his 'honorary' grandparents. Nick opened his heart to learning and was embraced and taught with love by the most amazing ambassadors (angels) of St Mary Parish, the RCIA team.

Today, Sundays are beyond special to me. I call them Christmas Sundays as they are a gift. Nick and I attend the 10:30am Mass. In church, Nick and I are

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## Coming of Age - The Confirmation Preparation Program

By Roger Gullo

“When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things.” (1 Cor 13:11). In his letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul describes how he was “coming of age” in his understanding and proclamation that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; and that He is the way, the truth and the life.

The Confirmation Preparation Program, run by the St. Mary Religious Education Office, is an assembly of over 400 area Catholic students in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades (typically) who are “coming of age” in the teachings of Jesus Christ and their proclamation that He is the way, the truth and the life. This two-year program prepares each young adult with the wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and fortitude to enter their adult lives as one with Jesus Christ and their Catholic faith. In the sacrament of Baptism, these young adults entered into the gateway to life in the Spirit. In the sacrament of Confirmation, the baptismal grace is completed as each of the young

adults become perfectly bound to the Church and enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. With the indelible seal of the Holy Spirit, they enter into their adulthood as true witnesses of Christ and become obliged to spread and defend their Catholic faith by word and deed. (CCC 1285)

I have the pleasure and trust to be the Confirmation Director to our special young adults, now in my second year. In September of 2015, through the support of our Pastor Father Brian, our Religious Education Director Karen Ackles, and the parents, we started a new Confirmation Preparation program called “*Decision Point*.” This program is brought to us by Mr. Matthew Kelly of the Dynamic Catholic Institute. Matthew Kelly is the author of the books, *Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic*, and *Rediscover Catholicism*, provided as gifts from Father Brian to parishioners over 2 years ago during Advent and Lenten Season Masses.

The *Decision Point* program is very different from previous programs available. For one,

this program is meant to engage with dis-engaged young Catholics and meet them where they are at. Second, this program is an opportunity for parents, sponsors of Confirmation candidates and all parishioners to re-experience the knowledge and understanding of being confirmed into the Catholic faith and living out that faith through word and deed. To learn more about the St. Mary Confirmation Preparation Program and *Decision Point*, please visit the *Confirmation Program Introduction* link located on the Religious Education: Confirmation 1 & 2 page of the St Mary Parish website (<http://www.stmarysfranklin.org/>).

In the next edition of the Weave, I will discuss the Confirmation Preparation requirements and how the Confirmation Candidates’ take the steps towards the sacrament of Confirmation. We ask that you please pray for our young adults, our volunteer Religious Education teachers, the Rock Youth Group leaders, and the Religious Education staff as our youth “come of age” in their Catholic faith.

## ...Evangelization Happens!

(Continued from page 6)

closer than any bond I can explain. He wraps his arms around my back and I feel blessed and feel His warmth and presence. Nick will be leaving for college next fall (a Catholic college). And even though he won’t be by my side every Sunday in St. Mary Church, I will still be around family, all of you. I will look around and see the family that He has given me for this part of my journey. I am truly blessed.

### Nick’s story:

Well, to say the least, my journey to St Mary’s was pretty interesting. My mom is correct when she said that I was “shaking and sweating” during my first Mass a few years ago. Yet, there is much more story behind that moment in my life. At that time, I was a dorky 15-year old trying to find my way through the awkward phase of life, commonly referred to as high school. Before then, I did not go to church. Yet, I was aware of the stories of Jesus, and I believed the rules set down by God. However, I did not fully understand what it meant to be a Christian. I did not know what objects and gestures symbolized, thus anxiety overcame me

being in a house where I knew nothing of its owner.

A few months went by and nothing changed until my mom met Tracy, her pilates instructor. As you know from my mom’s story, she is the reason my mom started going back to church. Tracy has also influenced my interest in finding my faith, but it was the way she impacted my mom that intrigued me. I saw that my mom seemed happier with the world around us and that she had a new peaceful aura that pervaded our home. During the early years in high school, I was trying to find my identity in a place where there were so many different people. So upon seeing my mom, I was perplexed where she found this new serenity. I realized that she was happy because of her exposure to Jesus. I deeply thirsted for happiness and peace so, when I heard of the RCIA program at Saint Mary’s I immediately signed up for the program. Yet, I did not want to go on this journey alone. I knew I wanted to have my mom with me not because I was scared, but I wanted us to grow our faith together. As time went on, I met new people and the directors of the program Eileen and Bruce Groncki made me feel at

home. They were like extra grandparents to me, they were so kind to teach me the ways of our Faith and of the mercy of our Lord.

A few weeks before the 2014-2015 Easter vigil, I was talking with my mom after the last RCIA meeting and I said, “Mom, I think the Holy Spirit has been guiding me all along. He’s giving me a good brain, so he’s good for my mind. He’s given me the ability to be a great baseball player, something I love more than anything. And he’s helped me find my soul. I now have an identity and have found my soul.” This was my revelation, I finally realized that God believed in me and that with his love I can do anything. The next day, I became a servant of God and a part of something bigger than I was. (Nick became a Lector at St. Mary Parish shortly after receiving the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easer Vigil in 2015). So, as I walk up to the ambo to proclaim the Readings on Sunday mornings, I know that this is where I belong at the table of God. Oh and as a side note, Tracy was my witness when I became a Christian, my Godmother. Thank you, and God Bless you all!

## Meet the Seminarians



### Ken Grooms

I grew up in SC and converted from Southern Baptist when I was in college. I then moved to NY and volunteered with Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity and was blessed to meet

Mother Teresa several times. I then became a caregiver and a cook for retired priests.

I joined a Trappist monastery, but left because I missed being with people. I returned to New York and began attending daily Mass and Eucharistic Adoration. It was there I discerned a call to the priesthood...but at 49, I thought I was too old. I contacted my spiritual director and he told me I *wasn't* too old. Because of my mature age, my bishop sent me up here to Weston, your own backyard, where I attend the national seminary for mature vocations run by RCAB. I feel privileged to be there...and to be here in your parish. Every year for the past 6 years, St. Mary's has been doing pas-

toral field education for our seminary. Nan Rafter, your Parish Nurse and Health and Homebound Ministry Coordinator, has been a supervisor for our pastoral education program, helping form future priests with her vast experience and pastoral sensitivity.

St. Mary's is a great parish with great priests and great people. It is a joy and privilege to minister to your homebound and sick.



### Michael Hanna

I am a second theology seminarian at Pope St. John XXIII Seminary. I was born in Chicopee, MA and attended Holy Name of Jesus Catholic grammar

school and East Longmeadow HS. I then earned a business degree at Bryant College in Smithfield, RI. A sports injury in college resulted in a dramatic conversion and healing which changed my life. It was during my convalescence that I felt God begin to call me.

My early work experiences include; Mass Mutual Company and the US Postal Service. After attaining a Master's degree in Education I spent seventeen years teaching in Massachusetts, Florida and Alaska. My fluency in Portuguese also led to teaching assignments in Brazil and a summer assignment at Our Lady of Fatima Portuguese parish in Ludlow MA last summer. I am an extraordinary minister and lector at both St. Mary's in Longmeadow and St. Michael's in East Longmeadow, MA.



# The Weave

St. Mary Parish Family  
One Church Square  
Franklin MA 02038

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