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ARE MADE NEW

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ST. VINCENT FERRER PARISH

LIVING
CHURCH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

Fr. Jerry Gardner *Growing Up in the Parish*

A lot happens in the life of a parish. Pastors come and pastors go. Children grow up, marry, and have children of their own – who then create their own memories of parish picnics, breakfasts with Santa, and crowded Christmas Eve Masses. In the life of a parish, ministries are introduced, building funds are launched, and the cycles of the liturgical seasons are punctuated with baptisms, weddings, funerals, and ordinations. And perhaps most importantly, in the life of a parish, faith that is first taught in the home can grow and flourish within the parish community, which can lead to vocations to the priesthood, diaconate or religious life.

Of course, the Church has long recognized families as being the first

heralds of our faith. Fr. Jerry Gardner, who was raised within the St. Vincent Ferrer community, credits his family for giving him the gift of faith and for creating an environment in which the idea of vocations was not a foreign one. His parents, Bill and Connie Gardner, raised Fr. Jerry and his siblings – two older brothers and a younger sister – with a strong sense of their Catholic identity in which Mass and Holy Days were observed. Furthermore, two sets of grandparents, an older cousin who entered the consecrated religious life as a sister, and a large, extended family meant that there were plenty of opportunities to gather in faith.

“The backdrop of Catholic prayer and ritual were evident during my early years,” says Fr. Jerry, who is

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FR. JERRY GARDNER

Growing Up in the Parish continued from front cover

presently serving as pastor of St. Margaret Mary Church. “The lessons of faith were simple – to believe and stay the course in both good and difficult times. Always in the background of our family life were the expressions of our faith – prayers at mealtimes, the Rosary, the crucifix in the living room, and the image of the Sacred Heart from a dedication blessing of the home. There was always the expectation of Sunday Mass attendance and regular confession, no matter our schedule or where we were.”

The same faith that Fr. Jerry learned at home was reinforced in the parish, especially through Catholic education. He attended St. Vincent Ferrer grade school – Father says he will always be grateful for the care and guidance provided by the Dominican Sisters – and he graduated from Moeller High School in 1971.

“The memories of my home and our neighborhood in Deer Park are always good ones,” Fr. Jerry says. “It was also a time of great change in the Church as the events of the Second Vatican Council brought changes to the Sacred Liturgy.”

“I know that during my discernment, I had the support of my parents, family and the parish community. I remember that when the date for my ordination became more certain, the priests and the people of St. Vincent Ferrer began planning for my first Mass, and I will always be grateful.”

– Fr. Jerry Gardner

And it was both his family and the parish community which fostered the idea of the priesthood. The initial seeds of a priestly vocation came from Father’s paternal grandmother, who nurtured the thought of vocations in all her grandchildren. She set the groundwork for later, when Father had the opportunity to participate in an archdiocesan program called The Gregorians, which offered graduating eighth-graders and high school students the opportunity to experience seminary life for a week during the summer. The program also promoted a monthly meeting with other interested young men and a priest moderator, and it was during this time that Father was encouraged to actively participate in parish life. With the combination of family support and the opportunity to put his faith into action within the parish, Father decided to enter the seminary – attending St. Gregory College and Mt. St. Mary of the West theology program – and was ordained June 1979. And because it happened to him, Father knows the important role families and the parish community have in fostering vocations.

“While the young aren’t always aware of what is happening around them, I have found that it is the little things we do to encourage and support our young people as they live their Catholic life that fosters vocations,” Father says. “Furthermore, with the reality of vocations being discerned at an older age, encouragement and positive affirmation for their involvement in the parish community allows an atmosphere for consideration of a vocation later in life.”

In the end, a lot happens in the life of a parish. When the faith that is passed from parent to child blossoms within the parish community, and when the faith is spread by word and deed, extraordinary things happen – including those who answer God’s call to a religious vocation.

“I know that during my discernment, I had the support of my parents, family and the parish community,” Fr. Jerry says. “I remember that when the date for my ordination became more certain, the priests and the people of St. Vincent Ferrer began planning for my first Mass, and I will always be grateful.”

All Things and All People Are Made New

Dear Parishioners,

We associate the Easter season with springtime — a time of new life and new beginnings — and Holy Scripture addresses this idea of newness many times. In one of our readings during April, God declares, “Behold, I make all things new.”

This idea of being “new” is important to us as Catholics, and it is important to our parish. We need to strive to do this on a regular basis — even on a daily basis. Think of the fact that all was once new. Regardless of how you view the development of this earth and those of us who occupy it, all was once new.

During this ongoing Easter season, we need to retain that idea of being “new.” And being “new” means conversion, and we have often pointed out that conversion is at the heart of a life of stewardship.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (§654) puts it, “The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life.”

In other words, Christ’s Resurrection is the source of our new life — our own future resurrection. St. Paul wrote about it to the Romans in the following words (Rom 6:5): “For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.”

Hope for a new life beginning now and extending on into heaven is the result of Jesus’ Resurrection. What greater grounds for thanksgiving can there be than this Easter hope? We should sing with joy about God’s promise to us: “Behold, I make all things new!” (Rev 21:5).

St. Paul also wrote (Col 3:1-2): “If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth.” Jesus’ Resurrection and His promise of a new life for us means that we need to live in conformity with our status as adopted children of God.



How do we show our joy and our gratitude to God for this amazing gift that has been given us? We join in worship, and praise God by word and song. We share the Good News of Jesus’ victory over death with our family, friends and neighbors. And we offer back to the Lord a portion of the time, talent and treasure that has been entrusted to us.

Yes, the Easter message is that we share in the benefits of Christ’s Resurrection, which indeed makes all things new — the ultimate foundation for all Christian stewardship.

The Lord is risen, alleluia.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. George Kunkel". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Fr. George Kunkel



St. Vincent Ferrer: Forming Hearts, Hands and Minds for Christ in Our Children

Out of the many blessings God has given us, none is greater than the blessing of our children. As such, it is every parent's responsibility to cultivate and protect that gift, helping his or her child grow into the man or woman he or she was created to be.

Seeking to aid parents in this important responsibility, St. Vincent Ferrer School is dedicated to forming hearts, hands and minds for Christ. To judge whether the school is succeeding in this mission, one only has to look at the lives of their alumni.

Sixteen-year-old Anne Mier graduated from St Vincent Ferrer in 2013 and now attends Mount Notre Dame High School as a junior. She truly appreciates her days at St. Vincent Ferrer and knows that it has helped her become the young woman she is today.

"I am most grateful for the teachers I had at St. Vincent Ferrer," Anne says. "Because of them, I felt challenged, but I was still comfortable asking for help if I needed it. I am generally a shy person at first, so asking someone for help can be a struggle of mine."

Anne states that because of the confidence she received from being

challenged and learning to ask for help, she also "discovered so much more" about herself through her St. Vincent Ferrer journey.

Similar to Anne, Brennan Dunkley, a sophomore at St. Xavier High School, feels the education he received at St. Vincent Ferrer was instrumental in his self-journey.

"There was a small, close group of people and everyone got a lot of attention," Brennan says. "This really helped me with independent study. They really stressed the fact that we need to become independent and learn separately from teachers and parents – that we need to learn to think for ourselves."

Because of how St. Vincent Ferrer encourages students to make their faith their own, Brennan states that his elementary education also "helped form him" as a disciple for Christ, allowing him to thrive both spiritually and academically in high school.

Having been encouraged to make his faith his own, Brennan's faith has now become a rock on which to stand. In the process of transitioning to a new school, meeting new friends, and beginning his high school studies, Brennan still felt "connected [to his faith] moving on



Brennan Dunkley



Anne Mier

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Forming Hearts, Hands and Minds for Christ in Our Children

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to St. Xavier,” allowing him not only a smooth transition, but also the grace to continue living as a disciple of Christ.

“St. Vincent Ferrer stresses the fact that faith is the basis of who we are, and it has helped me to be a disciple,” Brennan says.

Jake Fox, who graduated from St. Vincent Ferrer and is now a senior at Moeller High School, shares Brennan’s experience in being able to grow his faith through his education.

“I think that St. Vincent Ferrer School gave me a good baseline for the faith,” Jake says. “I also feel like I learned so much. When I transitioned to high school I felt very prepared, especially in English.”

Jake points out that he “learned his good habits” from St. Vincent Ferrer – a smaller grade school – and then used those habits to flourish and gain confidence in a larger school environment.

Anne, Brennan, and Jake are just three examples of how St. Vincent Ferrer School “exists to serve the academic, spiritual, physical, and emotional needs” of our children, as stated in

the school’s educational philosophy. Each of these students has gained a solid faith foundation, allowing them to confidently continue to grow in both their faith and their education.



Jake Fox

“There was a small, close group of people and everyone got a lot of attention. This really helped me with independent study. They really stressed the fact that we need to become independent and learn separately from teachers and parents – that we need to learn to think for ourselves.” – Brennan Dunkley



LIVING CHURCH

YEAR OF MERCY 2016 *Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy*

Since Medieval times, the Church has named 14 ways in which mercy can be demonstrated. Seven are corporal, meaning they affect the body in some way. The other seven are spiritual. These affect the religious, intellectual or psychological aspects of persons. Each month, we will focus on one of these ways of practicing mercy, in our local church and in our homes.

COUNSEL THE DOUBTFUL

The last chapter of Matthew tells us that the Resurrected Jesus appeared to the Eleven to give his final earthly instructions. "When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted". (Matthew 28:17) Jesus then commissioned them as Apostles. Clearly, Jesus did not hold it against these very human persons for doubting, according to this Gospel.

Doubt is totally human and a sign of a lively intellect. It can also be painful and destructive. Doubt of advertisements and political promises makes good sense. Doubt of religious teachings is harder. Solid faith and discipleship does not preclude doubt, as the Apostles demonstrate, but religious doubt can cause feelings of guilt. It can also inspire unloving reactions from others who disapprove of this doubt. Self-doubt can be the most destructive, preventing a person from action.

At St. Vincent Ferrer, catechists counsel the doubtful when they explain the faith in ways that make sense to students. Hospital and nursing home visitors counsel the doubtful when they assure dying persons that God's love is meant for them, in suffering and in death. Parents counsel the doubtful when they tell their children that they have faith in their ability to succeed, despite setbacks.

Catholic Charities of Southwestern Ohio serves persons of all faiths and income levels whose doubt has become debilitating, with counseling and mental health services.

A Look Back on Our Parish Mission

This past February, our St. Vincent Ferrer and All Saints parishes shared in fellowship, formation and reflection at our Parish Mission. We also welcomed mission speaker and evangelist Eric Hollis, a member of St. John the Baptist Parish in Harrison.



Behind the Scenes At Mass

There are many different pieces that come together each weekend for the celebration of Mass at St. Vincent Ferrer. From those who serve as ushers and altar servers, to the members of the choir, there are many parishioners who give of their talents to serve the parish each week. And although you might easily recognize someone who regularly serves as a greeter, lector, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, there's another group of people who humbly serve our parish, and use their talents to make our liturgy beautiful.

"It's just coordinating all the details, so that the liturgy runs smoothly and the parishioners can have a positive, prayerful experience of Mass," says Peggy Whelan of the Sacristans Ministry.

"I like being in the background and just making sure that we do everything we can so that the celebrant can do everything he needs to do to provide the Blessed Sacrament for the community," says Mary Kay Lynch, who coordinates the ministry. "We make sure that the ushers are there, that the servers are there, that we have the lectors, so that the celebrant can do the most important job, to celebrate the Mass."

From making sure everyone is where they need to be, to preparing the altar, lighting candles, and locking the church after Mass, sacristans take care of many of the little details that would otherwise fall by the wayside.

"I like to be behind the scenes," says Patti McElroy, who has served as a sacristan for the past five years, "I like trying to fill in the needs, making sure everything goes well."

For those who serve in this ministry, it is a chance to give back to their community in a quiet, yet necessary, way.

"We're the invisible people; people don't even know that we're there," says Mary Kay, of her 17 years serving as a sacristan. "But it's that gift that I can give. I really don't care whether people know that I'm doing it or not, because it's my gift to God and to the community."

"It's humbling," Peggy adds. "I don't have to be in the limelight, I know in my heart that it's a good thing."

How do you know if this is the right ministry for you?

"I like to organize events and I like helping others, so this is just perfect for me, and a way I can do that in the church," Peggy says.

"I'm a caretaker," Mary Kay says. "So it was just something I felt called to do."

For many who serve in this ministry, it is not only a chance to give to the parish, but also an opportunity to grow closer to God.

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"This is another little way to do small things with great love," says Patti McElroy, who has served as a sacristan for five years.



Mary Kay Lynch is the coordinator of the Sacristans Ministry and has served as a sacristan for the past 17 years.



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MASSES

SATURDAY VIGIL: 5:00 P.M.

SUNDAY: 9:00 A.M. AND 11:00 A.M.

CHAPEL (PARISH CENTER):

MON-FRI: 8:30 A.M.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

SATURDAY: 3:30-4:30 P.M.

Behind the Scenes At Mass *continued from page 7*

"I sometimes reflect, when I'm putting the hosts in the little paten, and I just think about how in a few minutes, this is going to be changed," Patti says. "It's helping me grow in my understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist. I think it helps me appreciate my Catholic faith more. I think it helps me be more aware of how important the Mass is to me."

For Patti, though, serving as a sacristan is not only spiritually beneficial, but it is also a practical way to serve, regardless of various time and schedule constraints.

"No matter how busy you are, you can do it," she says.

Most sacristans arrive about an hour before Mass begins and leave 15 minutes after it ends. Scheduling is based on individuals' availability, so you can serve whenever you are available.

"Add on a little more time to serve the Lord and the parish," Patti encourages.

"It's a small time sacrifice, but such a gratifying experience," Peggy says. "Sometimes I think it's hard for people to say, 'Yes, I want to do that.' But I think once you do it, you enjoy it. You just have to take that first step."



Peggy Whalen serves the parish as a sacristan, taking care of many of the behind the scenes details.

If you are interested in learning more about this behind-the-scenes service at Mass, please contact Mary Kay Lynch at 513-731-7155 or kaylynch@fioptics.com.