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ST. VINCENT FERRER PARISH

LIVING
CHURCH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

Offering Support and Christ's Love in Times of Need *Bereavement Ministry*

When we face the loss of a loved one, the smallest acts of kindness from strangers often leave the deepest marks on our hearts. It is through the simple acts of service from those around us that we see light in the darkness of our grief, and the love of Christ shines through. The Bereavement Ministry here at St. Vincent Ferrer seeks to provide that selfless love to our parishioners during what may be the hardest times in their lives.



St. Vincent Ferrer Bereavement ministers – (from left) Sue Palermo, Ellen Brinker, Mary Kay Lynch, Karen Schaefer, Lyn Smith, and Mary Sies

“It’s important that we serve those who have lost a loved one and try to give them comfort and support,” says Fr. George Kunkel, who acts as our Bereavement Ministry Coordinator. “No one should grieve alone. As ministers, we want to be a companion to the family of a lost loved one. Sooner or later, everyone will have to deal with grieving, and it’s important that we be able to walk with those people.

Sometimes, it’s just being present to them. I don’t know that there are any magic words to say. What we try to do in our ministry is to just offer our concerned presence and listen. People grieve in different ways, so we try to understand what they need and offer support however we can.”

Although the main purpose of the Bereavement Ministry is to offer support and peace of mind to parish families who have recently lost a loved one, Fr. George knows that this ministry can change the hearts of those it serves and foster community within our parish.

“I think this ministry can be evangelical,” Fr. George says. “By reaching out to people at a time like this, it’s a quiet way to let them know that the Church is there for them. They may have been away from the Church, so this is an opportunity to reconnect them to the Church. The holidays can be an

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DECEMBER 8:

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception

When it comes to Catholic trivia, there is one simple question that often evokes an incorrect response: “What is the Immaculate Conception?”

More often than not, this term is believed to designate Christ’s conception within Mary, through the power of the Holy Spirit. A good guess, no doubt. But it is 100 percent incorrect!

The term “Immaculate Conception” describes the state of Mary’s soul within the womb of her mother, St. Anne. It has nothing to do with a special type of generative conception by her parents – Mary’s body was formed in the usual manner by her mother and father.

Instead, the term “Immaculate Conception” describes how Mary was preserved from the stain of original sin from the first moment of her existence.

Every person since Adam and Eve has been born with the stain of original sin, which can be washed away in the cleansing waters of Baptism. Yet, this fallen state never touched the soul of Mary, the new Eve. She was conceived with original sanctity and innocence, escaping all faults, depraved emotions and passions, and remained sinless. She was not exempt from the temporal penalties of Adam, however — including sorrow, physical illness and death.

The belief in Mary’s Immaculate Conception has been held by the Church throughout history, though only officially declared a dogma in 1854

by Pope Pius IX. Highly devoted to the Blessed Virgin, Pius IX hoped the official definition would draw emphasis to the already existing belief, thereby inspiring deeper devotion to Mary. This dogma finds its roots in both Scripture and Tradition, and remains consistent with reason and the teachings of our early Church fathers.

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated every year on Dec. 8 and is one of the few declared Holy Days of Obligation on the Church calendar. All Catholics are obligated to attend Mass on this day.

Why not make this liturgical feast a special day of devotion? Bring a rose to place before an image of the Blessed Virgin in the church sanctuary, or arrange a little altar at home for your children to decorate. Recite the Magnificat and discuss the Church’s teaching on the Immaculate Conception.

As Pope Benedict XVI spoke during his homily on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in 2005, “On this feast day, let us thank the Lord for the great sign of his goodness which he has given us in Mary, his Mother and the Mother of the Church... Mary thus stands before us as a sign of comfort, encouragement and hope.”

Once this beautiful feast is brought alive in our hearts and in our homes, we will never again mistakenly answer that “tricky” question: “What is the Immaculate Conception?”



The Magnificat

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for He has looked with favor on His lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is His Name. He has mercy on those who fear Him in every generation. He has shown the strength of His arm, He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has come to the help of His servant Israel for He remembered His promise of mercy, the promise He made to our fathers, to Abraham and His children for ever.

December: A Time for Mercy and Tenderness

Dear Parishioners,

Advent and Christmas are upon us. This is a busy time for me, for our parish, for priests, and certainly for most of you. We all know that our homes, schools, offices, and churches will soon be overflowing with many holiday events, and our pews will be overflowing with all of those present for Christmas Masses.

We all know why – there is something special about the Church and about our faith during these holidays. First of all, you and I need to remember that fact – and we need to be grateful for it. For those of us who are here every Sunday, this is a time not to resent those who fill our pews and our parking lots. Rather, it is a time to be the loving and welcoming people Christ calls us to be. Hospitality is an important part of being a good steward, and this is a perfect time to practice it.

For those of us who may only come every once in a while, or for these special occasions, you are welcome here! We hope you like what you see, and we want you to know that you always have a home and family here, any time you need it.

You may have heard of the term “the New Evangelization.” It is something



Pope Francis has emphasized, in particular through his exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, which he wrote and issued two years ago. The pope’s letter, with the title that means “The Joy of the Gospel,” has advice for all Catholics relating to how we should all view and treat each other, as sons and daughters of God and members of the Church.

The pope said, “There is a need for Christians who help show God’s mercy and tenderness toward every creature. We all know that today’s humanity is facing a deep crisis. This is why the new evangelization must necessarily use the language of mercy, which is more about gestures and attitudes than words.” It is appropriate that the Year of Mercy proclaimed by the pope begins this Dec. 8.

As the Holy Father reminds us, this is a time for “mercy and tenderness.” This is a time for us to show love for everyone, to our brothers and sisters in the next pew or on the other side of the globe. This is a time to share the Good News of Emmanuel, God-with-us, with all we meet.

May you and your families have a blessed Advent and Merry Christmas!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. George Kunkel



Joan Crable

Serving Where You Are Called

God knows us better than we know ourselves. He recognizes an untapped talent within us, one that can be used to serve Him and the Church, and brings that talent to the forefront at different stages in our lives. Such is the case with parishioner Joan Crable, who found ways to serve the school and parish for many years until God led her to share her talents in a special ministry – one of which she has been part for over 40 years.

It all began in 1955, when Joan married Jack Crable. They moved into a modest two-story house where they raised seven children – Rick, Ann, Bob, Peg, Sue, Bill, and Jeff – and where life was never dull. With nine people living under one roof, Joan says that (obviously) things were never really quiet and that there was always an adventure around every corner. Then, between chores, school activities and sports, there was a lot of coming and going, especially since at one point their small neighborhood – which was arranged in a square with roughly ten houses on each side – included 70 children.

“Our kids never lacked for friends to play with, that’s for sure,” Joan says. “People look at my house and wonder how in the world we raised our family in such a small place, but we made it work and everyone turned out fine, and today they all live in nice, big houses.”

But if walls could speak – oh, the stories they could tell! From the walls in the Crable household, there would be tales of Christmas joys, holiday gatherings, squabbles between brothers, scrambles for the bathroom and, in later years, Jack’s struggle with mesothelioma and his eventual passing in 2004. But through it all – the ups and downs, the tears and the smiles – Joan says faith was the foundation for everything, one which was instilled in her childhood. Her parents raised Joan and her two brothers with a strong sense of their Catholic heritage, which included Mass on Sundays, periodic confessions, and visits during the holidays to an aunt who was a nun. Catholic education was also important, and it was something that she and Jack passed on to their own children.

“I attended St. Mark’s Catholic School in Evanston, and then graduated from Regina High School,” Joan says. “Catholic education has always been important to us. Jack wasn’t raised Catholic, but he played sports with lots of friends who were, and they were a big factor in him deciding to convert before we were married. And because of his friends and his contacts with the Catholic Church, he believed that Catholic school would be the best thing for our kids.”



As is often the case with parents of young children, involvement in the church and school often revolves around children’s activities, and it was no different for Joan. In the early years when the children were in school, she found ways to share her talents by volunteering as homeroom mother, helping out in the lunchroom, and even serving as a den mother. During a period when Joan was experiencing anxiety and depression and, on the advice of her sister-in-law, she joined Recovery International. Recovery International is a self-help support group which gives people the tools to cope in order to live more peaceful and productive lives. It was exactly where Joan was meant to be, and out of her heartache, God showed Joan how she could minister to others.

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Serving Where You Are Called *continued from page 4*

“When you are anxious or depressed, you think there is no one else out there going through the same thing,” Joan says. “You feel so alienated and alone. But Recovery International helped me in my struggles, and I have been involved with them for over 40 years, most of them as a leader. Of course, I reached a point in my life where I could have stopped going, but I still wanted to be involved in order to be of help to others. I have been there, I understand where people are coming from and what they are going through, and this has been my way to give back.”

“I don’t know what I’d do without my faith. I pray for all kinds of things, big and small. It’s second nature to me, because my faith is who I am.” – Joan Crable

Today, Joan still lives in that same house where she and Jack raised their seven children. She has been blessed with 15 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren, most of whom are attending – or have attended – Catholic school. She likes to read, serves as sacristan, helps take care of the altar linens, and every morning spends time in prayer before heading to daily Mass.

Ultimately, when we discern our gifts, thank God for our gifts, hone our gifts, and share our gifts with others through stewardship, can we grow in our faith and allow God’s grace to flow in our lives. But for Joan, whether she is volunteering her time with the parish or leading the weekly meetings at Recovery International, it all comes down to faith.

“I don’t know what I’d do without my faith,” Joan says. “I pray for all kinds of things, big and small. It’s second nature to me, because my faith is who I am.”

St Vincent Ferrer Church

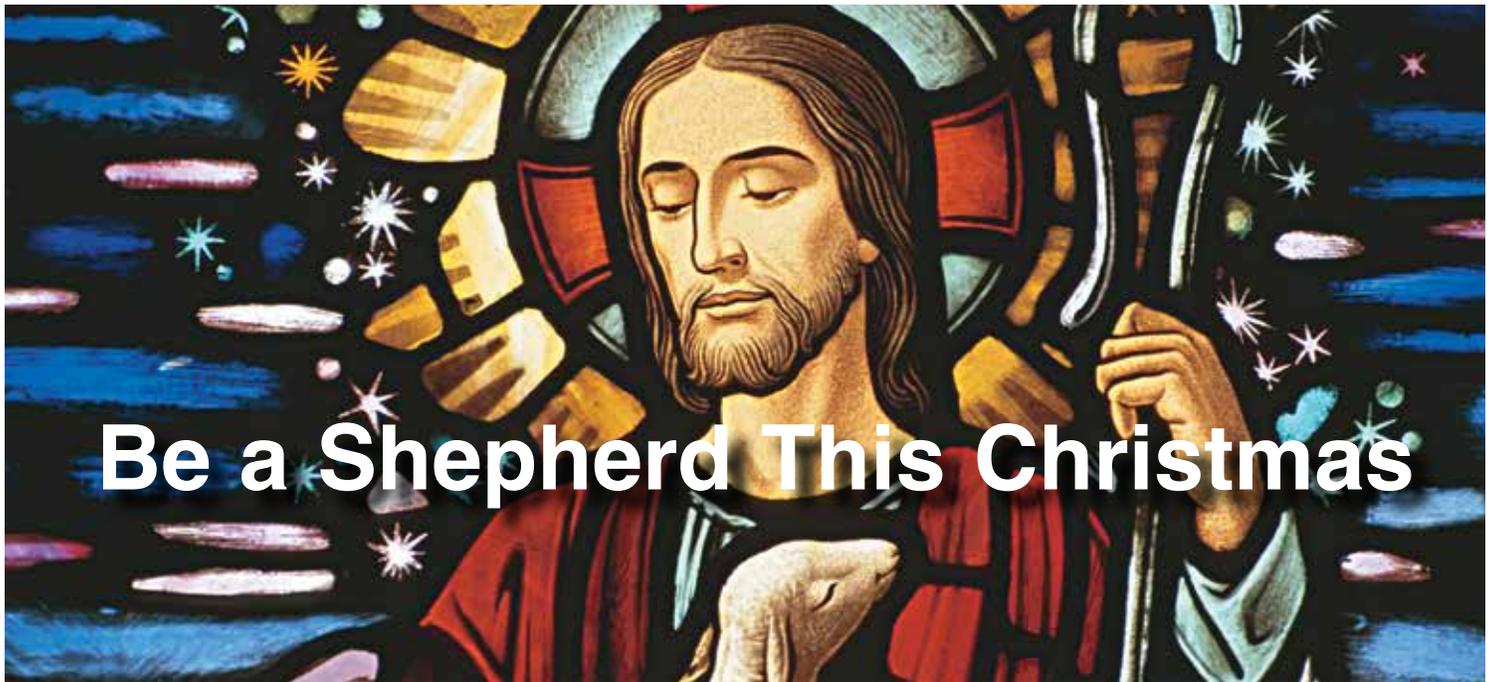
Financial Report as of September 30, 2015

	2015-16 Annual Budget	2015-16 Year to Date Actual	2015-16 Projected Year End
TOTAL CHURCH INCOME	1,028,025	266,181	1,009,645
TOTAL CHURCH EXPENSES	911,193	183,485	859,549
NET CHURCH INCOME / (EXPENSE)	116,832	82,696	150,096
TOTAL SCHOOL INCOME	828,805	133,647	773,025
TOTAL SCHOOL EXPENSES	874,408	238,923	916,352
NET SCHOOL INCOME / (EXPENSE)	(45,603)	(105,276)	(143,327)
NET PARISH OPERATING INCOME / (EXPENSE)	71,229	(22,580)	6,769
LESS: LOAN PRINCIPAL PAYMENT	(82,586)	(20,348)	(82,586)
NET PARISH INCOME / (EXPENSE)	(\$11,357)	(\$42,928)	(\$75,817)

Parish Funds Available

PARISH CHECKING ACCOUNT (net of liabilities)	\$63,037	\$36,544
PARISH SAVINGS W/ ARCHDIOCESE	\$11,499	\$0
BANK LOAN BALANCE	\$820,646	\$758,408

For the first quarter of fiscal year 2015-16, although we are tracking close to budget, there are concerns for the projected June 30, 2016 year-end results. We have recently determined that the income received from tuition will be substantially less than budgeted for the year and the Sunday offertory continues to track below budget on a weekly basis. As faithful stewards of all that God has given us, we continue to examine parish expenses and be prudent in our spending. — Fr. George



Be a Shepherd This Christmas

Sheep are mentioned more times in the Bible than any other animal. In fact, more than 500 references are made to sheep. It naturally follows that shepherds are an important aspect of the Bible, as well. The first shepherd is found in Genesis; “Abel became a herder of flocks” (Genesis 4:2). Shepherds continue to play a dominant role throughout Scripture. We all are familiar with the beautiful Psalm 23, composed by David (a shepherd himself): “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

Many other familiar Biblical figures served as shepherds, including Abraham, Jacob and Moses. However, the ultimate spiritual shepherd was, of course, Jesus Himself. “I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep” (John 10:14-15). If we are familiar with the story of Jesus’ birth, we are also aware of the important role played by shepherds in and near Bethlehem.

We need to know that being a shepherd, a sheep farmer, was not considered to be one of the more noble professions – shepherds were looked down upon by many. Near Bethlehem, it may well have been that the sheep they were raising were to be used as sacrifice animals. Yet, God chose a special role for them at Jesus’ nativity. The shepherds were visited by an angel who announced to them, “I bring you good news of great joy...a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). The word “angel” in both its original Greek and Latin means “messenger.” Throughout Scripture, angels serve as messengers. However, in recounting the angel with the shepherds, something occurs which is unique – the initial angel was joined by a “heavenly host” of angels, proclaiming “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace for those he favors” (Luke 2:14).

The shepherds, of course, rush to Bethlehem to find the Christ Child. When they had seen the Savior, they told others,

many others most likely, what they had seen and what they experienced. The shepherds in effect became the new messengers of the Good News.

Shepherds were good stewards. Being a shepherd meant feeding the lambs and sheep; bringing them to good pasture lands and water; caring for them; delivering new lambs; leading them and teaching them to stay together; going after those wandering and lost; and protecting them. Jesus was indeed our Good Shepherd.

However, He calls us to be shepherds, as well – and Advent and Christmas are good times for us to pursue and live out that call. We need to be shepherds. We need to seek out those who are lost. We need to love and care for them. We need to lead them to faith and to the Church. This is the time. Be a shepherd yourself this season. Proclaim the Good News!

Advent & Christmas Schedule

Wednesday, December 2

Advent Reconciliation Service

7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, December 8

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

8:30 a.m., 12:00 noon, 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, December 24

Christmas Eve Masses

3:00 p.m., 5:00 p.m., 10:00 p.m.

(Christmas Carols at 9:30 p.m.)

Friday, December 25

Christmas Day Mass

11:00 a.m.

St. Vincent for the Poor: A Ministry of Time, Talent and Treasure

The Seasons of Advent and Christmas tend to be a time where people are more giving. Something about that “Christmas spirit” captures our hearts and makes us more aware of those less fortunate than ourselves. Noting this tendency, Charles Dickens, author of the beloved *A Christmas Carol*, once wrote: “I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all year.”

Performing charitable works is indeed an excellent way to commemorate and express our thanks for the gift of the Incarnation. Yet, our generosity cannot end there, for Christ instructs us in Scripture: “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40). Recognizing the tremendous blessings in our own life and sharing them with others, whether through monetary donations or actual time given in service, is at the very heart of Christian stewardship.

Here at St. Vincent Ferrer Parish, we have a unique opportunity to live out this call through the St. Vincent for the Poor Ministry. Consisting of five members, this service-oriented ministry gathers the third Monday of each month at 9 a.m. in the parish office. The members’ mission is to assist the less fortunate of our community.

Jeffrey (Jeff) Homan, current President of the ministry, explains that St. Vincent for the Poor fulfills its mission in two main ways. The first is the more “personal” approach – the ministry runs a hotline where persons struggling can call in order to request financial assistance.

“Oftentimes these people have lost their jobs, or have just fallen upon hard times,” Jeff says. “We help them by paying for their rent, electrical and water bills, or even their food.”

Secondly, St. Vincent for the Poor monetarily supports 12 different local charities, enabling them to continue serving the less fortunate of our community. Some of these ministries include Catholic Relief Services, the Sycamore Senior Center, the City Gospel Mission, and Little Sisters of the Poor. St. Vincent for the Poor also hosts a Clothing Drive every October, benefiting the Hope Emergency Center.



The St. Vincent for the Poor Ministry – (from left) Charlie Niehaus, Loretta Metzger, Ferd Forney, Jeff Homan, and Fr. George.

“I think it really helps people get through difficult patches in their lives,” Jeff says. “It also enables the local charities to continue the good work that they are doing.”

It is impossible for us to out-give God – whenever we give of our time, talent, or treasure to others, we end up receiving in some manner. This has certainly been the case for Jeff, who says the most rewarding aspect of his participation in the ministry has been “helping individuals during difficult times in their life.”

“The people are so deeply grateful for the help they receive,” Jeff says. “Not only is it a gift for me the giver, but also for the receiver. So, it truly is a blessing for both parties.”

Of course, none of the charitable works accomplished by St. Vincent for the Poor would be possible were it not for the generous support of parishioners. Each month, there is a collection for the ministry, which provides funds for the ministry’s charitable works.

“I think sometimes all of us are guilty of taking for granted how lucky and fortunate most of us are,” Jeff says. “I think it is important for us to share of our gifts and time with those less fortunate than ourselves. The parish gives of their treasure, supporting us financially. Then our members give of their time and talents. By doing this, we are all living out Jesus’ call to help those less fortunate than ourselves.”

As Christmas comes upon us and we begin thinking about New Year’s resolutions, please consider assisting St. Vincent for the Poor in some way. New members are always welcome and needed. However, if you are unable to currently give of your time, you can also support this ministry, and through it those in need, by donating to the monthly collections. For more information about St. Vincent for the Poor, please contact Jeff Homan at 513-745-9958.



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7754 Montgomery Road
Cincinnati, OH 45236
513-791-9030
www.svfchurch.org

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.

Bereavement Ministry *continued from front cover*

especially difficult time for families who have lost a loved one. You just never know what can trigger their grief. I think it's important that people should not be afraid to mention the person by name. I find that people appreciate when I talk freely with them about their loved one. It's a natural thing to do and I think people want to talk about it, so I think that especially during the holidays, it's important to mention the person, and talk about how they will be missed."

Mary Sies first became involved in the Bereavement Ministry after two big events in her life – her mother passed away in the spring of 2011, and a couple of years later, Mary retired after working over 35 years as a school counselor in archdiocesan high schools. Although she has participated in many ministries at our parish, she shares that the Bereavement Ministry has been the most fulfilling.

"It is an honor to accompany others through the grieving process," Mary says. "As bereavement ministers, we meet with the family, helping them to choose readings and songs for that final liturgy with their loved one. We help them

determine which family members will help with the various roles during the Mass – who will read or be a Eucharistic Minister, who will be in the Offertory Procession. We help them decide if someone in the family will give the 'Spoken Words of Remembrance.' Some families are very familiar with the process, since they have been through another death previously. For others, it is a new and confusing experience. It is a real blessing to help them with such an important event in their lives and to accompany them on that final journey."

The Bereavement Ministry is always on the lookout for parishioners with sensitivity and patience to join this wonderful group of people, offering their time and talent to those among us who are mourning a recent loss.

For more information on this ministry and all that it does for our parish, please contact Fr. George Kunkel at 513-791-9030, or via email at gkunkel@svfchurch.org.