

NOVEMBER 2015



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ST. VINCENT FERRER PARISH

LIVING CHURCH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

“What You Can Give Constantly Changes With Time” *St. Vincent Ferrer’s Mary Alice and Norb Menke*

They were called “parish-wide progressive dinners.” In a generous gesture of hospitality, once a year, several St. Vincent Ferrer parishioners would open up their homes, and other parishioners would go from home to home enjoying food and fellowship.

“It was around the time when we were building the new church, and we had huge crowds because this was the big social event,” Mary Alice Menke says. “We would go to one home for appetizers, another for the main course and another for dessert. We would all end up at the parish hall together.”

For over five decades, Mary Alice and Norb Menke have been blessed to be a part of the history of St. Vincent Ferrer. Within their beloved faith community, they have grown as individuals, raised their family and continually discerned how best to give back to the community.



“We realized that our activities and involvement continually change as our family dynamics change,” Mary Alice says. “We do whatever we can because the parish has given to us, and we want to help and participate and have that sense of community.”

In 1962, when the Menkes built their home, they relocated into the parish boundaries of St. Vincent Ferrer, whose pastor at that time was Fr. Blum.

“Fr. Blum realized that in the future there would be a shortage of clergy, and the laity would have to take a more active role in the parish,” Mary Alice says. “He encouraged expanding an active confraternity of Christians with the idea of the laity getting more involved.”

Mary Alice and Norb began taking steps to be active laity, and their first involvement in the parish was through an adult discussion group in 1963.

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LIVING CHURCH

“THE JOY NEEDED TO REDISCOVER AND MAKE FRUITFUL THE MERCY OF GOD”

The Jubilee Year of Mercy

Pope Francis has declared a Jubilee Year of Mercy, which will commence on Dec. 8, 2015 (the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception) and culminate on Nov. 20, 2016 (Christ the King-Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe).

Jubilee Years are not unique, as this will be the 29th such Jubilee Year since the first one in 1300. Our most recent Jubilee Years have been in 2000, 1983, and 1975. In the Catholic Church, the concept of the Jubilee is a special year of remission of sins and universal pardon. In the Book of Leviticus, a Jubilee year is mentioned to occur every 50th year, in which slaves and prisoners would be freed, debts would be forgiven, and the mercies of God would be particularly manifest.

However, this particular Jubilee is unique in many ways. As in the past, it involves the establishment of Holy Doors. These are doors located at the four major

Basilicas in Rome – St. Peter Basilica, the Basilica of St. Mary Major, the Basilica of St. John Lateran, and the Basilica of St. Paul

Outside the Walls. Usually, Catholics are invited to make a pilgrimage to Rome and to enter through these doors during the Holy Year. Christ identified Himself as “the door.” In his announcement,

the Holy Father pointed out that the Holy Doors “...evoke the passage from sin to grace which every Christian is called to accomplish. Jesus is the one and absolute way to salvation. To pass through a Holy Door is to confess with firm conviction that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Lord, the Savior who suffered, died, and rose for our salvation.”

Pope Francis encourages every Catholic to make a pilgrimage to a Holy Door. He has recognized that pilgrimages will be taken to Rome and to other chosen churches with Holy Doors spread around the world – there are three others designated in the world, with the only one in North America in Quebec City’s Basilica of Notre-Dame de Quebec in Canada. Thus, in an unprecedented move, Pope Francis has directed that every diocese and archdiocese in the world specify a church or shrine with a Holy Door to encourage and make it easier for vast numbers of people to make pilgrimages in keeping with the Holy Year and to pass through a Holy Door. To put that in perspective, there are almost 6,000 dioceses and archdioceses in the world, and nearly 200 in the United States alone.

Therefore, every Catholic has an opportunity to fulfill this pilgrimage and to pass through a Holy Door. The churches and shrines designated as having Holy Doors will be announced soon. Of course, there is much more involved in this Holy Year of Mercy. Each Catholic needs to strive to learn about the Jubilee Year and to fulfill its stipulations. As Pope Francis said in his Bull of Indiction, “Doors speak to us of welcome, hospitality, openness. I am convinced that the whole Church will find in this Jubilee the joy needed to rediscover and make fruitful the mercy of God.”



“I have decided to call an extraordinary Jubilee that is to have the mercy of God at its center. It shall be a Holy Year of Mercy.”

– His Holiness Pope Francis

November: Time to Be Grateful

Dear Parishioners,

I thank God every day for my priesthood; I thank God every day for each one of you; I thank God when I say the Mass; I thank God for each and every day. There are so many ways that the Lord has blessed me that I cannot really mention them all. That is a lot of gratitude, I know, but it is that kind of attitude of appreciation for God's presence in our lives, and His many gifts to us, that we need to concentrate on. Not just this month when Thanksgiving is so much on our minds, but throughout the year.

It has been said many times that people who are good stewards are grateful people and, as a result, are happy people. If we think about the good things in our lives — no matter how many challenges and sorrows there may be — and make them the center of our thoughts, it makes everything better.

As Catholics, we are thankful people by nature. We share the Eucharist regularly, and this is a gift from God on which we should always unite. You are probably aware that the word "Eucharist" itself comes from the Greek



word eucharistia, which means, quite simply, "thanksgiving." As a faith family, we share this meal of "thanksgiving" often, and certainly at every Holy Mass.

Thus, my thoughts of thanksgiving are not confined to one time of

year, but every day of the year. That should be the goal for each of us. I heard someone say recently that our Thanksgiving holiday has Protestant roots, but there are Catholic roots to the tradition, as well. Were you aware that in 1565 — 56 years before the Pilgrims celebrated their first Thanksgiving — Spanish Catholic settlers and Native Americans celebrated a Thanksgiving at a Holy Mass in St. Augustine, Fla.?

Thanksgiving is a way of life for us. Every time we gather to celebrate Mass, to pray, or to just enjoy one another's company, it is a time for that eternal gratitude. Everything we have is a gift from God. It may be something basic like fresh air and clean water. It may be food. It is certainly family, friends and our parish. Let us thank God not just at this time of year, but always. You and I are blessed.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. George Kunkel
Fr. George Kunkel



LIVING CHURCH: Religion in the SVF School

By BETH HIMES

Technology teacher Amy Luebbering reaches across a table filled with toys, new clothes, and Christmas paper. “Does anyone need more ribbon?” Amy is leading her Christian service mini-course at St. Vincent Ferrer School on a cold day in December. The class, made up of fifth through eighth-grade children, is wrapping hundreds of donated “angel gifts” for the needy in the Kennedy Heights and Silverton neighborhoods.

Amy’s class is an informal part of a multi-pronged religious education program in the parish school. The service mini-class does not “teach religion” using catechisms or lectures. Rather, it engages students in living out the demands of the Gospel to serve others.

Service is one prong of the comprehensive religious education offered at SVF School. Prayer and liturgical practice, study of

Christian doctrine and traditions of the Church, and preparation for the Holy Sacraments are others.

In Sara Tepe’s second-grade class, students studying the meaning of the word “sacrament” dress up like moms and dads, clergy and friends, and act out an infant baptism. They march into the holy space carrying unlit candles. They dip their hands into the bowl of water and recite the baptism promises. One child reads the words of the priest, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” as the water is poured over the doll-child of smiling youthful parents.

Over in the parish chapel, volunteers Karen Hulefeld and Pat Riedmatter lead the kindergarten class in a children’s Bible study.

Meanwhile, in other classrooms, students study such religion topics as the Ten Commandments, Church

history, the saints, and the miracles of Jesus. Traditional textbooks are supplemented by videos, website research, Sunday Mass readings, and discussions.

Some students in the school are not Catholic. Teachers work diligently to help them feel included and valued in each lesson. Morning, lunch, and end of school-day prayers allow students from many backgrounds to open their hearts to the love of God.

Preparation for the Wednesday morning school Mass is an important element of liturgical catechesis. Each class has the opportunity to write its own petitions, and to choose students to read those and the First Reading at Mass. Students prepare special liturgical songs in Mrs. Geanna Schwaegerle’s music class, as well. This year, she might try singing *Dona Nobis Pacem* in rounds!

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Adriana, Cole and Katie acting out a baptism



School Mass at St. Vincent Ferrer



Mrs. Schwaegerle prepares students for choir

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Andrew, Josilyn, Jack, Carlee and Kylie: SVF Grade 2

For Catholic students, the pinnacle of the religious education program is the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation in the seventh or eighth grades. Religion teacher Beth Weir is part of a parish team that prepares young people for this sacrament. She explains, “I want the students to think more about what God wants from them as they make choices about friends, high school, hobbies, and values. And I want them to get to know God one-on-one; I want them to develop a friendship with Him that is unique, just like all good friendships are. I want them to see themselves as being individually beloved by God.”

All prongs of religious education at St. Vincent Ferrer School lead students to that same goal, “being individually beloved by God.”

*“I want the students to think more about what God wants from them as they make choices about friends, high school, hobbies, and values. And I want them to get to know God one-on-one; I want them to develop a friendship with Him that is unique, just like all good friendships are. I want them to see themselves as being individually beloved by God.”
– Beth Weir, Religion teacher*

St. Vincent Ferrer’s Mary Alice and Norb Menke

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“We had a very young family, and when Sunday school was proposed, I taught a class each week,” Mary Alice says. “At that time, Norb was in the Holy Name Society and then the Parish Council after it was formed. Then he served on the Building Committee for the new church in 1969-70.”

The six Menke children attended St. Vincent Ferrer School. In fact, at one time, all the teachers in the school had one of the Menke children in their class!

“We really believe in Catholic education, and I even taught in a Catholic school before we were married,” Mary Alice says. “I served on the school board and volunteered in the library as the children were growing up.”

After the Second Vatican Council, Mary Alice became an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. Then, when their last child graduated from Catholic high school, Mary Alice and Norb entered another season of involvement in parish life.

Adult Faith Formation was a new development at St. Vincent Ferrer. Sr. Kaye Lednik, the Director of Religious Education at the time, formed small discussion groups and everyone read *Creating Small Faith Communities* by Fr. Arthur Baranowski.

“The hope was that these groups would continue to meet, and at least one of them has been meeting since the late 1990s,” Mary Alice says.

It was out of one of these groups that the parish Prayer Chain evolved. Sue Sagrati suggested the idea, and a significant amount of parishioners expressed an interest in joining. Today the Prayer Chain includes an extensive email list.

“All of our situations and abilities change with the passing of time, but we all maintain the ability to pray for the intentions of our parish family,” Mary Alice says. “Norb, who is well known for his ‘Norbisms,’ frequently says, ‘prayer works.’”

As they remember their history with St. Vincent Ferrer, both Mary Alice and Norb are thankful for all of its parishioners. They particularly express a belief in the importance of hospitality and prayer, in forming relationships and praying for each other as we grow and change with our parish over the years.

“What you can do constantly changes with time, but I think we feel that we have received so much and want to return that to the community,” Mary Alice says. “Get to know others, and pray for our fellow parishioners and fellow Christians.”



Advent:

PREPARING FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST

As we proceed through this month of November, we note that we will begin celebrating Advent close to the end of this month, on Sunday, Nov. 29. So now is the perfect time to begin preparing for the Advent season, and to remind ourselves of the season's true purpose.

There are six seasons in the liturgical year for Catholics. The first is and always will be Advent. Advent is a season unto itself – it is not part of Christmas. The six seasons are, in order: Advent, Christmas, Lent, the Sacred Paschal Triduum, Easter, and Ordinary Time (which is divided into two sections, one from the end of Christmas time until the beginning of Lent, and one from the end of Easter time until Advent).

The point for us as Catholics as we approach Advent is to realize that Advent is not Christmas, even though it is possible to get caught up in the Christmas feeling that is so prevalent during this important liturgical cycle. Advent stands alone, and we need to approach it in that way. The mystery of Christ unfolds to us throughout the Church year, and that disclosure begins with Advent.

Each of us Catholics is most likely aware that the Church has spent centuries of prayer, thought and study, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to define and identify how we are to live out our faith. We have Canon Laws set down for us from Rome. Also, at the Vatican, in the Curia overseen by the pope, there is something called the Congregation for Divine Worship. It is this sector of the Church that has given us our calendar and the reasons for it.

According to the General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar issued by the Congregation, "Advent has a twofold character: as a season to prepare for Christmas when Christ's first coming to us is remembered; as a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ's Second Coming at the end of time" (39).

We may think in terms of Advent being merely as a time to prepare for Christmas. Nevertheless, it is much more important than that, or at least it should be. The word "Advent" evolves from the Latin word *adventus*, which means "coming." We all understand that Christ is coming; His first coming is celebrated on Christmas, and that is to what our Advent preparations may tend to lead.

To really be prepared nonetheless involves also understanding the second reason for the Advent season – to prime us for the Second Coming of Christ. Although this may seem to us not in keeping with the "Christmas spirit," it is exactly what we need to remember to include in what we do during Advent. Just as Lent is a penitential time leading up to Easter, Advent should be a penitential time leading up to Christmas.

It is important for us, as stewards of the Church, to understand and appreciate both aspects of Advent. And it is equally important as good stewards to live out those expectations.

The Mystery of Christ unfolds to us throughout the Church year, and that disclosure begins with Advent.



LIVING CHURCH

“THEY DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS THAT EXTEND FAR BEYOND THE PLAYING FIELDS”

Our St. Vincent Ferrer Sports Programs

It is certainly no accident that sports and youth ministry go hand-in-hand. When Pope Francis convened a meeting of coaches in Rome in the spring of this year, our Holy Father spoke of the connection between coaching and ministering to our youth when he said, “Our Catholic coaches need to show integrity, fairness, patience, joy, and kindness. As coaches you are extremely important in helping young people develop into mature, well-rounded, and well-balanced adults.”

Tim Carter, who has chaired the Athletic Commission at St. Vincent Ferrer for the past three and a half years, would concur – he truly loves his work in fostering ministry through sports.

“I am not sure I come to this naturally, but I see the benefits that sports has for the young people, the positive effects it has on them,” he says. “They develop life skills that extend far beyond the playing fields.”

Tim grew up playing soccer in his native Weymouth, England. As his oldest child became of age and was able to participate in the soccer program, Tim expressed an interest in coaching – he would find himself serving as the head coach. He was then invited to join the Athletic Commission Board, and this eventually led to his election as the Commissioner.



SVF 7th grader Seamus McGrath (in blue)

“What we offer to the young people for athletics in our parish is impressive based upon the size of our community,” Tim says. “In the fall, we have soccer for all grades, boys and girls. We also have cross-country for grades five through eight, and girls’ basketball for grades three through eight. In the winter, we have complete girls’ and boys’ basketball programs, as well as girls’ volleyball. That is followed by boys’ volleyball and

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“From the perspective of the archbishop, youth sports are a part of youth ministry. That means each coach is a youth minister, and he or she must fulfill all the requirements associated with that. Our Catholic faith needs to be reflected in everything we do, and at every practice and every game. We could not survive or continue without the dedication and commitment of our coaches. We always need them.” – Tim Carter



ST. VINCENT FERRER PARISH

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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.

Our St. Vincent Ferrer Sports Programs *continued from page 7*

soccer again. If one of our young people is interested in track or baseball or some other sports, we try to make arrangements with a nearby parish that has those programs.”

In the spring of 2014, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati launched an effort to have more archdiocesan involvement and supervision of the Catholic school sports programs. The result was a 44-page Charter on Youth Athletics to which each school and parish is expected to conform. This charter provides standards, rules and regulations. It also includes a code of conduct

for parents, coaches, and athletes. Tim says the coaches, in particular, play an important role.

“From the perspective of the archbishop, youth sports are a part of youth ministry,” he says. “That means each coach is a youth minister, and he or she must fulfill all the requirements associated with that. Our Catholic faith needs to be reflected in everything we do, and at every practice and every game. We could not survive or continue without the dedication and commitment of our coaches. We always need them.”

Those interested in coaching or in being engaged in the many other facets of the involved sports programs at St. Vincent Ferrer may contact the parish office at 513-791-9030. Simply inform them of your interest – and in what area that interest lies – and you will be directed to Tim Carter, or to the appropriate person who oversees that sport or activity.