

# Cross Talk

## We realize what we dream

Gathering together as a family, St. Helena celebrated the dedication of our new Education Center on Saturday, October 14, 2006.



*Pastor Emeritus Father John Coates leads the procession to the new Education Center.*

This was both a momentous and exciting occasion attended by The Most Reverend Daniel E. Thomas, our celebrant, former faculty, and our dedicated teaching staff, Pastor Emeritus, Father John Coates, along with our parish priests, parents, family members, and most importantly, our students.

Just as our former St. Helena Church was the center point of our first school, opened in

1948 by Fr. Thomas Kelly and Sr. Theresa and the Sisters of Mercy, so too today, we celebrate another centrality. Formed within the walls of our former Church has come a state-of-the-art facility consisting of six rooms: two 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms, a PREP office, a library, a Science and Art Lab and a Parish and Adult Education Center.

Through the years, our St. Helena Family has grown in leaps and bounds. In 1946, St. Helena consisted of 217 families. As of November 2006, our family count has reached 1,769. And as we get bigger, we get better.

We all had mixed emotions as we watched the walls of our old country Church removed. We also knew well that with growth comes



*Principal Sister Cathe walks with her enthusiastic students.*

progress and with progress comes the need to change. We had to be bigger.

The size of the rooms had been determined by the ultimate use and the interior beams of the old Church. The hallway area had a drop

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ceiling due to the Church's high ceilings. The new rooms and hallway have their own HVAC system with insulated ceilings. The Church's air conditioning was redirected to the cafeteria. An elevator had been installed



*The Most Reverend Daniel E. Thomas, followed by Fathers Nicolo and Redcay, blesses the new library.*

along with a doorway to the Recreation and Social Center from the first floor Education Center.



*The Most Reverend Daniel E. Thomas joins Principal, Sister Cathe, Pastor, Father Nicolo and students at the celebration.*

Out of this center will come students educated and prepared for the many and varied tasks they will be required to perform. With what we have here at St. Helena, we will produce "the best". Many of our graduating students will someday be members of the working world, and in this world, there are many companies and corporations who want "the best". Here at St. Helena, we have "the best" – the best teachers, the best principal, and now, "the best" state-of-the-art facility.

We are one family, one heart, one faith united in love – a love depicted by our Patroness, St. Helena, in the finding of the true cross, the sign of love! The world will know we are St. Helena graduates because future employers will see in our students an energy which makes things happen. They will also see the caring our students have for fellow employees because St. Helena gave these values along with caring for and helping each other.

Our Architect, J. R. Betts & Associates, and our Contractor, Berks Ridge, after much thought-out planning and hard work have fulfilled the vision of Sr. Cathe and Fr. Nicolo. What Sister and Father dreamed has now been realized.

*-Charlotte Fortesque*



*Students present flowers to the celebrant*

## Knights of Columbus on their way

Many of the men in our Parish had, at one time or another, been members of the Knights of Columbus. One of these men, Jim Fenerty, had fond memories of his membership in this fraternal organization when he belonged to a local council in the Philadelphia Parish where he lived. During his 23 years as a member of St. Helena Parish, he missed his involvement with the Knights since our Parish did not have a local council. Jim has been working with the Knights leadership to try to establish the Knights here.

The Knights of Columbus had a humble beginning in 1881 when Father Michael J. McGivney and a small group of men in St. Mary's Church in New Haven, CT, founded a fraternal society. That society, incorporated as the Knights of Columbus in 1882, would later become the world's largest Catholic family fraternal service organization. The founders sought strength in solidarity and security through unity of purpose and devotion to a holy cause: they vowed to be defenders of their country, their families and their faith. These men were bound together by the ideal of Christopher Columbus, the one whose hand brought Christianity to the New World. The Knights have always supported the Church, programs of evangelization and Catholic Education, civic involvement and aid to those in need.



*In Sight of the New World*, by Peter Kohlbuk, ca 1850

On the weekend of September 22 and 23, representatives of the Knights were present in the narthex after all the Masses to provide information about the Knights and sign up men who may be interested in joining. Approximately 23 people indicated an initial interest, and Jim felt that this is sufficient interest to get the project off the ground. An informational meeting was held on October 16, and around 17 men attended. Jim planned another informational meeting and had another sign-up in the Narthex after Mass. We will gather enough members to obtain a charter for a local council based at St. Helena.

-Matthew Rieder

## Moms in the mornings

Mommy and Me is a new program we had established this year to include the very youngest members of St. Helena. This group meets every other Friday in our Social and Recreation Center. It provides our young moms the chance to gather with other women who have children in a similar age group. This offers support for the moms and a wonderful play group for the children



from birth to age three. Joanne Kane, mother of eight children, has organized this program and has been a tremendous resource.

Our aim in starting this was to have a place where moms could come together to meet other women in the same stage of child-rearing to discuss issues relative to child-rearing. For more information please call Sister Cathe @ 610-279-3345.

## Another Dream Comes True

As we know from our proud parish history we have been continually blessed here at St. Helena with people of vision, whose gift and grace have led us to truly become "one family, one heart, one faith". Their leadership and vision have echoed through the generations from our humble beginnings with Fr. Higgins, founding Pastor and visionary, to his Administrator and successor, Fr. Kelly, whose dreams enabled him to include the opening of our own parish school in 1948, to our present day Pastor and true visionary, Fr. Nicolo, with his magnificent leadership and unparalleled vision for our parish.

Today we are twice blessed with both Fr. Nicolo and Sr. Cathe, Pastor and Principal, an incredible team whose prayerful insights and imagination are continuing to create for us a place where each of us can answer our call to come together as children of God. This dream was fulfilled in a very literal way this September as St. Helena School proudly opened its doors and its heart to welcome God's little ones into a wonderful preschool program for children ages three and four.



Children climbed aboard when the Whitpain Fire Company visited the school.

The decision to open a preschool program was a finely orchestrated one with the overture perhaps being the recognition of the immense value of early childhood learning experiences on the development of the child,



Silly faces for outdoor play.

and our desire to provide these opportunities for our children right here at St. Helena's.

These values were being echoed by young families around the parish on an ongoing basis, as Sr. Cathe reported getting up to 30 phone calls each year requesting such a program. It then became the challenge to fine tune a plan which would survey and assess the needs of our community and then to create the space to satisfy these needs. With the survey complete and the vision intact, Sr. Cathe and Fr. Nicolo moved forward with their plan, which has now come to fruition.

There is both a full day and half day program for four year olds and for three year olds, a half day program three days a week. Lunch Bunch is also available for half day children who wished to extend their day with lunch and playtime on an "as needed basis". These wonderful options certainly go a long way to accommodating the varying needs of the preschool set.

As for the space, the convent basement which previously housed two fifth grade classrooms was re-wired, painted and transformed into a Lilliputian delight with new classrooms for three and four year olds and bathrooms downsized just for them. A pre-K faculty room and adult bathroom completed the indoor space. A state-of-the-art playground was erected and private driveway engineered, giving the wee ones a grand entrance to a first class preschool environment.



A wee firefighter

The setting is only the beginning, it is true, but all you need to do is spend a few minutes in each of these classrooms to realize that this is indeed a very special place! If you believe as I do, as a former ele-

mentary, kindergarten and preschool teacher, that a classroom is only as good as the teacher(s) in charge, then our new preK classes are outstanding!

Both the four year olds' teacher, Mrs. Marge Sorber, and aide, Mrs. Maureen O'Brien, and three year olds' teacher, Miss Sara Saltmer, and aide, Mrs. Barbara Fitzpatrick, are masters at creating exemplary models of what an early childhood environment should look like. They themselves are a wonderful, warm presence and they have designed for the children a rich curriculum which continues the St. Helena School tradition "to nurture in each child

the desire to learn through a variety of experiences in religious, intellectual, social, personal and physical activities".

## Sunday worship for kids

It's unlikely that the adult congregation of St. Helena would be giving thanks for roller-coasters or hamsters as they worship in church on Sunday morning, but preschoolers through first graders can express their beliefs and receive God's message in their own special way through the Children's Liturgy of the Word held during the 9:00 Mass.

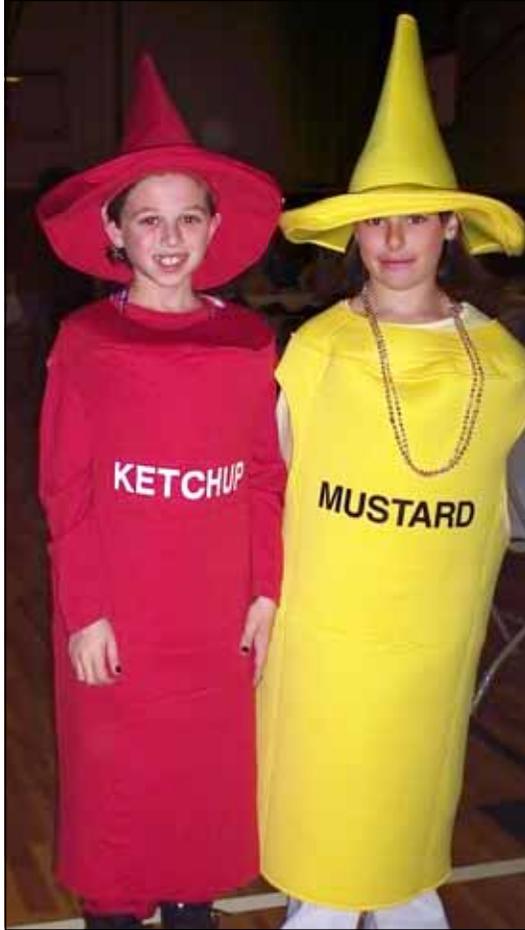
St. Helena's Liturgy of the Word program is based on *The Directory for Masses with Children*, and a guide for the program notes: "It is not a child-care program, nor is it an arts and crafts session intended to keep young people busy while adults are at worship. It is an authentic and concurrent celebration of the same, yet



adapted, Liturgy of the Word that the adult community experiences."

Children in preschool through first grade are welcome to join the classes, and registration is not required. Preschoolers can be dropped off in the Information Room in the side of the Narthex where teachers will be waiting to teach the liturgy in a simple, interactive way. The only requirement is that children be potty-trained. Kindergarten and first grade students will be dismissed from Mass after the greeting and will be met at the center doors in the Narthex by a teacher, who will lead them downstairs to a classroom for their lesson.

Children will remain with their class until parents, not siblings, pick them up after Mass.

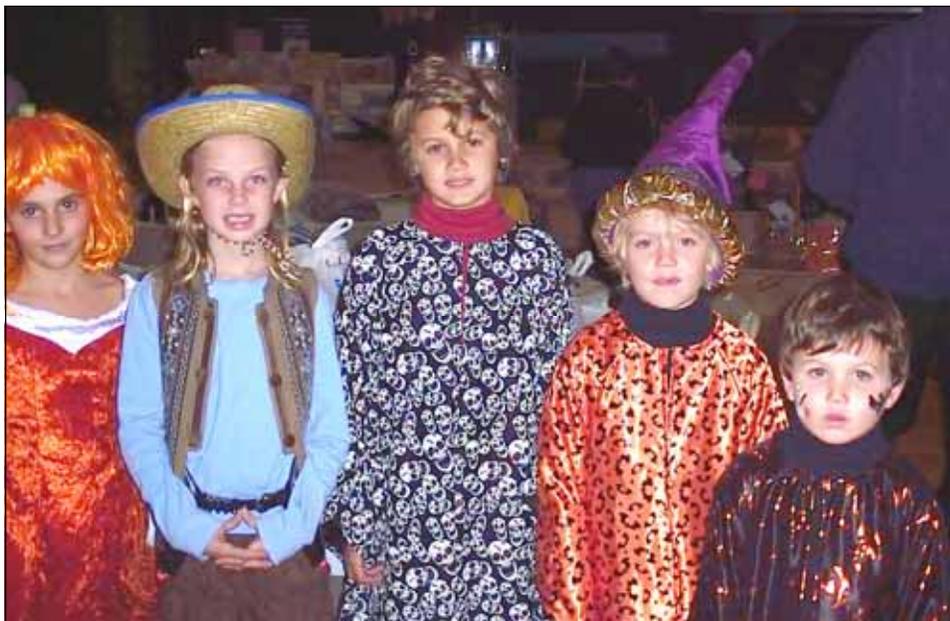


## Halloween Family Fun

The dress code was scary at the PREP's annual Halloween Bingo night October 27. The event, which raises funds for the Capital Campaign, was a howling success, and a good time was had by parishioners both young and old, scary and silly.



*Father Duffy and Sister Who?*





## Sacred Music

*“The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than any other art .... He who sings prays twice,” according to Section 1156 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.*

Cheryl Moser, the head of our Music Ministry, works hard to maintain and improve the quality of Sacred Music in St. Helena Parish. Cheryl was born and raised in the Lehigh Valley in the Lutheran tradition. She was in-



*Music Director Cheryl Moser*

terested in music from an early age, and her mother claims that she could read musical notes before she could read words.

Hers was a musical family, and her aunt and first teacher was an accomplished pianist and church organist. Early on, she was involved in liturgical music at her family’s Lutheran church where she participated in the choir. She also had twelve years of training on the piano. For the past five years, she has been engaged in voice training with a private teacher. In her life outside of Church, she is a busy scientist at a prominent pharmaceutical firm. She holds an advanced degree in Clinical Chemistry.

Cheryl was brought into the Catholic faith by

her husband John, who was her sponsor at her Rite of Initiation which took place prior to their marriage. While she was engaged to John and still a Lutheran, she would play the organ in liturgies at St. Philip and James Church in Exton, PA. She had little difficulty in converting to Roman Catholicism, since the Lutheran tradition and form of worship is similar to that of Catholicism.

When she and John relocated to this area from Chester County some years ago, they joined a neighboring parish. John joined Dick Lentz’ Contemporary Music Group, and gradually Cheryl started singing with them, and after a while, she joined St. Helena’s choir.

### Music for young people

When Father Nicolo became our pastor, she had a discussion with him on the lack of opportunities for young people to take part in a choir. Father Nicolo encouraged her to start the Youth Choir, and on his own initiative, he charged her with forming a bell choir. She had some limited experience with neighboring bell choirs, but she had to do quite a bit of research on bells and learn how to play them.

The bell choir led to the establishment of a chime choir, which is more suitable for young people. She now directs a youth and adult choir in both bells and chimes. After our former music director resigned a few years ago, Cheryl assumed leadership of the Adult Choir and the position of Music Director.

In many parishes, Music Directors are persons who have music degrees, and work either full or part time for the church. Cheryl performs the duties of Music Director while working in a demanding field, keeping up with a busy family life with her husband John, son Chris, 18, a freshman at St. Joseph’s University, and her high school age daughter



*The youth choir at practice.*

Rachel. Chris plays the violin at church and Rachel sings in the youth choir and plays in the bell choir.

## Girls Night Out

She also has outside musical interests, including the Norristown Chorale and her singing group *Girls Night Out*. *Girls Night Out* performs at varied venues, including weddings, nursing homes, and luncheons. Their repertoire includes many old popular standards.

As the saying goes, if you want something done, give it to a busy person. Cheryl is certainly busy with practice for the Adult and Youth Choirs Monday night, Tuesday night for Norristown Chorale, Wednesday night for *Girls Night Out* and Thursday night for the Bell and Chime Choirs. Each of the choirs performs at Mass twice a month, and the Music Ministry has one big event a year.

This year it will be a Christmas Concert in which members of choirs from neighboring congregations are participating. An orchestra will accompany the choirs at the Christmas Show, December 9. The choirs have been in rehearsal for this event since the summer, and it promises to be even more beautiful than previous Christmas shows.

Sacred music has a special place in the liturgy. The focus of the liturgy is the Eucharistic Meal, and the music is meant to compliment the prayers at Mass. It should not be so showy that it detracts attention away from the central theme of the Mass.

## Forget that old joke

Within these parameters, Cheryl is striving to improve our sacred music. This includes mentoring our Cantors and expanding our repertoire. Our current musical series has many traditional hymns which are biblically grounded and sometimes are actually psalms. Their composition is more geared to the message than the melody. Cheryl is seeking to expand this repertoire to include works by contemporary composers which may interest the congregation more and get it singing. It is an old joke that Catholics can't sing. Cheryl is on a mission to make people forget that old joke.

For more information on the St. Helena's music program, contact Cheryl Moser, (610) 630-8078.

*-Matthew Rieder*

*The St. Helena Adult Choir*



## Meet Father Duffy

Father Thomas J. Duffy has been our Parochial Vicar in St. Helena Parish since June 2003. Fr. Duffy was born and raised in St. Barbara Parish in the Wynnefield section of West Philadelphia. His parents were Thomas and Eleanor Duffy. Fr. Duffy has a solid educational background, graduating from St. Barbara School, St. Joseph's Preparatory School, and St. Joseph's College.

While at St. Joseph, Fr. Duffy majored in Business Administration and participated in the Air Force ROTC program. Fr. Duffy graduated from St. Joseph at the height of the Cold War, and was assigned to England, which was an important staging area for the Air Force as it kept watch on the Soviets. As a First Lieutenant, Fr. Duffy was a staff officer in the Headquarters Command on the General's staff.

While he was in the Air Force, Fr. Duffy considered an attraction to the priesthood that he had since high school. In the Air Force, he was quite close to the Catholic Chaplains and assisted at Mass frequently. When his service in the Air Force came to an end, he made a decision to act on his calling, and he entered St. Charles Seminary.

Having attended a Jesuit institution for higher learning and having served our country in the Armed Forces, Fr. Duffy had a broad range of experiences that a high school graduate would not have. If you read the biographies of newly ordained priests in the *Catholic Standard and Times* in recent issues, you would conclude that Fr. Duffy's background was typical of today's seminarian who enters after graduating college and pursuing a career. However, Fr. Duffy was ahead of his time. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, candidates would enter St. Charles right out

of high school. At that time, the Seminary did not make any accommodations for what were then "non-traditional" vocations, and Fr. Duffy had to start his career at the Seminary from the beginning with the high school graduates! It should be noted that St. Joseph had a similar policy for St. Charles students, while the University of Pennsylvania gave St. Charles students full credit for their academic achievements.

After ordination, Fr. Duffy served in several parishes in the Philadelphia area, rising to Pastor of St. Clare in Limerick, Montgomery County. After Fr. Duffy retired as Pastor of St. Clare, he assumed the office of Senior Priest and was assigned to St. Helena as Parochial Vicar. As one of two priests at a growing parish, Fr. Duffy is quite busy. The major functions of the priesthood are the celebration of the Eucharist and the administration of the sacraments to the faithful. People who attend Mass regularly see Fr. Duffy's reverence for the Mass, especially the Eucharistic prayer.

He is also a sympathetic confessor. In his ministry, and especially in his homilies, Fr. Duffy seeks to reach out to Catholics who, either by reason of habit or because of the precepts of the Church, attend Mass frequently yet do not appreciate what is taking place. Some of these people can be described as stuck in a rut, behaving in a mechanical fashion while at Mass. Fr. Duffy tries to disturb their complacency by explaining that the Eucharist is the trans-historical participation of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and not merely a memorial of that event. He also reminds us that Christ's message to love God with all your mind and spirit and to love your neighbor as yourself is truly a radical message and at odds with what passes for wisdom in our secular society.

-Matthew Rieder

## Help write your story

*"Fill your paper with the breathings of your heart".*

William Wordsworth

I have heard it said and I do agree that all human beings have an innate need "to hear and tell stories and to have a story to live by." The noted Harvard theologian, Harvey Cox, has told us further that "religion, whatever else it has done, has provided one of the main ways of meeting this abiding need".

As Catholics and members of St. Helena, we are certainly twice blessed in this realm. Our Catholic faith is a wonderful gift which provides for us "our story to live by", and our rich parish life enables us "to hear and tell stories" as we flesh out our own story in the context of "one family, one heart, one faith".

The idea of writing our own story is a very lovely metaphor indeed, which reminds us in a figurative way, of the inherent power we have over our own lives, and over each unfolding chapter along the way. The combined ideas of "a story to live by" and the awareness that we do indeed "write our own story" are powerful images which continue to enrich and inspire us.

On a more concrete level, we have an ongoing opportunity to tell the St. Helena story in

a very literal way through the Parish Newsletter, Cross Talk.

Cross Talk is a wonderful venue for spreading the good news about St. Helena to all of our parish family, including those who are unable to join us for Sunday Liturgy on a regular basis. It is a very real way for us "to hear and tell stories", the stories of "one family, one heart, one faith". Remember, this is not only our story but your story!

We invite you to consider being a part of our effort by writing, reporting, sharing an experience, or taking photos of any of the wonderful happenings going on around the parish. This is truly a team effort and the more people involved, even on a "now and again" basis, the more interesting and representative each edition will be.

We are now in the third year of publishing Cross Talk, two issues a year at Christmas and Easter. Most of the work is done by email with a planning session for each edition. We hope you are enjoying Cross Talk and we invite you to join this wonderfully evangelizing ministry to help us "fill *your* paper with the breathings of your heart"!

For more information about joining our team, please call Dorothy Barry (610-275-3679).

### Parishioners gather for Beef & Beer

One hundred and sixty parishioners attended the third annual Beef & Beer on Sat. Oct. 7, 2006.

The event was held at the Social & Recreation Center, with plenty of dancing all night long. Throughout the evening, door prizes were awarded, and the parish raffle top cash prizes

were awarded to three lucky winners. Joseph Cummings, Ray Welch and Jerry Corso received checks ranging from \$2,000 to \$250.

Over \$24,000 was raised with the sale of parish raffle tickets and Eagles raffle tickets, according to MaryAnn Brophy, one of the event organizers.

**CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE 2006**

**RECONCILIATION**

**PARISH PENANCE SERVICE**

Tuesday, December 12, 2006: 1:15 P.M. and 6:45 P.M.

**AREA PENANCE SERVICE**

Monday, December 18, 2006  
St. Helena Church at 7:00 P.M.

**CONFESSIONS**

Saturday, December 23, 2006: 3:30 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.

**MASSES**

**Fourth Sunday of Advent**

Saturday, December 23, 2006: Vigil – 5:00 P.M.

Sunday, December 24, 2006  
7:30 A.M. – 9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

**CHRISTMAS EVE**

Sunday, December 24, 2006  
4:00 P.M., 6:00 P.M. Children's Mass, 8:00 P.M.

**CHRISTMAS DAY**

Monday, December 25, 2006  
7:30 A.M. – 9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

**HOLY FAMILY SUNDAY**

Saturday, December 30, 2006: Vigil – 5:00 P.M.

Sunday, December 31, 2006  
7:30 A.M. – 9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

No Evening Mass New Year's Eve

**NEW YEAR'S DAY**

Monday, January 1, 2007: 9:00 A.M. and 11:00 A.M.

**CROSS TALK NEWSLETTER**

**VOLUME 3 ISSUE 1 FALL 2006**

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*Cross Talkers Needed! We hope that you are enjoying St. Helena's Cross Talk and we welcome your input for future editions. If you are interested in helping us as a writer, reporter, typist or proofreader, please contact Dorothy Barry 610.275.3689.*

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