

Cross Talk

Cardinal Rigali Confirms parish students

At 4 P.M. on Thursday, March 13, 2008, despite a five-vehicle accident on Route 202, Saint Helena Parish was honored and privileged to welcome His Eminence Cardinal Justin Rigali who came to confer the sacrament of Confirmation upon eighty students from Saint Helena School, PREP and private Catholic schools.

The children, most if not all sixth graders, prepared assiduously for this momentous

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Cardinal Rigali congratulates a student

Holy Week, a mini-retreat for the faithful

In the Catholic Church, the Week which we call Holy, from Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday, is the most solemn time in the Liturgical year, the time we celebrate the Pascal Mystery, the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is a time which offers us a special opportunity to immerse ourselves in the rich beautiful Liturgies and unite ourselves to the awesome saving mysteries of our redemption.

As Father Nicolo likes to say, "It is a wonderful time to make a mini-retreat right here in our own parish of St. Helena".

The week begins on Palm Sunday when we celebrate Christ's triumphant ride into Jerusalem, amidst the jubilant waving of branches of palm and joyful shouts of Hosanna from the multitudes who greeted Him.

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event in their young lives, one in which they are enabled to witness to Jesus both in word and deed as committed Christians. Their preparation included the much anticipated questions and answers so fondly remembered by many of us.

The confirmandi were also required to perform twenty hours of community service such as visiting or writing to the elderly, visiting the sisters at McAuley Convent and volunteering for many of the activities offered by the Community Service Corps (CSC). It is our hope that the spirit of helping others in the name of Jesus will endure in these children in the years to come.

In addition to their religious instruction and

service activities, the students chose their sponsors and Confirmation names. A sponsor must be a confirmed, practicing Catholic, someone whose life bears witness to Christ. Children researched the lives of saints in the process of selecting their Confirmation names and wrote a paragraph explaining their choices. They summarized their readiness in letters to Cardinal Rigali in which they offered themselves as candidates for the final Sacrament of Initiation.

The ceremony commenced with the processional of the confirmandi clad in their red robes followed by the celebrants. After Deacon Ken read the Gospel, one could sense the confirmandi eagerly anticipating the questions for which they were so well-

prepared, thanks to their teachers. Cardinal Rigali did not disappoint, delivering an exceptional homily, skillfully integrating the children's answers and most effectively delivering the message of Confirmation to both the confirmandi and the congregation as well. He pointed out that in Confirmation, we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit just as it was given to the apostles on the first Pentecost.

After the homily, the confirmandi renewed their Baptismal vows and, accompanied by their sponsors, solemnly proceeded to the foot of the altar where Cardinal Rigali extended his hands over them while praying that each might receive the Holy Spirit. Subsequently, he anointed their foreheads with Chrism in the form of a cross. Those of you of keen memory and sharp eye may have

Saint Helena Parish Pastor, Joseph Nicolo, and Cardinal Justin Rigali



noticed that answers to several of the renowned Confirmation questions have been incorporated into this article.

As the final verses of the recessional hymn echoed throughout the church, proud parents, relatives and friends sought out their

children in the Narthex, where they gathered around Cardinal Rigali for a group photograph. Ever gracious, His Eminence made the Empress Room his next stop, where beaming parents took individual pictures of their sons and daughters with him.

What began with the ominous blaring of police and ambulance

sirens came to a blessed conclusion as the newly confirmed, now strengthened in their faith, headed off to dinner with their loved ones.

—John Maloney

After Deacon Ken read the Gospel, one could sense the confirmandi eagerly anticipating the questions for which they were so well-prepared, thanks to their teachers.

For more information about parish educational programs, contact Sr. Cathe Shoulberg, RSM, Principal, St. Helena School, or 610-279-3345, or Madeleine Fitzgerald, PREP Director, 610-277-3573.

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At all of the Palm Sunday Masses we read and reflect on the Passion of Christ, setting the scene for the Easter Triduum to follow. The Triduum begins with the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, continues with the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday and culminates with the Easter Vigil Mass and all the Easter Masses on Sunday, the Feast of the Resurrection.

Holy Thursday celebrations actually begin at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul as all of the priests of the Archdiocese gather with their Ordinary, Cardinal Rigali, to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Orders and to renew their Ordination Promises. The celebration continues in each parish with the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, which commemorates the institution of the Christian Passover in the life-giving Sacrament of the Eucharist and reminds us, through the Washing of the Feet, that we are each called to imitate Jesus and serve one another. The Procession to the Repository in the Chapel and the Stripping of the Church remind us further of Christ's betrayal and imprisonment on the night before He died.

The solemn ceremonies of the Good Friday Liturgy—the Reading of the Passion, the Veneration of the Cross, the Intercessory Prayers for the Church and all the World, the Receiving of Holy Communion which was consecrated the night before, and the silent departure—call us to focus on the immense cost of Christ's awesome love for us as He accepted His Cross and won our redemption.

Holy Saturday evening marks the celebration

of the Mother of all Vigils, the Easter Vigil. The Liturgy begins outdoors with the Service of Light which illumines the night so that all may hear the Easter Proclamation. The service continues inside with the singing of the Exsultet and the expanded readings of the Liturgy of the Word, telling the story of the wondrous workings of God in our salvation history. In the Liturgy of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, we welcomed our Catechumen, Robyn Hodgkins, and our Candidate, Linda Warren, into full communion in the Catholic Church.

The Easter Vigil, which then culminates with the Liturgy of the Eucharist, is the most beautiful and meaningful of Liturgies and is truly the first and foremost Easter celebration!

Easter Sunday is the Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, when we celebrate Christ's victory over death and the triumph of good over evil, life over death and Christ over Satan and sin. It marks the season of new life and new beginnings as reflected in the renewal of our Baptismal Promises at all of the Easter Masses.

I've heard it said and been moved to agree that "the Easter Triduum is so full of moments that touch our inner being and move our soul that we would not be able to experience it more than once a year." To all who followed Fr. Nicolo's advice "to take that opportunity and to make that mini Holy Week retreat right here at St. Helena", the blessings were rich, indeed!

-Dorothy Barry



Living Stations.....

Saint Helena School Fourth Grade students portrayed the Passion of Jesus Christ with their presentation of the "Living Stations" on Tuesday of Holy Week.

In our Religion class, they are instructed on the 'Stations' as a special Lenten devotion. However, it is not until they take part in this religious drama, that they understand what each station means. The students clearly demonstrated to their audiences the solemnity of the Passion of Jesus through their presentation.

Our hope and prayer is that in years to come they will recall this 'walk with Jesus' and always remember how much Jesus truly loves them!

-Kittie Ryan



The Empress Room has arrived!

Members and friends of Saint Helena have now begun to enjoy the Parish's marvelous new venue – **the Empress Room**. It officially began with an elegant New Year's Eve party attended by young and old. The room was gaily decorated with festive balloons and tall glass candle holders adorned with holiday greenery served as centerpieces on all the tables. Hats, leis, and noisemakers were passed around to add to the festivity. The beautifully appointed room needed no further decoration as the glittering chandeliers completed the New Year's scene. The food



memories of a wonderful New Year's celebration. The best part for all of us who attended was the friendship and camaraderie that was enjoyed that evening. It was truly a grand celebration and a very happy time (and close to home!). Kudos to Theresa and Jim Smith for the terrific job they did in pulling this special event together with such style and class. They are already planning a New Year's Eve party to welcome 2009, so if you would like to celebrate the new year with elegance, fun, dancing and good food, begin making your plans now.



served was absolutely outstanding from the butlered hors d'oeuvres and hot and cold appetizers to the extravagant buffet.

The dance floor was crowded all night as the DJ provided an incredible range of music. Everyone was up on the dance floor at one time or another. Anne Yacarino, a very, very young senior citizen, was up doing the chicken dance, the stroll and anything else that struck her fancy. She had such a good time that at one point the DJ dedicated a song to her! After a raucous welcome to the New Year, people began to drift away with

And the beat goes on! In February, the Parish sweethearts enjoyed a **Valentine Extravaganza** in the Empress Room. A delicious sit down dinner was served and again everyone had their dancing shoes on. A few weeks later the Knights of Columbus spon-



sored a **Fish Fry** on Leap Year day and had an overwhelming crowd. For a first time event, the Knights were amazed by the number of parishioners who came out to support them. The Knights learned a lot and are actively planning their next "Fry". In March there was a very successful Saint Paddy's Bash. We had a grand visit by Irish Dancers, some of them were our very own from the Coyle School of Irish Dance. In April there

was the Ladies of Helena Communion Brunch followed by a Mother's Day Brunch in May and a Father's Day Brunch in June. With so much going on it is obvious that the Parish is enjoying what Father Nicolo calls "Friend-Raising". Make it a point to read your Bulletin every Sunday to read about the next event. Now that we have the Empress Room, you will surely find something to enjoy with St. Helena Parishioners. *-Barbara Neff*

Father Coates celebrates 90th birthday

On Sunday, February 17th, the parish community of St. Helena gathered in a special way to celebrate the 90th birthday of our beloved Pastor Emeritus, Father Coates. The celebration began in the most fitting way with Father present on the altar concelebrating the 11 o'clock Mass with Father Nicolo and each of our music groups adding their own great Amen!



Fr. Nicolo paid a lovely tribute to our guest of honor as he recalled with warmth and humor a Confirmation celebration several years ago when the visiting prelate, Bishop DeSimone, explained to the children that Fr. Nicolo was "The Father of St. Helena Parish" and Fr. Coates, "The Grand Father". Fr. Nicolo reminded us also that Fr. Coates is older than St. Helena Parish which was founded in 1919 and that he served as our beloved Pastor for almost 20 years. All of these pronouncements were

acknowledged in the inimitable response of our loving parish family, with a warm and affectionate applause.

Fr. Nicolo invited everyone to continue the celebration in the traditional way by gathering in the Empress Room to sing Happy Birthday and to enjoy ice cream and cake. It was a heart-warming sight to watch as hundreds of parishioners

waited in line to greet Father and to listen in amazement as he greeted us and connected all the dots about who we are, where we live, who our neighbors are, etc. The festivities were further enhanced by a wonderful slide presentation which brought back so many warm memories and reminded us that a picture is indeed worth a thousand words!

We are truly blessed to have shared in the life and legacy of Fr. Coates and are grateful to add another endearing footnote to a very special memory book! *-Dorothy Barry*

St. Helena School touches the future with its past commitment

Excited schoolchildren cheered as the roof above the new wing of the school was raised at the end of March this year as our educational facilities continue to expand under the leadership of Principal Sister Cathe Shoultberg and Pastor Father Joseph Nicolo. This event was yet another highlight in the parish's sixty-year commitment to providing a religious education to the community – *CrossTalk* reporter Matt Rieder profiles parishioner Jean Phalan, who was there at the beginning and has dedicated her life to Catholic Education.



Jean Phalan and her aunt, Betty Cavanaugh, 97, can be seen every Sunday in the first row at 9:00 or 11:00 AM Mass.

Jean Phalan recalls attending St. Helena School at the time of its founding in its former location in the large house across

DeKalb Pike from our current Church. At that time, the building also served as the convent. Jean started in the fourth grade (8 students) which was combined with the third grade and met in the living room. The first and second grade met in the dining room. She and her sister were under the care of Sisters Juanita and Theresa of the Religious Sisters of Mercy. Father Thomas P. Kelly had elicited the help of that Order to teach and catechize our young. Jean recalls that one of the Sisters would teach seated on the dining room radiator. Apparently, it was the

warmest place in the School. After a year, the two sisters moved across the street to attend the brand new St. Helena School.

Jean Phalan and her family have had a long and strong attachment to St. Helena

Parish and Center Square. Jean's great uncle, Dr. William Fitzpatrick, a physician who maintained a practice on Broad Street in Philadelphia, built a handsome Victorian summer home on Yost Road, next door to where Jean currently resides, around the turn of the past century.

After he retired from his medical practice, he settled on Yost Road permanently. Eventually, the house passed to his sister Helen,

Jean's great aunt. Jean, her sister Phyllis and her parents William and Mary Phalan moved from St. Leo Parish in the Tacony section of Philadelphia to join family members on Yost Road in 1947. Her father worked for three of our former Pastors, Reverends Thomas P. Kelly, James J. Kearney and John T. Coates. William Phalan could be called the Dick Lentz of his time, working on the buildings and grounds of the Parish. In those days before the building of our second Church, Mass was held at the Shrine of St. Theresa. Jean still

remembers seeing plaques in the front of the Shrine erected by people grateful to St. Theresa for her intercession with our Lord in the working of cures. Jean's father had a great devotion to the Little Flower. While a student at St. Helena, Jean often was given the job of cleaning the votive lights at the shrine.

The Sisters of Mercy had a strong influence on Jean and guided her to enter Gwynedd Mercy Academy, where she completed her high school education. She also attended Gwynedd Mercy College, which was a two year institution at the time. Following Father Kelly's recommendation, she completed her

degree at Rosemont College. From a young age, Jean had always intended to be a teacher, and after Rosemont, she stayed with the Sisters of the Holy Child and over the years taught and administered at Sharon Hill Academy, St. Leonard Academy in West Philadelphia and now is Principal of the Junior School at the Academy of Notre Dame de Namur in Villanova. Jean is a devoted educator and enjoys working with the age group of the junior school.

I know Jean through the Disciples in Mission program, and she has impressed me as a dedicated Catholic educator.

From Dorothy's Desk

The beautiful reflection below reportedly was written on the wall of Mother Teresa's Home for Children in Calcutta. Some sources say that the words were written on the wall of Mother Teresa's own room. They seem to have been based on a composition on Leadership for Students written by Dr. Kent M. Keith in 1968, and supposedly were adapted by Mother Teresa and rewritten in a much more spiritual way. In any case, their association with Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity have made them popular worldwide, expressing as they do, the spirit in which the Missionaries live their lives, and certainly serving as a worthwhile reflection for all.

Final Analysis

*People are often unreasonable, irrational and self-centered.
Forgive them anyway.*

*If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.
Be kind anyway.*

*If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies.
Succeed anyway.*

*If you are honest and sincere, people may deceive you.
Be honest and sincere anyway.*

*What you spend years creating, others may destroy overnight.
Create anyway.*

*If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous.
Be happy anyway.*

*The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow.
Do good anyway.*

*Give the best you have and it may never be enough.
Give your best anyway.*

*You see, in the final analysis, it is all between you and God.
It never was between you and them anyway.*

CYO Wrap-Up

Saint Helena CYO Winter sports concluded in February as our basketball teams completed successful seasons by competing in various tournaments, including the Girls and Boys Archdiocesan Tournament at the varsity level. All of our teams were competitive and enthusiastic and, by the end of a long season, showed marked improvement from the first practice sessions in early November. If one judges success by the sportsmanship and conduct of our players and coaches, all of our teams would be deemed champions. A total of eighty-six (86) students played on our Junior Varsity (separate 5th and 6th grade boys and girls teams), Varsity and Parish teams, and fourteen (14) boys competed for our high school team.

The highlight of the basketball season was the 2008 CYO Memorial Invitational Tournament, the major CYO fundraising event. In only its fourth year, the tournament has achieved wide acclaim among the CYO basketball community, thanks to the hard work of tournament organizers and volunteers who make the tournament truly memorable for players and fans alike.

Please take note that all eight girls teams and four boys teams qualified for the Archdiocesan Tournament. Interestingly enough, in a repeat of our own tournament final, Ss. Simon & Jude (West Chester) and St. Agnes (West Chester) met in the girls' championship game, with St. Agnes once again emerging victorious. In the boys bracket, St. Helena tournament champion St. Bede the Venerable (Holland) reached the Archdioce-

san semifinal before falling to eventual champion St. Andrew (Newtown).

In keeping with the true spirit of the tournament's memorial aspect, at halftime of the final game, the family of the late Jim Buggy, a long time CYO volunteer, gathered at mid-court for a presentation in his memory.

As this article goes to press, the 2008 spring sports season was well under way as our baseball and softball teams' practices moved outdoors with the first hint of spring and an extra hour of daylight. This year has also produced what is most likely a record turnout for the track team, with fifty-five (55) athletes at the Novice, Minor and Cadet levels (4th through 8th grades) and thirty-nine (39) Pee Wee (2nd and 3rd grades) sprinters.

We at Saint Helena wish all of our student athletes continued success in all of their endeavors, and we also extend a special "Thank You" to all of the coaches and volunteers who help make the CYO program a success no matter how one measures it.

CYO Programs are open to children in Saint Helena Parish. Eight sports are offered spanning the fall, winter and spring seasons. Junior varsity teams consist of fifth and sixth grade students, and varsity teams are open to seventh and eighth grade students. Second and third grade students participate in Pee Wee track; the varsity comprises the fourth through eighth grades. High school students play in a fledgling spring CYO Region 21 co-ed volleyball league. Our high school boys basketball team competes in the CYO Region 18 league.

The Ladies of Helena

The Ladies of Helena is a wonderful "friendraising" ministry which brings women together to share ideas, friendship, community service and spirituality. They meet on the last Wednesday of each month from September through April, from 7 to 9 PM, in the School Cafeteria. The yearly agenda, which is set at the September meeting, includes a broad range of activities which nurture the body, mind and spirit, in addition to reaching out to others and giving back to our own parish community.

Some of their outreach projects include collecting items for military service personnel in Iraq, making casseroles and sandwiches for a neighboring community charity and giving back to our own parish with an annual Stock's pound cake sale. Other meetings feature educational opportunities on an interesting array of topics such as therapeutic meditation, cooking with a local chef and

home interior design. Rounding out the agenda are fun nights for games, crafts and demonstrations and party celebrations for Halloween and Christmas.

The year comes to a close at the 11 o'clock Mass on the last Sunday in April, followed by the Ladies of Helena Annual Communion Breakfast in our beautiful Empress Room. This year they welcomed with great enthusiasm, "our own Father Redcay" as the Guest Speaker. At this time each year the Ladies make a generous donation to Father Nicolo to be used for Saint Helena Parish. What a wonderful and fitting Amen to such a lovely year of celebrating for the Ladies of Helena and for all that they are and all that they do!

If you are interested in further information follow the updates in the parish bulletin or call Donna Matoney, 215-616-0662 or Michele Gerstemeier, 610-584-0862.

Adult Basketball

On a Tuesday evening in early March, I paid a visit to the Social and Recreation Center to get a feel for what Adult Basketball is all about. After only a few minutes of observation, I flashed back to the days of pickup games played on outdoor basketball courts sprinkled throughout our region.

Adult Basketball consists of approximately 25-35 men ranging in age from their early 30's to the 60's. Typically, 15-20 men participate on Tuesday evenings between 7:30 P.M. and 9:00 P.M. On the evening of my visit, about 20 guys showed up, enough for

four complete teams sharing the court in alternating games. Games are played on the main full-court, and the style of play is competitive yet informal, with players calling their own fouls (surprisingly few!).

While most of the competitors are parishioners, I'm sure that Adult Basketball has strengthened existing friendships and forged new ones. Case in point, several of the players sponsored the 2008 CYO Memorial Invitational Tournament. It seems that whenever parishioners get together in any Parish Ministry, good things happen.

-John Maloney

Enjoy Writing, Taking Pictures, or Editing?

Cross Talk welcomes
volunteers who want to
contribute to St. Helena
Parish's newsletter—
we're always looking for
story ideas as well!

*Please contact Dorothy Barry
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