

Cross Talk

VOLUME 6

ISSUE 2

Catholic to Catholic

Because we at Saint Helena truly believe that every Catholic counts, we embraced with great enthusiasm the opportunity to participate this Lent in an exciting new program, Catholic to Catholic. This ministry is a parish visitation outreach to registered families designed to help us discover ways to better serve our parishioners and to make our parish more vibrant and welcoming.

Teams of volunteers were asked to visit a random sampling of almost five hundred homes over two weekends in March to say hello, perhaps enjoy a little chat and deliver a wonderful packet of interesting and informative updates on what it means to be Catholic and a valued member of the Saint Helena Family. The packet also contained tear-off sheets inviting those visited to share

their ideas for making our Parish more welcoming along with practical ways to implement their suggestions. The response forms also asked that requests for prayers be sent back and shared with the parish community.

It was a pleasure to interact with the volunteers as they prepared for their visitation as it was obvious that they approached their mission with a positive and prayerful spirit.

Catholic to Catholic was a wonderfully warm way to “spread the Good News” to so many right here within our own St. Helena Family.

-Dorothy Barry

In this issue...

Holy Week Preparations	2
The Wedding Planners	4
Rich in Time & Talent	5
Catholic Schools Week	6
Dinner Theater	7
Teacher George Gillin	8
Grade A Computers	9
CYO Wrap-Up	11



A Confirmation candidate responds to Bishop Cistone at St. Helena Church in March.

Holy Week Preparation

Each week a cantor, lector, organist, Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Eucharist, altar servers and ushers assist the priest and deacon in celebrating a truly wonderful Mass with us. Also, the music and hymn selections provided by the music director are always perfect and inspiring. How do they do this? What is entailed in bringing this Mass to us?

I decided to interview some of the people who are responsible, and from that it was



suggested that I investigate Holy Week and the Easter Liturgy to get a birds-eye-view of what it takes to bring it to us. I was amazed at how many people are involved and how much time and work they put into this liturgy.

The planning for the Easter Liturgy begins months before Easter with a search for the music to be used throughout the week. When it has been selected, the choir begins their practice as they will be singing on Palm Sunday and Holy Thursday through Easter Sunday. They practice every Monday night

for a few hours along with practicing for the regular Sunday Mass (twice a month). Once the cantors are selected for the various masses and services, they too have to practice. Then there is the practice for the bell choir and the chime choir to be scheduled.

The Church and the Chapel must also be prepared for Holy Week. On the Friday night before Palm Sunday many members gather to prepare the palms that are distributed. Several hours are spent sorting, braiding and distributing the palms throughout the Church in preparation for the Palm Sunday Masses. A month or so before the Holy Thursday Mass a search is begun to find twelve parishioners to participate in the Washing of the Feet. After services on Holy Thursday, the altar is completely stripped. As soon as the Good Friday services are completed at 3:00, the doors of the Church are closed and it is prepared for Easter.

All the flowers, plants and equipment that are stored in the Rectory basement are transported to the Church. It takes several hours to prepare the altar, replace the altar linens and place all the plants and flowers. Often times the parishioners doing the work don't finish until 8:00 at night. These members are also involved in preparing the Chapel for Easter. It should be noted that all the plants that are on and around the altar for Easter Mass are watered and cared for all through the Easter season by members of the Parish. The preparation for the services on the evening of Holy Saturday require a lot of work

and cooperation. The candles and holders for the parishioners to carry as they process outside for the blessing of the fire and water have to all be checked and sorted ahead of time. Oftentimes members take several of the holders home to clean them of previously dripped wax. They must be distributed at the service and members coordinate their efforts to ensure that all are lit.



Although it is not specifically part of the



Easter Liturgy I would like to mention 'Operation Resurrection' which is performed on Holy Saturday. This involves a parishioner, along with some children,

visiting a parishioner who has lost a loved one who was also a member of the Parish. One of the children will present the parishioner with an Easter lily and a card in memory of their loved one. This simple service has brought so much joy to people who are thrilled that their loved one was remembered at Easter time.

All of this is to give you some idea of what it

takes to bring a beautifully prepared and well executed Holy Week and Easter Liturgy. Even though it is not as involved, the weekly liturgy is approached in much the same way - parishioners from various ministries working together with the priests to make sure Saint Helena has the best and most beautiful Mass every Sunday. I purposely have not mentioned specific ministries because so many different ones are involved in the various preparations. My hope is that, in reading this, you might be inspired to join a ministry.

-Barbara Neff



The Wedding Planners

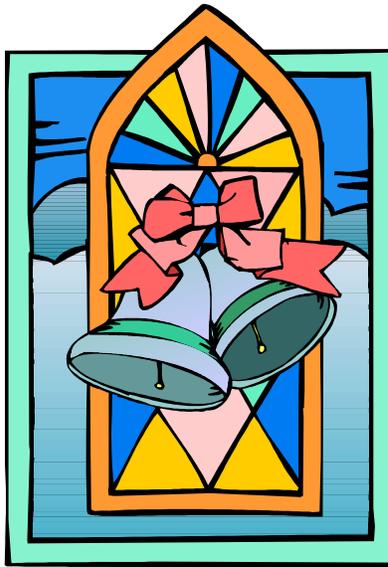
The wedding rehearsal ministry at Saint Helena is designed to assist couples with all of the aspects of their wedding ceremony. Lead by Jim and Michaelleen Dougherty, who have 31 years of marriage experience behind them, the group consists of six members, in three teams, with three new members who will be trained shortly. This is the Dougherty's third year with the ministry – they volunteered because they felt it would be a fun way for them to support the parish together. Jim is also involved with teaching PREP, which he did for six years in the 1990s and resumed last year.

In the past three years, Jim and Michaelleen have coordinated the rehearsals of over 60 couples who were married at Saint Helena Church. The day of the rehearsal, the Doughertys meet the bride and groom, along with their wedding party, for the first time, so they have a limited opportunity to discern what the engaged couple want and expect for their ceremony. It is their responsibility to appropriately prepare the wedding party for what to anticipate during the service and guide them through the various parts of the Mass.

Michaelleen typically takes the groom and best man to the front of the church and reviews when they should exit the sacristy and where they should stand to meet the bride and attendants. She also helps the readers

practice their readings for the ceremony. Jim generally stays at the back of the church to guide the bride and the rest of the party down the aisle and handle how the wedding party proceeds into church.

Other responsibilities for the ministry include accommodating visiting clergy who are participating in the service, handling a wedding party that is running late and ensuring everyone is comfortable with their roles in the ceremony.



The Doughertys have also had their share of challenges during their tenure, such as coordinating a very large bridal party with nine attendants, calming an emotional and overjoyed bride who had trouble

getting down the aisle, dealing with children in the wedding party who just do not want to cooperate and managing a wedding with a male maid-of-honor and a female best man!

Once everyone is in the church, the Dougherty's job is done and they ready themselves for the next wedding. With an average of 20 weddings per year, they keep pretty busy. One of the biggest rewards for the couple occurs when newly married couples run into the Doughertys after Sunday Mass and thank them for making their day run so smoothly. A job well done! - Stephanie Donley

Parish Rich in Time and Talent

The immeasurable time and talent shared by St. Helena Church parishioners is obvious to any *Cross Talk* reader. This issue alone features Catholic to Catholic visitation, the wedding rehearsal team, the musicians and others who support Holy Week activities, the St. Helena School teacher who started as a volunteer, the CYO coaches and organizers. The publication itself is the fruit of volunteer writers, editors and photographers.

More than 900 parishioners now volunteer in the parish, including the school, says Pastor Father Joseph Nicolo. St. Helena Church launched a Stewardship Ministry in 2005, he explains, which encourages the faithful to share their time, talent and treasure with the parish. Each year a weekend is dedicated to either Time and Talent or Treasure. Last year's Time and Talent Weekend featured parishioners speaking about their respective ministry at each Mass. Fr. Nicolo observes, "They talk about how being in a ministry not only helps others, but helps themselves become better Christians."

"Stewardship is discipleship. Time and Talent is what a disciple of Christ is to do," he adds. "We strive to offer everyone the opportunity to serve. The more ministries we have, the more people can do something. For example, members of the Prayer Shawl Ministry can knit at home and pray as they do it. They

can make it to a meeting or not, but they still can do their part."

The most recent Time and Talent weekend encouraged 200 parishioners to express an interest in a ministry and more than 100 to subsequently volunteer with a ministry. Of course, parishioners can volunteer at any time, using the church bulletin or parish Resource Book for contact information.

Fr. Nicolo observes that there are several ministries that serve during or after regular Mass, such as lectors, altar servers, ushers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion,

parish nurses, which in many cases do not require a time commitment much beyond time ordinarily spent at Mass. Other ministries may require a greater time commitment. In keeping with the goal of offering opportunities for all parishioners to become involved,

the parish welcomes new ministries, such as an adult service ministry beginning in the fall, which will offer parishioners assistance with transportation and similar services.

"When anyone asks about starting a new ministry, I only ask that they assist in starting it," Fr. Nicolo says. "After that I support them and do what we, as a parish, can to build it up."
-Liz Cummings

'The more ministries we have, the more people can do something.'
-Father Nicolo

Celebrating Service at SHS

Catholic Schools Week was celebrated at St. Helena School this past February 2-7. First celebrated in 1974, this national endeavor enjoyed its 36th year. The theme this year, which is decided by the National Catholic Education Association, was “Catholic Schools Celebrate Service.”

The week started off with a Mass and offered open houses and activities for students, faculty, the community and St. Helena families. St. Helena’s principal, Sister Cathe Shoulberg, emphasized that St. Helena is, “a school of academic excellence, committed to Gospel values, and a place where everyone is welcome.”

With outreach a big part of the week, this year the school celebrated Superheroes for John Shapiro Day to salute a parish youngster battling cancer. Children dressed up as their favorite superhero and brought in a do-



nation to assist the Shapiro family; the event raised close to \$3000. Another fundraising event the students participated in was a cupcake sale to benefit the “Nothing but Nets” program, which provides bed nets to help prevent the spread of malaria in Africa. The students raised over \$500 which will allow the organization to purchase 50 nets.

During the week, each class in the school had the opportunity to highlight what it is

proud of and families are invited to observe and participate: some of the activities included making birdfeeders with the Pre-K, a service project by the 4th grade, 5th grade volleyball, 2nd and 6th grade math games, 7th grade human body bingo, 3rd grade poetry, 1st grade tic tac toe, and the kindergarten play, “Once Upon a Lily Pad.”

Families also enjoyed Senior Friends Day, with entertaining vocal performances by each class that revolved around a Lawrence Welk theme, and a Pre-school Party, hosted by the St. Helena School Student Council. The school week finished with the



kids enjoying pajama day and story time with Sr. Cathe, and the Knowledge Bowl, a game of current events for the 7th and 8th grade.

But the festivities were not quite over as the St. Helena parents enjoyed their annual fundraising event with a Mardi Gras themed dinner dance in the Empress Room. The event is organized by the St. Helena Home and School Board and includes a silent auction with items made by each class. The considerable amount of funds raised allowed, with the assistance of Father Nicolo, the purchase of ceiling fans for several classrooms. Overall, it was a very successful week for the school .

-Stephanie Donley

'Casting Call'

Even during times of severe economic turmoil, Americans have traditionally turned to the entertainment world for a diversion from the grind of everyday life. Many of us enjoy first-run movies, Broadway shows and local theater, but some of the best performances can be found right here at Saint Helena!

From April 3 -5, the Social and Recreation Center was transformed into Blue Bell's very own version of Broadway, dinner theater style. Popular show tunes filled every corner of "the house" as members of the Saint Helena School Chorus, under the direction of Mrs. Jennifer Lau, presented "Casting Call." Acting skill, musical talent and humor were in great supply as our students assumed the roles of aspiring performers auditioning for parts in famous Broadway shows.

Tunes familiar to young and old alike were featured, including "Take a Chance on Me" and "Thank You for the Music" from the relatively recent "Mamma Mia" (1999), Luck Be a

Lady" from "Guys and Dolls" (1950) and "Lullaby of Broadway" which dates back to 1935. Sister Cathe was the surprise featured soloist in "Lullaby" and was immediately presented with a well-deserved Tony Award.

On Friday and Saturday evenings, The Twisted Gourmet offered a sumptuous buffet consisting of a wide variety of entrees, side dishes, salads, desserts and beverages. For the matinee finale, theater-goers were treated to a Sunday Tea with sandwiches, salads, crudités and desserts, courtesy of our hard-working parent volunteers.

"Casting Call" was truly a highlight of early spring. The beaming faces of proud parents, grandparents, relatives and friends were matched only by those of the cast members themselves. In addition to her "Tony," Sister Cathe and her staff at Saint Helena deserve our most sincere thanks for making the Arts an important part of the complete education of our children.

-John Maloney



George Gillin, Teaching Technology

Recently, I had the opportunity to examine St. Helena School's new computer lab. My host was George Gillin, the computer teacher. George is a true Philadelphian, born in Tacony, in the Northeast, and educated at St. Bernard Parish School and Father Judge High School.

George is the son of George and Marion Gillin. George Sr. was a Philadelphia firefighter, and Marion was an accomplished secretary. Early in her career, she worked for some of the pioneers of the computer industry who built the first practical computer in the City of Philadelphia, and went on to found the ancestor companies of the present day Unisys.

After high school, George entered the Oblates of St. Francis DeSales where he studied for the priesthood. As part of his preparation, he taught religion and history and coached baseball at Bishop McDevitt High School in Harrisburg for a year. Prior to Ordination, he left the Order. George finished his degree at the Allentown College of Saint Francis DeSales, now DeSales University. There he pursued his passion for baseball, which he had started in high school.

George next joined the Marine Corps, train-

ing in the Officer program at Quantico, Virginia, and was attached to an aviation unit. He traveled the world, and his service included Vietnam. After leaving the service, George became one of five partners in a successful medical supply business, which sold all manner of high technology products to hospitals and physician practices for thirty years.



George is married to Eileen Gillin, and they have three adult sons and two grandchildren. He has lived in Blue Bell near Montgomery County Community College for the past 22 years.

George grew up in a world where ballpoint pens were a novelty when he was in grade school, and computers occupied entire reinforced floors of buildings. However, in mid-career, he was confronted with the personal computer. Increasingly, the medical equipment he was dealing with interfaced with computers, and personal computers invaded the office space. For George, it was either sink or swim. On his own, he learned to deal with personal computers and the office suites that came with them. He became quite proficient with these new essential tools of modern business and the software that runs them.

While his two younger sons were studying at St. Helena School, George volunteered and taught a class in current events. Some of his students would work on projects that involved tools like Microsoft PowerPoint. Often, they would come to his house to work on projects on George's computer.

During that period, under the leadership of Sr. Cathe Shoulberg, RSM, a computer program was established, and a teacher was hired. After a period of time, that teacher left. George and his partners, at that point, sold the medical equipment business which gave George the opportunity to pursue another profession. After some discussions with Sr. Cathe, he took her up on her challenge to try teaching the computer program for a year. That year went by quickly, followed by another 11 or so.

When you see George in the computer lab, the first thing you notice is his broad smile. He thoroughly enjoys working with SHS students and developing skills that they will need in their educational pursuits and employment. As many of the older generation know, computers are not completely user friendly as yet, and training can be difficult. However, the SHS students are at an age when they learn complex things quickly, and one of George's 7th or 8th graders can match their Microsoft Office skills with any office worker.

George also enjoyed coaching the school's baseball team for many years and coaching for many years in the WRA sports programs.

-Matt Rieder

St. Helena School Computer Lab

A few years ago, George Gillen gave the Knights of Columbus an opportunity to meet in the computer lab at Saint Helena Education Center which allowed me to size up the equipment situation of SHS' computer program. George's former computer lab was more than adequate, but not exactly pretty. There was a profusion of wires, and a mixture of equipment. However, all the computers were networked and connected to the internet, and George had the resources he needed.

Saint Helena School follows the curriculum set by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Our program begins with introducing students to Microsoft Office in kindergarten, and by the end of third grade, George's students have a familiarity with all the programs in Microsoft Office, which is the standard for higher education and the working world. The students in George's higher grade classes are quite proficient. We also have four carts with laptops and a video projector which could be brought to a classroom to allow teachers to integrate audiovisual content into the curriculum.

In discussing the current program and its resources, George is quick to thank the leadership of Father Nicolo, Sister Cathe and the generosity of the parents, parishioners, and other benefactors who made the new addi-

tion to the St. Helena School possible through a capital campaign.

The new addition includes a computer lab which is unmatched in Montgomery County, and a library with several networked computers with internet access. Saint Helena School has been blessed with the generosity of other benefactors. When you go the SHS website and look at the faculty section and click on George's name, you will see long list of firms and individuals who have made donations of large numbers of desktop and laptop computers to SHS and George's expression of gratitude to them.

George did not accomplish all of this single-handed. Along the way, there were visioning committees and five and ten year plans. However, all of the long term plans were accomplished ahead of schedule. Also, many of our parishioners are IT professionals, and they provide their expertise to assist George from time to time.

The computer lab is divided into two rooms. The larger room contains long tables and chairs which comprise several computer workstations. The computers themselves were new when the lab opened, and constitute state of the art machines. They are Dell models with flat screen panels and Microsoft's latest operating system and office suite. The technology of the machines is such that they have extra capacity to handle future applications that may come along. In the middle of the lab, there is a cart with George's laptop and a projector that displays on two walls at the same time. George can project his lessons on the walls for everyone

to see, and follow along on their own machines. Outside the lab, each of the classrooms has from four to five desktop computers that are networked and have internet access. The school is a Wi-Fi hotspot. At the present time, there are approximately 100 laptop computers networked with Wi-Fi in use in the school. All the computers are networked into an industrial strength printer in the computer lab, and some of the classrooms have a printer. To keep up with the migration of computer functions to handheld devices, each child, beginning in third grade, carries a USB travel drive to school each day. This allows a student to begin a project in school and complete the assignment at home.

The smaller room contains two servers which handle the school's computer traffic, and spare parts. The school contracts with a local IT firm for maintenance of the server and heavy duty repairs. I am aware of the IT resources other Catholic Schools in the area have, and I am convinced that the SHS facility and program are far and away the best. Speaking with Fr. Nicolo, he indicated that the computer program in the school is a very high priority. He is aware, however, that technology changes, and that it is expensive to keep on top of it. He hopes that the spirit of stewardship and generosity of the parents of SHS students and other benefactors allow him to continue to support the program at a high level.

Anyone interested in making a financial contribution to the Technology Program, please call Sister Cathe at the school office 610-279-3345.

CYO Wrap-Up

An unexpected snowstorm blew in on Monday, January 19, taking many by surprise. What started as an aesthetic addition to a barren winter landscape persisted into the early evening rush hour and brought about perilous driving conditions and numerous delays.

The 2009 CYO Memorial Invitational Basketball Tournament also felt the storm's effects. Fortunately, the seventh, fifth and third place games were concluded in the afternoon, but both the boys and girls championship games were postponed to the following weekend. In spite of this hiatus, the tournament was, once again, an unqualified success.

Now in its 5th year, it's fair to say that it has become the premier CYO basketball tournament in the area, thanks to the dedication of tournament organizers, sponsors and volunteers who strive to put on a first-rate event. I have heard more than one coach, who, upon leaving after his or her team's last game, express an eagerness to come back next year.

The Memorial Invitational has a well-deserved reputation for inviting quality teams. The 2009 Girls Champion, Saint Maximilian Kolbe (West Chester) went on to win the Region 17, Archdiocesan and state CYO crowns. In the Archdiocesan final, "St. Max" defeated Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, its 2nd round opponent in our tournament. In the Boys final, Gwynedd Mercy Academy defeated Saint Bede the Venerable (Holland). Saint Bede also was a finalist in the Archdiocesan tournament, losing to

eventual state champion Saint Katharine Drexel (Chester).

The essence of the tournament's Catholic identity was truly captured on its final night, when loved ones of the Saint Helena family were fondly remembered. The Keane family graciously accepted a gift in memory of husband and father Tom Keane. A contribution in memory of Michael Rosa for a Montgomery County Scholarship Fund was presented to his parents. Last, a check in memory of fallen Philadelphia police officer Patrick McDonald was presented to his uncle, George Gillin and cousin, Kevin Gillin. The Saint Helena CYO made a donation to local TV personality Don Tollefson's One Child Saved Foundation and set aside scholarship funds for needy Saint Helena School students. Money was also collected for young John Shapiro, who is seriously ill and whose older siblings attend our school.

In addition to an immeasurable amount of good will and fun, some of the tournament's by-products include a much-needed storage shed beside the Social and Recreation Center and a backstop for the baseball field.

Cross Country Steps

Out in 2009

Introduced in the fall of 2008 as a pilot program, Cross Country has drawn significant interest and will be added to the CYO sports line-up in fall, 2009. The makeup of our team

(Continued on pg. 12)

CYO Wrap-Up *(Continued from pg. 11)*

has not yet been determined, but it is safe to say that fourth grade through eighth grade will be eligible to participate. Races will be held on Sundays in September and October at Philadelphia's famed Belmont Plateau.

Younger harriers will compete in the Novice and Minor classes on a 1.86 mile course. In the Cadet class, 8th graders and 7th graders of age will run a 2.48 mile course. Cross Country is somewhat unique in that everyone runs in a given race and can contribute to the team's point total. Please be sure to check the parish bulletin and the CYO link on the Saint Helena School home page for more information. -John Maloney

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