



St. Mary Magdalene
Catholic Community
Willowick, Ohio
Serving the needs of God's people
for **60** years!

St. Mary Magdalene Ministry Newsletter - August 2010

WE ARE A STEWARDSHIP PARISH

By: Ann Abraham, Ph.D.

We are a STEWARDSHIP Parish! What this means is that as parish leaders and parish members, we strive to look at ourselves, our ministries and our choices through a “stewardship lens” or perspective. This year, the Parish Council and the Stewardship subcommittee have chosen to work together to develop and strengthen our “stewardship lens.” We truly believe that all that we have has been given to us by a generous and loving God. And, we find ways to give these gifts back to God! The three “T’s” of stewardship - *Time*, *Talent*, and *Treasure* are a way for us to categorize our gifts. We believe that the gift of *Time* is spent with God. This *Time* is spent in prayer, in scripture, in faith sharing, in the celebration of the Eucharist and in thanksgiving. *Time* spent in ministry and in caring for others is *Time* spent with God!! Our parish is richly blessed with many *Talented* people. We are enriched by the musical gifts of our children and adults that praise God instrumentally and/or vocally. We are enriched by the *Talents* and generosity of the many people that have renovated our church, who share skills needed to wash and iron the linens and decorative banners and who order, arrange and water the flowers and plants that decorate the parish’s inviting worship space. We have living saints among us who truly show us stewardship through the use of their God-given *Talents*. Returning our *Treasure* to God is stewardship. As people of God, we are called to look at how our money and treasures could be BEST used to build up the Kingdom of God. There are many opportunities for fund-raising to support the parish and parish ministries. By supporting these activities, we build up the Kingdom of God, brick-by-brick!

A Stewardship Reflection: What is Treasure?

I have given considerable thought recently to the question of “What is Treasure?” and have tried to define my greatest “Treasures”...After much reflection; my “Treasures” are my Faith, Relationships, and my material Possessions. Let me try to explain.

God’s gift of Faith gives me life and a “way” to live my life. This gift contains the mysteries of our faith: the mysteries of God’s Word made flesh, Christ’s presence in the Eucharist, the Trinity, and Everlasting Life, to name a few. So, if these things are all gifts, the next question I ask myself is Why? God’s gift of Faith leads me to understand that we have been given these things, simply because we are loved. Wow! Loved! Such a simple, but infinite word. We have been loved from the beginning of time and will be loved thru the end of time. We are loved regardless of the bad that we have thought or done, UNCONDITIONALLY. And, God shows us His love by giving us lavish gifts. Christ shows His love for us through His obedience to the Father’s will and through His unfathomable suffering and sacrifice. We are richly loved! What can we do with our gift of Faith? In return, we are invited to love God; to celebrate the Eucharist in prayer and thanksgiving. We give the gift of Faith when we show mercy, serve and love one another.

God’s gift of Relationships gives me joy and a “purpose” for living and sharing my life, my time, my energy. For most of us, our lives begin within the context of a loving family; parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents and friends. We first know love from the acts of these people that care for us. We learn what it feels like to be loved and to love. At a young age, we learn to serve our family by doing simple chores like picking up toys or setting the table. Our sense of purpose (helping the family) grows. As we age, we learn the joy of serving our neighbors, teachers, and friends. As a young child, I helped an elderly neighbor pick her strawberries, which, in turn, she graciously permitted me to eat. When I became a little older, I realized that she planted those strawberries specifically for ME to pick and eat. Reflecting now on that simple chore with my dear neighbor, I can revel in the joy of my relationship with her. We shared brief moments in time with a specific purpose. How I wish that I could go back to the scenes of a little girl, a frail lady, and a few strawberry plants-waiting together for the berries to ripen...

My elderly neighbor’s material possessions (berries) were her gift to me. She didn’t have to plant berries. I think that she chose to do so because of the relationship and the time she knew we would spend together each spring and summer. I picture myself going to her back door at various times of the day and ringing her doorbell. I see us sitting together on the ledge of her little porch, covered and shaded by honeysuckle vines. I helped her weave the tendrils in the trellis; I can smell the flowers and see the bees. I see us checking under the leaves of her plants in her well-manicured garden for flowers and berries. The conversations between us brought great joy to both of us. I visited often and have fond memories of her back porch and garden.

WE ARE A STEWARDSHIP PAIRSH - continued

God has given me many possessions, a house (and the things within), books, pets, and a garden. Why? Simply, because He loves. We share our home and our things with family, neighbors, and friends alike because we love them. In our garden, we have hundreds and hundreds of Daisies and Black-eyed Susans. So many blooms, in fact, that we cannot pass on the garden pathways! One recent morning, my sons and I cut armfuls of flowers, tied bunches with twine, and delivered the bouquets to about 10 homes in the neighborhood. I hope the families were happy to receive fresh, sun-kissed flowers! I made plans with 2 families to split many of our flower plants. My neighbors can grow them in their own yards, too! I am looking forward to the brief moments shared with my neighbors while completing this chore, taking the plants from my flower beds to theirs. It will be hard, back-breaking, sweaty work-but, fun work, nonetheless. I am hoping that the flowers grow well in my neighbors' yards and bring great joy. I know that this time next year, I will have an abundance of flowers to share. These hardy perennials (maybe, TOO hardy?!!) will be split again and shared with other neighbors! Really, such a simple possession...Curiously, the purpose of the Daisies and Black-eyed Susans doesn't seem very different from the strawberries of my childhood...

DETERMINING GOD'S WILL ACCORDING TO ST. IGNATIUS

By: Deacon Carl Toomey

**Watch for a retreat during Lent 2011, right here at St. Mary Magdalene:
"Praying with Ignatius." (February 24th for 8 weeks)**

The goal of the spiritual life, as Ignatius conceived it, is to "choose what better leads to God's deepening life in me." This is a dynamic goal. We are to *choose*—to freely unite ourselves with God. Most of the time this means that we are to join with God in active work in the world.

This active life rests on a foundation of reflection. Ignatian spirituality teaches us to discern the footprints of God in our own experience. It shows us how to look back on our lives, to sift through our memories in order to see the way God has been dealing with us over the years. It teaches us how to find God in the present moment—in the relationships, challenges, frustrations, and feelings that we are experiencing today. The tools and methods of Ignatian spirituality instill in us habits of prayerful, thoughtful reflection.

Until then, here is a main tool that we can use each day to see how God may be moving in our lives. It is called the:

EXAMEN PRAYER

God, thank you.

I thank you, God, for always being with me, but especially I am grateful that you are with me right now.

God, send your Holy Spirit upon me.

God, let the Holy Spirit enlighten my mind and warm my heart that I may know where and how we have been together this day.

God, let me look at my day.

God, where have I felt your presence, seen your face, heard your word this day?

God, where have I ignored you, run from you, perhaps even rejected you this day?

God, let me be grateful and ask forgiveness.

God, I thank you for the times this day we have been together and worked together.

God, I am sorry for the ways that I have offended you by what I have done or what I did not do.

God, stay close.

God, I ask that you draw me ever closer to you this day and tomorrow.

God, you are the God of my life—thank you.

Share your ministry news!

If you would like your ministry, committee, or group news to be included in the next Ministry Newsletter please complete a Ministry News form at the Parish Office or on line at our web site www.smmwillowick.org. You can also e-mail your information to newsletter@smmwillowick.org, or contact Eileen R. Catalan at 440-944-1694 or ercatalan@aol.com.