



Newsletter of the Church of the Good Shepherd
Volume 16, Issue 1
June 2008

The Sheepgate

Improving the Visibility of Good Shepherd Parish in the Community

by Mark Stevenson

If you haven't had occasion to look in the yellow pages under 'churches' lately or you have not yet seen the most recent edition of the "Houses of Worship Directory" for Centre County, then you probably are not aware of the efforts of Parish Council over the past year to raise the visibility and promote awareness of our Parish in the community.

Though Good Shepherd is very well respected in the Diocese as a Parish that has all the right things going for it, we on Parish Council wanted to undertake a more focused effort to promote the mission and the culture of our Parish for would be parishioners visiting or relocating to the State College area. Toward that end, and without spending too much more on advertising than in years past, we improved our advertisements in the local Houses of Worship directory which is delivered to realtors, hotels and other establishments throughout the Centre Region. We also dramatically improved and updated our ad in the most widely used Yellow Pages book in the area, the IDEARC (formerly Verizon) directory. You can see them for yourselves in the phone book and in the Houses of Worship Directory or read our profile at www.housesofworshipdirectory.com

Other continuing efforts include the following:

- ✧ Improving our Internet visibility on search engine sites such as Google and Yahoo by making sure our 'metatags' or search hooks are up to date. We want to be one of the first churches that appears in a prospective new parishioner's online search for Catholic churches in the area, not the third or fourth one down the page.
- ✧ Investigating the feasibility of merchandising (t-shirts, shirts, goodies, jackets, hats, etc.) our name and image so that parishioners can show off their 'Good Shepherd Spirit' and literally wear their faith on their sleeve (or chest or head)!
- ✧ Exploring other phone book and realtor advertising opportunities (as the budget permits).
- ✧ Attempting to develop our own tri-fold brochure that we could reproduce and replenish in area realtor and hotel display racks.

We could use some dedicated help in the design and production aspects of this last item. So if you have some 'Time' and 'Talent' in this area and would like to pitch in, please call the Good Shepherd office at 238-2110.

Our hope is that all of these efforts will be a window for new or potential parishioners into the vibrant, welcoming faith community that we strive to be. So, in the coming months if you are seeing "Good Shepherd Catholic Church" in more places than you usually do now, you'll know why.

Ecumenical Dinner a Success

Twenty-six of the active and pleasantly mature members of the Fifty-five Plus Club of Good Shepherd Catholic Church, enjoyed each other's company and a wonderful church supper at St Alban's Anglican Church in Pine Grove Mills. Our hosts and hostesses could not have made us feel any more welcome. Father Gregg, a visiting Priest from Florida opened the occasion with a convocation, and after the food was blessed, everyone joined in the Lord's Prayer and we then consumed a delicious dinner together, complete with home produced cakes and pies.

The folks at the table at St Alban's Church supper, starting from the viewer's left are: Anna Sahr, Margaret O'Brien, Andrea Leonard, Suanne Roy, Donald Cook, Frank O'Brien, and John Sahr. As you can see, they are all well fed, happy and content to sit and chat. For more information on upcoming events, contact Dick Kustin at 814-238-2524.



Good Shepherd's Prayer Shawl Ministry

by Cheryl Wunsch

On January 29, 2008 from 10:30 a.m. until noon, we excitedly gathered together with our knitting, crochet needles, and yarn in the church gathering space. This was the official beginning of our weekly prayer shawl ministry meetings.



We gather around a couple of tables, and light a candle as we begin and close our meetings with prayer. Then we chatter amidst laughter, and stories, and calls such as, "Help, I have dropped a stitch." or "How far

do I have to rip out this time?" Our humble knitting-crocheting group takes hold of each of us and we have become aware of a dwelling spirit, a contemplative Presence, and an unmistakable grace.

Since our ministry started, we have given out over sixty prayer shawls. Each shawl is prayed over individually by the person knitting or crocheting it. When completed, the shawl is prayed over by our prayer shawl group, and finally and importantly, either Deacon Mike or Father Bender blesses these completed shawls. Only then are they ready to be given out.

The requests that come for a shawl meet many varied needs such as: a person who very sick and in the hospital, a person suffering from Alzheimer's, a new member to our parish

through our RCIA program, a welcoming shawl for a person just recently relocated to our church, for Confirmation, for a person in the dying process, and for many others too numerous to list. We also have been meeting the needs of families locally that have been victimized by acts of violence and murder. Whatever the need, a prayer shawl gives the shawl's recipient and its creator a healing comfort and peace from being wrapped in prayer and God's unconditional love.

We meet every Tuesday from 10:30 a.m. to noon. From September through May we also meet monthly in the nursery on the second Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. To request a prayer shawl, please contact: Cheryl Wunsch 814-692-4620 or Marge Bennett 814-234-7284.

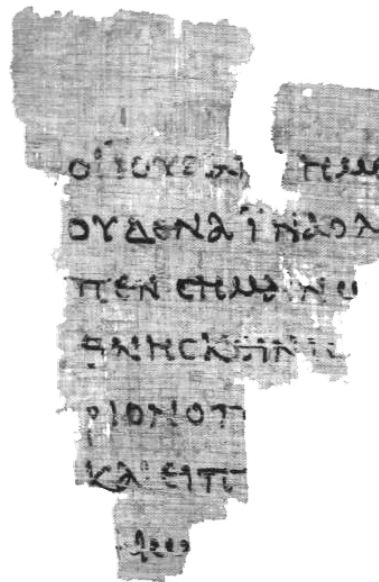
Catholic Scripture Study: The Gospel According to John

by Sven Olsson

Matthew is the primary Gospel of Cycle A, Mark of Cycle B, and Luke of Cycle C. As there is no Cycle D, it may seem that the Gospel according to John does not play a significant role in our Sunday liturgy. In fact, text from John's Gospel is read on average one third of all Sundays, and during the Lent-Easter-Pentecost season, words from the book of 'The Beloved Disciple' provide the focal content. Students from the 2007-2008 class of Catholic Scripture Study (CSS) learned about the liturgical and truly Catholic focus contained within the fourth Gospel, and even more so about the depth and multi-layering found there from the CSS authors Dr. Scott Hahn and Mr. Mark Shae.

From its opening words, the Gospel according to John sets a tone of explaining some of the deeper concepts of our Catholic faith: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (*Jn 1:1*) This one sentence says that the Bible is one story; that Jesus, the Word made Flesh, was always present; and also bluntly points out the divinity of Jesus. While John's Gospel does stress the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth, his humanity is also evident in the Bible's shortest verse "Jesus wept." (*Jn 11:35*) Also found in the fourth Gospel is possibly the most famed verse and the verse most often com-

mitted to memory "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." (*Jn 3:16*) We also receive what could be described as the most perfect advice ever shared, "Do whatever he tells you." (*Jn 2:5*)



Fragment from the Gospel of John found in Egypt.

These words were spoken by the Blessed Virgin Mary to the servants at the Cana wedding feast, but of course we should all receive them into our own hearts as well.

These examples provide some of the trivia found in a reading of John's Gospel, but a study like one done in CSS unveils deeper truths within the text. Chapter 6 of John's Gospel contains what is known as the

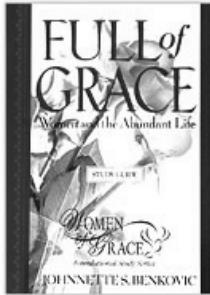
'Bread of Life Discourse' which consists of what the Church teaches on the doctrine of Jesus' Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Jesus speaks to a group of listeners of "...food which endures for eternal life." (v. 27), and those listening request a sign, such as the manna that Moses received from God in the desert. Jesus responds with, "My Father gives you the true bread from heaven." (v. 32) Next Jesus becomes very clear "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst." (v. 35) His listeners become confused so he says further, "The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." (v. 51) At this, the audience quarrels and Jesus bluntly says, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you." (v. 53) Upon hearing these hard words, "Many of his disciples returned to their former way of life, and no longer accompanied him." (v. 66) Peter, however, takes command and reaffirms his belief in Jesus by saying, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (v. 68).

The Church also finds the Eucharist present in less obvious ways throughout the fourth Gospel, and makes use of several

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Full of Grace: On Prayers and Praying

by Debbie Sabo



In our frail human attempts to reach God, we have but one way—Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the

Life. However, He no longer walks the earth. So how do we reach Him, and through Him, the Father? As our parish's women who are participating in the foundational study, *Full of Grace*, are finding out, the only way is through prayer.

Full of Grace is a study by

Johnnette S. Benkovic, the dynamic speaker who hosts the EWTN television program *The Abundant Life*. While the study is primarily directed towards women, to guide them in the role the Church Fathers of Vatican II described as “To aid humanity in not falling,” there are lessons for all Christians within the pages and videotaped lessons of the study.

One of our recent lessons was on the subject of prayer. The Church divides prayer into three categories—vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer, with vocal prayer being

further divided into formulated vocal prayer and spontaneous vocal prayer.

Vocal prayers are prayers we say aloud. Formulated vocal prayers are the old standards we learned as a child or in our RCIA classes as we converted to Catholicism. Examples of formulated vocal prayers are the Our Father and Hail Mary, and longer prayers, such as the Mass or the Rosary. They are prayers we can turn to when we cannot find the right words on our own to express to God what is in our hearts.

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John's Gospel

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verses in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. During the celebration of the Eucharist, we usher in Jesus by saying, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” (*Jn 12:13*) Then we are prompted by the celebrant, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.” (*Jn 14:27*), after which we share peace with those around us so that we are ready to receive the Lord. Finally, before we commune with God and each other through Jesus Christ, the priest holds up the body and blood of our Lord, and says, “This is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” (*Jn 1:29*)

Questions posed by the CSS authors require participants to



research the Bible and Catechism of the Catholic Church in order to fully reach the depths available and to trigger a way of thinking that allows for the possibility that more than the obvious is there. Then, as is truly classic with St. John the Evangelist, it is an exercise to force oneself to not decide that there is only one intended meaning, but instead many meanings,

and not only are we to allow for all of them, but should in fact try to grasp them all at once.

For us to truly understand the Word of the Lord, we must really study the words rather than only read, or only listen. St. John the Evangelist is known as a contemplative. This is in contrast to St. Peter, our first pope, who was a man of action, and whose position symbolizes action. The presence of John's Gospel in the Bible is a sign that fuller understanding of Scripture can come through contemplation, and that God is calling us through his agent St. John to be open to a deeper meaning present within his Word.

Watch the bulletin for details of a new CSS starting this fall.

Hey Mon, We be the Jamaica Committee

JoAnn Vautour & Lynne DeLuca

The mission of the Good Shepherd Jamaica committee is to increase Good Shepherd parishioners' awareness of and active involvement in supporting our twinned Catholic community, Holy Spirit in Maggotty, Jamaica. Fostering this relationship enables us to deepen our understanding of basic human rights and awakens us to our human responsibility to help others. The Jamaica Committee is a subcommittee of the Christian Service Committee.

This mission began with Bishop Boyle of Jamaica proposing to Bishop Adamec the twinning of churches. Then, in the Fall of 2000 Father Marek, the priest at Holy Spirit, was brought to Altoona Hospital for treatment from a very serious car accident. Dr. Lou Persic's personal encounter with Father Marek at the hospital led to the first Mission trip to Holy Spirit in Maggotty in November 2000, with nine parishioners making



Teacher Martha and student Latoya

the journey. Shortly afterward Good Shepherd entered into a monthly financial commitment to help support the priests at Holy Spirit.

In June 2001, Father Bender made the trip to Jamaica to attend the dedication of Holy Spirit Church. Then in November 2002, a second mission trip took place, with fourteen of our parishioners taking part. The third trip in November 2004 had seven members of Good Shepherd. By this time a convent was being built and in 2005, the Japanese Government granted \$90,000 to build a community center at Holy Spirit. Good Shepherd's fourth mission trip, with six people, coincided with the November 2006 dedication of the Community Center. In May 2007, our fifth mission group of nine people were comfortably housed in the new community center with bunk beds & mattresses sent by Dr. & Mrs. Persic through Food for the Poor.

Our Good Shepherd community now tithes 8.5% of our weekly collections and this budget is distributed through the Christian Service committee. This enables Good Shepherd to send \$1000 per month to Father Marek to enable him and his incredible staff, Marta Socha a lay teacher, and three



**Holy Spirit Church
Maggotty, Jamaica.
The first Mass was
celebrated June 3, 2001.**

Nuns to continue their efforts.

The Jamaica Committee welcomes any interested parishioners to join us. We typically meet one time per month, the last Wednesday of each month, at 6:30 pm at church. Please contact one of the three co-chairs to receive meeting dates and reminders, or watch the bulletin for the information. The committee co-chairs are:

Kim Intore —

nrthwoods1@comcast.net;

Laurie Palmer —

l_palmer5@hotmail.com;

JoAnn Vautour — 237-1104,
rayjov@comcast.net

Our Jamaica committee is learning a lot from Dr. and Mrs. Persic who have facilitated the

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Jamaica Committee

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5 past mission trips to Holy Spirit and who are exceptional supporters of the growing Holy Spirit community.

The committee has identified six goals and projects to address:

1. To stay in close communication with Father Marek so that we clearly understand Holy Spirit Parish & its community needs, and the new programs they are developing and offering through their community center, and to share that information with our parishioners.
2. We are communicating with several other Holy Spirit church support groups around the country so that we might collaborate on material collections & shipping, and mission trip planning & projects.
3. Facilitating material collections during Lent, through the religious education program
4. Developing a Preparatory Mission Trip program and booklet, for future family mission trip participants.
5. Planning & Scheduling Mission Trips for 2009
6. Exploring opportunities for Good Shepherd parishioners to participate as Academic Scholarship Sponsors to Jamaican students. This financial support awarded to specific students will provide a



Church interior just before the dedication.



Some of the children with Father Samuel.

higher quality, more comprehensive education for Jamaican children of the Holy Spirit community.

For more information on becoming a sponsor please contact JoAnn Vautour (237-1104; or e-mail rayjov@comcast.net).

Please consider becoming a part of this mission. Through this work we look forward to

entering into friendships with the people of the Holy Spirit Community—poor people who can move us to live differently and to act on their behalf with a new passion for justice. “By entering the work of deprived people, one comes to share not only their pain & struggle but also their hopes...”

Please join us!!

On Prayers...

(Continued from page 4)

Spontaneous vocal prayer is basically speaking to God in our own words, whether it be something short, said with feeling, such as “Thank God!” or “Lord, have mercy on us,” or a longer time spent in prayer, when we share with God what’s been happening in our lives, and how much we need His help, support and guidance to see us through. Spontaneous vocal prayer is a dialogue with God.

Meditation continues this dialogue, only this time it’s God’s turn to do the talking. In meditation, we read a short passage from the Bible, and prayerfully wait for God to put on our heart what He is trying to tell us through His Word. For instance, an idea may pop into our heads after we’ve read the verses, or, although most modern Christians would not admit to this, they may hear the still, small voice explaining to them what God would have them know. However, when we hear such things in our hearts, we must be careful to question their authenticity, asking if what the “voice” tells us is in line with Biblical and Church teachings, if it is

something God would teach, if it represents a spirit of righteousness and love. If not, do not trust it.

Sometimes a verse does not “speak” to us at all. In that case, we should ask discerning questions, the basic who, what, where, when, why and how, and also how does the passage make me feel, and what graces is God offering me through this passage.

The final form of prayer the ladies learned about was contemplation. John A. Hardon, S.J. says, in *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism*, of this form of mental prayer, “The mind is not so much reasoning about God as looking at God in simple faith and adoration.” Contemplative prayer experiences are God’s deepest answer to our prayers on earth. God is completely in control of what happens in this form of prayer. St. Therese of Lisieux experienced God’s presence as a sacred fire. Others have experienced His presence as the stigmata, or the wounds of Christ, still others as a shadow of God’s pain at the thought of all souls not reaching heaven, or simply as “a dry longing” for God, or an enveloping sense of His nearness. While the experiences vary, God

decides how He will give us the gift of Himself in this prayer.

Some of the ladies of the *Full of Grace* group are also involved in the centering prayer movement here at Good Shepherd Parish. In that group, each person meditates on a single word, such as “faith” or “hope,” or whatever virtue or grace they seem to be most in need of at the time, for twenty minutes a day, twice a day. They are seeing results as God gives them the grace or the virtue they requested from Him and desired most.

Some of the women spoke of other Christian churches having different, often more open attitudes towards prayer. They noted a deep need for the Catholic Church to better educate its members in the practice of prayer, and in the simple fact that it does not make you crazy if you admit to hearing God’s word for you in, for example, the good advice a friend offers at a time when you were struggling with a problem, or the song you hear on Christian radio; or even, dare I say it—in the still, small voice.

God answers prayers and part of praying is being open to God’s answer, whatever He says; however, He says it.



OUR FATHER



Church of
the Good Shepherd

"I know mine and mine know me."

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Featured In this issue of *The Sheepgate*...

- ✧ Good Shepherd stands out in our community
- ✧ Taking time to have fun and enjoy fellowship
- ✧ There is more to a shawl than keeping you warm
- ✧ Opportunities to deepen your understanding of and strengthen your faith
- ✧ Some thoughts on prayers and praying
- ✧ Our ongoing mission—Holy Spirit Parish

**Missions**