

OUR LADY OF MERCY PARISH NEWSLETTER



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Our Trip to Rome

By Diane Meyer

In early May, Ralph and I went to Dublin, Ireland for the Christening of our granddaughter, Elena.

After our daughter Julie encouraged us, we decided to take a side trip to Rome, since we had never been there. We were excited to think we might be able to see the newly elected Pope Francis.

We had heard that General Audiences with the Pope are held every Wednesday morning in St. Peter's Square. But how to get tickets was our question. After calling the rectory we discovered www.st.peter'sbasilica.org. We emailed the site and contacted the tourist information section.

Within a couple of weeks they emailed us back and told us to pick up the tickets at the Vatican North American College on Tuesday afternoon before the General Audience. We found our way through the streets of Rome to the college where we met with a nun who told us when to arrive and what to expect on Wednesday morning. She said it would be like a Pope pep rally.



Pope Francis greeting the faithful at St. Peter's Square.

On Wednesday morning, with much anticipation, we arrived at the Vatican, St. Peter's Square at 8:30 a.m. . Thousands of faith-filled people were there from all over the world. (Later I read there were 70,000 people present.)

Pope Francis came out at 9:30 a.m. and circled the area to greet everyone in the open-air Pope mobile. The excitement was amazing! He went through the crowd shaking hands, picking up babies, and stopping to welcome everyone.

We held our cameras high in the air hoping to get a good photo as he passed us. As you can see, we were successful.

The General Audience began at 10:30 a.m. and lasted about an hour including prayers, a homily, and a blessing that was for us and our family and friends. Pope Francis' homily focused on the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

It was truly an awesome experience!

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Bringing the Body, the Love and the Peace of Christ

By Jo-Ann Kelly



In early 2011, two very close family members were simultaneously being treated for cancer. Between them, I spent close to 75 days sitting at their bedsides in the hospital. Those days were often dark and scary, and many times the only bright spots were the visits by various Eucharistic Ministers. These amazing people would stop by daily to bring the Body and the peace of Christ to our family. Some prayed with us, others distracted us with stories; some shared their personal stories of faith and healing, and a few left prayer cards and reflections for us to read. Receiving the Eucharist and spending time with the ministers reminded us daily that the Lord is with us all the time, even in our darkest hour. What an amazing gift to be able to do that for those in need. I knew then that this was something I would want to do.

In the fall of 2012, my family healed, I was asked if I would like to become a Eucharistic minister. I was so excited yet nervous. I wondered if I was worthy enough to be entrusted with the Body and Blood of Christ. After much prayer and reflection, I realized that the Lord was calling me to serve and to help others the way my family was helped. In March, after attending a full day of instruction at the Archdiocesan Center, I was blessed by Father Charles and officially became a minister. I will admit that my first time serving at Mass was very nerve-racking. I was so worried about dropping the host or the chalice, but each time I did it I became more and more comfortable. Quickly, I became more aware of the gift that I had been

given. Being able to hold the Lord in my hand and share Him with others is truly an amazing experience! Recently I started to bring the Eucharist to the Plaza Regency in Park Ridge and have signed up to serve at HUMC at Pascack Valley in Westwood. It is my hope, that with the Lord's guidance, I will be able to bring the Body, the peace and the love of Christ to those in need. My family and I will always be grateful to those Eucharistic Ministers who comforted us on those dark days. With God's grace I hope to pay it forward through my service as a Eucharistic Minister. It is truly an honor and blessing not only to bring Communion, but there is great joy in praying with others. For those thinking of joining this extraordinary ministry, I highly encourage you to do so. The blessing to be able to serve the Lord and our community in this very personal way is an amazing gift.



PRAYER FOR EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS

Jesus, bless these hands chosen as your tools.

Jesus, keep us in awe of our sacred mission.

Jesus, make us worthy of this great ministry.

Jesus, send us out to distribute your love.



Book Review
Reviewed by Cos Ferrara

Florence Nightingale's Nuns

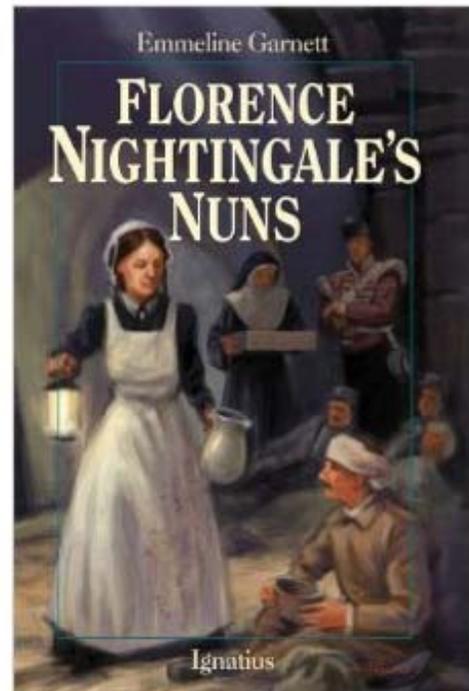
By Emmeline Garnett

Anyone who has spent a short time in British or American schools would probably be familiar with Florence Nightingale, the heroic woman who led groups of women in the fight against disease in war-torn countries. Though Florence received the recognition, she herself acknowledged the work her sisters did saving many hundreds of lives and making those who would not survive as comfortable as possible. Florence wrote: "They are the truest Christians I ever met with, invaluable in their work, devoted, heart and head, to serve God and mankind."

Besides disease, the nuns and other nurses lived amid poverty and filth in the mildewed, cracked and oozing walls, and the rotten greeny black floors. "The smell was awful." With little food and medical supplies, Florence's nuns would also endure the emotional pain that comes with trying to soothe the pain and fear of wounded soldiers. It was not unusual for a wounded soldier who sensed he was dying to ask one of the nuns to write a letter to the soldier's wife back home. One such letter began this way:

"I promised to write and tell you all I could about your husband. You have already heard that he was very much wounded –I believe by a shell. First he seemed to suffer more from the wounds in his body, but then he seemed to rally and we were in hopes that he would recover, but God pleased to obtain otherwise."

The book's author—Emmeline Garnett—is a historian of note who has written a number of books. She writes in clear, direct prose, presenting her research in a readable narrative. Florence's Nuns is a slim book with a big impact.



Looking Ahead: Advent/Christmas Season

December 2013

December 1: Advent Begins.
December 8: The Immaculate Conception (Holy Day of Obligation).
December 12: Our Lady of Guadalupe.
December 25: Christmas.
December 29: The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

January 2014

January 1: The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God (Holy Day of Obligation).
January 6: The Epiphany of the Lord (Magi/Three Wise Men).
January 12: Baptism of the Lord.

Visit the websites below for scriptures, Church Traditions, Advent and Christmas activities:

www.usccb.org/advent/index.shtml (United States of Catholic Bishops). www.blestarewe.com/litcal (*Blest Are We* - Religious Education Program). www.webelieveweb.com/liturgical_year.cfm (*We Believe* - Our Lady of Mercy Academy).

My Trip to Ecuador

By Jeannette Warhol

Visiting Cuenca

In July 2012, I accepted an invitation to travel with my family to Ecuador in South America. The six-hour night flight went smoothly although upon arrival early Thursday morning at Guayaquil Airport, security was high. A friend of the family we were visiting came and took us on a 2-1/2-hour drive to Cuenca, Ecuador's third largest city. Traveling by car, we were able to enjoy both the mountainous scenery and the different neighborhoods.

Ecuadorian Local Color

Once in Cuenca, we met our host family and we immediately became accustomed to our different surroundings and the friendliness of the Ecuadorian people. Homes in Ecuador, like their restaurants and hotels, have an opening in the roof that allows fresh water to fall on the beautiful flower garden underneath. An overhang around the opening keeps rainwater from going where it is not wanted. As oil is one of the area's leading products, a trip to the pump in Cuenca costs only \$1.47 a gallon. Ecuador's mild climate also frees the people from the need to have heaters in their homes. Rice and bananas were plentiful. Fresh fruit juice was available each morning, as fruit trees grew in most backyards. Because Cuenca is located near gold and silver mines, there was a plaza market square of about 40 jewelry stores carrying many items of a religious nature.

Ecuador's Religious Heritage

Ninety-five percent of the population in Ecuador is Catholic. In the neighborhood where we stayed, a church was literally located every two blocks. Everyone walked to church and the one priest presided at two of the churches.

We walked to town in the market square where we saw a huge flower show in progress, with many vendors selling their beautiful flowers. The week of our visit was the time of a special celebration in honor of the Virgin Mary. Madre Dolorosa, Mother of Seven Dolors (Sorrows) was prominently displayed everywhere we went, as was the Crucifix. On the Sunday when we attended Mass, we witnessed a procession of four men carrying a statue of Mary holding Baby Jesus on a platform. Following were five pick-up trucks loaded with their produce in thanksgiving tribute to Mary. All their crosses showed Jesus as having gone through the Passion, which is striking when you first see it.



Jeannette Warhol

Cuenca has been listed as a UNESCO heritage site for its architecture and historical buildings. This one town happened to be the site of two cathedrals. The new cathedral took 50 years to build. The old cathedral is now a museum with a great religious history. Featured in the museum is a large replica of The Last Supper as well as life-size statues of Jesus and the Apostles around the tabernacle.

Pilgrimage to El Cajas

Our trip's highlight was a one-day pilgrimage on Saturday into the Andes Mountains located 10,800 feet above sea level in a place called "El Cajas." From a pamphlet written by the Bishop of Cuenca, we are told that the Virgin Mary appeared to a 16-year old girl named Patricia, from August 1988 until March 1990. A beautiful statue of Mary dressed all in white commemorates her apparitions in El Cajas. In one of her messages, Mary said, "I am the Guardian of the Faith." Through Patricia, Mary told the people to pray a lot for peace in the world. In addition, Mary gave a message for Pope John Paul II which Patricia delivered personally to the Pope in Rome.

The Guardian of the Faith movement has grown in some dioceses in Ecuador. The messages of Our Lady have spread to the United States through Sister Isabel Bethwy's book entitled "I Am the Guardian of the Faith." A commission appointed by the bishop is investigating the movement's work.

On our last evening, we were blessed for our return trip by a priest at his rectory. I was delighted to have had this most enjoyable adventure.

A Teacher's Memories

Doing a favor

By Bernadette Klein



It is August 15th – the Feast of the Assumption. For as long as I can remember this has been a very special day in my life. This holyday, in the middle of the summer, while honoring Mary's completion of her work on Earth, has always signaled that it's time to prepare to begin a new school year. Whether I was a student or teacher, August 15th has always been a pivotal day in my year.

On or about August 15, 1988 I received a phone call from Sister Jane Feltz, principal of Our Lady of Mercy School, asking me to “do her a favor”. I am a product of parochial education and a strong advocate of Catholic Schools, so when a sister asks a question I perk up and listen. It seems the young lady she had hired to teach second grade at OLM had just been informed that her father was transferred to Virginia. Since she could not afford to stay behind to teach at OLM, she too would be moving. There were only two weeks before school would begin. Sister Jane needed a second grade teacher! I had taught second grade in the New York City School System before leaving to have my children. I had resumed teaching as a substitute in the local public and Catholic schools. Sister reminded me that in September my third son would be joining his brothers at Fairfield University. My daughter would be entering fourth grade at OLM. So I would be available to solve her problem. Twenty three years later I can thank Sister Jane for the wonderful, fulfilling years that I spent teaching at Our Lady of Mercy.

I was asked to write about why I taught in Catholic School. I just told you how it came about but then I sat down to think about my reasons for staying after the one year I had promised Sister. The answer came quickly- why not? As a teacher in OLM I was given the privilege of working in my chosen profession under the best of circumstances. I was able to teach

the “whole” child. I knew I enjoyed the academics and I thoroughly enjoyed their age group. I was also given the privilege of preparing children to receive two sacraments- Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist. I was able to freely pray and witness to my Faith. I worked with other dedicated teachers in a Christian atmosphere and I could use all my educational background in teaching and Guidance to help prepare my students for all phases of life. What a gift!

The other day I received a note from a former student who brought me up to date on her life. I was happy to write back and remind her that I am praying for her and all my students every day as many of them prepare to return to school as students and in some cases educators.

For twenty-three years I was part of a school that flourished. In 1990 our school began preparations to apply for Middle States accreditation. With the help of faculty and parents this goal was met and has been maintained. In 2008 Our Lady of Mercy Interparochial School fulfilled all the requirements to achieve Academy status. In 2011 Our Lady of Mercy Academy, having fulfilled all the prerequisites, received national recognition as a Blue Ribbon School. All this was done while maintaining our focus as a Catholic school dedicated to teaching the “whole” child.

In June, 2011 I retired from teaching. But it's August 15th – the Feast of the Assumption, and my mind turns once again to Mary and school. Even though I am officially retired, I am still preparing for another school year by selecting books to read on my visits to the second grade. I must also write up my minutes from the June School Board meeting. Yes, now I'm the Secretary of the OLMA School Board! Mrs. Meehan, the principal of OLMA met me when I returned for one of my visits and asked me to “do her a favor”. So the cycle of life goes on and I continue to be fortunate as I remain a member of Our Lady of Mercy Academy.

Advent

A Reflection on Kindness

By Celeste T. Villegas

When I think of a spiritual journey during the season of Advent, one of Thomas Keating's reflections from his book, *The Transformation of Suffering*, comes to mind – that it is “in the trivial, everyday things that is exactly where the Kingdom of God is at work.” Provided we are open to God's wisdom, the ordinary routines in our daily life can take on extraordinary significance. “Mary's little act of kindness in the Marriage at Cana,” says Keating, “is a true example.”

A reflection on the kindness shown to the “babe born in a manger” whom we await in Advent resonates in a modern-day experience described in the poem on “Kindness” by Naomi Shihab Nye (shown at right).

While on her honeymoon in Colombia in 1978, Nye and her husband, Michael, were robbed on a bus in the middle of the night, of everything that was on them at the time. With just a little notebook and a pencil Nye had managed to salvage, the author penned this poem as she sat in the plaza in the center of the town. She was especially touched at the kindness of a “gang of street ragamuffins” who allowed her to eat a bun now and then, when she showed them that she had “no bag, no purse, no passport – nothing.”

For more information on Naomi Shihab Nye, please log on to the following links:

<http://www.elise.com/q/poetry/naomi.htm>;

<http://spiritualityhealth.com/articles/incomparable-naomi-shihab-nye-kindness>.



KINDNESS

Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.
How you ride and ride
thinking the bus will never stop,
the passengers eating maize and chicken
will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness,
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night with plans
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing
inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow,
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to mail letters and
purchase bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
it is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

How Much Do You Know About Advent?

For your fun and enlightenment, gather your family together and see how much you know! Answers are found on the bottom of this page.

1. Advent is the liturgical season that prepares us for a) Christmas b) Easter c) shopping d) Christ's baptism
2. Matthew 1:23 quotes the prophet Isaiah (7:14), saying: "...the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel." *Emmanuel* means a) Thank you, Jesus b) God is with us c) God is coming d) Jesus Christ is Lord
3. This solemnity celebrates the magi from the east giving homage to the infant Jesus. a) Holy Trinity b) *Tres Leches* c) Immaculate Conception d) Epiphany
4. Saint ___ was the first to create a Christmas crèche (manger) to celebrate the birth of Christ. a) Nicholas b) Mary c) Joseph d) Francis of Assisi
5. The angels and the heavenly hosts proclaimed: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth ___ to those on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:14). a) peace b) blessings c) happiness d) prosperity

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WE ARE INTERESTED! CONTACT A STAFF MEMBER.**



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Answers

1. a) Advent, the season before the Christmas Season, helps us prepare for the birth of Jesus. Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas.
2. b) Before the Incarnation, God spoke through signs and prophets. In Christ, however, God spoke to us face to face and lived among us.
3. d) The visit by the three kings (the wise men or the magi), traditionally celebrated on January 6, revealed even more deeply that the child born to Mary was the Son of God.
4. d) On Christmas Eve in 1223, Francis recreated the birth of Christ in a cave with live animals and people. He hoped to inspire Christians to recognize Christ in their midst.
5. a) This angelic song anchors the Gloria we pray every Sunday Mass except during Advent and Lent, the seasons of penance in the Church.

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Hats Honor Susan



Susan Vaccaro's friends recognized her birthday by wearing hats of different shapes, colors and sizes recently at an 8:30 a.m. Mass. Susan is pictured to the right of Mgr. Carl, along with her hat-wearing friends.