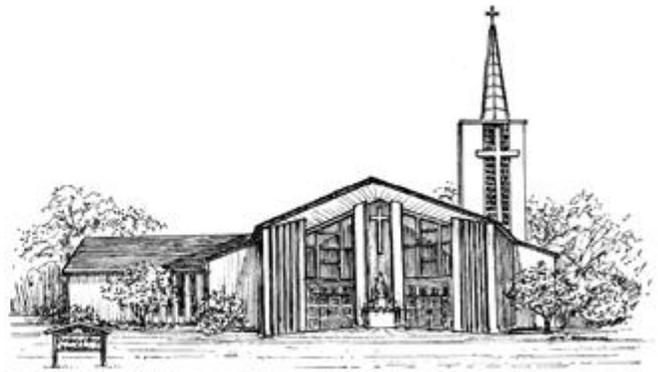


# Our Lady of Mercy

Spring 2016

## PARISH NEWSLETTER



### Merciful Like The Father

*"I have decided to announce an Extraordinary Jubilee which has at its centre the mercy of God. It will be a Holy Year of Mercy. We want to live in the light of the word of the Lord: 'Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful' (cf. Lk 6:36). And this especially applies to confessors! So much mercy!"*

March 13, 2015 Announcement by Pope Francis

The logo and the motto together provide a fitting summary of what the Jubilee Year is all about. The motto *Merciful Like the Father* (taken from the Gospel of Luke, 6:36) serves as an invitation to follow the merciful example of the Father who asks us not to judge or condemn but to forgive and to give love and forgiveness without measure (cfr. Lk 6:37-38). The logo – the work of Jesuit Father Marko I. Rupnik – presents a small *summa theologiae* of the theme of mercy. In fact, it represents an image quite important to the early Church: that of the Son having taken upon his shoulders the lost soul demonstrating that it is the love of Christ that brings to completion the mystery of his incarnation culminating in redemption. The logo has been designed in such a way so as to express the profound way in which the Good Shepherd touches the flesh of humanity and does so with a love with the power to change one's life. One particular feature worthy of note is that while the Good Shepherd, in his great mercy, takes humanity upon himself, his eyes are merged with those of man. Christ sees with the eyes of Adam, and Adam with the eyes of Christ. Every person discovers in Christ, the new Adam, one's own humanity and the future that lies ahead, contemplating, in his gaze, the love of the Father.



The scene is captured within the so called *mandorla* (the shape of an almond), a figure quite important in early and medieval iconography, for it calls to mind the two natures of Christ, divine and human. The three concentric ovals, with colors progressively lighter as we move outward, suggest the movement of Christ who carries humanity out of the night of sin and death. Conversely, the depth of the darker color suggests the impenetrability of the love of the Father who forgives all.

See the Vatican Website, [www.vaticano.va](http://www.vaticano.va).

#### Inside this issue:

Merciful Like The Father .....	1	By the Numbers.....	5
Prayer of Pope Francis .....	2	Respect Life .....	6
Prison Ministry .....	3	Social Justice and Peace Ministry .....	7
The Bereavement Support Group.....	3	Hackensack Soup Kitchen Ministry .....	8
Lazarus Ministry .....	4	A Reflection .....	9

## Prayer of Pope Francis for the Jubilee Year of Mercy

Lord Jesus Christ,

you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,  
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.  
Show us your face and we will be saved.

Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money;  
the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things;  
made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us,  
the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman:  
“If you knew the gift of God!”

You are the visible face of the invisible Father,  
of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy:  
let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.

You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness  
in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error:  
let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing,  
so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord,  
and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor,  
proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy;  
You who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen

## **Prison Ministry**

*By Jean and Bob Lampert*

Our first awareness of those in prison was through Fr. Jack Martin. Fr. Jack worked with a multi-racial, ecumenical group in Newark. We met leaders of First Friends who were dedicated to those incarcerated for seeking political asylum or for lack of documentation. We joined together with First Friends for what was to be our first protest march. We walked through the bleak industrial area of Elizabeth, weeds, gray earth, colorless warehouses, and huge trucks either parked or racing past us. We arrived at a warehouse about 4 stories high with small windows around the top. This was the privately run prison which was paid handsomely by the federal government per detainee. We were told the lights never went out, that it was just one open space with no privacy, not even for the bathrooms. Most detainees had been there for numerous years.

On that march we met David bar David, a young Jewish attorney associated with the Seton Hall Law Center. He represented a young Palestinian man who had sought political asylum in the U.S. He had been told that he was chosen to be a human bomb. His family fled to Egypt, he to America because he was convinced that we were the land of the free and the home of the brave. He was met at JFK by officials. He thought he was being welcomed but quickly found himself in the warehouse prison in Elizabeth. It took his attorney years just to get his case heard, and still more to argue for his release. He eventually won and the young man was freed. First Friends found him a place to live as he began his dream to become an American citizen.

The plight of the imprisoned, whether innocent or not, continues. Our Lord said I was in prison and you visited me. Can we each in our own way find a way to follow the example of our Holy Father Francis?

Our parish was blessed this Lent with a visit from members of First Friends. Their mission statement is: To uphold the inherent dignity and humanity of detained immigrants and asylum seekers. We provide hope and compassion through volunteer visitation, resettlement assistance and advocacy.

Web site [www.Firstfriendsnjny.org](http://www.Firstfriendsnjny.org)

---

## **The Bereavement Support Group**

*By Emily Urbaniak*

The Bereavement Support Group of Our Lady of Mercy Parish is part of the Lazarus Ministry, which was formed 13 years ago to assist and prepare grieving families for the wake and funeral. The Bereavement Support Group is available for them through their grief journey afterwards. The group is open to anyone who has ever suffered the loss of a loved one.

The support group meets on the second Wednesday of the month in the Parish Center/former convent, from 7:30 p.m. to 8:45 p.m., except during July, August and September. The group is led by John Rokoszak, Pastoral Associate and Licensed Family Counselor, who has worked with the bereaved for many years, both in group and individual counseling. John helps members understand their grief journey, encouraging them with his well-chosen words and compassion.

The group provides education, emotional support, and the opportunity to socialize in a safe, non-judgmental setting. Members may attend as many or as few sessions as they find helpful in working through the various stages of grief. They may share their stories, feelings and concerns, or simply listen. All information shared by the group is confidential. Prayer and sharing of faith are part of the sessions, affirming that we are not alone on this journey to healing.

## Lazarus Ministry

*By Ann Marie Dong*

“God made me to know him, love him, and serve him in this world and to be happy with Him in the next.” The words of the old Baltimore Catechism flowed through my memory as I thought about our Lazarus Ministry and the time we share with those we meet as they prepare to celebrate the life of someone special to them. Only now as I reflect on the many meetings I have attended, do I realize that each was a new learning experience for me.

So many remarkable lives were presented and so many families were forthcoming with sharing knowledge of the unique individual life of their family member/friend.

I have cried and laughed because of the open expression of both sadness and love that each person authentically wanted to share with all who were present.

I feel enriched and blessed each time we present ourselves to help someone prepare for the emptiness that will come and the memories that they may recall from the final Mass/celebration together.

---

## Lazarus Ministry

*By Joan Hafemeister*

I believe the Lazarus Ministry is truly wonderful and of great value to our parish. The families and friends of the deceased are so grateful to be helped in selecting the scripture reading and hymns, writing the prayer of the faithful and the eulogies.

They want so much to have a beautiful meaningful liturgy for their loved one and often aren't sure where to begin. A team member meets with the family and explains what will take place and guides them in choosing selections to make the Mass meaningful and personal to them. They are so relieved and comforted by this help.

They are also grateful that we attend the wake and are present at the Mass to help set up and reassure them about what they are to do. They are so appreciative and thank us over and over again.

The Team always feels blessed to have been able to give comfort to our bereaved.

## By the Numbers...

Looking at just some of the numbers of works of mercy in our parish:

### Feed the Hungry/Give Drink to the Thirsty

- Soup kitchen
  - **100** meals are prepared **6** times a year. **90** volunteers prepare them over the year and **24** take turns going to Hackensack to serve them.
- Food pantries collections
  - A food drive yields about **2, 475 lbs.** Multiply that by four and the Social Justice and Peace ministry collects and delivers about **4 tons** of food a year! They also distribute about **\$4,000** in cash and gift cards through the Pascack Food Center/Family Services of Pascack Valley.
  - Several times a month **7** drivers rotate to deliver a carload of food from our offerings at Mass to the food pantry at Blessed Sacrament parish in Newark.

### Pray for the Living and the Dead

- Nocturnal Adoration
  - Every First Friday **102** members meet throughout the night to pray before the Blessed Sacrament.
- Praising God and praying for special intentions are the works of two groups:
  - **Fifteen** members of the Abundant Life Prayer Group meet every Tuesday evening.
  - **Fifteen** members of the Daughters of Mary Prayer Group meet every Thursday morning.

### Bury the Dead

- **Fourteen** members of the Lazarus Ministry reach out to parishioners for assistance and comforting after a death.

### Instructing the Uninformed

- RCIA John Rokoszak and **5** parishioners provide education and support for those wishing to become a member of the Catholic faith or complete their initiation sacraments.
- Religious Ed - **470** children enrolled in K-6 classes and **59** in Home Study.
- **80** adults and teen volunteers work in the K-6 program.

### Shelter the Homeless

- **5** families have been given meals, fellowship and a bed through the OLM's participation in the Family Promise Program.

### Clothe the Naked

- **25** tables in the Gathering Space were filled and overflowed to the floor at the children's clothing exchange organized by the Social Justice and Peace ministry last fall.

### Comfort the sick

- **25** Eucharistic ministers take turns to visit the residents in a nursing home and bring them Holy Communion twice a week.

## OLM Respect Life Ministry

*By Carol and Art Lavis*

In the Respect Life Ministry at Our Lady of Mercy Parish, members are able to feel a connection to God's mercy in "charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church 2447*)

Often involved in sheltering the homeless, this ministry works closely with the Pregnancy Resource Centers (PRCs) in Bergen County, especially with New Hope Pregnancy Resource Center, a PRC founded by OLM parishioners 30 years ago.

New Hope's outreach efforts extend to maternity homes in New Jersey and New York which aim to place single pregnant women in a safe environment. Not only do they help single moms search out appropriate apartments, but they also provide rental subsidies. Social service and financial aid are made available as well, so these moms can continue with their education. Like other PRCs, New Hope offers a range of clothing for both moms and for babies, allowing clients to save for a rainy day. The OLM Advent Giving Tree at OLM generously supports New Hope with food cards for clients' emergency needs. Working hand in hand with food pantries, PRCs distribute a list of places where clients can obtain food for themselves and their babies.

Underlying non-judgmental, compassionate and loving counseling by the Respect Life Ministry is a spiritual approach that reflects God's mercy, unconditional love and forgiveness. Ministry members seek to comfort a homeless and depressed single mom and to ensure she keeps a positive attitude about her circumstances. Some are turned away by parents; others live with older relatives who smoke and do drugs in the house. A few sleep and live in their old cars. Short of sponsoring adoption as an option, the Respect Life Ministry works to encourage the single fathers concerned, who hear the Gospel, to accept their fatherhood and to step up to the plate – to love their children and to support the struggling mother. Decidedly, "mercy is the stuff of conversion." We are placed in a healthier spiritual mind-set and that has a domino effect.

If anyone would like to get involved in the Respect Life Ministry, please contact Carol and Art Lavis at: [carolart1@verizon.net](mailto:carolart1@verizon.net).



New Hope board of directors. Top: Kristy Gillio, Kim Wymbbs, Carol Lavis, Marilyn Laquidara, Executive Director. Front: Tim Dougherty, LouAnn McGlinchey, Sunday Ruvolo. Not pictured, Thomas Loikith.

## Social Justice and Peace Ministry

By Peggy Dulaski

If you were to glance around the table at a meeting of the Social Justice and Peace ministry you would see a cross section of our church community. Looking at the individual faces the expressions would best be described as unassuming, matter of fact or let's get down to business. They are present simply to serve, to do what needs doing. Here, service covers many of the corporal works of mercy and is achieved in the spirit of neighbor helping neighbor. I, in joining the ministry, have gone from an almost invisible church attendee to a visible part of a good work.

These people, the members of SJ&P, share not just a willingness to help where help is needed but to do as much as time and resources permit. There are coat drives and clothing collections, giving trees and letters of encouragement, help for immigrants and those disenfranchised peoples on the fringes of community. There is help in the simplest and most fundamental forms to satisfy the temporal needs of others.

There are usually four food drives during the year and sometimes more if needed. Food is collected, organized, sorted, bagged and delivered to five local food banks. Volunteers from the parish community magically appear to help with all of the work on collection day. Many people benefit from our local food pantries and are in great need of them. SJ&P is busy feeding the hungry of Pascack Valley all through the year. It's also very important to recognize that an enormously generous spirit exists among the families of OLM. Each time I arrive at a food collection event I am amazed by the amount and array of items on the tables.

Performing these works of mercy proves to be as beneficial to the giver as to the one who receives. I think this is where the phrase "heart warming" comes from.

Pope Francis has called all of us in the community of the Church to action on matters of social justice. In particular he asks us to be ready to perform the corporal works of mercy as individuals and as an institution.



Kristen Sileo (left) and Jessica Thompson (right) at the Pascack Food Center

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Galatians 6:9

## Hackensack Soup Kitchen Ministry

*By Cathy Thabit*

Do you ever wonder what happens to the food and other items that are donated for the Hackensack Soup Kitchen? Where does it go and who gets to eat it?

On the second Thursday of every other month we bring it to the Bergen County Health and Human Services Center in Hackensack to feed one hundred or more of our neediest population. OLM is one of many different houses of worship that volunteer to serve each day throughout the year. We are one small part of a much larger coordinating agency.

Currently, Dolly Diffendahl and Elaine Hart organize the OLM group. Six times a year, they set up the bulletin boards, place a notice in the parish bulletin and oversee our work at the center.

Taking the first step from seeing the bulletin boards to choosing a food tag and leaving the food at the Parish Center was my initiation to this ministry.

Soon after, I joined the group going to the soup kitchen. Meeting these people and serving them dinner gave a true appreciation of my life's blessings and a realization that I was receiving so much more than I was giving. Since my husband Richard joined our group, he starts our trip home by saying what a good feeling he gets from doing this, and we all share that feeling.

On our day, we meet at the Parish Center at about 2PM and are always in awe of the generosity of you, our fellow parishioners, who have left all the food and supplies needed for the meal. It always reminds me of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes! We know this is God's work. We load a few cars and carpool to Hackensack where we sort, heat, set up and prepare to serve. Since we never know how many we'll be serving, we wonder if there will be enough food. Somehow, we always manage to feed all who come.

In turn, they "feed" our spiritual need as we are blessed with the opportunity to perform this corporal work of mercy, to feed the hungry.

## A Reflection

### Mary and the Year of Mercy

*By Celeste T. Villegas*

The Holy Father declared that “the Church will celebrate an extraordinary jubilee Holy Year of Mercy, beginning December 8, 2015, the feast of the Immaculate Conception.”

“Mercy”, Pope Francis said, “is the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to a hope of being loved forever despite our sins. The bridge was made concrete when God chose Mary to be the mother of His son.”

According to Archbishop Fulton Sheen, “Mary was thought, conceived and planned as the equal sign between ideal and history, thought and reality, hope and realization.” The Catholic Church teaches that “Mary is our mother in the order of grace, mother of the Church, the second Eve (therefore the mother of the new creation in Christ), conceived without sin and continuing without sin her entire life, perpetually a virgin; and that when the course of her earthly sojourn had finished, she was assumed body and soul into the glory of heaven where she continues her motherly watchfulness and maternal intercession before God.”

It is significant, therefore, that December 8 was chosen to open the year as it was through Mary that Jesus became the bridge between the Divine and the human – the crux of God’s merciful plan.

For us today, this is an invitation “to enter, listen and to be with Mary’s immaculate heart, so she can bring us into the sacred heart of her Son.” By surrendering and following Mary’s sweet example, “we harden not our hearts” (Psalm 95) and we become open to receiving God’s merciful love.

Truthfully, we are not only challenged by placing ourselves totally in His hands, but we are also promised that our healing can begin in a new way during this year which will end on November 20, the celebration of Mary’s Son, Christ the King.

## Will this be the year that you contribute? Send an article or picture soon!

**Newsletter Staff:** Carolyn McNamara, Coordinator, 201-746-0315

Ann Marie Dong, Cos Ferrara, Connie Fleming, Rosemarie Myers, Christine Venusti, Celeste Villegas, and John McNamara, Graphic Designer.

**Contributors:** As you can see by the bylines, many parishioners contributed to this issue to celebrate the Year of Mercy. We thank them all!

**We’re on the web. Visit us at [www.urolm.org](http://www.urolm.org)  
Find Us on Facebook**