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His name is Emmanuel. He is the light of the world that broke through the darkness. On Sunday, December 20th, our community of faith embraced that light by doing something that represents who we are and that the love of Christ shines brightly through these times and into our faith community’s future. If you were able to wander through the live nativity on the grounds at Saint Irene, you would have seen something outstanding.

Wisemen in the low lands of the parking lot with their camels sang as they looked to the west. Angels danced in the upper lot, praising and rejoicing the arrival of the child savior. The star of Bethlehem shone brightly from the hillside while sheep tried to graze in the snow and slush but found it more enjoyable to just jump around and support the overall excitement of the angels and kings they shared pasture with.

Tucked away in the small side parking lot in a manger fit for a king; Mary, Joseph, the angel Gabriel and a shepherd kept watch over the baby Jesus as he quietly slept. Sleeping even while members of the choir beautifully sang hymns and the live donkey and goat munched on hay and sounded out eeyores and baas. Just for the record, the baby Jesus used in this nativity was a doll.

What made this thirty minute live nativity scene so outstanding wasn’t just the cuteness factor, but that it was the first time that our faith community has come together in a real tangible form in ten months. Even with all social distancing and mask protocols being followed, it was a sight that represented an opportunity being seized. An opportunity to let our community shine and to let the Light into what has been a tough year for everyone.

So thank you to Marsha Cervantes and all the parents and kids that made the live nativity such a great event!
Welcome to the Winter 2020-21 issue of Belong, the messenger of the Concord-Carlisle Catholic Collaborative. It feels good to type the number 21 to signify our moving on from what has been a year that many of us would probably describe using the word challenging. We have all had to alter our lives in a multitude of ways, and these new routines and ways of existing on earth are going to be for at least a little while longer, our “new normal.”

With Advent upon us and the celebration of the arrival of the Light of the World next week, let us see the way in Him. No matter what your life of faith has been over the past year, opportunity abounds. For those who have grown their faith over the past year through what have been tremendously enjoyable efforts, you know what I am speaking to. For those of us who have neatly tucked faith away in a draw with the intention of using it again as post pandemic Catholics, the opportunity before you may not be quite as apparent.

Someone who lives their faith out of discovering what it is and what it will be has no problem putting in at least a few minutes each day to reflect upon it. That’s how they truly discovered it in the first place. They will tell you that if the notion hits them to put in an extra few minutes outside of prayer doing something like reading a chapter from scripture or watching a quick video from one of the many great Catholic media ministries like Word on Fire, Dynamic Catholic or Ascension Press; then they do it. Worst case scenario is they put in that extra few minutes listening to some Christian music while running an errand or cooking dinner.

When the old normal becomes available to you again, how much of the new normal will you bring with you? If you are feeling that you need to do something to give your faith a chance to be there for you when you need it, start doing it now. Remember one thing, be patient. We have all made Jesus wait for us, but He will not be as stubborn. You’re going to work a little to show you are trying, but put your heart into it and you won’t wait long.

The first thing I would do is read this newsletter.
“Why me? Why now?” It’s a question Concord Carlisle Catholic collaborative parishioner Scott Staniar struggled with many years ago, when he felt God pressing him to take his professional marketing and management experience to focus on Catholic teen faith formation. “I am not a theologian; in fact I am not even a cradle Catholic. My background is in corporate marketing and advertising. For a long time I questioned why God was asking me to take this on – and the timing could not have been more inconvenient – trying to raise a family of four teens.

But what drove Scott to trust God and launch Luke Hill Media, was seeing firsthand the challenges today’s teens were facing in the age of social media and an increasingly secular and materialized landscape; including higher levels of stress, anxiety, and especially issues with self-identity and self-worth. As a middle school counselor advising Scott put it; “the issues we’re dealing with middle schoolers today used to be reserved for high school.” Scott also knew from his years working with inner city Boston youth as a VP with Tenacity Inc., that these issues transcended all demographics – it wasn’t limited to inner city – suburban teens were also struggling with issues of self-identify and worth and purpose.

“I know in my heart that Jesus can provide teens the “spiritual body armor” they need to cope with the world today as healthy, resilient, kind & caring citizens. But we have to communicate Jesus’ teachings and our Catholic faith in a manner that more authentically connects to the real-life challenges teens face.

Luke Hill’s team of advisors, have built a curricula that is fully digital; and often includes contemporary video story shorts of real-life teen issues. “We also have a lot of fun. Kids are naturally social and our lesson plans tap into this energy; with team challenges, experiential learning, group role playing and collaborative service projects to help foster a sense of community among the kids. We also love using science and nature around us to showcase the genius of God’s design – including His children!

Our collaborative is utilizing Luke Hill’s innovative program for Grades 6-8 faith formation. Luke Hill’s mission is to complete their middle school program and then build a high school confirmation program to follow the teens as they grow. For more information and or to donate, visit www.lukehillmedia.org or contact Scott Staniar (scottstaniar@gmail.com)

I am excited to see Luke Hill Media develop Catholic religious education within a digital platform. It’s a fascinating new direction. Not only does this provide flexibility & variety, but it’s allowing youth to contribute to the direction of the content.

Theresa O’Keefe, PhD
Faculty Director
Boston College School of Theology
All of the answers can be easily found in the chapters indicated below.

John the Baptizer began preaching in the desert of ________________.
   – Matthew 3

John the Baptizer’s favorite food was Grasshoppers (Locusts) and wild ________________.
   – Matthew 3

Jesus went all through Galilee, teaching in their ________________.
   – Matthew 4

______________ was a fishing village in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.
   – Matthew 4

______________ are the poor in spirit.
   – Matthew 5

You are the ________________ of the world.
   – Matthew 5

What man would give his son a stone if he asked for ________________?
   – Matthew 7

Two ________________ men approached Jesus and called him “Son of David.”
   – Matthew 9

The Disciples asked Jesus, “Why do you speak to them in ________________?”
   – Matthew 13

In Matthew 17, Jesus takes Peter, James and John up a mountain. The three of them witnessed Jesus speaking with Moses and ________________.

Simon the Leper lived in the town of ________________.
   – Matthew 26

What was the name of the person who owned the tomb Jesus’ body was in between the crucifixion and resurrection? ________________
   – Matthew 27
On the afternoon of October 25, parishioners from several of the ministries at Saint Irene were present at the home of Frank and Marguerite Barre for the presentation of the Excellence in Christian Ministry Award. Each year, this honor is bestowed upon a longstanding parishioner who has benefitted Saint Irene Parish and its faith community in a multitude of ways over the years.

Now, for the sake of clarification; Frank is the “official” recipient of the award this year. However, as he and Marguerite, as well as others will quickly explain to you; they are basically joined at the hip. As one does, so does the other. So much so, that it is perfectly fine to address one as Frankmarguerite and the other as Margueritefrank.

Arriving at Saint Irene in 1990 from New Jersey, the Barres quickly became an integral part of this small yet vibrant Catholic faith community. When the construction of the current Saint Irene was being completed in 1997, Frank chaired the “Momento” committee for the dedication of the new church building. He also worked with his good friend, fellow parishioner and first ever recipient of this award, Don Eckelkamp, on the promotions and custom introductory publications for the new church.

The world began to take notice of Frank's
previously unseen acting talent when in 1998 he performed in the first of many Murder Mystery Dinners in the parish hall. Shortly after, he and Marguerite were asked to begin leading the monthly children’s liturgies during the school year. So good and so well known were these performances across the land that Frank recalled a story to those present about laying in a hospital bed and someone walking by the room, stopping and saying “I know you! You’re the one who does the children’s liturgies.”

Frank served as a certified VIRTUS instructor in our parish for fifteen years and helped to draft the Care and Safety policy. Frank has also been heavily involved in different fundraising projects at Saint Irene to serve our neighbors up the road, as well as around the world. One such campaign was Water for People; during which our community raised the funds to drill and install clean water wells for the people of the village of Chinyama in Malawi. Most of us remember Frank standing at the back of the church with a giant water bottle and enthusiastically asking for “change for Chinyama.” So successful was this campaign that we were able to fund the drilling of wells for a neighboring village as well.

From 2009-13 Frank served as the coordinator of our parish’s Confirmation program with Marguerite at his side preparing our young women and men for adulthood in the faith. He is also a member of the Knights of Columbus and recently completed his second year as Grand Knight of the Saint Irene Council.

So it is with sincere appreciation and love that we say thank you to Frank and Marguerite Barre for the immeasurable time and effort spent helping to make Saint Irene the kind of place we like to call home.
**Recommended Winter Reading**

*The Fulfillment of All Desire*
Ralph Martin draws upon the teaching of seven acknowledged “Spiritual Doctors” of the Church to present an in-depth study of the journey to God. This book provides encouragement and direction for the pilgrim who desires to know, love, and serve our Lord. Whether the reader is beginning the spiritual journey or has been traveling the road for many years, you will find a treasure of wisdom in The Fulfillment of All Desire. It is destined to be a modern classic on the spiritual life.

*Jesus: The Way, the Truth, and the Life*
This book of approximately 200 pages stands alone, but can also be accompanied by a 10-week video study program presented by Marcellino D’Ambrosio, Jeff Cavins, and Edward Sri.

In this book, Catholics walk step by step with Jesus from his infancy to the Ascension. Anchored in the life of Christ as presented in the Gospels, it explores the entirety of Jesus’ life—who he is, what he is really like, what he taught, what he did for our salvation, and what this means for us as Catholics today.

This study shows, in a simple way, how Jesus, the Incarnate God, is both fully divine and fully human—his intimacy with the Father, his revelation of the Father’s love, and his extraordinary influence on his disciples, his followers, and even his enemies.

Most importantly, this encounter with Christ will inspire and empower you to center your entire life in him as you come to know and love him in an ever-deeper and more intimate way.

*Broken + Blesses: An Invitation to My Generation*
Only 2 in 10 Americans under 30 believe attending a church is important or worthwhile. Well over half of young adults raised in the Church have dropped out with many having a strong anti-Church stance, many even believing the Church does more harm than good. Fr. Josh Johnson was one of these people. In this excellent book he tackles the harsh realities facing the Church in the 21st century.

With charity and courage he speaks to his own generation of Catholic “Millennials,” who often feel their needs and concerns are not being addressed by the Church, or who simply do not believe the Catholic Faith has any relevance to their lives. Using his own experiences, both as a former struggling young Catholic and as a priest, Fr. Josh offers an inspiring witness of how he came to know God, rather than just knowing about him—and presents practical ways for us to truly know God as well.

*The Book of Saints for Catholic Moms*
Lisa M. Hendey, founder of the award-winning CatholicMom.com and bestselling author of *The Handbook for Catholic Moms* and *The Grace of Yes* shares her passion for the saints by
introducing fifty-two holy companions as guides for the amazing vocation of Catholic motherhood.

Guided by the example of the saints, Hendey eloquently links personal stories, scripture, prayer, and soul-strengthening exercises into a spiritually rich and deeply practical resource for Catholic women. This edition includes a new preface and cover and is updated with information about saints canonized since the first edition.

Allow The Book of Saints for Catholic Moms to help you grow in your faith and enrich your heart, mind, body, and soul by spending each week of the year with Lisa M. Hendey and a different saint. This award-winning spiritual guidebook introduces you to popular saints such as Thérèse of Lisieux, Teresa of Calcutta, John Paul II, and Patrick, as well as lesser known but equally inspiring saints such as Gianna Beretta Molla and Damien of Molokai.

Each week Hendey offers a thematic prayer intention, biographical and devotional information about the saint, lessons she learned from each saint, daily scripture meditations, prayers, activities for moms and children, and practical, spiritually rich steps that help moms incorporate the wisdom and exemplary faith of each figure into their own lives.

Simplicity shows you how to grow closer to God in the things you already do every day, without burdening you with numerous devotions or complicated methods.

Author Bishop Emmanuel de Gibergues explores the virtue of simplicity — that is, having the single intention of pleasing God in all that you do. You’ll learn what a difference simplicity can make for you — as it did for our Lord and our Lady. You’ll come to recognize the signs of true simplicity and find out how to practice simplicity toward God and in your life’s activities. Even better, you’ll find the secrets of practicing simplicity within yourself — a deceptively difficult spiritual discipline that de Gibergues makes easy here.

As this book helps you bring the calming and transforming virtue of simplicity into every part of your life, you’ll become better able to direct all things to God and learn new ways to be attentive to His presence in your life.

The Little Way for Every Day
Saint Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-97, feast day, October 1) is the latest—and among youngest—of the thirty-three “Doctors of the Church.” This devotional book is made up of her sayings from her many writings (Story of a Soul, her poetry, and her letters), approximately one to two sentences for each day of the year. Each month is introduced by a quote from Scripture. The English text was translated by the late Paulist priest, Francis Broome, whose brief foreword is also included, as are end-notes and a table of contents.

This is the perfect pocket-/purse-sized gift-book for those who have a devotion to St. Thérèse or to those who have yet to be introduced to her infectious “Little Way.”
Dear Families,

I hope that your Grade K-5 teach-at-home classes are going well! We continue to get great reviews about our videos. Brenda Dupont is such a gift to our parish! Her photography captures the beauty of our children and their families and truly helps our lessons come alive! Wait until you see our Christmas Pageant this year! It is going to be so wonderful!

Parents…WE NEED YOU! We still have a lot of videos to create and we need families...Please sign up...it is really fun!

Our Middle School catechists are such a blessing this year! Incorporating Luke Hill on ZOOM has presented a few minor challenges, yet it has been so rewarding for everyone.

The kids have been great…I love being a part of the classes every week and seeing all of them participating in such an important part of their early faith formation.

May the love and joy of Jesus fill your hearts during this Advent and may you have the happiest and holiest Christmas!

Blessings and Love,

Jaye
Holy Family and St. Irene Parishes are starting a Young Families Ministry (YFM) and you are invited to join! This is for newly married couples up to families with elementary school aged kid(s). This is more than just a group; it is a holistic platform to spread the love and comfort of Jesus and to provide for the young families of our parishes. Not only will we have our own activities and events, we will also hook you up with other relevant ministries and offerings in the parishes. This is all about connecting with God and with each other. Below is just a small sampling of items. We actually have a 7-page Master Plan full of great ideas!

Regular Faith Group Meetings
(weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly)
♥ To build friendships and relationships
♥ To bring the love, comfort, joy, and help of Jesus into our lives
♥ A time to chat about the joys and challenges of raising a family
♥ Care in the time of COVID

Special Events (scheduled throughout the year)
♥ A Family Picnic and Hike at a local park
♥ Easter Egg Hunt
♥ Couple’s Night (a fun outing followed by dinner)
♥ Trunk or Treat in October

Provide Services to Young Families (ongoing)
♥ How to get to know the community, schools, and other Town resources
♥ Parishes/Collaborative Integration
♥ Women Walking With Purpose
♥ The Parishes’ Men’s Group

Parish Life: (ongoing)
♥ Sacraments of Baptism and 1st Communion
♥ Religious Education
♥ Parish Social events
♥ Have a young family you would like to invite? Invite them to anything and everything!

You may say: This sounds great…but COVID is going on, life is crazy, and everything is closed; so how are we supposed to do anything? Like Jesus does for us, we meet you where you are, and where the state of the world is. What we would like to do as a start is make a roster of who is interested. Then come January, we will have a Zoom meeting, and maybe a virtual event. We will let this whole idea of young families ministry grow organically and let you be the ones who guide it. Involvement is completely flexible, there are no commitments, requirements, or anything like that. Feel free to participate as much or as little as you like.

If interested, please email Fr. Bill at brobinson@cc-catholic.org. Happy Advent and Merry Christmas!
I received an early copy of the book I Heard God Laugh. It is the book that is currently being made available to you and fellow parishioners through our partnership with Dynamic Catholic. I wanted to come up with an idea pertaining to this book that maybe, if utilized by your “average practicing Catholic” would stir something in the soul.

I really didn’t need to brainstorm any groundbreaking notions or consult anyone I hold in regard as being more of a practical Catholic or more in tune with their spiritual life. Basically I read the book and even before finishing had decided to put into practice and to communicate what is suggests. That suggestion is to commit to ten minutes of prayer each day.

The author, Matthew Kelley puts forth the fundamental truth that effective personal prayer is transformational pray. It is necessary for establishing and growing your relationship with God and the Son. He describes prayer as life’s essential daily habit. That is why the commitment is twenty-one days. Apparently that is how long it takes to form most habits.

Kelley covers the true opportunity found in daily pray. Yes, it is an opportunity to grow closer to God. However that is only possible through the transformation of one’s life through prayer. He discusses what daily personal prayer should be and that the most common approach to it by Christian adults does not include some basic elements of effective personal prayer. This is helpful for someone who is new to daily personal prayer or in need of a refresher to get the feel of it again. Kelley does let the reader know that once someone has established an ongoing commitment to transformational daily prayer, the ability to do so in a free flowing and unregimented manner than what is needed early on is developed. Those who are good at it will tell you, when you develop the skill; you are just as or even more effective in your time spent in personal prayer.

As we already know, prayer is an opportunity to ask questions, express thoughts and feelings of concern, joy, sadness, fear, courage or even indifference. It is an opportunity to speak about your life to the only One who knows absolutely everything. That’s why praying effectively with the desire to transform yourself over time in order to grow spiritually, requires and approach that covers the why and how. Kelley offers this approach with the simple and brief seven point Prayer Process. The Prayer Process is an easily implementable way of having an encompassing conversation with God, Jesus or both; all
within ten minutes or less once you become familiar with it. The process truly does provide what is needed for anyone who has not been nurturing this most important relationship.

What prayer should not be is a laundry list of things we want for ourselves and/or others. Too many of us ask God to make changes in our lives to fit our own purpose or tweak some situation or tweak that annoyance we may be dealing with. God is not in the business of tweaking our lives. He is in the business of transforming them. That is why a good prayer life is all about generating a two way flow of communication between you and God.

A healthy relationship with the Creator as well as Jesus is rarely about what we want. It is about what He wants for us. When you think about the dynamic of your relationship with Him, based on this fact, you get the picture of what daily personal prayer is all about. You also see why many people with genuine heart based intention do not get even close to the life transforming benefit of it.

As Kelley states, this is the critically important “missing piece of the puzzle” to our lives. You cannot have a spiritually vibrant life if you do not accept two things. First is that God’s role in your life is as the eternal One who has endless love for you. Second, is that He simply knows us better than we know ourselves. When we find this missing piece, we more effectively make progress along the path to the things we are supposed to have and achieve, rather than what we think we need and want.

I have great news! Many of the things you want and have fit right into how God wants you to be. But then there are those things and ways of being that we must let go of in order to fulfill our purpose. It is the idea of having to give a few things up that hurt us rather than help, or knowing that we need to avoid certain things that turn so many people off to even attempting to know God to any degree above what they learned in youth faith formation or CCD as many of us still refer to it. The best way to think about this is to take into account the natural desire of any good parent wanting what is best for their child. Would any good parent want something for their child that would make their life worse? We all had to do things growing up that we didn’t like. However, many of those things that initially seemed the most un-enjoyable or most difficult, are the ones that best prepared us for life.

I’m going to admit it. I am a forty-four year old cradle Catholic and I did not know how to properly pray before reading this book. As of writing this editorial, I think I am somewhere around 37 consecutive days of spending at least ten minutes in personal prayer. I have become more in tune with my faith and I am beginning to learn the difference between faith and fluff. I am finding more of a sense of enjoyment and value in some work based and personal tasks that previously held none. I definitely have more great days now than just good or okay ones.

I have begun a slow transformation that is going to make me even happier than I was before, a better Christian, Catholic, family member, co-worker and friend to those I love. There are many great experiences and “seismic shifts” to be discovered and lived as Kelley speaks to through taking the transformational approach to prayer. I look forward to all of them.

One more thing, if you are someone who is wondering how you are going to find ten minutes to pray each day; take one of two approaches. Either ask yourself if your relationship with God and Jesus really matters to you or just spend ten minutes less looking at social media each day.
If I had to choose one thing that Jesus wants all of us to take account of and lessen in our lives, it is foolish pride. Foolish pride is the enemy of faith and in many ways does the work of the darkness to cause us to stray from or to never truthfully seek Christ. Almost every human that has ever existed, has and does possess foolish pride to varying degrees.

I say it leads us away from Christ, because loving Jesus involves loving those around you and having an open heart and mind to the will of the Father. Throughout human history, we have not been able to fully live up to what seems like the obvious way for us as the human family and as individuals to be. It’s not entirely our fault.

Foolish pride is a shared human failing and almost impossible to get rid of fully. It negatively affects our relationships with each other and with God. The best way to reduce it is to develop the somewhat self-deprecating sense to know when what you think or say as it pertains to other people is wrong. Wrong in that it goes against what you actually know to be God’s will for us. Yes, it is an absurdly difficult thing to do for most people.

Let me explain this by giving a somewhat brief and non-detailed, yet what I believe to be an accurate analysis of Judeo community between the years of 6 B.C. – 38 A.D. Let’s look at how the pride of many of those with the

**Proverbs 11:2**

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.
highest human authority in the House of Israel foolishly lost what they wanted and desired most from their faith. Then we’ll just simply skip 1,982 years to arrive at today.

The entire Old Testament, which is also the Hebrew Bible and from which the first five books of Moses make up the Torah is where the opportunity to completely change the course of human history for the better was exclaimed and lost.

In many ways, foolish pride by the religious authorities of Judea and the free will given to all and practiced equally by Jews and Gentiles contributed to the failure of God’s first covenant through Abraham with His Children Israel. Foolish pride was also the single biggest factor in the crucifying of Jesus which was the first part of the three days that enacted God’s new and final covenant with us. God knew from the start that His laws would not be able to be kept. God also knew that he would be rejected again in Christ, even with everything the scripture of old spoke to over and over about the coming of a Messiah to set things in order.

The two primary groups who held the power and authority over Judaism at the time of Jesus’ birth, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension were the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Sadducees were the upper social and economic echelon of Judean society. They fulfilled various political, social and religious roles, including maintaining the Temple in Jerusalem. The Pharisees were responsible for being able to answer questions about Jewish Law as society changed and the Torah did not.

Click here to read the rest of the article.
When I was temporarily laid off from my job for eight weeks near the beginning of the pandemic, I participated in our Collaborative’s adult faith formation groups that meet virtually on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings. I figured that with a lot of extra free time available to me and my calendar completely cleared; I would begin to challenge myself as someone who wanted to firm up his faith’s root system and grow it from there.

There is an exceptional quality to the material and content offered and shared in these weekly groups. From engaging videos, readings and discussions on our Catholic faith, to classic scripture study and reflection; I found myself in the midst of the exact opportunity that I was looking for. Here were fellow parishioners, some I knew and some I was meeting for the first time; who were excited to both learn and talk about our shared beliefs and questions. I quickly realized that I fit right in because there was no higher learned ideals or mindset needed. It was simply people at all stages of their journey as Catholics coming together to grow and it was food for the soul.

Truly, each week brought a sense of enjoyment in not only learning but the sharing of ideas, notions, beliefs and misconceptions about faith while the world around us was presenting stark uncertainty.

I work in the culinary field, so there was no way I could talk my boss into letting me work from home when I got the call to come back. So with a heart that was thankful to have a job and broken to leave behind my virtual experience of sprouting a mustard tree, I headed back to the daily grind.

I pushed on with reading scripture and catching up on videos series that were able to be shared with me via email and DVD, but the actual conversation and feeling of community was absent. I most desired the benefit of talking with a group of people about what we had read and heard; but it wasn’t knowingly available to me. That is until I found…they.

What I am about to say, is in no way a claim that one group of parishioners meeting for the purpose of faith formation and camaraderie is better than another. Every single group within our collaborative that meets for a faith based purpose is equal in the eyes of God and my editor.

In August, I became aware of a group of parishioners that was meeting online every Saturday morning. The group had started up a couple of months prior and with my luxurious Monday through Friday work schedule, it was really my only opportunity to find something that might be close to what I had experiences back in March and April.

To be honest, I knew about the group a month earlier, but caught wind they were focusing on the Psalms during July and I thought that would have been just way too boring. I now know that it would not have been. So prior to the first Saturday in August I introduced myself to the group’s organizer and obtained the zoom address.

There I was once again at my laptop waiting to be let into the gathering with a large mug of steaming coffee. I was excited to be back at it, but I figure I should keep that excitement reserved until I knew what this group was all about and how it was going to get my mustard tree’s inflorescence emergence going.

I did not have to wait long to get my answer.

Click here to read the rest of the article
I love French Toast! But when you are feeling like the family just isn’t going to appreciate you slaving in the kitchen on Christmas morning to make French Toast for everyone, there is a solution. The Banana Stuffed French Toast Casserole! Simply make this dish the day or night before, refrigerate, then just heat it up in the oven and serve.

Banana Stuffed French Toast Casserole

- 2 bananas
- Lemon juice
- 8 slices of white bread
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup of milk
- 1 teaspoon almond extract (or vanilla)
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons of cinnamon
- ¼ cup melted butter
- Cinnamon sugar for topping (optional)
- 8 by 8 pan (glass is best)

Slice the bananas and coat in lemon juice and set aside.

Mix the granulated sugar and the cinnamon (so the cinnamon doesn’t clump) then add the eggs, extract and milk, and whisk together.

Dip the bread into the French toast batter and layer 4 pieces on the bottom of a prepared 8 by 8 glass pan.

Place a layer of bananas on the first layer of the French toast dipped bread.

Dip the remaining 4 slices of white bread into the French toast batter and place on top of the first two layers in the pan.

Pour the remaining batter on top of the layers in the pan.

Wait a few minutes, then pour the melted butter on top of the pan.

Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Heat oven to 350 degrees and cook the casserole for 40 to 45 minutes.

Sprinkle additional cinnamon sugar on top of the casserole.

Serve with your favorite toppings.

Check out more recipes here