

# Never Underestimate the Power of Prayer

By Amy Lett Rouse

*Prayer, who can live without it? It nurtures, it lauds, it begets miracles.*

*If you are reading these words, you are one of many who could attest to the efficacy of prayer.*

*Following are several stories about the power of prayer in the lives of our parish community.*

## Hausers Witness to Power of Prayer, Miracles

Tami and Tracy Hauser are a devoted couple, not only to each other, but to their seven children and to their faith. Tami credits her mother for teaching her about Christ at an early age.

“As a child, I always felt that God was very real and present in my life, and I strive to pass that on to my children,” she says. She notes that her husband had a similar upbringing, with parents who emphasized the importance of the Mass, as well as dedication to the sacraments. The Hauser family starts and ends each day with prayer, and that has always been their practice, long before the event which changed their lives.

“Our youngest son, John Paul, was born October 9, 2008, with Trisomy 13, a condition considered incompatible with life,” Tami explains. Three months before his birth,

*Continued on page 4*



The Hauser family: Tracy, Tami, Scott, AnnMarie, Lily, Nathan, Joshua, Alayna and John Paul.

## What's Cooking?

### Second Sizzler Set for September 26

The inaugural September Sizzler last year was such a success that we're doing it again – this time on Sunday, Sept. 26, from 1 – 7 p.m.

The church grounds will transform into a carnival setting, with live music featuring The Turfmen and Easter Rising, lots of games and activities for kids of all ages, Bingo, and a big bake sale and cake walk sponsored by the Guild. There will be a big raffle with exciting prizes, including a \$10,000 grand prize.

Food will include sausages, brats and hotdogs, beer and beverages from The Upstream.

Spread the word - tell your friends and neighbors to join us for sausages, suds, and Spirit!

If you would like to volunteer to help, please contact Cathy DeWeese at [cathy\\_deweese@gallup.com](mailto:cathy_deweese@gallup.com) or 614-4273.



## September Sizzler Fun Run

Lace up your shoes and get ready for the first-ever September Sizzler Fun Run, which will be held Saturday, Sept. 25, at 8 a.m.

The 5-K run and 1.5 mile walk will loop around the parish, starting in the SMM school circle drive and finishing on the soccer field.

Fees are \$10 for children under 18, \$20 for adults, and \$50 family maximum, which includes up to four t-shirts. Additional t-shirts are \$10.

Watch the bulletin for details.

# From the Pastor

By Fr. Gregory Baxter

Remember when we were complaining about the long hard winter? Those days are just a bad memory now that we are in the midst of summer...albeit a very hot and humid summer! But the warm weather is the perfect time to catch up on parish maintenance projects, the care and improvement of parish grounds, and of course preparing for the new school year.

Several projects of interest have been in progress throughout the summer. Restoration work has been under way on the school flagpole and the statue of Mary on the south end of the school building. The goal posts on the football/soccer field have been sandblasted and painted with epoxy paint with a urethane topcoat.

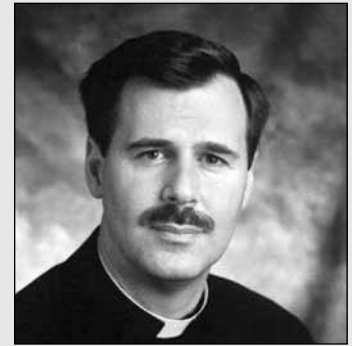
The exterior of the school building has also seen some restoration work. Several areas needed to be tuck-pointed and the entire exterior stone and brickwork on the building has been sealed. There was also a damaged area on the north side of the bell tower that had to be tuck-pointed.

The system that runs the bells in our tower is also in need of repair. You may have noticed that for the past two months or so they are not ringing with familiar regularity

for the Angelus at noon and at 6 p.m., nor have they been announcing the Sunday morning Masses. The system of motors that ring the bells and the clock system that controls the timing are beginning to fail. These are vintage 1960's equipment, and they are due for an upgrade.

Many thanks to the Gardens and Grounds Ministry for all they have done this summer to plant and maintain the gardens on our parish campus. As always the parish grounds look quite beautiful and enhance our Catholic life of worship, prayer, and community in the Lord Jesus.

Finally please do not forget to join your fellow parishioners and neighbors for our parish festival, the September Sizzler, on Sunday, Sept., 26, from 1 p.m. – 7 p.m. I'll see you there! May God bless you as you enjoy the remaining weeks of summer.



## Perfect Attendance!

Stephanie Paul had a perfect attendance record for Religious Education for eight consecutive years. Stephanie made Religious Education a priority in her busy life, even asking her parents to schedule going out of town in between religious education classes so as not to be absent. Stephanie has a third-grade brother who also has perfect attendance for religious education classes. Stephanie's parents are Linda Rock-Paul and Vic Paul. This is one way to keep God #1.

## CYCLE OF LIFE

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*If you would like to help with this publication, please call Paula at 391-1130.*

# Peggy Grennan Named Administrator of the Year

By Susan Rosenlof

Principal Peggy Grennan will be recognized as one of the Administrators of the Year at the Archbishop's Dinner for Education in September. This award honors individuals who have given exemplary service in Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Omaha. This is no surprise to those of us at St.



Principal Peggy Grennan

Margaret Mary – it's quite obvious that Peggy Grennan is an outstanding educator. With 16 plus years as a Catholic school student and nearly thirty years of teaching in Catholic schools, Peggy has dedicated her life to Catholic education.

So you think you know the lady who greets us every morning, rain or shine, in the circle drive? I've put together a little quiz to assess your knowledge of our beloved principal. It will not be graded.

**True or False:** Mrs. Grennan was born in Omaha.

False. Margaret Meyer Grennan was born in Laramie, Wyoming. Mrs. Grennan is one of six children. She attended St. Lawrence O'Toole through second grade and then her family moved back to Omaha.

**True or False:** Mrs. Grennan attended Duchesne Academy for nine years.

True – but not because it took Mrs. Grennan nine years to complete high school. Peggy attended Duchesne from third through 12th grades. At that time Duchesne was an elementary school and high school, as well as a college.

**True or False:** Mrs. Grennan is a huge CU Blue Jays fan.

True. Peggy went to college at Creighton University and earned a

Bachelor's in Psychology and Secondary Education. She returned for a year after graduating to get her Elementary Education teaching certification.

**True or False:** Mrs. Grennan has always wanted to be a teacher.

False. Initially Peggy wanted to be a Child Psychologist. Her mother (also a teacher and principal) suggested she also get a Secondary Teaching Certification. Peggy completed her student teaching at South High and Westside High. Because she enjoyed both experiences, she decided to become a teacher and obtained her Elementary Teaching Certification as well.

**True or False:** Mrs. Grennan has always been at SMM.

False. Peggy began her teaching career in 1977 when she was hired by Mrs. Bonnie Pryor at St. Cecilia's Cathedral Elementary School. She taught sixth grade for one year, then moved to the junior high to teach English, reading and religion for five more years before staying home with her two boys. She returned to her job in 1987 when St. Cecilia's opened a day care for teachers' children.

**True or False:** Mrs. Grennan had to go to summer school.

True. Mrs. Grennan's principal, Bonnie Pryor, was a great mentor and encouraged Peggy to pursue becoming a principal. Peggy received a scholarship toward six hours of graduate school in Education Administration and took two classes at Creighton the summer of 1993. After many years of studying, she received a Master's degree in Elementary Administration in 1998. Mrs. Grennan became principal at St. Margaret Mary in July of 1998.

**True or False:** Mrs. Grennan lives in the school.

False. Mr. Green lives in the school. But true, Mrs. Grennan spends a lot of time at school – she is even there on Saturdays, during summer break, and many times late at night. Peggy lives

in a house with her husband Terry. She has two sons who are now grown ups, Bobby and Bill.

When Mrs. Grennan became principal, her youngest son, Bill, was still a student at SMM. She worried about how he was going to deal with having his mother as his principal.

"I was worried that the other students might give him a hard time, so I

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**"The next morning I told Bill, 'You might get bothered about me being your mother and principal, and some kids may even give you a hard time, especially if they've been in trouble with me. I want you to just look them in the eye and say, *Pray for me. You only have her for eight hours a day; I have her for 24-7.*'"**

Peggy Grennan to son, Bill, when she became his principal

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prayed to the Holy Spirit to help me, said Peggy. "One night I woke up and knew what I needed to do. The next morning I told Bill, "You might get bothered about me being your mother and principal, and some kids may even give you a hard time, especially if they've been in trouble with me. I want you to just look them in the eye and say, '*Pray for me. You only have her for eight hours a day; I have her for 24-7.*'"

Mrs. Grennan along with other award winners in the diocese will be recognized at the Archbishop's Dinner for Education at the Embassy Suites of LaVista on Thursday, Sept. 16. Tickets for the event are available from the Office of Stewardship and Development, 557-5650.

Congratulations, Mrs. Grennan. We are lucky to have you at SMM!

## The Power of Prayer

# The Hauser Family

*Continued from page 1*

Tami's physician told her that her baby would most likely die in utero. If he survived, he might be born with horrific birth defects and suffer greatly. Because so few babies with this syndrome survive, there isn't much data to help prepare for their care.

Tami acknowledges that the months before John Paul's birth were "dark and difficult for our family. Tracy and I prayed the Chaplet of Divine Mercy and begged God to be merciful. We tried to prepare our children for multiple scenarios: your brother may die before he is born; he may die shortly after birth; he may come home and die. We tried to impress upon them to have an eternal perspective and told them that we would have eternity to love and enjoy him."

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**"Even though I felt God's presence and grace through this, I was still full of fear about what I was going to be called to face. I told our children that God is true to his word, as in Revelations 21:4, 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes.'"**

*- Tami Hauser*

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She says, "Even though I felt God's presence and grace through this, I was still full of fear about what I was going to be called to face. I told our children that God is true to his word, as in Revelations 21:4, 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes.'"

Because they viewed his life as a gift, the Hausers decided to celebrate as soon

as John Paul was born. "We had a party right there in the delivery room," Tami says, with family and the nursing staff singing, taking pictures and eating cake.

The Hausers took John Paul home with the goal to hold him 24 hours daily. Tami says, "We wanted him to die being loved. He was on hospice, so we had some nursing support a couple of nights a week, but the rest of the time he was held by family, friends, neighbors, and fellow parishioners."

Weeks turned into months, and now John Paul is 22 months old, a happy, loving baby who is "generous with his smiles," says his mother. He is sitting, crawling and working on standing. He has an adaptive walker, which he is moving forward without assistance. He loves music and his interactive musical toys, which he controls.

The Hausers' faith community has broadened considerably since the arrival of John Paul. "Our community at SMM truly feels like a large extended family to us," Tami says.

But beyond SMM, the Hausers have also experienced connection with complete strangers who have heard or read about John Paul.

"When John Paul was a month old, my mother learned about the devotion prayer for the beatification and canonization of Pope John Paul II. We felt who better to ask to join us in prayer on earth than his namesake in Heaven? We had prayer cards made up with a picture of our baby on them. We placed them in local churches asking people to please join us in daily prayer, in hope that our son might receive one of the miracles that John Paul II needs to give to become canonized a saint. We also felt that this would be the perfect place for God to be glorified. Our son's condition is considered hopeless, so what better place for God to shine than in a situation where man can claim no credit?"

In 2009, the *Omaha Catholic Voice* newspaper, ran the first of several articles about John Paul, featuring the devotion prayer.

"We were overwhelmed with response," Tami says. "Complete strangers reached out to us with encouragement

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**"God has revealed Himself to us through the countless people who served our family. He was whispering to us all along: 'I am here. I will not leave you.' We saw his face and heard his voice. All of those people have been his hands and his feet."**

*- Tami Hauser*

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and prayer. Classrooms of children sent us cards. One classroom implemented a project for students to earn service hours by remaining after school to pray for our baby."

Tami continues: "You cannot go through something like this and not grow in your faith. Our family's faith has been deepened and enriched through this experience. God has done great things, and it has been accomplished through a wide community of people who have actively and consistently prayed for our baby – who are still praying! We are so humbled and grateful.

"God has revealed Himself to us through the countless people who served our family. He was whispering to us all along: 'I am here. I will not leave you.' We saw his face and heard his voice. All of those people have been his hands and his feet. My children have witnessed a community of serving believers, and we hope to impress upon them the importance of belonging to a Christian community and to serve one another in love."

# Dorans Believe that Prayer is Essential in Raising a Family

By Amy Lett Rouse

Sharon Doran wears many hats. She is both a student, pursuing a Masters degree in theology, and a teacher, currently leading a bible study program. She is a public speaker, who has shared her knowledge of Catholicism and its impact on her life with many audiences. She is musician and singer, sharing those gifts during the liturgies at St. Margaret Mary. She is the beloved wife of Steve and the dedicated mother of five sons. And more than these, she is a joyful daily witness to God and the power of prayer.

“There was never a time when I did not know about Jesus or how He wants to have an everlasting friendship with me,” she says. “My parents began teaching me the minute I was born.”

Sharon’s parents, Mary Ann and Michael Lewandowski, created an atmosphere in their home reflecting their love of Jesus and of his mother, Mary. “Our father was the faithful, spiritual head of our household. While raising seven on a telephone repairman’s salary, we always knew his great love for the Lord. He valued our mother and the sacrifices she made to stay home and care for us kids. Mom had a servant’s heart and her love was a constant. She prayed with us a lot about anything. From skinned knees to test scores in high school to finding a parking place downtown, Mom always prayed.”

On their front door, a plaque quoting scripture (Joshua 24:15) stated: As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Above the piano a banner counseled: To sing is to pray twice, advice the Lewandowski daughters took to heart by serving as music ministers at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Grand Island, Neb., their parish church.

On the refrigerator was posted an original prayer composed by Michael Lewandowski: Jesus, you are FIRST in our home and in our lives. We praise You, We thank You, and We love You. “It is a simple prayer, but it said it all for us,”



The Doran family includes, front from left, John Paul, Sharon, Steve, Peter; back row, Michael, Thomas and Paul.

Sharon says. She and Steve now recite it before meals with their sons.

Perhaps the most influential sign in Sharon’s childhood home was the one which stated: The Family That Prays Together Stays Together. “What wisdom there is in that,” she says, noting that prayer is essential in raising a family. She is grateful to her parents for their example, and is especially indebted to her mother for teaching her to surrender ALL TO GOD. She says, “The will of God is not always our own human will, and thus comes the need for full surrender. In the full surrender, aided by his grace, will come peace that transcends our limited human understanding.”

Sharon can attest to the wisdom of surrender through her personal experience. She is a two-time cancer survivor who has relied on not only her own supplication, but the prayers of many others. Surviving cancer is a gigantic feat, but it pales in comparison to raising five young men, “on different points in their journey,” she admits.

“A child is not a possession, but a temporary gift from God. God is faithful, and He has a plan for each one. My number

one prayer for each of them is to have an eternal friendship with Jesus.”

The Dorans celebrated 25 years of marriage this summer and have weathered their share of challenges, underscored by health issues and the demands of family. But these matters have propelled them into a prayer ritual which has become a cherished part of each day.

“We pray from 6:30 to 7:10 a.m. and the time flies,” Sharon says. “We use the Magnificat and read through daily mass readings and prayers. Following that, we pray spontaneously from our hearts. The Holy Spirit has moved us from a range of expressions.” Each has shared their hopes and aspirations and fears, and have come to know “each other’s hearts in a deeper way. Neither of us can bear to miss (the prayer time) now. I want to encourage people to try it. God will show you how; just be faithful to show up, and you will be blessed beyond measure.”

The Dorans conclude their prayer time with the Memorare. “Mary is such an intuitive intercessor,” Sharon explains. At the feast of Cana (John 2), she is the first to recognize that they are going to run out of wine, which would embarrass the hosts. She recognizes the need and asks Jesus (to intervene). Mary recognizes the needs of our families even before we as parents do. She will intercede on our behalf to her son even before we are aware of that need. With this confidence we fly to her, the mother of the incarnate WORD. She is faithful, like a mom who is always there.”

Sharon cites the Blessed Virgin’s constancy – staying with her son as he hangs on a cross, and Mary’s full surrender to God’s will, as the model of devotion that she desires for her own faith life. “It wasn’t all about her, but her faithfulness to the Word of God, Jesus Christ. I pray that my husband and sons and the church at large will find me faithful to God’s word. When I stumble and fall, I am forever grateful for His grace and mercy which endure from generation to generation that all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”

## The Power of Prayer

# Benefit for Parishioners James and Carla Nigro Family Sept. 12

A pasta dinner, silent auction and raffle to benefit parishioners James and Carla Nigro and family, will be held at the SMM Raynor Center on Sunday, Sept. 12, from 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

While on a family vacation in Minnesota, Carla Nigro had an emergency c-section to deliver their premature baby, Luca.

Carla and baby Luca were stabilized in a Fargo, North Dakota, hospital for 10 days and then flown back to Omaha.

At Methodist Hospital, physicians diagnosed Carla with colon cancer, which has spread to her liver. Carla is facing 16 weeks of chemotherapy, colon surgery, and will also need open heart surgery to repair two damaged heart valves. The next six months will be spent in and out of the hospital away from her young family, which includes four children under the age of six.

In the midst of all this, the Nigro's home was broken into with a vehicle and other valuables taken.

The financial burden being placed on the family from this

tragic series of events is enormous. We urge you to consider a monetary gift, volunteer time and most of all, prayers for this struggling family.

The pasta dinner will be provided by Mangia Italiana. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children three and up. Tickets will be sold after all masses (except 7:30 a.m.) the weekends of Aug. 28-29 and Sept 5-6. Dinner includes pasta, salad, dinner roll and water or lemonade. Beer, wine, soda pop and desserts are available for purchase.

There will be a Silent Auction with a "Buy-it-Now" option, a raffle, a kids' activity area and more!

Donations also may be made at any U.S. Bank or contact [nigrobenefit@gmail.com](mailto:nigrobenefit@gmail.com).



## The Power of Prayer

# Prayer Shawl Ministry Gets Prayer Chain Started

By Paula Lukowski

Rather than praying with hands clasped together, a group of women in the parish have taken a different approach as they talk to God and other heavenly hosts with some very special intentions.

Instead, their hands hold knitting needles and crochet hooks, as they work methodically, crafting prayer shawls for those facing illness and other trials. Each shawl maker begins each project with a prayer and blessings for the recipient – who they may or may not know – and the prayers continue throughout the creation of the shawl.

Some recite traditional prayers, and some do more contemplative prayers. Each person has her own method for praying as she works.



"We feel like this ministry has been blessed and anointed," said Elizabeth Pokorny, who helped bring the ministry to SMM in April of 2009. As

a member of the parish Nurse Ministry, she saw the need for such a comfort. Parishioner Christine Penrice helped spread the word and taught the inaugural group of women how to get started.

"At first, we were afraid we wouldn't have enough shawls, but it became clear to us whose ministry this really was," said Elizabeth. "We have been replenishing supply, and it seems to be taking care of itself."

In March, they gave out 40 prayer shawls, bringing the ministry's total to about 100. Before they are distributed, prayers shawls are blessed at a Mass. "We had so many shawls at the last mass that they covered both sides of the communion rails," said Elizabeth.

The ministry meets the first Thursday of each month from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in Conference Room B off the Suneg Center. However, many women prefer to make theirs at home and drop them off at church when they are finished. Regardless of where they are made, the women share patterns, and they share stories that they hear about the finished shawls.

Elizabeth said it is interesting what people look for when they request a

shawl. Luckily, the style of shawls is as diverse as the women who are making them. Some are soft and dainty. Some are textural and strong. Some are colorful, others are subdued in color.

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*Elizabeth Pokorny  
Prayer Shawl Ministry*

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"We have made shawls for babies, young children, mothers, fathers and the elderly," said Elizabeth. "We continue to pray for them after they receive the shawl, too. This keeps us all very humble."

## The Power of Prayer

# God Sent Rainbow to Let Us Know “They Made It”

By Paula Lukowski

The power of prayer revealed itself to the family of Rita and Luther Thompson when they passed away last December. During their final years, which included many challenges with their illnesses, they had been wrapped in prayer.

An aggressive leukemia had found its way into the spinal fluid of my mother, Rita Thompson. The night we initiated in-home hospice for her, God apparently

Dad died Dec. 5, and mom died in the early morning of Dec. 9, in the midst of a big snowstorm. By sunrise, the snow had stopped. When the blazing sun rose that morning, the foot of snow glistened brightly. A pair of rainbow towers enveloped the sun. Those of us gathered at their house saw it. A daughter-in-law near Bellevue saw it, and so did a son-in-law in Millard.

We knew it was a sign from mom and dad, through God, that they made it to

heaven. They had lived full and faith-filled lives on earth, and this was their way of saying thanks for taking care of us. Thanks for all the prayers – they worked.



Luther and Rita Thompson

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**Dad had an incredibly joyful day a few days before he died. From his bed, he laughed, smiled and sang with a pure joy that his Parkinson’s disease had stripped from him.**

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thought it fitting to take her husband of 57 years, too. Luther had an episode that evening that put him a few days ahead of her on their eternal journey.

We knew the parish community was praying for them, and we did our part at their bedsides. We also draped the SMM prayer shawls over them, and it was clear to us that the hands of God were upon them, as He sent us several signs.

Dad had an incredibly joyful day a few days before he died. From his bed, he laughed, smiled and sang with a pure joy that his Parkinson’s disease had stripped from him. When my sister Annlouise hummed a song that he sang to us when we were little, he chimed in with three verses of “You are My Sunshine.”

Later that day, all seven of his adult children sat around his bed with Christmas tunes playing in the background. He started softly singing, and Mike realized he was singing Silent Night, which was playing. He also conducted an animated meeting from his bed to “fix the problem.” Dad had been a wonderful, very fair businessman, retiring as a vice president from his company after 37 years.



The day Rita died, these rainbow towers appeared on either side of a blazing sun, which resembled the flame of the Sacred Heart of Jesus when photographed. The family knew this was more than a coincidence, as Rita was devoted to the Sacred Heart and said the following prayer for years. Photo by Lacy Thompson.

### *Prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

O Most holy Heart of Jesus, fountain of all good, I adore Thee, I love Thee and being deeply sorry for my sins, I offer Thee this my poor heart.  
Make it humble, patient and pure, and in all things conformed to Thy desires.

Grant, O good Jesus, that I may live in Thee and for Thee. Protect me in dangers, console me in affliction, give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, Thy blessing in all my undertakings, and the grace of a holy death.

## The Power of Prayer

# Father Michael Mukasa Recounts His Prayerful Journey

When did I realize the presence of God in my life?

I suppose since I was born into a Catholic family, God was always part and parcel of our life and program, prayer was a must in our home, morning and evening prayer, Rosaries were a daily thing and especially in the months of Mother Mary. We had to go to church, no option here and we would have to wait until mom had finished chatting with all the ladies for us to go home after church.

However, this was a routine, a good one at that, and so I never had to ask myself about the presence of God in my life. I guess I took it for granted. I finally began to know and realize the presence of God in my life with my vocation discernment to the priesthood. I was in the seminary, and it was decision time whether to continue seminary or pursue a more successful secular life. I made a decision for the latter, but when I tried the campus and got my admissions in place, I felt a deep presence of God telling me I was in the wrong place. I immediately turned around and went for college seminary. I have never regretted the decision, and each time I get prone to disappointment, I revisit that moment and feel God's presence abundantly again.

My spiritual mentor is definitely my mother. Mom has a faith that is absolutely amazing, and I am not talking about a spirituality rooted in reciting of Hail Marys, Our Fathers or Glory Be to the Fathers. Mom's spirituality is rooted in the love of people. I have yet to come across one person that mom hates to her guts, and my goodness, I have quite a few! Mom treats everyone like they are her kids. Her house never fills up – she could always take in another soul. When she went on a trip to her ancestral home last year, she came back with two gals. She told us that they were kids from that trip, only visiting for Christmas. I knew better! They are with us and have become part of the family. I know she will bring in more. For me, this is what a spiritual mentor is, and I wish I could emulate her spirituality that way. She taught me the traditional prayers, but she is teaching me by doing,

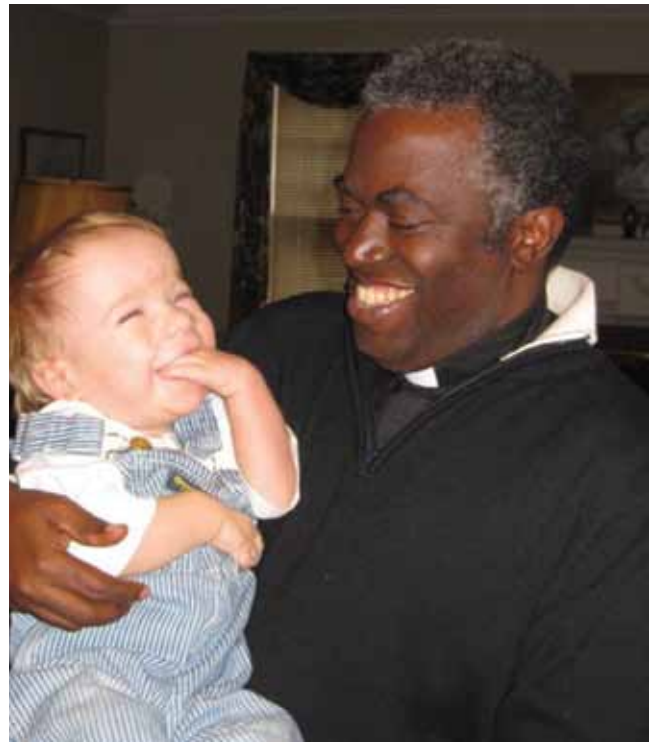
8 • *Cycle of Life* – August 2010

the meaning of intimacy with a God that we do not see, who exists and wants us to see him in the people that he has created, and most especially, those who are in need.

Indeed without despising the importance of traditional prayers, the importance of going to Mass regularly, I am learning more and more that the most authentic type of prayer is the one in Mathew 25:21-40 in brief, "whatsoever you do to the least of my people...." I want this to be the most important form of prayer in my life. I want that when I say the traditional prayers, they help to cement that prayer of extending love and charity to those who most need it. I will continue to pray the Rosary, to say the Our Father, to meditate and so on as a form of synergy to lead me into, what in my opinion is the most authentic form of prayer! This might surprise you and probably disappoint you, but it works for me. This is how I continue to pray, and this how my prayer continues to show me the presence of God in my life. Short of this, I can't experience a depth of love of God and from him back to me. I need this to feel his presence, to know his love and to make it fruitful.

I want my prayer of action to extend to all humanity, that they may too learn to experience God by being present to others, by being kind and charitable to family, friends, and yes, even to those whom they find hard to love because they have hurt them in the past.

Yes, I do pray for special intentions when people request them. The most important time and prayer that I offer them is the Eucharist. As a priest, I have the opportunity, should I even dare call it the luxury, to use Mass as a special and close way of reaching God as his priest. I feel that he can listen to me and to the requests that I present to him. The Mass is exclusive and personal: it's me and



Fr. Michael Mukasa and John Paul Hauser share a joyful moment. Fr. Michael, who works in Uganda, visits Omaha each year. He made many friends during his initial trip to Omaha in 1994, when he spent the summer at BoysTown as a seminarian.

my God and the people that he wants me to reach out to that day, that year, or for the rest of my life.

Every one has to find the best way to pray to God; there is no one size fits all when it comes to prayer. Some find contemplative prayer to suit them best, others, the traditional prayers or devotions to our Lady, St. Joseph, Jude, and so on. Some find the Catholic charismatic experience as the best way to pray. Whatever works for one should be the form of prayer to use; of course not disregarding the other forms of prayers which can be used as fertilizers to cement the best form of prayer that fits for each person.

If I am outgoing, and active, contemplative prayer might be tough for me. If I am melancholic, spontaneous prayer might be a challenge for me. So check your personality and temperament, and then let prayer fit in that personality and you will see wonders. Don't feel bad if you see someone spending hours and hours in meditation and yet you can't do it even for five minutes. That's not you — find your personality and use that personality to converse with God, you will be more fulfilled and rewarded abundantly.

# Salvation Through Addiction

Not too long ago, I learned that a friend of mine is in a very difficult position. Her son is battling an addiction – a strong one – and my friend is agonizing over how best to help him overcome it.

She and her husband have tried everything they can think to do, from gentle guidance to kicking him out of the house and – while their efforts are having an effect – the addiction always seems to come back.

Worth noting is that my friend is exactly the sort of person you would choose to play the role of mother – patient, firm, loving. Unfortunately, those qualities are not proof against addiction, which should be a sobering reminder for those of us who aspire to be good parents.

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**God finds us in our darkest moments – when we have lost to our demons; when we cannot find a way to make ends meet; when we see the world moving in a direction we don't like and are powerless to change. And it is in those moments that He saves us.**

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I know it was hard for my friend to tell me her story, but I flatter myself with the hope that I was a good listener, and that I surprised her by reacting in a more positive way than she expected. I tend to look at situations like hers with different eyes than most, because the man I admire most in the world has been shaped, largely, by his addiction. My father is an alcoholic.\* Sure, he has been sober for 30-some years, but that does not change one of the defining characteristics of his life: he is an alcoholic. Present tense.

The part of our conversation which had the greatest impact on me was when my friend asked me for my

opinion about the long-term effects of her son's addiction.

“What I hear most often is that he is going to be saddled with this for the rest of his life. But you think there is hope for afterward?”

The short answer is “yes” - there is wonderful hope, miraculous hope. That is one of the most beautiful things about the Catholic faith: God works real miracles in our lives.

Honestly, though, I think that answer is an oversimplification. The real answer, the more complicated answer, is that there is no “afterward.”

My father is an alcoholic. The addiction is a part of his being. It did not go away when he went into treatment, or when he got out of treatment, or when he had been sober for 10 years, or 20 . . . his demon will never go away.

To a certain extent, then, the concerns expressed by the friends of my friend are perfectly accurate. Once your demon has been awakened – and you can be certain that everyone has a demon – it never goes away. We truly are saddled with them for the rest of our lives.

Remember, though, that I introduced my father as the man that I admire most in the world. What is more, a number of people have approached me to let me know how highly they think of my father and how deeply he touches their lives. That image is at odds with the picture that most people have of addiction – with the picture my friend had of her son's addiction.

The Truth that alters my father's addiction story is God – that is, my father's story is different from most, because he found his way to God. When Dad's addiction grew too strong for him, he recognized he had lost the battle – he accepted the fact that he could not overcome his demon, realized that there was no “afterward”

## Perspectives

By Charlie Collins, Ph.D.



– and gave himself over to God. With that decision – and Dad will tell you that there was no action on his part other than to make the decision – he removed himself from the battle, and allowed Christ to defeat the demon for him.

That is the paradox which lies at the heart of Catholicism – or one expression of it, at least. Those two ways of looking at the answer I gave to my friend really are one. There is no “afterward,” but the power of our demons turns out to be the source of our hope. When you realize you cannot defeat them, when you embrace that fact, you give Christ the chance to defeat it for you.

That is the miracle of Salvation – the real, true-to-life miracle that God works here on Earth every day. God finds us in our darkest moments – when we have lost to our demons; when we cannot find a way to make ends meet; when we see the world moving in a direction we don't like and are powerless to change. And it is in those moments that He saves us.

*Dr. Charlie Collins is the author of “The Silver Seed.” He and his wife, Kara, have been parishioners for 15 years. They have seven children: three attend SMM, one attends Mount Michael and one is at Duchesne Academy.*

*\*NOTE: Dr. Collins' father passed away in 2009. For Charlie, it was easier to write this article by reflecting on the time when his dad was still with him.*

## Kids Explore Faith at 'High Seas Expedition'

More than 300 kids were participants or crew leaders at the annual Vacation Bible School in July. Many parents and other parishioners lent a hand, too. The *High Seas Expedition* led participants on a fun, faith-filled journey with lots of singing, dancing, story-telling and crafting.





# St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church

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## Amy Reefer, Becky Bredmeyer Join SMM School Staff

St. Margaret Mary welcomes two new teachers this year. Amy Reefer, a familiar face around the school, will teach morning kindergarten, and Becky Bredmeyer will join the junior high staff.

### Amy Reefer

You already may have seen Amy Reefer walking the halls at SMM, cheering at a Spartan sporting event or attending Mass at the church.

That's because the long-time parishioner has four kids who have attended the school, and she and her husband, John, have been involved in numerous parish activities.



"I am so blessed and excited to be working at SMM," said Amy. "Our community here is unmatched."

Amy knew from a young age that she wanted to be a teacher. "My first teaching job was as a first-grade teacher at Field Club Elementary. I taught for seven years before becoming a stay-at-home mom for 12 years," said Amy.

Before accepting the kindergarten job, Amy had been a substitute at SMM for six years.

Amy moved to Omaha as a freshman in high school because of her dad's job with the railroad. And by the time she stepped foot in Millard North, she had lived in Napoleon, Ohio; Michigan; and Sacramento, Calif.

Her sister, Michelle Harrison, lives in Omaha with her family.

The Reefers have four children. Courtney is a freshman at Duchesne. Casey, Jack and Joe are all at SMM, in seventh, fifth and second grades, respectively.

### Becky Bredmeyer

Becky can't remember a time when she didn't want to be a teacher.

"A lot of children grow up changing their minds every other week about what they wanted to be, but I always knew teaching was the career for me,"



said Becky, who attended St. Wenceslaus grade school and Skutt High School. "I love to help students reach that 'ah-ha!' moment when they grasp a new concept for the first time."

Becky received a bachelor's degree in secondary education, with endorsements in History and English, from the University of Nebraska at Kearney. At SMM, she will teach 7th grade English and Literature and 8th grade English.

Prior to joining SMM, Becky student-taught History and English at Creighton Prep, and then taught Economics full-time at Prep.

"At the end of that year, I picked up and moved to London, England, where I taught Literature at a British public school," said Becky, who loves to travel and studied abroad in Holland during college. "After about 14 months of British weather, I moved back to Omaha and served as a substitute in the archdiocese for a year before the Holy Spirit brought me to St. Margaret Mary."

Becky's other interests include reading, going to baseball games, watching movies, volunteering at the Durham Western Heritage museum, hanging out with her cat and roommate's dog, and spending time with my family and friends.

"I feel very blessed to be a part of the SMM family. It has been a God driven journey, and I look forward to meeting and working with everyone!"