

THE RAY

The newsletter of Our Lady of Grace Catholic Spirituality Center

CELEBRATING THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS
DECEMBER 2013



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From the desk of Mary...

Warm Advent greetings from Our Lady of Grace Catholic Spirituality Center where we continue to celebrate daily the Universal Call to Holiness!

United with you in prayer, I am delighted to report that the mission of providing spiritual direction and vocational discernment in the Catholic tradition to men and women from near and far continues to grow. As you read through this newsletter, you will see how the Center has been blessed in the intervening months since our last issue.

We continue to serve people in crisis, those struggling in their marriage, young adults discerning a religious vocation, and those seeking a deeper prayer life. We explore together in the context of prayer, Scripture and Church teaching the underlying reasons for their particular situation. Through the outstanding scholarship of the late Father Jules Toner, SJ, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we come to see the action of God in their lives, or how God is calling them, or what they need to do to respond to His call. This is very delicate work. For all of the ways in which you support our mission, we are so very grateful.

Dear friends, Christmas, the season of joy, is nearly here. Christian joy is contagious and is a very effective way of witnessing to the presence and action of Christ in our lives. It is my privilege to share with you as a Christmas greeting from Our Lady of Grace Catholic Spirituality Center the following words from a letter written by Mother Teresa to a friend of mine, "May the joy of Jesus be your strength and the bond of love, peace and unity. May you become more and more—the sunshine of God's love, the Hope of Eternal Happiness and the Flame of burning Love to all you come in contact with."

A joyful Christmas to you and those you love from Our Lady of Grace Catholic Spirituality Center!

Hold the Date—August 17, 2014

We will host our Third Annual **Holy Hour followed by an Ice Cream Social on Sunday, August 17, 2014 at 3:00pm at Christ King Church** in Wauwatosa. **Please plan to attend this beautiful event and be sure to bring your family and friends along!**



An 800-Year Tradition, and Counting

Did you know that St. Francis of Assisi is credited with constructing the first crèche, or Nativity scene to commemorate Christ's birth? The story is that on Christmas Eve in 1223, St. Francis visited a cave in Greccio, a small town approximately 60 miles south of Assisi. In advance of his visit, he had obtained the permission of Pope Honorius III. Francis brought with him several shepherds. Together they erected a small hay manger in the cave, to celebrate the birth of the Child of Bethlehem, and in an effort to foster further devotion to Our Lord. At a time of rampant materialism, St. Francis wanted a reminder that Jesus came not as a rich king, but as a poor child. A donkey and an ox kept them company (and probably helped keep them warm!) As St. Bonaventure reports in his Life of St. Francis of Assisi, during their prayers the Infant Christ Child appeared to them in the manger, and St. Francis held Him in his arms.

Since that time, many Christians have prepared and kept creches in their homes, and in their churches. Many schools today create "live Nativity scenes" with children playing the roles of the Holy Family, of shepherds and of the Three Wise Men. The Gospels do not establish whether the Magi actually visited the Holy Family at the same time as shepherds were there. But a crèche today depicting both types of figures not only symbolizes the array of people who came to adore the newborn King, but that Christ came for all.

(By Beth Hanan, from articles in www.Smithsonianmag.com, website of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, & www.franciscan-archive.org)

Masses for Your Intentions in 2014

In gratitude for your support, Holy Mass will be offered in 2014 at the Marquette Jesuit Residence for the intentions of our directees, friends and benefactors on the following Marian feasts:

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| February 11 th | Our Lady of Lourdes |
| May 31 st | The Visitation of Mary |
| September 8 th | The Birth of Mary |
| December 8 th | The Immaculate Conception |

A Wonderful Event

Our Lady of Grace Catholic Spirituality Center welcomed approximately 150 people to Christ King Parish for our Second Annual Holy Hour in honor of Mary, Queen of Heaven, on Sunday, August 18, 2013. It included a sacred music repertoire sung by Musicâ Oramus under the direction of Mrs. Julie Cucunato. Included were the following pieces: *Ave Maria* by Tomás Luis de Victoria and *More Love to Thee, O Christ* by Camille Saint-Saëns. Musicâ Oramus is a select young adult choir comprised of some of the most beautifully trained voices in the Archdiocese. A relaxing Ice Cream Social followed. It will be our blessing to welcome back Musicâ Oramus in 2014.

Some of our dedicated volunteers are pictured below.



Serra Club Gift

In September, Father Luke Strand, Vocation Director for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, secured a \$5,000 donation from the Serra Club to be used for referrals made to Our Lady of Grace from the Vocations Office for young adults discerning their state in life vocation. The Center is very grateful to Father Luke for our ongoing collaboration with the Vocations Office and to the Serra Club for its continued support of the mission and work of Our Lady of Grace.

A Gift from Our Bishops

On Friday, October 18th, Father Wally Stohrer, S.J., a member of the Marquette University Jesuit Community, came to bless the new Our Lady of Grace statue that we received as a gift from the bishops of Milwaukee. The delicate triple stained statue was hand carved in the renowned PEMA wood carving workshop in northern Italy. We are profoundly grateful to our bishops for their solidarity with the mission and work of the Center, and for this very generous and exquisite gift. The following prayer was composed by Fr. Wally for the occasion.



A Special Blessing in Honor of Our Lady of Grace— October 18, 2013

Eternal Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Today we confidently invoke your abundant blessing on this spirituality center, a sacred place which renews us through the maternal intercession of Mary, Our Lady of Grace. We celebrate and honor Christ's immaculate mother Mary, Mother of the Church and Mediatrix of Divine Grace. We thank you for gifting us with her maternal intercession, for she is a continuing source of light and grace, of splendor and holiness. We now ask that through the infinite love and unfailing intercession of your Son, Jesus Christ, you (+) bless and consecrate this statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is truly our very own Lady of Grace. Through her faithful intercession may all who visit this sacred place be richly blessed! May they know the purifying power of Mary's holiness. May they always mirror her peace and joy in their service to your people. We know that You are with us at this moment, secure in the knowledge that You "who began this good work will see it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). We offer our prayer through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

A Lesson in Virtue

To grow in virtue is to grow in holiness. Virtue is "a habitual and firm disposition to do the good" (CCC ¶1803). The Catholic Catechism further teaches, "Four virtues play a pivotal role and accordingly are called 'cardinal'" (¶1805). Can you name the four cardinal virtues? The corresponding definition of each is given as a help. (An answer key follows the article.)

(¶1806) _ r _ d _ n _ _ Known as the charioteer of the virtues, this is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it.

(¶1807) _ _ _ t _ _ e This is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor.

(¶1808) f _ _ t _ _ u _ _ This moral virtue ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good.

(¶1809) t _ m _ _ _ _ _ e is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods.

Remember, unlike the three theological virtues (faith, hope and charity) that are "infused by God into the souls of the faithful" (¶1813), the moral virtues are acquired by human effort. It is important to pray often for the grace to grow in the life of virtue, and to swiftly cooperate with graces received. Answers to above blanks: prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance

We are so grateful for any donation to the Center. All donations are tax-deductible and may be made payable to ***Our Lady of Grace***.

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