ST. LEO THE GREAT
PARISH & SCHOOL

News & Views

Winter

Catch the Adopt-a-Child spirit

During the first season of St. Leo's Adopt-a-Child program in 1973 an elderly parishioner brought in a lady's coat as a gift. Although the program has always benefitted children, her gift was accepted. But she felt it was necessary to explain why she was giving the coat.

"I just bought this coat, and when I brought it home, I looked at my other coat and realized it was perfectly good and I really didn't need another coat. So here is the new coat."

This is the spirit that has sustained Adopt-a-Child for the past 43 years.

The 2015 season of Adopt-a-Child began November 14 and ends when gifts are collected the weekend of December 12 and 13.

Under the program, parishioners are asked to sign up to purchase a gift of about $15 for a needy child. Children who benefit from the program include families at St. Colman Parish, St. Aloysius School, The Zechariah House (Maggie's Place), families living at the Near West Side shelter of Front Steps Housing and Services (formerly Transitional Housing Inc.), Catholic Charities Refugee families and families at St. Leo Parish.

You can also donate money to the program. Checks payable to St. Leo Parish or cash can be placed in an envelope marked "Adopt-a-Child" and placed in the collection basket or dropped off at the rectory.

To sign up, call Jeanne Sabol at 216/351-6247 or Judi Westerburg at 216/642-0134. They will give you the name and age of a child so you can buy an appropriate gift. Or you can sign up after all Masses on Nov. 21 and 22 and 28 and 29.

If you purchase a gift, please wrap it, tag it and bring it to the Parish Community Center on Saturday, December 12 from 4–7 p.m. or Sunday, December 13, from 8–10 a.m. If you cannot drop off gifts at these times, the gifts may be left at the rectory before the drop-off weekend.

Volunteers are also needed to deliver gifts on Sunday December 13 (late morning and early afternoon).

If you have questions, would like a child's name, or would like to help deliver gifts, please call Jeanne at 216/351-6247 or Judi at 216/642-0134.

Mickey makes the most of music

St. Leo Music Director Mickey Stitt

By Chris Rath

St. Leo Music Director Mickey Stitt made her first joyful noise on … the accordion. But a shoulder problem turned things around, musically speaking.

At age 9 in her hometown of Syracuse, NY, Mickey started with an instrument familiar to many—the accordion. In high school and at LeMoyne College, she studied music theory, which helped her eventual move from the accordion to playing left-hand keyboard chords.

She earned a living playing accordion in clubs, as well as playing classical music (on the accordion) with a "string" quartet, where she met her first husband. She said she liked playing

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Festival's return is a big hit

By Nancy Zola

The 2015 St. Leo the Great Festival was—well, GREAT!

The Festival, like a family reunion on a much larger scale, brought together people of all ages—generations from the same families—who came to enjoy the food, entertainment, and games of chance. "I haven't seen some of these people in years!" was heard each night.

Parish volunteers in the kitchen directed by cooks Lou and Kari raced throughout the two days turning out homemade meals—corned beef dinners and sandwiches on Friday night and pork dinners with dumplings on Saturday. If you tasted the cabbage and noodles, you knew they were freshly made by Eileen, Gail, and Amy. The rest of the menu featured parish favorites such as pierogies and Italian sausage sandwiches with peppers and onions.

If you like munching on carnival food, you had your choice of nachos, popcorn, caramel apples, cotton candy, hot pretzels and freshly squeezed lemonade. And neighborhood favorite Honey Hut served vanilla, chocolate, honey pecan, mint chocolate chip and sea salt caramel ice cream.

Besides the kitchen and other food treats, kiddie games and games of chance were busy throughout the night with people trying their luck. The Cleveland casinos had some stiff competition both nights as the players tried their luck at St. Leo's instead.

Instant bingo tickets littered the floor, the raffle baskets (19 of them) created a buzz with people not knowing which ones to choose, and tickets for the 50/50 drawing and main raffle were going fast. And it wasn't all work and no play as volunteers in the beverage booth were dancing to the beat of Backtrax and Driven.

The Festival was two nights of fun, culminating months of hard work by a dedicated committee. Some committee members had been part of the Festival for many years, but some had never been to a St. Leo Festival. Supported by dozens and dozens of volunteers, the committee was able to bring back a parish tradition.

One volunteer stepped away from the game he was running to thank a committee member for bringing back the Festival. As he spoke, a nearby teenager added "Everyone is glad that the Festival is back."

In case you missed it, don't worry. Two words were repeated through the weekend … next year!

Music director excels no matter the keyboard

Continued from page one

in various venues, and until her 30s she played in both clubs and Catholic churches.

When she was 35, she developed a blood clot in her right shoulder, and her doctor told her she would never play the accordion again because of the damage. She was crushed, and her husband bought her a keyboard, thinking she could learn to play piano and organ. She joked that she didn't know how to approach it because the keyboard was horizontal, but on an accordion it's vertical.

She soon adapted, though, and decided that playing both in clubs and Sunday Masses was too much. She chose the Church and never looked back. With her son and two daughters, she moved to Ohio when her husband's job required a move.

That marriage didn't last, but her musical career did, and she worked as organist at Holy Martyrs Parish in Medina for 15 years, followed by another 15 years at St. Stephen in West Salem, where she became acquainted with Fr. Jim Schmitz, now St. Leo pastor. He invited her to aim for "another 15 years at St. Leo's."

She met her second husband at a gas station, where he was working and she was a customer. They were married for 26 years until he passed away 12 years ago. Mickey has nine grandchildren (all from her youngest daughter), plus three step-grandchildren and four step-great grandchildren on her husband's side. Sadly, she doesn't see them much as they don't live nearby and "they all have their own lives now."

Mickey recently moved into a cluster home in North Royalton, which she likes because "no one is nearby so if I want to practice in the middle of the night, I won't bother anyone." She has both a piano and organ at home, and still has her old accordion, for sentimental reasons.

Here at St. Leo's, she's looking forward to building the adult choir with "new, fresh voices. We need young blood." And she hopes to start a children's choir with the help of the school's music teacher. She said, "Kids are a joy. The purest tone (musically) in the world is the male voice under age 12. That's why groups like the Vienna Boys' Choir are so popular."

If you can sing, you are encouraged to join the adult choir. If you can't sing but can count, you are invited to join the bell choir. Both need new members. If you are interested in joining these groups and enhancing liturgy at St. Leo's, contact Mickey at 216-661-1006. You will be soundly welcomed.

St. Leo News & Views

The St. Leo News & Views is published three times a year. Articles and article ideas are always welcome.

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Festival!

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For RCIA, a new approach

If you want to learn more about your faith, join the Sunday morning group

By Elizabeth Fleming

St. Leo Parish is taking a new approach to its RCIA program this year, and it's working out very well.

The Catholic Church provides the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) for those seeking full participation in the sacraments. It is open to those who were never baptized, those who were baptized in another Christian faith, and those baptized in the Catholic Church who never received the sacraments of Holy Eucharist or Confirmation.

The program is also open to parishioners who want to learn more about the Catholic faith and encourage individuals who are in the formation process.

The RCIA program also welcomes people who plan to marry in the Catholic Church or baptize their child, but who have not maintained a connection with the church. Engaging these individuals has increased the program's participation this year compared to previous years. Ten to fifteen people are meeting for RCIA each week in the Parish Center.

In another change this year, sessions are being held from 9–10 a.m. on Sundays instead of an hour and a half on Wednesday evenings. The new time frame makes it convenient for participants to attend Mass either before RCIA at 8 a.m. or immediately afterward at 10.

Fr. Jim Schmitz, St. Leo pastor, leads the RCIA meetings each week, and the program is obviously close to his heart.

"RCIA is the most important thing a parish can do because our mission as a parish and church is to proclaim the gospel," he said.

The setting is welcoming and low-key. Father Jim begins by giving a brief presentation, then offers opportunities for discussion, Q&A, and sharing of experiences and observations.

Fr. Jim is grateful to Macrina Dodson, St. Leo pastoral minister and assistant principal at St. Leo School, for assisting with RCIA this year. Her ministry and faith experiences add to the richness of the program, he said.

At the November 1 RCIA session, the discussion turned to the Feast of All Saints. Fr. Jim explained that we can seek the intercession of the saints in our daily lives and invited participants to name their patron saints or favorite saints. He also discussed the Feast of All Souls, which honors the faithful departed, and encouraged everyone to pray for their deceased relatives and friends.

Of the 10-15 people who are meeting each week, those who are preparing to receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist are known as inquirers. Along with their sponsors, they will participate in a Rite of Acceptance at a Sunday mass during Advent. After their participation in this rite, during which the sign of the cross is traced on their foreheads, the inquirers are known as catechumens.

On the first Sunday of Lent, all catechumens throughout the Cleveland Catholic Diocese will participate in a Rite of Election led by Bishop Richard Lennon at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. Following participation in this rite, in which their names are recorded in a Book of the Elect, the catechumens are known as the elect.

Others meeting in this year's RCIA program have been baptized already but have not received the other sacraments of initiation (Holy Eucharist and Confirmation). These individuals are known as candidates, and they will come into full communion with the Catholic Church when they are confirmed and receive Holy Eucharist at the Easter Vigil Mass.

The RCIA formation program culminates at the Easter Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday, the most significant liturgy of the church year, when the elect and the candidates are officially received into the Church.

The goal of the RCIA program is to lead everyone to conversion. Whether you have been away from the Church or are a practicing Catholic, you are cordially invited to participate. So feel free to drop in on an RCIA meeting any Sunday morning to learn more. While deepening your own faith, you will also be encouraging others.

The fish returns to St. Leo in 2016

Lent begins February 10, 2016, and the traditional St. Leo fish dinners will begin February 12 and continue through March 18 (no dinners on Good Friday).

Watch the Sunday Bulletin or our next newsletter for details about menus and prices, and keep those Fridays open for fish dinners.

Put ARISE in your plans for 2016

By Chris Rath

Under the theme "Following in the Footsteps of Christ," *Arise Together in Christ,* St. Leo's small-group-based renewal program, closed its third season shortly before Thanksgiving. St. Leo Parish is the only community in the Cleveland Catholic Diocese to participate in the program, which is sponsored by Renew International.

Eighty-nine parishioners began meetings during the week of October 11, gathering each week to read Scripture, pray, share, and support each other in nine small groups. Meeting for about 90 minutes a week, each group becomes a community of faith as members return to daily life uplifted, changed and stronger in the discipleship that comes from our Baptism.

Some of the newest members of the series were pleasantly surprised at the format and effects of the weekly sessions.

"I was afraid it would be too hard to understand, but it wasn't."

"It was nice that everyone talked, and I felt comfortable from the first meeting."

"It was fun getting to know some new people and seeing some I already knew."

"I'm a returning Catholic, and it was a good way to meet others."

Arise planning team coordinator Cora Dejelo was upbeat about the effectiveness of the program.

"The commitment of most in the program, based on what has been expressed by various leaders, remains very strong," she said. "There seems to be a greater desire for more action, especially for the disadvantaged members of our community and beyond, in order to meet the challenge of 'Following in the Footsteps of Christ.'"

Ideas for outreach activities were proposed to the program participants during the celebration dinner on December 2, where small group members were invited to share.

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"It was nice that everyone talked, and I felt comfortable from the first meeting."

"It was fun getting to know some new people and seeing some I already knew."

"I'm a returning Catholic, and it was a good way to meet others."

The group examined the possibility of a fund raising project to assist needy parish families.

The fourth season of Arise will begin during the week of Ash Wednesday, February 10, 2016. The theme for the fourth season is *New Heart, New Spirit*, and you can sign up in late January. First-timers are always welcome, and the season of Lent might be the best time to start. If you have been part of an Arise group before, sign up again. It's a great way to prepare for Easter.

St. Leo class of '65 marks 50th

This group of classmates from the St. Leo School class of 1965 had a lot of catching up to do recently, when they met for their reunion at the Parish Community Center. Shown left to right in the back row are Jim Matey (wearing the cap), Robert Kappler, Brian Fox, Karen Gross (hidden), Dale Arvay, Dennis Werner, David Tobiasz. In the front row left to right are David Kravetz, PhD (his wife is turned sideways), Judy Puhac, MaryAnn Olenick, Gail Klein, Jennifer Matey, Denise Werner (hidden), Karen Ross, Ingeborg Schmeider, George Dean, Paul Girosky, Doug Bacso, Alan DeTore and Hugh Kerr. Lenny Flors also attended but is missing in this photo.

The Community Center is available for private parties and reunions. Rental forms are available at the St. Leo Parish website— leothegreat.org/parish-center-rental/ At the same time, graduates of St. Leo School are urged to sign up for the St. Leo Alumni at leothegreat.org/alumni-association/.

ST. LEO THE GREAT PARISH & SCHOOL News & Views

Catholic Diocese
St. Leo the Great Parish
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Cleveland OH 44109
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Rev. James P. Schmitz, Pastor
Rev. James Vesely, in Residence

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Mass Schedule
Sundays—4 p.m. (Saturday Vigil)
8 a.m., 10 a.m. and Noon
Weekdays—Monday-Thursday 7:30 a.m.
Friday 8:30 a.m.
Holy Days of Obligation—7 a.m., 8:30 a.m. (school Mass when in session) and 7 p.m. (please check Sunday Bulletin for exceptions to this schedule)

Blessed events

December 4
Eucharistic Adoration—9 a.m.–5 p.m.
Feast of the Immaculate Conception—Masses at 7 and 8:30 a.m. and 7 p.m.
December 6
Blood Pressure Screenings after the noon Mass
December 12/13
Adopt-A-Child Gift Drop-Off
December 13
Breakfast with Santa
December 15
School Christmas Concert—7 p.m.
December 21
School Christmas Break begins
December 24
Christmas Eve—Masses at 4, 7 and 10 p.m.
December 25
Christmas—Masses at 8 and 10 a.m. and Noon
December 31
Solemnity of Mary Vigil—Mass at 4 p.m.
January 1
Solemnity of Mary—Masses at 8 and 10 a.m.
January 3
Blood Pressure Screenings after the noon Mass
January 4
School Resumes
January 10
Bloodmobile—8:30 a.m.–Noon
January 31–February 6
Catholic Schools Week
February 10
Ash Wednesday—Masses at 7 and 8:30 a.m. and 7 p.m.
February 7
Blood Pressure Screenings after the noon Mass
February 12
Fish Dinners begin and continue through March 18 every Friday—4:30–7 p.m.
Sundays
RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults)—9–10 a.m. All are welcome to attend.