

The Ameliorator

St. Amelia Church

January-February 2010

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Tonawanda, NY

“CAP” and “GAP” Enlist Support of School Alumni and Their Parents



Two new initiatives have come into play this fall to enlist the support of people who have benefited from Catholic elementary education.

CAP is the acronym for “Catholic Alumni Partnership”. A grant from a New York City philanthropist (who is not a Catholic but believes strongly in Catholic elementary education) enabled the Partnership to search and find the current addresses of graduates from Catholic elementary schools, not only in our diocese but in eight other dioceses in the northeast. The intent is to keep these alumni informed about the schools that helped form them, and to ask for their support for those schools. An initial letter was sent to these alumni in early December.

Support of alumni and their parents is crucial to keep Catholic schools viable.

“It is not just financial support that we are looking for when we reach out to alumni”, said Jim Mulé, Principal of our school.

“Kids grow up and they go their own way, and after some years they find sometimes they are at a distance from the Church of their childhood. We want them to know that they are always welcome here at St. Amelia’s, that wherever they have been, however long ago they graduated, they are always members of the St. Amelia family, and always have a home here.”

GAP is shorthand for “Group of Alumni Parents”. This group is specific to our school, and is comprised of parents of children who have graduated from the school. Bonnie Pritchard is spearheading this initiative. She says, “We hope to gather together the parents of children who have benefited from our school. So many of us are parents of school alumni. In those by-gone days, we worked hard for our school. We think we still have a role to play. We want to continue to support the school that has meant so much for our children.”

GAP intends to bring alumni parents together to reminisce about “the good old days”, to re-connect with each other, and to sustain the school with their moral and financial support.

Thinking of Others in a "Me First" World *by Michael Botticello*



In today's world, very few people treat others like themselves. People get all kinds of gadgets for themselves (I-Pods, cell phones, laptops) and do not even think about others. I do not want to be like that. I will try my best to treat others as Jesus would like me to treat them.

Keeping a connection with God reminds us that we are not the center of the universe. Going to Mass every week and praying often will help me to not want all the stuff that suits my own wishes. It will remind me of God's wishes. These days, people are not geared to give to others. Instead of being generous, people are focused on suiting themselves. Some people will buy a ridiculous amount of things they don't need when other people in the world are starving. They could easily give up some of their stuff, and donate that money to people who are lacking food, clothing, and shelter.

Showing love for your neighbor doesn't mean just giving money to those in need. You can also do good deeds for them. We should always remember that God is in everyone and if we treat someone with disrespect, we are really doing that to God. If people are laughing at or teasing someone, we should think to ourselves that they are really doing that to God. Also when we see someone in need of help, we should automatically help that person.

I wish that the whole world know that in the end of time it won't matter how many cell phones we have, how many songs we have on our I-Pod, or how hi-tech our new laptop is. What will matter is how many friends we have made, how many people we have helped, and how much love we have shown to God and our neighbors.

Seventh Graders Share Thoughts On Loving One's Neighbor

"It's all about me" is a popular slogan for many young people today. But Jesus tells us, "Love your neighbor as yourself". Maryknoll Missionaries sponsored a contest this fall for young people, asking for essays on how one can follow Jesus' words in today's self-centered culture. Seventh graders in our school entered the contest, with the encouragement of their religion teacher, Mrs. Kathy Waite. We selected a local winner, Michael Botticello, a member of Blessed Sacrament Parish, who won two tickets to a Sabers game. Part of his essay appears here. In addition, here are some notable thoughts from the students' work.

"God wants us to love all of mankind, that is, not just our neighbors. It is not the person next door. God wants us to love all people - friends, family, and those that may not even be nice to us." -
Andrew Gray

"Some examples of how to help out your neighbors are: volunteering at an animal shelter or a soup kitchen, caring for someone who is ill, helping clean your house when you are not asked to, picking up garbage around your town, helping a friend with homework, donating money to a charity, letting a friend borrow something, picking up someone's books when they drop them, sharing your food with someone who forget their lunch...the possibilities are endless." -
Hannah Taggart

"This commandment is hard to do without the help of the Holy Spirit. It makes it harder because we live in a self-centered world. People need religion now more than ever. We should go to church every Sunday and listen to the Gospel." -
Gino Lattuca

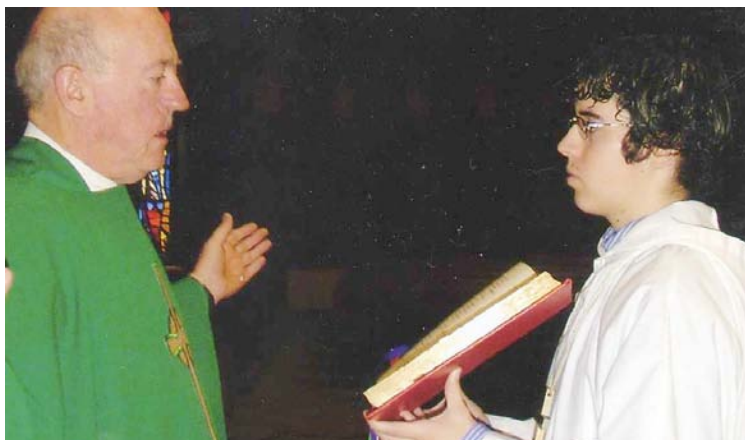


**Pastor's Report:
State of the Parish**

St. Amelia's Carries on the Ministry of Christ

When an institution evaluates itself, it often does so by referring to its mission statement. Our mission statement comes from Christ, who told us to "go forth to all nations, teach and baptize, and know that I am with you always." Saint Amelia parish exists to carry on, in this place and in our time, the mission given us by Jesus. We teach and baptize; we manifest his presence among us. I speak today of three areas of parish life: our prayer and sacramental life, our educational life, and our ministry of caring for people.

Prayer and Sacraments. Our three daily Masses are attended by about 180 people. The five weekend Masses gather about 2400 people each week. We estimate that about 40% of our people attend somewhat regularly.



Confessions are heard four times a week: Sundays at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m., Mondays at 6:30 p.m., and Saturdays at 3:30. Twice a year, before Christmas and Easter, we offer a four-hour period for confessions, with several visiting priests, where hundreds of confessions are heard. Eucharistic Adoration takes place weekdays at the "Hour of Power" from 7 to 8 a.m., and on Mondays from 11 a.m. till 7 p.m. We began a new period of Eucharistic Adoration this year, the "Night of Two Hearts", in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This is held on the First Friday of the month, beginning at 8 p.m., and continuing overnight until 8 a.m. Saturday. About 700 people take part in the annual Healing Mission during Lent.

Here are the statistics for the Sacraments for the year 2009, and for comparison, the numbers from ten years ago, 1999.

	1999	2009
Baptisms	94	47
First Communions	117	83
Confirmations	98	58
Funerals	111	95
Weddings	35	21

Education. There are many opportunities for adult religious education. Books, tapes and CDs are available in the Church narthex. A Thursday morning Scripture program has about 40 participants. The monthly Men's Spirituality Program has 20 to 25 regular attendees. A new group of younger men, mostly in their twenties, is called "Men of Iron", and they have been meeting on a weekly basis in the Lighthouse. We offered a summer scripture, on Paul and Job, which drew about 50 participants. The series "From the Ground Up" by Father Mark and Brian Ruh, had about 70 regular attendees.

The RCIA currently has five adults and eight children preparing for sacraments. Three adults were confirmed in November. Our liturgical and adult education ministries are the responsibility of Brian Ruh, to whom I am deeply grateful. Thanks too to Dan Fronckowiak, our music director. The choir has added a few new voices, and has even garnered an invitation to sing at the Cathedral of the Diocese of Hamilton, Ontario!

The parochial school provides an excellent academic and spiritual formation for some 495 children. That number is down from 511 last year. The decline is mainly due to families who moved out of the area for economic reasons. Of the 495, 117 are not parishioners, and 32 are not Catholic. On any given weekend, 75% of the children who are our parishioners attend Church. The number who attend regularly is probably in excess of 85%.

St. Amelia's Carries on the Ministry of Christ continued



The school takes pride in that it is what we call a "Five Star Catholic School", having attained five significant recognitions. It has been declared excellent by the Council on Private Education. It is both a New York State School of Excellence and a National School of Excellence. It is Middle States Accredited, and is a National School of Character. No other school in New York State – elementary or secondary; private, parochial, or charter – has attained these five recognitions. The school's widely-acclaimed excellence is due primarily to our principal, Jim Mulé, now in his 15th year as headmaster. He deserves, and has, our profound thanks for what he has done and is doing for our children.

Great programs are available for children attending public schools. The Summer School of Religion this year enrolled 230 children in grades 4 through 9.



This program is taught by paid professional teachers. Of the 230, 70 were not parishioners, and they paid a tuition of \$100 per child. Religion classes for grades 1-8 take place on Tuesday nights and Wednesday afternoons. The tenth grade program was changed last year from a classroom program to a home program. The tenth graders meet in homes

under the direction of parents who are trained to lead them in exploring and discussing their Catholic faith. Similarly the eleventh grade program is comprised of six two-hour sessions in homes, led by parents who have been trained by our Religious Education Department. In total, there were 475 children in elementary religious education, 74 in grades 9 and 10, and 65 eleventh graders. All of this is due to the untiring efforts of Mrs. Elaine Volker, our Director of Religious Education, to whom I express, in the name of the parish, my sincere gratitude.

Our youth minister Kathy Waite is involving a good number of young people in parish life beyond school and religious education. The "TPE Connection" for junior high kids brings out about 30 young people for its monthly programs. A new initiative for high school youth – "Zero Hour" – involves 15 to 20 young people in its monthly gatherings. Kathy now also teaches Grade 7 religion in our school. The parish is truly enriched by her enthusiasm and her efforts. Scouting programs for boys and girls, and athletic programs for kids of all ages round out the parish's ministry to young people.



Caring for One Another. The sick and those confined in hospitals, nursing homes, or at home are visited regularly by Sr. Helen, who makes about 100 calls each week. That's over 5000 visits a year. What a blessing Sister has been for our parish! Just about every day I get a note or a message thanking the parish for her ministry. In addition, Eucharistic ministers to the sick make weekly visits.



St. Amelia's Carries on the Ministry of Christ continued

The Outreach Ministry, under the capable administration of Judy Reitz, and the St. Vincent de Paul Society, take care of people in need of food or household goods. 2000 Christmas gifts were donated by parishioners to those in need. \$64,000 worth of food was distributed. Beyond this though, people with all kinds of needs contact Outreach, and Judy manages to connect them with the agencies or the resources to help them. We are blessed to have Judy, and Richard her husband, in our Outreach service.

Work continues on the renovation of the Outreach facilities in The Lighthouse. Target date for completion is January 1. The renovation is made possible by a bequest of \$100,000 designated specifically for Outreach, from the late Bernard Leising.

The Health Care Ministry this year provided monthly blood pressure screening, sponsored a flu clinic, held educational sessions on health topics, conducted a blood drive, and published timely information in the parish bulletin.

Stewardship. All that the parish accomplishes comes from the good stewardship of our parishioners: stewardship of their time, their talent, and their treasure. Recognizing that God has blessed them abundantly, they are generous in giving back to God. They give their time in prayer, and in weekend worship, in Eucharistic Adoration. They give their talents. It is impossible to calculate the extent of this gift of talent, because it pervades every area of parish life. The annual Irish Appreciation Breakfast for volunteers draws about 500 people, but there are probably a few hundred more.

"Our increased income comes from the people who have been here for years, and are making sacrifices to support our parish".

Each year in January we talk about stewardship of time, and we invite parishioners to dedicate some portion of God's gift of time to them, back to God. Periodically we ask for gifts of talent. I can't stress too greatly the importance of those parishioners who volunteer their talents - day by day, week by week - throughout the year. I am deeply grateful to them.

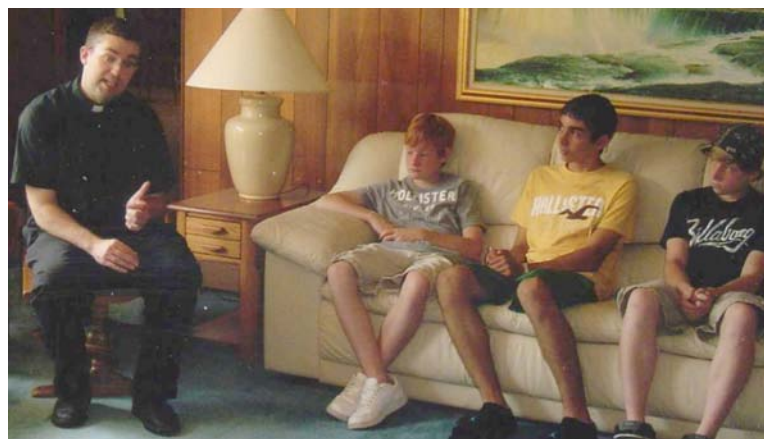
In September each year, we ask for a realistic stewardship of treasure. We propose a donation of 5% of income to the parish, and each year more and more members meet this challenge. Probably 11% are now

giving at this level. Our collection income increases each year by close to 2%. That may not seem too significant, but recall those statistics I gave earlier on the numbers of baptisms, and first communions, etc. We are not growing in terms of numbers. The additional income is not new money from new members. It is additional money from the people who are here and have been here for years, who are making sacrifices to support the parish. Remember too the economic times in which we live. Many parishes are reporting a decline in actual dollars received.

John Ludwig is our Business Manager, and his steady and firm handle on finances, and on our physical facilities, has kept us on an even keel. John is about to retire, which saddens me, but not as much as it saddens him. I am profoundly grateful to him for his ministry over the past ten years. He will be hard to replace.



Parish Priests. Pope Benedict has proclaimed this the "Year of the Priest", to focus people's attention on the ministry of the common ordinary parish priest.



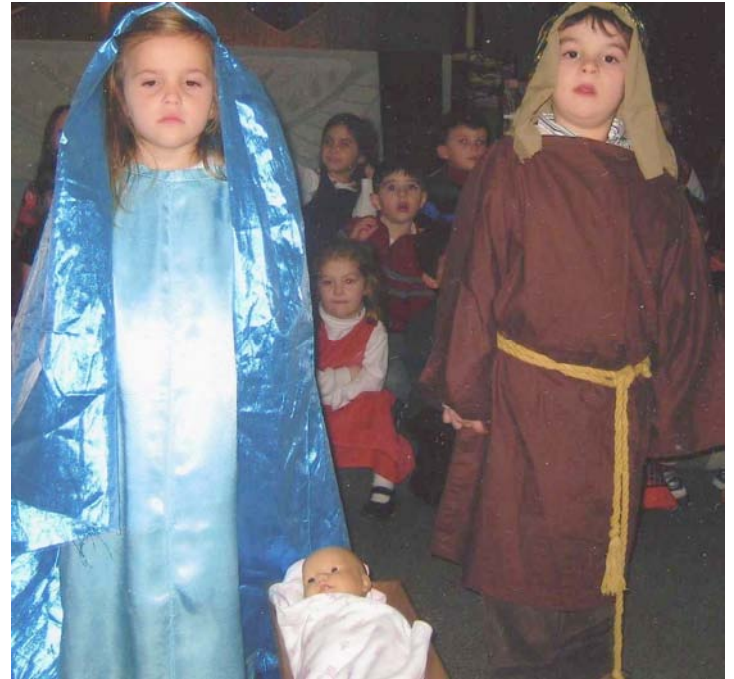
In that light I want to acknowledge, and thank, Father Mark especially. He has been a priest a scant two years, and with us maybe a year and a half, but he has made such a difference.

He personally teaches the 9th grade religious education pupils; he is promoting vocations to the priesthood through, among other things, the "Travelling Chalice" plan; he spends hours - often in the middle of the night - at the bedsides of people who are dying...I could go on and on. Thank you, Father Mark!

Continued on Page 8



Eighth grader Christian Mye gets his flu shot from nurse Marguerite Metzger at a clinic in the school gym December 11.



Preschoolers and kindergarten children presented the Christmas story for their parents. Elizabeth Young portrayed Mary, and Ethan Dean was Joseph.



*Thru
the
Lens*



2009 Altar Servers of the Year were recognized at the Holy Name's annual Prime Rib Dinner on November 7. Anna Turski, a ninth grader at Kenmore East, and Nick Czerwinski, a freshman at Cardinal O'Hara, were this year's honorees.



Jean Hasselbeck and Winnie Wozer help sort Christmas gifts for the needy. Over 2000 presents were given by parishioners this year.



Bishop Kmiec, with Father Tom, congratulating the school's bell choir at the Bison Fund's Annual Recognition Luncheon in the Convention Center. 85 of our students receive tuition assistance from the Bison Fund each year.



Parishioners took a stand in defense of human life at the annual Lifechain demonstration on Niagara Falls Boulevard on October 4.



The school faculty gathers for prayer each Friday morning before classes begin.



Renovation work continues at The Lighthouse, with completion anticipated in January. A bequest by the late Bernard Leising provided \$100,000 to enhance the parish Outreach Ministry.



Bell Choir members Dan Barry and Madison Coburn smile for the peripatetic photographer at the Bison Luncheon at the Convention Center this fall.

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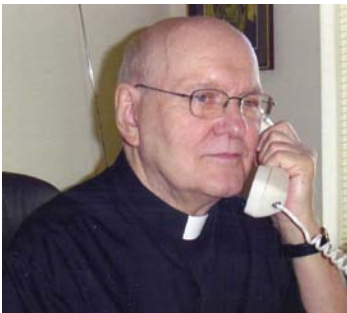
The Ameliorator is the bi-monthly publication of Saint Amelia Church. We mail it to registered members of our parish. We also mail it to non-members who live in the geographical area served by our parish. We do this to keep our neighbors informed about who we are and what we are doing. If you do not wish to receive this publication, you can have your name deleted from our mailing list by simply calling our office at 836-0011.

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St. Amelia's Carries on the Ministry of Christ continued from page 5



Father Don Measer – retired pastor, who could live in serene retirement elsewhere, chooses instead to remain a part of parish life and activity. He celebrates the Eucharist, he hears confessions, he counsels people – day after day. I am grateful that he has gifted us with his presence and his ministry here at St. Amelia's. I thank too Msgr. Charles Griffin, who comes every morning, six days a week, to celebrate our early Mass. I also acknowledge the other retired priests who serve us, notably Father Vince McCarthy and Msgr. Paul Belzer.

Summary. Our parish is part of the universal Catholic Church, and we experience the same joys, the same sorrows, the same challenges as parishes around the world. We would hope for a greater depth of commitment on the part of our members. We pray for increased attendance at weekend liturgies. We long for a stronger adherence to Christ and his Gospel. Like parishes throughout the world, we have work to do. Still, this was a good year for our parish. I thank God every night that I am pastor of this parish. I am grateful to Msgr. McHugh, our founding pastor, and most of all to our people who have enriched our parish life by their generous gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

The pastor's State of the Parish report was given at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, December 13, 2009.