

# The Ameliorator

St. Amelia Church

November-December 2009

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Tonawanda, NY

## Plaudits for Five Parishioners at November Prime Rib Dinner

Five parishioners will be honored for outstanding stewardship of talent, at the annual Prime Rib Dinner on Saturday evening, November 7. They are Jim and Karen Biesinger, Lenore Belzer, Jim Binner, and Joanne Myers.

Jim Biesinger has served as a member of the parish St. Vincent de Paul Society for many years and as President for the past six.

"Calls come in for assistance at all hours, literally, of the day and night", Father Tom noted. "When people need food, or other help, they don't follow a 9 to 5 schedule. You can call Jim anytime, and he is right there, within minutes, to help people in need".



His wife Karen has a similar ministry. For many years, she has been the driving force in the parish unit of the Ladies of Charity, and in the Bishop's Committee for Christian Home and Family. The Biesingers have two children and three grandchildren.

***"Helping my parish began way back in my altar server days".***

***-Jim Binner***

Lenore Belzer retired in 2001 from service in the U.S. Government. At that time she was the top law enforcement officer at the Peace Bridge. "I always carried a gun", she said once, "but in Church I felt funny coming up to Communion with a weapon in my purse. But I sure wasn't going to leave it in the seat!" Retirement brought her more time to devote to the parish. She has been a member of countless committees and ministries (without her gun) through many years. Lenore was the first



President of the St. Amelia School Board, and the first woman to serve as Parish Council President. She has been a long time member of the Finance Committee and the Stewardship Committee.



Jim Binner's specialty is in the field of sales and marketing. He is currently Sorrento Cheese's Director of Sales for the Eastern United States. When he and his wife Marybeth enrolled their twin sons, Adam and Aaron, in our school, he brought his expertise to the school's Bingo program. Today he directs that operation, which nets the school in excess of \$200,000 each year.

"I love the challenge", he says. "I can bring in my business and organizational skills. For me, helping my parish began way back in my altar server days at St. Andrew's in Sloan with Msgr. Stachewicz. I want to pass that along to my sons". Jim is also involved in the Holy Name Society and serves as an usher.

## Plaudits for Five Parishioners...continued

Joanne Myers has been a parishioner for over 40 years, and there is scarcely any area of parish life that she has not touched, and enriched. For 25 years, she taught in our parochial school, retiring in 1994. She was active in CYO when her daughters – Elise, Joanne, and Kathy – were in high school, and has been a Eucharistic minister for 30 years. Today she continues to give generously of her time and



talent as an Outreach volunteer.

“I don’t know where we would be without her”, commented Outreach Director Judy Reitz. “She is as dependable as a Swiss watch.”

At the dinner, two outstanding altar servers will also be recognized. The dinner follows the 4:30 Mass, and comprises a full course meal, featuring prime rib beef, with all the trimmings, prepared and served by the folks from the West Seneca “Market in the Square”. The dinner includes beverages, but wine and beer can be purchased. Single people are especially welcome, and can, if they ask, be seated at the “Captain’s Table”, with Father Tom and Father Mark. Music and entertainment will follow the dinner. Tickets are available at \$10 per person (with special rates for families) at the Rectory.

## Pro-Life Committee Seeks to Fulfill Gospel Mandate by Father Mark Noonan

It is greatly evident in the Gospels that Christ calls us to take care of those who are most vulnerable and in need. As the Church throughout the world works to care for the poor and the weak,

every Catholic parish, and indeed every Christian, should seek to contribute to the well being of those who are unable to provide for or protect themselves. Through the centuries, and in countless ways, the Church has cared for the needy through social action. Hospitals and Catholic schools were initially founded precisely to serve the needy. In our times, organizations like the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Knights of Columbus, and others have made the Roman Catholic Church the largest charitable organization in the world.

Our parish seeks to contribute to the well being of the poor and the vulnerable in a variety of ways. But particularly important and timely is the work being done by our parish Pro-Life Committee. This Committee held its first meeting of the new academic year recently, and made plans to provide opportunities to involve parishioners in caring for those whose dignity is overlooked, and particularly those most overlooked in our country: unborn children and their mothers.



To enable our parishioners to participate in great events like the National Life Chain, the March for Life (held each January in Washington, D.C.); to provide

reliable and clear information on issues like abortion, birth control, euthanasia, proper care of the sick and dying; to provide opportunities for us to pray for a greater and more profound respect for every human life - this is the work of our committee.

Nine parishioners, of various ages, attended this first meeting, and signs of more growth are very evident. The group is hopeful about accomplishing its goal of bringing our parishioners to be a real light of God’s grace in our community, testifying to the dignity of every human life.

The committee meets on the third Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Rectory meeting room, and welcome all who wish to participate in this most important work.

Our next meetings are set for October 19, November 16, and December 21.

Munich's traditional Oktoberfest begins in late September. True to form, the St. Amelia German Mass and Dinner-Dance took place on September 26. The 4:30 Mass was enriched by stirring German-Lutheran hymns, notably "Now Thank We All Our God" and "A Mighty Fortress" by the Bergholz German Band. That same band provided music for dancing, or listening, or just foot-stomping, following Joe Kroczyński's magnificent German dinner, served to over 300 people, who toasted "ter gemuchlichkeit" - "to fellowship". The peripatetic photographer was on hand, to provide these pictures.



## Council Sets Goals For 2009-2010



The Parish Council met on September 10, and spent a few hours formulating goals for the year. They were helped by Dennis Mahaney, from the Diocesan Office for Parish Life. Mr. Mahaney helped the Council and its committees set goals and objectives for the current year.

The Youth Committee made plans to increase attendance at the Junior High "TPE Connection" by at least 25% during the current school year. The Liturgy Committee planned to increase weekly Mass attendance by 100 people by July 1, 2010. They also resolved to increase participation in liturgical ministries (altar servers, adult choir, children's choir, greeters, lectors, Eucharistic ministers) by 25% in that same time period.

The Parish Life Committee resolved to conduct a "pilot" program: an evening where people of all generations could come together for a program that would enrich their spiritual knowledge and at the same time give them opportunities for fellowship. The Council Leadership set a goal of identifying and training at least one individual for leadership of each principal Parish committee during the coming year.

"It was a very productive evening" commented President Karen Trimper. "We now have a clear vision of what we want to do this year".

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## School Class of 1969 Holds 40<sup>th</sup> Reunion



*Ida Cipolla and Kathi Snyder remember the good old days.*

"It was a night to remember and cherish for years to come. In fact, there is talk of not waiting another five years for our next reunion. People enjoyed themselves immensely, and can't say enough good things about the whole night". Elaine (Antholzner) Ball was talking

about the 40<sup>th</sup> reunion of the Class of 1969 of St. Amelia School, held on September 26.

"The tour of the school was a great hit, as most of us had not been back in many years. Principal Jim Mulé went out of this way to accommodate us. Each person got a canvas St. Amelia tote bag, filled with a St. Amelia cookbook, bumper stickers, notepad, and Blue Ribbon book. I am so glad we decided to have our reunion at the school".

Ida (Cipolla) Fiorella reminisced about the time when she, as a high school junior, baked bread to be used at a youth Mass. "Father Tom had to break the bread into pieces to be served to all those taking Communion, about 150 of us. But he could not break that bread! I watched the muscles bulging and straining under his priestly robe as he tried to tear that loaf apart. I sensed that Father was praying hard, and at last he managed to break the bread. He didn't give us kids a lot of commandments (I think he figured we had enough challenge with the original ten) but he did say afterwards: 'No more homemade bread!'".

## The Question Box

### 5% for the Church?

Dear Father Tom,

*I heard your homily on September 18 on stewardship of treasure, and your proposal that we should give 5% of our income to the Church. I wonder why the Pope has not called for this, and why we haven't heard much about this in the past.*

*- Just wondering.*

Dear Wondering,

I think the Pope has not issued a universal call for the giving of 5% to the Church because the Church is financed in various ways in different countries, and in some cases, is already getting its 5%. In Germany, for instance, I am told, when you pay your income tax you indicate which Church you belong to, and the government remits a portion of your taxes to that Church. In Ontario, where I pay school taxes on my cottage, I can (and do) designate them for the support of Catholic schools. In Belgium and France (and I would guess many other European countries) the government pays for the maintenance of most Church buildings, since they are historical places. The Vatican seeks to conclude an agreement or pact (in Church terms, a "concordat") with each nation, and that agreement often provides for some sort of financial support.

In the United States, of course, there is a strict separation of Church and state, and so the Church depends on the people for 100% of its income. You probably have not heard much about the 5% in the past, because the need was not as critical as it is now. For instance, I graduated from grammar school in 1956, and from my class of 103 pupils, ten boys eventually entered the seminary, and seven girls became religious sisters. When I was ordained in 1968, there were 1200 priests serving in our diocese. Today that number is less than 300.

So, to my mind, the future health and vibrancy of the Church depends in large measure on the generous financial support of our people.

- Father Tom

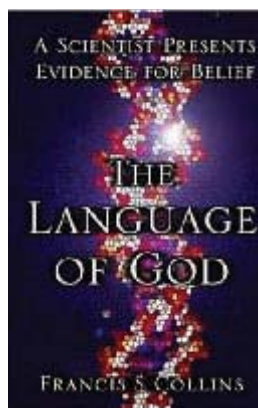


## Book Review: Catholics and Evolution

Most Catholics do not have a problem with believing in evolution and also believing in a God who created the world and all that is in it. For others, though, there is, in their minds, a conflict between science and religion. For them, "The Language of God", by Francis S. Collins, is a must-read.

The author is an acclaimed scientist who led the "Human Genome Project", a staunch proponent of the theories of Charles Darwin, and also a believing Christian. He tells the story of his conversion from atheism to Christianity, and explains how it is possible to believe in both evolution, and the God of Genesis.

The book is available in the parish Lending Library.



## Couples Celebrate Wedding Anniversaries



Bishop Kmiec celebrated a special Mass October 18 at the Cathedral, recognizing couples celebrating significant wedding anniversaries. A number of couples from our parish took part.

Bernard and Jane Bunny are observing their 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary. Couples celebrating 60 years are Albert and Irene Cleesattel, Daniel and Marie Diocedo, Austin and Betty Finn, Richard and Carol Gardener, and Pat and Joan O'Hanrahan.

Those celebrating 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries include Bob and Betty Borden, Rocco and Marge Casullo, Bob and Maryann Cecchini, Joseph and Barbara DiCarlo, and Tom and Joan Lillis.



Seventh grader Michael Buckley tees off at the 8<sup>th</sup> fairway at Harris Hill Golf Course, at the school's annual Fall Golf Outing September 25. 28 pupils and 9 adults took part.



Felician Sister Christelle Sawicki, campus minister at O'Hara High School, teaches fifth graders in our Wednesday afternoon religious education program, including these pupils from Edison and Hamilton: Paige Phillips, Ryan Williams, and Justin Mutka.



## *Thru the Lens*



Members of the steering committee for the Emmaus Men's Spirituality Group meet to plan for future events: Dan Mulhern, Dick Rooney, Mark Roland, Ed Egan, and Dale Rouse.



Grade 8 students Jessie Reardon, Jessica Hart, and Anna Maranto work together at the Car Wash on September 5. Funds raised will help finance the class trip to Washington this spring.



55 junior high students enjoyed the presentation by The Parable Players at the “TPE Connection” gathering on Sunday, September 23.



Sean Beiter addresses school parents at a joint meeting of the School Board and the Home School Association on September 24.



Sharon Ferger and Amy Jahn welcome fellow members of the St. Amelia School Class of 1969 at their reunion, held at the school on September 26.



6th grader Scott Zenosky winds up for a pitch at the match between Christ the King School and Saint Amelia's, in Junior Varsity competition at Shoshone Playground on September 16.

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## Message to Graduates: “Keep Your Faith Strong”



“It’s ironic, because back in my St. Amelia School days, the teachers had a difficult time trying to keep me quiet... and now they’re inviting me back, and handing me a microphone!”

Thus began the Commencement Address delivered by alumna Charis Gatas, Class of 1997, to the 2009 graduating class of St. Amelia School. Charis went on to Mt. St. Mary Academy, and then to the University of Buffalo, where she earned a doctorate in pharmacy in 2006.

Dr. Gatas made reference to the maxim, “Make new friends, but keep the old; one is silver and the other gold.” She advised the graduates, “Meet new people and make new friends, but don’t lose touch with those you have shared such great times with thus far.”

She went on to say, “The most important advice I have for you is to keep God close; continue to pray and keep your faith strong. It is faith in God and your strong beliefs that will get you through anything.”