The Naugatuck River stretches almost twenty-five miles from the woods of Litchfield County south to Derby, where it loses itself in the broader Housatonic. Along the way, towns crowd the bank—Waterbury, Naugatuck, Beacon Falls, Seymour, Ansonia, Derby. The land in the Naugatuck Valley has never been of much use for farming. As local farmers say, “Put down seed and rocks come up.” What there is here is waterpower, plenty of it, to drive mill wheels in the old days and turbines in later years. The attention and energy of the early inhabitants naturally turned to enterprises that this resource could empower, the manufacture of common household items. These products were carried all over New England, and beyond, by the ubiquitous Yankee peddlers. The region became identified as a center of manufacturing.

The heyday of manufacturing in the Valley came during the last half of the Nineteenth Century and the first half of the Twentieth, when large companies sprang up all along the river, companies like American Pin Company and Scovill Brass and Chase Brass in Waterbury, Risdon Manufacturing and Goodyear Rubber Shoe Company in Naugatuck, and scores of others. As in any major industrial area anywhere in the world, the lives of the inhabitants of the valley became tied to these companies. Even those that did not work directly for the companies, served them or their employees in some way. The career and life expectations of most people living in the Valley were defined by the needs of the factories of the area. In many families, several generations spent their entire working lives in the employ of the same company.

As the manufacturing bubble continued to expand, people from all over this country, and from other countries, flocked into the Valley, attracted by the entry-level jobs that were being created here. Specific job skills were not necessarily required, and often it was not even necessary to be able to speak English, as long as you could work hard.

When the air finally began to come out of the bubble, it came, not with a sudden explosion, but with a long, ominous hiss. In the 1970s and ’80s, various factors began relentlessly to undermine the manufacturing base of the economy of the Valley. Foreign competition and rising labor costs cut sharply into profitability. Many companies closed, others were bought up by conglomerates and sold off in pieces. As the lights began to (Continued on page 2)
From the Heart
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Photos: Jean Brickey and Elaine Hendrickson

New members, ideas and Ask Father questions are welcome throughout the year. Please contact the rectory or Katherine Pavone at 264-6599.
already had. There was just no way her expanded family could survive in the small, substandard apartment where they were. So Luz went looking for a bigger apartment. She heard of a realtor who had several apartments that might do, so she went to the realtor’s office. She was asked if, rather than an apartment, wouldn’t she really want a house, one big enough to hold her entire family. She replied that she would like that very much, but she couldn’t afford to rent a house. “Not rent,” the realtor told her, “buy!”

“I know I can’t afford to buy one,” she replied.

“We have a special house in Oakville,” the realtor told her. “It’s priced to sell, only $109,000! We can even offer you a special no-money-down, low-monthly-payment mortgage. Don’t worry; we will take care of everything. You wouldn’t even have to go through the hassle of hiring an inspector or finding a lawyer. We have people we can recommend.”

When Luz and her family moved into their new home, they thought they were finally realizing their share of the American Dream. But the dream soon began to turn into a nightmare. The first thing Luz noticed was that the doors and windows did not close properly. She called a contractor, and after inspecting the place, the man had bad news. The house had serious foundation problems that could cost up to $45,000 to fix. How in the world, Luz wondered, could she afford to continue to pay the mortgage, make the repairs necessary to keep the house from falling down, and still feed and clothe her children?

The LeBron family was not the only one that had been scammed. NVP became aware of the problem when one of the victims came to the group to ask for help. Under NVP’s prompting others came forward, until there were nineteen families willing to sign complaints against three Waterbury real estate firms. NVP then brought the matter to the attention of Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, who agreed to initiate a civil action against the three firms. By the time the civil action was filed, sixteen more families had come forward, making a total of thirty-five.

Not content to simply wait for the results of this litigation, NVP played a central role in the initiative that made grants of up to $100,000 available to families that needed to repair the houses sold to them under fraudulent circumstances.

On April 25, 2006, a $750,000 settlement was reached on behalf of the thirty-five plaintiffs.

NVP was also instrumental in the creation of the Connecticut State Anti-predatory Lending Task Force, which will work to ensure that people like Luz LeBron will not be taken advantage of in the future.

Anyone who lives in this area, and is interested in helping the poor close to home would be hard pressed to find a more worthy organization to support than the Naugatuck Valley Project. Their website, at www.naugatuckvalleyproject.org contains a wealth of information about the group’s history and current projects. The email address for NVP is naugatuckproject@sbcglobal.net.

W. J. Calabrese

At the June 29th Mass, friends and parishioners helped Father William Thuer celebrate his 60th anniversary in the priesthood. Pictured here with Fr. Thuer are Deacon Vin Cassidy, Fr. Joseph Donnelly, Father George Laliberte, and Paul Donnelly. A reception was held afterward. Congratulations to Fr. Thuer on this special milestone!
2006 Mustard Seed Charitable Grants

This year parishioners were again given an opportunity to submit a Charitable Grant Application. Thirteen charities were selected to share in the $14,000 allotted from fund earnings in 2005. Checks were presented at the nine o’clock Mass on June eleventh.

Concelebrating this Mass with Fr. Donnelly was Msgr. Joseph Potter from the Bridgeport Diocese. Padre Jose Potter, as they call him in Brazil, works with St. Charles Brazilian Children, an organization devoted to 750 of the poorest children in the backwoods of Northeast Brazil.

Other charitable organizations receiving a grant were: Amar Viswanath Foundation, funding a school in India for children who are not able to attend school; Carolyn’s Place, a nonprofit agency dedicated to reaching out to women in crisis pregnancies; Fonkoze, a nonprofit organization established to provide capital and a full range of financial and technical services to help the poor in Haiti pull themselves out of poverty; Franciscan Family Apostolate supports the poorest of poor in Alleppey, India; Handy Dandy Handyman provides assistance to people in Connecticut who are unable to obtain services on their own or with their own resources; Heifer International, an organization working to end world hunger by giving animals and other food to the needy; National Alliance for Mentally Ill is a grassroots, self-help support advocacy organization of families and friends of people with serious mental illness; Passionist Volunteers funded by the Passionist Order through donations has a wide range of services—home repairs, children’s recreation programs, elderly and community visits; St. Bonaventure Indian Mission is developing a domestic well system to provide water for the poor who do not have indoor plumbing on the Eastern Navajo Reservation; St. Vincent DePaul Mental Health helps clients with mental illness; Southbury Needy Fund provides funds to assist the needy with medical and dental care, fuel and rental assistance; Young Life of Southbury’s mission is to introduce adolescents to Jesus Christ and help them grow in their faith.

In anticipation of more funds being available next year, we hope to award more scholarships and charitable grants than were distributed this year.

Scholarship Grants

At the June 10 graduation Mass, nine Mustard Seed scholarships of $1000.00 each were awarded.

The nine recipients are: Alisa Jaclyn Forney, Erin Herlihy, Karen Kaufman, Bernard Kokinchak, Sherry Langrock, Adrienne Lila Mansour, Susan McKenna, Jenna Richards and Timothy Smith.

Alisa Forney, along with Bernard Kokinchak, Adrienne Mansour and Susan McKenna graduated from Pomperaug High School in June. Alisa will attend Bentley College, Waltham, MA; Bernard will attend Western Connecticut State University; Adrienne and Susan will both attend St. Joseph College, W. Hartford, CT. Others will use this grant to continue their studies. Erin Herlihy will enter her second year at the University of Richmond, Karen Kaufman will enter her third year at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA; Sherry Langrock and Timothy Smith will enter

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Msgr. Potter receiving a Mustard Seed grant check from Fr. Donnelly.

Fr. Joe and Mustard Seed Scholarship Recipients: (front, from left) Alisa Jaclyn Forney, Susan McKenna, Adrienne Mansour, Jenna Richards, and Karen Kaufman (back row) Bernard Kokinchak, Erin Herlihy, and Tim Smith. Sherry Langrock, not photographed, also received a scholarship.
Sacred Heart Parish Expansion Project

It’s a good thing when a church has to expand. In 1986, when there were 1,500 families registered in the parish, it was necessary for Sacred Heart Church to undertake a major expansion due to the increase in attendance at Mass and activities. This expansion added a new sanctuary, a larger kitchen facility, offices for religious education staff, a small chapel that uses the stained glass windows from the original church, a meeting room, a library, a hospitality room, a large social hall and a beautiful and welcoming atrium. This enlarged space, dedicated in 1990 has served us well for the past sixteen years.

A short while after Father Joe arrived at Sacred Heart, it became apparent to him that the parish facilities were again bursting at the seams. There were now 2,200 families registered in the parish and many people were again forced to stand during the Masses. In addition to needing more sanctuary space, Father Joe envisioned a parish center that would house all of the needs of Sacred Heart under one roof—a place for worship; a place for study and parish activities; a place for the faith formation staff and the parish secretaries, as well as an office for the priest and pastoral associate. “One stop shopping.” Father Joe also recognized that he didn’t require such a large living space; he and Kerry, his dog, could do well with a smaller space, and the sale of the rectory and offices would go a long way toward funding the new expansion.

So in the fall of 2004, Fr. Joe met with Bob Loiseau and Dennis Von Ende of the Finance Committee to determine if the parish was financially able to take on an expansion project. Their assessment was that the parish was financially sound, and recommended that the project move forward. Architect Hugh Sullivan was consulted to help decide whether we needed to re-configure the existing seating with additional pews or to bump out the side walls to add more seating there.

The Sacred Heart Parish Expansion Committee was formed to review the situation and come up with a solution that would satisfy our urgent needs. Architects were interviewed and ideas were developed that would make the dream of a true parish center a reality. Hugh Sullivan’s firm was hired to take on the project. In addition to his excellent credentials, he was chosen because as a parishioner he would be working with the best interests of the parish in mind. A construction company, Caldwell & Walsh, was commissioned to oversee the project. Paul Foschi, another parishioner, was project manager for Caldwell & Walsh and acted as liaison between the committee and the construction firm.

Representatives from all parish departments were asked for input as to their needs. The expansion committee, the architect, the construction company, and Fr. Joe met every two weeks for the last year and a half to develop plans, review progress, and make critical decisions to ensure the project would be completed on time and to everyone’s satisfaction. The new expansion includes additional sanctuary seating for 140 people, a renovated and expanded kitchen, parish administrative offices, additional conference and meeting rooms, renovated restrooms, a multipurpose extension to the social hall, and a full basement under the new administrative wing. Roof repairs and several other renovations to the existing building and grounds were also addressed.

As chairman of the Sacred Heart Parish Expansion Committee, I would like to thank all the members for their cooperative and tireless efforts to bring the project to an on-time and under-budget conclusion. Everyone generously offered his own expertise and knowledge in a unified effort to see this project through to a successful completion. Along with Fr. Joe Donnelly, Hugh Sullivan, and Paul Foschi, the committee members are Ed Comstock, Dennis Von Ende, Bob Loiseau, Vince Berluti, Anthony Curcio, Ernie Fabrizio, Dan Bauer, Janet Conte, Patty Richards, Marge Griffin, Ted McDermott, and the late Bernie Gracy. Joe Lavoie added additional carpentry projects and Joe Ruggiero worked on our computer systems.

It should be noted that, when viewed from Main Street South, the original Sacred Heart Church on this property remains as the central focus of this facility, just as it was with the last expansion project. Our complex looks like a single unified structure, not various additions made over the decades. It should also be noted that this project was undertaken without the need for a major fund drive or request for financial pledges from our parishioners, however, any vol-

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With so many “new beginnings” at Sacred Heart, especially our new church building, I began looking through the Bible for similar “new beginnings.” I remembered that in the Old Testament in Kings there was something about Solomon and his building of the Temple of the Lord. God promised King David that he would allow Solomon, his son, to erect a temple. Since David’s reign was full of wars defending his kingdom, God did not give him the project.

Solomon’s reign was peaceful and so he began this tremendous work 480 years after the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt. Solomon had 80,000 men, and his father’s friend, King Hiram of Tyre, helped him by supplying cedar trees, fir trees and gold according to what he needed. It took more than twenty years to complete the project. This is a bit different from our situation.

Read 1 Kings, chapters 6 - 9 for the description and the size of the temple. It must have been awesome.

A building needs to be planned, stones hewn, wood polished, foundations laid, things have to be fitted and molded just as God’s faithful must be hewn and polished by many trials and sufferings before they can be admitted into the celestial structure.

The temple was dedicated with words issued from the wise Solomon with thousands of animals sacrificed. The celebrations lasted 14 days.

God said to Solomon in 1 Kings 6:12-13, “This house, which thou buildest, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments, walking in them, I will fulfill my word to thee which I spoke to David thy father. And I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel.”

Solomon told his people whenever they prayed in this dwelling place, God would hear them. God warned Solomon that if the people did not keep the commandments all would be taken away. Sadly, we know what happened to Solomon and eventually to the temple in Jerusalem years later.

Sacred Heart, where each of us can experience a new beginning, is a place where we meet as a community to praise and thank the Lord, receive spiritual nourishment in the Eucharist and go forth in the world humbly doing his work on earth.

Dina Carella
Of Many More Things

The word church has had many meanings down through the ages. Always connected with religious faith, it first was used to speak about the assembly of people, the community of people who believed in Jesus and who were drawn to become and live as his disciples. As time went on the term came to be identified both with the community of members as well as with the building in which they normally gathered. The “church” meets in the “church.” In time we began to talk about the building as the church more than the people. Several years ago when we were renovating the church building in my former parish, we were unable to use it for about four months. Each week during those four months we put the following question on the cover of the bulletin: “How can we be ‘church’ if we don’t have a building?”

People will often use the term church to express who they are, as in, “We are the Church.” Others will use the term to indicate where they are, as in, “I’ll be in the church.” And still others use it to indicate what they are doing, as in, “I am going to church this morning.”

You may have noticed the various quotations about church that are spread throughout our latest parish directory. One of them is a particularly wise saying (some would say a “wise guy’s saying”) on page 14: “The Church is what’s left over after the building burns down and the pastor leaves town.” That seems to best express what the Church means by the term church. It’s not somewhere we go or something we do. It is who we are.

All of this is by way of introduction to explain once again what we are all about and particularly the purpose of our recent changes. Now that our construction is complete and our G.I.F.T. program is more fully implemented, it is helpful for all of us to be reminded about the reason for these changes. It is to help us be a better Church. Just as the Holy Spirit of God is always calling/challenging/nudging us to be better Catholic Christians so also that same Spirit is calling/challenging/nudging us to become a better Church. Our parish mission statement, framed at the entrance to the atrium and printed on the cover of our weekly bulletin is our “game plan” for what we do, and how we do it in the name of Jesus.

Our expansion of our worship space will enable us to better respond to the first way our mission statement says we will be the visible presence of Jesus Christ through “creating a welcoming, joyful and compassionate atmosphere for all.” When people have to regularly stand in the back of the assembly or out in the atrium it is hard for them to feel that welcoming atmosphere. Of course we all need to continue to work on how we welcome others (greet, introduce yourself etc), how we reflect joy (smile at others, speak with them etc.) and how we show compassion (offer to help, take part in some ministry etc). It will also enable us as a result to better celebrate the liturgy of the Church “providing opportunities for spiritual growth through ministries and worship, particularly in the Eucharist.”

Our expanded parish center, now all in one location, will make available more adequate meeting space to better enable us to carry out our ministries and to support one another in our individual and communal faith journey and share God’s love through participation in those many ministries of our parish. The added meeting space will assist us in “advocating our responsibility to the poor and oppressed” in our many outreach programs.

Our G.I.F.T. program will help to nourish parishioners of all ages (not just the children) to grow as a “faith-filled and vibrant community of believers in Jesus Christ” by feeding our faith in Jesus at all moments of our lives, by helping us understand better the richness of the Scriptures and the teachings of our Catholic faith. We believe it will more effectively and efficiently help us to build households of faith, or as an ancient saying of the Church would put it, to make our households into little Churches to nourish our Catholic Christian faith in the place that most deeply affects who we are and who we become in life.

All of our recent changes (the building, the buying, the selling, and the new approach to faith formation) are because of our mission and our identity as the Church. My hope is that as days pass, this is becoming more and more evident. We are building a better Church because God’s Holy Spirit is always calling us to take the next step and to respond as best we can to what Blessed Pope John XXIII called “the signs of the times.” That perspective will always call us to change in order to grow.

May God give you peace!

Father Joe
What is it about my journey of faith that could be helpful to young people?

“Faith is the confident truth, value and trust in God, and this belief does not rest on a logical proof or material evidence.” Faith is parallel with time. In order to have a journey of faith it takes time to build and grow stronger day by day. Whether I am on the soccer field, at church, in the classroom or at work, my faith is part of my life. My parents have had a major impact on my journey of faith; they have taught me to always FROG it (Fully Rely on God). They also taught me five other rules to live by: 1. Get the hatred out of your heart; 2. Free your mind of worries; 3. Live simply; 4. Give more, and 5. Expect less. Whether it is working at the assisted living center or providing childcare, my faith allows me to be a role model for others and put what I believe into action. My journey of faith is simple; it is reinforced by going to church every Sunday and by fully relying on God and believing in Jesus Christ.

Providing childcare was one of my very first jobs. I got it through the church, where I volunteered to help make pretzels with the other youth of our parish. I was asked to baby-sit for one of the families that I helped. When I attend Mass on Sundays, I see the different children for whom I baby-sit. It is my hope that I am a role model for them, illustrating the importance of church attendance and the need to keep God in our lives. Baby-sitting and working at an assisted living center, Kensington Green of Southbury, has helped me to be more patient with the old and the young. I know that when I am having a rough time or losing my patience I can just think to myself—what would Jesus do—and try to handle the situation as he would. Being able to do this in front of the younger children is a good example for them. Not only has my journey of faith allowed me to be more of a role model to younger children, it has allowed me to use the many things my parents have taught me about our religion and how important it is to have faith.

By applying the five basic rules that my parents have taught me, and fully relying on God, I feel that it shows in my everyday actions and can impact others. My mother gave me a stone with a frog on one side and the word smile on the other to carry in my pocket. When I am in certain situations, such as ones that deal with peer pressure and difficult decisions, I rub my stone and say a prayer to help guide me through these difficult circumstances.

I am praying that my behavior will impact the younger generations so they will be able to make the right decisions and fully rely on God in their everyday actions. My parents have impressed those five basic rules on me and following them has helped me become a happy and caring individual.

Susan McKenna

Editor’s note: This essay was written by Susan as part of the requirements to apply for and be awarded a Mustard Seed Scholarship.

Scholarship Grants

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their third year at Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, PA, and Jenna Richards will attend the University of Bridgeport.

Among the nine, two will major in Nursing, two in Music Education, one in Dental Hygiene, one in Meteorology, one in International Business and Marketing, one in Education and Spanish, and one in History and Communications.

We extend our congratulations and good wishes for every success to these young adults as they go forward with their education in pursuit of their ultimate goals.

Jean Brickey
As we begin our second year with our G.I.F.T. (Growing In Faith Together) program, we will continue to address particular questions and concerns with the hope of leading people to a better understanding of the merits of WCC (Whole Community Catechesis). In this publication, I will seek to address a question that is particularly sensitive to those of us in parish ministry who take seriously our call to lead people to Christ: “How do you respond to those who say they will leave our parish rather than participate in G.I.F.T.?”

Our response centers upon the fact that our information is inconclusive. We have only heard about this by rumor, not directly from anyone who has left Sacred Heart. We hope that by addressing it here, people with such concerns will feel freer to speak with us about their concerns.

During our training and our many conversations with parishes that have implemented WCC we have become aware of the many challenges this major change entails. It will take time for people to realize its strength and purpose. We realize that WCC may not appeal to everyone, but we do believe it is a program that will serve God and his people best. It is our hope that people will try G.I.F.T. before making the decision to leave the parish. In addition, we remain open and available to conversations with those who have concerns.

From what we understand there are three concerns about G.I.F.T.
1. “Our Children are not learning enough.”
We firmly believe that G.I.F.T. is responding to the educational needs not just of our children but also of our entire parish as it engages all ages in learning. This year, we will provide 6 learning sessions developed by Harcourt Publishers that are geared toward the theme of “Following Jesus.” We have often referred to the three parts of necessary participation for WCC: attending the G.I.F.T. sessions, regularly attending Mass on Sundays and holy days, and using the home packet activities and readings in your own homes.

The six-year educational cycle of learning incorporates the four pillars of Catechism of the Catholic Church—prayer, sacraments and liturgy, creed, and morality. We also include liturgical events and the social justice teachings of the Church. In addition, children ages 3-12 years have the added offering of Liturgy of The Word for Children (a liturgical program that occurs during the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Masses), every weekend of the year. Sacramental preparation is built into G.I.F.T. sessions, and additional workshops are offered for Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation preparation.

Lifelong education means that we learn throughout our lifetime. We no longer need to be concerned with ensuring that a particular doctrine or facet of religious education be taught at a particular grade level. This new way of learning is more connective and experiential as we come to celebrate the key events of our worship and together connect life with faith.

2. “We have already completed our religious education, and we do not feel that it is our responsibility to teach our children. This is the Church’s responsibility.”

One of the major premises of Whole Community Catechesis is that, unlike a schoolroom model of education where we graduate from a particular level of learning, faith formation is never completed; rather we continue to grow in our faith as we grow in age, wisdom and experience. We must invite our faith to grow

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Sharing Our Faith
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with us through prayer, continuing education and service. WCC affords us that opportunity to grow together.

Careful study of Church documents over the past 40 years has told us that the greatest primary influence of passing on the faith comes from the parents to the children. Without the example and commitment of parents who are devoted to passing on the faith and practicing their beliefs by modeling their participation in Church, children will not understand the importance of faith formation. The concept that faith is the most valuable thing we can pass on to our children is grounded in the belief that the life of Jesus transforms our lives, making us better people called to a higher purpose. We are the Church, so it is all of our responsibilities.

3. “We do not have the time or desire to fit this program into our lives.”

Our new faith formation program involves households making time for and setting as a priority our G.I.F.T. program. The desire to develop faith and find meaning in our faith involves an openness to receive the teachings of Jesus and to believe that the Spirit of God will guide us in this process. Our evaluations from our first year of G.I.F.T. have clearly illustrated that those who participated in our program were spiritually fed and grew in appreciation of the value this type of learning provides.

In conclusion, we genuinely hope that in time we will all Grow In Faith Together, and together we will build a program in which people will desire to participate, and that the life and mission of Jesus will be better served within our community of faith. We encourage conversation about where your faith can be best served.

Anne Sharkey

A Friday Night Interlude

Just after my second sip from my martini, I heard, “God protect you.”

“I thought you were on vacation or away doing whatever you do when you are not saving my soul.” I said out loud, enjoying another sip. Since I was alone watching Doctor Who on this Friday night, who was going to complain about me talking to myself?

“She taking a vacation? That’s like saying God takes a vacation. Sometimes I wonder about you,” replied my guardian angel.

“Why should you wonder about me at all? You’re supposed to know me better than I know myself, at least that’s what you keep telling me. That is true isn’t it?”

“Of course, and tell your editor whom you seem to be so devoted to, I am not a wiseacre.”

“You have been spying on us,” I said more as a declaration than as an inquiry. “Don’t take her so seriously,” I added.

“A human trait. Like Spock in Star Trek, I am merely being factual in my observation.”

“Now this is good. I watch Doctor Who and you watch Star Trek? Why am I not surprised?” I continued, “I am wrestling with the notion that you watch TV at all. Why aren’t you thinking great metaphysical thoughts—advancing the public’s understanding of St. Thomas Aquinas’ proofs of God’s existence, or better yet, helping me develop a stronger faith and trust in my personal Savior. By the way, it suddenly just occurred to me; does being an angel entitle you to Satellite TV?”

“The word impertinent is the only one that comes to mind. And your editor calls me a wiseacre?”

“I want you to know that Saint Tommy and I are good friends but I think he would advise me that of the three choices you so sarcastically suggested, the most difficult one would be comforting you in your faith. And how you vacillate! A bright day and God is good. You have a mosquito bite, and God has singled you out for this torment. But it doesn’t stop there; somehow and your logic is beyond any sane thought, you compare your discomfort with those inflicted in Job. And Job isn’t too keen about that, let me tell you.”
“When was the last time you had a mosquito bite?” I asked.
“I think I am asking for a transfer.”
“Better,” I said, “You’re fired!”
“You can’t fire me.”
“There must be an appeal process,” I responded, hoping he would hear the defi- ance in my voice.
“Good heavens, what am I saying? We are stuck with each other. I will never get a transfer, as if I would ever ask for one, and you can’t fire me, either.
“Says who?”
“Trust me, Dennis.” (Oh oh, when he uses my first name he is very, very serious.)
I felt rather than heard a sigh.
“Dennis, best you understand when the dust clears between us, the Holy Spirit insures that you receive a supernatural gift from God, that gift is called faith. The Church is the mother of all believers and it is she that supports your faith that is most personal. That same faith that you have so much trouble with is the vehicle that lets you better understand God through his word and deeds. As a matter of fact, St. Thomas tells us, “Faith is the foretaste of the knowledge that will make us blessed in the life to come.”
“Heavy stuff,” I said.
“Not too heavy I would think, yet I do know you. I know that you will turn off Doctor Who and fix yourself another martini, but in the silence of your room, you will think about what I just said. I am here to answer questions, you may count on that, and I don’t charge by the hour either.
“You never did like lawyers,” I said. Did I sense laughter? No it can’t be. Yet here’s a thought. I could be more like my guardian angel and he could be more like me. Now I know I am hearing coughing and wheezing. “What is so funny about that?” I asked. “It might be good for both of us.”
“I’m asking for a transfer.”
“But you said you couldn’t get one,” I thought. “Well I like you anyway,” I added. “You do provide me with great comfort you know.”
“Really? And here I thought you agreed with your editor that I was a wiseacre.”
“I do, but you are a supportive wiseacre.”
“Oh Good Grief.”
This time, dear reader, it was my guardian angel who said it and not me.
And so life goes on.

Parish Website

What was the Sacred Heart Church website like in the old days, daddy?”
“Well my child, it was like this. Way back in 1997…

I had just come back home after an attempt to hike the Appalachian Trail (didn’t make it; only got about 350 miles). Since I thought it might be a good idea to find some gainful employment, I started the usual search. In the course of that search, I kept hearing about this wonderful thing called the Internet, or the “Web” as it was referred to by those in the know. Not wanting to leave any stone unturned, I enrolled in some classes in webpage design at Naugatuck Valley Community College. As time went on, it occurred to me that this new medium would be a great way to let people know about all the good things going on at Sacred Heart Church. A quick presentation of some ideas to the Parish Council revealed that I was alone in my enthusiasm for this project, but since there was no expense involved, I was given the green light to proceed. I was not expecting much support.

RCnet, a free service to parishes, hosted our first site. We were pretty limited in what we could do, but the price was right. Over time, there were several unsuccessful attempts to integrate the site into the life of the parish.

What success we now enjoy is due to two factors. First, Mark DePalma assumed the leadership of the web page. Mark is a dynamic and very knowledgeable engineer, who can work absolute wonders with a little computer code, and a few pictures. Without Mark, the site would still be struggling. As it stands now, thanks to Mark, I think we have one of the best parish websites anywhere.

The second factor affecting our success is our pastor, Fr. Joe Donnelly who has an appreciation of the Internet’s potential to reach and interact with a worldwide audience. Father’s support and guidance has helped the Web Page Committee successfully meet the challenge of communication in the 21st century.

The original site went live about 1998 or so. At that time, no one could have foreseen the advances in technology that have gotten us to where we are today. While the Internet is primarily geared to the present and the future, the Sacred Heart website embraces the past as well, acknowledging our debt to those in the church who have gone before us.

(Continued on page 12)
Have You Ever?

Have you ever watched the sunrise while lying in your bed
With the covers firmly tucked beneath your chin:
Loathe to leave the warmth and comfort that your friendly bed provides,
And yet anxious for your new day to begin?

Have you ever lain in soft warm grass on a summer day
Finding pictures in the fleecy clouds above;
Enjoying all the beauty that surrounds you,
Sharing hopes and someday-dreams with one you love?

Have you ever watched your little ones smiling as they dream
And wondered what dreams bring such peace and joy?
Are they playing with the angel friends they left to be with you,
Or are they dreaming of their favorite toy?

Have you ever stared in wonder on a sunny winter morning
At the beauty of pristine new-fallen snow---
Branches dressed in finest lace, bedecked with sparkling jewels,
The dazzling mantle sets the world aglow?

Have you ever had a tragic day, when everything went wrong
You were sure you couldn’t make it through the day;
Then along came just the person that you needed,
Fixed your problem and helped drive the gloom away?

To tell you all the good and beauty I’ve found in my life,
I’d have to go on, and on, and on, and on forever.
Have you looked for the good and beauty in your life?

Irma Rilling

Saint Katharine Drexel

When the wealthy heiress, Katharine Drexel, decided to enter a Catholic convent, Philadelphia high society was stunned. Newspapers broadcast the news up and down the east coast. In a culture that values money, it is difficult for many to understand how one of the richest women in the U.S. could give up all the luxuries that money could buy. Katharine was a powerful counter cultural symbol.

She was born in 1858, in Philadelphia, into the very wealthy Drexel family. Her father founded the house of Drexel and Co. in Philadelphia, with ties to the firms of J.P. Morgan in N.Y. and Drexel, Harjes and Co. in Paris.

The family was devout Catholic and philanthropic, donating generous amounts of money to schools, hospitals, orphanages and homes for the elderly. The Drexels even opened their home three times a week and handed out food, clothing and money to those in need. A close
In recent years, there have been several new and supposedly secret revelations about Jesus Christ, and our faith in him that have gained public attention. Over the last several months the release of the movie *The Da Vinci Code* based on Dan Brown’s best selling novel of a couple of years ago, and the publication (just in time for Holy Week) of studies about a text entitled *The Gospel of Judas* have fanned the flames of our curiosity and even lead some to question their faith. Let’s look at both phenomena.

*The Da Vinci Code:* The most important thing about this book/movie is to recall what genre of literature it is, or more simply put, in what section of the library or bookstore did you get it? That’s right, it’s fiction, which is to say, not fact. That insight helps us to understand from the start that it is not true. While including some references to historical people/groups and some historical experiences, it is more like a historical novel than a history or theology text. There are many historical inaccuracies and misrepresentations in it. The best resource for understanding *The Da Vinci Code,* in light of our Catholic Christian faith, is through the excellent website created by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and supported by your generosity to the annual Catholic Communications Collection. You can access this site at [www.jesusdecoded.com](http://www.jesusdecoded.com) or from the link on our parish website. It is exceptionally well done and they will respond to any questions about the novel/movie you may have. Please check it out.

*The Gospel of Judas:* There are more texts given the title of gospel than just the four Gospels we know and revere as definitive and reliable reflections of Jesus Christ. However, the fact that these texts are called gospels does not mean that they are the same thing as those of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. A gospel is a specific literary genre or type of literature (like novel, history, poetry etc.). A true Gospel is the written account of the early Church’s experience of Jesus. They were first a group of stories about Jesus, his life and his teaching that were passed on by word of mouth. When it became clear that the second coming of Jesus was not going to happen in their lifetime, the early Church realized they would have to pass them on to future generations. They began to write down what until this time were verbal stories about Jesus. At some point, because there were many texts claiming the title of gospel, the Church had to decide which were truly inspired by God’s Holy Spirit in the telling, the gathering and the writing. This decision by the Church created what is called the canon of Scripture, those books of the Bible that we recognize today as God’s word. *The Gospel of Judas* was not among them.

It was discovered in the 1970’s in Egypt and passed through several hands before coming to the attention of scripture scholars in 1983. The text describes itself as “the hidden discourse of the decision which Jesus spoke to Judas Iscariot.” It is believed that a scribe added the title gospel at the end. But the author had no intention of writing a gospel, that is, a narrative telling the story of Jesus from Judas’ point of view. It stops short of the passion. In fact it contains no account of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, which is in itself a rather serious point of disqualification as a true gospel. Rather the author appears to have intended to present the teaching of Jesus from a Gnostic point of view. The Gnostics were an early sect of Christianity who separated themselves from the larger Christian community, believing that the larger Christian community was no longer faithful to the true teaching of Jesus to which they had special secret insight. We believe that God’s Holy Spirit guided or “inspired” the writing, editing and choosing of the books of Sacred Scripture in order to help us come to fuller knowledge, love of and faith in Jesus. While like *The Da Vinci Code* it may contain some facts, we do not believe it to be inspired by God and therefore helpful to our faith in Jesus.

*Father Joe*
Saint Katharine Drexel  
(Continued from page 12)

friend of the family, and frequent visitor to their home, was Fr. James O’Connor, who later became Bishop of Omaha. He shared with them heartbreaking stories of the pervasive poverty and degrading treatment of the Native American Indians that he had encountered in his travels. Katharine and her father made several trips to the northwest and witnessed first hand the broken promises of our government and the squalor and despair on the reservations. She visited Red Cloud, the Sioux Indian chief, and began her aid to the Indian missions, eventually spending millions of the family fortune.

Upon her father’s death in 1885, 1.5 million dollars was bequeathed to several charities, with the remaining 14 million divided amongst the three daughters. In today’s market the Drexel estate would have been worth over $250 million.

Katharine had long wanted to enter the religious life but her desire to become a nun in an enclosed congregation was in conflict with her desire to personally, as well as financially aid the Indians.

On a trip to Europe with her sister Elizabeth, she met with Pope Leo XIII and pled her case, asking him if he could designate a particular congregation that would devote all its time and effort to the Native American missions. His reply astounded her and awakened her to new possibilities for her life. He said, “But why not be a missionary yourself?” She entered the Srs. of Mercy convent in 1885 and took her final vows in 1891. She founded a congregation with twelve other women called the Srs. of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, which eventually was shortened to the Srs. of the Blessed Sacrament. Soon more women joined the order. By 1942, Katharine had opened black Catholic schools in 13 states, 40 mission centers and 23 rural schools. Katharine and her order encountered ignorance and prejudice along the way. She often told her fellow sisters, “It is God who has called you here; it is God who will sustain you here.”

In 1913 the Georgia legislature tried to pass a law prohibiting white teachers from teaching blacks. In 1915 when Katharine purchased an abandoned university in New Orleans and founded Xavier University there, vandals smashed every window. In 1922 in Beaumont, Texas, the KKK posted a sign for the sisters on a church where they had opened a school, threatening flogging with tar and feathers if they weren’t gone in a week. A few days later, a violent storm tore through Beaumont destroying Klan headquarters. The sisters weren’t bothered again.

In the late 1920’s, Katharine used a third party to purchase property to expand Xavier University. To this day, this university sends more African American graduates to medical school than any other.

Katharine suffered a heart attack in 1935 and devoted her last years to Eucharistic adoration. She died in 1955 at the age of 96. She overcame society’s hostility and indifference and built an amazing network of schools, churches, and missions, spending almost $20 million of her fortune. She was ahead of her time in demanding civil rights for all. Today, her order still works with Native Americans and African Americans, and is also in Haiti serving the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

She was beatified on Nov. 20, 1988 and canonized on Oct. 1, 2000. Her feast day is March 3.

Diane Tomas