

The Canticle of St. Francis

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Parish Newsletter: Volume 12, Issue 1

Spring 2007

Second Common Conference—*another Success!*

Over 400 adults, teens and children had an informative and fun day at our second Parish Common Conference. The Conference was held on Saturday, January 20th between 9am and 5pm. There were over 32 workshops on all areas of the Catholic faith with a special emphasis on *how we are called to live our faith in today's society*.

The topics covered scripture, family life, saints, Vatican art, social justice, prayer, Catholics and other religions and many other sessions for adults. There was a special track for teens that included "How to be safe on the Internet", "Catholic and Cool", "God and Hollywood", and others. Another new feature was special programming for children in Preschool through 5th grade. You can see that they were excited and interested in their sessions.

A wonderful lunch was provided to all. Once again everyone raved about "The Coffee Guy" who provided delicious coffee, latte and cappuccino all day.

We were fortunate to arrange for Mr. Paul Wilkes as our keynote speaker. Paul is a national speaker and author of several books on "successful parishes".

Thank you so much to the hundreds of people who made this day a tremendous success.



(above/below): *Paul Wilkes, keynote*



Special workshops for Children in Preschool through 5th grade were exciting and interesting.



High School YOUTH & Young Adults



New Year's In New Orleans

Seventeen St. Francis teens, young adults, and chaperones headed to New Orleans December 27 through January 4. Over the course of 9 days they drove over 2,000 miles, gutted three houses, and spent time with our twin parish, St. Paul the Apostle. It was a challenging adventure and everyone cannot wait to go back down!

Homes have to be gutted down to the cement flooring and the studs before they can be demolished or rebuilt. Whether it was tearing up seven layers of tile and linoleum, or pulling out yards of insulation, this crew worked hard. We were also able to meet some of the New Orleans natives, hear their stories, and create lasting memories.



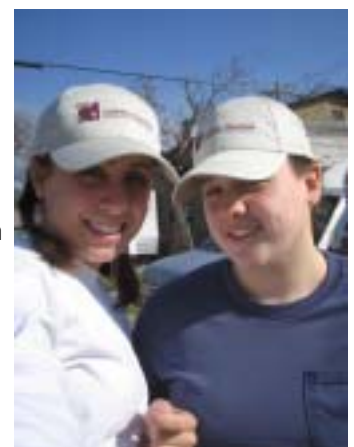
Tearing out the materials was the easy, and often fun part. It got quite a bit more difficult to haul carpeting, toilets and even tubs to the trash pile!



From one house we pulled out trash that piled over 8 feet high and stretched the entire property length.



Only on New Year's Eve when we attended Mass at St. Paul the Apostle Parish were we clean! Our twin parish welcomed us with open arms and cheers.





Catholic Schools: The Good News in Education



St. Francis of Assisi School had a weeklong celebration of Catholic Schools. Each day had a theme and it was truly a celebration of our wonderful community. Students in first through eighth grade had a special time to meet with their Mass family groups. Mass families are made up of a combination of students from each grade level, led by a teacher who is their Mass family leader. At all school masses and prayer services the students sit with their buddies. We feel that this strengthens the bond of caring and giving among the school as a whole, and provides our older students the opportunity to practice their leadership skills.

So, on Wednesday Jan. 31st, the students met with their mass families to create pom poms, which were then used in a PEP assembly later in the afternoon. The pictures here show our students demonstrating their incredible energy and school spirit.



In December, we held our annual Christmas program and as always the church was filled to capacity with proud parents and grandparents to see their children in the program. As you can see we had a variety of talent from our band, strings choir and drama represented. We do have an amazing group of students and our faculty is the best.





The EDGE is about service, fun & the Spirit!

The Edge has been very busy so far this winter. We had lots of fun in November!

We started the month by helping Neighborhood Senior Services do some raking on November 11th for their Annual Fall Chore Day. We ended the month with an exciting evening, playing Zap Zone Lazer Tag.

We did not slow down in December! We had a great time on December 9th at Colonial Lanes doing the Rock and Roll Bowling. It was a blast. We have quite a few excellent bowlers!!! Then, on December 17th, we helped out the Knights of Columbus with the Children's Christmas Festival following the Living Nativity Procession. It was hard to tell who was having more fun ... the youth helping out, or the children playing the games!!



At the Edge, we do a combination of service and social events! It is a great chance for the youth to take a break from school and have fun, or help others!

Please read the Forum for more information on these and other great events and activities planned! For a complete list of the events for the rest of this year, please check online at www.stfrancisa2.com under the Middle School Link. This Spring, we will be having the 2nd Annual Edge Olympics, an awesome year-end party and much more. Plus, mark your calendars now for July 25th!! We will be heading to Cedar Point!

Edge events are open to ALL 6th, 7th and 8th graders!!



For more information on **The Edge**, please contact Victoria Emch (at 821-2133 or emch@stfrancisa2.org).

Special Marriage Mass

to celebrate and honor all engaged & married parish couples



On Saturday, February 10th over one hundred couples attended our annual "Mass Celebrating Marriage". The couples renewed their marriage vows and those with Milestone Anniversaries were especially recognized. Milestone anniversaries are any multiple of five years. We congratulate all engaged and married couples at St. Francis of Assisi parish and would like to honor those with Milestone Anniversaries who gave us their names in advance.

Two milestone anniversaries are applauded.



- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| Susanna & Scott Brown | 10 years |
| Victoria & Ted Emch | 10 years |
| Kathy & Norman Miller | 20 years |
| Annie & Ed Scott | 30 years |
| Marianne & Kenyon Schmanske | 40 years |
| Mary & Daniel Sougstad | 45 years |
| Anne & Don Courtois | 50 years |
| Monica & John Judson | 60 years |



SOCIAL MINISTRY

Christmas Dinner Party for Perry Nursery School



We thank the Party Coordinators: Roger Parlett, Chris Kempton, and Zach & Loren Weathers. And, we especially thank the more than 78 volunteers who prepared the food and/or served at the party, or helped with children's activities and crafts; Linda Opaleski and the St. Francis School choir; and Carol Marino and the Friendship/Helping Group of Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities.

A Thank You Note ~

On behalf of all our families and staff, we want to thank the wonderful people of St. Francis of Assisi Parish for hosting the Christmas Dinner Party for Perry Nursery School in December. We appreciate all the efforts made by your office and the parish volunteers to make this event a very special time for all of our attending families.

We extend a special thanks to you and all the dinner coordinators including Loren and Zach Weathers, Roger Parlett, and Chris Kempton. The music of the middle school choir led by Mrs. Opaleski lent a joyous air to the evening. It was fun to participate in the singing of familiar carols. Our children loved the games, as well as the arts and crafts projects. Everyone enjoyed the abundance of food and the desserts were terrific!

The Christmas Dinner Party was a welcome respite for our families and staff during the usually hectic holiday time. We are grateful for this wonderful expression of your parish ministry to Perry and for being our partner. We know that you share in our sense of accomplishment for all of the children and families that have been reached as a result of your continued support of our program. May your generosity be returned to you abundantly during this year.

We are just overwhelmed by the caring generosity of everyone at St. Francis. Our families & staff had a wonderful time. We truly appreciate everything that everyone has done for us! You are very special people!! Thanks for all you do!

Sincerely,
Sandra Hilton, Executive Director



Photo Exhibit Exposes the Agonies of Sudan

We are keenly aware of the devastation in Darfur today, and have been for years, yet the death toll mounts ... What do you think is the actual reason for the inaction of the international community?

The Peace and Justice Committee of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church is making the arrangements for this event, and has taken the lead in sponsoring the photo exhibit, *Hands of a Displaced Sudan*, chronicled by Ryan Spencer Reed, a photojournalist from Michigan. The photo exhibit brings to life the agonies of Sudan in a way that words cannot. It can be viewed at <http://www.ryanspencerreed.com>. It is scheduled to be on display from May 2-June 14, 2007, at the Mallets Creek Public Library in Ann Arbor, and will be free and open to the public during regular library hours. We are planning a grand opening of the exhibit with feature a presentation by Mr. Reed.



This event will cost about \$3500. In early January 2007, we approached other congregations to co-sponsor this event so that

more people will be reached. We mailed a letter to more than 130 congregation leaders in Washtenaw County asking them to encourage their congregation to consider co-sponsoring the photo exhibit. We presently have paid cosponsorships from St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Parish, St. Mary Student Parish, and Beth Israel Congregation, St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Parish, Scio Community Alliance Church, and we expect several more communities to join us in cosponsoring. We each are becoming part of a collective effort to end the genocide in the Darfur Region of Sudan and elsewhere.

The next meeting will be on **Thursday, March 15 @ 7 PM in the St. Francis Parish Office**. If you are interested in being part of this work in any small or big way, please contact: Kelly Gauthier (544-2915) <chaysayd@yahoo.com>, Jim Varani (995-2597) <varani@umich.edu>, or, contact our St. Francis Social Ministry Office (821-2121)

& visit: www.stfrancisa2.com/socialministry/darfur.htm

"If you want peace, work for justice"

Pope Paul VI



gifts for the 1,100 gift tag requests that were on our Giving Tree during Advent.

The following quotes are from a few of the "Thank You" notes we received...

...thank you ... It was because of your compassion and generosity that these families were so tremendously blessed for Christmas. Sincerely, Naomi Williams, **Hope Clinic**.

Thank you, for the generous gifts given to our consumers. The consumers were so excited when each one of them received and open their gifts. The St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church Giving Tree Program is a wonderful service for the community. The church's support is a testimony to the

We especially want to thank Susanna Brown and Carol Wisner for their work in coordinating the Giving Tree Program in December 2006. St. Francis parishioners provided



compassionate heart of the congregation and the generosity of the Church's members.

Peace, Lavinia Love, **Community Support and Treatment Services to Persons with Development Disabilities**, E. Ellsworth, Ann Arbor.

Thank you so much for your donation of clothes, coats, shoes, toys, books and gift certificates ... Our work simply would not be possible without you and others from our community who donate time, money, and other valuable resources [Christmas gifts]. We are grateful to you for being part of this significant network ... open to survivors every minute of every day each year. ... meeting the needs of 40-50 shelter residents every day. Thank you for your role in working toward a community where all survivors and their children find safety and justice.



Sincerely,
Barbara Niess, **SAFE House Center**.

St. Francis Social Ministry:
821-2121

Starry Starry Night ... A Million Reasons to Shine

6th Annual Educational Trust Fund Benefit

Kick-off Party for Education Trust Fund Benefit

On Saturday, January 27th Dave and Lisa Filipe, Chairpersons of the 2007 Educational Trust Fund Benefit, hosted a festive and fun kick-off party for the event at their home. Over 40 guests attended the celebration that included a wine tasting, and delicious hors d'oeuvres and desserts prepared by Lisa, who loves to cook. In addition to creating enthusiasm for the benefit, the kick-off party was an opportunity for Dave and Lisa to give thanks to the teams of dedicated volunteers who are working vigorously to plan the May 11th event.

Catholic education is a key ministry at St. Francis Parish. As Lisa said, *"I am consistently amazed at the time and talents offered by our faculty and staff, our families and parishioners, and other friends of Catholic education who work together to create such an atmosphere where academics excel, but just as importantly, souls are nurtured."* Dave and Lisa have been St. Francis parishioners for 12 years. Their three "stars," Lydia (4th grade), Sophia (2nd grade) and Mia (kindergarten) attend our school.

The Educational Trust Fund Benefit gives our parish a gateway to support and recognize the extraordinary environment that nurtures and educates our children. Guests of all ages come together as a community of faith to celebrate, affirm and secure the goodness and future prosperity of Catholic education in our parish community.

Educational Trust Fund

The Educational Trust Fund was established in 1987 to provide long-term financial assistance to our school. The corpus of the Fund (which is nearly one million dollars) is invested, and interest is generated. Each year, a percentage of the interest is deposited in the school's operating budget to assist with a variety of operating expenses. This year the award totaled \$38,000.

Through our collective support and prayers, the Educational Trust Fund helps safeguard our academic environment so we can continue to provide children with strong Catholic and moral foundations, enabling them to contribute to the world in meaningful ways. These are wonderful and lifelong gifts.



Dave & Lisa Filipe, 2007 ETF Benefit Chairpersons

You are invited to attend the
**6th Annual Educational
Trust Fund Benefit**

★ **Starry,** ★
★ **Starry Night**

Friday, May 11

Kensington Court in Ann Arbor

★ ***A Million Reasons To Shine***

The event is designed to be
enjoyable in every detail.

For more information,
call Colleen Pierce
at 734.821.2208 or visit

www.stfrancisa2.org/school



(left) Children respond enthusiastically at the *Common Conference Children's Workshop* last January 20, 2007.

(right) *Preparation for*

Sacraments: Candidates for Confirmation this spring, their sponsors and parents gather together to focus on the sacrament. The month of January saw meetings to begin the Confirmation preparation for 7th graders to be confirmed in 2008, and First Eucharist preparation for second graders coming to the table of the Lord in early May 2007.

(below) Susanna, Scott, and Parker Brown played the roles of Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus for the *Living Nativity Procession* last December 2006.



(right) The light of faith is proudly displayed with the words of God's love both in Obijwe and Arabic as part of the cultures display, *Christmas Around the World* last December.



For more information or to enroll,
please call the Religious Education Office at 821-2130.



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