

SJN Insights

Vol. 14 No. 3 A quarterly publication for the St. John Neumann parish community September 1998

Renew 2000: an invitation

By Linda Fetzer

What is RENEW 2000's Invitational Ministry team? And what does it have to do with me?

I asked myself that April 30th after volunteering for the team.

We all had experienced Renew and wanted to invite everyone in our parish to this faith-sharing opportunity.

Father Bovard offered to send a personal letter to SJN family members who had recently received a sacrament and newcomers to the parish. This would introduce the names of Renew 2000's Invitational Ministers, who would call that parish member and request a brief visit to their home.

The purpose was to invite fellow parishioners to participate in the Parish Mission and the Fall '98 Season of Renew 2000.

The plan looked slick on pa-

per, especially with chairperson Steve Smith's multi-colored flow charts! Then came the formidable task of finding people to make the calls and visits.

Here is where the Holy Spirit really shows His Stuff — 44 SJN family members said, "Yes!" They knew this was not your "run of the mill" church volunteer job — a couple meetings, a couple donuts, a couple "Amens."

Without their optimism and perseverance, there wouldn't be an Invitational Ministry.

The Team's responsibilities for this season are largely complete. Our success is not based on how technically perfect the telephone calls and home visits are made. Our success isn't based on how

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Renew 2000 for all of us

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many parish family members say “Yes” to our invitation. In fact, it’s a bit arrogant to talk about “our success” at all. We have been given a gift from the Spirit — a charism — and we used it to serve our SJM family. The rest is up to Him. (And you!)

So what the heck does the Invitational Ministry have to do with me?

I’m a rather ordinary person; no halo, just ask my family. I’ve never even seen a burning bush, let alone spoken with one. Sharing my spiritual life with people I don’t know is a little embarrassing, even scary.

I don’t want people to think I’m “too religious” — whatever that means. But, deep down, I think we all need to believe that our life has meaning, has a purpose.

We all have a need for a sense of community and deeper, more genuine relationships. We also share the need to grow in faith.

That’s why I go to Mass. That’s why I joined the Invitational Ministry Team.

And that is why I invite you to participate in SJM’s Parish Mission and Renew 2000.

Small faith sharing groups begin Oct 4. Sign up on Sign Up Sunday, after mass Saturday Sept. 12 or Sunday, Sept. 13, in the education building.

Ask Father Bob:

Someone asked me, not too long ago, "Whatever happened to those old time missions, that the church used to have?" Well, despite some changes in terminology and thrust, we still have these experiences.

Sometimes they're called "renewals" or days of recollection, or even retreat experiences, but the aim is the same; namely, to give us some concentrated time to do some reflecting on our lives. Don't we all need from time to time the opportunity to ask where we are, where we're headed, and how we plan to get there?

And it just so happens we're planning a "MISSION" this fall. The dates are Sunday, Sept. 13th through Wednesday, Sept. 16th. Each night we will gather in church for a wonderful program of scripture, song, and reflective talks (brief) given by a number of our own parishioners. These sessions will typically begin at 7:00 p.m. and move to the Education Bldg. no later than 8:00 p.m. for a social. Please mark your calendars now, and check out other columns in this issue of INSIGHTS for more information. This promises to be a very special four nights in the life of SJN. *Fr. Bob Coyne is parochial vicar of St. John Neumann. Send questions to him at the rectory.*

SJN will offer two new programs in high school religious education

By Grace Ghirardi
Director for Religious Education and Youth Minister

What do the Sunday Scriptures have to do with me and my life?

This is a question many teens and adults ask themselves.

This fall, the new Renew 2000 small faith sharing program will give high school teens, in grades 9 through 12 an opportunity to ponder and discuss this and other important issues in their lives.

This new program will be offered Sunday evenings, starting Oct. 5.

Registrations are coming in quickly, so please sign up soon if you are interested.

Social Justice is an issue that many young people struggle with and have questions about.

This new class will be offered on Tuesday evenings, for high school teens in grades 9 through 12.

In addition to covering topics including poverty, racism, etc., there will be opportunities for hands-on experience and guest speakers.

There is limited space and only one class is being offered, so, please register as soon as possible.

Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 each have their own curricu-

lum devoted to that grade. Here are brief descriptions of the various subjects covered in each grade.

Grade 9: Who am I and what attitudes and actions do the teachings of Jesus Christ call me to embrace?

Several groups will meet both in homes and at SJN on Monday evenings to try to answer these questions and more.

Grade 10: What is sin? Why does the church teach abortion and euthanasia are wrongful acts? Is homosexuality a sin?

Want a better understanding of moral issues which might affect you? Monday evening class at SJN.

Grade 11: As you develop into a young adult, learn more about the Scriptures in an informal atmosphere.

How can the Old and New Testaments help you grow spiritually in today's world? Monday evenings at SJN.

Grade 12: Moving on in life...Getting ready to face new and exciting challenges.

What issues will you face in the next year and beyond?

This young adult group will help high school seniors prepare for their future after high school. Monday evenings at SJN.

In Appalachia, work campers built bridges of love and playgrounds, too

By Chris Hewitt

Work camp is different for every person. Each camper comes home with different stories. Here's mine.

On a Saturday in June, I rode with six other work campers in a van to Tunnelton, W.Va., where we were to help our first family that week. Not knowing what to expect, we pulled up to the K. family's trailer. A smiling Ralph K., in his forties and disabled, emerged. He was extremely happy to see us and invited us inside where we met his wife Claire and their 3 children, R.J., Sarah and Noah. Three-year-old Noah was all smiles and giggled as two girls in our crew played with him. From the hustle of the living room, R.J., an eight-year-old boy, led me to the room he shared with his sister. Excited and smiling, he showed me toy cars and the cardboard track he made for them. R.J.'s 10-year-old sister, Sarah, showed us her dolls. We played and talked until we decided to start work.

We first dug holes for foundation posts of the deck we were building. R.J. and Sarah insisted on helping, grabbing the digging bar and trying not to wince so we wouldn't know it was too heavy for them. Full of pride and excitement, they helped us for three days to build their new front porch deck. R.J.

would periodically come up to me and take my hand saying, "I'm with you."

Our group paid to move the family's donated mobile home from another county. Ralph told me that it's the first the family has ever owned. They lost much of what they owned in a fire a few years ago and

few miles away in a community known as "Hollywood". Even the most experienced in our group had difficulty comprehending the poverty there. Children ran around dirty, bruised, and barefoot. Many parents did, too. Houses were missing walls and windows, roofs leaked and a natural spring had turned much of the ground into a mud pit. I had never seen so many shacks in one place. Our group had work crews here all week, fixing as much as we could.



Playground designer Chris Hewitt and crew member Tracy Bauer swing some of the local children on the recently completed play set in the "Hollywood" section of Tunnelton, W.Va.

he has been off work for some time because of back problems. The family was one of the most loving and appreciative I have ever met.

On our fourth day, we finished at the K. family home. We said our good-byes. I didn't want to leave.

The next day, we worked a

People in "Hollywood" were different from the K's, standoffish and quiet. It was difficult to see love here. Early in the week, the situation looked hopeless.

My crew wanted to build a playground. With no idea what to build, I went looking

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In West Virginia, campers brought tools, and love

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for experts. Soon, I had 12 kids sitting on a hillside: Charlotte, Latascha, Damion, Joseph, Carlene, Clarence, Cathleen, Roger, Debbie, Leslie, John-Wayne and Tiffany. They wanted a fort, slide, swings and monkey bars.

The next day we began the playground. The children watched cautiously and curiously, at least 20 feet away at all times. A 20-year-old man living down the hill asked if he could help. We gladly accepted and he worked on a slide with one of our work campers. Everything

went well. You could see excitement building in the eyes of the children.

On the second day, five children argued over who would use the hammer. It was as though their fear had disappeared overnight. Neighborhood people came by. Some offered to help, others opted to talk. In two days, the whole spirit of the community had changed. People helped and talked to our crews. A mother watched her children adoringly as they jumped over the new playground. You could see love amidst the bleak surroundings.

Friday, we prepared to leave. As we cleaned up, one woman thanked me. She said, "We've had crews come in here before and they would come in and stare at us and not talk to us and work and go away. They never did anything for the children. I really appreciate everything you guys did."

My experiences in Appalachia helped me learn more about people and about the meaning of the work we do. The Appalachia Workcamp brings people together to help one-on-one. We get to know them as individuals. We work with them, play with them, cry for them, and pray for them, but more important, we show them love. Love exists in many forms, sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle. Part of our goal in Appalachia is to show love to people who haven't seen it expressed as we do. We show them how we work with and respect people. We try to show them the words of God through our actions and we work to make their lives a little bit easier to bear.

Because of this trip, there are 15 children in Preston County whom I care about. I pray each night that they find the strength and courage to break the cycle of poverty and that the love that we showed them will lead them to a brighter future. If our work in Appalachia inspired even one child to fight for a better life, then the 1998 Appalachia Workcamp was a huge success.

Chris Hewitt is a fourth-year work camper and a junior at Penn State University.

1998 Appalachia Work Campers

Preston County, WV

June 27 - July 4

(St. John Neumann's

12th Year in Appalachia)

Tracy Bauer	Paul Hlasnik
Vicki Bertoty	Matt Hreha
Father William Bovard	Dennis Juran
Jessica Brandes	Laura Juran
Paulette Bundick	Stephanie Juran
Rachel Bundick	Bill Kristan
Chris Byrnes	Jenni Kristan
Mardy Byrnes	Jenny Kuhn
Molly Byrnes	John Kuhn
Lance Chimka	Tad Lehmann
Eric Dahar	Mark Lopes
Lorraine Dahar	Kim Madia
Beth Farrell	Bridget Maloney
Jen Fatica	Mike Mantia
Julie Federico	Barbara Mikulski
Marco Federico	Mark Palchak
Santo Federico	Julie Parina
Bethany Fetzer	John Parks
Mark Fetzer	Bret Poppleton
Erin Foley	Charles Schneider
Dorian Fox	Sarah Schneider
Lou Gacek	Jeff Schneider
Tony Gacek	Tricia Speakman
Jamie Guentner	Mark Sperry
Jeff Guentner	Jim Starman
Julie Guentner	Matt Stullken
Cathy Hewitt	Mimi Stullken
Chris Hewitt	Joe Urso
Tom Hewitt Jr.	Jen Wickert
Tom Hewitt III	

Campers tackle six Indiana projects

**By Sarah Schneider
Community Outreach &
Workcamps Coordinator**

Fifteen teens and five adults from St. John Neumann went to Indiana County, Pa. July 26 - 31 for what was supposed to be a Habitat for Humanity Workcamp. When one of the Habitat sites in Aultman was eliminated just a week before departure, we sought other

sistance in Josephine. Late in the week, a needy couple near the Jimmy Stewart Airport was identified by a Presbyterian church. Better access to a trailer home was needed for a 47-year-old invalid and his wife. He'd been in the hospital for two months for lung cancer and heart problems. The trailer door was four feet above ground with a bad

were second- and first-year work campers. NA sophomore Diana says, "When we built the deck and stairs for the couple in the trailer, we were a team working together for a cause!" Charles, an NA junior, says, "This summer was different from last year when we framed and roofed a house and a different church provided our lunch every day. But I found it to be just as rewarding. We made our own lunches as work camps have done in the past. And we got to see the people we worked for at most sites. It was great for us to help others and get to know one another better during the times we came together as a group."

A family now lives in the SteppingStone Bridgehouse apartment that work crews cleaned, repainted and recarpeted. At the Parkhill Apartments for low-income families, a crew removed roots of a large tree, dug around the building, shoveled stones and laid concrete slabs for a sidewalk. Nearby, the registered plumber in the group and some teens installed water pipes for a family adding to a trailer home. At the Pathway Homeless Shelter in Black Lick, walls of the community room were primed and painted. The Habitat house in Aultman was also primed and painted while soffit, fascia and interior doors were installed. Work campers set up **contin-**

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Work campers Juliann Urbaniak, Mike Limbacher, Amber Nehnevajsa, Sean Miller, and Paula Kuhn take a picture break while working on the Habitat house in Aultman, Pa.

places where the group could work.

The work campers agreed to work with the Indiana County Action Office and the Indiana Planning Organization on four sites in addition to a Habitat house. Those were a homeless shelter in Black Lick, bridge housing apartments for abused women and their children in Graceton, low-income housing and a family needing plumbing as-

stairs. For the first time in seven years (the first four were in Greene County), the Habitat work campers would be at different sites.

Fourth-year work camper and recent NA grad Kate Bechak recalls, "This year was unique since we were not doing just Habitat. It was nice working more with the community in lots of little towns."

Brother and sister duo Charles and Diana Scheerbaum,

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and moved scaffolding. The trailer project added Thursday involved designing the deck and stairway, buying materials, digging post holes and assembling a deck, a wide staircase and railing with spindles. The site down a wooded one-lane road intrigued the group and the people were so grateful.

1998 Indiana Work camp participants:

Kate Bechak
 Tony DeLuliis and daughter
 Lisa
 Grace Ghirardi, SJN DRE
 and Youth Minister
 Randy Hall
 Lauren Koch
 Paula Kuhn
 sisters Laura and Danielle
 Labrasca
 Mike Limbacher
 Sean Miller
 Dave Nehnevajsa and
 daughter Amber
 Adam Reese
 Charles and sister Diana
 Scheerbaum
 Sarah Schneider, SJN
 Community Outreach and
 Workcamps Coordinator
 Nate Smith
 Bill Urbaniak and daughter
 Juliann

Adoration of Blessed Sacrament resumes with beginning of school year on Sept. 4

**By Clara Donovan
Worship Committee**

On Friday, Sept. 4, St. John Neumann will resume Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The Worship Committee decided to resume at the start of the school year, from 9:30 a.m. to Noon, the first Friday of the month.

This custom began in the 13th Century, when saints like Francis of Assisi and Thomas Aquinas brought about the feast of Corpus Christi. This popular feast encouraged further development of Eucharistic devotion.

“The Blessed Sacrament is at times removed from the tabernacle in which it is ordinarily kept, and placed upon the altar for adoration. Usually the Host is placed in a monstrance, so that the Sacred Species can be seen by the faithful adoring their present but unseen Lord.” (1)

The Church warmly commends this devotion to the Real Presence of the Lord. Canon Law prescribes that one person, preferably two, be present at all times of adoration.

In accordance with this law, we ask parishioners to sign up for a special time. Anyone may come to the chapel during this time, but we must abide by Canon Law.

“Wherever the sacrament is, there is the Christ who is our Lord and our God; hence He is ever to be worshiped in this mystery.” (2)

There will be a sign-up in the church lobby each month or call Clara Donovan, 366-4013, and note your time preference. Please join us in this special devotion.

¹*The Teaching of Christ*; p. 428; 206. ²C. F. Pope Paul VI Encyclical *Mysterium Fidei*, Sept. 3, 1965 (EV. 433-434).

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Pastoral Associate: Ann Shuckrow
Director for Religious Education:
 Andrew O. James
*Director for Religious Education,
 Family and Sacramental Minis-
 tries:* Barbara Stokes
Director for Religious Education:
 Grace Ghirardi

Community Outreach Coordinator:
 Sarah Schneider
Pastoral Counselor:
 Larry Badaczewski,
 M.S.W./A.C.S.W.
Music Minister: David Evankovich

*Insights is published quarterly by
 St. John Neumann. Editors: Paul
 and Brenda Furiga*

Parish health ministry readies to reach out

By **Janice Wolfe,**
RN, MHS

On May 18, a group of caring individuals from our church community gathered together to explore the potential possibilities for a Health Ministry at St. John Neumann.

Following that enthusiastic initial meeting we have met several times since.

At our last meeting, on Aug. 5, Joy Conti, coordinator of the Mercy Hospital Parish Nurse and Health Ministries Program, explained that parish nursing or health ministries bridges the gap between care for the mind, the body and the spirit and brings holistic care to the parish community.

The Parish Nurse and Health Ministries Program at Mercy was begun in 1991 and is funded through a grant by

the McCune Foundation and Mercy Hospital.

Along with the hospital-based program there are many volunteer parish nurse/health ministry programs in the Pittsburgh area.

Mercy Hospital hosts a quarterly gathering for these volunteers for education programs and a sharing of experiences.

Thanks to the interest of parishioners and input from Joy Conti, the basic concept of a health ministry at SJN has evolved from a group of nurses who wanted to help to a multidisciplinary team of health professionals.

The mission of this group is to assist members of the community in health-related areas like wellness and disease prevention and to help individuals and families during

of acute illness.

This newly formed group is interested in promoting the basic elements of all health ministries, which focuses on health for the body, the mind, and the spirit.

The St. John Neumann Health ministry would work in conjunction with services already available within the parish such as the John Neumann Society.

We are anxious to begin work on this new program.

If you would like further information on either joining the group or making a request for assistance, please contact Janice Wolfe (635-0966) or Ann Shuckrow (366-2020).

Our first project will be an informational survey to assess areas of interest and needs within the parish community.

Holy Spirit, Source of Unity: Catechetical Sunday 1998

By **Andrew James**
Director for Religious Education

On Sunday, Sept. 20, the Catholic Church in the United States will observe Catechetical Sunday. "Holy Spirit, Source of Unity" is the theme selected by the Department of Education for the U.S. Catholic Conference. As the millennium approaches, we are challenged to remember and live our baptismal commitment to be heralds of the Good News to the world around us. With the aid of the Holy Spirit, each of us may become alive in Jesus Christ and witness to his Gospel proclamation.

On Catechetical Sunday, our parish community acknowledges the commitment of a large number of our community who publicly and actively proclaim God's Word to our children,

children, youth and adults in the catechetical ministries of the parish. All who accept the call to minister through the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD), Good Shepherd Catechesis, Sunday Preschool, Liturgy of the Word For Children, Baptism Preparation for Parents, Marriage Preparation for Engaged Couples, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and Children (RCIA and RCIC) and the Christian Education Committee will receive the blessing of the gathered community at every Mass on Catechetical Sunday. At the same time, we are reminded that the ministry of catechesis is a shared responsibility. We are called individually and as a community to the essential work of the Church, to go forth and preach the good news.

Elizabeth Ministry begins with LIFE celebration

By Barbara Stokes

Director for Religious Education, Family and Sacramental Ministries

Big or small, young or old, all families are invited to join us 6:30-8 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 4 for songs, skits and a speaker who will encourage us to celebrate and respect life. Fun will be part of this exciting picture: face painting and balloon sculpture and games for the children and an entertaining speaker for the adults. This fast-paced hour and a half will include an old-fashioned ice cream social. Call your neighbors and come celebrate LIFE. This event is sponsored by Elizabeth Minis-

try to mark its official beginning at SJN. Just as our faith celebrates life so too will Elizabeth Ministry in our parish community. This woman-to-woman ministry has been meeting since last spring and we formally begin work with this celebration of life! How appropriate, for to be an Elizabeth Minister is to develop an attitude of mind and heart that values life. It is to take seriously the message of Jesus which insists that every person is loved into existence by God, who is lover and savior. This celebration of life is one way to share our joy and belief that if every person began to recognize ways to show reverence for life, it could change our world.

“Elizabeth Ministry is a grassroots movement that focuses our energies and efforts to affirm, foster, and safeguard the life of every human person from the first moment of conception.” Elizabeth Ministry is dedicated to the premise that by cherishing all life we will be transformed. We will learn from children to trust, to be open to share and to love. We will receive the kingdom of God in and through the little ones we serve.

So we hope everyone will join us in prayer for our world to value life. We also hope many of you will come on October 4th, from 6:30-8 p.m. and make it a wonderful celebration of LIFE at SJN. Registration forms are on the lobby table. If you want more information about Elizabeth Ministry call Carole Cunningham at 366-5194 or Barb Stokes at 366-5885.

Respect ALL life — A special blessing of pets set for Oct. 4

Bring your pet and celebrate God's blessings Sunday, Oct. 4 at 2 p.m. Pets play a significant role in developing skills of caring for and protecting life. The Scriptures remind us of the special relationship between humanity and “beasts of the earth” in the Genesis ac-

counts of creation. In the New Testament, we learn that God's protection over us is like the care a good shepherd provides for his flock. And we know that in Jewish law and tradition in Jesus' time, even animals were to be given a day of rest on the Sabbath as the people of God were.

The Feast of St. Francis—the Patron Saint of animals, gives us a chance to celebrate God's wonderful gift of pets. So bring yours (in a cage or on a leash) to the front circle of the church at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 4 for this unique blessing and to receive a St. Francis medal for pets.

Families and teens Renew

**By Elaine Lafayette
Liturgy Preparation Team**

The Liturgy Preparation team invites parishioners to bring to church a 4-inch square of material beginning the evening of the Mission's Eucharistic celebration and continuing through the Renew season. We ask each family or individual to select a piece of fabric that represents or expresses who they are (a burlap or textured material, or perhaps a silky delicate piece). As the squares are sewn together, they symbolize our coming together as a community — that we can do nothing alone. As family, as friends, as a community of believers, we must hold hands and join together, doing our part to help each other do the best we can.

**By Sharon Wirtz
Renew Core Community**

This fall, Renew 2000 faith sharing groups are available to teens (or teen participation). Those interested will meet in groups of 8-12 on Sunday evenings for guided discussion after scripture reflection. Teens who commit to Renew fulfill their CCD requirement.

Teenagers tend to share daily experiences with friends. In Renew, they will look at these experiences from the point of view of their faith. The Renew structure is less formal than the usual classroom and allows a lot of free-flowing discussion. We should hear a lot of great ideas. We hope what follows is a deeper commitment to our faith. Sessions begin Oct. 5.

SJN Women's Guild ready to begin 1998-1999 season

**By Mildred Benitz
SJN Women's Guild**

The women of the Guild invite all women of the parish to join us for the first meeting of the 1998-1999 season, 7:30 p.m. Monday, Sept. 21, in the Education Building. Dues will be collected.

Tickets for the annual "Wine & Cheese" Craft Show Preview will be available to members at this meeting. The Preview will be Friday evening, Nov. 6 with the Craft Show, Saturday, Nov. 7. The crafters have been meeting on Wednesday mornings following Mass to create items for the Guild table at the show. Please come and join us if you like to sew, glue, stamp, or just socialize. Many hands make work light!

The profits from the Craft Show and the Fashion Show are donated to charities, as well as SJN organizations.

This past season we were able to allocate \$8,200 to Affordable Housing, Perry Hilltop and Incarnation food banks, Miryam's House, the Jubilee Kitchen, the Christ Child Society, the Verland and Vincentian programs, as well as SJN Groups: Hands In Service, Appalachia, the CCD program, Preschool, and the Youth Group.

The Vincentian Home programs are held on the second Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. and people are always needed to push wheelchairs, assist with bingo and serve refreshments. Let us know if you wish to help.

We look forward to seeing you in September for the start of a wonderful year of service, socializing, and friendship.

Call Mildred Benitz, 366-5907, if you need information or have questions.

Over 50 club schedules its fall meetings

The SJN Over 50 Club begins Sept. 17. A representative from Rose Valley Retirement Village will speak about its new facility on Rochester Road.

The Halloween Party will be Oct. 22; the November gathering is the 19th. Our Christmas celebration will be Dec. 17th. All events will be announced in the weekly bulletin. Flyers for special events and our regular monthly

newsletter will be on the table in the church lobby.

All members of the parish are invited to attend.

To join, just come to the meetings and sign up.

Officers for the coming year are: Clara Donovan, president; Bob Lupi, vice-president; Peg Harkins, secretary; and Grace Grenzig, treasurer. For information call Clara, 366-4013 or Grace, 364-3991.

Around the world in one youth week

By Grace Ghirardi
Director for Religious Education and Youth Minister

Twenty-three sixth, seventh and eighth graders began St. John Neumann Youth Week Aug. 11 with a trip to Lynbrook Park. Our young adults, Allesandra Maletta and Christian Ghirardi, helped our junior high people learn more

about themselves and their God with many activities during the day. Fr. Bob joined us for lunch. The pizza was from Pizza Outlet and I think it was a first time for delivery to Lynbrook Park.

On Wednesday, we sorted clothes, packed boxes, and toured the "World Vision" warehouse in Sewickley. The

items packaged are sent to third world countries and SJM has been participating in this endeavor through "Hands In Service" for several years. After many hours of hard work, the junior highers and guests, Andy James and Barb Stokes; adult chaperones Mimi Stullken, Toni Ambrosino and additional driver, Michele Conley, were rewarded with ice cream at King's. Tom Matera, a junior at Vincentian High School was our new young adult helper.

Thursday, we returned to Lynbrook Park in the morning and then to Giant Eagle to buy lunch. The youth were divided into small groups and given a set amount of money to make their purchase. This required team planning and hopefully gave them a chance to experience buying food on a small budget. After lunch, Sarah Schneider and young people from SJM Appalachia and Habitat Workcamps shared their experiences in a witness talk and slide show. We'd like to thank Sarah, Stephanie Juran, Jen Wickert, Tony Gacek, Bret Poppleton and Matt Hreha.

Friday was our big day at Sandcastle and the conclusion to youth week. Several youth who could not be a part of this week joined us on the water slides. And who said church is not fun!

Good Shepherd takes flock to new level

By Barbara Stokes
Director for Religious Education, Family and Sacramental Ministries

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd approaches the spiritual development of children and their religious education through the principles of Dr. Maria Montessori. Her unique way of looking at children and observing their developmental needs leads us to the atrium. The atrium becomes the place of prayer, work and meditation for the child. This atrium environment helps to nurture and deepen the child's natural relationship with God. We've made some marvelous discoveries in two years at St. John Neumann as we initiated the



atrium experience in our sacristy space. This catechesis is an alternative method of religious instruction. Last year we had six sessions for 3- to 6-year-old children in our atrium. The response has been wonderful- we've seen children who want to be here and keep working after class time, we've seen children excited about God's presence and God's work and we've even had one little one ask if he could just stay here and sleep! WOW!! This led us to work hard this summer and

to extend the program to the 6- to 9-year-old group. So this fall we'll begin Level II of the catechesis of the Good Shepherd! Like Level I it is based totally in Scripture and liturgy. Now we'll move into the concept of time and how God's gifts have been given and used in time and sacrament. Jesus, God's greatest gift and our Good Shepherd, expands our world and helps us enter God's time of incarnation and redemption. With thanks to Joyce Kelleher and Fr. Bovard, and praise to God, we grow once more deeper and deeper into God's story. We grow with joy! We know this for the children are sharing theirs and we are richer for it!

A teen teaches CCD — and learns from his students

As Catechetical Sunday 1997 loomed, there were vacancies in our faculty. Tony Gacek, a rising high school senior, was asked to teach a 4th grade. Here is his reflection of the year.

When Andrew James asked me to teach CCD to 4th graders. I, an 11- (going on 12-) year veteran of CCD, thought, "Yeah, I can handle this." I thought I could help the kids understand Catholicism and learn about God. As it turned out, they learned more about God and I learned more about community. The youngsters were more than willing to ask questions about God, church, beanie babies, and the popularity of the Spice Girls. The 11 of us bonded, not as teacher and students, but as a community. Our classes were based on real-life issues. We used the students' current situations to learn more about religion. In turn, we all learned more about each other. The students learned that God loves everyone. I learned that children love to play hangman. We

learned together, laughed together and we ate snacks together. I am so glad I chose to teach CCD. It told me a lot about myself. I remembered what it was like to be in 4th grade. I remember the tough times I went through. Being picked last for kick ball was the end of the world. But in our class, things were different. The kid who was probably picked last sat next to the star player. They had no ill-feeling towards each other. They were members of the same community, both wanting to learn more about God. One student asked me the same question every week, "Tony, if you're so smart — then what is the meaning of life?" I would pause for an answer, but the same response came every time. "The meaning of life is what you make it to be. More than likely, God is a big part of it." I hope in the future that student finds his own meaning of life. And I also hope God is a big part of it.

Parish Share is a St. John Neumann success story

By Bradley J. Franc
Temporalities Committee

As summer winds down, and our children return to school (yea!), the Temporalities Committee would like to provide you with an update of the Parish Share Program. For the third year in a row, we exceeded the prior year's pledged amount! In 1996 and 1997, \$158,275 and \$179,470 was pledged, respectively. This year, \$186,928 was pledged. On behalf of the Temporalities Committee and St. John Neumann, we thank you for your generosity and commitment.

As of July 31, we are also pleased to report that our parish has received over 58% of the total amount pledged. In the past, we have received over 95% of the pledges by the end of the parish share year. If the parish is to remain financially healthy, we will need the same type of response this year.

Parish Share is a program in which funds pledged by parishioners help satisfy the annual diocesan assessment. The general assessment equals 17% of the total of the general weekly offertory collected by our parish. In addition, our parish is responsible for a second assessment from the Diocese of 10% of the general

offertory for school subsidies.

Although there is a 27% tax on all general offertory collections, any amounts pledged to Parish Share are exempt from the 27% assessment. As we pledge more of our weekly contributions to Parish Share, our diocesan assessment is reduced. If the \$186,928 pledged to this year's Parish Share had been made as a general offertory, St. John Neumann would have had to make an additional \$50,470 payment to the Diocese in 1999. Instead, that savings can be used to help support the important programs of our parish.

Besides meeting the financial obligations of the Diocese and supporting the programs of our parish, our parish must maintain its own facilities, which require routine maintenance and repair. It's only through continued financial support of parishioners that our facilities can be maintained.

We also want to bring to your attention that it is not too late to make a parish share pledge for 1998. Any new parishioner to the parish or anyone who just "never got to it" can still make a pledge for 1998. If you should need any information regarding 1998 Parish Share, please do not hesitate to call the parish rectory.

You, too, can be Moses for an hour on Sunday mornings

By Linda Fetzer

So you come to Mass. You think to yourself, "You know, I'd really like to get more involved in this parish." You pick up the Sunday bulletin and say, "WHOA! I can't make *that* time commitment" or "*I'm* not free that time of day" or whatever. Well, do we have the volunteer opportunity for you! First, it's *during* Mass — so you're up at church already. Second, if you have little kids, they'll be so proud of you, they'll burst! And third, it has the weirdest acronym in church history,

LOWC. Yes, I'm talking about Liturgy of the Word for Children!

The time commitment is minimal — one or two hours a month. And, you are given the awesome delight of "breaking open" the Word of God for our youngest parish members. (Remember those sermons in church when you were a kid!) Plus, you won't be alone — you'll be part of a team, under the expert guidance and unlimited imagination of Barbara Stokes.

I remember when our family was involved. Sharing the

Sunday readings in simple, down-to-earth language made Scripture so much more alive to *me*. Since my husband Mark has a beard and a mustache, he cheerfully "volunteered" to be cast as every male Old Testament character we needed. Did you know there are kids at our church today who *still* think Moses is a parishioner at SJN? Still not sure? Say a prayer or two about it. Call Barbara for more information at 366-5885. I promise, you'll be glad you did.

Eighth grade follows the SON at SJN

By Barbara Stokes
Director for Religious Education, Family
and Sacramental Ministries

Nothing seems more important than the sun in summer. We plan activities around it and mark the days by its intensity. So too at SJN. Our incoming eighth graders (over 70% of them) let the SON guide their days in July and the Spirit was shining with them! We moved through picnics, parks and projects with lots of help and encouragement.

We tackled awesome tasks and endured fantastic heat at Miryam's House and its garden. We served the ladies, cleaned the outside area and cultivated a patch in the Hill District until finally, we picked beans, lettuce and tomatoes. Harry's Bar-

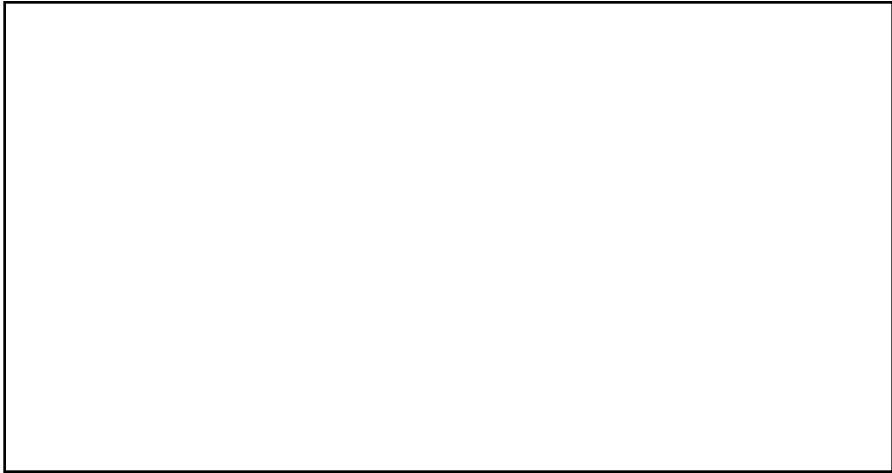
bershop offered refreshment. Sister Rosaire at Mary's House in Brookline never saw such Spirit as we mopped, dusted, moved furniture and vacuumed for the elderly women residents. We learned card games from the ladies and were entertained by their cat!

Some visited the zoo or the aviary with women and children served at Light of Life Mission on the North Side. From a picnic in the rain to a mission lunch, we experienced new sights, sounds and situations.

Lizards and frogs appeared from beads and cord at Holy Family Institute. The Spirit soared as we made new friends and delighted in their sharing of cottage, lunch and stories. We'll never forget one little guy taking his lizards for a gentle ride on his skateboard!

And we spent some great time with our friends at Jubilee Soup Kitchen. Four times they came to visit this summer. We shared story, song, skits, crafts, games, and summer

pizza, popsicles and a picnic at Lynbrook. A crew led by Charles Scheerbaum and Cari Hennessey produced an opening act each week as we searched for Treasure. The Spirit of God within us soared as we heard them singing on the bus: "Love is patient, love is kind." We rejoice in the blessings we are and



Volunteers, including Peggy Garbooshian (center) serve up lunch for Jubilee Soup Kitchen visitors during one of the group's four visits to St. John Neumann..

the joy we felt as we spread God's love.

Like many summer activities, it all took planning and help.

So we thank Mimi Stullken, Peggy Garbooshian, Bethany Fetzer, Barbara and Mark Matera, Charles Scheerbaum and crew, Iris Parks, George Kriever and Pat Westerman. Bethany Rogers and friends put together treat bags for our picnic and Heather Storm donated a toy for each. People too numerous to name provided treats or transportation. God's family grows as we spread our Spirit and follow the Son! Just as we discovered there were so many treasures around us, the Jubilee kids sent us a thank you note: "We want to say thank you for inviting us to your beautiful church. The volunteers did a great job—we had so much fun. You are all treasures! Love, The Jubilee Summer Camp." What a summer! What a SPIRIT! Thank You, SON!

To seekers, we offer RCIA and RCIC

By Barbara Stokes
Director for Religious
Education, Family and
Sacramental Ministries

Hide and Seek is a universal game. Consider "Seek and Share" not as a game but as a universal way of looking at our Catholic faith through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults or Rite of Christian Initiation for Children. Catholic churches around the world welcome "seekers" into our family with these rites.

Perhaps you know someone seeking the Lord, who has expressed a desire to look deeper at our Catholic way of following Christ.

Extend an invitation from St. John Neumann to get to know us. Sometimes people wait to be invited. Sometimes they need to know what happens next, so share what you know of our rites and rituals.

For seekers, we move from a beginning inquiry time this fall to the Rite of Acceptance and Welcome in Advent.

Then we move into the catechumenate or period of formation to learn about Scripture, tradition, history and sacraments in our Roman Catholic understanding of Jesus and his message. Participants (candidates and catechumens) travel to the cathedral, where the whole church of Pittsburgh celebrates the Rite of Election on the first Sunday of Lent with the bishop. This covenant rite marks the decision to continue toward Easter and full initiation in the church. So we enter the period of Purification and Enlightenment during Lent. These six weeks are the time of preparation and prayer for the Easter sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Baptism names us in covenant and ritual in family and is only celebrated if one has not been validly baptized in a Christian tradition. Confirmation signs and seals us with the Spirit and Eucharist

journey to the kingdom. Through these sacraments we are fully initiated into the church and welcomed by the entire community. After Easter, the new members continue to meet for six weeks during the period of mission or mystagogy.

Seekers are invited to come weekly and share openly and freely with a team of committed adults, parishioners who share their faith stories and encourage others in following Christ through the Catholic tradition to seek the kingdom and greater understanding.

We are all seekers and sharers in God's world. Hear the Lord seeking you and seek others. Observe the Lord sharing with you and share with others. Extend an invitation to a friend or family member. The Lord will do the rest. Any questions? Call Fr. Bob Coyne at 366-2020 or Barb Stokes at 366-5885, and we'll be happy to extend the invitation again and again.

Were not our hearts burning? A Catholic education conference

By Andy James
Director for Religious Education

The Secretariat for Education of the Diocese of Pittsburgh hosts its third Total Catholic Education Conference at the David Lawrence Convention Center, Downtown, Friday and Saturday, Nov. 6-7.

The conference features nationally recognized Catholic educators addressing the theme, "*On the road to the third millennium.*" Hear Rev. Alfred McBride, Mary Beth Bonacci, Rev. Michael Scanlon, Sr. Clare Fitzgerald, Rev. Mark Gruber and others talk about catechesis

catechesis in the Catholic Church for the 21st century. All involved in the ministry of religious education — catechists, parochial school teachers, pastors, catechetical administrators, parochial school principals, clergy, religious, parents — are invited. Registration for participants is \$30 for one day or \$40 for two. SJN parish catechetical volunteers will receive a subsidy from the parish. Please read the Pittsburgh Catholic for more information. You may also call the diocesan Secretariat for Education at 456-3100 or the SJN religious education office at 366-5885.

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