

July/August 2016



the

connecting the community of st. francis xavier parish

# Navigator

## 'It made us feel good'

### Nearly 300 turn out for 2nd Parish Day of Service

By Jennifer Webb

**O**ur second-annual Parish Day of Service was a hot but wonderful day as nearly 300 parishioners fanned out to more than 35 locations throughout Medina County to do yard work, paint, clean, sort donations, visit with the elderly, play games with low-income youth and much more.

"I think it's a wonderful thing that our church is doing each year," says longtime parishioner Virginia Penrose, 79. "I think it's an opportunity for those who are not Catholic or those in the community to realize we are sometimes a service-oriented group also."

Parishioners were given a chance to sign up for projects that appealed to them. Some were eager for indoor work, where they could sit and tie the fringe for fleece blankets to

be given to toddlers served by Birthcare. Others enjoyed the active work of cleaning up yards, pulling weeds and spreading mulch for those who could not do it themselves. Still others spent their time spreading cheer as they played bingo at two nursing homes or served ice cream to low-income children at Ray Mellert Park.

Virginia spent a few hours cataloging the new clothing donated for Birthcare, then helped others in her team sort the seven tables full of used clothing dropped off at our church basement.

"There were people there that I really didn't know (before), but everybody pitched in and did it," she says.

**SERVICE** continued on page 2



Saturday Vigil – 5 p.m., Sunday – 8 & 10 a.m., noon & 5:30 p.m.  
Weekdays – 7:30 a.m. Monday through Saturday; 7 p.m. Monday, Thursday & First Friday of the month



## Service

*continued from page 1*

“I think it’s a good idea to bring people together. You meet new people that way.”

Edward and Jeanne Stroffolino, with teenage sons Joey and James, spent almost two hours cleaning a lower level of Cups Café to create new areas for youth to spend time. “That was a big thing for me, finding out what (Cups Café) did, as a place for the young boys to go to, give them a meal sometimes, a place to hang out,” Edward says of the interdenominational Christian nonprofit that serves as a drop-in site for youth and adults. “They serve 40 kids a day on average. It was surprising. I go by that place a million times and didn’t know what it was.”

When they finished there, the family headed back to St. Francis Xavier Parish, where they scrubbed tables and chairs in the church basement.

“It gives you a good feeling to help out and know you can do something,” he adds. “A lot of times you think, ‘what can I do?’ This makes a nice opportunity; it’s all set up for you. You can help out and do something for someone else.”

Joyce Bair says the day gave her the chance to volunteer

alongside her three children. Nicholas Bair, 14, served rootbeer floats, and the Bair and Nichols families played bingo with about 20 residents of Brookdale Medina North. “The residents just loved it; they loved being around the kids,” Joyce says. “The fact that the kids were there brightened their day. They had fun. They were so appreciative, and it made us feel good.”

Members of four families came to Camp Paradise to pull weeds and spread mulch at the Montville Township camp for disabled adults. Once the staff member told the children, teens and adults about who would be coming to the camp and why, the group was eager to be of service. Keith Ohnhaus says even daughters Sereniti, 6, and Shalyn, 8, were able to help cleaning windows, putting mulch in wheelbarrows and helping to spread it.

“They pretty much worked nonstop for the few hours,” Keith says. “Everybody seemed that they got a lot of gratification out of it. Everybody was lending a hand. They took pride in what they were doing. It made you feel good.”

In addition to learning more about the agency they served, the project introduced the Ohnhaus family to a few other families, including the Reagans. “The teamwork was nice,”





Keith says. “It was nice to kind of do it as a family effort, too.”

Rebecca Rak, director of the Lodi Family Center, was so appreciative of the hard work put in by Betty and Mike Canning, Ed and Hayden Martin and Tom Urban. They dug in and cleaned this former school that had been vacant for three years and vandalized before her nonprofit took it over to provide services and free lunches to Lodi families in need.

“I just wanted to say what a HUGE blessing your crew was,” Rebecca says. “They were a mighty team that cleaned approximately one-third of the entire floor surrounding the gym. Betty was even up on a ladder making sure that every pipe and ductwork was cleaned! Thank you so much for blessing the community of Lodi! Because of your team, we will be able to use the cafeteria to serve the free lunches this summer! God bless your entire congregation for their dedication and hard work this Memorial weekend!”

Next year’s Parish Day of Service is scheduled for May 27. Many have said the three-day weekend gives them an



## MORE SERVICE

Michelle Powell of Let’s Make a Difference is asking for our help running games for her program’s field day July 20. Contact Jennifer Webb at [jwebb@sfxmedina.org](mailto:jwebb@sfxmedina.org) or 330-764-8946 if you can help!

opportunity to do something for someone else and still have time to relax with their family.

“We had such a wonderful day,” said Beth Sloan, who trimmed and pulled weeds at Medina Creative Housing sites with her husband Kevin and three daughters. “It was a great thing for the five of us to do together, but working with the other families of the parish made it that much more special. We will be back every year because it was a great experience. I loved the Mass with all of us in our yellow shirts. It was a great way to end the day. It was a great way to see in a couple of hours what our parish could do for the community.”





# Fr. Larry: 'Do you know Jesus Christ?'

By Jennifer Webb



**F**ather Larry Richards warned from the outset: He is not everyone's cup of tea. The often loud, always instructive priest from Erie, Pennsylvania, said he aims to make sure his homilies stick.

"If I say something like, 'if you do that, you're all going to hell,' I don't mean that... necessarily. But, it'll get your attention," he explained. "The whole point of this is to get you to heaven. I'm going to say things that will make you mad."

By the end of the four-night mission, he promised, lives would be changed. "You're just going to have to trust," he said. "I've been doing this a long time."

More than 700 packed St. Francis Xavier Church on May 9 for the first night of the mission that focused on prayer. The second night included a Mass and drew a similar number. The third focused on confession, and the number dipped to about 550. The final night, which included a healing service and anointing with sacramental oil, drew 600. In addition, up to 549 people watched each night online, live or over the following weeks, via the parish's live stream. More than 80 parishioners volunteered to park cars, welcome visitors, sell books or bake for the final night's reception.

Father Tony Sejba, who has known Father Larry for many years, invited the popular author, speaker and EWTN radio host to our parish in 2014. It took nearly two years to get on his schedule, as he travels to some 45 speaking engagements a year. He spoke at no cost to our parish and accepted a free-will offering at the end to benefit his foundation, The Reason for Our Hope.

A priest for 27 years, Father Larry said he thinks many Catholics today – especially those who grew up post-Vatican II – fail to understand their purpose on Earth. In the old "Baltimore Catechism," children learned that God made us "to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him in this world so

I can be happy with Him forever in the next."

"Unless you know the meaning of life as revealed by Christ, you're gonna go searching everywhere for it. ... None of that's gonna work. The only thing that's going to work is Jesus. And to know him, love him and serve him," he said.

He added: "Do you know Jesus Christ like you know your best friend, like you know your spouse, like you know your mother, your father, your sister, your brother? Do you know Jesus Christ that way? And if not, ... you have not even begun to live why you were created. You've been going everywhere else. You've got to refocus."

He bemoaned the drop in weekly Mass attendance and parents allowing their children to stop attending Mass after confirmation. "We have been lost in secularism," he said. "The problem is, secularism offers you nothing after you die. So what if you have a million-dollar house, you have \$50 million in the bank?"

"You think that's going to make you happy? Go for it, sir, go for it ma'am," he nearly shouted as he stood in front of the altar, his fingers interlocked behind his head. "But I promise you that one night, you'll be lying in bed, and you're going to be as empty as all get-out inside. And when that day happens – and I promise you it will – I want you to remember this fat priest from Erie. ... I promise you, nothing on Earth will bring you happiness. The only thing that'll fill your emptiness inside is something eternal. And the only thing eternal is the love of God. So until you come to experience the love of God, there's always an uneasiness. The whole mission is about you experiencing Christ and allowing him to love you."

For those who like "the la-la stuff," he said, he asked each person to write one word on each of five small sheets of paper. These were the five things they loved most. One by one, he told them to get rid of each page until they were left holding one.

"This is what you love the most. Let's say for a minute





that – BAM! – you have a heart attack and die right there. And the God of the universe looks at you and says, ‘I love you very much. I will now give you what you have in your hand forever.’ And if what you have in your hand is anything other than God, you just chose hell forever.

“Don’t you hate me?” he said to laughter. “And those of you who sit there and say ‘nyah nyah, I have God, I have God,’ well, you’re prideful and you’re going to hell too.”

As he turned to Scripture, Father Larry encouraged everyone to pull out their Bibles – then launched into a diatribe about how Catholics don’t know their Bible. He shared his personal philosophy of “No Bible, no breakfast; no Bible, no bed” to explain how he randomly opens his Bible in the morning upon first waking up and before going to bed each night to learn God’s will.

“It’s an encounter with the living Lord. ... Open it up, and then slowly start reading until God takes a 2-by-4 and whacks you on the head, and you stop, listen and respond.”

On succeeding nights, Father Larry showed how Scripture demonstrates Jesus’ strength (“Most people think Jesus tiptoed through the tulips. Jesus would not be accepted in most churches today.”) and that the only way Jesus stays with us is through the Eucharist. “It’s not enough to hear a good homily,” he said, pointing to the Emmaus story.

He pointed to 1 Corinthians 11:26-27 and said Eucharist should not be received if you have committed a mortal sin, such as deliberately missing Sunday Mass, and haven’t been to confession. “So, if you eat and drink the body of Christ unworthily, the bread of life becomes the bread of death. It can kill you,” Father Larry explained. “I have never turned anyone away from communion. Never. It’s not my job to judge anyone. But I tell them ahead of time, if you receive unworthily, it can kill you. Come on up.”

In his church, he said, parishioners know Mass is the most important thing, and they are not to leave early. When he was appointed pastor, he told them: “Never insult God in my presence. And if you ever leave the Mass before the final blessing, without diarrhea running down your leg, don’t ever come back.’ They all look at me. So the next week I stood out there at the end of Mass, and the other priest was having Mass, and a husband and wife started walking out the door. I said, ‘Hey! Come here.’ ‘Oh yes, Father?’ ‘Don’t come back!’ ‘What did you say?’ ‘There’s 34 other parishes (in the diocese). Don’t you dare come to my church and spit on God and walk out the door before the final blessing. Don’t you dare!’

“That was 14 years ago. Do you think anyone leaves my Mass early?”

“I scare some people; it’s really terrible, I know. But – You don’t get it! If you ever leave Mass early, you’re saying, ‘God, you’re not worth my time.’ You’re saying, ‘I’m more important than you.’

“And you know, who was the first one to leave the Mass early? Judas. If you leave Mass early, you fall in line with Judas.

“Don’t you hate my guts?”

Father Larry says he refuses to “put up with such garbage.” “What if God treated you the way you treat Him, so what if you leave Mass 5 minutes before it’s over? Then God leaves your life 5 minutes before it’s over. He’ll treat you the way you treat Him. So never, *ever* leave Mass 5 minutes before it’s over.

“Any questions?”

---

*Each night of Father Larry’s presentation was recorded and will be available for borrowing from the parish lending library, in the Washington Street vestibule. For more information about Father Larry, visit [www.thereasonforourhope.org](http://www.thereasonforourhope.org).*



## A Growing Family

**T**here is so much wonderful Christian information coming to us from St. Francis Xavier Church. In recent months, Pope Francis, the Pastoral Council, and our pastor and priests are teaching us to remove barriers while motivating us to strengthen our Christian parish and community.

Walking through the door of St. Francis Xavier you will often be met by a smile, a greeting, a hug or a handshake. I always look forward to seeing my parish friends during our services and activities and the sincerity and camaraderie I receive is like a warm blanket on a cold, windy day. I may not always know or remember their last name or how many children or grandchildren they have...but what I do remember is the bond that we share as we move forward as a Family in our journey with God. It is indeed a strong bond.

We are blessed with numerous parishioners who have been on a continuous journey of goodness and light for many years and we are now in the process of enlarging those numbers. One way, of course, is to get closer to the faces that we smile and greet regularly. Naturally, the people that frequent the same masses and activities have an easier time getting to know each other. This is how I have come to admire three couples that I have known for a few years. Two of them are married and the third couple are siblings. I've watched as they reflect pleasant, positive and peaceful feelings to one another. Their relationships are such a natural part of who they are together that I doubt if they are aware of how they appear to others. I can see and feel the love and respect, the kindness and connectedness as they often reach out beyond themselves to help, support and inspire others through their words and actions. Because they are living their Faith they are teachers whose deeds resonate and strengthen our Parish Family.

After knowing these couples for a long time I knew I wanted what they had. I wanted to be one of the many that breathe Life into our beautiful church and community.

I became inspired with the thought of being a better person, a better Catholic.

I opened myself up to reaching out and lifting people who are struggling. I listen more carefully to my family and friends and I pray more often now.

I hope that someday I, too, will inspire another parishioner by my words and actions. And if I'm ever asked, "Why do you belong to St. Francis Xavier?"

My heartfelt answer would simply be, "It's my Family."

*A Parishioner*

## Retiring

**A**s school ended in June, we said goodbye to some beloved teachers and parish staff.

Sue Rohe-Brooks, the director of religious education, retired after 34 years on parish staff. She concluded her tenure with three busy but joyful weeks with 130 students in Vacation Bible School and another 50 in two weeklong middle-school Edge camps. A reception was held in the church basement social hall June 26 after Mass to celebrate her long career and thank her for her service to the parish.



The end was bittersweet for Sue, who has loved the role she has played in the lives of so many children, some of whom have grown up and enrolled their children in our religious education programs. This year, she supervised the instruction of about 125 children in our Parish School of Religion program, prepared 128 second-graders for the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist and worked alongside some 50 catechists.

One of those second-grade teachers, Marita Leachko, also joined the list of retirees. Mrs. Leachko, 66, has taught at Catholic schools in the diocese for 31 years, including the last 18 at St. Francis Xavier School. "It's all in God's plan," says Mrs. Leachko, whose husband Dale died suddenly last year. "There's a very strong feeling that this is what I'm supposed to do."



She plans to spend more time with sons Joseph, 27, and Andrew, 25, and lots of nieces and nephews. She praised the tremendous support she felt from families and said she will miss the children. "I learned something from them every single day," she says.

Also retiring this year is Mindy Woll, our school librarian and, more recently, middle-school art teacher. For many years, Mrs. Woll helped direct the school plays; last year she shifted that creative spirit to a new student-run morning video broadcast show that introduced many students to unique roles as on-air reporters and production assistants.



In addition, longtime parish business manager Ray Scherry, 74, and rectory housekeeper Jeanne Rebesch, 80, retired in July. Both have served the parish continuously for more than 20 years.

Thank you to all for your service!



# Bingo jackpot draws crowds, lowers tuition

**T**he players start gathering before the church basement doors open, hours before (B-4!) the first numbers will be called.

Once inside, they place their trinkets on the table in front of them: lucky charms, pictures of grandchildren, dabbers in several colors, a bag of Cheetos – all the things they need to enjoy the evening, and maybe even bring home a win.

While they wait for Judy and Bob Pagura, Mary Jane Semivan, Marilyn Dempsey or a handful of other faithful volunteers to arrive and set everything in motion, they chat. Stories are shared, recipes are swapped, movies are reviewed, pictures are admired.

“They’re good people that come,” Judy Pagura says.

In her 30 years managing the bingo program with her husband, Judy has come to know the regulars, usually by first name only. “I ask them how they are,” she says. Some of them are carrying heavy loads.”

Most players are not parishioners, but they come faithfully to our church social hall once or, often, twice a week to play bingo. By doing so, they help to raise tens of thousands of dollars that directly support our school: \$60,000 last year, and

an anticipated \$70,000 this year. That’s down from a high of \$140,000 years ago, says parish business manager Ray Scherry, but it’s been as low as about \$40,000.

Legalized gambling at casinos and the racetrack may account for some decreased profits. But the increased profits are thanks in part to a progressive jackpot that had grown past \$10,000 by mid-June. One Sunday evening, 144 players occupied seats and hoped for a chance at the big prize.

They sit with wide rows of paper bingo grids in front of them, as Bob Pagura calls out the numbers. Throughout the evening, many players motion to volunteers milling the room to sell \$1 instant tickets. Halfway through the evening, there’s a break, and players buy a slice of pizza or something to drink.

Judy says she learned long ago that there’s a lot more going on at bingo than simply feeding a penchant for gambling.

“They’re playing – they hope they’ll get something so they can play a little more. They’re interacting – maybe they’re locked in their house all day (otherwise). They always sit with the same people,” she explains.

The program is run by volunteers who range from seniors who have done it for



years to parents with children in our day school who are asked to work a few shifts a year. The profits help to keep tuition more affordable for families in our parish’s largest ministry. Without that income, the parish might have to raise tuition.

Mary Jane says she happened to see an announcement in our church bulletin in 2002, when she retired as chief deputy of the auto title department for the Medina County clerk of courts. The bingo program needed volunteers, so she called and got right to work. Now she handles the money in the bingo office for more than four hours each Sunday and Tuesday. “I was just looking for somewhere to volunteer some of my time,” says Mary Jane, who’s 80. “I enjoy it. I just like the people.”

More volunteers are needed to work 2-hour shifts. If each school family worked just 2 shifts a year, every shift would be covered. To see volunteer opportunities, visit [www.sfxmedina.com/parish](http://www.sfxmedina.com/parish) or call Mark Bugner at 330-461-6531.

Natalie Boothe, whose daughter Emma will be a second-grader this year, says she recently committed to working one two-hour bingo shift a month. “Where would we find that money if they canceled bingo?” she asks. “If everyone did just a little bit, no one would have to miss big family days, holidays and special occasions. Personally, I enjoy it, and knowing that I am giving back makes me feel good. We can all manage something.”

## BY THE NUMBERS



**Admission:** \$15 for two 6-ons; senior citizen discount

**Hours: Sunday** – Doors open at 3:30 p.m.; Games start at 5 p.m.

**Tuesday** – Doors open at 5 p.m.; Games start at 6:30 p.m.

- \$1,000 Jackpot Coverall
- 4 Early Birds Games pay \$50 each

(Bingo will be canceled July 12 to Aug. 1 while the church basement is retiled.)

# St. Francis Xavier

606 E. Washington St.  
Medina, Ohio 44256  
330-725-4968  
www.sfxmedina.com

Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
Medina, OH 44256  
Permit No. 00124

## Change Service Requested

page 8



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## July 4

9 a.m. Mass,  
Church  
Offices closed



## July 11-Aug.1

Church basement retiled;  
all access closed.

## July 22-24

Cardboard City  
Support our Life Teen “beggars”  
with your donations and prayers.

## July 23

Pig Roast Parish Picnic sponsored  
by the Knights of Columbus  
\$8 per person or \$25 per family.  
Visit [www.sfxmedina.org/parish](http://www.sfxmedina.org/parish)  
for details.



## July 25-28

CYO Cheer Camp  
Randel House

## July 25



LEAF Ministry for families of  
incarcerated individuals  
7 p.m., Loyola Room

## Aug. 5

First Friday adoration begins  
after 7 p.m. Mass through 7 a.m.  
Saturday, Church

## Aug. 7

The Fest  
Seminary grounds,  
Wickliffe



## Aug. 12

School open house  
& tailgate party

## Aug. 17

First day of school!



## Aug. 21

Walk with Mary day of reflection  
12 to 4 p.m., parish grounds

## Aug. 29

St. Francis Xavier  
Parish Golf Outing  
Weymouth Country Club



## Aug. 31

Ministry Leaders dinner  
6:30 p.m., Xavier Room