

January/February 2016



the

connecting the community of st. francis xavier parish

Navigator

The Doors of Mercy have been opened!

Enter and let God's mercy flow into you. Leave and carry God's message of mercy to others.

Pope Francis has declared that the universal Catholic Church observe a Jubilee Year of Mercy until the Solemnity of Christ the King on Nov. 20, 2016.



Normally, jubilee years occur every 25 years – the last occurred in 2000. It is evident that our Holy Father believes that a special year of grace and favor need not wait until 2025.

The Year of Mercy is proclaimed because God's abundant mercy needs to be made known in a world that is increasingly becoming more self-centered. Jesus – "the face of God's mercy" – is to be visible in and through the Church and flowing into the streets today.

Jesus' message of mercy shines all through the Gospels, challenging society and the law to see the divine justice present in mercy. His greatest parables tell

of an ungrateful steward forgiven of his debts, who tragically fails to show the same forgiveness to his debtors (Matthew 18:21-35); and of a wasteful son who carelessly spends his father's inheritance, only to be embraced by his prodigal father when he penitently returns home (Luke 15:11-32).

In his ministry, the Lord reached out to the hated tax collector (Luke 19:1-10) and rescued the accused adulteress (John 8:2-11), reconciling them with society and with God – and with themselves. When teaching about the last judgment, Jesus highlights that those who show mercy feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothed the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned.

Every Christian has a calling and a responsibility to serve as a living example of Jesus' teachings. For Christians, young and old, being merciful should be an attitude – a way of life. It is important not only to listen and understand the Word of God, but also to apply the lessons learned through daily life and service to others.

The mercy of God is "the beating heart of the Gospel." This is essential to living as a Catholic Christian. We, the living Body of Christ, reveal the mercy of the Father as Jesus does.

How do I allow God's mercy to flow? It is important that we enter through the confessional door of mercy. This Year of

MERCY continued on page 2



Volunteers set out buns and chop onions for the warm meal they will serve guests at the Peter Maurin Center in Akron in mid-December. The center is supported by volunteers from a number of Catholic parishes.



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



Mercy

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Mercy allows us to move from fear or complacency toward the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Often hesitancy toward celebrating the sacrament arises because of pride and/or the emphasis we place on confessing sins we have chosen. The acknowledgement of sinful choices is but one part of “confession.”

Upon stating our sorrow, the Church community confesses that God is kind and merciful. The naming of the sacrament as the “Sacrament of Reconciliation” purposely states that God’s mercy flows and reconciles you to those whom you have failed to love – God and neighbor. God offers the sinner MERCY and not condemnation.

Mercy that flows doesn’t just “wash” sin away but seeks to transform the stony heart. Leaving the confessional, we carry the message of mercy within our hearts. We leave and are challenged to be merciful to others as God has been merciful to us.

When we are sent out into the world,

we are sent forth as vessels of God’s mercy.

This is how we evangelize. We teach people about the faith by instructing them in God’s mercy, but also by embodying it. As stewards of God’s grace and mercy, we are merciful.

So, practically speaking, how can I be merciful? We can reach out to the broken in body and spirit.

Corporal Works of Mercy:

- Feed the hungry
- Shelter the homeless
- Clothe the naked
- Visit the sick and imprisoned
- Give drink to the thirsty, and
- Bury the dead.

Spiritual Works of Mercy:

- Admonish the sinner
- Instruct the ignorant
- Counsel the doubtful
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Bear wrongs patiently
- Forgive injuries, and
- Pray for those who are living or have died.

How will you choose to celebrate the extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy?

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:36)

Introducing Mercy Visits



By Barbara Grygier

In the Jubilee Year of Mercy, St. Francis Xavier Parish has launched a special ministry.

Mercy Visits is especially for our parishioners who are homebound. Through Mercy Visits, our ministry team is keeping homebound parish members from feeling isolated as we put into practice one Corporal Work of Mercy: Visit the Sick.

Mercy Visits promote a spiritual connection to St. Francis Xavier Parish by sharing various forms of prayer, reading Scripture and receiving Holy Communion. The benefits do not stop there. We also offer companionship through conversation, books or newspapers, or by sharing common interests like a game or hobby.

Our Mercy Visits team members are trained as compassionate listeners and as Eucharistic Ministers. We offer spiritual support and companionship on a mutually agreed day, time and frequency. We believe in being faithful stewards, reaching out to share God’s loving presence that we have found in our lives.

Please contact the St. Francis Xavier Parish office at 330-725-4968 to receive an informational brochure and more information, or to sign up for Mercy Visits. Please consider giving the gift of companionship during this most holy season. Anyone who feels called to serve in this ministry may also contact the parish office for more information.



Join members of St. Francis Xavier Parish and many other Akron-area Catholic parishes to feed the homeless at the Peter Maurin Center in Akron from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 30. Adults and older children welcome. For more information about this ministry and to sign up for this one-time commitment, visit sfxmedina.com/parish/mercy.



The Compass is on right course

By Jennifer Webb

Most mornings, at most schools, the library is a pretty quiet place. But at St. Francis Xavier School's library, about a dozen students in fifth through eighth grades are huddled over a computer screen, rehearsing their scripts, and tossing questions across the room.

"Who's doing the weather?" eighth-grader Emily Austin asks no one in particular.



"Do we have weather ready?" Mrs. Mindy Woll calmly asks Jacob Novicky. "Yes," the eighth-grader replies. "We talked it over." "And sports?" the librarian-turned-producer asks. "Yes." "Bring your coats..." Jacob starts, as he practices his report. "Got it! I got the weather."

This is the Compass, the new video announcements

presented by students for the students and staff of St. Francis Xavier School. After months of research, consultation with fellow educators at other schools, including Medina City Schools' cable television manager Jarrod Fry and several Catholic elementary schools – along with fundraising and generous donations to cover some \$7,000 in costs – the broadcasts started Oct. 1.

The broadcasts are entirely student-produced under the direction of Mrs. Woll and Miss Christa Ludwig, the technology teacher. The teachers linger near as resources while the students take charge of the flow, transitions, cameras, sound and more.

Mrs. Woll says the broadcasts not only are entertaining, they provide an important educational component to the school's curriculum.

"The kids needed a performance venue," she explains. "For a lot of kids, that's their area of giftedness. It's an area of intelligence that needs to be expressed."

The students write most of their segments and learn how to improve their reports. "It's a great collaborative group effort," Mrs. Woll adds. "They have to work together."

And they do. The students applied to be considered for the team, with many creating short spots – like "Chuckles with Chuck" (a joke-of-the-day spot with fifth-grader Charlie Snow) and "Wise Facts" (current and historical science facts by fifth-grader Timmy Wise).

On Thursdays, Assistant Principal Diane Salamon showcases quick experiments on "Salamon's Science." Even Principal Bibiana Seislove takes part, pulling a staff member's name on the air each Friday to win a surprise gift.

The 9-minute video news program, which airs only inside the school, replaces the announcements previously shared over the school's P.A. system, usually by the assistant principal with student contributors in a few spots. Now, students do everything from announcing substitute teachers and birthdays to leading prayer and revealing winners of the Life Saver awards.

Students even have taken an iPad for special events – such as Mapleside Farms, Science Olympiad events or a class field trip to a Christmas play – for remote reports.

Fifth-grader Lauren Bangs says she enjoys running one of two cameras, along with classmate Oliviana Lika. "It's just nice to know you're helping out," Lauren says. "It was a little hectic the first day, but it got easier."

The girls say their classmates pay more attention now during the announcements than they did when the news was all audio. "They like seeing the kids doing it," Oliviana says.

Academically, the initiative enhances the middle school's dedication to collaborative teaching across subject areas by combining many skills and topics. Students learn to problem-solve as they overcome challenges. Mrs. Woll envisions integrating various types of prayer during the second semester. She hopes to acquire a little more technology – one more camera, software for green-screen technology and a teleprompter, and headsets for the tech crew. "We're real close to me being able to stand in a corner and let them do it all," she says.

"I'm very proud of the kids," Mrs. Woll concludes. "They're doing a fantastic job."



JAN. 31 – FEB. 6
Catholic Schools Week

Join us for Sunday, Jan. 31,
at the noon Mass, followed by a
school open house and tours
from 1 to 2:30 p.m.



Formed in faith

Parents choose St. Francis Xavier School for their children because they value the ongoing and daily process of faith formation that begins in early childhood. St. Francis Xavier School keeps these goals at the forefront of curriculum development, from preschool through eighth grade. The environment at St. Francis Xavier School is designed to encourage the spiritual, intellectual and social growth of each child. We strive to integrate our Catholic faith throughout the day, from the cross students see as they enter the school, to prayer during morning video announcements and before lunch. They plan and participate in school liturgies and service projects, and they eagerly wait for their teacher's blessing when they leave. In this way, we truly become a community of faith, knowledge and service.







Hearing His Voice to be a better man

By Mark Tomecko

Last November, I heard His voice. I was sitting in church listening to Fr. Tony's homily on the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30). In this story, Jesus tells us about a man who entrusts his money (or "talents") to his three servants while he's away. When the man returns, he is pleased to discover that two of his servants invested the money and increased it substantially. However, the man grew angry with the third servant, who had buried the money in the ground and simply returned it to him with no increase.



In the past this parable had confused me, but on this day Fr. Tony explained that this is what God expects when he gives us a spouse, children, family and friends. He didn't put these people in our lives simply to have us return them to Him unchanged. No, He expects us to "improve" them, to help them grow in their faith, and to bring them closer to Him.

I don't know why exactly, but on that day I felt God was talking directly to me. Sure, he was using Fr. Tony to convey the message, but I had no doubt He was aiming this homily at me. And it seemed so clear what He was saying, too. He expected me to do more for my family. He had given me many gifts, and now He wanted me to invest in them, to bring our family closer to Him. This

feeling that God was trying to tell me something continued for weeks after that November Sunday, and in March it led me to Men's Renewal.

I've been a parishioner at St. Francis Xavier for over a decade, and for each of those years I have artfully dodged the guys standing at the church exits trying to persuade men like me to attend renewal weekend. I just never thought it was my kind of thing. While I attended church every Sunday, I never considered myself the type of guy who went to renewal. To be honest, I really didn't know much about it, and I just didn't think it was for me.

But again I heard His voice. When Tony DiMarino and the "We Walk by Faith" team made their appeal to attend last year's renewal, I was certain God was again talking directly to me. This time I couldn't say no, and I signed up soon thereafter.

Renewal weekend was life-changing. Like I said, I was always a regular church attendee, and I had even become a bit more active at church recently, but I still felt like something was missing, like there should be more to it all. After 10 years I really didn't feel like I was a part of the church, and I have to admit that I was often going through the motions of my faith.

But at renewal that began to change. I, again, heard God's voice in so many ways. The most powerful moment was in our makeshift chapel. We were sitting quietly, given some time to pray, when the team told us they wanted to

play a song called "I Want to Be Just Like You." The song is told from the perspective of a father who wants to be a better Christian example for his son. It hit me just like Fr. Tony's homily did several months earlier. Once again, God was calling me to do more within my family, to be a better example of our faith. The message was loud and clear now.

But renewal weekend also introduced me to some amazing men. I will always be grateful to the team that put on the weekend for us. Their witnesses to faith showed me I wasn't the only one who felt he was "going through the motions" and wanted more. They made me realize there are a lot of men in our parish just like me. In sharing their stories with us, they helped us see what real faith looks like. I also met the men who would form our team, the one currently planning the 2016

renewal weekend. Over the past several months these six men and I have grown in our faith together, and it's an experience I will never forget.

I am certain you will find the 2016 renewal weekend to be enjoyable,

energizing, and a terrific way to

meet more men from our parish. And it just may change your life, as it did for me. If you, too, are hearing His voice, please join us.

The Men's Renewal weekend is March 5 and 6, 2016. For more information, contact me at marktomecko@yahoo.com. Join us on Facebook or LinkedIn at St. Francis Xavier Men's Renewal.



You Are Joyfully Gifted

Did you know that you are joyfully gifted?

God has given each one of us at least one spiritual gift, also known as a charism at Baptism.

Pope Benedict XVI in Charity and Truth, *"The human being is made for gift... Gift by its nature is that of superabundance. It takes first place in our souls as a sign of God's presence in us, a sign of what he expects from us."*

What is a charism?

A charism is a spiritual gift given by God to be used at the service of others.

Using one's spiritual gifts brings life to the owner and life to the faith community.

How do I know my charisms?

Some ways to recognize one's giftedness is by looking for clues.

Yearning: when a person possesses a charism, they are naturally or supernaturally drawn to activities using them.

Rapid Learning: a person learns activities related to spiritual gifts quickly.

Flow: when a person is using their charism, the activity is performed with great ease.

Glimpses of Excellence: a person upon completion of using the charism sometimes might say, "how did I do that?"

Satisfaction: one never tires of using the charism and is anxious for the opportunity to use it again.

Pope Francis encourages us to use our charisms in Joy of the Gospel, *"Our charisms are not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the center which is Christ and then channeled into an evangelizing impulse."*

Our charisms are to be discovered, discerned and used to build the Kingdom.



Common Charisms

Listed here are 20 of the most common charisms. Perhaps you will recognize one or more in you?

Encouragement	Intercessory Prayer
Helps	Creativity
Hospitality	Evangelism
Mercy	Prophecy
Pastoring	Teaching
Administrative	Faith
Giving	Missionary
Leadership	Discernment of Spirits
Service	Knowledge
Healing	Wisdom

Practicing Charisms

- Pray, ask for God's help.
- Intentionally use a spiritual gift for another.
- Ask yourself, "How did I feel as I used this gift?"
- Ask yourself, "After using the charism, did someone affirm the spiritual gift in me?"

Find out more: join us at the *Joyfully Gifted Retreat!*

Date: January 9, 2016

Time: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Lunch is provided.

Place: St. Francis Xavier Parish (Xavier Room)

Register: call 330-725-4968 or visit sfxmedina.com/parish/joyfully-gifted-parish-retreat/

St. Francis Xavier

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan. 3

LifeShare Bloodmobile
9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.



Jan. 7-Feb. 11

'Beloved' six-week Marriage
Enrichment Program
7 p.m., Xavier Room

Jan. 9

Joyfully Gifted parish retreat
11 a.m. to 5 p.m.,
Xavier Room
Visit sfxmedina.com/parish
or call parish office
for information or to register.



Jan. 15 & 18

No School

Jan. 21-23


Life Teen bus trip to Washington
D.C. for March for Life



Jan. 29

10th annual Wines of the World
parish wine tasting
7-10 p.m.,
Rustic Hills Country Club

Jan. 30

Pack sack lunches
& feed homeless 
9 a.m., Peter Maurin Center, Akron
Visit sfxmedina.com/parish/mercy
for details.

Feb. 10

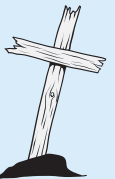
Ash Wednesday
Mass at 7:30 a.m., 9:15 a.m.,
12 noon, 5 p.m. and 7:15 p.m.

Feb. 11

Kalahari Getaway

Feb. 12-March 11

Fridays in Advent
7 p.m. Mass &
Stations of the Cross



Feb. 17-March 16

Wednesdays in Advent
Soup & Scripture
6 p.m. soup supper;
7 p.m. prayer service
Xavier Room & Church

Feb. 20

Cub Scouts
Blue & Gold Banquet

March 23

Tenebrae Service
7 p.m., Church