



Church Renovations Scheduled for Completion on Palm Sunday

The last time major renovations were carried out at St. Greg's Church was 1998, and that was a full 30 years after the church was originally constructed. During the 1998 renovations, the original pews were dis-assembled and re-configured, after undergoing some re-conditioning.

Those same original pews were still in use, 50 years later, until the current wave of renovations was recently undertaken. As part of the modifications being installed at St. Greg's this year, new solid wood pews will be installed, and they will be configured to have a setup which is more 'in the round' than the pews formerly had.

Renovations extend much further than the pews though, because 50 years of heavy use has taken its toll on the church, and many areas need to be addressed. Parishioner and General Contractor Tony Ticone is managing the specific areas of work which are being done, and several different specialists are being brought in to handle those areas.

The stone terrazzo flooring is being re-surfaced, to eliminate the cracks and holes which have developed, and then they will be re-finished and polished to completion.

Virtually everything inside the church itself will be re-painted, to provide a fresh coat to old walls and ceilings. New carpets will be installed on the main altar, the choir area, the crying room, the sacristy, and in the two large confessionals opposite the crying room.



The eight main light fixtures will all be replaced, as will the approximately 40 recessed lights, in favor of more modern LED lighting. All this work is scheduled to be completed somewhere around Palm Sunday, April 14th, but as is always the case with construction efforts, delays are possible because of material availability and other reasons.

A second phase of renovations will be addressed following the completion of the interior work described above, and these alterations will primarily affect the exterior of the church.



Monsignor Thomas Maloney photographs ongoing work

The posts which support the canopy in the front of the church, and the same posts at the rear of the church are scheduled to be replaced during this phase of renovations.

The metal part of these posts is corroding badly, and must be replaced. However, in order to get to the metal portion, the concrete must be broken out, and at that time, a 'snow melt' system will be installed, similar to the one which was implemented at the entrance of the school.

This has proven to be very effective, and it will undoubtedly be very helpful for parishioners during the cold season. Those alterations are scheduled to be completed during late spring or possibly early summer, depending on how work progresses with the interior work.

Finding JOY during Lent

by Thomas Ahern

A Lenten Meditation

You many wonder how we can speak of JOY during this season of repentance and fasting. The JOY I speak of is JOY, shorthand for Jesus, Others, and Yourself.

God our Father always provides what we need to exist in this great creation of His. Therefore He gave us his son, Jesus, to take upon Himself our transgressions and allow us to be worthy to enter God’s kingdom.

God gave us Others to provide assistance along our journey. These others can be your neighbor, the person sitting next to you in your church pew, a spouse, a child and yes, even a stranger.

How many times have you felt so alone that you had nowhere to turn, and suddenly someone you don’t even know gives you an encouraging word, or lends you a helpful hand to get you out of the pit that you most likely dug for yourself.

There’s that word again: Yourself. Yourself will be taken care of if you pay attention to the first two letters of JOY: Jesus and Others. We often live with self pity. We think, “Woe is me. It is Lent. It’s such a sad time for me.



I have to wait until Jesus dies, so I can be taken care of.”

No, that’s not it at all. Yes, Jesus did have to suffer, a suffering only He was able to take on Himself. He was thinking of others, not Himself. He was faithful to his Father’s will – that He come to save us and lead us to paradise.

How can we take care of the others? Give an elderly neighbor a ride to church, visit a friend for no reason at all, work in a soup kitchen, bring the Eucharist to shut-ins, tutor a child – there are myriad ways. During this Lenten season, we are challenged to give more of ourselves, we are challenged to imitate Christ in his compassion.

God gave us each other to guide us along the path, so that we do not sojourn alone. If we keep the first two letters ‘J’ and ‘O’ firmly in mind, the ‘Y’ will take care of itself.

A retired New York State Corrections Officer, Tom is the coordinator of Eucharistic Ministers for our parish. He and his wife Janet have four children and five grandchildren.

Lenten Happenings at St. Gregory’s Church

Lenten Fish Dinners

Every Friday night except Good Friday from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the School Cafeteria



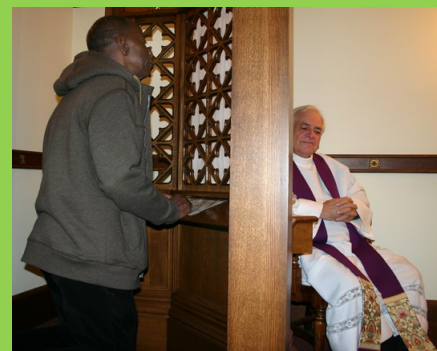
Stations of the Cross

Every Friday night at 7:00 p.m. in the Ministry Center



Confessions

Every Wednesday night from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. in the Ministry Center



Third Graders Prepare for First Communion

by Joan Rischmiller

It's more than just pretty dresses and new suits to prepare our young children for their First Communion. Preparation begins when the children's parents decide to have them baptized into the Catholic Church, and promise to raise them in the Catholic faith.

The parents become the ultimate coach for the faith of their child and they need to be supported by godparents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends who share the same faith and values that they have.

Faith is caught not taught

The first experience of the Eucharist is around the dining table, where the family shares and celebrates meals together. Parents teach their children about their faith by praying with them and helping them to know and love God.

Saying prayers before meals and at bedtime, and blessing your children as they venture out each day for school and other events, helps to remind them of God's presence in their lives.

Other suggestions which help keep their faith alive are celebrating Advent with an Advent Wreath, keeping family Christmas traditions, going to church on Ash Wednesday to receive ashes, Lenten events, Holy Week events, Blessing of the Easter Baskets on Holy Saturday, celebrating Saints feast days, attending the parish May Crowning, and lighting their Baptismal candles on special events, e.g. birthdays, the anniversary of their Baptism, First Penance, First Communion and the feast day for the saint they were named after.

Family table to the Eucharistic table

Reverence and respect at Mass is mirrored by your children, by observing how you, the parents show respect and reverence at Mass. Parents teach children by blessing themselves with Holy Water (as a reminder of their Baptism) as they enter the church, by genuflecting before entering the pew (to acknowledge the presence of Christ



in the Tabernacle), and by remaining prayerfully silent as they wait for the Mass to begin.

At communion time, young children are encouraged to go with their parents for a blessing as their parents receive the Eucharist. When parents sing and respond during Mass, they encourage their children to fully participate in the Eucharist.

First Communion is a parish event

First Communion has its own coaching staff: Our priests, deacons, our school religion teachers, FFF Catechists, the FFF office staff, our Director of Music Daniel Victor, and the prayers from the entire parish community. We are also blessed to have the help of the following:

- Ladies of Charity - each First Communicant receives a rosary that was handmade by members of St. Gregory's Ladies of Charity.
- Our parents, who cut banners and put hems on them. At the retreat, our parents add the ribbon hangers to the banners, and staple and assemble the First Communion programs. Parent volunteers bake the bread and help the children make their crafts during their First Communion Retreat.
- The St. Gregory Knights of Columbus, who form an honor guard at our First Communions and for our parish May Crowning.

The journey continues

First Communion is a major step in the children's lifelong journey of faith. As they grow in faith, we pray that they will make the decision to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. How can parents keep their children Catholic?



Surround them with love and friends who share the same faith and values. Be a good role model of our faith for them to follow. Encourage them to become involved in our parish youth ministry programs. And as a parent, stay involved in our parish, through ministry and service.

Prayer Partners Rewarding for Everyone Involved

Prayer Partners is an organization which started up last year, and has met with tremendous success already, with even greater benefits anticipated for the future.

The idea behind Prayer Partners is to bring together an older student at St. Greg's School with a younger student, so the older student can act as a kind of mentor, helping his/her partner to pray and serve the Lord better.

For example, 8th grade students might be paired with 2nd graders, 7th grade students would be paired with 1st graders, 5th and 6th grade students would get paired with Kindergartners, and 4th grade students would get matched up with Pre-K youngsters.

However, it isn't just a one-way street, because the younger partner always has something to offer to the older one as well, even if it's just the youthful enthusiasm and innocence that they bring to the partnership.

In addition to sitting and praying together at special masses, the partners also engage in fun activities once each month, and some of these activities include very special projects.

Last Halloween for instance, nearly 100 Prayer Partners visited the Brookdale Senior Living Community in



full costumes, to sing songs for them and pray with them.

At Christmas time, the Prayer Partners prepared 'Boxes of Joy' for fellow students at Our Lady of Black Rock School in Buffalo, where a number of under-privileged students are enrolled. These boxes included crayons, coloring books, cookies, candies, warm blankets, and a number of simple household items which

constituted the only Christmas presents that some of the OLBRS students would receive.

Along with the boxes, all the Prayer Partners prayed for their student counterparts, and let them know they were loved. The next planned major activity for Prayer Partners is in gathering up gifts and helpful household items for a Nicaraguan Mission, with all the donated materials to be sent to lower income students and young people in that country.

The point of all this is that the monthly activities serve to impress upon all the Prayer Partners the importance of praying together, of praying for others, and of considering other people in their daily lives. The Prayer Partners learn to give to other people, and they learn to give to each other, which is an unusual quality at such young ages. As one of the Prayer Partners organizers, Patti Hartigan likes to say, "When you give something to kids, you're giving to Jesus".

St. Greg's Confirmation Dates Set in May

This year, Confirmation interviews will be held in two sessions, the first being on March 30th, from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. in the school cafeteria, and the second being held on April 2nd, from 6:30 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. in the school gym.

There will be only one Confirmation Rehearsal this year, and that will be held on May 7th, at 6:45 in the church.

The rehearsal should be attended by the Confirmation candidate and their sponsor, unless the sponsor lives out-of-town, and is unavailable on that date.

In cases like this, a parent or guardian is permitted to stand in for the sponsor at rehearsal, and would then be



obliged to inform and update the sponsor about the procedure when the sponsor is in town and available.

The actual dates for Confirmation are as follows: Tuesday, May 14th at 7:00 p.m. in the church, and Thursday, May 16th at 7:00 p.m. in the church.

All candidates should already have received an email informing them about which of the two Confirmation dates they have been assigned to. Good luck, and a blessing on all this year's candidates!

Monsignor Maloney to Chair New Evangelization Committee

Monsignor Thomas Maloney will be heading up a new Evangelization Committee at St. Greg’s, which will meet between six and eight times each year to consider potential efforts for evangelization in the parish.

Monsignor Maloney has been involved in evangelization efforts at other parishes during his history, and brings some useful experience to the group.

The purpose of this new committee will be two-fold: to reach out to individuals in the area, to bring the message of Christ to them, and to help deepen the faith of people already attending Mass and committed to their faith.

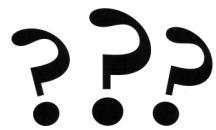


To accomplish these goals, some methods will be considered which have proven successful in other parishes, and some of which have been overseen by Monsignor Tom in the past.

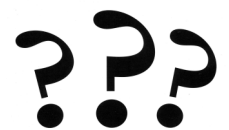
Anyone having an interest in serving on this committee should email Monsignor Tom at tfm210@hotmail.com, with the word ‘committee’ in the subject line, or should call 688-5678, ext.

305.

“At the present time, we have 12 members on our committee,” Fr. notes, “but we do have room for more people who might be interested.”



The Question Box



How can we be certain that the funds we contribute to the “Upon This Rock” campaign, or to Catholic Charities, will not be used to compensate victims of sexual abuse?

I spoke with Richard Suchan, a St. Greg’s parishioner and director of the Foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Buffalo, which administers the “Upon This Rock” campaign.

He said, “Gifts made to the Foundation through the ‘Upon This Rock’ campaign are not discretionary assets of the diocese, and can only be used for the purposes set forth in the original case statement of the campaign. The Foundation was incorporated in 1996 as a legally distinct entity from the diocese.”

Catholic Charities is likewise a distinct legal entity. The “Upon This Rock” case statement, which was explained in detail to prospective donors, included support for Christ the King Seminary, the Mother Teresa home for unwed expectant mothers, families needing help to send their children to Catholic schools, and expansion of Catholic Charities services in small towns and rural areas, among others.

35% of donations are returned to the donor’s home parish. This has enabled St. Greg’s to undertake the current Church Renovation project without a special appeal for funds.

It is ironic, yet understandable, that people who are rightly angered about the abuse of children would express their anger by cutting back on contributions to causes, like Catholic Charities and “Upon This Rock”, that are dedicated to improving the lot of disadvantaged children.

My personal reaction to revelations of child abuse by my fellow priests is this, “Some have been unfaithful; I have to be even more faithful”.

We are all, at the moment, suffering for sins we did not commit. The bishop is getting flak for things that happened long before he came to Buffalo. Good priests are enduring suspicion and rash judgement because of crimes unfaithful priests have committed. People in the pews are angered, appalled, and even enraged.

That may seem unfair, and in a way, it is. It is also the way of the cross, the way of Jesus, who though innocent, suffered for the sins of the guilty. He asks us to take up our cross and follow in his footsteps.

- Father Thomas Maloney

St. Gregory's Great Mission Trip Serves the Most Vulnerable

by Jillian Kajdas



St. Gregory the Great's Mission Trip Team will be heading to Moneague, Jamaica for the sixth year in a row, from July 13 - 20. While there, we will become Christ's hands and feet in serving the most vulnerable of society at Mustard Seed Communities (MSC).

The major mission of MSC is to provide residential care to adults and children with disabilities, many of whom have been abandoned by their families. Thirteen of their communities are in Jamaica, and there are seven others in Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Zimbabwe, and Malawi.

The community we live and work at is a home for 100 adults with various developmental disabilities. During our time there, we are given light construction projects to help make their houses into homes.

Some of our previous projects included: hand-mixing cement to make sidewalks so the residents who use wheelchairs could get around easier, painting the outside and inside of their cottages to make them feel more comfortable, and building fence-posts around their villages.

However, our main goal as a mission team is to show the residents unconditional love. After spending time with the residents throughout the week, the mission vol-

unteers become families to the residents. What we don't realize before we leave is how much we learn this virtue from the residents themselves, and bring it back to our everyday lives here in the United States.

MSC's mission is to be completely self-sustaining, but there are certain items that are needed which do not allow for this to happen. Over the past few years, we have both seen and have been told about the need MSC has for children and adult-sized diapers/briefs.

Since most of their population uses these disposable items day in and day out, there is no way to keep up with the increasing demand from their growing population. During Lent of 2018, with your generous donations, we were able to fundraise enough money to send two shipping containers (40,000+) of diapers to Jamaica for them to use.

We will be continuing this fundraiser during the coming Lenten season, and would like you to please consider the cross that our Jamaican family is bearing, and donate to our diaper drive fund to help them. With your support, we can give them the opportunity at living a life of dignity, offering them a basic need that we might take for granted.

Keep an eye on the Bulletin and in the vestibule of the Ministry Center for information on how to donate. You may also send donations to the Parish Office (checks made out to St. Gregory the Great), attn: Jamaica Diaper Drive.

We also still have a couple open spots for this year's trip, if you are being called to serve Mustard Seed Communities. If you are interested in joining our team this year, please contact our Mission Trip Coordinator, Elizabeth Astridge at stgregsmissiontrip@gmail.com, as soon as possible.



Exciting Youth Ministry Activities Upcoming in Spring

Middle School Happenings

Ignite – This is a brand new group for 5th and 6th graders, which meets every Tuesday from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The focus of each meeting will be on sharing faith, food, and fun, so don't miss out on any of the sessions.

EDGE – Every Thursday night at 6:30 p.m., 7th and 8th graders meet to enjoy music, crazy games, and sometimes even a very engaging speaker. Bring a friend and enjoy the activities!

Spring Retreat – There will be a middle school spring retreat, held from May 3rd through May 5th for young people, with more information available from the Youth Ministry Office.



High School Activities



Life Teen – Sundays after the 4:30 p.m. Mass, high school students meet to learn more about their Catholic faith, and to have some fun while doing so. Now is the time to register for Camp Covecrest, scheduled for July 21st through July 28th. Attendees can expect to have loads of fun whitewater rafting, navigating the high-ropes course, listening to great music, and appreciating some terrific speakers. Spots for the retreat can be reserved through the Youth Ministry Office.

SWAT team – This group meets on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. to take a deeper look at faith and scripture, as well as the importance of prayer.

Empowered in Christ – This girls group meets once a month on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m., to provide high school girls with an opportunity to share their faith and to grow closer in a community spirit.

High School Hangout – Once each month on a Friday evening at 7:00 p.m. all high schoolers meet, to take over the Ministry Center, to enjoy a night of great food, great fun, and the spirit of togetherness.

High School Spring Retreat – A high school spring retreat will be conducted from April 12th through April 14th, and is sure to be a meaningful experience for all attendees. Contact the Youth Ministry Office for more information and to register for the retreat.

Young Adult Happenings

Amped – All Amped attendees can count on meeting great new people and enjoying some meaningful discussion about faith and community. Participants will meet from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on dates selected each month.

Young Adult Wednesdays – The young adults of the parish generally sit together on Wednesdays at the noontime Mass, and then congregate in the Café afterward for discussion and faith-sharing. Take a break from your normal routine and join this wonderful group to enrich your life.



Summer Faith and Fun at St. Greg's

by Joan Rischmiller



Vacation Bible School

The Vacation Bible School is a program for students aged 3 (as of 12/1/18) to those entering Grade 4 in September, 2019.

Vacation Bible School dates are Monday – Friday, July 8th – 12th. The programs times are 9 am – 12 noon each day. At VBS, students experience the extraordinary love of God in the Old Testament, in fun and unforgettable ways by visiting various stations. We start each day with with energizing, fun and faith-boosting music! A

different Bible story is featured each day from “Creation” to the “Promised Land.”

Each story is reinforced through songs, crafts and hands-on activities. Students enjoy pony rides and a petting zoo during the week. Our week-long camp culminates with a jubilant closing celebration and ice cream social in which students put on a final show for their families. Registration will be online by June 1st on our parish website.



Disciple Camp

This summer program is for public school students who are entering Grades 5 – 8 in September 2019. The program is open to registered active members of St. Gregory the Great Parish, and it runs Monday – Friday July 15th – 19th, from 9 am until 4 pm.

The students attend 35 hours of instruction based on the curriculum guidelines of the Diocese of Buffalo. In a summer camp-like setting, lessons are enriched with music, prayer, speakers, outside activities, crafts, service opportunities and more.

The lessons are based on an active learning process in which religious knowledge is experienced in various ways, encompassing all styles of learning.

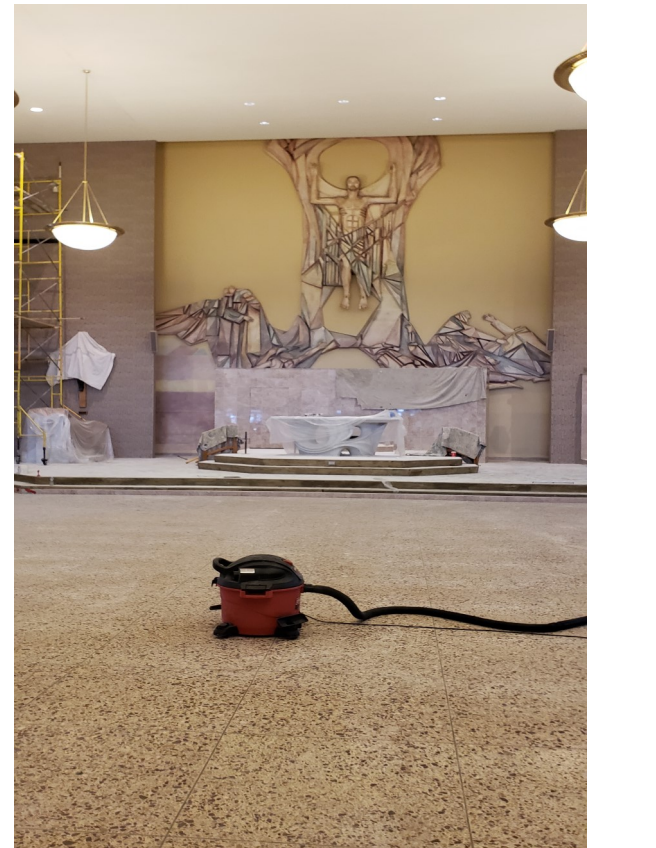
Disciple Camp parents are expected to be involved by agreeing to help for a least one activity during the

year. Students are invited to attend First Friday Club, which meets on the first Friday of each month throughout the school year.

First Friday club provides a safe, social setting where kids can have fun; activities include: service projects, sports, crafts, music, prayer and spiritual experiences that count towards heir ministry and service requirements.

Our camp ends with a car wash for a charity that the students choose. For more information please contact Joan Rischmiller @ 688-5760 ext. 358 or email jrischmiller@stgregs.org. Registration in-person only (for both students and a parent) on Saturday, June 1st at 9 am or Monday June 10th at 7 pm in the school cafeteria and gym.

Thru the Lens



Photos of ongoing renovations at St. Greg's Church, which are expected to be completed sometime around Palm Sunday.

Lent and Holy Week at Saint Gregory the Great Church

Monday - Wednesday, March 25-27 Parish Lenten Retreat with Deacon Greg Feary
at 12:30 or 7 p.m. in the Ministry Center

Tuesday, April 9

Parish Penance Service at 7 p.m. in the Ministry Center



Palm Sunday, April 14

Blessed palms distributed at Saturday Vigil Masses at 4:00
and 5:30 p.m., and at Sunday Masses at 8:00, 9:30, 11:00 and 12:30

Holy Thursday, April 18

9:00 a.m. Morning Prayer
5:00 p.m. Shared Supper in the Ministry Center
7:00 p.m. Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper
8:30 p.m. Bus Excursion to Seven Churches



Good Friday, April 19

9:00 a.m. Morning Prayer
12 Noon The Seven Last Words of Christ
3:00 p.m. Celebration of the Lord's Passion
7:00 p.m. Living Stations of the Cross

Holy Saturday, April 20

9:00 a.m. Morning Prayer
12 noon Blessing of Easter Baskets
7:00 p.m. Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday, April 21

Masses at 8:00, 9:30, 11:00, and 12:30

“I am fulfilled in a way I never was before”

Spirit and Life interviews Julie Gajewski, principal of St. Gregory the Great School

What led you to come to St. Gregory’s as principal of our school?

I was actually happy with my job as Elementary School Principal in Lewiston. It was the fulfillment of a dream of mine. But I wanted to be closer to home, that is, to Williamsville, and I became attracted to St. Greg’s.

What was the basis for that attraction?

Catholic schools were a major influence in my life, from the time I attended St. Andrew’s Country Day School, through my days at Sacred Heart Academy, and on to John Carroll University and Canisius College. My classmates from St. Andrew’s still maintain bonds, with each other, through periodic reunions and social media. The Catholic school community at St. Edmund’s helped our family through a tough time, when my mom died, and my sister was a student there.

St. Andrew’s especially gave me a strong foundation in my faith, and helped me grow in my personal relationship with God. When I applied at St. Greg’s, I saw this as an opportunity to help today’s kids and their parents experience some of what I and my family experienced.

Is your job at St. Greg’s what you expected it to be?

It is, and a whole lot more. I am fulfilled in a way that I have never been before. I love sharing my faith and talking about God, especially to children and their parents. Right now I am re-experiencing First Penance and First Communion as my two older children, Jackson and Annabelle, go through the preparation process. I am very impressed with the amazing degree of dedication and commitment on the part of our teachers and staff. I am grateful that at St. Greg’s, we can minister to the complete child - body, mind, and soul - in a way that’s simply not possible in a non - Catholic school.



Julie with husband Joel, and children Jackson, Annabelle, and Everett

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED
PLEASE DELIVER BY MARCH 15**

**NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Buffalo, NY
Permit No. 4869**

**200 St. Gregory Court
Williamsville, NY 14221**

Spirit and Life is a quarterly publication of St. Gregory the Great Parish. Publisher: Rev. Leon J. Biernat, Pastor. Editors: Msgr. Thomas F. Maloney (tfm210@hotmail.com) and Ken Lashway (klashway52@gmail.com). Your comments, questions, and suggestions are invited. Our summer edition will appear in mid-June; deadline for submissions is May 15. We are grateful to Liturgical Publications, whose benevolence enables us to provide this service to our parish members.

Page 12

Spirit & Life

Spring 2019

1500 Club Raffle to be Held May 18th

This year's 1500 Club Raffle will be held on May 18th, and will be giving away a total of 245 cash prizes, including the Grand Prize of \$10,000. The party will be held in the Ministry Center, and each \$50 ticket will admit two adults to the event, which will feature fun and food for all participants.

Winners of the drawings need not be present, and since there are 245 chances to win, a number of people will come away as winners of the raffle. In order to purchase tickets, you can fill out the form below, and send your check to St. Gregory the Great, Attn: 1500 Club, 200 St. Gregory Court, Williamsville, NY 14221. You can also contact 1500club@stgregs.org with any questions you may have.



1500 Club Ticket Request

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zipcode: _____
Phone number: _____
Number of tickets requested @ \$50 each: _____