

# SPIRIT AND LIFE

SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT PARISH  
Spring 2021

## His Path Toward Baptism Began at a Funeral



Connor Coscia is a junior at Nichols School, and an important member of the school's basketball team. At the Easter Vigil this year, this sixteen-year-old young man will attain his goal of becoming a member of the Catholic Church, as he receives the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and First Communion.

"When I was ten years old," he recalls, "I attended a funeral for a relative in North Tonawanda. It was the first time in my life that I was in a Catholic Church. I was impressed by the liturgy: the songs, the incense, the Scripture readings, and especially by the reverent and prayerful atmosphere. I hoped that someday I would find out more about this religion."

He got his chance a few years later when his father introduced him to one of his former teammates from his college baseball team, Terry Shaughnessy. "We hit it off immediately," Connor relates. "He became like a godfather to me. He would come to my basketball games. He is a staunch Catholic and gradually I learned more about the Faith from him." After some time, Terry felt Connor would benefit from a more-structured program of learning about Catholicism, and spoke about this to Father Leon.

One of the preliminary steps in the Rite of Christian Initiation is to provide the prospective convert with a group of peers who can share with him their own personal stories of growing in their Faith and in their personal relationship with Jesus. Father Leon assembled such a group, comprised of high-school teens and young adults, and the group met weekly for a dozen times in the summer of 2020.

"The group provided me with information on how people close to my own age were actually living their Faith, and more importantly perhaps, they were giving me inspiration. My desire to be a part of this parish community grew stronger. I have found great love and kindness at St. Gregory's and I want very much to be a full-fledged member of this family."

Connor is grateful to all who have guided him on this journey, and especially to his father, who encouraged him throughout his six-year pilgrimage. Connor is one of ten people who will be initiated into the Church at the Easter Vigil on April 3 at 7:00 pm.

"In any time of darkness, light always shines. Connor is a great light. In a time when we are concerned over our teens and their Faith, Connor has come forward to Faith on his own and is a bright light of Christ for me and our Parish family." ~ Fr. Leon Biernat

## “Men of God” is Born from One Man’s Faith

Scott Marcus grew up in a Jewish household. When he got married he agreed that any children that came along would be raised Catholic. He took an active role in this endeavor, attending St. Gregory’s liturgies regularly with his family. Once at a social event he expressed an interest in learning more about the Catholic religion. Someone suggested that he have a chat with Sr. Maureen Fanning.

This led to his enrollment in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA), and ultimately to his Profession of Faith and Baptism at the Easter Vigil in 2003. His friend Tom Vacanti was his godfather.

Tom recalls, “One day he said to me ‘I gotta read the book.’ The book of course was the Bible, and I had on my desk a program that took a person through the Bible in one year. Scott said that he wanted to invite people who had helped him on his journey to Catholicism to join him in his trek through the Scriptures. We ended up with an even-dozen men, meeting once a month at each other’s homes to discuss what we were learning.”

At the end of the year, the men decided to tackle The Catholic Catechism as their next project. That is how Men of God came into existence. The group continues to meet monthly, on the third Wednesday, here at St. Gregory’s. Several years ago Scott decided to pass on the leadership role to others. Jeff Criden and Ray Geska share the mantle, with Greg Gaulin, a candidate for ordination as a permanent deacon, as spiritual director.

“We get somewhere between twelve and twenty at a typical meeting, though over the years over 100 men have taken part,” Jeff explains. “We have used to same format for seventeen years. We pray the Rosary. We talk about what it means to be a Catholic man in today’s society. We have refreshments.”

Scott was called home by God in November of 2019. His spirit lives on in the legacy he has left to St. Gregory’s, the Men of God.



A pre-Covid gathering of members from Men of God.

## Great Happenings for our Faith Community



- ⇒ FIAT - Saturday, April 10, at 7:00 pm in the Church. All are welcome to attend.
- ⇒ The Great Shred Event - Sponsored by the Knights of Columbus - Saturday, April 17, from 9:00 am -12:00 noon outside the Ministry Center.
- ⇒ St. Vincent de Paul Annual Clothing Drive - Sunday, April 18 - The SVDP truck will be parked outside the Ministry Center for drop-offs prior to each Sunday Mass time.
- ⇒ The Great VIRTUAL Meat Raffle - Sponsored by the School on Friday, April 23, at 7:00 pm.
- ⇒ Knights of Columbus Mulch Sale - Sunday, May 8.

## “Let the Little Children Come to Me” Matthew 19:14

by Joan Rischmiller

On Tuesday, March 3, our Parish celebrated the Sacrament of First Penance with our St. Gregory's School and Family Faith Formation Grade 2 students. Even Covid did not stop 78 of God's Children from coming to Him.

Our Pastor, Fr. Leon, was the celebrant. The Gospel reading was “The Lost Sheep” Luke 15: 1-7. Father did an excellent job relating to the children about losing and finding something important to them.

Children today are not familiar with shepherds or herding sheep. Fr. Leon used an analogy of his “treasure chest” with some of his favorite collected items. He showed the children his collection one by one. He explained that one of his favorite items was lost, and he looked for it but could not find it until he emptied the entire chest. He expressed how happy he was to finally find it. Just like a shepherd who is sad when he loses one of his flock, and how God is sad when you are lost but happy when you return.

To keep a safe social distance, the children remained in their pews and were asked the following: “Did you ever lose something? How many of you were sad? How many of you found what you lost? Were you happy when you found it? How many never found what was lost?” They answered the questions by standing if their answer was “yes” and remaining seated if their answer was “no.” Fr. Leon helped them to understand Jesus' concern and care for each one of them. Explaining that when they are lost from Jesus, like when they sin, he will always look for them and welcome them back to the flock.

After the homily, Fr. Leon's “Examination of Conscience” helped them realize that their poor choices affect their family, friends, neighbors, and God. When we sin, we are like the “lost sheep.” Each child was ushered to one of our priests for their individual Confession. Watching the smiles on the faces of the children returning to their families after their Confession was inspiring.

We are grateful for the loving parents who prepared their children to receive the Sacrament despite the pandemic. We are all very fortunate to belong to such a Faith-filled Parish Community.



The St. Gregory the Great students celebrated the morning after with a breakfast with the priests and administration.

Fr. Paul even treated the students to a song on his guitar.

## School Shines amid Covid Pandemic

Basic economics tells us that there is an observable relationship between supply and demand. That has certainly been the case with enrollment at St. Gregory the Great School for the current school year as well as the upcoming one.

With physical distancing requirements in place, there is a limited supply of “spots” available for students in each of our classrooms. Covid has led to an increase in demand for these “spots” due to the five-day-a-week in-person learning that St. Greg’s and many other Catholic schools across the nation have accomplished.

As current families began the re-enrollment process for the 2021-2022 year, the School community quickly shared their belief in our School and all that we’ve achieved as a Faith community during the pandemic. Retention rates are at 99% across all grade levels. Additionally, we will offer a third section of Kindergarten for the fall, something the school has not accomplished in many years.

There is currently a waitlist for the following grades: PK3, Early Kindergarten, Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, and 5th grades. There are “spots” available in the other grade levels. To be added to the waitlist or to inquire about our enrollment process, please email Assistant Principal of Admissions Katie McIntyre at [kmcintyre@stgregsschool.org](mailto:kmcintyre@stgregsschool.org).

We are extremely grateful for our staff, faculty, student, parent and parish community for supporting, believing and trusting in our School’s mission and values during this uncertain time. We are grateful for your continued prayers and support.



### ***Stay Connected to Your Parish!***

If you have moved, locally or out of the area, or if you are no longer a parishioner at St. Gregory the Great, please email [bulletin@stgregs.org](mailto:bulletin@stgregs.org) with your updated contact information. We continue to work on our records to ensure our mailed communications, emails, and phone system are current. With all the changes in WNY related to Covid, it is more important than ever to **STAY CONNECTED TO YOUR PARISH!**

Receive spiritual quotes, learn about upcoming events, closings, cancellations and updates within the Parish, School, Family Faith Formation and Youth Ministry:

- ◇ Download the St. Gregory the Great Parish Mobile App.
  - ◇ Iphone users text: *ParishApp1* to 555888
  - ◇ Andriod users text: *ParishApp2* to 555888, follow prompts.
- ◇ Follow us on Social Media: [@StGregsBuffalo](https://twitter.com/StGregsBuffalo), [@stgregsthegreat](https://twitter.com/stgregsthegreat), [@stgregsyouth](https://twitter.com/stgregsyouth), [@stgregsyounadults](https://twitter.com/stgregsyounadults)
- ◇ Subscribe to our YouTube Channel: [@stgregswilliamsville](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCstgregswilliamsville)



## Ladies of the Lord Celebrates Silver Anniversary

by Dawn Curazzato

Ladies of the Lord began with six women, meeting in each other's homes once a week for prayer and fellowship. Three of those original six are still involved: Kathy Deakin, Donna Strom, and I. We met through the presentations I was doing around the diocese about the miraculous healing of my daughter Katelin, and my witness to the Eucharistic miracle I experienced at the home of little Audrey Santo in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Once our story appeared in local media, we received many calls to give witness talks to various groups. Following each talk we would distribute free Rosaries, blessed medals, Scapulars, and pamphlets. We felt like apostles for our Lord, bringing others closer to Him through my story, which is in a way a modern version of many of the stories we read in the Bible.

In the Jubilee Year 2000, my husband and daughter gave me a fiftieth birthday gift in the form of a pilgrimage to Medjugorje in the former Yugoslavia. Five of those six original Ladies of the Lord made the trip. The Blessed Mother stressed the importance of prayer groups during her apparitions. Little did we know that shortly after we arrived home, our group of six would grow to about 200!

*We were 'Fishermen,' fishing for souls.*

At present we have about 165 members officially, and pre-Covid would have around 70 at each meeting. We begin each meeting with a prayer to the Holy Spirit. Then we offer our petitions, and pray the Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet. We have readings then, from The Catholic Catechism, the Bible, and St. Faustina's diary. Sometimes we have a speaker. We end with what we call a fellowship table, where we enjoy earthly food to complement our spiritual nourishment. All women are welcome, no matter where they are in their spiritual journey. There are no dues. We meet at Church on the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm.



LOL 2013 Picnic

Now, after a quarter century, I am stepping down from leadership and am passing the reins to Chris Schober. Chris says, "We will continue the work that has been done by these wonderful ladies over the years. We do have many challenges with Covid but we are confident we can continue to provide a beautiful ministry for our Parish community. We will continue our commitment to say our daily prayers especially for those prayer requests."

## 13th Annual Divine Mercy Sunday

St. Gregory's is holding its 13th Divine Mercy Sunday Celebration on Sunday, April 11, from 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm in the Church. Starting with the Rosary, then the Divine Mercy Chaplet, finishing with the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Please join us; all are welcome to attend. To learn more about Divine Mercy Sunday and the Divine Mercy Message, visit our website at [www.stgregs.org/divine-mercy](http://www.stgregs.org/divine-mercy).



## ***The Mail Box***

### ***Is St. Joseph our spiritual father?***

*Dear Padre,*

*I am a returning Catholic, having spent twenty years as a Presbyterian. We are told to participate in the Consecration to St. Joseph. I understand that this means you acknowledge that he is your spiritual father, and you want to be like him. To show it, you entrust yourself entirely into his paternal care so that he can help you acquire his virtues and become holy. I was brought up to believe that only God is our Heavenly Father. This is causing me some confusion. Call me puzzled.*

Dear Puzzled:

The confusion perhaps comes from two very different ways that Saints are viewed in the Catholic and Protestant traditions. Typically, Protestants would be cautious in honoring the Saints, lest they receive tribute that should go to God alone. Typically, Catholics sense that in honoring the Saints, we are at the same time honoring God, Who is the source of every Saint's goodness and holiness. See for instance Matthew 5:15-16, where Jesus urges his followers to let their light shine before others, so that people will see their goodness and be moved to give praise to God, since God is the source of all goodness.

When a child wins the spelling bee, say, at school, her parents will receive congratulations from other parents. That is because the child's proficiency in spelling is a reflection of the parents' proficiency in parenting. The spelling bee winner brings praise to her parents, and the Saint brings praise to God, the source of all goodness.

It is true that God is our Heavenly Father, but many others share in His Fatherhood. Think of your own father and grandparents and perhaps you can see how they somehow are reflections of our Heavenly Father. Similarly, we call the Pope "Holy Father" and the parish priest "father," since they have father-like functions in the Church.

~The Padre



### ***Parents Well Pleased With New School***

Dear Parishioners,

Our son had completed one year of Kindergarten in a large public school when we decided to explore other educational opportunities. Our decision to transfer him was not an easy one, especially since the public school had an excellent reputation. Nonetheless, we decided to seek a faith-based education for him, in an environment that offered strong academics and a sense of community. St. Greg's seemed like the perfect fit. The school has far exceeded our expectations. Now all three of our children are St. Greg's pupils.

From the moment you walk in the door, you feel you are part of a family: teachers, pupils, administrators and fellow parents. We have a great sense of pride and appreciation for being part of the St. Greg's family.

~A Grateful Family

## Holy Thursday

Thursday, April 1

9:00 am – Morning Prayer

5:00 pm - Holy Thursday Supper

7:00 pm – Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper

## Good Friday

Friday, April 2

9:00 am – Morning Prayer

9:15 am – Divine Mercy Chaplet and Novena

12:00 noon – Seven Last Words of Christ

3:00 pm – Celebration of the Lord’s Passion

7:00 pm – Living Stations

## Holy Saturday

Saturday, April 3

9:00 am – Morning Prayer

9:15 am – Divine Mercy Chaplet and Novena

12:00 noon – Blessing of Easter Baskets

7:00 pm – Easter Vigil Mass

## Easter Sunday

Sunday, April 4

8:00 am - Mass

9:30 am - Mass

11:00 am - Mass

12:30 pm - Mass

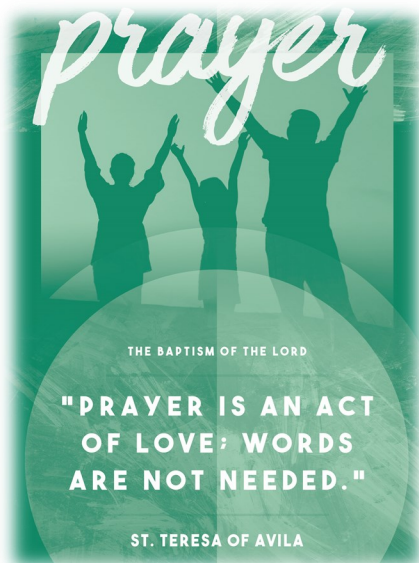
No 4:30 pm Mass

**Reservations are required attend Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday Masses.  
See our website or call the Parish Office.**

### Share-a-prayer

Submitted by a parishioner who says, “I have found this prayer beautiful and comforting, and I have given it to many friends.”

Share your favorite prayer with our readers. Email it to tfm210@hotmail.com with “Prayer” in the subject line, or send it by U.S. Mail to the Parish Office.



### A Prayer for Healing

Heavenly Father, I call on You right now in a special way. It is through Your power that I was created. Every breath I take, every morning I wake, and every moment of every hour, I live under Your power.

Father, I ask You now to touch me with that same power. For if You created me from nothing, You can surely recreate me. Fill me with the healing power of Your Spirit. Cast out anything that should not be in me. Mend what is broken. Root out any unproductive cells. Open any blocked arteries or veins and rebuild any damaged areas. Remove all inflammation and cleanse any infection.

Let the warmth of Your healing love pass through my body to make new any unhealthy areas so that my body will function the way You created it to function. And, Father, restore me to full health in mind and body, so that I may serve You the rest of my life. I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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## Visit St. Greg's Catholic Store for First Communion Gifts

First Communion is right around the corner! Stop by the Catholic Store to choose from a selection of items to celebrate a child making his or her First Communion this season. You'll find children's prayer books and Bibles, Scapulars and Rosaries, picture frames, and much more. The store is open Tuesday through Friday from 8:30 am until 2:00 pm; Wednesday nights from 5:30 until 7:30 pm; Saturday from 8:30 am until noon; Sundays 9 :00 am until 2:00 pm.

