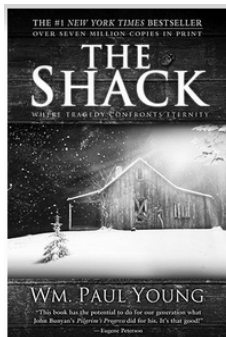


For privacy considerations, please note that photos of individuals and phone numbers are not shown on the website edition of *Bart's Herald*.

A review of the book... "The Shack" by William P. Young



If you want a challenge, a different perspective, then by all means, you will want to read *The Shack*, a novel by William P. Young. *The Shack* is a relatively short book – 252 pages – about a father, Mackenzie Philips, who

experiences an overwhelming family tragedy that causes his life to sink into what he calls "The Great Sadness". Four years later Mack receives a message from God to meet Him at the site of the family tragedy. Responding to the invitation, Mack encounters God in a different form than one might expect. Through Mack's interaction with God and The Trinity, he overcomes "The Great Sadness" and experiences forgiveness not only for his own sins but also for the individual who caused the tragedy.

Is this book controversial? YES! It portrays the persons of The Trinity in human form that you probably have never considered. Some theologians consider *The Shack* to be against organized religion while others consider it to be inspirational. Whatever your feelings after you read *The Shack* (remember that it is a novel), it will provide you with a reading experience that might be considered "outside of the box". On the New York Times Paperback Trade Fiction best-seller list in the No. 1 spot for several weeks last year, it is a story of love, forgiveness and redemption.

By Bob Albert

PASTOR'S CORNER

By Father Stephen Slodesky

Much has happened since the last issue of *Bart's Herald*! As so many of you know, St. Bartholomew and St. Bridget parishes were linked together on July 30th when I was appointed by Archbishop Mansell as pastor of both parishes. At the same time, Father Tom Sievel moved on to a new assignment at St. Vincent de Paul parish in East Haven, CT, and Father Marcin Pluciennik, a newly ordained priest of the Archdiocese, became the Parochial Vicar (formerly called a "curate" or "assistant pastor") for St. Bart's and St. Bridget.

The linkage of our parishes is not a merger and does not involve the closure of either parish. In fact, it is an attempt to keep parishes open and autonomous with fewer clergy available. Father Marcin and I rotate each weekend between the parishes. We also split our time between the parishes during the week celebrating daily Mass, funerals, weddings, baptisms and being available for parish appointments, events and meetings. Having two priests is actually a bonus for us. Sometimes when simultaneous events are happening at the parish we are able to have a priest at each, which would not have been possible before.

At the same time, the linkage provides a natural connection between St. Bartholomew and St. Bridget parishes to explore ways to come together as one – to share ministries and social events that will make both parishes more vibrant, strong and effective in ministering to our neighbors in need. For example, some parishioners have already suggested to me that we might be able to have a joint parish picnic next year. We will certainly consider that!

I am also deeply grateful for the dedicated and hardworking staff we have here at St. Bart's! Without these co-workers – our Deacon Bill Bartlett, Religious Education Director Denise Bartlett, Youth Minister Vicky Rispoli, Music and Liturgy Director Jane Peacock and Office Manager Diane Gluhosky – along with a host of support staff and parishioners generously offering their talents and time, we would never be able to do and be all that we are at St. Bartholomew!

My sincere hope is that we continue to build upon the foundation of those who have gone before us to allow St. Bart's to grow and thrive as a community of faith which nourishes and strengthens us in our daily lives and provides the opportunity to live our faith meaningfully, as we proclaim the Gospel in action and reach out beyond the walls of our church complex to those in need in our town, our nation and our world!

Father Stephen

YOUTH MISSION TRIP TO SOUTH CAROLINA

“Absolutely Wonderful!”

By Harry Robinson

Eighteen St. Bartholomew youths and three adult leaders landed in Charleston, South Carolina, July 26, in 91 degree heat and high humidity to begin a five-day mission which would excite them and open their eyes to a new world. The mission was an event where one had to be there to appreciate it fully, but Linda Hamlin, one of the leaders, has various records of the trip as well as a “scrapbook” of digital photos to take others there and to retain sacred memories of what one youth called an “absolutely wonderful” experience.

An article Linda wrote for the Youth Ministry newsletter began with a recipe that she called “Soul Food - A Recipe for a Successful Mission Trip.” (The names in parentheses have been added for this article.)

Ingredients:

- 1 Dedicated and enthusiastic Youth Minister (Vicky Rispoli)*
- 1 Supportive pastor (Father Tom Sievel)*
- 3 Ambitious & open-minded chaperones (Linda & Thomas Hamlin and Kevin Warena)*
- 1 Faith-filled supportive parish community (St. Bart’s)*
- 18 High-energy, faith-filled, fun-loving youth*
- 15 Sets of supportive & loving parents*
- 1 Mission trip work site*

Prep Time: Countless hours but well worth it

Serves: God and those in need

With these ingredients how could the mission trip not be wonderful and successful!

Linda knew St. Bart’s group from her previous youth mission trip and from her help with the Confirmation class. Tom offered a different perspective. This was his first mission trip, but he had met some of the young people in his eighth grade CCD class. Kevin was quite familiar with such trips because he had been early on a member of St. Bart’s Youth Ministry.

The trip was part of a Catholic Heart Workcamp (See catholichrtcamp@msn.com) program for tenth graders or older. Its mission was to help the needy and to develop further the participants’ spiritual lives. The youths were not building houses but repairing, washing, painting, and cleaning – all physical work - with designated troubleshooters. The whole project involved youths from all over the country working in small groups: Florida, Texas, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Missouri. A priest and a soon-to-be priest helped with spiritual growth of the group, saying Mass each morning and guiding other segments of the day: breakfast, work, free time, dinner, after dinner programs.

All of these activities were strong bonding activities – youth to youth and youth to adult. The bonding began even before the trip with a barbecue hosted by the Hamlins. All arrived

in South Carolina with their St. Bart’s blue mission trip T-shirts. In Charleston they lived in the Bishop England High School. They brown-bagged their lunches, slept in sleeping bags. The group also had a free day to have lunch at the beach and a visit to an open-air market where they could buy souvenirs. Linda has a panorama of photographs showing the group in high-spirited, fun activities. In the evening programs the group participated in skits, watched videos, sang Christian music, danced, and played games. One game involved a blindfolded person putting a quarter on his or her nose, trying to get the quarter into a cup. Another game involved spitting out a cricket, but details of that will remain hazy. Of the whole experience, Tom said, “I can’t find words to describe how they were into it.”

The young missionaries responded to Linda’s evaluation request as follows: “When you help people, you learn more about yourself. I learned what to be grateful for: family, home, food, friends.” “You get out of the trip as much as you put into it. “ “I love helping people and learned from experience that I am very fortunate.” “It was a great experience to meet people who were just as on fire about God as I was.” “I have gained the confidence not to be ashamed of my faith. I’m not embarrassed to stand for what I believe in.” “It was fun getting to know people from around the country.” “I can’t wait to go again next year.” “The trip changed me by being closer to God and understanding more about helping people.” “Since I have been given the chance to view what others don’t have, I have realized the importance of valuing and respecting what I do have.” “We really grew closer to the other kids from our church.” All are grateful to their leaders, to Vicky Rispoli, who has worked energetically to organize the trip, and to St. Bart’s community.

At a post-trip barbecue, again hosted by the Hamlins, Linda saw that the missionaries had reached a new “comfort zone.” At that get-together the message was: “Now you’ve done it – share it with others at St. Bart’s. You have ‘everything’ compared to the people you helped – now engage in service projects, help a neighbor, and do not take things for granted.”

Youth Mission participants:

Audrey Arel, Lauren Arel, Katie Ashmead, Alyssa Bacay, Austin Bernaiche, Olivia Botteron, Victoria Caudillo, Caitlin Connelly, Megan Donohue, Jennifer Johnson, Linda Hamlin(C), Tom Hamlin(C), Carolyn Kokoska, Jennifer Mears, Lauren Morency, Anna Piggott, Joshua Piggott, Kristen Sullivan, Natalia Surdam, Kevin Warena(C) and Matthieu Wheeler.

(C denotes chaperon)

A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL

An interview with Joe Pazdan of St. Bart's Social Committee

By John Garoppolo



On August 15th, members of St. Bart's parish attended a baseball game in Norwich at Dodd Stadium, home of the Connecticut Defenders, the AA farm club of the San Francisco Giants. About sixty people enjoyed the event, which was the second time it was held; the first time was last year as part of St. Bart's 50th anniversary. Participants provided their own transportation but anyone that needed a ride received one. The package provided by the stadium included an "all-you-can-eat" picnic-style buffet served 90 minutes before the game started. The menu included hot dogs, hamburgers, potato salad, coleslaw and soft drinks at the stadium's picnic area in a pavilion with very comfortable seating. The turnout was double that of last year which bodes well for next year. The choice of the Norwich location, rather than New Britain, was the recommendation of Ed Giard, St. Bart's former deacon, who felt that the stadium did a very good job with respect to the food offering.

One of the highlights this year was the rendering of the National Anthem by St. Bart's choir, who were magnificent and represented our parish in fine fashion. A park attendant said that their rendition was the finest he had heard all year. Because the choir had to be on the field fifteen minutes before game time, the pavilion was open an additional 15 minutes to make sure that choir members didn't lose out on refreshments. The stadium staff knows how to show appreciation. After the National Anthem, the game began and was won by the Defenders. The stadium, named in honor of the late Senator Tom Dodd (father of current Senator Chris Dodd) is a beautiful park, well maintained and presents itself as a showcase for major league baseball. The atmosphere was very friendly and the hosts extremely cooperative. All the seats were together right behind the visitor's dugout and close to the game. There are a lot of things to keep the kids entertained with an activity on the field every half inning just for their entertainment. The Defenders' mascot roamed the stadium to the delight of many. The Defenders will not be playing at Dodd Stadium next year, but another minor league team is expected to replace them. The outing was a pleasant experience and, hopefully, we'll do it again next year, and a "good time will be had by all."



HAPPENINGS AT ST. BARTHOLOMEW AND ST. BRIDGET

By Ed Rowe



Editor's note: with the linkage of St. Bartholomew and St. Bridget parishes, Bart's Herald feels it is appropriate that its readers be aware of some of the many opportunities available at both parishes.

It's now fall, and activities that were dormant during the summer now spring into action again. Parish life is no exception. This article will summarize what St. Bart's and St. Bridget's parishes can expect from now through part of January 2010.

St. Bart's will go first. For the next three months there are the traditional and ongoing liturgical, social justice, mission and purely social activities. These various pursuits range from praying the rosary on Friday evenings, Small Church Communities on Monday, Thursday and Saturday mornings, Wednesday evenings and Tuesday afternoons, to Legion of Mary on Tuesday mornings and choir practices on Wednesday evenings. Then there are the monthly events, such as Monday morning visits to Crestfield Nursing Home, and the Prayer Shawl ministry on Friday mornings. Finally, there are special happenings, such as the November 11th bus trip to New York City and Confirmation service projects that range from volunteering Saturday mornings at the MACC shelter and food pantry to serving Christmas Day dinner for the homeless at Rein's Deli. As always, St. Bart's maintains a vibrant and vital community life.

For St. Bridget's, John Ryan, Pastoral Associate, was gracious enough to supply the following list of events:

- ✠ November 1, Sunday, at 4pm: organ dedication and reception in the church.
- ✠ November 6, Friday, at 5pm: Italian Night in the auditorium.
- ✠ November 8, Sunday, at 8:30am: flu clinic in the cafeteria.

Also, *Creative Croppers* (a scrap bookers group) will meet in the cafeteria at 6pm on November 13 and 27 and December 11 and 18. On December 5, Saturday, St. Bridget's Craft Fair will be held in the auditorium, starting at 9am. Finally, a pancake breakfast will be held on January 24, 2010, starting at 6:30am in the cafeteria. John wanted to let us know that start up meetings for *Pax Christi* will be held on the first Tuesday of each month at 7pm in the parish office. (From its website: *Pax Christi USA* strives to create a world that reflects the peace of Christ by exploring, articulating, and witnessing to the call of Christian nonviolence.)

As you can see, both parishes have an active and exciting parish life. Please attend as many of these functions as you see fit.

THE NEXT BIG STEP – FIRST VOWS!

By Sister Karen Lynn Trespacz, O.S.B.

Editor's note: Sister Karen Lynn was an active parishioner at St. Bart's before joining the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia.

It's hard to imagine that it's been over 2 ½ years since I moved from St. Bart's into the monastery! The first step was as a Live-In – you live in the building for up to a year and participate in table, prayers and chores, but you keep your own income, car and cell phone. This is a very helpful stage, especially if you've been used to living by yourself, for seeing how you feel about living with thirty other women! Then comes the "knock on the door" when you request entrance into the community as a Postulant. At this stage you give up your own income, car and cell phone and start classes, but you continue to work for up to twenty hours per week. (What happens to the income from work? It goes to the community, which pays for food, shelter, transportation, medicines and medical care, while you receive a small cash "budget" to spend on personal items.) After a year of Postulancy, you become a Novice; that's when the Formation Program really becomes intense! Your working/ministry hours go down to six per week, the number of classes you take goes up to about five at a time, and you only go outside "the womb of the community" one day a month. We affectionately call this stage "Holy Lockdown" and it is a very special time of focusing on your relationship to God, yourself and others. The humorous way we explain these early stages is that when you're a Live-In, you let your director know where you're going. When you're a Postulant, you ask your director if you can go. When you're a Novice, your director answers, "No."

During the Novice ceremony we receive a copy of the *Rule of Benedict*. So in addition to the classes you would expect on Scripture, Theology and Monastic History, we have classes on the *Rule* and on each of the three vows we are preparing to take. But the vows are not what you might expect – poverty, chastity and obedience. As Benedictines, we take vows of stability, fidelity to the monastic way of life – and, yes, obedience! Perhaps the best way to give you an idea of the first two is to quote from the reflection given by Sister Cecilia Dwyer, our Prioress, at our vow ceremony: "You are asked to embrace *stability* and be a stable force of good, positive energy in building relationships among us as you insert yourselves into our communal understanding of the Word of God. And you are asked to embrace *fidelity* to the monastic way of life, which demands of you simply to live this life one day at a time, take what comes and turn it into something beautiful. You may long for rain in a dry spell and for sun in a rainy spell, but you will grow, nonetheless, because you are planted in the rich, nurturing soil of our community heart."

Obedience doesn't come easy to free-spirited Americans, but we discover in obedience a road to joy. We hear many stories from our sisters about the times they were assigned a ministry they were convinced that they couldn't do. The impossibility would be explained to the Prioress, but as the *Rule* says, "If after explanation the abbot or prioress is still determined to hold to their original order, then juniors must recognize that this is best for them. Trusting in God's help, they must in love obey." These stories always end with, "And that was the best time of my life!" Sisters discover strengths, talents and an enrichment of their lives that they had never even dreamed of before. And we're not just obedient to the Prioress (who also has to be obedient – even Jesus was "obedient unto death") but the *Rule* tells us to "earnestly compete in obedience to one other."

Why would we do this? Again, Sister Cecilia's reflection explains beautifully:

"St. Paul prays that 'Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, as we are being rooted and grounded in love.' Being rooted and grounded in love is the whole point of the formation process. And it isn't to say that Kathleen and Karen Lynn didn't come to us grounded in love. Of course they did. But they are choosing this life on purpose and today are making a commitment to it. The only reason to do that is to become even more rooted in love, rooted in the love of Christ through the expression of that love fostered in monastic community living."

What a joy and a blessing to have the opportunity to do this!

Now what happens? We become "Scholastics"; the number of classes goes down to two (Scripture and a seminar in theology), and the number of hours devoted to work/ministry goes up to thirty per week. This is when, newly hatched from the protection of the Novice year, we learn how to balance work, prayer, community and family. And prepare for the next stage – **final vows!**

For more information about the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia and their ministries, you are welcome to look at their website, www.osbva.org. If you'd like to keep up-to-date on monastery happenings, be sure to click on the link to Sister Vicki's blog at www.monasticsonajourney.blogspot.com.

MARCH FOR LIFE 2009: A NEW AWARENESS

By Serge Arel

This past January, a colleague invited me to attend the “March for Life” in Washington D.C. with him. At first I was reluctant to go because between work and family, well, I’m a busy guy. Plus, the march was on January 22, a weekday, which is not very convenient. To make matters worse, the only realistic way to attend was to hop a bus that was leaving from West Hartford on a Wednesday night at 11pm, driving through the night and arriving in Washington D.C. at 6am. I felt that I had plenty of reasons to say “no” to this invitation and I would be justified. But, I felt the need to say “yes” and I’m so glad I did.

Although I had heard of the march before, I had no idea about for what I had just signed up. But the Holy Spirit always leads the way when we open ourselves up to His guidance. The organizers quietly serve by doing work that goes virtually unnoticed by the majority of us. But this work is vital as these faithful activists spend countless hours peacefully opposing the evil of abortion. Many of those I met on this trip have been making this pilgrimage for years and plan to continue until *Roe vs. Wade* is overturned. That kind of commitment is impressive and humbling to me as a pro-lifer as I reflected on what actions I have (or have not) taken in the pro-life effort. I realized that, perhaps, I was being challenged to move beyond just calling myself a pro-lifer. Abortion has become the centerpiece in a cultural battle between promoting life or promoting death through inaction, and I was being challenged to do more.

We can all agree about the teachings that Jesus Christ left with us. But in the end, what does it mean if those teachings bring about no change in how we live or how the truth is expressed or silenced within the public square? In other words, our faith needs to be more than just believing in the truth. Acting on these beliefs allows us to bring about social justice, deepen our faith and to imitate Jesus. If Jesus were here today, I believe that He would not simply watch from the sidelines. He would be involved. We, too, must be involved or we simply become marginalized believers who are unwilling to stand up when called upon.

The “March for Life” takes place every year on the anniversary of the controversial *Roe vs. Wade* Supreme Court decision of 1973. This ruling to legalize abortion has resulted in the institutionalized destruction of over 50 million innocent lives in the last thirty-six years. There is no greater holocaust than this in recent history. This cleansing of innocent lives is approximately eight times greater than the killings of Jews by Nazi Germany. This statistic has taken place in a nation that was founded on Christian principles, intended to protect our God-given freedoms. Perhaps we are only partially into this struggle to save human souls since it took our nation over seventy years to abolish slavery, another evil that was once regarded as

acceptable. One only needs to read the *Declaration of Independence* as a reminder of what we fought for when first establishing our independence and inscribing “...endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The most basic of all rights is that of life. No other right really matters if a new life never has the opportunity to survive in the womb of a mother. Do we still even believe in the founding principles of our nation or in God’s Commandments? If so, we must take action.

Participating in this “March for Life” along with 250,000 other faithful and peaceful demonstrators awakened me. I walked in solidarity with the most diverse crowd of believers including Catholic priests, friars, Sisters of Life with their banner stating: “Mary is Our Mother and Jesus is Our Life”. There were Catholic high schools, youth groups and colleges, such as Christendom College who led the march. The Knights of Columbus not only helped with crowd control but also handed out thousands of signs to demonstrators. Intuitively, I expected those groups to be present but perhaps the greatest advocates were those who carried signs that stated, “I Regret My Abortion” and publicly expressed remorse for their actions. That takes strength and courage. They are the ones who suffered the losses, felt guilt, rejection and experienced the personal heartbreaks. Yet, their testimony is real and speaks the loudest among all the voices.

As we express our views on the respect for life of the unborn, we need to recognize that it is a cultural issue that is emotionally charged and one that has affected so many people under various circumstances. We cannot be judgmental but must approach all efforts with a loving perspective. Based on my observation and experience in D.C., the “March For Life” was completely respectful and sensitive to all who have been touched by this issue. It was clear that all involved understood that the goal is not to point the finger at anyone. We must send a loving message to those who create and interpret the law to respect life from conception through natural death, as intended in our Constitution.

I am so thankful my colleague took the risk and personally invited me to attend because it was a transformational experience. I am determined to return to Washington, DC next year on January 22, 2010, and I invite anyone else reading this to join me. Consider this your personal invitation.

Editor’s note: for additional information please contact Serge Arel or the pro-life coordinators for our parish – Jen Arel or Maureen Sullivan.



Rachel, Welcome to St. Bart's

By Bob Albert

Editor's note: In the June 2009 issue of Bart's Herald we presented two of the three RCIA graduates - Linda Bouchie and Enrique Ochoa. We now introduce the third member of the 2009 RCIA program: Rachel Larson (Please see page 7 for the photo of the three RCIA graduates.)

Rachel Larson and her husband, Eric, moved from Nebraska to Connecticut in 2006 when she accepted a position at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, where she is currently a career consultant in the Department of Career Services. She was born and raised in a small town with a population of about 300 in Nebraska, where her father was a farmer and her mother, a preschool teacher and college academic advisor. Attending the University of Nebraska, she earned a Bachelor of Journalism degree with a major in advertising and a Master of Arts degree in educational administration. She has a younger brother, who still lives in Nebraska.

Upon arriving in Connecticut, she and Eric settled in Manchester. Rachel, baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran Missouri Synod church, and Eric, a life-long Catholic, reached a joint decision that they should be of the same faith. After agreeing that she would become Catholic, she began the search for a program that would meet her needs. She wanted a program that would be challenging and focused on Catholic doctrine. And, she was able to meet those needs through the *Right of Christian Imitation for Adults (RCIA)* at St. Bart's. In choosing St. Bart's she found the program not only challenging but also supported by the entire St. Bart's RCIA team as they worked with each candidate to address the candidate's needs. Since Eric was unable to attend the weekly RCIA sessions due to his job and educational commitments, Dan Cadaret (a convert to Catholicism as a member of St. Bart's RCIA program in 2006) was her sponsor. (Dan is enrolled presently in the bible study program sponsored by the Archdiocese of Hartford). Rachel commented that she came to know several parishioners because of the program's practice of using guest presenters. Not only was she appreciative of the efforts of the RCIA team, but also of the contributions of Father Tom Sievel to the RCIA classes.

At UConn Rachel interacts with students and alumni and has developed and teaches a four-semester program in career development called "Explore" to aid students in their major and career decision-making process and transition from academia to the professional world. She is also pursuing a doctorate in adult learning at UConn so her available time is limited. She plans to help out at St. Bart's as time permits. *Rachel, welcome to the parish family of St. Bart's.*

Keeping Our Kids Catholic

By Jen Arel



Is it possible in our present culture to keep our kids Catholic? Music, movies, internet, health education agendas, immodest fashions and cell phones expose our kids to ungodly values so that at times it really does seem impossible. Just as discouraging are stories from committed Catholic families whose kids seemed to keep their faith during the early years but tragically lost it during their young adult years.

If you're hoping I have a plan guaranteeing that your children will keep the Faith, read no further! I, myself, am still in the thick of this struggle with my oldest of four heading to college and my youngest entering 3rd grade. I remain on my knees for them in prayer, devouring Catholic parenting books, and reading through yahoo groups' advice. This job is so important because God placed these children in my husband's and my care and we will one day be accountable to Him as to whether we did all that we could to give them a solid Catholic foundation that leads them to Him. I know that most Catholic parents feel the same way so I'm hoping to address this subject over the next few issues of *Bart's Herald*.

First, you need to know that through my now eighteen years of parenting, I have made more than my fair share of mistakes. I have eaten more words than I care to count; in fact I'm surprised I haven't choked to death by now. So, keeping humble and accepting our mere mortal attempts at this are very important. Therefore, I'm hoping these upcoming articles aren't all of my ideas on the subject. I still have much to learn and miles to go before I sleep! However, sitting in our parish are parents who have walked this road already and have undoubtedly had successes as well as failures. Would you share these with me? I would like to take each phase of a child's life in a different quarterly *Bart's Herald* section and discuss ideas that have helped children keep the Faith! Keep in mind that I think it's also important for parents to hear about the mistakes that others have made so as not to repeat them. My segments will be: Infant/Pre-school Years, K-12 School-aged Years and finally the College/Young Adult Years. We desperately need your wisdom to survive the increasingly strong undertow that threatens to drown all of our children, rob our beautiful Church of their presence and the heavens of their final resting place. Please submit your wisdom (including your name and phone number which will not be printed) and give them to Diane Gluhosky in the parish office. I am hoping this can be a joint effort with me as the humble scribe.

MEET FATHER STEPHEN SLEDESKY, OUR NEW PASTOR

By Debi Ashmead

If you haven't met Father Stephen Sledesky and his smiling face, you are sure to meet him soon as he tries to greet everyone before and after Mass every other weekend. He decided to best serve our parish with some consistency of getting to know us, so he and Father Marcin Pluciennik will rotate weekends giving them a greater chance to meet everybody. Father Stephen is no stranger to St. Bart's. A few years ago, after he had been living in the office area at St. Bridget's, Father Tom Sievel extended an invitation to stay in St. Bart's rectory. He's helped Father Tom in the past to cover daily Mass or a funeral Mass. As the pastor of St. Bridget's in Manchester since 2003, he has been involved with Small Church Communities and the Catholic Community of Manchester where he has come to know several St. Bart's parish family members.

So, what keeps the smile on Father Stephen's face every day? In general, he is indeed an optimist who is content with fulfilling his calling; but above that he embraces the gift that God has given him. He genuinely enjoys being with each and every one of his parish family members. He takes his invitation to be with members of his parish family in some of the most significant moments of their faithful lives, seriously and with great honor. Father Stephen describes the gift of being able to make each parish family member's sacraments a more meaningful experience, "I'm in the right place, answering God's call and where I'm suppose to be".

Stephen Sledesky, Jr., son of Louise and Stephen Sledesky and a native to East Hartford, attended St. Rose School and East Catholic High School. He is the middle child of three boys and is looking forward to visiting his older brother with four kids in Tennessee over the Thanksgiving weekend. As a Catholic, Father Stephen attended Mass

with his family and became involved in high school, taking part in youth group activities. He was invited to be a lector at Mass during his high school years. In his junior year of high school he began the process of determining what he would do in life and where he would go to college. Father Stephen knew he wanted a career where he could help people and was thinking about the optometry field where he could make money as well. Perhaps, he thought, being a doctor would be an attractive career. As he was discerning this process, he had an internal sense that this was not really where he wanted to go. At the same time, he heard comments from people he knew - "...ever think of being a priest?" As priests came to East Catholic High to talk to the youth about vocations, he quickly tucked the literature into his book, deathly afraid of anyone picking up on his interest. When he got home, he mailed the post card to the seminary to request more information. Early in his senior year, he knew he was being called, but it wasn't until he settled into his college curriculum at Trinity that he began feeling comfortable and at peace with his calling.

He studied theology in Baltimore and became ordained as a Deacon in 1991. He was assigned to a number of parishes and received the sacrament of Holy Orders in 1993. His first assignment as a priest, granted by Archbishop Cronin, was to Sacred Heart Church in Suffield, where he learned from a great pastor. Father Stephen had increasing roles of responsibilities within the Archdiocese and is no stranger to the linking of parishes. He experienced this concept when he served in Torrington. Father Stephen chuckles that although he gets paid to do this work for God - "I have the privilege of serving others." Which, as Catholics, we are all called to do.



*Psalm 110:4 (NAB)
"...You are a priest
forever, according
to the order of
Melchizedek."*



"Bible Bayou" AT ST. BART'S

By Henry Poirer



From August tenth to the fifteenth, St. Bartholomew parish again sponsored the annual Vacation Bible Camp (VBC), at which a record number of young people – 81 in all – attended. Although there have been many VBCs over the years, Debi Ashmead had directed it for the past several years. Debi introduced Mary Falotico to VBC three years ago, and Mary took over as its director in 2008. Mary has agreed to take on the camp again in 2010. We are the only parish running a Catholic VBC in the Manchester area, but we happily accept young people from other parishes. We supply the facilities: Father Hussey Hall, classrooms, furnishings, the kitchen and materials. St. Bart's regular staff and many volunteers - primarily from our parish - play a big role in making it all possible.

This summer there were twelve pre-school children who had a separate age-appropriate program under the care of Katie Ashmead and Caitlin Connelly. The remaining children – in first through fifth grade - were placed in twelve separate groups, each with six or seven children with at least one child from each grade level. This arrangement reduced competition and encouraged a "working together" atmosphere among different age children. A crew leader and two assistants worked with each group. In support of this year's service project the children donated over 600

canned goods to the Haitian Health Foundation. A Bible-related activity started each day at 8:30 with activities, such as the burning bush, the plague and Passover, drawn from the book of Exodus. Each day's session ended promptly at 11:30. That's five three-hour days of intense activity with 80+ highly motivated youngsters plus a dedicated staff of 40+ volunteers who made it all work.

The theme for this year's VBC was "Bible Bayou". The name, as well as instruction materials and supplies, were purchased from the Group Publishing Company. Making the material become a reality in our parish was up to Mary Falotico and the volunteers (too numerous to mention here) who made up her staff. The volunteers came together to make the decorations and included fifteen and sixteen year olds, who are "graduates" of previous VBCs. Other helpers responded to a specific need – like the parishioner who saw a need for a boat dock at the "Bayou" and went ahead and built it - and those who provided baked goods for the volunteers. Many volunteers - some from other parishes - were part of this annual effort to enrich the lives of our young people and, in so doing, enrich our entire parish life. They are already looking forward to next year's "High Seas" program.

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