

# SPIRE

To Educate, Inform and Nourish the Faith of the St. Anne Parish Community

## AMAZING STORIES OF FORGIVENESS

The Catholic Church teaches that there are seven Corporal Works of Mercy and seven Spiritual Works of Mercy. Many of the Corporal Works were discussed in our last issue. Today I would like to focus on the fifth Spiritual Work of Mercy: To forgive offenses willingly.

One after another members of the victims' families stepped up to the podium at King County Superior Court to confront the man responsible for murdering their loved ones. Gary Leon Ridgeway, perhaps better known as the Green River Killer, had been convicted of the murders of 48 women (he confessed to killing 71) throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The murders took place near Seattle and Tacoma Washington.

One called him an animal, another an evil creature, and another a parasite. And, as you may have guessed, some used language that cannot be printed in a church publication. Then a white bearded man with gentle eyes approached the podium. His name was Robert Rule. His teenage daughter, Linda, was murdered by Ridgeway in 1982. Rule looked directly at Ridgeway and said "Mr. Ridgeway, there are people here who hate you. I'm not one of them. You've made it difficult to live up to what I believe, and that is what God says to do, and that's to forgive. You are forgiven sir." As Ridgeway gazed at

*Spiritual Works of Mercy*  
*To admonish the sinner • To instruct the ignorant*  
*To counsel the doubtful • To comfort the sorrowful*  
*To bear wrongs patiently • To forgive all injuries*  
*To pray for the living and the dead*

Rule, Ridgeway's lips began to tremble. He started to cry and quickly turned away to wipe his eyes. You can witness this poignant moment yourself by going to YouTube and searching for "The Power of Forgiveness – Gary Ridgeway."

On October 2, 2006 Charles C. Roberts walked into an Amish schoolhouse in Lancaster Pennsylvania, armed with three guns, and murdered five young girls and injured another five before taking his own life. He was reportedly deeply scarred by the death of his child, Elise, who died nine years earlier and left him with an unquenchable anger toward God and himself. One can only imagine the hurt and anger the loved ones of the victims may have felt. But in an extraordinary demonstration of forgiveness, that Amish community - including family members of the deceased victims - attended Robert's funeral and comforted his widow. The community also offered financial support to her and her three young children.

Some of us may remember when, on May 13, 1981, Mehmet Ali Agca fired several shots into Pope John Paul II leaving him critically injured. We may also remember when the then pope met with his would be assassin to forgive him. But many of us may not know that after serving 19 years in prison

Agca was released - and 31 years to the day that he was forgiven - he went to the tomb of Pope John Paul II and, while wiping away tears, laid several white roses on it.

More recently, several family members of the victims of the horrific shooting in a church in Charleston, South Carolina publicly forgave 21 year old Dylann Roof who murdered nine people during a prayer service being given in the church.

Admittedly, the examples cited above are more the exception than the rule. To forgive a horrible act of violence is a challenge that, hopefully, most of us will never face. The marvelous thing about the act of forgiving, however small or large the offense, is that all parties benefit.

Research has continually shown that our minds and bodies are linked. Studies have also shown that holding a grudge not only weighs heavily on your mind but affects your physical body as well. Research published in Social Psychological & Personality Science, states that "the act of forgiveness — pardoning someone who has done you wrong — can not only metaphorically lift a burden off your shoulders, but it can do so physically, as well." According to the Mayo Clinic,

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## A REVOLUTION OF TENDERNESS

Most of us are familiar with the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Pope Francis has done something with them that can change how we look at them: he has put them into the broader context of the *Jubilee Year of Mercy*. For him, they are part of a “revolution of tenderness.” Revolutions aren’t nice and they’re certainly not innocuous. They’re upsetting for the way things are done and the Year of Mercy is meant to be upsetting. To underscore this, the Pope plans to offer a gesture of mercy one Friday every month. So, on Friday, December 18th, he visited a charity center in Rome and opened its “door of mercy,” to symbolically remind us that mercy means opening our hearts to the least amongst us, the hungry, the poor.

The Pope wants every diocese throughout the world to designate their cathedrals, and certain parish churches in their dioceses, as places of mercy. Traditionally, the way it was usually done was for a jubilee year to be celebrated only in Rome. Pilgrims would then come to the Eternal City and pass through the jubilee year door at St. Peter’s Basilica and receive a special indulgence for their sins.

But Pope Francis has altered this tradition to include local dioceses. In Newark, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Archbishop John Myers has opened a special “door of mercy.” He has also designated the following parish churches as special “Pilgrim Churches” for people who can’t get to the Cathedral Basilica: St. Francis Xavier, Newark; St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, Linden; Divine Mercy, Rahway; Our Lady of Mercy, Park Ridge; Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Wallington, and Our Lady of Mercy, Jersey City. As with the Rome churches,

anyone who goes to these sites and fulfills the conditions associated with receiving indulgences will do so there.

The mere going to a special church, however, isn’t what the *The Jubilee Year of Mercy* is about. As the pope has emphasized, it’s about a new way of looking and acting, both at the world and at one another. It’s about mercy as a revolutionary practice! Did you know that his motto, as pope and as archbishop of Buenos Aires, is often translated as *Choosing through Mercy?* Do you hear the active quality of this phrase? He wants to act in a merciful way in any circumstance.

When speaking of the Year of Mercy, he said: “the revolution that is needed is that of tenderness, because justice and all the rest comes from it. We have to cultivate a revolution of tenderness today...the tenderness of God toward each one of us.” The journalist, John Allen, noted that

*As the reference to justice suggests, Francis seems convinced that the social change that he’s after – stronger measures on climate change, for instance, or an end to unjust trading relationships, a halt to illegal arms trafficking, greater investment in anti-poverty efforts, and so on – is dependent on something fundamental. In a word, that “something” is mercy.*

By calling for a “revolution of tenderness,” the pope is urging us all to make this Jubilee Year first of all a revolution in consciousness, a profound shift in the attitudes and behavior that can make a difference in how we relate to creation and to each other politically, economically, and personally. This is why the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy are so important. These aren’t just nice things to do.

The revolution begins with “the tender-

ness of God toward each one of us.” We don’t learn to love unless we’ve been loved first. So Christ cares and forgives us before we can say anything. He’s like the father in the Prodigal Son parable: searching the horizons for us and opening his arms, inviting us to self-acceptance, based on his acceptance. His mercy supersedes our guilt and self-centeredness.

This isn’t to coddle us, however. It’s to heal us of the false sense that our self-worth is dependent on what we’ve done or failed to do. When that’s the standard, we live a roller-coaster way of life, more often than not looking out for “how we’re doing.” Our sense of who we are is addicted to the reaction of others to us.

The Risen Christ shifts this focus. He loves us not because we’re good, but because he is good, as Richard Rohr often says. Isn’t this what the Eucharist celebrates: Christ is in communion with us? His mercy gives us a new center – we are always his brothers and sisters. When we act from that identity, we can learn to love freely rather than from the fear of what another may say or do.

The roller-coaster reaction of others creates an insecure sense of self, always looking over its shoulder. Christ transforms this self-image to one capable of more consistent love because his love is so unconditionally constant. But for this to take hold in us, he offers us the practices we call the “works of mercy.” These aren’t just options. They are essential to deepen this new sense of self-worth. By practicing them each day, even if it’s just one a day, we slowly become other Christs. It takes a lifetime but it’s worth the change for it changes the world!

–J.C.D.

# YEAR OF MERCY

## 08.12.2015 - 20.11.2016



## A CONNECTION BETWEEN YOUTH AND MERCY

**T**he Youth Ministry and Spiritual Works of Mercy...can they really be connected? According to our very spirited and enthusiastic youth minister, Caitlin Seymour...absolutely!

Cait, as she prefers to be called, grew up in a town very close to Fair Lawn, Rochelle Park, where she was a member of Sacred Heart Parish. In her early teens, she joined the Youth Ministry at St. Joseph in Oradell. There she grasped the true meaning of the importance of having Christ in her life and in the lives of young people like herself. She graduated from Immaculate Heart Academy and enrolled in Loyola University in Baltimore, Maryland where she majored in philosophy and political science preparing for a career in law. While at Loyola, she had the opportunity to spend a year studying in a foreign country. Cait, always adventurous, chose to travel to Thailand. There she lived among people whose lifestyle, culture, and religious beliefs were very different from what Cait knew. She studied their philosophies and learned so much about their lives and religions.

After graduation from Loyola, Cait chose to suspend her formal education until she had a clear vision of what she felt Jesus wanted her to do with her life. She became a member of a mission that sent her to South Sudan, an emancipated country that had formerly been a part of Sudan. While there, she and members of her group estab-



▲ Caitlin Seymour, Youth Minister.

lished a school, a church, and a hospital to serve as many as 600 children and their families. While in South Sudan, her love of and connection with Jesus grew through the simplicity of the people, particularly the children. There were no commercial distractions and Cait grew to truly appreciate the souls of those she served. Because these families had very few possessions and spoke very little English, this was no easy task. To further complicate the situation, Cait spoke even less of their national language, Arabic, and had to be taught their native tribal language by the children.

After a little more than a year, Cait returned home renewed and enriched by her experiences in South Sudan. While she looks back on that time as a time of peace and learning, she truly believes her place, the place where Christ has meant for her to be, is right here at St. Anne working with the youth of the parish.

She became aligned with the BOLD Youth Ministry, a program sponsored by Fiat Ventures, and has introduced their youth program to St. Anne. BOLD is an acronym for Becoming Our Lord's Disciples and its primary goal is "to aid young people in building a personal relationship with Christ through Catholic formation, support, prayer, and the sacraments." The mission statement of BOLD reads as follows: BOLD exists to expose teens to God's love, promote a life of ser-

vice to Christ, and provide a place for teens to enjoy each other's company.

Cait accomplishes both the goal and the mission of BOLD by visiting the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classes of both St. Anne School and the Faith Formation program to introduce herself as the Youth Minister and to introduce the program and to invite them and their friends to BOLD events held right here at St. Anne.

Their first event was a "meet and greet." To Cait and her team's surprise, 48 students in grades six through eight from St. Anne and their friends from other schools enjoyed pizza, inter-group games, and prayer. They learned to look upon Jesus as a friend who is in their hearts and with them all the time. In this way, the Youth Ministry addresses their fears and doubts in a very informal setting. The ministry fosters Catholic friendship, decision-making, service, and heroic virtue. When the need for silence occurs, Cait recites her mantra "God is good all the time." Those present respond, "All the time God is good." Quiet follows.

The second BOLD meeting was a service event for the holiday season. The teens and preteens were asked to bring small items such as cards, pencils, etc. to be packaged by them for the children of the women of Oasis, an organization in Paterson that trains the women in skills that fortify them for the workplace.

Cait is thrilled with the outpouring of interest in the Youth Ministry at St. Anne and believes it will continue to grow. She also believes that some of the Spiritual Works of Mercy are definitely addressed by the ministry. And she hopes, as time passes, the ministry will teach the youth to understand the place of Christ in their lives. Youth members will counsel those who doubt Christ's love, and will comfort the sorrowful with Christ's understanding. They will learn to be patient with those who lack understanding, and they will forgive when necessary. Through their friendship with Jesus Christ they will pray for the living and the dead.

As you can see, with her enthusiasm, Cait has brought BOLD to the youth of St. Anne Parish.

- K.P

### S P I R E

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# A R O U N D   T H E   P A R I S H



▲ *The annual St. Anne Christmas Concert.*



▲ *Street Faire games and fun.*



▲ *Sigmond Gorski playing the bugle at Coffee Sunday while Gavin O'Keefe looks on.*



▲ *The Guest of Honor at the Breakfast with Santa.*



▲ *Mike and Nick DiPasquale at the Christmas concert.*



▲ *A special thanks to John Hufnagel for repairing the St. Anne statue.*

# A R O U N D   T H E   P A R I S H



▲ Stella Magarelli, accompanied by her dad, Nick and Father Joe, bringing Baby Jesus to his cradle at the Christmas Eve Mass.



▲ Fr. Colin and his buddy at Breakfast with Santa.



▲ The Allen Quinn Band doing their thing at the Street Faire!



▲ The St. Anne adult choir singing at the Christmas concert.



▲ Recipients of the St. Anne School Hall of Fame Inaugural Class along with Mayor John Cosgrove. From left to right: Joseph Tieng, Lisa Caggiano, Richard Meade, Mayor John Cosgrove, Edward Trawinski, Joseph Caggiano, Donna DiSclafani, Diane DePadova, Dominick Gerardo, Susan Jacobson, John Fogarty and Father Jeremiah McGinley. Congratulations to all!

## AMAZING STORIES...

*Continued from page 1*

forgiveness brings with it “plenty of health benefits, including improved relationships, decreased anxiety and stress, lower blood pressure, a lowered risk of depression, and stronger immune and heart health. Letting go of negative emotions can often have a remarkable impact on the body.”

Jesus encourages us to forgive several times throughout the Gospels, sometimes appealing to the practical side of our nature: “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (Matthew 6: 14-15) Other times, such as when Peter asks him “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” the Lord does not discuss the practicality of forgiving but simply states “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” Of course, Jesus himself forgave the men who put him to death.

Many of us know, on a personal level, how the act of forgiveness can bring healing and comfort to our lives. Conversely, we know that resentment or holding a grudge, because of a sense of injury or insult, can only have a negative effect on our peace of mind. Even so, it is oftentimes extremely difficult to free oneself of the pain resulting from an insensitive comment or a deliberate transgression. During these times it is helpful to be mindful of our own failings and weaknesses. If we hurt someone in some way, maybe an apology is in order. Perhaps they will respond likewise and make amends with someone they may have offended. Maybe even small acts of forgiveness can bring some much needed peace to the world.

– D.L.

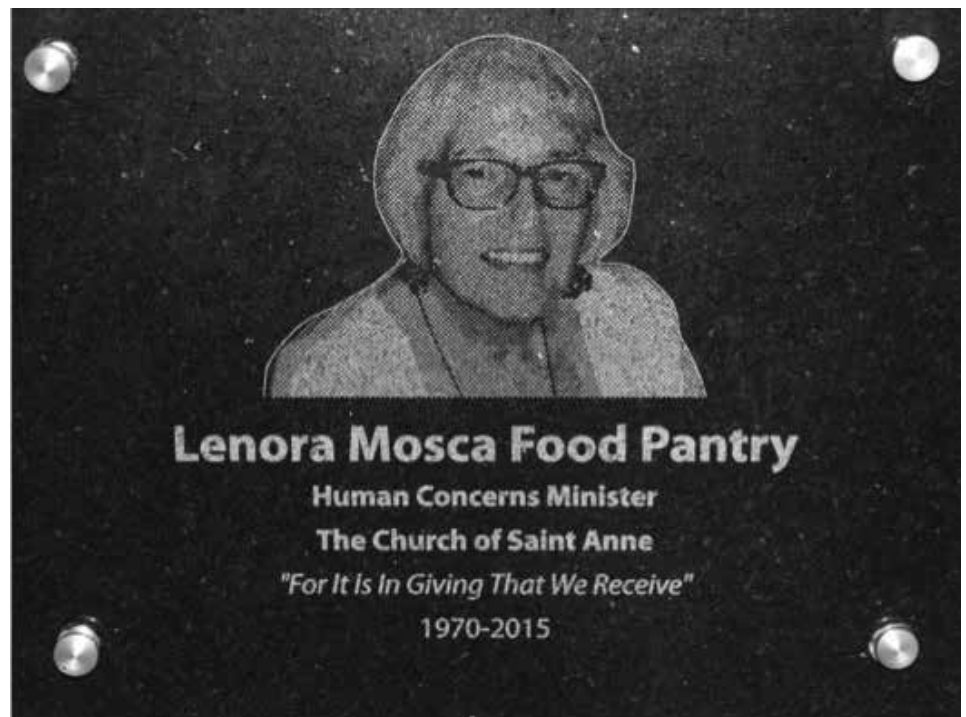
## TRULY COMMITTED...

*Continued from page 7*

One explains the Ten Commandments and other church doctrines. The second session is a two hour retreat focused on the Eucharist.

This is by no means a complete list of parish ministries whose actions exemplify the Spiritual Works of Mercy. If you are interested in volunteering for any of these ministries, please call the rectory.

– E.M.M. and E.K.



*This plaque hangs outside the  
Food Pantry as a tribute to  
Lenora Mosca for her dedicated  
service to the parishioners of St. Anne  
and the surrounding communities.  
Two of Lenora's greatest contributions  
were the founding of the  
Food Pantry and the Giving Tree,  
both thirty-year parish traditions.*



## TRULY COMMITTED

The Loyola Press definition of the Works of Mercy states that the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are actions we can perform that extend God's compassion and mercy to those in need. In the last edition of Spire, we looked at ways St. Anne incorporates the Corporal Works of Mercy, acts by which we help our neighbors with their material and physical needs, in our various parish ministries. With this edition we will look at our parish commitment to the Spiritual Works of Mercy.

One of the largest commitments to the Spiritual Works is to pray for the living and the dead. There are three groups of parishioners that minister to those in nursing homes, assisted living facilities and the veterans' home. These groups of dedicated parishioners help those who are unable to attend Mass and live their faith. They bring the formality of our faith to them in a form of a prayer service every Sunday. In addition to the weekly prayer service, a Mass is offered every other Wednesday by our parish priests. The group at the nursing home is led by Peggy Morandi. Ann Riffle participated as an active member of this group for 25-30 years before recently retiring. For many of those years, Dorothy Pyryt worked closely with Ann leading the team. Ann is one of the parish faithful that found her ministry by accident. She was asked to participate and she was very hesitant, but after doing it for a while, she really felt that she was needed and especially enjoyed the individual contact with residents. Not only is a prayer service provided but communion is distributed to those who are room bound. There is also a group of parishioners who provide those in assisted living, with a formal prayer service. The third group provides ministry to the veterans at the Paramus Veterans' home. The team of Dante and Fran DeNicola and Karen Peterson go to the Veterans home to distribute communion to 30-35 residents. They see each resident in their room and say a prayer and distribute communion. As with the others that are performing this ministry at the nursing home and assisted living facilities they also find this to be a very rewarding and fulfilling experience for



them and the reason they continue to serve in this ministry.

Another parish ministry that is little known is the funeral servers. These few parishioners pray for the dead by serving as altar servers at funeral Masses assisting the priest. Two of these servers, Carol Conte and Peggy Schneider, started out because they saw the opportunity to perform as altar servers something that they could not do as children since only boys were allowed to serve at that time.

Peggy added, "Since my retirement, it is something I can do for others that makes me feel good and allows me to do my small part, serving others in our St. Anne's family." Carol commented, "I thought I was there only to assist the priests, until one Easter Sunday morning a parishioner approached me after Mass. With tears in her eyes she thanked me for serving at her daughter's funeral. That was the first time I had any idea that my presence had any impact at all on the mourners."

Comfort the sorrowful is the mission of the bereavement ministry. It was started

seven years ago by Margaret Howard and Sr. Sandra McKita to provide support to parishioners who had lost a loved one. It is not just for those who have lost a spouse but any loved one including parent, child, and friend. Sr. Sandra left four years ago and Diana Torragrosso has joined Margaret. Both Diana and Margaret are Bereavement Group Facilitators certified by the archdiocese. The groups are held for eight weeks and are very loosely structured to encourage participation by all of the attendees. Ellen Kovarik, a parishioner attended these sessions after the loss of her husband. She commented that it was such a comfort to be with people with similar experiences and to know that moving on is possible. The group that she was with



became very close and some of them still get together.

The Faith Formation program instructs and assists our young people to grow in their faith. This is especially important for all second graders preparing for their first Eucharist and first Reconciliation. These sacramental preparations are completely home based with support from the faith formation office. The first meeting is held with the parents to prepare them for working with their children, helping them remember their own experiences and inviting them to grow in their faith. There are also two family sessions with Fr. Colin Kay.





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# St. Anne's Youth!

## PRACTICING MY FAITH

*by Ashley Moran*

I am growing up in a religious home. I was taught to love and follow God. I still attend church every Sunday and go to faith formation class following 9:30 mass. St. Anne's is like my second home. When I was nine months old I was baptized at this parish. About eight years later I received my first communion. I have learned the difference between right and wrong. I pray every night even if the whole family is not together. I always ask for forgiveness and thank God after a miracle has happened. I try to be satisfied with what I have, however sometimes I don't realize that people are not as fortunate. I am grateful for the things that I have. At the end of the day I realize, maybe someone would appreciate it if I helped them get back the things that they lost. It could be something as small as a bottle of water or something as big as a place to sleep. I am going to help others who can't afford their own food, water, and clothes. From this year and years to come, I am going to give to people who are less fortunate.

God didn't promise days without pain, or laughter without sorrow, or sun without rain, but he did promise strength for the day, comfort for the tears, and light for the way. If God brings you to it, he will bring you through it. I have traveled to many poor countries with my family and have seen how people with less fortunate lives live in poverty. I don't have everything I want but I do have all that I need. My life may not be perfect, but I am blessed to have a family, food, shelter, clothing, and people to talk to.

At least one day a week make an act of kindness. An example of something I do, is going to a shelter and making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the homeless. These works are so simple to do and can leave such a big impact on someone's life. Faith is not knowing what the future holds, but knowing who holds it. Faith is taking the first step even when you cannot see the whole staircase. Faith is seeing light with your heart when all your eyes see is darkness. Faith is hope, truth and belief.

*(Ashley Moran is a guest contributor to the Spire's Youth Page. Ashley is a resident of Fair Lawn and is an eighth grader at Memorial Middle School)*



## WORD SEARCH

*Find 31 terms relating to the Spiritual Works of Mercy*

T	E	T	B	U	O	D	L	P	R	A	Y	E	I
N	C	D	E	D	E	E	L	O	S	N	O	C	G
E	H	U	A	L	S	F	S	Y	O	A	M	A	N
I	E	E	R	N	A	W	P	R	R	O	D	K	O
T	D	C	U	T	E	R	F	U	R	M	R	T	R
A	E	O	A	D	S	O	G	J	O	N	R	R	A
P	C	I	G	L	R	N	C	N	W	O	E	O	N
F	A	A	N	G	O	G	I	I	F	D	D	P	T
A	R	D	I	U	R	S	E	M	U	R	E	P	A
I	G	V	V	I	H	D	O	Y	L	A	E	U	I
T	E	I	I	D	H	C	A	E	T	P	M	S	D
H	S	S	L	E	F	E	I	R	G	H	U	G	S
C	H	E	E	R	E	G	A	R	U	O	C	N	E

admonish, advise, aid, bear, cheer, comfort, console, counsel, dead, doubt, ease, encourage, faith, forgive, grace, grief, guide, hugs, ignorant, injury, living, instruct, pardon, patient, pray, redeem, solace, sorrowful, support, teach, wrongs