

Construction Obstruction Can't Slow Down School

BY JOAN T. BARRY, PRINCIPAL,
ST. MARY'S SCHOOL

St Mary School got off to a positive start. This is an exciting year for us as we watch and experience the expansion of the parish. Our slogan for the year is "Flexibility". The teachers and students are doing a great job each day as we adjust to how we enter school, new traffic patterns in school, and the occasional loud noises from drilling etc. It is a learning experience for us all as we witness firsthand the need for math and science in building construction.

The year is moving very quickly. Students have been hard at work and received their first quarter report cards October 29. Teachers are busy planning lessons that are challenging, incorporating the LCD projectors our new technology installed last spring through a generous donation. Our students are able to use technology in daily instruction as well as research and enrichment.

Our Family Festival was very successful. I want to thank all of St Mary's parishioners who volunteered and participated in this fun weekend. The service projects

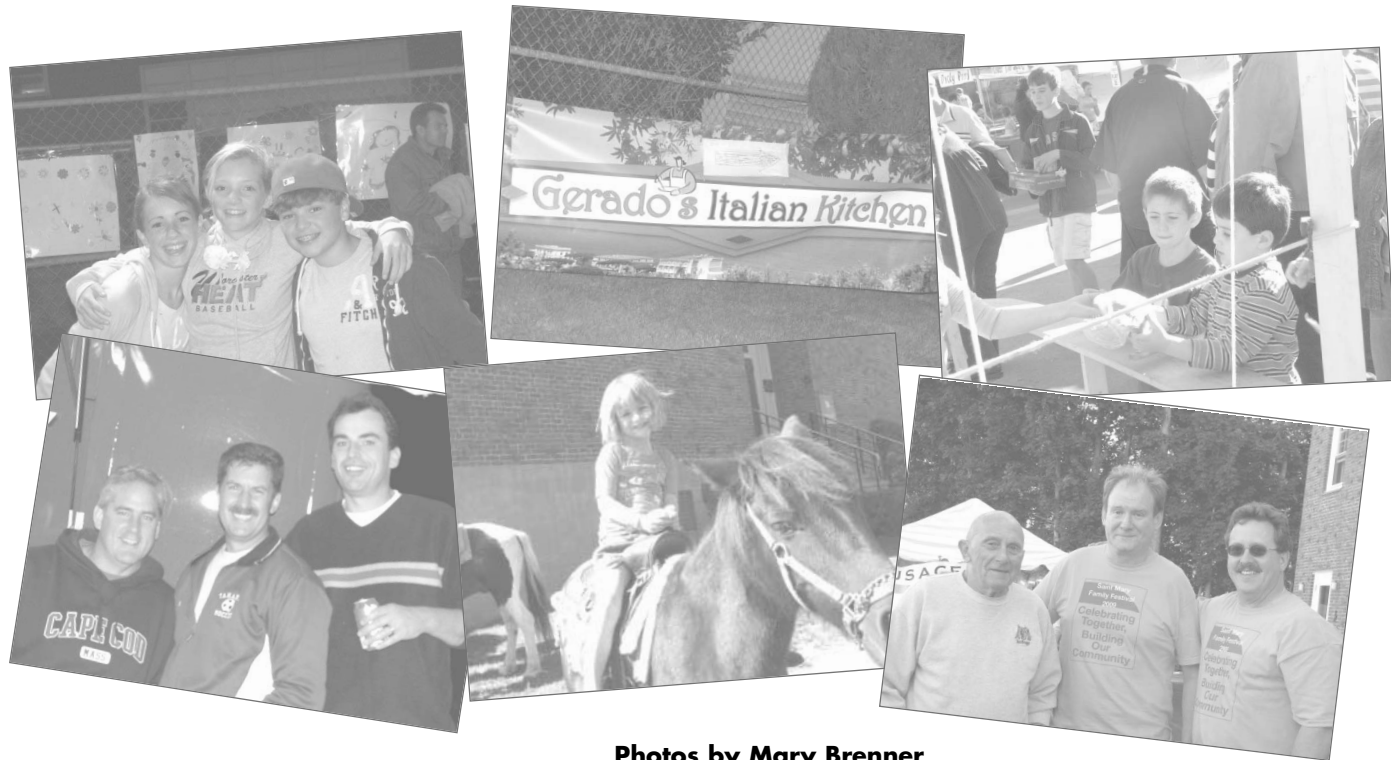


This look is history

for each grade have started and we are now in rehearsal for our Christmas Pageant. The Grandparents Mass was well attended as was our All Saints Mass on November 6. The Senior Luncheon was Friday November 22. We welcomed our parish seniors to a delicious meal and great entertain-

ment. Each of these activities enabled us to provide opportunities for our students to experience firsthand the importance of God in their lives and to reach out to others in our parish community.

Family festival = fabulous fun



Photos by Mary Brenner

Blessed and Broken: The Challenges of Ministry in Today's Fast-paced World.

BY GINA KURUVILLA

I noticed the woman making her way purposefully up the aisle from the back of the church. She looked angry. It was my first Orientation Session for parents of students in the high school religious education program and I was nervous. The church was packed and in just a few minutes the meeting would begin. The woman reached me as I stood by the microphone somewhat anxiously leafing through my pile of hand-outs.

Without preamble she began, "You people are completely out of it! God and Church are all very well but you have to be in touch with the real world. I can't believe that you made this meeting mandatory! Mandatory?!" And she walked right out!

Are we completely out of it? Whenever I explain our vision for youth ministry and high school religious education at St. Mary's I talk about achieving a true understanding of our faith and of what we are about as Christian people. I suppose it would be easy enough to water down the requirements - easy enough to say, "Everyone is busy with school and sports and dance and music, so let's have a very relaxed approach to religious education" - but in good conscience I can't.

The High school program at St. Mary's offers a structured, fairly comprehensive approach to faith formation. Everything that our students have been taught from K-8 is strengthened and solidified in their High School years. Every student in the program

is required to attend a retreat and participate in two different service projects. There are on average nine classes in each grade. This means that a total of 36 different projects are arranged for the two grades.

Our students help out at Visitation House, Abby's House, Dismas House, the Refugee Apostolate, Jeremiah's Inn, The Mustard Seed, Heifer project, St. Anne's Human Services and Catholic Charities to name just a few. We are careful to make the distinction between personal responsibility and community service. Occasionally I will get a call from a parent who will be indignant when I explain that the raking of a grandparent's yard or the cleaning of a sick relative's house does not count towards meeting the requirement for Confirmation. Helping a close family member who is ill or elderly as I see it, is one's loving duty - it does not count as service to the community.

If service was not a requirement it would be much harder to get students to participate. However, when they do, they return with a sense of meaning and purpose that is no less satisfying than a victory at a ball game. I often think of how, if Moses were to receive the Ten Commandments today, the first commandment would state, "I am the Lord your God, you shall not have Sports before me...." It is the most frustrating aspect of scheduling - trying to find a day and a time free of a sporting conflict. I am exasperated with the parochial schools - surely, they

can leave Sundays free of sporting events?

It is not unusual to find students with "inner city" problems in suburban Shrewsbury - students who have been in trouble with the law or students who have been on probation. And there is, of course, universality to pain - broken homes, wounded spirits, crushed wills. I am reminded of the passage from Isaiah that is read year after year at the Confirmation liturgy - "...a bruised reed I will not crush, a smoldering wick I will not extinguish" (Is 42:3). Some of my most meaningful moments in this ministry have come from seeing a student, troubled and questioning the existence of God, respond to positive outreach and make the transition from uncertain agnostic to believer.

These past few weeks have been filled with news of disease and death. More students in our program have lost a family member or had to deal with illness at close quarters over the last two months than over the entire year. I am reminded of the frailty of life, the importance of building good relationships, the great blessing of friends and the comfort and consolation of God. One should not really have to choose between "God/Church" and "the real world". God is in all things. His breath is woven into our consciousness. As Kierkegaard pointed out, it is not so much a question of "either/or" as "both/and".

Family comes first

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remembers being in an Ironman race when she wasn't doing as well as she hoped. She started to feel down, she said, then she reminded herself of her own credo - it's not about winning.

Paula had had a health scare. Gratitude for being well flooded through her. She remembers looking up at the sky. It was dark, she said, then the clouds moved and a bright moon was revealed.

"I told myself to take it all in," she said. "Enjoy the moment, don't take anything for granted."

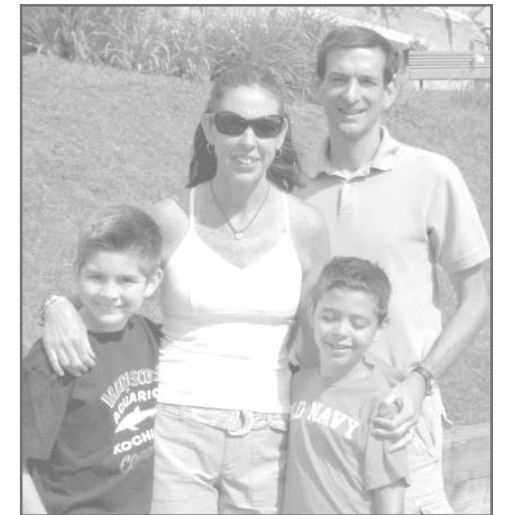
When the kids were little, she took them in their carriages on her runs. Today, Paula is

training for another Ironman triathlon. It takes six months to ready herself for this brutalizing competition. In the Ironman, competitors swim for 2.4 miles, bike for 112 miles and run a marathon - in that order and without a break.

The kids are still involved. When she's out training, husband Michael will often follow her in the car with the kids. They bring water, and sometimes they bring their lunch, she said

Her next Ironman is her current goal, but she has a longterm goal as well.

"I want to be that 80-year old woman who's still running," she said. "People will see my name in the paper and say, 'look, she's still running.'"



The Hayeck Family, John, Paula, Michael and Michael