



Beacon of Hope . . . Light of Christ

Volume 1, Issue 2 For Catholics in the Fox Valley

December 2004

ALL OF THE GOOD SHEPHERDS ARE GONE

Inside this issue:

- Should My Son Become a Priest? **2**
- Challenges & Solutions **3**
- New Catholic Community **4**
- The Reading Corner **5**
- Post Crescent Article **6**

**NOTHING is
Impossible with
GOD**

A Focus On..

- **All the Good Shepherds**
- **Beacon of Hope - Light of Christ**
- **Leadership**

An invitation to return to St. Mary's.

It is an established fact that the majority of us at St. Mary's love Father John. However, many parishioners and recent parish leaders may be retreating from doing exactly what he has believed in ... bringing about progressive changes.

A familiar saying with a bit of a twist could be, "Ask not what your church can do for you, but what you can do for your church". Just because Father has been ousted for his progressive ways, should not mean that his progressive leaders should give up or give in to stagnation. Of the many unanswered questions remaining, there are the questions we need to ask of ourselves.

First, if we truly wish to right the wrong done to Fr. John, why are we leaving St. Mary's? Would it not be better to stay and work towards rebuilding the SPIRIT of Community which the diocese has so devastated? In all essence, we have literally handed over the keys and locked ourselves out of the church we have worked so hard to build!

Second, because there were many negative factors which were used as excuses to force Father John's resignation, none of which were of his making, why can't we try to deal with positive motivation by infiltrating the "problem areas"? Eventually, through the HOLY SPIRIT, St. Mary's might have a chance to "progress" back.

Third, we would not have to give up our support for Father John. Just as we have been meeting in "Renew" groups for over half a decade, we could continue with group meetings to support Father, while working to restore reform in our Church.

And finally, it seems the majority of those at St. Mary's who love Father John, the progress he brought, and who still remain at St. Mary's, may think that the departure of parishioners and leaders who are now "roaming", actually walked-out on the parish and were not thrown-out. These perceptions come regardless of the threats that were made against parish leaders by agitators.

Continued on Page 2

Should My Son Become a Priest?

When my bride and I were married 14 years ago, we had hoped that one day God would bless us with a large family so maybe one of our sons might become a priest. He has since blessed us with three sons.



After witnessing how a few parishioners at St. Mary's Church in Greenville were able to have Father John Zickert removed, I am beginning to question the wisdom of our hopes for our sons.

When discussing my concerns and dismay with the elderly of the parish, its living history, they told me that this has occurred two and even three times before. How is this possible?

I always believed that if our parish was to have any challenges, that it could always lean on the Diocese of Green Bay for strength and wisdom to overcome them.

Does Bishop Zubick not see the patterns of history repeating itself

over and over again at St. Mary's and that the same people are involved time and time again? How long will the new priest last? History suggests no more than 5-6 years.

Why would Bishop Zubick choose to play "switch the priest again" instead of "fix the problem" at St. Mary's? Is there any wonder why the Pope is concerned about the worsening shortage of priests in the Catholic Church?

When my sons start to wonder what they should do with their lives, I probably will not suggest the priesthood. What parent would want to witness their son's heart being broken by a small minority of his flock and the lack of leadership that cannot figure out what is going on?

If any of my sons become a priest, it will truly be by the will of God.

- Joe Uchytel

Continued from Page 1

This analogy of this situation is like that of a divorce. Remaining parishioners at St. Mary's may see the departure of so many like the children of a broken home. They are both angry and saddened at the departure of the heads of the

household. All of the good shepherds are gone.

Like children, when strangers come in to take charge of their HOME, the congregation has become very quiet and withdrawn.

I don't have answers as to how *The Truth* will prevail, when the minority continues to have such a stronghold through its repression. However, I do believe that the right direction includes that "our good shepherds" return HOME.

- Karen Heintz

Challenges and Solutions in the Church

Cardinal Jan Schotte, in his homily to the Knights of Columbus, August 5, 2004, presented his view of the challenges facing the Catholic Church in America. He called the identity of the Knights to be: “truly and totally Catholic, truly and totally faithful to the pope and bishops, truly and totally eucharistic.”

Cardinal Schotte went on to reflect challenges to the “Catholic identity”, citing examples of illiteracy in faith...”generic Christians”... (who) do not accept all of the teachings of the Church.”

He further reflected on “several inexact or incorrect models being used” that are “indicators of the loss of Catholic identity” such as:

“The democratic model” where authority rests with the people and majority rules.

“The business model” where the parish runs like a business, with the pastor as CEO.

“The political model” where left and right political wings vie for control.

“The ‘White House’ model” where the pastor is president with a cabinet.

“The ecumenical model” where what is acceptable to the common denominator is best.

Cardinal Schotte suggested the “crisis of identity in the Church has been recognized by the Holy Father... (who) sounded the call for new evangelization.”

In his greetings to the Knights of Columbus, Pope John Paul II cites his own call for evangelization through our “baptismal vocation of ‘building up the Church, sanctifying the world and imbuing it with the spirit of Christ’ (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 16).”

The pontiff further cites his own letter, *The Church in America*, expressing his “conviction that the lay faithful by their lived witness to the gospel in daily life, ‘are largely responsible for the future of the Church’ (44).”

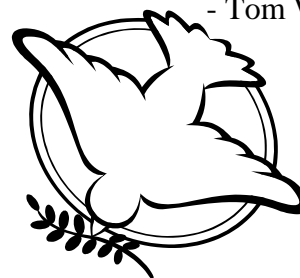
In concluding comments, the pope calls for a unity or “harmony of mind and heart” with the laity, priests, and

bishops.

Taken from the *Columbian*, September and October 2004.

Editor Note: Vatican II called for reforms in the Church, which in turn would lead to a Church with diversity of thought and style, responsive to the divergent needs of many, and fully engaged in building Christ’s Kingdom on earth, the Church through the baptized. It is interesting to note that the Church appears to be rejecting diversity of thought and style, while remaining hopeful of being responsive and engaging the baptized in building the Church. The Church seems at cross-purpose with itself.

- Tom Wiltzius



In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Romans 12:5

New “Catholic Community” Formed in Fox Valley

All changes have a point of origin, a beginning... a genesis.

Some changes start with an almost imperceptible beginning. Other changes can start with an almost breathtaking event... a crisis or a catalyst of significant proportion.

The genesis of the **Beacon of Hope-Light of Christ** and its newsletter, *Beacon of Hope . . . Light of Christ*, is to be found in the dynamics that are made up of the forced resignation of Father John Zickert, now former Pastor of St. Mary, Greenville, and the reaction of many disaffected Catholics within that parish.

St. Mary, Greenville had recently become known for several significant accomplishments, and importantly, for its means of arriving at those outcomes.

According to reports, St. Mary’s was among the parishes in the Green Bay Diocese that had the highest percentage of members attending mass for weekend services, had the highest percentage of students enrolled and participating in Religious Education, and had the highest percentage of students active in summer youth ministry programs.

Moreover, the pastor was an advocate of the reforms called for in the Catholic Church brought about by Vatican II. Community action was taken seriously and efforts were expanding for parishioner commitments in jail ministry and helping the poor. Weekend offerings were even tithed to go to community agencies such as food pantries and Christian ministries.

“All changes have a point of origin, a beginning...a genesis.”

St. Mary’s also was known for its unique involvement of its baptized members in its weekend liturgies. Young children would participate in offerings, youth and young adults would approach the altar for participation in the Lord’s Prayer, and after masses, parishioners would be recognized for birthdays and anniversaries. Engagement was high.

Christ’s message of a commitment to love and grow God’s Kingdom was well underway at St. Mary’s.

Then came the crash, the cataclysmic event.

Father John was forced to resign by the Bishop of Green Bay. Behind the scenes, behind the clamor, unseen by those who have been hurt and confused by the dismissal of their pastor, their friend, has been an almost sinister plot.

In his over 35 years of ministry, Father John Zickert has been an instrument of change, a proponent of the reforms brought 40 years ago through Vatican II. He was part of starting St. Joe’s Food Pantry, ACES and other community initiatives that were spawned in the spirit of Vatican II. He has helped transform parishes and through his ministry, brought many to baptism and an understanding that the Holy Spirit works through all the baptized. People who grew to understand and engage in the reforms of Vatican II, found purpose at St. Mary’s.

The sinister plot comes not in the actual removal of Father John or the loss of momentum for reform at St. Mary’s and elsewhere, but in the hidden reasons behind the cataclysmic event. Where was the impetus to stop reform, who were those behind it, and why was Father John and St. Mary’s its first victims?

Continued from Page 4

The answers to those questions also lead to the justification for the formation of the **Beacon of Hope-Light of Christ**.

Vatican II was a calling together of the Catholic Bishops in the world 40 years ago by Pope John XXIII, who believed, as shepherd, that the Catholic Church had lost contact with its flock. It was not matters of faith that he proposed needed reform, but matters of church function and perspective. He believed that the Church needed to become more responsive, more sensitive and invite more involvement of the baptized into the day-to-day function of the institutional church. Pope John and the Bishops of the time decided on reforms for the church, a fresh look forward while building on the sound traditions of the past

Today there is a backlash to those reforms. The backlash appears among some of the clergy and among some of the parishioners. Together, many of them often refer to Vatican II as *an experiment gone wrong* or even as an illegal event in the

Church's history. They seek a return to tradition, to previous rituals, and to absolute control by the clergy.

Father John and St. Mary's represented both an obstacle to them and an opportunity. Dismiss him and revert St. Mary's back to a time and a traditional practice of faith; and then Vatican II is dead in the Green Bay Diocese and so is its visible leader. These are the answers to the questions. This is the sinister plot.

The ministry of the **Beacon of Hope-Light of Christ**, is to grow God's Kingdom on earth in a Christ-centered manner, consistent with the reforms of Vatican II. The movement has its genesis, its origin, its beginning through the Holy Spirit, working through the baptized. God's Kingdom will grow and reform.

- Greg Potts and Tom Wiltzius

THE READING CORNER

Books of Interest

- **The Coming Catholic Church: How the Faithful are Shaping a New American Catholicism** by David Gibson, Harper 2003
- **Doors to the Sacred** by Joseph Martos
- **Reconciling Faith and Reason: Apologists, Evangelists and Theologians in a Divided World**, Thomas Rausch
- **Faith That Dares To Speak** by Donald Cozzens
- **The Changing Face of the Priesthood** by Donald Cozzens



If I have a

faith

that can move

mountains,

but I have not

love

I am nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:2

Post Crescent Article Exposes Truth

Father Zickert is shown as victim

A significant step was taken towards the restoration of Father John Zickert's good name when the December 5th *Post Crescent* newspaper printed a major investigative article written by Cheryl Sherry.

Sherry, the Religious Section writer of the *Post Crescent*, had begun working on a feature article a number of months ago, when she began to see a pattern of misinformation and misrepresentation. Her investigation revealed that a poorly conducted psychological evaluation, forced on Father Zickert, without cause, by the Green Bay Diocese and conducted at St. Michael's in Missouri, provided Diocesan officials with what they erroneously felt was ample

justification for the removal of Father Zickert.

The justification itself turned out to be a ruse for an ultra-orthodox Bishop, encouraged by a conservative minority of St. Mary Greenville parishioners, to remove a progressive priest.

Although still recovering from the emotional trauma of his forced resignation and the conditions that brought it about, Father Zickert is feeling somewhat vindicated by the article.

- Tom Wiltzius

The full article can be accessed by the following:

http://www.wisinfo.com/postcrescent/news/archive/local_18908579.shtml

Note:

Cheryl Sherry submitted her article at 240 column inches. The article as it appears in print was 90 column inches. A good deal of the story was not carried in the printed article which may leave some people with questions. If that is the case, please submit your questions to Beacon of Hope... Light of Christ "Questions" at Box 2524, Appleton, WI 54912. Questions



A Prayer for the New Year

Lord of all the living, you created all that is, and have bestowed upon humankind the gift of life. Deepen our respect for all life and help us to see in each person, from the unborn to the eldest among us, the beauty of your face and the life of your spirit. Increase our faith as we journey through life until we come at last to the fullness of joy in your presence. We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

BEACON OF HOPE - LIGHT OF CHRIST

A new “intentional community” organization

After our initial copy of the Beacon of Hope, many of you are probably wondering “What is this all about?” and “Who is this group?”

Beacon of Hope-Light of Christ is the semi-monthly newsletter from a newly forming organization also known as Beacon of Hope–Light of Christ. This organization is being formed for those who seek a Catholic group that is Christ Centered, Spirit driven, active internally and externally, Gospel oriented; and embraces the spirit of Vatican II reforms, including restorative justice. BOH is membership managed, non-exclusive, contemporary, and embraces youth and special populations

An application to be a 501c3 nonprofit organization has been filed with and approved by the State of Wisconsin. The next step is to file for Federal Status as well. This approval will allow all contributions to the Beacon of Hope–Light of Christ to be tax deductible.

The development of this organization is being accomplished by a steering committee made up of individuals who are either current or former members of St. Mary Catholic Church in Greenville, and of other parishes in the Fox Valley.

Our web site is in the infancy of development and is publicly accessible: at:

<http://www.bohlightofchrist.org>

An initial focus of our efforts is on supporting Father John Zickert in his unfortunate situation,

while also trying to prevent this from ever happening to another member of the clergy.

Monthly meetings and communication have given those that continue to feel the loss of Father John a venue for healing and discussion. A more visionary focus of our monthly agenda is designed to preserve the Community Liturgy resulting from Vatican II. The feeling of “community and participation” we once experienced at St Mary’s during Father John’s leadership is something we continue to seek.

If being part of a progressive and contemporary Catholic future is something you would like to explore further, consider registering for Beacon of Hope... Light of Christ on the new web site. All are welcome!

-Diane Ernst

‘An initial focus of our efforts is on supporting Father John Zickert’ While also trying to prevent this from ever happening again.’

If you have any questions/concerns, no longer wish to receive this newsletter or wish to receive additional information not included in this newsletter, please contact us at: Beacon of Hope P.O. Box 2524 Appleton, WI 54912 or send an email to newsletter@bohLightOfChrist.org.

Disclaimer: The *Beacon of Hope...Light of Christ* is the official newsletter of the Steering Committee for Social Justice and Reform in the Catholic Church as part of the Beacon of Hope.. Light of Christ. Any opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the authors. *Beacon of Hope... Light of Christ* operates independently and is not approved by the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay or its parishes.

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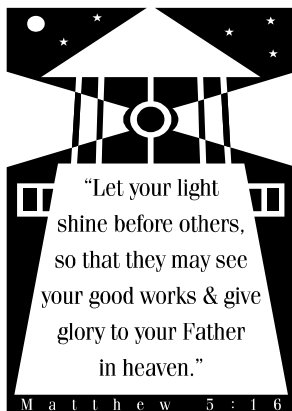
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DECEMBER



Matthew 5:16
