

## St. Mary's Human Development

**Our Caring Committee** was established to assist with mainly funeral luncheons.

Presently Jackie Ruzekowicz is coordinator for the funeral luncheon arrangements. The luncheons are held in Daley Hall or the family may pick up the luncheon meal from Daley Hall to take elsewhere.

Generally chicken or ham is ordered and then paid for by the parish. All other food is donated by our parishioners. Any donation from the family is welcomed to help defray the costs of meat and supplies.

Volunteers are called to make or donate a certain food item. Other volunteers come in one day to help set up for the luncheon. The day of the funeral, the luncheon is served by the volunteer committee. Afterwards the committee takes care of all the clean up. They stay in the background yet are quick to respond to anyone's needs. Jackie and her volunteers have also done receptions for Ecumenical Receptions and First Communicants.

## Peace and Justice

We have representatives to the Peace and Justice Committee who keep the parish apprised of issues established by the bishop. In this way the parish can be active and support these goals.

At present we, along with Holy Cross, are raising awareness and money to support the Water for Life Mission. This is accomplished by selling bottled water once a month. The money raised, which is matched up to \$5,000, is committed for a well to be drilled in a town in Nigeria, Africa.

In the past we have sponsored a Vietnamese family and a Bosnian family. In conjunction with other community churches we have sponsored six "Lost Boys of the Sudan". Last year, along with Catholic Charities, we sponsored a 12 member Somalian family. This month we have sponsored 5 refugees from Mauritania East Africa. Clothing, bedding, supplies and food have been collected. Apartments are prepared for the families also. Parishioners also help with acclimating and settling them in to a whole new way of life.

We continue to support the Eastern Farm Workers with drives for school supplies, clothing and bedding; and participating in their tamale fund raiser each year.

## **Food Pantry/Outreach Program**

The Outreach/food pantry was established in 1984. Its mission is to provide emergency necessities, primarily food, but can assist with clothing, utilities, medicine, etc. Our services are provided for the residents of Jamesville/DeWitt falling in the 13078 and 13214 zip codes. All households requesting assistance must provide proof of a current address, along with meeting other guidelines. Some may only be a one time occurrence needing temporary assistance.

Our program is affiliated with the Food Bank of Central New York, the Interreligious Food Consortium, Catholic Charities and the Southern Tier Outreach Group.

Our funding comes from private donations and grants. St. Mary's parishioners, the Jamesville Post Office (which has two food drives a year), the local cub and boy scout troops (have a large food drive in November), and DeWitt Community Church contribute a significant share to support our program. DeWitt Community Church donates monetarily and food donations on a monthly basis. A voucher for clothing can be used at their second hand shop. They also assist with the holiday baskets. This Easter their youth group will be making up Easter candy baskets for our children receiving a food basket. Jamesville Community Church occasionally assists with food drives at their church. And most recently Holy Cross has started assisting with food and monetary donations.

Last year we had 457 households come in to the pantry; this includes 500 children and several elderly people, some of whom are housebound. We average about 30 households per month. Generally at Easter we serve about 40-45 households. During the other two holidays we have between 55-60 families. St. Mary's has a "Giving Tree" at Christmas. We provide tags with suggestions on them for each family member. We collect over 220 presents to be distributed along with the food baskets. Each child receives a toy and an article or two of clothing. M & T, our local bank, helps with 15 names. Some local families "adopt" a family and may provide more. Monetary donations help provide the laundry baskets the food is put in, the other staples that may not have been donated, fresh produce, bread/rolls, desserts, coffee and either gift certificates or a protein product, like ham or turkey. This meat, which is not purchased through the Food Bank, is a large expense, generally costing about \$700-800 each holiday.

The food pantry plays a very integral role in the communities of Jameville/DeWitt and hopefully will continue to do so.

## Bereavement Committee

The Bereavement Committee was set up to assist those grieving for any type of loss, i.e.: loved one, job, pet, etc.

The group would meet once a month from 7-9 pm. They did take a break for the summer but at this point have not resumed meeting.

At these meetings handouts were given to each member. Some consisted of poems, articles related to loss and prayers.

Members are encouraged to come as long as needed.

One of the meetings was at the Butterfly Garden at Onondaga Lake. Here they could reflect on their loss. Bricks in the garden are inscribed with names of those who have died.

As soon as the death of a parishioner or family member/friend becomes known to the parish committee the family is contacted to see if they would like to have someone come visit and bring the book, *Through Death to Life*. It is a book to help make funeral arrangements; such as their need to contact the organist themselves, if they require a luncheon they need to contact the Caring Committee, etc.

Another book to help them with their loss is *Hope for Bereaved*. Sr. Ann Marie Ball has mentioned her interest in perhaps assisting in this area. If Sr. Ann is not able to do this maybe someone who is trained or has experience in dealing with loss. Sharon Kieffer was on the bereavement committee along with Angie Marsiale.