

The Epistle

PROOF 1



ST. PAUL CATHOLIC CHURCH



St. Petersburg, Fla.



Summer 2007

"I never ceased to be amazed by the dedication of the Festival volunteers. They devote countless hours in the weeks leading up to the event, organizing, ordering, cooking, and so on. Then during that week they are here around the clock, it seems. I can't think Doug Moore and all the volunteers enough."

– Father Robert Gibbons

Festival report: 2007 is best yet

The annual Spring Festival was bigger and more festive than ever, bringing in \$82,000 for our school over St. Patrick's Day weekend. Good weather, the addition of a dunk tank, and the growing popularity of Bingo helped boost the bottom line. Add in the tried and true booths and it was a record year.

Doug Moore and Rob Haddad led the way, eight years after telling Father Gibbons, "Sure, we can help out this one year." They in turn gave kudos for the food booth captains and all the other volunteers, including the Knights of Columbus, who run the kids' games.

The festival chairmen can't say enough about pre-festival ticket sales. The parish earns the most off ride tickets and wristbands purchased before the gates ever open, so keep that in mind when Festival rolls around next year and buy your tickets before opening night on Thursday, March 6, 2008.



BINGO! All the kids (and more than a few grown-ups) under the big tent were hoping to win this particular game of Bingo. The prize was a new Sony Wii game system, and its excited winner, Sarah Hartney, is surrounded by fellow St. Paul's students.

What does it take to feed all those hungry festival folks?

1152 hotdogs	4000 plastic knives, forks & spoons	640 slices of American cheese
1200 hamburgers	50 pounds of onions	480 corn dogs
6000 salt & pepper packets	284 brownies	300 pounds of French fries



ST. PAUL

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Father Francois, we hardly knew you

By PATRICK RUSSELL

As a boy growing up in northern France, he loved to go out in his neighborhood to play with the other children of many diverse backgrounds and nationalities. His mother would tell him he belonged in China by the amount of rice he ate while growing up. His parents were very active Catholics and dedicated to the Church. Sounds fairly reasonable that someone with such a background might someday become a missionary priest serving in Cambodia.

But at 25, Francois Hemelsdael's life was on a much different path. He was a college graduate with a girlfriend and faced with a crisis. "I was lost," he admits. He spent five days on retreat in a monastery. While there, he read about the life of Fr. Damien, a 19th century Flemish priest who lived and ministered to the leper colonies of Hawaii and eventually died from leprosy himself. Inspired by this experience, Francois knew that God was calling him to be a missionary priest.

"A missionary should be a bridge between culture, people and language to bring harmony," Fr. Francois said. His favorite movie is *Dances With Wolves*. "Because Kevin Costner's character becomes one of the Native Americans." Fr. Francois said that his goal as a missionary priest is to immerse himself into the culture to truly understand and respect the people. Then, hopefully, to help them know God as he knows God.

"God became man so we can be close to Him. Our God is close if we just take the time to listen," Fr. Francois said. "He is compassionate and loves us as we are. God respects our freedom. He wants us to open ourselves, like a flower opening, and develop our talents."

Fr. Francois says he became a new person during his ten-year formation period as a seminarian at Rue du Bac in France. He spent one year of that time in Cambodia and knew that was where he belonged.

Rue du Bac has a rich history and commitment to missionary work. Twenty-four priests from that society were canonized by Pope John Paul II. Over its history, 10% of their order has been killed because of their faith and work.

Fr. Francois was ordained on June 19, 2005. He came to St. Paul's on September 27, 2006. "St. Paul's is a dynamic parish," Fr. Francois said. "Fr. Gibbons and Fr. Jim made me feel very welcome. St. Paul's parishioners are so dedicated, involved and organized." Where can we improve? "Gather together as a parish just to pray. Prayer is the foundation of Christian life. Every once in a while, meet as a community for no other reason than to be spiritual together."

"As a foreigner who doesn't know the language too well," Fr. Francois said, "you spend a lot of time in silence and you learn to listen. In our busy lives, it takes practice to get used to silence. We need quiet time to pray. God speaks to us in that silence."



Fr. Francois wears a stole with all the schoolchildren's thumbprints in this photo taken at his farewell party at the school.

After spending a month with his family in France, he was to leave for Cambodia on April 25, the feast of St. Mark. Fr. Francois is quick to point out that St. Mark's gospel focuses on going out and preaching the good news of Jesus. "It will be hard to say goodbye to my family when I go to Cambodia. But I gain strength when I know I do it for the gospel."

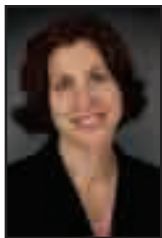
Fr. Francois' goal is to take all the love and lessons he has received over the years at Rue du Bac and at St. Paul's, and give it back in Cambodia.

He will miss most his American cultural tour guide and good friend, Fr. Jim, and the parishioners of St. Paul's. And to the children of St. Paul's School, he extends this message, "Follow Christ. Only Christ can bring you true happiness." We should all include ourselves among the children and accept his invitation as we bid Fr. Francois Adieu, thank him for his brief time when he became one of us, and wish him all the best in his endeavors.

Getting to Mass

By KELLY McBRIDE

This issue we are discussing what we wear to church. I was in college when I first realized that different families have different standards for church garb.



It was a holy day of obligation (I can't remember which) when my roommate Francie asked if I was going to Mass. We attended a big state university with an active Newman Center. Francie was clearly not ready for church.

The service started in 15 minutes and she was wearing the sweats she'd slept in the night before. She traded them for a pair of khaki pants, pulled her hair into a ponytail and sniffed her sweatshirt to see if stunk. "Let's go," she said.

As a child, church was something we planned for. We had Sunday clothes. My dad put on a tie. My mom curled my hair. It was liberating to learn from Francie that church didn't require the effort my mom insisted upon. I'm not sure I could have kept the faith, if it did. As I became more of an adult, I adopted Francie's philosophy when it comes to dressing for church: You can't wear your pajamas, but just about anything else will do.

I'm even more relaxed with my kids. As long as it's clean, has no holes and covers your belly, you can wear it to church. It doesn't even have to match. And yes, my youngest has worn her pajamas, which are actually pretty cute.

I don't have the energy to get my kids into church clothes. Sometimes I barely have the energy to get them to church. Every Sunday morning we go to Mass. And every Sunday at least one of my kids asks, "Do I have to go?"

And every Sunday I say, "Yes, you have to go."

"Why?" They whine.

Sometimes this conversation goes on and on. Sometimes it ends with, "Because I said so." Sometimes I give in and let them stay home.

I've come to regard this weekly battle as a form of prayer, a struggle to find God amidst a loud and chaotic life. In fact one of the many definitions of prayer is the struggle for the soul.

And getting to Mass is definitely a struggle. I wish my family arrived at church with five minutes to spare, in color-coordinated outfits. I wish my son would tuck in his shirt. I wish my daughters would wear dresses.

ST. PAUL

CATHOLIC CHURCH

But when I look around the pews at St. Paul's, I find comfort. I see a lot of families just like mine. They've given up the idea of making it look easy or perfect. They are struggling against the forces of the modern world - to get to Mass.

And it shows.

The Epistle

The Epistle is a quarterly newsletter of the parish of St. Paul Catholic Church in the Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida.

Pastor	Father Robert Gibbons
Editor	Kelly McBride
Designers	Ron and Jan Brackett
Copy Editor	Kathleen Tobin
Contributors	Roy Peter Clark
	Richard Bruce
	Victoria Whitton
	Sybil Crocetti
	Ingrid Tomey
	Shawn Jacobson
	Kathy McCoy
Clerical staff	Molly Jacobson
	Clarke Jacobson
	Maggie Jacobson

Want to help? We need it. Send all suggestions, photos, stories and comments to:

stpaulepistle@gmail.com

ST. PAUL

CATHOLIC CHURCH

St. Petersburg, Fla.

4

Summer 2007

My knobby knees

By ROY PETER CLARK

The first time I wore shorts to Mass was last summer at St. Paul's. Anyone who saw me might have called me a sinner or blasphemer, not because of my garb, but because my legs are an abomination, a challenge to the idea of a benevolent deity. But, hey, no one – not even my wife – seemed to care. I still got several generous signs of peace. I still got to take communion. And I even got to be first in line after Mass to shake Fr. Gibbons' hand. (He was the last obstacle between me and a tee time at the Vinoy.)

My inhibitions against wearing casual clothes to church are rooted in more than five decades of what the psychologists might call "aversive conditioning." I've belonged to parishes where the pastor would quote one of those scary parables about people in Jesus' time who showed up at the wedding feast with the wrong garments and so the unhappy king kicked their butts out into the darkness.

One pastor held forth at considerable length about no sneakers, no shorts, no jeans, no soccer uniforms, no golf pants – and you should come to Mass on time and not leave until the priest does – and if you didn't like those rules, "then don't come back." My mother, a devout and conservative Catholic, was visiting us from New York and could not believe what she was hearing: "Don't come back?" She repeated her disbelief: "Did he say 'Don't come back?'"

St. Paul's seems like the opposite. Not, "Don't come back," but "Ya'll come in."



Shawn Jacobson

Sometimes Roy Clark has an 11 a.m. tee time.

I'm so glad to see young people in church. I don't care what they are wearing. I don't even care when the jocks want to show off their biceps or the young women want you to see their new tattoos on their lower backs. Shorts. Tank tops. Flip flops. Bare feet. I don't care. Just come. Be there. And be who you are. Enjoy the presence of the Lord, as He enjoys yours. This is a big family, God's family, from tuxedos to togas to tank tops.

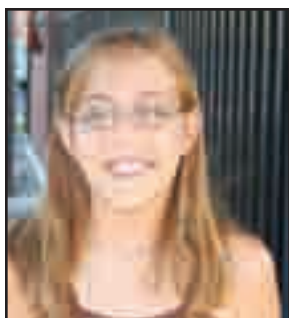
But if you want to enjoy your brunch after Mass, please, if you see me coming wearing shorts, avert your eyes.



Not pretty, but you don't have to look.

On the steps of the Church

Q Do you have any clothing guidelines that you follow (or that you make your family follow)? How do your church outfits compare to what you wear during the rest of the week?



Rachel Sigley

I normally wear something more formal (than the rest of the week). Even if I'm serving Mass I wear a skirt and a nice top. We can't wear flip-flops when we're serving but I might if I'm not serving.



JoAn Dorzuk

We grew up wearing our Sunday best. When you're going to see our Blessed Lord you don't wear shorts. Only our best is good enough for the Lord.



Mark Morgan

I wear casual clothes to church but very rarely shorts. Only if it's hot and muggy. But I dress up for holidays.

ST. PAUL

CATHOLIC CHURCH



Sasha Taylor and Darren Porterfield

Sasha: Jesus hung around with thieves and prostitutes. I'm not here for show. I'm here for Jesus."
Darren: I'm not a man of money. If I could, I would dress

up more. Now I dress like I'm going to the doctor or to dinner--respectable, casual, comfortable.



Maria and Hernan Molina

I don't wear shorts or décolletage. Shorts up to here are disrespectful. I wear pants or capris (we used to call them 'pedal pushers'). Certain things need

respect. My husband feels the same way."



Martha Laesser

I try to wear a dress – rarely jeans or slacks. My mom was my biggest example. She always dressed up. Wearing a dress to Mass was the way I was raised. And I

couldn't take it off for the rest of the day



Chris Lipke

I wear jeans, tee shirts, usually with no collar, and flip-flops.

PROOF 1

ST. PAUL

CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Geena Williams, above, plays Cordelia, the silly maid, in the *Beast of Baskervilles*. At right, Beard Bruce is Sir Henry and Erin Marie McEntegart is the apprentice.

Middle School Drama

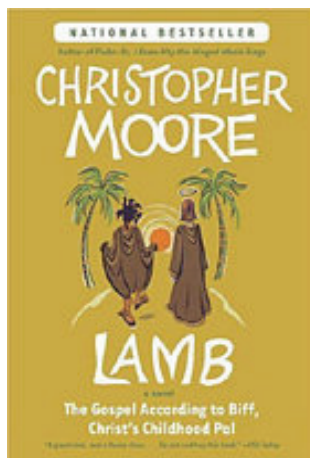
By MOLLY JACOBSON

This was the first year for a drama club for middle school students at St. Paul Catholic School. A couple dozen students met as a class every Tuesday after lunch. Robin Crawford, Mary Rachel Dudley and Terry Eckelkamp volunteered to teach the class and direct our shows.



We staged two productions. Our winter show was *Happily Never After*. This spring we put on *The Beast of Baskervilles*, pictured here. We also spent a lot of time working on improvisational comedy. We did a show for our classmates in the fall, then a warm-up act for the dramatic productions. Drama will return to St. Paul's this school year. Rumor has it we might attempt a musical.

What we're reading . . .



Ever wonder what Jesus' childhood was like? Christopher Moore did just that in his clever, irreverent novel **Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal**.

Turns out, Biff and Jesus met at the village well when they were 6-year-olds. Together, they make friends with another village child, Maggie. The three develop a complex friendship that lasts into adulthood.

Biff has a crush on Jesus' mother. Maggie has a crush on Jesus. They hang out with the village idiot who turns out to be the

first disciple. And there's this crazy angel, Raziël, who's been sent earth 2,000 years after Jesus' death to resurrect Biff and lock him in a hotel room until he writes his gospel.

Moore combines his sense of humor with solid historical and theological scholarship. But that's not to say his views of Jesus' divinity are orthodox.

Warning: this book is not for the easily offended. It only works if you appreciate satire.

-Kelly McBride

ST. PAUL CATHOLIC CHURCH

Good for the soul

By PATRICK RUSSELL

Standing in front of a busy Publix on a Saturday morning with a change canister in one hand and a Tootsie Roll in the other is an open invitation that brings some surprising results. You can't help but make snap judgments of the people going by. "He looks like he woke up on the wrong side of the bed." You say to yourself. "That guy looks like he hasn't seen a bed in days." "That lady will need two extra hands just to get to her purse while she holds on to her shopping cart and her kids."

But Mr. Sunshine crams a wad of dollar bills into your canister, refuses the candy and briskly walks away. The insomniac fishes through one pocket, then another, then a third and gives you his change. He takes the Tootsie Roll and then has a quizzical look on his face as if to say, 'Now what did I come to the store for again?' And the woman who would have had a much easier time of it had she just kept going, stops her cart and parade of children, digs into a suitcase-sized purse and hands you thirteen cents. She's embarrassed. "I thought I had more but that's it." You make sure all her kids get a Tootsie Roll as it hits you that you just received your most meaningful donation.

My friend, Tony Pillucere, and I were two such lucky beggars on this particular Saturday. But the Knights of Columbus Tootsie Roll Drive adds a unique twist to begging: candy. Innocent, sweet and wholesome (don't listen to your dentist). Some of the



Patrick Russell, left, and Connery Duncan volunteer for the Knights of Columbus.

hardest expressions can't help but melt with a simple, "Would you like a Tootsie Roll?"

Coincidentally, Tony had brought his son, Michael, and I had brought my daughter, Kristen, along to help. W.C. Fields said never perform with a kid or an animal, they'll up-stage you every time. In this circumstance it's a good thing. Get yourself a cute kid and watch the wallets open. My daughter, who was 6 ½ then (she made me promise I would add the ½), worked her magic for a really really long time – 7 minutes – then she was done. Michael, 10, hung in there for the entire three-hour shift.

Don't get me wrong, this is the public you're dealing with. You have to be prepared for NO and for the occasional person who thinks you came there just to hear his views on religion, politics or life on Mars. The major-

ity, however, recognize the Knights of Columbus name. Many hear you are raising money for handicapped children and receive you warmly and generously. You get a quick history of an older gentleman who shares with you that he raised two mentally challenged children or hear from the wife of a handicapped man while they give you their money. You thank them as sincerely as you can for once again giving of themselves.

They say begging is good for the soul. I realized, though, that it is also good for the souls of all the good people who give, for they need the beggars to ask. And it is good for the little eyes that are watching. They didn't listen to their Dads expound on the virtues of philanthropy, or read it in a book or watch a cartoon try to teach the lesson. We showed them. Not bad for a Saturday morning.

PROOF-1

ST. PAUL

CATHOLIC CHURCH

A Life Remembered

By LORI RUSSELL

Madelynn Rayne Duncan was born with a serious heart condition that filled her life with many hardships. But to her parents, Karen and Connery, she was simply their daughter, and to Connery Jr., she was his sister, given to them to love. The Duncans have taught their parish many lessons in acceptance and sacrifice. St. Paul's community responded with kindness and generosity. And for the source of all this strength, inspiration, hopefulness and true Christian community, we say thank you to a 4-year-old girl named Madelynn.



Let me start by saying thank you to all of you. I can only smile at all the great times I had to share with Madelynn. When God gave her to me on April 4, 2002, I was somewhat prepared in the knowledge that she was a gift. A gift that won't last a lifetime with me. She may be going back to our Savior, but until that day would come she was mine to love and to cherish. My life was happy with Madelynn.

The day of the funeral was a sad day, but the ending was really special and happy. The balloons were like bubbles floating away up into the sky tickling us all inside. Lifting our heads to smile to the Lord and saying "hello" to our angel Madelynn.

Hello and never goodbye to Madelynn.

Here are some of Karen's own words to their parish:



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St. Paul Catholic Church
1800 12th St. N.
St. Petersburg, FL 33704

Company Name
123 Everywhere Avenue
City, ST 00000

PROOF 1