

FEBRUARY 2010

# Sacred Heart

Catholic Church

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## *A Letter From Our Pastor*

# Come Home to God's Mercy

Dear Parishioners,

**L**iver and onions, pea soup, confession! For many, they all fit nicely into the same category. Over my dead body! How the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a sacrament of healing, could become so dreaded has surely puzzled many a priest and pastor over these past 20 years or more. Could it be that we have failed to articulate the meaning of God's mercy properly? Could it be that people are not in need of forgiveness anymore? Could it be that we fail to understand the grace of having someone with skin on tell us that we are forgiven, untied and set free? These and many more, I am sure, are reasons for staying away from the mercy of God, who wants us all to be healed and made whole.

Just as the Church has grown in its understanding of this sacrament of forgiveness, we need to do the same. Many of you may remember when the Sacrament of Reconciliation was called "Confession." The sacrament focused on a laundry list of sins, and we were to list each of them and the number of times we offended God by committing those sins. The Church recognized that we should focus not on sin, but our desire to make ourselves worthy of God's grace. So many were prepared for the Sacrament of Penance, where the focus was on what we could do (our penance) to make us worthy of forgiveness.

Since Vatican II, this sacrament of forgiveness has been called the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Reconciliation does not focus on a laundry list of sins, nor anything we can "do" to make us worthy of God's grace; but rather restoring friendship. Reconciliation is "being made friends again," with God, with others, with ourselves, and with everything



*Continued on back cover*



## *Sharing a Weekend With the Lord* The Sacred Heart Men's Retreat

**M**ichael Matondi has a special message to the wives and families of men in the parish: he would like them to encourage the men in their lives to consider attending the annual Sacred Heart Men's Retreat this year.

"If the men attend the retreat and say 'yes' to those two days, the fruits of their participation will manifest tenfold once they return home," says Michael, who has been participating in the retreats for over 25 years, and has served as the facilitator for the retreats for the last eight years.

From his personal experience Michael can attest to the benefits of participating in the weekend.

"It has helped me become closer to other parishioners, and to share my faith journey with them, creating a deep bond of brotherhood," he says.

The annual pilgrimage by the men of Sacred Heart parish – as well as some men from other faith communities – is a two-day quest for spiritual renewal and restful perspective on the Holy Trinity.

As has been the tradition, the retreat will be held during the season of Lent from March 12-14 at the La Salette Retreat Center in Attleboro, Mass.

The retreat will be led by Fr. Fern Cassista and Fr. Cyriac Mattathilanickal who, according to Michael, work extremely well together, possess a great sense of humor, and appeal to all age groups of men.

"The retreat's goal is to join in communal friendship, to experience the presence of God in an atmosphere of prayer, faith-sharing, and guided reflection, and to return home better rested as the men God calls us to be," says Michael.

The cost for the weekend journey is \$160 with a \$30 non-refundable deposit request, and it includes a private room

at the Retreat Center and all meals provided. Scholarships are offered for those in difficult financial situations, so that all who wish to attend can do so.

Check-in begins at 6 p.m. on Friday evening, followed by a break-out session at 8 p.m. Then, Saturday begins with an optional Mass at 7:30 a.m., followed by breakfast and several shared sessions that will focus on hope, which is the theme



for the week-end. The day continues with presentations filled with music, films, discussion groups, the Rosary and an opportunity for the Sacra-

ment of Reconciliation. Saturday concludes with Mass at 7:30 p.m., followed by a fellowship gathering complete with wine and cheese to celebrate the day. Sunday begins with breakfast, which is followed by a special prayer service and Mass.

All men in the parish ages 18 and over are encouraged to take a leap of faith and attend this life-altering event, which has been taking place at Sacred Heart for the last four decades. Michael especially encourages men in the parish who are between the ages of 25 and 40 to join this year's retreat, as many of the retreat attendees have been attending for a long time and some "new blood" is needed to keep the spirit alive.

"To anyone who feels life is bearing down on them or who may be struggling, and wants to restore communication with the Lord with more confidence, I urge them to attend so they will feel lifted up and lighter when they leave the retreat," he says.

For more information or to register, please contact Michael Matondi at 508-478-0897, or via e-mail at [mmaton@verizon.net](mailto:mmaton@verizon.net).



# Making Every Sunday “Super” *Putting God First*

This month, thousands of visitors will flock to Miami and fill Dolphin Stadium for Super Bowl XLIV, the championship game of the National Football League. Millions of football fans across the world who have followed their respective teams week-in and week-out will gather together on Sunday, Feb. 7, to kick back, enjoy fellowship, and celebrate the culmination of the 2009-10 NFL season. Last year, an estimated 152 million American viewers watched all or some of the telecast of Super Bowl XLIII between the Pittsburgh Steelers and Arizona Cardinals, making it the most viewed television broadcast in U.S. history.

On Feb. 7, more than 18,000 Catholic parishes in the United States will also be celebrating Masses. But if recent statistics are any indication, the percentage of the U.S. Catholic population attending Mass that day will stand in stark contrast to the percentage of the U.S. television audience watching the Super Bowl.

According to the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life’s *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* published in 2008, Catholics account for roughly 23.9 percent of the adult population in the United States. But of the 70 million-plus registered Catholics in the U.S., only 36 percent attend Mass once a week or more, according to Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. Only 12 percent of U.S. Catholics

participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year, and a mere 17 percent of Catholic men say they have ever even slightly considered becoming a priest or religious brother.



God gives us leisure time to clear our heads and recover from what can often be a hectic daily life. But it is important that we glorify God in all that we do, and time away from work or school provides a great opportunity to celebrate the sacraments regularly. As Catholics, we are obligated to attend Mass on a weekly basis barring illness

or extenuating circumstances, but this is just the first step. Spending time in prayer, Eucharistic Adoration, and confession provides us with the graces, healing, and the wisdom to live as disciples of Christ on a daily basis. And sharing of our talents and treasure through ministry participation, social outreach, and charitable giving helps enables us to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ, and ensure that we are placing God at the top of our list of priorities.

The season of Lent, which begins this year on Feb. 17, is a time for us to renew our commitments to discipleship in anticipation of Christ’s passion, death and resurrection. This month, set some time aside to discern ways that you can put God first, on Super Bowl Sunday and every Sunday throughout the year.



## *Coming Home to the Faith* The Martin-LaVache Family

As “cradle Catholics,” Melissa Martin and Christian LaVache were baptized as infants, raised in Catholic households, and grew up celebrating their Sacraments of Initiation. But in adulthood, their respective faith journeys led them on different paths that eventually intertwined.

As a single mom, Melissa sought a sense of community for herself and her daughter in her church. And Christian had a strong desire to help people in the community through outreach activities, as well as to better get to know people in the Hopedale area, to which he had recently moved. Their paths led them to the local Unitarian church, where they met each other for the first time.

“We both felt like we were meant to go there to meet each other,” says Melissa. “We got married there, and found the sense of community we were looking for.”

But a series of events last summer caused Melissa and Christian’s faith walk to take another unexpected turn.

“During the summer, which the Unitarian church takes off, we felt that we wanted to have a stronger foundation of faith for our children; something with the structure that we grew up with,” says Melissa. “So we thought, ‘We have this summer; why don’t we do some searching?’”

The LaVaches’ search was a short one, however, as it began and ended at Sacred Heart Church.

“As soon as we walked in, we felt like this is where we belonged,” says Melissa. “We were welcomed, we felt that we were at home in our faith and our beliefs, and having the tradition of Mass brought us back to what we were searching for.”

In addition to the hospitality the LaVaches received when they first attended Sacred Heart, Melissa says that a series of family funerals cemented their return to the Catholic Church.

“Over the past year, I’ve lost both of my grandfathers, and our entire family is Catholic, so going to their funeral

Masses brought us back to the Church,” says Melissa. “After they passed away, I had a gnawing feeling that I needed to do something, but I didn’t know what it was. I talked to my mom about it, and she said, ‘Pray about it and think about it; God is trying to tell you something.’ After I started going to Sacred Heart, I didn’t feel that way anymore. It was a fulfilling feeling.”

Since that time, Melissa and Christian have enrolled their oldest daughter, Helena, in Faith Formation classes. Helena



recently made her First Reconciliation, and she is preparing to celebrate her First Communion in the spring. In addition, Melissa and Christian have begun learning about the stewardship way of life, becoming actively involved parish life at Sacred Heart. Melissa is involved with the Women’s Prayer Group at the parish, and she recently made a commitment to be a Reader of the Word during

our Annual Stewardship Renewal. Christian also decided to become involved in parish ministry, committing to become an usher.

“I think I’ve always heard of the idea of stewardship, but I love the organization and the way it is presented at Sacred Heart,” says Melissa. “You can look at your blessings and what you have to contribute, so it is a positive experience.”

Sacred Heart welcomes Melissa, Christian, and their two daughters, Helena and Taylor, to our parish family. Please be sure to say “hello” to them the next time you see them at Mass or around the parish.

“We feel that even though our journey may not be like others, it taught us a lot about what is really important,” says Melissa. “You don’t realize how fulfilling the Liturgy is until you’ve been without it. And we look forward to strengthening some of the connections we’ve already made.”

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# Results of the 2009 Stewardship Renewal

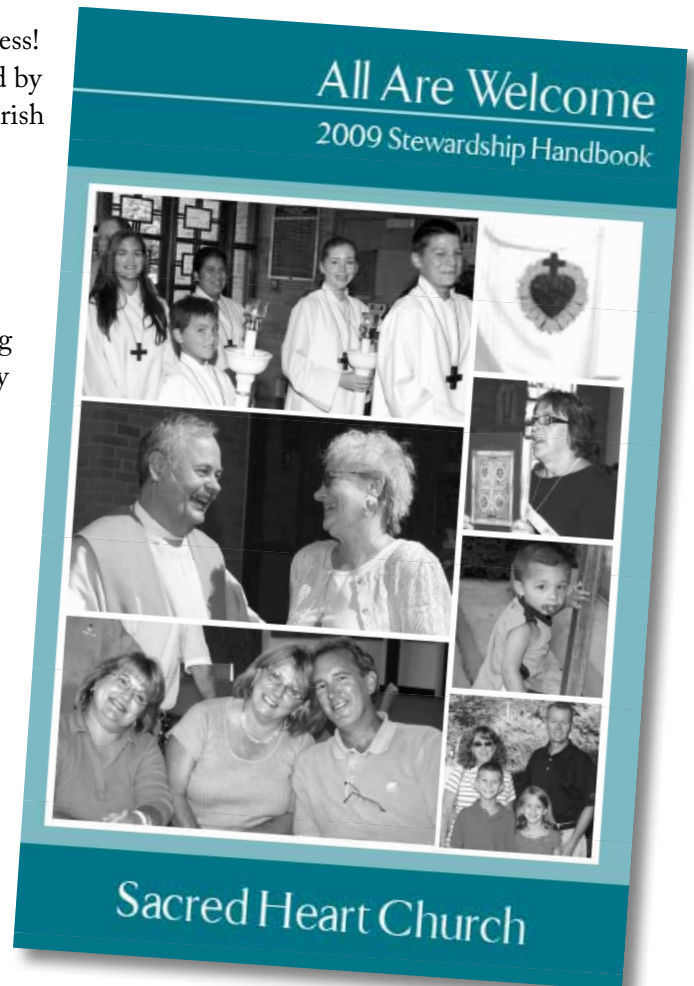
Our 2009 Annual Stewardship Renewal was a great success! One hundred and sixty-five parish families participated by returning a Commitment Card. This is a good sign that our parish is continuing to embrace stewardship as a way of life!

Just a few of the outstanding results from the renewal include:

- All together, our parish families made 450 commitments to spend time in prayer, such as praying the Rosary, scripture reading, and praying with family members.
- Twenty-five families who weren't previously involved in parish ministries signed up for a total of 61 ministries.
- The five most popular ministry sign-ups (in order of popularity) were Mustard Seed Food Preparation, Altar Servers, Readers of the Word, St. Vincent de Paul, and Children's Liturgy of the Word/Kidz Chapel Adult-Teen.
- The ministry with the most new sign-ups was Mustard Seed Food Preparation (18). The ministry with the most re-commitments was Altar Servers (28).
- The total amount pledged to the offertory this year was \$174,798. This is a good step toward reaching our parish budget of \$318,570.
- Over the past two renewals (2008 and 2009), UPDATED NUMBER HERE individual parish households, or PERCENTAGE of all registered households, participated in at least one of the Stewardship Renewals.

While the statistics from our Stewardship Renewal are encouraging, the real effect of emphasizing stewardship can never be quantified, for two reasons. First, the spiritual benefits are inestimable. Secondly, even families who didn't return a Commitment Card this year are nonetheless impacted by the stewardship message, and become more generous with their time, talent, and treasure.

Thanks to all parishioners who support Sacred Heart and make our parish a vibrant, faith-filled community.





# Hospitality

## *The Cornerstone of Stewardship*

**T**he dictionary defines “hospitality” as: “the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way.”

From the standpoint of a Christian world-view, hospitality can be referred to as Christian kindness.

We see the effects of hospitality (and the lack thereof) time and time again throughout the Bible. Christ speaks of hospitality in Matthew’s Gospel when He says, “When I was a stranger, you welcomed me” (25:35). In the Old Testament, the Israelites wander the desert for 40 years in search of a hospitable environment. Even the Holy Family spent ample time searching for shelter before the birth of Our Lord.

It is safe to say that hospitality is, and most likely has always been, a big deal to people everywhere. Modern-day hotels and



hostels often use the image of a pineapple to advertise their special brand of hospitality. There’s no doubt that in ancient times, the distant lights of an inn or tavern struck a chord of hope within weary travelers’ hearts.

Over the years, decades and millenniums, the meaning of the word “hospitality” hasn’t diminished.

For Christians, the presence of hospitality can mean the difference between calling others “guests” and “strangers.” Guests are welcomed with open arms and warm smiles. Strangers aren’t. Guests feel the genuine love present in a hearty “Welcome!” Strangers don’t. Guests often return for second or third visits. Strangers don’t.

As a parish, do we find ourselves surrounded by guests, or burdened by strangers?

In many senses, hospitality is a mindset. The same person may be treated as guest at the church down the road, and as a stranger here.

**“When I was a stranger, you welcomed me.”**

In Matthew’s Gospel, Christ reveals a profound truth about hospitality. “When I was a stranger, you welcomed me.” In other words, “I used to be a stranger, but you changed that when you welcomed me.” It’s a classic example of “before” and “after.” And all it took was a change of heart.

In terms of stewardship, hospitality is an immensely important concept. Remember the “three Ts” of stewardship: time, talent and treasure? Well, there are also “four Ps,” the four pillars of stewardship – hospitality, prayer, formation and service. Interestingly enough, hospitality is mentioned first. Why? Because without hospitality, none of the other pillars will ever take hold. Hospitality is the cornerstone of stewardship, because it opens the door to a person’s heart and allows him or her to receive joy, grace and love.

For stewardship to truly take hold within a parish, hospitality must become second nature. When a stranger visits our parish, welcome him or her as a guest. Who knows? Maybe one day he or she will pay us a second visit.

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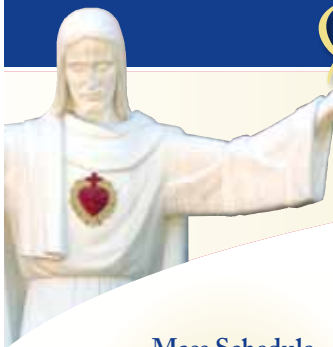
# Sacred Heart Church Calendar

*Please see page eight of the newsletter for daily and weekly Mass times. This calendar is compiled a month before publication, and dates and times of events may have changed. Please confirm with the parish office, or check our Web site, [www.shchopedale.org](http://www.shchopedale.org).*

## FEBRUARY 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>31 Jan</b> 9:30a -10:15a Faith Formation Classes 9:30a -10:15a Coffee and Reflection Mass 8:30 & 10:30am 12:00p Hall/ Classroom Rental	<b>1 Feb</b> 6:30p -9:30p Girl Scout Leader Meetings Boy Scout Meeting	<b>2</b> 3:30p -5:00p Boy Scout Meeting The Presentation of the Lord	<b>3</b> 9:30a -11:00a Mom to Mom	<b>4</b> 9:00a -3:30p Thrift Shop 7:30p-9:00p Women's Prayer Group	<b>5</b> 9:00a -12:00p First Friday Adoration	<b>6</b> 8:30a AA Meeting 1:00p -3:30p First Eucharist Prep. 3:00p Reconciliation 4:00p Vigil Mass
<b>7</b> 9:30a -10:15a Coffee and Reflection 9:30a -10:15a Faith Formation Classes Mass 8:30 & 10:30am 3:00p -5:00p Confirmation Prep.	<b>8</b> 6:00p -7:00p Daisy Troop 7:30p Cub Scout Committee Meeting	<b>9</b> 10:30a Draper Place Communion Service 7:30p -9:30p Parish Life Night	<b>10</b> 9:30a -11:00a Mom to Mom 10:30a Mass at Continuing Care	<b>11</b> 9:00a -3:30p Thrift Shop 11:30a -2:30p Senior Lunch Club 6:30p-8:00p Men's Prayer Group 7:30p-9:00p Women's Bible Study	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 8:30a AA Meeting 3:00p Reconciliation 4:00p Vigil Mass 6:30p Italian Dinner
<b>14</b> 9:30a -10:15a Faith Formation Classes 9:30a -10:15a Coffee and Reflection Mass 8:30 & 10:30am 11:45a -12:15p Anointing of the Sick Valentine's Day	<b>15</b> President's Day	<b>16</b> 5:00p Mustard Seed	<b>17</b> 9:30a -11:00a Mom to Mom Ash Wednesday 9:30a and 7:30p Masses 3:00p Liturgy of the Word with distribution of Ashes	<b>18</b> 9:00a -3:30p Thrift Shop 7:30p-9:00p Women's Prayer Group	<b>19</b> 7:00p Stations of the Cross with Milford Parishes	<b>20</b> 8:30a AA Meeting 3:00p Reconciliation 4:00p Vigil Mass
<b>21</b> 9:30a -10:15a Faith Formation Classes 9:30a -10:15a Coffee and Reflection Mass 8:30 & 10:30am 1st Sunday of Lent	<b>22</b> 7:00p Cub Scout Pack Meeting 7:30p -9:30p Pastoral Planning Meeting 6:30p-8:00p Lenten Supper	<b>23</b> 10:30a Mass at Draper Place 3:30p -5:00p Boy Scout Meeting 7:00p-8:30p Come Home to God's Mercy - Sacrament of Reconciliation	<b>24</b> 9:30a -11:00a Mom to Mom 11:30a Stations of the Cross 12:00p Lenten Lunch 6:30p-8:00p Lenten Supper	<b>25</b> 9:00a -3:30p Thrift Shop 6:30p-8:00p Men's Prayer Group 7:30p-9:00p Women's Bible Study	<b>26</b> 7:00p Stations of the Cross with Milford Parishes	<b>27</b> 8:30a AA Meeting 3:00p Reconciliation 4:00p Vigil Mass
<b>28</b> 9:30a -10:15a Faith Formation Classes 9:30a -10:15a Coffee and Reflection Mass 8:30 & 10:30am 2nd Sunday of Lent	<b>1 Mar</b> 6:30p-9:30p Girl Scout Leader Meetings 6:30p-8:00p Lenten Supper	<b>2</b> 7:00p-8:30p Come Home to God's Mercy - Sacrament of Reconciliation	<b>3</b> 9:30a -11:00a Mom to Mom 11:30a Stations of the Cross 12:00p Lenten Lunch 6:30p-8:00p Lenten Supper	<b>4</b> 9:00a -3:30p Thrift Shop 7:30p-9:00p Women's Prayer Group	<b>5</b> 9:00a -12:00p First Friday Adoration 7:00p Stations of the Cross with Milford Parishes	<b>6</b> 8:30a AA Meeting 3:00p Reconciliation 4:00p Vigil Mass





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## Mass Schedule

### Saturday

4 p.m. Reconciliation  
5 p.m. Vigil Mass

### Sunday

8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Masses  
(September through May –  
in effect after Labor Day)  
9:30 a.m. Mass ONLY  
(Memorial Day through Labor Day)

### Weekdays

9 a.m. Mass – Monday through Thursday  
9 a.m. Communion Service  
and Adoration – Friday

### Holy Days

7:30 p.m. Vigil Mass  
(Evening before Holy Day)  
9 a.m. Mass

## Come Home to God's Mercy *continued from front cover*

that God created. Everything that God created, we are told in Genesis, was good. Through Reconciliation, we restore our friendship with all that God created.

It is easier to understand a broken friendship with God, and broken friendships with others, but difficult to understand restoring friendship with ourselves and with creation. Jesus reminds us to "Love our neighbor as ourselves." Sometimes, we do not love ourselves, and as a result those around us are victims of our impatience, anger, rage, depression, and more. How we treat the environment and use the Earth's resources is what is meant by friendship with all God's creation. This Sacrament of Reconciliation invites us restore any broken relationships we have with God, others, ourselves, and creation.

During Lent, all of us are being invited to "**Come Home to God's Mercy.**" Every Tuesday evening (Feb. 23 to March 30) from 7-8:30 p.m., a priest will be available to hear confessions in every church in the Diocese of Worcester. Whatever church you are near at that time, take the chance to be made friends again

with God, others, ourselves and creation; and I am going to add one other: be made friends again with Church! Many have stayed away from this sacrament of forgiveness, and are afraid to return because they have forgotten how, or they don't know the Act of Contrition, or they are afraid what will be said, because they have been away for so long. Be not afraid, and welcome home!

Liver and onions, pea soup, confession: I happen to love all three! Certainly, we all have different taste buds, and you may not be able to enjoy liver and onions, nor pea soup. But I hope we all have a taste for the forgiveness of God's Mercy!

Have a wonderful Lenten journey!

Fr. Bill Konicki, IVD