



## From Wilderness to Light

### *An Advent Story*

The mornings now leave a thin skin of greyish ice over usually life giving bodies of water from the great lakes to the bird baths in our back yard. As we wait for the sun to peek out in later hours, we anticipate the melting away of the ice, giving way to a 'clearer view.'

When the ice of our heart melts, however, we can see the true view of what has been kept there. Pride, jealousy, unforgiveness, indifference, shame and loss of love for our brother.

Sometimes it takes some excavation to expose those things hidden. In the wilderness of the desert one can quickly be tested. There is some preparedness necessary. We must stay awake! In Matthew's gospel (Mt. 3:1-2) John the Baptist cries out for repentance. Also, in Matthew 24:42, he says, "stay awake because you do not know the day your master is coming."

When we are in the Wilderness of life where the extremes seem too much to handle, we oddly find relief in repentance. The Holy Spirit has the **divine** job of unearthing, with a gentle wind of love, those parts in our lives that are the most unbecoming.

It seems that keeping those things hidden wasn't a bad idea after all. Who wants to see such things in their own heart? It seems there is a wilderness where God doesn't seem to be... right in our own heart.

He lovingly excavates the landscape of our heart, by clearing our view of ourselves and presenting the things we need to leave behind. When we repent of those ungodly areas, our 'vision becomes clearer' and our lives regain some authenticity again.

We then can be filled with the life giving water that we saw in the beginning—before it was frozen and glazed by our sinfulness.

**Life does not spring from static living or filthy water. Static living is not authentic and filthy water does not nourish.** We are loved by and created for relationship—with God the Father; His Son, Jesus; and the Divine Counselor, the Holy Spirit—and one another.

Paul also encourages and exhorts us in Romans 13:11-12, "besides, you know the time has come; the moment is here for you to stop sleeping and wake up, because by now our salvation is nearer than when we first began to believe. The night is nearly over, daylight

is on the way; so let's throw off everything that belongs to the darkness and equip ourselves for the light.

The Scriptures make it clear that the wilderness is necessary and by embracing it we find our way out of the darkness and into the light.

Paul also reminds us that we have hope. In Romans 15:4-5 he says, "and all these things which were written so long ago were written so that we, learning perseverance and the encouragement which the scriptures give, should have hope."

The Scriptures make it clear that the wilderness is necessary and by embracing it we find our way out of the darkness and into the light.

With the help of the Spirit, the love of the Father and the Mercy of Jesus we can venture into the desert of our own wilderness. Our heart may be stony or unkept, but we have hope and we have help.

We must be patient not only with others, but with ourselves as we permit this process of 'excavation' to take place. James 5:7-8 reminds us, "Now, be patient, brothers, until the Lord's coming. Think of a farmer: how patiently he waits for the precious fruit of the good ground until it has had the autumn rains and the spring rains! You too, must be patient; do not lose heart, because the Lord's coming will be soon."

This Advent, consider a trip into the Wilderness of your own Heart. Consider how the gentle excavation process of the Holy Spirit might reveal or expose those unkempt areas that are hiding there. Consider a sincere and complete inventory for Repentance. Step out in faith and move from static to authentic living; be delighted and lifted up by the birth of the One Who Saves and brings the Light.

May the love of our Savior Jesus Christ fill you with His peace and unending love. May the counsel of the Holy Spirit give you the confidence to step out in faith and 'wake up,' and with David, let us sing. "Let us go to the house of the Lord. At last our feet are standing at your gates, Jerusalem."

Debbie Hawley, Director

# Shepherd's Way Comments

The Shepherd's Way Group has been a wonderful place to experience inner healing. The Holy Spirit has a way of gently uncovering deep wounds and then applying the Father's love to heal those wounds. I have found that simply forgiving others is not going far enough into our healing journey.

God also heals the effects of our woundedness. Shepherd's Group opens us to be healed in a supportive environment with others who are also experiencing God's love, mercy and healing.

—Jennifer Loftin

*Check out a new blog on Living the Spirit-Filled Life @ [www.BreathofHisSpirit.com](http://www.BreathofHisSpirit.com)!*

The Shepherd's Way class has been very eye opening for me. Some hurts that I felt had healed were brought forward again so they could be healed. Some hurts that I didn't even realize were there came up to be healed. This has been such a wonderful follow-up to Pilgrims' Way where I learned to listen to and depend on the Lord and his son Jesus Christ to heal the wounds I have.

—Margaret Verdun

## Comments from Fr. Gary's Lectoring Workshop

I was grateful to have the opportunity to be coached by Fr. Gary because I have always felt he is a master Liturgist! He captures what it takes to give a meaningful proclamation.

He highlighted some of the issues that can detract from hearing God's word – monotone, rushed, and breathy presentations. These issues can be improved with preparation.

That day, I did ALL the things that irritate me, when listening to God's Word. I used my "atrium" voice which is a soft, neutral voice with little modulation or inflection. I call that being Johnny one-note. And I definitely wasn't prepared. Normally, I do the daily preparation piece and strive to make eye contact with my delivery; however on that Monday, I neglected to do the step that is, for me, most important. I didn't pray like I do before I step into the sanctuary and walk to the ambo! I ask the Holy Spirit to use me as a tool to touch the hearts of His people.

## From the Director...

**To Be Discipled.** The apostles were with Jesus for 3 years. Jesus had 3 years from the time of his Baptism in the Holy Spirit by John the Baptist to teach and instruct them. Some of the study courses offered here at the Prayer Center are intended to take you through a period of at least 3 years. Even with a short period of 'time off,' a steady course of approximately 3 years of formation in close 'spirit living' will dramatically shape our personal journey of faith.

**The Shepherds Group** is a follow up for the Pilgrims' Way. Its focus is strictly Inner Healing and growing in transparency with the Lord. Meets once a week for 13 weeks.

**Anyone interested in attending these studies is encouraged to contact the Prayer Center at 810-787-5330 to pre-register. It is very helpful to determine materials needed.**

**You can also contact us via e-mail at [stfrancisflint@comcast.net](mailto:stfrancisflint@comcast.net) or check us out on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/stfrancisprayercenter-flint](http://www.facebook.com/stfrancisprayercenter-flint).**



## Workshop News

Fr. Gary McInnis shares with local Lectors from parishes the "how to's" of the Ministry of Proclaiming the Word. Two fun days with an ever entertaining and knowledgeable Fr. Gary left all with a new appreciation for the Word of God as it is proclaimed in the assembly. We will repeat this workshop after the first of the year.

Father Gary and I are of one mind about the worship aids. When I see, Eyes rather than book covers, it makes me feel that Lord has, indeed, spoken through me. Like St Paul states, 'It is no longer me, but JESUS at work in me.'

I gained so many pieces of wisdom, at the Reader/Lector workshop. It was fun to meet new friends and renew acquaintances. I loved learning some of Fr. Gary's songs, too. Hopefully, I will be able to improve each time I'm honored to be a Lector. It truly would be helpful for every Lector to go through specialized training to revitalize and refresh proclamations at each Parish community ...

Thank you for so graciously hosting the training. The St. Francis Prayer Center is a beautiful place for reflection and learning. It is a secret spot that needs to be discovered!

Sincerely,  
Connie

## Come Share Some Time With Us During This Advent/Christmas Season

This is an invitation to each of you to come to the Prayer Center any time Monday through Thursday from 12 noon to 4:00 pm and share some holiday cheer with us.

We would be delighted to stop and have a chat with you, pray with you, listen to you, and share the joy of Advent and Christmas with you. We thank all of you for being a part of the Prayer Center – whether you've been with us for decades or just this past year or so!



### Pilgrims' Way Bible Study

The Pilgrims' Way study examines and scrutinizes relationships—first the Trinity with one another, secondly the Trinity with us, finally us with one another.

Because of the formative quality of the study, we form community as we learn to explore and live in close relationships—both with one another and in our church and family communities.

We have had more than 40 complete this study and a few who now want to also be facilitators.

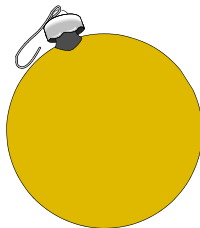
Evening classes will start **Thursday, Jan. 9th at Holy Redeemer, 6:30-8:30**. We will do a morning class (off site or at the Prayer Center) with enough interest. Please inquire. All classes meet 1 day a week for 6 months.



### Christmas Memory Ornaments & Tree Lighting

Although we tried to make this to happen this year, it was not to be. We will be doing this for next year.

What we need from some wonderful, gifted person out there is for them to step forward and be willing to chair this event. If you are that someone – who would enjoy pulling together a spirit-filled Christmas memory celebration – please call the Prayer Center 810-787-5330.



## Save these Dates ★

- **Wed., Nov. 27th (first session)**  
"A Date with the Deacon" series continues.
  - Dec. 4 Dcn. Jim Brown
  - Dec. 11 Dcn. Corrion
  - Dec. 18 Dcn. Ken Preiss

Come spend a couple of hours on Wednesday's from 10 am-12 noon during Advent @ St. Francis Prayer Center. Each Wednesday a different Deacon will share the gospel and homily for the following Sunday. Questions & a brunch make the day special. Please call 810-787-5330 to reserve your place. **Bring a treat to share.**

- **Thursday, Dec. 5th, 6:30-8:30 pm**  
**Pilgrims' Way Scripture Study** @ Holy Redeemer Family Center, Thursday nites for 6 months. Follows Spirit Filled Life sessions.

- **Monday, Jan. 20, 6-9 pm or Saturday, Jan 25, 10 a-1 p**

**Guided Prayer Service:** focused prayer with others concentrating on use of the spiritual gifts in the process. Teams will rotate in workshop fashion to allow the opportunity to pray with several people. Both held @ SFPC. Free will offering.

- **Fri/Sat, Feb. 7-8th**

**Visions & Dreams Retreat Workshop** with Arlene Apone, Arch Diocese of Detroit. *What does God Say in our dreams?* Held @ SFPC. Cost \$60; \$75 for overnight. Reservations needed.

- **April 4-5-6 (Friday - Sunday)**

**Inner Healing weekend Retreat** w/Arlene Apone from Arch Diocese of Detroit. **Will be held @ St. Francis Prayer Center.** Begins Friday night @ 6:00 pm, goes through Sunday @ 1:00 pm. This is expected to be a large retreat w/many coming from other dioceses to attend. Lodging will be available at local hotels, retreat held @ SFPC. More info will follow. **Call to be put on list in advance.**

- **April 26, 2014 from 5:00-10:30 pm**  
**Annual Fundraiser. Garden Party/Picnic** is the theme for this year. The first meeting will be on Friday, Jan. 10 @ 1:00 pm. Mark it on your calendars! Start planning your costume now.

**The Prayer Center is located at G-2381 E. Carpenter Rd., Flint, MI 48505; Phone 810-787-5330, Fax 810-787-5399; Email: [stfrancisflint@comcast.net](mailto:stfrancisflint@comcast.net); Facebook: [www.facebook.com/stfrancisprayercenter-flint](http://www.facebook.com/stfrancisprayercenter-flint)**

**Volunteers were plentiful for our...**

# Old Fashioned Revival

Our most gracious thanks to everyone who volunteered – before, during and after – at our hope-it-becomes annual Old Fashioned Revival. Many hands made short work. THANKS!

## Revival Helpers:

- ◆ Face Painting: **Deborah Simms; Stephanie Flynn**; CTK Junior Daughters **Janay Ford, Tyanna Stewart, Azariya Murphy, Garicia Gladney**
- ◆ Grill Masters: **Jim Drummond & Keith Dharamraj**
- ◆ Popcorn and our “please-go-get-it-guy”:  
**Andy Verdun**
- ◆ Happy Hostess and helper: **Jill Poma**
- ◆ Food prep and ENTHUSIASM **Liz Lamson**
- ◆ Planning committee: **Maryanne Krupka; Sherree Miller; Margaret & Andy Verdun; Mary Dharamraj; Director Deb; Carol Yahr; Jean Shipley**
- ◆ **Jon Hawley**: detailing our property and hauling chairs and tables and ice and... and... and.....
- ◆ Priests who served us: **Fr. Dan Kogut; Fr. Phil Schmitter; Fr. Gary McInnis; Fr. Paul Schwermer**
- ◆ Musicians: **Tom Clark & friends** from Monroe Michigan; **Dan Schmitt w/Thicker than Water**; Al Pittel on guitar; **Stephanie Monear** soloist; **Christ the King** choir.
- ◆ Medical Tent: **Sam Stewart, Kitty Kelly**
- ◆ Items donated or built: small tents: **Dave & Sharlene Drury & kids – Ryan, Erin, Kyle; Margaret & Andy Verdun; Jean Shipley**. Lemondade stands: **Lee Wendt**.
- ◆ Parishes Represented: **Holy Redeemer; St. Mary’s, Mt. Morris; St. John’s, Davison; Christ the King, Flint**
- ◆ Sponsors & Other Contributors: **Aldi’s; Kroger; Meijer, Inc.; Dukes; Swartz Creek Knights of Columbus; Genesee County Sheriff Reserves; McDonalds; Anonymous.**



*This tent kept our music contributors mostly dry – especially the morning group! Starting on this page and continuing for the next three pages are just a few of the 950 pictures (that we know of) taken this day by Andy Verdun, Sherree Miller, Debra Hawley, Jean Shipley.*



**Rain, rain, go away...**

# Old Fashioned Revival

## From Our Director, Debbie A DAY OF SERVANTHOOD

While the scriptures have much to say about obedience, I will say that, "it isn't always easy"! The idea for the Revival came more than a year before I was hired to be director. I couldn't imagine what God had in mind as I woke up from the very vivid play-by-play in my dream of the



Revival on the grounds of St. Francis. I saw with great clarity the tents, the priests hearing confessions, the BBQ fired up, the children getting faces painted—and the wonderful music.

Early winter this year (my first at SFPC), I remembered that dream.



Holy cow, how could I possibly pull that off in such a short time? So, I bargained with God, "if my 2 music buddies say yes, then I'll take that as a yes," if not we're off!! There was no way

both of those guys were going to be available—at the same time! Wrong!

With the help of a shocked but willing committee, away we went. Powered by love of the Lord and the Power of the Holy Spirit, we gave it our best.



The praise and worship kept us all in perpetual focus of the 'why' of the day. The commitment of



those music friends filled my heart and the heart of everyone else all day. God did His part and we did ours. Many people who have never known Jesus brought their



family and gave their hearts to Him. Then they left and came back, and brought their friends! Some, away from the sacraments for many years found their way to a kind, willing Priest. The only words I heard in that dream were, "feed my people." Among the tents, music, adorable



paints, were people of all races, color, and stations in life. Many who had much, and many who had little. But, all were fed. Some food. Some compassion. Some time. Some joy. Some listening, but all were fed.



Although we had 3 downpours before 1 pm, spirits stayed high, and the worship kept propelling us to stay focused. A contemporary Christian song, named "Rain Down," was played. It was as if God himself was raining down on the property here. It was as though He was consecrating it for His Glory.



# Old Fashioned Revival in Pictures



## A Note from Co-Director, Margaret

The 2013 St. Francis Prayer Center Old Fashioned Revival was a smashing success. It brought together a wide range of

people and parishes to the Center to have a day of praising, eating, fellowship and prayer.



The volunteers did an awesome job of making everyone feel at home.

The music was inspiring. The weather was not the best but that did not stop Debbie and her volunteers from having a great day.



The children loved the face painting, the bounce house, the popcorn, and the ice cream. The joyous songs sung by the Christ the King choir ended the day on a perfect note.



The joyous songs sung by the Christ the King choir ended the day on a perfect note.



# Old Fashioned Revival Continues

## Another Point of View

Yes, the rains came! BUT that did not discourage those who came out to spend the day or a few hours with us.



There were a few problems with electricity – like trying to figure out how to change the timer on the Prayer Center sign lights so the bounce house and

popcorn stand could operate! And we probably could have used a few more small EZ-up canopies, we could have even used some raincoats or large umbrellas. What we had was a dedicated effort from many people to make this, our first, Revival very worthwhile!

From the time of inception by our “Energizer Bunny” director, Deb, to the actual event, this joint was jumping!

Meetings were held, plans were made ... then remade, donations sought, donations received, stands were built, flyers and other notices were sent out, signs were made, laminating was done.

A few big tents were rented, some small tents and canopies were donated for the day, food was donated, food was prepared, food was brought in by others. There was a popcorn stand, an ice cream cart, a bounce house, and face painting to the delight of the kids.

The music was great, there were priests on site for personal confession or just to talk, a message was given, a small raffle with a variety of items, an Information Booth where you could sign up for

upcoming events, plus hot dogs grilled to perfection. We even found an umbrella for the guys to use when the rains came! It looked difficult trying to grill the dogs – move them from box to grill then to the holding pan – all

while holding up an umbrella. We finally let them do the grilling in the garage.

Helpers were here Friday evening to help get things set up. Some even stayed Friday night to work on food preparation. At the

last minute we had to get a different tent for the deck where the playing and singing resounded. This large tent with sides was donated for use by the musical groups – they were very thankful, especially when the rains came. –JS



## Great Getaway 8 Winners!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Great Getaway fundraising raffle. We used a portion of that money to support the Revival held here Sept. 7, 2013. Both the raffle and the Revival were wonderful successes.

The winners were: 1st ticket drawn – won by **599 Retirees**; they chose the TV. The 2nd ticket drawn – won by **Bill & Diane Lane**; they chose the Kindle Fire. The 3rd and final ticket drawn – won by **Claude & Sally Green**; they received the Soaring Eagle Gift Certificate. Congratulations to all of you.

It appeared that everyone was pleased with their prize. We, too, are pleased. Pleased that so many of you chose to participate in this effort! Thanks again.



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## Newsletters by E-mail

We would like to hear from you. Please send us a card or note to let us know both how YOU are doing and how WE are doing. Send your request via email to stfrancisflint@comcast.net.

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## Will You Adopt A Family? See below!

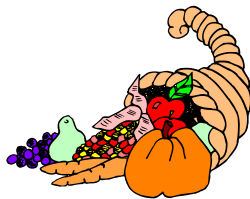
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# Adopt A Family for Thanksgiving or Christmas!

## THANKSGIVING:

There is still time to participate in the Thanksgiving Baskets for the 15 families we adopted this year. And, even though by time you receive this newsletter we have already made our purchases and probably given the baskets to the families, you can still help.

A number of people have already sent in their donations. but if you haven't done so and would like to contribute, please do consider helping. Remember, any amount taken in that exceeds the expenses for the baskets will be directed toward our Outreach Ministry.



just have a heart for children, or maybe you'd like to adopt a family in the Memory of a loved one. In either case, you can choose, and we will help assign the family that suits your idea and budget the best.

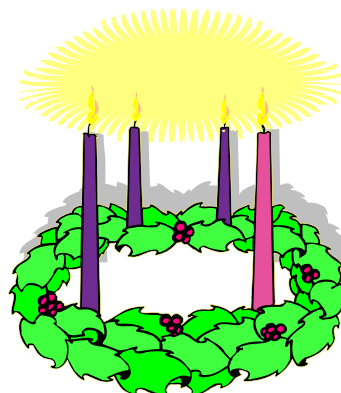
We will have family information such as children's sizes, ages, and how many in that household. Let the joy of Christmas fill your heart by serving another.



## CHRISTMAS:

Last year 15 families had a beautiful Christmas dinner; groceries for the holiday's and gifts for their family. Our St. Francis family supported this effort through finances; some with shopping; some shared a family and split the cost between them.

All kinds of people can adopt a family. Maybe you



*Celebrate the  
 Advent Season  
 with Family and  
 Friends! Better  
 yet, take a family  
 member or a  
 friend to church  
 with you!*