

Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.

Parish Life! from OSV



News and resources for your parish

January 2008

Parish Life! from Our Sunday Visitor

Welcome to **Parish Life!** from Our Sunday Visitor. As a parish leader who has ordered from Our Sunday Visitor in the past, you're receiving this eighth edition of our special e-newsletter just for parishes!

Be sure to visit our Parish Resources pages. Newly updated for December, this material is written specially for YOU! Find Advent help and hints for early childhood, elementary, adult, youth, catechists, and the workplace! [Help for your parish is here now»](#)

Each month you'll find timely content, practical information, and insightful inspiration delivered right to your inbox. We'd love to hear from you as well, so please e-mail us with questions or topics you would like to see discussed in future editions: yyoung@osv.com.

To continue receiving this monthly e-newsletter, you need do nothing. To unsubscribe, please follow the instructions at the bottom of the page.

Feel free to forward this email to a friend who might be interested.

Don't Lose Hope!

By Lorene Hanley Duquin

One of the most subtle temptations parish staff members encounter is a loss of hope. It happens when things don't go the way we had hoped they would go:

- Mass attendance goes down.
- Only a handful of people show up for a special parish event.
- Tensions arise in the office between staff members who have different ideas of how things should be done.
- Volunteers, who promise to do something, don't do it.
- People complain about how things are going, but no one offers a solution.
- Parish gossip turns negative.

We become disappointed, discouraged, disheartened. It's a downward spiral that saps our energy and our enthusiasm for ministry.

The problem, according to Pope Benedict XVI in his new encyclical *Spe Salvi* ("On Christian Hope"), is that we are hoping for the wrong things. It's not bad to hope that everything in the parish will turn out well. But that can't be the main source of our hope.

The Pope assures us: "Man's great, true hope which holds firm in spite of all disappointments can only be God - God who has loved us and who continues to love us 'to the end,' until all 'is accomplished.'... His love alone gives us the possibility of soberly persevering day by day, without ceasing to be spurred on by hope, in a world which by its very nature is imperfect."

Your parish is imperfect. Your ministry is imperfect. You are imperfect. But God has called you to help build His kingdom here on earth. With God's call came the promise that the Holy Spirit will guide and sustain you in everything that you say and do.

So when parish problems start getting you down, resist the temptation to become disillusioned. Turn to God in prayer. Place your hope in the Lord. Ask for the inspiration to move through whatever difficulty you are facing. Then be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. You may be surprised at where the Spirit leads you!

Lent: Keeping It Real

By Woodeene Koenig-Bricker

Lent will hit the schedule quicker than normal this year. Ash Wednesday is Feb. 6.

Working in a parish during the high liturgical season of Lent has many positives. Being able to participate in most or all the parish activities, being near to the church for a quick prayer during the day, being able to attend daily Mass. But it has its drawbacks, as well. When one works for the church, the temptation to turn Lent into a series of job-related duties is always present. Instead of thinking about your own mortality and sinful nature on Ash Wednesday, it's easy to wonder if there are enough ashes for everyone who shows up. While the parishioners look forward to the Stations of the Cross, you may have to be concerned about finding replacement altar servers to carry the candles and the cross.

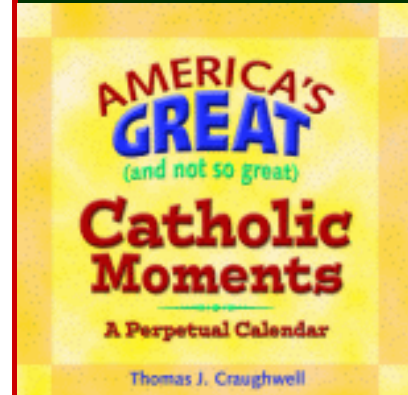
So how can you keep Lent from being just more items on your to-do list?

Here's one suggestion. [For more, visit the full article at our website by clicking here»](#)

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Catholic Moments



January 10

President Ronald Reagan names the first U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, 1984. For most of the history of the United States, anti-Catholic feeling ran too high for any president to risk sending an ambassador to the Vatican. In 1984, Reagan broke with that tradition by appointing William A. Wilson of California the first American ambassador to the Holy See. Reagan gave as his reason Pope John Paul II's standing as an internationally respected statesman.

- From "America's Great (and not so great) Catholic Moments," by Thomas Craughwell (OSV).

[Order it here»](#)

Mother Teresa



Mother Teresa's Devotion to Our Lady

Proving once again at what a powerful presence she possessed, Mother Teresa has been in the news recently.

Though some of the news reports got it wrong, charging her

1) Go to a different parish for at least one Lenten activity so that you can participate and not feel pressure to "work." In some towns, the parishes take turns holding penance services throughout Lent. Instead of going to your "home" parish for confession, go to a parish where you can simply "be" rather than "do." [More here»](#)

A Steward Reflects

By Julie Kenney

The introduction to "Stewardship: A Disciple's Response," the U.S. bishops pastoral letter on stewardship, begins by defining discipleship as a conscious decision to be followers of Jesus Christ no matter what hardships the choice brings. An inner conversion occurs and disciples fulfill their commitment in an entire way of life.

The bishops then tell us that "stewardship is an expression of discipleship, with the power to change how we understand and live out our lives." Disciples (stewards) recognize that God is the source of everything we are and have. We are grateful and carefully cultivate our gifts to make a generous return to the Giver.

The challenges of a stewardship lifestyle in today's selfish society are many, forcing us to continually choose between our way and Christ's way. "Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required" (Lk 12:48). Much as been given to Christian stewards living in the United States, and sharing is not an option for us. How do you use the resources entrusted to you? How do you share them for the good of the Church locally and globally?

Hope Springs Eternal

In his second encyclical, *Spe Salvi*, Pope Benedict XVI teaches us about hope. He answers the questions that people today have about what hope really is and reminds us of the truly Good News at the heart of our Christian hope:

Heaven is not empty. Life is not a simple product of laws and the randomness of matter, but within everything and at the same time above everything, there is a personal will, there is a Spirit who in Jesus has revealed himself as Love (No. 5).

- From Our Sunday Visitor's pamphlet "[Pope Benedict XVI: Encyclical on Hope](#)." To order for your parish, [click here»](#) Or, call 800-348-2440. For a free sample copy, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to *Spe Salvi* pamphlet, Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750.

Voting as a Catholic

with not believing in God, she had wonderful ways of keeping her faith during dark and difficult times.

One of those ways was relying on the presence of the Blessed Mother, detailed in a new book "[Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady](#)," published by Our Sunday Visitor. In many pictures of Mother Teresa, you will see her holding a rosary. Why? In addition to helping her recall and relive her founding vision, it was her way of "holding Our Lady's hand." [Read an excerpt here»](#)

Quick Links

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Parish leaders' resources

Q&A with Dr. Joseph White

7 Steps to Becoming Financially Free Small Group Study Program

New VBS program: Great Bible Reef

Register to win free programs and materials for YOUR parish

FREE parish resources

Our Sunday Visitor's website offers monthly articles on early childhood education, elementary education, adult formation, spirituality at work, youth ministry that inspires and help for catechists. [To see the latest, click here»](#)



We are taught from an early age to form our consciences in the light of our Catholic teaching. "To follow one's conscience" is often misunderstood as something that allows us to do whatever we want, or as the "feeling" we have that something is right or wrong. But our faith teaches us that "conscience is the voice of God resounding in the human heart, revealing the truth to us and calling us to do what is good while shunning what is evil" (from the U.S. bishops' 2007 document, "Forming Citizens for Faithful Citizenship, No. 17).

It is our responsibility as Catholics to form our consciences

- by studying what Scripture and the Church teaches
- by using our reason to study key issues in light of this teaching
- by prayerfully seeking to understand the will of God

- From Our Sunday Visitor's "In the Voting Booth: A Catholic's Guide." [Order this pamphlet by clicking here](#)» Or, call 800-348-2440.

Let us know what you think!

We hope you've enjoyed our Parish Life! newsletter! Let us know what you think--we appreciate your comments, questions, suggestions, and requests! Email York Young: yyoung@osv.com.

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