

Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.

Parish Life! from OSV



News and resources for your parish

August 2007

Welcome to **Parish Life!** from Our Sunday Visitor.

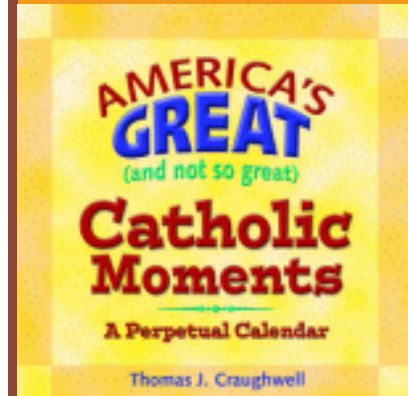
Welcome to **Parish Life!** from Our Sunday Visitor. As a parish leader who has ordered from Our Sunday Visitor in the past, you're receiving this sixth edition of our special enewsletter just for parishes!

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 enewsletter, 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.

Getting people involved
Serving the Church
How Can I Help?

Catholic Moments**Sept. 8**

The first Mass is celebrated for the first parish in what would become the United States, 1565. On the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Father Francisco Lopez de Mendoza Grajales said Mass for 600 settlers from Cuba in what is now St. Augustine, Fla. The parish that Father Lopez founded, Mission Nombre de Dios, is still active today.

Quick Linkswww.OSV.com

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

Getting people involved

by Lorene Hanley Duquin

As parish staff members, we know that we should constantly be bringing new people into volunteer positions in the parish. The reality, however, is that we frequently succumb to the temptation to ask the same people to do more and more. When that happens, our parish develops a reputation for being a clique, and we end up burning out the very people we depend upon the most!

It doesn't have to be that way.

The first change we can make is to stop looking at people as volunteers, and begin looking at how everyone in the parish can use their gifts. When people use their God-given talents and abilities, they find meaning and purpose in their lives. The result is that we begin to work together to build the kingdom of God right here on earth.

Sound interesting?

Start by extending an open invitation to an evening of discernment on how people can identify their gifts. Use bulletin blurbs, lector announcements, signs, encouragement from the pulpit and personal contact to let people know that they are wanted and needed.

The evening should include seven key elements:

- An opening icebreaker designed to get people talking to each other.
- An opening prayer and several unique prayer experiences, such as music, a guided meditation, a breathing prayer or a short spiritual reflection interspersed throughout the evening as prayer breaks.
- A short witness talk so people can see how using gifts gives meaning to someone's life.
- A talk on how to discern gifts and match gifts with the needs of the parish.
- A short period of silent reflection.
- A commitment activity where people have a chance to sign up for a parish ministry or organization.
- An opportunity for people to talk after the session.

You might want to host these evenings of discernment several times a year. After each session, make sure that everyone's gifts will be used. The worst thing is to have people volunteer and never be contacted, or even worse to be rejected or told they are not needed.

When volunteers are looking for jobs

Sometimes you have volunteers who don't know where they want to help. Help them find what they really are interested in with the help of the Holy Spirit.

The spiritual term for identifying your gifts, and determining how they can be best used for service to others is "discernment," from a Latin word meaning "to sift through."

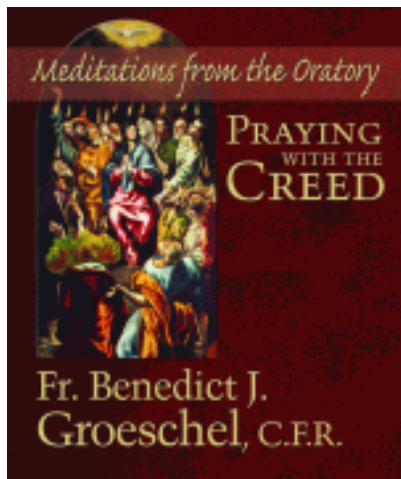
Discernment takes time, prayer and reflection. Begin by setting aside some quiet time with no interruptions. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you recognize your gifts and talents. Then ask yourself some questions:

- What are my talents?

- What are my special abilities?
- What skills have I developed?
- What people skills do I have?
- When people compliment me, what do they recognize?
- What do family members see as my best traits?
- What activities energize me?
- What difficulties have I overcome?

- From the pamphlet "Living Catholic Stewardship: Discerning Your Gifts," [available from Our Sunday Visitor](#)»

programs and materials for YOUR parish



Meditation on serving the Church

Look for any kind of Church work you will be able to do well and in accord with the mind of the Church. This might be in your own parish or with some endeavor near where you live or work. It can be a simple, humble task done well for God's love: helping to clean the church, preparing the bulleting, being a minister of the sacraments to the sick, or an usher. It can be also be more complicated and time-consuming....

There are many ways of helping the Church, weather through organizations or in silent, unnoticed activities. They are right in front of you, but perhaps you have not seen them. We must always do these things out of love, disinterested love. That means trying to do them with all your heart and with great care and not looking for any personal reward. Outside my little

office in the garage there is a sing with Mother Teresa' words: "Do no great things, only small things with great love." That says it all.

- From "Meditations from the Oratory: Praying with the Creed," by Father Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R. (Our Sunday Visitor) [More infor here](#)»

Disasters: How Can I Help?



In the wake of recent disasters that have been in the news - the bridge collapse in Minnesota, earthquake in Peru, Hurricane Dean in Mexico and severe flooding in the Upper Midwest - how can parish leaders help parishioners understand how these things can keep happening?

Our Sunday Visitor's pamphlet "How Can I Help? Disasters: A Catholic Response" gives some direction: "Faith is put to the test when innocent people suffer. You may wonder where God was during the disaster. You may wonder why God didn't intervene.

If you look at the crucifix, you could ask the same questions - and yet, God triumphed over the "disaster" of Good Friday when Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday. St. Thomas Aquinas tells us, "God permits evil in order to draw forth some greater good." Only in faith can you embrace the mystery of suffering in the world. Only in faith can you accept that God created an

imperfect world where good and evil exist for reasons that are beyond human comprehension. Only in faith can you believe that God will bring something good out of every tragedy."

[To order this pamphlet, click here](#)»

Also, to read more about how everyday people handle crises, [click here](#)»

A prayer for disaster victims

Watch, dear Lord, with those who wake or watch or weep tonight, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend your sick ones, O Lord Jesus Christ, rest your weary ones, bless your dying ones, soothe your suffering ones, shield your joyous ones, and all for your love's sake. Amen. - *St. Augustine*

Let us know what you think!

We hope you've enjoyed our Parish Life! e-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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