

Transformed!

Good News at St. Hilary Parish

February/March 2017

Experiences with homeless transforms youth

For Michael English volunteering is more than just fulfilling a requirement, it means experiencing Jesus through the poor and acting on Christ's words. "My favorite form of prayer is action. It's important to act upon our faith—and not just say it. Obviously, it's important to pray, to meditate and go to church. But when you actually go out and do what Jesus did, I think it's extremely important and necessary for our salvation."

Living out social justice

As a result of his understanding of the nature of social justice and living it out, this Archbishop Hoban High School senior and St. Hilary graduate recently received the Rose Juriga Youth Justice Award at the Catholic Commission of Summit County's Bishop Cosgrove Dinner. According to Kelsey Sees, Hoban's campus minister, Michael was nominated for the award because his "solid understanding of social justice was above and beyond his years. He asks deep questions and connects understanding of what it means to be socially just and living it out in his life."

Michael's involvement in social justice issues is rooted in his family life and has continued in high school. From seventh to ninth grade he volunteered at the Peter Maurin Center with his family. When he entered Hoban Michael became part of the school's Justice Akron Ministry (JAM), a summer activity which takes students to different locations in the area for service projects for a three or



Michael English

four-day stint. Each day begins with prayer and ends with a discussion about their experiences students followed by a prayer service or mass. Last summer, Michael mentored a group of Hoban freshman through their JAM experience.

Support for Ugandan children

United for Uganda is another social justice ministry for Michael. Hoban students like Michael engage in fundraising activities which make it possible for Ugandan children to receive an education. To raise funds, students sell school sports jerseys and hold bake sales.

Through Project Hope Michael and fellow Hoban students engage directly with the homeless, bringing

them meals and conversation where they live—under bridges, near railroad tracks, in deep wooded areas, outside South Street Ministries. "A lot of people know that we are coming. One of the biggest things is to interact with the other people, and make them feel human. Often times when the poor are holding signs, people don't really look at them on the side of the road and make eye contact. This dehumanizes them. Our job is to make them feel human, to make them feel welcome," he said.

'Be human'

This has had a profound impact on Michael. "Before, I had this preconceived notion that the homeless were lazy or alcoholics. But I learned that everyone has their own story. They may lack education or suffer from mental illness, but they are our brothers and sisters in Christ." Through his experiences, Michael has learned to have an open mind and an open heart—to be nonjudgmental. "In the words of my old campus minister—to 'be human,'" he added.

His most impactful experience came during his second time out with Project Hope. "I tried to put myself in an uncomfortable position so I'd get the most out of it." Instead of joining a group of his peers already engaged in conversation, Michael approached one of the homeless on his own. "One of the first I met was Jimmy. He had long gray hair.

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He used to be a meth addict, but he's been sober three or four years. I have since seen him walking through Akron, and I'll say hi to him. He recognized me from the Peter Maurin Center."

Michael and Jimmy bonded over a common interest—playing guitar. "He can't play anymore, but he's outgoing and funny—not what you'd expect. He's a lot of fun to talk to."

A name means an identity

For Michael, learning Jimmy's name was important. "Getting a name was helpful—it marks him as human. He's not the homeless guy—he's Jimmy. It gives him an identity.

"I see Jesus through people like Jimmy. It reminds me of the image that depicts Jesus standing in the bread line with the poor," he added.

At this point, Michael says he isn't sure which college he'll attend or the major he'll pursue, he does know that he'll continue his involvement in social justice ministry. "I would like to do a mission trip either in my college years or shortly thereafter."

In times of uncertainty, Michael draws comfort from his favorite Scripture verse from Jeremiah 29:11. "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans to prosper you, not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." "I find it the most comforting. As I get ready for college and don't know what I'll major in, at least someone knows what's going on!"

LIFE LESSONS IN SOCIAL JUSTICE

Here are some of Michael's most important take-aways from his experiences in social justice:

- 1** Do not be judgmental. Don't jump to conclusions; acknowledge others as human beings.
- 2** Volunteering opens your eyes to the poor in our midst.
- 3** Be human; poor or not, we all have potential and God-given rights.
- 4** Be grateful for what you have—be thankful and count your blessings.

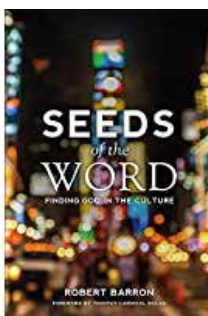
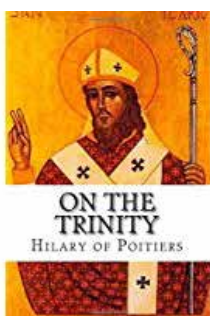
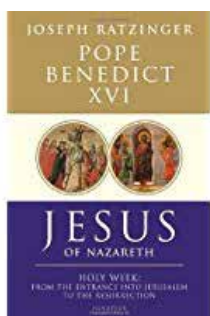


Jesus of the Breadlines, woodcut by Erich Eichenberg, 1951.

Spiritual reading opens door to transformation

By Dan Samide, Seminarian Intern

Given that the name of this parish newsletter is “Transformed,” I wanted to highlight one way I have been personally transformed through the years, a method that does not get enough attention, in my opinion—reading. I imagine that all of us have heard a priest, religion teacher, or catechist talk about the great value in reading the Bible regularly, but our religious reading advice often ends there. While reading the Bible is vital (as St. Jerome said, “ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ”), we have an incredible array of books in the Christian tradition that can inform, entertain, challenge, and transform us.



I have heard it said that everything we learn about God is a new reason to love God. I think that this is very true, and gets to the heart of the importance of good Catholic reading. Our learning and reading does not seek knowledge for its own sake, but seeks knowledge so that it might transform us and our relationship with God. There are many different paths to knowing and loving God, so there are many different genres of reading materials for us to draw from—there is always something for everyone in our beautifully diverse, yet always united, Church.

The Catholic Church is blessed with the example and witness of the saints. Their lives serve as models for us to emulate, and many of them have left writings for our benefit. Some offer great theological reflections, like our patron St. Hilary whose treatise *On the Trinity* is still in print and readily available to this day. Others give practical guidance and advice, like St. Francis de Sales in his classic work, *Introduction to the Devout Life*. Some of the most beloved saintly works are the autobiographies. Most saints did not write about their own lives, but the easy to read narrative style of a biography combined with the holiness and intellect of the authors

have made those autobiographies we do have, like St. Augustine's *Confessions* and St. Therese's *Story of a Soul*, absolute treasures.

Modern authors have given us an overwhelming quantity of excellent Catholic material. We are blessed to live in an era with resources on just about every topic imaginable. Scott Hahn's *The Lamb's Supper* brings the Mass to life in a whole new way. Pope Benedict XVI's *Jesus of Nazareth* series offers insight and analysis on Jesus using the Gospels and historical information. Bishop

Robert Barron's *Seeds of the Word* shows the many ways God shines through mainstream culture. If there is a part of our faith that is confusing or interesting to you, there is a high quality resource available about that very topic to help you to a better understanding.

One of my favorite genres is Christian fiction. I have found that the imagery and symbolism employed in works of fiction often allow the author to express truths and realities that would have otherwise been difficult to articulate. My favorite author is C.S. Lewis – he is probably most famous for his series set in Narnia, but he wrote many other great works of fiction. The *Pilgrim's Regress* is based on his own conversion from atheism to Christianity. *Screwtape Letters* offers a glimpse at how demonic beings think and behave. The *Great Divorce* considers what heaven and hell (as well as the souls that dwell in each) might look like. *Till We Have Faces* is a retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche – it is Lewis' most complicated and most masterful work. Lewis even dabbled in science fiction with his space trilogy, which begins with *Out of the Silent Planet*. Works of fiction like these can be fun and relaxing while still engaging our faith and challenging us to think about things in a new way.

Lent can feel like a time of deprivation (and in a certain sense, it is), but above all it is meant to be a time of transformation. Something as simple as taking some time with a good book could prove to be one of the most transformational decisions you could make this Lent. God bless, and happy reading!



Melissa Crooks and Kathleen Gibson at the Feast of St. Hilary.

Sisters in Christ, Sisters of the heart

Being new in a parish or school can have its challenges. Just ask Melissa Crooks and her son Will or Kathleen Gibson and her son Logan. Both families were new to St. Hilary last year when Debbie Sinopoli, Director of Marketing and Admissions entered the picture.

“When a new student enters St. Hilary, I ask his or her teacher to match him or her with a ‘buddy’ in the class, and I match the students’ parents with a volunteer parent mentor. I suggested to Logan’s teacher, Mrs. Monea, that Will Crooks, who was new to the class at the start of the school year and had a similar personality to Logan’s, would be the perfect match,” said Debbie.

The right choice

Although St. Hilary is 45 minutes away from their home in Medina, Melissa and husband Mark chose the school for their son Will, who would enter first grade the next year. Attending open house during Catholic Schools Week made the difference for them. “We

met Fr. Steve, Mrs. Arnone, and Mrs. Monea, and we were so impressed,” said Melissa.

Kathleen and her husband Daryl came to the area after a job transfer from Tennessee and intended to send their son to Copley-Fairlawn Schools, but found no room in first grade. Having experienced a blue ribbon school before, Kathleen was attracted to St. Hilary. “All roads led to St. Hilary,” she said.

“It was like we’d known each other all our lives.”

As a result of Debbie’s efforts, Kathleen and Melissa became fast friends. They first talked in the parking lot and later in the front seat of Kathleen’s car that often overflowed with the stuff of life. However, there was always room for Melissa. “It was like we’d known each other all our

lives,” said Kathleen. They marveled at all they had in common with sons in the same grade and similarities in their own personalities.

Perfect match

What each craved was a true friend. Of Kathleen, Melissa said, “She’s just so real. I’m a very transparent person. Finally, here is someone I could be real with—it is so comforting. With Kathleen and her family, I don’t feel pressured to be anyone other than myself.”

Due to his position at Marathon, Daryl and his wife Kathleen have moved several times during their marriage. While living in Tennessee, Kathleen was diagnosed with breast cancer. In her soft drawl and tears in her eyes, Kathleen recounted an incident in which she found out that a neighbor she thought was her friend was actually not her friend. Still hurting from rejection at a time when she most needed support, Kathleen yearned for a friend as well and was willing to take that risk when she met Melissa Crooks.

Seeing the work of God

“When we started at St. Hilary at the end of October, I met Melissa that first day, and we instantly hit it off,” Kathleen related. “I was really nervous at first thinking of the friendship I had with the lady in Tennessee. But I couldn’t help myself!

“Melissa affirmed my belief in making new friends and I know God put her into my life for that reason. God had a hand in every single aspect of our move from Tennessee to Ohio. Not that He doesn’t always, but this time it was in-your-face obvious,” said Kathleen.

Faith takes root

While her friendship with Kathleen was taking root, so was Melissa’s faith. Previously divorced, Melissa had felt rejected by the Catholic Church, but things changed when Will was in first grade. “When Will started at St. Hilary, I did religion homework with

him and attended mass on Fridays. I had never made my First Communion or had been confirmed.

"I became more and more intrigued as Will's education and religion grew. I did the church tour with Fr. Steve and learned so much. I wanted to know the why for everything," Melissa explained.

The first grade experience led to second grade and pretty soon Melissa was faced with a dilemma. Will could not receive his First Communion with his class unless he was baptized. And Melissa realized she wanted to join the Church as well. "What better way to make my First Communion than along with my son's journey through this," she said. And arrangements were made for Will to be baptized.

This yearning led Melissa to RCIA and the need for a sponsor. Unsure if her friend would be interested or willing, Melissa broached the subject while they sat in Kathleen's car together. "Would you be my sponsor—would you be it?" Melissa asked tentatively. "I started to cry," said Kathleen. Melissa added, "I know it's short

notice, but the meeting is tonight, but if you could come next week—." "I am so stoked to be your sponsor!" Kathleen recalled.

RCIA fosters friendship

RCIA has been a meaningful experience for them both. "I started because I wanted to go through this process for me. When Kathleen became my sponsor, I loved knowing I would see her on Wednesdays. It was uninterrupted fun.

"I work a very stressful job in sales—medical devices. It is the most relaxing thing for me to come for two hours to be there with all these people—and there are all these second grade moms." Two of the candidates and their sponsors are mothers of second grade students at St. Hilary. "It's been comforting to realize that there are other mothers like us are," said Melissa.

In the right place, right time

"I have met so many people," she added. "It has brought our families together. We've had play dates and even dog experiences.

"It has been comforting because I'm in the right place at the right time. Feeling like you're at the right place at the right time doesn't happen very often. RCIA has been one of the best experiences of my life," Melissa said.

As for Kathleen, "This has been completely eye-opening! I was thinking that I would go and be supportive." Instead she found RCIA surprising. "After listening to one of the witnesses, I said to myself, 'I can be part of this? I want that, I want that!'"

RCIA has filled Kathleen's need to be spiritually fed. "I am excited about my faith again. My church down in Tennessee was ridiculous. The priest spoke in a monotone. It was depressing. I went to Christmas mass there and not one person was singing. There were maybe ten people there; it was nothing special." Now Kathleen and her family attend the 5:30 mass on Sunday, which is far more lively than her experiences in Tennessee.

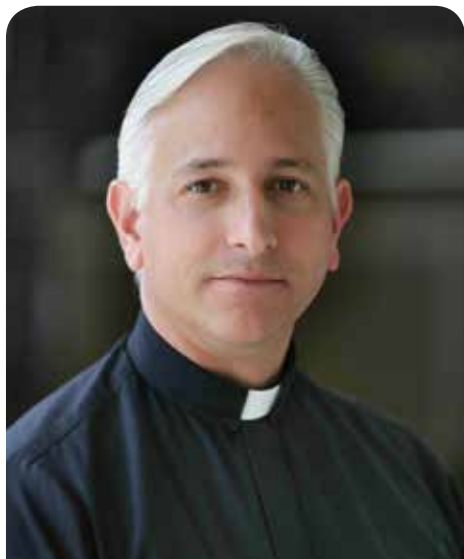
Inspiration and support

RCIA has also impacted their friendship. "Kathleen is a very honest and family oriented woman. She inspires me to be a better mom, friend and person every day," said Melissa. "Kathleen can find hope in what I might feel is a hopeless situation. Kathleen is determined and goal oriented individual and provides me with endless spiritual support—something and someone I have been looking for for some time."

Of Melissa, Kathleen said, "I see Jesus in her all the time in the way she cares for her son, the way she cares for her animals, the way she cares for me. And I see it every Wednesday at RCIA. She is so completely committed to this program and the teachings within. It has inspired me to be a better Catholic, watching her go down this path. This has definitely been an honor and privilege to do this with her, my heart sister."



From left, Logan and Marylin Gibson with Will Crooks.



By Fr. Steve Brunovsky

Q What is the significance of ashes and what do ashes have to do with repentance?

A Ashes are an ancient sign of repentance. They appear in the Old and New Testament as a sign of repentance—an outward symbol that one is asking for forgiveness. See the story of Jonah, who travels to Nineveh to call for a time of repentance. When he does, we are told that the king and all the citizens put on sack cloth and ashes as a sign of repentance. For Christians, ashes are also a sign of our mortality; hence, the prayer we used to say when receiving ashes: “Remember man that you are dust and unto dust you shall return!” We now say, “Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel!” So the emphasis now is on conversion of life, and repentance, as we begin the Lenten season.

Q What is the purpose of fasting?

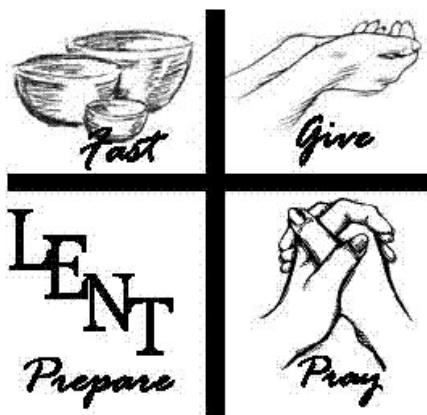
A Fasting is also an ancient sign of repentance, and even more a sign of preparation for something greater to come. The prophets fasted prior to starting their prophetic ministry, and Jesus fasted for 40 days in the desert prior to beginning his public ministry. The idea of fasting is to empty oneself so as to be filled with God.

All about ashes, other aspects of Lent revealed



Q Why is fasting associated with food?

A The feeling of being hungry, the lightness of inner space speaks of a desire to be filled with grace, with God’s presence. Fasting prepares us for Easter, when we celebrate the new life of Christ.



Q How do you choose something from which to fast? What is the best way to fast?

A We can also fast from other things besides food! I encourage people to fast from negativity, criticism, crabbiness, or any other bad habit that might affect the good quality of their relationships with others. One might also decide to fast from electronic media, the phone, computer, internet, so as to restore balance in life if they are feeling that those activities are taking time from relationships with others or from having time for prayer.

Q Why are prayer, fasting and almsgiving together associated with Lent?

A Prayer, fasting and almsgiving are the trio of Lenten practice as they are also rooted in the Jewish faith practice that Jesus would have been familiar with. They are practices that attune us to God (prayer and fasting) and to others (almsgiving), especially those who are in need. All three help us to get out of ourselves and our personal needs, and stretch us to be attuned to the other, whether that other is God or another person.

Q What are your recommendations for growing one’s faith during Lent?

A I think these traditional practices are ideal for growing one’s faith in the Lenten Season. They are a gift of the Church to help us to go deeper in our relationship with the Lord, entering the desert with him, so that at the end of the 40 days we can really be experiencing some type of new life—the new life of deeper prayer, the new life of greater prayer, the new life of a better relationship with our spouse or children, the new life of a new habit that leads to a healthier and holier lifestyle!

To end, may I point out that psychologists have found that it takes about 40 days of consistent practice to make a new habit a permanent part of someone’s life. Perhaps that is why the ancients choose the 40 day period as the time frame for penitential practice. It is just enough time to let new life begin to blossom!

Lenten Series to feature conversations about racism

St. Hilary's 2017 Lenten Series is *Building Bridges . . . Conversations on Race*, a continuation of last year's series, *But I'm not a Racist! Racial Realities in the USA*. It features four sessions, each of which will focus on an aspect of race. The objective of each evening is to engage, educate and empower participants on racial issues that are present in our country today.

The series is a combined effort of St. Hilary Parish, Faith Lutheran Church, New Hope Baptist Church and Temple Israel, and will include dinner, prayer, and dialogue between participants on each topic. Each Wednesday evening event includes:

6-6:30 Gathering and sign-in

6:30-7:15 Shared meal

7:15-7:45 Prayer

7:45-9 Presentation and table sharing

The series features:

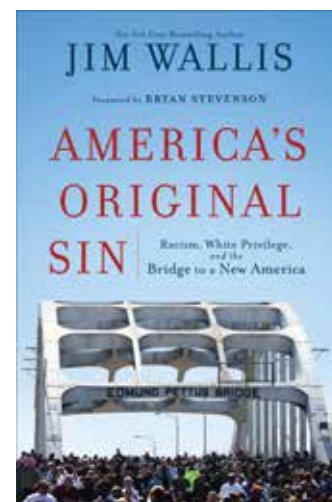
Session 1: *Conversations on Racism and Policing* on March 8 at St Hilary.

Session 2: *Conversations on Racism and the Criminal Justice System* on March 22 at New Hope Baptist Church, 1706 S. Hawkins Ave.

Session 3: *Conversations on Racism and Voting Rights* on March 29 at Faith Lutheran Church, 2726 W. Market St.

Session 4: *Conversations on Race, Local Issues, and Where do we go from Here?* On April 5 at St. Hilary.

Mary Lou Grossmann, member of the Lenten Series planning team explained, "It is our hope that our collaboration with New Hope Baptist Church will allow for more diverse participation as we discuss the reality of growing up black in America."



Participants are strongly urged to read the book, *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege and the Bridge to a New America* by Jim Wallis. Mary Lou said that many of the ideas discussed throughout the series will be based on this book. A limited quantity of these will be available for sale in the parish office, or they can be purchased from Amazon.

Advance registration is required. Reserve your spot through sthilaryparish.org/lenten-series or call the parish office at (330) 867-1055.

Events, activities to help grow your faith this Lent

While not a holy day of obligation, **Ash Wednesday** is a great way to start Lent on March 1, 7 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; prayer service with ashes at 12:10 p.m.

Learn more about your faith with a study of Bishop Robert Barron's ***The Mystery of God and Why He Matters***. The study, led by Randy Malick, Director of Adult Faith Formation, explores how Christians should respond to the "New Atheism" of people like Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris who vigorously attack belief in God as irrational, or even worse, dangerous. This thinking has attracted millions of young people thanks to best selling books such as the *God Delusion* and *God is Not Great*. It meets Thursday mornings March 2-April 6 from 9:15 to 11:15 a.m. in the Spiritual Center. Contact rmalick@sthilarychurch.org by Feb. 6 to register. Cost is \$25.

Attend the **Faith Alive Retreat** with Fr. Norm Douglas, at St. Hilary beginning Friday evening and continuing

Saturday, March 3-4. Call the parish office to register at (330) 867-1055.

Experience a traditional Lenten devotion, **Stations of the Cross**, each Friday at 7 p.m. in church.

Preparation for Easter is not complete without the Sacrament of Penance. The **Diocesan Evening of Reconciliation** on Wednesday March 15 offers private confessions at all parishes from 5 to 8 p.m.

Enrich your spirituality with Sacred Music at the **Palm Sunday Concert**, April 9 at 7 p.m. in church. The St. Hilary choir, St. Cecilia Singers and Hand Bell choir will present an evening of music and prayer. The choruses will present John Rutter's Requiem with Elizabeth Rickel, soprano soloist, accompanied by strings and wood winds. This concert is a St. Hilary tradition which prepares our hearts for the Triduum.

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Save the Date!
Knights of Columbus
Lenten Fish Bakes

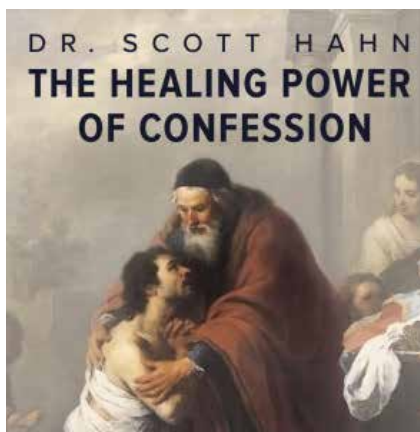
Fridays, March 10 & April 7
5:00-8:00 pm
School Multi-Purpose Room

Audio on formed.org offers Healing Power of Confession

Looking for a way to enrich your faith and deepen your understanding of the sacraments? Try formed.org. With Lent upon us and the need for repentance, you can find a fresh perspective on the topic through Scott Hahn's audio presentation, *The Healing Power of Confession* available on formed.org. Hahn's purpose is clear: to make the listener aware of the powerful and merciful love of God that one finds in confession.

Hahn, a professor of biblical theology at Franciscan University of Steubenville and former Presbyterian minister, explores the Sacrament in light of the Scriptures and his own personal experiences with healthy doses of humor and grace.

To access *The Healing Power of Confession* and other materials on formed.org, use the parish code 7RMY4V then set up your own login with your email and a password. Resources are grouped by type of media: programs, books, movies, and audio.



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We welcome your feedback!
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