

OCTOBER 2010

# THE TWIN SPIRES

VOLUME 13 No. 4

CATHEDRAL OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST, SAVANNAH GA



**Celebrate!**

**PRIESTHOOD SUNDAY**  
October 31, 2010

## **Priesthood Sunday A Chance to Say Thank You**

By Peter Paolucci

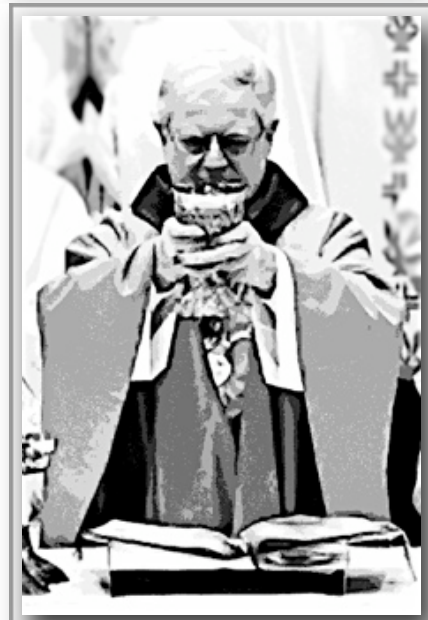
What would it be like if there were no priests? We are all aware of the shortage of priests caused by the shrinking numbers of vocations compounded by the aging of existing priests. However here in the Diocese of Savannah we have fared somewhat better with a significant number of priest ordinations over the past several years. It was only this past year that there were no ordinations to the priesthood, perhaps a sign that we too are not immune to the harsh reality confronting other dioceses across the country.

Over the past several summers in Maine, Barbara and I have seen the shortage of priests first hand. Our summer mission parish is now part of a cluster which includes five year round churches, stretching 52 miles, served by only three priests, who say a total of 9 masses each weekend. Recently one of the priests, who had a heart attack during the summer, died from complications following corrective cardiac surgery. This will place an extraordinary burden on the two remaining priests. It is somewhat better during the summer when, although additional masses are held at two summer chapels, several retired priests ranging in age from 75 to 87 have helped out. If this trend continues,

Communion services will become increasingly more common. As a matter of fact, on the first weekend of a reduced mass schedule, due to an inadvertent error, one of the priests did not show up at the appointed place and time, so 275 people were in church with no priest. A deacon had to step in and lead a Word and Communion Service.

This is one of the primary reasons that we became involved in Serra. As Serrans we are all dedicated to promoting and affirming vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Sunday, October 31, 2010, is Priesthood Sunday, a special day set aside to honor the priesthood in the United States. It is a day to reflect upon and affirm the central role of the priesthood in the life of the Church. Catholic parishes throughout the United States will have the opportunity to show support for their priests with prayer, celebration and dialogue.



Continued→

In the wake of the clergy sex abuse scandal, there has been concern that the image of all priests has been tainted by the actions of a few. Priesthood Sunday sends a message to all that the sins of a few do not reflect on the innocent majority, and that the parish priest, as the instrument of Christ's ministry on earth, is loved and respected by those in the parish community.

Priesthood Sunday was established in 2003 to provide a way for Catholic communities to express appreciation for the devoted priests who serve them so faithfully despite recent negative attention in the media. Such a celebration is increasingly relevant in light of the declining number of priests in the U.S. Only about 4,000 of the 19,000 parishes in this country currently have more than one priest. Many priests serve two or more parishes by themselves.

"Affirming and supporting our priests are some of the most important things that we can do as Serrans," says Gary Davis, past president of the USA Council of Serra International. "Our priests give of themselves every day in so

many different ways. It is an honor to recognize them in a manner in which entire parishes may join together in an outpouring of appreciation," said Davis.

For the past several years, the Serra Club has promoted the "*Say Thank You to Our Priests*" project throughout the Savannah Deanery. Boxes will be placed in the vestibules of all churches with special note cards provided by The Serra Club of Savannah for parishioners to write expressions of appreciation and support to their priests. Please take a moment to say thank you to these men who have generously and faithfully committed their lives to serve the Lord and the people of God.

Here at the Cathedral we will again hold our Priest Appreciation Supper on Wednesday October 27, 2010 in the Parish Hall at 6:30 PM. Please take this opportunity and join your fellow parishioners to make your gratitude personally known to our priests by attending the supper and assuring them of your loving care and gratitude for their presence in our lives.

## Save the Date

### CATHEDRAL HERITAGE BALL

NOVEMBER 20, 2010

It is amazing to realize that this is the 10<sup>th</sup> year for The Cathedral Heritage Ball. The Ball Committee has spent many hours planning this Anniversary Gala which is going to be held on Saturday, November 20, 2010 at the Hilton Savannah DeSoto Hotel. Bishop J. Kevin Boland is serving as Honorary Chair for this 10<sup>th</sup> year celebration. The evening will begin at 6:30 with cocktails and an opportunity to browse through our many Silent Auction items which are already coming in and are as awesome as in past years.

We are pleased that many of the popular items from previous years are being donated again this year, as well as some surprising new items. Travel packages, fine art, wine, and tickets to area events are just a few of the items that will be available for bidding. Because they were such a popular addition to last year's event, our Deanery CCW groups have volunteered to provide customized baskets of gifts. Following the Silent Auction, we will enjoy a delicious dinner and a Live Auction. After dinner, entertainment and the Live Auction, dancing until midnight to the music of the Swing-time Orchestra will follow. Invitations will be mailed within the coming weeks. Individual tickets for the Ball will be \$125 and tables of 10 can be reserved. Special

hotels rooms are being offered, so book early.

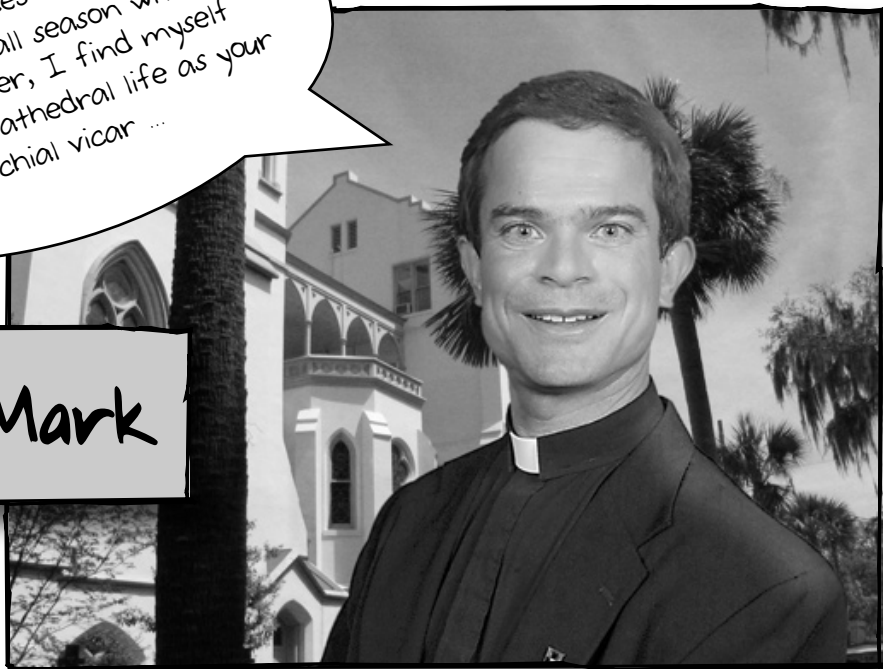
The Cathedral Heritage Ball provides funding for the Cathedral Endowment Fund. The sole purpose of the Cathedral Endowment Fund is "to preserve the architectural soundness, integrity and beauty of the Cathedral, as a symbol of our faith, for future generations." The Cathedral is a piece of history that draws visitors from near and far to our community.

Without the support of our many loyal supporters as sponsors, patrons and advertisers in our program book, our Ball would not be as successful. Many of our supporters throughout the past years have already committed to contribute this year. We are pleased this year to add the Savannah Morning News as a sponsor. Our committees for sponsors, ads, and auctions are working hard to reach our goals for this year.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, November 20, 2010. Please also consider what you can do to support this important annual event. Questions about the affair, donations or sponsorships may be directed to the 2010 Cathedral Heritage Ball Chairperson, Judy Carter Farabaugh at [Carter01@comcast.net](mailto:Carter01@comcast.net) or by calling the Cathedral Parish Office at 912-233-4709.

As summer fades away and we welcome the fall season with its cooler weather, I find myself settling into Cathedral life as your parochial vicar ...

## Meet Fr. Mark



... Monsignor O'Neill and Father Firmin have warmly welcomed me, as have our parishioners. Previous diocesan meetings and ordinations, plus a 2002 summer assignment at St. James, have provided me with some familiarity of Savannah. Now I find myself living in the historic district, gratefully enjoying the people of our parish community and the many visitors who make the Cathedral part of their vacation. Speaking of visitors, Cathedral living equates to living in a tourist attraction. I am beginning to sense how the people living in downtown Charleston or a place like Lourdes, France, must feel.

Allow me to sketch a bit of my background. My parents met and married in Wyoming, my mother's native place and my father's college state, south of his native Montana. Following marriage, they moved eastward according to my father's academic pursuits in mathematics. They first stopped in Rolla, Missouri, where I arrived on the scene in 1965, bracketed by my older brother Joe and a younger brother who died at childbirth. Before I was old enough to remember, we moved via a summer stint in Madison, Wisconsin, to Blacksburg, Virginia. Then along came my younger brother Andrew and sister Clare. The academic situation and burgeoning family pushed my father toward full-time employment and a move to rural central Virginia where my youngest sister, Yvonne was born.

Following six years moving about Wyoming, my parents in 1980 moved to Aiken South Carolina, to join the Alleluia Community, headquartered in Augusta. At the time I was 15 years old. The Holy Spirit eventually warmed my heart to life in this multi-denominational charismatic community. After graduation from the Alleluia Community School in 1983 (my third high school), I attended University of South Carolina-Aiken

and graduated from Clemson University in 1987 with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. I took full-time employment at the Savannah River Plant (now Site). If you ever need radioactive material shipping packaging help, call. Soon thereafter, I formally joined the Alleluia Community and everything remained on autopilot until the late 1990s when God's merciful intervention culminated in my 1999 departure from home and family to attend Saint Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. I continued recreational bicycle riding and occasional backpacking trips, took advantage of my proximity to many historical and scenic venues in Southwest Pennsylvanian, and especially came to like Pittsburgh. The country boy had become somewhat of a city boy, and by osmosis a Steelers fan.

After being ordained a transitional deacon, I spent the summer of 2004 serving with Father Robert Girardeau in Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Columbus. I am grateful to Father Robert for inspiring me to look forward to priestly ministry. Upon ordination in 2005, I served three years with Father Gerry Schreck at Saint Anne Church in Columbus. What a terrific first assignment! Then went to Augusta, for two years at St. Mary on the Hill Church with Father Jerry Ragan and company. Two wonderful years with family and a new parish family culminated in a surprise move to Savannah as assistant vocation director and earning my keep as your parochial vicar.

I look forward to serving the people of the Cathedral Parish and enjoying this spectacular city. And for all this, I am grateful to God!

Sincerely in Christ,  
Father Mark Van Alstine

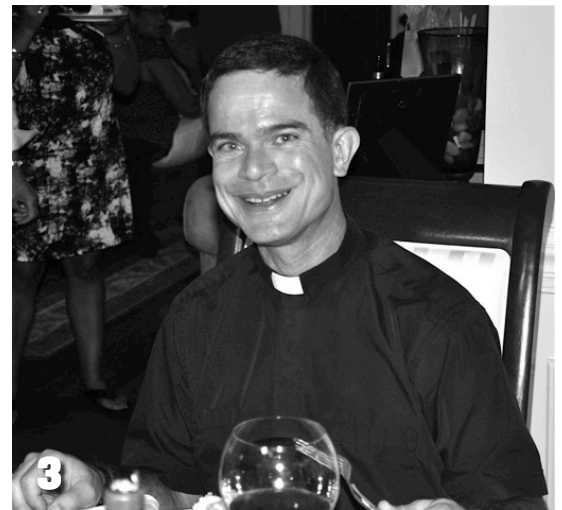
## Parish Council begins the Year

Your new Parish Council began its work at the end of September. The council is a representative body of the people of God selected from the parish community that seeks to assess the spiritual and temporal needs of the parish and encourage participation of all parishioners in the life of our community of faith. Elected members shall serve two-year terms and may be elected to serve two consecutive terms but then must wait at least one year before standing for election again. There are several non-voting members who represent various parish organizations and activities as follows:

CHAIRMAN	Jean M. Dorsinville
PROPERTY	Gerald Cyr
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	Gretchen Reese
CHRISTIAN SERVICE	Deborah Wade
WORSHIP	Peter Paolucci
PARISH LIFE	Sharon Wallace
FINANCE	Roger Haneline
RECTOR	Msgr. William O'Neill
PAROCHIAL VICAR	Fr. Van Alstine
Non Voting Representatives	
CCW	Carol Letcher
PRO-LIFE	Will Cubbedge
HERITAGE BALL	Judy Farabaugh
PASTORAL ASSISTANT	Br Robert Sokolowski

The council year kicked off with an informal gathering at the lovely home of Chairman Jean M, Dorsinville and his wife Leslie. This was a good opportunity for the newer members to get acquainted before they began their work on the council. Everybody said Leslie fed them well. and a good time was had by all.

**1.** L to R Sharon Wallace, JoAnn Wallace, Roger Haneline, Rita Haneline **2.** "Council" cake  
**3.** Fr. Mark Van Alstine enjoyed meeting everyone  
**4.** Hostess & Host, Leslie and Jean M. Dorsinville  
**5.** Gretchen Reese, John Reese Deborah Wade, Bill Wade





# THE RCIA PROCESS

**By Joan Schaaf**

Every Easter new Catholics come into the Church and Cathedral parishioners encourage and pray with these persons throughout the months of evangelization either as their sponsors or their neighbors at Mass. These persons are received into the Faith through the RCIA, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. The Process usually commences in September on a date set by the Rector and culminates at the Easter Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday. According to Reverend William A. Bauman, the RCIA Process “is a structure, an integral and essential part of a parish’s life”. When welcoming their new members, something awakens within the parishioners themselves. When cordially greeting the new persons, the parishioners ask themselves what they themselves already are.

There are four types of people who participate in the RCIA Process. The unbaptized person will complete his Initiation into the Church by receiving the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist at the Easter Vigil Mass. The person baptized into another Christian Church (whose baptism is recognized by the Catholic Church) will complete his Initiation into the Church by making a Profession of Faith and receiving the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Eucharist at the Easter Vigil (Penance is prior to that Mass). The third type of person is the Catholic who just needs to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in order to complete his Initiation into the Church. Lastly, there are the Catholics who just want more information. The RCIA Team is comprised of RCIA Coordinator, catechists, and priests. In the Cathedral Parish RCIA classes traditionally meet on Tuesday evenings from 7:30–8:30 in the Rectory Meeting Room.

There are four distinct stages in the RCIA.

**1. PRE-CATECHUMENATE BEGINS IN SEPTEMBER:** This is a period of inquiry and no commitment is expected at this point. The topics will cover an overview of Church History, Old and New Testament, The Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, the

Church (the People of God), and Ecumenism. The three classes on the Blessed Trinity study God the Father as Creator, God the Son as Redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier.

**2. CATECHUMENATE BEGINS IN NOVEMBER AT THE RITE OF ACCEPTANCE ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT:** This is a period of catechesis on the Introduction to the Seven Sacraments, the Communion of Saints, the Mother of Jesus, the Rosary, Life After Death, and Sacramentals. After Christmas catechesis on the Seven Sacraments commences and concludes.

**3. PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT BEGINS IN FEBRUARY OR MARCH AT THE RITE OF ELECTION ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT:** A period of inner renewal, turning away from sin, and conversion. Catechesis centers on the Ten Commandments, Prayer, Church Government, Catholic Customs/Practices/Symbols, and a Tour of the Cathedral. The Rehearsal for the Easter Vigil Mass also takes place at this time.

**4. MYSTAGOGY OR POSTBAPTISMAL PERIOD BEGINS AFTER THE EASTER VIGIL MASS UNTIL PENTECOST ON MAY 31<sup>st</sup>.** Classes are finished but the group usually wants to meet once more to discuss the events which occurred during their acceptance into the Church. That is the meaning of Mystagogy for them. The group wants to break open the “mysteries” of the Easter Vigil Mass and discuss them over & over. These persons are deepening their awareness of what it means to be Catholic and a Disciple of Christ.

In the RCIA Process the Sponsor is a most important person sharing the seven month long journey with the one seeking to be Catholic. So, if anyone asks you to be a Sponsor, just say “Yes”! What thrilled me the most, though, was having my own daughter-in-law and one of my dearest friends come into the Church through our Cathedral RCIA. I had the immense joy of teaching these two ladies.



## CATHOLICS COME HOME

The Catholics Come Home initiative will launch in our diocese during Advent 2010. The program is aimed at inviting our missing brothers and sisters to return to the Church. The initiative will consist of inspiring and compassionate TV commercials and other media messages, that will be broadcast locally, in order to inspire, educate and evangelize inactive Catholics and others, and invite them to live a deeper faith in Jesus Christ.

To prepare parishes to welcome back inactive Catholics, a series of workshops is being held for the "Ministers of First Impressions" around the diocese, namely people in a parish whom a returning Catholic is likely to encounter first-- priests, deacons, parish secretaries, ushers, greeters, faith formation staff, Parish Council members, nursery volunteers, etc.

Commercials played frequently on broadcast networks throughout the diocese will direct Catholics who are no longer practicing, as well as others, to a Web site, which will put them in touch with nearby Catholic parishes. The commercials will run from December 18 through the end of January. The promotional spots detail the good works of the Catholic Church throughout history. They also offer real-life testimonials of non-practicing Catholics explaining what turned them away and what drew them back. Besides reaching "fallen away" Catholics, Catholics Come Home has also been effective in connecting with people who are interested in the Catholic faith and in encouraging practicing Catholics to become more grounded in the faith.

Consistent with the Advent season, a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas, you should get ready for the launch of the Catholics Come Home campaign and be prepared to play your role in building our family of faith. For more information on this campaign, please visit the national website at [www.catholicscomehome.org](http://www.catholicscomehome.org).



## 5<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL RUMMAGE SALE

By Mary Downs

The Cathedral Council of Catholic Women held its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Rummage Sale at the Parish Center on Saturday, September 11, 2010. It was a huge success. In fact, the best year ever. Many thanks to Cathedral parishioners for their donations and all the hard working CCW members. The event was well attended by the public. Everyone walked away with a treasure and smile on their face.

The CCW is a very active group at the Cathedral. Projects

last year included contribution to the Cathedral for refurbishing the Rectory TV Room, monthly sandwiches for the Social Apostolate, support of Casa De Angeles Orphanage, Heritage Ball Patron and Basket for the silent auction, Ronald McDonald House dinner for guests, Reception for two seminarians and their families, St. Mary's Home reception, as well as contributions to the Christian Service Committee for families in need, Special Olympics at Coastal Georgia Academy, Mission Trip to South America for one of our college students, and much more.

Almost \$4,000 was raised from this year's Rummage Sale which will be put to good use for a special project at the Cathedral Rectory and also fund on-going projects.

The CCW meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 6:00 p.m., at the Parish Center. Anyone interested in joining are more than welcome. For more information, you may contact the CCW President at (912) 272-0205.



# What I Did on My Summer Vacation

(What Msgr. O'Neill *Really* Does in Ireland)  
By Peter Paolucci



Msgr O parked outside the local pub and church after delivering a bulldozer

When we were children returning to school in the fall, one of the familiar assignments was always “What did you do on your summer vacation?”

I posed that question to Monsignor O’Neill recently and he regaled me with a flood of wonderful stories about his summer vacation in Ireland.

When he returns to Ireland, he notices that it is becoming increasing different from the one he left more than 43 years ago to come to America and serve in the mission Diocese of Savannah. Back then, America was a very exciting place to him. The sixties was the post Kennedy era but the memories of Camelot were still fresh. The Space Program was just beginning and the race to the moon was on. The cars were big and powerful back then, prompting Monsignor O’Neill to aspire to drive a Lincoln Continental someday. Things have certainly changed here.



Msgr O at the Bishop Barry homestead

When he goes back to Ireland on vacation now, he notices many differences too. It is important to him to reconnect with the things he used to do while growing up. To be sure, he visits family, former classmates and friends, and is in fact expected to call when he is at home. Growing up in Tipperary, he knew everyone within a 10-mile radius of his home, but things are not the same. New people are moving in, the area is becoming more multi-cultural and they don’t mix much with the locals.

His family has a farm dating back to the early 1800s but all that has changed too. Since his brother had a heart attack and retired, they do not operate it any more and it is now leased out. “To keep connected to my roots, sometimes I go over to a neighbor’s farm and help him milk the cows. In addition, I have always been fascinated with farm machinery, so I enjoy operating some heavy equipment while there. The technology has

changed over the years and it takes me a little while to become familiar with the more hi tech controls,” he said. It was reassuring to learn that although he does operate the equipment he doesn’t do any serious work.

His cousins operate O’Neill’s Heavy Haulage based in Limerick, so Monsignor O’Neill helped out by relieving the regular drivers. Of course, he took a dry run with an 18-wheeler to familiarize himself with driving on the other side of the winding, hilly local roads as well as to get accustomed to braking and reversing. After one session, he was all set. A trip was scheduled through The Chunnel but was cancelled due to a strike in France so he had to content himself with hauling about 10 loads on local loads around Ireland delivering such diverse cargoes as cattle, bulldozers, backhoes, boilers, and windmill turbine blades. For more information go their website: [www.heavyhaulageireland.net/](http://www.heavyhaulageireland.net/).

He also celebrated Mass, helped out in his childhood parish of St. Nicholas in the little village of Solohead, near Monard Cross just out from Tipperary Town. He also celebrated several rural cemetery



Himself with O’Neill Memorial marker Masses, which are common in Ireland during the summer months. These Masses are celebrated in the surrounding cemeteries so that people can remember their loved ones who are buried there. During this visit, they unveiled a refurbished stone memorial marker In Newchurch Cemetery, about two



Refurbished marker

miles from Tipperary Town that recorded the passing of several generations of the O'Neill family, dating back to the mid 1800s.

While he is away, he stayed in touch with happenings at the Cathedral by way of a daily 4 PM SKYPE call to Jan. "I always feel more relaxed when I know what is happening and that everything is OK. After a while I noticed that things were running just fine on

remote control without me." So much for being indispensable.

One of the highlights of his trip was a visit to the old homestead of Bishop John Barry, the second Bishop of Savannah (1857-1859). Born in 1799 in Coolmain in Olyegate Parish County, Wexford, he began his studies in Ireland and continued them in Charleston where he was ordained in 1825. The gate to the laneway entering the property is still called Barry's gate. The house, which was built over 200 years ago, is long gone having collapsed several years ago. Although the

current farmer bulldozed the remains of the house some time ago, Monsignor found several artifacts in the field, such as part of an egg cup and some bottles and broken dishes, which he brought back to the diocesan archives. The farmer who now owns the property after bulldozing the house into the ground regretted doing so because he concluded that maybe someone in the future might come looking for that house. So in time it came to pass that someone was Monsignor O'Neill who came looking for it!

In his novel *You Can't Go Home Again*, Thomas Wolfe espouses the idea that after you have left your country town for the big city, you can't return to the narrow confines of your previous way of life. Monsignor O'Neill sees it a little differently. "Never forget where you came from because you won't know where you are going," he concluded.



Msgr O with Bishop Denis Brennan of Ferns as part of an egg cup and some bottles and broken dishes, which he brought back to the diocesan archives. The farmer who now owns the property after bulldozing the house into the ground regretted doing so because he concluded that maybe someone in the future might come looking for that house. So in time it came to pass that someone was Monsignor O'Neill who came looking for it!

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