

OUTREACH

SERVING THE PARK SLOPE, BROOKLYN COMMUNITY SINCE 1886

A Parish Family Gathering in Faith Renewed in Spirit Sent Forth to Serve

Quarterly Newsletter ~ Advent & Christmas 2008!



Dear Parishioners,

What a wonderful and joyous moment - the inaugural issue of Saint Francis Xavier's quarterly newsletter, *Outreach!* One of the real joys of being pastor of Saint Francis Xavier is the abundance of activities, ministries and social action programs our parish has - each filled with tremendous enthusiasm and vitality. There is literally something for everyone, especially our programs designed to help those in need.

Unfortunately, sometimes our parishioners are unaware of the many ministries and events that go on in Saint Francis. It's difficult to keep track of so many groups, activities and events. Until now, there was no centralized way to inform people of these activities. Also, there are many people in our neighborhood who do not realize what great resources and treasures can be found at Saint Francis Xavier Parish.

At this point you may be saying, "Isn't that why we have a weekly bulletin and announcements?" Yes, they help, but due to space limitations, they do not contain complete information about what is ongoing here in Saint Francis Xavier. Many of our events and programs simply cannot be covered adequately through our parish bulletin or announcements, and the electronic age in which we live offers one solution to spreading the word amongst our fellow parishioners.

Outreach is designed to act as a focal point for information about SFX on a quarterly basis. It will consist of articles, events and commentary about what we do in our parish. Its purpose will be to highlight various aspects of parish life - get "the word out" about activities to parishioners and to others in our neighborhood. To best accomplish this, in addition to being published "on paper" *Outreach* will also be sent electronically, via email and posted on our parish website: www.StFXBrooklyn.org. This will ensure that all are in touch with our communication initiative.

Our Communications Committee has worked very diligently to assemble this newsletter, with the hope that you will become more aware of the many opportunities Saint Francis Xavier has to offer. Comments are always welcome and encouraged! Please do not hesitate to submit an email to: newsletter@stfxbrooklyn.org. Or speak with me after Mass for more details. The Committee aims to showcase all aspects of the life and substance of our parish. I look forward to the present and future success of *Outreach*, and hope that you will too!

Peace!

Fr. Bill Rueger

A Dedicated All-Star

By John Labate

It takes many special, dedicated people to make up a parish community as vibrant as Saint Francis Xavier. This year marks a milestone for one of our most active and most valued, Sister Helene Conway, who celebrated her Golden Jubilee in October as a member of the Sisters of Saint Joseph. An avid baseball fan, Sister Helene is herself one of Saint Francis Xavier's true star players.

It's hard to imagine the richness of so many parish ministries and activities without Sister Helene's careful guidance and grace. For 41 of her 50 years as a Sister, she has played an active role in our parish, having started and chaired many ministries that continue today, including the Ministry of Consolation and Children's Liturgy of the Word program at 9:30 Mass on Sunday.

Sister Helene also is Chairperson of the Liturgy Committee and Coordinator of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), which is the process for adults seeking full membership in the Church. The RCIA is for non-baptized adults, those baptized in another Christian tradition and for baptized Catholics who never received Confirmation or Eucharist. While Sister Helene enjoys all aspects of her ministry here

Hark! Our Choir Sings

By Chris Napolitan

Saint Augustine is said to have once remarked that "to sing is to pray twice." That thought is apparent at Saint Francis Xavier Church. You only have to attend Mass once to appreciate the dedication and hard work behind its music program. For many parishioners, the sheer variety and complexity of the many vocal and instrumental pieces heard each week are among the great pleasures of our spiritual gatherings. Ursula Kugler, a member of both the 9:30 and 12:15 choirs, has sung at SFX for 25 years. She believes "we've been blessed that every pastor over the years has recognized the importance of the music to our parishioners, and been supportive of it."

At the center of the parish's inspirational music is Dr. Michael Kaminski, who just marked his twentieth year as Director of Music Ministries here. Kaminski holds degrees from Catholic University and Julliard. As a child, he was highly impressed by the "big" liturgies in Our Lady of Angels parish, and always knew he wanted to make that kind of music. He credits the work of his predecessor at Saint Francis



Xavier, John Denaro, for raising the musical expectations of the parish. As a young church organist, Kaminski used that legacy as incentive to strive for the best.

Kaminski is well known on the organ concert circuit, and parishioners are privileged to experience his expertise every Sunday. "I prefer to keep styles consistent at each Mass," he says. "If music styles matter to people, they can choose the Mass where the music nourishes them spiritually and helps them in prayer, and know it will meet their expectations."

Another integral contributor to the music at each liturgy at SFX is Marty Kugler. He began his career

with Saint Francis Xavier in 1986 and is familiar to parishioners as cantor at 5pm Saturday Masses, tenor and soloist in the 9:30am choir, and leader of song, guitarist, and director of the choir at 12:15.

The three Sunday choirs are made possible by the dedication of many volunteers. Over the years, the size and make-up of the membership in each group has fluctuated due to changes in people's lives, but all three have remained consistently important parts of our liturgies.

Each Mass at Saint Francis Xavier has its own unique musical culture. Saturday's 5pm Mass is congregational music, led by a cantor. Sunday morning at 9:30am, the hymns are traditional, and the music usually includes one or more anthems, sung by a highly admired choir. The anthems, sung at Offertory and Communion, are matched to the scripture readings (as are the hymns) and are intended to add prayer and meditative value to the liturgy. This choir also adds their inspirational music to all our special liturgies. At 11am a Spanish-language choir provides hymns that enliven that liturgy and speak of home to many of its attendees.

The final Sunday Mass takes place at 12:15. That choir invites the congregation to join in a more contemporary style of music, and might also perform an anthem. Currently, this choir is very much a "family affair," with Marty and Ursula Kugler (and sometimes one or both of their daughters) two Napolitans, and the entire Maceda family among its members.

The guiding force within all those in our music ministry is to bring the words of Saint Augustine to life - whether by providing an atmosphere where prayer is strengthened for the congregation, or by inspiring those present to raise their own voices in adoration and praise.

An Evening of
Lessons and Carols
Monday, Dec 15th, 7:30pm

Rejoice with our choir as they celebrate the Christmas Season with this annual event @ Saint Francis Xavier Church

at Saint Francis, she says about the RCIA, "It is my most favorite. To have the opportunity to share faith with adults who are looking seriously at who God is for them and what that means in terms of how they live, is a privilege and a blessing which enriches and deepens my own faith."

Sister Helene grew up in Flatbush—just eight blocks from Ebbets Field—where she spent much of her time and developed a love for baseball's Brooklyn Dodgers. "I would go every Saturday for 50 cents with my friends. It was Ladies Day." She was, of course, "crushed" when the Dodgers announced their move to L.A. in 1957, and years later Sister Helene moved her own allegiance to another hometown team, the Mets. Despite their ups and downs, she remains a big Mets fan. For her recent Jubilee a friend gave her a written dedication on the walkway of the newly built Citi Field.

After high school, she entered the Sisters of Saint Joseph, and was given the name Sister Mary Myles. "Myles wasn't the name I chose," says Sister Helene, who laughs when she tells the story that her mother wasn't happy with the name either, since it was the same name as a neighborhood shoe store she didn't care for. Fortunately, Sisters were later given the choice of using their own Baptismal name, which Sister Helene happily chose to do.

Looking back is easy, but Sister Helene has many hopes for the parish's future. The Liturgy Committee



Sister Helene (c) at her Jubilee Celebration, with Sister Charlene (l) and Sister Dolores (r)

is planning its first Family Retreat Day during Lent and Sister Helene, with the Spirituality Committee, is currently starting a parish Book Club. "It's another avenue for people to share ideas," she says.

"What I'd like to see as we move forward is something more for adults and for families in terms of faith formation," she says. "With people working two jobs in some cases, I think too often we let our spiritual lives get pushed to the side. My dream is to help develop stronger adult faith formation programs and, with that, more family centered faith formation opportunities." Then Sister Helene adds with a wry smile: "My other dream is to see the Mets win the World Series."



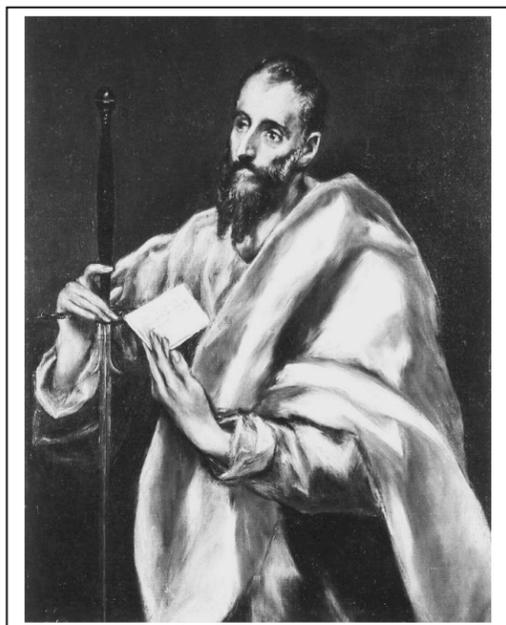
The Year of Saint Paul, 2008 - 2009

By Francis J. Greene, Ph.D.

Over the years, the Church declares special or "Jubilee Years" to provide opportunities to the Faithful for spiritual renewal and refreshment. Most notable are the "Holy Years" which occur every twenty-five years, such as those in 1950, 1975, and, most recently, 2000. Pope John Paul II also opened a Marian Year during his pontificate as an occasion to reflect upon Mary and her essential role in salvation history.

It is unusual to devote such a special year to a saint. However, this is exactly what Pope Benedict XVI has done this year, opening "The Year of Saint Paul" last June 28 on the Saint's feast day. This special year extends until June 29, 2009.

The Holy Father's intention was to call the Church, that is to say, us, to spend time in prayer and reflection on the life of Saint Paul, on the example he has set for us, on the depth of his writings, and on the immeasurable impact he has had on Christianity as we experience and live it today.



Of course this "Holy Year" is also an opportunity, not only for reading, learning, and reflection, but for spiritual reawakening—as an occasion for *grace*.

The model for such a year might best be seen when Jesus, after returning from His (Lenten) fast in the desert, entered the synagogue, opened the scroll and read from the Prophet Isaiah: "He has sent Me to...announce a year of favor from the Lord." (Luke 4 verses 18-19).

This is exactly what the Jubilee Year of Saint Paul can be for each believer—a time of favor, of spiritual growth and grace from the Lord. The opportunities to learn more about Saint Paul and his writings abound in inexpensive publications, many of them recently published for this occasion.

An excellent and inexpensive (\$12.95) text is available from Magnificat Publications: *Praying with Saint Paul*. It offers a one page reflection and prayer for each day of the Jubilee Year. No matter that we are in the middle of the year, just read a page a day until it is done! (Available at www.magnificat.com)

There are special events, films, and lectures throughout the Diocese, often announced in the Tablet. Here at Saint Francis Xavier Parish, we have already had a film on Saint Paul and his life this past October, and will host an evening in Lent of Music related to Saint Paul (by our own choir) along with paintings, sculpture and architectural images related to Paul and his ministry. Watch for the date in the bulletin.

The Church is also encouraging pilgrimages to visit a church dedicated to Saint Paul. Here in Brooklyn, in Cobble Hill, on Court Street, we have Saint Paul's Church, the oldest church building on Long Island and the second oldest parish in our Diocese. Of course there is the famous and massive Saint Paul's Church at Lincoln Center in Manhattan, staffed by the Paulist Fathers. A group of our own parish pilgrims made the trip to Saint Paul's (on Court Street) in October, attending Mass there and praying for our own parish and for the intentions of the Holy Father. Anyone can make this type of spiritual "journey" to any of these sites whenever they are open. Why not consider gathering a few friends to go with you for a half day "pilgrimage" in this year of Saint Paul? Those of us who joined together in October for this venture found it a deeply rewarding and spiritually refreshing experience.

As with all Jubilee Years, a Plenary Indulgence is available for those who visit an approved pilgrimage site, attend Mass, receive Holy Communion, and pray for the intentions of the Holy Father. It is also expected that the pilgrim will receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation on that day or within one week of making the pilgrimage visit. This is an ancient custom of the Church and links our modern-day observances with the great Medieval pilgrimages, of which we read in Chaucer and other literary works. More information on the Plenary Indulgence and the required conditions can be found on the website of the Diocese of Brooklyn.

But we might ask: Still, why all this attention on Saint Paul? In response, four brief thoughts come to mind:

1. Without Saint Paul, all of us might never have heard of Jesus Christ. Early Christianity seemed focused upon bringing devout Jews to belief in Jesus. It was Paul who argued most strongly on reaching out to (us) Gentiles. At first his thinking was not well received, and much controversy ensued



before Paul prevailed and the Gospel was preached to "the whole world."

2. The example of Paul's life offers hope and encouragement to us all. He had actually participated in the martyrdoms of early believers in Jesus, yet he surrendered totally to Christ when he finally heard His call. His conversion on the road to Damascus and afterwards is an outstanding example of the transforming power of Christ.
3. Some of his writings are the earliest approved, canonical texts that we have, pre-dating the four Gospels.
4. While he has written much and some of it makes for difficult reading, Paul has also composed some of the most lyrical, emotional, and moving passages of the Scriptures.

This article ends with the following selections as examples of these unforgettable passages—also recommended for your re-reading in this Pauline Year:

- 1 Corinthians 12, verses 4-31
- 1 Corinthians 13, verses 1-13
- Ephesians 3, verses 18-21
- Ephesians 4, verses 7-16
- Philippians 3, verses 12-14
- Romans 8, verses 35-39

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Advent Faith Sharing - Tuesday evenings, December 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd: 7:30pm

The Catholic Young Adults (CYA) of Park Slope hosts a weekly gathering at the Saint Francis Xavier Rectory (6th & President) to celebrate each week of Advent leading up to Christmas.

Annual Christmas Crafts Fair - Saturday, December 6th: 10am-5pm

Join us in the Church Lyceum on President Street between 6th & 7th Avenues for a variety of vendors selling Christmas crafts, gifts, collectibles, etc. Fresh Christmas wreaths available! Also visit Santa Claus, and have your child's picture taken, hosted by Saint Francis Xavier Boy Scout Troop 22.

Lessons and Carols Family Service - Monday, December 15th: 7:30pm-9pm

Saint Francis Xavier Church hosts its annual Christmas liturgical and musical service, where you & your family may sing traditional and modern Carols with our full choir & classical church organ! A fun family event celebrated in the heart of the Christmas season!

Advent Penance Service - Monday December 22nd: 7:30pm

Saint Francis Xavier joins with sister parish Saint Augustine for a pre-Christmas and New Year's Day Penance ceremony. This year's service will be held at Saint Augustine Church on 6th Avenue & Sterling Place.

Christmas Eve Vigil Mass & Family Service - Wednesday Evening, December 24th: 5pm

Christmas Mass is celebrated with Choir and Carols, special outdoor nativity ceremony for children.

Christmas Eve Midnight Mass - Wednesday, December 24th: 11:15pm

Mass with full Sacra Musica Choir and organ. Please join us for this most holy celebration! Masses Christmas Day include: 9:30am, 12:15pm (Contemporary Choir)

New Year's Celebration - 2009

New Year's Eve Vigil Mass: Wednesday, December 31, 5pm
New Year's Day Mass: Thursday, January 1st, 12:15pm (Choir)

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ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2008
MUSICA SACRA

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CHURCH
PARK SLOPE, BROOKLYN

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING

BACH
HANDEL
FRANCK



JOIN US THIS JOYFUL SEASON
SHARE THE JOY WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS

Come Home For Christmas!