



The Visitation Visitor

VISITATION OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN MARY CHURCH

Volume 20 Issue I

February 2023

20th Anniversary Edition of the Visitation Visitor

by Deacon Vince Drewicz

Welcome to a special edition of the Visitation Visitor, our Parish newsletter. Our team of reporters have been working hard at putting this issue together and I think you will find it informative and full of trivia and fun facts.

We have come a long way since Karen Stumpo, Maureen Rimgaila, Judy Fleming, Sr. Diane and a few others approached our Pastor, Monsignor Thomas Murray, with the idea of sharing things that were happening in our parish through a newsletter sent out to every registered parish family. Monsignor Murray was onboard with the idea of a communication tool sent out quarterly. We've missed the mark of quarterly a few times over the past 20 years, but we have maintained the same ideal of providing our parishioners with great things happening in our parish.

My involvement began right after my ordination to the Diaconate on June 4th, 2011. In a meeting with Monsignor Murray and Deacon Pat Mandracchia, I asked, (Yes, I asked!), if I could be assigned as the Spiritual Director for the group. Over the past 20 years, many people have contributed to the newsletter either by writing articles or being interviewed. There have been articles on ministry groups, CYO, parishioners like Eleanor McDevitt, the parish secretary, interviews with newly ordained priests assigned to our parish,

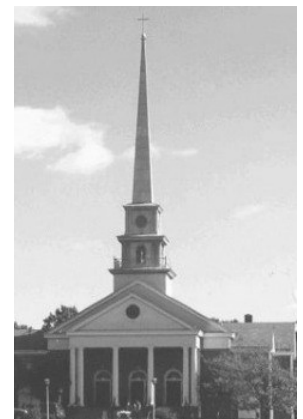
school articles, seek-and-find games and so much more. Included in this issue are articles from the past, including one on our parish school renovations (Summer 2004), the Eucharist (April 2019), Stewardship (January 2002), interview the newly ordained deacons (Fall 2011) and an interview by Joe Gavanus with Norma McCorvey, aka *Jane Roe of Roe vs. Wade* fame (Spring 2003). All of our pastors have included articles each quarter giving us updates on the status of our parish and things moving forward. One of my favorites is a feature called "Do You Know?" giving insight into things about our faith that you may be wondering about.

Looking to the future of the newsletter, we can use your help. This is a totally volunteer group that works without commitment. If you would like to write an article, have an idea for future publications or know of some of our youth who like to write for us, please let us know. Feel free to contact me via email—deaconvince@visitationbvm.org.



Inside this issue:

20th Anniversary Edition of the Visitation Visitor	1
Jane Roe vs. Wade (reprint)	2
The Pastor's Page - Fr. Bob (reprint)	3
Welcome New Deacons (2011 reprint)	4
Welcome New Deacons (continued)	5
Stewardship, An Opportunity for Sharing (reprint)	6
Parish Breaks Ground on School Renovations(reprint)	7
Crossword Puzzle - Parish Pastors	
Do You Know?... Facts About The Visitation Visitor	8





The Visitation Visitor

Jane Roe vs. Wade

By Joe Gavanus

In the spring of 2003 this reporter had the opportunity to interview one of the most intriguing women of the 20th century. Not known for her real name – Norma McCorvey – but for her assumed alias, Jane Roe. Yes, the very same person named in the infamous 1973 Supreme Court case of Roe v. Wade. Now deceased, this quiet, unassuming woman had quite a story to tell and the following article – re-printed from the Visitation Visitor July 2003 issue – is included below as one of the most memorable articles written by a newsletter team member in the past twenty years.

On the weekend of April 26th and 27th Visitation BVM Parish was blessed with a visit from a meek, calm, middle-aged woman named Norma McCorvey. She was invited here to speak to two vastly different audiences in two very different settings – the 8th grade boys and girls of Visitation School at their class retreat weekend at Camp Green Lane, and, the adults of our parish community in the school gymnasium. She was here to talk about life. In particular, the life of the pre-born. As a spokesperson for the Pro-Life movement, she calmly and confidently delivered a message to all that heard her speak - abortion is wrong. But, her outward demeanor that weekend, belied the tumultuous life that she led up until eight years ago.

Norma McCorvey's life history is a double-edged sword. Born in rural Louisiana, she was abused as a child and ran away from home at the age of ten. She became a drifter, roaming from town to town picking up odd jobs to support herself. She eventually turned to drugs and alcohol in the hope of forgetting the terrible life that she was leading. In her early twenties, alone and pregnant, she was presented with a decision that would shape the rest of her and many other lives in this country. She was asked to lend her name to a court case in Texas that, if won, would allow women the unrestricted right to have an abortion. She was persuaded by two young and ambitious attorneys to concede to their request. And the rest is history.

For years, Norma worked as an aide in abortion clinics in several cities. She was an outspoken advocate of a woman's right to choose. She grew to hate the pro-life movement and the religious values they represented. She worked tirelessly to push her agenda that abortion was a personal choice and should not be legislated by the government. Ironically, Ms. McCorvey gave birth to three children in her lifetime – all given up for adoption—and she NEVER HAD AN ABORTION!

One day in 1995, an Operation Rescue Pro-Life headquarters opened their doors right next to the abortion clinic in which Norma worked. Through the efforts of the Operation Rescue director and the relationship that she had developed with a little girl that she befriended, a “miracle” occurred in Norma's life. She began to see the “abortion factory” for what it was – a place where the lives of helpless little human beings were being snuffed out

indiscriminately. As she tells it, she “began to hear footsteps – the footsteps of little children running down the halls of the abortion clinic”. Several days later she was asked by the little girl to attend a church service. The preacher asked the congregation if there were any sinners present who wanted to amend their lives. Norma responded, “Yes, I do!” And, from that day forward she became a Christian and eventually a Catholic.



Since she had arrived early at Camp Green Lane, she had about a half hour to relax before giving her speech to the 8th grade class. While sitting in the living room of the camps' hospitality house, she was gracious enough to reminisce about the highs and lows of her life. “I'm 55 years old now. I've abused my body with drugs and alcohol to the point where I have some major health problems”, she revealed. “I don't know how many years that I may have left on this earth, but I know I will spend them spreading the word that abortion is wrong. Jesus is the light of my life. He has shown me that all life is precious”.

And, by the way, there is another name by which Norma McCorvey is better known – Jane Roe. The very same Jane Roe as in the infamous United States Supreme Court Case of Roe v. Wade which, for the last thirty years, has allowed legalized abortions to be the law of the land. The once poster child for abortion rights has become the outspoken advocate of pro-life! As Norma puts it, “a miracle happened in my life and I want to share it with everyone!”

Ms. McCorvey now operates a non-denominational organization called Roe No More Ministry. It is dedicated to helping educate the public about the pro-life Christian perspective on abortion. For more information you can access her web site at www.roenomore.org.



The Pastor's Page

The following is an excerpt from Fr. Bob's first letter to the parish published in the August 2021 edition of the *Visitation Visitor*



Beloved Parishioners,

What a joy it has been to come to Visitation and be with you over the course of the last (crazy) year. Everyone has been so welcoming and has made the transition very easy. Many people have called Visitation their home parish for their whole lives and love to be here and worship with their family and friends they have grown up with. There is a lot of energy and excitement over the direction of our parish and I rely on your prayers and involvement in making sure our parish family stays faithful and joyful with our Lord Jesus Christ as the cornerstone.

It is amazing to think that I am just the fifth pastor of Visitation in the last 67 years. This is a testament not only to the pastors who have been here before me but mainly to the people of the parish. The previous pastors have enjoyed their time so much at Visitation, they wanted to stay forever! This parish, in priestly circles, has always been seen as a "gem" of the diocese. Again, it is because of the people.

I ask for your continued prayers for our parish family. I thank you again for your love of Visitation and your desire to see Her flourish. I pray that the Holy Spirit may guide us as we ensure the long term vibrancy and success of our parish family.

May the Lord give you His peace,

Fr. Bob



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Parish Newsletter

Editor: Joe Gavanus

Staff:

Patricia Drewicz

Clare Hughes

Patricia Gavanus

Bob Hehn

Lisa Klaput

Colleen Henderson

Tina Bruckner

Joe Gavanus

Spiritual Advisor

Deacon Vince Drewicz

Contact Us:

E-Mail: jgjr52@aol.com

Phone: 610-584-0183



The Visitation Visitor

"We Are Servants" - Visitation Parish Welcomes New Deacons



Visitation's new Deacons at their Ordination on June 4, 2011 at the Cathedral Basilica in Philadelphia.

Cardinal Justin Rigali ordains Deacon Vincent Drewicz (left) and Deacon Patrick Mandracchia (right)

(photos courtesy of The Catholic Standard and Times)



By Bob Hehn

"We are Servants" is a phrase I heard frequently when discussing the Diaconate with recently ordained deacons Vince Drewicz and Pat Mandracchia. It is a fitting mantra for them, as it is also a mantle they humbly wear.

Vince and Pat were among nineteen men elevated to the order of permanent deacons - consecrated ministers, on Saturday June 4, 2011, by Cardinal Justin Rigali at the Cathedral Basilica of SS. Peter and Paul.

This was the culmination of a journey that formally began six years ago. Their motivation today is the same as it was then. Vince says, "I believe I've been called to serve God by serving His people and this didn't change." Pat agrees, "I think we had a call from the Lord then and that's the same motivation now - to serve. We are ordained into the servanthood of Christ."

Both men had discerned a call to the diaconate for many years, but ultimately were moved to action by "promptings" (aka Holy Spirit) in Visitation Church.

One Sunday during Mass, Vince heard an interior voice saying "Go talk to the pastor about the diaconate." He did. For Pat, it was after cantoring a Saturday morning Mass that he was asked by the celebrant to consider the diaconate. He did. They followed their promptings and in time entered the diaconate program together at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in September, 2005.

As first year candidates they continued to focus on discernment. Vince notes, "The discernment that precedes entrance into and during the program continues today. It is a lifelong process of discovering and attuning oneself to God's will."

This was followed by a year of aspirancy and four years of formation involving training and study, and finally their Practicum. The formation process was not only a period of intellectual growth but spiritual growth as well. Vince emphasizes that, "Nothing I do now cannot have that focus (spirituality). God is the center of everything." Pat adds, "It has helped my prayer life and deepened my appreciation of our Faith."



The Visitation Visitor

Ordination Day fills the candidates with many thoughts and emotions. Vince remembers, "One of the first things was, don't make a mistake. I was first in line. Don't trip, don't fall. And again the discernment. Am I really worthy to do this?"

Pat exults, "I love getting something for free. And on that day I was saying I am so blessed to be receiving the Sacrament of Holy Orders which I did not earn. I thought of it as being like grace, a completely free gift from God. So I was just really so happy and thrilled."

Vince recalls that the ordination didn't really sink in until the following Tuesday. "Monday I was still on a high." Pat feels that performing liturgical functions quickly helped it become a reality. Within a week he was performing a funeral committal.

All but four of the new deacons were assigned to their home parish. Vince was surprised that he was assigned to Visitation. "There is a great need in the Norristown area for deacons and I was sure that I would be assigned to one of the parishes in need". He continues, "Immediately after ordination we're hurried to the Basilica Rector's dining room and the Cardinal gives the assignments. Cardinal Rigali says, "Vince Drewicz, Visitation BVM." I stood there waiting to find out where I was assigned because all through the program it's always your name and where you're from. So when I heard my name and parish (I thought), where's my assignment? Then it sunk in – oh, I got my parish."

Pat was not that surprised. "Visitation is one of the larger parishes in the archdiocese and we didn't have a single deacon. I wanted to be assigned to my home parish. But when Vinnie was picked first, I thought that if only one of us was picked then.... I think we were prepared to go elsewhere and if so assigned, say that's God's will and go do a good job there."

The word deacon comes from the Greek word "*diakonia*" which means service. The deacon's ministry of service is threefold: Ministry of the Word - proclaiming the Gospel and preaching homilies; Ministry of the Altar - assisting at the altar during Mass and performing other liturgical functions; Ministry



19 newly ordained Deacons stand before Cardinal Justin Rigali in the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter & Paul in Philadelphia on June 4, 2011

Photo courtesy of The Catholic Standard and Times

of Charity - service to the parish and the community at large.

Vince and Pat have hit the ground running. Both have been assisting frequently at Sunday Masses and also at daily Mass as their work schedules permit. They've preached homilies and performed baptisms, funeral committals and blessings. They have also become involved in other aspects of parish life. Vince will help train altar servers, conducts Pre-Jordan, Pre-Cana sessions, wedding rehearsals along with Pat and their wives, and is the spiritual mentor for the Militia Immaculata organization. Pat is the facilitator for the Parish Committee on Call to Conversion and Holiness and is the spiritual mentor for the Bible Study group. He singles out preaching as a special joy because of the opportunity "to share the Catholic Faith."

Vince is married to Patty with five children and has been a member of Visitation parish for 30 years. Pat is married to Giovanna with two children and is a lifelong resident of Visitation parish. The wife's role in the formation process is critical. Vince and Pat affirm that Patty's and Giovanna's consistent support was instrumental in their journey's success. Vince says, "They had one thing, that they would support us. They were the two most active wives in the group. Patty and Giovanna attended most classes. Not only did Pat and I have our own eyes and ears for the class, but we had theirs that would give us a different perspective."

"Giovanna has been supportive all the way through", says Pat. "She has been a real bulwark in my diaconate formation and continues to be." Vince adds a thought provoking comment, "The unity of the deacon and his wife is a sign to the entire parish of the unity of Christ with His Church."

Pat expresses their gratitude to the parish community "for your many prayers, congratulations and words of support, and we ask for your prayers to become better deacons." Vince notes, "We're not here to throw fire and brimstone. We want to meet you (in church) at a basic level, walk out the door and talk to you at that same level." Summarizing their attitude about their roles, Pat says, "It is not so much about working on the altar or preaching, it's about the example we give by our life."

It is obvious that both Vince and Pat are enthusiastic and passionate about their ministry. Visitation parish is indeed blessed and privileged to have these outstanding men as deacons and models of Christ's servanthood.



Stewardship, An Opportunity for Sharing

Celebrating 20 years, Visitation Newsletter is a product of a program started in 2001. The purpose of this publication is to tell the stories of the activities, events and extraordinary gestures of time and talent that occur within all the ministries of our parish. In the January 2002

Newsletter, **Judy Fleming** wrote an article, *Stewardship, an Opportunity for Sharing*.

If you haven't gotten caught up in the excitement yet, you soon will. Stewardship is a new program at Visitation BVM Parish; a program that is expected to enlighten, touch and impact you by its presence.

In July 2001, Msgr. Murray asked a group of approximately 15 parishioners to join him in initiating a Stewardship Committee in the hopes of drawing on and expanding upon the strengths and God-given gifts of our church members. Stewardship inspires an awareness of the time, talent and treasure that have been uniquely bestowed on each of us.

The concept of stewardship is not new. In fact, it is rooted in the biblical directive to treat all abilities, good fortune and material means as gifts from God. Those who receive such blessings should consider them a loan and use them wisely and with gratitude. "What stewardship is about is recognizing that each of us is gifted and can respond to those gifts," explained Msgr. Murray. "In so many ways, stewardship is already in practice within our parish community. Visitation is a wealthy Parish, not just financially, but in the abundant talents we possess. We need to build on that wealth."

A Common misconception about Visitation Parish is that because of its large number of parishioners, it doesn't foster a welcoming atmosphere. Many feel shut out by the lack of connection to any particular aspect of parish life. A primary goal of the newly formed Stewardship Committee will be to reach out to the individuals within the church community and address this concern.

Stewardship means locating and drawing in those who might feel disconnected, not just from Visitation Parish, but from the Church as a whole. Successful stewardship programs in parishes nationwide have done this by acknowledging that while a common bond may bring people together



within a church community, it is important to offer a vast array of interests in order to satisfy the varying needs of all its members.

Everyone should be able to find their niche somewhere within the parish community. And if that comfort zone does not exist, then it is the goal of the Stewardship Committee to find or create it. Over time, Visitation's Stewardship Committee hopes to reach out to as many parishioners as possible and bring them into the welcoming fold of the church community. Then they, too, can experience the rewards of sharing their God-given talents.

"I want to see people involved," said Msgr. Murray. "Our focus needs to be on the giving of ourselves and on being of greater assistance to each other."

Sallianne Tschoepe, Visitation's Stewardship Committee Chairperson, said the primary objective of the group over the next year is to reach out to the parish community as a whole and explore avenues for drawing people in. Presently, plans are underway for a Parish Ministry Fair to be held in the Spring which will highlight the many groups and activities at Visitation. The objective will be to recruit volunteers interested in getting involved, thus giving of their time and talent.

If anyone would like more information on Visitation's Stewardship Committee or would like to learn more about how they can share their time and talent within the parish community, please call Sallianne Tschoepe @ 620-631-5432 or Parish Volunteer Coordinator Patricia Drewicz @ 610-539-0411.



The Visitation Visitor

Parish Breaks Ground on School Renovations

By Karen Stumpo (Summer 2004)



Pictured from left to right: (Tom Case, Adam Eisenhower Architects; Bob Barry, Branch Valley Associates; Gus Widmann, Sr. Diane, Monsignor Murray, John Hayes, Visitation; Dennis Murray, Gary Shafer, Branch Valley Associates.)
Photo: Karen Stumpo

No one wants to see our Catholic faith die. That is why I have chosen this article to highlight. The article shows how Visitation parishioners put their treasures together to come up with enough funds to expand our school. During our Capital Campaign, one of our sponsors said, "In order to have a strong Catholic culture, it had to start in the classroom." With that idea in mind the school was expanded.

Just after the 8am Mass on Tuesday morning June 8, John Hayes, Capital Campaign Building Committee chairperson, Monsignor Murray, Sr. Diane and Gus Widmann, met with the Architect and builders to break ground and begin renovations on the Visitation Jr. High School.

The project will add 14,700 square feet and renovate 9,700 square feet to the school, offering a new entrance, nine (9) new classrooms, a new library, a new computer room, three (3) new kindergartens, new Administration space, in addition to a second floor on the Jr. High wing. Construction is planned from June 2004 through Summer 2005.

Visitation Parish Pastors

Do you know the last names of all five of our Pastors?

Across

3. first Pastor

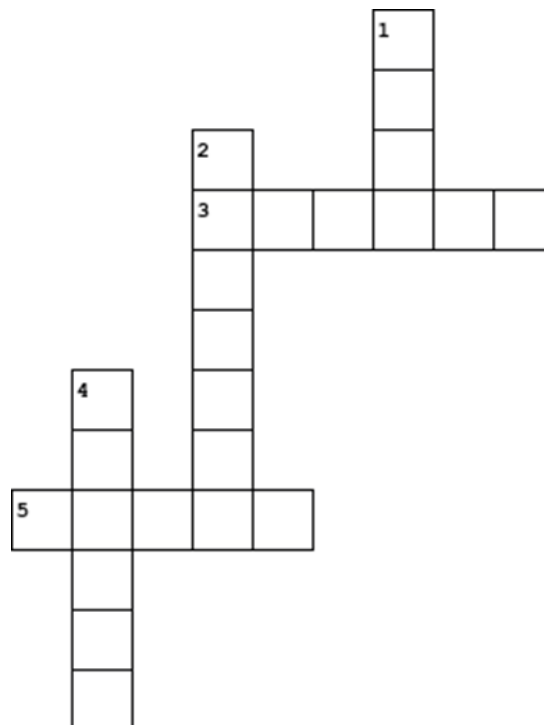
5. Fifth Pastor

Down

1. Fourth Pastor

2. Second Pastor

4. Third Pastor



Answers can be found on the parish website

VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY CHURCH

196 N. Trooper Road
Norristown, PA 19403

Phone: 610-539-5572
Fax: 610-539-3240
Web: www.visitationbvm.org

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The Visitation Visitor

Do You Know?... Some Interesting Facts About the Visitation Visitor

By Bob Hehn

- + Volume 1, Issue 1 was published in January 2002.
- + There have been only 2 editors in the 20 year history of the Newsletter - Karen Stumpo (2002 –2010) and Joe Gavanus (2010 - present).
- + The Issue 1 cover page article, "Annual Scouting For Food Drive" by Karen Stumpo featured the participation of Visitation Boy Scout Troop #369 and Cub Pack #369 in the Boy Scouts of America annual Scouting for Food Drive.
- + Issue 1 included the first Parish Profile, "Kitchen Talk with Father Wilson" (Karen Stumpo). It featured an interview with Fr. Eugene Wilson, Visitation Parochial Vicar from 2000 to 2005.
- + Issue 1 featured the first "Letter from the Pastor". Msgr. Thomas Murray recounted his desire for a parish newsletter as expressed to future editor Karen Stumpo. "I'd like, at some point, to have a parish newsletter mailed to homes.....Behold in your hands, the **Visitation Visitor**. The start of this publication is an example of what parish life, what stewardship is all about. Abundantly blessed and gifted people who seek ways to express gratitude by the sharing of time, talent and treasure."
- + Other first issue articles included the "Celebration of Catholic Education"(Judy Fleming), "Stewardship, An Opportunity For Sharing" (Judy Fleming), "DIM (Disciples In Mission) - A Call To Discipleship" (Debbie Pitts), "Lent, Time of Renewal and Preparation" (Debbie Pitts), "Time Alone With Jesus"(Judy Fleming) on the Perpetual Adoration Chapel, "Maybe Baby It's You"-CYO Sponsored Play (Maureen Rimgaila), "Do You Know Why" - St. Blaise and the Blessing of Throats" and @St. Valentine's Blessings" (Jim Walsh)
- + Norma McCorvey, Jane Roe in the landmark 1973 Roe vs. Wade United States Supreme case that legalized abortion in the United States, and who had since recanted her pro abortion stance, was interviewed for a Visitor article, "Norma McCorvey Speaks on Pro-Life", in Volume 2, Issue 3 (July 2003) by Joe Gavanus.