

The Concept

Newsletter of Immaculate Conception Parish

A Letter From Our Pastor

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"Flooring, Desks, or an Indoor Toilet?"

Dear Parishioners,

Before Msgr Ngindu went back to our sister parish of Sts. Peter and Paul in Kananga, Congo, he asked me for some advice. He said that someone had given him a large donation to the school, and he did not know what he should spend the money on first. They need flooring for the school, they need desks, and they would like to have an indoor toilet for the children. I told him to put a floor in the school first, so that the children would not have to walk and sit on a dirt floor. The desks should come next, and lastly an indoor toilet. He agreed with the advice. What would you have suggested?

Unless you have lived in or visited for an extensive time a Third World country, it is very hard to imagine the way that people live in other parts of the world. We are getting ready to merge into an inter-parochial school, and among the many subjects that we debated and prepared for there was never any discussion about a floor, desks or indoor plumbing. We take for granted the basic necessities of life and are unaware that many people in our world must struggle each day for their basic necessities. We have been blessed materially, haven't we?



This month's *Concept* features an interview with Msgr. Ngindu about life in his parish, and about the construction and future plans for the health center that is

being built. Our parish gave our sister parish the necessary means to begin construction with an \$80,000 gift in 2008. Our Finance Council unanimously advised me to continue our support of the health center with an additional \$24,000 gift to our sister parish, along with other donations that you have been giving to Sts. Peter and Paul over the past two years. After listening to Msgr. Ngindu speak of their needs in Kananga, it was no wonder that our Finance Council responded in such a manner.

Be sure to read the article and check out a very touching slide show on our Web site at www.immaculate.net that shows through pictures the construction of the health center. Mr. Greg Patt and Mr. Ron Felter were instrumental in getting the slide show up on our Web site. I know you will enjoy the presentation.

In Christ,

Fr. Troha

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Going for the Gold!

Immaculate Conception CYO Athletics

For young athletes at Immaculate Conception Parish, participating in Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) athletics is about much more than just playing competitive sports. It is about going for the gold – that is, the golden opportunity to grow in friendship, teamwork, discipline, and all kinds of virtues.

“It is not about the winning,” says Pam Yert, Athletic Director and Pastoral Designee. “If the kids win, that is just a bonus. CYO is about them being able to interact with other children, learning life lessons, following directions from adults and being respectful. It is about learning how to win and lose gracefully. Sports help children learn to deal with the things they will have to face in life, and hopefully, CYO is giving them knowledge to take with them after grade school.”

CYO includes a network of young athletes from Catholic parishes around the area, divided up into teams which CYO schedules to play each other. Students in fourth- through eighth-grades at Immaculate Conception Day School, as well as Parish School of Religion and home-schooled students, are welcome to register for CYO athletics. Registered students play games against teams from other local parish schools, such as Mt. Carmel. Pam directs Immaculate Conception’s teams overall; however, there are coaches and (usually) assistant coaches for each individual team, as well.

Last fall, Immaculate Conception had five girls’ volleyball teams who all did very well. There were even a few teams that went undefeated in the regular season. A few of the teams also went to CYO tournaments and

won. They enjoyed their extra playing time, as well as their new trophies! Although our parish did not have its own football team, some of our boys played football with St. Justin Martyr School, which is also part of the CYO network.

During the winter, CYO athletics centers around basketball. This year, there were 12 grade school basketball teams and two boys’ high school teams. They weathered some wins and losses well, and succeeded, in many ways, in what was most important.

“If you win every game, that is just icing on the cake,” says Pam. “But the real questions are: ‘Did you have fun? Did you respect your coach?

Did you represent the school in the way we want to be represented? Did you get along with the other athletes?’ CYO is all about giving all kids the opportunity to play.”

This spring, we are looking forward to likely having one girls’ fast-pitch softball team, as we did last year. Fast-pitching prepares the girls to play baseball or softball in summer leagues, and helps them to further develop their skills.

If you are interested in CYO athletics, there are sign-up fliers in book-bag mail, information on the school’s Web site at www.immaculate.net, and occasional inserts in the parish bulletin. Families can support the athletic program in many ways, such as attending their games and providing them with transportation to and from practices.

Many thanks are extended to all of our athletes, coaches, assistant coaches, supportive parents, and Booster Club members for their fantastic dedication and stewardship!



Celebrating St. Patrick's Day

This month, we celebrate the feast of St. Patrick. Born in the year 385, Patrick grew up in the Roman province of Britain. He was captured at the age of 16 by Irish raiders, taken to Ireland and sold into slavery. And, despite the precarious nature of his captivity, Patrick managed to learn the language and customs of the Druid pagans who held him.

Throughout Patrick's captivity, the young saint would often turn to God in times of distress and need. Prayer became Patrick's refuge, and he would spend hours in conversation with God.

In all, Patrick remained in the hands of his captors for six long years. Then, in the summer of 407, he experienced a profound religious transformation. Commanded by God in a dream, Patrick was instructed to leave Ireland via the coast. There, on the rocky shores of the coast, sailors caught sight of Patrick and returned him to Britain and his family.

However, a short while later, Patrick experienced another profound dream. In the dream, Patrick heard the cries of the Irish people: "We beg you, holy youth, to come and walk among us once more." And although it would be years before he returned to Ireland, the prophetic nature of Patrick's dream was inevitable.

Patrick was not destined to stay in Britain for long; he moved to continental Europe and began studying for the priesthood in a French monastery. In 432, Patrick was ordained a bishop and commissioned to take the Gospel to Ireland. He reached the Irish shores for a second time on March 25, 433. Patrick would spend the remainder of his life in Ireland, converting the Irish pagans for the next 30 years.

Patrick's legend spread far and wide, and by the grace of God, the saint converted thousands of Druids to the Catholic Faith. He built churches throughout Ireland and opened the eyes of ruthless barbarian kings to the grace and love of Christ. Legend has it that Patrick used an ordinary shamrock clover to explain the mystery of the Trinity to the uneducated Irish people. Other



legends depict Patrick ridding the island of venomous snakes. Scientists now know that snakes never inhabited the Emerald Isle, but the story symbolically sheds light on Patrick's evangelical mission: ridding Ireland of pagan religions, as the cross replaced the popular Druid serpent.

Today, 93 percent of Ireland is Catholic. We celebrate St. Patrick's Day on March 17, the day of his death. A holiday for all nations, St. Patrick's Day has become a universal opportunity to celebrate friendship and good fortune.

The Concept

Getting Ready for the Rings *Pre-Cana Day*

For many of its participants, Pre-Cana Day is much more than just a marriage preparation class. It is a taste of married life, and a life-changing experience.

“In the beginning, there are some engaged couples who come in hesitantly, but then by the end of the day, their emotions have changed,” says Deacon Paul Hlabse, who coordinates Pre-Cana with his wife, Joann. “They are glad they have shared things, and feel they have gotten to know their fiancé better. The Pre-Cana Day really changes them. God is really working through this ministry.”

“With this ring, I thee wed...” These words strike chords of emotion in many of our hearts. The joys and challenges of marriage can be extraordinary, and it is usually after a couple exchanges rings that they realize both the seriousness and the wonder of the marital journey they have undertaken. Pre-Cana Day provides an ideal opportunity for them to get ready for the leap of faith they are soon to take, and is an intimate part of their preparation journey together.

At Immaculate Conception, Pre-Cana Day takes place once per year, generally in the spring time. It is open to couples from other parishes as well, and meets a diocesan requirement for marriage preparation.

The day begins with prayer, introductions, and a few ice breakers. It is facilitated by approximately seven married couples who present talks or support the engaged couples in other ways. At times, some of the speakers from Our Lady of Mt. Carmel’s Pre-Cana Day come to speak at our parish’s session as well. Fr. Troha thoroughly supports this ministry and attends the day when he can.



Over intriguing discussions, the couples cover topics such as marriage as sacrament, spirituality, communication, conflict resolution, dual-career families, intimacy and sexuality, finances, Natural Family Planning, which includes the Church’s teaching on contraception. Dr. Rachel Koelsch, an authority on Natural Family Planning, gives an incredible, eye-opening presentation on the negative physical, physiological, spiritual and emotional effects of contraception, and the benefits of Natural Family Planning. Everything the engaged couples share is held in complete confidence.

“We tell the engaged couples that nothing we say or do is going to make or break their marriage, so they are to feel free to open their hearts; after all, it is their marriage,” says Deacon Paul.

The day is spiced up with fun activities, such as the “Newlywed Game,” which follows the famous game-show format. The couples can’t help but laugh and learn many new things about one another as they try to answer certain questions in the way their fiancé would.

The next Pre-Cana Day will be held at Immaculate Conception on March 20 from 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. It will include a continental breakfast, lunch, dinner and Mass. Those who are interested can call the rectory at 440-942-4500.



Reaching Out with the Hands of Christ

Congo Clinic Nears Completion

Two years ago, Immaculate Conception Parish took on the challenge of helping our sister parish in the Republic of the Congo — Sts. Peter and Paul — build a medical clinic to serve the poverty-stricken people of the Archdiocese of Kananga.

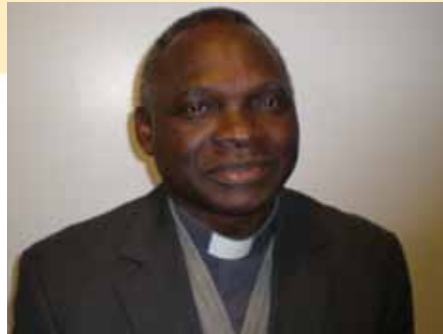
In the two years since, thanks to the prayers and financial contributions of Immaculate Conception parishioners, our sister parish has made great strides in realizing its dream of building a full-service medical facility to provide care to the 10,000 people in its surrounding community.

However, as the clinic hits the “stretch run” of its construction process, a great need for funds remains to ensure that the project is completed and has the medical resources necessary to be fully-functioning when it opens.

Recently, Msgr. Gilbert Kalumbu Ngindu, pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul and longtime friend of Fr. Troha, visited Immaculate Conception to give our pastor and Finance Council an update on the clinic’s progress, as well as the financial need that still remains to secure its completion.

“At present, we have realized 74 percent of the budget that we actually need,” says Msgr. Ngindu. “We have to finish the ceilings, the floor, and the windows to help keep out the mosquitoes, which carry malaria.”

Upon its completion, the clinic will have 10 rooms, including an area where mothers can give birth, as well



Msgr. Gilbert Kalumbu Ngindu

as a place for surgeries and a lab to conduct medical tests. However, in order to guarantee the clinic’s sustainability, Sts. Peter and Paul needs to account for several basic utilities that we often take for granted in the U.S.

“We discussed the possibility of having a kitchen there, so that we can clean the linens in hot water,” says Monsignor. “And we also have to contemplate the toilet facilities, a system to collect water, the electrical wires, and the medical equipment that we need to run the clinic.”

We are asking all parishioners to please consider renewing your commitment to helping our sister parish in Africa complete this invaluable project. If you are able to make a charitable contribution to this endeavor, we ask that you please designate your gifts for the Congo clinic and mail them to the rectory or place them in the basket during the offertory at Mass. And each and every one of our parishioners can help the cause by continuing to pray for our sister parish



and the people of the Archdiocese of Kananga.

“I want to see this through from the beginning to the end,” says Msgr. Ngindu. “The idea for the clinic came from my predecessor, and when he retired, I found a letter in the archives in which he said that if one day the church had its own clinic, we could reach out with the hands of Christ the Healer. I very much kept this in mind, and I want to thank Immaculate Conception for everything that the parish has done for us through your sustained prayers and material help.”

For more information, please contact the parish rectory at 440-942-4500.

The Concept

The Blessings of Sponsor-A-Student

At Immaculate Conception, we take the needs of our parish school students seriously – so seriously, in fact, that many of us are willing to share of our time, talents and treasure to make Catholic school a reality for them. Every year through the Sponsor-A-Student program, a parish effort that enables deserving students to attend our parish grade school, funds are raised to offer financial aid to the students' families.

"If it weren't for the Sponsor-A-Student program, some of our parish children would not get the Catholic education that they and their parents so desire," says Mary Kay Makar, Parish Bookkeeper, who coordinates Sponsor-A-Student under the direction of Fr. Troha.

This February, the program's campaign began when a letter from Fr. Troha was sent out to families and placed in the parish bulletin along with an appeal card for donations. Immaculate Conception parishioners have always been generous in supporting this program. Last year, Sponsor-A-Student raised over \$10,000, assisting 54 children in 34 families.

All Sponsor-A-Student proceeds go directly towards off-setting the tuition costs for Immaculate Conception families in need. The names of those who receive aid remain anonymous, and all is done in a spirit of authentic stewardship.

Although Immaculate Conception School is combining with Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School to form the Mater Dei Academy for the 2010-11 academic year, Immaculate Conception will continue subsidizing its own parish students that will be attending Mater Dei.

"I am a product of Catholic schools, and I believe that Catholic education is such a good reinforcement for

families trying to raise their children in the Faith," says Mary Kay. "It is complimentary to the Catholic family life. It helps parents as well, because what they are trying to teach their children at home is being taught to them during the day."

Those who donate to the program are showing an excellent example of stewardship in sharing of their gifts to help others in need.

"They are doing what they can to help," says Mary

Kay. "Sometimes, people want to help our parish school students but they don't have kids going there, so this is a way they can give to them. Many of them do it out of gratitude for God blessing them financially, or giving them a Catholic education. If they feel that something good came out of their Catholic education, now they can help other families."

Coordinating Sponsor-A-Student has also been an enlightening experience for Mary Kay.

"This has been a spiritually-enriching experience for me, because I have seen how generous people are, and how important Catholic education is to them," she says. "In today's world, every little bit helps."

Intentions of Sponsor-A-Student donors will be remembered at the 10 a.m. Mass on Aug. 15, 2010 at Immaculate Conception. Donors may sponsor a student for various periods of time; they may also make a donation in memory of someone special. Call the rectory if you would like a donation appeal card sent to you.

If you would like to help Mary Kay with the coordinating aspect of this ministry, please contact her at 440-942-4500.



Immaculate Conception Plans Trip to Our Nation's Capital

In the 1939 film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, Jimmy Stewart plays a patriotic young man who excitedly travels to Washington, D.C., to fill a vacant Senate seat, only to come face-to-face with political corruption.

In June, Mr. Smith will *not* be going to Washington, to the best of our knowledge, but Fr. Troha will! And he won't be alone, as Immaculate Conception parishioners will have an opportunity to travel to our nation's capital for a three-day, two-night tour of some beautiful Catholic sites.

Parishioner John Latkovich will be facilitating the trip. He has been responsible for several of Immaculate Conception's local and regional guided Historic Church Tours with Deacon Paul Hlabse. John says that past tours have been great sources of fellowship and nice history lessons for Immaculate Conception parishioners and their friends and families.

"We have found our trips to be successful for the camaraderie, companionship, fun, value and security that a trip of this nature offers," he says. "Based on the success of the Historic Church Tours we have had previously for IC parishioners, Fr. Troha thought it would be a wonderful adventure for the parishioners to see and tour the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. It is a magnificent complex that leads one to prayer and spiritual reflection."

The tour will also visit the Franciscan Monastery, one of the hidden treasures of Washington, containing replicas of the Shrines of the Holy Land and peaceful gardens.

"This little known-site comes highly recommended by Fr. Troha because so few people know about it," says John.

The escorted three-day, two-night tour will take place from June 17-19. It includes deluxe motor coach service with Lakefront Lines and two nights of hotel accommodations at the Comfort Inn of Falls Church, Va. The trip will include a guided tour and dinner at Mt. Vernon, George Washington's estate; breakfast in the hotel both mornings; Mass and a tour at the National Shrine with a box lunch; a four-hour tour of Washington, D.C. with a local, step-on-guide; a Buffet dinner at Phillips Waterfront Restaurant; and a tour of the Franciscan Monastery before the participants head home on Saturday.

The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception



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Immaculate Conception

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Trip to Our Nation's Capital *continued from page 7*

For those interested in more information about the tour, John will be showing at 26-minute DVD on the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception at the Senior Ministry meeting on Wednesday, April 7 at 1 p.m. in the parish Meeting Hall.

John also points out that these trips have given him a unique perspective on the sacrifices that turn-of-the-century Catholics made to be able to live as disciples of Christ.

“At the turn of the century, the immigrants that came here were so thankful to have jobs that they wanted to build beautiful churches,” he says, “There was one church where the immigrants there didn’t want their church to be in debt, so they took out second mortgages on their house and gave the money to the church up front, so that the parish wouldn’t incur a debt. That is almost impossible to imagine today, and when I hear these stories, I feel truly blessed to be able to do this.”

The price of the Washington, D.C. tour is \$299 per person, based on double occupancy. Please call the Immaculate Conception rectory at 440-942-4500 to make reservations, or for more information.



The Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America