



I.C. Church Hosts Scam Prevention Workshop

By Kelly Ann Kelly

On March 1, I.C. hosted “Protecting Ourselves and Loved Ones,” a presentation by the Manlius Police Department to educate senior citizens and their adult children about scams that target the elderly. The event was sponsored by the FM Committee of Christian Pastors. About 200 parishioners of I.C. and other local churches attended. Father Cliff and Rev. Dr. Renée Tembeckjian, rector of Trinity Church in Fayetteville, introduced the program.



Officer Brianna L. Sparks stands at the ambo after her presentation, “Protecting Ourselves and Loved Ones,” March 1.

Father Cliff described the case of a local woman who thought she was in an online long-distance romantic relationship with a man who was deployed overseas. He sent her flowers and talked about a future together. He said he needed her help with a large financial transaction and she complied. Then he continued to ask her to make payments on his behalf for one reason after another. She spent \$600,000 of her life savings before she told her family and contacted the police.

Officer Brianna L. Sparks described common types of fraud using the telephone, internet, mail, banking, and text messages. The methods change over time but the goal, she said, is always to steal your money. In 2024, the Federal Trade Commission received 2.6 million reports of fraud, with losses of \$12.5 billion. Many cases of financial fraud are never reported. Officer Sparks encouraged her listeners not to be embarrassed if they are defrauded; “Crime does not discriminate,” she said. “Please call and report it. The police do not judge.”

Scammers use sophisticated technology to trick people into trusting them. They “spoof” their Caller ID, i.e., display false names and phone numbers to impersonate relatives or businesses. Artificial intelligence programs can even mimic the voices of other people. A common scam involves impersonating a family member, often a grandchild, who says they have been arrested and need money immediately. They ask the person to wire money for bail or hand cash over to a courier. Officer Sparks recommends that families have “safe words” or phrases to verify their identities in an emergency.

Another scam involves impersonating a business or federal agency (such as the IRS) demanding immediate payment — often in cash, gift cards, or cryptocurrency. Officer Sparks said not to provide information such as bank accounts, social security number, passwords, or PINs over the phone if you didn’t initiate the call. Look up the actual phone number of the company or agency for yourself and remember that legitimate institutions will never ask for payment in gift cards.

Scammers use computers to dial many numbers at once, looking for someone who answers. Officer Sparks advised letting calls from unfamiliar numbers go to voicemail. Another strategy is to say nothing when you answer. If you hear silence when you answer the phone, hang up. The FTC recommends using technology such as call blocking, call filtering, or call labeling to protect against telephone fraud. Visit their website for more information: consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-block-unwanted-calls.

Scams can also be committed through the mail, email, text messages, and pop-up messages on your computer or cellphone. Email and text message scams often include in-

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Meet Heather Galko: The Voice Behind the Telephone Outreach Ministry

By Kelly Ann Kelly

Hospitality is a hallmark of I.C. Parish. The warm, welcoming atmosphere is apparent to all who meet the friendly parish staff, attend liturgies with presiders who encourage people to greet their neighbors (as Father Cliff does regularly), attend Coffee Sundays, or participate in any of our ministries. But did you know that behind the scenes, there’s a dedicated young woman who reaches out in the spirit of Christian fellowship to homebound parishioners? Since 2017, Heather Galko has been the heart, soul, and voice of the I.C. Telephone Outreach Ministry.

Every week, Heather makes phone calls to parishioners who generally are not able to attend liturgies and church activities in person. “I just like talking to different people,” Heather said. In a typical week, Heather talks to between 10 and 15 people. She said that she chats with them and asks if they know what services are available to them through the parish. “Do they know about Mass being streamed?” Heather said. “Do they know that there’s someone who can bring them Communion? Do they know about Senior Luncheons?” She asks if they would like a home visit, a prayer shawl, or prayers from the parish, and builds relationships with people who may otherwise be socially isolated.

Heather also enjoys meeting her telephone friends whenever possible. For example, at Christmas and Easter, Heather delivers flowers to the homebound people on her call list. She has met some of her phone contacts at Senior Luncheons. Recently, Heather began calling all parishioners who turn 90 years old or older on their birthdays to wish them a happy birthday and see if they would like to be added to her call list.



Heather Galko sits in the Music Room ready to begin making her weekly calls to homebound parishioners.

When not serving the homebound, Heather enjoys horseback riding and downhill skiing. Her adventurous outdoor activities are remarkable because Heather is blind. She also enjoys community activities at the Redfield Village Apartments, where she lives.

Parish minister Stephanie Hausladen oversees the program and coordinates the rest of I.C.’s outreach to homebound parishioners. If you or someone you know is homebound and would like to receive phone calls from Heather or other parish services, please contact Stephanie Hausladen at shausladen@syrdio.org.

New Ministry Supports Parish Mothers

By Stacy Zdep

The N.E.S.T. is a new ministry at I.C. Parish created for moms seeking a supportive community rooted in faith and friendship. The N.E.S.T. offers monthly gatherings dedicated to supporting Catholic mothers in their day-to-day vocation of motherhood. Each meeting will offer guest speakers or discussions centered on the joys and challenges of modern motherhood. Twelve moms attended our first meeting on Feb. 24. Our next gatherings will be April 21 and May 11, from 9:30 to 11 a.m. in Dwyer Hall. Free childcare is provided by the parish.

The letters of N.E.S.T. stand for the goals of the ministry: to nurture, to edify, to socialize, and to thrive. These are the four pillars of support we provide to moms.

Nurture: Providing a supportive environment that cares for mothers’ emotional and spiritual well-being, acknowledging that one cannot pour from an empty cup.

Edify: Building up and instructing mothers through faith-

based teaching; helping women grow in their knowledge of the Church, motherhood, and personal holiness.

Socialize: Fostering authentic community and friendship among women, breaking the isolation that can often accompany the trenches of parenting.

Thrive: To move mothers beyond mere survival in daily life by leaning into God’s grace, finding joy and purpose in the vocation of motherhood.

Each meeting offers an opportunity to grow in faith and friendship. The N.E.S.T. is based on Mother’s Morning, a ministry created by former parish minister Kay Satterfield in 2014 for I.C. moms.

The N.E.S.T. is off to a great start! All parish mothers are invited to join us. We will not have monthly gatherings over the summer, but are planning to host a casual get-together at the I.C. School playground. For more information, contact Stacy Zdep at stacyzdep@gmail.com.



Ministry leader Stacy Zdep (third from right) poses in front of the group logo with some of the I.C. moms attending the inaugural meeting of the N.E.S.T., Feb. 24. (Photo courtesy of Stacy Zdep)

I.C. School News

By Caroline Agor-Calimlim

I.C. School Observes Catholic Schools Week

I.C. School celebrated the blessings of a Catholic education during the annual Catholic Schools Week, Jan. 25-31. The week kicked off with Sunday Mass. Students in each class from kindergarten to sixth grade participated as readers, gift bearers, and altar servers. Two sixth graders gave their reflections on how special Catholic education and I.C. School are to them. After Mass, prospective and current families were invited to an open house at the school.

A traditional part of I.C. School's Catholic Schools Week celebration is the Living Rosary, where each bead is represented by a student. We were so grateful and blessed to have Bishop Douglas Lucia join us for the Living Rosary on Jan. 27. On Vocation Day, Jan. 29, Father Brendan Foley visited with grades four, five, and six. He explained that God has a plan for every heart and helped our students explore how they are called to serve Him. Our own Sister Margaret Fay, school office assistant, visited Maureen Pierret's kindergarten class. She read them a book about vocations and showed pictures of herself as a young novice.

We had a fun Pajama and Movie Day on Friday. The morning was spent learning. Popcorn and movies were enjoyed during snack time. The sixth grade played Crabwalk Soccer with teachers serving as goalies. The fun continued with a magician for the pre-K students and bowling at Green Lakes Bowling Lanes.

Students Learn About Helping Homeless People

John Tumino, executive director and co-founder of In My Father's Kitchen (IMFK), visited with students in grades three through six on Feb. 23. He explained how he was guided by the Holy Spirit to help others. He and his wife, Leigh-Ann created IMFK, a faith-based street outreach program for homeless individuals. The students later put together Blessing Bags with socks, hand warmers, candy, water, applesauce, and encouraging messages for the homeless people served by IMFK. What a great way to share during this Lenten season of helping others and showing kindness!



I.C. School students write encouraging messages to include in the Blessing Bags they assembled for In My Father's Kitchen Street Outreach program, Feb. 23. (Photo courtesy of Caroline Agor-Calimlim)



I.C. School was blessed with a visit from Bishop Douglas Lucia (back row, center) and pastor Father Cliff Auth for the Living Rosary during Catholic Schools Week, Jan. 27. (Photo courtesy of Caroline Agor-Calimlim)



A second grade student prepares to bowl a frame at Green Lakes Bowling Lanes during I.C. School's celebration of Catholic Schools Week. (Photo courtesy of Caroline Agor-Calimlim)

Kindergarten Celebrates 100 Days of School

Maureen Pierret's kindergarten students celebrated their 100th day of school on Feb. 25 with fun activities exploring the number 100. They listened to stories about the first 100 days of school and counted 100 steps from the classroom to the front office. The students were asked to bring 100 items, like buttons, stickers, or pieces of cereal, that would fit in a sandwich bag. They did math problems counting out 10s of 10 different food items, strung 100 pieces of Froot Loops to make a necklace, and made 100-day hats. For snacks, they had cookies that looked like the number 100.



A happy kindergartner strings 100 pieces of cereal on the 100th day of school, Feb. 25. (Photo courtesy of Caroline Agor-Calimlim)

Congratulations Junior Varsity CYO Champs

With a regular season record of 9-3, Immaculate Conception's Boys JV CYO basketball team landed the second seed in the Syracuse Diocese Championship playoff bracket. In the final game, on February 10, I.C. fought off an 8-point deficit in the second half and won by 4 points to defeat Holy Family for the championship.

The I.C. Boys JV CYO basketball team pose in front of the scoreboard after winning the championship game over Holy Family, Feb. 10. Kneeling: Tristan Alaniz, Jake Chandler, and Jack French. Standing: Kevin Murphy, Abram Rayland, Theo Zacholl, Matthew Gaulke, Genssen West, Evan Disque, Jameson Dermady, Ryan Gott, coach Jerry Chandler, and Lincoln Smith. Not pictured: Head coach Joe Smith and Brayden DeBlois. (Photo courtesy of Erin Zacholl)



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Reception of Holy Communion: A Quick Guide

By Deacon Craig Rheume

“Recognize in this bread what hung on the cross, and in this chalice what flowed from His side”

- St. Augustine

As Catholics we believe that the Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life” (CCC 1324). We believe that what we receive in Holy Communion is nothing less than Christ Himself: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity; but it is here that our senses fail us. We see and taste bread and wine, yet what is truly present can only be perceived in faith. Because of this disconnect between sense and faith, it is important to remind ourselves often of what we believe and to evaluate how we live that out in worship. There is a Latin phrase that is helpful here: *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*, “the law of prayer [is] the law of belief.” In other words, the way we pray, the way we worship (i.e., the liturgy), reveals what we believe and vice versa.

Here are some simple insights into the reception of Holy Communion taken from the Roman Missal and directives from the Office of Liturgy in our Diocese that I hope will act as a refresher for all of us, so that our actions, gestures, and words will flow from and inform our hearts.

Q: What is the most appropriate way to receive Holy Communion, in the hand or on the tongue?

A: The Catholic Church allows for either. When receiving in the hand, place your dominant hand under your non-dominant hand, creating a “throne” for Christ. Then, take the Eucharist with your dominant hand and consume it. When receiving on the tongue, provide the minister with a “large target.” Bow before receiving in either case.

Q: How do I respond when the minister says, “The Body of Christ” or “The Blood of Christ”?

A: “Amen,” which essentially means “I believe.”

Q: Can I kneel to receive the Eucharist?

A: When there is no altar rail, the norm is standing but you may kneel. Please be cautious so as not to trip those around you.

Q: Am I permitted to dip the Host into the Precious Blood?

A: No. Dipping the Host into the Precious Blood is called intinction. Only priests are permitted to practice intinc-

tion when they self-communicate, i.e., take the Eucharist themselves rather than receiving it from another minister. Communicants are never permitted to self-communicate or practice intinction.

Q: Can I bring the Eucharist back to my seat to consume?

A: We are asked to consume the Host immediately in the presence of the minister. If a loved one cannot walk to the altar to receive Communion, stay in your pew and ask an usher to have a minister bring Holy Communion to you and your loved one.

Q: If I only receive either the Precious Blood or the Sacred Body, have I truly received the Eucharist?

A: Yes, Jesus is fully present (Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity) under both forms. To receive both has a fuller symbolic meaning, but the reality of the Eucharist is present in either or both. You don’t receive more or less of Jesus one way or the other.

Q: Is there a gluten-free option for the Sacred Body?

A: No. Church law requires a certain amount of wheat in the host to be considered bread for the purpose of consecration. We offer low-gluten hosts but not gluten-free hosts. If you have Celiac disease, discuss your options with your doctor. Remember, it is perfectly acceptable to receive only from the cup.

Q: How do I bring Holy Communion to someone who is homebound?

A: You may receive Holy Communion in the communion line in a pyx, a special container used to carry the Holy Eucharist. Pyxes and instruction cards are available in the sacristy. Please follow the instructions on the card exactly as written to ensure proper and reverent distribution. If you are using your own pyx, it must be all metal, inside and out (fabric pouches are discouraged).

Q: What do I do if I drop the Host?

A: Accidents happen, but they should be very rare if the Host is received carefully and reverently. If a Host happens to fall, please carefully pick it up and consume it. If you are uncomfortable with that, please carefully bring the Host to one of the ministers and let them know what happened.

Q: Is there ever a time that I should not receive the



Eucharist?

A: Holy Communion should only be received by baptized Catholics who have received their first Communion, have fasted for one hour prior to receiving, and are in a state of grace. (A pastor can grant a dispensation to some of these requisites but not all.) This means that if you are not Catholic, you should refrain from Holy Communion. Non-Catholics and those who have not received their first Communion may come forward for a blessing from a priest or deacon; just cross your arms over your chest when you approach him. If you would like to inquire about being received into the Catholic Church, talk to Deacon Craig or call the parish office. Anyone who has committed a mortal sin should refrain from the reception of the Eucharist until they have gone to Confession. If you are unable to get to Confession at the scheduled times, call the office to schedule Confession with Father Cliff, Monsignor Bill, or Father Hearn.

I hope this guide increases your understanding and appreciation of our great Sacrament and helps you continue to grow deeper in your love of Christ and reverence for the Eucharist. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.” (John 6:54-55)

Scam continued from page 1

instructions to call a number or click a link to take immediate action such as scheduling a package delivery or receiving a prize. Officer Sparks warned never to click on a link provided in an unsolicited email or text message. Computers and cellphones store a great deal of personal and financial information. One click can give criminals access to all of the information in your device. Some fraudsters even impersonate banks or credit card companies claiming that fraud has been detected! They instruct you to click a link or make a call and provide your account information. In fact, while I was writing this article, I received a suspicious text message from a Hotmail email address claiming to be Apple Security. I blocked the sender, deleted the message, and reported it as spam.

If you do click on a suspicious link, immediately turn off the device to sever the connection with the scammer. If you believe you have been scammed this way, contact law enforcement. The Manlius Police, county sheriff, and state police departments have forensic investigators who can examine your device for digital evidence of cybercrimes.

Officer Sparks touched briefly on identity theft, phishing, and spoofed websites. There are too many variations on fraud to provide an exhaustive list, but there are red flags that should make you suspicious: broken English, grammatical errors, or spelling errors; asking for large amounts of money; urgency or pressure to act immediately; and specific payment methods, especially cryptocurrency, wire transfer, or gift cards.

After the presentation, a parishioner related a story to me about a scammer impersonating someone she trusted. She received an email that appeared to be from Father Cliff asking her to purchase several \$100 gift cards for him to give to the parish office staff. At first, she was happy to comply but became suspicious when “Father” insisted that she pay for the gift cards with cash. She contacted Father Cliff directly and learned that the email didn’t come from him. This type of scam has been happening at I.C. and other churches in the Syracuse Diocese for years. If you receive an unexpected email or text message from someone claiming to be Father Cliff or another priest, call the rectory office and verify it.

Armed with a healthy dose of skepticism and the facts about financial fraud, you can reduce the chances that you will be scammed. But even the most cautious person can make a very costly mistake. Don’t let pride or embarrassment prevent you from reporting a scam. Here’s list of resources for more information about scams and how to report them. If you receive an attempt to scam you, report it to the FTC or FCC. If you lose money in a scam, also report it to the police.

Federal Trade Commission Consumer Advice: consumer.ftc.gov
 Federal Communication Commission Consumer Help Center: www.fcc.gov/consumers
 New York State Office for Aging: aging.ny.gov/scams
 Onondaga County Office for Aging: www.ongov/aging
 Town of Manlius Police Department: 315-682-2212

Focus on Vocations: Career, Calling, Service

By Mary Anne Corasaniti

We often hear that people who chose the religious life had a special calling from God. Is that always the case? How would we know if God were calling us to the religious life? Recently, I was blessed to have spent some time with Monsignor Ronald Bill. He has dedicated his long life (he will be 95 years old in May) to serving others in ways that I, and perhaps you, might not have imagined. This article begins a series about the people at I.C. Parish who have religious vocations and what drew them to serve God in this unique way.

Monsignor Bill was born in Syracuse in 1931. He attended Salt City Public School in Liverpool and went to Christian Brothers Academy for high school. At CBA, he wanted to play football, but the coach said he wasn’t big enough. “Ronnie” was told that if he took up boxing, he could try out for football again the following year. He did and accomplished both.

Like many young men, young Ron Bill enjoyed good friendships, many of which have continued throughout his life, and a “very nice” girlfriend. He first thought about entering the seminary in his senior year but didn’t feel “called to be a priest.” He wasn’t sure if he could do it or if he was even “worthy” of the priesthood. He shared his thoughts with Father William Walsh and Father Carl Denti, who helped him navigate the process of applying to St. Bernard’s Seminary in Rochester. Upon acceptance, he entered with 23 other young men, all of whom became priests. In the seminary, he found a skill he never believed he had. To this day, Monsignor Bill continues to share his lovely tenor voice with all of us. It was not until Ordination day, Feb. 2, 1957, that he felt God was calling him to be a priest.

Unlike many of his peers, Monsignor Bill did not become a parish priest upon ordination. His first assignment was director of Catholic Charities of Oswego County and teaching at Oswego Catholic High School. He went on to serve as the director of Catholic Charities of Broome County, and then of Catholic Charities of the Syracuse Diocese. Along the way, he also fulfilled his dream of joining the Army National Guard. During the Vietnam War, Second Lieutenant Bill had the difficult job of informing families of the loss of their loved ones. He also served as chaplain to the troops during the floods in the Southern Tier and other catastrophes in New York state.

In 1988, after 30 years with Catholic Charities, Monsignor Bill was made pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Cicero. In 1991, he retired from the Army National Guard with the rank of brigadier general. In 2001, he retired from parish administration and moved into the I.C. rectory. In “retirement,” the bishop called upon him several times to help at parishes around the diocese for days, weeks, or even months at a time.

Monsignor Bill says the most difficult sacrifice he had to make as a priest was not having a wife and family. But the impact he has had through his chaplaincy, scholarships, pastoral ministry, and charitable work has bettered the lives

of countless people of all ages, which he might never have been able to accomplish as a husband and father.

The calling to the priesthood may not have happened for Monsignor Ronald Bill in the way we would have envisioned, but his ordination most certainly changed the world for the better. How blessed we are at I.C. to have him in our community.



Monsignor Ronald Bill is a retired brigadier general of the Army National Guard. (Photo courtesy of Meme Cavanaugh)

A Prayerful, Comforting Ministry

By Diane Haller

On a crisp, sunny autumn day last year, members of one of I.C.'s most creative ministries gathered at current leader Carolyn Frymoyer's house to knit, crochet, and socialize.

Founded in 2008 by Donita Whelan, the Prayer Shawl Ministry provides the sick and the bereaved with a shawl or blanket to comfort them in their time of need. As each shawl is made, the member is praying for the well-being of the person who will receive it. A prayer of blessing attached to each shawl reads in part: "May the one who receives this shawl be cradled in hope, kept in joy, graced with peace, and wrapped in love. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen."

On this particular day, Carolyn, being the gracious hostess she is, had baked a delicious pumpkin pie, which we enjoyed along with hot apple cider. Halloween decorations added to the festive atmosphere. During the afternoon, more members stopped by to say hello and a good time was had by all!

Donita and Mary Ann Jefferies, members of the original

10-member group, continue to serve in the ministry. Today, the group has grown to 24 active members. When asked what she likes most about the group, Mary Ann summed it up: "Companionship is ... the most important thing."

There's no better way to spend an afternoon with friends than knitting or crocheting for a good cause. Needless to say, the recipients of these beautiful shawls or blankets are so grateful that someone took the time to make them and prayed for their personal well-being.

While a few members meet four times a year, it is not a prerequisite to join. Many members make their unique creations at home and then bring them to church to be blessed by Father Cliff. Shawls require three to five skeins of non-allergic easy-care yarn, about six hundred yards.

Donita conveyed that she is "super happy the group is still going." If you would like to put your creative talent to good use, or if you're rusty and would like to get back to doing what you love with a little help, call the parish office at 315-637-9846. We'd love to meet you!



Prayer Shawl Ministry members gather at Carolyn Frymoyer's house to knit and crochet together. From left: Donita Whelan, Diane Blanchfield, Lorraine Markley, Diane Haller, Mary Ann Jefferies, Stephanie Hausladen, and Carolyn Frymoyer. (Photo courtesy of Diane Haller)

Your Eternity Has Already Begun

By Peter Arsenault

How often do we think of "eternal life" as something that is going to happen later? After all, John 3:16 suggests this: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."

John the Baptist declares something else, though, namely "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2) to prepare the way for Jesus who begins his own ministry with the exact same message (Matthew 4:17). However, Mark 1:15 uses the words "The Kingdom of God is at hand." The distinction in wording is likely due to the fact that Matthew was writing to a predominantly Jewish audience and therefore would use the word "heaven" as a substitute for saying any name for God — a pattern found throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Nonetheless, the meaning is the same. The fact that Jesus was bodily present on Earth and doing the work he came to do among us meant that His Kingdom had arrived, even if it was not yet fully realized.

What does all this mean for us? It means that we are living in the present form of the spiritual Kingdom that Jesus established. Yes, we anticipate Jesus to return in his Second Coming as he promised and to usher in the fullness of his eternal Kingdom, but we are living in the present Kingdom now.

I recently heard a sermon on the idea of our life in the present and how it relates to eternity. The priest held up the end of a long white rope that draped down alongside of him, ran around the ambo, spilled down the altar steps, and wrapped around several statues before disappearing into an alcove. He asked us to picture this rope running out of the alcove, into the parking lot, taking off into the sky, looping past the moon, circling the sun, and then heading off into deep space. He then revealed that the end of the rope he was holding was colored red for the first few inches. He explained that the very short red portion represents our life here on earth, while the rest of the rope represents our life continuing into eternity. The direction of the rope is determined by how we hold the red section, just as the direction of our eternal life is determined by our focus on God or on worldly or sinful things.

That may be why John the Baptist and Jesus followed the proclamation of the Kingdom with a message to repent or turn away from anything that keeps us from embracing the reality of the Kingdom of God through Jesus the Christ. That message came with a sense of urgency for conversion — get focused now; do not wait until later. We only live a short time on this Earth, but our spiritual life is eternal — and by being alive, our eternity has already begun.



The Immaculate Conception Choir: Front row, from left: Jane Price, Danielle Marnell, Jo-Ann Michalak, Cheryl Noetscher, Annette Friedrichs, Janet Bleier, and Liz Loftus. Center row, from left: Pat Richards, Linda Marnell, Sherrie Hale, and Michael Guzman. Back row, from left: Lucien Hale, Peter Hale, Larry Koch, Dorsey Rohrer, and Sallie Igou. Missing from photo: Carolyn Frymoyer and Lois Papp.

Music Ministry Enriches Worship

By Pat Richards

As a child, I was always reminded by my parents who loved to sing at church that "when you sing you pray twice" — a quote I have since learned is attributed to St. Augustine. Do you enjoy listening to music at Mass? Do you enjoy singing along, or do some of the hymns bring you back to your childhood? Perhaps you would be interested in joining one of the parish's music ministries.

Immaculate Conception has always had a rich music program, with both traditional choir and contemporary music provided at different Masses. I met with the principal leaders of both music groups and learned more about the people and programs that bring us the music that enriches our worship.

Organist and pianist Jane Price has been at I.C. for 49 years! Jane plays the organ to accompany the choir. She also plays when there is a cantor but no choir. She studied music in college, and she is a classical music fan.

Sherrie Hale is the leader of the choir and has been at I.C. for 30 years. You would not be surprised to learn that, like Jane, her favorite type of music is classical music but you might be surprised to know that Sherrie has a Ph.D. in cell biology and anatomy, and she teaches anatomy at Upstate Medical University!

The I.C. choir is a dedicated group of men and women who enjoy music and singing. I have been in the choir for only a few months, but I can tell you that the choir members are some of the nicest and most welcoming people I have met in a long time! Sherrie is our leader and we always welcome new members. We practice on Thursday evenings at 7 p.m. and sing at the 11:30 a.m. Mass on Sunday. In addition to Sunday Mass, we sing at a couple of special events each year, such as the Lessons and Carols service in the Christmas season with the other church choirs in the area. The choir is very flexible about attendance, so missing a Thursday evening practice or a Sunday is not a problem.

The Immaculate Conception Contemporary Ensemble. Front row, from left: Marie Koch, Jo-Ann Michalak, Jane Broton, Aleksandra Smith, Gwyn Mannion, Chrissy Lefkus, and Andrea Ashline. Back row, from left: Mike Rutkowski, Liam Kohler, Danny Kilbride, Steve Hanson, Russ McPherson, and Lou Pellegrino. Missing from photo: Melina Kohler, Melody Cornman, Peter Prunner, Tracey Trebendis, and John Doughy. (Photo courtesy of Andrea Ashline)

The choir takes the summer off; it generally stops after Father's Day and resumes after Labor Day.

If contemporary music is more to your liking, then the Contemporary Ensemble that sings at the 9 a.m. Mass may be what you are looking for. Andrea Ashline is the director. She has degrees in music education and she teaches music at an elementary school in Syracuse. She has been at I.C. for six years. Her favorite type of music is musical theater. The Contemporary Ensemble rehearses on Thursdays at 6 p.m. and currently has 16 members who sing or play instruments including piano, keyboard, drums, and guitar. Andrea described her members as people from all different walks of life who come together and enjoy making music. Like the choir, they are always looking to welcome new members.

Maybe one of these music ministries is a good fit for you! For more information contact Choir director Sherrie Hale at p.hale@yahoo.com or Contemporary Ensemble director Andrea Ashline at 315-439-3361.

