

St. Mary's Alumni Action News

Fall/Winter 2005 - 2006

From the Pastor's Desk...

Volume 7, Issue 2

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! It is with great joy that I have the opportunity to greet all of you once again from beautiful Far Rockaway. I write to share with you all of the great things that continue to take place in our school and in our parish.

2006 marks the 149th year that St. Mary Star of the Sea Parish has served as a beacon of light to those who seek Jesus Christ. It is hard to imagine what things were like here 149 years ago. One thing we do know is that the faith of those who have gone before us built up this great community of faith and made it what it is today. Over these many years we have faced many challenges as a parish community.

Those challenges continue today and we rely on the support of our alumni and friends to help us continue our mission. As many of you know there were many Catholic schools that had to be closed last year due to decreasing enrollment and lack of funds. This year our parish school has 255 students. That number is good but not great.

In the Far Rockaway community there are many Catholic young people who would like to attend Catholic school but are prevented from doing so because of the cost. As alumni we have an opportunity to enable those less fortunate to have a quality Catholic Education at St. Mary Star of the Sea School. I have had the great pleasure of speaking with so many of you who have already made a difference in the life of a child by your generous sponsorship of one of our students. I am so grateful to so many of you for all that you do for St. Mary's.

As we begin a New Year I once again ask for your help. We need your support to keep our school alive. Please consider the possibility of offering to a child from St. Mary's Parish the opportunity that each one of us has had, the gift of a Catholic education. Your gift can make the world of difference. May God bless you and all of your families.

With Love in Christ,
Father Jim Cunningham
Pastor

St. Mary's Golden Oldies Reunion

On October 15, 2005, the classes of 1954,1955,1956, and 1957 came together to celebrate their graduation from St. Mary Star of the Sea, growing up in old Far Rockaway, and the incredible friends and classmates we met along the way. After nine days of unrelenting rain, the heavens cleared and showered us with afternoon sunshine, balmy temperatures, and a star lit evening sky.

The activities began with a trip down memory lane as many of us took the opportunity to tour St. Mary's school and venture into the places that held so many of our childhood memories. The students of today welcomed us as did a lovely welcoming letter from today's principal, Angela Brucia. We visited old classrooms, and recounted tales of years gone by. We peaked into cloak rooms to assure ourselves of their preservation, and few could resist a trip to the multi-purpose "China Rose Room" of our youthful memories.

Sixty or more of us were welcomed at the five o'clock parish mass. The service was beautiful. Father Jim Cunningham made us feel loved and welcomed home. Former pastor and Episcopal Vicar, Father Sean Ogle, was also on the altar. Father was instrumental in the formation of the effective alumni association St. Mary's has today - which is also used as a model for other parishes aspiring to do the same. The readings were given by Bokeeta Craft Spataro (Class of '55) and Pete Meehan (Class of '57). The Prayer of the Faithful was offered by Dr. Bill Cashel, joining us from California. The music "Bells of St. Mary" brought a tear to all as we remembered attending those 9:30 children's masses all those Sundays of our youth. We realized that after a lifetime of laughter, tears, and travel, we had eventually come home at last.



The hugely successful "Golden Oldies" Reunion was a labor of love for alumnae Mary Ellen McGroary ('55) and Suzanne Zatto Mills ('55). Peggy Meere Mecca ('57) is pictured in background.

(Continued on page 4)

The Principal's Report

Dear Friends,

I had the pleasure to spend time with some of you in October at the "Golden Oldie" reunion. What a wonderful celebration! Reunions, especially those of elementary schools, are unique experiences. We are transported back to a time when life was so simple. There is no need to "put on airs." We are with people who knew us before material things mattered, financial status was calculated, or "success" was measured by financial worth.

At the party, I was overwhelmed by the generosity of the guests. The school was presented with a substantial donation from the "50/50 raffle." An extremely generous tuition scholarship was presented in memory of an alumnus. A member of the "Golden Oldie" group sent me a check specifically for the Pre-Kindergarten. Of course, all these gifts have been put to good use. We continue to receive gifts from a few other alumni, as well. I have said this many times: the St. Mary's Alumni are THE BEST!

How is the school doing today? I have told you, in previous newsletters, about the serious financial crisis we are experiencing. This year, enrollment is up slightly. Our current enrollment is 255 students. We are fortunate to be part of two scholarship programs - *Futures in Education* and the *Children's Scholarship Fund*. There are about 25 students who participate in these programs. They would be unable to attend St. Mary's if not for the financial aid they receive. However, our present worry revolves around day-to-day operating expenses. Every few weeks, we receive an oil delivery of more than 1,000 gallons! Do I need to say more?

We are presently meeting with the other schools and parishes in Rockaway to determine the future of Catholic Schools in our area. Are all the schools viable? Can they all continue? These are questions that need to be answered. Of course, we want our school to stay open. We are the only Catholic School in the area. We feel we are needed and necessary, but the financial realities must be considered. I will be happy to share the results of these meetings with you.

I worry about the financial stability of our school. However, when I see the children happy and safe, and I know they are being educated to become productive members of tomorrow's world, I know that we are needed - now, perhaps, more than ever. Please keep us in your prayers. I would love to hear from anyone who has any suggestions regarding our financial situation. I'm sure you have some wonderful ideas - after all, you are St. Mary's graduates! God bless all of you.

Angela Brucia
Principal

Our Reader's Corner

I am **still smiling** since being at the class reunion. **I had such a great time and it was a day I'll never forget.** It was one of my **happiest days.** **Thanks to everyone** who was there as I'm sure everyone feels the same way. **It was such a happy time** and I loved seeing all of my **dear, dear classmates** who made this a happy time by all being there. Thank you for the keepsake cup and booklet full of memories so that we can all reflect on this very special day. God bless you all.

Diane (Pepe) Cellini

I'm sure you know by now that the St. Mary's reunion was quite a success. I just wanted to commend the students that acted as tour guides. They did an outstanding job. They went out of their way to show us around and answer any questions pertaining to St. Mary's. It was so refreshing to meet such polite kids. I should know, as I became a school bus driver after retiring from the Postal Service.

Jack Pickle, Class of '57

Just checking out the site and brought back memories...anyone remembering me, feel free to email me and say "hi."

Jimmy Vaughn, Class of '68 (mrbaddog175@aol.com)

My mother and her family grew up in Far Rockaway in the 1930 - 60's. Her name was Mary Ellen McGrane, Class of 1946, and all her siblings - Hugh, George, John, Winifred and Jimmy - went to St. Mary's. She and my father, Robert Barry - who died in 1987—were married at St. Mary's in 1960. His mother was Grace Barry, a long time member of the parish. Unfortunately my mother passed away this year. Would love to hear from anyone who might have known her growing up in the 1930's and 40's. Thanks.

Robert Barry (rmbarry@att.com)

The reunion was great. We toured the school. I clapped the erasers and enjoyed the tour. The Mass was very special. The dinner was great also. So many laughs. So many memories. Good to see so many old friends. If your class is organizing a reunion, don't miss it. Thanks to all the committee who worked so hard. Thanks Fr. Jim, Fr. Ogle and Ms. Brucia for a great evening. The student tour guides were most helpful. Great bunch of students. Please convey my thanks to all.

Joe Clancy, Class of '57

I graduated St. Mary's in 1982. I loved going to the school and I have a lot of great memories. I would love to hear from any of my old classmates. Your website is very helpful and interesting.

Alice Napolitano-Improte (AliceA@Improte.com)

Graduated St. Mary's in June 1957. Lived right next to the school. Great School. Found a couple of old friends on the net. Would like to here from old classmates. Please write.

Barbara Craft Dawo (Barbarad12315@yahoo.com)

2005 Mass for Deceased Alumni

On Saturday, November 19, 2005, a special Eucharistic celebration was held in memory of our deceased Alumni.

Mark your calendar: the 12:10 Mass on the Saturday before Thanksgiving is reserved for this memorial each year.

Please join us!



Fr. Jim and George Smith



Mary Ellen McGroary, Jack Reilly and Suzanne Zatto Mills



Gail Dunn Joseph and John McGrane



Joe Barden and Jim Higgins



Walter Wood and Frank Whelan



Julian Waldron, Lillian Higgins and Suzanne Mills



Frank Whelan, Jim Higgins, Gail Joseph, Lillian Higgins, Marilyn Whelan, Mary Kate Riley and Fr. David



Edna Dieringer



Marilyn O'Connell Whelan, Leah Wood, and Maureen Heinzmann Morin

I would like to make a correction on a site I had posted. The correct address for the new alumni site for anyone who went to St. Mary's is:

www.groups.yahoo.com/group/stmarysosalumni/

Sorry for the mistake....Would love to hear from all you guys...
Peggy Meere Mecca (Caycay@optonline.net)

IN MEMORIAM

In the brief time that has passed since our last newsletter was published, we have suffered the painful loss of the following alumni and faculty:

Sr. Margaret Angela, 1940 - '44

Sr. Anne Michaela, 1957 - '59

**Katherine Dmytriw Hahn,
Class of '32**

**Henrietta Snyder Lenz,
Class of '37**

George Leonard, Class of '52

George J. Ficke, Class of '53

Thomas Gillen, Class of '54

James Commack, Class of '69

Please remember all our deceased Alumni in your prayers.

***"May They Rest in Peace!
Amen."***

Please remember SMSOS when planning your estate.

Golden Oldies Reunion

The evening's festivities took place at The Coyote Grill in Island Park. There were one hundred revelers in all from points north, south and west, traveling from fourteen states to join in the party of the year, decade, and, some might say, lifetime. Some founding members of the Alumni Association were able to join us as did our newsletter managing editor, Joe Barden. There are no words to describe what happened that night. There was a lot of hugging, and laughter and reconnection with old friends and buddies and meeting new friends as well. And more hugging and laughter and reliving, and making future plans, and dancing to the music from our graduation parties of a half century ago. It was as if someone waved a magic wand, and for a few moments, we were all thirteen once again.

The following day an "Afters" party was hosted in Malverne, where we once again relived our youth, and also relived the night before. About forty dropped by for a chance to pause for a moment longer before saying good bye and going off to our many and diverse lives.

Mary Ellen McGroary and I wish to extend our gratitude to Tommy Morin and Peggy Meere Mecca for their help, particularly in locating lost classmates. And to all for the many "thank yous" we have received including notes, letters, e-mails and phone calls. Some of the words used to describe the weekend were, terrific, fab, wonderful, glorious, and most often magic or magical. Some of the phrases depicting the event were, the best reunion ever, a wonderful reconnecting, a chance to rejoice, fabulous in every way, all that I could have hoped for and more. As for me, it was an extraordinary experience and blessing to be a part of one exquisitely perfect moment in time!

Suzanne Zatto Mills '55



← Class of 1955
 Cathy Kilgannon Player
 Pat Clancy Gilligan
 Mary Bauer Evans
 Bobby Schreiber
 Diane Vitale Durham
 Maureen Cartledge Molinari
 Suzanne Zatto Mills
 Mary Ellen McGroary
 Gail Bodenlos
 Ray Cashel
 John Farrell
 Pat Berkhoff Sisson
 Rob Carney
 Msgr. Jack Waldron
 Ray Kane



Class of 1954 ↑
 Billy Mansfield, Tommy Morin, Jimmy Keenan, Suzanne Bolyston Cusack, Eddie Heslin,
 Jack Degnan, Joe Muratore, Pat Howard Morin, Eileen Dempsey Provenzano,
 Ray Connolly, Billy Cashel

In addition to fun and frolic, the reunion raised some serious money for the school. The sons of Mac McDermott '53, Chris and Glen, donated \$ 2,000 for tuition funds for two needy families. Bokeeta Craft Spataro '55, donated \$ 1,000 to St. Mary's pre-K program - and has since sent 11 boxes of early childhood education books to the school! The 50/50 Raffle conducted at The Coyote, won by Pete Meehan '57, raised another \$ 500."

Golden Oldies Reunion



↑ Class of 1956
Diane Pepe Cellini, Anne Forsman Northup, Joe Lally, Danny O'Rourke, Joan Farrell Boyd, Doug Mahoney, Eileen Matlock McNally, Mary Noonan, John Haas, Dolores Jones Muratore

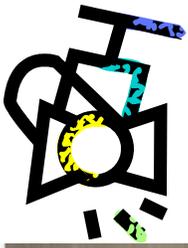
Class of 1957 →
Pete Meehan
Peggy Meere Mecca
Dolores Davis-Kon
Diane Pepe Cellini ('56)
Dick Connolly
Fran Farrell Cowan
Ronnie Shea Lauriano
Jack Pickle
Mike Kane
Dennis Carroll
Eddie Friel
Barbara Craft Dawo
Joey Kiskis
Pat McGroary



← Enjoying the "afters" (Sunday, Oct. 16th) at the home of Suzanne Zatto Mills are:
Ronnie Shea Lauriano
Cathy Kilgannon Player
Barbara (guest)
Diane Vitale Durham
Joan Bodenlos Lewis
Marilyn Carney
Fran Farrell Cowan

More "afters" with: →
Anne Forsman Northup
Tommy Morin
Eddie Friel
Joan Farrell Boyd
Bobby Schreiber
Eddie Farrell





Alumni Spotlight

Julia Waldron, Class of '38

On September 24, 2005, St. Mary Star of the Sea Parishioner Julia Waldron was inducted into the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. The Order has a worldwide mission to support the Holy Places, particularly in Jerusalem, and has approximately eighteen thousand members across the globe. This most impressive honor was bestowed upon Julia by Cardinal Egan at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, where she became a Lady of the Holy Sepulchre.



Julia pictured with Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio and fellow parishioner Dr. Emy Punsalan.

This is one of the oldest and most distinguished orders of knighthood confirmed upon men and women for leadership in the Church, in the community, and in their individual lives.

Julia is a 1938 alumna of St. Mary Star of the Sea School. She was a founding member of the alumni association to which she continues to contribute her endless time and effort. Other parish responsibilities Julia has held include participation in St. Mary's Pastoral Council, as well as the Diocesan Bishop's Pastoral Council. She is a parish trustee for St. Mary's, as well as a Eucharistic Minister for patients in St. John's Hospital.

Julia is a life long resident of Far Rockaway. She is retired from her position as membership manager for the New York Chamber of Commerce. Julia loves to travel and has traveled throughout Europe, and has made extensive trips to Ireland where she has many cherished family members.

Julia said she was thrilled by receiving this honor. Others were thrilled for her, and know just how well deserved the honor was. Also receiving this special honor was parish member Dr. Emy Punsalan.



Julia is welcomed into the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre by Cardinal Egan.



The badge is the Cross of Jerusalem with a smaller Cross between the arms, all in red enamel, suspended from a black ribbon.

Memory Lane



Far Rockaway bathing beauties circa 1953, in one of Fr. La Flare's famous productions with the "Parish Club" for young adults.

Seen in this picture, taken by Fr. Milde, are:

Back Row: Virginia Lavelle, Maureen Monahan, Barbara Wall, Maureen Heinzmann, Frances Carrano

Bottom Row: Eugenie Hanigan, Ann Hynes, Diane Dunn, Joan Mannenbach

KENWOOD CONVENT OF THE SACRED HEART

CENTER FOR HEALTH & RETIREMENT FOR RSCJ

Dear Father Cunningham,

Sincere gratitude for St. Mary's Alumni Action News, Winter '05. It is so full of good news. My name is Faine McMullen, R.S.C.J. - but as a student graduate of St. Mary's Class of 1926 I was called Redempta.

I write to acknowledge my gratitude to my first and most precious of schools and to Fr. Farrell, then Pastor, and the Sisters of St. Joseph. With their values and principles I built the foundation of my years of high school, College of Mount St. Vincent and Fordham University School of Law. I received my J.D. in 1937 and was admitted to the NYS Bar in the same year.

After practicing law in N.Y.C. till 1944, I felt the *Call of Our Loving God* to enter the Society of the Sacred Heart, which I did in '44. After profession in 1954, I taught at New College for 20 years. When the College merged with another, I left to serve the poor as legal counselor and political activist until 1985. Then I retired to our Convent in Albany.

This looking back is simply to say what the education at St. Mary's has meant 'thru these nine decades. St. Mary's is a school where sound moral and intellectual values are developed and where the student is given an awareness of the needs of the human family and his/her responsibility to respond to them. In a word - St. Mary's is a **God-given** opportunity for a student's basic education.

May God sustain the School for long years and bless you, the faculty, all the students and Alums, and the thousands of parents and friends who have supported it.

Sincerely in *Lorde Jesu*,

Faine McMullen, R.S.C.J., *Class of 1926*

Note: Sister Faine's brother, the Rev. Aiden McMullen, S.J., is a SMSOS graduate of the *Class of 1930*.



St. Mary's Alumni Association

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St. Mary's Alumni Action News

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Call to Service

St. Mary's School achieved an enrollment this year of slightly more than 250 students. As many know, we did NOT enjoy any significant boost in enrollment following the closing of St. Joachim's in Cedarhurst. While Fr. Jim has indicated (see page 1) that this number is ok, it's really not enough to fully achieve self-sufficiency, provide the level of service our students deserve (*and the market place demands*), or insulate us against the (now) yearly threat of "school closings." What our alma mater really needs is a solid yearly enrollment of some 300 students.

It's a simple fact that many parish families with school age children, and a strong appreciation of catholic education, simply cannot afford the tuition these days. This is reflected in the high participation rate in the parish CCD program. How can we encourage or facilitate the transition of CCD participants to registered, tuition-paying students?

One word comes to mind: *scholarships*.

For as long as I can remember, the parish has promoted the idea of full or partial scholarships to the children of financially distressed, parish-registered families. In better times, this "ministry" - made possible through the generosity of registered parishioners - was funded from parish revenues. Some alumni have been quietly shouldering this burden, with little or no recognition, for some time now. They - and the school - desperately need our help. Yearly tuition runs in the area of \$ 2,800 these days. For an annual tax-deductible, charitable donation of \$ 3,000, we can provide a quality catholic educational opportunity for a needy parish child, along with a modest uniform allowance - and save the future of catholic education at St. Mary's.

Our Pastor, Fr. Jim, has agreed to identify students of eligible families presently enrolled in the parish CCD program, and our Principal, Angela Brucia, has agreed to administer a scholarship program through which we could be periodically informed of the progress of these students. Anonymity, of course, remains an option. We may wish to dedicate our individual scholarships to the memory of those who sacrificed to provide for our educational needs.

Please contact Fr. Jim or Ms. Brucia if you are interested in participating. Thank you.

Joseph G. Barden, *Class of '69*