“A Spider-Man Legacy”   
July 17/18, 2004

I attended a funeral on Monday. It was somewhat different. Spiderman was there.

Since working in Youth Ministry, this is the fourth time I’ve experienced the death of one of my “kids”. I’m referring to the youths who’ve been a part of my ministry programs over the years.

Jay was one of the youth I worked with at Sacred Heart. Jay died one week short of his 20th birthday. His body was wore out from dealing with the medical problems that plagued him all his life.

Born with heart problems, he had three surgeries in his first six years. After the last surgery he suffered a stroke, followed by a three-month coma. He received a tracheotomy, and breathing difficulties increased each time fluid built up around his heart. His body never fully developed, so he was short in stature. Despite it all, he never complained.

What he lacked in stature, he made up for in warmth, and smiles. Jay was one of the most loving young men I’ve ever known. He would call family and friends just to say, “I Love You”.

Jay completed the 8th grade, but remained homebound since then. He loved movies and the Dukes of Hazard show. In the last few years he met Garth Brooks, and “The Rock”.

Spider-Man was his current love. He connected to the superhero who is both invincible and able to scale buildings by using his web. At night Jay was attached to a breathing machine, his web becoming his lifeline. The super hero helps those in trouble. Jay helped people with his genuine warmth, hugs, and love.

Sadly, Jay never got to see the newest movie.

Jay was buried in Spider-Man apparel, including a hat, necklace, and shirt. Tears flooded my eyes when most of his relatives walked in wearing Spider-Man shirts at the funeral! It was their last tribute for Jay.

I’m going to go see Spider-Man 2 to remember what a gift Jay was to me and to all. He touched a lot of hearts in 20 short years. What a legacy if each of us did the same!

Cindy Black

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“Answering the Call”   
 May 9, 2004

I didn’t grow up being involved at Church. I was not connected to the parish. I was like many young people. I went to Mass and went home. There was no youth program. As a matter of fact, I hadn’t heard of “youth ministry”.

So how did I end up in Youth Ministry for the last 15 years? IT WAS A CALLING. God used the voices of friends to call me forth.

Here is the short version.

I was attending college, living at home and working part- time. I was very involved in campus life.

One day everything changed. I hurt my back on the job, went to the doctor, and then went home to bed for two years. I lost my ability to drive and my independence. Over the next four years I saw 13 doctors.

It took six years to finish college. It would have been easy to quit, I could barely walk, much less sit. As my friends moved on with life, mine stayed stagnant. The pain was great, and the depression followed. My parents, in their wisdom, coaxed me to a meeting at church. The group performed lip sync shows.

I knew no one at the meeting, only faces of adults I’d seen throughout the years. I was the youngest person there, and was somewhat adopted by the group. Those people became a source of support, encouragement, and faith.

Over the next few years it was their voices that called me forward. They prayed for someone to work with their kids. In various ways and places I heard the message. The words stayed in my heart, and I knew God was calling me.

I made the commitment to God to work with young people, and the assurance I received in return was a slow healing of my back problems.

At St. Patrick we are now in the process of calling adults forward to help walk with our young church. Please listen to see if you are being called. God doesn’t call the equipped, God equips those that are called.

Cindy

P.S. Happy Mother’s Day

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“Following the Blueprints”   
May 15, 2004

Laying a foundation requires many builders. A project manager who oversees the work has quiet a task, but refers back to the blueprints for clarity. If the project manager leaves the project unexpectedly, a new manager can come in, follow the blueprints, and continue building. They shouldn’t have to tear down the structure and start again.

Thankfully in youth ministry, a blueprint was established to guide the way.

The foundation for youth ministry was established in 1976 when the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops developed the document entitled, “A Vision of Youth Ministry.” It became the blueprint as it blended past efforts with emerging ideas. It outlined the philosophy, goals, principles, and components for the Church’s ministry with youth.

In 1995, Pope John Paul II spoke to the crowds at World Youth Day and called to Church to become the “traveling companion of young people.”

Two years later the vision was developed even more by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops when they released, “Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry.” It expanded the thinking to include younger and older adolescents, while calling them to personal discipleship, evangelization, and leadership.

The framework sets up three goals: (1) empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today; (2) drawing young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the faith community; and (3) fostering the personal and spiritual growth of each young person.

The accomplishment of these goals is not a one-person task. This is not the “Cindy” ministry, but the St. Patrick Youth Ministry Program. I was hired to coordinate, facilitate, train, manage, and model youth ministry. But there is more than one model needed in the lives of our youth. Each person brings different experiences of faith, and different gifts to share.

There are many ways to read the blueprint and many builders needed to make it grow.

Cindy

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“I Have Been There”  
Date - 2004

“I have been there, I know what pain is all about.” This quote from a song by Christian recording artist Mark Schultz sums up what I said at the funeral home last Friday evening when I visited Karen Sirianno’s family after the death of her father, Steven Perry.

It is the same reason I attended the funeral service for one of our youngest parishioners, Lauren Rader, on Monday morning.

I have been there. Our family was touched by cancer after my Mother was diagnosed. I know what it is to become a caregiver while watching someone you love, suffer. I also know what it meant to me when family and friends came to the funeral home after she died. I have been there, and I’m called by God to be there for others as much as I can. It is a Ministry of Presence.

My Mother’s death helped me to become the Minister I am today. I feel deeply the experiences of others.

We all have struggles, joys, and pains that form who we are. They make up the story of our lives. Our stories are meant to be shared, in the same way that Jesus shared stories. .

That is why I’m looking for adults willing to share their stories and experiences. Youth are looking for caring adults to be their friends and to share their struggles. Remember adults, you have been there!

We are building a core team of adults willing to be “Faithwalkers” with our senior high aged youth for the coming year. This team will create programs and a vision for youth ministry that is broader than the idea of “youth group”. Eventually junior high and college-aged teams will be built.

Because you have been there, I hope many of you feel called to offer your stories to our young Church. Your Ministry of Presence will go a long way in shaping their lives.

Cindy Black

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"Total Sacrifice"  
Date - 2004

The church's pastor invited a guest minister, a childhood friend to speak at a service.  
  
The elderly man began... "A father, his son, and a friend were sailing in the ocean when a fast approaching storm caught them off guard. The waves were so high that the boat capsized and the three were swept into the water.”            

The old man made eye contact with two teenagers in the pew.  
  
He continued. “Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life: To which boy would he throw the life line? He only had seconds to make the decision."  
  
The father knew his son was a Christian, and that his son's friend wasn’t. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the torrent of waves."  
  
"As the father yelled out, 'I LOVE YOU SON!' he threw the lifeline to the friend. The father pulled the friend to the boat, as his son disappeared beneath the waves.

By this time, the two teenagers were anxiously awaiting the next words.

The man continued, "The father knew his son would step into eternity with Jesus, and he could not bear the thought of his son's friend stepping into eternity without Jesus. He sacrificed his son to save the friend."  
  
"How great is the love of God that He should do the same for us!

After the service the two teens were at the old man's side and said. "That was a nice story but I don't think it was very realistic for a father to give up his only son's life in hopes that the other boy would become a Christian."  
  
The man smiled and said, “I'm standing here today to tell you that story gives me a glimpse of what it must have been like for God to give up His Son for us. You see, I was that father and your pastor was my son's friend."

Cindy Black

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"Laying the Firm Foundation"   
May 23, 2004

It is nice when someone lays the groundwork, does the preliminary steps, goes through the trials and errors before it gets to you. But sometimes digging in the trenches, doing the initial legwork, and starting from scratch has countless benefits.

In my 15 years of youth ministry experience, I have been on both sides. In each case I‘ve gained skills, and experience that benefited me, and the youth.

Looking at the “Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry” document, I see new and exciting things for St. Patrick.

I’ve laid some of the vision out in the three year Long Range Plans and Goals that the parish will be receiving soon.

I’ve begun a relationship with the Boy and Girl Scouts, encouraging the youth ministry that they already are doing. I’ve become the Chartered Organization Representative for our Boy Scouts.

The *Generations of Faith Program* has been a focus for me since I came to St. Patrick, creating learning sessions for the youth.

I stepped right in to helping with the Confirmation preparation, recently taking on the lead role for the program.

I’m attending regional meetings with our local Catholic Churches to create programs that will bring youth together for social, and prayerful experiences.

The Youth Commission and I begin an outreach to our college students, looking for avenues to keep them connected.

The senior high youth have had several opportunities for service in the past few months, and have invited adults to join them in planning.

We will establish leadership teams consisting of adults and youth who will create opportunities for those in junior high, high school and college students. We will work with the eight components of Youth Ministry while developing relational ministry.

There is such room for growth with so many young members. More adult help means more that we can offer. Won’t you share in the Vision and help with the foundation?

Cindy

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"Freedom isn’t Always Free”

July 10-11, 2004

As far back as I can remember, my extended family has gathered for the 4th of July Holiday. We have a family reunion with a huge picnic. My cousins, who live away from Southern Indiana, know that this is a great time to come “home” for a visit. Amazingly, out of my 34 first cousins, only 4 of them live out of state.

The day is filled with traditions: food, volleyball, stories, horseshoes, desserts, fireworks, more food, babies, sweat, and water fights. It is a great time for pictures and updating our family tree.

Over the years friends have joined into the celebration, knowing they are welcome at the Aemmer family picnic.

I’m not sure how it came to be that this holiday celebration became our family reunion. But I always wanted to be in town to celebrate the 4th of July with my family.

As I looked about the field on my uncle’s property, I could watch my relatives as they caught up with one another’s lives.

In so many ways, the day was like many others, except I kept watching my cousin Wayne and his family. Wayne, who is in the National Guard, just got called up. He had already served our country, but is needed to serve again. He leaves for Camp Atterbury next week. He is being sent to Afghanistan for 18 months. He has 2 young children, a wife, parents, and brothers.

In my family there is dividing thoughts on war and politics. I overheard several conversations taking place. But Wayne played volleyball, and chased kids around the field. He laughed and held the babies. He was enjoying everything about Independence Day.

My family will be like so many others in this country and around the world; we will be waiting and praying.

I know that freedom isn’t always free, and we sometimes take it for granted. This holiday, I was even more grateful for all those who serve our country, and for those who give their lives so that we can be free. Thank you for your service so that we can be free!

Cindy

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“Be Still and Know that I am God”

Jan. 3 & 4, 2004

When the winter weather brings snowfall at night, I love looking toward a street light and watching the flakes drift down, creating a fluffy blanket on the ground. Of course, I like it best when I’m already at home, safe and warm. Sometimes I fix a cup of hot chocolate, and then settle down by the window to watch the world turn white.

The snow seems to buffer all sounds. I watch a few cars traveling, and I pray for their safety. Sometimes I see tiny prints in the snow of a pet making its way home.

There is a peace that is hard to describe. It passes all understanding. And I am still, listening quietly to what God has just handed me. A gift!!!

I get excited when it snows because I believe that it is God’s way of slowing us down, allowing us to quiet ourselves, and just BE.

Our spirituality and souls need quite time! We need to rid ourselves of distractions to relax, and hear what our Creator is saying to our weary souls.

Right now our souls need peace as we deal with the death of Fr. Jack. It was only last year that we said goodbye as he finished what he was sent to this parish community to build. Now, we say goodbye again as he finished what God sent him to do.

We are a community in mourning. Be easy with yourself as you go through the grief process. Tears are a blessed event. Memory sharing is important. Seek the support of friends or counsel. Take time to be “Still” and sit with God. Just BE.

Cindy Black

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"Come to the Quiet"  
March 11-12, 2006

I went to a funeral home visitation last week. I enjoy the pictures and treasures that are displayed by the family that tell about the life of their loved one.

Near the casket was a table filled with Christmas decorations. But they weren’t just any decoration, they were the noisy ones; the ones that sing, move, or play music.

The family told me that the Grandmother loved those animated, noisy novelties, She would make them all sing and move at the same time, especially when the youngest grandchildren were visiting.

My friend said she couldn’t stand it, that the noise was just too much for her.

As I left the funeral home I thought about the noisy toys, and the grandchildren’s laughter.

But I also understand in our hectic world, sometimes we just don’t need any more noise. I could appreciate my friends’ sentiment of quiet time.

I thought about my quiet time. My office is located above the gym and below the Commons. I hear chairs scooting across the floor above me, and the P.E. classes below. As I’m writing this, noises from play rehearsals are drifting up from the Celtic Center.

Sometimes when I need quiet, I go to the chapel. At times I go with deep thoughts, or a heavy heart. Other times I go there for inspiration, my alone time with God. Sitting in front of the tabernacle strengthens me and gives me perspective. I leave knowing that with God’s grace, I’m never alone.

It is easy for me to get to the chapel since I work here.

There is a group of dedicated people trying to give this opportunity to more parishioners by promoting Eucharistic Adoration in the evening. At some parishes, Adoration has taken hold and large numbers come to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. This form of prayer is changing people, and parishes.

If you are looking for some quiet time, or a way to strengthen your relationship with Christ, Adoration may offer you that opportunity. There are sign-up sheets in the Gathering Space.

Sometimes in the quiet, I hear God’s voice. I leave feeling strengthened by the encounter. Maybe you will too.

Cindy Black

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"The Right Road at the Right Time"  
Jan 18-19, 2006

Traveling the interstate can get tiresome, yet when there are no tie-ups, it can be quicker.

A few weeks ago, I left the Sam’s Club in Clarksville, heading to New Albany.

It was a sunny day, so I decided to drive the scenic back roads. As I did, I realized it would take longer, but I continued. When I got to the main road, there was backed up traffic due to an accident. “Great”, I thought to myself, “just what I need.”

I turned the car around, and backtracked. I passed the vehicles that were heading toward the accident and thought, “I guess they will be turning around as well.”

I then noticed two very small children chasing one another through a yard. They were laughing and smiling as they ran. As I watched, they continued toward the road.

The closer I got, the closer the children got to the roadway. I saw no adult, no one to stop them. I moved in the opposite lane as I approached. As soon as I passed them, the children ran into the street. Cars turning around would not be far behind. Cars coming the opposite direction would be facing the sun and may not see the tots. My heart raced.

I had to save those children. I stopped in the road, turned on my hazard lights and ran to them. I got them out of the street and out of danger. They couldn’t tell me where they lived.

I saw an open gate and went in with the toddlers. Two young girls playing with some dogs said they were supposed to be watching them, and didn’t realize the gate was open.

When I asked for an adult, a young woman appeared with a phone in her hand. She was visibly upset. She explained the phone call was informing her that her boyfriend had just been in a bad car accident.

It was the same accident that caused me to turn around. It was the same accident that put me on the right road, at the right time. I don’t want to think about what could have happened if I hadn’t decided to take the scenic road that day.

God put me exactly where I was needed.

Cindy

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"Similar Circumstances"  
Sept 22-23, 2007

Recently my sister asked me to stop at a Christian Bookstore and pick up a video she needed the next day.

It was 100 degrees in the August heat, so I stopped for water. Returning to my car, I looked across the street. Directly across from me was another Christian Bookstore, one I had forgotten about!

“This will save me time and gas, “I thought. In record time I had the video in my hand and could have been back out the door in less than 5 minutes. But I wasn’t.

Something on a shelf caught my attention and I stopped. The young woman employee and I began talking. She said working at this store in the evening was a second job, one not as stressful as her factory position and where she could freely talk about God.

A customer came and went and our discussion grew deeper. She shared that she was having a very rough day, having just returned from a grief counselor. I couldn’t leave now.

I asked questions regarding her grief. Recently, her Mother died quite unexpectedly. I said that I understood. Her Mother was only 54. I stopped for a moment. My Mom was also 54 when she died! The young woman was 29 at the time. I couldn’t believe it! I was also 29 when I lost my Mother!

I had to know more when I realized our similar stories. She talked about her Dad and I dared to ask his name. As God would have, our Dad’s are both named Richard!

As you might expect, my very next question was the name of her Mother. Well, the similarities ended.

I don’t remember the item that I stopped to look at before our conversation began. I do remember that I stood and ministered to this young woman for about 30 minutes.

And the best part of the story; it was my Mother’s birthday. I know that my Mom guided me to that store to help that young woman in her time of grief. I hoped it helped her. I know it inspired me.

Cindy Black

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"Simply Stated"  
Jan 6-7, 2007

It was several evenings before Christmas and I was riding with my sister’s family looking at Christmas lights.

We drove, passing Santa Claus’, snowmen, penguins and reindeer. We noticed the trend of the big light bulbs, not the miniature lights that are popular. My family hung up the big bulbs every year. My sister would use the word “Retro” when we saw some hanging from a house. Elizabeth, my 5 year old niece, asked what that meant. Her Mommy explained and she was satisfied with the answer.

If a street was relatively dark, my brother-in-law would turn another direction. We praised the houses that were well decorated, especially those with a Nativity set. Not wanting to be left out, Elizabeth would add comments of her own.

We turned on a cul de sac and saw very few decorations. I commented that it appeared many people on the street did not celebrate Christmas.

The next words out of Elizabeth’s mouth were; “Why don’t people believe in Christmas?” The van fell silent. The quietness was broken by my sister who turned in her seat to look at me and said, “You get this one.”

Two thoughts raced through my head. The first one was gratitude that my sister was letting me give the “parent” answer. I’m careful not to overstep the bounds of being the aunt.

My next thought was how do I answer this inquisitive kindergartener? What answer will satisfy her? As a Youth Minister I answer faith questions, but generally to an older audience.

The silence grew. Too much information might confuse things. Too little information would lead to new questions.

I said a quick prayer to keep it simple. “Some people don’t celebrate Christmas because they don’t know about Jesus. Their mommy’s and daddy’s didn’t teach them that it is Jesus’ birthday and that we should be happy that he was born for us.”

She answered, “Oh”. Her Daddy said, “But we teach you, right?” Elizabeth answered, “Yes, you teach me about Jesus.”

For that night, the answer was enough. If only it were that simple to pass on our faith.

Cindy

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“Christ Our Hope”  
April 19-20, 2008

Pope Benedict XVI arrived this week for his first United States visit, his 8th foreign trip since his papacy began in 2005. Pope Benedicts visit coincided with the 200 year anniversary of the dioceses of Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Bardstown (later moved to Louisville).

During his 6 days in the States, our Spiritual leader visited the U. S. Bishops, the United Nations, and Ground Zero. His visit culminates with a final liturgy on Sunday, April 20.

It is amazing to note that prior to his visit, over 5,000 requests were made for press credentials to cover the Pope’s travels which began in Washington D.C. There is little doubt that people want to be in his Holy presence.

When Pope Benedict celebrates in Yankee Stadium today, the Archdiocese of Louisville will be represented as a way to acknowledge our Bicentennial. Specifically, St. Patrick is represented by the Chicani and Kraus families whose names were drawn in the ticket raffle.

The theme of the Pope’s visit is “Christ Our Hope” taken from his encyclical letter On Christian Hope (Spe Salvi). To bring this message closer to home, I asked 20 St. Patrick high school youth their thoughts regarding Hope in Christ.

Here are a few excerpts:

-Believing the story of Christ we can HOPE for his coming again.

-As youth of the world, our HOPE is to have a strong sense of faith in God to stand up for our beliefs.

-Christ is continually our HOPE to aid our decision making.

-We see HOPE in life, especially newborns.

-We see HOPE in death in the dying, rising, and Ascension of Jesus.

-Experiencing beauty in people and nature can give us HOPE, and proof of Christ for ourselves.

-We HOPE that in the chaos of the world, there is true peace.

May the Pope’s message of Hope deepen Christ’s love in your hearts, homes, and here at St. Patrick.

Cindy Black

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"Giving and Receiving the Body of Christ"

April 18-19, 2009

My niece was so excited this past Sunday at Mass because it is the last time that she will receive “the blessing”. This weekend, she will be welcomed at the table as she receives her First Holy Communion. At St. Patrick we celebrate 104 children who received the Sacrament on Saturday.

The excitement from the 2nd graders is contagious as they prepare to receive the Body and Blood of Christ for the first time, and move into a deeper level of commitment in the Church. Their giggles and smiles turn to reverence and respect for their faith and all that it offers to them at a young age.

Does that same level of respect for the Body of Christ carry over in the young adult years? I believe at St. Patrick it does.

We are blessed that a number of high school & college aged young adults have made a commitment to become Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. When the Regional Youth Masses began 2 years ago, we were one of the few parishes that had a large number of youth trained for this ministry.

This past weekend four more youth were trained to serve in that capacity. Some will serve as Extraordinary Ministers at their school Masses, while other youths will share this reverent ministry with their parish family.

When I asked them why this ministry is important to them they smiled and thought for a moment. Here are a few of their responses:

“I want to be an active participant in the most Holy moment in the Church.”

“Although we are younger, it is our parish as well and we should be living out our faith for all to see.”

“I’m involved in other ministries and felt like I wanted a deeper connection in the Mass.”

A special thank you goes to Mike Welch for the training session and to Alison Burry, Rebecca Cunningham, Emily Hughes, and Nick Ruppelt for making the commitment.

As always, the youth are not just the future of the Church, they are the **present Church.** And we are blessed that they are sharing their gifts now.

Cindy Black

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"A Prayerful Advent"  
Nov 14 -15, 2009

It's hard to put Christmas at the end of Advent when the stores have displayed Christmas items since October. Retailers try to get one step ahead of their competitors. Sometimes Santa Claus may seem more popular than Baby Jesus.

In our Church liturgical year, Advent is designated as the four weeks prior to Christmas which is designed as a time of prayerful waiting and preparation.

In the busyness of our lives, some wonder how they will fit in prayer. And who has time to wait? Our society lends itself to instant everything; instant oatmeal, instant replays, and instant messaging. And what about all the Christmas parties, recitals, and shopping? These are conflicting messages and families get pulled in many directions.

In a recent discussion with some 8th graders, the subject of prayer surfaced. I asked, "How do you pray?" and "When do you pray?"

I gave them some ideas of prayer "on the go". They may work for you as well.

-Pray when you hear a siren. One of my grade school teachers made us pause in class to pray whenever an ambulance passed by our school. We recited the "Hail Mary", but you can use any prayer.

-Pray in the car when you see a funeral procession. You may have no idea of the circumstance of the death, but people are grieving a loss. The least we can do is offer a prayer for comfort and strength.

- Pray for someone sitting in a broken down car on the side of the road. Depending on your circumstance, you may not be able to stop, but you can pray for someone to come along who can help.

The most consistent form of prayer during this season is the Advent wreath. Families should make it a focal point of the Holiday decorations, lighting the candle and reflecting on the readings. What a great model to our youngsters as you gather as a family to pray.

Remembering to pray might take a little effort this Advent season, but you will never be sorry that you did.

Happy Advent,

Cindy Black

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"Palm Sunday"  
March 28-29, 2009

As Lent draws to a close we focus on Holy Week, beginning today with Palm Sunday. Those who celebrated Jesus’ grand entrance to the city, no doubt questioned the dramatic turn of events as the week concluded with His death on a cross.

Scripture tells of the many characters mentioned in the death and resurrection story. There were people who played a significant role in Jesus’ suffering and crucifixion. There were some that stood on the outside, yet were perhaps unwillingly pulled into the chaos. There were others who called him Son, friend, and teacher. Each person had their viewpoint and ultimately, different reactions to his death.

These last two Lenten seasons I’ve focused on a specific character in the Crucifixion story. This year my attention was on Mary. I was drawn to Mary as I witnessed my friend portraying the Mother of Jesus at the local Easter Pageant. Kendall, who was one of my first “kids” in Youth Ministry, has an amazingly beautiful voice.

As I watched her tears on stage, and on the large video screen in front of me, I was also moved to tears. I witnessed her portrayal of this courageous young woman, this loving Mother of the Son of God. Through Mary’s support for her Son, her agony in His suffering, and the questioning of His death, I felt a greater compassion to this story. Being connected to Kendall, I felt like I had a greater connection to Jesus!

When her portrayal was over I met Kendall in the lobby. She stood before me after just finishing her role as the Mother of Jesus. On her garment was His blood. Although it was theatre makeup, I pictured Mary holding her Son in her arms, wiping his skin, weeping over her child, giving His body the respect it deserved. In that moment, I was overwhelmed with the personal connection I was having with the crucified Christ!

This Holy Week perhaps there is a character that you make your focal point. Put yourself in their place, feel their emotions, make the Crucifixion story your own so you are prepared to celebrate the Resurrection story on Easter morning.

Cindy

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"Miracles Are All Around"  
April 11-12, 2009

Jesus’ resurrection was the ultimate miracle. We weren’t there to witness it, but rely on Scripture accounts of this event. Just like Thomas who doubted Jesus’ return, we probably know people who want proof before believing.

It reminds of the miracle story of one youth in my Ministry program years ago.

We were on an eighth grade trip in Indianapolis, touring the city. After the Hoosier Dome tour we were on our way to the Soldiers and Sailors Monument. As we pulled over to unload, a young man called for us to come to the back of the bus. Kids circled around Kyle, who was panicking. The teacher and I looked at his hand. His finger was swollen and beet red. Kyle had picked up an electrical tie off the floor of the Hoosier Dome and put it on his finger. Pulling on an electrical tie only tightens it, a fact he didn’t know. I rushed to the bus driver to see if he had a knife or scissors. We came up empty.

We had to get the tie off before his circulation was completely cut off.

Out of the bus window I looked to see what businesses might have cutting tools. I saw a street vendor and a deli. I turned the other direction and directly beside us was a Florist. They would have scissors!

I rushed a tearful Kyle into the shop. A gentleman at the counter working on a flower arrangement had scissors in hand. I asked for help and without question he went to work. With the swelling it was hard to get the scissors underneath the tie, but finally he was able to cut Kyle free. Relief filled us all. I shook the man’s hand, and noticed that he had half of a finger missing. I wondered about his story. After Kyle calmed down we rejoined the group.

The very next year at the same spot I looked for the Florist. I was going to point it out to the other adult, but there was not a floral shop to be found! I still wonder if that shop ever existed. But I do know this, God had provided at the exact time it was needed. Miracles still happen!

Cindy Black

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"In The Check-Out Lane"

Nov 13-14, 2010

I hurried to the check-out lane, my purchase in hand. I grabbed my key ring with my savings card attached to it. Next, I pulled out my money and then checked my watch. I thought to myself that I still had plenty of time to make it to the birthday party.

I looked down at the check lane and noticed the purchase in front of me. It was only two items; one large baking potato, and a package of bologna. The bologna was not a recognizable name, but a cheaper version of the store brand.

It was then that I looked at the customer ahead of me. She was quite elderly, already wearing her worn winter coat despite the fact that it wasn't quite that cold outside.

It struck me, was that really all she needed? Were her cabinets at home full to the brim and she just needed a few forgotten items? Was that all she could manage to carry?

I didn't think that was the case. It was closing in on the end of the month, and I felt she was buying the food that would last her for the next week. If that was true, my ice cream was a luxury.

This woman was heavy on my heart all evening as I thought about wants versus needs.

Currently, the Boy/Cub Scouts are collecting food at your doorstep for the Scouting for Food program benefiting Dare to Care. At certain grocery stores you can make donations to help supply food for those who have little to eat. Many organizations are looking for monetary support to feed the hungry. In today's economy, things are tough for so many.

As we prepare to celebrate our Thanksgiving feast, let us be mindful of those who go without, or those who survive with so little. If you are sharing a meal with family and friends this Thursday, count your many blessings. I know I will.

Have a Blessed Thanksgiving.

Cindy

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“The Peace that Passes All Understanding”  
March 13-14, 2010

“Can you feel the love, tonight?”

These are lyrics from a song from the Lion King and they keep running through my head.

It has been going on for more than a week.

Perhaps it is because I don’t want to let go of the feeling that accompanied the moment that those words popped into my head.

It was at the home of my terminally ill uncle. Family and friends had been visiting all week to say their goodbyes. Many family members had begun their vigil of prayerfully staying in the house, supporting my aunt and cousins, sleeping in chairs in the living room.

The last 48 hours had been full of ups and downs. My uncle was still with us, although unable to communicate. The bedroom door was shut to cut down on the noise level, but we were free to go sit with him.

I had seen my uncle that morning, and was returning that evening to keep vigil with my family. After greeting everyone, I went to the bedroom door and opened it. At that moment, I felt an overpowering sense of love and peace. The lights were low, yet the room seemed to glow. Jasper, their cat, was curled up by my uncles’ feet, keeping vigil as well. My aunt was snuggling close to her husband, telling stories of their married life. There was dull laughter taking place as we talked about the Volkswagen Bug which rolled down the driveway by itself.

As the end drew near, all the relatives joined around his bedside. In the midst of what could have been chaos, there was peace. Surrounded by his family, he felt our love. The room was filled with a Holy Presence, the Spirit of God. “Can you feel the love tonight?” Yes, I did.

In Scripture it references “the peace that passes all understanding”. It is a peace that I have felt before. It is that peace that I offer to you as this parish undergoes change. It is the peace that I pray you experience this Holy Week.

Cindy Black

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Christmas at "Exit 0"  
Jan 8-9, 2011

It was bitter cold on the night of December 22, 2010 with the wind chill of 8. The van was loaded with supplies for the homeless and less fortunate, and I wondered if the coffee was hot enough to get these men through another night of life on the streets.

"Exit 0" is a coalition of various church groups who address the needs of those who live or gather near the bridges/overpasses on the Indiana side of the Kennedy Bridge. I've written about it before and I've taken St. Patrick youth with me several times.

The "In Heaven's Eyes" ministry was the first group who built the bridge ministry 11 years ago.

The Christmas tradition of pizza is a step above the peanut butter/jelly sandwiches. As we prepared for the food distribution some of the men and women selected donated clothes, socks, and personal care items.

While I was busy serving the pizza, I didn't notice them crossing the street. But there they were, 2 children without coats, coming forward for help.

The Wednesday night Bridge Team only brings adult clothing with them. My heart sank as I realized on that Advent night that we had no clothing or coats for these 1st and 3rd grade children.

One member of our team rushed to his car and found 2 pairs of gloves he had just purchased for his children. He gave them away.

When the children came for the pizza, we asked about their school and found out about their favorite classes.

After eating they approached the table again and the woman encouraged them to begin.

And just when I was feeling so bad about not having much to give to them, they began to sing Christmas songs to us. My thoughts raced to "*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*" and how the Who's began singing even though they had no Christmas presents or food.

I went home chilled to the bone. Upon further reflection, I realized again the importance of our annual St. Patrick Advent Coat Drive. We may not know who receives the coat, but we know that there are many in need.

I'll write more about our annual Coat Drive next week.

Cindy Black

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