

SEASONED OBSERVER

Priests Urged to Care For Their Bodies as They Care for Souls

"We should remind our priests to take the time for relaxation and physical exercise," said Baltimore Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien, himself a physically fit 69-year-old Catholic leader. "It's very important for their health and their ministry."

Deacon Chuck Cooper, of Rockford, agrees, saying, "When you get (priests) laughing together, you find a healthier, happier priesthood."

A 2001 national survey found that 76 percent of Christian clergy were either overweight or obese, 15 percentage points higher than for the general U.S. population. In general, younger priests lead healthier lifestyles than older clergy.

Cooper, a personal trainer, and Mike Gallagher, health care professional, helped organize the Diocese of Rockford's wellness program for priests and deacons in 2006.

The focus of the program is on healthy activities, exercise and improved nutrition. "Among the (15) guys that participated early on," he reports, "we've had a 17 percent improvement in their overall health," based on measures such as weight and cholesterol. "We worked with OSF St. Anthony to establish exercise and diet changes for them," he said.

There are 45 men in the program now, he said, who take part in a variety of activities. For example, leading up to a recent golf outing, priests had a chance to take a few lessons with a golf pro.

The program continues to expand, Cooper said, as more priests and deacons become aware of it. For more information, check the Web site, <http://priestwellness.com>.

— Sharon Boehlefeld; CNS contributed to this story



An Aurora Provena Mercy nurse talks with Our Lady of Good Council parishioner Martha Limbrunner (right) after taking her blood pressure.

Aurora Parish Promotes Health

Our Lady of Good Council Parish Nursing presented a family health fair, June 8, in Aurora. The event, one of several planned for OLGC's centennial year, offered parishioners information on good health, and provided free blood pressure checks, and tests for diabetes and depression. Seventeen exhibitors, including a dentist, chiropractor, local health agencies, Visiting Nurses Association and Provena Mercy Hospital participated.

On June 7, when the parish held its fourth annual 5K Unity Run/Walk, 86 participants of all ages completed the course from OLGC through Phillips Park Mastodon Lake area and back. Parishioners Terry and Tony Jakubowski chaired the event.

Welcome to the premier edition of "Seasoned Observer." As you may have guessed, we're doing this for our "older" readers — although you don't have to be a full century old to be "seasoned" in our book. We'd love to hear suggestions from readers for stories and destinations (see our first choice on the opposite page). We'd also love you to share your photo memories of living in the Rockford Diocese. Check out our mailing addresses at the bottom of "Destination."

104 Candles



Betty Stringham (center) sits with her son-in-law (left) and daughter, Jim and Jeannine Cook.

Her Church Helped in Toughest Times

BY AMANDA HUDSON
News editor

ROCKFORD—A person doesn't get to her 104th year without some trials along the way.

Betty Stringham, who turns 104 on July 12, has had more than her share over the years, beginning with being abandoned by her husband when she had two children and another on the way, back in the days before government help.

"I just prayed and thanked (God) for any good that happened," Betty says simply. "I had to raise three kids and had to be strong for them."

With the children not yet in school, she worked part-time, while neighbors and the Sisters of St. Casimir at SS. Peter and Paul Parish, helped by watching her children.

The Poor Clare nuns let her use a plot of land in the back of their convent for a garden, says her oldest daughter, Jeannine Cook, who remembers her mother digging the garden by hand and planting vegetables "so we'd have food to eat."

As soon as her children were in school, Betty went to work full-time, first for 10 years at a stocking factory, then some 26 years at Greenlee Tools.

She also was the SS. Peter and Paul housekeeper and cleaned the church, Mass linens and school classrooms to earn the tuition for her children.

Recreation, recalls Cook, was taking the children next door to join the sisters in their bench swing at night, singing and swinging together.

When her children were older, Betty married again. That marriage lasted about 25 years until her husband's death in 1976. Cook laments that her mother's second marriage was also a bad one because both mother and children were abused.

Betty suffered yet another tragedy when her only

son, Richard, was killed in an accident at age 21.

Although Betty doesn't elaborate about her Catholic faith, it was instrumental. She began each day with the rosary and other prayers, including the Stations of the Cross.

It's been too many years for her to remember just when she began praying the rosary every day, she says.

"She wore out more prayer books than I can count," says her son-in-law, Jim Cook.

"Nothing goes on until her prayers are said," adds her daughter.

After moving to the east side of town, Betty became a parishioner at St. Edward Parish, and that has been her faith home ever since, although she has also attended St. Patrick Parish with the Cooks, counting its former pastor, Father Brian Geary, among her special priests.

"She also loves Father (Michael) Black and was good friends with Father Jim Murphy," says her daughter.

And, after having colon cancer surgery at age 100, Betty woke up to see hospital chaplain Father Pierre Polycarpe holding a gift for her — a red rose in a vase.

"She never forgot it," the Cooks say. "He came almost every day to see her in the hospital."

Her best blessing, Betty says, is her children. "I'd be lost without them," she says, adding that she also appreciates son-in-law, Jim, "like my own son."

Betty insists on sharing a photo from last year's trip to California to see her youngest daughter — a picture of her sitting with a big grin in a dune buggy.

"She's a survivor in the true sense of the word," her daughter concludes. "She knows what hard work was, and she did earn her way."

Vatican Urges Tourists to Take Eco-friendly Vacations

BY CAROL GLATZ
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY—In time for the summer holidays, the Vatican urged tourists to pack less luggage, leave the car at home and have a greener vacation.

Tourists have to choose whether they are "for or against the planet," said the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers in a message for World Tourism Day Sept. 27.

They can "contribute toward the preservation of life on our planet and slow down the process of climate change" or they can pursue "a kind of insane narcissism" that selfishly ignores recognizing the earth "is at risk of destruction," the council said in the June 18

message signed by the council's president, Cardinal Renato Martino, and secretary, Archbishop Agostino Marchetto.

World Tourism Day, sponsored by the U.N. World Tourism Organization, is dedicated to the theme "Responding to the Challenge of Climate Change." It suggested some ways tourists could be more environmentally friendly this summer: "travel on foot, opt for hotels and hospitality facilities that are closer to nature, and carry less luggage."

Such efforts are aimed at burning less fossil fuels, which emit carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, it said. Carbon dioxide traps heat in the earth's atmosphere and is seen as a prime cause of global warming.

The council said tourists should make sure their "rubbish is adequately disposed (of)" and try to "eat more eco-friendly meals, plant trees to neutralize the polluting effects of our journeys, choose local handicrafts rather than more costly and poisonous items, and make use of recyclable and biodegradable materials."

Tourists and the international community should "comply with and encourage a green culture that respects the environment," it said in the message.

The council also denounced nations that have been reluctant to endorse policies aimed at protecting the environment and ratify international protocols aimed at reducing greenhouse gases.

SO YOU KNOW ...

Speaker 'Predicts' Future of Health Care

Introduced by a robot used to provide medical services to rural patients in remote parts of Idaho, futurist and inventor Ray Kurzweil took some 1,100 participants at the 2008 Catholic Health Assembly on a journey into the future of health care and of the world.

Kurzweil spoke on the opening day of the June 22-24 national convention of the Catholic Health Association in San Diego.

He demonstrated for an audience of Catholic health care administrators one of his inventions, a reading machine for the blind, which was "about the size of a washing machine" and prohibitively expensive when it debuted in 1976.

"Over the years it got smaller and smaller but in 2002 it was still a device that sat on your desk," he said. Working with the National Federation for the Blind, Kurzweil recently brought out a pocket-size device that will not only allow the visually impaired to read menus and street signs but also will translate into seven languages and provide GPS navigation and indoor navigation, such as within a hotel. The new device, called the knfbReader, "is 500 times smaller than the first device" but exponentially more effective, Kurzweil said.

Kurzweil said advances in technology also will bring breakthroughs in the fight against cancer, diabetes and heart disease. Scientists will be able to turn genes on or off to help patients overcome disease and patients will be able to receive "robotic" red blood cells that will give them special abilities and stamina.

Kurzweil closed by showing the audience a prototype of one of his latest inventions — a cell phone that can translate conversations between people speaking different languages.

"In a few years we will be able to talk to anyone, regardless of language," he said.

— By Nancy Frazier O'Brien Catholic News Service

DESTINATION



(Photo: www.holyhill.com)

Holy Hill Shrine

Destination: Holy Hill Shrine in Hubertus, Wis., is a peaceful, great place to visit for a day-trip or as a side-trip during a stay at Milwaukee. Daily Mass is at 11 a.m.

Why to go: This Shrine of Mary Help of Christians offers opportunities and settings for prayer and for walking or hiking on 435 acres. It is located on the highest elevation in southeast Wisconsin, so the view is great. A long-time tradition at Holy Hill has been to walk and pray the Stations of the Cross, winding up a paved (with stairs) path from the bottom of the hill to the second level chapel.

The shrine was elevated to the status of a minor basilica in 2006. Its newly-renovated upper church is bright and filled with stained glass windows portraying Mary's life and her charisms. Mosaics of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, above the two side altars, point to the shrine's relationship with the Discalced Carmelite friars who came to the Hill in 1906 at the invitation of Milwaukee's Archbishop Messmer.

Even before the building of the hill's first log chapel, pilgrims left crutches, leg braces and canes at Holy Hill, and the practice is continued today by pilgrims who believe that God has healed them through the power of intercessory prayer.

Special event: The 34th annual Arts and Crafts Fair will be Sept. 20, when more than 200 artists & craftsmen will participate. Admission is \$4 for adults (children 12 and younger may attend for free).

Amenities: The Holy Hill Café is open every day for lunch from May 1-Oct. 31 and on Friday, Saturday and Sunday the rest of the year. Sunday brunch buffet is served year-round from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Simple, overnight accommodations are available in the retreat facilities.

Access: An elevator makes the church accessible. Enter through the front glass doors that lead to the shrine gift shop and go to the right to the elevators. But the retreat facilities are not accessible.

(Grand)Kid friendly: Yes. A picnic area is located at the beginning of the stations — walk down or drive to Station Way Road just east of the shrine's main entrance on Rte. 167.

Info: Address: 1525 Carmel Road, Hubertus, WI 53033. Web site: www.holyhill.com. Phone: 262/628-1838

— Amanda Hudson

Share a favorite destination with others. If you have a photo, send it to "S.O. Destinations" at The Observer, 555 Colman Center Dr., P.O. Box, 7044, Rockford, IL 61125, or to observer@rockforddiocese.org. If you want a photo back, include a stamped, addressed envelope. If you send e-mail, include "Seasoned Observer" in the subject line. You don't need to include all the details we have here (although we wouldn't mind), but give us a phone number or Web address so we can get the information.