

# Pastoral Presence

ADDRESSING THE SPECIAL CONCERNS OF PASTORAL VISITORS, CAREGIVERS & CARE-RECEIVERS

Volume 1, Issue 2; October 2007



Deanna Sass

## Meet the new director

Deanna V. Sass, the new director of the diocesan Office of Pastoral Care is a familiar voice to many in the diocese. She writes the *Faith in the Family* column that appears in the *The Monitor*, which received the first place Best Column award from the Catholic Press Association in 2003.

Sass received a bachelor's degree in theology and psychology from Georgetown University and master's degree in pastoral ministry/pastoral counseling from Boston College. She's currently working toward a master's degree in clinical psychology/counseling from LaSalle University.

In addition to her academic degrees, Sass is a certified spiritual director, retreat director and supervisor of spiritual directors. She completed her clinical pastoral education (CPE) at Boston City Hospital.

Sass, who speaks fluent Spanish, has been married for 26 years to Dr. Timothy Sass, an internist in Princeton. They have five children, ages 15 to 25 and just welcomed a son-in-law to the family.

Sass says her role model for the ministry of pastoral care is Blessed Teresa of Calcutta and that the greatest joys in her life are her family, friends and life in ministry.

## "Receiving the Baton...Once Again"

by Deanna Bosco Sass, M.A.,  
Director of the Office of Pastoral Care

For the second time in my ministerial career, I find myself following in the footsteps of Sr. Regina White, MSC. The first time was in 2001, when she co-founded the Office of Parish Life for the diocese, and invited me to participate in the mission of establishing the *Institute for Lay Ecclesial Ministry (ILEM)* with her and co-director Msgr. Richard Brietske. And now, after six years of service to that mission, I will receive the baton from Sr. Regina, once again, on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 as I officially assume the position of Director of Pastoral Care. It is a blessing, once again to be in-

vited to continue a great work which she has begun.

My own journey, of late, has been one that placed me in hospitals, nursing homes, hospices and home-based bedsides, with persons very close to me. I was humbled to be with Betty Palmisano, one of the first Commissioned Lay Ecclesial Ministers of our diocese, on the day she left this life prematurely, at age 52, after waging a valiant battle against the bone cancer that ultimately claimed her body. We lost several colleagues at the Pastoral Center this past

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Sister Regina White, MSC

God is doing a new thing in the life of Sister Regina White MSC, outgoing Director of the Office of Pastoral Care! Sister Regina has responded faithfully to the prompting of the Holy Spirit by accepting her new role as vice-president of her congregation, the

## New Beginnings...

by Anna P. S-Brudzynski, MSW, MA  
Associate Director

*"See, I am doing a new thing!"*  
— Isaiah 43

Marianites of Holy Cross. Her gifts and talents will encourage the Marianites to continue being a prophetic presence to an ever-changing world meeting the needs of the poor and God's underserved people throughout the country. She began the next phase of her ministerial journey as of September 2007 relocating to New Orleans, LA by way of Le Mans, France for the beatification of their community's founder, Father Basil Moreau.

The Diocese of Trenton has been well served by Sister Regina's ability to anticipate emerging needs at the parish level. It was she with Msgr. Brietske that forged the path for the establishment of the Institute for Lay Ecclesial Ministry as well as promoting small faith-sharing groups through the RE-NEW initiative several years ago. Most recently, she established the Office of Pastoral Care which began as a one person liaison position

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# Receiving the Baton...

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year, and I was truly humbled and blessed by two of them, who permitted me to accompany them through the dying process. This year I have come to know the pain and regret upon the death of a dear friend's husband, whom I failed to visit even once through his suffering and passing. I shared in the grace of being with my ninety-six year old aunt in her final weeks, and was remiss in reaching out to my husband's uncle who left this life in the same week as my aunt. Through each of these powerful experiences, both those in which I feel I was pastorally present and those in which I feel I utterly failed, I was being led to a deep desire to serve, again, in the ministry of pastoral care.

I say 'again' because much of my ministry prior to my diocesan service was pastoral. I ministered as a chaplain in a large urban hospital in New England while in graduate school, as I completed a year-long unit of clinical pastoral education (CPE). I have shared in the stories

of young women in crisis while serving as a counselor at pro-life crisis pregnancy centers in College Park, Maryland, Brooklyn, New York and Huntington, Long Island. In my cherished time as a pastoral associate at St. Paul's parish in Princeton, I served the home-bound and nursing home populations as a pastoral visitor and extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. As a spiritual director I administer pastoral care routinely to those who share their crosses with me through the medium of spiritual direction. Each of the times down through the years, in which I have found myself entrusted with the care of the sick, the suffering and the dying, have always been the times when I most profoundly experienced God working through me.

Today I remain deeply committed to the pastoral care of all of our broth-

ers and sisters, which I see as an extension of the healing mission of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Through directorship of the Office of Pastoral Care I hope to ensure that the community we call church reaches out to those who are separated from their local parish communities through hospitalization, institutionalization or by being home-bound. I feel called to see that the compassion and love of Jesus, expressed through sacraments, sacramentals, and pastoral presence, are available to all no matter where they may reside. I trust that I will honor this commitment, in collaboration with Anna Brudzynski, the associate director of Pastoral Care, through the various programs and initiatives of this office. May Jesus, whose healing mission we are entrusted to uphold, be our strength, our light and our hope.

## The Office of Pastoral Care IS

**A resource for all who minister to the sick, homebound & residents in healthcare facilities and their caregivers:**

- Pastoral Care Coordinators
- Pastoral Visitors
- Parish priests
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the Sick
- Family Caregivers
- Residents in Healthcare Facilities and those who serve them
- Chaplains

## New Beginnings

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to an office that directly provides enrichment and consultation to any and all care ministers at the parish level who serve the sick, homebound and residents in healthcare facilities.

Each of the mentioned initiatives continue to this day adapted to the current needs of the People of God who desire a deeper spiritual connection to our Creator and a more meaningful and intentional way of practicing Jesus' model of servant-leadership. Sister has shared with me that it is her joy to see how the Body of Christ have risen up, lovingly becoming partners in the Lord's vineyard and meeting the challenges of providing compassionate pastoral care to our sisters and brothers in Christ, in and outside of one's parish community.

Sister Regina's gentle presence will be missed. However, her mantra "to be always about the mission" will serve as a steady reminder that ser-

*"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."*

— 1 Peter 4:10

vice to and for others in God's name is at the heart of pastoral care as it is in every ministry. Sister's reflections on compassionate presence have accentuated the need for all ministers in pastoral care to recognize and claim their giftedness for the glory of God and for the good of the care-receiver. She has planted the seeds and leaves the Diocese of Trenton with confidence that those seeds will blossom with God's help through the compassionate, tender, Christ-like presence of our dedicated pastoral care ministers. We ask all our readers to keep Sister Regina in prayer as she continues to serve and love the Lord with faith and confidence. God bless you Sister Regina and Au Revoir!

# Pastoral Care Delivers a *Faith that Heals*

By Deanna V. Sass, M.A.  
Director, Office of Pastoral Care

The theme for Pastoral Care Week 2007 is “Healing Faith.” How lovely it is when our faith enables us to be a healing presence in the life of someone who is hurting. How awesome when another shares his or her faith with us, and we experience the healing balm of love and compassion. The gift of faith, particularly when passed from person to person in a pastoral encounter, is truly *healing*. Healing, not as in ‘a dramatic overnight cure,’ but in the deeper sense of inner peace, comfort and feeling at-one with another, with a community and with God.

In the world in which pastoral care ministers serve, we know that the prayers of good and faith-filled people do not often lead to those ‘dramatic overnight cures’, although they may at times, and certainly such cures are *always* within the capability of our God. More often than not, however; the miracles we witness are found in the gifts of presence and prayer which we share with the suffering. The faith to which we witness is one which teaches that a burden shared is a burden lightened, and our loving God always shoulders our burdens with us, and even for us, whether we ‘feel’ his presence or not.

We participate in Jesus’ healing ministry when we say ‘yes’ to serving in the ministry of pastoral care and in effect, ‘sign-on’ to carry one another’s burdens. In our willingness to walk with our sisters and brothers who face pain, whether the pain of loneliness, physical suffering, or of facing the end of life, we are demonstrating a living faith which gives us the impetus to ‘be with’ the other, whether friend, relative or stranger, in the darkest moments of life. It is this participating in one another’s daily struggles which I envision when I hear this year’s theme of “healing faith.” I believe that the love and compassion which our faith compels us to share delivers the healing balms of peace, support, strength and ultimately hope, to those whom we pastorally encounter.

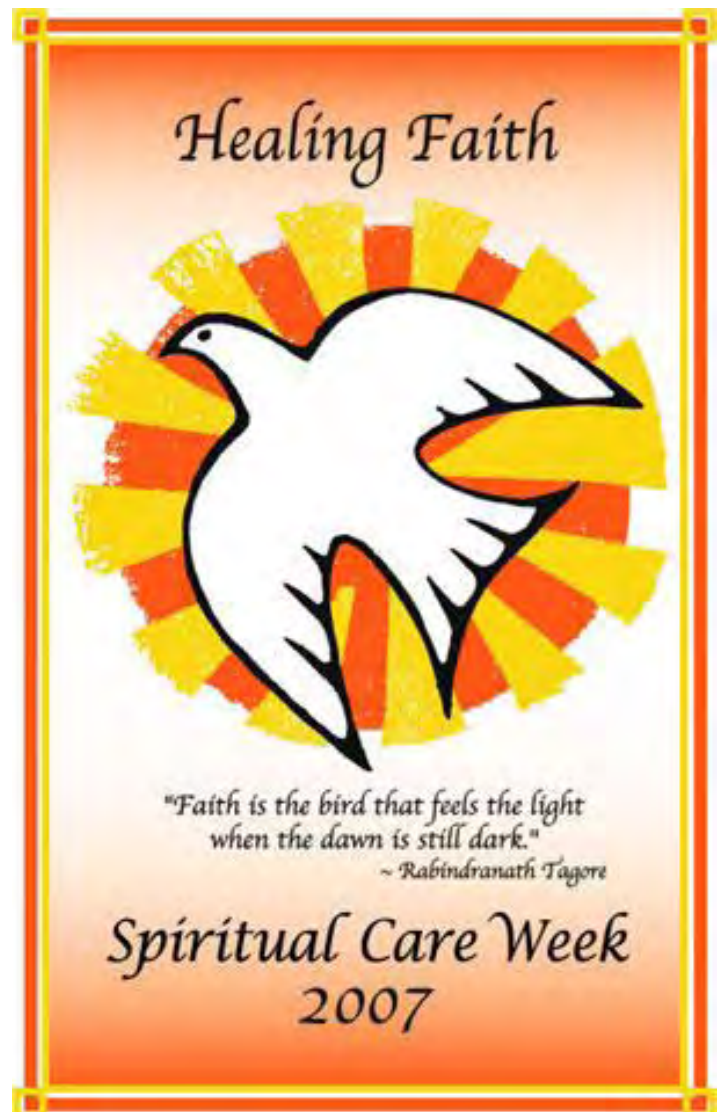
I consider it truly miraculous that the gifts we share are the very gifts we receive. I know that I am filled with deeper hope after every pastoral visit, whether I have been the *provider* or the *receiver* of pastoral care-and truthfully, aren’t we always both? The bountiful miracles which I have witnessed over the years leave me utterly in awe of the power of God. When despair has turned toward hope, when sorrow has dissipated even a bit, when fear has been replaced by courage and when anger and denial have begun to move toward peace and acceptance, we have met our God face to face. I cannot think of any miracle greater than this. I hope you have a blessed Pastoral Care Week. And know how thankful we at the diocese are for the many miracles you mediate as you further the healing mission of Jesus, day after day, delivering a *healing faith!*

During Pastoral Care Week, you are invited to consider finding ways to celebrate and to show appreciation for the faithful caregivers in your setting.

In the past some have:

- Sponsored a special Mass or prayer service for family, volunteer & professional caregivers
- Hosted a breakfast or luncheon in their honor
- Offered an in-service on a topic of interest to pastoral care ministers
- Written a ‘prayer of the faithful’ for pastoral caregivers at all masses
- Put a message of appreciation in the bulletin, or local newspaper
- Used this opportunity to raise awareness and recruit new ministers

Pastoral Care Week 2007  
October 21-27  
Theme: *Healing Faith*





## Come and Rest Awhile...

Pastoral Care Coordinators recognized for their tireless compassionate ministry to the sick and homebound.

*A reflection on the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Day of Reflection sponsored by the Office of Pastoral Care at San Alfonso Retreat House May 11<sup>th</sup> is offered by Marie Blohm, main presenter and newly retired Pastoral Ministries Manager at Seabrook, Tinton Falls.*

At the gathering for pastoral care coordinators, John's words were proclaimed in prayer. "In my Father's house are many rooms; ...I go and prepare a place for you." It is in the homes of those who are ill or grieving, in hospital rooms, in the corridors of nursing homes that Christ's comfort is offered in the healing presence of the caregiver.

The themes of Pilgrimage, Presence and Pondering were explored through parable, art and reflection. There is something so profound that happens when Christ's disciples gather to share their

experiences. Heads nod in affirmation, an insight is shared and questions are raised. Gentle conversations follow. It is in the gathering that truth is known and proclaimed. Throughout the day, whether in the talking or in the silence, the words of Carey Landry's song echoed the work of the caregiver: "I will hold your hand; I will dry your tears. I will stay with you until your fears subside. Never will you be alone against the night. Gently I will walk this sacred journey with you."

Marie Blohm served as main presenter at the 1st annual Day of Reflection.

## More reflections from pastoral care coordinators...

**Deacon Michael Taylor**  
**St. Barnabas Parish, Bayville**

I am sincerely grateful for the Day of Reflection for Pastoral Care Coordinators. As one of the few men in this particular field, I've had to learn new inter-personal skills. My business experience and cultural conditioning as a man only take me so far. I've needed to pay more attention to my own reactions and responses to the kaleidoscope of persons God sends my way each day. The Reflection Day helped me to gear down, do a little self-assessment, be with God, and network with others in the Pastoral Care field. I wish to offer Anna and Sister Regina my sincere thanks and gratitude for a job well done this year. Your services have been a blessing to me

personally, and to many of our parishioners at St. Barnabas.

**Sandy Mullarkey**  
**Pastoral Associate, St. Anselm Parish, Wayside**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Day of Reflection for Pastoral Care Coordinators left me feeling refreshed, renewed and mindful of the scripture verse: "Come to me, all of you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). As Christians we are called to be the presence of God for others. To do so we need to nurture the Spirit within us. Our facilitator reminded us of our giftedness and of our duty to self-care. We were encouraged to be still and listen to our hearts - to enjoy and listen to the God that we

love and serve. This day of reflection was filled with life-giving graces - a day that was a "GIFT" to us all. A well deserved "THANK YOU" to the Office of Pastoral Care for organizing this event.

**Deacon Nick Donofrio**  
**St. Dorothea Parish, Eatontown**

Marie and I attended the Day of Reflection and found that the information presented and the personal quiet times were a perfect blend for a day to truly reflect on our calling as pastoral care ministers. We both came away renewed and refreshed. We would like to see such a program expanded for all pastoral care ministers not just coordinators. Thank you for a rewarding and peaceful day.



## A Place Apart

*During the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Day of Reflection sponsored by the Office of Pastoral Care, participants had the opportunity to spend time by themselves in moments of peaceful reflection.*



### *Refreshed and Renewed*

Personal, quiet time created a perfect atmosphere for Deacon Nick Donofrio (top photo) to reflect on his calling as a pastoral care minister at the first annual Day Of Reflection. That atmosphere also helped Deacon Michael Taylor (bottom photo) reveal that he should pay more attention to his reactions and responses when facing the kaleidoscope of people God sends his way every day.

## Radiating Christ

John Henry Cardinal Newman

Dear Jesus, help me to spread your fragrance everywhere I go.

Flood my soul with your Spirit and life.

Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly,

that my life may only be a radiance of you.

Shine through me and be so in me that every soul

I come in contact with may feel your *presence* in my spirit.

Let me look up and see no longer me but only *Jesus!*

Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as you shine,

as to be a light for others.

The light of *Jesus* will be all from you.

It will be you shining on others through me.

Let me thus praise you without preaching by words, but by my example,

by the catching force of the sympathetic influence of what I do,

the evidence fullness of the love my *heart* bears to you. Amen.

# SACRED HEART PARISH 'CARE' MINISTRY

By Mary Neary  
Director of Ministries

As the newly hired Director of Ministries at Sacred Heart Parish my first assignment was to make sure the long list of parishioners who were sick and homebound were offered the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of the Sick and Holy Communion. As I turned in prayer to Our Heavenly Father I was reminded of the words spoken by Blessed Mother Teresa, "Do small things with great love. It's not how much we do, but how much love we put in the doing; and it is not how much we give, but how much love we put in the giving. To God, nothing is small; the moment we give it to God, it becomes infinite."

Her words not only filled me with peace and encouragement, but became the heart of our 'Care' Ministry. If we were going to make a difference in the lives of those who are sick and isolated, we needed to understand from the start that God's love would be the source and strength of all our efforts to minister to our brothers and sisters.

Armed with confidence in God's anointing on the 'Care' Ministry, along with the words of Blessed Mother Teresa I placed an advertisement in the parish bulletin for volunteers. The responses were wonderful and many agreed to come to a meeting to learn more about this new outreach program. Now that God was sending the people, I needed to prepare a plan of action.

The goal and purpose of the 'Care' Ministry was to follow in the footsteps of Christ whether visiting the sick, or making coffee at the parish social everything small or large would be done for love of Christ.

I soon discovered that what held many back from reaching out to the sick and homebound was not their lack of desire, but rather feelings of inadequacy regarding their abilities and gifts.

## Responding to needs

It was along this part of the journey that Sister Regina White, MSC, (former



Anna P. S-Brudzynski, Mary Neary and Sister Regina White, MSC, worked together to create interactive workshops that both laid the spiritual foundation for ministry to the sick but also introduced practical pastoral visitation techniques.

Director of the Office of Pastoral Care and Anna P. S-Brudzynski, Associate Director provided interactive workshops that both laid the spiritual foundation for ministry to the sick but also introduced practical pastoral visitation techniques. Through their workshops on 'Nurturing the Nurturer: Naming and Claiming Your Giftedness' and 'Pastoral Visitation: The Art of Holy Listening', our volunteers were affirmed in their baptismal call to recognize, honor and share their gifts for the common good. Furthermore, they received the skills and tools necessary to feel confident to serve others.

## Seek counsel

Pastoral associates and/or pastoral care coordinators starting a new ministry to the sick and homebound and/or revamping such a ministry would be served well by collaborating with the Office of Pastoral Care which is set-up to provide consultation, to share resources and to provide skill building classes specifically for pastoral care to the sick. Such consultation generated a course of action that led me to examine such matters as: assessing needs; identifying how the parish community rallies around the sick, the suffering, the lonely and families in transition; identifying potential lay leaders; identifying the quality of training/education in pastoral care; discernment/recruitment of pastoral visitors; identifying your vision

and creating a mission statement for pastoral care; and ultimately how to best initiate, organize and train your people for this new ministry. Finally, but not least of which these services were provided at no expense to our parish other than offering hospitality for our workshop participants.

## The fruits of our labor

At present, we now have eight teams with two visitors per team who provide caring and compassionate monthly visits to those who are homebound and/or in nursing facilities. We now have an active list of 37 volunteers who are doing a variety of things for the Care Ministry from; visiting the sick, going door to door welcoming new parishioners to the parish, comforting those grieving the loss of a loved one, or supporting our young families through our Moms & Tots Devotional groups.

The fruit of our labor is readily visible in the relationships that have been formed and the love that has been shared not just with those we visit, but with each other! I now can see that Sacred Heart 'Care' Ministry is more than outreach programs; rather it is a way of life for those who have been baptized in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Let us not delay when we hear God's call; 'The harvest is great and the workers are so few!'



<http://www.dioceseoftrenton.org/justice/pastoralcare.asp>

## About Us

The Office of Pastoral Care grounded upon the mandate to carry on the healing mission of Jesus Christ (*Mt. 25:35-36; Gal.; 6:2, 2Cor:1:3-4; James 5:13-15*) seeks to advance the compassionate and dignified spiritual care of the sick and homebound.

As in the parable of the Good Samaritan, we encourage the Body of Christ to incarnate the Lord's love, to make His compassion a felt presence to our vulnerable sisters and brothers in Christ and to their care-givers.

**Please contact** us to learn how we can support individuals, parishes and healthcare providers in the compassionate care for God's people.

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Associate Director  
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## Upcoming Events

### **Caring for the Caregiver: Who Cares for You?**

Oct. 25, 2007

7 to 9 pm

Church of the Nativity  
Fair Haven, NJ  
Details: Office of  
Catechesis @  
609-406-7400, x-5553

### **All Are Welcome: Com- munion to the Sick and Homebound**

Presented by Msgr. Charles  
W. Gusmer, S.T.D. (author  
of *And You Visited Me:  
Sacramental Ministry to  
the Sick and Dying*) as part  
of **Liturgical Conference:  
Being Formed and Trans-  
formed by Worship and  
Prayer**

Nov. 10, 2007

9:15 a.m. to noon

Cost: \$20

College of Saint Elizabeth:  
Center for Theological and  
Spiritual Development  
Call for details: 973-290-  
4300

## Skill Building Opportunities

*We bring our workshops to parishes at no cost. If you would like to deepen your understanding about pastoral care and/or enhance your skills in ministry to the sick: Contact Anna at 609-406-7400 x5639.*

*All workshops are three hours long and include prayer, reflection and small group sharing.*

### **Pastoral Visitation: The Healing Mission of Christ**

Pastoral Visitors will explore and reflect upon the scriptural and spiritual foundation of ministry to the sick and lonely. This session begins and grounds the pastoral visitation skill building series. It explains the "why we do what we do" as ministers of care.

### **Pastoral Visitation: Entering into the Experience of 'Suffering with' our Care- Receiver**

Grounded in Christ's Paschal Mystery, pastoral visitors will get in touch with suffering, dying, death and rebirth as natural and transformative parts of our Christian life. Sensitivity to the care-receiver's experience of illness and alienation will be heightened. Pastoral and spiritual needs of the homebound and residents in healthcare facilities will also be addressed.

### **Pastoral Visitation: The Art of Holy Listening – Part 1 & 2 (Two - 3 hour sessions)**

Active and reflective listening skills for the pastoral visitor. Visitors are encouraged to embrace the care-receiver's

sacred story via skill building, small group sharing and role-playing.

### **Pastoral Presence: Prayer as Gift and Tool for Self and Care- Receiver**

Pastoral Visitors will be introduced to a variety of prayer styles that can enhance their pastoral presence when serving the sick and homebound. Contemplative ministry as faith in action will be explored.

### **Caring for the Caregiver: Who Cares For You?**

Celebrate the sacredness of your role as caregiver. Designed as an opportunity for family and/or informal caregivers to have time set-apart and be spiritually nourished through directed small group sharing and silent reflection.

### **Day of Reflection for Pastoral Care Coordinators, Staff and Volunteers (time varies)**

OPC offers opportunities for renewal, to network and to celebrate the sacredness of the call to minister to the sick and homebound. Allow us to spiritually 'minister to the ministers' in your parish and/or healthcare facility.