

The Georgie File

All those presents and food! We were absolutely overwhelmed, but we had a great Christmas day; did you? The extended family gathered at Uncle Leo and Yvonne chalet, over the river, between Seton and Lakeland High. Towards nightfall, Madeline found her mouse sister, tiny Elizabeth, under three open gift boxes, tissue and giant red bows. She was asleep, content and "looking divine, just like baby Jesus." Sister. Rebecca whispered, "How fortunate we all are that Jesus came among us in such a beautiful and easy-to-appreciate way as the "little Babe of Bethlehem." "And he *was* peace, Grandma Annie gently chimed in.

Well that was certainly the strangest Senior Citizens Christmas social the Altar and Rosary Society hosted last Sunday! Big Augie and Little Augie and their in-laws, Bo and Beau had rushed over to pick up whatever they could from the leftover Christmas cakes and cookies in the auditorium. They had heard that the roadways were covered with a thin sheet of black ice by 11:00 AM, and that many seniors wisely stayed home. They naturally expected a huge "take." But wouldn't you know that Father Rajan's suggestion Father Lodi invited the entire 12:30 congregation to be the guests of the Altar Rosary Society and, in his inimitable style, said, "This way, all the sweets don't get delivered to rectory!" Hmmmmm! Slim pickin's for us mice . . . as if any of us needed any more sweets before Christmas!

Did you see the new countertop in the sacristy? It is a parishioner gift to our parish. It's so beautiful! The granite surface is long, shiny and

quite slick. Last night, Joey and his friends were having a secret "skating party" at 3:00 AM. They were having a *good old time*, when, wouldn't you know it, accident-prone little Dexter hit a patch of water, and went sailing off, at supersonic speed, right into the stainless steel garbage can; it was closed! A little mouse could get hurt that way; just ask Dexter. He's the one with the patch over his eye, and an arm in a sling. Since his dad had a "talk" with him, and I with Joey, they are much smarter, and surely won't take chances and playing again. Kids!

Well, among Setonians "Thanksgiving every day" comes alive more than we know. At the 9:00 AM Thanksgiving Day mass, as our twenty-something MaryMary (don't ask!) was minding the quintuplets Judy, Jenny, Janie, Jackie and Jerome, she'll overheard a parishioner exchange a sign of peace with his wife with the most beautiful sentiment she ever heard. "I give thanks to God for you and for the family you have given me." Wiping a tear from her eye she thought, "That's what makes Seton Seton."

The color "purple" came up after our Thanksgiving meal Thursday, but not the novel or the movie or the play of the same name. Two of our older teenagers began arguing about the liturgical color of Advent (how's that for an after-dinner conversation?) Phineas said, "It's purple, of course." Phoebe said, "No one is sure Advent *blue* is correct." Back and forth it went, very much annoying the ladies playing poker in the corner. Lawrence (who just got a liturgy degree at the well-respected Notre

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Dame Extension Program for Mice" calmly settled the argument with, Actually, *violet* is the liturgical color of both seasons, but to distinguish Advent from Lent, parishes may use a *bluish* violet in Advent and a *reddish* violet in Lent. Whew! And onto and Lucy's desert and peace and quiet.

Pete, Petie and Peter were watching ten of the new altar servers go through their paces at their "first Masses" last week. Every one of them tried so hard to be alert, fold their hands when standing, ring the gong with a smile at the consecration, and sit up straight on the benches. In fact we noticed a posture was improved even when they were *not* assigned a Mass. "See," we told the triplets, "good behavior has an impact on everything we do!" Gramps muttered under his breath "Bad actions too."

We had a ball at the Ball! Our family enjoyed watching 303 parishioners enjoy a fabulous meal, spirited conversation, and all-out dancing till midnight on November 6th, which happened to be the 43rd anniversary of the dedication of our parish school. Our kids were fascinated watching human dancers of all ages--including the Seton school faculty--dance to the tunes of several decades. After midnight, when all was finally quiet, Gramps took out his fiddle, TomTom played the guitar, petie on bass, and Tiny Tim ran to and fro on the piano. We danced to our hearts content Needless to say,

our teenage mice looked mortified that Lisbeth and I and the rest of us adults danced at all!

Grandma Myrtle was knitting a very tiny sweater for one of the boys just outside the St. George Portico Cole last Monday, and she noticed a large number of our parish school children planting hundreds of hundreds of daffodil bulbs on the hillside. Lisbeth reminded Granny that this is something special our parish school children do every autumn to remember Seton school people who have died and now live with Jesus in heaven. "They both smiled and wiped away a tear or two. What a very nice thing to do!

"What did you *go* as?" "Who were *you* last night?" The eager questions of our children the day after Halloween! Many of our little ones chose human costumes and scared a lot of our old folk.

Dear old Aunt Gertie and Uncle Ebenezer were taking an afternoon stroll in the auditorium last Sunday, and they paused to admire the many parishioners who were donating blood at the blood bank (85 units were collected!) Ebenezer said, "How very kind--to offer *the gift of life* to another! Gertie added the old proverb, "One hand washes the other, and both wash the face." People need people! (Sigh.)

Joe we Joey has just recovered from his wild animal adventure. He's only six months old and did not know about the October 3rd *Parish*

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Blessing of Animals in the rectory backyard. At a very safe distance he got his brothers Pete Petie and Peter to hold up the mousy binoculars, and he watched entranced as 40 or so pets and their humans assembled. It was like a *Jurassic Park* experience! Once his breathing returned to normal, he especially loved the tiny sugar bear, the tree dwelling marsupial, pocket pet. She wasn't much larger than Joey Joey, and she looked pretty cute too (Sigh.)

We had a scare last Wednesday. Teddy and Eddie were seeing who could eat the fastest at the family table. (This is a very bad thing to do.) Lizabeth and I had just given the "chew your food carefully, boys" talk when Eddie began to choke Big John ran behind him and performed a perfect Heimlich Maneuver. A tiny piece of meat shot out of Eddie's mouth. Ted quipped that was just like the whale. You know he *spit up* Jonah on the shores of Nineveh. Lisbeth and I looked at each other and I

said, "Those Old Testament stories *do* stick in the mind!" And Eddie said rather hoarsely, "And sometimes in the throat!" (Chew your food slowly, boys and girls.)

Our Pauline the Pearl and Frankie the Fair were very upset last week. They had overheard Lisbeth say, "Frank and Pauline were going to Disney World," and just assumed it was them. The special trip was a gift from Pauline *Bruno* to our own Deacon *Frank Bruno*, marking a

very special birthday (I remember the line from Psalm 90 and smiled, 70 is the sum of our years, or 80, if we are strong." The Brunos are now well rested and our two kids are enjoying two, the big, red lollipops. "Everybody wins." And so it goes!

Now I've seen it all! Last Sunday, as I was playing touch football with my teenagers in the rectory backyard, I noticed our parish secretary going through a bag of *trash!!* She was diligently searching for a circular heirloom, baking plates which had held a parishioner's homemade cheesecake for the priests. Somehow her grandmother's plate had closed my overjoyed of course. I bet *that's* not in the parish secretary's job description, but it *is* the type of thing you'd expect one's Seton parishioner to do for another. So, Mary Ellen, we all salute you with the mouse equivalent of "Here, Here!" "Eek, eek!"

My mother in law, Monique, little Frankie and Pauline slipped into monsignor's car two weeks ago to go to a cemetery committal service. After the ceremony, a few of the mourners noticed an unusually beautiful, rounded marble bench serving as a gravestone." On the back of the stone was expertly carved inscription, "Talk to me." Frankie said, "So I can talk with Aunt Mary like when she was alive?" "Yes," said Monique, "we Christians believe our souls never die; we live forever." They said a quick prayer for the dead and left Amawalk Hill Cemetery a little wiser and much comforted,

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Last Saturday, Dickie-boy he (that's our athletic boy, Robert) was doing somersaults with his friends on top of the new church ceiling when he stopped suddenly to overhear an elderly parishioner whisper to one of our priests, "God bless your consecrated hands." He thought, "Just think, God called that man personally to the priesthood to work for us, and with us, for his whole life! Thank you, Father, and Amen!"

Just a brief note. Hello, everyone. I'm still the poor church mouse, and quiet. I had a great summer with my brood, and am now getting our nests, burrows, and church holes ready for autumn. Whew! Now I know why I went on vacation!

Our perky triplets, April May in June, overheard a formal parishioner say, "What I miss most of all since we moved upstate is the *spirit* at Seton. There's just nothing like it. Ah, yes; *Seton, sweet Seton!* Now it's off on vacation See you in September! Happy summer.

[As you know, the job of your poor, quiet church mouse is to *build up the parish spirit* by passing along unheard, heart-warming conversations and actions of parishioners of "the greatest parish in the world." I've noticed boys and girls really enjoy reading (or have mom or dad read to them) about my adventures. So, hello boys and girls!] Accompanying his mom to the Marian shrine behind the rectory on Memorial Day, a toddler picked two dandelions for Jesus' mother: one a mature *yellow head*, the other a *seed head*. "One for now and want to blow," he said, "so

Mary would always have beautiful yellow flowers." Very moved but allergy-prone, Sophie, Lisbeth sister, ran for the hills, handkerchief in her nose and a big smile in her heart.

Last Monday Aunt Myrtle was taking her daily afternoon walk, when she came upon a heart-touching scene. The pastor was at the outdoor Marian shrine reciting the blessing of animals from the *Book of Blessings* for a tiny, sick bunny. *Peter*, a Netherland dwarf rabbit, weighing in at about two pounds, was on antibiotics for an eye infection. The family was very concerned, and invoking God's name over one of his innocent creatures was enough to quiet the fears of the three children caregivers. Myrtle opened the large print, mouse Bible and quoted *Psalm 148:10*, "You animals, wild and tame, you creatures that crawl and fly, bless the Lord." And we all said "Amen."

On good Shepherd Sunday, Yves and Eve were going over their French lessons with Mademoiselle Babineaux, when they overheard a nine-year-old parishioner explained to his grandmother the origin of the word shepherd. He said, you see, Shepherd is made up of two other words "shep" and "heard." The sheep "heard" God's word and they followed. Hmmm! Add an "e" to Shepp, and an "a" to herd, and you too can get the Gospel message.

Our diva-in-the-making, Isabella, attended the parish talent show last Sunday. She told our family we missed something really moving. Tom Tom said "The singing?" "Yes, but when

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the basket was passed around for a free-will offering, a little girl put in just two pennies-- just like the Gospel story of the *Widow's Mite*. Thank you, darling, and thanks to mom and dad for teaching you about charity.

We had a scare last Saturday, when we couldn't locate our dear, Little Charlie, last seen playing around one of the rectory air-conditioners. His playmates lost track of him. Someone heard pitiful, weak cries of "Help!" and looked under the air conditioner cloth cover and saw the little guy stuck, spread-eagled, to the air conditioner intake vent. (The air conditioner covers had not yet been removed.) We got the switch turned off and he was free. What a relief; he feels better too.

"The sanctuary lamp has been lowered!" cried Granddaddy Beauregard, who finds reading from his tiny prayer book by flickering candlelight about 3:00 AM devotions difficult. Since the slick, new tile went up, and the tabernacle light was lowered for easy access, he doesn't have to use his magnifying glass anymore. We're all on the same page now!

Tootsie, my grandfather's sister, was practically run over by a six-year-old after Mass. Holding one of the plastic kneeler props, he was zooming toward Monsignor at the back of the church after Mass. Quietly, and yet very bravely he said, "I'm very sorry I accidentally broke your pew." Then he burst into tears. Mom and dad were very moved at this tender sight and praised the boy for his owning up to his

actions. Toots was a basket case and bawled all the way home.

Just before sunrise today, our entire family got dressed in our "Easter best" (bowler or bonnet on the head, cravats or scarves at the neck, knickers "down below," and bows at the tail) and formed our traditional Easter parade around the church. Yes, we proudly strolled around our church home decorated so magnificently. We began at the St. George portico (of course) and ended up in our spacious hunting grounds (the backyard). How sweet Seton is, and how blessed is to be the "mouse in chief." (Sigh!)

Just after our Maria finished playing peek-a-boo with her brother Liam over the pastor's office Thursday, she watched him type an e-mail response to a parishioner concerned about the purchasing altar flowers in these difficult financial times. Monsignor wrote, "You may be unaware, but we supplemented the two floral pieces in the sanctuary with those from the 99 funerals and the 18 weddings celebrated last year. Otherwise, we use a variety of silk flowers. Additionally we do not use flowers at all during the 10 weeks of Lent or Advent." So *that's* why those flowers Liam tried to eat last week made him sick!

Lisbeth and I were rambling in the ceiling well above the parish communion luncheon last Sunday and heard Msgr. Sandi introducing the guest speaker as "one of the gray heads the new archbishop would be wise to consult about boosting the morale of the clergy." After

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thanking our pastor that priest humorously but emphatically injected, "And my hair is not grey." The very able and still pastorally active *pastor emeritus* of St. Patrick's Parish, Yorktown, gave a very insightful talk and was genuinely delighted to be among Setonians. He praised the Holy Name Society, which, he remarked privately, doesn't even exist in other parishes.

While out daydreaming at noon last Sunday our Tiny Tim heard a parishioner talking with one of the priests about purchasing a "50-50" raffle ticket from one of the committee men. He said, "Before mass, I told them, I'll see how lucky I am 'in there' (meaning the church), 'then I'll purchase a ticket 'out here.'" Blessed humor! No other fortune can match what we received "inside" at Mass--Jesus himself!

At midnight last Tuesday, our whole family crawled underneath the red covering and tickled the 80 shiny keys of the new piano in the choir loft. Our youngest played *forte*; our teenagers, *fortissimo*; my grandma, *decrescendo*; our pre-teens, *fortepiano*; our elderly Aunt Myrtle, *pianissimo*; and as for

Lisbeth and I, just *mezza-mezza*! You might call it "cacophony"; we mice prefer "modern rodent!"

Lisbeth was jogging behind Fefe's stroller in the school auditorium a few weeks ago when she overheard some of the sleepy Seton schools fourth-graders talking about their favorite sandwich. Most were ordinary delights, such as

P. and butter and jelly. But one boy said he knew someone who made a sandwich with jelly, peanut butter, whole peanuts, onions, and garlic! Everyone in earshot said, "Ewwwwwww!" Smiling wickedly the boy shot back with the *coup de grace*, "Then he put everything in a blender and made a smoothie!" Feeling faint Lisbeth quickly made an exit.

Saw that Seton Building and Grounds committee is experimenting with more efficient lighting for the church. A couple of new bulbs were to bright, but a bunch of us old-timers saw it as "stage lighting," and tried out some wildly different dance steps: *jig*, *waltz*, *flamenco*, *tango*, *polka*, and Elizabeth's elderly second cousin Tomasso, not to be outdone, demonstrated a proper *tarantella*. Our kids were, as you might imagine, "mortified."

Maria, one of our toddlers, was playing *ring around the flagpole* Sunday afternoon, when she heard a woman take a deep breath, as she exited the church, and say to her companion, "You know, I feel I get a kind of *oxygen* from the thoughtful and practical sermons are here at Seton." Reminds me of *Genesis 2:7*, "The Lord God formed out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life." Breathe deeply, Seton, and smile!

On the feast of St. Blaise, our curious Jerome watched as the priests blessed the throats of our schoolchildren with two crossed candles, tied with a bright, red ribbon. Before the priest explained how he would lay the *unlit* candles across each person's throat and recite a brief

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blessing, a seven-year-old whispered to her friend, "Aren't you afraid your hair will catch fire?!" We love our beautiful, parish children!

After a funeral last week, our eldest triplets, Hughie, Dewey, Louie, and I hopped aboard a hearse on its way to the local cemetery, and overheard a casual conversation between the driver and one of our priests. The driver, I'm not Catholic remarked how open and cooperative the pastoral staff was. He said, "You know, whenever our funeral home calls Seton, we know we and the family will be accommodated because in the midst of arranging dates and times for the wake, the Funeral Mass, obituary deadlines etc., the focus is always kept on the grieving family and their needs. Everyone knows about your parish, Father; love and respect for people is hard to hide. When they think pastoral care, they think Seton Parish!"

Our brood figured there would be lots of leftovers and some *vino* left over from the Volunteer Workers Dinner last Saturday night. Big disappointment! Not only had the 287 leaders ate their fill--from cheese and crackers to chocolate cake--the Dinner Committee had done an excellent job of cleaning up. Oh the pain of a backyard Saturday dinner with all those intoxicating aromas lingering in the auditorium!

While leaving the church last Sunday in the midst of another of our "snow Sundays" a grandma-visitor said to her daughter "There were so few people in church today how can

you folks keep the parish going?" The wise woman replied, "Just like we do at home, Mom--tightening our belts, good maintenance and better prayers!" A ready wit and wisdom make for a brave parishioner and a faithful Catholic. God bless you *all*, hardy souls, one and all! "Mother always said there'd be days like this." Last Sunday evening word got out that a huge, rich, homemade chocolate cake was sitting pretty on the sacristy countertop. Since families of church mice rarely get such a delectable treat, we sounded the alarm for our young ones and their friends. We dreamed about munching down the whole beautiful thing. The kids prepared the old summer camp blessing, "Rub-a-dub-dub, thanks for the grub, Yayyy, God1" and we planned the midnight raid. We arrived at the stroke of midnight with hearts beating and mouths watering. My wife, Lisbeth lit our tiny lantern and saw . . . nothing! One of the priests had picked up the cake while locking the church and brought it to the rectory kitchen--its intended destination. So we mice settled down as a family and began to weave a story about what might have been on the Night of the Great Chocolate Cake Raid.

Our twins, Liam and Billy, overheard the following after one of the five Christmas Eve masses. A little boy shook the hand of the priest as his family was leaving the church. The priest asked him, "Are you going to open your presents tomorrow?" The little boy replied, "Yes." The priest continued, "And how do you know you will *find* presents under the tree?" The little boy quipped, "Because I ordered

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them from the catalog!!” Hmmmmm. Don't ever know what the little ones will say!

File this under “How many priest does it take to change a light bulb?” Lisbeth was taking the will with a triplets Peter Petie and Pete for a walk above the rectory office when she witnessed a fun moment. Seeing one of the old table lamp light bulbs burned out, one of the priests picked up a brand-new container of two 25-watt bulbs and proceeded to replace the old bulb. When it didn't light, he tried the other new bulb. When that didn't work, he tried plugging in the lamp in an adjoining room. Frustrated he was about to bring the lamp to electrical store for repair, when the voice of one of our quick thinking secretaries was heard through the wall, saying,

“Father, did you try another set of light bulbs?” Of course, what he did, and they lit up beautifully and everyone had a good laugh. How about those refined, resourceful Seton rectory secretaries!