

## Embracing the spirit of evangelization

Members of Saint Michael Parish in Augusta went on a great adventure this Lent and Easter, taking a trip back to Biblical times.

"This is amazing, really amazing," says Leslie Wiles Hubbard, a participant.

Approximately 135 parishioners are participating in "The Great Adventure" **Catholic Bible study program**. The program shares the story of Scripture from Creation to Christ by focusing on 14 narrative chapters of the Bible. It combines video presentations by Jeff Cavins with small group discussions.

"I think it's interesting that he gives this approach of how to read certain books in the Bible to get the whole story," says Sister Carol Martin, PFM, a faith formation coordinator.

"It's so easy to use, and it's good. It's very good," says Gail Gould, pastoral life coordinator.

Participants are guided on their journey by a color-coded Bible timeline that helps them understand the relationship among the characters, how and when events unfolded, and how they related to what was happening in the world at the time.

That is what caught the eye of Father Frank Morin, pastor.

"I thought this might be a good way of kicking off more interest in Bible study and faith formation later on if people get an umbrella tool to help them situate everything in the Bible," he says. "Our people have a hunger for understanding the Word better, and if we can provide them with the tools, they'll feel more comfortable about not just keeping the Bible on the dining room table collecting dust."

To allow as many parishioners as possible to participate, the parish scheduled workshops at multiple times and locations in the parish. Weekday afternoon sessions, for example, drew more retirees, while Sunday afternoons attracted more families.



Gail Gould

"Our people have a hunger for understanding the Word better."

– Father Frank Morin

"I wanted to do a Bible study for a long time, and this one came up, and I liked the little synopsis about it, and I thought, 'This is the one,'" says Jeannette Lasso, a parishioner.

"I never really studied the Bible," says Leslie, who is originally from Litchfield but now splits time between Maine and Alabama.

"It's just really helpful to put everything into sequence and understand how it relates to the secular history."

"As a Catholic from childhood, both parochial school and all the training I've had, I've had bits and pieces of the Bible, but I've never really studied the Bible. I knew the readings came from the Old Testament and the New Testament, so I was getting bits and parts and piecing them together," says Bill Kiely, a parishioner. "I know where it ends, but I want to see how we got there."

Several parishes across the state offered "The Great Adventure" series during Lent. The program had been introduced to priests and parish leaders during workshops last fall sponsored by the diocesan Office of Lifelong Faith Formation.

The office, which is funded by your gifts to the annual Catholic Appeal, supports pastors and parish leaders in ministries related to evangelization and faith formation.

"By sponsoring workshops like 'The Bible in a Day,' we help parish leaders not only learn about great resources but how to best use them with their parishioners. It is exciting for me to hear about the many Bible study groups that started up in parishes this Lent," says Maryanne Harrington, director of the office.

"For me, personally, the Office of Lifelong Faith Formation is my lifeline, and it always has been. It's just that connection to chancery, that connection to the greater Church," says Gail. "Maryanne really listens to what the needs are. She has really offered pertinent things for us."



Evangelization team

Another initiative encouraged by the Office of Lifelong Faith Formation, which has been embraced by Saint Michael Parish, is the formation of an **evangelization team**. The group at Saint Michael is comprised of members from nearly every church in the parish.

"We've assumed for generations that we live in a Christian culture, and our families are Christian and the society around us is Christian and Catholic even, and it's not. And this is a recognition that it's not," says Joseph Nielsen, a team member. "We just can't assume that the faith flows on, and I think we're all a little bit guilty of that as a Church. This is our world, and it just flows. No, it doesn't. It's going to take a lot of work and participating in the Holy Spirit to reinvigorate it."

"This new evangelization, it's new to a lot of parishes, and it needs to be worked on and built upon right now. That's why I think this group is good," says Dylan O'Brien, another team member.

The team has three goals: to evangelize those who are already in the pews, to evangelize those who identify themselves as Catholic but don't regularly attend Mass, and to evangelize the greater community.

"Our focus, right now, is particularly on the first two groups," says Jayne Wakefield, a team member, "reaching out to the people who are already attending, who are already the faithful, lighting a fire within those people to activate them to go out beyond their coming to Mass, and to stir the Holy Spirit within them."

Although they admit it took a while to get rolling, they now have a number of initiatives underway. After Easter Masses, they handed out Matthew Kelly's CD, "Becoming the Best Version of Yourself." An evangelization corner is a regular part of the parish bulletin. The team is leading a novena for evangelization on Monday evenings. The parish is considering programs that build upon "The Great Adventure" series. And the team is taking a look at hospitality at all of the parish's churches.

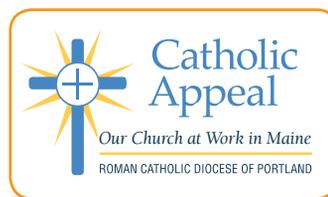
"I want to help the parish, as a whole, build better community," says **Karen Jack**, faith formation director at Sacred Heart Church in Hallowell. "It's all about community for me."

All the members of the team say they are moved to make a difference because of their love for the Church.

"It's not someone else," Jayne says. "It is the lay ministry that is going to call people back, to bring people back to the Church again."

"I have felt moved by the Holy Spirit, buoyed up by a force bigger than myself to help move this whole process along," says **Martha Nielsen**, the team leader. "God has helped me tremendously."

"We're going to get lots of stuff done," says Karen. "We have the fire in our hearts for Christ and under our bones for the Holy Spirit. So, I think that's really good."



## SHARING YOUR LIGHT to spread the Word

*Through baptism, we are called to share Christ's light and to "go and make disciples." Through your contributions to the annual Catholic Appeal, you are helping to do just that.*

*The Office of Lifelong Faith Formation, funded through the appeal, supports parish faith formation and evangelization efforts, including youth ministry, young adult ministry, and adult faith formation. It assists parishes in baptism and marriage preparation and offers divorce ministry. It also sponsors Project Rachel, which reaches out to those suffering the emotional and spiritual pain of an abortion.*

*The appeal provides crucial funding for the Christian Life Center in Frenchville, which offers retreats and marriage preparation programs. The ACTS (Adoration, Community, Theology, and Service) retreats offered at the center help to draw people closer to Christ and ignite in them a call to serve.*

*Ministry to the Latino and Native American communities is also supported by the appeal. The Office of Hispanic Ministry, under the direction of Sister Patricia Pora, RSM, offers pastoral care to the Latino community, and Masses are celebrated in Spanish in both Portland and Lewiston. The appeal also helps to provide pastoral care and education on three Native American reservations, including outreach to the homebound.*

*Your contributions to the appeal are also helping to spread the light of Christ by supporting the Office of Communications and Harvest magazine. These ministries allow the diocese to share the word of God and stories of faith with Catholics, as well as with the larger community.*

*And the appeal helps those in prison come to know the light of Christ. Deacon Robert Curtis serves at the Maine State Prison and Bolduc Correctional Facility, both in Warren, offering communion services and Bible Studies, and providing counsel to inmates. He says he tries to help them "see that there is a God who loves them." The appeal provides Deacon Curtis with a small housing allowance and pays for worship materials that are shared with inmates.*