

members of Saint Peter's Parish Council (Columbus Diocese) met at a parishioner's farm to renew, recharge, and to reach out to new and veteran members of the faith community. It was a mutually beneficial day. We used the gospel, +Romero, and fair trade chocolate to tackle some tough, practical questions, and considered more opportunities for growth at day's end. What a blessing it was to spend a few hours with the leadership from a little parish in Amish country.

VBS is short for Vacation Bible School. Nearly first thing in the morning, I was in west Akron at Saint Paul Episcopal on the 27th to help 60 wee folk conclude their VBS with puppets, story, song, and an interactive rap. It looks like Beacon Street may be returning there to address some bullying issues in the near future.

Finally, I closed the month with a three-day Faith and Sharing retreat at Saint Joseph Christian Life Center, now presenting itself as "The Center." (enterthecenter.org) This was not technically a Beacon Street program, but I was part of a core team that has coordinated the last several such retreats for a most diverse population: adults, teens, ten men from a homeless shelter, more than a dozen residents from L'Arche homes, care givers, clergy, professed religious, grandparents, and an

*"No storm can shake my inmost calm,
While to that rock I'm clinging.
Since Love is Lord of heaven and earth.
How can I keep from singing?"*

eight year old too. The residents from L'Arche homes are often developmentally or physically disabled. Sometimes both. But their contribution to dialogue, song, prayer, and celebration knows no bounds. Perhaps it is because we try to be so attentive to their needs that we note their every response to the circumstances around them.

Lots of talking, lots of listening, lots of music. And loads of planned and unplanned crafts and activities, inventive, inclusive, and inspired. Most of the participants have attended annually for years. They wouldn't miss it for the world.

So you see, not a hint of greasepaint for thirty days, just a school assembly, an early breakfast meeting, Sunday preaching, a camp, a board room, a college campus, a farm house, and a retreat by the lake. Have a great summer.

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Books: Old & New

*as seen from the reading
glasses of the Artistic Director*

I read in spurts. When the calendar(s) permit and the stars are aligned just right, I get to start each day with a hefty tome or selected short stories. And it doesn't get much better than sitting on my back porch in the wee hours of the summer mornings with an author in one hand and a cup of fair trade coffee in the other. This past Lent, I had a little extra time on my hands for reading.

My family heard the interview on NPR with James Martin SJ during which he recalled how his Jewish college roommate had inquired about the significance of the season of Lent. Martin faithfully articulated the symbolism of the forty-day observance and mentioned that dutiful Catholics often chose things to "give up" as a sacrifice. "What kind of a sacrifice is it," his friend asked, "if you decide what to give up?"

The next day, Martin was informed that this Lent he would be doing without orange soda. Apparently his Jewish roommate had settled on young Martin's favorite refreshment. And every Ash Wednesday for the next twenty-seven years, that same fellow would phone the Jesuit, no matter where in the world the two of them were, to assign the holy season's abstinence. With friends like that, who needs a spiritual director?

When my wife asked our children if they would like to do the same for Lent 2006, both of them, in one and the same breath, said: "Yes, and we know what Dad has to give up." I was all ears. Their answer followed in unison: "Listening to the news."

I must admit, I had found news reports troubling for many months. And because I am inclined to believe I have a mandate to right the wrongs of the world, I was occasionally finding myself overwhelmed and embittered, grumbling in the presence of my kids. They thought my