Dear Alums, Friends and Family,

We are entering the time of year when communities of faith celebrate great festivals (Thanksgiving, Christmas and Chanukah). The Winter Solstice is approaching and will present some of the most brilliant night skies that one could imagine. There is a reflective aura within our hearts and souls during these days. The colors of the dawn, the pitch black of night broken with radiant specks of light, the white fresh snow, the green conifer trees and the magical qualities of paper wrappings with spectacular ribbons and bows all illume aspects of the head, heart and mind. To be sure, the mystical of the ordinary is very present.

With the season of great festivals approaching, including the new year of the Church beginning with the First Sunday of Advent, I encourage you to make a conscious choice (which is not always an easy one) to take the time to appreciate this time of year and be present with each other as we enter into these coming days. The gift of presence is the greatest gift we have to offer, as it lends to a greater appreciation for life and a greater level of happiness.

Your monetary gift allows our existence and our vital presence to the students here at the Chapel + Cultural Center and the community of Rensselaer. You are the light in the pitch of the night in a person’s life and this is evident every time a student asks “Do you have a minute?” and an hour can be given. Through the careful use of our financial resources we are able to minister and serve the students in ways I find to be the mystery of God, present and real.

We know all to well the current economic reality is overwhelming; nevertheless, we continue to place our trust in you and your belief in us. Please, I ask for your assistance on behalf of a community in progress, our students. To be able to be engaged at the point of necessity is the grace of God’s presence, for me, and for all in need. Please assist in making that happen.

May the joys of these upcoming festivals (Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, the New Year, the Epiphany and the light of the days eventually becoming longer) fill your hearts and minds with the faith of a living and loving God.

A Blessed Christmas and Healthy, Happy 2010 from everyone here. . . . .

Sincerely,

Fr Ed Kacerguis

HOW TO SUPPORT OUR WORK

If you work for a matching gift company: Please make your check payable to “Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute” and write “C+CC” on the memo line. Also make out your matching gift form to RPI, which will send us a gift equaling your contribution, plus the matching gift value. If you do not work for a matching gift company: Please make your check payable to “Rensselaer Newman Foundation”.

Pledges: Gifts made over a number of months or years may allow you to increase your overall contribution.

Gifts of Securities: Gifts of appreciated securities are tax-deductible. Please call 218-6518 for transfer instructions.

Bequests: By leaving the Chapel + Cultural Center in your will you can insure the continuation of quality events and programs as well as receive a savings on your estate taxes.

Online Donations: Please visit our website at: www.chapelandculturalcenter.org and click the DONATE NOW button.
REFLECTIONS ON FAITH FORMATION
Excerpts of Remarks by Sr. Clarisse Correia
Rensselaer Newman Foundation Committee of One Hundred Dinner
October 16, 2009

Did you ever wonder why Europe has so many great cathedrals – Notre Dame and Chartres in France, the Cologne Cathedral in Germany, the León Cathedral in Spain, and so many others? These cathedrals were built as giant records of the faith. In the elegant windows and impressive sculptures bible stories and the beliefs of the Church are told in simple, yet intimate, detail, so that all people – whether nobles or paupers, learned scribes or illiterate peasants – could learn about Jesus and come to believe in him. For almost a thousand years, the Church used these images to retell the story of Jesus and the Church to the next generation of believers.

Today we are living in a very different world. We are influenced by the secular society in which we are deeply, inappropriately marked by our culture. There is a growing distrust of authority and institutional integrity; job security occurs because of movement from job to job / profession often requiring mobility. Our lives are affected by informational overload and demands placed on us. Remember when Sunday was a day for prayer and rest now replaced by sports, to do lists and other choices.

Today the Church continues to proclaim the Good News of Christ Jesus using multi media instead of just glass and stone. Yet the Church’s goals and message are still the same:
• To introduce people to the person and story of Jesus
• To promote knowledge of the faith through study of Tradition and Scripture
• To promote formation for all persons in a parish community with a core curriculum which is rooted in the life of the Church.

Faith formation in GIFT prepares people of all ages and all generations for meaningful participation in Church events through intergenerational learning, engages all ages and generation in Church events and guides them in reflecting on and applying the significance and meaning of the events to their lives as Catholics.

CONCLUSION
I would like to conclude with four key passages for the Directory for Catechesis:
• “Faith is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ … This demands a permanent commitment to think like him, to judge like him and to live as he lived.” (#53)
• “The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ.” (#80)
• “The witness of Christian life given by parents in the family comes to children with tenderness and parental respect. Children thus perceive and joyously live the closeness of God and of Jesus made manifest by their parents in such a way that this first Christian experience frequently leaves a decisive trace throughout life. This childhood religious awakening is irreplaceable. Indeed family catechesis proceeded … accompanies and enriches all forms of catechesis.” (#226)
• “The parish is, without doubt, the most important focus in which the Christian community is formed and expressed. This is called to be a fraternal and welcoming family where Christians become aware of being a people of God. In the parish, all human differences melt away and are absorbed into the universality of the Church.” (#237)

I believe that faith formation here in the Church of Christ Sun of Justice is on the right path thanks to the commitment of the Rensselaer Newman Foundation and because of Father Ed’s leadership and the lived commitment of people such as the Jim, Teresa and Christopher Brennan, recipients of the Sun and Balance award this year.