



**ST. MARY'S PARISH
8 CHURCH ST.
HOLLISTON, MA 01746**

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**ASH WEDNESDAY
IS FEBRUARY 18**

Five Services with Ashes ~

6:45 AM Liturgy of the Word

9:00 AM Mass

4:00 PM Liturgy of the Word

5:30 PM Liturgy of the Word

7:00 PM Mass

ASH WEDNESDAY IS A DAY OF FASTING AND ABSTINENCE FROM MEAT.

For Catholics, receiving ashes on Ash Wednesday is a profound outward sign of an inner spiritual reality: penitence and humility. The ashes, made by burning the palm branches from the previous year's Palm Sunday, serve as a "memento mori" - a reminder of human mortality. When the priest or lay minister marks a person's forehead, they recite the words from Genesis 3:19: *"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."* This act acknowledges that life on earth is temporary and that every person is entirely dependent on God for eternal life. It sets a sober, reflective tone for the forty days of Lent, inviting the faithful to strip away worldly distractions and focus on spiritual growth.

Beyond mortality, the practice is deeply rooted in scriptural traditions of repentance. Throughout the Old Testament, figures like Job, Daniel, and the people of Nineveh donned sackcloth and ashes as a public demonstration of grief and a desire for divine mercy. In a modern Catholic context, this biblical gesture is paired with the command to *"Repent, and believe in the Gospel"* (Mark 1:15). By wearing the ashes in the shape of a cross, believers identify with the sacrifice of Jesus and commit to a season of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. It is not meant to be a display of holiness, but rather a collective admission of the need for forgiveness and a complete turning of the heart back toward God.

In His own words, Jesus "came to call sinners." We, too, are sinners. When we come forward to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday, we are saying that we are sorry for our sins, and that we want to use the season of Lent to correct our faults, purify our hearts, control our desires and grow in holiness so we will be prepared to celebrate Easter with great joy. **Our ashes say that we want to come back to Jesus.**

St. Mary's Parish Newsletter

February, 2026 ~ Volume 52, Number 2



St. Mary's Parish
8 Church Street
Holliston, MA 01746

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Mission: "To Know Christ and to Make Him Known!"



The Journey Begins

The world often feels noisy and hurried, making it difficult to hear the "still, small voice" of the Spirit. This Lent, our parish is highlighting a variety of digital and traditional resources to help you carve out that sacred space in your daily routine. Whether you prefer a quiet book of reflections, a daily video in your inbox, or a prayer app on your phone, there is a path here for everyone.

Interactive & Digital Resources



Hallow: Pray40 "The Return"

* **Link:** hallow.com/pray40

* Description: The world's #1 Catholic prayer app features the "Pray40" challenge. In 2026, the theme is "The Return," focusing on the Parable of the

Prodigal Son and insights from Dostoevsky's 'The Brothers Karamazov.' It offers daily meditations led by figures like Fr. Mike Schmitz and Jonathan Roumie.



Dynamic Catholic: Best Lent Ever

* **Link:** dynamiccatholic.com/lent

* Description: A free email program that sends a daily short video reflection to your inbox. The 2026 program focuses on "becoming the best version

of yourself" through small, manageable life-giving habits rather than just "giving things up."

FORMED: Lenten Video Series

* **Link:** formed.org/lent

* Description: Often called the "Catholic Netflix," FORMED offers several series for 2026, including

"Fearless," which explores overcoming anxiety through faith, and "Brother Francis" daily meditations specifically designed for children and families.

Service & Reflection

CRS Rice Bowl (Catholic Relief Services)

* **Link:** crsricebowl.org

* Description: A staple for Catholic families, this site provides a digital "Lenten Calendar" with daily reflections, meatless recipes from around the world, and stories of hope regarding the global communities supported by your Lenten almsgiving.



USCCB: Lenten Resources & Calendar

* **Link:** usccb.org/lent

* Description: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops provides the official liturgical calendar, daily scripture readings, and downloadable PDF reflections. It's an excellent "hub" for checking the specific fast and abstinence laws of the Church.



Catholic Climate Covenant

* **Link:** catholicclimatecovenant.org

* Description: Offers a unique "creation care" perspective on Lent. Their 2026 resources include a Lenten Labyrinth Journey and a "Creation Stations of the Cross" that connects Christ's suffering to the modern "groaning of creation."



Books & Study Guides

Word on Fire: Lenten Gospel Reflections

* **Link:** wordonfire.org

* Description: Bishop Robert Barron provides a beautiful, printed (or digital) devotional for 2026. It includes the full Gospel reading for every day of Lent alongside his insightful commentary and space for personal journaling.



Loyola Press: Sacred Space for Lent 2026

* **Link:** loyolapress.com

* Description: Based on the popular Ignatian prayer website, this book offers a simple, points-based prayer method to help you spend ten minutes a day in quiet conversation with God.





FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Members of the St. Mary's Parish Family,

Not long ago, on the Feast of the Epiphany, we reflected on the Magi - those ancient travelers who possessed the wisdom to look upward. While the rest of the world kept its eyes fixed on the dusty roads and the demands of the day, the Wise Men followed a celestial light to find the Source of all Light.

To bring this lesson home, as part of the Epiphany Children's Mass homily, we challenged our younger parishioners to a scavenger hunt. Scattered across St. Mary's property are eight birdhouses. The rule was simple: the first child to find all eight and have their parent email photos of the birdhouses, would win.

What struck me most wasn't just the excitement of the race, but a common refrain from the children and their parents: *"Father, I've walked past these trees a thousand times and never knew those birdhouses were there."* They hadn't seen them because they hadn't been looking up.

As we approach the season of Lent, this simple game takes on a spiritual significance. In the Catholic tradition, there is a concept known as "contemptus mundi," the "contempt for the world."

To our modern ears, the word "contempt" sounds harsh, but in the spiritual life, it refers simply to a holy "detachment." It is the realization that the material world, with all its noise and passing pleasures, is often just a thicket that obscures our view of the Divine. To "contempt" the world is simply to refuse to let it be your master. To seek first the things that are eternal.

Saint Columbanus, a sixth-century Irish abbot, once wrote: *"O life, how many have you deceived... you are a shadow, and not a reality... For while you are seen, you are not; and while you are felt, you are a dream."*

If we spend our lives looking down at the "shadows" - our screens, our bank accounts, or our anxieties - we often miss the "birdhouses" of grace. Lent is the time to realize that this world is a highway to travel, not a home to inhabit. Lent is a time to look up toward heaven, and value first the Kingdom of God.

How do we practically achieve this detachment? The Church gives us three powerful tools that act like a spiritual telescope, refocusing our blurred vision.

Prayer: This is the act of looking up. It is the conscious decision to stop staring at the dirt of our own problems and gaze into the heavens. Through prayer, we lift our hearts to where the Magi looked.

Fasting: This is the practice of thinning the "shadows." By denying the body's immediate cravings, we prove to ourselves that we are not slaves to the material. Fasting clears the fog of the "passing things" so we can see and value the eternal ones.

Almsgiving: This is the ultimate act of detachment. When we give away our resources, we are literally letting go of the world. We are saying, *"This material object does not own me."* It frees our hands so we can more easily point them toward God. Including toward the Suffering Christ Who is present in the needy we aid.

Lent is all about the upward gaze. To look up is to acknowledge that we are pilgrims, that our true home is not built of brick and mortar, but of light and spirit. Like the Magi, we are searching for a King who is both "here" and "beyond."

Let us enter this Lent with the eyes of a child on a scavenger hunt. Let us stop obsessing over the pebbles at our feet and start searching for the hidden dwellings of the Spirit. May we find that when we stop looking at the world, we finally start seeing the One Who made it.

God bless you.

Rev. Mark J. Coiro



BIRDHOUSE SCAVENGER HUNT WINNER:

Congratulations to Connor Coughlin (far right). He and his dad were the first to find and email photos of all eight St. Mary's birdhouses on Epiphany Sunday!

Connor won a church shaped birdhouse that matches one of the eight at St. Mary's. Let us all keep searching and looking "up" toward heaven as we journey through Lent and life!



Meet Him In Ashes ~ Wednesday, February 18



6:45 AM	Liturgy	4:00 PM	Liturgy
9:00 AM	Mass	5:30 PM	Liturgy
		7:00 PM	Mass

Ashes will be distributed at all five celebrations.

"Remember you are dust and unto dust you shall return ..."

Meet Him In Adoration ~

This Lent, St. Mary's will offer a Eucharistic Holy Hour each Thursday in the church. Each Lenten Holy Hour includes an intention for which we ask you kindly to include in your prayers during your time before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament:

Thursday, February 19:

Please pray for Peace in Palestine and Israel.

Thursday, February 26:

Please pray for Peace in Ukraine.

Thursday, March 5:

Please pray for Peace and Unity in our Nation.

Thursday, March 12:

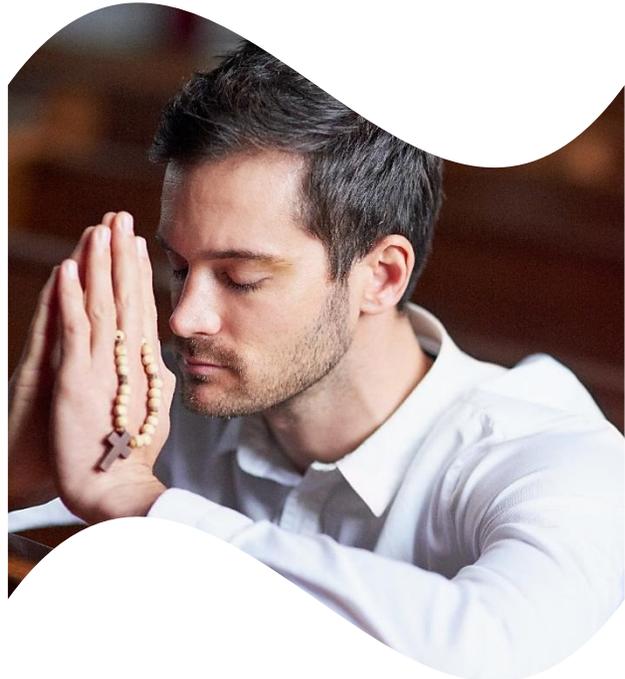
Please pray for Reverence for all Human Life.

Thursday, March 19:

Please pray for Freedom from Addictions.

Thursday, March 26:

Please pray for all lapsed Catholics.



Meet Him In Peace ~ Saturday, February 21

Join us for a Lenten Retreat Hour, **Saturday, February 21 from 10:30 - 11:30 AM in St. Mary's Church.** Deacon John Barry will Expose the Blessed Sacrament for Eucharistic Adoration. During this time of prayer, he will offer the reflection, "The Way of Peace." We live in a time of turmoil, suffering, and violence. Our families, community, nation, and our world are desperately seeking ways to find peace, which always seems elusive. God is the only Answer. This retreat will focus on the only way for us to achieve true and lasting peace through the Cross and example of Jesus Christ.



Meet Him Around The Table.

Friday Lenten Suppers ~

Join us for a great meal, prayer and deepening your community connection to your St. Mary's Family!

Fridays at 6 PM: February 20, 27 (*this one-night we begin at 5:30 PM as the St. Paul's Boy Choir performs at 7 PM*); **March 6, 13, 20, and 27.**

Our Lenten Suppers will take place in Fr. Haley Hall and will include a range of food options while observing Friday's abstinence from meat - as well as child-friendly food.



Families with young children are encouraged to come and not feel burdened about bringing a meal, please let your St. Mary's community lift you up. This also applies to any individual / couple / family feeling burdened where bringing a meal would prevent you from attending. We are all in different seasons of life, let your St. Mary's family be a safe landing spot for you this Lent!

If you'd like to help, please email Natalie Pomarico at st.maryslentensuppers@gmail.com. You will be added to the Lenten Supper Volunteer Group. A weekly 'Signup Genius' goes out via email to the volunteer base and individuals sign up for available food / drink slots. Volunteer participation varies week to week, some volunteer once during the six weeks, some commit to every week and others dip in and out of helping. Thank you!



Meet Him In Cor ~ Thursday, February 26

Cor, St. Mary's faith enrichment program for men, will launch its 2026 Spring season on **February 26 at 7 PM in Fr. Haley Hall**. In anticipation of the Lenten season, our first meeting will focus on the Sacrament of Reconciliation, how it heals and strengthens our relationship with God, and why it must be part of every man's life who is serious about becoming the person that God made him to be.

It is easy to look at the events swirling around us, and to offer our opinions on who is at fault and how we would solve the world's problems if we were in charge. However, it can be very difficult to step back and to take a long hard look at ourselves, and to think about how we are measuring up to what God expects of us. If we are honest with ourselves, we know that we have all fallen short. We know that at times we have consciously chosen to follow our own will instead of God's will for us, and we sense that in doing so we weakened our relationship with God.

Cor meetings take place twice a month on Thursday evenings. There is no cost for this program. All men of St. Mary's parish aged 18 or older are invited to participate. Our mission is to help and support the men of the parish as we seek to deepen our relationship with God through scripture, catechesis, prayer and small group discussions. For more information, contact StMarysCor@gmail.com.

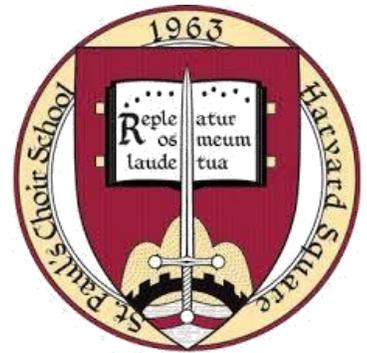


*Meet Him With The St. Paul's Boy Choir ~
Friday, February 27*

Friday, February 27, 7 - 8 PM in St. Mary's Church. Bless your Lent with an evening of rapturous music by the internationally acclaimed Boy Choir of St. Paul's Choir School in Cambridge. Directed by Brandon Straub, the Choir will perform selected works from the classical repertoire, including pieces by Rawsthorne, Dvorak, Purcell, Vivaldi, Faure, and Rutter.

The Concert is free and open to all. For more information about St. Paul's Choir School, please visit www.saintpaulschoirschool.us.

* The Lenten Friday Soup Supper will start early this night, at 5:30 PM, so that you can attend both.



"It is hard to find words to convey the joy of the soul's loving encounter with God, yet fine music is able to express something of the mystery of his love for us and ours for him."

- Pope Benedict XVI



*Meet Him In Love, Our Parish Mission ~
Sunday, March 8 and Monday, March 9*



The Four Ways of Love. The Season of Lent calls us to a greater love. This Mission will reflect on the four ways of love - Storge (empathy), Philios (friendship), Eros (romantic), and Agape (unconditional "God" love). During this Mission we will journey through these, one by one, in the hopes that we become better able to give and receive love from family, friend, neighbor, and God. The Mission will be held from 7 - 8:15 PM, in the church, on **Sunday, March 8 and Monday, March 9.**

Our Mission Director, Fr. Brian Mahoney received his undergraduate degree in Computer Science from Boston College in 1985 and was ordained from St. John Seminary in 1995. He received his STL in Sacred Liturgy from Catholic University in Washington, DC in 2003, and was appointed Director of the Office for Worship for the Archdiocese of Boston, a position in which he served until 2009.

In addition to now ministering as Pastor of the Holy Rood Collaborative in Chelmsford and Lowell, Fr. Brian is an instructor at The Theological Institute at Saint John's Seminary Master of Arts in Ministry Program (MAM) and the Master of Theological Studies Program. He also teaches in the Diaconate Program.

*Meet Him For Forty Hours ~
Sunday, March 16 - Tuesday, March 18*



40 Hours Devotion: In celebrating this devotion, the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed on the altar at St. Mary's for forty continuous hours. The church will be open throughout and people may stop in at any time to visit with the Lord in prayer. The Forty Hours Devotion nurtures the love of the faithful for our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Additionally, three special dimensions surround this devotion:

- the protection from evil and temptation;
- reparation for our own sins and for the Poor Souls in Purgatory;
- and deliverance from political, material, or spiritual calamities.



Sunday, March 15
 11:30 AM Opening Mass
 6:00 PM Evening Prayer
 8:00 PM Scripture Reflection

Monday, March 16
 9:00 AM Morning Mass (Hall)
 Noon Holy Rosary
 6:00 PM Evening Prayer
 8:00 PM Scripture Reflection

Tuesday, March 17
 9:00 AM Closing Mass with
 Benediction (Church)

Anyone and everyone is welcome at any time without signing up. But we need a minimum of two people committed to each specific hour the Blessed Sacrament is Exposed for Adoration. Please sign up at:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/805094DA5AB29A3FC1-61928555-40hours>.

ST. MARY'S CRECHE & LIGHTS TAKE DOWN: On a cold January 10 Saturday morning, Council Knights took down the Christmas Creche and lights. The Creche was carefully stored away for next year. In keeping with tradition, after the hard labor, Knights enjoyed coffee and donuts before departing for home and warm up.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #14224 RED CROSS

BLOOD DRIVE: On Saturday January 17, in Father Haley Hall, the Council sponsored its annual Red Cross Blood Drive. Donors gave **47 pints** and the Council thanks all who donated blood. Every day, blood donors help patients of all ages, such as accident and burn victims, heart surgery and organ transplant patients, and those battling cancer. In fact, every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood.



MEMBERSHIP DRIVE FOR 2026: For membership information contact Grand Knight Tom Brodo at StMarysHollistonKofC@gmail.com OR you can now join ON-LINE by going to the Supreme K of C website kofc.org/joinus. **Our Council respects members limited time but desires new members to share our faith, present innovative ideas, and be part of our journey as Roman Catholic men.**

MONTHLY ROSARY: The next Rosary will be Tuesday, February 17 in the church at 7 PM. The Rosary is open to all parishioners.



KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #14224 FIRST ANNUAL DON MARDEN MEMORIAL FREE THROW CHALLENGE:

On Saturday January 24, the Council held its annual Free Throw contest at Holliston High School. This year the Council named its Challenge in honor of deceased Knight Don Marden who had organized and led the challenge for the past 15 years. Winners will be feted at an awards ceremony in February. Holliston winners will then proceed to the district tournament challenge.

District winners go to the Regionals. Regional winners go to the State Tournament challenge!

Girls	9	Celina Lahiani
Girls	11	Josie Brower
Girls	12	Lennon King
Girls	13	Danika do Rosario
Girls	14	Riya Yedugaki
Boys	9	Alessandro Salvati
Boys	10	Charles Ogoreuc
Boys	11	Tommy Baker
Boys	12	Cole Dennison
Boys	13	Ryan Baker
Boys	14	Leo DeFazio

WORCESTER CATHOLIC MENS CONFERENCE

“BE NOT AFRAID”: The 25th annual conference will be held on Saturday, March 21 at the DCU Center. All five speakers are nationally known. In addition, Adoration, Reconciliation and a closing Mass with Bishop McManus will be held. Adult tickets are \$60 and student tickets \$30. To register go to catholicmenworc.com. Knights and all St. Mary's male adults and students are invited to a day of listening, worship and peace. The Council has traditionally arranged carpooling. Contact Deacon Ron Dowding at 508-429-3961 or Knight Mitchell Liro at 508-429-6098 for conference information and carpooling arrangements.

please scan QR code below for more information



www.catholicmenworc.com





Join us for our Winter Season: **“How to Be Happy”** based on the study of Matthew’s Gospel Chapters 5-7



What is WINGS?

WINGS is an opportunity for women of all ages to grow in faith wherever they are on their spiritual journey. Lifelong Catholic, new Catholic, or just curious – come learn and grow!

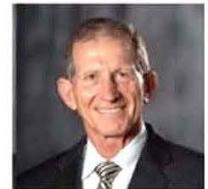
We will study **The Sermon on the Mount**, and discover how Jesus urges us to live in a way that fosters justice, peace, harmony and well-being within and among people.

Join us in Person or on Zoom!

Meetings will be held:
Wednesdays, January 28th – March 4th
from 9:45 – 11:15 AM in Fr. Haley Hall.

Free Childcare
Drop-ins are welcome!

Joe Javorski



We have been blessed each time Joe comes to speak at WINGS and are so delighted to welcome him back to facilitate our winter season. His deep faith and knowledge of the Bible are woven through his gentle explanations and insight.

Joe and his wife, Linda are members of St. Joseph Parish in Medway and are also members of the Vision of Peace Prayer Group in Medway.

Previously, Joe was the President of the Marian Community, at Betania 2 and is on the Board of Advisors for the Xaverian Missionaries located at The Fatima Shrine. He and Linda have been active in the past in the Cursillo Program, the Charismatic Renewal, and Teenagers Encounter Christ (TEC).



Contact Us to Join and to get the Zoom link.



stmaryswingssecretary@gmail.com



scan for our Facebook page





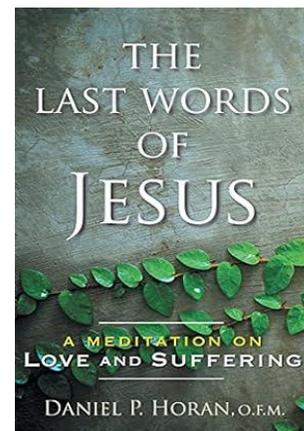
St. Mary's Parish High School Youth Group

NEXT MEETING is Sunday, February 22, 7 - 8:45 PM. All are welcome!

TGIF LENT STUDY: 'The Last Words of Jesus' by Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M. Jesus' final words weren't random. They were real, raw and meant for us. This Lent, we're slowing down and standing at the Cross with Jesus. We will read a chapter a week at our meeting and discuss.

Note: We will meet on Sunday afternoons 3 - 4 PM for this Lent Study in Sr. Ricci House. We begin the Sunday before Lent and end on Palm Sunday.

Cost - \$10 for book. If you didn't Sign-Up and would like to join us, please email st.marystgif18702gmail.com.



Lent Study Schedule:

Sunday, February 15 - Receive Book, 'The First Word'

Sunday, February 22 - 'The Second Word'

Sunday, March, 1 - 'The Third Word'

Sunday, March 8 - 'The Fourth Word'

Sunday, March 15 - 'The Fifth Word'

Sunday, March 22 - 'The Sixth Word'

Sunday, March 29 - 'The Seventh Word'



Join us for a great meal, prayer and deepening your community connection to your St. Mary's Family!

FRIDAY, MARCH 27 AT 6 PM - TGIF will sponsor the Lenten Supper by providing food and drinks needed.

A SignUpGenius will go out prior to the event! Our Lenten Suppers will take place in Fr. Haley Hall and will include a range of food options while observing Friday's abstinence from meat - as well as child friendly food.



**MISSION TRIP
FAMILY BINGO
RAISED
\$2,702.03!
Thank you!**





St. Mary's Parish Middle School Youth Group

Our Next Meeting is Sunday, March 1, from 6:30 – 8:30 PM, Welcome!

A SPECIAL GUEST: At their January 11 Meeting, MSYG Teens had a visit from Canadian hockey goalie Lukas Toth! Lukas talked about his journey in hockey and his journey in faith as a Catholic. One of the things he shared was how the first thing he does every morning when he wakes up is to pray. Wouldn't that be a wonderful resolution for this new year 2026? To reach for God in prayer even before you reach for your phone?



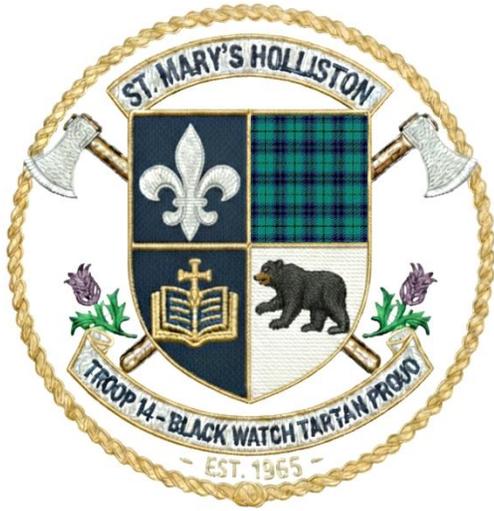
A CELTICS WIN! On January 21, seventy MSYG teens cheered on the Celtics as they played the Pacers at the TD Garden. Jaylen Brown led Boston to a 119-104 victory, scoring thirty points and ten rebounds. Our group was seated right behind the family of Pacers Player #11, Micah Potter. Some of our boys showed good sportsmanship by cheering Micah on once they met his family. Nice!



A COLD DESCENT: The MSYG Snowtubing Adventure on January 23 was frigid but fun! Fifty-seven teens hit the slopes at Nashoba, whipping down the icy lanes, and enjoying hot snacks with their buddies in the lodge.



FEBRUARY FUN: Monthly Meeting on Feb. 1; Boda Borg Boston Trip on Feb. 20; and Hosting the St. Paul's Boy Choir on Feb. 27. Lent starts Feb. 18, so at our March 1 Meeting we will make 300 sandwiches for the homeless!



Meetings: Monday Nights 7 - 8:30 PM

Contact: Mike Hebert, Scoutmaster
603 - 520 - 9045

Email: Troop14Holliston@yahoo.com

If interested in joining Troop 14, contact the Scoutmaster. It is an ideal organization for boys in sixth grade or above. The Troop meets weekly during the school year, Mondays from 7 - 8:30 PM in the Lower Church.

WINTER CAMPOUT: Scouts from Troop 14 participated in their annual winter campout on the weekend of January 10 and 11. Fifteen Scouts and six Leaders hiked with winter gear and food supplies up to the Carter Notch Hut in the White Mountains while a smaller group extended the hike to the summit of Wildcat Mountain. The weather was mild on the 4-mile hike to the hut, which allowed great visibility to the surrounding peaks. The group summiting Wildcat experienced icy conditions due to the elevation. Scouts were required to use specialized gear such as micros spikes, and zero-degree sleeping bags with liners due to the treacherous terrain and below freezing temperatures. After a full day of winter activities, Scouts prepared a hot dinner, then settled into the bunkhouse. The Carter Notch hut is a staffed AMC cabin that has a wood fired heat source and a kitchen for meal preparation. The bunkhouses are unheated, which was a new winter sleeping experience for many of the Scouts. After a cold night's sleep, the Scouts prepared a warm breakfast and hiked back to the trail head for their Sunday morning departure.

*"I will lift my eyes unto the mountains,
from which comes my help." Psalm 121:1*

