

Why Catholic you ask? Just ask St. Stephen's Church

Somewhat new program taking off at Kearny's biggest parish

By Ramon Luna
Observer Correspondent

Many people stray from Catholicism for a number of reasons: finding faith in another denomination, lack of interest, the sex scandal that exploded in 2002, or a loss in faith all together. One Kearny parish is trying to lure back parishioners who have strayed away from the Church and to deepen the faith of the faithful.

St. Stephen's Church began "Why Catholic," an evangelization program designed to help parishioners deepen their Catholic faith and to apply it to their daily lives, back in 2006. Danny Jutkiewicz, a committee member of "Why Catholic" since its inception, says that the program has approximately 100 members currently attending the sessions.

"We all go to church and we think we know all about our faith but the reality is we don't and we all need to be evangelized constantly to raise our level of conversion," Jutkiewicz said.

Why Catholic was developed by Renew International to help accomplish the goals of "Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us," the U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter for faith formation, says Jutkiewicz.

Doug Christmann, of Wood-Ridge, is a committee member of "Why Catholic," and manages a group of about eight participants along with his wife, Leanne.

"For me, it's a great way for people in church to learn about their faith," Doug Christmann said. "It's a small group session of about 8-10 people, where you have the opportunity to learn about your faith through scripture reading and sharing what you read with a group of your peers. So each person can get something from someone. It's a nice sharing process, not just textbook. By people sharing their faith, it brings the faith alive."

Group leader Marc Haefner, of Kearny, says, "[People] can use it as an opportunity



Observer file photo

Kearny's St. Stephen's Church is one of many Catholic parishes taking part in Renew International's 'Why Catholic' program.

to come back and learn more about the church.

People who are already going to church can gain further depth in what the church teaches and why it teaches it. It's also just an opportunity to meet people in a social setting in a relaxed atmosphere and be able to talk about religion."

The program is designed to last four years, with six sessions each spring and fall, totaling 48 overall sessions. Groups run small in size, ranging from eight to 12 members, with the sessions running 90 minutes each.

"Why Catholic" covers more than 48 topics including: The Profession of Faith; What We Believe; The Celebration of the Christian Mystery: Sacraments; Life in Christ: Walking with God; and Christian Prayer: Deepening My Experience with God.

All materials are provided at no

cost through the generosity of St. Stephen's Pastor, the Rev. Richard Cabezas.

Committee members also include Deacon Earl White, Susan Komorowski, Beverly Brachocki and Martin Sweeney. Group leaders also include Joan DiLemme, Ralph DiLemme, Noellee Haefner, Ken Robinson and Phil Glackin.

People wishing to attend the "Why Catholic" sessions can sign up the weekends of Sept. 22 and 29 for the fall sessions at St. Stephen's Church or by calling the rectory at 201-998-3314.

The fall session begins the week of Oct. 7.

"We all go to church and we think we know all about our faith but the reality is we don't and we all need to be evangelized constantly to raise our level of conversion," Jutkiewicz said. "Being a Catholic is not just a religion, it's a way of life."

Rapper Ice-T offers candid talk at Hudson Community College

By Ramon Luna
Observer Correspondent

Rapper and actor Ice-T launched a series of lectures hosted by Hudson County Community College Sept. 13 with a candid and uncensored overview of his life and how he rose to superstardom.

The pioneer of gangsta rap was born Tracy Marrow in Newark Feb. 16, 1958.

After the death of his mother and father, one dying while he was in third-grade, and the other while he was in seventh-grade, respectively, Ice-T moved to Los Angeles to live with his paternal aunt who was an alcoholic social worker, says Ice-T.

While living in Los Angeles, Ice-T attended Crenshaw High School, where he began to roll with the Crips gang. Ice-T said he was never initiated into the gang, but lived by their rules.

At 18, Ice-T got his girl-

friend pregnant. Enticed by a hefty sign-up bonus that would help his pregnant girlfriend, he decided to join the Armed Forces and become an airborne ranger.

After his return, Ice-T became a jewel thief and a pimp. It was after his friends began to warn him about the life inside the big house when he began developing his rapping talent.

Ice-T's musical content have always painted a bulls eye on the rapper. His second record "Power," the first rap album to carry an explicit-content warning label, had a portion of the public complaining about its sexist message.

"I was showing the power of weapons, the power of sex, and the power of deception," Ice-T said.

The song "Cop Killer," by Ice-T's rock band called Body Count, had also garnered the attention of President George H.W. Bush when it was released in



Ramon Luna ♦ Observer Staff photo

Rapper and TV star Ice-T began Hudson County Community College's new lecture series last week.

1992 before the Rodney King incident in Los Angeles. The song was about police brutality and the devil-may-care attitude of the LAPD, says Ice-T.

Ice-T's acting career has always been admirable,

starring alongside such actors as Keanu Reeves in the movie "Johnny Mnemonic," and Wesley Snipes in 1991's "New Jack City."

Ice-T will be continuing his role as Detective Odafin "Fin" Tutuola in the ninth season of NBC's award-

winning drama "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit."

"They say there is no thing as luck. Luck is when opportunity needs preparation," Ice-T said, in closing his talk about the opportunities in his life that came up and that he grabbed, telling

the audience that whenever opportunity presents itself, one should grab it before it's too late and another opportunity doesn't arise.

The lecture series at the community college continues Nov. 28 with ABC News Correspondent and "Primetime Live" co-anchor John Quinones, and will later include the real-life Hotel Rwanda hero Paul Rusesabagina Feb. 6, and Linda Armstrong Kelly, mother of seven-time Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong, April 9.

**HAVE A STORY
IDEA YOU WANT TO
SHARE WITH
THE OBSERVER?**

The Old Guard in Nutley continues sending care packs to troops

By Ramon Luna

NUTLEY — With American forces currently stationed in Iraq facing death each day without the company of their loved ones, the separation can cause them to be homesick and lonely.

One senior citizen club in Nutley, however, is trying to make sure their fellow Americans know their country appreciates the task they are trying to accomplish and that they are on the minds of their fellow countrymen every day.

The Nutley Old Guard, located in the Senior Citizen building at 84 Park Ave., has been sending care packages to soldiers in battle or who are stationed around the globe for more than 10 years, says club president Alfred Pepe.

The Nutley Old Guard sends care packages filled with cookies to specific soldiers or companies stationed outside of the United States, containing about 12 tins of cookies each.

"We send out cookie packages about three or four times a year," Pepe said. "People give us the names of people they know out there. Otherwise, we send out the packages to companies stationed out there. If we have the names of some of the GIs stationed out of the country, we send the packages directly to them.

"I am a member of the Nutley Old Guard for the last five years, and we have been doing this for the last 10 years, even before the war in Iraq. From time to time, we get thank you letters from the GIs over there saying that they love the packages. The GIs share them with the other guys in their company. They are happy to know that people back home are thinking about them."

Hundreds of thousands of American troops have served or are currently touring the current Iraq War, along with many different forces from other countries.

The war, which has been losing support from the American public for some time, is part of the United States' War on Terror.

It was first invaded on March 20, 2003, and continues to this day. After the removal of Saddam Hussein, American and coalition forces have been fighting insurgents to gain control over Iraq and hand over control to her people.

According to a club member, who asked his name not be used, club currently has 220 members, and 90 percent of those members are veterans of World War II, The Korean War and Vietnam. Anyone who is retired may join the club, even if not a veteran.

The Nutley Old Guard, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary on Oct. 9, asks those who have loved ones serving in Iraq or in the Armed Forces to get in contact with the group so they can send out care packages to the brave men and women serving in the Armed Forces.

Send addresses to The Nutley Old Guard, P.O. Box 198, Nutley, 07110.