

From the PA's Desk

Christ the King:

A few weeks ago Fr. Loren from Sacred Heart in Mount Pleasant wrote a wonderful reflection on the end of the Church's year as we approach a new Church year beginning in Advent, and I wanted to share it with you. "In the northern hemisphere, as life slips into wintry sleep, nature offers us a visual parable of surrender, falling into death, in the sure hope of nourishing the promise of new life to come. The first three weeks of November present us with the last Sundays of Ordinary Time. The twilight of the liturgical year rises to crescendo on November 20 with the annual celebration of the Feast of Christ the King. This year marks the close of an extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, just as families gather in thanksgiving for the bounty of the season, and the manifold graces of the year. On the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Scriptures explore the promise of everlasting life in the face of persecution. Psalm 17, a song of lament, outlines the predicament of someone unjustly treated, who seeks sanctuary in the temple. Leaning into the Creator's love, the person determines to trust in divine justice that delivers the oppressed. This is a heartfelt cry from someone who knows that, despite evidence to the contrary, they are cherished as the apple of God's eye, the child of our maker's all seeing compassionate care. The shadow of God's wings offers a haven of last resort for so many people who are lost in the legal system, without rights, status or protection under the law, whose petitions go unheeded. In lament they cry out to the heavens, in the hope that they might behold God's restorative justice in their stormy times. On November 13th, the 33rd and final Sunday of Ordinary Time, we are reminded that all things come to an end, even injustice and persecution - thanks be to God! Psalm 98 reassures the faithful that God rules supreme over all threats, whether from human foes or the forces of nature. The Scriptures speak of days of trial and disaster. Challenged to persevere in times of persecution, this psalm invites us to invoke the God of justice, who shines above shadowy rumors and threats that terrorize and paralyze us. On November 20th, we celebrate Christ, the King and Ruler of the universe. This day also marks the end of the Jubilee Year of Mercy. Heir to the throne of David, Christ embodies the paradox of a ruling servant, a shepherd king. Baptized as His servants, we represent His personality and character as humble servants sent to extend His mercy to all those we meet. Psalm 122 is one of 15 pilgrim psalms that invites us to journey from Ordinary Time into Advent Season. As our Jubilee doors close, we rejoice with all those travelers down through the ages who sought refuge and God's peace in God's dwelling place, our churches. This song of hope, Psalm 122, echoes Isaiah's vision of God's dwelling place, where weapons are recast to feed hungers and tend to the good earth. There is a Jewish prayer that says, 'Let us continue to work for the day when the nations will be one and at peace. Then shall we rejoice!'"

Families and Faith Formation:

The Church has been bending over backwards in the past 50 years to convey the notion that parents themselves are the most influential agents of catechesis for their children. They have the unique responsibility for the faith formation and education of their children since they are the first and best catechesis to their children. They catechize primarily by the everyday witness of their Christian lives, and by their love for the faith. They do this in a myriad of ways: their participation in the life of the parish, above all in the Sunday Eucharist; their willingness to evangelize and serve others, and their dedication of their faithful authentic routine to care and provide for their family.

For many years now the Church understands and appreciates that the catechesis given by parents within the family, "precedes, accomplishes, and enriches all other forms of catechesis." When children are baptized, parents accept the responsibility to bring up their children in the practice of the faith, and to see to it that the

divine life that God gives them always grow stronger in their hearts. At the same time, the Church promises to help parents foster their children's faith and assist them specifically in their role as catechesis of their children.

The Church has also gone to great lengths to promote adult faith formation, designed for all adults young and old, and for parents, in order to help them nourish their own faith which is then passed on to their children.

Such programs help parents to understand important issues in their own faith lives and the lives of their children, such as the preparation for celebration of the sacraments. Bishop Cistone in his Pastoral Letter to the people of the Diocese of Saginaw in 2011 called *A Future Full of Hope*, said this about Adult Education and Faith Formation: "When speaking of Catholic education, it is not enough to address the education of young people alone. Adult Catholics are equally in need of a strong educational and formational background in the faith.

Before we can love and serve the lord, we must truly know him. Education and catechesis are essential for each one of us, teacher and student. It is not enough to concern ourselves about our teens, young adults and children. We must find a way to provide a solid faith-formation for every adult: priest, deacon, and religious, teachers and administrators in our schools, parents of our school age children and those whose families are already full grown, as well as senior members of our parishes. Everyone is included in this universal endeavor of updating our faith and rejuvenating our Christian ideals."

May all of us involved in parish pastoral ministry look for ways in which we can enrich and help faith come alive more and more for both children and adults. Next week I'll write more about what is called Whole Community Catechesis (intergenerational faith formation), which is intended for everyone in the parish together, including parents, children, older adults, young adults, and youth.

Angel Tree Christmas Outreach:

This year the Christian Service Commission has agreed to sponsor our Angel Giving Tree in the back of church. As in previous years, tags will be hung for the needs of individuals and families who need help with Christmas gifts, but also, we will also have **acts of service** tags. Please see the insert in today's bulletin for more information.

Advent Reconciliation: Everyone is invited to an Advent Reconciliation Service on Sunday December 11 at 1 pm. There will be a few other priests here to help Fr. Fred celebrate the sacrament, and our families who have been preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation will have the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of penance as a family. Let us keep them in our prayers as the children especially have another opportunity to encounter the healing and loving presence of Jesus in our midst. There will be other opportunities for Advent Reconciliation throughout our Vicariate in Alma, St. Louis, Mount Pleasant and Beal City.