

From the Deacon's Desk

Food Pantry Ministry:

In last week's homily I mentioned the great ministry and service our food pantry volunteers do on behalf of this faith community, and although I see the countless hours they spend at the parish each week, many of you might be unaware of what I would consider one of the main outreach charisms of this parish.

St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry serves approximately 125 people per month from Coe, Union, Chippewa, and Lincoln Townships who meet income guidelines for assistance. We receive donations from the Methodist Church, soup kitchens in the area, the CCN food bank, local clubs and organizations, farmers, gardeners, and our own parish family in both food donations and monetary contributions. All money donations are used to buy food, in addition to soaps, paper products, and toiletry items. Distributions are done on Friday only due to the pre-school presence during the rest of the week, although the volunteers are often here throughout the week and on weekends.

Let us be prideful and humble at the ministry these dedicated parishioners do on behalf of us all, and may God bless them abundantly for reaching out to the less fortunate in our area. Thanks too to our parish secretary who spends time on the phone every week scheduling the appointments.

Anyone who would like to join our wonderful team of dedicated food pantry workers, please call the parish office.

Thank you to Joyce Feltman:

Thank you to Joyce Feltman for making our remembrance banner in church with the names of the deceased members of our parish from the past year. It took her a lot of hours and delicate finger work to pin each letter of each name to the banner. Also, thanks Joyce for making our parish meat-dish during our Living the Eucharist program. You're the greatest!

Trunk or Treat:

Thanks to Kaylie Willoughby, Bev Kalmar, Geri Clark, and Mary Moomey for handing out candy at the Shepherd Truck & Treat event. If we missed you we are sorry, but we did hand out 500 pieces of candy in 45 minutes. Next year we'll be ready with 1000 pieces of candy. It was great seeing all the families and children enjoying the beauty of our town together!

Living the Eucharist: From Mass to Mission

Last Monday at our fourth of six sessions on understanding the Mass better, we looked in detail at the Eucharistic Prayer, which is the heart of the Mass. We learned that there are 13 different Eucharistic Prayers to choose from; four regular ones, two with the themes of reconciliation, four with various needs and themes, and three for use with a Mass involving primarily children.

We again stressed how at the Eucharistic Liturgy, we just don't remember an event from the past, but the Event Character of the Mass brings the death and resurrection of Christ from 2000 years ago into our present moment.

We also discussed that during the Eucharistic Prayer, we pray for two transformations; first we pray that the Holy Spirit will change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, and then we pray that we too will be transformed into the body and blood of Christ. We are then sent into the world as his presence.

Next week in session five, we will begin to examine the shift in understanding the Mass from before to after the Vatican Two Council in the 1960's. We will look at the Eucharist as both a Sacrifice and a Meal. All sessions will begin with a pot luck at 6 pm (bring a dish to pass) and the presentation and group discussions will be from 6:30 until approximately 7:30/8:00 pm.

Sacramental Prep for Sacraments of Penance, Confirmation, & Eucharist:

Last week we began Sacramental Preparation for families with children requesting the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation, and First Eucharist. I met with the parents while Mary Moomey did the catechesis with the children.

With the adults I began by talking about the Church's understanding of Sacraments, and our sensibilities about ritual and sign and symbol. Catholicism has the most wonderful and beautiful image of incarnation and sacramentality surpassing any other Christian religion, and we will begin talking about how God comes to us through all the things God has made. As Thomas Aquinas once said: "All of creation is a window to the Divine."

From there we will move to our understanding of brokenness and healing, and how God invites us to start over again and again in the Sacrament of Penance. A great theologian once said that "wholeness can only be attained by being open to one's brokenness," and "God comes to us through our wounds." Another great theologian said: "If we do not transform our pain, we will transmit it." This is why the Catholic Church has a sacrament of Reconciliation, so we can name our brokenness and move beyond it to new life. Any mature adult who has lived long enough knows that it is not always easy to distinguish between a moment of death and a moment of new life, but for those who hope in the Lord, new life is always possible.

Parents and families will also be asked to work with their children at home. First Penance will be celebrated for parents and children in early December. After the Christmas holidays we will begin sacramental prep for Confirmation and First Eucharist which will be celebrated in the spring time.

Praying with others after Mass:

As a way to follow-up on the Anointing of the Sick that was celebrated recently at Masses, if anyone is ever in need of someone to pray with you about something going on in your life or your needs, there are parishioners who are willing after Mass to pray with you. Catholics are not always used to others praying with us, and yet, it has a long tradition in the church. We have always been encouraged to pray for one another, but sometimes people keep their need for someone to pray for them all to themselves. If you ever would like someone to pray for and with you after Mass, please let me know and I'll find you a prayer-partner who is available after each Sunday Mass.

Recently it has occurred to me that often people ask me to pray for them or something going on in their life, and rather than try to remember that request later on, I'm going to start praying for people on the spot (with me) when they ask. Following this same practice, we will have others at Mass always willing to pray with us when we need prayers, so just ask.