

From the PA's Desk

Sacrament of Reconciliation:

Fr. Fred, Joshua, Mary Moomey, and myself, had a brief discussion last week regarding our low attendance at our Advent and Lenten Reconciliation Services. I learned that it has been an ongoing situation here for a few years now. I came from the Hemlock and Merrill area, and we didn't have the same experience with low participation, and I'm wondering what is different here?

In looking at some possible ways to address the questions, blessings, benefits, and need for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, I was asked to offer a series of **"three minute teachings"** on why we have the Penance, before Masses begin. I will start these as we enter the Lenten Season in a few weeks. Look for more info in the weeks ahead.

MINISTERS NEEDED:

Many ministers are necessary for each Mass; some we see; others are not so obvious and are "in the background." There are **music ministers**, leaders as well as choir members. Joshua is always looking for additional ministers to help provide the kind of music that contributes to the celebration, joy and sacredness of the worship environment. **Eucharistic Ministers** of Holy Communion fulfill their role with grace and reverence, and we need more of them. We have **Lectors or Readers**, (lector is simply the Latin name for reader), who proclaim the Word of God from the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures (Old and New Testament.) They do not simply "read" but "proclaim" the Word, and therefore, they are the voice of God speaking to us in their own voice. **Altar Servers** assist the priest presider by holding the Missal, receiving the offertory, and setting the altar. They can be children or adults, and in previous parishes, I've seen entire families serve the Mass together, and that is quite beautiful.

Ushers/Greeters are the ones who welcome people to the church. Their primary role is not to pick up the collection, but more importantly, but to make people feel welcome, especially visitors. They are also the ones who are "on duty" for the entire Mass. They take care of emergencies; see that the entrances are kept clear in bad weather, find empty seats during Masses that have a high attendance such as at Christmas and Easter. Then there are the mostly "unseen" ministers; **sacristans, art and environment persons**, those who make sure the church is kept **clean**, those that take **care of sacred linens**, and make sure candles are replaced, etc. These people are often the ones who are the "glue" that holds it all together.

We are in need of more of you to step forward to help those already doing these duties. I know for busy families there is a "fear" of signing up; being committed to serve, but if everyone stepped up to the plate and helped, then you wouldn't be tapped for every week.

I encourage families to serve together. Have you considered being a family who greets and ushers? Or, family members who serve at the altar together? For instance: a child that can proclaim the Word well is a Reader at Mass, Dad is a Communion Minister, Mom and sister are servers together, and another sibling is in the choir. In my last parish there was a ninth grader who was one of the best Lectors we had. Just because one is young doesn't mean they can't minister at our liturgies. Many thanks to all who are already serving in one or more of these ministries and who continue to make our Eucharistic Liturgies joyful and uplifting. We had a first time visitor to our church on Sunday, and after the Mass, she told me she needs to keep coming back, so we should all be proud of the inviting and joyful celebration of the Lord we reflect at our liturgies.

Alpha: What is Alpha?

Alpha is a series of sessions exploring the Christian faith, typically run over eleven weeks. Each talk looks at a different question around faith and is designed to create conversation. Alpha is run all around the globe, and everyone is

welcome. Alpha runs in cafés, churches, universities, homes —you name it. No two Alphas look the same, but they generally have three key things in common: food, a talk and good conversation.

Food—Whether it’s a group of friends gathered around a kitchen table, or a quick catch-up over coffee and cake, food has a way of bringing people together. It’s no different at Alpha. We start with food, because it’s a great way to encourage community and get to know each other. Jesus often preferred to engage people in conversation over a meal for the same reasons.

Talk—The talks are designed to engage and inspire conversation. Generally thirty minutes long, they can be given as a live talk or played as a video. They explore the big issues around faith and unpack the basics of Christianity, addressing questions such as *Who is Jesus?* and *How can we have faith?* We will use the newest Alpha series which is even appropriate for teens.

Discussion—Probably the most important part of any Alpha: the chance to share thoughts and ideas on the topic, and simply discuss it in a small group. There’s no obligation to say anything. And there’s nothing you can’t say. It’s an opportunity to hear from others and contribute your own perspective in an honest, friendly and open environment. The discussion is not a class on theology or catechesis or doctrine, but simply a time to share thoughts on the videos and your feelings about what you heard. This after all is the core foundation of evangelization.

My hope is that Alpha will help us learn the language needed to reach out to others in our area and invite them to join our faith community. We Catholics were never taught how to talk to others about the basic concepts of Christian faith, and how can we share that information with others if we don’t have the right vocabulary to do so. Alpha will help us begin learning how. Ultimately Christianity is about a living relationship with Jesus Christ, not just a set of doctrines and dogmas, so Alpha focuses on our most important relationship of all—our relationship with the God who made us.

We currently have over 50 people who have signed up, and we want more. Please consider joining us and invite any family and friends you may know.

ALPHA SCHEDULE FOR MEALS, PRESENTATION, AND GROUP DISCUSSION

<p>Monday March 6 at 6 PM to 8 PM <i>Meal, Presentation, Discussion</i> Topic 1: Is there more to life than this?</p>	<p>Monday May 1 <i>Time same as above</i> Topic 8: Who is the Holy Spirit?</p>
<p>Monday March 13 <i>Time same as above</i> Topic 2: Who is Jesus?</p>	<p>Saturday May 6 Day long retreat, 9 to 3 PM Topics 9—11: What does the Holy Spirit do?; How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?; How can I make the most of the rest of my life?</p>
<p>Monday March 20 <i>Time same as above</i> Topic 3: Why did Jesus die?</p>	<p>Monday May 8 <i>Time same as above</i> Topic 12: How can I resist evil?</p>
<p>Monday March 27 <i>Time same as above</i> Topic 4: How can I have faith?</p>	<p>Monday May 15 <i>Time same as above</i> Topic 13: Why and how should I tell others?</p>
<p>Monday April 10 <i>Time same as above</i> Topic 5: Why and how should I pray?</p>	<p>Monday May 22 <i>Time same as above</i> Topic 14: Does God heal today?</p>
<p>Monday April 17 <i>Time same as above</i> Topic 6: Why and how should I read the Bible?</p>	<p>Sunday June 4 Pentecost: The Birthday of the Church</p>
<p>Monday April 24 <i>Time same as above</i> Topic 7: How does God guide us?</p>	<p>Monday June 5 <i>Time same as above</i> Topic 15: What about the church?</p>

