

From the Deacon's Desk

Arts & Environment:

I would like to revitalize an important ministry for the parish, an Arts & Environment Committee. This committee would focus on creating beautiful environments in our church as we worship God throughout our liturgical seasons. This group would strive to come up with creative and beautiful ways to decorate our worship space. They would design the plan and acquire the necessary items, plants, material, and more, for the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time. Other parishioners would continue to help the committee place and arrange decorations and take down decorations at the conclusion of a season. So far, Diane Courter has agreed to help, but we need a few more artistic and creative imaginations. Please see me for more information... many hands make for light loads.

On a side note, thank you to Carol Gall, Jennifer Austin, and Donna Lefever who are working on creating a Parish Meditation and Spiritual Reflection Garden on the northwest side of the church. The garden will be installed in the fall, so more information will be following.

Whole Community Catechesis:

Have you heard that Faith Formation is not just for kids anymore? Within the past twenty years, and sweeping across the country, there are several programs and models that use a new approach to faith formation. In a typical religious education program, parents drop children off once a week for an hour-long class with other children in the same grade. The newer programs however are intergenerational and involve the entire family, both children and parents. In some parishes adults of all ages who do not have young children attend as well. The new model of faith formation is for adults, children, and youth, and is most often referred to as Whole Community Catechesis.

Whole Community Catechesis begins with the understanding of adult faith formation being the focus of the Church's educational mission. All major recent documents on catechesis written by the bishops consistently say the same things: 1) Catechesis is a lifelong process that is situated within the process of evangelization; 2) The Sunday Eucharist is the font from which the catechesis of the entire community flows; 3) Participation in lifelong faith formation is not optional, but rather is viewed as integral to all areas of parish life; 4) The hub around which all other catechetical programs must operate is adult faith formation; 5) The goal of catechesis is not to learn more "about" Jesus, but to "know" him personally.

While parishes differ in their approaches to the Whole Community Catechesis sessions, many begin with Mass and a meal or snack, followed by a large group activity, and then time to break out into smaller groups for discussion. Often groups are divided by age, and sometimes the children's group (classes) are a mixture of different ages. The session then ends with the re-gathering of the group for a brief prayer and a social, community-building activity. While traditional faith formation (we don't even like to call it "religious education" because catechesis is not like teaching an academic subject) is still popular in many parishes, intergenerational Whole Community Catechesis programs are growing in popularity.

Some families in the area who have experienced firsthand Whole Community Catechesis have said the following: One parent found it especially helpful to be able to interact with a skilled adult faith formation speaker, who knows how to share mature spiritual and religious insights with the other adults at an adult level,

and not be talked down to. How one does faith formation with adults as opposed to faith formation with children is critically important since faith development of adults is far beyond that of children.

Another parent said: "It's great to be able to discuss something at home besides school and work. The topics change, but a lot of discussion is about how you make the topic relevant to family life. It's lead to us spending time talking about something that's as deep as you can get – your soul and your spirituality."

Still another parent commented: "I think it's important that both the children and parents learn something that's age appropriate. Everyone is learning at their own level, but on a similar topic. We understand more about what our child is learning, and we can talk to her about it."

As we begin to move toward this model of faith formation one Sunday a month, I will keep you informed all along the way. In the weeks ahead, and right up until fall and the beginning of Whole Community Catechesis, I'll continue to write about the vision called Whole Community Catechesis. If you'd like to watch a YouTube clip from a parish in Massachusetts, check out St. Elizabeth of Hungary Generations of Faith at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rOgk4E2gJA>

RCIA – Becoming Catholic – An Invitation:

Perhaps you or someone you know has been wondering about becoming Catholic. Perhaps this pondering has occurred over some time, or is a recent thought. Perhaps your thinking is energized by the Spirit, prompting you to investigate further. Know that the Church offers a way of discernment, a process called the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). The process involves learning more about the Christian way, and following an apprenticeship of prayer, worship and Catholic practices. If you would like to know more, please contact the Parish Office, 989-828-5720, or talk to Deacon Jerry Green. Your call will be returned, and or, questions answered.

Thoughts from Alpha Participants:

In the back of church is a tri-fold poster with brief word descriptions from those who experienced Alpha this year. Please take a look to see the feelings and emotions expressed by our participants. Alpha is intended to continue every year (as long as we can find the money needed for the meals), with more and more non-parishioners invited to experience it for themselves. Thank you to Diane Courter who had this idea for a display and put it together!

CSA 2017:

Our annual Catholic Services Appeal (CSA) campaign has begun. Our quota is about \$45,000. As of this writing, we have collected about \$28,500 in pledges, or about 63% of our goal. I know we can make our quota as we have for the past several years. If you don't have a pledge card for CSA, there are some at the doors of the church. CSA serves the bigger world church and our local diocese. It is worth your support.

I hope you will consider a gift of 1% of your annual income, and any money that comes back to the parish will be used for future evangelization, youth ministry, and whole community catechesis programs.