

From the Deacon's Desk

Summer Planning:

Summer tends to be a bit more relaxed around the parish, although it is a time I use for catching up on reading, and planning for next year's programs. Some things that are in the planning process would be:

- Alpha and Alpha for teens (If we have enough for at least one group, ages 12 through high school).
- Whole Community Catechesis which will happen on the first Sunday of each month starting October 1st. Right after Mass everyone and of all ages will be invited to the parish hall for a sit down breakfast, followed by age-appropriate catechesis for adults, teens, and children from 10:45 am until 11:15, followed by adult or children's catechesis from 11:15 to 12:15.
I'll have refrigerator magnets with the dates, times, and topics ready for you by the end of summer.
- An 8 week adult faith program called Mass Matters: A small course on the Holy Mass and the Sacrament of the Eucharist.
- We need to find a practical way to start reaching out to former members of our parish who live in the area but no longer attend regularly on Sundays. We need to connect with them and let them know we care about them. Months ago I met with Fr. Bert Gohm who gave me a program he used for reaching inactive Catholics at his former parish, and we need to consider if that approach will work here.

Today's Gospel:

In today's Gospel we find yet another set of Jesus' words which often are left to misinterpretation. "Come to me, all you who are labored and are burdened, and I will give you rest." We take this to mean that if we have troubles and grief, we can give our anguish to Christ and he will "give you rest." There is truth to this, but the main idea Matthew had in mind when he included these words was to let the Jewish Christian audience know that the burden of observing all the details of the Mosaic Law (613 of them) was not necessary any longer. In place of the heavy yoke of the Law of Moses, Jesus offers his own yoke, the yoke of the gospel, which by comparison is "easy" and "light."

Jesus goes on to talk about himself as "meek and humble of heart." This does not mean that Jesus was a wimp. Often people misinterpret Jesus' words regarding "little ones" to mean with limited life experience "like children." Being a "little one" or "childlike" is not the same thing as being childish. A childlike person is one with an unlimited open mind who, once he or she has done all that can be done in any given situation, trusts God like a child trusts a loving mother or father.

The mind of a child is eager and open. It is not defensive, or cluttered with many thoughts and opinions, and is always learning from experience and testing things to see if they are of benefit. But most importantly, the mind of a child is essentially relational. It is explicitly defined by its interchanges with a parent. This type of person does not think of him/herself as something in themselves as more special or important than others (ones ego is not out of control), and so he/she does not spend their energies in protection and isolation. Even as a mature adult, a person can have a child mind. This means the mind is in service to the deeper dimensions of the person, prizing the knowledge that opens the soul to God. This type of person is not resistant but ripe for revelation. This mind is ready to enter into the mind of Jesus and to know what he knows. Jesus knows that God's gracious will is to pour divine life and love into his children when they are eager for it.

Jesus' yoke leads to meekness and the steady flow of gentleness. Humility is a partner of meekness. Humble people know their place in the order of things. They remember at all times they are dependent on God and meant to serve God's purposes. The meek and humble live at peace, and their actions flow easily and effortlessly from a deep center of communion with God and all other creatures. Why is the "yoke" of the gospel "easy" and "light"? Because it only requires openness and love for God, and the people and things (creation) that God loves.

Whole Community Catechesis:

The past few weeks I have been writing about a new model of faith formation called Whole Community Catechesis, and some people have asked where the idea for Whole Community Catechesis comes from. The whole movement toward an approach to catechesis which involves the entire parish community developed due to four main reasons.

First, catechetical leaders have given careful consideration to the way Jesus taught, as the **General Directory for Catechesis** suggests we should. Second, we have reflected seriously on the teachings of Vatican II for more than fifty years. Third, the direction provided by the *General Directory for Catechesis* (**GDC**) itself has been nothing other than revolutionary. And fourth, there is an emerging consensus in the catechetical community that the present way we do our ministry, in what's known as the "schoolhouse" framework, just isn't working as well as we'd like it to.

The name, whole community catechesis, comes directly from article #254 of the *General Directory for Catechesis*, which says: "The Christian community is the origin, locus, and goal of catechesis. Proclamation of the gospel always begins with the Christian community and invites (people) to conversion and the following of Christ. It is the same whole community that welcomes those who wish to know the lord better and permeate themselves to a new life. The whole Christian community accompanies catechumens (adults being instructed in the faith) and those being catechized, and with material solicitude makes them participate in her own experience of the faith and incorporates them into herself."

Beginning in October we will offer Whole Community Catechesis following Mass once a month on the first Sunday of the month. Look for more information in the weeks ahead.

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, Joyce Noyes, Valerie Helinski, and Bev Kalmar have 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.

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.

Parish Picture Directory:

After six years since our last Picture Directory, it's time for a new one! Judi Degruise has agreed to coordinate this project with the help of Mary Lou Willoughby, Joyce and Larry Noyes, Pat Daniels, Dave Spindler, Pat Trudell, and Louanna Burch.

Look for weekly information in the gathering area of the church and in the bulletin. There are a number of flyers you can pick up in the back of church and we will start scheduling people for photos in mid-July. Photos will be taken at the parish on Monday August 28, Tuesday August 29, Wednesday September 6, Thursday September 7, Friday September 8, and Saturday September 9. We are also considering visits to the homebound to take in-home pictures.