

From the Deacon's Desk

Art & Environment Committee Meeting:

The Art & Environment Committee is meeting after Mass on Sunday in the hall. We will be planning for both the Lenten and Easter Season.

Alpha Team Meeting:

On **Monday January 22 at 7:00 pm** in the hall there is an Alpha Team planning meeting for anyone interested in helping with Alpha this year. I'm in need of small group facilitators and behind the scenes folks to get things ready. Lent is coming soon and we want to start running Alpha by the end of February.

If you enjoyed being a participant in last year's Alpha Program, please consider stepping forward to help run the program for others this year. More help the better!

Gospel Today & Ordinary Time:

This Sunday we will continue to hear Jesus calling his first disciples, and what is so amazing in the Gospel today is that in Jesus' day, only the best of the best students were chosen to be a Rabbi's disciple. In addition to that, the would-be-disciple first had to apply to be a disciple of a Rabbi before he was considered for discipleship and chosen. Today's Gospel is a statement about faith, but it's about the faith Jesus has in his disciples more so than their faith.

With the completion of the Christmas season, we have now begun a series of "Sundays in Ordinary Time" that will continue until the beginning of Lent on February 14. When the Church uses the term "Ordinary Time," it does not so much mean that the time is uneventful or mundane, but that it is ordered and sequential: Third Sunday, Fourth Sunday, Fifth Sunday, and so forth.

The gospel readings for these Sundays will generally come from the Gospel of Mark, the shortest gospel and, according to most scholars, the first gospel that was written down. There are several special characteristics of the Gospel of Mark that you might notice in the in the passages that are proclaimed on the Sundays in Ordinary Time this year.

This gospel emphasizes the actions of Jesus more than his words. There are only four parables in this gospel and no long passages where Jesus is teaching his disciples. There are many accounts of the miracles performed by Jesus.

Peter and the disciples of Jesus are not given preferential treatment in Mark's gospel. Their misunderstanding of Jesus and their human weaknesses are often pointed out.

The gospel of Mark is dominated by the passion of Jesus. The account of the passion and death of Jesus takes up more than one third of the gospel text. Even during the public ministry of Jesus, Mark takes note of enmity building up toward Jesus that will lead to his death.

One final note about Mark's gospel that I have always found interesting is how often it refers to human hands – the hand of Jesus or taking someone by the hand. This adds a human “touch” to the gospel that is very appealing.

The traditional symbol for the Gospel of Mark is the winged lion, a symbol of strength and royalty. The strength and courage of Jesus, the true King, is emphasized in this gospel.

Alpha is for meeting Jesus:

Have you thought much about your relationship with Jesus? What's in a relationship? Imagine a couple on a first date, where the young man lays down rules of dating—don't date anyone else, don't drive after dark and please wear your hair down. Hmm...wonder if there would be a second date! Yet perhaps several months and maybe a proposal later, the young man makes the same requests, and this time they are met with a much different response. The young lady is happy to comply because now there is an intimate love relationship.

The same is true of our relationship with Jesus and the Church. Some might come into the Church and only see ritual and rules. But when we have come to know Jesus, the things we used to view as rules are now things to do out of love. The love of a Person makes us think differently. Alpha is a wonderful way to introduce folks to that relationship with Jesus so we no longer see the rituals and rules but we see Jesus.

Can you love a pet cat you never had? Can you love salmon if you have never tasted it? The human mind is divided into intellect and will, and when we experience something new, our intellect acts first. It seeks to understand and know the object, experience, or person.

Sometimes we use the word *love* to express a judgment we have made, as when we say, “I love French fries,” which means “I choose French fries because I enjoy how they taste. Similarly, if we meet a person whom our intellect judges as good, then our will chooses that person as a potential friend or one worth loving. Our will seeks what our intellect judges as good. Knowledge comes before love. That's why we can't love a cat we never knew, or the taste of salmon we have never eaten. That is why there is no such thing as love at first sight. We can feel attraction at first sight, but we cannot love at first sight, because our intellect has to get to know someone well before our will can make that deep, intimate choice to love that person. To really come to love someone, then, requires that we come to know that person.

Alpha is an opportunity for us to get to know intimately who this Jesus is, and once our intellect experiences this God in Jesus first hand, then and only then can we fall in love with God. As Cardinal Schönborn of Vienna Austria so eloquently put it, “Alpha is for meeting (and falling in love) with Jesus.”

Confirmation Update:

Bishop Cistone will be coming to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation with us on Wednesday April 11, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. in our church. We will be joined by Nativity of the Lord Parish and St. Paul the Apostle Parish. Our rehearsal and retreat for Confirmation Families will occur a week or two before. Look for more information from Mary Moomey.