

From the Deacon's Desk

Alpha for Youth:

This year we will also offer an Alpha Youth discussion group for kids aged 11 to late teens. They will join the adults for the community meal and then break off into their own DVD presentation and faith discussion group.

Alpha this Lent:

Alpha gives everyone the opportunity to explore the meaning of life in a relaxed, friendly setting. The Alpha course meets once a week for eleven weeks. Sessions begin with a meal followed by a short talk and time to discuss the topic. Feel free to come to the first session and see what you think. No pressure, no follow up, and no charge, although we need to have people sign-up in advance so that we have enough food on hand.

Alpha is for anyone who is curious about the Christian faith. The sessions will explore the following questions: **Is there more to life than this? Who is Jesus? Why did Jesus die? How can I have faith? Why and how should I pray? Who is the Holy Spirit and how does the Holy Spirit work today? Why and how should I read the Bible? How does God guide us? How can I resist evil? How and why should I tell others? Does God heal today?**

Alpha will meet weekly on Monday evenings beginning February 19, 2018 from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM in the hall. The course is free although registration is required.

Alpha invites people to respond to the good news through a decision to follow Jesus. Parishes around the world have seen significant growth in numbers and a new enthusiasm for mission. **In the past year we as a parish have grown by almost 10%, and although we can't attribute it entirely to Alpha, our community-building gatherings have surely helped. New members of the parish, having come to faith during Alpha, frequently join parish activities and bring the freshness and joy of their encounter with Christ into the life of the parish. Alpha has been called a "discipleship pipeline" and it gets fallen away and inactive Catholics reengaged with parish life.**

One Catholic pastor has said this about ALPHA: "I have been running Alpha in all my parishes since 2001, and I am even more convinced than ever that it is the most effective tool I have found to date. There may be another, but I have not yet found it. I have seen all my parishes transformed by placing Alpha at the center of our evangelistic efforts, and have even expanded the use of Alpha in my present parish. At my parish, we are clear that Alpha is not just one of many programs we use, but that it is foundational to our identity as a missional and evangelizing Church. All these courses are

run by our parishioners, many of whom have experienced conversion and transformation through their own experience of Alpha.”

This same pastor also said it took three years before his parish really began to see the fruits of Alpha, so we will begin our second year on Monday February 19 at 6 PM.

Homemade Crosses Needed For Lent:

The Art & Environment Committee is inviting every parishioner, older and younger, to make a small cross out of any material, no bigger than six or ten inches, that will be used with our Lenten decorations. Be creative and use your imaginations.

Old Palms:

Please bring your old palms to Church for burning and making ashes for Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday is very early this year and will be celebrated on Valentine’s Day, February 14th. On the day we as a culture celebrate love, we as a Church will also celebrate the ultimate example of God’s love for us in the person of Jesus Christ, and the cross of ashes on our foreheads is the ultimate expression of God’s love for us.

The Traveling Last Supper Troupe:

We will be hosting a live-drama presentation of the Last Supper by a community theater group on Saturday March 24 at 7 pm in St. Vincent church.

The Traveling Last Supper Troupe is an ecumenical group made up of a cast of 18 people, a narrator and a musical duo. The group has been performing since 2006, with six of the original members still in the cast. They are mostly Catholics from Hemlock, Merrill, Saginaw, Midland and the Auburn areas.

The Last Supper presentation starts with Jesus informing the Apostles that He will be betrayed. In their horror they examine themselves to see if they might be that person.

Admission is free but they do ask for an offering at the exits if you are able to contribute. The money they collect will go to area soup kitchens and food pantries, and they will keep a small amount for themselves for publicity materials and costume upkeep.