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# *The Canticle of St. Francis*

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## Support Groups Offer Hope

Sometimes the journey of life presents us with situations and events beyond our control. Sometimes these are of such a deep impact upon us that we are never the same. We don't know what to do next. Our situation seems hopeless. We feel very alone.

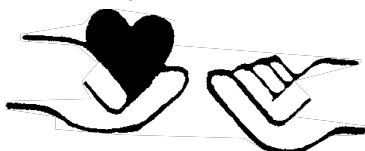
Sometimes it helps to discover that others are on a similar journey. They have experienced similar losses. They face similar adjustment needs. That is the value of a support group. It provides us with the chance to get together with others for mutual support and encouragement. Meeting with a support group that is parish sponsored also has the added faith related component that provides the spiritual connection.

At St. Francis there are three such groups that have been meeting regularly. Each focuses on a specific life-changing experience, or experiences. Participation is open. Come when you like. Gatherings are informal and confidential. You may find the journey less lonely. You may discover that God has been there through the pain. You may grow in the courage to move forward. You may even come to discover joy and begin to hope again.

### Support Groups that Meet at St. Francis Parish

[For further information, contact the Adult Education Office at 821-2125 or [cclist@catholicweb.com](mailto:cclist@catholicweb.com)]

- ✦ **Unemployment Support Group:** Meets twice monthly, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday at 2:00 p.m. and the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday at 6:30 p.m. Place: Parish Offices
- ✦ **Bereavement Support:** For those grieving the death of a loved one. Meets the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. Place: Parish Offices
- ✦ **Infertility Support for Women:** Meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. Place: Parish Library



## PARISH MISSION

*Come Seek the Tenderness of God*

February 29 through March 4

Five faith-filled evenings  
7:00 p.m. each evening

All are invited! Two dynamic speakers, Redemptorist priests, will explore the depths of God's love and mercy as they relate to the sacraments. It will be an enlightening and enjoyable week, rejuvenating our faith and strengthening our bonds as a community of believers. If you have been seeking a way to renew your faith this Lent, plan to come to this uplifting experience.

Besides engaging talks and experiences at the Mission sessions, there will be receptions providing beverages and food to top off each evening.



### Family Friendly Atmosphere!



- **Childcare** will be provided for the little ones in the church nursery.
- **Children in grades 1-4** are invited to the **Children's Mission** to take place in the school.
- **Children 10 and up**, please come to the Mission in church with your parents.



## Mark Your 2004 Calendar!

March 6/7 **Stop Injustice** (partial birth abortion) **with Your Signature!** Sign petition after masses.

March 7 -14: **Lenten Clothing Drive for Children.** Drop off outside Religious Ed Office. No boots/shoes 821-2132

March 9, 23, 30: **Ya<sup>2</sup>acht** - Lent with Frodo: The Spirituality of "The Lord of the Rings" [Young Adults 821-2126]

March 9 **Seniors @ St. Francis** program begins 10AM in the PAC, followed by lunch (\$5 donation).

March 13: **Singles Saturday** (30-50's) 3-8 pm in the PAC. 821-2126

March 14/15: **First Communion Parent/child meeting.** Sunday, March 14 at 2:30 p.m.; or Monday, March 15 at 6:30 p.m. in the PAC. 821-2132

March 15: **Preschool** enrichment registration begins for 2004-05 year.

March 19: **Serve Supper to the Hungry** - Third Fridays of each month.

March 22 **Family Reconciliation Service** at 5 p.m. in Church

March 29: **A lenten day trip-** "St Peter & the Vatican: The Legacy of the Popes" at the Cincinnati Museum Center. Paid reservations only. Call St. Francis Adult Ed. office (821-2125).

March 27-28: High School Youth **Christian Passover Meal** & World Hunger Awareness Lock-in. 821-2126

March 31-April 2: **Spring Rummage Sale.** St. Francis Altar Society

April 4: **Parish Lenten Concert** on Palm Sunday, 7 p.m.

April 6: All-Parish **Christian Passover Meal** ~ 7 PM in PAC ~ a Christian variation on a Jewish Seder Meal.

May 1/2: **Celebration of First Holy Communion.**

## Holy Week & Easter 2004

**Holy Thursday, April 8**

7:30 pm Mass of the Lord's Supper

**Good Friday, April 9**

12 noon Live Stations of the Cross

1:15 pm Liturgy of Lord's Passion

6:30 pm Evening Prayer

**Holy Saturday, April 10**

12 noon Blessing of Easter foods

8:00 pm Easter Vigil Mass & reception

**Easter Sunday, April 11**

7:00 am Mass

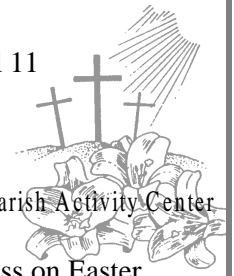
8:45 am Mass

10:30 am Mass

10:45 am Mass in Parish Activity Center

12:15 pm Mass

No 5 pm Sunday Mass on Easter



## RENEW and Ecumenism

### RENEW Season IV Begins

*Focuses on and Celebrates what We Share  
With other Christians*

Approximately thirty small faith-sharing groups have begun meeting this week and will continue to do so throughout the season of Lent. Most groups, each consisting of approximately eight to ten people, generally meet in the homes of parishioners. Some groups have been meeting together since the beginning of RENEW in 2002. A few of the groups began meeting just last fall. There are a couple of small groups that have been meeting together for many years who are participating as well.

RENEW is a process of revitalizing the parish community through prayer and small group faith sharing. In a parish the size of St. Francis, it is easy to become "lost in the crowd." RENEW offers the opportunity to really get to know other parishioners and to bring that connection to the greater community. Participants share how they experience God's presence in their lives. Meetings are intimate and confidential. Participants support each other

and help each other to grow in faith and friendship.

This season's focus of ecumenism helps participants to understand the prayer of Christ, "That they all may be one." (John 17:20) Through the movement of sub-topics each of the weeks, there is a chance to focus on and celebrate what we share with other Christians. It is a discovery that unity doesn't mean uniformity. Prayer is the bonding element in ecumenism and it is woven into each of the weekly gatherings.

A good third of our parishioners are in interfaith marriages. This RENEW season helps open doors of understanding not only between Christians in the larger picture but also in the little church of the family, the domestic church.

It isn't too late to participate in this RENEW season. Simply contact Charline List at the Adult Education and Formation Office, 734-821-2125 or cllist@catholicweb.com. We'll do our best to connect you with a group that meets at a time and day you are available.



## Spiritual Direction Program Grows

Two St. Francis parishioners have completed the two-year Internship in Spiritual Direction program at Manresa Jesuit Center in Bloomfield Hills. Janene Ternes and Patricia Sullivan were commissioned at a formal ceremony on November 8, 2003 and are now available to provide spiritual direction through our parish program.

While St. Francis of Assisi parish has been blessed to have trained, spiritual directors available for many years, Fr. Jim McDougall saw a need to make this ministry more accessible. Three years ago, as part of efforts to focus on Christian Spirituality, he directed that Spiritual Direction be more publicized and available to parishioners.

Christian Spirituality is centered on our relationship with God through Christ. That relationship is developed through regular prayer and the choices we make in how we live our daily life.

Each of us has a unique relationship with God and a unique purpose in life. *Spiritual Direction is a process of learning how to pray, listen more attentively and make free responses to God's will for us.* This ongoing process can lead us deeper into that spiritual relationship with God and our neighbor. The One directing us is God, but throughout the history of our faith people have sought others to be companions and guides on this spiritual journey which can be both joyous, as well as dry and desolate at times. A spiritual director does not tell us what to do; a spiritual director helps us to listen to God's voice in our life and to discern how we might respond. The focus is on the patterns or movements of prayer in our life. We learn how to filter out the distractions in our thinking and lifestyle, and to focus more on how God is trying to get through to us today as we follow in the footsteps of Christ.

There is a time and a place for spiritual direction in our life. To be helpful it is important that first of all you be



Photo: Patricia Sullivan (at right) leads the newly commissioned spiritual directors in a blessing for those assembled at the service. At left is Janene Ternes, dressed in the garment she wore for the liturgical dance that was part of the commissioning service.

searching and are open and willing to follow your spiritual journey at this time of your life. Secondly, someone (a spiritual director) must be available and willing to let his or her life be a resource to your learning, and thirdly a humble trust to let God break into your life and illumine both the seeker and the companion is required.

Janene and Patricia join Shaun McCarty and Michael Sullivan as commissioned spiritual directors available to serve you through the St. Francis Spiritual Direction ministry. Jesus said, "*The Kingdom of God is within you.*" (Luke 17:21) If you would like to learn more or speak with a spiritual director, call the parish office (734-769-2550) during business hours to schedule a confidential appointment.



### The Giving Tree!!!

Thanks to all of our volunteers that worked on this project especially our volunteer coordinator, Maria Arroyo-Martinez.

The St. Francis annual ADVENT celebration of sharing gifts through the GIVING TREE during December distributed approximately 820 gifts to persons in need associated with these agencies:

**The Giving Tree Participating Agencies:** Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County; Community Support & Treatment Services (Ellsworth Office & Developmental Disabilities Office on Varsity); Community Action Network (Hikone Center & Green Baxter); HIV AIDs Resource Center; Hope Clinic, Inc.; Huron Valley Child Guidance Clinic (of CSTS); Perry Nursery School; Problem Pregnancy Help; Project Transition; Safe House; St. Louis Center; Superior Woods Nursing Home; Wish Project (of Michigan Ability Partners).

