

The Canticle of St. Francis

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Parish Newsletter: Volume 8, Issue 2

Summer 2003

We Welcome Those Exploring our Faith!

One of our recent newly initiated shared her faith journey and Christian Initiation experiences:

"Joining the Catholic Church has deepened my relationship with God. There is an excitement that wasn't there before. I feel that it has brought me closer to my goals as a Christian. The traditions and customs of the church bring a new meaning to worship for me. It means that I can be more active in worshipping than ever before."

The Christian Initiation Journey at St. Francis

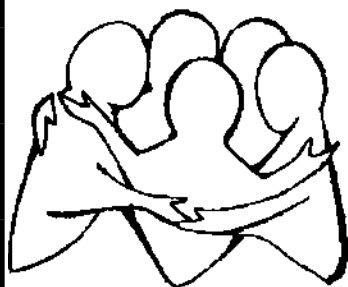


Photo: Pattie Scherer engages the Tuesday evening group exploring the Catholic faith.

We Welcome Those Who Return!

Each year St. Francis invites persons who have been away from the practice of the faith to come home. This year, eight persons participated in the **Come & See** series for the transition back into parish life. Parishioners who have returned to the Faith in the past form the welcoming team.

Participants have an opportunity to update their knowledge of the Catholic Faith, through presentation and discussion on various theological topics such as prayer, the church, sacraments, the bible, making moral decisions, Christian Service and social justice, what Catholics believe, the lectionary and church year. The series ended with a special mass and potluck dinner celebration.



If you or someone you know has considered returning to the Catholic Faith, please call Charline List (821-2125) at the parish offices for further information.

***Catholics Can Always
Come Home!***

When Jesus' first followers questioned him, he responded,

"Come, follow me" (Mark 2:14). This same invitation is extended to all who are interested in exploring the Catholic way of life.

The Christian Initiation process (RCIA) is open to adults, youth, and children of catechetical age (7 years of age or older) who: have not been baptized/ have been baptized Catholic, but have not completed full initiation into the Church through Confirmation and/or Eucharist/ have been baptized in another Christian faith/ would like to explore Roman Catholicism and make no commitment at this time.

Weekly RCIA sessions will begin in September. If you or someone you know is interested in exploring the Catholic way of life, please call Pattie Scherer. (821-2122).

Christian Initiation (contd on page 5)

The Celebration of First Holy Communion

The family plays a central role in initiating their children into the mysteries of faith. Preparation at St. Francis for First Communion begins with religious education in the first grade. Generally, in second grade preparation for the sacraments of First Penance (celebrated in December) and First Eucharist (celebrated in May) begins. Preparation consists of education in the classroom, and four parent and child meetings for the two sacraments.



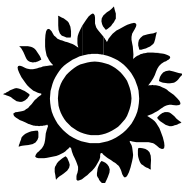
Pictured here: One of our First Communicant families pose for pictures after Mass. On the weekend of May 3/4, 147 children celebrated receiving Jesus for the first time in holy Communion. First Communion for next year is scheduled for the weekend of May 1/2, 2004.

Registration for Fall 2003 religious education classes has begun. Please call the Religious Education Office at 821-2130 to

register. For older children who have been baptized and are in need of preparation for First Communion, please call Ellen Ward in the Religious Education Office at 821-2132.

Mark Your Calendar!

June 25-July 30:
Summer Bible Study of The Psalms. 6-sessions with Fr. Arulsamy S.T.D. (call 821-2125).



June 23: **The Existence of God**-Where Modern Philosophy & Science Converge, adult 4-week series (call 821-2125).

July 14-18: **Vacation Bible School.** See more information on page 11.

July 18: "Bike Ride Across America to highlight **Poverty in the U.S.**" - see the early evening program in St. Francis School Gym.

July 18: **Serve Supper to the Hungry**, volunteer for third Fridays of each month (Call 665-9549).

July 19/20: **Catholic Book Store** - shop for vacation reading materials & gifts, after all weekend Masses in the PAC.

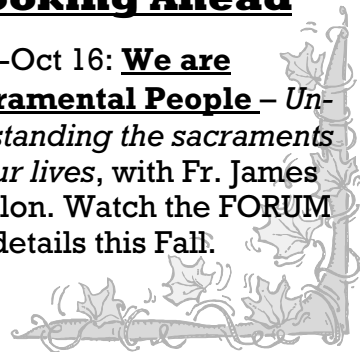
August 2-9: **Holy Family Ministry Camp.** Call to get involved by calling the Stein family (677-6659).

August 4,11,18,25: **August ORGAN RECITAL Series** at 7:00 PM on Monday evenings in August.

August 5,6,7: 2003 **Adult Summer Scripture Days**, with Sr. Dorothy Jonaitis, O.P. At Bethany House, Dewitt (734-821-2125).

Looking Ahead

Sept 18-Oct 16: **We are Sacramental People** - *Understanding the sacraments in our lives*, with Fr. James Conlon. Watch the FORUM for details this Fall.



Confirmed in the Spirit & Commissioned for Service

On March 23, Bishop Mengeling came to St. Francis to confer the Sacrament of Confirmation upon 130 young people. Family and friends gathered to join in the celebration as the candidates were sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

In his remarks to the candidates, Bishop Mengeling congratulated the young people for making a good choice. In choosing to be confirmed, he said, the candidates were inviting the power of the Holy Spirit to be with them to guide them in the many choices they will make throughout their lives. Bishop Mengeling also reminded the youth that it is in the Sacrament of Baptism that they discover **who they are** as Children of God. It is in the Sacrament of Confirmation, however, where they are given their mission and learn **what they are to do**.

The rigorous formation process that the candidates had just completed helped to prepare them to carry out this mission. The young people had studied the faith and researched what the Catholic Church teaches in many areas relative to living in today's difficult world. They had also studied the lives of those who had remained faithful to the gospel despite various trials and hardships. In addition, the candidates developed

their awareness of God's presence with us through the working of the Holy Spirit, especially at their retreat and through various prayer experiences. Finally, through the service component of their preparation process, the candidates practiced what a life lived for Jesus should look like. Each of these young people performed a minimum of 30 hours of service for their families, the parish, and the community. In total, the candidates performed over 3900 hours of service in Jesus' name! It appears that these young people are off to a great start in living out their mission of service.

May the power of the Holy Spirit continue to help you choose wisely and strengthen you to faithfully live out your mission.



Middle School Students & Parents: Talk About Chastity

With its many signs of new life, spring seems to be the natural time to talk about the "Birds and the Bees." The months of March and May, therefore, were chosen for the annual parent and youth talks about sexuality. The seventh grade students and their parents met on March 19 and the sixth graders and their parents met on May 7 to discuss this important topic.

The goal of both programs was simple: To get parents and youth together to talk about issues dealing with sexuality. In today's fast-paced world, setting aside a time specially designated for such a discussion is extremely important. Otherwise, despite our best intentions, it simply won't happen.



So, what makes this program different from any other?

In addition to reviewing the many physical and psychological changes that occur during puberty, these programs stress God's plan for our sexuality. The virtue of chastity is defined as purity of heart, mind, and body. Chastity is a virtue, or a good habit, that **everyone** is called to practice regardless of our state in life. Participants identify behaviors they can adopt right now that will help them live a chaste life. The program strives to show how living a chaste life ensures that we are using our gifts of sexuality to give glory to God and, in the end, will bring true and lasting happiness for ourselves.

Children Enter the Catholic Faith through:

The Children's Catechumenate

Along with adults who are inquiring about the Catholic faith, children often express an interest in wanting to know more about Jesus and answering God's call already given to them. This process includes children who are at least 7 years of age who have never been baptized or have been baptized and have not received any instruction in their faith. Their innocence and vulnerability allow them to be open to God's call to come, to trust to be fed and nourished. The children share their faith stories while breaking open the word on Sunday's readings as well as praying, singing, telling stories, participating in crafts and eating together.



Reading the Bible scripture

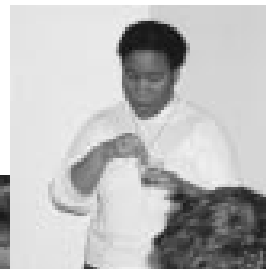


Sips the last glass

Photos tell the story of the Christian Passover meal shared by the Tuesday evening Children's Catechumenate.



The matzah



Dips the bitter herb

Understanding the Last Supper:

St. Francis Religious Education Program Looks at the Paschal Mystery



On Wednesday of Holy Week this year, families from the Religious Education program gathered together to prepare for the Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter vigil), in anticipation of celebrating Christ's Victory over death in Easter.

The paschal mystery of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection is the Good News of Jesus Christ, who redeemed us from slavery to sin and has given us a share in the freedom of God's life.

About 280 people celebrated a passover service designed for child involvement, and based on the biblical and historical traditions of Jesus' last supper. Understanding the roots and context of the last supper lends itself towards greater understanding of the paschal mystery.

