

March 2015

Peer Connections

St. Mary Star of the Sea Youth Ministry



Lent - A Time of Preparation

Lent is the time during the church year when we are asked to really focus on our spiritual life. How is our relationship with God? What do we need to change? As we know, Lent, is also a time of sacrifice. What do we need to let go of or give up? Monsignor Motta advised us to do three things during Lent; fast, give alms and pray. How can we make changes in our lives and incorporate fasting, alms giving and prayer?



End Hunger Food Packing Event

On January 17, St. Mary's parishioners joined with members of local community and faith organizations to package over 32,000 meals at Farmington Valley American Muslim Center in Avon. These meals were then distributed to local food banks, charity origination and Food Share to be given to families in our area. Thank you to all the adults that organized fundraising events and everyone that participated to make this event an amazing experience.



Got Light?

As followers of Jesus , we are expected to share His light with everyone we meet. As DIVE! members we share that light through an exciting game of Laser Tag! This year 13 DIVE! members traveled to Laser Quest to play our annual game. We had fun, played as a team and even had some high scores. Now that were back to our normal lives outside of the game, how can we spread the light of Christ to everyone we meet each day.

Upcoming Events

- March - Movie Night
- April - LEAP! & DIVE!
- May - Relay for Life

Why do Catholics put Ashes on our heads on Ash Wednesday? - by Mark Hart

'Excuse me, you've got some dirt on your head.' Every year someone says that to me on Ash Wednesday. Maybe it has happened to you too. In the past it used to frustrate me, but in recent years I have come to see it as a great opportunity to evangelize, to share with someone about the most important person in my life: Jesus Christ. So, what do you say when folks ask you about that smudge on your forehead?

Here are a few responses that I would *not* recommend:

The Ignorant Response - 'My mom made me go to church and get them. I have no idea what they mean.'

The Sarcastic Response - 'I'm protesting showers. Today, ashes; tomorrow I'm going to swim in raw sewage.'

The Ridiculous Response - 'I have a big zit that I'm trying to cover up. Is it working?'

The Practical (but Misguided) Response - 'Better dirty on the outside of my head than on the inside.'

And here are a few responses that I *would* recommend:

The Biblical Response - Over forty passages in the Bible associate ashes with mourning and grief. In Old Testament times people used ashes as a sign of repentance. They would sit in ashes, roll around in them, sprinkle them upon their heads, or even mingle them with their food and drink. They did this as an outward sign of their inward posture of repentance. Check out **Daniel 9:3-6**, for an example.

Ash Wednesday begins Lent, a time when we stop and assess how we're doing in our walk with God. Lent helps us identify spiritual areas in which we can grow and sinful areas that we need to avoid. To repent, put simply, means to turn away from sin and turn *toward* God. We use ashes as an outward expression of our need to begin again.

A Traditional Response - Ashes are a sign of physical death, as in 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust.' We began as dust (a joyless and lifeless existence), and our bodies will return to dust until we are raised up by Christ. By receiving ashes and keeping them on, we publicly proclaim our intent to die to our worldly desires and live even more in Christ's image, which we focus on during the season of 'rebirth' that is Lent (a Latin term for 'Spring').

The Historical Response - For over twelve hundred years on the *dies cinerum* (day of ashes) faithful followers have approached the altar and received ashes upon their foreheads. These ashes are made from the burnt palm fronds that were blessed on the Palm Sunday of the previous year. The ashes are sprinkled with holy water, usually fragrancd with incense and blessed using four prayers that are thousands of years old. The use of ashes for repentance and penance can be traced even further back and is practiced throughout the world. On Ash Wednesday ashes are applied to believers' foreheads in the shape of the cross.

The Symbolic Response -God formed Adam out of the 'dust' of the earth, which we read about in Genesis 2:7. In addition, Jesus healed the blind man with clay (earth and spit) in John 9:6. We mark ourselves with ashes as a 'new beginning' at the onset of Lent, allowing the life of Jesus Christ to make us whole and new again.

The Most Basic Response - I'm a sinner. I don't always love God as strongly as I could or as directly as I should. Ash Wednesday reminds me that it is only through God that I have life; He gave it to me.

Ash Wednesday also begins my preparation for Holy Week and the Passion and Resurrection of my Lord, Jesus, without Whom I have no life here and no chance at eternal life in Heaven. This is just a great opportunity for me to get better. Thanks for asking.

God forgives. He loves. And He gives this sinner a second chance. Put simply: my God kicks ash.

Children's Worship Ministry

Starting April 12, 2015 a new group will begin under the youth ministry program at St. Mary's. This new group will be for some of our youngest peers ages 3-6. Sometimes the readings and the Gospel can be difficult to understand. Even for those of us who have been learning about our faith for a while. This new ministry will help our young friends to learn about their faith in a way that is designed specifically for them. The readings and Gospel will be in child-centered language and the activities and music will reinforce the Gospel message. The ministry will meet Sundays during the 9:30 mass. If you would like to be an assistant or a teacher if you have been confirmed please contact Danielle F.

Amanda McCaffrey, Coordinator of Youth Ministry
st.marys.peerconnections@gmail.com | 860-716-4978 | stmarys-unionville.org

Sunday Gospel's

3/1/15

Mark 9:2-10

3/8/15

John 2:13-25

3/15/15

John 9:1-41

3/22/15

John 12:20-33

3/29/15

Palm Sunday
Mark 14:1-15:47

Why should we go on retreat?

Retreats can be an amazing experience for teens & parents. Listed below is some basic information.

Who? - Teen retreats : Students entering high school to graduating seniors. Men's / Women's retreats : Any adult

What? - Weekend spent with like minded individuals who share your faith. A break from everyday life.

Where? - Holy Family Passionist Retreat Center in West Hartford offers Men's, Women's and Teen retreats. Our Lady of Calvary Retreat House in Farmington offer Women's retreats.

When? - Teen Weekend Retreat 2015 will be June 19-20th.

Why? - To treat yourself to some relaxation, fun, good food, wonderful new friends and a faith experience like you've never had before.

How? - Contact Amanda for information about registration,

Holy Week

Join your parish family as we celebrate Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection.

Palm Sunday

Saturday 3/28 at 4:30pm

Sunday 3/29 at 7:30am,
9:30am or 11:00am

Holy Thursday - Mass of the Lord's Supper

Thursday 4/2 at 7:30pm

Good Friday - Celebration of our Lord's Passion

Friday 4/3 at 3:00pm

Holy Saturday - Liturgy of Light

Saturday 4/4 at 7:30pm

Easter Sunday - Our Lord's Resurrection

Sunday 4/5 at 7:30am,
9:30am or 11:00am

A Prayer for Lenten Grace

Loving God,

During the sacred season of Lent, bring me closer to you.

Prepare a place in my home and heart for silence and solitude, so that I may re-discover the grace of a prayer-full life.

Help me to fast from those things that threaten the well-being of body and soul and remind me of the grace of simplicity.

Enlarge my heart so that I give to those in need and, in so doing, re-discover the grace of gratitude and generosity.

May this season be a grace-filled time to rekindle my love for and faith in you.

Amen.

