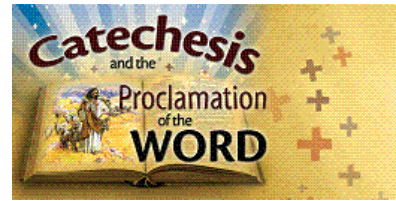


St Joseph Parish

& St. Vincent de Paul Mission

9961 Elk Grove-Florin Road • Elk Grove, California 95624 • 916 685-3681



Lenten Water Project: Ash Wednesday, February 17 thru Palm Sunday, March 28, 2010

Dear Parents and Families in Faith Formation:

To assist in our observance of **Lent** the children will be participating in a variety of Lenten experiences that emphasize the three “Acts of Religion”: **Fasting, Prayer and Almsgiving**. One of our almsgiving projects involves a sealed bottle of water which the children will prepare and distribute on **Ash Wednesday**. Each bottle will be adorned with a purple ribbon, the liturgical color for Lent, and a Scripture passage. As a family, you are asked to take a bottle home and reflect on some suggestions for how your children might use the bottle in your family’s Lenten reflections.

Fasting. Water is essential to life and a reminder of our creation and baptism. Share this water with the whole family at dinner on Ash Wednesday; refrain from other liquids during that meal. After praying grace, reflect on the beginning of Lent and how each member might observe fasting and abstinence. After the bottle is empty, keep it on the table or somewhere noticeable in your home as a daily reminder of the Lenten journey. Consider all the blessings we have; one being, in the gift of clean water – a resource 1.1 billion people in the world do not have.

Prayer. Attached to the bottle is a passage from the Scripture or the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to help families reflect on our social justice teachings. Supplement these readings with other prayers and teachings for the *40-Days of Lent*. The number 40 is a biblical number some suggest has the meaning of “long enough to make a difference.” In addition, the number “40” is the number of years the People of God spent in the desert; the number of days Moses spent on top of Mount Sinai (twice); the number of days Jesus fasted and prayed before beginning His public ministry. This concept of time recognizes the overcoming of hardship, the resisting of temptation, and that becoming obedient to the will of God takes perseverance.

Almsgiving. Begin to fill the empty water bottle with coins gathered from all your daily activities - pennies, nickels and dimes will fit. During the Lenten season have your child bring your family’s water bottle to Faith Formation sessions or Mass on Sunday. Have your child leave their coin filled bottle in front of the Baptismal font or they can pour the coins into one of the communal bottles. Half of the donations will be given to our St. Vincent De Paul Society for direct assistance to the “least among us” here in Elk Grove. And the other half will be donated to Catholic Relief Services who are assisting the people of Haiti.

Over the course of Lent, as the water bottles fill up, the coins begin to represent something more than money. Each coin signifies a person in need and a person willing to serve. Perhaps, each coin could symbolize a prayer said for others, or a prayer said for our self, or even a kind gesture bestowed upon someone in need. *It is our prayer that your children will see that they are part of something bigger than themselves and part of the Body of Christ!*

As St. Paul wrote:

***“You are the Body of Christ so that you might belong to another,
to the One who was raised from the dead, so we might bear fruit for God.” - Romans 7:4***

Peace in Christ, Cathy Geppert,
Director of Faith Formation
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