

# More About Us

## Winter 2014



**From the Desk of Fr. Bill Wagner,  
Pastor**

### Lent 2014

Faith is the precious gift freely given by God and freely accepted by us. Our "receiving" this gift is not a one-time event but a constant activity of renewal and nourishing and of living the faith. Jesus likens His kingdom of faith to a seed planted in the earth that eventually sprouts forth into the plant inherent to its nature. The seed/plant must be watered, weeded, sometimes pruned, and of course, fed with life sustaining food. These are obvious observations but important ones.

In comparing the kingdom (and our faith) to a seed or plant Jesus would want us to employ these images to help us understand our gift of faith. He usually taught in parables or by using things from everyday life to enhance his thoughts.

Our bodies and our spirits are continually growing and must be tended to in a variety of ways. We know we must nourish ourselves and at times we must do a little pruning and we also need to weed out the unhelpful things we find in our environment. We do need to recognize the weeds from the wheat, the sins from the grace-filled moments.

Spiritually we died to our own self-centeredness in Baptism that we might come to a life of grace. We are nourished by the Lord Himself in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and from time we prune ourselves of what is useless to our

spiritual growth by doing penance. We acknowledge our sins, the weeds, by being contrite, confessing them, and doing penance to re-direct our growth into the light of grace.

Lent is the usual time we take special note of this. As a community of faith we celebrate the sacraments of forgiveness and reconciliation that all of us together may truly be "God's people." This Lent as a very visible reminder of our need to care for our own spiritual growth, the entire Archdiocese will set aside an evening to make available the Sacrament of Reconciliation. **THE LIGHT IS ON FOR YOU!** Program will be on Tuesday, March 18, 2014, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm. The church will be open and a priest will be in the Reconciliation Chapel (Confessional) during this time. There is no service or liturgy connected with this, just extra time for Confessions. Besides the usual Saturday confessions at 3:00 pm we will also celebrate our Lenten Communal Penance Service with neighboring parishes on Thursday, April 10 2014, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm here at St. Thomas More. So the opportunities to receive this wonderful sacrament are abundant this Lent. Please consider carefully the gift of reconciliation the Lord has given His people.

**If you have left the parish and are still receiving St. Thomas More publications or information by mail, would you be so kind as to call the Parish Office at 753-2541 to let us know that you are no longer attending and would like to be marked inactive. This would help defray some of the cost to the parish to send out these publications and church information. Thank You!**

## WHO WE ARE NOT, BUT WHO WE ARE CALLED TO BE

As members of the Catholic Church, the Lenten passage takes place in the presence of the catechumens who are in RCIA. These are people who seek and thirst for full membership into the Catholic community and the initiation sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. For the catechumens the season of Lent is a period of purification and enlightenment, which is the concluding stage of preparation for initiation. As a Catholic community we travel with the catechumens into the desert assisting them on their sacred quest, but at the same time, we seek, as individuals and as a Christian community, to renew our own thirst and desire for a deeper relationship with Jesus and a greater participation in our faith.

The journey through Lent for the catechumens is also our journey. As baptized Catholics, we share with them the joys and struggles for being a follower of Christ. Just as they are seeking to be renewed and transformed by Christ so, we too, are called to challenge and stretch ourselves.

We don't come to Christ for validation of our fallen nature. We require correction. We need to ask ourselves: are we seeking verification that we're ok just as we are? Do we seek out people, publications, other parishes or even different faiths that will cater to us and tell us what we want to hear?

What good is a faith that agrees with us 100 percent of the time? Christ calls us to be what we are not yet. He asks us to recall what we were supposed to be. In the silence of our hearts, behind the defenses, the humor, the excuses, and the justifications we interiorly know that we are not who we were meant to be.

When we seek out a Christianity made in our own image, one that we can agree with all the time, we are losing the transformative nature of true faith. We are fragile and broken. We sometimes shatter. Our Blessed Mother calls this life a "valley of tears." To dry those tears and come to deeper conversion, we need the sacraments, prayer and Christian fellowship especially when learning the faith together in small groups.

Come and join us at the Easter Vigil, the holiest Mass of the entire year around the whole globe! Come and meet the RCIA candidates and catechumens who are looking forward to receiving the bread and wine which are made into the Body and Blood of Christ. Transformation is the heart of Christianity. Just as the bread and wine are transformed, so must we be. We must look to the sacraments to remind us of who we are not but are called to be.

~ Becky Ready, DRE



## As I See It

By Deacon Michael Thomas

### A SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY for Lenten PRAYER "Will you not watch on hour with me?"

Each week there is an allotted portion of time set aside in our Church for those who wish to come and spend some time in the presence of our Lord, present in the Blessed Sacrament. Along with our acts of service this is how the Lord himself keeps his promise "to be with us always." In the General Introduction to *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass* we read, "Once the sacrifice is offered and while the Eucharist is reserved in churches and oratories, He is truly Emanuel, God with us. He is in our midst day and night; full of grace and truth, He dwells among us." (#3)

Each Friday members of our parish community, most of who are retired, come and spend an hour in presence of our Divine Master. This special time concludes each Friday at 3:15 pm with a special Eucharistic Blessing called Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Lent as we all know is a special season of prayer. Once again this year we are going to extend the time of adoration until 7:30 pm, when we will have Way of the Cross and conclude with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

When the Blessed Sacrament is exposed on the Altar, it is the tradition of the Church that someone is always present. For this reason beginning the weekend of February 15 and 16, a sign-up sheet will be placed in the main vestibule so that members of the community can sign up to be here in prayer for an hour throughout the day. This is a wonderful form of family and personal prayer.

The Church calls each of us during the Season of Lent to fast and pray. In this spirit, let us also heed the invitation of Jesus to his disciples of long ago, "Can you not watch one hour with me?"

## **VIRTUS AND BACKGROUND CHECK CHANGES PLEASE READ CAREFULLY**

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati requirements for background checks when volunteering in any capacity with children changed effective January 1, 2014. The Virtus class requirement deadline is still June 30, 2014. This will now include an online background check to be completed when registering for a Virtus class REGARDLESS if you have had a background check anytime in the past. Furthermore, anyone already Virtus certified that has not had a background check in the past five years must complete an online background check by July 1, 2014. All the Archdiocese of Cincinnati fingerprint sites are now closed. It is our parish's goal to be in compliance before July 1.

**IF YOU HAVE NOT TAKEN A VIRTUS CLASS TO DATE** and wish to continue to volunteer with children after June 30, 2014, log into [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org) and register for a class. Once you complete the class registration, if you need a background check, there are now four additional screens to process your online background check. One screen will ask you if you want a copy of your background check results. You can have the results directly emailed to you. We highly encourage you to do this so you have a copy on file. We will now receive only notification if you are approved (or not) to volunteer with children. There is a \$25 charge to process your background check. See below for more information regarding the cost.

**IF YOU HAVE ALREADY TAKEN VIRTUS BUT HAVE NOT HAD A BACKGROUND CHECK SINCE JULY 1, 2009** and wish to continue to volunteer with children beginning July 1, 2014, you will need to log into your Virtus account, click on Toolbox, and click the first button on the left

## **“SELECTION.COM BACKGROUND CHECK”. How do I know when I was fingerprinted?**

Current parishioners volunteering in the various youth programs will have their specific status sent to the employee or head volunteer of every parish youth group. You can also email [mgennett@stm.org](mailto:mgennett@stm.org) for your last background check date. There is a \$25 charge to process your background check. See below for more information regarding the cost.

**BACKGROUND CHECK CHARGE** – There is a \$25 one-time charge to complete your online background check. It only takes a few minutes to complete and only has to be done once. Your background check is automatically updated every quarter. Current volunteers going forward will be issued a unique, seven digit token to pay for the check through their current volunteer organization. New volunteers needing Virtus and/or a background check must call the parish office to receive a token number. You can always pay for the cost yourself with your credit card and help the parish to defray the cost of this transition. Eventually, everyone will need to update their background check through selection.com. Anyone fingerprinted after July 1, 2009 can update their background check now, but at their own expense. School employees must still be fingerprinted every five years.

**VOLUNTEERS DEFINITION CHANGE** – Anyone volunteering with children present must submit to a Virtus class and a background check. The old three hour per month exemption rule no longer applies. This includes but is not limited to all Scout leaders, Booster coaches and volunteers, PTO, PSR, Youth Ministry, all School and Cafeteria volunteers, and Sacristans/Mass coordinators to name a few.

**VIRTUS BULLETINS** – Everyone that has taken the Virtus class must complete their training bulletins every month. Anyone that is three or more bulletins behind will automatically be disqualified from employment and volunteering by the diocese effective July 1, 2014. The diocese will automatically lockout all these Virtus accounts. In order to requalify, you will have to first re-take the Virtus class and complete all the delinquent bulletins.

**SAFE ENVIRONMENT COORDINATOR** - Mike Gennett will continue to be the parish Safe Environment Coordinator.

For more information, visit the parish website pages [Child Protection/selection.com](#) and [Child Protection/Virtus](#).



## SUMMER LATCHKEY COMES TO ST. THOMAS MORE SCHOOL



### LATCHKEY PROGRAM

The St. Thomas More Latchkey program is pleased to announce that we will be starting a Summer Latchkey program for the summer of 2014! The program will begin on June 4 and run until the first day of school in August. Daily hours will be from 6:30 am until 6:00 pm each day except July 4. The program is open to any

child entering kindergarten through outgoing 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Those children not attending St. Thomas More School are also welcome to attend the Summer Latchkey Program.

Flexible rates are available based on time used. The cost of the program is as follows: full time = \$175/week; part-time (10-25 hours weekly) = \$100/week; hourly (up to 10 hrs.) = \$10/hr. for 1 child, \$12/hr. for 2 and \$14/hr. for 3.

There are discounts for more than one child per family.

Breakfast (cereals, bagels, waffles, and breakfast sandwiches) will be offered each morning until 8:30 am. Lunch will be available for purchase both Tuesdays and Thursdays for \$1.75 each day. A lunch should be brought from home all other days. Both a morning and afternoon snack will be provided daily.

The daily schedule will consist of free time, outside/inside structured games and activities as well as crafts. Time will also be set aside daily for the children to work on reading and math so those skills don't get rusty over the summer.

Each Wednesday, we will be going on a Field Trip somewhere! Our list of adventures will include bowling, movies, laser tag, putt-putt golf, and other local activities. There will be an additional fee for each field trip. Field Trips will be optional for students enrolled in the Summer Program full time. There will also be a "Field Trip Package" for students who are not enrolled full time in the program but would like to join us for our adventures! If you would like to send your child to our program for field trips only, the cost is \$30 per trip.

For more information please contact Angela Holtgreffe, program director, at [aholtgreffe@sttm.org](mailto:aholtgreffe@sttm.org) or call the school office at 753-2540.

*~ Submitted by Candace Hurley, Principal*

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