

# Celebrating Christian Mystery

## Grace, Evil, Sin, Will Power/Transformation

*All the baptized are called to participate in the celebration of Christian mystery. For some this starts with an awareness of being immersed in mystery and then reflecting on the words our Tradition gives us. For others it starts with an awareness that we have reached the limits of what our intellect can teach us, and subsequently being drawn into the wonder and awe of mystery. Immersion into Mystery and Tradition work together to lead us to transformation.*

February 2010

### Adult Faith Formation

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When I was younger I remember working hard at being good, being nice to my siblings, obeying my parents, fulfilling my Sunday obligation, not eating meat on Friday, etc., etc. Then when I didn't live up to these standards, I worked hard at being sorry enough, confessing my sins according to the formula, doing my penance and starting over on the cycle. Whether I was being good or being sorry for failing to be good, it was all about me and very little about God.

Thankfully, I had people who gave me a foundation that taught me about good and evil, and even more thankfully, they also taught me about grace, mercy and love. Michael Himes says that "grace is God's love outside the Trinity." It is by grace that we exist. We can neither earn nor repay grace -- it is something we behold and respond to.

Then there's the question about sin. What exactly is it? Is it a series of static acts or is it a dynamic core disposition that manifests itself in static acts? Can sin be resisted by will power? Is sin individual or communal? Perhaps it is not that sin be resisted, but rather that it be transformed.

**Small Faith Sharing Groups.** During this Lenten season we will have an opportunity to come together in small groups to reflect on sin, grace, transformation, will power and the effects they have on individuals and society. We will use reflections on the Sunday gospels provided by Catholic Charities, as well as Fr. Mike's homilies as the basis for our sharing. Information and sign up sheets are available in the link, or contact Marge Virnig if you have any questions.

**Two Movie Nights this month.** Movie Nights are a great way to meet people, share a meal, watch a movie and do some theological reflection on contemporary issues.

**Feb. 20 – Into Temptation,** starring Jeremy Sisto and Kristin Chenoweth

Father John Buerlein's confessional duty in his shabby Minneapolis parish is mundane. He generally listens to the litany of petty misdemeanors with one ear while working a crossword puzzle. But one afternoon he's approached by a woman seeking absolution for a sin she hasn't committed yet.

"I'm going to kill myself. On my birthday. And I'm Aries, Father, so I don't have a lot of time."

"Into Temptation" is a haunting, carefully crafted movie about a woman with mile-wide rips in her soul and the flawed priest who aims to save her. This is one of very few American films to deal with religious beliefs about faith and salvation with empathy and insight. The confidentiality of all statements made during confession prevents the priest from contacting the authorities. If he violates the seal of confession, he would be subject to excommunication. If he does nothing, a life and a soul will be lost.

**Feb. 27 – Amazing Grace**

In 1797, William Wilberforce, the great crusader for the British abolition of slavery, is taking a vacation for his health even while he is sicker at heart for his frustrated cause. However, meeting the charming Barbara Spooner, Wilberforce finds a soulmate to share the story of his struggle. With few allies such as his mentor, John Newton, a slave ship captain turned repentant priest who penned the great hymn, "Amazing Grace," With Prime Minister William Pitt, and Olaudah Equiano, the erudite former slave turned author, Wilberforce fruitlessly fights both public indifference and money-eyed opposition determined to keep their exploitation safe. Nevertheless, Wilberforce finds the inspiration in newfound love to rejuvenate the fight with new ideas that would lead to a great victory for social justice.

### Calendar

Thursday, Feb. 4	Faith Formation Advisory Meeting 7:00 p.m.
Sunday, Feb. 7, 21	Youth Group 7:00 p.m.
Wed., Feb. 10	RCIA 6:30 p.m.
Sun., Feb. 14, 21, 28	Catechesis of the Good Shepherd 9:45 a.m.
Wed., Feb 17	Ash Wednesday Whole Community Wednesday Mass 12:05 p.m. Pizza Supper-5:15 p.m. Prayer Service 6:30 p.m.
Sat., Feb. 20 & 27	Movie Night 6:15 p.m.
Sun., Feb. 21	Whole Community Sunday 11:00 a.m.
Mon., Feb.22	Stations of the Cross Practice
Sun., Feb. 28	Rites 10:00, Confirmation 11:15

### For Reflection

- Grace is the "love of God outside the Trinity." What does this mean?
- If grace is present everywhere, what makes the church and sacraments sacred?
- How can you increase your awareness of grace? How is the work you do sacred?

Michael J. Himes  
the mystery of FAITH –An introduction to Catholicism

## Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

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Annamary and I work with 3-5 year-old children in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) program. At that level CGS does not work directly with the concept of sin. Those who conceived the program, and now continue to create it, believe that at this young age it is too early to introduce "sin."

Instead the children are presented with the concept of God's unconditional love. They explore that idea with work centered on embodiments of this idea. The most important of these is the story of the Good Shepherd. It has been found over the years that children on the multiple continents in which CGS is found, have embraced the parable of the Good Shepherd more than any other. The children work with a set of wooden pieces: a circular green board, approximately a foot in diameter; a twine and post fence around the green circle; 12-14 two-dimensional wooden sheep; and a

two-dimensional shepherd with a lamb wrapped around his neck. In the children's work they retell the story of the shepherd leading his sheep to "green pastures" and "restful waters." He chooses the very best places for his sheep to graze and finds calm waters where the sheep will drink. He keeps them safe. If a sheep wanders away, the shepherd looks until he finds it and then guides it back to his flock. He protects his sheep from danger. As they return home, the shepherd guides the sheep back into their sheepfold. When children begin the CGS program this basic story of the Good Shepherd is presented first. The story of the Lost Sheep is introduced to the older children in our group. The children don't meet the hireling until they are in the 7-9 year old program.

One more idea before this column ends... If you are one of the last people to leave the 10:00 mass on February 21, you might see the CGS children quietly and seriously (we hope) approaching the altar with a shoebox covered in purple fabric. You might wonder why this is happening.

During Lent we do not say the word,

"Alleluia." It is the only season of the church year in which that happens. The CGS children mark the beginning of Lenten season by burying Alleluias.

On February 7, each student will receive a 4x6 note card with the word, "Alleluia," written on it. There will be a variety of special stickers, pencils, pens and markers available to the children. The students will work to make their Alleluias beautiful and special.

And so on February 21, the Sunday closest to Ash Wednesday (parish dinner on the 14th), the children take their beautiful Alleluias and pack them into the purple (Lenten) box. They presume that our "classroom priest" will change his green vestments to purple; and, similarly, that a purple cloth will be on our prayer table. We will work as a class to identify Lent (in purple) on our church calendar.

We have found a space near the sanctuary where the box of our Alleluias can be placed below the "ground" (eye level), until they are resurrected the first time we meet after Easter.

## Youth News

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Super games on Superbowl Sunday. Not into football or all the hype about Superbowl Sunday. Then come and play super games with Cindy in the Fellowship Hall at 7:00 p.m. Bring your favorite games and I'll bring mine. There will of course be fabulous Superbowl food to enjoy. Reminder: Youth group is for youth in grades 6th through 12th. We would love to see the middle schoolers at this event. Don't forget the parish dinner is coming up on Sunday, February 14th. Sign up in the link to help out in the pie room, setting/clearing tables, or the kids games. Also look for registration for youth games like a bean bag tournament with cash prizes.

Summer is just around the corner and with it our Mission Trip to Read Lake. We will be

gone July 11th-16th. The cost will be \$258. In the past we have been able to fund-raise most of that cost. Registration forms will be in the Link. The forms and a \$50 deposit to hold your spot are due by February 20th. For more information, contact Cindy Windau at cndybauer@yahoo.com or call 651-222-2500. We are in need of two adult chaperons for the trip as well, one male and one female. Please contact Cindy if you are interested.

Skiing is back. Yahoo! Mark your calendars for Saturday, March 6th to go skiing at Afton Alps. We will meet at St. C's at 8:30 a.m. and then carpool over to the Alps. Family and friends are welcome and encouraged to come along. (This includes adults without kids that like to ski) Here are the costs:

Full Day, 9:00 a.m.-9:30 p.m./\$24 lift ticket  
Ski/Board Rentals \$18  
Ski/Board Lessons \$4  
Helmet Rentals \$4

## Faith Formation K-8

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*This life, therefore is not godliness but the process of becoming godly, not health but getting well, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way. The process is not yet finished, but it is actively going on. This is not the goal but it is the right road. At present, everything does not gleam and sparkle, but everything is being cleansed.*

Martin Luther King

This month's theme may seem a little daunting for children! But I think this quote from Dr. King helps express it in a wonderful way.

The idea of reconciliation merges this month with last month's theme of being a disciple. We are not always as we wish to be, the world is not always as we believe it can be. Do we believe that faith and prayer together with thoughtful action can move us closer to the kingdom? Can we "transform the world" without God? Can we be

transformed without God? Children may be better than adults, understand what Grace is, that it is with this free gift of God's love in our lives that we move closer to love ourselves.

So **Grace**, freely given, **Evil** and **Sin**, chosen by us and forgiveness for this free for the asking in reconciliation, **willpower**, and efforts (understanding that we need God with us to succeed) and **Transformation**, a change brought forth through God's goodness and compassion. We can bring these ideas to our children and listen to their wisdom as well.

Be with us, your community, this month for Ash Wednesday service on February 17th. We'll have a cheese pizza supper at 5:15 with the Ash Service following at 6:30. We will have an opportunity for children to meet and talk about this theme on WCS (Whole Community Sunday) on February 21st following the 10:00 mass. Please note on the calendar the dates this month for WCW and WCS, we have moved things around a bit because of the parish dinner on the 14th and Ash Wednesday on the 17th.