

CONNECTIONS

ISSUE 32, VOLUME 1

A Newsletter for our Spiritual Family
at Christ the King

JANUARY 2009

From
the
Pastor's
Heart



The Call

Thanks for the Water

As we come together this first month of the new year we are celebrating on the second weekend of January the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Since all enter into the Christian life through the waters of baptism, it is a marvelous opportunity to revisit that initial call given to us. I am reminded of a baptism recently of two younger children who became new members of the Body of Christ through the Sacrament of Baptism. After the Mass and service were completed, little three year old, Emily was leaving the Church and looked at me and said in a sweet voice of a child, "Thanks for the water." That is the wisdom from a new sister in Jesus. A reminder of a life starting where wisdom and grace abound in the faith community.

The Good-lookers

Let me share with you some basic themes that come to us in a further reflection on our own call to Baptism.

When we see a child brought forward to the waters, there is often the ooh and aah's about how beautiful and innocent they look dressed in their white outfits for the celebration. But no matter what we look like, Jesus has called us. Jesus does not choose us based upon our looks. Jesus is never portrayed to be impressed by any theme as shallow as one's appearance. However, we've all heard those studies that show that good looking people are more likely to receive preferential treatment, and they are subconsciously assumed to be smarter than others.

Shopping cart safety

There was a recent study done by a professor at the University of Alberta in Canada. Dr. Andrew Harrell showed that preferences are important even in times of parenting, a place where we would not expect to see them. Since 1999, Dr. Harrell, has been researching shopping cart safety. He's published more than a dozen articles on the topic. Along the way he began to notice that the appearance of the children in the carts seemed to have a correlation to the larger matter of safety. He set up a study involving 14 different supermarkets.

Attractive Kids

In those stores he placed teams of researchers to observe parents and their two to five year old children for ten minutes each. Independently of each other, the observers were first to grade each child's attractiveness on a scale of one to ten, and then were to note if the child was buckled into the grocery cart seat and how often the child wandered more than ten feet away. In total, his teams observed 426 parent-child pairs.

The study revealed that while 13.3% of the most attractive kids were buckled in, only 1.2% of the least attractive children were. What is more, the least attractive children were allowed to wander further away from their parents, and to do so more often.

Other Kids

Dr. Harrell speculates that these results are based on a parents instinctive Darwinian response. He suggests that we are more likely to pay closer attention to attractive children because on a subconscious level we perceive them as our best genetic material. Dr. Harrell goes on to write that most parents will react to these results with shock and dismay. They say, "I love all my kids and I don't discriminate on the basis of their attractiveness." The whole point of his research indicates that people do!

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ADULT CONFIRMATION PREPARATION



An 8-week preparation period will begin Sunday, February 8, 2009 at 2:00 p.m. in the Sunshine Room. These sessions are open to all adults (age 20 and over) who have received Baptism and Eucharist and now desire to complete the Sacraments of Initiation. You are asked to pre-register by completing the form below or by calling Sr. Joan at the Parish Office (542-9248 ext. 14.) **Please pre-register before January 25th.**

ADULT CONFIRMATION REGISTRATION

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

Either mail to the Parish Office,
Attn: Sr. Joan Hentges,
1708 Horseshoe Drive, Pueblo, CO 81001 —
or drop in the collection basket at Mass.



National Vocation Awareness Week January 11-17, 2009

Prayer for Vocations

Gracious God, You gift us with your son, Jesus. At his baptism you affirmed him as your beloved son and Jesus responded by proclaiming the Good News about your reign.

Help us realize that by our baptism we are each called to continue the mission of Jesus by proclaiming the Good News.

**You call people to married life.
Bless them with love, understanding, and fidelity as they proclaim the Good News.**

**You call people to single life.
Bless them with compassion, joy and dedication as they proclaim the Good News.**

**You call people to consecrated life.
Bless them with courage, commitment, and passion as they proclaim the Good News.**

**You call people to ordained life.
Bless them with faith, integrity, and zeal as they proclaim the Good News.**

May we accept and acknowledge the dignity of our vocation.

Guide those discerning your call and give them the support they need. Gift us all with open and generous hearts to further your reign here on Earth.

With gratitude we offer this prayer through Jesus and the Spirit. Amen.

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Count Your Blessings Everyday this New Year

Looking for a great way to start the New Year? Make a resolution to count your blessings every day in 2009. How? First you must decide just what you consider a blessing to be and second, you need to decide how to count it.

A Blessing is defined in the dictionary as "anything that gives happiness" so let's start with that. Starting January 1st resolve to find one thing in your day that brought you happiness. It could be as simple as someone smiling at you or as exciting as winning a game, maybe it was the happy feeling you got from helping someone in need, or being the recipient of the same. The point is, whatever made you happy during your day, consider it a blessing and before you go to bed that night record it in some way. It doesn't have to be an elaborate description, just something to help you remember it.

Recording your blessings is another way of counting them. If they are not recorded they will soon be forgotten. Since they bring us happiness we should treasure them and want to keep a record of them.

There are several ways one can do this daily. Here are some ideas you may like to try:

1. Make a "Blessing Box" or "Blessing Jar." This can be any container you choose, a box you make or purchase, or a glass jar or vase, just make sure it will be large enough to hold a blessing a day for each day of the year. Decorate the container as you like and label it "Daily Blessings". At the end of each day write down your blessing for the day and the date and drop it in the container.
2. Purchase a Journal or Notebook with enough empty pages for the year and label it "Daily Blessings" At the end of the day record your blessing in it with the day's date.
3. Purchase a 2009 Planner and log your blessings on the calendar pages for each day.
4. If you are a computer user, record your blessings daily in a Journal you have created in Microsoft Word or add them to your daily calendar program on the computer.
5. You can also email them to yourself and save them in a special online folder labeled "Daily Blessings" on your computer.

Whatever method you choose, resolve to stick to it and do it daily, and then when Thanksgiving Day rolls around you can pull out all your recorded blessings and really have lots to be thankful for!

Try it! You will be amazed daily at all the things you are blessed with once you start counting them.

Encounter with God's Call

Encounter with God's Call will be held March 28-30, 2009 at Conception Seminary College. It is a discernment retreat for young men age 16 and older who are considering the vocation to priesthood. This is an excellent opportunity to meet the Seminarians as they share their stories of responding to God's call. This visit is free. For more information, please contact Msgr. Tom Adrians, 542-9248 ext. 16, or Conception Seminary at 660/944-2886, or email vocations@conception.edu.

UNITED NATIONS AWARDS SISTER DOROTHY STANG

Sister Dorothy Stang will be among the seven who will be awarded the 2008 UN Prize in the Field of Human Rights on December 10, 2008. The date marks the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The award will be received posthumously by her brother David Stang (who spoke at one of our Adult Enrichment sessions back in 2006) and Sister Joan Burke of the NGO Office will represent the Notre Dames. It is hoped that this occasion will be an opportunity to bring the message of Dot's life and death to a wider audience.

In the words of the UN, The honorary award is given to individuals or organizations once every five years for 'outstanding achievements in the field of human rights. It represents an opportunity to give public recognition to the achievements of the awardees themselves, as well as to send a clear message to human rights defenders the world over that the international community is grateful for, and supports, their efforts to promote human rights for all. The responsibility for the selection of the awardees is entrusted to a special committee composed of the President of the UN General Assembly, the president of the UN Economic and Social Council, the President of the Human Rights Council, the Chair of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the Chairman of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee.

God's Own Making: Catholic Values of Human Sexuality



During three of our regularly scheduled Religious Formation classes in January (January 4, 11, & 25), all children in grades 4-8 will be taught from a curriculum called "God's Own Making: Catholic Values of Human Sexuality." The goal of this program is to teach the moral and religious dimension of human sexuality. It is not a "sex education" class. "God's Own Making" offers a broader understanding of human sexuality as contained within the teachings of the Catholic Church. This program has been granted the Imprimatur (which means that the Church has determined it is free of doctrinal or moral error).

In addition to the three classes listed above, our 5th grade class will have one more class called "The Wonders of Life" on February 1, 2009. This class explains to kids the biological aspects of human sexuality.

We began this program five years ago and our catechists found the material to be very good and relevant to our kid's lives. In addition to classroom discussion, there is a "take-home sheet" that kids should bring home after every class so they can discuss it with their parents. This is an important component of our program! Having your child bring these sheets home is definitely a "teachable moment" for you, the parents.

All children need a permission slip in order to attend these classes. If you do not wish for your child to be involved, you may sign a withdrawal slip (this will not be held against your child's attendance record). Permission/Withdrawal Slips are available in the Formation building and at the front office. Attached to the slip is a "Scope and Sequence" - which shows what is covered in each grade in each class. All slips need to be returned to your child's catechist before the first class on January 4, 2009.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 542-9248 ext. 13.

Laura Fisher Escalera

Director of Religious Formation

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Show no partiality

We note in the reading from Acts of the Apostles a statement coming from Peter to the early community:

“In truth, I see that God shows no partiality.” (Acts. 10:34)

God may not show partiality, but it seems to be obvious at times that we, in our frail and fallen condition, do.

Looking for Commitment

The scriptures also remind us this month that Jesus is not looking for volunteers. You find time and again that when Jesus selects people to be His disciples it's not a matter of volunteerism. He does not say, **“Who would be interested in following me?”** **“You, maybe?”** No, rather Jesus uses the imperative and it is directed at people who are not expecting it. Often they seem to be extremely unlikely candidates, namely, tax collectors, fishermen, skeptics, political zealots, and the like. These are not the first people to come to mind when we are talking about our best genetic material.

What is more is that the people whom Jesus calls are usually in the midst of doing something else totally unrelated. In fact, in the examples that the Gospel records of people volunteering to be disciples, Jesus doesn't exactly turn them away. However He describes what they can expect as a disciple so starkly that it is doubtful that they ever joined His team. (Luke 9:57-62)

Jesus was not wild about volunteers. As is recorded in the Gospel of John: **“You did not choose me, but I chose you.”** (John 15:16)

Jesus still calls people today to follow Him. Of course His call comes to unlikely people who are often in the midst of other things and often have no thought of volunteering themselves. But when Jesus makes His wishes known, it is for the new work and new fields that further God's Kingdom. Now all of this is important to understand because it helps us to recognize what is going on when Jesus calls us — you and me.

The call of Jesus does not await the completion of our education, or the completion of our work time, and the advent of retirement, or the size of the nest

egg we've put away. **The call of Christ comes on His time schedule, not ours.** We might be actually the ugly kid in the grocery cart, but Jesus sees beyond all of that.

What Jesus asks us to do may or may not be in line with some skill we are already comfortable with. It may be an extension of some talent we have already developed. But it may just as well be a use of a talent we didn't know we even had — but Jesus knows.

Our Christian Vocation

Traditionally this ideal of being called by God for a certain activity or task has been labeled our “Christian vocation.” Our vocation sometimes coincides with our employment, but sometimes it is some other duty for the Kingdom. God gives Christians a vocation, or calling, so that we will not wander aimlessly in our lives. Our calling is a kind of sentry post we are asked by God to staff.

There is a point when the light dawns and we understand what God is calling us to do. Or the call may come because we are discomforted in a certain situation and cannot find rest otherwise. Or the call may come to us in a dramatic way. Please join me this month and pray for vocations to the active ministry.

Accept Jesus' call

The acceptance of Jesus' call is where all of this leads. Jesus doesn't call us because we are the best by human measures. He doesn't necessarily call us because of some talent we have buffed to perfection. He knows of something in our hearts and He speaks to that and tells us to go out.

All of us, no doubt, would like to have the affirmation of our response to Jesus' call so affirmed, as we read in Mark's Gospel:

“On coming up out of the waters, Jesus saw the heaven's being torn open, and the Spirit like a dove descended upon him, and a voice came from the heaven's, ‘You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.’”

(Mark 1:10-11)

A blessed 2009!

Monsignor Tom