

New Honduran bishop visits state as missionaries prepare

written by Malea Hargett |



Little Rock parish to host mission for 90

Internet predators make computers as dangerous as a gun

written by Malea Hargett |



Parents should monitor chat rooms, Web sites used by kids

Their Lenten journey

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |



Catechumens, now called elect, will be baptized, confirmed and receive the Eucharist in their parishes during Easter Vigil Masses April 15. More than 560 elect and candidates will become Catholic at Easter. Other Rite of Election services were held in Jonesboro March 2 and Fort Smith March 4. .

Teens, parents learn about Internet predators

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |

This was my little girl — my little angel. ”

— Rick Woody, father of Kacie Woody, murdered in October 2002 by an Internet predator

ROGERS — An officer in the Greenbrier Police Department, Rick Woody established the Kacie Woody Foundation and an educational program to provide information for students and parents on the dangers of Internet predators and online relationships.

In memory of his daughter, Woody is using his law enforcement background to alert the public and to help families prevent their own children from being harmed.

He and the Internet Predator Awareness Team (IPA) of high school students were on hand Wednesday, Feb. 15 to present a program to about 200 parents and teens at St Vincent de Paul Church in Rogers. Area churches were invited to attend.

At the time of Kacie’s death in 2002, Woody knew nothing about Internet dangers.

“Parents have to get involved. I knew zero about chat rooms. I knew about computers, but I had no interest in chat rooms,” he said.

Sadly, Woody learned also that online predators are patient. Thirteen-year-old Kacie thought she was talking in a Christian chat room to an 18-year-old boy who turned out to be a 47-year-old man from San Diego. She corresponded online with the man for almost a year.

“Predators will work a child like a puzzle, slowly getting information from a child,” he said.

Beginning in March 2005 Woody started sharing his program with high school and junior high school students in the Greenbrier School District.

The team members are students from Greenbrier schools who volunteered after hearing Woody’s program and Kacie’s story. One of the volunteers is Jessica Tanner, a close friend of Kacie. Now a sophomore in high school, she is the one who shares her loss with other students.

“I knew her four or five years before it all happened. I like them to hear her story because that usually hits them really hard when they know I have had this personal experience. They see how it affects me and the other people on the team. It can happen here in Arkansas,” she said. Tanner and another teen presented the program for the teens in one area of the church while Woody and senior Kelli Leding led the discussion for the adults.

The team members are well aware of the dangers of chat rooms for teenagers. They relayed their own concerns about the hidden possibilities for predators in chat rooms. One of their concerns is the ability of predators who frequent chat rooms to be invisible and not “speak” at all. They are only there to observe and learn more about the others.

If a predator follows a student anywhere he/she goes on the Internet, any personal information that the student reveals to friends is available to the predator as well. Personal information is the key to the exploitation of students online.

Why are these students drawn to chat rooms and online relationships?

It usually stems from loneliness, insecurity and privacy, Woody said. Teens want someone to talk to — someone who will keep their secrets and respect their privacy.

Predators show understanding, respect for the teens’ privacy, and they are very patient. Their ultimate goal is to meet the child.

Woody stressed the importance of a “partnership between parent and child” when teaching the child about the use of the Internet as a tool for research and sending e-mail messages.

Woody presented several tips for parents to consider:

Keep the computer in a room where family members are congregating.

Let children know that putting personal information and photographs online is not allowed.

“Posting pictures on the Internet is dangerous because a picture is forever. Once it is out there, it can be copied and pasted anywhere,” he said. “They can put the child’s head on someone else’s body. Teenagers have to be aware of this — that they could end up on a sleazy Web site. ”

If parents become aware of a problem, they should call the child’s school resource officer, local police department or FBI to report their concerns and find the appropriate place to get it resolved.

“However, in small town police departments, a lot of officers don’t know what to do when a parent calls in a complaint,” Woody said. “They often don’t know what to tell the parents. That’s why it is important to get your police department involved. ”

Parents should be aware of any efforts for Internet “friends” to meet their child, any threats to the child or situations that make the child uncomfortable in any way.

Woody also provided clues for parents to look for to determine possible problems:

If your teen spends a lot of time online, especially in the evening hours

If your caller ID brings up unknown long-distance numbers

If your child changes the screen when you come in the room

If your child receives gifts from strangers, especially cameras or Web cams.

Parents looking for more information or wanting to report a problem can call the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children’s Cyber Tipline at (800) 843-5678 or visit www.cybertipline.com.

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Parroquia de De Queen se une más después de los asesinatos

written by Malea Hargett |

La grave naturaleza del acto de Méndez y la reacción de los demás feligreses han sido motivo de preocupación para el párroco. El Mons. Jack Harris, párroco de la Iglesia de San José de Pine Bluff, quien es un consejero capacitado en momentos de crisis, pasó cuatro días en De Queen ayudando al Padre Márquez-Muñoz con el trauma y los preparativos del entierro.

El 12 de febrero, se reclutó a un grupo de consejeros para reunirse con los feligreses después de las Misas del fin de semana para ayudar con asuntos psicológicos.

Mons. Harris, miembro del equipo de Arkansas de la Asociación Nacional para la Asistencia de Víctimas, dijo que los hombres y las mujeres se reunieron por separado para participar en “intervenciones de crisis en grupo”, en las cuales podían hablar sobre el crimen y lo que podría esperarse del futuro. “No hay nada que ayude más a la gente a calmar los nervios que el tener información sólida buena”, indicó Mons. Harris.

El Padre Márquez-Muñoz dijo que los asesinatos habían afectado a personas de todas las edades en la parroquia. El párroco conocía a Méndez y a sus tres niños ya que asistían a Misa y a las clases de educación religiosa todas las semanas.

“Siempre estaban aquí”, señaló.

Los 2,000 miembros de la Iglesia de Santa Bárbara se están uniendo para sobreponerse de estos asesinatos.

“Esta unión fortalecerá los enlaces de la familia y el valor del matrimonio”, indicó el Padre Márquez-Muñoz. “Hay más personas acudiendo a la iglesia, aun entre semana la iglesia está llena”.

El centro parroquiano se estaba desbordando de gente el 2 de febrero durante la Misa bilingüe que se celebró para el entierro.

La Iglesia de Santa Bárbara abrió una cuenta en un banco local para aceptar donativos para pagar los gastos de entierro de los niños, la sepultura y la grabación en la tumba.

En un futuro, la parroquia construirá un edificio de educación muy necesario el cual será también un lugar para recordar a los niños.

“Mi plan es usar el nombre de los niños para nombrar a cada salón”, señaló el Padre Márquez-Muñoz.

Los donativos a la Iglesia de Santa Bárbara pueden enviarse a: St. Barbara Church, P. O. Box 86, De Queen, AR 71832.

Nueva iglesia en Danville en respuesta a las oraciones

written by Tara Little |



Peter Sartain bendijo la nueva Iglesia Católica de San Andrés durante la Misa que se celebró en la parroquia el domingo por la noche.

San Andrés es la segunda nueva iglesia construida en menos de un año por una parroquia predominantemente hispana en la Diócesis de Little Rock. La Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe se dedicó el 21 de agosto en Glenwood.

En una entrevista con el Arkansas Catholic, se le preguntó al Obispo Sartain el significado de estas nuevas iglesias para la diócesis.

“El desarrollo acelerado de parroquias, como la de San Andrés en Danville, es otro indicio de la

vitalidad y el crecimiento de la Iglesia Católica de Arkansas”, señaló.

Ubicada a unas 20 millas al suroeste de Dardanelle y Russellville, la población de la zona rural de Danville es de alrededor de 2,500 personas y sólo recientemente surgió una presencia católica cuando los hispanos comenzaron a ubicarse allí para trabajar — en su mayoría en la zona de industrias avícolas.

“Hace diez años, no se celebraban Misas católicas en Danville”, indicó el párroco Padre Neil Pezzulo, GHM, en una entrevista. “Ahora tenemos una iglesia con cabida para 350 personas”. La iglesia está ubicada en un lote de dos acres en la Ruta 10 hacia el este de Danville. Su diseño se describe como un estilo de “múltiples usos”, en la que la cámara central de la iglesia hace las veces de capilla y salón parroquial. Tiene un santuario y una sacristía. A un lado de la entrada de la iglesia se encuentran la cocina, los baños y el cuarto de almacenaje.

Aunque la iglesia de 1,500 pies cuadrados está diseñada para dar cabida a 350 personas, se calcula que unos 740 feligreses e invitados asistieron a la Misa en español.

“La dedicación de la iglesia es el fruto de muchos años de crecimiento por parte de la comunidad, su entusiasmo por la fe católica y el arduo trabajo de todos sus miembros y líderes pastorales”, indicó el Obispo Sartain en una entrevista.

La celebración comenzó con una procesión por la tarde a lo largo de la Ruta 10 de Danville.

Al final de la Misa, se le dio un reconocimiento especial a las invitadas: las Hermanas Josita López, OSB, de Jonesboro y Ann Sullivan, OP, de Adrian, Michigan. Junto con la fallecida Hna. Margaret Sullivan, OP, estas mujeres trabajaron en Danville y ayudaron a construir la comunidad parroquiana.

Actualmente, alrededor de 150 personas acuden regularmente a la Misa semanal del domingo en la parroquia recién formada.

Anteriormente, los feligreses acudían a la Misa que se celebraba en una antigua iglesia de Pentecostés que se alquiló durante el último año y medio. La Misa de Danville se trasladó de un hogar a otro y a un taller de reparación de autos para posteriormente ubicarla en una casa que se alquiló durante seis años hasta que se vendió y demolió en el 2003.

Solís y su esposa, María, tienen cinco hijos entre las edades de 20 y 2 años. Todos son miembros de la parroquia.

Solís dijo que tener una nueva iglesia “es una bendición para mi familia”.

La Hna. Josita, quien fue la administradora pastoral de San Andrés del 2000 al 2003, reflejó sobre el significado que tuvo para ella ser testigo de la formación final de una iglesia en Danville.

“Es muy difícil expresar la alegría de ver convertida en realidad una plegaria y ver a tanta gente contenta porque ahora tienen un lugar especial para estar con el Señor”, indicó en una entrevista. “Mi corazón y mis ojos todavía se regocian por ello”.

33 se gradúan del programa de capacitación de líderes

written by Malea Hargett |



Peter Sartain celebró una Misa en español para los graduados en el Centro Católico San Juan de Little Rock y entregó los certificados al final de la celebración.

Los asistentes del curso fueron:

Bentonville: Alejandra Hernández

Fayetteville: Enevit Cruz, Evaristo Ayala, Israel Cruz, Luz M. Morlet y Juana Ayala

Fort Smith: Aldo Martín Pozos, Ana Gabriela Martínez, Jaime. R. Flores, José Rosales, Juan Rosales, Maria Josefina Flores, Miguel Devora, Olga Ozuna, Pedro Martínez, Rosalba Zarate, Roxana Devora, Vanessa Martínez y Yolanda Torres

Green Forest: Elías Rangel Flores

Rogers: Carmen de Haro y Rosy Carbonell

Siloam Springs: Margarita Hernández, Benito Baca, Gustavo Bautista y Leticia Bautista

Springdale: Humberto Herrera, J. Gabriel Lunar, Jorge Sierra, Juan José Godinez, Mirza Vázquez y Patricia Ortega.

Van Buren: Mercedes C. López

En el curso, creado por el Concilio Nacional Católico para el Ministerio Hispano, les enseñaron a los participantes destrezas de liderazgo pastoral y cívico, métodos organizativos y organización de la comunidad.

La Hna. Mickey Espinoza, MCP, antigua directora diocesana del ministerio hispano y residente actual de Dallas, dijo que el crecimiento de la comunidad hispana hizo que fuera necesario que la diócesis ofreciera más capacitación de líderes.

“Muchos de los que ya desempeñan estas labores han tenido alguna experiencia en sus países natales y otros tienen cualidades naturales de liderazgo”, indicó. “Creo que la capacitación les ayudó a comprender algunas de las realidades de las ‘estructuras’ de la Iglesia en Estados Unidos y cómo pueden contribuir mejor a la misión de la Iglesia”.

El Diácono Marcelino Luna, director actual del ministerio hispano, dijo que los graduados comprenden ahora mejor el funcionamiento de las parroquias en Estados Unidos.

“Los líderes trabajarán arduamente para organizar ministerios y estarán más activos en sus parroquias”, señaló.

Una graduada, Luz Morlet, ha sido la coordinadora del ministerio hispano de la Iglesia de San José de Fayetteville desde julio de 2005. Oriunda de Acapulco, México, considera que los seminarios le ayudaron a mejorarse como líder de su parroquia.

“Es crucial ser un buen líder para ayudar a edificar el reino de Dios en esta Tierra”, dijo.

Morlet asistió a las ocho sesiones desde abril hasta noviembre en la Iglesia de San Vicente de

Paúl de Rogers. “Fue un curso extenso, pero el recordatorio constante de todas las sesiones fue que es necesario ser humilde en todo momento para brindar un mejor servicio a nuestros hermanos y hermanas”, señaló.

Varios de los graduados formarán ahora equipos y ofrecerán el curso en distintas zonas de la diócesis.

En noviembre de 2004, los ocho instructores del curso asistieron a un seminario de cinco días en el Mexican-American Cultural Center (MACC) de San Antonio. Los asistentes del grupo fueron: Hermana Mickey; Hermana Josefina Gutierrez, MSC, de Fort Smith; José Luis Ahumada de Rogers; José Dionicio Vázquez, Sofía Manjarrez, Estela Gómez y Alicia Ruíz de Springdale; y Pablo Ramírez de Van Buren.

La Hna. Mickey, quien fuera directora en ese momento, colaboró con los miembros del equipo para implantar el curso en el estado.

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Let the good times roll

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |



Several couples paid \$2,700 for the 12-person dinner to be cooked in one of their homes. They are Dave and Jean Reiff (standing from left), Dan Reiff, Lesa Reiff, Sharon and Ed Belto, Paul and Lori Callahan (seated from left) and Erin and Al Scheuerman. More than \$32,000 was raised for the school, which was a 30-percent increase from last year. .

Parishes to host Lenten missions, fish

fries, Living Stations

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |

Bernard of Clairvaux Church

"Through Word, Sacrament, and Fellowship Seek to Promote an Encounter with Christ which is Renewing and Transforming" Mission March 25-30; 8:30 a. m. Mass and 7 p. m. presentation daily; in church and parish hall. Father John O'Donnell and Sister Anne McCoy, SSJ, from the Paulist National Catholic Evangelization Association in Washington, D. C. , will be guest speakers.

"The Eucharist: the Real Presence" video March 20 at 9 a. m. in parish hall

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 4 p. m. Sponsored by parish ministries and organizations

Lenten Fish Fries March 10 and April 7 at 5 p. m. in parish hall. Sponsored by Knights of Columbus

Mass followed by soup supper March 15 and 22 at 6 p. m.

Seder Supper April 9 at 4 p. m. in parish hall, for RCIA class

BENTONVILLE

St. Stephen Church

Lenten Fish Fry March 10 and 24 from 5:30-7 p. m. in Parish Life Center

Live Stations of the Cross and Soup Bowl April 5 from 6-8 p. m. ; Stations in church; Soup Bowl in Parish Life Center

CAMDEN

St. Louis Church

"Lent: A Matter of the Heart" Mission March 5-8; 4:30 p. m. presentation and supper March 5; 6:30 p. m. supper and 7 p. m. presentation, March 6-8 in the parish hall. Sister Mary Ellen McAleese, OSF, from Wheaton, Ill. , is the guest speaker

CARLISLE

St. Rose of Lima Church

Stations of the Cross and Benediction Fridays during Lent at 7 p. m.

Stations of the Cross followed by Mass of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and devotions to Hearts of Jesus and Mary First Fridays from 6-9 p. m.

Devotions to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary with adoration of the Blessed Sacrament followed by Mass of the Immaculate Heart of Mary First Saturdays beginning at 7:30 a. m.

Penitential Services Before all Masses and on First Fridays and Saturdays during Two Hearts devotions

CHEROKEE VILLAGE

St. Michael Church

"Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel for the Lay Faithful" Mission March 5-9: Call parish for times and location at (870) 257-2850. Father John Michael Payne, OCD, of Marylake Monastery in Little Rock, is the guest speaker.

CLARKSVILLE

Holy Redeemer Church

Stations of the Cross Wednesdays during Lent at 7:30 p. m.

"Touching the Mysteries: Scripture and the Rosary" Lenten Bible study Wednesdays from March 8 to April 5 at 6:30p. m. in parish center
Parish Lenten Worship program Thursdays during Lent with Mass at 5:30 p. m. ; supper at 6:30 p. m. ; and presentation at 7 p. m. Topics: March 9, "Prayer" with Msgr. Scott Friend of Little Rock; March 16, "Scripture and the Rosary" with Marie Bishop; March 23, "Prayer on the Run" with Marietta Stimpson; March 30, "Caps of Comfort" with Diane Heil (a cancer survivor story of prayer); April 6, Family Service Night
Live Stations of the Cross Good Friday at 3 p. m. on church grounds. Presented by parish's Hispanic community

CONWAY

St. Joseph Church

Mass followed by Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 6 p. m.

Lenten Soup Suppers March 8, 15, 22 and April 5 from 5-7 p. m. in the parish hall; take-out available at 4:30 p. m.

Reconciliation services April 11-12 from 4-5:30 p. m. and 7-8:30 p. m.

EL DORADO

Holy Redeemer Church

Lenten Fish Fry March 10 at 5 p. m. in parish hall. Sponsored by Knights of Columbus

Ecumenical Day of Recollection March 11 from 9 a. m. to 2 p. m. in church

"The Da Vinci Code and the Rapture" Conference March 7 and 14 at 6 p. m. in parish hall.

Stephen J. Binz, a Catholic biblical scholar and author from Little Rock, is the guest speaker.

FAIRFIELD BAY

St. Francis of Assisi Church

"Breathe on Me, the Breath of God" Day of Recollection March 7 from 8 a. m. to 3 p. m. in parish hall. Msgr. J. Gaston Hebert of Hot Springs is the guest speaker.

FAYETTEVILLE

St. Thomas Aquinas University Parish

Busy College Student Retreat Call parish for details at (479) 444-0223

Lenten Spiritual Retreat for university students March 31 to April 2. Father Dennis Bosse, OFM, a Catholic campus minister from Galveston, Texas, is the guest speaker.

FORDYCE

Good Shepherd Church

Stations of The Cross Fridays during Lent at 6 p. m.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament followed by the Divine Mercy Chaplet, Novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, The Cenacle and consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Wednesdays during Lent, 5 p. m.

HOT SPRINGS

Church of St. John the Baptist

Stations of the Cross followed by Lenten supper Fridays during Lent at 6 p. m.

Live Stations of the Cross followed by Lenten supper April 7 at 6 p. m. Presented by parish youth

HOT SPRINGS VILLAGE

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church

Stations of the Cross and Benediction Wednesdays during Lent, 6 p. m.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament Each day during Lent from 7 to 9:45 a. m. in church
Live Stations of the Cross Good Friday at noon in the church. Presented by Parish Religious Education students

HUNTSVILLE

St. John the Evangelist Church

Bilingual Stations of the Cross or First Friday Mass Fridays during Lent at 6 p. m.

JACKSONVILLE

St. Jude the Apostle Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 7 p. m.

Live Stations of the Cross March 10 at 7 p. m. Presented by the parish's Catholic Youth Ministry program

JONESBORO

Blessed Sacrament Church

Stations of the Cross followed by Lenten soup supper Fridays during Lent at 6 p. m.

Lenten Mission March 12-15 at 7 p. m. each night; weekday Mass as announced; with penance service on March 14. Redemptorist Fathers William Broker and Vic Karls, parish missionaries from Liguori Mission House in Liguori, Mo. , are the guest speakers.

Live Stations of the Cross in Spanish Good Friday at 4 p. m. at Holy Angels Convent in Jonesboro

LITTLE ROCK

Christ the King

Reconciliation and Mass Wednesdays during Lent at 5:45 p. m. and 6:30 p. m.

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 6:30 p. m.

Lenten Reconciliation Service March 21 at 7 p. m.

Contemplative Prayer Series Wednesdays during Lent from March 1 to April 12 at 7 p. m. in the church. Led by associate pastor, Father Jose Uppani, the sessions will include Lenten meditations on sin, repentance and penance; the Ten Commandments; sacrament of reconciliation; and the Passion of Jesus Christ.

"Touching the Mysteries, Scriptures and the Rosary" by Little Rock Scripture Study Wednesdays from March 1-29 from 8:30 to 10 a. m. ; Mondays from Feb. 27 to March 27 from 7:15 to 8:45 p. m. ; in the Family Life Center

Holy Thursday Family Dinner April 13 at 5 p. m. before Holy Thursday Mass in the Family Life Center

Live Stations of the Cross April 7 at 6:30 p. m. ; presented by the fifth grade students in church. April 14 at 3 p. m. ; presented by the parish's Catholic Youth Ministry program in church

Our Lady of Good Counsel Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 1 p. m. with school students; and 6 p. m. followed by soup supper

Live Stations of the Cross Good Friday at 3 p. m.

Divine Mercy Lenten series April 3-4 at 6 p. m. Mass. Father Thomas Keller, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Church in Carlisle and Holy Trinity Church in England, will be the guest celebrant and homilist.

Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 7 p. m. in the church

Live Stations of the Cross April 7 at 7 p. m. Presented by the fourth grade class

Eucharistic Lenten Reflection followed by vespers; Mass Sundays during Lent at 3:30 p. m. through 5:30 p. m. Mass

Men's Club Lenten Fish Fry March 3 and 10 from 5 to 7 p. m. in the Allen Center; \$7 for adults and \$3 for children younger than 12

St. Patrick's Day Potato Night March 17 from 5 to 7 p. m. in the Allen Center; \$4 for adults and children younger than 6 eat for free. Sponsored by parish Men's Club

Holy Souls Lenten Red Cross Blood Drive March 12 from 8:30 a. m. to 12:30 p. m. in the Allen Center

"What the Catholic Church Teaches About . . ." Lenten series March 8, 15, 22 and April 5 following the 5:30 p. m. Mass in the parish hall. Cost is \$15 for series or \$5 each night; reservations required; childcare available; teenagers invited. Topics include "Spirituality: What gets in the Way of your Spiritual Growth, March 8; "Divorce/Annulment: Are you Alone?" March 15; "Scripture and Evolution: Are they Compatible," March 22; and "Ouija Boards, Tarot Cards, Astrology, Fortune Telling," April 5.

St. Bartholomew Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 5:30 p. m.

St. Edward Church

Bilingual Live Stations of the Cross Good Friday at 4 p. m. in MacArthur Park in Little Rock

MENA

St. Agnes Church

Day Retreat March 11 from 1-4 p. m. ; led by Deacon Larry and Sally Hatch in the church

MONTICELLO

St. Mark Church

"Sowers of Justice: Leadership for the Common Good" series Mondays at 6:30 p. m. during Lent through April 3, in the church. Tom Navin, director of social action for the Diocese of Little Rock, will lead the five-week series for the Southeast Deanery.

MORRILTON

Sacred Heart Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 7 p. m.

MORRISON BLUFF

Sts. Peter and Paul Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 7 p. m.

MOUNT IDA

All Saints Church

Day Retreat March 12 from 1-4 p. m. ; led by Deacon Larry and Sally Hatch in the church

MOUNTAIN HOME

St. Peter the Fisherman Church

"Called and Chosen" Lenten Mission March 19-22 at 7 p. m. each night. Father Norman Langenbrunner and Jeanne Hunt from the Oblates of the Sacred Heart DeSales Ministries in Niagara, N. Y. , are the guest speakers.

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent after the 5:15 p. m. Mass

MOUNTAIN VIEW

St. Mary Church

Weekday Mass Wednesdays during Lent at 5:30 p. m.

Stations of the Cross followed by Word and Communion service and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament Fridays during Lent at 3:30 p. m.

Lenten Journey with movie, meditation and discussion Tuesdays during Lent at 6:30 p. m.

Parish Seder Meal April 11 at 6:30 p. m.

NORTH LITTLE ROCK

Immaculate Conception Church

Way of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 2:15 p. m. for school students; 7 p. m. for the parish

Live Stations of the Cross April 5 and 7 at 7 p. m. in the church. Presented by the parish's Catholic Youth Ministry program

St. Augustine Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 6:30 p. m.

St. Mary Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 7 p. m.

Live Stations of the Cross March 31 at 7 p. m. Presented by the school students

Parish Seder Meal April 12 at 7 p. m. in the parish center. Sponsored by the Christian Ladies Club

PTO Fish Fry March 10 from 6 to 9 p. m. in the parish hall. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$3 for children 14 and younger; children 3 and younger eat free. Cost at the door is \$1 more.

PARIS

St. Joseph Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 7 p. m.

Anointing of the Sick March 25 at 6 p. m. Mass and March 26 at 9 a. m. Mass

Penitential Service and Reconciliation March 29 at 7 p. m.

PINE BLUFF

St. Joseph Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 6 p. m.

Lenten Fish Fries Fridays during Lent through April 7 from 5 to 7:30 p. m. in Gallagher Hall. Cost is \$9 for adults and \$4.50 for children younger than 12; carry-outs available. Sponsored by Knights of Columbus Council 1153, St. Joseph Altar Society and Catholic Daughters of the Americas Victory Court 564

ROGERS

St. Vincent de Paul Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent through March 31 at 6 p. m. in English and 7 p. m. in Spanish. Presented by different parish ministries and organizations each week

"Mysteries of the Rosary" Little Rock Scripture Study Wednesdays starting Feb. 15 for eight weeks from 6:15 -7:30 p. m. in school meeting room C

"Lenten Logos" Bible study Mondays beginning Feb. 13 for seven weeks from 9 to 11 a. m. in the daily chapel; childcare available for children 5 and younger. Sponsored by Women Growing in Faith group

Theology on Tap Tuesdays during Lent from March 7-28 at 7 p. m. at Club Frisco in Rogers; at the church on March 28. Associate pastor Father Shaun Wesley will facilitate.

Religious Vocations Women's Retreat March 11 at 8 a. m. in parish hall; hosted by Sister Concepta Joerger, OP. Call (479) 636-0200, ext. 2133 for details.

Legion of Mary Retreat March 11 at 10:30 a. m. in daily chapel. Call Donna McGann at (479) 644-4168 for details.

SAINT VINCENT

St. Mary Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 7 p. m. ; First Fridays at 7 p. m. will be an anointing Mass

SILOAM SPRINGS

St. Mary Church

Stations of the Cross and Benediction Wednesdays during Lent at 6:15 p. m.

SPRINGDALE

St. Raphael Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 6 p. m. in English; 7 p. m. in Spanish

Live Stations of the Cross Good Friday following 7:30 p. m. Spanish Mass

TONTITOWN

St. Joseph Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 7 p. m.

VAN BUREN

St. Michael Church

Stations of the Cross and Benediction Fridays during Lent at 7 p. m. Stations will alternate in English and Spanish

WALNUT RIDGE

Immaculate Heart of Mary Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 5:30 p. m.

WEST MEMPHIS

St. Michael Church

Stations of the Cross Fridays during Lent at 6:30 p. m.

Live Stations of the Cross March 22 at 6:30 p. m. in the church; April 9 after the 10:30 a. m. Mass; and April 14 following the Divine Mercy Chaplet at 3 p. m.

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Centering prayer is simply resting in God

written by Tara Little |



" (Matthew 6:7-8)

Finding God in the silence. That is often hard to do given the noise pollution that infects the modern world. Television accosts the senses. Satellite radio and the Internet travel even to the most remote getaways. Even Mass is not immune to cell phones and pagers.

Distraction seems to be a clever enemy to prayer.

In response, many have rediscovered the ancient Christian practice of contemplative prayer. A centuries-old monastic tradition, this prayer form is expressed without words, thoughts or emotion. It is simply a silent resting in God's presence.

Drawing from the writings of the Church's contemplative heritage, three Trappist monks from St. Joseph Abbey in Massachusetts developed a modern method called centering prayer in the 1970s.

According to "The Method of Centering Prayer," a brochure by Father Thomas Keating, OCSO, contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition "is considered to be the pure gift of God. "

Centering prayer is simply a practice that could bring about contemplative prayer "by preparing our faculties to receive this gift. "

Centering prayer is based on the words of Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount: "But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. " (Matthew 6:6)

At Christ the King Church in Little Rock, participants in the Adult Faith Formation program recently practiced centering prayer as part of a seven-week prayer series led by Sandy Compas, associate director of religious education for the Diocese of Little Rock.

Before leading the class into the experience Feb. 8, Compas instructed them on the process.

To start, choose a comfortable prayer posture and focus on the rhythm of one's breathing. "Try to breathe very deeply and very slowly. " Then to focus on God "you choose a word or a phrase to repeat in your mind. "

When choosing a word or a phrase, the point is to pick something short to prevent being distracted by the word when concentrating on saying it, she said.

"Pray that very slowly over and over again with your breathing. "

"When you find yourself getting distracted while praying, the thing to do is just bring yourself back to that word or phrase very gently, very slowly," she said.

After 20 minutes of prayer, Compas received mixed feedback from the participants.

One said 15 minutes was good while another said 20 minutes wasn't long enough.

A third complained of being "fidgety" and found it hard to focus, while a fourth said it was

relaxing. A fifth participant said 20 minutes was fine, but the first five minutes was the hardest. He said he eventually got to a point where he didn't hear the music and lost awareness of how his hands were positioned.

"Getting lost is exactly what we're trying to do, getting beyond words and images and even conscience thought, just to be in the presence of God," Compas said.

Abbot Jerome Kodell, OSB, of Subiaco Abbey said he been practicing centering prayer since 1980 and considers it to be "it a very powerful prayer. "

Through the books of Father Keating and the late Abbot M. Basil Pennington, OCSO, and Father John Main, OSB, he said he taught himself the form of prayer.

"I have found for me, it is the best type of prayer," he said. "Any time you do this kind of prayer it takes the emphasis off yourself and puts the emphasis on God because it doesn't depend on any of your own thoughts. "

Abbot Jerome said Father Main founded Christian Meditation, another prayer method that is similar to centering prayer in that its purpose is the same — to guide one into contemplative prayer.

Centering prayer uses a prayer word or "mantra" that one stops using once focused on God, but with the Christian meditation method, the word or phrase is repeated all the way through the prayer.

Traditionally in the West, meditation usually means a mental reflection of ideas, he said. But for this purpose, the word, "meditation" draws from the Eastern tradition to mean contemplation.

Abbot Jerome said other methods that may lead to contemplative prayer include the rosary; the Lectio Divina, which is a contemplative meditation on a scriptural verse or word; the Jesus Prayer, which can be used on its own as a mantra; and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

"God can lead anyone into this without going through these methods, but these are methods over the years that have been found to help people looking for guidance," he said.

Ultimately "the more we practice the more we get into a life of prayer, the less words are needed," he said. "The simple focus on God is beyond your knowledge. . . . It's a great act of humanity. You trust God to heal you but you can't make any demands because you don't even know what you need. "

Anne Thomisee, director of religious education at Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church in Little Rock, facilitates a centering prayer group on Wednesday mornings. The group, which has been meeting for three years, begins with fellowship, followed by a Scripture reading, then 20 minutes of centering prayer and ends by reading and discussing a book on prayer.

Thomisee said centering prayer is hard to do because it is so contrary to most people's active lifestyles.

"There's no doubt about it," she said. "It is not an easy form of prayer especially for people like ourselves in this country who are so used to the take charge, always being busy, always talking, always thinking, always on the go. Centering prayer is exactly the opposite of that. It invites us . . . to give up control. "

Because it so "counter-cultural" she recommended following the steps because it helps one develop a discipline for silence.

"When you first start your mind is just cluttered with thoughts," she said. That is where the prayer word or phrase is an ally against distraction.

"The word in itself is not all that important because what it does is help you get into this prayer," she said. "And whenever you have a thought that comes creeping in you go back to your sacred word. "

To develop this discipline, Contemplative Outreach Ltd. , the organization founded by Father Keating, recommends 20 minutes of centering prayer twice a day.

Though hard to find the time, it is worth it because the fruits of the prayer are experienced in every day life, Thomisee said.

“A contemplative person is aware of God’s presence all the time,” she said, “and sees God in everything that happens without necessarily thinking about it. ”

To practice centering prayer one does not need to be part of a group. Anyone without instruction can do the method. Many may be practicing a form of centering prayer and not even realize it, Thomisee said.

She recommended centering prayer books written by Father Keating or Abbot Pennington for independent study and encouragement.

Annette Wahlgreen, 75, a Holy Souls centering-prayer group participant, said in three years this prayer method has taught her to allow God to work through prayer distractions.

“Centering prayer acknowledges that there are distractions and we simply have to let them pass. . . . In the past I tried to argue with them . . . Now I allow the Spirit and peace to overcome my distractions,” she said.

In the season of Lent, Wahlgreen said centering prayer can also be helpful in heightening self-awareness and redirecting one’s focus.

“Our faults like selfishness and our pride, our determination to satisfy ourselves rather than to be open to God, centering prayer helps us first of all to see these things in ourselves and secondly to let them go,” she said. “I like to think of it frankly as like housecleaning, clearing out so that God can move in. ”

“If people can commit 20 minutes twice a day to centering prayer, that’s a real discipline,” Compas said. “I’m not one of those believers that you should always give up something for Lent, sometimes I think it’s helpful to add something, some new kind of discipline or some new kind of prayer and make a commitment to that. ”

Method of Centering Prayer

Centering prayer is inspired by the writings of John Cassian, the anonymous author of “The Cloud of Unknowing,” Francis de Sales, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Therese of Lisieux and Thomas Merton.

Father Thomas Keating, OCSO, suggests four steps to develop a practice of centering prayer. Choose a sacred word. This is to focus all attention on God’s presence within. (Examples: God, Jesus, Father, Mary, amen, peace, listen, trust)

Be still. Sit comfortably and quietly with eyes closed. Then gently begin to say the sacred word inwardly.

The sacred word may disappear in time when no longer needed. Return to sacred word when distractions or thoughts creep into the silence.

Continue the prayer for 20 minutes. At the end of this time remain silent for two minutes to bring silent atmosphere into other areas of life.

Source: “The Method of Centering Prayer” a brochure by Father Thomas Keating, OCSO, a publication of Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. For more information, visit www.contemplativeoutreach.org.

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