

Teaching Jesus at Home: Faith Seeking Understanding

By Regina Thibeau, Director of Religious Education

"And when I am lifted up from this world, I will draw everyone to myself." Jn 12:32b

Most evenings before bedtime, I have a habit of putting in one last load of laundry around 10:30 p.m. It's as if by slipping in this one last task, I will have accomplished something in my day. The water was gushing into the machine as I measured out the soap. Suddenly, my 16 year old son was standing in the doorway of the laundry room and I gasped with surprise. He was holding an open Bible in his hands and he called loudly over the din of the washer. "Mom, see here", he said pointing to the bold print in the Gospel of Matthew, "It says, 'the Mystery of Jesus'." I followed him out into the hallway and with earnest sincerity he positioned the Bible between us and tilted his face close to the page, "Can you show me where in here I can find the mystery of Jesus?"

For a moment, I had to digest the scope and poignancy of his question. Will was writing a paper on the novel, *The Great Gatsby* using the thesis that Jesus bore some resemblance to Jay Gatsby. "Hmm, not sure about that one," I thought to myself. This was his junior year of High School which is generally understood to be the most academically challenging so he and I weren't finding time for a casual conversation much less an in-depth one. As much as I wanted to go to bed, there was no way I could defer him or this enormous question until morning.

I was overwhelmed with a feeling of not knowing where to begin. Where exactly in the New Testament would one point to illustrate the mystery of Jesus? Perhaps the Sermon on the Mount, the young Jesus teaching in the Synagogue or the feeding of the multitude? Or would one turn to the healing of the paralytic, Jairus's daughter or the hemorrhaging woman? The institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper would certainly be a good choice. Then there is the appearance of the Risen Christ to Mary Magdalene and the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Suddenly I didn't feel like I grasped Jesus very well. I prayed for God's guidance and inspiration.

"Could you narrow it down?" I asked. "Anything in particular about the mystery of Jesus that has you curious?" "Well, yea, like it says, he is the Son of God. When did he learn he was the Son of God?" "Good question; we're not sure." Narrowing Jesus down wasn't going to get me to bed any sooner. I started thinking of my 3 year old niece who inverts her words. When she has a question, she announces, "I have an answer!" So, we sat down at the kitchen table and went through the Gospels, citing all the stories I mentioned above. Will was realizing Jesus wasn't much like Jay Gatsby after all. The gospel for the previous Sunday intrigued me as well. It was Palm Sunday. In John, chapter 12, a crowd who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus followed Jesus to Jerusalem. The chief priests were plotting to kill Jesus and kill Lazarus! They were very nervous about the crowd Jesus was drawing.

The question my son posed at the laundry room door was similar to that of the Greeks who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Passover and to join the curious crowds. They went to the disciple, Philip and asked, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew, who asked Jesus and Jesus answers in the verses of John 12:23-33.

Jesus was a mystery the Greeks were attempting to understand and they followed a throng to Jerusalem to better understand him. What the Greeks encountered were the events of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday. They followed witnesses to Jerusalem and were to become witnesses themselves.

It was midnight before my son and I finished probing the mystery of Jesus and he revised his thesis. This late night exploration with my son gave me a heightened appreciation for all the children who would come to St. Joseph's Religious Ed with the hope of "seeing Jesus." Once I could see my son was satisfied, I closed the Bible and suggested that one good way for him to understand the *mystery* of Jesus would be for him to come to church with his Dad and me that night. It was the beginning of Holy Week and the Holy Thursday liturgy always immerses us in the human/divine mystery of Jesus. And it did.





Pearl of Great Price

Each year the Religious Education staff selects a symbol around which to organize our catechist gatherings, training and preparation. This symbol provides a unifying principle and inspiration for our year together. Last year our symbol was a "key". We meditated on the keys to the kingdom of heaven and other variations on that theme. In past years, our symbols have been compasses, kites, seashells, mirrors, fish and lighthouses. Often our symbol is drawn from scripture and this year we have selected the parable of the Pearl of Great Price. This short, but well known parable is similar to the one that precedes it, the parable of the Hidden Treasure, and is a continuation of the same teaching.

No doubt, we are supposed to understand the gospel in its revelation of life eternal, but it wouldn't be a wide departure from the scope of this parable to consider Christ himself as the pearl with which the Gospel enriches all believers. Whatever preciousness there is in the gospel, it is entirely derived from Christ, for it is the gospel of Christ. He is the author, the subject and the glory.

Christ is similar to a pearl in that pearls are mysterious. Pearls are noted for their variety. There is a resemblance and dissimilarity among pearls. Thus there are numerous pearls, but only one Savior. God has sent many priests, prophets and evangelists, but only one Redeemer.

As followers of Christ, we perhaps bear the greater resemblance to the merchant. Our soul is seeking the presence of the precious pearl. We are on a quest of discovery and longing for the presence of Christ. This quest for the pearl of great value is at the center of our catechetical ministry. It is a quest we embark on for our own sake, the sake of the Church and the families we serve. Please join us on this quest full of joy, love and hope. We'll have fun too! We welcome your reflections on the parable of the Pearl of Great Price. *Please e-mail rthibeau@stjoseph-libertyville.org.*

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."

Mt. 13:45-46



Thank you to all the families who donated books, toys, games and craft materials for the special needs daycare my sister opened this past June. There is an ongoing need for business size "junk" envelopes as well as plastic bags (grocery store size). If you want to learn more about the daycare or want to check out their complete wish list of needed items go to: www.havenofhopedaycare.com.

Jean Hruska – 847-345-3007

Important information for Traditional Program families-

- Faithful attendance is important. For security purposes, if your child(ren) are not able to attend their session, please call the RE office. FOR HOME GROUPS, call the catechists directly so they will not be expecting them.
- Session time is very limited and traffic and parking are a challenge. Please allow a few extra minutes so that your child(ren) will be in the room on time.
- If you need to pick your child up early, please come to the RE office on the second floor to sign them out. We will call the catechist to send your child to the RE office to meet you.
- We encourage you to check your child's folder regularly. It will contain important flyers, announcements, and the RE class schedule which is on the front of the folder.

Upcoming Events



WELCOME COFFEES

September 20 & 22

Parents of K-2 Students in Traditional Program

Come for coffee, lemonade and cookies during the last 15 minutes of your child's class.

This is a chance for you to meet your child's catechist as well as other families.



PENNIES FROM HEAVEN

All Traditional, Faith Weaving and Home Group Sessions beginning September 27

We will collect "pennies" brought in by the students. This money will support Academy of Our Lady in Waukegan – to purchase supplies and support their scholarship program. During Lent the money collected will be donated to Heifer International.

Please send any money to be collected in the plastic baggies attached to your child's folder (Traditional program) or in a bag/envelope clearly marked for Pennies from Heaven (Faith Weaving & Home Groups).



HOLYWEEN

All 3rd Grade Students

October 25 & 27

Students in Traditional Classes attend during their class time. Faith Weaving students participate with Tuesday 6:30 PM class.

Children have fun dressing up as saints and participating in a variety of faith based games. More details regarding making costumes will be sent home by your child's catechist.



SAINT SHOWCASE

Presented by All 8th Grade Students

Open to All Parishioners after all masses

November 1, 2009

12:30 Mass will feature a Procession of Saints (All 8th grade Students) followed by exhibits in the School Gym created by the students representing the confirmation names they have chosen.

There will also be a bake sale to benefit a charity selected by the 8th graders.

WELCOME from the Religious Education Staff



Front: Roz Camardella, Linda Popeck, Glenda Braun,
Regina Thibeau
Back: Jean Hruska, Mary Ellen Marra, Patty Lemberger

WELCOME TO FAMILY FAITH CONNECTION

As a parent of a Religious Ed student, you automatically belong to *Family Faith Connection*. The mission of *Family Faith Connection* is "to support and extend the Religious Education Program by creating opportunities for family faith enrichment and for strengthening parish community." We welcome your involvement in any way! Please consider coming to any of our monthly meetings to explore ways you can participate. This is my first year as FFC President and I am blessed to be working with the experienced board members listed below. Feel free to contact any one of us through the Religious Ed office for further information, to answer questions or to share your ideas.

--- Patty Lemberger, *FFC President*

2009/2010 FFC Board members: We thank them for serving!

Patty Lemberger - President
Anna McDonnell - Secretary/Book Fair Co-Chairperson
JoAnne Coughlin - Treasurer/*Pennies from Heaven* Chairperson
Jane Risley - Newsletter Editor
Sharon Mullins - Welcome Coffee Chairperson
Dorie Sanderson - "An Evening with Santa/A Season with Jesus" Chairperson
Donna Heffern - Fish Fry Co-Chairperson
Mary Nee - Fish Fry Co-Chairperson
Susanne Taylor - Book Fair Co-Chairperson
Sarah McAuliffe - Bake Sale Co-Chairperson
Stella Murphy - Bake Sale Co-Chairperson
Jeanne Eckstrom - Board Member



CATECHETICAL SUNDAY

HIS EXCELLENCY BISHOP GEORGE RASSAS
cordially invites

All Catechists of Vicariate I
(and their families)
to a

Commissioning Mass and Reception
Sunday, September 20th, 3:00 p.m.

St. Mary of Vernon Church
236 US Hwy 45
Indian Creek, Illinois

Please reply to Linda Popeck at
Lpopeck@stjoseph-libertyville.org or
call (847)362-5797

Calling All 3rd thru 5th Graders



Children's Choir will
begin this fall for
kids in grades 3
through 5 in both
public and parochial
schools!

Does your child have an ear (and voice!) for music? Have him/her consider joining the **CHILDREN'S CHOIR** for the 2009-2010 school year!

Participation in choir provides a wonderful opportunity for our children to experience **MUSIC MAKING**, but also the chance to **MINISTER**, adding *vitality* to our liturgical life! Rehearsals will be on Tuesdays from 3:30 – 4:30pm, and the children will sing approximately 6 times during the year, including Christmas Eve. Regular rehearsal attendance is required, as well as a commitment to the scheduled masses.

For more details call or email Clare Marvin, Director of Music Ministry: 847-990-1224, CMarvin@StJoseph-Libertyville.org

Choir fills up quickly so sign up now to reserve your space!