

St. Thomas the Apostle MAY 2008 Newsletter



Parish Easter Mission a Huge Success!

A heartfelt thanks for all who participated in the Parish Easter Mission last month! What a beautiful way to keep the spirit of Easter Alive reflecting on our call to *Intentional* discipleship! Fr. Mike Fones from the Catherine of Siena Institute reminded us that our discipleship

“requires a conscious, daily decision to follow Jesus as Lord.....It is not unconscious or accidental. It is not cultural Catholicism. It is not just about “following the rules.” And it is much more than attending Mass on Sunday!”



In the spirit of IGNITE! Each morning and evening session was accompanied by gathering around the table to share food and fellowship! A special thanks to Tony & Cindy Ruco and Juan Jose Fuentes for the FABULOUS dinners provided! Thanks are also extended to The Religious Ed dept. for the “Children’s Mini-Mission” and the Parish Nursery for their support. Praise the Lord!

Join us for our next gathering to sing, pray, worship, and reflect on the way our Lord Jesus has moved in the life of one of our parishioners. Let’s keep the fires burning and join together for another evening of food for the body and soul! It only took a spark to get the fire going, but we are all feeling its warmth. Our God has blessed us abundantly.

Dinner will be served in the Social hall from 6:15pm—7:15pm before the program. Please bring desserts for the sharing table! See you there!



Next Ignite!

Monday May 19th

7:30pm—9:00pm

In the Main Sanctuary



Parish Week of Prayer May 12th—19th

In the spirit of Pentecost, which we will celebrate on May 11th, when Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit and the Church was born, we are calling forth all parishioners to enter into a week of prayer to keep the fire of the holy spirit burning within us and our community as we *Dream the Vision*. We know our mission is to live as One Body in Christ, though made up of many different parts! We know also, that we can be easily distracted and discouraged by the tempter when we strive to live in Christ. What’s our weapon? Prayer! So, for 7 days in the presence of the Eucharist we will be praying for our parish as we *dream the vision*. There will be a 24 hour adoration chapel and opportunities for everyone to join in the prayer. Sign up sheets can be found in the commons. Often people ask, What can I do? Well here is something we ALL can do! Come together and Pray!

Colloquium on Biblical Spirituality June 29, 30 & July 1 7:00-9:00pm

Holy Spirit Catholic Church / McDonough Hall

Sandra Schneiders, IHM, *Reading the Bible As Sacred Scripture*

Dr. Sandra Schneiders will examine the richness of the Bible as Word of God in three lectures. The first lecture, entitled: “Thus says the Lord’: Is the Bible Really the Word of God?” will explore how the Bible functions as the revelation of God. The second lecture, entitled: “From Biblical Text to living Word: Interpreting the Bible as Scripture,” will examine the necessity of interpreting the Bible for the present historical context of the reader. The third and final session will be based on Dr. Schneider’s book *Women and the Word*, and will be entitled: “The Gender of God and the Sex of Jesus: Difficult Texts in Scripture and Contemporary Spirituality.”

Contact Maria Cressler I will be attending.



Trying to Understand and Wanting to Apply My Faith

In January, our parish was invited to attend a screening of the documentary film *An Invisible Chapel*. The event also included a Q&A session after the screening with the film's director, John Frey, followed by a fact-based and faith-filled discussion with a panel of leaders on the issue of immigration reform. The panel included an Episcopalian pastor, a Catholic Deacon, a Jewish Rabbi, and a religious studies researcher.

I decided to go because I simply didn't know how to feel about this important subject that is quite pertinent in our community. I feel that I need to understand the immigration issues well enough to have a voice about what is right for our country and for the people living here legally or otherwise.

The experience honestly moved me to share it with you. I was somewhat taken aback by the depth of the issues and the reactions of some of the attendees. The room exceeded capacity with over 120 people. The vast majority of the room silently watched the film and witnessed the discussions that followed. I suspect that some of these people we like me in that they were trying to get their "arms around" this subject. A few stood up to state their perspective and ask a question. Fewer still stood up to claim a statistic or opinion about the negative impact of illegal immigration. In that small subsection of the attendees, anger and frustration seemed to be at the forefront of their perspective to the extent that the event's facilitator stepped in a few times to remind the audience that we had gathered for a faith-based discussion. After the event, I wanted to understand the message behind the anger, but I was afraid to ask.

The clearest lesson I learned from the experience is that every one of us wants a solution for America's immigration -- immigrants, native-born citizens, migrant workers, business owners, Christians, Jews, Muslims, everyone. We all stand united in our desire to "fix the problem" even if we each bring different reasons for wanting it fixed:

Keep families together
Maintain low prices for services and products
Protect jobs for people who need them
Protect safety of America in times troubled by terrorism
Provide public benefits for the people who paid taxes



We can expect that a diverse group of people will have different opinions. The best solution will draw from all of our experiences and will only come about when we are willing to share our thoughts with each other, are open to different perspectives, and are ready to bring about change.

I will end with the prayer for justice and peace that all of the faithful prayed together that night:

**Grant us, oh God, a vision of your world as your love would have it:
A world where the weak are protected and none go hungry or poor;
A world where the riches of creation are shared and everyone can enjoy them;
A world where different races and cultures live in harmony and mutual respect;
A world where peace is built with justice and justice is guided by love.
Give us the inspiration and courage to build it. Amen**

Your fellow St. Thomas parishioners,
PJ and Amy Edwards

Social Action Summer Institute July 20-25, 2008

Becoming More Authentic and Effective Disciples in the Public Arena

Spirituality * Scripture * Catholic Social Teaching * Skills of Public Action * Vehicles for Action.

Olgethorpe University, Atlanta Ga.

Program details at www.catholiccharitiesatlanta.org/events/sasi.htm

Catholic Teachings on Migration

Excerpt from the Pastoral Letter on Immigration Reform from the Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory, Archbishop of Atlanta, and the Most Reverend J. Kevin Boland, Archbishop of Atlanta Bishop of Savannah, Regarding Immigration Reform

America has always been a country built of many immigrant peoples, who bring with them richness in cultures and diversity from all areas of the world. Our nation has consistently welcomed immigrants, refugees, and exiles fleeing injustice and oppression and seeking liberty and the opportunity to achieve a full life. They have found work, built homes and lives, and provided security for themselves and their families.

During the past 20 years, about 23 million newcomers have arrived in our nation, surpassing the “first great wave” of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in terms of the numbers of immigrants arriving in the United States. Unlike their predecessors, most of the current immigrants come from Mexico and Central and Latin America. Today the foreign-born comprise about 12 percent of the total population of the country, compared with 15 percent at the beginning of the 20th century.

At the same time, U.S. immigration laws and policies have become increasingly restrictive and even harmful to some immigrants and those seeking asylum. It is estimated that over 10 million people live on the margins of our society for lack of proper immigration documentation. In the last five years alone, more than 250,000 illegal immigrants have arrived in the state of Georgia, bringing their total to nearly 800,000 people or about 9 percent of our state’s population.

Today’s immigrants often face rejection, hostility, and discrimination in our communities and even within the Church. Though we often celebrate the diversity in our communities, we bishops must confess that today, as in the past, the treatment of the immigrant too often reflects failures of understanding and sinful patterns of chauvinism, prejudice, and discrimination that deny the unity of the human family.

“You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt.”

(Lv 19: 33-34)

“The Church of the twenty-first century will be, as it has always been, a Church of many cultures, languages and traditions, yet simultaneously one, as God is one – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – unity in diversity..”

(Excerpt from *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*, A Pastoral Letter issued by the U.S. Bishops)

...Immigrants are the strangers for whom God seeks protection. They are people with names and faces, hopes and fears. They are not statistics or “talking points,” but persons who seek a better life through their own hard work and sacrifice. In adopting new legislation, our state legislators must take into account the moral implications and human consequences for all people. Are we going to treat people in our midst with dignity and respect or punish them for where they come from and how they got here?

...To respond to our present immigration situation, a number of Catholic organizations, representing a broad cross-section of the Church in the United States, have joined forces to implement a campaign called “Justice for Immigrants: A Journey of Hope.” This campaign is designed to educate and influence public attitudes toward immigrants and to bring about orderly changes in our nation’s immigration laws and policies.

Learn more about Justice for Immigrants, a journey of hope – The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform at <http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/>. The site provides information about Catholic teachings that underpin this Campaign, as well as proposals from the Catholic Bishops to achieve reforms in our nation’s immigration laws and policies that better reflect our values as a nation of immigrants.



Holy Hollywood

FRIDAY MAY 16TH

LARS & THE REAL GIRL

Poignant story of emotionally fragile delusional man (a brilliant Ryan Gosling) who -- unable to make human connection -- buys a life-size female doll whom he presents as his girlfriend, and how his brother and sister-in-law (Paul Schneider and Emily Mortimer), his office mates, fellow churchgoers and townspeople accept "her" as human out of love and compassion for him. Though suspension of disbelief is essential, director Craig Gillespie, working from Nancy Oliver's delicate script, makes this improbable tale utterly believable, while the themes of family, community, religion, forgiveness, redemption and a strong affirmation of human decency override those very few elements that might preclude younger teens. Two nonexplicit images of a porn site, mild innuendo, discreet sexual references and brief profanity. **A-II -- adults and adolescents. (PG-13) 2007**

Doors open 6:30pm
Movie begins 7:30 pm
B.Y.O.D. "Dinner"
See you there!



Vacation Bible School

You're Invited!

Come Join the Fun in God's Big backyard!

Welcome to God's Big Backyard: Where kids have a blast serving Jesus!

Get ready for an outdoor adventure that starts in your own backyard and gets bigger each day as kids take the love of Jesus into their neighborhoods and communities! In

God's Big Backyard kids will participate in the large group excitement of Backyard Bash, experience God's word at Backyard Bible Club, meet real-life servants at Community Corner, plus explore through fun-filled crafts, snacks and games. Children of St. Thomas just step outside, take a look over your fence, and discover how much fun you can have serving in God's Big Backyard.

Your kids won't want to miss this adventure in God's Big Backyard! Secure their positions on a backyard crew today! Registrations forms are available on the commons table in church or in the Religious Education office.

We are still in need of volunteers to make God's Big Backyard come alive to the children of St. Thomas. We are in need of crew leaders, actors, snack, arts and craft and nursery helpers. Please consider joining Alex, Stan, Cooper (the dog) and Nick (the squirrel) for this fun and rewarding week.

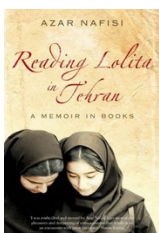
Date: Monday June 16th through Friday, June 20th

Time: 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM

Contact: The Religious Education Office



Book of the Month



Reading Lolita in Tehran

May 20th

10 am—11:30am

Adult Faith Formation Building

Catechist Appreciation Dinner

As this Religious Faith Formation year comes to a close, our parish community has been blessed with approximately 200 catechists who shared the faith with youngsters, teens and adults. How grateful we are to them for journeying with thousands in their faith walk. Their "companionship" and shared footsteps in faith will forever remain with those to whom they ministered. On **Wednesday, May 14th**, we will honor these individuals beginning with a special liturgy of thanksgiving at 7:00 pm followed by dinner in the social hall. This event is generously sponsored by the Religious Board of Education and PSR parents. What a gloriously fruitful catechetical time these past several months have been. To ALL OUR CATECHISTS – We Salute You and We Thank You!

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