



St. Francis de Sales Parish

Holland Michigan

November 2014

Adult Faith and Family Formation news

By Ricardo Valdez

We started the month of November off by celebrating the Saints of the Church. It serves as a great reminder that we are all called to live as saints who know, love, and serve the Lord.

Nursery and Early Childhood

The Synod on the Family opened and closed its first session this past month. Pope Francis called for the synod shortly after having started his pontificate. Families are key to the now and the future of the Church and we find that families face many challenges in today's society. It's not that families haven't faced challenges before, but they are different and many of the coveted support systems that have once existed are no longer as strong or in existence. So, the Pope Francis along with many bishops and lay couples from around the world gathered to start talking through these issues. It seems to have been a fruitful event with many of the key issues being discussed.

What does this have to do with us? Well, first of all it calls our attention to how we at St. Francis de Sales support families. It gives us the opportunity to reflect on how we support parents to live as disciples who raise disciples. Disciples simply put are people who follow Christ in order to know, love, and serve him. There are many more layers to "discipleship," but let us begin there.

Since I've began my ministry here in July, I have learned from our faith formation staff, parents, and various leaders in the parish many of the challenges that many of our families face in our community. It can be daunting, but I have seen great hope in all of these conversations. Why? Because all of this have been shared with great love and care. Our parish wants to help in the best way we can to support our families.

While I don't pretend to know how to address all the challenges, there are two areas that have glaringly stuck out in all of these conversations.

Weekend nursery during liturgies

Weekend pre-school programming during liturgies

Parents coming to Mass as the primary catechists of their family need to be spiritually fed as do their young children. The challenges that many families face with have young children in Mass with them through the duration of Mass often distract them from digesting this spiritual food. So how can we help them? Well by working on the two above areas.

Together with Fr. Charlie, we have asked Shawn Byrns to lead a task force to pray, research, and plan a new "kidzone" that would serve this population of our parish. The end result is not clear, but we have high hopes as we already have dedicated space in the Lower Level of the church and we have great people stepping forward to reach our goal. Please pray for this process and contact me in the parish office if you would like to help in some way.

Spanish Immersion program is new at Corpus Christi School

By Melissa Mulder

There's something exciting in the air at Corpus Christi this fall... It's the sound of kindergarten and first grade students becoming bilingual! After the success of our pilot program last year in kindergarten, we have expanded into a full day K/1 Dual-Immersion classroom, while continuing our afternoon enrichment program for kindergartners who are in the traditional classroom. Corpus Christi has partnered with Add.A.Lingua, a nationally recognized organization based in Zeeland, to ensure the success of our new program and provide support and guidance for our teachers.

The combined Kindergarten and 1st grade dual immersion class is being taught by Mrs. Febe Gómez. Mrs. Gómez came to the United States from Mexico when her children were young. When she arrived here, she spoke no English and had to learn everything all over again. After learning her new language, she graduated from Hope College with a dual degree in Education and Spanish. She and her husband have 3 children, a senior and freshman in college and a 4th grader. We are so grateful to have Mrs. Gómez's knowledge and enthusiasm in our classroom.

In Mrs. Gómez's K/1 class, she has 10 students; 3 kindergartners and 7 first graders. Our program is unique because we are blessed with both native speakers of Spanish and English in this classroom. This is why our program is called dual-immersion. Both languages are fostered, and the students grow their language together. Just as an example, one of our students' grandparents shared with us that even though he only speaks Spanish at home and in the classroom, he has learned so much English that he is now confidently translating for them when they go to the store. He is learning this from his classmates, just as they are learning from him. And it's only October!

Mrs. Gómez's class follows the same curriculum as her counterparts in kindergarten and 1st grade, Mrs. Teri Coffin and Mrs. Marie Schuchardt, but all the content is delivered in Spanish. The students have all their specials classes (PE, Music, Art, Computers and Library) with their fellow students, so they have plenty of time to socialize with their friends in the other classes. While the program demands that 1st and 2nd grade have 90% Spanish instruction, 10% English, the breakdown shifts as the students get older. By 5th grade, half their day will be in Spanish and half in English.

Our point person for contact between Add.A.Lingua and Corpus is our own talented Mrs. María Gómez. María was our lead teacher last year for the pilot enrichment program, and she continues to be an amazing advocate for the program. María currently has 14 students in her Spanish enrichment class for kindergartners that meets 3 afternoons per week. The students begin to acquire their second language through song and play.

As you walk into the Mrs. Febe Gómez's K/1 classroom, you immediately hear the sounds of little global citizens bubbling with new ideas, new ways of expressing themselves, and a confidence that positively astounds those of us who have learned a second language at a later stage. All of this, coupled with the unparalleled value of the Catholic education that Corpus Christi provides, makes for an educational experience that is second –to–none.

If you are interested in visiting our immersion classrooms, please contact our principal, Jo Jones @ 616-994-9864.

Sixty young people from our parish are newly Confirmed



Sixty young people from our parish were recently Confirmed by Bishop Hurley at St. Andrews Cathedral in Grand Rapids. The Confirmation ceremony took place on Sunday, October 26th at 3:00 p.m. Congratulations to them and their families!

Here is a list of those Confirmed: Roberto Aguirre, Marissa Alcalá, Jacqueline Alfonso, Jennifer Andary, Bryce Arredondo, Nathaniel Barndt, Fernando Bermea, María Betencourt, Ana Isabell Callejas, Sylvia Cassar, Melani Lisseth Castillo, Emily Renee Ellis, Wendy Abigail Estrada-Celaya, Jorge Guadalupe Flores, Anna Maria Elizabeth Franz, Aline Garcia, Denisse Garcia, Diana Gonzaga, Jessica Gonzalez, Jessica Grimaldo, Ramon Guiza, Alyssa Eve Hernandez, Bianca Jerding, Stuart William Johnston, Anthony Lawrence, Isaiah Lee, Edith Alejandra Lopez, Victoria Marroquin, Jazmin Martinez, Jennifer Martinez, Micaela Martines, Rodrigo Mata, Alondra Mejia, Miguel Angel Mejia, Andrew Mendoza, Christopher Mendoza, Roberto Mendoza, Zebedee Miller, Alexis Jaime Mireles, Mercedes Irene Montgomery, Elizabeth Navarro, Andrew Nguyen, Meredith Olesh, Veronica Marisol Padron, Ari Pedroza, Jennifer Reyes, Vanessa Rios, Leticia Roman, Estevan Martin Rosas, Bryan Salinas, Jazmin Serrano, Garrett Shrode, Carter Stockdale, Kevin Araely Timmermann, Khoi Tran, Riley Vaara, Berenzie Vaca, Leslie Liszet Vazquez, Jocelyn Vizcarra, and Sonny Vo.

Thank you to all those that made our September Family Fun Day a HUGE success!



Pancakes, Justice and Faith

By Sister Noella Poinsette

Is there a connection? In Holland, Michigan there is – at St. Francis de Sales and Our Lady of the Lake parishes. The first immersion or “boundary crossing” experience for this year’s JustFaith group is serving pancakes, sausage, eggs, juices, etc. to homeless and other people living on the edge. Pancakes R Us takes place every Saturday at the community kitchen at Hope College’s Western Theological Seminary.

This experience is just one of several encounters, challenging books, DVDs and speakers that enable us to open our eyes and ears to seeing and hearing Christ here among us today in those whom we are often blind to. Last year a Hope College student who had lived his entire life in Holland and then volunteered at St. Vincent de Paul Center said, “I never knew before that there were poor people in Holland”. JustFaith challenges participants to go deeper into exploring their faith, its teachings on social justice, and then to say “yes” again to a richer dimension of being disciples of Jesus. Through these experiences and our reflection alone and together, we’ll become more aware of the challenges, the joy, the blessing of daily growing on this journey, of perhaps discovering new gifts that can make a difference as we walk with others – listening to them and learning from them – just as Jesus once did in the gospels we follow.

More news will follow in later editions of this newsletter. Perhaps this is a journey of faith you’d choose to be part of in 2015-2016.



Forever Young group goes to Fennville for outing in October

By Sister Noella Poinsette

This is the name of a group of people over 50 who are parishioners here at St. Francis de Sales. It’s always open to new members as evidenced by Betty who just moved here in July. October 9 was an outing to Fennville Winery and then to Gary Crane’s U-Pick Apple Orchard. There were about 15 of us who enjoyed bag lunches of all varieties indoors. This was followed by wine tastings; we were presented with 20-25 choices of wines that offered something for every palette.

Of course, some then made purchases to take home and possibly share with some of you readers if you’re lucky enough to know some of these “forever young” people. It was a beautiful autumn day for this drive into the country with the leaves beginning their annual change into vibrant colors. The temperature too was perfect for some of the group to then do some apple picking. There are probably more than 10 varieties of apples to choose from during the picking season but this year Oct. 9 was in the final days.

Many trees were unbelievably bare having already been completely harvested but our trusty pickers did find some delicious apples for pies, breads, and just eating on the spot. If you want info on the next outing, give Barb TenPas a call at 616-396-2102.

