



Gracious God, you are our Maker, Keeper and Lover. Your goodness embodies each one of us. Help us to appreciate you in one another and to recognize that all we do flows from your generosity and creativity working in and through our lives. During this year of renewal, we ask that you will change us! Help us to BE Christ in this world, bringing light to the darkness, hope to despair, trust to uncertainty and new life to devastation. Strengthen our commitment to do your work in our homes, in our parish, in our community and in our world. We pray with sincere hearts and open minds, in your name, O God. Amen.

MARCH 20/21, 2010



VISION:

Finding deeper meaning in our relationships and our Catholic Faith

VALUES:

- Personal and Community Growth
- Relevancy of faith in our daily lives
- Relationship to God and one another

MISSION:

Provide opportunities to:

- Experience growth and relevancy of our Catholic faith as individuals and as a community.
- Relate the Year of Renewal experience to the entire SJF Community.
- Build and celebrate community.

ST. JOHN FISHER CHAPEL UNIVERSITY PARISH

What is the year of Renewal at St. John Fisher?

In the biblical tradition, every seven years the Jewish people celebrated a “Sabbath” year. It was an opportunity to start over, correcting the failures of the past and committing to a better future. For Christians, we have that opportunity to celebrate a Sabbath every week.

The year of renewal provides a time to read, think, share, and celebrate who we are as believers. We will have the opportunity to step back from our usual Church participation and take a look at some fundamentals in our faith.

We will invite all of our SJF community members to set aside quality time to consider a few aspects of our faith. You may discover some ideas that you want to think about or talk about. You may find that you are called to set aside some ideas that you have held for years.

We ask that you pray before and after you read these brief articles and that you listen with openness and expectation to each other. It is in this openness to the printed material and in your discussions with each other that your own personal faith will be deepened and enriched.

Finally, as a community, may we discover a renewed Word of God for our world today.

Weekend DATES

The program is centered around six weekends (plus a Tuesday follow-up) through 2010. Small groups will gather on other days after the Year of Renewal (YOR) weekends.

Fall Theme: God's Presence and Call:

Oct. 3-4: In my personal life.

Oct. 24-25: In my personal life related to community.

Nov. 14-15: In my personal life as a member of the larger community.

Winter theme: My/Our response to God's Presence and Call:

Feb. 6-7: My response as an individual.

Feb. 27-28: My/Our response as belonging to a community.

March 20-21: As individuals and as a community.

Opening PRAYER

Let us Pray ... We take a few moments of silence to ask God to open our minds and hearts and to gift us with deeper wisdom and understanding.

Small sharing groups are encouraged to begin their session by reading the booklet, together or individually, before they begin sharing.

REFLECTION

Personal

Has my participation in the Eucharist become a matter of habit? Is it a personal moment between Jesus and me or do I grasp the profound reality that what we, as a community, do here can change the world?

Introduction

As we come to the last in our series of renewal offerings, we look back on our journey which has invited us into a consideration of:

- * God's call in our personal relationship with God
- * God's call to us from the outsiders, those on the side of the road
- * God's call to us to love and reform our Church
- * Our response to God in our world:
 - ◆ Knowing the social teachings of the Church, observing, judging, and acting
 - ◆ Leaving our religious comfort zone and listening for God's revelation in the marketplace, in the poor, in the *other*, those we consider different, distant, distressing
 - ◆ And now, seeking the strength to embrace the cost of discipleship.

The Adulterous Woman

We may be so familiar with this Gospel story that we arrive quickly at the "bottom line" without pondering some details in the story. Except for Jesus, everyone in the story is a sinner. The Scribes and Pharisees have gathered as a community of self-righteous judges in the name of faithfulness to the law. They encounter Jesus, the sacrament of God's forgiveness and compassion, who then bends down and begins writing on the ground. What might Jesus have been writing? Was he writing the virtues of the accused woman? Was he writing the sins of the self-righteous? Was he perhaps writing the deep fears of the accusers? Perhaps Jesus was listing the good traits of the Pharisees. Perhaps, had they stayed until the end of the story, they, too would have been included in Jesus' words of forgiveness, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

The righteous and the religious are in as much need of conversion as those whom they judge.

Revelation from the Arts

The 1987 award-winning film, *Babette's Feast*, is based on a 12-part story by Isak Dinesen; it is set in the 18th century on the barren and frigid Jutland Peninsula of Denmark. There lived two middle-aged daughters of a recently deceased Lutheran minister. Having lost their opportunity for love, they have continued their father's stern and austere lifestyle and meet regularly with his aging disciples, equally stern, austere and judgmental.

Enter Babette, a papist!

Babette is a refugee from France, and having lost her family

in the war, begs the sisters to house her in exchange for her service as a maid. Out of Christian charity the sisters agree.

After 12 years of servitude, Babette wins the French lottery and, with a sense of God's goodness and graciousness, she asks if she might prepare a meal for the sisters, their returned suitors, and the aged disciples.

Babette spends her resources and herself in preparing the feast. The dour sisters and their guests begin the meal in their own private reverie, filled with regret, rationalization, and righteousness. As the opulent meal progresses, and each guest is the beneficiary of lavish, extravagant and undeserved hospitality, their judgments and condemnations melt away.

The host is spent, but the guests are healed, forgiven, and liberated. They are redeemed.

Like the Scribes and Pharisees in the Gospel and harsh, begrudging guests at Babette's feast, we, too, are in need of the ongoing conversion, forgiveness, healing, liberation and forgiveness at the table of our host in the Eucharist.



We Gather

As we enter into the assembly, we place the altar bread in the dish to be presented with the gifts. That piece of bread represents us as *we are*. Many of us will have had a bad week; we may have been negative about God, the world, the failures for which we are responsible. Some will have had to struggle with children to get them into the car; often there will have been an argument. Most of us will be absent mindedly just showing up. We gather just like the Scribes and Pharisees, thinking we're doing well enough, if only those *other* people would just shape up. This is the Body of Christ in need of renewal.



We Confess

We pray, "Lord, have mercy!" because we genuinely need mercy, either because we are conscious of our sins or, especially, if we *aren't* conscious of our sin. We pray, "May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to life everlasting." Amen! So be it!



We Listen

We receive God's Word in the readings and in the preaching. This is an examination of conscience for the community. It's when we bring ourselves into the presence of God's Word that, as individuals and as a community, we can judge ourselves. We *observe* our world and our place in it. We *judge* how we as believers have responded and should respond. We determine to act to bring our response into better alignment with God's Word. The Word of God nourishes our hearts and minds. We are brought to newer and deeper awareness by this reverent listening.



We Offer

We present those original altar breads, representing ourselves as *we are*. With the bread and wine we give our labor, the fruits of our work, our wages, our blood, sweat, and tears. The gifts presented are our very lives, our sincere efforts, our incompleteness, our struggles, and even our failures. We offer all of it.



Our Gifts Are Sanctified

The bread we offered with all of our imperfections is consecrated; it is made perfect; it is *changed* into the Body and Blood of Christ.



We Receive and We Are Changed

More than the bread is changed at the Eucharist. We are changed. Often we hear people say, “I just feel better when I have gone to Mass.” The fact is that we *are* better. The stuff of our ordinary lives has been made holier. We are changed. Like the guests at Babette’s feast, we *are* more conformed to Christ, loving, forgiving, healing, and serving. We *are* more united with those whom we may have hurt or judged or condemned. We have whatever it takes to spend on the cost of discipleship, to spend ourselves and our resources. The interaction within the Eucharist has changed us.



We Are Commissioned

“Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” is not just a farewell; it is a command. Having been changed, empowered, renewed, reconstituted as the Body of the living Christ, we are sent to serve. We are given the task to love and serve in the world.

We can appreciate all of the wonderful things about our parish, but it can’t end there. When we go through the door marked “Servants’ Entrance,” the work begins.

For this is what I received from the Lord, and in turn passed on to you: that on the same night that he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, and thanked God for it and broke it and he said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me.” 1 Cor. 11: 23-24

DO: act

THIS: “This” refers to the actions of Jesus. Jesus gave his body over to suffering and death. After the Last Supper, “this” includes Jesus’ going to death. Are we prepared to do “this?”

IN MEMORY: re-remembering Christ. Bringing the active presence of Christ into the world through the members of the Body of Christ.



Post Script

Throughout the history of the Church, much effort has been spent trying to decide how and when the bread and wine is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. While we have consistently said that the very substance of the bread and wine was changed, what was left unsaid was *why* the substance was changed. What is the purpose for our participation in the Eucharist? Is it only for our own sense of closeness to God? No. If the Eucharist does not have impact and meaning in the world, we have missed the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

Small Group SHARING

When you leave the parish after having celebrating the Eucharist, do you feel better than you did before Mass?

When you leave the parish after having celebrating the Eucharist, are you aware of being sent on a mission?

In the reading from Philippians, we read “forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling, in Christ Jesus.” What might be your call in this pursuit?

Conclude this time by reflecting on the Year of Renewal prayer. (See back page.)

Acknowledgements

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A Faith to Believe In

Song for the St John Fisher Year of Renewal

Terry Gonda & Kirsti Reeve

$\text{♩} = 114$

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in treble clef, 2/4 time, with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 114. The lyrics are: We're long-ing for You to deep - en our__ faith Draw us in clo-ser through love__ - and through grace. Re - new us, trans-form us, con - nect us as one. So we may con - tin - ue the work__ of Your Son__ We're seek - ing deep - er mean - ing__ And a faith to be - lieve__ in__

Verses (One for each weekend):

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Like little children, we come to You
Help us to open our hearts
To notice Your presence in all that we do
Make us aware of Your call | 4. Like Simon Peter, abandoning all
Help us cling only to You
Here we are, ready to answer Your call
Leaving our nets on the shore |
| 2. Like Bartimeus, we want to see
Help us to open our eyes
Finding Your call to community
In every part of our lives | 5. Like the disciples, in awe and in fear,
As Your glory transfigures all
It is indeed good for us to be here
May we respond to Your call |
| 3. Lord, when uncertainty hits from all sides
Help us keep trusting in You
Keep us alert to the signs of the times
For only Your call will endure | 6. Just like the Pharisees, we're quick to judge
Help us to put down our stones
And walk a new road of forgiveness and love
Knowing we're never alone |

Final Refrain:

We're longing for You to deepen our faith
Draw us in closer through love and through grace
Renew us, transform us, connect us as one
So we may continue the work of Your Son
We're seeking deeper meaning, and a faith to believe in
We're **finding** deeper meaning ... And a faith to believe in

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