

St. Leo's

PARISH COMMUNITY



HIGHER GROUND RETREATS

ENABLING YOUNGSTERS TO GROW IN CHRIST

APRIL 2020
Inside



Lasting friendships, but most importantly, a closer relationship with Christ, are what these high school students found at Higher Ground.

Registration will be closing soon for the Higher Ground Retreat, where high school and middle school students have the precious opportunity to grow closer to Christ, all while building friendships and having fun.

The Diocese of Grand Island sponsors Higher Ground, now in its 55th year. This year, high school students can attend either the week of May 31-June 5, or June 7-12. Middle school students can attend July 12-16. The high school retreat will be held at Fort Robinson State Park, while the middle school session will be at Camp Maranatha in Maxwell.

“The program is an opportunity for them to experience the Church, how it is intended,” says Eric Heckman, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the diocese. “They will do a lot of fun activities together and pray together, and talk. The fun leads to the breaking down of walls and they get to know each other. They do trust building. As they get to know each other, this will lead them to experience the love of Christ through that community. At the same time, this presents to them the basic Gospel

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A woman with blonde hair, wearing a light blue shirt, is watering a green plant with a watering can. The scene is set outdoors, and the background is slightly blurred. The overall tone is bright and natural.

Cultivate

YOUR PERSONAL GARDEN FOR CHRIST THIS SPRING

Everyone loves springtime. The weather is warmer and beautiful flowers are blooming all around us.

But anyone with a beautiful garden will attest that the flowers do not magically appear as if the season change itself miraculously makes the flowers bloom. Beautiful flowers and lush gardens are the result of the gardener's hard work.

Imagine that a man is given some flower seeds. The man then buries the seeds in the ground and leaves them on their own. As the months pass and rain falls, some seeds may receive enough nourishment to bloom. But simply burying seeds in the ground will hardly make for a gorgeous garden. Rather, if the man truly wants to enjoy many beautiful flowers, there is much care and work ahead. Recognizing the hidden beauty within these simple seeds, he must cultivate the ground, plant the seeds in a solid foundation, then water and fertilize them throughout the year — only then will he see the proper fruit these seeds were made to bear.

This simple illustration speaks to the heart of us this season — not only as we look around at the flowers, but more importantly as we reflect on the springtime of the Church. We are celebrating the great feast of Easter when, through His death and Resurrection, Christ offers us the greatest gift of all — eternal life with Him forever. This celebration leads us to reflect on the many

gifts God has given us in this life and the fruit they will bear, especially as we look to life eternal.

He has given each of us a multitude of gifts so that we can better serve Him and bring others to Him. Do we notice the hidden potential of our gifts? Do we see them, like the seed — as seemingly small, yet so full of fruit? Everything we have — our time, talents and treasure — is a gift from the Lord. Do we accept gifts in gratitude, then put them to use by cultivating and nourishing them so they will bear the proper fruit?

Just like springtime flowers that we enjoy, our time, talents and treasure need to be cared for. Our gifts need to be cultivated and nourished. It is only then that will we see them for what they are — wonderful gifts given by God meant for His greater glory.

Like the seeds, if we use our gifts flippantly, we may see some fruits here and there. But we are called to so much more — we are called to build a beautiful garden. We are called to offer God the most beautiful flowers of all.

This season, as we look at all the beautiful flowers around us and enjoy God's creation, let us think about the seeds in our own lives. Ask yourself if you have accepted the gifts God has given you — your time, talents and treasure — and have cultivated and cared for them properly. Or, do they just sit dormant within you yearning to bloom?

Just like springtime flowers we now enjoy, our time, talents and treasure need to be cared for.

EASTER: THE ULTIMATE VICTORY

Dear Parishioners,

Because Easter Sunday is on the second Sunday of the month, we spend over half of April bathing in the joy of Jesus' victory over death. His Resurrection is the source of our hope for eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

If you were to seek one characteristic word for the Easter Season, that word would be **Alleluia**, which fills the liturgy during this period. Notice how many Easter hymns contain the word *Alleluia*. It comes to us via Latin and Greek from the Hebrew *Hallelujah* meaning, "Praise the LORD."

The Hebrew *Hallelujah* is a word of pure praise, used in the Jewish liturgy and found at the beginning and end of many of the Psalms. It was even recorded in Revelation — see chapter 19 for examples. In fact, the essence of *Alleluia* ought to be at the center of our Christian lives.

What do I mean by "*Alleluia* living," if I may call it that? I guess I'd best summarize my thoughts by saying it means incorporating Christ's victory into the core of our own lives. Knowing that Jesus Christ died on the cross and then rose again from the dead should not be some abstract idea that has no relevance to our own life. Faith in the Resurrection is the basis of Christianity.

Perhaps for most of us death is not very real, or at least not something we think about often. Most Americans don't live on farms where the deaths of animals are regular occurrences. And most people die conveniently out of sight in nursing homes or hospitals, not at home surrounded by their families. We try to keep death out of sight.

But Christianity recognizes that death is real and that it is the final result of sin. Death is hostile to us — St. Paul even states, "The last enemy to be



destroyed is death" (1 Cor 15:26). However, Jesus has won the victory over death. While we ourselves will experience death until Christ's Second Coming, the crucial battle is over and has been won.

We have faith that Jesus has risen, and that fills us with the hope that we too will share in the Resurrection. St. Paul explained it in this way: "For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life, but each one in proper order: Christ the firstfruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ" (1 Cor 15:22-23).

That hope then brings joy to the Christian's life — joy because Christ is victor, joy because He shares His victory with us. That we trust death is not the end is the basis of this joy. And that's what is at the heart of "*Alleluia* living," a joy that radiates through all of life even when we experience pain and suffering, even in the midst of financial turmoil, even during times of personal sorrow.

This Easter Season, let's live out Jesus' reassurance, "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world" (Jn 16:33). We can be joyful because we don't need to fear, and with that promise of ultimate security, we then dare to share the time, talent and treasure God has entrusted to us, and use them in His service.

The Lord is risen, alleluia!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Donald A. Buhrman
Pastor

Taking Time Away to Grow Closer

CATHOLICS ENCOUNTER CHRIST



While there are many ways to make an investment in your faith — attending Mass, spending time in prayer or serving others — there are times when it takes something a little out-of-the-ordinary to really help you go deeper in your relationship with God. Prioritizing specific “time away” can often be exactly what you need to get out of your everyday routine, and allow God into your life in new ways.

“Because of my participation in Catholics Encounter Christ, I am more involved with the Church, my prayer life is strong and consistent, and I am more aware of recognizing Christ in others,” says parishioner Kathy Boroff. “I regularly read to learn more about Catholicism and my faith continues to grow.”

For Kathy, a Catholics Encounter Christ, or CEC, weekend was the perfect way to start that process. She attended her

first weekend 15 years ago, and has served in various leadership positions, including six years as the President of the CEC Leadership Council. According to Kathy, the weekend — which begins on a Friday evening and proceeds through Sunday evening — has the potential to be life-changing.

“During this weekend you will experience how God’s grace works within you, how you can share this grace with others, and become an effective evangelizer,” says Kathy.

The weekend includes inspiring talks presented by both priests and lay people, as well as opportunities for prayer and discussion.

“Discussions are centered on talks emphasizing the true meaning of grace, the sacraments, the Mass, the nature and need of prayer, living one’s daily life in union with God, studying to understand the gift of God, and introducing Christ to others

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“CEC is for anyone who would like to grow in and deepen their faith life and get to know other like-minded individuals. The weekend is a lively, joyous opportunity for you to allow Jesus to work in your life. You will see and experience Him in the lives around you, learn a method of perseverance to keep Him in your life, and bring Him to others through your Christian leadership.” — Kathy Boroff

COUNTER CHRIST

by word and deed,” Kathy says. “There is daily celebration of the Eucharist and opportunities for spiritual direction and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.”

And while CEC begins with a weekend event, participants are encouraged to use the weekend as a starting point for a whole new way of living the faith. In order to facilitate this, those who have participated in the CEC experience are encouraged to become part of the “4th Day Community,” expand their own daily

prayer life, initiate an ongoing program to study the faith, and become a more active disciple.

“The CEC weekend in itself is simply a beginning,” Kathy says. “The goal of the CEC movement is to make Christ the prime influence in one’s life and community. CEC provides support to sustain you as you persevere in using your individual gifts to bring others close to Christ.”

Kathy encourages fellow parishioners to consider making a priority of spending time growing

in their faith and getting to know other faithful Catholics.

“CEC is for anyone who would like to grow in and deepen their faith life and get to know other like-minded individuals,” Kathy says. “The weekend is a lively, joyous opportunity for you to allow Jesus to work in your life. You will see and experience Him in the lives around you, learn a method of perseverance to keep Him in your life, and bring Him to others through your Christian leadership.”

HIGHER GROUND RETREATS

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message that God loves them and desires what’s best for them.”

The middle school retreat program is similar, but there will be a few changes this year.

“The main thing is for them to have a fun time with a bunch of kids and have an incredible experience, and get the Gospel message,” Eric says.

There are opportunities for adults to take part as volunteers to minister to the youngsters as teachers.

“We’re always looking for volunteers,” Eric says. “A lot of adults are involved in the program. Many keep returning because they get something out of it, too. They get to serve and grow in one’s faith while sharing it with others.”

Parents also learn from their children as they return from the retreat.

“The kids come back changed,” Eric says. “They

have had experiences that build them as people and expose them to the true love of Christ. A lot of times they will return kind of built up about their faith. And, often parents see a change in how they interact with them.”

The fee for the retreat is \$250. There are opportunities for scholarships to assure that a child can attend.

“We don’t allow money to stop a kid from attending,” Eric says. “I would tell parents considering sending their children that it’s time well spent, and therefore the money is well spent. The impact this event has on kids will be there for their entire lives and eternity. The spiritual benefit is well worth making it happen for young people. They will have the opportunity to deepen their relationship with Christ, which is the primary intent of camp.”

Registration can be done online at highergroundretreats.org, where all the information is available for both retreat groups.

Divine Mercy Sunday and the CHAPLET OF DIVINE MERCY



In the 1930s, Sr. Maria Faustina Kowalska of the Most Blessed Sacrament, a Sister of Our Lady of Mercy, received a message from the Lord that she was to live her life as a model of Christ's merciful love and spread Christ's mercy throughout the world. She proceeded to offer up all of her personal sufferings in atonement for the sins of others. She kept a diary in which she wrote of God's mercy, as well as about her special devotion to Mary Immaculate and to the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, which gave her strength. Sr. Faustina's diary, *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, serves as the handbook for the devotion to the Divine Mercy. In it, we read of the message of mercy that she received from Christ.

On April 30, 2000, Sr. Faustina Kowalska was canonized by Pope John Paul II. Then, on May 23, 2000, the Congregation for Divine Worship decreed that "throughout the world, the second Sunday of Easter will receive the name Divine Mercy Sunday, a perennial invitation to the Christian world to face, with confidence in divine benevolence, the difficulties and trials that humankind will experience in the years to come."

On Divine Mercy Sunday — occurring this year on April 19 — all parishioners are encouraged to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet, always remembering and practicing the essential "ABCs" of Divine Mercy:

Ask for mercy • **B**e merciful to others • **C**ompletely trust in Jesus

How to Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet:

"Chaplet" simply refers to the prayers counted on a rosary. The Lord said to St. Faustina, "You will recite this chaplet on the beads of the Rosary in the following Manner:"

Begin with: One Our Father, one Hail Mary, and the Apostle's Creed.

On the "Our Father" beads, say:
Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved

Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

On the "Hail Mary" beads, say:
For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

In conclusion, three times recite these words: Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

ADULT GRIEF CLASSES ARE TRULY A WORK OF MERCY

The Corporal Works of Mercy provide us with an essential guideline for helping our neighbors “as if they were Christ in disguise,” says the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. With this in mind, the Adult Grief Class helps with one of the Corporal Works of Mercy — “bury the dead.” These classes, offered through St. Mary’s Cathedral, are open to anyone grieving a loss.

Any of us who have lost a loved one know the months and years to follow can be very difficult. That’s why the Adult Grief class, facilitated by Trish Curran and Sister Ann Ference, is so important.

The classes are offered from 6 to 7:30 p.m. for six weeks at St. Mary’s Cathedral. One session begins in the fall and leads up to Thanksgiving, and another begins in the spring and leads up to Easter. They are limited to five or six people. Participants are expected to attend every session. The format for these classes is mainly open for sharing among group members.

“People may be experiencing



things and think they are alone,” Sr. Ann says. “In a group setting, they find out others are feeling the same way, and that helps them.”

And, as Sr. Ann notes, all information regarding who is in the class and what they share is kept confidential. “Importantly, the class provides a safe space

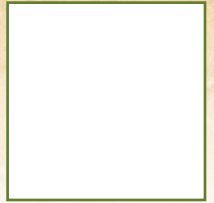
for those grieving to express how they feel,” says St. Leo’s Outreach Coordinator Donna Douglass.

“Out in the world, we are not always able to let out our true feelings,” Donna says. “That is why it is so wonderful to have a safe place to begin to understand where we are.”

Donna says that this class is

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such a blessing to those who have suffered a loss.

“Grief affects everyone differently and sometimes we shut out certain parts of our life,” Donna expresses. “It is helpful to have someone help us through these times.”

Sr. Ann feels blessed to help with this class, and she wants everyone, of all faiths, to know they are welcome.

“Some people think they can handle grief by themselves,” she says. “This class shows you

that you are not in this alone.”

“We get as much out of it as the group does,” she adds. “It’s a blessing to help people in their grief journey.”

Sr. Ann and Trish receive a lot of positive comments on the benefits of the Adult Grief Class and how it has helped.

“This really helps people take the beginning steps of healing. Most of us think we can handle it alone,” Sr. Ann says.

If you would like more information on the classes, please contact Trish Curran at 308-384-8862. The classes are offered free of charge.

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Daily Mass: 9 a.m., **Saturday:** 5 p.m., **Sunday:** 8 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

Confession: Saturday 4 - 4:30 p.m. **Adoration:** First Friday of the Month, 9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Abide Adoration: Fourth Sunday of the Month, 7 - 8 p.m.