**October Faith Formation News**

Items of interest:

* Do you have a 2nd grader? You will be receiving a letter soon regarding our NEW First Reconciliation plan! 3rd grade is now the year for Reconciliation and Eucharist preparation! If you do not receive anything from Sue Ann by week’s end, please contact me at 716-909-7110.
* We started 24 hour Eucharistic adoration on the first Friday/Saturday of the month. If you have never experienced praying in the presence of Jesus this way before, we encourage you to sign up for an hour to be silent in front of the Blessed Sacrament. You can go to [www.SignUpGenius.com/go/409044BA9AB2BA64-inimmediate2](http://www.signupgenius.com/go/409044BA9AB2BA64-inimmediate2)

and sign up for a time slot. This is life-changing stuff!

* Do you or another adult you know have a desire to make your confirmation? Maybe you weren’t ready or missed out when you were younger. Confirmation is a powerful sacrament that brings grace and clarity to us! Contact Sue Ann or Mike Saltarelli and get plugged in TODAY!
* Fr. Mike told us at GOF mass this past Sunday that God is ALWAYS happy because He is ALWAYS helping people! If you’d like find this happiness, one way is to join us ONCE A MONTH at NEIGHBORHOOD ANGELS AND SAINTS! We gather on a Sunday after the 11 o’clock mass in the Early Childhood Center kitchen to make homemade soup, bread, dessert and cards for those in need and the homebound in our community!! Sign up at

<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/409044ba9ab2ba64-november1> .

ALL AGES are welcome! If you can’t make it this time, consider donating one of the items we need to prepare the meal☺

* Have you ever been to daily mass? We have mass every week day in the St. Francis Chapel at 8:30. In addition, there is a noon mass on Wednesdays and Fridays. This is a great way to start your day or spend your lunch hour… It’s 30 minutes and you get to refresh, renew, and receive Jesus! Try it – I promise you’ll be hooked! PS – It’s also a great way to get little ones familiar with mass!
* Do you need prayer? Do you have an idea? Would you like to just have a cup of coffee or tea and chat? We are here for you! Call Sue Ann 716-909-7110, Mike 716-830-0320, or Fr. Mike 716-909-1751. We live to share our lives and faith with YOU! 

**GREAT talks for adults on FORMED.ORG:**

**(Highlighted talk is your HW for October – Kids’ selection on reverse side!)**

* Living the Gospel with the Heart of Pope Francis
* Who Am I to Judge
* Religionless Spirituality
* From Atheism to Catholicism – My Conversion Diary
* That All May be One
* Saints for Sinners
* Blessed Pier Giorgio
* I’m Not Being Fed
* The Lamb’s Supper
* We Must Go Out
* Facing Your Fears
* The Four Levels of Happiness
* Discerning God’s Will
* Being All In
* Is God on your iPod?

Not on FORMED.ORG?

Go to the website (it seems to work better initially from a computer) and click “REGISTER”.

Type in our parish code:

ZKZ79Y – all caps

You will be directed to go to your email and verify that you’re registering.

Then you will make a login (your email address and a password).Remember – YOU WILL ONLY USE THE PARISH CODE THE FIRST TIME to make a login. The next time you log on, it will be your email and password.

KIDS’ HW for October:

Watch “Francis – The Knight of Assisi”

**Longing for the heavenly banquet Heaven is the substance of Christian hope, but that does not mean we should be detached from this world.**

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| Jesus in the New Testament uses the image of a wedding feast to describe heaven. Shutterstock |

Being a writer, I often get letters and emails from readers. One of my regular correspondents is a lovely gentleman nearly 90 years old who frequently tells me what the Church really needs are more hellfire sermons stressing sin and punishment, like the ones in the good old days.

Actually, I don’t recall hearing a whole lot of homilies like that. But maybe my correspondent is right — up to a point. Maybe frequent reminders of the evil of sin and the awful possibility of eternal separation from God would help.

Maybe, though, a comprehensive approach would help even more. Never mind hell — when was the last time you heard a homily about heaven? I don’t mean a eulogy suggesting the recently deceased is already there, even though the facts of the case would seem to make a long stay in purgatory more probable. I mean a well-reasoned explanation of what we’re hoping for in hoping for heaven.

The object of our hope

Heaven is, of course, the ultimate and appropriate object of hope. Yes, it’s possible also to hope for good things in this world. But in the end our hope as human beings is directed to our perfect, eternal fulfillment — to heaven, that is.

So, where can we turn for help in understanding heaven as the object of hope?

Not, certainly, to those cartoons that show people in heaven wearing shapeless robes that resemble bedsheets and standing on clouds cracking jokes. Some are funny enough, but they don’t make heaven look like a place where you’d be eager to spend eternity.

To some extent, that’s even true of religious sources that say heaven is where we’ll see God face to face. I don’t doubt the truth of that, nor do I doubt that seeing God face to face will be a marvelous experience. But this practice of reducing heaven to a purely intellectual activity may not stir much enthusiasm in people who aren’t Ph.D. candidates.

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| **Strong Hand of God** |
| “Sometimes, when things turn out the very opposite of what we intended, we cry out spontaneously: ‘Lord, it’s all going wrong, every single thing I’m doing!’ The time has come for us to rectify our approach and say: ‘With you, Lord, I will make steady headway, because you are strength itself, quia tu es Deus fortitudo mea.’    “I have asked you to keep on lifting your eyes up to Heaven as you go about your work, because hope encourages us to grasp hold of the strong hand which God never ceases to reach out to us, to keep us from losing our supernatural point of view. Let us persevere even when our passions rear up and attack us, attempting to imprison us within the narrow confines of our selfishness; or when puerile vanity makes us think we are the center of the universe. I am convinced that unless I look upward, unless I have Jesus, I will never accomplish anything. And I know that the strength to conquer myself and to win comes from repeating that cry, ‘I can do all things in him who strengthens me,’ words which reflect God’s firm promise not to abandon his children if they do not abandon him.”    *— Excerpt from St. Josemaría Escrivá’s* [*“The Christian’s Hope”*](http://www.escrivaworks.org/book/friends_of_god-chapter-13.htm) |

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, mirroring Scripture, suggests something quite a bit richer and more exciting when it says heaven will be “the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness” (No. 1024). Now, that’s something to hope for.

Jesus in the New Testament uses the image of a wedding feast, which naturally conjures up thoughts of good food, good wine and good company. Granted, that’s a metaphor, not a candid photo meant to be taken altogether literally. But it does tell us something important about heaven that can be considered a fact.

It’s that the experience of heaven will involve the broad range of human possibilities and human goods rather than intellectual knowledge alone. And that means heaven will be a place where people have fun — a place where, so to speak, we’ll enjoy hanging out.

A remarkable passage in one of the documents of the Second Vatican Council suggests as much. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*[Gaudium et Spes](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html" \t "_blank)*) speaks of the promise of new heavens and a new earth after the second coming of Christ (Nos. 38-39). Then comes this:

“For after we have obeyed the Lord, and in His Spirit nurtured on earth the values of human dignity, brotherhood and freedom, and indeed all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise, we will find them again, but freed of stain, burnished and transfigured, when Christ hands over to the Father: ‘a kingdom eternal and universal, a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace.’ On this earth that Kingdom is already present in mystery. When the Lord returns it will be brought into full flower” (No. 39).

What this says is that, along with discontinuity, there will also be a profound continuity between God’s Kingdom as it’s truly but imperfectly present here and now and the kingdom in its fullness and perfection when Christ comes again. The continuity will be embodied primarily in the human goods that we labor to realize in our lives and that God will bring to perfection in eternity.

Improving our world

This is heady stuff. And it’s the substance of Christian hope. To a great extent, furthermore, it provides the answer to a perennial question that Christians have asked themselves for many centuries: What importance should we attach to life in this world?

Doesn’t our faith tell us this world is passing away? We’re only here for a little while anyway. So why put a lot of time and energy into making this fallen world a better place? Wasn’t the philosopher Theodor Adorno right when he remarked that human progress, “seen accurately,” can be summed up as “progress from the sling to the atom bomb”?

Vatican II also answers this one.

“Far from diminishing our concern to develop this earth,” it says, the grand vision of God’s Kingdom already mysteriously present and taking take shape here and now, should spur us on to work even harder to make things better in this world (“such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God”).

There’s a measure of truth in Adorno’s bitter quip about human progress. But the truth in it should be an incentive to believers to spend themselves on behalf of progress of a different, better sort.

St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei — a group that labors to promote spirituality among laypeople who live and work in the world — took a balanced view of these matters in a homily titled “The Christian’s Hope.”

“God did not create us to build a lasting city here on earth,” he said, “because ‘this world is the way to that other, a dwelling place free from care.’ Nevertheless, we children of God ought not to remain aloof from earthly endeavors, for God has placed us here to sanctify them and make them fruitful.

“We urgently need to Christianize society. We must imbue all levels of mankind with a supernatural outlook, and each of us must strive to raise his daily duties, his job or profession, to the order of supernatural grace. In this way all human occupations will be lit up by a new hope that transcends time and the inherent transience of earthly realities.”

Confidence in suffering

But there’s another great obstacle to hope that must be overcome — suffering. Even the bravest nonbeliever is likely to see suffering as an experience without meaning, conclusive evidence that life is absurd.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI responded to that in a passage in his 2007 encyclical [*Spe Salvi*](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html) (“Saved by Hope”). “Suffering and torment is still terrible and well-nigh unbearable,” he acknowledged. “Yet the star of hope has risen — the anchor of the heart [a reference to the epistle to the Hebrews, which speaks of hope in these terms] reaches the very throne of God. … Suffering, without ceasing to be suffering, becomes despite everything a hymn of praise.”

This then brings us to the subject of death, the last and most difficult hurdle for faith to surmount. Here, too, hope is the answer, as can be seen from the equanimity and good humor with which martyrs often meet death.

Martyrs by definition are people who are prepared freely to give up their lives in testimony to faith, based on the faith-inspired hope that something a great deal better awaits them beyond this life. Hope like that can be heard in the words of St. Thomas More, the chancellor of England who was condemned to death for refusing to support King Henry VIII’s divorce and the king’s claim to have authority over the Church in England superior to the authority of the pope.

Just before his death by beheading on July 6, 1535, More told the executioner, “You will give me this day a greater benefit than any other mortal man can give me. … Pluck up your spirits, man, and don’t be afraid to do your job.”

Martyrdom is usually quick, however, and life is long. Many people who would be glad of quick martyrdoms must instead suffer drawn-out martyrdoms of frustration, rejection, disappointment and pain that go on for many months, even years. Hope of heaven sustains them then. Hope and the realization that, as somebody once said, nothing so honors God as confidence.

**Did you know that there are SEVERAL Eucharistic Prayers that the priest chooses from for mass each week, depending on the season or theme of the mass!!**

**This past Sunday, Fr. Mike used the Eucharistic Prayer entitled, “ Jesus, Who Went About Doing Good.” It’s SO beautiful that it’s worthy of some prayer and meditation on it! Enjoy!**

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Father of mercies and faithful God.

For you have given us Jesus Christ, your Son, as our Lord and Redeemer.

He always showed compassion for children and for the poor, for the sick and for sinners, and he became a neighbor to the oppressed and the afflicted.

By word and deed he announced to the world that you are our Father and that you care for all your sons and daughters.

And so, with all the Angels and Saints, we exalt and bless your name and sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy…

Bring your Church, O Lord, to perfect faith and charity, together with Francis our Pope and Richard our Bishop, with all Bishops, Priests and Deacons, and the entire people you have made your own.

Open our eyes to the needs of our brothers and sisters; inspire in us words and actions to comfort those who labor and are burdened. Make us serve them truly, after the example of Christ and at his command. And may your Church stand as a living witness to truth and freedom, to peace and justice, that all people may be raised up to a new hope.

**Rethinking “Stranger Danger”**

“Stranger danger.” It’s short. It’s simple. It even rhymes! But is it really the most effective abduction prevention lesson for our children?

Children do not understand the concept of a stranger. Many believe that strangers are mean, ugly people — so the nice man asking for help to find his lost puppy? Not a stranger.

Children also learn that some strangers – like store clerks, police officers, or parents with children – are helpful. It may be hard for them to understand the difference between strangers who could hurt them and strangers who may help them.

**Most importantly, “stranger danger” ignores the fact that most children are abducted by someone they know.**

Avoiding strangers will not help if the abductor is a family member, neighbor, or family acquaintance. When you talk to your children about abduction prevention, don’t focus on warning them about certain types of people. Instead, teach them to identify and respond to threatening situations.

A New Message

Say goodbye to “stranger danger.” Try using the following language when talking to your child about abduction prevention:

* Don’t say: Never talk to strangers.
* Say: You should not approach just anyone. If you need help, look for a uniformed police officer, a store clerk with a nametag, or a parent with children.
* Don’t say: Stay away from people you don’t know.
* Say: It’s important for you to get my permission before going anywhere with anyone.
* Don't say: You can tell someone is bad just by looking at them.
* Say: Pay attention to what people do. Tell me right away if anyone asks you to keep a secret, makes you feel uncomfortable, or tries to get you to go with them.

In addition to these conversations, use [role-playing scenarios](http://www.kidsmartz.org/~/media/KidSmartz/ResourceDocuments/KidSmartz_Safety_Scenarios.pdf) (see additional sheet) to help your children practice their abduction prevention skills. The more children practice, the better prepared they will be to respond to an emergency.