

***LIVING OUR FAITH* at St Philip Neri**

March 2006 Volume 4 Issue 3

This Lenten Season, we continue our focus on poverty. In the last issue of *Living Our Faith*, we invited you to join our Parish Peace & Justice Commission in presence, prayer and spirit as we embark upon an extended time of study and discernment around poverty. This month's newsletter includes some reflection and action suggestions for Lent.

This year's National Prayer Breakfast featured an unlikely speaker ... Bono, the lead singer of the rock group U2. Bono has been working for the past decade on issues of global poverty and debt relief. "It's not a coincidence that in the Scriptures, poverty is mentioned more than 2,100 times," Bono told those present. "It's not an accident. That's a lot of air time, 2,100 mentions. ... 'As you have done it unto the least of these brethren, you have done it unto me.' (Matthew 25:40)."

Earlier in that same Gospel, we read... "Jesus, at the sight of the crowds, was moved with pity." (Matthew 9: 36). This is the Gospel passage **Pope Benedict XVI** has selected for his Lenten message.

"Yes, even today the Lord hears the cry of the multitudes longing for joy, peace and love. As in every age, they feel abandoned. Yet, even in the desolation of misery, loneliness, violence and hunger that indiscriminately afflict children, adults, and the elderly, God does not allow darkness to prevail. In fact, in the words of my beloved Predecessor, Pope John Paul II, there is a 'divine limit imposed upon evil,' namely mercy. It is with these thoughts in mind that I have chosen as my theme for this Message [this] Gospel text." - *Pope Benedict XVI, 2006 Lenten Message*

Think back to the images that came into our living rooms this past year of misery, loneliness, violence and hunger on the faces of children, adults and the elderly. Whether caused by hurricanes, tsunamis, war or systemic poverty, those images touched our hearts deeply. Many of us chose to act, donating money and keeping them in our prayers.

Pope Benedict reminds us of the challenge of the "gaze of Christ," especially during this Lenten season.

"In the face of the terrible challenge of poverty afflicting so much of the world's population, indifference and self-centered isolation stand in stark contrast to the 'gaze' of Christ. Fasting and almsgiving, which, together with prayer, the Church proposes in a special way during the Lenten Season, are suitable means for us to become conformed to this 'gaze.' ... Thanks to men and women obedient to the Holy Spirit, many forms of charitable work ... demonstrate the genuine humanitarian concern of those moved by the Gospel Message. ... Moved like Jesus with compassion for the crowds, the Church today considers it her duty to ask political leaders and those with economic and financial power to promote development based on respect for the dignity of every man and woman." - *Pope Benedict XVI, 2006 Lenten Message*

Prayer

- Reflect on the Pope's entire Lenten message www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/
- Reflect on Bono's Prayer Breakfast Speech www.bread.org/get-involved/one-campaign/bono-prayer-breakfast-speech.html
- Use the prayer and reflection materials on the next page

Fasting

- Operation Rice Bowl provides the opportunity to give the money you save during your Lenten fast to those in need
- You might also want to consider preparing and eating simple meals from different parts of the world as a way of fasting in solidarity with our brothers and sisters across the globe. Recipes can be found at http://orb.crs.org/lenten_resources/fast.cfm

Almsgiving

- Money given to Operation Rice Bowl funds Catholic Relief Services hunger and poverty alleviation efforts around the globe and in the US.
- There is more than one way to give. Consider volunteering with our parish food pantry or Daybreak homeless shelter. Drop nonperishable food items in the barrels in the church foyer.
- Write to your elected officials asking them to write laws and craft budgets that show compassion for the poor. The Legislative Action Center at www.networklobby.org makes writing your representatives easy. We are also including contact information below:

President George Bush

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Prayer & Reflection Resources

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

"This mission continues and, in the course of history, unfolds the mission of Christ, who was sent to evangelize the poor; so the Church, urged on by the Spirit of Christ, must walk the road Christ himself walked, a way of poverty and obedience, of service and self-sacrifice." #852

Reflection Questions:

- What practices can help me find God in all others, especially those in poverty, in affliction, or without hope for a good life?
- How can I become "comfortable" with being uncomfortable in the face of hunger, poverty and injustice?
- How seriously do I take my relationship to God and my responsibilities to all my neighbors in the global community?

Lenten Prayer

As our church journeys through this sacred season of Lent, grace us, O Lord, with the eyes to see you in every person and to hear you in those who cry out for bread and for justice. Amen

We Pray for the Global Community

We pray for the Church throughout the world, that it may be a living example of a loving community which seeks to include and share, and a voice for those who are hungry for food and justice. May our Church continue to speak out against the scandal of poverty.

We pray for the world's leaders, that they may work to overcome the barriers between people and foster a spirit of a global community in a world where no one has to experience poverty or hunger. May our leaders listen to those in poverty and allow them to help shape a better future for all.

We pray for ourselves, that through our choices, action and words each day we may live out our faith, growing more compassionate and generous each day. May we have the courage to learn more, love more, and embrace the values that will create a just and peaceful global community. Amen

Sources: Vatican Website
Bread for the World Website
Center of Concern Website
Operation Rice Bowl Website