

THOUGHTS FROM YOUR PASTOR: Pray For and Support Our High School Youth Groups

It is the time of year for our parish High School Youth Groups to begin their activities and gatherings. We are fortunate to have such groups in our Hardin County parishes, because ministry to teens is such an important aspect of our pastoral work. From my several years of pastoral work working with and listening to and ministering to teens (in parish youth groups, at Catholic High Schools, in “Theology of the Body for Teens” chastity classes, at Catholic Youth Summer Camp, etc), it has become patently (and painfully) obvious to me just how many challenges our teens struggle with, and are hit across the face with, from the secular and permissive culture we live in. Most Catholic teens, I have found, truly want to be holy and are looking for “something more” than what MTV and Hollywood and peer pressure at school has to offer. They want authenticity and truth and holiness. But they struggle with enormous temptations, and it can often feel overwhelming.

Therein lies, I believe, a major purpose and goal of a parish High School Youth Group. And therein lies also the reason why our parishes need to fully support such groups. Our teens are on a spiritual battlefield for their souls, and they need support both from our Lord Jesus Christ and from us as their fellow disciples in the Christian life. Our teens need to know that they are not alone, that the Catholic faith of Jesus provides what their souls are truly seeking: true meaning to life beyond “it’s all about you”, and a true desire for personal holiness of body and soul, and not “just do whatever makes you feel good”. One of the great ways teens can experience this support – and to know that they are taken seriously by the Catholic Church – is through our parish High School Youth Groups. These groups allow Catholic teens to come together to hang out with each other, to learn and pray together, and to see that they are not alone – that other teens exist who are also bold and courageous enough to push back “against the grain” of the culture, and that it is indeed “cool” to be on fire for personal holiness, for purpose, and for God.

Our parish High School Youth Groups are starting up, and I ask all our parishioners to support and strongly encourage our teens to participate. At Kenton, the Youth Group (typically for those in Grades 9-12) begins next Sunday, October 7, after Mass and Pancake Breakfast (what teen can resist food?), in the Youth Group Lounge (quite an impressive place, I might add) on the second floor of the office building. See Stacey Stacklin for more information. At Ada, the Youth Group has already begun, and will continue to gather most Sundays at 9:45 (next meeting Sunday October 7) in the Social Hall, with various Sunday outings also scheduled throughout the year. See Rachel Klear or Shelleigh Alexander for more information. Last weekend, I had the chance to join the Ada Youth Group on its outing to do canoeing and kayaking in Findlay. We had an impressive turnout, and it was a great chance for the teens to support each other as holy Catholic teens. I could tell we have a holy group of teens, since none of them even attempted to capsize the others’ vessels! (I also gently warned them that capsizing a priest in a kayak amounts to a mortal sin!) A good time was had by all. Again, please support and pray for our young disciples – our teens – and get them involved with our High School Youth Group!

Fr. Ferguson is available to help you with any questions or concerns you may have; please contact him at hamilton.college@outlook.com or at 419-634-2626.

THOUGHTS FOR OUR PARISH CHILDREN by “Jackie”, the Pastor’s Cat



Hi boys and girls! My name is “Jackie”, and as you know, I am Father Ferguson’s cat! Did you know that this week contains a special day in honor of St. Francis of Assisi? That’s right! St. Francis was a holy saint who lived way back in the 1200’s. We cats like St. Francis because he always loved animals. In fact, our parish is having a “pet blessing” this week in honor of St. Francis. Ask dad or mom if you can bring your pets to church on Wednesday, October 3 at 6:00 to let Father bless them! What is your favorite animal (besides the cat, which we all know is the best animal God ever created...)? This week, thank God for creating all the world’s amazing animals! Have a “purr”-fect week!

IMPORTANT NOTES ON PASTORAL CARE

Fr. Ferguson, along with Fr. Jeffrey Tigyer and Dcn. Mike Hood, stands ready to serve your pastoral needs. Periodically, I like to remind parishioners of how best to access pastoral care here in our Hardin County parishes, for your convenience and spiritual benefit. The following is some important information:

- 1) **HOSPITAL STAYS:** Please note that, due to current laws, hospitals are no longer able to notify local clergy about enlisted Catholic patients. We won't know someone is in the hospital unless you tell us. If you wish one of the parish clergy to visit you or a loved one during a hospital stay, PLEASE LET US KNOW by calling the Parish Emergency Line (419-673-6720), or (in Kenton) you may also call the regular Kenton church number (419-675-1162) and press the emergency option for Fr. Jeffrey. [Columbus-area hospitals also have local priests "on call"; you may ask the nursing staff to contact the "Catholic Chaplain on call"; or you may still always call our Parish Emergency options.]
- 2) **TERMINAL ILLNESSES:** It is important for a gravely sick person to receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and also Viaticum (Holy Communion for the last time) [these used to be called "Last Rites" in the old days] prior to death. HOWEVER, we need NOT wait until the "last moment" to call a priest to administer these sacraments. It is okay – and much preferable – to call a priest several days – even weeks – prior to an anticipated time of death to request these sacraments. While some medical emergencies obviously arise suddenly, most terminal patients are ill for some time, and it is much better to be able to minister to a person with less frenzy and haste by not waiting until the "last moment". This will also allow the person to receive Viaticum while still conscious. Plus, in these days of clergy shortages, we may risk not being able to reach a priest in time if we wait until the "last moment". Please arrange for these sacraments, earlier rather than later, by calling the Parish Emergency options as above.
- 3) **FUNERALS:** While you may certainly contact Fr. Ferguson upon a time of death of a loved one, normally a family meets with a Funeral Director, who will then call Fr. Ferguson to finalize arrangements, depending on parish scheduling logistics. Fr. Ferguson will also be the one to "delegate" funeral arrangements to Fr. Jeffrey or Dcn. Mike if circumstances warrant. Parish staff will then make final liturgical arrangements with the family.
- 4) **BAPTISMS, WEDDINGS, ANNULMENTS:** Please contact Fr. Ferguson directly to initiate arrangements for all these cases. He may be reached through his normal contact information. If circumstances warrant, he may then "delegate" a case to Fr. Jeffrey or Dcn. Mike.
- 5) **HOMEBOUND VISITS/NURSING HOMES:** If you or a loved one is unable to come to weekend Mass, we offer a "homebound visitation" program staffed by parish volunteers. You may also ask any of the three clergy to visit as well. Please arrange a one-time or long-term home visitation by calling either parish office, or by contacting any of the parish clergy.
- 6) **GENERAL SPIRITUAL DIRECTION:** Any of the three clergy is available for spiritual direction. Although this is very different from *psychological* counseling – which we are not licensed to do – *spiritual direction* is an important service to help individuals with their spiritual struggles or overall growth by making use of Scripture, prayer, the saints, the Church's wisdom, etc. If interested, contact any of the three parish clergy directly.

Hopefully, these points of information will assist everyone in knowing how best to access the pastoral care services offered by our Hardin County parishes. If you have any questions, feel free to ask Fr. Ferguson at any time. Thank you! St. Mary, our Mother, Pray for Us!