

THOUGHTS FROM YOUR PASTOR: KAIROS Weekend: Pray for our Local College Students!

Last weekend, I met with the parents of our Hardin County Confirmation teens, in order to offer them some support, resources, and guidance regarding the difficult task of raising teenagers in the Christian faith in the midst of a very challenging culture – a culture which conspires to “drown out” the voice of Jesus in their lives, and which pommels them which myriad temptations away from a life of personal holiness. I shared with our Confirmation parents the following statistics cited by Dcn. David Stavarz of Cleveland in his recent article highlighting the Damascus Catholic Mission Campus near Mt. Vernon, where our teens will be doing their Confirmation retreat in April:

“According to the National Study on Youth & Religion, 63% of US Catholic youth say that they have never experienced the love of Jesus. According to that same study, 92% of US Catholic youth say the Bible and Church teaching does *not* impact their daily moral decision-making. **Further, 5 out of 6 young people confirmed in our parishes today will no longer be practicing their Catholic faith within 10 years of their Confirmation.** Without question, these are hard facts to read.”

[emphasis added; Damascus Catholic Mission Campus: An Encounter with Transformative, Missionary Youth Ministry; 6 August 2018; www.wordonfire.org/resources/blog].

Indeed. We American Catholics are in the midst of a crisis retaining our youth in our faith as a result of the successes of the culture in pulling them away. And this happens especially during their college years. Which is why it is so encouraging that this weekend, as we speak, 14 of our local Ohio Northern Newman Club Catholic students are taking part in the annual Kairos Retreat. They arrived at SS. Peter & Paul Retreat Center near Newark on Friday afternoon, and will conclude their retreat on Monday. I am with them the entire weekend, as well. They are true counter-culturalists who are taking a weekend away from the noise of the secular world to go deeper in their committed relationship with Jesus in our Catholic faith. Please pray for their retreat experience, and for their spiritual protection as they remain as brave and courageous witnesses to their college peers, especially as they go back and share their faith with Catholic students who have fallen away. May the Holy Spirit send a fire of desire for holiness and faith upon this next generation of disciples, including also our parish teenagers here in Hardin County who are preparing for Confirmation; they, too, are already on the cusp of beginning the battle with the forces of secularism over the health of their souls!

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.

DID YOU KNOW? A Note From Your Parish Finance Council

[As indicated earlier, we will periodically be placing “blurbs” in the bulletin to make everyone aware of our practical, parish stewardship needs:]

The last fiscal year at Our Lady of Lourdes, we spent \$9,488 on utilities, which includes electric, gas, water, trash, internet, etc. We try to keep these costs down by wise management of our usage of utilities and also by taking advantage of Diocesan Central Purchasing bulk contract opportunities when they offer better deals. However, we are still running short in covering our parish expenses. Please consider an increase in your Weekly Offertory, which provides the vast majority of our needed parish income. Thanks for your generosity and support of our parish family!

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. Tomorrow is a special holiday in our nation: Martin Luther King Day! That’s right! It’s a day to celebrate the work of Dr. King, who lived many years ago and tried to get everyone to treat everyone else fairly, especially those who have different colors of skin! It’s important not to be mean to someone else simply because they have a different skin color. God loves all humans! ...just like God loves all cats, and we cats come in all sorts of colors: orange, white,

gray, blue, and, of course, black like me! I wouldn’t want an orange cat to be mean to me and growl at me just because I’m a black cat. That would not be nice. Why not pray to Jesus today and ask Him to help everyone in our nation to be fair to everyone else, no matter what color they are?

Have a “purr”-fect week!

PRO – LIFE! A Message from our U.S. Bishops:

It has been more than a quarter-century since the *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities* was first issued and Catholics responded to the call to help restore respect for human life in our society. Through their hard work, prayers, and generosity, especially on the part of those in parishes across the nation, much has been accomplished:

- The numbers and rates of abortions steadily declined in the 1990s. More Americans identified themselves as pro-life, while the number of those who said they are "pro-choice" declined; polls showed that Americans are far more opposed to abortion than our law reflects.
- Despite opposition from powerful and well-funded sources, the pro-life movement continues to be one of the largest and most effective grassroots movements in the nation.
- The moral argument concerning the humanity of the unborn and the sanctity of all human life was advanced, and even those who advocate abortion had to acknowledge that it destroys a human life.
- Services for those facing difficult pregnancies, as well as services for women and men suffering because of abortion, were established and expanded, aiding many thousands in need of help.
- Most state legislatures enacted measures to restrict abortion and reduce its incidence.
- Assisted suicide initiatives were defeated time and again in many states; some adopted new laws against assisted suicide. Medical societies, hospice groups, and other organizations worked with Catholic health professionals to provide the best care to those who are terminally ill and to oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Yet the federal law on abortion has changed very little. *Roe v. Wade* continues to make impossible any meaningful protection for the lives of human beings from the time they are conceived until after they are fully born. The abortion decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court must be reversed. For it is impossible, as our Holy Father reminds us, to further the common good "without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop" (*The Gospel of Life*, no. 101). Our own commitment will not waver. Our efforts will not cease. We will speak out on behalf of the sanctity of life wherever and whenever it is threatened. We hold in high esteem all who proclaim and serve the Gospel of life. Through their peaceful activism, education, prayer, and service, they witness to God's truth and embody our Lord's command to love one another as he loves us. We assure them of our continuing prayers. And we renew our appeal to all in the Catholic community to join with them and with us in building a "culture of life."

May the "people of life" constantly grow in number and may a new culture of love and solidarity develop for the true good of the whole of human society. – Pope John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life*, no. 101

The Public Policy Effort at the Local Level

To secure federal pro-life legislation or to pass a constitutional amendment requires the support of members of Congress. Efforts to persuade members to vote for such measures are part of the democratic process and are most effective when carried out locally. This can be done through activities organized on a congressional district basis (sometimes called a "congressional district action committee") comprising citizens within a particular congressional district (involves people of different faiths or none), or it can be accomplished through effective parish efforts. Regardless of how it is carried out, its purpose is to organize people to persuade their elected representatives to support pro-life legislation. The following program objectives can be met effectively by a small group of politically aware and dedicated people:

- educating parishioners and others about the destructiveness of abortion to unborn children, to women and their families, and to society, and about the need for pro-life legislation and a constitutional amendment
- enabling parishioners and others to organize effectively so that their views will be heard and taken into account by elected representatives and political parties
- building effective mechanisms for lobbying elected officials and candidates for public office to support effective legal protection of human life from conception to natural death. These mechanisms might be telephone trees, postcard campaigns, fax and e-mail systems, letter-writing programs in the parish, etc. Collaborative work with other churches is highly encouraged.

In this regard it should be noted that the Church does not engage in partisan politics. Rather, it fosters the responsibility of every Catholic to exercise his or her citizenship faithfully by being well informed on issues, and it recognizes the right to vote as a privilege and a civic responsibility. For more, go to: <http://uscceb.org/about/pro-life-activities/pastoral-plan-prolife-activities.cfm>
The Church also offers compassionate support for those suffering past abortions. See the local Bethesda Healing Ministry for more information – www.bethesdahealing.org