

THOUGHTS FROM YOUR PASTOR: Pray for our RCIA Inquirers!

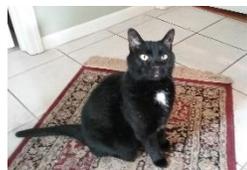
The past couple of weeks have been very positive with a great start to our “RCIA” year. The “RCIA”, course, stands for “Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults”. It is the process offered by the universal Church to invite those who are inquiring into the Catholic Christian faith to learn and to pray more about their relationship with Jesus and to receive full communion with the Catholic Church through the sacraments at the Easter Vigil Mass.

The RCIA programs at both Immaculate Conception and Our Lady of Lourdes have been off to a great start. At Ada, we have at least four inquirers, including a student from Ohio Northern. At Kenton, we have at least six inquirers, including three teenagers. I have been able to attend the opening sessions of both groups over the past few weeks, and it has been a great thing to witness. Their presence and their questions are indicative of the search for deeper meaning and purpose to life that more and more in our culture are experiencing.

These individuals have taken a bold step to come forward and to be honest about their searching. They have had the courage to go “against the grain” of the secular culture and to give faith in Jesus a chance. But as they do so, they need our prayers, fasting, and support as they go further in their journey. Because, while we as disciples are excited about their deepening faith, there is someone who is not at all amused at what they are doing: the evil one. And, from my experience, it will very likely be the case that the evil one will try his best to discourage and to stymie their deeper union with Jesus. So, let’s together, in a spirit of solidarity, support our RCIA inquirers through our prayer and spiritual sacrifices, so that they remain confident in the love and truth of Jesus for their lives here on Earth and later for eternity!

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! It’s already been two months since school has begun! That’s right! It’s hard to believe that time flies by so fast. Has it been a fun school year for you so far? School is so important, because it lets you learn a lot of the things you need to know in order to grow up and be successful and to do the things God wants you to do in this world.

When I go to Kitty School, I enjoy learning lots of things. I learn about the Kitty Alphabet, which has only four letters: “M”, “E”, “O”, and...I keep forgetting....oh yeah... “W”! I also like learning about math. It’s important to be able to count how many cans of tuna fish you have (that’s why I can count all the way to 100). What do you like to count? Learning to read is important, too. I love to read the great classics like “The Cat in the Hat” by Dr. Seuss, and also “Joseph and Chico”, about the cat owned by a Pope (by Jeanne Perego)! What is your favorite book? Why not ask Jesus this week to help you keep focusing on your school work, so you can grow up smart and holy? Have a “purr”-fect week!

Maria* was going back to Church after her second-grader enrolled in First Communion classes. She didn't know what to say to her daughter after being asked why she didn't go to Communion. Maria had an abortion in her teens and felt that she couldn't go to confession because she had committed an "unforgivable sin."

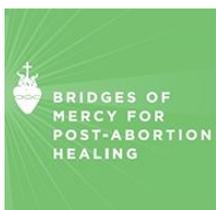
Li* and his wife, Vanessa*, were attending counseling to address problems in their marriage. Li decided to finally tell Vanessa that, while in college, he had taken his former girlfriend to get an abortion. Vanessa was devastated.

Jennifer* comes from a large, pro-life family that is active in their parish. At the funeral of her devout, beloved mother, Jennifer was despondent beyond the grief of her loss. Jennifer couldn't stop thinking that her mother in heaven would now discover the secret she had kept for thirty years: the existence of a granddaughter, whom Jennifer had aborted in college because she was too ashamed to tell her parents about her pregnancy.

When Darryl* started attending a parish men's prayer group, he began to feel more connected than ever to his faith. But with his increasing engagement, he began to wonder whether God would really forgive him for encouraging and paying for the abortion of his only child.

Maria, Vanessa, Li, Jennifer, and Darryl are among the tens of millions of Americans whose lives have been directly touched by abortion. Like so many others, they have experienced shame, regret, guilt, and unhealthy secrets. But as they have also experienced, God's healing love and mercy are always possible.

While many Catholics want to help women and men heal from past abortions, most don't know how to begin. Here are a few ways that Catholics of different backgrounds can assist friends, family members, fellow parishioners, clients—or perhaps even themselves:



If you are like Jennifer, who had an abortion, read the words of St. John Paul II to women who have had abortions.** Be assured that it is never too late to seek God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and that "you can with sure hope entrust your child" to the Father and his mercy (EV 99).

If you know someone like Maria who has had an abortion, express your sympathy for her loss. Assure her of God's unconditional love and encourage her to seek healing and forgiveness. Explain that the Church's Project Rachel Ministry for post-abortion healing can help.

www.HopeAfterAbortion.org

If you are a priest who fears alienating parishioners, be confident that you can preach on pro-life issues with sensitivity as long as your message reminds the congregation that no matter how serious the sin, God longs to forgive every repentant heart. Many who have participated in abortion like Maria, Li, Jennifer, or Darryl believe they have committed the "unforgivable sin." Your preaching can be a unique channel of God's mercy for them, inviting them to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

If you are a parish faith formation leader, become aware of the potential pastoral encounters with those hurting from past abortions like Maria or Darryl. Work with your pastor to include catechesis on forgiveness and reconciliation.

If you are a member of your parish pro-life committee, remember those who may be suffering like Jennifer or Li. Regularly highlight information about Project Rachel Ministry and post-abortion healing using bulletins, bulletin boards, literature racks, parish webpages and e-newsletters, and any other appropriate means of communication.

If you are actively involved in public pro-life advocacy which people like Jennifer may encounter, remember to communicate with messages that are respectful, non-judgmental, and compassionate.

If you are a mental health professional who works with couples like Vanessa and Li, strive to learn more about post-abortion issues and how those you are serving may be affected.

If you are trying to be a devout parent like Jennifer's mother was, remind your children frequently that you love them unconditionally. Promise they can always come to you when they are troubled or have done something wrong.

If you belong to a religious community, you can help people like Maria, Vanessa, Li, Jennifer, Darryl, and others by regularly praying for all who are in need of post-abortion healing.

If you don't specifically know anyone in circumstances similar to those of the people mentioned, you still have an important mission. Keep all who suffer from post-abortion pain in your prayers and commit yourself to be an instrument of mercy. Show by your example what it means to ask for and extend forgiveness.

All of us are sinners. Yet Pope Francis calls mercy a "bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness" (MV 2). The Holy Father also reminds us, "As the Father loves, so do his children. Just as he is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other" (MV 9). Life is a gift from God and so is his mercy. May we cherish and promote both!

*All names have been changed to protect the privacy of those mentioned.

**See Pope St. John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* (*Gospel of Life*) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), no. 99