

ASH WEDNESDAY • FEBRUARY 14, 2018



The Parish of
ST. JOSEPH
HOMewood, IL

Fostering Christ's Love in Our Lives

17951 Dixie Highway • Homewood, IL 60430

www.stjohomewood.org



SAINT JOSEPH YOUTH GROUP

SERVICE ~ SOCIAL ~ SPIRITUAL

Saint Joseph Church is starting a Youth Group and is looking for young leaders to participate.

The Youth Group is a leadership team open to all current seventh and eighth grade religious education students, former St. Joseph School students, high school students that have graduated from St. Joseph school and religious education program.

The Youth group will give the students an opportunity to help serve the church and community. The Youth Group will work on community projects, support those in need, assistance in religious education, and church services.

Upcoming Initiatives

- **Collection for a family in Puerto Rico**
- **Lent Fish Fry**
- **St. Joseph Events**
- **PADS**
- **South Suburban Family Shelter**
- **South Suburban Humane Society**
- **And much more!!**

The first meeting will be held on **Sunday, February 25, 5:00 PM to 6:30PM.**

If you are interested in joining St. Joseph Youth Group, please contact:
Allisa Opyd at 847-814-1862

A DOOR THAT IS ALWAYS OPEN



People leave all the time. Whatever the reason. Could be part of a migratory wanderlust urge. The stimulating novelty of something new at the expense of the tried and true, old and familiar. Departing sometimes with the acrimony of trumped up justification. Sometimes just walking away. Time for some sort of a change. Through the door. “Just not working for me.” Dramatic exit or simply slinking away? Breaks are less of a bang than a whimper.

Is there finality in this? Undeniably there is a clear separation or a severe break. Hardened in our justified superiority of our position. Rapprochement becomes increasingly more difficult if not impossible the longer the separation. The longer we remain away. How to reconcile? How to overcome the feelings of guilt that immobilize us? How to admit we might be wrong?

To make this situation perfectly clear....We turn away from God. We choose to turn away from everything that we know and love to be true. We choose to initiate that separation. That choice is the ultimate expression of our selfishness; putting ourselves first before God and our loved ones.

But...God never turns from us. God never excludes us from our relationship with him. God never separates Himself from us. God never walks away from us. Never.

In our act of turning away, we need to overcome our selfishness. To be able to *reconcile* we need to overcome our selfish fears. That word's Latin roots describe a “bringing back together.” God's mercy is always there to embrace us. As if we've never been away.

God's hand is always extended in a welcoming gesture, inviting us to just walk through that door that is always open. If you feel ready to accept the welcome and walk through that door, but would like to talk to someone first, please know that Fr. Bob, Fr. Dan, Fr. Ron or any member of the parish staff would be happy to see you. Just corner one of them after mass or give a call. You might be surprised at how good it will feel.

LENT 2018

Back to basics is perhaps the best, or at least the simplest, way to describe how the forty days of Lent should affect the lives of believers. And what are those basics? Jesus himself identifies them in the gospel we hear on Ash Wednesday: “When you **fast**... when you **pray**... when you **give alms**...” Those have long been considered the three “disciplines” of Lent. And discipline is certainly what’s needed if we are to make prayer, fasting and almsgiving as central to our lives as they should be.

Prayer grounds us, not only in the discipline of lent, but in every other dimension of Christian life. Lent offers us the opportunity to examine how prayer is woven throughout each moment of life, from the time we wake to the moment we close our eyes in sleep. Does your day begin with prayer, with words of praise for the gift of another dawn? Are prayers of blessing and thanks integral to every meal of the day? Does a prayer of trust acknowledge the Lord’s presence beside you at home or work or school? Does your day end with petition for the needs of the world and prayers of gratitude for the blessings of the day? Do you pray each Sunday with the community and will you take advantage of other opportunities offered by the parish?

Fasting is the discipline of Lent that helps us make room in our filled and busy lives for the life that really matters: our life with and in the Lord. Fasting in the Christian tradition has most often been associated with food. But all that the law of the Church demands of us now is that we **fast** (eat less) on only two days each year: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday – and only then if we are of a certain age (those regulations can be found elsewhere in this bulletin). On Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent, we must **abstain** from meat – again, if we are of a certain age. But if that is the only fasting we embrace during Lent, what are we saying about the importance of our life in and with Jesus? There is probably much more that most of us need to do when it comes to fasting. If food does occupy a central place in life, perhaps the Friday evening **Fish Fry** is for you. But what about fasting from TV or the internet? Abstaining from cigarettes or alcohol? Fasting from laziness or busyness? Abstaining from anger, impatience or gossip? The list could go on and on. Decide this week what fasting or abstaining is needed in your life so you can begin to appreciate the life that really matters, in and with the Lord. You can find the official regulations on fasting and abstinence elsewhere in today’s bulletin.

Almsgiving – generosity – is the third discipline of Lent. Like prayer and fasting, it is a basic element of the Christian life year-in and year-out. Almsgiving is **not** what we do with our leftovers, but what we give from the substance of our lives. Almsgiving is what Christians do **before**, not after, their own needs are satisfied; it is the powerful proclamation of trust in the providence of an extravagantly generous and loving God. We’re called to give generously and selflessly, not only to our parish community, but to those beyond our parish boundaries who are in need of our care and concern.

Each one of us must decide just how (and how much) prayer, fasting and almsgiving will mark our Lenten journey. But every parish has a responsibility to provide opportunities for the members of the community to live out the disciplines of Lent. Make some or all of them a part of your Lenten journey this year.