

The Ascension Weekly

February 25, 2018

Lenten Friday Evenings at Ascension

Friday, February 22nd was the first Friday in Lent this year, and at Ascension, it was the kickoff of its annual Lenten Friday Soup and Salad Suppers in Bates Hall. Hosted each Friday in Lent from 6:00 to 7:15 pm by a different parish ministry, the suppers are a simple yet delicious way to share fellowship while enjoying a meatless Lenten Friday meal. Share & Care, which hosted the first supper on the 22nd, offered such tasty fare as vegetable tortellini soup, tomato basil soup, grilled cheese sandwiches, a tossed salad, and a variety of desserts. Guests enjoyed the meal and much appreciated the hospitality shown by the members of Share & Care. Upcoming suppers will be hosted by the Ladies Auxiliary Knights of St. John #109, Mother's Group, American Heritage Girls, Ascension Homeschool Co-op, and the Knights of Columbus. Fr. Larry, our pastor, encourages all parishioners to stop by sometime this Lent. "Our Friday night Lenten Suppers definitely build community and leave everyone who attends with a fortified stomach and heart."

In keeping with the teaching that Lent is a season to meditate and reflect on the passion and death of Christ, Ascension also offers parishioners a chance to pray the Stations of the Cross with fellow parishioners on Friday evenings. There are two different versions of the Stations that parishioners can choose to attend. A children's Stations of the Cross, coordinated by parishioner Lina Martin and geared especially toward young children, is first offered in the church at 5:45 pm before the Lenten supper. The children's version includes one-sentence meditations for each station and is particularly well-suited for those youngsters who might have difficulty keeping focus during the longer version. A second Stations begins in the church at 7:30 pm, using the traditional Way of the Cross written by St. Alphonsus Liguori, bishop and Doctor of the Church. Led by our pastor Fr. Larry, these Stations combine meditations and prayers based on the Gospels to lead the faithful through the Passion and Death of Jesus. Lasting about a half hour, the Stations held at Ascension are a wonderful way to unite with Jesus in his sufferings and meditate on the true meaning of His love. Kristen Bryant, our parish events coordinator, is hopeful that the Stations will enrich our parishioners' spiritual walk with Christ this Lent; she says, "We hope it will help our parishioners to form a deeper prayer life which can enable them to gain momentum and develop a closer, stronger relationship with God."

Weekly Lenten Prayer List

When the seventh and eighth grade Religious Education classes met a couple of weeks ago, their discussion centered on the upcoming liturgical season of Lent. With the guidance of Mrs. Jeana Barber, the seventh grade catechist, they talked about different ways they could live out this period in a more meaningful and impactful way this year. Their discussion yielded the idea of a Lenten prayer list, by which each of the students would pray for a specific intention each day of the week between 7:30 and 8:00 pm each night. Ms. Elaine Mitchell, the 8th grade catechist, helped create a document which listed all the different prayer intentions that had been decided upon, and the students agreed to use the document to remember to pray each night. They felt that by committing to prayer in this way, they would be motivated to remember to pray for their agreed-upon intentions, as their friends would be saying the same prayers at the same time each day.

Their prayer list covers a wide range of topics to be kept in prayer. On Sundays, the students focus on thanking God for all that they have, specific things as well as for everything God provides for them. On Mondays, their prayer centers on gratitude for our priests, seminarians and all religious, and they are encouraged to use the seminarian cards available on the Vocations Tree in the church to pray for a specific seminarian during Lent. On Tuesday, they pray for "bad people," i.e., those that do wrong to others, like bullies, physical and mental abusers, and those in prison for crimes committed. Wednesday's prayer theme is safety, both physical and spiritual, petitioning God to keep the devil out of their minds and hearts so that they do what God wants them to do. On Thursday, they pray for those who are less fortunate, including the homeless, those without enough to eat, and those who do not have the opportunity for education. On Friday, the focus of their prayer is on family, giving thanks for their own families and praying that everyone can get along. Lastly, on Saturday they pray for world peace: that government officials pray about decisions, that they do what God would like, that leaders work with each other, that our military stays safe and that God watches over them in situations of conflict.

This prayer initiative that our 7th and 8th grade students collaboratively planned is certain to bear much fruit, and all parishioners are welcome to join them in their worthy endeavor of prayer this Lent.