



**St. Francis of Assisi Church**

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# Children's Ministry Faith Formation

## Kindergarten thru Fifth Grade

**February 2008**

Lent begins on February 2, Ash Wednesday. On that day, we begin a season of performing special acts of charity (almsgiving); of being more conscientious about prayer; and fasting. Almsgiving, fasting and prayer are the three pillars of Lent. During Lent our relationship with Jesus grows stronger as we prepare to celebrate the joy of the Resurrection of the Lord.

A wonderful way to teach your children about the three pillars of Lent is to participate in Operation Rice Bowl. Operation Rice Bowl is the official Lenten program of Catholic Relief Services. For 33 years, Operation Rice Bowl has called participants to pray with their families and faith communities, feast in solidarity with those who hunger, learn about our global community and the challenges of poverty overseas and give sacrificial contributions to those in need.

Rice Bowls are being distributed the last week of January. For 2008, the featured countries in Operation Rice Bowl are Guatemala, Mali, India, Haiti and Cameroon. Each week during Lent, stories, photos and recipes from the featured counties will be sent home so that your families can learn about the joys and challenges in the lives of our brothers and sisters overseas. Share the resources that are sent home, collect alms in the Rice Bowls and include the people from these countries in your family prayers to provide an enriching Lenten experience for your entire family.



### Customs and Traditions

**St. Valentine Day - February 14**

St. Valentine is the patron saint of love, young people and happy marriages. Valentine's Day is a time to share our love with one another, as Christ called us to do with His Greatest Commandment. Even young children can be taught the value and benefit of praying for and with those we love. Here is one idea for a "make it yourself" spiritual bouquet that would make the perfect gift for a parent, grandparent, teacher or special friend.

**He Loves Me Spiritual Bouquet**

Cut heart-shaped "petals" out of construction paper. Have children write one intention or thanksgiving that they will pray for on each petal. Glue the petals to a yellow circle to form a flower shape and attach the flower to a plastic straw or green chenille stem.

Place the flower or flowers in a vase. Each night at supper, pray for one different intention as a family after you pray your grace before meals. This little bouquet will remind you to pray for these needs, or to lovingly thank God for his gifts.

If you want to be really elaborate, you can also design your flowers so you can "pick" off a petal each night (in "He-loves-me; He-loves-me-not" fashion).

However, with Christ, the answer is ALWAYS: HE LOVES ME!

**Important Upcoming Dates:**

**1/27-1/31** Rice Bowls distributed for Operation Rice Bowl 2008

**2/3-7:** No Classes

**2/6:** Ash Wednesday

**2/6:** Second Grade Catechist Meeting

**2/10-2/14:** 1st Communion Parent Meetings for Second grade parents

**2/8-3/21:** Children's Stations of the Cross every Friday during Lent

## Saint of the Month: Saint Gertrude the Great

*\*\*There will be many Saints depicted in our new church, through various works of art. This portion of the monthly Faith Formation newsletter will begin to introduce your family to those saints.*



St. Gertrude was born January 6, 1256, in Eisleben, Germany. Nothing is known of her parents, so it is believed that she was probably an orphan. At the age of 5 she began living at the Benedictine monastery in Helfta. She dedicated herself to her studies, becoming an expert in literature and philosophy. At the age of twenty-six, when she had become too enamored of philosophy, she received a vision of Christ who reproached her; from then on she studied the Bible and the works of the Church Fathers. Saint Gertrude received many visions and mystical instructions, including a vision of Jesus, who invited her to rest her head on his breast to hear the beating of his heart. These visions and instructions formed the basis of her writings. Through these writings she helped spread devotion to the Sacred Heart. Her writings have been greatly praised by Saint Teresa and Saint Francis de Sales, and continue in print today.

Saint Gertrude had a deep empathy for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. At every Holy Communion she begged Jesus for His mercy to be bestowed upon them. During one Holy Communion she experienced the descent into Purgatory with Our Lord. She heard Him say: "At Holy Communion I will permit thee to draw forth all to whom the fragrance of thy prayers penetrates." Our Lord told St. Gertrude that the following prayer would release 1000 souls from purgatory each time it is said. The prayer was extended to include living sinners as well.

*"Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son, Jesus, in union with the Masses said throughout the world today, for all the Holy Souls in Purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the universal church, those in my own home and within my family. Amen."*

St. Gertrude is the patron of nuns, travelers and the West Indies.

St. Gertrude died at Helfta, near Eisleben, Saxony, 17 November, 1302. Her Feast Day is November 17.

*Per Diocesan Safe Environment regulations, please note that children under 10 years of age **must** be accompanied by an adult when using the restrooms during Mass. Please help us help keep your children safe!*

**To accommodate future growth in our Faith Formation program, we are considering adding an 8:30 a.m. session of classes for the 2008-2009 school year. If such a session would be desirable for your family, either to attend or to teach, please contact the Children's Ministry office.**

## LENT



February 6, Ash Wednesday, marks the start of Lent. Lent is the 40 day period, prior to the Triduum, in which we pray deeply and ask for forgiveness and healing. Prayer does not always involved bowed heads and folded hands. Prayer does not require a silent room, a burning candle, a rote prayer or an open Bible. Rather, prayer comes from the heart and we can pray wherever we are and in the midst of whatever we are doing. Take time during this Lenten season to pray with your children during times you would not ordinarily do so. Driving in the car, taking a walk together, stopping in the midst of play time—these are all opportune moments to stop and pray with your children, thanking God for the blessings He has given us and asking forgiveness for any wrongs we have committed. Teach your children the power and gift of prayer through your example. We also invite you to come to the Stations of the Cross and Children's Stations of the Cross each Friday during Lent. Watch the church bulletin for further announcements regarding special Lenten events in our parish.