

FAITH SHARING
17th Sunday in Ordinary Time
(July 26, 2009)

**The Real Presence of
Jesus Christ in the
Sacrament of the Eucharist**

#1 This text is the first of six excerpts from **The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist: Basic Questions & Answers**. Additional excerpts may be found at www.usccb.org/publishing.

Introduction

The Lord Jesus, on the night before he suffered on the cross, shared one last meal with his disciples. During this meal our Savior instituted the sacrament of his Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages and to entrust to the Church his Spouse a memorial of his death and resurrection. As the Gospel of Matthew tells us:

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Mt 26:26-28; cf. Mk 14:22-24, Lk 22:17-20, 1 Cor 11:23-25) Recalling these words of Jesus, the Catholic Church professes that, in the celebration of the Eucharist, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the priest. Jesus said: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. . . . For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink” (Jn 6:51-55). The whole Christ is truly present, body, blood, soul, and divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine—the glorified Christ who rose from the dead after dying for our sins. This is what the Church means when she speaks of the “Real Presence” of Christ in the Eucharist. This presence of Christ in the Eucharist is called “real” not to exclude other types of his presence as if they could not be understood as real (cf. *Catechism*, no. 1374). The risen Christ is present to his Church in many ways, but most especially through the sacrament of his Body and Blood.

What does it mean that Jesus Christ is present in the Eucharist under the appearances of bread and wine? How does this happen? The presence of the risen Christ in the Eucharist is an inexhaustible mystery that the Church can never fully explain in words. We must remember that the triune God is the creator of all that exists and has the power to do more than we can possibly imagine. As St. Ambrose said: “If the word of the Lord Jesus is so powerful as to bring into existence things which were not, then *a fortiori* those things which already exist can be changed into something else” (*De Sacramentis*, IV, 5-16). God created the world in order to share his life with persons who are not God. This great plan of salvation reveals a wisdom that surpasses our understanding. But we are not left in ignorance: for out of his love for us, God reveals his truth to us in ways that we can understand through the gift of faith and the grace of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. We are thus enabled to understand at least in some measure what would otherwise remain unknown to us, though we can never completely comprehend the mystery of God.

As successors of the Apostles and teachers of the Church, the bishops have the duty to hand on what God has revealed to us and to encourage all members of the Church to deepen their understanding of the mystery and gift of the Eucharist. In order to foster such a deepening of faith, we have prepared this text to respond to fifteen questions that commonly arise with regard to the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. We offer this text to pastors and religious educators to assist them in their teaching responsibilities. We recognize that some of these questions involve rather complex

theological ideas. It is our hope, however, that study and discussion of the text will aid many of the Catholic faithful in our country to enrich their understanding of this mystery of the faith.

1. Why Does Jesus Give Himself to Us as Food and Drink?

Jesus gives himself to us in the Eucharist as spiritual nourishment because he loves us. God's whole plan for our salvation is directed to our participation in the life of the Trinity, the communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our sharing in this life begins with our Baptism, when by the power of the Holy Spirit we are joined to Christ, thus becoming adopted sons and daughters of the Father. It is strengthened and increased in Confirmation, nourished and deepened through our participation in the Eucharist. By eating the Body and drinking the Blood of Christ in the Eucharist we become united to the person of Christ through his humanity. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him" (Jn 6:56). In being united to the humanity of Christ we are at the same time united to his divinity. Our mortal and corruptible natures are transformed by being joined to the source of life. "Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me" (Jn 6:57). By being united to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we are drawn up into the eternal relationship of love among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As Jesus is the eternal Son of God by nature, so we become sons and daughters of God by adoption through the sacrament of Baptism. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation (Chrismation), we are temples of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, and by his indwelling we are made holy by the gift of sanctifying grace. The ultimate promise of the Gospel is that we will share in the life of the Holy Trinity. The Fathers of the Church called this participation in the divine life "divinization" (*theosis*). In this we see that God does not merely send us good things from on high; instead, we are brought up into the inner life of God, the communion among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the celebration of the Eucharist (which means "thanksgiving") we give praise and glory to God for this sublime gift.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1 After reading the preceding selections, what did you learn that was new about the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist? In what ways has this learning enriched your understanding of real presence? How might it enrich your participation in the Eucharist?

2 In what ways is your belief in the Trinity deepened when you participate in the Eucharist? How has your belief in the Trinity changed the way in which you prepare to receive Holy Communion?

3 "The ultimate promise of the Gospel is that we will share in the life of the Holy Trinity. The Fathers of the Church called this participation in the divine life 'divinization' (*theosis*)." In what ways are you aware of that promise being fulfilled in your life? In what ways can you be more open to the life of the Trinity on a daily basis? As you participate in the Eucharist?

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Monsignor William P. Fay General Secretary, USCCB

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FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time
(July 19, 2009)

Scripture (*Mk 6: 3-34*)

“When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.” (*Mk 6: 34*)

Background

This section of Mark’s Gospel (Mk. 4:1 - 8:3) deals with the proclamation of the Word by Jesus and his apostles. It began with the parable of the sower of the seeds (Mk 4:3-9), Jesus teaches and many gather around him, but those of his home town reject this teaching. Jesus also sends the apostles to preach, but warns them that not all will accept the Word. In today’s passage the image of the shepherd (pastores) is implied as he again “teaches them many things.” As we begin the Year of The Priest we are reminded that the title “pastor” come from the word for “shepherd.” Indeed, a must teach as Jesus taught, aware that the message he preaches will not always be well accepted.

Question of the Week

- Which homily, during the past year, do I recall truly spoke to my heart? Why?
- Which homily, during the past year, did I find hard to accept? Why?
- What should I do so that my heart and mind will be more receptive to the proclamation of the Gospel?

Question of the Week (Children)

What do I recall the priest saying during one his homilies that helped me to understand the bible better?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time
(July 12, 2009)

Scripture (*Eph 1: 3-14*)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will..” (*Eph 1: 3-6*)

Background

We begin listening to St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians as he gives praise to God for his blessings. Scholars point to the baptismal images as Paul lists so of the gifts the Ephesians and we have received by our baptism. Pay careful attention to three things: first, our “being chosen;” second, being chosen “from the foundation of the world;” and third that we were destined for “adoption.” Each of these speak of God’s unique love for us.

Question of the Week

- When have I felt “awe” because of God’s love for me?
- Do I praise the Lord because he chose me “before the foundation of the world”?
- Do I feel obligated to become holy because He “chose” and “adopted” me?

Question of the Week (Children)

- How will I try “to be holy” this week because of God’s special love for me?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time
(July 5, 2009)

Scripture *(2 Cor. 12: 7-10)*

“...but he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.’ I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong. *(2 Cor 12: 9-10)*

Background

Paul is very much in touch with his weaknesses, his suffering. He speaks of “a torn in the flesh was given to me.” He sees his suffering and weakness as an advantage for it is then the grace of the Lord is most effective.

Question of the Week

- What do the words “for when I am weak, then I am strong” mean to me?
- When in the past did I experience weakness and suffering, but later realized it was then the grace of the Lord was present because of that weakness?
- What weakness or suffering am I currently experiencing that could become a “moment of grace” me?

Question of the Week (Children)

Do I believe that when life is hard the Lord is with me to make me strong?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time
(June 28, 2009)

Scripture (*Mark 5: 21-43*)

“She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. She said, ‘If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured.’ Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.” (*Mark 5: 27-29*)

Background

This is the account of the healing of the “woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years.” It is placed in the middle of the account of the raising of the young girl who had died (Jarius’ daughter). Both stories speak of the Lord’s power to heal and to give life. The “wounds” of our own time are often more interior, than exterior. Such “wounds” or “brokenness” can be the results of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, divorces, abuse of drugs or alcohol, dysfunctional families, betrayals, etc. etc.. It seems, at times, that being “wounded” is more the “rule” than the exception. After acknowledging our own “wounds” and “brokenness” perhaps we need to be more like the woman in the Gospel who placed her trust in Jesus seek to touch his garment to be healed.

Question of the Week

Assuming that we are all “broken” or “wounded” and in need of healing; and that we can each be ministers of healing to others...

- When did the Lord heal me of my brokenness?
- Am I currently in need of healing? Do I believe that the Lord can and will heal me?
- How can I be an instrument of healing to someone who is wounded?

Question of the Week (Children)

- How do I think I can help someone whose feelings have been hurt by someone else?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time
(June 21, 2009)

Scripture (*Mark 4: 35-41*)

”They woke him and said to him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ The wind ceased and there was great calm. Then he asked them, ‘Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?’” (*Mark 4: 38-40*)

Background

This has been a very comforting story for Christians throughout the centuries. The storm has come to represent the Evil which the church or we individually experience in life. But the story also reminds us that the Lord is with us and can quiet the storm. But whether the storm is rebuked by the Lord or not, we should not be terrified; rather, we must have faith that the Lord will remain with us throughout the duration of the storm.

Question of the Week

- When have I felt like I was going to “perish” and the Lord did “wake up” and saved me?
- Have I felt recently like I was going to “perish” and I am still waiting for the Lord to “wake up” and save me?
- How have I dealt in the past with the reality that the Lord did not seem to “wake up” and “save me” during my own “storm”?

Question of the Week (Children)

- When have I felt like I was in the middle of storm? Did I ask Jesus to quite the storm? Did he? How did you feel about what happened?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

Body and Blood of the Lord (Corpus Christi)

(June 14, 2009)

Constitution on the Liturgy *(Second Vatican Council)*

“But in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper disposition, that their minds be attuned to their voices, and that they cooperate with heavenly grace lest they receive it in vain.” (No. 11)

Background

On this, the Feast of the Body and Blood of the Lord, we reflect on our interior disposition when attending Mass. Our recent parish survey showed clearly that we long for “Masses that are prayerful, reverent, and spiritually moving.” The survey also indicates that this expectation is not being met. For that longing to be fulfilled we individually need to have the “proper disposition.” Having the proper disposition could mean various things: arriving at Mass early, rather than after the Mass has begun; joining in the singing instead of simply listen to others sing; avoid being anxious for the Mass to be over, as if there were always something more important for us to do.

Question of the Week (Adults)

- What practice do I have which helps make the Mass more “prayerful, reverent, and spiritually moving”?
- What should I do to insure that Mass will be more “prayerful, reverent, and spiritually moving”?
- What habit should I strive to change so that the Mass will be more “prayerful, reverent, and spiritually moving”?

Question of the Week (Children)

- What part of the Mass do I find the most interesting? Why?

FAITH SHARING

QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

Solemnity of the Holy Trinity (June 7, 2009)

Scripture *(Matthew 28:15-20)*

“And behold I am with you always, until the end of time.” *(Matthew 28:20)*

Background

The Gospel of Matthew concludes with Jesus calling the Apostles to the mountain top, a symbol of where God is present. He sending them forth to baptize, commissioned to teach the world the commandments of the Lord. The very last words Jesus to them is “and behold I am with you always, until the end of time.

Question of the Week (Adults)

Assuming the Spirit of the Lord is always with us, but we often are not conscious of that Presence.....

- When in life was I certain the Lord was present with me?
- What hinders me from experiencing the Presence of the Lord?
- What do I need to remove from my life so as that my mind and soul will be better disposed to the Presence of the Lord?

Question of the Week (Children)

What does it feel like when you know that God is with you?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

Feast of Pentecost (May 31, 2009)

Scripture (*Galatians 5: 16-25*)

“ I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh.... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.... if we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit.” (*Galatians 5: 16, 23, 25*)

Background

Today’s passage is understood better by noting what is said before (“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”) and after today’s passage (“Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another”). What St. Paul says about the “flesh” and the “Spirit” is about the relationships among the members of the Church. Bible scholars point out Paul’s use of the singular of the word “fruit” because this one fruit, is the first listed, namely love. The other eight can be viewed as virtues that flow from the fruit of love or describe the fruit of love.

Question of the Week (Adults)

Assuming that the “fruit” of the Spirit is “love” and the other either virtues are descriptions of the fruit of love.....

- Which of the eight virtues do I think best describes the Fruit of love?
- Which of the eight virtues do I need the most?
- What of the eight virtues do I try the hardest to practice?

Question of the Week (Children)

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: Which one best describes me?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

Feast of the Ascension of the Lord (May 24, 2009)

Scripture

“But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1: 8)

“He said to them, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16;15)

Background

Both St. Mark and St. Luke give an account of the Ascension of the Lord: Mark at the end of his gospel and Luke at the beginning of the Acts. Both accounts have Jesus commissioning (sent with a “Mission”) his Apostles with the command to “proclaim the gospel” (Mark) and to “witness” (Luke). From the very beginning our Tradition as Christians and Catholics has been to be “evangelists.” Our church is seeking to reclaim that part of our Tradition aware that others Christians, at times, fulfill this command in a more active fashion than we do. Our parish mission statement concludes with this very concept.

Question of the Week (Adults)

- Most Catholics acknowledge that we do not “witness” or “proclaim” the gospel to others as much as other Christians. What do I think are some reasons for that?
- Who are examples of fellow Catholics who possess this “missionary” or “witnessing” spirit?
- How could I be more “missionary” in my relationship with others?

Question of the Week (Children)

- How can I show others that I love Jesus?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

6th Sunday of Easter (May 17, 2009)

Scripture

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.” ” (1 John 4: 7-8)

Background

In today’s brief reading from the 1st Letter of St. John the word “love” is used by St. John. “Love” is his favorite word. In his letters he speaks of God’s love for us, from which flowed the importance of loving one another. There is a legend about when St. John was the last living Apostle, a old very old man by that time. He would be carried into church on a stretcher as everyone longed to hear what he had to say. He would speak on the same topic each time: “My children love one another.” When asked why he didn’t speak on something else, the answered, so the legend goes, “There is nothing else.” Another conclusion of the legend has him saying “Once you get that part right, I’ll move on to another subject.”

Question of the Week (Adults)

- Recall acts of love performed by others. Which one of these examples of love of others has inspired me the most?
- What, in the recent past, have I learned about the meaning of love?
- In what in way do I find it difficult to love others?

Question of the Week (Children)

How have I shown love to someone else this past week?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

5th Sunday of Easter – Mother’s Day (May 10, 2009)

Scripture

“I am the true vine... Remain in me, as I am in you... I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing” (*John 15: 1,4,5*)

Background

In this final discourse with his closest followers, the Apostles, Jesus uses the word “unless” as he often does in John’s Gospel when explaining what is required of his disciples. He says in today’s gospel reading “Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me.” (John 15:4). In fact if we are separated from Him we become like a branch no longer attached to the vine – it dies.

Question of the Week (Adults)

- How has my mother set an example for me in learning how to ‘remain in him’?
- What experience in my life has taught me that “without me you can do nothing”?

Question of the Week (Children)

How has my mother taught me to be close to Jesus?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK
4th Sunday of Easter (May 3, 2009)

Scripture

“When the shepherd has brought all his own sheep out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him **because they recognize his voice**...I am the good shepherd, and I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the father” (*John 10: 4,14-15*)

Background

Jesus compares his relationship to his followers to a shepherd’s relationship with his sheep, which he compares to the Father’s relationship with him.

The center of Jesus’ life is his obedient relationship with the Father. The word “obedient” comes from the Latin word “audire,” which means “listening.” The center of His relationship with the Father is listening to the Father. So too our relationship with Jesus must be one of “obedience,” which means to listen to His voice, as sheep listen to the voice of the shepherd and Jesus listens to the voice of the Father.

Question of the Week (Adults)

- During the past year how have I been obedient (“listened”) to the voice of the Good Shepherd?
- What tends to be a serious obstacle to my being obedient (“listening”) to the voice of the Good Shepherd?

Question of the Week (Children)

- Can I recall a time when I felt Jesus was “speaking” to me to do what was right?

FAITH SHARING

QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

3rd Sunday of Easter (April 26, 2009)

Mission Statement

“Our mission is to live as a welcoming and engaging community of Catholics, nourished by the holy sacraments and formed by the gospel message. We strive to be Christlike by sharing our faith and the love of the Father with all His people.” *(Adopted April 20, 2009)*

Background

A Mission Statement expresses the fundamental purpose of a group. Our Mission Statement took eight months to write. It was adopted overwhelmingly at our Parish Assembly on April 20, 2009. The Mission Statement was announced all the weekend Masses April 25-26, 2009. This week’s Question(s) of the Week are meant to encourage parishioners to begin reflecting on its meaning and implications.

Question of the Week

Which aspect of the “Mission Statement”....

- ...pleases me the most?
- ...do I need to develop the most?
- ...will attract others to become members of our parish?

Question of the Week (Children)

- What is the most important thing our “Mission Statement” is saying about us as a parish?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK
2nd Sunday of Easter (April 19, 2009)

Scripture

“The community of believers was of one heart and mind....
and great favor was accorded them all.” (*Acts 4; 32a, 33b*)

Background

The Acts of the Apostles is St. Luke’s account of how the Church grew in the beginning after the Resurrection of Jesus. Luke paints a picture of a united group of Christians “of one heart and mind.” The leaders of St. Mary Parish are seeking to have our community to be “of one heart and mind” through our Parish Mission Statement.

Question of the Week (Adults)

- In what ways do I feel I am of “one heart and mind” with my fellow parishioners?
- Which part of the Parish Mission Statement will help me the most to be “of one heart and mind” with my fellow parishioners?
- Which part of the Parish Mission Statement will help our parish the most to be “of one heart and mind”?

Question of the Week (Children)

- Who are some of my friends who are members of St. Mary Parish?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

Easter Sunday (April 12, 2009)

Scripture (Rite of Baptism)

“Do you reject sin so as to live in the freedom of God’s children?

Do you reject the glamour of evil and refuse to be mastered by sin?

Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness? (*Mark 14: 46, 50*)

Background

From the earliest of times we Christians, when we are baptized and confirmed, have been called upon to reject sin, evil, and the power of Satan. Every year on Easter Sunday all Catholics are called up to renew that renunciation, assuming Lent has been fruitful in facing sin in our lives.

Question of the Week (Adults)

- As I look back over my life, I continue to thank the Lord for setting me free from
- How have I experienced being set free during this season of Lent?
- How have I refused to be mastered by sin?

Question of the Week (Children)

- What have I decided to stop doing which I know was wrong?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

Passion (Palm) Sunday (April 5, 2009)

Scripture

“... at this they laid hands on him and arrested him...they (disciples) all left him and fled” (*Mark 14: 46, 50*)

Background

In Mark’s passion story, of the twelve disciples handpicked by Jesus, one betrayed him (Mk 14:10), another denied him (Mk 14:66-72), and all abandoned him (Mk 14:50) at his greatest moment of need. In Mark’s account neither Mary nor John are at the foot of the cross. Both of the criminals crucified with him “kept abusing him.” Throughout his passion and crucifixion Jesus receives no support. He dies totally alone.

Question of the Week (Adults)

- When have I felt totally alone, as Jesus did? As I look back on that time in my life were there any “fruits” from that suffering?
- How have I reached out to someone who felt alone and abandoned?

Question of the Week (Children)

- Do I sometime feel very alone, misunderstood by others? Do I pray to Jesus when I feel that way?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

5th Sunday of Lent (March 29, 2009)

Scripture

“..unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” (*John 12: 24-25, NRSV*)

Background

“Unless” is used four times in John’s gospel to express conditions of discipleship: Unless you are “born from above” (3:3), “believe that I AM,” (8:24), “grain of wheat falls... and dies” (12:24), “I wash you” (13:8). Today’s gospel speaks of the third condition (die like grain of wheat, hate their life in this world) as Jesus did. We cannot be His disciples unless we do what he did. Obedience, sacrifices, and suffering are inevitable to a disciple of Christ.

Question of the Week (Adults)

When have I suffered because I followed the teachings of Jesus?

(or)

How has my obedience to the Lord’s call resulted in sacrifices or suffering for me? (or)

What were some of the “fruits” that resulted from my dying like the grain of wheat?

Question of the Week (Children)

When did others tease me because I tried to do what Jesus wanted me to do?

FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK
4th Sunday of Lent (March 22, 2009)

Scripture

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast.” (Eph 2: 8-9)

Background

In today’s Old Testament Reading (2 Chr 36: 14-23) God surprises our Ancestors in Faith by answering their prayers to be set free from their exile in Babylon. The surprise is that God used King Cyrus as his instrument to not only set them free, but also build a temple for them. Though written centuries after the Israelites returned from their exile in Babylon, Paul’s thought in Ephesians is reflected in what happened to our Ancestors in Faith so many centuries before. It is also a reflection of what can happen today to anyone who is a Christians. Our salvation is God’s doing, not our own!

Question of the Week (Adults)

- † When and how has God surprised me by his grace? (or)
- † How have I been set free through the grace of God? (or)
- † What in my journey of faith has clearly been a result of God’s grace rather than my own effort?

Question of the Week (Children)

- † When and how has God surprised me by his goodness to me?

"Growing in Faith: St. Paul's Testimony in Christ"

March 17, 2009

Guidelines for Faith Sharing

1. Sharing groups are ideally four or less members.
2. Allow time for group to reflect on question(s) before beginning to share.
3. No one should be forced to share.
4. When someone is sharing "Seek to understand before being understood."
5. Allow sufficient time for each member of the group to share before beginning discussing the answers.
6. Beware of sharing deep secrets or matters more appropriately shared in confession or with a professional counselor.
7. Respect other's faith sharing by maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

(Revised 3/8/2009)

Scripture:

"But when (God), who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me, so that I might proclaim Him to the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; rather, I went into Arabia and then returned to Damascus." (Gal. 1:15-17)

Background:

After Paul's conversion he didn't immediately start preaching. Rather, Paul went into Arabia to pray and study.

- ### Adult Questions:
- 1) How have you grown in your faith in recent years? (or)
 - 2) What has helped you the most to grow in your faith? (or)
 - 3) Based on your experience what are some lessons you have learned about prayer? (or)
 - 4) What has been your most powerful experience in prayer?

Kid Question:

- 1) What is your favorite prayer? Why?
- 2) When do you pray?

Kid Questions:

How do you picture Jesus in your mind?

**FAITH SHARING
QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK**

3rd Sunday of Lent (March 15, 2009)

(This week's Question(s) of the Week are those used at our Lenten Mission)

Lenten Mission "Faith Sharing"

"St. Paul's Conversion: Haying Faith"

March 16, 2009

Scripture: "He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to Him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" *(Ac*

Background: Paul, as a zealous Pharisee, persecuted this new "way" because it seemed to be heretical. Jesus appears to Paul and converts Him.

Adult Questions:

- 1) What have been some high points of your spiritual journey? (or)
- 2) How has God revealed Himself to you? (or)
- 3) Recount a conversion experience you have had along the way?

Kid Questions:

How do you picture Jesus in your mind?

FAITH SHARING QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

2nd Sunday of Lent (March 8, 2009)

Scripture

“God put Abraham to the test. He called to Him, ‘Abraham!’ ‘Here I am!’ he replied. Then God said: ‘Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer Him up as a holocaust on a height that I will point out to you.’” (*Gen. 22: 1-2*)

Background

Abraham is the “Father of Faith” for Jews, Muslims, and Christians. He is honored for His trust in the Lord God who called him to do things that seemed contradictory. How could the promise, made by the Lord to Abraham, that his decedents would be as many as the stars of the sky and sands of the sea if he sacrificed his only son? He trusted and sought to do what the Lord called upon him to do. We have our own “fathers and mothers of faith” who brought us to the Faith, who showed us how to live the Faith, who trusted in the Lord like Abraham. What a blessing they have been to

Question of the Week (Adults)

1. Who are some of my “fathers and mothers of faith” who inspired me by their trust in the Lord’s word?
2. Which story about one of my “fathers or mothers of faith” continues to inspire me? (or)
3. How do I hope to be a “father or mother of faith” to my family and those who know me?

Question of the Week (Children)

1. Who in my life has inspired me by the way they love Jesus? (or)
2. What is one thing I have learned from my parents, grandparents, or godparents because of the way they act?

QUESTION(S) OF THE WEEK

1st Sunday of Lent (March 1, 2009)

Scripture

“At once the Spirit drove Him out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted (tested) by Satan.” (Mark 1: 12-13)

Background

The Spirit came upon Jesus when he was baptized. This same Spirit then “drove” him into the wilderness where he was tested. We, too, have received that Spirit through Baptism and Confirmation. He at times leads us into the “Lenten Desert” to confront things that may need to be faced. Are we ready this Lent to allow the Spirit to lead us into the desert to confront these challenging realities?

Question of the Week (Adults)

1. How has the Spirit led me in the past? (OR)
2. How has the Spirit, in the past, helped me face issues that needed to be confronted? (or)
3. How is the Spirit leading me to confront an issue I may be ignoring? How can I address this issue during Le

Question of the Week (Children)

1. What will you do this Lent to help you become a better person? (or)
2. What did you learn from this week’s Children’s Bulletin?