

# Winter 2011 - Newsletter

*Inspirations from: the November Healing Mass with Father Michael Barry,*

*The Christmas Luncheon with Father Greg Menegay*

*Our Annual Retreat at Oakbridge with Featured Speaker Father Bill Marquis*

*February Visit with Father Michael Barry*

One of Angie's repeated praises of gratitude to Our Lord is for the holy priests that spiritually feed us at our meetings, luncheons and our annual retreat. Father Mike, as our spiritual director, has asked us probing questions in his talks which are a call to examine our lives and take definitive steps to change. He asked us **in November** "Are we looking for healing from Jesus first or are we looking for Jesus?" Father tied in King Hezekiah to our current study of Isaiah by explaining that only 4 kings out of 40 were faithful, of which Hezekiah was one. Although he was considered a good king, Hezekiah repented and was given 15 more years of life. Jesus has pity on people and gives direction with healing such as "Go and sin no more." Father Mike offered that we need to go back to our families and witness to the healing God has done in our lives. We need to get out of our comfort zones, have a true encounter with Jesus and get out of the bondages of this world in things such as TV watching, being right, angry, unforgiving - especially of ourselves - and of being defensive.

Father Mike encouraged us to offer to Jesus what He offers to the Father: to be consecrated to Him, to make sacred with God who we are and what is in our hearts and to love like Jesus does. If we were to appear before Jesus now, are there untruths in us? As Hezekiah was repentant, we should make daily self-observations and repent. What foothold does the evil one have in our lives? Jesus will help us in our weakness to resist the evil one. We can kneel before Him and He will anoint, bless and enable us to give thanks in all circumstances. In that way, we will be open to the consecration of the truth in our lives; we will be able to say "Through the power of Jesus, I have overcome the evil one."

Our **Christmas luncheon** is such a joy as we praise God with seasonal carols, win door prizes, dress festively and fellowship with each other over a tasty meal and music from Skelpin. More important is the spiritual food from our speaker which empowers us to continually seek Christ in Christmas. Father Greg Menegay shared his personal testimony of how he was called into the priesthood. His retelling of his early Catholicism, his lukewarm moments and the people God sent into his life to bring him back into a close relationship with him were easy to relate to. He had moments of religious confusion and of studying Buddhism and other religions. He had fully expected marriage to be in his future but then had a life-changing moment in Mass that he said was a like a boom – and the cogent idea "I should be a priest." A seminarian then educated him about discerning his vocation but it was the scripture Matthew 16:18 that hit him hard and guided him back to the church "And so I say to you, you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it." Father realized that

the Catholic Church had been around for over 2000 years and offered the fullness of truth. Specifically, Father cited the 3 ways to obtain this truth:

**Tradition** - The church was handed down with the spoken word before the written Bible. 2 Thessalonians 2:15 states, “Brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.”

**Holy Scripture** - 2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness.”

**The Sacraments** - starting with Baptism (John 3), Reconciliation (James 5), Eucharist (John 6) and of course all the others that are a road map that lead us to be with Jesus in heaven.

Father encouraged us to live our faith, to make it a complete part of who we are and to proclaim Christ to others. He saw people who not only went to church but made a genuine effort to *live* it. His final thought for us was “When you are struggling, think of what Peter said in John 6:68 ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life.’ ”

**Recap of the 2011 Retreat at Oakbridge: This year’s theme “Walking in the Power of the Virtues.”**

Angie and members of the Leadership brainstormed about how to bring a new dimension to this year’s retreat and came up with specific workshops that would put into practice some of the teachings that would complement the seminars about the Cardinal and Theological Virtues. Father Bill brought a stimulating intellectualism to his talks as well as a warmth through his personal stories that served to elucidate each virtue for us. Father Mike Barry and Monsignor Fred Florek offered personal reflections on how they had to practice each virtue in the circumstances of their lives.

Printed in our retreat journals were the scriptures Wisdom 8:7 about the Cardinal Virtues, “If it be virtue you love, why, virtues are the fruit of wisdom’s labors since it is wisdom who teaches **temperance** and **prudence, justice** and **fortitude**; nothing in life is more serviceable to men than these.” Also 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13; 14:1; 16: 14, gives a discussion of the Theological Virtues ending with “In short, there are three things that last: **faith, hope and love**: and the greatest of these is love. You must want love more than anything else. Do everything in love.”

Father Bill taught us the definitions and benefits of each virtue as medicine for the soul, as a capacity in our soul that makes us good and more perfectly made in God’s image. Grace pours these virtues into our souls and God enhances them, but they are activated by our will. Prudence gives us the ability to be good rational thinkers and to avoid the pitfalls of pride, concupiscence, envy, excessive self-love, imprudence and destructive acts.

We learned that temperance is moral virtue with control that moderates our actions and insures our mastery over instinct. We can’t be temperate without God in our lives. With justice, we live in a right relationship with one another and God but justice without mercy

is tyranny. Our justice must be our putting on the mind of Christ. Fortitude helps us to restrain fear in our lives. It helps us put God first in our lives, to withstand ridicule and to take every thought captive as we put on the armor of God as stated in Ephesians 6:10. We are daughters of the Most High God and Satan will not cause us to get depressed. We fight our battles and temptations with the Word of God as a tool.

Monsignor Fred exhorted us with the virtue of hope to trust God in all things, to have a positive attitude by counting our blessings and to avoid focusing on the negative.

Every retreatants' faith was edified when we participated or saw the many women who came to experience the increase of the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit in their lives through the workshops. Women received the gift of praying in tongues for the first time. They were the direct recipients of healing with the laying on of hands through our holy priests, the Exposition of the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and intercessory prayer by the WCF Leaders. The workshop on Spiritual Warfare clearly delineated who our true enemy is and how to combat him as described in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

Each day we were blessed to have a Mass celebrated by one of our inspirational priests. We were treated to beautiful hand-sewn gifts that caused us to admire the giftedness that we women possess and use to glorify God and bless each other. The youth served us lovingly, the weather cooperated and the annual blessings of the Private Hour of Silence, Divine Mercy Chaplet and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament fed us in every way possible. If you have never attended a WCF retreat, the Holy Spirit is calling you to a life-changing three days that will create in you a desire to put more of Him in your daily life!

The WCF leaders got a breather the week after the retreat by taking a break from leading our groups and getting to sit to listen to Father Mike's recap. He gave an overview of the virtues for all those who couldn't come to the retreat and finished up by blessing each woman individually. He reminded us that virtue is key to happiness, a state of the soul rendered harmonious by reason and good living. He continued that our present times are diametrically opposed to virtue causing us to think "all about me." In times of crisis it is imperative to be connected to a community of faith. Then we can learn how to be prudent, to learn the best way to do the right thing and avoid rashness, procrastination, rationalization and anger. With justice, we learn how to give others their due. In fortitude, to stand firm in hope in all the pressures of life. A great model of the virtues is in our surrender as St. Francis posits in his Serenity Prayer:

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

and where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master,

grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console

to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love;  
for it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

By Sue Kelly-Cochrane, small group leader, WCF