

Women's Christian Fellowship Welcomes You to Our 31st Season of Bible Study, Prayer and Praise!

Written by Sue Kelly-Cochrane

We're ready for this 31st season of Bible study, prayer and praise at Women's Christian Fellowship! We had the Commissioning and Anointing of Angie Lake, our teaching leader, the small group leaders and the music ministry at a special Mass said by our Spiritual Director of 20 years, Father Mike Barry. He spoke Holy Spirit-filled words, "WCF is a work of God. God has a purpose for this (our) group. We will be attacked by satan * like Job," said Father. "You are women who have heard God and listened, not depending on your ears but listening with your hearts. You need to have a hunger for God. There is a call on your life. You are fed by WCF and the sacraments."

With that encouragement, WCF welcomed the returning women and newcomers at our Registration Day on September 16. Despite the new construction challenges going on at the parish, the big turnout was a God-work. Everyone was anxious for fellowship after the long summer. All enjoyed the breakfast lovingly provided by WCF's leadership. With attentive ears, we waited for our "spiritual food" starting with Angie's welcome: "God is going to shake things up, our lives will be changed. We are like a bag of microwave popcorn. When the fire of God by the transformational power of the Holy Spirit hits us, we become tasty and good for the world." She quoted Isaiah 50:4 "The Lord GOD has given me a prophet's tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them. Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear."

Angie was first inspired to serve the Lord following a miraculous healing of what is often called "The Suicide Disease" because of the constant, excruciating pain that continues 24/7. A life-long Catholic, Angie became aware that Jesus wanted a more personal relationship with her, with all of us. Ushering women into a more personal relationship with Jesus is one of the cornerstones of WCF's mission.

Angie spoke the truth – with the introduction of our featured speaker, Father Paul Farrelly, we received a word that did rouse us entitled "My Journey to the Priesthood." Father Paul completed his priestly formation at Mount Angel Abbey and Seminary in Oregon and was ordained this past June. He is a monk at the Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside. Growing up in Southern California, he graduated with a degree in psychology from San Diego State University. Though he heard God's call to the priesthood at an early age, Fr. Farrelly fought and ignored the call. He was eventually led gently back to a close relationship with the Lord through a philosophy course, a gift of an inscribed Bible with his name and the date "December 31, 1997" from a special girl whom he loved and the hymn "Here I Am, Lord," an invitation to serve from Isaiah 6:8.

All of us in the audience were very interested to learn how a priest hears God's call, confirms that he has a true vocation and then obeys. We related to the commonality of the struggle to obey God. We were moved by Father Paul's purity, his love of the Lord and how he overcame

his natural attraction to a loving girl, as well as his respected father's objections as to the practicality of studying theology. "I felt like I was being attacked by the Lord," reminisced Father Paul. "I was attacked in my heart by the love of this special girl and attacked in my mind to see that the Church's teachings made more sense to me than those ideas in the philosophy class. I knew that the Lord wanted me to return to my childhood practices of prayer."

The indecision was difficult and it was not until he received the support of a mission group at San Diego State University that he felt supported in his leaning toward a priestly vocation. At a retreat with the Norbertine Fathers, the Lord clearly told him that he must separate from this girl and leave his life in God's hands. Finally free of the indecision, he could follow his heart and consecrated himself to Jesus and Mary. On June 7 he was so blessed to lift up the Eucharist for the first time at Mass at his monastery.

Father Mike sent us forth with this counsel "Angie invited you back next week. I invite you back for the whole year. WCF is a charism, a gift to the church. It will nourish what's in our hearts. We need community because home and family are not enough. There is a holiness here in WCF; it charges you up with the anointed truth to minister to your families. When you don't come, WCF becomes a memory – it should be a life."

For information about this year's study "**Understanding the Power and Promises of the Prophets**" from the Head to the Heart Series by Angie Lake as well as our meeting information, click on "September" in the Calendar of Events section on our homepage.

(*no respectful capital letter for him!)