

SETON FAMILY



NEWSLETTER

Vol. 11, Number 2____

December, 2013

Learning

The Pittsfield Seton Family group continues to use the book eucharist with a small "e" by Miriam T. Winter as focus for learning.

Recently, the group reflected on the Meal Parables. Points for discussion remind of the gospel stories themselves:

- Do not take the highest place at table, but rather choose a lower, possibly being asked to move up. This is a lesson in humility as well as hospitality. How big is our circle? Do we just invite friends, or is our table open to strangers?
 - Consider the wedding garment and the improperly dressed wedding guest. The author suggests these two stories are focused on the end time, the messianic banquet-- for many are called, but few will be chosen.
 - In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, why are there no women in the story? Would not a Mother run to a lost son who has been found? This is a story of extravagances, both positive and negative: wastefulness and generosity, hostility and hospitality. Is the mother not found in the preparation of the gifted clothing, sandals and ring to the lost son and in the preparation of the banquet?
- Some members found the parables to be harsh. Others suggested the author's interpretations were thought provoking and a stimulus for further group reflection.

There is reference to "hospitality" here, the topic of a previous book the group read and reflected upon. When our learning influences our thought in future learning, we know the previous learning has become a part of us.

Based on the good experience of the Pittsfield group, Sister Edie Strong is using the book Hospitality- the Sacred Art by Nanette Sawyer

with a church-based group that wants to deepen faith through learning together. This group is also finding the book life-changing. *Thanks, Pittsfield Seton Family, for the suggestion.* For their next phase of reading and reflection, this group has chosen The Wisdom of Pope Francis, found at www.usccbpublishing.org. Members are especially enthusiastic about the fresh, straight-forward approach of Pope Francis.

The Greensburg B Seton Family group is using the book Rediscover Catholicism by Matthew Kelly. Joeen Catanzaro gave a presentation and led discussion on the first two chapters. The group is very enthusiastic about this book.

Community

In October, Ok Hy Beauchamp hosted the Jacksonville Seton Family group for National Pray the Rosary Day. Some "friends of Seton Family" joined the group for the day. With visitors participating in many of the group's gatherings, potential is there for some to become members.

Sentiment shared in the group, as expressed by one member, "We are all so grateful for our meetings and warm fellowship, and prayer life together."

Apostolic Spirit

The Jacksonville Seton Family group contributed to the parish Thanksgiving food basket project. They gave \$40.00 in the name of Seton Family.

Prayer

The Bethel Park Seton Family group dedicated their October meeting to Our Lady of The Rosary. They generally begin their meetings with a prayer and a hymn. Marian hymns lent themselves well to this occasion. The members bring the prayer needs of people they know to the group. They find that the more they pray for others, the less they need to pray for themselves. Their gathering then, becomes a prayer to our most gracious God.

The members of the Pittsfield Seton Family group committed to purchasing an Advent reflection booklet. This booklet will offer them another way to pray and reflect in common, even when not together.

Please pray for eternal happiness for: James Herrick, nephew of Nancy Rodda, and for his wife and two small children; retired deacon Ray Paulus, Tucson Seton Family member; Helen McCarthy, aunt of Sister Barbara Ann Boss; and for all our loved ones who have died recently.

For healing for: the four year old grandson of Elaine LaPierre who lost several toes in a lawnmower accident; Armida and Dale Hughes, parents of former Seton Family member Michelle Brubaker; and for all our loved ones in need of healing.

Seton Family groups also request special prayer for: those affected by the shootings at the Naval Shipyards in Washington D.C.; peace for Syria, the Middle East; and around the world; a diplomatic solution for the destruction and non-use of chemical weapons; and for political will to work for immigration reform and effective solutions surrounding climate change.

Retreat

In September, the Seton Family groups in Pittsburgh and Greensburg and their guests participated in an annual retreat led by Sister Gertrude Foley and titled: "Where in My World Is God?" Sometimes we tend to separate spirituality from everyday life. Yet, Pope Francis encourages us to "Seek and Find God in all things." This exhortation was the focus of the day. Comments from several participants give us a glimpse into the blessing found in this time spent together.

Sr. Gertrude and her wealth of knowledge is always a learning experience for me. "Where In My World Is God?" was an interesting title and I do think of where He is, especially on "those" days that are challenging to me.

"I have benefitted from coming to this day. Sister Gertrude talked about looking at pictures of gospel stories. The old saying "A picture is worth a thousand words" is true. When I read the Bible now I picture the setting, not only what the words say but the image that the words conjure up in my mind. Instead of just thinking of the main theme of the verse or lesson, I'm considering what was going on at the time that the passage was written. Meditating on the complete image not just the central idea; there is always a side bar to everything. God may be teaching us in the small things that are happening. We all have read stories and not picked up what's going on between the lines.

The retreat was wonderful; it helped me on my spiritual journey. Where is God? He is all

around me in the big and small details in my life.
Praise God!!!!

Barbara

Molitor

I appreciated the entire day and was inspired by Sr. Gertrude's discussions on using the three perspectives of experience, culture, and Scripture and tradition as I seek to find God each day.

Another highlight was the reflection on a recent interview held by Pope Francis. "God is always a surprise, so you never know where and how you will find him."

Sister Marian

Madden

This quote by our Pope Francis (along with many others) will not be forgotten -- "Although the life of a person is a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God."

Rosemary Cook

Day of Reflection, Pittsfield

The Pittsfield Seton Family group held a day of reflection in August. Two members from the Northeast Seton Family group joined them. The focus of the reflection day was "Pondering the Prodigal".

The word prodigal has two meanings. It can mean "exceedingly or recklessly wasteful." It can also mean "extremely generous or lavish." The participants discussed how both meanings are front and center in this story.

After reading the parable and a time of silence, participants recalled words in the scripture that spoke to them: father; I have sinned - not worthy - I have served you - I never disobeyed - he was lost and now he is found... Reflection led each to

ponder the characters in the parable and identify with one of them.

The group reflected on Rembrandt's interpretation of the parable in his painting "The Return of the Prodigal." They also pondered three poems by Kilian McDonell depicting the thoughts of the three main characters; the father, the young son and the older son. By reflecting on each character in scripture, McDonell's poems and Rembrandt's painting, the anger of the older son and the love of a parent whose son was lost and now was found took on fuller meaning. The group could see that the father loving the son back into the fold was an illustration of God's unconditional love for us.

In the book eucharist with a small "e", Miriam Therese Winters challenges readers to think about the three characters as women: a Mother, a younger and an older daughter. From this perspective, several themes emerged for the participants: unconditional family love, faith in God, forgiveness, and explaining to the older child that what belongs to the parents is also the children's equally. The day was a valuable experience for all.



Sister Colette pinning new Seton Family member Nancy Rodda with Barbara Kurek looking on.

Day of Reflection, Tucson

Tucson Seton Family held a day of reflection led by Sister Maria Consuelo Pacheco. Sister Maria Consuelo used different icons of Jesus to help

visualize what Jesus was REALLY like. Group discussions helped participants examine their own faith growth in understanding their relationships. Activities were lively, instructional and spiritually uplifting.

The Grass Roots Are Growing

Several members of Seton Family and Sister Supporters from the Pittsburgh/ Greensburg area attended a regional gathering of the Sisters of Charity Federation, held at Caritas Christi on November 16. This was one of seven regional gatherings of the Federation, which included associates of Sisters of Charity congregations and our Seton Family. The day explored the history of Charity from the founding of the Ladies of Charity in 1617 until the present time. Sister Mary Clark gave live performance of a monologue on the life of Elizabeth Seton. Julie Schoppen of the Brookline Seton Family group represented Seton Family on a panel which was meant to spark discussion. There was much curiosity about Seton Family, since other religious congregations are only familiar with associates as a lay organization. Julie and several Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill spoke to the fact that Vincentian-Setonian spirituality is a gift of God to the Church, which is available to laity as much as to religious. The focus of Seton Family being on this spirituality, rather than on identification with a religious congregation, and the fact that there are lay-led Seton Family groups was an new insight to many participants.

Seton Family: Who, What, When, Where, Why?

Seton Family began as a question posed in 2001 by the members of the then General Council of the Sisters of Charity: How should we be partnering with adult Catholic laity? After much discussion and dialogue, including an evaluation of previous ventures (e.g., summer volunteers, associates), we named this new venture Seton Family. From its beginning, Seton Family had four dimensions: community, prayer, learning, and service. Sisters at many of the parishes in which we served gathered interested women and men and facilitated monthly meetings. Each facilitator and group designed ways to implement the four dimensions. In the beginning, the learning dimension often focused on some aspect of the lives of St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac, and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. Each year, the Seton Family offers a day of retreat for all of the members in various locations. Sister Mary Price generously accepted her assignment as the first Seton Family Coordinator. Gradually, Seton Family developed a Membership Manual, which outlined the goals and essential characteristics of the Seton Family. These flow from our tradition and from the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the indispensable role of lay women and men in the mission of the Church.

Time marches on. One of the ways we know this is by observing change. Those who have been members since the began have experienced continual change in Seton Family. At the close of the Fall Seton Family retreat this year, we distributed a survey to the participants asking

them to respond to 8 questions to help us evaluate the results of change. The responses can help us measure to what degree Seton Family is implementing its four dimensions. This information also points to areas needing to be addressed, if Seton Family is to continue to play a vital role in members' lives.

Asked to rate each of the four SF dimensions in terms of how it ranked in the focus of local groups (scale 1-4 [highest]), respondents gave the highest rank to "learning" (3.4); "prayer"—2.9; "community"—2.1; "service"—1.6. Asked what they most enjoyed at SF meetings, their responses validated the above numbers: sharing, talking, learning from others; deepening my faith so I may live according to the Setonian tradition; religious and laity sharing; videos and discussions.

"How do you think the Seton Family fulfills its goal 'to enable lay women and men to claim their indispensable role in the Church'?" Especially helpful were responses to this question: "Many members already enabled, but engage each other's support; through the discussions we get into; rekindles knowledge and interest in the faith; keeps us updated on happenings in the church; having lay women prepare and lead SF sessions." Some responses spoke explicitly to SF goals. "Keeps us abreast of what our role is and how best to aid us on our journey." "If nothing else, I've learned that my role in the Church is equal to [that of] all the religious—very memorable and freeing lesson." "Great tool for reminding us of our responsibility as laity for the Church." "I believe my role in the church is equal [to] and just as important as any one else's. We are the Church."

Respondents shared a variety of ideas for reviving the energy, spirit, and interest in the Seton Family. Two much-mentioned ideas were the need for spreading word about Seton Family and the opportunity it offers and trying a new approach to the yearly retreat.

The SF Core Leadership Team (Sr. Edith Strong, Sr. Colette Hanlon, Mary Wicker, and Sr. Gertrude Foley) discussed these results at length and is using the data to refresh our SF design regarding the whole. At the same time, we invite each local SF group to ponder these data to stimulate creativity about how your own group functions.

Angelica Remembered



Angie Holland with Bishop Moreno.

Angelica Cruz Holland, a loyal Tucson Seton Family Member since 2008, died in August, shortly after diagnosis with cancer. Seton Family members had a Memorial Service for her during their August meeting. Angie is remembered as bright, spunky and devoted to the poor and neglected. People from Nogales on both sides of the border testified to her concern for the orphanages across the line which she supported. Until three months before her death, Angie gave English instructions to immigrants and conducted poetry classes at a nearby public library. She knew how to share her talents, as a faithful follower of Jesus. The Setonian apostolic spirit was certainly an integral part of her life.

Gracious God,
may we possess
the faith and trust
of your daughter Mary to
welcome your Christ into
our midst.



Save a Stamp!

If you would prefer to receive your newsletter via
e-mail, send Sister Edie a message at
earthisone@live.com.