



Newsletter

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Faith: Comfort or Challenge?

Nobody has time in November and December. The culture pushes us to buy, buy, buy and party, party, party celebrating Thanksgiving and Christmas. Caring for the poor, the homeless, the immigrant, and the orphan take on the character of one-time seasonal events. We're just so busy and out of breath!

And so, the liturgical months of November and December have a hard survival in our culture. November and December yearly remind us of what our faith has to say about things we don't like to think about: death and waiting. The feasts of All Saints and All Souls and the season of Advent/Christmas all highlight the reality that we need to live a life of faith.

At morning Mass this past week, Luke's Gospel was the parable about the nagging widow and the unjust judge. The parable is about persistence in prayer and how we must trust God and not grow weary in our asking. The closing sentence of this passage, however, struck me in a new way this time. Luke seems to change the focus and writes, "But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

One often hears someone say, "Oh, I don't know what I would do without my faith!" And, most of the time, there has been a sad event in the person's life—an unexpected illness, a job loss, or a death. We usually murmur in agreement and choke back any platitudes that come to our lips.

But did you ever suppose it might be easier not to have faith?

Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa reminds us of what it means to have faith. To have faith is to believe that

*Good is stronger than evil;
love is stronger than hate;
light is stronger than darkness;
life is stronger than death.
Victory is ours through him who loved us.*

When we hear ourselves constantly bewailing the 'awful news' in the daily paper or TV, do we really believe that good is stronger than evil? When we hear someone being praised, do we take a sly delight in 'denting' the praise by recalling some fault of the person? Do we really believe that good is stronger than evil? Do we make an effort even to notice just how good and kind most people are?

When hate flames out in so many conflicts in our world, do we really believe that love is stronger than hate? Do we look to take sides in family quarrels rather than to speak words of reconciliation? When we've been treated unkindly, do we respond lovingly or do we simply retaliate? When we find ourselves 'giving up' on someone, do we really believe that light is stronger than darkness?

You see, it's not so easy to have faith in Tutu's sense after all, is it? A high school freshman observed one time that he didn't see what was so great about the New Testament. "It's just full of clichés," he judged. When we think faith makes living daily reality easy,

could it be that we have turned the teaching of Jesus into easy clichés?

For me, Archbishop Tutu's description of faith relates to how someone once defined hope. "Hope is what you have when there is no reason to have it."

Trust in God, faith, and persistence in prayer are not three 'boxes.' They are three facets of the realistic outlook of a disciple. Faith does not cloak reality. It offers a different way of taking it on.

Apostolic Spirit

Pittsfield Seton Family regularly alerts its members to city events where they could be of service. Several of their members represent their church at the Pittsfield Area Catholic Community gatherings.

Tucson Seton Family pays attention to local cultures. They see an urgent need to interact with parents on topics of parenting and fostering the faith of children. They value engaging young people by playing age-appropriate games and discussing relevant issues with them. The members realize need for the pro-active support of local police officers who have one-on-one knowledge and experience working with neighborhood communities.



Tucson Seton Family mining the message of *Laudato Si!*

Learning

Laudato Si!

Tucson Seton Family continues its study of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, or *Praise be to You*, in which Pope Francis encourages all people to develop ecological virtue. The group has come to realize that their relationship with God is related to their relationship with all other creatures and living things. The Earth is essentially a shared inheritance, a collective good. God's caress comes to us by way of Mother Nature. Each creature has its purpose and lives in harmony with all else in creation. No one creature can show the magnificence of God; it takes discovering all Creation to begin to describe God.

An ecological approach to caring for the Planet is tied to its social aspects, particularly to the Golden Rule. A sense of communion with other human beings is necessary in order to heal inequalities among human beings, many of whom are mired in degradation. There's too much disparity in our experience of life. For instance the group realizes that the right to private property is not an absolute.

The theme song from Mr. Roger's neighborhood provides an appropriate backdrop for discussion of the interdependence of all things:

It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood,
a beautiful day for a neighbor.
Would you be mine?
Could you be mine?
Won't you please?
Won't you please?
Please won't you be my neighbor?

All verse from song *Won't You Be My Neighbor* by Fred M. Rogers

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As human beings, we are part of a network, or "neighborhood," with other biological creatures and Nature. Thus social and environmental crises are not separate. Our purpose is to become one, or united with Our Lord, with each other, and with God's majestic work of Creation. Our Lord invites us to be humble, to live simply in the world, like birds that take only what's provided for them and praise His name on high.

There are definite challenges in "renewing the face of the earth." Countering consumerism, respecting shortage in the water supply, and boycotting certain products are a few of these challenges. We hope for a new start for the planet and a new reverence for life, a new covenant with the environment and God.

Believe

Greensburg B Seton Family highly recommends the book entitled Believe – Meeting Jesus in the Scriptures, published by the Word Among Us Press. Different members take responsibility for facilitating discussion based on this book. The first session used the story of Zaccheus to encounter Christ in the Word. The second session centered on Blind Bartimeus. The group encounters Christ between group sessions by engaging in regular prayer conversations with Christ for 20 minutes, followed by



2 minutes of silence. The book offers several psalms for easy reference and to facilitate prayer.

Living into Hope

Pittsfield Seton Family continues to glean much wisdom from Living into Hope. Members offer each other key sentences from the text that have meaning for them.

Retreat Offerings

The Seton Family groups in the Pittsburgh and Greensburg area topped off the Year of Mercy reflecting on “Extending Mercy.” This time apart from the busy-ness of life was spent listening and sharing about the mercy they have experienced in their lives and praying to God who is Mercy itself. The lives of Saints Vincent, Louise and Elizabeth are shining examples to us of embodying the mercy of God. The day was led by Sisters Colette and Edie. One retreatant reflected, “I enjoyed being a Mary and listening to speakers that shared about God’s mercy and the practical ways to show mercy in my everyday life.”

Northeast Seton Family joined Pittsfield Seton Family to invite area parishioners to a day of retreat titled “Touching the Holy through the Ordinary.” Sister Colette Hanlon, retreat facilitator and former facilitator for Pittsfield Seton Family, engaged the group with her usual wit and wisdom, focusing on embracing ordinariness in everyday life and accepting ordinariness in self and others through obedience, community and love. One of the retreatants wrote a poem that spoke of the meaning of the day for many: “Listen to your heart each and every day; God our heavenly Father speaks to us this way. We need to accept ourselves as such – ordinary is the name of the game. Self-esteem is an expression of ourselves and a gift from God above. Be thankful for simplicity, the ordinary things in life that bring out the best for you and me!”



Welcome to New Members!

Brookline Seton Family welcomed Onnie Costanzo, Joan Brown, Clare Joint, Joan Smith, Marian Vezendy, and Maureen Westwood as new members in a prayer service and reception this past summer. A passage from Pope Francis’ Joy of the Gospel expressed the joy of the occasion. Germaine Harbor Seton Family joined with this group to welcome Josie Orasc as a new member there. Miles apart but one in spirit, we welcome Dawn Lapinski as a new member of Jacksonville Seton Family. Pittsfield Seton Family welcomed Barbara Dalo, Josie Daveau, Beverly Dubiski, Peg Dunlop, Edna Kuliga, Jodi Poole and Joanne Stechmann with song and a reception. Linda Aronckes is taking an active interest in Greensburg B Seton Family; *welcome Linda!*



Jacksonville Seton Family enjoying the sunny south!

Celebration Article

Celebration is a publication of the Sisters of Charity that is distributed to their “partners in the work of charity.” Seton Family has been invited to participate in the spring 2017 issue of *Celebration* with an article about Seton Family and its value to members. Groups are encouraged to reflect on key questions that hone in on the value of Seton Family in their lives. The spring 2016 issue of the Seton Family Newsletter featured two Seton Family groups reflecting on these questions. Members’ thoughts will surely be valuable in helping our “partners” understand what Seton Family is all about. We hope to be able to include thoughts from all Seton Family groups in the *Celebration* article. **Contributions of all groups are needed by Dec. 18.** Responses from individuals, as well as groups, are eagerly accepted. Just send them to Sister Edie at estrong@scsh.org. Thanks for helping the world (or at least the *Celebration* readership!) learn about Seton Family.

