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5005 S. WOLF ROAD WESTERN SPRINGS 60558
708–246–4404
WWW.STJOHNOFTHECROSS.ORG
Fr. Dowdle

Dear Parishioners,

The Boston bombings, as with so many other terrorist acts, have once again numbed our ability to comprehend. We just don’t, and even can’t, understand why a person would commit such harm, especially on innocents. The desire to hold the guilty parties accountable, the righteous anger that calls for punishment of the guilty and the instinct to defend ourselves can all build to an overwhelming urgency to strike back, even to the point of executing the perpetrators.

A parishioner asked me during the week what the Church’s teaching is on the death penalty. I thought it a timely question that was also probably on other people’s minds as well. Below is some information from the US Catholic Conference of Bishop’s (USCCB) website:

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<th>What is the Catholic Church’s position on the use of the death penalty?</th>
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<td>At the heart of Catholic teaching on the death penalty is the belief that “Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end…” (Catechism, No. 2258).</td>
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Regarding the death penalty, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

Assuming that the guilty party's identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor.

If, however, non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people's safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means, as these are more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and more in conformity with the dignity of the human person.

Today, in fact, as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm—without definitively taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself—the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity "are very rare, if not practically non-existent" (#2267).

Catholic teaching says that the situations in which the death penalty can be used are “rare, if not practically non-existent.” Wouldn’t cases of heinous crimes, such as 9/11, be examples of the “rare” cases?

The test of whether the death penalty can be used is whether society has alternative ways to protect itself, not how terrible the crime was. Life in prison without parole provides a non-lethal alternative to the death penalty. We can’t know whether God has a purpose for a person’s life, even one who has committed a terrible crime and must spend his or her life behind bars.

Does life in prison without parole really work or are those convicted sometimes released?

Life in prison without parole means that the convicted person is not eligible for parole and cannot be released.

I understand that in the past innocent people were sentenced to death, but now that DNA is available, isn’t this avoidable?

DNA evidence only exists in about 5-10% of criminal cases (10-15% of death penalty cases). Where it is available, it is still subject to contamination and human error. The risk of an erroneous conviction is still significant.

This can be a pretty tough teaching when anger is red hot and we feel impotent to respond decisively. Another way of saying what I quoted above is that the power to give life and the power to take life belongs to God alone. It certainly does not belong to the state, or any government, or any other authority in this world. One of the challenges of belonging to a church that claims teaching authority, as Roman Catholics do, is consistency in that teaching. (Not all churches claim to have a teaching authority to instruct their members on what to believe. Quakers, Congregationalists, Eastern religions and most Protestant denominations do not claim teaching authority because it cannot be justified by the authority of the Bible. This is a huge topic that cannot adequately be covered in a bulletin article, but if it is also not properly understood it makes any other points difficult to understand. I’ll assume this is not a major point of departure for parishioners reading this.)

So to be consistent you cannot say that the state does not have power over life in the womb (i.e., legalized abortions) but does have power over life when a crime is committed (i.e., imposing a death penalty). This is part of the philosophical basis for why the church teaches the immorality of artificial birth control. It is all about who is making the decisions, who is in charge. Is it God or is it me? (To which many might also reply who is paying the bills and who is changing the diapers. Ah, the challenge of conscious formation!)

We weep, we grieve, we recoil, we resist, we defy when a terrorist act is committed against us. (We are Boston!) But we cannot become terrorists ourselves in response to terrorism by assuming we have the authority to decide who lives and who dies.

Come, Holy Spirit!

Fr. David
Reflecting on Living the Gospel

Jesus’ new commandment is “As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.” The nature of our love as disciples is specific, singular, incomparable: we are to love to the extent and in the manner Jesus loved. Our love is to be the self-sacrificing love of Jesus. It is this kind of love which brings Jesus glory. It is this kind of love which brings God glory. It is this kind of love which enables us to share in that same glory.

We are able to love as Jesus did only because of the power and grace which come from our first being loved by God. God transforms us into those who love as the divine Son loved. On our own we cannot love as Jesus did. The power of the resurrection is that Jesus’ risen life now pulses within us. It is this life which gives us the ability to live Jesus’ new commandment of love. Our “paschal transformation” is our passing from keeping the old commandment to keeping the new, from loving as ourselves to loving as Jesus did, from dying to the old self-centered, sinful self to rising to a new life in Christ. What is “new” in our paschal love is that now our love is like divine love. What is “new” in our paschal living is that now our very identity is that of the risen Christ. The “new” measure of love is Jesus. He has been raised to glory and lives forever. So will we by loving in this way! By our own self-sacrificing love, we are the presence of the risen Christ for others. Christian living is, bottom line, to love as Jesus loved, to be the risen Christ for others. By loving as Jesus did, we are transformed, and so is all the world. And this newness will last forever.

Closing Prayers

May we grow in our love for one another and by our love give God greater glory.

Our Father . . .

For Reflection:

· The extent to which Jesus’ love for me motivates my love for others is . . .
· I experience sharing in God’s glory when . . .

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Readings for the Week

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<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
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<th>6th Sunday of Easter</th>
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Richard Rohr

Luke’s Gospel is the most broad-minded and the
most forgiving of all four Gospels. Every chance he
gets, Luke has Jesus forgiving people, right up to the
thief on the cross and the prayer for his persecutors.
Luke is quite ready to see God as generous, gratuitous,
and merciful. Mercy and inclusivity—Jesus’ ministry to
outcasts, to gentiles, to the poor—are emphasized a
great deal in Luke. In this approach, Luke’s sacred text
is also called the gospel of women. Far more than any
other evangelist, Luke brings women into Jesus’ life
and shows Jesus’ unique way of relating to women. He
wants to make Jesus available to the forgotten and
diminished, and women usually were.

Luke’s Gospel has also been called the Gospel of
absolute renunciation. For Luke, to be a disciple one
has to let go of everything—not just money or other
external idols, but inner idols and ego concerns as well.
Luke advocates radically new social patterns of
relationship. His is an upside-down gospel: “The first
will be last and the last will be first” (Luke 13:30). Luke
uses every story he can to show that what impresses
people does not impress God, that people who think
they are at the top are often, in God’s eyes, at the
bottom; and that people who think they are at the
bottom are, in God’s eyes, often at the top.

Adapted from The Good News According to Luke: Spiritual Reflections.

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**This Week at SJC**

**Monday, April 29**
- 10:30 a.m. Step 11 Christian Meditation
- 1:00 p.m. Spiritual Director Committee
- 2:30 p.m. Eucharistic Adoration
- 2:30 p.m. Spiritual Journaling
- 7:00 p.m. Promise Team Meeting

**Tuesday, April 30**
- 9:30 a.m. Focus on Sunday Scriptures Group
- 12:30 p.m. Day of Preparation, School
- 1:30 p.m. Sr. Josephine Scripture Group
- 3:00 p.m. Tuesdays with Mary Rosary Group
- 3:30 p.m. Girl Scouts
- 7:30 p.m. Boy Scouts

**Wednesday, May 1**
- 9:30 p.m. Bible Study
- 2:00 p.m. Christian Meditation
- 7:30 p.m. Christian Meditation

**Thursday, May 2, Flower Sale**
- 1:30 p.m. Creed Study
- 2:15 p.m. Market Day Pick-up
- 3:30 p.m. Girl Scouts
- 6:30 p.m. Seasons of Hope
- 7:00 p.m. Baptism Prep Meeting
- 7:00 p.m. Creed Study

**Friday, May 3**
- 9:00 a.m. Mom’s Club

**Saturday, May 4**
- 7:00 a.m. Christian Meditation
- 11:00 a.m. First Holy Communion
- 2:00 p.m. First Holy Communion

**Sunday, May 5**
- 10:00 a.m. Crossroads Advisory Meetings
- 5:00 p.m. Play Dinner

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**Invitation to Become a Minister of Care**

Do you feel moved by the words of the Gospel that
invites us to bring Christ to the sick and elderly at their
homes and in hospitals?

Training for new Ministers of Care will be held on four
evenings in May at the Carmelite Spiritual Center in
Darien. The dates are May 7, 9, 14, and 16 from 7:00
p.m. until 9:30 p.m. If you are interested in becoming a
Minister please email or call Fr. Filbert to attend this
training. Pre-registration is necessary. SJC will cover
the cost of your training. 708-246-4404 x120 or
fngwila@stjohnofthecross.org

**Session I:** Introduction to the theology of Pastoral Ministry to
the sick

**Session II:** Pastoral and Practical Aspects of Ministry of Care

**Session III:** Theology of Aging, Death & Dying

**Session IV:** Theological, Pastoral and Practical Aspects of Prayer
and Eucharistic Ministry

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**Church Women United**

May Friendship Day - May 3

9:30 a.m Bible Study and 10:30 program—The theme is Swinging Wide the Doors of Hospitality

There is an optional luncheon after the program. The cost is $7 and reservations are requested.

First United Methodist Church
4300 Howard Ave, Western Springs
Contact Carolyn Grela 630-662-0517 for reservations.
Elections for the St. John of the Cross Parish Advisory Council, School Board and Youth Catechesis Council will be held the weekend of May 18-19 before and after all Masses. Ballots will be available at the entrances to church. Please affirm the following parishioners who have submitted applications for election to these Consultative Bodies.

2013 Parish Advisory Council At-Large Parishioner Candidates
There are two At Large Parishioner positions open on the Parish Advisory Council. The two positions are for two year terms.

The Parish Advisory Council (PAC) meets three times a year to support implementation of the Parish Vision and Mission Statement. The Council serves to assist, represent and discern parish needs as an advisor to the Pastor. The PAC also fosters communication among parish staff, volunteer leaders and parishioners. Council members include the Pastor, Associate Pastors, Parish Deacons, Parish Ministerial Staff, representatives from active Ministerial Committees, the Archdiocesan Parish Council Representative, four elected at-large parishioners and appointed Apostle parishioners.

I moved into the parish 9 1/2 years ago from Laguna Niguel, California and am married to Tim (will be 20 years May 1st…!!!). Sean is a sophomore at Benet Academy, Elise (8th), Luke (6th) and Kevin (3rd) all at SJC parish school.

Graduated from John Adams High School, South Bend, IN and earned a BA in Sociology from St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN. I was a 4 year member of the St. Mary's Tennis Team and was inducted into the school's Athletic Hall of Fame in 2011.

I'm interested in becoming a member of the SJC PAC to serve the parish in a new way and to continue to help build, enrich, and sustain a vibrant St John of the Cross Community.

In past, I have been a committee member of the former Christian Parenting/Mother's Breakfast Club, Social Welfare Co-Chair on the Women's Club Board, Co-Chair of the Annual Women's Club Garage Sale, helped implement the Tuesdays With Mary Rosary Group and am a recent team member that helped plan the Matthew Kelly Rediscover Catholicism Book Seminar and Live Speaking Engagement. Currently, I am a Eucharist Minister and Parent Association Coordinator for the SJC Parish School.

Before having children, I worked in Skilled Nursing Facilities in California helping the elderly. After having held a few sales positions within the past 3 years, I currently devote my time volunteering in various ways for the non-profit organization Open Heart Magic and am a Coordinator for Open Heart Magic's Charity Running Team. Open Heart Magic has volunteer magicians who visit and provide magic at the bedsides of hospitalized sick children in 9 Chicago area hospitals.

Marie Gerken

Brian and his wife Kathleen have been parishioners at St. John of the Cross for thirteen years. They have four children: Bridget, a sophomore at Nazareth Academy; Michael, a seventh grader at McClure Jr. High; Mary Clare a sixth grader at St. John of the Cross; and Margaret, a second grader at St. John of the Cross. Brian and his wife have been volunteers with various school/parish activities and are currently in their second stint as home group leaders for Crossroads. Brian looks forward to the opportunity to serve the parish community on the Parish Council, if elected.

Brian King
There are three candidates for the School Advisory Board. Each will serve a three year term.

The purpose of the School Advisory Board is to develop, formulate, and adopt policies which govern the operation of the school enabling it to reach its goals; in collaboration with the Pastor, to hire and evaluate the Principal; to review and advise on the annual budget and to determine sources of funding for the school; to provide counsel and advice on the vision of the school; and collaborate in the implementation of the school’s three to five year plan.

Mike grew up in New York City and attended Archbishop Molloy (Marist) High School, class of 1990. He went to Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut and graduated with honors in 1994. He started working for MetLife after graduation as a member of the Management Associate Program in New York City.

Mike moved to Washington, DC in 1995 where he spent almost ten years as an Account Executive with MetLife. He met his wife Katie in DC and they got married there in 2001. In 2004 Mike was appointed Regional Director in the Philadelphia area where he spent nearly 5 years.

In 2008 Mike was asked to assume the position of Regional Vice President of the North Region Sales. This position is responsible for leading the profitable growth of this $1B business, including a broad portfolio of Group Life, Dental, Disability, Voluntary Benefits, Worksite and Executive Benefits.

As the RVP for North Region, Mike has P&L responsibility for the business and leads the sales and account management teams across the North to maximize sales opportunities and to leverage the availability of a vast brokerage and consultant communities that serves this marketplace.

Mike and Katie chose Western Springs as their hometown when moving to the Chicagoland area in November 2008 because of the family values that were evident in the people they met and the clear community associated with St. John of the Cross Parish and School.

Mike and Katie have four children: Grace (10), Finn (7), Aidan (6) and Declan (1). He enjoys coaching the kid’s soccer and baseball teams, as well as fishing and golfing.

When we decided to move to the suburbs to raise our family, one of our most important priorities was to find a thriving parish and excellent school. Both my husband Dan and I are products of Catholic education from grammar school through college. We felt, and continue to feel strongly, that this influenced who we are today. We joined St. John of the Cross in 2009. My children Eileen (8) and Danny (5) attend SJC and Genevieve (2) can't wait to join her siblings next year.

Having grown up in La Grange, I went to St. Francis Xavier, attended St Ignatius College Prep and the University of Dayton, followed by De Paul University for a Masters degree in Education. I believe my background as an educator will enable me to contribute positively to the School Advisory Board's goals. I'd like to help SJC remain a prestigious competitor with other private and public schools in the area. I hope to help the school remain on the cutting edge of education, utilizing all resources available to enhance better learning.

I am interested in joining the School Advisory Board because SJC is an integral part of my family's life. More importantly, SJC is a huge part of my children's future. Now that we have made Western Springs our home, we will be active and enthusiastic members of the SJC community. Serving on the Advisory Board is an exciting first step and I feel lucky to be part of the continual evolution of SJC!
I grew up on the south side of Chicago and graduated from Christ the King School. I then attended St. Ignatius College Prep, followed by the Indiana University Kelley School of Business. I passed the CPA exam in 1994 while employed by Bansley and Kiener, where I worked as an auditor and tax preparer from 1991 through 1997. After that, I took a position at Brandenburg Industrial Service Co. as part of a team of three who developed the front and back end of an Oracle database system for the company’s accounting, estimating, billing and payroll areas. I then took a full-time position as mother of three. As a school parent, I have served as Parent Association Co-Chair and Treasurer. I have been a Grade Parent, Room Parent and Art Appreciation instructor and have assisted with the Book Fair, Teacher Appreciation, Hospitality, Secret Santa Shop, Angel Gift and Catholic Schools Week committees. I helped plan and create a video for use in the school’s 50th Anniversary Celebration. I am serving my last year as a Trustee of the SJC Teacher Recognition Trust (formerly the Endowment Trust) and was its 2012 – 2013 Chairperson. I enjoy being involved at St. John of the Cross Parish School, where my husband Dave’s and my children, Grace, Luke and Danny, attend sixth, fourth and second grade, and would welcome the opportunity to join the School Advisory Board’s ministry of promoting Catholic education.

Laurel Schumm has been a parishioner since 2003, with her husband Eric and children Brendan (11), Ryan (8) and Julia (6).

She looks forward to playing a greater role in the faith formation of parish youth and to building an even greater sense of community among all parishioners. Laurel has been a volunteer Catechist in YC since 2007 and also volunteers in other Western Springs organizations. Laurel earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Speech Communications from Miami University Ohio and a Master of Business Administration degree in Marketing and Business Ethics from Loyola University Chicago. Laurel is currently a Senior Manager of Field Relations for Ronald McDonald House Charities Global (RMHC)/McDonald’s Corporation.
Tony Liotta and his family have been parishioner at St. John of the Cross since moving to the neighborhood six years ago. Tony has helped YC as a volunteer for the past four years. His daughters, Natalie and Ava, are both in the YC program preparing to be confirmed in 2014 and 2015, respectively. Tony attended Benet Academy High School in Lisle and studied communication at Loyola University in Chicago.

M. April Sullivan and her husband, Bryan have been parishioners of St. John for five years. Their children, Fiona (9), Keira (8), and Caroline (6) have attended YC and made many of their sacraments at SJC. April attended Saint Mary's School in Lake Forest, IL, Lake Forest High School, and Saint Mary's College in South Bend, IN and she plans to return to the Nursing profession in the coming months. April has taught YC, as well as other local volunteer positions. She looks forward to this new role and to continuing her and her family's journey in the Catholic Faith.

Angie grew up in Glendale, Arizona and moved to the Chicagoland area in 1998. She resided in London for two years before returning to Hinsdale in 2006. Angie and her husband, Dan, moved to Western Springs and joined St. John of the Cross in December 2011. She has two children: Sydney, 6, and Alex, 5. Angie earned a BSBA and an MBA from DePaul. After working for 16 years at Discover Financial Services, she now is a stay-at-home mom.

Lauren Trifilio has been involved with St. John of the Cross her entire life as she is a graduate of SJC School and a long time resident of Indian Head Park. Her daughter Kate is making her First Communion at St. John's this year and her daughter Megan will attend YC next school year. She is impressed with the Youth Catechesis program and is happy to become more involved with the organization.
Book Drive for Our Lady of Charity School

This weekend concludes the SJC Women's Club Book Drive for Our Lady of Charity Parish in Cicero. Thank you to all of the parishioners who have pledged to donate book titles, and have sent in generous monetary donations. We are off to an amazing start with 220 titles pledged so far! 60 book titles have not yet been claimed, so please stop in the Narthex before or after mass this weekend and choose a title, or drop a donation off at the Parish Center. All books are to be returned to the parish center on or before May 8th.

Questions? Contact Colleen Pabst at 708 246 4014 or mahoney5674@yahoo.com
Moms’ Club
The SJC Parish Moms’ Club is a group of women who meet every Friday from 9:30-11:00 in the Parish Center, providing support, spirituality, and fellowship for one another. This combination of prayer and play group is open to all women in the parish with young children. Please join us!

May 3: Join us for a Mom’s Meeting - babysitting will be provided for the little ones while we engage in some Holy Yoga, thanks to the guidance of Sue Bidstrop.

May 10: We will revisit all things animal! Kids will make animal masks, play animal games, and hear animal stories!

May 17: Get ready for summer! We have some outdoor activities planned, snack, and story time!

May 24: NO MEETING due to the holiday weekend. See you May 31st!

May 31: Moms and kiddos will celebrate with an End of the Year party. Thank you to everyone who made this year such an incredible success!

Please contact Colleen Whittingham at whitting910@yahoo.com with any questions about this group.

Women Golfers May 6—Sept. 30
Women’s nine-hole golf group now organizing to play at the Village Greens of Woodridge. Tee times start at 7:30 a.m. Senior rates available. Call Mary McDonald at 630-654-4323 or Pat Wees at 630-789-1688. Check the website for more information.

“Off the Street Club” Needs Our Help
The club needs a number of items for the summer camp it has for the children: The top of the wish list are gently used or twin sheets, pillow cases & new pillows. Swim goggles Swim suits (new or gently used, toddler—young adult) Mosquito repellent Regular-sized bath towels (New or gently used) Tooth brushes and toothpaste. Please drop off at the Parish Center, back of church, or at the YC office in designated boxes beginning the week of May 1st through May 18th.

Questions, Contact Debbie Pusinelli 708-246-6760 or Pusinelli@sjc.pvt.k12.il.us

Catholic Charities Mother’s Day Collection
Your Mother’s Day gift to Catholic Charities provides food, housing and counseling. It supplies safe, dependable childcare. It makes maternity, adoption and teen parenting programs available. It supports older adults with home-delivered meals, in-home care, and nursing home care. 92 cents of each dollar you give goes directly to help someone in need. Learn more at www.catholiccharities.net.

ICN Networking Meeting
May 2, 7-9 p.m. Join us for a relaxed and casual evening of informational sharing and support on Thursday, May 2, 7-9 p.m. First Baptist Church, 20 North Ashland Avenue (across from the west side of the La Grange Post Office). Please use the Bell Avenue entrance. This program is open to all and there is no cost to attend.

Job Support Workshop, each Tuesday, 7-9 p.m.
First Presbyterian church of La Grange
To learn more go to www.interfaithcareernetwork.org Programs are open to all and there is no fee.
**OPPORTUNITIES for ADULT Volunteers**

Our Youth Ministry offers unique summer opportunities to give teens a better understanding of what it means to love your neighbor.

* Two adults for OLC local trip June 10-14 (daily commute to Cicero, no overnight)
* One adult needed for OLPH trip Aug 8-13 (be a part of their 50th anniversary)

If this is not for you, but you believe you have a gift to help in leading our teens please contact Katie to get information regarding opportunities in the fall!

708-246-4404 or khayes@stjohnofthecross.org

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**CALENDAR EVENTS:**

- **April 28**  Spring Mass 5pm & activities after
- **May 5**  Final Home Group Meetings
- **May 19**  Leaders Meeting 6-8pm
- **June 6**  6:30-8:30pm Work Tour Mtg
- **June 10-14**  OLC local trip
- **June 13**  SJC Battle of the Bands

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**CONFERENCE & WORK TOUR spots are available for all teenagers of our parish!**

pick-up in the Parish Center office or download from our website www.stjohnofthecross.org/crossroads/service

REGISTER ASAP! Openings on trips:
OLC trip June 10-14, ND Vision June 17-21
YLC June 28-30, Habitat July 7-13
OLPH Aug. 8-13, NCYC Nov. 21-24

Initial registrations for the National Catholic Youth Conference are due! Please contact Katie NOW if you are interested in joining this awesome experience from November 21-24.
Past attendee’s descriptions are on the featured section of our website at www.stjohnofthecross.org/crossroads

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Crossroads Battle of the Bands will raise funds to support our summer trips and enjoy musical talents of our teens...to get info or register a band contact us on facebook at sjcbattle

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Crossroads teens & families will host the water and pop stands at our SJC Fest June 27-30. More details will follow so reserve that weekend to share in the fest fun!

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This weekend Crossroads will celebrate our Spring Mass Sunday at 5 p.m.

We plan to highlight our teens and our youth ministry in various liturgical ministries and enjoy some social time after. All teens are welcome!

Many thanks to our team for their inviting of others and planning: Brendan Swinehart, Abby King, Lis Williams, Ann Maney & John White

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As the weather becomes warmer, many of our students spend more time outside after school and on weekends. Mrs. Kysiak organized safety presentations for all of our students. Each grade level learned about different ways to ensure their safety. A Western Springs police officer visited the second, fourth, and eighth graders to speak on bicycle and railroad safety. In addition, the eighth graders also learned about curfew and seatbelt laws. Our first graders learned about “Stranger Danger,” while our sixth grade studied substance awareness. In the technological age in which we live, our third, fifth, and seventh graders spent time in the computer lab discussing internet safety.

This week at SJC
Monday, April 29  All School Liturgy, 9:15 a.m.
Tuesday, April 30  Day of Preparation, 12 – 3 p.m., 2nd grade
Thursday, May 2  1st Communion Practice, 7 p.m.
Saturday, May 4  1st Communion Mass, 11 a.m. & 2 p.m.

Wanted: School Receptionist @ Parish School  
35 Hours a Week/Benefits Eligible
Must be able to multi-task in quick-paced environment, good interpersonal communication, and proficient computer skills. Send cover/resume to Marybeth Wingert at wingert@sjc.pvt.k12.il.us

Registration for 2013-2014 is now OPEN
Please stop by the YC Office to complete your family form:
Sunday from 9:00 am-Noon;
Monday from 8:30 am-7:30 pm
Tuesday-Thursday 8:30-4:00 pm

Thank you to our wonderful YC Volunteers!!
The YC Council invites all the YC volunteers from this year to come join us for lunch
Sunday, April 28th
11:30 am to 1:00 pm
In the Parish Center

Youth Catechesis Office
yc@sjcross.org  * 708-246-6760  * www.stjohnofthecross.org/yc
Sunday during class ~ Monday 8:30 a.m.-7:00 p.m. ~
Tues thru Thurs 8:30 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.
Today, among many of us churchgoers, there is growing-propensity to self-protect rather than risk crucifixion for the world. We are well intentioned in this, but, good intentions notwithstanding, our actions are the opposite of Jesus. He loved the world enough to let himself be crucified rather than self-protect.

We see this propensity for self-protection everywhere inside our churches today, albeit it is not without cause. In most parts of the world, the church is under siege in some fashion, either because of active persecution or simply because it’s being disrespected, unfairly perceived, and unfairly treated. Secularized culture carries inside itself a certain anti-Christian and anti-ecclesial bias and many church-people feel that this bias is the last prejudice that is still intellectually acceptable in our culture.

And this isn't simple paranoia. There's some substance to it. Secular culture has it virtues, but it is also clearly somewhat immature and grandiose in its relationship to its Judeo-Christian heritage. Not unlike an adolescent feeling his own strength for the first time, it can be overly critical and bitterly unfair to its own parentage. Adolescents are often very hard on their parents and secular culture is often very hard on its Judeo-Christian heritage.

Given this fact, I can understand why so many church leaders and concerned church members today are becoming more and more defensive. However, while I understand the instinct behind this, I cannot agree with the response, namely, our propensity to circle the wagons, batten down the hatches, and see our culture as an enemy against which we need to protect ourselves rather than as the world that Jesus died for and which we are called to love and save. Why is self-protection wrong, given all the reasons that seem to call for it?

What's wrong with our propensity to self-protect is that it's the exact opposite of what Jesus did. We see this everywhere in the Gospels. Jesus' disciples were forever trying to protect him from various groups whom they deemed unworthy of his presence and Jesus was forever clear that he didn't need or want to be protected: "Let them come to me!" was one of his mantras.

Moreover, and more importantly, his disciples were also trying to protect him against persons and things they deemed as a threat to him. Thus they tried to talk him out of accepting his crucifixion and, indeed, at the time of his arrest, tried to protect him through violent resistance, the sword. As he was being arrested, they asked him: Should we use force to protect you? Should we strike with the sword? Sadly, they didn't wait for his answer and Peter, trying to protect him, did strike with the sword, cutting off the ear of one of the men arresting Jesus.

What was Jesus' response to this effort at protection? We have his words: No more of this! But we don't have the tone of those words. Were they spoken in anger, as sharp reprimand? Were they spoken in frustration, recognizing that Peter, the rock, the future pope, had so badly misunderstood his message? Or, were they spoken in that sad tone a mother uses when she tells her children to stop fighting even as the resignation in her voice betrays the fact that she knows they never will? Whatever the tone, the message is clear: His first followers didn't understand one of the central things about their master: Jesus had spent his entire ministry healing people, including healing diseased ears so that people might hear again, and on his last night on earth the leader of his apostles cuts off the ear of someone in an attempt to protect him.

The lesson is in the irony: Jesus' healing of ears had revealed his longing for dialogue and Peter's severing of an ear had revealed his itch to cut off dialogue. Jesus' whole person and message had incarnated and preached vulnerability and radical acceptance of crucifixion rather than self-protection and his followers, at the first show of hostility, had responded with violence and self-protection.

That lesson shouldn't be lost: Everything about Jesus speaks of vulnerability rather than self-protection. He was born in a manger, a feeding trough, a place where animals come to eat, and he ends up on a table, "flesh for the life of the world", to be eaten up by the world; the first words out of his mouth call for metanoia, the opposite of paranoia; and in the end he gives himself over to crucifixion rather than to self-protection. That was Jesus' response to a world that grossly misunderstood him and violently mistreated him. He opened is arms in vulnerability rather than closed his fists in self-defense.

And in that's how, ideally, we should respond to the world when it's unfair to us. Unlike Peter, who instinctually struck with the sword without remembering Jesus' message, we shouldn't let an outside threat erase what was so central to Jesus' person and teaching and respond in a manner antithetical to the Gospel, hostility for hostility, immaturity for immaturity.
In April, 2013, we welcomed the following children into the Christian community through the sacrament of Baptism.

May we remember your light today when we see the radiant sun,
   a burning candle, or a shining lamp.
Jesus, our light, we praise and thank you.
Shine on us forever.

John 12:46

Baptism Preparation Meeting
Thursday, May 2

The Baptism preparation meeting this month will be held Thursday evening, at 7 p.m. in the Parish Center. Godparents as well as new babies are most welcome to attend with parents. Please call the Parish Center if you are coming or if you have any questions.
trying to get in touch with us? More info is on our website: www.stjohnofthecross.org

fr. david p. dowdle pastor ddowdle@stjohnofthecross.org
fr. filbert f. ngwila associate pastor fngwila@stjohnofthecross.org
john schopp deacon john.schopp@newhemispheres.com
bill bright outreach bbright@stjohnofthecross.org
janet caschetta director of youth catechesis jcascchetta@stjohnofthecross.org
jim clauer worship jclauer@stjohnofthecross.org
kathleen gorman school principal gorman@sjc.pvt.k12.il.us
katie hayes crossroads high school khayes@stjohnofthecross.org
jessica koch music jkoch@stjohnofthecross.org
mj martin operations mjmartin@stjohnofthecross.org
elizabeth russell-jones welcome erussell-jones@stjohnofthecross.org

mighty god, in whom we know the power of redemption, you stand among us in the shadows of our time. as we move through every sorrow and trial of this life, uphold us with knowledge of the final morning when, in the glorious presence of your risen son, we will share in his resurrection, redeemed and restored to the fullness of life and forever freed to be your people. amen.
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