

Third Sunday of Advent

December 16, 2007

Those whom the LORD has ransomed will return and enter Zion singing, crowned with everlasting joy.

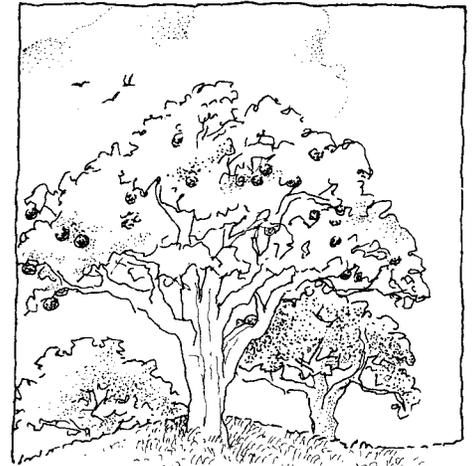
-Isaiah 35:10a

A SEASON OF HOPE

Today we can bask in the imagery that the Mass readings offer us. In particular, Isaiah's vision of a parched land that blooms with abundant flowers holds a message for each of us. Too often we are just like that parched land. We can allow ourselves to become absorbed in the waves of consumerism that grip so many. We look for fulfillment in the things that money can buy. Unfortunately, this leaves us like parched land, thirsting for something that money can't buy. This holy season has much to offer to quench our thirsts. In a word, this season offers hope. We are told that those who are ransomed by God will know joy and gladness. For them, sorrow and mourning will be no more. Let us place our hope in these promises.

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Be patient until the coming of the Lord

Please remember the following in your prayers:

Michelle Degmetich	Wendy Semon	Margaret Vandergrift	Kay De Prima
Art & Rosie Velasco	Larry & Ann Davis	Marcia Garcia	Bonnie Thibault
Till Faugh	Paul Ruel	Ken Maraccini	Lorraine Da Rose
Nancy Bird	Judy Rogers	Robert Bataglia	Elaine Stepp
David J. Brown	Nancy Barnes	Bill Smith	Bob Nute
Agnes Lynch	Bill Mc Carrick	Pam Gestner	Jeanine Robb
Hanna Voelker	Bob Hess	Daran	Elaine Stepp
Bob Wagner	Vorraine DaRosa	Rose Hassel	

'Higher Ground' Coffee on sale after all Morning Masses this Sunday.

Support Fair Trade by purchasing fine chocolate, and teas!

Readings for the Week

Monday: Gn 49:2, 8-10; Mt 1:1-17
 Tuesday: Jer 23:5-8; Mt 1:18-25
 Wednesday: Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a; Lk 1:5-25
 Thursday: Is 7:10-14; Lk 1:26-38
 Friday: Sg 2:8-14 or Zep 3:14-18a; Lk 1:39-45
 Saturday: 1 Sm 1:24-28; Lk 1:46-56
 Sunday: Is 7:10-14; Ps 24; Rom 1:1-7; Mt 1:18-24



Question of the Week:

Reading I: Isaiah 35: 1-6a, 10
Reading II: James 5:7-10
Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

What is there in this promise from the Prophet Isaiah that gives you hope?



How have you seen this promise fulfilled in Christ?

Open Call for Christmas Singers

Help make the 10:30 Mass on Christmas Day more festive by joining Alynn and Michele with your voices or instruments. Young and old are invited and you do not need to have experience. We will be singing familiar Christmas carols and acclamations. We will hold one singers' rehearsal on Sunday, December 23rd from 1:30 to 3:30 PM in the church. Interested instrumentalists should call Michele to arrange for an additional rehearsal. 872-4553 (afternoon is best). For any questions, please call Michele at the same number or e-mail, michele@rustyzipper.com.

Missal reading for December 16th is located on page 30.

Weekly Calendar

Sunday, December 16

Third Sunday of Advent
Gift Collection for Children, mothers and others
Coffee and Donuts, Liturgy Board
Second Collection: Retirement Fund for Religious



Monday, December 17

9:30am Directory Meeting, small hall
3:00pm Christmas Children's Choir, church
5:30pm K.O.C. Monday Night Football, main hall
7:00pm Midnight Mass Choir, Church
7:00pm St. John's in Chico Penance Service

Tuesday, December 18

1:00pm Psalms Spiritual meeting, small conf. room
5:00pm Prayer for Peace Candlelight Vigil, front lawn

Wednesday, December 19

Noon Hot Lunch, main hall
9:30am Directory meeting, small hall
9:30am Mothers and Others, small conf. room
1:00pm 49+ singles, main hall
3:30pm Parish Penance Service, church
7:00pm Joyful Noise Music Practice, church
7:00pm Breath of the Spirit Prayer Group, library

Thursday, December 20

9:15am Legion of Mary, small conf. room
9:15am Scripture Class, small hall
Christmas Basket Distribution, garage
7:00pm Midnight Mass Choir, church
7:00pm Parish Penance Service, church
NO Scripture Class due to penance service
7:00pm RCIA Inquiry, small conf. room

Friday, December 21

9:30am Directory meeting, small hall
9:30am Intercessory Prayer Group, small conf. room
10:30-Noon Table of Plenty Food Distribution, garage
3:00pm Children's Choir Rehearsal, church

Saturday, December 22

Winter Begins
Individual Confessions 3:00pm-4:30pm



Sunday, December 23

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Coffee and Donuts, KOC

Make Way for the Lord Scripture Classes with pastor Foppiano will meet this week, December 20th, in the morning only. The evening session will be cancelled as we participate in the community penance service.

The class will then take weeks off and will return on January 17th, with both classes resuming at the established times.

Thank You to Mothers & Others, Knights of Columbus, Youth Ministry and All Involved, for a Wonderful Christmas Carnival!

We owe great thanks to Mothers and Others, the Knights, the Youth Group, Greg Kidder, Santa Claus, the entire staff and many volunteers who jumped in to help with our 5th Annual Christmas Carnival. This year's was one of the best yet with many non-parishioners joining us for a few hours of Christmas spirit and fun! There were tons of kids in attendance with their families and others who just came to join the fun. It is a great tradition. Thank you all who helped, attended, or supported this event. We can't wait to do it again next year! God bless you all!

A Great Advent Season!

This Advent season has been truly memorable with the Fret Not choir, Boutique and Bake Sale, Christmas carnival, decorated landscaping, well planned liturgies and a beautiful church. The great charity demonstrated by your support of the Christmas basket program the purchase of gifts for kids of these families, the Wednesday Lunch program and Table of Plenty; has also been a great blessing to the parish and the community. There are many volunteers making all of these events possible. Thank you to all! The Kingdom of God is visible and active at St. Thomas More.



Sacrament of Reconciliation

This coming week we have the opportunity to come together for the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the main community service this Wednesday at 3:30 pm and a second one on Thursday at 7:00 pm. Meanwhile, we have begun running out of time due to the number of people seeking this Sacrament on Saturday afternoon. Beginning this week, on Saturday, confessions will begin a half hour earlier, at 3:00 pm, to help handle this increased traffic.



We hope to have more problems of increased participation in the Sacraments. What a wonderful gift!

Note that **confessions will not be offered on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day**. Please make use of the other scheduled times noted above or call for a private meeting.

Thank you everyone for the great activity in the parish!

Father Steven Foppiano

Second Collection

The Second Collection this Sunday is for retired Religious. This is to help those members of Religious Orders who once worked teaching, preaching, or otherwise working for as little as \$2.00 per day. Some of these orders are struggling with the costs of an aging membership and numbers retiring.

Next week we will have a second collection for those who wish to help purchase flowers for the Church during Christmas. These donations help us enjoy great beauty as we celebrate God's gift of His Son.

If you participate in a second collection, please make it in addition to your regular support of your parish as the work here continues every day and there remains much to do in our own community.

Definitions:

Diocesan Priest Bishops and Priests: The normal structure of the Church consists of the bishops, priests and deacons who work for a particular diocese. In our Church, authority flows from the Pope to the bishops, and then to the priests and deacons. The bishops represent the Apostles and the Pope holds the Chair (authority) of Peter.



Priests receive their authority from the bishop and work in those places the bishop cannot be due to the size of the diocese. Deacons also receive their authority from the bishop but instead of acting in place of the bishop, are called to help the bishop and his representatives.

These receive their compensation from the parish or diocese. They usually receive a retirement package from the diocese but are then responsible to provide for their own retirement much as in the secular world.

Religious Bishops, Priests, Brothers and Sisters:

The structure of Religious Orders is an exception to the normal structure of the Church but is also a very large and important one. A Religious Order is typically created by the Pope for a specific need (their charism). These orders cut across diocesan lines. Each order is self contained with its own leadership. Sometimes that leader is a bishop as well. Orders must have the permission of a territory's bishop to work within a diocese but diocesan bishops cannot interfere with the workings of the order itself.

Many of these orders work within a diocese under contract with the diocesan bishop or various parishes. In the past, they sometimes worked for very little. Unlike diocesan personnel, a religious order member does not receive a pension. Instead, their order is to provide for them in retirement. Members of orders usually take a vow of poverty and cannot own anything, making them all the more dependent on the order itself for their needs



Note: There are some orders which are established by individual dioceses. They are few in number but there are several in the U.S. In this case the order usually remains within that diocese for their service but could minister to other locations if they were granted permission by the area's bishop.

A Religious Priest as a Bishop? Some Religious Priests do become bishops, either to run their own order or to be appointed to head a diocese. In such cases, these bishops must temporarily be relieved of their vow of obedience to the order as they must now be obedient directly to the Pope and, if they are made head of a diocese, must put the order's needs secondary to the diocese they head. At the end of service in a diocese or as the head of the order, they regain their vow of obedience and rejoin the regular membership.

An Order Priest gave us the Pope's White Vestments:

The tradition of the Pope being dressed in white began with the pope being from the Dominican order. Dominicans wear white as part of their habit. Once the Dominican, Benedict I became Pope, that color was adapted as the Pope's traditional garb.

Back to the Virtues!

The philosopher Aristotle developed the virtues with an understanding that virtues hold us between cowardness and rashness. With Aristotle it is virtue that guides our actions towards the good of all. St. Thomas built on this idea but he maintains that human kind is in fact blessed to be in the image of God, and is elevated to the highest of all forms, besides God. Even the angels are sent to serve humankind who, in the Resurrection, ascends to an even higher plane than these servants of God.



Virtues are those values which enable us to live out our blessed position in creation. God has reached out to us and has called us to His heavenly kingdom. He even joins us as a man, giving human nature the greatest gift of all; sharing our existence so we may come to share in His eternal life. Virtues are the values that bring us to live out this reality. They turn us away from animalistic tendencies, self serving values and destructive actions towards all that is Holy and Divine.

For Thomas Aquinas the soul is the natural existence of us all and it is the soul that must be developed and protected. The body is not evil and, in fact, is also a gift from God, but it is often the body which can lead us astray if we are overly devoted to its desires. It is through the body that we experience love but it is also the body that can draw us to give in to lust. Worldly things that make us physically comfortable can draw us away from people and non-tangible values that draw us towards love and unity with God.

By practicing virtues we develop a conscience that draws itself towards the Good of the world and the Good that exists eternally in God. Virtues help us to not be overwhelmed with self importance and help us to see the truth, that we are part of something much larger than our individual being. Virtues help us to avoid short term pleasure that end in long term suffering, and guide us to understand the values that last forever and the Good that exists within us. These Morale Virtues avoid extremes and seek out right reason and divine guidance. Reason, guided by divine principle, is the center of all virtuous activity. Virtues are the right reasoned choices that lead us to fulfill the divine will.

Virtues develop good habits through good actions. We find virtuous actions to accomplish, small or large, and eventually we come to understand, deep within, that these actions are good not only for others but for ourselves. We do not make major changes all at once. Instead, we ask God's help in prayer and each day we search for those actions that would reflect well on our true nature and which bring out the Grace of God that exists within us. Virtues reveal that we are made in the image of God!

Faith Hope and Charity are called theological virtues as they bring us to understand the existence of God and His divine nature. They reflect the Faith, Hope, and Charity that are divine characteristics that are also found within human kind. When we live out these virtues we find peace because we are in congruence with our true nature and are on the path to companionship with God.

The above theological virtues are found in the human soul through our human nature which is reflective of God. The cardinal virtues of Justice, Prudence, Temperance and Fortitude are divine attributes which are infused to the human nature by divine intervention. We call on God for these gifts but must also practice them and develop good habits that encourage these virtues so as to avoid imbalance.

If we carry out acts of justice but have not developed that virtue within ourselves, we can be doing good acts without it being an act of love. Development of virtues allows us to not only accept the right behavior of good moral actions but also makes the desire of such behavior part of who we are. Then we no longer have to struggle with decisions but are called to do the right thing by the conscience we have formed in light of God's revelation.

In many ways, the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity lead us to the moral virtues of Justice, Prudence, Temperance and Fortitude. Through these three virtues found within our soul, we are led to the moral virtues that reflect God's will. With the practice of these virtues we are led to understand the Goodness of God's Kingdom and seek to make that kingdom present wherever we are. The Kingdom of God is within us. It will come to its fullness when

Lord returns but now is found in us through our virtuous behavior.

Understanding what virtues are and the good they bring is a good thing. How do we apply this to our lives? Begin now by living out the virtue of Faith. God has known you since before you were born and has loved you always. Now have faith that this love will lead you to the good life, a life from, for and destined to God.

Have Hope that God has plans for you. Things will work out and with your choice to cooperate God will make wonderful things happen within you. Prayers will be answered. They may not be answered in the way we think but you will come to find out that God has always been for and with you. When we "discover" God, we are really just recognizing the presence that has never left us and the love that will never abandon us.

Be Charitable by being kind towards others. Chose not to take offense at somebody and you free yourself to live out the love granted us by God. We can learn tolerance and to not make someone else's bad behavior or attitude a problem with our own behavior or attitude. Why not be kind to someone you hardly know or reach out to someone you might usually avoid. Share your gifts and God will give you ever more in the gift of your heart.

Forgiveness is a charity that is as much a gift to our selves as it is a gift to the one forgiven. Forgiveness allows us to let go of anger that clouds our outlook and to embrace the love God shares with each of us. When we forgive we also hope to take the place of anger. Maybe we can live the life of love called to by our Lord Jesus Christ.

I will write more on the virtues next week but, for now, let's each find some small way today to be virtuous. Find the good that can be done. Once done, give thanks to God for that ability and then look for another. Large changes begin with small steps. The happiness we seek is not to be found in another. It is already granted by God and is to be found within ourselves.

Father Steven Foppiano

Advent Tree Gifts

The tree in the vestibule has ornaments with the names of children of those families who will receive Christmas baskets this year. The names go up as the applications are turned in. Buying a gift for one of these children is a wonderful gift of charity that brings out the love of God for us all, but especially for the innocent ones. Thank you to the many who have already answered this need and to those who will do so this weekend. The deadline for return of the gifts is next Sunday.

Continued on page 5

Church Gifts

The needs of these children come first and we will make sure that all receive a gift but, for the first time in several years we have put up some ornaments for those who wish to make a gift to the parish. They include additional round tables and padded chairs for the hall. We have done very well in replacing the old long tables and metal chairs but have not fully completed the project. We also have displayed the very special gift of communion cups.

A year ago, the rite (rules of procedures for the priest) changed for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In the Diocese of Sacramento we used to consecrate the wine into the Blood of Christ and then pour it into the communion cups. Now, under the continued direction of our bishop, we pour wine into the cups and the consecration occurs within them. This avoids the possibility of spilling the Precious Blood as we pour before consecration -- while it remains wine.

The use of glass or crystal, while beautiful, is only marginally acceptable to the requirements of the rite and most parishes have begun to switch over to the required natural metal of "precious nature" that is called for by the rites. These new cups have a gold finish. In our history we never had this problem as the people of the pews did not receive in both species. Until Vatican II only the priest consumed the precious blood.

The gifted communion cups will replace the glass cups currently in use. They will have a gold finish but will still be smaller and less elegant than the chalice. The cost is \$200 each and we would like to have six as larger holiday Masses often call for an increase in the number of ministers. The ciborium plates which hold the hosts were replaced four years ago. This move continues to place an emphasis on the central nature and importance of the Eucharist in our Christian lives.

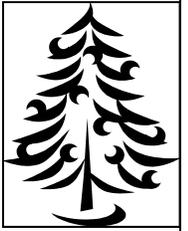
We thank you for considering the generous gesture of making one of these gifts to the parish.

Music Schedule

Sat.	Dec.15	5pm	Essila
Sun.	Dec.16	8am	Joyful Noise
		10:30am	Marvelous Comrades
		5pm	Roebucks
Sat.	Dec. 22	5pm	Celestial Strings
Sun.	Dec. 23	8am	Zooba
		10:30am	Joyful Noise
		5pm	Roebucks

Gifts for Kids

The tags on the tree in the vestibule are for children whose families will be receiving Christmas food baskets from our parish. If you wish to provide a gift for a child in need, choose a tag off the tree. Please buy a present with an approximate value of \$10 (This will ensure that children of the same family do not receive disproportionate gifts). Return the unwrapped gift, with the tag attached, to the box in the vestibule no later than December 16th. Thank you for helping to make a child's Christmas brighter.



Sacrificial Donations

December 8-9, 2007

Sunday Collections	\$	3,902.00
Immaculate Conception	\$	1,071.00
Christmas Food Baskets	\$	2,693.00
Table of Plenty	\$	146.00
Youth Group	\$	110.00
Building Maintenance	\$	129.00
	\$	8,051.00

Thank you for your generosity!

Daily Mass Intentions

December 15 - 23, 2007

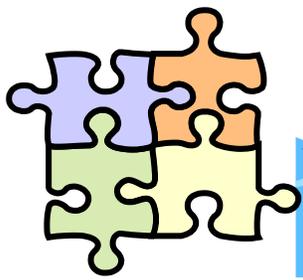
Sat.	8:30am	Intentions of Peter Sales
	5:00pm	Guy Saiani †
Sun.	8:00am	James Godwin †
	10:30am	Ruth Bienz †
	5:00pm	People of St. Thomas More
Mon.	8:30am	Intentions of Bill Mc Carrick
Tue.	8:30am	Schuyler Haynes Binstock †
		Toby Leung †
Wed.	8:30am	Cena †
Thur.	8:30am	Margarita Chiarmonete †
Fri.	8:30am	Helen Hazard †
Sat.	8:30am	Teresa Lapp †
	5:00pm	Joe Caruana †
Sun.	8:00am	Mirna Munoz †
	10:30am	People of St. Thomas More
	5:00pm	Edward Landry †

† Denotes deceased †

Advent Candlelight Prayer Vigil for Peace

Please join us for a candlelight , prayer vigil for world peace this Tuesday evening, December 18th. We will gather at 5 PM on the church lawn area along Elliott Rd. Please bring your own candle. What better way to ready ourselves for the coming of the Prince of Peace than spending some time in public prayer and witness for peace in our war torn world.





"Be strong, fear not! Here is your God..."

ROCK At-A-Glance

Sunday, 16 December
3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
 10:30am — Children's Liturgy
 2:30pm — The ROCK
 Grades 9-12
 5pm — ROCK...the Liturgy!

Monday, 17 December
 6:30pm — The ROCK
 Grades 7-12

Tuesday, 18 December
RCIC — Time Change!!!
 5:30-6:30pm

Wednesday, 19 December
 3:30-4:45 **LAST DAY OF FAITH FORMATION!!!**
ADVENT/CHRISTMAS BREAK UNTIL 1/16/08!!!

Thursday, 20 December
 6:30pm — The ROCK
 Grades 6-8

Friday, 21 December
 4:59pm — **MAGIS**

Sunday, 23 December
4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
 10:30am — Children's Liturgy
 2:30pm — The ROCK
 Grades 9-12
 5pm — ROCK...the Liturgy!

Monday, 24 December
NO ROCK MEETING!
 4:30pm — Prelude to Vigil
 5:00pm — Family Vigil Mass
 11:30pm —
 Prelude to Mass at Midnight
 Tuesday, 25 December
 Nativity of the Lord
 12:00am — Midnight Mass
 8am — Christmas Mass
 10:30am — Christmas Mass

 Got questions about Youth Ministry at St. Thomas More?
 Contact Colleen at 877.4554
colleen@stmparadise.com

Random Thoughts...REJOICE! Today is Gaudate Sunday! We are liturgically reminded by the Advent Candle for this week as well as by Fr. Steven's vestments that we are better than halfway through the Season of Advent — and therefore we rejoice that Jesus is almost here! We do however see a tempered difference in tone at today's readings — as we find John the Baptist in jail. He has actively chosen death over not telling the truth. And I'd imagine that he's feeling both proud and hopeful that he has done a good job — but also maybe a little nervous. The Jewish people were seeking a Messiah of the God in the Old Testament. They thought the Messiah was going to be a war hero -- someone who would empower them to conquer the Romans, the world superpower at the time. One of the reasons Jesus was persecuted by the scribes and Pharisees was because he preached peace, love, and service to the poor and outcast. This guy wasn't going to win any wars. Not any physical ones, anyway. The Jews are unaware at the time of John the Baptist that Jesus in fact is part of the bigger picture -- and would be the conqueror of the biggest war of all time -- the war between sin and salvation. John the Baptist was one of these Jews. John likely thought he was the one who would prepare the way of the Lord who would bring the Jews to power. And really — he fits the profile for the messenger coming before the Messiah. Desert. Camel-hair. Locusts. Shouting and baptizing people. If John lived today — he'd be one of those guys wearing a sandwich board that reads "REPENT! The End is Near!" And he would still be correct — the end IS near. The end of sin and damnation. John the Baptist operated on two tenets -- his Jewish background and love for his people -- and his personal call and vocation from God. Yet imagine his surprise when his followers return with Jesus' answer to the question, "Are you the one who is to come?" Jesus doesn't exactly say yes. Jesus doesn't tell John that he's coming to bust him out of jail. He doesn't even really get a "well done my good and faithful servant." Jesus leaves it to the disciples of John -- much as he leaves it to us -- to recognize Him themselves. What is most interesting perhaps is that Jesus leaves John to live out the conclusion of his vocation -- to die for his faith. Rejoice. Whoopee. How depressing. But Jesus leaves John also with a cryptic message. "And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me." How we long for that message in our own personal prisons of this world! And how we try to live it out! And whether we ever get that little clue from Jesus is unimportant. God has a plan. If we follow Jesus — we get to God. If we get to God — the plan will follow us. We are called to keep preaching the message that John leaves behind. We are called to be heralds of the Gospel. Am I the voice crying out in the wilderness? Am I the reed that is swayed by the wind? How do I passionately and outwardly rejoice at Jesus' words to me in my life?

QUESTION OF THE WEEK: 16 DECEMBER

Theme: God's kingdom is close - it is Jesus.

First Reading: Isaiah 35: 1-6a, 10
 Second Reading: James 5: 7-10
 Gospel: Matthew 11: 2-11

Adults: What is there in this promise from the Prophet Isaiah that gives you hope? How have you seen this promise fulfilled in Christ?

Young People: John was a prophet who prepared the people for Jesus' coming. How can you be a prophet this week to prepare friends, family, and strangers for the coming of Jesus at Christmas?

Children: Why is Christmas such a time of happiness for people?



CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS TO OUR 5TH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CARNIVAL TEAM!!!

Mothers & Others
 Knights of Columbus
 STM Staff
 & Santa Claus!



And also a special thanks to our student team who once again was honored to get another chance to be

part of serving our community at this year's Christmas Carnival! We had fun!!!



- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Kiaya Mangan | Alysa Sullivan |
| Melissa Cook | Savanna Stephens |
| Nick Cook | Whitney Massae |
| Alysha Sanchez | Tim Muñiz |
| Lauryn Gregorio | Krystle Young |
| Catherine Burton | Chris Young |
| Hazen Tisoni | Greg Muñiz |
| Caesar Vega | Marissa Sanchez |
| Daniel Essila | Kayla Cranford |
| | & Mark Hess |



...with a very extra special thanks to our

Advent Mass Coordinator Kiaya Mangan and our Student Director for the Christmas Carnival Mark Hess! YOU ROCK!!!

FAITH FORMATION STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

19 December — Faith Formation
 21 December — Choir Rehearsal
 24 December — 5pm Family Vigil Mass
 We are still seeking more Faith Formation team members - remember - we're a flock!
 We continue to pray that those still discerning their call will continue to come forward. Our community honors our personal Baptismal promises as well as those of the families and children in our community when we do more than contribute - when we really commit - to developing our faith community by being heralds of the Gospel! Please contact Colleen to find out more about becoming part of a fun, diverse, dedicated, and hardworking ministry! 877-4454! Thx!

