Our yearly spiritual journey into the desert

By Cara Koenig
The Sooner Catholic

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 5, and continues until Holy Saturday, April 19. During the 40-day fast of Lent, we recall Jesus’ journey into the desert after his baptism by John in the Jordan River.

Scripture tells us, “Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil” (Mt 4:1). There, “he fasted for forty days and forty nights” (Mt 4:2).

If we’re honest with ourselves, the thought of going into a desert, a wasteland, a barren and abandoned place – to be tempted, no less – is uncomfortable, but imitating Jesus by observing a season of penitence and baptismal renewal is a deep and powerful way to respond to our baptismal call.

“By taking an active approach to the three traditional pillars of Lenten observance – prayer, fasting and almsgiving – we recognize that to be evangelists, we must first be evangelized ourselves,” the USCCB website on Lent states.

“The key to fruitful observance of these practices is to recognize their link to baptismal renewal. We are called not just to abstain from sin during Lent, but to true conversion of our hearts and minds as followers of Christ. We recall those waters in which we were baptized into Christ’s death, died to sin and evil, and began new life in Christ,” the website continues.

Yet another way to observe this season is to go to Confession. We are called to not only avoid sin but also to be cleansed of it through Penance during Lent (and other times of the year). Christ became man to forgive us of our sins and save us so we can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. We encounter His mercy and forgiveness in a particular way in the confessional.

“No matter what we do, it is important to do something concrete and specific and intentional,” Archbishop Paul Coakley said in his annual Lenten video message, available at www.archokc.org.

“What we embrace as a Lenten discipline ought not to draw the focus on ourselves but make us more mindful of our brothers and sisters in need,” he added.

Pope Francis, too, has emphasized communion with the poor as a key to observing Lent.

“May this Lenten season find the whole Church ready to bear witness to all those who live in material, moral and spiritual destitution the Gospel message of the merciful love of God our Father, who is ready to embrace everyone in Christ,” the pope said in his Lenten message, available at www.vatican.va.

“We can do this in the extent that we imitate Christ who became poor and enriched us by his poverty,” the pope continued.

“Lent is a fitting time for self-de-sire; we would do well to ask ourselves what we can give up in order to help and enrich others by our own poverty. Let us not forget that real poverty hurts: no self-denial is real without this dimension of penance. I distrust a charity that costs nothing and does not hurt.”

Cara Koenig is photographer and special projects editor for the Sooner Catholic.

Seven practical ways to observe Lent

- Say a small prayer for the poor every time the phone rings
- Put coins in a Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl every time you text a friend
- Fast from the Internet or social media one day each week
- Use the time you’re stuck in traffic as a time in silence with God
- Make your office space, carpool lane or pew a gossip free zone
- Subscribe to a daily devotional or Scripture reading
- Truly listen and meditate on the Stations of the Cross each Friday

Regulations shape Lenten observance

The Lenten obligation, as determined for Catholics in the United States by our bishops, requires that fasting be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The law of abstinence from meat is to be observed on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent.

Who must fast?
All Catholics who are between the ages of 18 and 59. The obligation ceases when one begins his/her 60th year.

Who must abstain?
All Catholics who are 14 years and older.

What does fasting mean?
The observance of fasting means that those obliged may take only one full meal on the day of fast. Two lighter meals (not equal to another full meal) are permitted if necessary to maintain strength according to one’s needs. Eating solid foods between meals is not permitted.

What does abstinence mean?
The law of abstinence forbids the eating of meat; Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence from meat. Other voluntary acts of self-denial are encouraged during this penitential season.

Can anyone be dispensed or excused from fast and/or abstinence?
Individuals with just cause may be dispensed by a priest. Those who are ill or have a similar serious reason are excused from the observance of fast and abstinence. Catholics are reminded that they should not lightly excuse themselves from this obligation and if they do so, they then need to compensate with prayer and other voluntary acts of penance.
Rebuilding lives in the wake of Super-typhoon Hayyan

Since joining the board of Catholic Relief Services twice as a member of the CRS Advisory Council, Archbishop Coakley has seen the need for strong advocacy for the CRS project sites around the world. It has been an extraordi-

narily rewarding to witness the good work being done by our friends in Catholic Relief Services, the agency of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

The archdiocese has been a strong supporter of the work of Catholic Relief Services, and as a member of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the United States, CRS is the official humanitarian development agency of the Catholic Church.

In my visit early in February to the Philippines, it was the fifth visit to the site of the typhoon, the fifth visit since the disaster occurred. The CRS site is one of the largest in the country, and the archdiocese has been a key partner in the response. The agency is working with local CRS staff, local Church of the Philippines, and other partners to assist with disaster relief and recovery. While CRS has done a fantastic job, there is still much work to be done. The archdiocese is one of the many churches and organizations that have been involved in the response, and we are committed to continuing our support.

The archdiocese has provided financial assistance to the local CRS staff, and we have also provided resources to assist with the recovery effort. We are committed to continuing our support and are working closely with the local CRS staff to ensure that our assistance is as effective as possible.

The archdiocese has also provided financial assistance to other organizations working in the region, including the Red Cross and other relief organizations. We are committed to continuing our support and are working closely with these organizations to ensure that our assistance is as effective as possible.

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The power of one disciple demonstrated

Moving beyond the Papal States mentality of legal establishment: the Church no longer seeks to foster this growth. In the midst of that dark suffering, he would become a deacon, a link to God’s call and God’s plan.

Thirdly, we learn the power of one disciple to change the world. In 1949, Father Jan Tyranowski excused himself from youth ministry to study with the influential Polish Jesuit John of the Cross. In the spirituality of Saint John, Tyranowski found the wisdom that John taught him: the importance of silence, solitude and contemplation. In the midst of suffering, he opened up by grace.

When Lolek was 20, his widowed father died, leaving him alone in the world. In the midst of that dark time, the power of one disciple demonstrated the riches of his spiritual life. That was the time that he discovered the riches of his spiritual life. That was the time that he discovered the riches of his spiritual life.

In May of 41, 11 priests at the Salerno parish in Krakow were arrested and murdered by the Nazi’s. Lolek, being one of the 11 priests, had devoted tremendous energy to youth ministry, and the sudden vacuum of leadership threatened to destroy the work. There was no one else in the parish, a tailor who had sometimes volunteered with the youth, but otherwise lived a private and unknown life. In the midst of crisis, Jan Tyranowski stepped up to help with youth ministry. In this one action, he became a model of grace and faith to the whole Church.

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The Sooner Catholic

Catholic Action Club serves the Hispanic community through fun and fellowship

By Brianna Osborne

A devotion to the Catholic faith, a love of traditional Hispanic culture, language and language-speaking catechists from across the diocese who speak other languages.

The archdiocesan Office of Religious Education team of Sadlier Inc. for their sponsorship,” said Madre Marmolejo at (405) 605-4355.

On March 9, 2014, a special collection for the Black and Indian Mission Office will take place throughout the archdiocese.

“Sembraones de a Fe” is sponsored by the archdiocesan Office of Religious Education, the focus on the formation of catechists is one of the main ways in which the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City is called to “Go Make Disciples.” They understand the importance of events like this in the development and education of catechists in the archdiocese.
Edmond parish begins perpetual Eucharistic adoration
By Brianna Osborne

On Feby. 1, Saint John the Baptist Catholic Church in Edmond began perpetual Eucharistic adoration.

In the past, pastors and parishioners might hope to increase the hours of adoration, but the timing was not right to secure enough participants to support adoration. Two major factors contributed to the success of this particular adoration: starting a new adoration, according to Cindy Case, one of the coordinators of Eucharistic adoration for Saint John’s.

First, Father Ray Ackerman began his pastoral assignment at Saint John’s and he immediately began the process of starting a perpetual adoration. Second, for the 2013 Lenten season, Saint John’s invited Father Larry Richards, a renowned Catholic apologist and author of logical and spiritual topics. Father Richards enthusiastically promoted perpetual Eucharistic adoration: “If my little parish can do it, then a large parish this size can!”

It took a lot of hours and a lot of perfect timing," said Case. “It’s been a real parish event, with some many steps forward." Case also acknowledged the leadership and support of her fellow coordinator, Velma Brundt, to the whole effort coming to fruition.

Case has been passionate about Eucharistic adoration for many years, ever since a revision to the Catholic Liturgy of the Hours. “It really harkens back to this truly Jesus Christ,” she said. “I was so deeply immersed in the church and the eucharist and the adoration that I couldn’t get away from the water.”

Case is grateful when she was told that they could finally begin perpetual adoration.

“I just want to rejoice, weep and thank God,” said Case. “It’s a wonderful gift to me, and it’s a wonderful gift to the children of God from Holy Trinity Presbytery.”

The lifestyle of adoration can also expand to the rest of the world. “We are educating our children, caring for our sick, and spreading Christ’s good news without the unique vocation of religious women. They bring sensitivity and concern to the Church’s mission to the world, a world that can be dark and hard to penetrate with the gentle force of Christ witnessed to so courageously by women religious.”

Case said that it wouldn’t have happened without the support of Father Ackerman and Father John Peter Swartwout. “They supported me from the beginning, so they were so grateful for their priesthood.”

Benediction takes place Friday afternoons at 5 p.m. Adorers are still needed; those interested may contact Cindy Case at (405) 357-9550 or Velma Brundt at (405) 475-6398.

In addition, Case also said they are reaching out to immigrants.

“Sisters were often push- ing forward on the front lines of social change, rolling up their sleeves and doing the hard work. It is hard to make it happen — praying, petitioning, pointing, reaching out to many needed hospitals, schools and non-profits, reaching out to immigrants.”

* For more information about the new adoration, please visit https://www2.stkate.edu/ncsw/.
Thousands brave freezing temperatures to attend 23rd annual Rose Day at the State Capital

By Cara Koenig
The Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY — Despite freezing temperatures and an ominous weather report for more snow, thousands still attended the 23rd annual Rose Day at the State Capital Feb. 5.

The halls were filled with young and old alike taking roses to their legislative representatives, asking for them to support pro-life bills and thanking those who are pro-life.

Numerous pro-life members of the state House and Senate, Lt. Gov. Todd Lamb and Gov. Mary Fallin all appeared at the program.

"My thanks is to you," Lt. Gov. Lamb said to the pro-life legislators present. "To you on the chamber floor, in the gallery, in the overleaves room, and to those you represent, who, for so many years, so many decades, come to the State Capital when it was extremely unlikely that one piece of pro-life legislation would be passed. You came anyway. You encouraged and you prayed and you helped men and women and now we pass pro-life legislation and have made Oklahoma a very safe place to be in the womb. And you still come and you still hold men and women accountable. Thank you. And thank you to our heavenly Father for the difference faith has made in Oklahoma for the unborn."

"My thanks is to you," said Gov. Fallin. "Four years ago, though, God called me to give her true testimony. "What will people think? How will they look at me? I am the women's ministry leader at church. You will not be able to use me anymore," Sullivan thought at the time.

Her true testimony: Her senior year in high school she got pregnant and had an abortion. She told no one. That decision haunted her for the rest of her life.

"People will tell you it's a simple fix to make it all go away. But that is a lie from the devil himself," said Sullivan.

"The reason I am telling my story now is to show people that this one decision you make when you are scared and confused does not just go away when you've done with it," she added.

Sullivan found an organization called Save One. Through it, she "found the forgiveness I'd been longing for."

Russell Moore, Ph.D., president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, delivered the keynote address.

"It is easier for us to think, 41 years after Roe v. Wade, that the culture of death we live in is normal. This is not normal," said Moore.

He continued: "There is a consciousness awakening, there is a movement afoot, a younger and younger movement of people of all faith and backgrounds in this country, saying women deserve better than a culture of death. Children deserve better than a culture of death. Families deserve better than a culture of death. We can do better than that."

Cara Koenig is the photographer and special projects editor for the Sooner Catholic.
Catholic Foundation to offer college scholarships to an estimated 75 students

The Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma awards college scholarships to an estimated 75 students from throughout the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. The scholarship recipients are determined based on financial need, academic achievement and service to church and community. The recipient must be a full-time student and a permanent resident of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. Scholarships are renewed for all recipients for four years of undergraduate study so long as the student maintains a 3.0 cumulative GPA. Scholarship Committee Chair Golden S. Davis, a key financier of the project, noted, “The Catholic Foundation is offering Catholic college students a $1,500 per year scholarship for up to four years of undergraduate study. This is a $6,000 value.” Catholic students have received scholarships from the Foundation for more than 40 years. The Foundation is proud of its record of giving back to the parishes throughout the Archdiocese in support of this wonderful education program.

While all scholarships are awarded regard- less of the applicant’s ethnic background, the Foundation encourages all Catholic university students to apply. In addition to scholarship awards to Catholic students attending Catholic universities, the Catholic Foundation also awards scholarships to students attending non-Catholic universities.

Hollywood awards spotlight distance between Catholic, secular worldviews

By Rebekah Scupersdale

In 1975, Steven Spielberg’s “Jaws” was described in Variety magazine as “a film of consummate suspense, tension and terror.” Today, online reviewers call it “laughable” and “a technical backup.”

More than modern films, “Jaws” has renewed the power of suggestion; it took nearly 70 minutes for the shark to appear on screen. The film, today’s moviegoers imagine, is a 3-D illusion, as if the shark were in the audience, surfeiting the viewer with sex and violence.

Sadly, but not surprisingly, these films often were among the most prestigious and highest-grossing films of the year. Today, these awards are still viewed by many as a celebration of the acts of a real-life Jordan Belfort, a man convicted of investment fraud.

The movie celebrates the remissless Belfort’s lavish lifestyle filled with drugs, cash and sex. As the audience witnesses the last with an exclamation of horror, cues itself to equip itself for dialogue with those who see no problems with such displays of intense debauchery and nudity.

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Reconstruyendo vidas después del super-tifón Haiyan

Neta de Theolocical Catholic Relief Services, CRS por su siglas en inglés, se traduce como Servicios de Asistencia Católicos, una agencia internacional que trabaja mundialmente por la causas de los Católicos de los Estados Unidos.

Desde mi incorporación a la Junta de Catholic Relief Services hace dos años he hecho tres visitas en las que he presenciado las devastadoras repercusiones del tifón en el mundo. Ha sido una bêneción extraordinaria experimentar el resultado de la buena labor que se realiza en todo el mundo en nombre de los católicos en el catolicismo en el mundo. Durante las últimas visitas hemos visitado a los refugiados en diversas regiones del mundo y desafortunadamente en todas ellas hemos visto que son víctimas de conflictos. El objetivo de la visita y el trabajo de la CRS es responder a urgencias humanitarias.

La principal misa en español de la Asociación de Padre Rother será el 27 de febrero para las catequistas hispanohablantes, y lo expresó el padre M. Price Oswalt. 200 personas asistieron para poder asistir. Para más información, llame a la oficina de Ministerio de Oklahoma City. 200 personas asistieron para poder asistir. Para más información, llame a la oficina de Ministerio de Oklahoma City. 200 personas asistieron para poder asistir. Para más información, llame a la oficina de Ministerio de Oklahoma City. 200 personas asistieron para poder asistir.
“Welcome the stranger”
The Mount’s Mercy Ambassador Program enables students, families to experience the universality of the Church

By Sarah Cooper
For the Sooner Catholic

As high schools across the United States of America try to focus on a more global education for their students, Mount Saint Mary High School’s Mercy Ambassador Program gives students a tangible approach to experience new cultures.

The Mercy Ambassador Program is an international student exchange program between Mount Saint Mary’s High School in Oklahoma City, Okla., and El Colegio Santa Ethnea, a high school sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy in Bella Vista, Argentina. This year’s exchange program will benefit the lives of 10 Argentinean high school students as well as seven students from Mount Saint Mary.

"By hosting another Mercy Ambassador, students are able to see firsthand what life is like for someone of their age in a different country. They are able to see Spanish, as a language, in action, not just in the classroom," said Mercy Ambassador Program coordinator and Spanish teacher Beth Navejas. "They greatly benefit and enjoy the interaction with each other’s families, not just the Mercy Ambassadors themselves."

Through an intensive selection process, students from each high school are paired up and served as each other’s host family. The students from El Colegio Santa Ethnea attend school at Mount Saint Mary during the month of February while the Oklahoman students travel to Argentina the following June. To make the opportunity more accessible, the only cost of the program is a small application fee and the cost of the airline ticket.

Argentinean exchange student Luis Giovacchini chose to participate in the exchange program to travel the world and practice his English skills in a situation independent from his family.

"Going to school here is great because it is one of the best ways to realize how life is here, in the United States," said Giovacchini. "You can see the most common customs of people, how the educational system is, and the typical daily food. What I most like being able to do are the same things I do in Argentina, like playing sports and having fun with my friends."

Mercedes Mosquera’s host family had an opportunity to exhibit Mercy hospitality and be a caring host to Mosquera when she came down with the flu soon after arriving in Oklahoma. Mosquera quickly regained her strength and was able to join her peers back at school.

"Despite the flu, we have really enjoyed our experience as a host family. It is interesting to see Mercedez’s perspective of how we live," said Kacee Glass, host mother of Mosquera. "Things are very different in Argentina and my four children are benefiting from having their eyes open to new culture. My own daughter is thrilled to travel to Argentina this summer for her portion of the exchange program."

The Mercy Ambassador program also has academic advantages for the Mount Saint Mary students who travel to Argentina.

"Mount Saint Mary’s students receive school credit for participating in the program and it is something that really stands out on resumes and college applications," added Navejas. "Not many high school students show the maturity to be able to travel abroad at their age."

After such a positive experience with hosting an exchange student, Dillon Manley, host brother of Giovacchini, cannot wait to travel to Argentina this summer.

"For me, Argentina will be a chance to experience the many cultural differences between our two societies and allow me to have a chance to bring back some of the lessons I learn," said Manley. Sarah Cooper is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.

Madison Rubino, Naomi Matsumoto, Rachel Bornstein and Chloe Glass: Our 4 MSM girl hosts getting ready to get their faces painted at a Thunder game.


Chloe Glass and Mercedes (Mechi) Mosquera

Dillon Manley and his Argentinean Brother: Luis Giovacchini: Dillon and Luis eating with the rest of the Mercy Ambassadors for their first meal in the States, Waffle House.