

May – July
2007



The St. Vincent Voice

A PUBLICATION OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CATHOLIC CHURCH

WE CATHOLICS ARE CALLED TO CONVERSION ...BUT WE MUST BEGIN WITHIN

DO YOU HEAR GOD'S VOICE?

In this issue of the St. Vincent Voice, we will talk a great deal about the idea of evangelization.

However, as the old saying goes, "You can't give what you don't have." You must continually strive for your own personal conversion, so as to deepen your own faith as you share it with others. Our parish offers many opportunities to develop your understanding of God and the Church. Although many of the Faith Formation programs that began in the fall are nearly complete, you can always call the parish office to learn about new programs starting soon. Some of these programs will be highlighted in this Newsletter issue. Many of our own parishioners have participated, as well as those from nearby parishes. Programs

"...This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a contrite heart, drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God, who loved us first."

include Faith Formation (youth through adults), J-Zone, Jeff Cavin's Bible Studies, RCIA, and many more. The programs are designed to provide knowledge, as well as discussion opportunities for the partici-

pants, in order to promote growth in their relationships with God. The result is naturally transforming, if we are listening with an open heart.

Jesus calls us to conversion. Conversion in this sense refers to an interior change of heart turning towards God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that Baptism is the first conversion. "It is by faith in the Gospel and by Baptism that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life" (CCC 1427). The second conversion,

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ST. VINCENT'S EVANGELIZATION EFFORT

One Parishioner Shares Her Experience of the "Evangelization Initiative"

"But I don't want to be an evangelist," was my first reaction to the announcement of the evangelization effort in our parish which was promoted by the Archdiocese. **I had fears that I would be expected to give testimony to crowds of people or to organize old-fashioned tent revivals. Instead, I have found these meetings during Lent for the past three years to be faith-forming times.** This year we participated in discussion and study of people who, by doing ordinary things, lived their faith and led others to a more Christ centered life, and by those actions lived out their vocations. These stories of real people gave insight to possibilities to live as Jesus did in our modern day lives.

One of our members talked about her disorientation after the death of her husband, and on a road trip said in prayer, "God,

what am I supposed to do now, join a convent? You have 150 miles to talk to me." He did not answer on her schedule, however, as she shared with us what she has tried to do since then, we all saw how she was being led to serve others in Jesus. Our evangelization study calls this being "nudged by Jesus" to discern what living in Him means in our lives.

Some of the small ways our group felt we can, "Let them know we are Christians by our love," are the following:

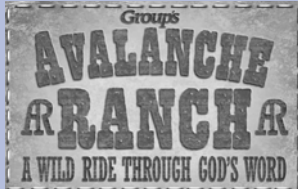
- Participating in social justice efforts such as supplying food shelves, visiting elderly, checking on our neighbors in time of need.
- Displaying a crucifix or holy items in a place of honor in our homes.

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FAMILY CORNER

Have you signed up your children to attend or assist as volunteers at St. Vincent's Vacation Bible School (VBS) this summer?

It will be June 18-22, from 9 am – 12 noon.



This year's theme is "Avalanche Ranch – A Wild Ride Through God's word!" It's an exciting celebration of Jesus' love filled with amazing Bible adventures, unforgettable songs, memory-making crafts, and life-changing missions. Children four years old to entering 5th grade NEXT fall are invited to participate. Cost is \$25 per child due at registration.



VBS would not happen without the support of our volunteers.

Volunteers are welcomed and encouraged to sign up in the church office. Sixth graders (NEXT year) to adults are needed. The nursery will be open to watch children too young to participate while you volunteer. If you have any questions, or to see if there are still openings, please call Michelle Lingen at 763-773-4567.

For more information on the program, visit:

www.group.com/vbs/2007/AvalancheRanchnu/index.asp

ASK SR. NORA

Our Special Guest Writer this Issue Answers a Parishioner Question



Q. How can we best evangelize to some family members who no longer practice their faith?

A. First of all, let us establish and say right out front that this is not a new problem. I suspect that the mothers of both St. Francis of Assisi and Ignatius Loyola had their moments of frustrations with their worldly and distracted sons. My grandmother had plenty of anxiety with my very own father. **The practice of two fundamental virtues, patience and fidelity, is key. Patience as each person travels their personal path to God, and fidelity in our own religious practice.** Talking about a really good homily heard at Mass is better than asking why the individual wasn't there to hear it. Declining an invitation to some (possibly superficial) event in favor of some Church-related activity speaks volumes about values. If the lapsed person is a reader, a gift of a subscription to a good Catholic magazine (like *America*) or a book by a Catholic author might be something to consider. While it may be difficult, not making compromises about your personal practice also says a lot. If your custom is to pray before having a meal, this should be done no matter who is present or where you are. The observance of Lenten practice should be maintained; the power of good example can never be underestimated. Pray for yourself that you discover the words, the gestures, the acts of love that most touch your loved one's heart. Then pray a bit more for the openness of each person to the continuous invitation that God extends to us all to come closer to Him. We have each been gifted with free will. (Oh, how the Creator does trust us!) The question is, "Freedom from?" or, "Freedom for?" We are never *free from* our dependence on God—whether folks choose to admit it or not. We are always *free for* the pursuit of true human happiness. Pray that your children, grandchildren, brothers and sisters will be truly happy.

CATHOLICS CALLED TO CONVERSION

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according to the Catechism, is "an uninterrupted task for the whole Church, who, clasping sinners to her bosom, is at once holy and always in need of purification, and follows constantly the path of penance and renewal. This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a contrite heart, drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God, who loved us first" (CCC 1428). **In layman's terms, this means that conversion is a lifelong process.**

Conversion experiences can be sudden—like that of St. Paul as described in Acts: 9, or they can be gradual like that of St. Francis of Assisi, as described in the book *The Reluctant Saint*, by Donald Spoto. Sudden experiences are more easily recognized because of the dramatic change in a short period of time. Gradual experiences require us to stop and think in order to recognize the smaller changes that have occurred over a longer period of time. **The key changes to look for are**

those resulting in us living out God's will more fully. Key changes also include areas of our lives where we are identifying ourselves in God's terms, instead of human terms. It is interesting to note that conversion does not require a certain social status or IQ. Personally, I find this to be a great relief! In fact, nowhere in the Bible does it ever mention that these things are requirements to obtaining salvation. This is unlike so many human standards of success, which do require social status and advanced academic degrees.

Christian life is transforming. The better we know God, the better we realize who we really are. God is always with us and is always seeking us, but we too must be earnestly seeking God with an open heart. It is comforting to know that for those who are truly seeking God, He can be found.

— *Marci Siers, Pastoral Council Member*

Submit Your Question!

If you have a question, mail it to: **The St. Vincent Voice Editor** at the church, or e-mail it to: editor@saintvdp.org. Please title it, "Ask Father."

EVANGELIZATION INITIATIVE

(continued from page 1)

- Guiding children by modeling moral behavior or teaching them at home or in the faith formation classes.
- Attending funerals and giving support to families in grief by helping with funeral lunches, etc.
- Singing in the choir, serving, lecturing, ushering, distributing Communion at Mass, preparing the altar and cleaning the church.
- Sharing & encouraging each other at Bible study, grief support, book club etc.
- Giving our bosses our best efforts daily.

- Leading our family in prayers.
- Greeting our fellow parishioners as we leave Mass to "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

Evangelization is described by the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis as, "Making Jesus Christ known and loved in our time by choosing to live out the Gospel in every moment." If you feel nudged by Jesus to explore the next evangelization effort, please contact Chuck Pratt at 763-425-2210.

— Rose Kahuke, Pastoral Council Member

MEN SHARING THEIR FAITH

One Bible Study Leader's Experiences with His Fellow Parishioners

Three years ago, St. Vincent's offered a bible study program called "The Bible Timeline." My wife Sheila and I had been looking for a way to study our faith and the Monday night class worked well with our schedules, so we signed up. The format of the program was to watch a DVD presentation that lasted about an hour, and then break into small groups (all men or all women) to discuss the material. Through the 24 sessions of that first study, it was refreshing to have faith discussions with the other men in my group in a relaxed setting. Participation was encouraged but everyone was free to add to the discussion at his or her own discretion.

The next fall the study continued on Monday nights with the Gospel of Matthew and I was asked to be a group leader. All this really entailed was taking attendance and passing out the materials. Most of our group from the first study returned, with the addition of a few new faces. **It is amazing to me how meeting with other men once a week for two hours to discuss your faith can have a very positive effect on everything you do.** Gaining a better understanding of the teachings in the Bible and hearing from other men how they apply them to their lives often gives me the strength to lead a more productive and Christian lifestyle.

At the end of the second session, many in the group did not want to lose that connection over the summer. So, we organized ourselves to meet twice a month and discuss the Sunday Gospels.

Last fall the series continued with study on The Acts of the Apostles. Most of the group had been together now for three years, and we had a couple of much enjoyed additions. It is interesting to notice the differences and similarities of the men in our group. The differences don't seem too important; some are quiet and some are animated, some are older and some are younger, some are members of the parish and some are not. It's our many similarities that make the time together so enjoyable—it's something I look forward to, and try never to miss. **The common thread is that we all are interested in knowing our faith, practicing our faith, sharing our faith, and learning how other men do the same in their daily lives.**

As we get together through the summer months this year, I know I will gain more insight from my friends, the men in our group, about how to conduct myself in our ever-changing world as a Christian man. This is not easy in our society today and I welcome all the help I am given by just getting together with other men of faith for two short hours a week.

— Matt Higgins, Parishioner

Evangelization Prayer

Holy God, fill our hearts with the fire of your love.

Awaken us, Holy Spirit, to witness to the presence of Jesus in every moment of our lives.

Renew us, Lord, so that our homes, parishes, neighborhoods, and world are transformed into your kingdom on earth, where peace and justice reign.

Amen

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

- May 9: Sharing & Caring Hands
- May 13: Mother's Day & Donut Sunday
- May 20: Feast of the Ascension of the Lord
- May 27: Solemnity of Pentecost
- May 28: Memorial Day—Mass at 9 am
- June 3: Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity
- June 6: Last Day of School
- June 10: Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
- June 13: Sharing & Caring Hands
- June 17: Father's Day
- June 18-22: Vacation Bible School
- June 24: Nativity of John the Baptist
- July 4: Independence Day—Mass at 9 am
- Aug. 10-12: Harvest Festival
- Aug. 15: Feast of the Assumption of Mary

An Excerpt from a
Speech on the New
Evangelization by
Joseph Cardinal
Ratzinger (Pope Bene-
dict XVI) in Dec. 2000

"Human life cannot be realized by itself. Our life is an open question, an incomplete project, still to be brought to fruition and realized. Each man's fundamental question is: how will this be realized – becoming man? How does one learn the art of living? Which is the path towards happiness?

To evangelize means: to show this path – to teach the art of living.

At the beginning of His public life Jesus says: I have come to evangelize the poor (Lk 4:18); this means: I have the response to your fundamental question; I will show you the path of life, the path towards happiness – rather: I am that path.

The deepest poverty is the inability of joy, the tediousness of a life considered absurd and contradictory.

This poverty is widespread today, in very different forms in the materially rich as well as the poor countries. The inability of joy presupposes and produces the inability to love, produces jealousy, avarice – all defects that devastate the life of individuals and of the world. This is why we are in need of a new evangelization – if the art of living remains an unknown, nothing else works. But his art is not the object of a science – this art can only be communicated by who has life – He who is the Gospel personified."

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“WHOSE FAITH FORMATION IS THIS?”

One Faith Formation Teacher Learned to Ask This Question

Many Sunday afternoons as I was preparing for my 9th grade religious education class, I wondered if I had made a mistake volunteering as a teacher. It has been 10 years since my husband and I left the classroom, and we have heard the horror stories of how the youth have changed and the parents don't care. Being parents of six adult children has given us some insight into the difficulties that families face in this age of decadent living, and we felt that even though the challenges were tough, many families were being brought up with Christian values. Teaching on Sunday evening meant leaving family activities early, but I was looking forward to sharing my faith with these young people. I had fears that I was too old to relate to teenagers, and frankly, it was sometimes hard for me to answer their questions or defend the rules of the Church. Nevertheless, each time I met with them my own faith grew, and I marveled at their struggles with their own developing morality.

Our 9th grade text uses the Dictionary of the Catholic Church as its main reference, and so I knew the theology represented in the study guide was solid. As the year went on I depended heavily on the background information given for each session to decide where the lesson would go, but I believe the Holy Spirit was there in that room leading the discussion.

As I was reminded at our first class, 9th graders are reluctant to share in class—certainly in the first session, with their peers as witnesses and an unfamiliar teacher. **But by the end of the first evening, students were speaking up as they began to feel comfortable. By the end of the year I was wondering, “Whose faith formation class is this?”**

We had many different levels of moral development in that group, but I learned from each of them. I was reminded how hard it is to be the one who is still trying to decide on a role model, and remembered how hard it is to be the one who has found the way, and needs to speak up for what he or she believes. One of the

students always knew the answers to the history questions, and another was such a good student she couldn't stand to have the class bog down waiting for a volunteer. Once I told a student, “I see your raised hand, but I need to have someone else answer this time.” He just smiled and kept his hand up. Finally, I called on him and he said, “I knew you would call on me because they don't know the answer.”

On the other hand, when another group came to visit us one evening, and our class was doubled up, one of the new young men told me I obviously had no idea what kids were like anymore. As I silently said a quick prayer for him and repressed the urge to reply unkindly, I remembered that feeling when I was a teenager too. In addition, it reaffirmed the value of being a faith formation teacher.

This may be the most important job someone could have. Just think about this for a minute. Young people are giving up their evening to come and participate, even if they are sometimes reluctant to do it. Parents are putting their trust in the program and making the sacrifice to bring their children, and some of them even teach the courses. The parish is expecting that the information the students are learning is accurate and will contribute to their moral growth.

Faith formation teachers may never be told that they made a difference in someone's life, but imagine if there were no parents who brought their children, no students who participated in the program, and no teachers to lead the lesson. I would urge anyone who has the inclination to be a teacher to volunteer, and then let the Holy Spirit direct your preparation for classes and be invited into the classroom with you. **My own feeling is that grandparents are uniquely suited for this position, since they have practiced on their own children and have the wisdom of years.** Perhaps you are ready to find out whose faith formation class it really is.

— Rose Kahuke, Pastoral Council Member

EVANGELIZING IN THE WORKPLACE

An excerpt from the blog: www.LivingCatholicism.com

Produce Fruit Where You're Planted:

It's rare to find a Christian workplace in our post-Christian age. Furthermore, it's easy to imagine that you could be a better person – or a better Christian – if you worked in such a place. However, God has us placed in "the world" so that we might be witnesses to the Truth and bring others to Him. This is difficult to say the least.

In a workplace where it doesn't seem appropriate to even mention God, much less tell a co-worker about Him, how can we function as witnesses? How can we articulate our love of Christ without words, as St. Francis admonishes? **Following are just a few of my ideas on how you can become a better Christian witness in a secular workplace...**

Get the Basics Right: For starters, you won't end up influencing anyone if you are unethical, untruthful, or unkind. You've got to start with the basics and always take the high road. God's commandments do apply in the workplace, just as they apply on Sunday morning. I know this seems simplistic, but it is a basic requirement for being a good Christian witness.

Keep It Clean: By this I mean: no cursing, no going out to strip clubs with your co-workers, no dirty stories, etc. You'd be surprised by how many men who consider themselves Christian still send obscene emails to co-workers or use obscenities in the workplace. Just by refusing to curse, you begin to set yourself apart – others actually notice when you choose to be clean, so it's a great starting point for discussion.

Be a Good Person: The next step is to be a generally good person in the workplace. **Don't get caught up in office gossip or politics. Help others when they need it. Put your family first in the workplace.** I personally don't work on Saturdays or Sundays, which sounds obvious, but there have been several situations where co-workers did work during this time. I work hard, but I also don't stay at the office until late at night. Remember that work is a way to sustain your life, it is not life itself.

Be Joyful at Work: No one respects those who constantly complain or whine about their jobs. Be joyful. Disgruntled workers aren't living out their calling as they should (we are obliged to give a full day's work for a full day's pay). So work diligently and well and be happy about it. A slacker cannot be the example he/she should, so get your job done well. Also, no one wants to emulate a person who is obviously unhappy. Be happy at work!

Use Your Surroundings: One thing that is typically okay in the workplace is hanging up a calendar or pictures, etc. Use this opportunity to be a silent witness: buy a calendar with Scripture verses or pictures of Churches. Add pictures of your family – possibly even in religious settings. These quiet examples get noticed by others even if they don't say anything about them.

When Asked, Be Honest: When you set an example like this, the Holy Spirit will lead others to ask about it. Our job is not to convince others to be Christians or to convict them of their sins. That's God's role alone. Our job is to honestly explain that the reason we're different is because of our Christian faith. We should be able to provide a defense of our faith (apologetics) and explain what we believe and why. In this way you allow others to come to you – your actions attract those seeking more in their lives. And you provide the explanation of how they can be happy and holy as well.

The Fields are Ripe: In our materialistic society, the fields are truly ripe for the harvest. Materialism will never satisfy the need for God's love that all people feel, so those without God are constantly seeking Him, whether they realize it or not. If you choose to act as Christ would in the workplace, you not only become a great employee for your employer, you also provide an example to others of how their lives could be.

Join in the work of the Holy Spirit today and become the productive vine God calls us to be.

God bless,
Jay

WHAT IS "CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS"?

Apologetics is a word derived from the Greek word *apologia*, which means to give a reasoned defense (1 Pet. 3:15). In its Biblical context, apologetics is a branch of Christian theology and philosophy through which the Christian mind expresses itself in the task of evangelism.

Apologetics seeks to provide rational grounds for believing the truth claims of Christianity in whole or in part and to respond to objections raised against the true knowledge of God in whole or in part in the Christian faith (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

The St. Vincent Voice Newsletter Committee

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For information on joining the committee, contact Sr. Nora at 763-425-2210.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In past issues of The St. Vincent Voice, we have used this column to offer ideas on how you can use your gifts to make a difference in the lives of others. This time, we want to offer an idea that can make a big difference in your own life: **find a spiritual discussion or prayer partner (or partners!)**

Everyone, as they experience the lifelong conversion discussed in our first article, will live through a variety of milestones on their spiritual journey. The joys and challenges of raising a child and teaching them the faith, the loss of a loved one, doubts about whether we are fulfilling God's purpose for us... all these times can be clarified, heightened, or better understood with the help of other faithful people.

Each of us should find at least one person with whom we can share our spiritual thoughts. It can be a spouse, child, sibling or a good friend. Perhaps you don't have this person in your life right now—but you can join a group, or seek out a professional spiritual advisor. Once you've found your person or group, schedule regular meetings to discuss these issues. It might happen over the family dinner table, at a restaurant, or at church. The important thing is to seek out your spiritual partner—and then make it a point to have an ongoing spiritual dialogue.

A FATHER'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE PARISH YOUTH GROUPS

Trying to find the right church in which to practice your faith is hard enough, let alone finding one that helps promote the faith in your teenage children.

A few years ago, my wife and I found ourselves in this situation. We were moving back into the area and trying to find a church that not only met our spiritual needs as adults, but helped our children grow

in their faith as well. We had attended Mass at other Catholic churches in the area, but when it came time to look at the Religious Education programs that the churches had to offer, St. Vincent's was our choice. We became members after attending our first Mass here.

We enrolled our preteen and teenage children in the Religious Education program and then became Religious Education instructors ourselves to show them that this was a family learning experience. And even though our children learned about their faith and grew in their faith in this education setting, it wasn't until J-Zone came along that our children really grew!

Our daughter was the first to experience J-Zone. It offered her the opportunity to really get to know her peers, develop some life-long friendships and to grow in her faith through group discussions – all in a non-threatening and fun environment. It was such a great experience for her that she recruited her non-Catholic friends to attend J-Zone with her, because J-Zone is not just for us here at St. Vincent's, it's open to all high school students.

As a parent, it did my heart good to know that she was going somewhere safe and at the same time, developing a personal relationship with God. (A huge bonus that I wish was afforded when I was growing up.) J-Zone also fos-

ters evangelization, which became quite evident to me when my daughter started bringing some of her friends with her that were not St. Vincent's parishioners. She is

now in her second year in college and when she comes home, the friends she likes to get together with, are her J-Zone friends. For us as parents, that does our hearts good!



Our son is a Junior this year in high school and he too has benefited from being in J-Zone. When most boys his age start to lose interest in maintaining their faith, our son has done just the opposite, and we feel it has a lot to do with his interest and participation in J-Zone. We used to kid him that the only reason he wanted to go was to play games. There is a time for that, but he corrected us by saying that he really likes to go and go early, because he can take time personally to go into the sanctuary before J-Zone and pray. He then would attend J-Zone with a prayerful attitude, ready to participate. **He too has made some lifelong friends and is on the correct path in his faith journey.**

If your child is in either Junior or Senior high school and there's a need to foster their relationship with God outside of the classroom, J-Zone could be the answer. I know it was for my kids.

— *Tim Huston, Parishioner*



Fill your car or home with discussion and education about your faith—tune in to these local Christian radio stations!

Relevant Radio: AM 1330
or www.relevantradio.com

KTIS: AM 900 or FM 98.5
or www.ktis.org

EVANGELIZATION: FROM A TEEN'S PERSPECTIVE

Our Teenage Parishioners Share their Challenges and Successes in Sharing their Faith

Recently, a member of the Newsletter committee visited with the Jr. J-Zone and J-Zone youth groups at our parish. We asked the teens to anonymously share their personal stories of success in using everyday opportunities to evangelize to their peers. We also requested that they share some of the challenges they have faced. **Their stories are both disturbing and inspiring. Disturbing because of the prejudice and scorn they've experienced for showing their faith... but inspiring because they do their best to stand strong and proud as Catholics despite the challenges.** What a great group of young people we are blessed to have among the next generation of Catholics!

From our Jr. J-Zone members:

- "I wore a J-Zone shirt to school that had some Catholic symbols and words and things and some kids came up to me and asked me what was I wearing. I said that it is something from my church and they really didn't know what to think. Then some of the person's friends came over and tried to act cool and said, 'Well, church is just weird and boring.' And his friend kinda laughed and walked off and I talked to him later and I said, 'You can think what you want and you can believe what you want, and I respect what you believe. But this is what I believe, so I wish you would respect what I believe.' And after a couple of days, he thought about it and he came up and apologized to me and said he was sorry."
- "I wear a cross, and people ask me about it and then I can tell them why I wear it."
- "I try to get my friends to come to J-Zone."
- "It's difficult that one of my neighborhood friends always thought it was weird that we go to Mass on Sunday. Also, sometimes I am pressured to swear because of other people who swear."

- "It's hard when my friend makes fun of the Catholic faith by saying it's stupid and calling the hosts crackers and all sorts of other things."
- "I was in Science class the other day and a kid was an atheist and saying he doesn't believe in God and I challenged him and basically said, 'Why not?' I also said, 'When you're thankful for something, who do you thank?' I also wear shirts from my mission trips and kids come to me and ask about them."
- "At church, after the Eucharist and after the priest sits down before the Body of Christ gets back to the chapel and everyone sits down, I usually keep kneeling until the Body of Christ gets to the chapel."
- "I go to the extra Masses, not just Sundays, and invite my friends to come with me."
- "I help out my community and some people laugh, but I don't mind. I also help out the students and school. I also respect others."
- "I go to church weekly and I serve at Mass. My family prays the rosary a lot more than some other people, and we pray at restaurants too."
- "I tell people on my bus about God and to believe."
- "I gave up eating the cookies at school for Lent and my friends that aren't Catholic wondered why I was doing that and I told them about it."
- "Before I came to Saint VDP school, I wore a St. Christopher medal to school and someone asked me what that was, and I told them that it was part of my faith and everyone made fun of me. As I went on through the day, people made fun of me, but I just blocked it out and didn't care because that was my faith and no one should make fun of me for it."

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Please give us some feedback on The St. Vincent Voice. We want to create a publication that will serve the needs of our parishioners.

What topics would you like to see addressed in this newsletter?

How can this newsletter most benefit you as a parishioner?

What questions do you have about the Catholic faith that we might address?

Thank you! Please cut out and return this form to: Attn. St. Vincent Voice Editor,
St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, 9100 93rd Avenue North, Brooklyn Park, MN 55445

Or e-mail your feedback to: editor@saintvdp.org

Other comments:



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EVANGELIZATION: FROM A TEEN'S PERSPECTIVE

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- "I once wore a cross necklace to my babysitting class and one of my friends that was Catholic talked to me about it and she really didn't know what it meant. I told her some things about it and she got really interested. Another thing that I did was to help out at Feed My Starving Children and people thought that it was really cool. Another time, some people that were Jewish came up to me and questioned me about my religion and didn't understand. They started to criticize me, and I started to feel really pressured. Then I explained as much as I could and left. They were stunned."
- "I pray in public and wore my Ash Wednesday ashes."
- "I've been made fun of for my Christianity in front of friends because I was the only Catholic/Christian one there. I stood up for Jesus and God."

From our Sr. J-Zone members:

- "One huge success I have had with my faith is that I am able to discuss my beliefs with my friends. It's really important not for me to be judgmental towards my friends who have no religion. It's really great for me to learn new things about others' ideas & beliefs, and at the same time express mine."
- "My faith was challenged today at lunch. A good friend of mine said, 'Oh, my God!' I said, 'Don't use the Lord's name in vain,' and she totally gave me a piece of her mind. I said, 'You may not believe, but I

do.' I then said a prayer for our friendship."

- "Someone on a web site wrote, 'Jesus !@#\$\$' and I got off the Internet after I saw it."
- "Talking about the experiences I've had on Mission trips. I meet new people and they ask what I do for fun, and one of the first things I think of is the trips."
- "I wear a St. Sebastian necklace, and I've had many people approach me asking me what it stands for. I've had people approach me at school (students and teachers) and even at hockey rinks. It feels good to enlighten people with a part of the Catholic faith."
- "I wore a cross to school and my J-Zone shirts to school and out and about."
- "In class I try to treat all people with love and respect and people are attracted to that, which has opened up avenues to share the faith."
- "I have always wanted to live my faith and share it with others so that they can rejoice in the glory of God. But, I have been afraid to wear shirts that have expressed my faith because I have been afraid of being persecuted for my faith. Now, I try to remind myself that God has given me a candle and I need to go and light the world with my candle and I try to do this in whatever way I can. I started with just a cross, and now I know that I have the confidence to live and defend my faith."