

# St. Louis College Ministry

*Keeping you Connected to the Fam*



## Mealtimes, Ministry, & Sacredness

Once a month, the youth ministers of Howard County meet together to plan county-wide events and offer professional support to one another. There are two things I can always count on at these meetings: food and prayer.

In fact, there are two things that I can always count on at just about any youth ministry event: food and prayer.

Food and prayer. Meals and ministry. They go together. And Jesus understood that well. How many times in Scripture is Jesus recorded eating with people? He multiplied the loaves and fish to feed the 5,000 (John 6:1-15), gave us the gift of the Eucharist (a sacramental meal!) at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26-29), and revealed himself in the breaking of the bread to the travelers on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). This past week's Gospel, the parable of the Prodigal Son, is Jesus' response to an accusation from the Pharisees: "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2).

Some of Jesus' most important ministry happens in the context of a meal. We can learn a lot from the way that Jesus reaches out to people. Everyone has to eat and most people eat several times a day. What an abundance of opportunities IN MEALS ALONE for us to reach out to other people!! Meals possess a certain sacredness that enables

### Balance Check List

- \_\_\_\_\_ Enough Sleep
- \_\_\_\_\_ Eating healthily
- \_\_\_\_\_ Exercising 3-4 times a week
- \_\_\_\_\_ Leisure & Rest
- \_\_\_\_\_ Studying Enough for Classes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Time to Pray & Attend Mass
- \_\_\_\_\_ Time for Fun & Friends
- \_\_\_\_\_ Service to Community

We are midway through Lent and Easter is just around the corner!

The story of the Prodigal Son was the Gospel for this past Sunday and it's allll I've had on my mind for the last week and a half. I would love to share some of my reflections about one of the world's favorite stories of mercy.

We are praying for you always!

-The CYM Office

them to be an avenue for connecting with God and others. First, let's look at how we can better respect the sacredness of meals. Then, let's explore how meals can be used for ministry.

To better respect the sacredness of meals, slow down to create and enjoy them. I challenge you to make a plan to prepare a meal, if you don't usually do so. I have found that when I *create* something from scratch, I appreciate it more than when I just purchase something to consume. And ENJOY the meal you create! ONLY eat when eating. It's easy to grab a granola bar on the way to a morning class, to eat dinner from a Tupperware while driving in the car (harder not to get the majority of it on your outfit), to snack while you're working on a paper. If we multitask with our meals, we compromise our ability to enjoy the food we are consuming, to be aware of the amount of food we are consuming, and to use our meals as a social event to connect with others.

Meals can be used in a multitude of ways for ministry. To *minister* means *to tend to the needs of*. Meals can fulfill the physical need of hunger, the intellectual need of conversation, the emotional need of companionship, and the spiritual need of encouragement and support. In college, I ate breakfast with my best friend every Tuesday and Thursday. It was a sacred time for us to catch up during our busy weeks. As an adult, I offer to make dinner for friends from high school that I haven't seen in a while. It's a sacred yet easy, non-awkward way to reconnect to people who are without community. I love to meet up with friends for coffee so that we can encourage each other to keep pressing on when life makes it hard to be a Christian. Sacred moments CAN happen at Dunkin Donuts!

Jesus didn't just eat with *friends*. He ate with sinners. Let's not be afraid to share a meal with someone even if they don't share our Christian beliefs or lifestyles. And if people are hungry,- for food, for conversation, for companionship, for God—they will come, just like the Prodigal Son came home once he found himself without food during the famine. Imagine the hearts God can touch through meals!

# Know your Holy Week!

## AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO

# THE TRIDUUM

BY JONATHAN TEIXEIRA FOR THE FOCUS BLOG



### HOLY THURSDAY

#### WHAT HAPPENED ON THAT DAY



Jesus celebrates the Passover Seder/Last Supper with the Apostles.



"This is the Chalice of my blood... my body"  
"Do this in remembrance of me"  
Jesus institutes the Eucharist.



He washes their feet, showing them what type of leaders they are to be as priests.



"Not my will, but yours be done."  
Jesus suffers the Agony in the Garden, sweating blood in anguish as he prays.



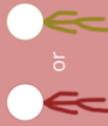
Judas betrays Jesus and hands him over to the authorities. Jesus is arrested.



Jesus is taken away and imprisoned.

### GOOD FRIDAY

#### WHAT HAPPENED ON THAT DAY



Pontius Pilate questions Jesus. He offers the crowd a choice: Jesus or Barabbas?



Jesus is nailed to the cross and left to die.



Jesus is scourged.



He gives his mother Mary to John, and in turn, each of us.



Guards come to break Jesus' legs to speed his death. Already dead, they pierce his side.



Jesus' body is taken down from the cross, prepared for burial, and placed in the tomb.

**"It is finished."**  
Jesus dies.

### EASTER VIGIL

#### WHAT HAPPENED ON THAT DAY\*

\*CELEBRATION OF EASTER SUNDAY EVENTS START THE NIGHT BEFORE



The guards at the tomb report what happened to the chief priests, who pay them off to tell a cover story.



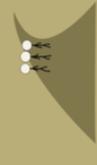
Mary Magdalene sticks around the tomb and encounters Jesus.



Jesus rises from the dead and leaves the tomb.



Peter and John check out the tomb. All they find are the burial cloths.



Jesus walks to Emmaus with two of his disciples. They realize it's him only after breaking bread.



Jesus appears to more disciples, shows them his wounds, gives them power to forgive sins.

Unfortunately, I was not able to share the entire image because the text was too small! However, you can view the whole document if you google "An Illustrated Guide to the Triduum".

# Make Mercy a SPORT

Saints—Pilgrimage—Opening Doors—Reconciliation—Tangible Works



## Would the oldest son have opened the door?

There is a second son in the Prodigal Son parable, the older son who says to his father, "Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends."

The older brother is angry when he sees that the younger brother's return is being celebrated. At first, because of his jealousy, he refuses to participate in the festivities. His feelings are stark in contrast with those of the father.

Someone once asked me, "What would happen if the prodigal son came into contact with the older brother before he met the father?" Wow, what an important question to think about! If the prodigal son had run into the older brother, what would the older brother have done? Would he have welcomed his brother home? Would he have chastised his brother for squandering his father's inheritance? Would he have made fun of him for being completely without funds, housing, or food? Would he, perhaps, have turned his younger brother away completely?

To whom is it easiest for you to relate: the prodigal son, the older brother, or the father? At different times in my life, I have been able to relate to all three. Reading the Gospel this week, I have been reflecting upon whether or not I approach others as the father (welcoming, embracing, celebrating) or as the older son (hostile, jealous, standoffish). As a Church, do you think we are seen to be like the father or the older son? What would it tangibly look like if we welcomed one another at Mass like the father? What would it tangibly look like to run out to people who were hesitant to approach the mercy of God?

## Be Gateways & Not Gate Keepers

I guess we will never know the answer to the question: "What would happen if the prodigal son came into contact with the older brother before he met the father?" Yet, I can only guess that the older brother would have been somewhat of a gate keeper.

Pope Francis has been encouraging us to be "gateways" instead of "gate keepers". That's what opening doors during the Year of Mercy is all about: being a *gateway* like the father and not a *gate keeper* like the older brother. How do we be a gateway? How do we open doors to the Church?

**Character.** Firstly, we can open doors by our character. As I reflect on the Gospel, I find the character of the father both incredible and intriguing. There must have been something about the father's character that made the son confident that the father would take him back. We need to have trusting and forgiving characters like the father. We must trust, that, though people make mistakes, they will return. And when they return, we must forgive them for leaving in the first place. Let's work on having such an understanding relationship with our loved ones that they are completely confident that they can come back to us even after they wander astray.

**Going out.** The father in the parable does not wait for the son to come all the way back. As soon as the father sees the son in the distance, the father runs to the son, embraces him, and kisses him. *Maybe an open door is less of an invitation to enter the Church and more of a way for us to be on the look out for people to welcome.* If the father had had his door shut, he would never have seen the son in the first place. How do we tangibly keep a look out for people who long to enter into a relationship with God? One way is that we can be aware of our brothers and sisters who are suffering. And there are plenty of people suffering. In college, a lot of suffering is masked by activities that have been dubbed as "normal college behavior". I'll resist getting on my soapbox about this, but I think we, as a culture, neglect young people who are blatantly suffering and turning to drugs, alcohol, and sex to relieve their pain. I think we neglect our friends, too. We say, "Everyone does that in college!" Yes, many people do. But are most of those people suffering? Look out for those who are suffering and take the love of God to them! Don't make them come to the physical building of a church to experience God's mercy.

**Celebrate returnees.** The Prodigal Son parable is preceded by two other parables: the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin. Both speak of celebration! "I tell you, in just the same way there will be more *joy* in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance!" (John 15:7). "There will be *rejoicing* among the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (John 15:10). The Father celebrated his returned son by slaughtering the fatted calf and throwing a feast! Let's start celebrating the lives of those who "return" and becoming known as a Church who welcomes and rejoices, rather than shames and condemns, sinners. I think if this was our reputation as a Church, we'd be welcoming people home left and right!

The Year of Mercy is about opening doors to one another, which is why the door, shown above, has been chosen as the logo for the Archdiocese of Baltimore's Year of Mercy. Eight doors on eight different churches have been designated throughout the diocese as pilgrimage sights. I intend to visit them throughout this upcoming year. Maybe you could do the same over summer break!

**YOUR PARISH IS  
PRAYING FOR YOU!**

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**REGIONAL EVENTS IF  
YOU ARE HOME**

**Every Wednesday but the last one: ChristLife Young Adult Meetings from 7-9pm in the Classroom at the Friary**

**March 13– ITALIAN DINNER, 12:30-6:30pm. Join us for our biggest fundraiser of the year!**

**March 19– Baltimore Frassati Night at Sts. Philip & James Church. Adoration, Praise & Worship, Confession, a Talk, and line dancing after!**

**THE REWARDS OF FASTING**



Our Church especially stresses participation in the Christian practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving during the season of Lent. I'm decent at making time to pray, I'm fully capable of donating part of my income towards a worthy cause, but when it comes to fasting, I'm on the struggle bus. Even the smallest fast, like not snacking between meals, is completely distracting for me. I hyper-focus on the fact that I'm starting to feel the slight discomfort of hunger and can hardly get anything done because I'm just longing for my next meal. For this reason, I decided to make fasting more of a priority in my life. I am beginning with Lent, but hope to continue afterwards.

Fasting makes us hungry. Physically hungry. But it's only fruitful if it makes us spiritually hungry. In college, I belonged to a Christian group of women who fasted every Wednesday. Our fasts were varied: sometimes we would only eat bread, or give up all drinks except for water, or refrain from texting or listening to music. Some of the fasts were more helpful for me than others. The fast was a constant reminder to focus on God.

Fasting was important in Jewish religion and culture. When Jesus came on the scene, he upset the Pharisees because he allowed his disciples to eat on the Sabbath: "At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:1-2). Jesus helped the Pharisees (and us) understand that the reason why we fast is because we hunger— and want to be *aware of* and *increase* our hunger— for God. Therefore, it makes no sense for the disciples to fast while they are physically in the presence of Jesus: "Jesus answered, 'How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast'" (Matthew 9:15).

Christians, obviously, have continued the practice of fasting. Besides the 40 days of Lent, many Christians traditionally fast on Wednesdays and Fridays. Wednesday is widely accepted as the day that Judas approached the Roman authorities about betraying Jesus. Christians fast on Wednesdays in retribution for sins and offenses against God. Friday is the day that Jesus died on the Cross. Christians fast on Fridays in solemn remembrance of the act of love that saved us.

I purchased a book recently called "The Rewards of Fasting" by Mike Bickle and it has been very helpful in explaining the purpose of fasting. Reading it encourages and strengthens me to do better with my own personal fast over Lent. That being said, I have a long way to go. I still feel weak and easily distracted when it comes to denying myself anything substantial. I hope that, eventually, I will not be distracted but focused on God. The book has taught me that we fast because we are not with the Bridegroom. We are not with Jesus, as we one day will be in heaven. We fast to increase our intimacy with him.

As I continue to take baby steps and learn more about the purpose (and rewards!) of fasting, I am being more inspired to grow in this practice! Interestingly, I have grown in appreciation for the sacredness of meals (see first page) because I am more grateful for what food I consume. I recognize myself growing in self-control and self-denial, not just when it comes to food but when it comes to doing anything that may feel good but isn't good for me (any indulgence in the "seven deadly sins"- greed, lust, envy, anger, sloth, gluttony, pride). I've also found that fasting does constantly remind me of God's presence throughout the day. Every time I make a different decision with what food I eat, I think of why am I making that decision, and I think of God.

If you have made it a point to fast this Lent, I hope it is going well! Perhaps you will join me in trying to become a "better faster"! I am praying for your second half of Lent!!

**With love, Katie**