

A Joyful Word

News from the Office of the Director of Religious Education

October 2023

Rescued Sheep Returns to the Ditch

In the last several weeks, I have come across children and teens telling jokes that have really made me laugh HARD. When I retell these jokes, others just shake their head or laugh, not because the jokes are funny, but because I'm laughing so hard.

Seeing the kids telling these jokes had me searching the social media for more because it brought me so much joy. As I was searching, I came across a video on YouTube of a young shepherd boy who had found one of his lost sheep in a ditch. (In YouTube, search "Rescued Sheep Jumps Back into Ditch.")

I imagine this occurs more frequently than we might think. Why? Because sheep aren't the brightest animals in the barn! They are unattractive creatures who are easily frightened and unclean by nature.

The punchline of the video is that as soon as the sheep is rescued, within seconds, it returns to the ditch. In one of the videos, after seeing the sheep return to the same ditch, one shepherd walks away as if to say, "you're on your own this time!"

This got me thinking. I'm so glad that God doesn't get frustrated with me to the point of walking away from me in disgust. Yet, the scriptures are clear that our God is the Good Shepherd. And as the Good Shepherd, he watches out for me and you. He protects us. He provides for us. And, yes, he even pulls us out of ditches of our own choosing.

Understanding the Lord as the Good Shepherd brought me to reading and reflecting on Psalm 23. It's a fitting picture of our Lord Jesus Christ – the Shepherd King who offers abundant life (John 10:10-15, 27) and guides his flock today (1 Peter 5:4; Hebrews 13:20).

As I was reflecting on this Psalm that most everyone has heard of, and knows even if they have never opened a Bible, made me put myself in the place of the sheep caught in the ditch. As I gaze on the Good Shepherd through the eyes of a sheep, I find comfort in his provision, protection, and promises for eternity.

The Good Shepherd is always there caring for his sheep in all kinds of weather, just like King David was as a boy caring for his sheep. He counted each by name as they wandered into the fold at night, and he slept by the door so that none would stray. He searched for any lost sheep and nursed the injured ones to health.

The school year is back in full swing. Let us not get so lost and our eyes unfocused that we can't see the Good Shepherd protecting us from the ditches of despair. Always keep your eyes fixed on him.



Want to Be a Holy Reader?

A few weeks ago students in CCD were given a letter and worksheet to go with a new program that we are starting this year called "Be a Holy Reader." The idea is to encourage students and families to read the lives of the saints, scripture, or some other Catholic reading in order to continue growing in their faith. I would like to invite the St. Malachy School students to participate if interested.

Students in grades K-3, who may need help reading, may have someone else read to them and they can draw a picture about what they read and learned, while students in grades 4-6 are asked to write a paragraph about what they read.

Sheets can be turned into me, and after students complete five, they will have their photo taken and placed on a special display in the St. Malachy School hallway. This is a complete voluntary activity, but I highly encourage the participation of all students and families as a means to continue growing closer to Christ in holiness.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at ksouba@stmalgeneseo.org or by calling the office at (309) 944-5393.

Feast of St. Francis of Assisi: Oct. 4

Several years ago I had the opportunity to visit the tomb of St. Francis of Assisi, whose Feast Day is October 4, in Assisi, Italy. It was during that trip that I had a life changing experience and I owe my devotion to the Blessed Mother to St. Francis.

Below the Basilica of St. Francis is the crypt where St. Francis' body is buried as seen below. As I walked towards the gate that surrounds his tomb, I couldn't help but feel the grandeur of his simplicity and poverty. Francis taught a gentle loving side of spirituality. He focused on compassion for the suffering, care for the sick and downtrodden, and reverence for women. He expressed love for all beings, especially the wild ones like wolves and birds.

The only thing you could hear were the silent sobs of pray-ers who were so touched by the holiness felt. It's a feeling I will never forget.

In this year of focusing on missionary discipleship, as a way to help us make Jesus more widely known, let us follow the example of St. Francis through our own poverty and simplicity and be instruments of peace, love, faith, hope, and consolation. Don't forget the Pet Blessing at 3:15 pm at the Mahoney Shelter on October 4.



1000 KEYS
INSTRUMENTS
OF YOUR PACE

Where there is hatred
let us sow love—
Where there is injury, pardon
Where there is discord, union
Where there is doubt, faith
Where there is despair, hope
Where there is darkness, light
Where there is sadness, joy
Grant not so much that we
be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love
For it is in giving that we receive
It is in pardoning
that we are pardoned
And it is in dying that
we are born to eternal life

ATTRIBUTED TO ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Youth Ministry Flamingo Fundraiser

Oasis and The Rock students would like to thank everyone who participated in the "Blessed by a Flock" flamingo fundraiser during August and early September. Funds will be used to help with different activities of the two groups throughout the year including but not limited to dinners, parties, possible trips, and service projects they will be doing.



ST. MALACHY'S HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP

Save Important Dates

- Oct. 1 - CCD 6th Grade; Confirmation Prep
- Oct. 4 - Pet Blessing 3:15 pm; CCD K-5 Grades; Oasis; Adore
- Oct. 5 - The Rock Scavenger Hunt
- Oct. 9 - No School - Columbus Day
- Oct. 10 - St. Malachy School Pictures
- Oct. 11 - CCD K-5 Grades; Oasis
- Oct. 12 - The Rock Bonfire; Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Oct. 15 - CCD 6th Grade; Confirmation Prep (Women's Choice Center Presentation)
- Oct. 18 - CCD K-5 Grades; Oasis
- Oct. 17 - Parent/Teacher Conferences (St. Malachy School Dismissal 2:08 pm)
- Oct. 19 - The Rock
- Oct. 20 - No School - Teacher Institute
- Oct. 22 - CCD 6th Grade; Confirmation Prep
- Oct. 25 - CCD K-5 Grades; Oasis
- Oct. 26 - The Rock
- Oct. 29 - CCD 6th Grade; Confirmation Prep



For more information contact Kimberly Souba at 309.944.5393 Ext. 110 or by email at ksouba@stmalgeneseo.org.