Inside this issue:

Notes on Sunday Gospel readings 1

Faith Foundations 1

Book and Film Recommendations 2

Adult Faith Formation Opportunities 2

The Holy Father's Prayer Intentions For This Month

General Intention: That the family may be respected by all in its identity and that its irreplaceable contribution to all of society be recognized.

Mission Intention: That in the mission territories where the struggle against disease is most urgent, Christian communities may witness to the presence of Christ to those who suffer.

Contact:
Brendan Murphy
Director of Family Life, Marriage Preparation, and Adult Faith Formation
(570) 207-2213, ext. 1133
Brendan-Murphy@dioceseofscranton.org

Disciple

A monthly resource for adult Catholics of the Diocese of Scranton

Volume 4, Issue2 February 2011

Breaking Open the Word—Notes on the Sunday Gospels

Feb. 6 (Mt. 5:13-16)

In today's Gospel we hear Jesus calling those who believe in Him to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. One scholar notes that "both images have links with the Old Testament. Salt is associated with the covenant of priesthood made with Aaron and his descendants (Num. 18:19) as well as the covenant of kingship made with David and his descendants (2 Chron. 13:5). Light is associated with the Old Testament vocation of Israel to make the truth and justice of God shine out to all nations (Is. 42:6; 49:6)."

Feb. 13(Mt. 5:17-37)

In today's Gospel what does Jesus mean when he says that He has come to fulfill the Law and not abolish it? Well, we see in the accounts of Christ's life and teaching that He fulfills the Mosaic law and the testimony of the prophets (e.g. Mt. 1:23; 2:6, 15; 4:15-16; Lk. 24:44-47, etc.). "The Greek word translated *fulfill* means 'to make complete.' The New Covenant thus includes and concludes the Old Covenant; it both perfects it and transforms it. While sacrificial laws of the Old Testament expired with the sacrifice of Jesus, the moral Law (Ten Commandments, etc.) was retained and refined (5:21, 27, 43; 19:17). In the Christian life, the power of God's Spirit is necessary if we are to obey the Law and grow in holiness."

Feb. 20 (Mt. 5:38-48)

In today's Gospel Jesus calls us to be perfect as the Father is perfect. What does this mean? It seems a hard ideal to reach. Here, one scholar says, "Jesus advocates moral righteousness higher than the Old Covenant—it is a standard of mercy. Just as Israel was to imitate God in being 'holy' (Lev. 19:2), so Jesus calls the Church to imitate God's perfect compassion (Lk. 6:36). The Father is kind and merciful to the good and evil alike, so His children must extend mercy even to their enemies (Mt. 5:7, Lk. 10:29-37, etc)."

Feb. 27 (Mt. 6:24-34)

In today's Gospel Jesus refers to "mammon." Mammon is an Aramaic word that means "wealth" or "property." Jesus warns that the accumulation of earthly possessions often leads to an inordinate love for them which distracts men and women from loving God with an undivided heart. The New Testament addresses this concern in a number of places, such as Mt. 13:22; Lk. 12:13-21; 1 Tim. 6-10; and Heb. 13:5.

Faith Foundations—Basics of Catholic Christian Belief

The Sacrament of Baptism

(From the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church)

The following is a brief overview of Catholic belief about Baptism, which is the first sacrament of Christian initiation.

Who can receive Baptism?

"Every person not yet baptized is able to receive Baptism."

What is required of one who is to be baptized?

"Everyone who is baptized is required to make a profession of faith. This is done personally in the case of an adult or by the parents and by the Church in the case of infants. Also the godfather or the godmother and the whole ecclesial community share the responsibilities for baptismal preparation (catechumenate) as well as for the development and safeguarding of the faith and grace given at Baptism."

Is Baptism necessary for salvation?

"Baptism is necessary for salvation for all those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament."

Is it possible to be saved without Baptism?

"Since Christ died for the salvation of all, those can be saved without Baptism who die for the faith (*Baptism of blood*). Catechumens and all those who, even without knowing Christ and the Church, still (under the

(continued on next page)

Faith Foundations…Continued

Impulse of grace) sincerely seek God and strive to do his will can also be saved without Baptism (*Baptism of desire*). The Church in her liturgy entrusts children who die without Baptism to the mercy of God."

What are the effects of Baptism?

"Baptism takes away original sin, all personal sins and all punishment due to sin. It makes the baptized person a participant in the divine life of the Trinity through sanctifying grace, the grace of justification which incorporates one into Christ and into his Church. It gives one a share in the priesthood of Christ and provides the basis for communion with all Christians. It bestows the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. A baptized person belongs forever to Christ. He is marked with the indelible seal of Christ (*character*)."

What is the meaning of the Christian name received at Baptism?

The name is important because God knows each of us by name, that is, in our uniqueness as persons. In Baptism a Christian receives his or her name in the Church. It should preferably be the name of a saint who might offer the baptized a model of sanctity and an assurance of his or her intercession before God."

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him."

~Matthew 3:13

Faith and Media—Reading and Viewing Recommendations

Book of the Month:

***Jayber Crow* by Wendell Berry**

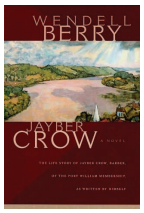
If you've never read anything by Wendell Berry, it is time you did. Berry is a philosopher, writer, farmer, intellectual—how many people fit that category? As a Baptist, his work is imbued with a Christian sensibility. *Jayber Crow*, a novel about a bachelor barber in the fictional town of Port William, Kentucky is, simply put, one of the five best novels I have ever read—maybe the best (maybe). The story itself is powerfully appealing and will linger in your mind long after you've finished reading it. Woven throughout are reflections on faith, family, love, human nature, the importance of community, and the influence of technology, A good selection for a Catholic reading group as it provides ample resources for discussion.

[*This book is available at most online retailers and local libraries]*

Film of the Month:

Nicholas Nickleby

An award winning adaptation of the novel by Charles Dickens, this film is well acted and visually beautiful. The story revolves around the title character and his family who, at the beginning of the film, lose their father/husband and seek assistance from their wealthy uncle, who turns out to be a despicable person who values wealth and power over family. Plenty of great Catholic themes throughout, such as the dignity of all people created in the image and likeness of God; the power of friendship; the importance of family and more. [Available from most local libraries and rental stores]



Left: *Jayber Crow* (Counterpoint)

Right: *Nicholas Nickleby* (MGM)

Catholic Calendar—Upcoming Opportunities for Adult Faith Formation

Bible Study Leadership
<u>Training Day Set</u>

A full-day training session led by an Ascension Press representative for those who wish to lead "Great Adventure" Bible Studies in their parishes has been scheduled for Saturday, **Feb. 19, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Sacred Heart Church Hall in Peckville**.

The presenter will be Kelly Wahlquist, who works with Bible Study leaders in order to help them organize, implement and conduct their studies.

The leadership training session will include an overview of the Bible study program and methodology, a workshop that includes a guided walk through a "Great Adventure" lesson, and tools for training and supporting small group facilitators.

Registration fee is $65 for Bible Study Leaders (includes lunch and comprehensive Leader's Manual) or $45 for Core Team Members (includes lunch and Core Team materials).

To register, call Corinne Murphy at 1-877-842-1877, ext. 209 or go to: www.regonline.com/LTDScranton.

"Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you…"

~1 Pt. 3:15