

- Learning About Good Friday at the Most Recent Faith Festival
- First Communion Letters to Jesus
- Another Successful School Auction! The Auction Committee Thanks You

## St. Matthew Parish Welcomes *YOU!*

An “Alleluia” welcome to everyone celebrating Easter, especially those visiting relatives in the parish, or those returning to our parish. Easter is the high point of the Church year. On Easter, as on every Sunday of the year, we celebrate the Life, Death and Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In fact, the Church calls Easter the “mother of ALL Sundays!”

The faith community of St. Matthew’s parish gladly welcomes you back to pray with us whenever you are in our area. If you have moved to this vicinity and have been searching for a parish community to which you can belong, this is a warm, welcoming, prayerful community of fellow believers who, like you, are on a journey of faith. We invite you to journey with us. We have several community-building events throughout the year, and have a vibrant school and religious education program for children, youth, adults, and families. We have a dedicated staff and parishioners who join together in a myriad of ways to build up God’s Kingdom in this southeast corner of Milwaukee County in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

As it states on our Welcome Banner hanging on our Little Brick Church: Welcome! Come grow with us!”

Easter Blessings!

*Rev. Stephen J. Stradinger*

Rev. Stephen Stradinger  
Co-Pastor



*Fr. William Stanfield*

Rev. William Stanfield  
Co-Pastor



*Matt Knorr*

Matt Knorr  
Parish Council Chair



# Faith Festival Teaches Meaning of Good Friday

St. Matthew's third faith festival of 2006-07 was held the week of Sunday, March 18th, and focused on the meaning of Good Friday. The evening sessions began with a meal of pasta and salad served down in the church cafeteria. Those who attended the faith festival on Sunday morning were greeted with enthusiastic volunteers serving up a french toast sticks, sausage, and oatmeal. After some social time, it was



time to get down to business and learn the meaning of one of the church's most important days. Families filed out of the cafeteria after eating and gathered in the church to hear a brief talk on the meaning of Good Friday.

It was explained that Good Friday is called "good" because on this day Jesus was crucified for our redemption of our sins. On Good Friday, the whole Church mourns the death of Jesus. Good Friday is also a day of fast and abstinence. Catholics are also supposed to meditate and pray between Noon and 3:00 p.m, because those are the hours Jesus hung on the cross.

You likely have just attended the Easter Vigil or Easter Sunday services, which take a more joyful tone. However, if you went to church here at St. Matthew just a few days ago for Good Friday, you probably noticed that it's

also the only day that there isn't a full Mass. Catholic Churches actually have a Good Friday service. Continuing the ancient tradition of the Catholic Church, there are no sacraments performed on Good Friday or Holy Saturday. On Good Friday, the altar is also bare.

Another difference in the Good Friday service is how things comes to an end. The congregation receives Holy Communion, there's a "Prayer After Communion," then a "Prayer Over the People," and everyone departs in silence. This signifies that the Easter Triduum is really one happening that lasts three days, instead of three separate events.

Following the time in the church, the most recent faith festival continued with everyone breaking into small groups. Most adults without children remained in church and heard from pastoral associate Alice Haztenbeller, who did a more in-depth presentation on the meaning of Good Friday and what it should mean in our lives. Adults with children gathered in the downstairs cafeteria... where children got to talk about Good Friday and participate in a small art project involving a colorful cross. Teens and pre-teens were also busy... some got to watch a video about the meaning of Good Friday, while others got to learn about the



stations of the cross in the Little Brick Church. Even some of the littlest ones at St. Matthew had their hands full... they were busy making crosses out of popsicle sticks.



One other activity offered to teens and adults during this most recent faith festival was a chance to take a walk in the giant labyrinth, stretched across almost the entire Gathering Space. It was explained that a labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. The Labyrinth represents a journey to our own center and back again out into the world. Following these small group activities, everyone regathered in the church for a final prayer and dismissal. Hopefully, if you attended the Good Friday faith festival, you got the chance to learn something more about the meaning of this very important day.

The fourth and final faith festival of the 2006-07 season will be held towards mid-May. The theme of this faith festival will focus on the Catholic Feast of Corpus Christi. To learn more about its significance in the church year, be sure to attend the next faith festival!

— Article and photos by Robert Tabern

# The Journey to First Communion... Jesus Day

Back in February, I shared with you some of the ways the second graders are preparing for their First Holy Communion. On Saturday, March 24, they took another important step in the process... Jesus Day. Jesus Day was a three-hour day of reflection the second graders spent with their parents. It was one of the last tasks they will need to complete before their First Communion Day.

## Writing to Jesus

One of the assignments the children were asked to complete was to write a letter to Jesus. They were asked to thank and praise him, tell him something they had learned during their preparation and share with him something they were looking forward to regarding First Communion. I'd like to share some excerpts from these letters with you...

*Dear Jesus: Jesus, pray for me and all the children getting our First Communion. Jesus please, please make sure I do not mess up. I'll try hard to follow the Ten Commandments, especially the 4<sup>th</sup> one, respect your Mother and Father. – Katelyn W.*

*Dear Jesus: Thank you for my family and friends that you gave me. I know I can not see you, or feel you, but I know you are here in my heart. – Nate G.*

*Dear Jesus: I am excited to receive the bread and wine. You're a good soul. – Jacob K.*

*Dear Jesus: I hope you are having a fun time in heaven with my grandpa and great grandma. Thank you for my family, food, water and shelter, great gifts. Please watch over me as I grow up through the years. – Indiana S.*



*Dear Jesus: Thank you for letting me be involved in the entire Mass. I now am able to follow my parents up for communion. – Tyler S.*

*Dear Jesus: Thank you for letting me have Holy Communion. I want to be closer to you and God and I want to learn more from you. With you in my life, I can be a better person. – Will B.*

*Dear Jesus: I can't wait 'til I make my First Communion!!!! TO be able to receive your body and blood. I learned receiving Communion is very special. – Kate*

*Hello Jesus: Thank you for allowing me to share your body and blood. I am looking forward to wearing a pretty white dress. – Alyssa S.*

*Jesus: Thank you for everything you did for me. I hope that I am going to be okay in Deerfield School and make new friends. – Ellie*

*Dear Jesus: Thank you for caring so much for me and dying for me. Help me to be good like you so that one day I will see you in heaven. – Colin M.*

*Dear Jesus: I would like to thank you for being by my side and watching over me. – Blake M.*

*Dear Jesus: Thank you for giving to me your body and blood through the sacrament of First Communion. You're always helping me get closer to God, our Father. Even if I am not being good, your gifts of forgiveness and of yourself are precious to me. – Jake T.*

*Dear Jesus: Thank you for a family and my home. I learned*  
*Continued on next page.*

*First Communion, continued from previous page.*

*that you died for our sins. Thank you for doing that. It must have been hard for you. – Zach B.*



Dear Jesus: Thank you for the opportunity to share in my joy of receiving First Communion. I can't wait until I can wear a pretty white dress. See you there. – Gabriella S.

*Dear Jesus: Jesus, I want to thank you for the sacri-*

*fices you made for me. Because of your death and resurrection, I have a new life of joy and peace. – Kelsey C.*

Dear Jesus: I am looking forward to tasting the bread and wine. Please help me to not be nervous. – Jenna B.

*Hello Jesus: I learned we are connected to Jesus like the vines and branches of grapes. I also learned the host is not made with yeast like other bread. – Abigail K.*

Dear Jesus: Thank you for giving your life for us. That was very thoughtful. – Rachel P.

*Dear Jesus: Thank you for dying on the cross for us. I learned that after I receive you, I need to share you with others. – Anna D.*

Dear Jesus: When Angelina comes can you make her healthy? – Brandon L.

*Dear Jesus: On April 22, I will receive First Communion. I am really excited. I have been going to class and learning more about my faith. I thank you for giving your life up for us. You were brave. I hope I can be brave, too. – Hanna B.*

Dear Jesus: Thank you for living things and for my brother, Beck. At school, I am learning all about your life. – Tanner

*Dear Jesus: Please take care of my family and friends and my very sick grandpa. – Amanda P.*

*Dear Jesus: I hope I get all 4's on my report card and can you please help me to change my behavior at school? – Anonymous*

If you want to read more of the children's letters, they will

be on display at church. Masses of First Communion will be held April 21<sup>st</sup> and April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Please keep the children who will be celebrating on those days in your prayers.

— Article by Amy Cicigoi

— Photos by Amy Cicigoi and Carol Daun



**A Ticket to the St. Matthew School Auction.....\$35**

**Having a GREAT time at the auction.....\$0**

**Amount raised by the auction.....\$46,000+**

**The support of the St. Matt's families and our community....**

**PRICELESS**

The Auction Committee would like to extend a huge THANK YOU to everyone who helped to make this year's auction so successful. Whether by attending the auction, purchasing raffle tickets, using contacts to get donations, making a donation yourself, volunteering your time to be on the committee or to help the night of, you were the reason we were able to exceed our goals and raise enough money to update the school's technology. It's amazing what we can accomplish when we all work together toward a common goal!