

Catechists,

The season of Lent begins this week. Please begin your classes with this prayer experience. Wednesday classes will meet in the Church at 5:00 P.M. (first session) or 6:30 P.M. (second session) for an Ash Wednesday liturgy.

There will be no water in your fonts for blessing as a sign of our union with Jesus in the desert.

On your classroom table you will find:

- **Bamboo table mat** (a simple table for a simple/meager meal for families with little means),
- **Rice bowl** (a simple bowl that holds all of the nourishment of a meal for a family in a developing country),
- **Operation Rice Bowl box** (to collect money to share with children around the world to help their families fill their rice bowl with good nutrition and fresh water),
- **Rice for bowl** (1/4 cup - the amount of food families in developing nations need to share as a meal),
- **Small container of clean water;**
- **Terracotta holder with candle** (always a sign of Jesus as light of the world),
- **Terracotta plate with sand and rock** (reminder of Jesus' time in prayer and fasting in the desert),
- **Bible** (God's word and promise of presence, hope, love and grace through our faith and trust),
- **Story of the week** about how Catholic Relief Services and Operation Rice Help families improve their lives by increasing crop production, expanding their businesses to increase their income, and improving sanitation and access to clean water.
- **Operation Rice Bowl Prayer**, (to be left on the prayer cloth/ table for weekly prayer)

Remember that 25% of Operation Rice Bowl contributions remain in Chicago to fund local poverty and hunger in our archdiocese.

Please,

- ✚ Gather your students and have them help set the center of your table as a prayer space. Talk about the symbolism of each item.
- ✚ Pour the rice into the bowl so the children can see how little rice there is for an entire family meal.
- ✚ Light the candle and tell the story that is left on the table. (Week 1: Mexico)
- ✚ Lead the children in blessing (Sign of the Cross) slowly and prayerfully;
- ✚ Pray together from the prayer card.
- ✚ Ask the children to add their intentions.
- ✚ Pass out the cardboard rice bowls and calendars that will be on your table. If time allows please have the students put their bowl together. The envelope goes on the inside usually; however the students can use their envelope to return their “sacrifices” each week.
- ✚ This year following Ash Wednesday, **we will focus on clean water**. Materials will be on your table each week.
- ✚ The children should be encouraged to create their own prayer space at home.

Card board rice bowls and calendars are to be taken home and placed on the kitchen table, counter or wherever the student and their family finds as a daily reminder for the family to make small sacrifices. A handout will also be provided about Lent. The students should return money from their rice bowls at every class time. The grade level coordinator will check in every week and collect the children’s money into a larger basket. When a grade level has collected \$100.00, a plastic shape of a child (from a collection of children around the world – about 20” x 30” – will be placed outside in the ground around the “Peace Pole.” The “Peace Pole” project was begun in September of 2005. Last year we created our first “Circle of Friends” around the pole throughout Lent. This year our circle will reach beyond our Peace Garden Circle and symbolically extend Peace that begins here at St. Julian Eymard. Through *prayer, fasting, learning and giving* the students can make a difference in the world.

Important:

It does not matter how much a student brings each week. Their sacrifice must be meaningful. If they saved a nickel by giving up a treat at the store, their nickel is important and valuable to a child in a developing country. Their small sacrifice was real and appreciated!

Thank you!

PRAY FOR PEACE – LIVE FOR PEACE!