

# From Psalms to politics:

## THE PSI SPRING SEMESTER ADULT ED CLASSES

The Pastoral Studies Institute spring 2008 semester adult education offerings begin with Bishop Edward J. Slattery leading a discussion of the Book of Psalms and concludes with one of the Diocese's newest priests, Father Brian O'Brien, leading a four-part series on issues Catholics will consider in the election year.

In addition, the PSI is offering eight for-credit college classes and 10 adult faith enrichment modules.

The first adult ed class will be Jan. 23 when Bishop Slattery talks to the Women's Daytime Study Group about the Psalms, which he said are "expressions of the deepest human longings and feelings."

"Unfortunately, most Catholics are not familiar with the Psalms. Mostly they hear and recite them only at Mass immediately after the First Reading," he said.

Even though they come from the heart of man, the psalms' expression is Divinely inspired, he added.

"The 150 psalms in the Old Testament are meant to be sung or recited in common. They are meant to be pondered and made one's own because they assist the man or woman of prayer in giving expression to their human feelings and longings, all of which are universal," he said.

The psalms are the core of the Divine Office, which is recited by every priest and every deacon every day and more properly are chanted in common, the Bishop said. "As such, the psalms are the official prayer of the Church along with the Mass and the Sacraments."

Joey Spencer, coordinator of the PSI, said that the Psalms usually are attributed to King David, and while he may have been the author of some of them, "most scholars would agree there was no one writer who could be given full credit for writing all of the Psalms."

He said they have been described as "a collection of collections." They can be divided into five books in a

structure similar to the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament.

"While the psalms cover the entire range of human emotions, generally they are grouped in one of two major genres: lament or hymn. A lament can be considered a cry for help in a time of need or desperation. A hymn is focused on praising God, usually starting with a call to praise and then stating what the psalmist is praising God for."

Regardless of the genre, Mr. Spencer said, reading all the psalms gives a person "the big picture of what it is to be human in relation with God in just about every situation possible."

Other speakers on the psalms are Father Paul Eichhoff, Msgr. Patrick Gaalaas, Abbot Marcel Rooney, Father O'Brien, Father Steve Austin, Father Ken Harder, Father Stuart Crevcoire, Father Jeff Polasek and Father Jim Caldwell.

In his four-part "Catholic Issues in an Election Year," Father O'Brien said he will use several resources, including the U.S. bishops' document, "Faithful Citizenship," and statements by the late Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI.

"My goal is that the class be interactive, where people can come with struggles, frustrations and questions and get some real guidance in what is turning out to be a very complicated election year, especially at the national level."

The associate pastor of Christ the King Parish said each class will focus on a different issue so people can come for one, two, three or four of the sessions as they are able. Teen-agers and young adults are welcome to join "what promises to be a spirited and informative series of classes," Father O'Brien said.

Among the issues on the agenda are the dignity of human life, immigration, war and poverty.

Meeting times, dates, locations and instructors for all PSI adult ed classes are in the box at right.



Father Brian O'Brien



Psalm 107 is illuminated on the pages of The Saint John's Bible, a work commissioned by St. John's Abbey and St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn. Artist Donald Jackson digitized recordings of Gregorian chant and scattered actual voice prints throughout the artwork. The Bible is the first handwritten and illuminated book of Scriptures in 500 years. (CNS file photo from St. John's University)



Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are penitential days of fast in the Latin Church. Those age 18 to 59 ordinarily are obliged to observe these fast days by not eating between meals and by having no more than one main meal and two smaller meals. (CNS file photo illustration/Nancy Wiechec)



Elizabeth Crossen blesses herself with holy water at Clonard monastery in West Belfast, Northern Ireland. (CNS file photo by Reuters)



Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. (CNS file photo by Reuters)

## Free (or all-but free) courses cover many topics

### JANUARY

#### Women's Daytime Scripture Study: Psalms I & II

9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Wednesdays at Church of the Madalene beginning with an organization meeting Jan. 16; studies begin Jan. 23 and continue through April 9. \$15 fee

The prayer book of ancient Israel has formed the prayer of Jesus and the Church. A number of priests, including the lead-off speaker, Bishop Edward J. Slattery, will lead this discussion and study group, which has a core following of nearly 100 women and has been meeting for more than a decade.

#### Spanish for Communication I

7-8:30 p.m. Mondays at Elizabeth Seton Hall, Church of the Madalene, Jan. 21 through March 10. Instructor: Irma Chajeccki; \$50 fee.

This course is designed to help students learn to communicate with Spanish-speakers over the telephone or in person. Emphasis is on the spoken language and the Catholic cultures of Latin America. Designed for those with some high school or college Spanish or no Spanish training at all. No books required, teacher will supply all materials.

#### Catholic Answers to a Fundamentalist's Questions

7-8:30 p.m. Thursdays, Jan. 24 & Jan. 31 in Benedictine Hall, Madalene. Instructor: Deacon John Donnelly, J.D. Free.

Living in Oklahoma, many Catholics frequently are on the receiving end of questions from fundamentalist Protestants, many of whom have greatly distorted views of the Catholic Church. The class will begin with discussion of the fundamentalist position on the Bible, the Papacy, Mary, Purgatory and other questions. The course will arm Catholics with answers to the fundamentalist arguments while providing them a deeper awareness of their faith's richness and history.

#### Understanding the Lenten Fast

7-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 29, Aquinas Hall, Madalene. Instructor: Msgr. Patrick Brankin. Free.

This class will focus on understanding the reasons behind the Lenten fast that always has been an important tradition within the Catholic Church. Discussion will include why the Church fasts and the relationship between the Lenten fast and the celebration of Easter.

### FEBRUARY

#### The Easter Triduum: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday/Easter

7-8:30 p.m. Thursdays, Feb. 7, 14 & 21 at Madalene's Benedictine Hall. Instructor: Deacon Jose Guzman. Free.

Easter 2008 will be more meaningful for class participants who learn the history and meaning behind the Church's liturgy for the Easter Triduum, which includes Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday/Easter.

#### The Mass and Liturgy of the Hours

7-8:30 p.m. Tuesdays, Feb. 19 & 26, March 4 & 11 in Aquinas Hall, Church of the Madalene. Instructor: Deacon John Donnelly, J.D. Free.

With the creation of the Diocesan Liturgical Institute, this class offers lay Catholics an opportunity to better appreciate the greatest prayer of the Church. Topics will include the composition of the Lectionary (how and why the Sunday and daily readings are what they are) and how the Liturgical Year operates. The Liturgy of the Hours (the Divine Office) also is explained, and participants will pray Eve-

ning Prayer as hands-on way to experience this official prayer of the Church. Students are invited to bring their Liturgy of the Hours.

### MARCH

#### Tenebrae Service - Lessons and Carols for Passiontide

7 p.m. Saturday, March 15, Holy Family Cathedral. Free.

This first-ever Tenebrae Service for the whole Diocese offers participants a reflective way to begin Easter Week. The Latin word "tenebrae" means shadows and refers first to the fact that this beautiful, moving ceremony takes place in the shadows of Lent as the light fades away on the evening before Palm Sunday. The word also refers to the shadow of sorrow that crosses Christians' hearts as they celebrate the medieval Ceremony Lessons & Carols for Passiontide. Similar to the more familiar Lessons and Carols for Christmas, the ceremony consists of a lengthy series of readings and prophecies concerning the Passion, each of which has a proper response, sung first by the choir or cantor and then by the faithful. After each reading, another candle is carefully extinguished, symbolizing the apparent triumph of darkness at the Crucifixion.

#### Pastoral Visitor Workshop

6:30-9:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, March 31, April 1 & 3 in Elizabeth Seton Hall at Church of the Madalene. Instructor: Chris King, master's degree in theological studies. Free.

Many people desire to reach out to people who need pastoral care, but many of them don't know how. This workshop will cover "being vs. doing" ministry, how to listen effectively, logistics on making a pastoral visit and how to give pastoral support. Learn to pray effectively and minister to a family member in crisis or trauma, to people who are dying and their families and how to address the needs of the bereaved. The class includes textual facts and research but most of the material is based on real-life experiences of instructor Chris King as a hospital and hospice chaplain.

### APRIL

#### Ways to a Richer Experience at Mass

7-8:30 p.m. Thursdays, April 3 & 10, Benedictine Hall, Madalene. Instructor: Deacon John Donnelly, J.D. Free.

To impart a richer spiritual experience at both Sunday and Daily Mass, this class will offer a brief discussion of the various parts of the Mass, the different Eucharistic Prayers, how the Scripture readings are selected, the Liturgical Year, Church teachings on the Mass and the Real Presence. Why do Catholics genuflect, kneel and bless themselves with Holy Water when entering Mass? Why and when is incense used? What is the role of the homily? Plus other helpful information and suggestions.

#### Catholic Issues in an Election Year

7-8:30 p.m. Tuesdays, April 15, 22 & 29 and May 6 in Aquinas Hall at Church of the Madalene. Instructor: Father Brian O'Brien. Free.

The presidential nominees of both major political parties probably will be on their way to their respective nominations, but the 2008 election will be heating up as this four-night class helps Catholics consider what they should consider before casting their votes. Various documents of the Church concerning life issues, immigration, just war and other topics will be presented by Father O'Brien, who plans to leave plenty of time for discussions and questions.