

A Best Practice: A Celebration with Art and Tea

This month's best practice combines various realities of our lives as faithful disciples:

- reflections on mercy
- recognition and appreciation of the arts to express and deepen faith
- support and empowerment of adults to express and share their faith
- gathering in community

The Beginning

St. Francis deSales Parish, Salisbury, MD wanted to provide an experience which would connect faith with the arts. After much brainstorming, they decided to provide an art show and an afternoon tea with music and poetry.

Michele K. Harris, pastoral minister at St. Francis deSales, worked with a committee which gathered monthly for five months, creating various subcommittees and inviting volunteers to help with all the specific aspects of the event.

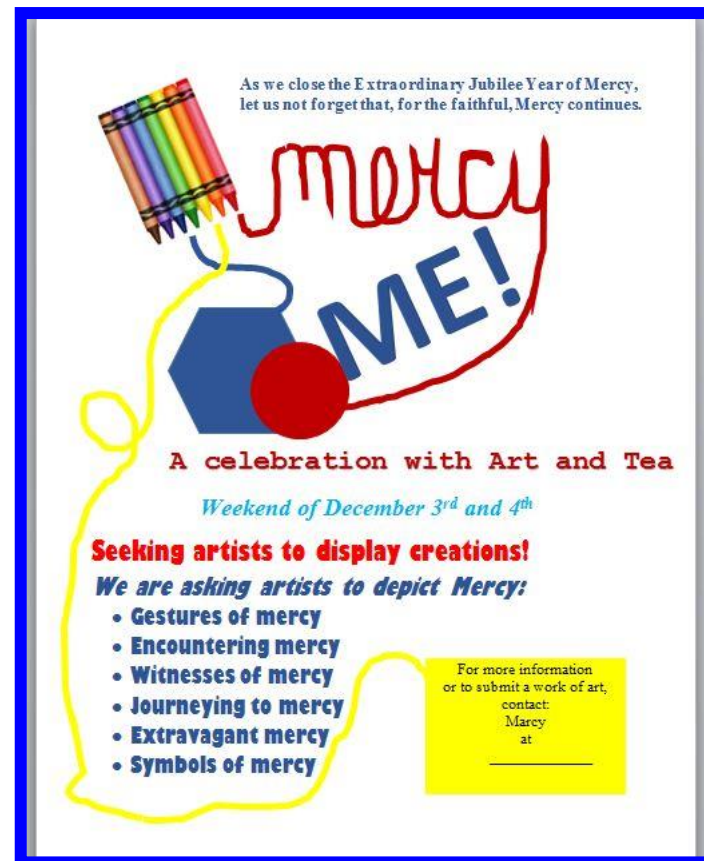
The Invitation

Since this "Celebration with Art and Tea" was planned at the closing of the church's Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, "mercy" became the theme for the artwork.

Reflection, suggestions and guidelines were provided by the committee and staff through the various programs and groups within the parish as well as the Sunday bulletin and website. Children, youth and adults of the parish were invited to share their faith-filled reflections by submitting their artistic works which portrayed various aspects of "mercy" in daily life, in the life of the church and culture.

Art is both love and friendship, and understanding;
the desire to give...It is both the taking and giving
of beauty, the turning out to the light of the inner folds
of awareness of the spirit.

- Ansel Adams



The Celebration of the Art

The invitation yielded a beautiful, intriguing and inspiring display with a variety of mediums as well as interesting content. The children had used markers, crayons, paint. The adults used the mediums of collage, photography, pottery, mosaic, sketches, oil, acrylic, and quilted tapestry.

The planning committee chose not to judge or give awards; all artwork was given equal status.

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The art was displayed in the parish center with an invitation to all parishioners to browse and enjoy after each of the weekend liturgies.



Some of the logistical helps for the “artists”

- Artists were given table space to display their work, providing their own stands or command strips if they wanted the work to be hung.
- Artists were responsible for setting up their pieces and taking them down at specific times.
- In an effort to provide protection for the works of art, someone monitored the art during the browsing times. For the parish records, pictures of each piece were taken before the show began.

A person should hear a little music, read a little poetry,
and see a fine picture every day of his life,
in order that worldly cares may not obliterate
the sense of the beautiful,
which God has implanted in the human soul.
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The Tea


The afternoon tea took place in the setting of the art show so that the gathering of fellowship and entertainment occurred among the works of art.

The tea was a ticketed event; it was not a fund raiser so the nominal fee was only to cover costs.

As we close the Extraordinary Year of Mercy,
you are invited to

Mercy Me!

**A celebration
with Art and Tea**



Sunday, December 4th
3:00-6:00 p.m.

Philip & Barbara Long
Parish Center
(Planned for adults and youth,
not children)

Enjoy an afternoon of art and entertainment before the holiday rush:
bassist, violinist, pianist, clarinetist, vocalist, poets—surrounded by works of art.

Seating is limited. For tickets, please contact the parish office:
\$5 per person, \$40 for a table of 8
Invite your friends; bring a light refreshment to share at your table
and your favorite tea cup.
Tea, coffee and scones will be provided.

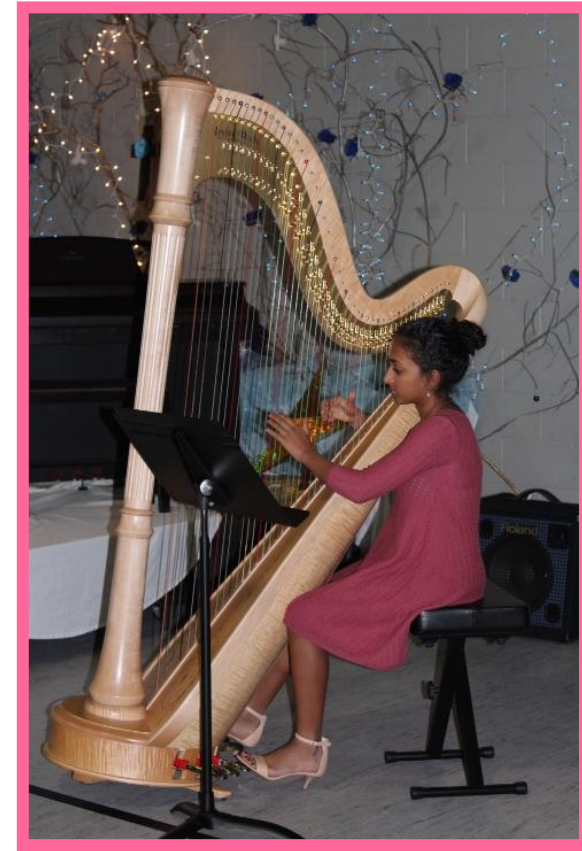
Tea, coffee and scones were served as well as the participants bringing a dish to share at their table. The parish boy scouts escorted each of the guests from the parking lot. At the door, one of the scouts presented a carnation to each of the women upon entering.

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The committee worked to provide an “elegant” atmosphere so did not use any paper or plastic products. All participants of the tea were invited to bring their own tea cup.



The tea began and closed with prayer. The musical entertainment – all providing their talent gratuitously – included soloists, violin, harp, guitar, piano and clarinet.



The Evaluations

Over 50 percent of the participants indicated on their evaluation that the “best part of the tea” was:

- Talking to and meeting with others
- The community spirit
- Hospitality
- The musical performers

Suggestions for next year

This year’s participants offered some logistical changes (adjusting some of the times in the schedule, etc.) as well as adding a story teller to the program.

GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

GEMS Suggestions

- If you were doing this, what would you add (in addition to storytelling), e.g. poetry?
- As you think about [Multiple Intelligences](#), how would you provide for all (or many) of these intelligences in an offering like this (and in all your adult faith formation offerings)?
- Many parishes celebrate an Advent Tea. Are there any ideas from this offering that might add to your Advent Tea?
- As you think about Advent Teas, what about inviting parishioners to share their Nativity sets? Place a card with each set to invite faith-reflection, e.g.: What does the expression on Mary's face tell you? Do the colors that the artist chose to use tell you something about the Nativity story?
- In addition to Advent, how might you provide an opportunity similar to this during Lent? During the Easter season?
- Are there ways to provide faith conversation starters and time for faith-sharing during opportunities like this celebration of art and tea?



Adding New Luster to an Old Gem

[GEMS #54](#) explored four ways to share books with others ... and what it might mean for adult faith formation opportunities. You might find that the following articles spark additional ideas for you:

- Building a Reading Revolution:
<http://www.dailygood.org/story/1077/building-a-reading-revolution-ashoka/>
- Prediction of demise of the public library:
<http://www.alternet.org/books/all-those-techies-who-predicted-demise-public-library-were-wrong?sc=fb>

- Reading Builds Empathy and Improves Well-Being:
<http://readingagency.org.uk/news/media/reading-for-pleasure-builds-empathy-and-improves-wellbeing-research-from-the-reading-agency-finds.html?utm>
- A Whole New Way to Think About Neighborhood Libraries:
<http://blog.theliteracysite.com/little-libraries/?utm>
- Reading Books Can Improve Your Memory, Concentration and Good Looks: <https://mic.com/articles/124120/reading-books-instead-of-kindles-can-improve-your-memory-concentration-and-good-looks#.nqIcl3yIp>
- Bike Libraries: <https://www.good.is/articles/bike-libraries>



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Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at www.janetschaeffler.com

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*
http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The_Seasons_of_Adult_Faith_Formation.html
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation website*
<http://www.lifelongfaith.com/2015-adult-faith-formation-symposium.html>