

## ***Faith Alive!* for the Year of St. Paul**



The fall 2008 edition of *Faith Alive!* is coming.

Last winter, I had begun writing a book centered on the Beatitudes, but by spring decided to change the focus to passages from the letters of St. Paul. I made this decision in light of Pope Benedict XVI's declaration of the "Jubilee Year of St. Paul," which runs from June 28, 2008 to June 29, 2009. The book will have six sessions and will be available by the end of October, so that *Faith Alive!* groups may begin meeting in November.

The new book will have the same components as the first two resources (*Deepening Our Life in Christ I and II*):

- Prayer
- Reflection
- Fellowship
- Service

Once again the sessions will begin with a passage from Sacred Scripture and then illustrate the theme with a real-life story. There will be brief excerpts from the Catechism, reflections of Benedict XVI, etc. The sessions will then move to "Questions for Discussion" that connect the themes to everyday life, and conclude with prayer.

The new resource will no longer be a stapled booklet, but rather a quality 5 ½" x 8 ½" paperback. As previously announced, due to the tremendous demand for the *Faith Alive!* resources (more than three thousand five hundred of the first two booklets in circulation), the diocesan offices can no longer distribute the books free of charge. But because we were able to find a printer with low production cost, the cost per copy will be only \$3.50. Program participants will be asked to bear this minimal expense.

It was a rewarding experience choosing from St. Paul's letters certain passages that fit well the purpose of *Faith Alive!*, which is to foster a modest commitment of loving service as the fruit of shared faith and prayer. And I am particularly enthused about the real-life stories that will follow the Scripture passages. Probably few have heard of Blessed Bartolo Longo, who in 19<sup>th</sup> century Italy turned from being a priest of the occult to being a fervent promoter of the Rosary. Other stories include that of Blessed Damien de Veuster, the Belgian priest who went to live and die ministering to lepers on the island of Molokai, Hawaii; Matt Talbot, an Irishman who became an alcoholic at the age of twelve but broke the chains of the addiction to live a saintly life; and former Colombian presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, who was held hostage by rebels for six years before her dramatic rescue this past spring, after which she told of her profound conversion and the power of forgiveness.

Bishop Jerome ListECKI continues to be an ardent supporter of the *Faith Alive!* program. As he puts it, "We want to foster praying, catechized, loving communities that put their faith in action in an intentional and consistent way. This coincides with an aspiration that saw a large degree of fulfillment in the early Church, as witnessed by the words of the surrounding pagans: 'See how they love one another!'"

For anyone unfamiliar with *Faith Alive!*, the program involves joining a small group of 5-12 people who typically meet once a month in each other's homes or on parish grounds. The meetings usually run about 90 minutes and involve reflection and prayer centered on one of the sessions in the book. Each participant also makes a modest commitment to service (one to two hours each month) that can be carried out individually or as a group. This component reflects the conviction that we are fully disciples of Jesus only if our spiritual lives blossom in love of neighbor. Service can take many forms (suggestions are provided), but it should come from the heart. For those already devoting considerable time to service, it is enough to consciously "dedicate" some portion of that service to the group's communal effort and spirit.

There are very many *Faith Alive!* groups throughout the Diocese of La Crosse. The resources are also being promoted in the Diocese of Madison and elsewhere. For anyone reading this column who has not yet been involved in *Faith Alive!* but who would like to start a group or join an existing group, please speak with your pastor or contact the Office of Ministries and Social Concerns at 608-791-2667 or [hhanson@dioceseoflacrosse.com](mailto:hhanson@dioceseoflacrosse.com).

Publicity materials and sign-up sheets are being sent to all the parishes, so watch for announcements in your community in the coming weeks.