



Focus on Our Children and Youth

Youth Mission Statement:

The youth program at Church of the Nativity seeks to inspire, nurture and expand the spiritual growth of its teens through faith, worship and community. The Church of the Nativity will provide an accepting and welcoming community for our teenagers where they can experience the love of God and the Good News of Jesus Christ so they can express their faith through worship, prayer and service.

Did you know...for the 2013-2014 school year, Nativity has:

- **50 children** (3-years-old - 4th grade) enrolled in our Christian Education **Sunday school**
- **24 adult instructors** teaching our children
- **66 teens** (5th – 12th grade) participating in **Journey to Adulthood**
- **27 adult leaders** guiding our youth

Where do we stand?

Since its 2001 inception, committed adult parishioners have led Nativity's Journey to Adulthood program. We can be proud that the initial participants of the program are now flourishing 23 year-olds, many of whom are college graduates making their mark as adult citizens in the world. Capable adult volunteers have also guided our children's education program. **Christian Education Programs of this magnitude and importance deserve our commitment of spiritual guidance as our young people come to know Jesus Christ.**

Our goals for 2014:

With the advice and recommendations of the Youth Ministry team, the Stewardship Ministry team firmly supports the hiring of a full-time youth minister. A youth minister would give continuity and cohesiveness to our children and youth programs as we lead our young people on their spiritual journey. We will seek a person with a strong love of God and passion for sharing Christ with youth - someone who has the ability to articulate the transforming power of a life following Christ. This person should take Nativity's successful programs to new levels of commitment, service and participation.

We seek a professional lay youth minister who will guide and counsel not only our youth, but also their parents and leaders, as well as families of young children who will join the program in years to come. Though this will not be an ordained clergy position, the youth minister will join the other lay staff members in assisting Stephanie in the mission and ministry of the church.

Your prayerful pledge will enable the church to continue to build our children and youth programs now and for generations to come.

Flourish in Faith *Stewardship Narrative Series*

Proper 23 - Luke 17:11-19

Sunday, October 13, 2013

Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.



“**P**rimero Dios!” is a phrase frequently heard in Latino ministry. It is loosely translated into English as “First of all, there is God!” signifying an awareness that God is within us and can be trusted to provide for our personal wellbeing, our families and children, our livelihood and future. Our relationship with God is one of gratitude for all these blessings, from the basic necessities – housing, food, medical care and education – to the opportunities for a brighter future benefitting our children and, in turn, our communities.

Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor opens her recently published memoir, *My Beloved World*, with her diagnosis of juvenile diabetes at the age of seven, describing how she learned to inject her daily dose of insulin. Justice Sotomayor writes of her large, loving extended family – her abuelita (grandmother), parents, brother, aunts, uncles and cousins. She talks of her family’s journey from Puerto Rico and their struggles to survive and flourish in New York, surrounded by gangs, alcoholism and drugs. She speaks of venturing out of her familiar world, first to Princeton then Yale Law School. Justice Sotomayor felt very much a foreigner in an alien land. Yet she understood the wonderful opportunities offered to her, welcomed the collegiality and helpfulness of those she encountered along the way and experienced the love and support of her family. Justice Sotomayor speaks movingly of the gratitude she feels for all whom God placed in her path to love, support and mentor her. She learned that healing and gratitude go hand in hand.

Do we put God first in all the circumstances of our lives? Can we see that offering praise to God, no matter what, deepens our faith? Can we see that praising God makes us well? In today’s Gospel, Jesus encounters ten lepers in a village in the region between Samaria and Galilee. All ten lepers called out for mercy, having heard of His healing ministry. Jesus’ love and mercy – the healing of the leprosy – was freely given to all. Yet only one, the foreigner, the Samaritan, returned to praise Jesus for the gift of his healing. The other nine may have been made clean, but through the act of praise, the Samaritan was healed.

It is easy to take so many things for granted in this life: our family, friends, health, even our faith. The Samaritan Leper shows us that expressing gratitude makes us well. Jesus’ love and mercy continue to sustain us as we live our faith in an ever changing, diverse society and world. None of us are “foreigners” to Jesus’ love and compassion. We share His love and compassion in relationship with others through service and stewardship to the Church, the Body of Christ, proudly proclaiming “Primero Dios!”



The Rev. Sandra Castillo
Assisting Priest
St. Martin’s Episcopal Church
The Episcopal Diocese of Chicago

Reflection Questions

- Is expressing gratitude a measure of health?
- What are some of the concrete ways you express gratitude?
- Is praising God good for our health?

