

***Diocese  
Of  
Altoona-Johnstown***



**Adult Enrichment  
and  
Lay Ecclesial Ministries**

...in everything we do commending ourselves  
as ministers of God...

2 Corinthians 6:4

**COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

## **Heart of Faith**

Adult Catholics must be well informed in the four pillars of the Catechism if they are to effectively catechize children, teens and young adults. The *Heart of Faith* class focuses on the Creed, the Sacraments, Christian Life and Prayer and reflects the unity of the Catholic faith as well as the richness of its lived expression in American culture.

## **Old Testament**

This course introduces participants to some of the major features of the Old Testament; the Bible in history and history in the Bible, the Torah, the heart and soul of the Old Testament, the book of Genesis, Prophetic Literature-Isaiah and his companions, the word of David, Wisdom Literature and Prayer in the Old Testament.

## **Christian Prayer and Spirituality**

Exploring both traditional and contemporary expressions of Christian prayer and spirituality. Participants will study the *Spiritual Exercises* developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola, which is a compilation of meditations, prayers and contemplative practices to help one deepen their relationship with God. Also, the practice of Lectio Divina, [Latin for “sacred reading”], a method of prayer and spiritual reading to help discover God’s will in all things.

## **Living Your Strengths**

The *Living Your Strengths Journey* focuses on identifying and developing one’s talents, which are God’s gifts to each individual. The seven-week course is a journey in discovering these unique God-given talents, recognizing those same talents in others and learning how to apply the knowledge in one’s parish and personal life.

## New Testament

“God not only reveals the divine will, God reveals God’s very self. The goal of this revelation is to invite people into fellowship with God and with one another (*Dei Verbum*, 2). Jesus is the living example of this invitation. We speak of the Bible as the “word of God.” But it is better to think of the Bible as the inspired *testimony* to the living Word of God, who is Jesus Christ (*Dei Verbum*,\_4)<sup>1</sup> This course introduces the participants to some of the major features of the New Testament such as; Jewish and Graeco-Roman background, Pauline Letters, Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Acts of the Apostles and the Book of Revelation

## Sacraments

The purpose of this course is to introduce the participants to a post-Vatican II Theology of the Sacraments within the context of Christology, Ecclesiology and Ministry. The history of the sacraments is also covered in this context.

## Church History

The history of Christianity is a story of diversity, multiple developments, and pluralism. Yet, throughout every era of Christian history the underlying and unifying thread has been a desire among the followers of Jesus the Christ to discern the presence of the Spirit and the marks of the Creator within the many faces of human culture, and to welcome and work to bring about a fuller realization of God’s Kingdom within our midst. This course offers an overview of Church history focusing upon Christianity in Europe from apostolic times to the present. Questions are raised about the role of the laity and models of the Christian ministry as each era of Christian history is reviewed.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward P. Hannenberg, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2007), 31-31.

## **Hospital Ministry**

"Patient Visitors are" usually laypersons who have a desire to grow spiritually through serving the sick in the hospital. The goal of hospital ministry is to provide patients and families an experience of a safe, listening environment through which spiritual, emotional and physical healing can occur.

The Hospital Ministry course prepares volunteers to be good listeners; to be broad-minded people capable of "being with" patients in physical or emotional distress. Participants will be instructed in Ministry and Visit Basics, Listening, Feelings, The Theology/Spirituality of Suffering, End of Life Issues, Grief and Losses, Cultural Issues, Prayer, Setting Boundaries, Crises Theory, and other challenges that patients face and how best to minister to them and their families and friends.

## **Sacred Scripture Revisited and Synoptic Gospels**

This course is a theological examination of the biblical record of God's saving interaction with His people through His Word, Jesus. It is a general introduction to the Scriptures through an analysis of their forms and content. Some emphasis will also be given to biblical scholarship, the nature of exegesis hermeneutics and literary tools for biblical study.

## **Patrology**

This course discusses the lives and writings of the Fathers of the Church. It provides a study of the major events of the internal and external history of the Church and the establishment and expansion of the Church. Other topics included are: martyrdom, monasticism, patristic exegesis, and the early Christological and Trinitarian controversies.

## The Covenants of the Bible

One of the most valuable “keys” for opening up the theological significance of the Bible--of the whole of the story of the People of God--is the concept of COVENANT. This course presents a survey of The Covenant with Adam and Eve, The Covenant with Noah, The Covenant with Abraham, The Covenant with Moses, The Covenant with David, The “New Covenant”, and “The New Testament.”

## The Prophets

This course is an overview of the phenomenon of biblical prophecy within its historical, social and cultural settings and considers the various ways of categorizing prophets in the Jewish and Christian traditions.

## With Jesus Through the Holy Land: The Via Dolorosa

An in-depth look at the suffering of Christ through the lens of the *Via Dolorosa* (The Way of the Cross) in Jerusalem. Participants will learn about the Roman practice of crucifixion and walk with Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane to the Cross. Each Station along the Via Dolorosa will be viewed and discussed as history is brought to the current day.

## Mariology

Mary was probably about 13 years old when the angel Gabriel came to her with news, so incredible and unexpected...**she** would have a child, a son and **He would be the Messiah**. This 8 week study of Marian theology begins with devotion to Mary, Mary in Sacred Scripture, the development of the Virgin Mary's image and devotion from her descriptions in Sacred Scripture to the documents of Vatican.

## The Four Constitutions of Vatican II

The documents of Vatican II are the most important documents written about the church in the past four hundred years. Unfortunately very few people have read them. This five session lecture course begins with a basic understanding of what an Ecumenical Council is, the events leading up to Vatican II, and what took place during the council. In addition, the course presents an overview of the four major Constitutions:

*Sacrosantum Concilium (The Constitution on Divine Liturgy), Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Dei Verbum (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), and Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World).*

Understanding the major documents of the Second Vatican Council will enhance each participant's knowledge of the teachings of the Church and provide a new appreciation for how the Holy Spirit is very much alive and working in the Church today.

## The Writings of John

This course considers the theology and spirituality of the church as expressed in the Fourth Gospel. Attention is given to the theological and cultural setting of John's Gospel as well as the principle images and themes concerning Jesus and the Church found in the Gospel. The special vocabulary and spiritual program of John will be considered. Literary, structural, and theological topics are also to be examined as well as the position of the Johannine Church in the early Christian community.

## **St. Paul**

This course explores fresh insights into Paul's message of the Kingdom of God, its challenge to Roman Imperial Theology, and the apostle's relevance for today. Participants will examine the growth of the early Church and the theological and cultural setting for Paul's writings in the early Church to gain insight into the reasons for his tremendous impact in the formation of Christian Doctrine.

## **Praying With Icons**

Icons are not simply art; they are a way into contemplative prayer, and are therefore one way to let God speak to us. They are doorways into stillness, into closeness with God. If we sit with them long enough, we too can enter into the stillness-into communion. And if we listen to them closely enough, with our hearts, we just may discern the voice of God. When we speak of icons as a medium for "gazing into heaven", we refer to their value as much more than religious art. Instead, icons serve as a very real means for connecting us with God and His love. The course "Praying with Icons" focuses on the Festal Icons (the major events in the life of Christ and the Theotokos) and the Sacred Scripture that speaks to us through the sacred images.

## **Wisdom Literature**

This course is a study of biblical Wisdom Literature and selected Psalms with a focus on their underlying message and the literary contribution of ancient Israel to world literature. The course will also present a careful study of the literary character and theological themes in the Book of Psalms.

Your word, Lord, stands forever;  
It is firm as the heavens.  
Through all generations your truth endures;  
Fixed to stand firm like the earth.  
Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
A light for my path.

Psalm 119: 89-90; 105



You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood,  
A holy nation, God's own people.

1 Peter 2:9



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