



St. Peter Academy Receives National Blue Ribbon Recognition

By James McCarthy
Principal, St. Peter Academy



The St. Peter Academy educational community is proud to announce that our school has received recognition as a National Blue Ribbon institution. The National Blue Ribbon Schools

Program is a United States government program created in 1982 to honor schools that have achieved high levels of student achievement or made significant improvements in closing the achievement gap among student subgroups.

St. Peter Academy was established as a Catholic elementary school by the Sisters of St. Lucy Filippini in 1952. Although the student population has fluctuated since these early years, the school's Catholic identity and high academic standards have never wavered.

St. Peter Academy has now, as in the past, hosted a cadre of dedicated and knowledgeable teachers. The teachers offer a well-balanced student experience of traditional elementary studies seasoned with a valuable religious experience, technology applications, science and engineering exploration and real world problem-solving skills.

St. Peter Academy is a true melting pot of cultures, tradition and languages. Throughout the school year the students celebrate their diversity and unity with a culminating event on Heritage Day held each spring.

The motto of the Academy, "Providing the Keys to a Brighter Future", provides the academic foundation of the school. Students are challenged at their current academic level and motivated to progress in their studies. Students are challenged to leave their comfort zone and experience educational and social growth. Due to this challenge, the school was able, in the past three academic years, to raise its standardized test scores (Terra Nova) thus being recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an exemplary school.

During the 2017 school year, the Dept. of Education chose 50 private schools throughout the nation to be honored with a school of excellence award and St. Peter Academy is so proud to be one of the 37 Catholic schools chosen. On November 7, 2017, in Washington D.C, a team of educators and parents accepted the award from Betsy DeVos, Secretary of Education, on behalf of the Academy. The Academy then formally celebrated this newly acquired status at the 11 a.m. Sunday liturgy on November 19 presided over by Bishop John Flesey. At this Mass, a plaque and flag received from the Dept. of Education was blessed and installed in the school.

St. Peter Academy is a welcoming, yet challenging school. We encourage you to visit us or simply contact us by phone (201-261-3468) for a private tour. We believe you will be impressed by our students, staff and facility. You will find an

environment of comfort and safety, as well as knowledge that our children are successful as witnessed by their acceptance into valued secondary schools throughout the Archdiocese of New Jersey and New York and the Bergen County Academies.

Finally, we are encouraged by the members of our Catholic faith community, who donate to our “Adopt a Student Fund” assisting families in need of tuition assistance. Many of our past and present students have received a rich Catholic education through these generous donations.

God bless you and know our students remember the members of all of our Catholic parishes during our morning prayers.

REPENTANCE!

By MaryEllen Love

A bulletin board in the school where I teach reads, “Sometimes God takes us into troubled waters not to drown us but to cleanse us”. The phrase reminds me of the story of Jonah. You know the story: God divinely commissions Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach against its wickedness. Jonah hops on a boat and heads off in *another* direction. God hurls a violent storm upon the sea, Jonah is thrown into the raging waters and is then swallowed by a giant fish where he spends three days and nights in its belly praying. Finally, he is spit up - at which point he does what the Lord had asked of him in the first place and goes to Nineveh.

Everyone in Nineveh listened to Jonah and repented -- wearing sack cloth, sitting in ashes, fasting – the works. When God saw their repentant hearts, He showed them mercy and repented of the evil he threatened to bring upon them. That’s usually where the story ends for most. A repentant prophet with a repentant message that is taken to heart and people are saved by the mercy of God.

But the story continues with a narrow-minded prophet who is angry with God because He didn’t punish the wicked Ninevites believing God’s mercy shouldn’t apply to “them”. Yes, that’s right. Jonah,

after being treated with mercy, was angry that God showed mercy to others. Funny isn’t it, that even though he could hear God, his self-righteous hard-headed selfishness wouldn’t allow him to see like God. Contrary to the Ninevites - who did what God had asked of them - Jonah discarded God’s request and did as he wished. Jonah reasoned himself to be right, time after time.

This story is a good place to begin a Lenten reflection. How do we respond to God’s call to love Him? To listen to Him? To love each other? To follow His Commandments? Do we disregard God with reason, self-righteousness or a hard heart? Do our hearts resemble that of Jonah’s or of the Ninevites?

Lent is a time of truth, of repentance, of fasting and prayer. A time of reconciling ourselves with our Creator. We are human. We are sinners. Lent is a great time to clean up our act. Jump into the water of repentance this Lent with a contrite heart and be cleansed, and let’s be careful not to reason and rationalize our actions when they don’t align with God’s will -- lest we too may be swallowed up!

“Repent therefore and be converted so that your sins may be wiped away.”

Acts 3:19



THE TURQUOISE TABLE

By Eileen Hanrahan

Have you ever felt like life is passing you by, and you are just "muddling" through your day? That your life is just filled with tasks, moving from one thing to the next? That you are not living the life you imagined?

Kristen Shell, a faith-filled Christian and the author of *The Turquoise Table*, felt just like that. As the mother of four small children, her life was certainly a hectic one. She writes that she considered herself in "frazzled mode". The bible verse, "Take every opportunity to open your life and home to others" (Romans 12:13), had always resonated with her and was something she aimed for, but with her busy life that target kept on getting farther and farther away.

Her house was never in perfect order, and she had less and less time as her family grew. She had envisioned her home to be filled with friends and family like the bible verse says, at "every opportunity". And yet this ideal eluded her. She found herself screaming to God in surrender, "Lord, edit my life!" And she heard God answer her.

Kristen decided to purchase a picnic table, paint it turquoise, and put it on her front lawn (mind you she lives in Texas, a different climate than New Jersey!) She placed a pitcher of lemonade and a snack on the table, and she sat out there.

As people and neighbors passed by, she invited them to sit, and be present, and talk about what was happening in their lives and what worries their heart was carrying. Neighbors, friends, and strangers that became friends began to understand that when she was at the table, they were welcome. It became a "thing". She had standing times when she would be there that her community knew about, and she also had people that would call her up and ask for a time to come to the Turquoise Table because there was something on their mind.

Eventually, she wrote the book, *The Turquoise Table*, and the idea became a movement. At the time of her writing there were Turquoise Tables in virtually every state from California to Maine and at least five countries. She states, "we all crave community-authentic connection to do our one-and-only crazy lives together."

***"Take every
opportunity to open
your life and home to
others" (Romans
12:13),***

The book is a quick read, but a meaningful one. It made me stop and think. Will I join them? How about you?

Kristen has a blog, <http://www.kristinschell.com/the-turquoise-table/>, and a Facebook page. She also partnered with the store, Tuesday Morning, which is where I purchased the book (for \$8.99!)

In addition, in the beginning of the book, she talks about a woman, Ludmilla, that she "met" through attending a conference and watching Ludmilla's documentary. Ludmilla is a

widow living in the Czech Republic who has made it her mission to welcome people. Deeply devoted to Christ, she considers her home an extension of the Kingdom of Heaven. The documentary is quite moving, and her idea of hospitality is quite simple. I would be remiss if I did not refer to it. Her documentary can be found at: <https://deidox.org/film/woman-lives-at-embassy-of-kingdom-of-heaven/> or by googling "Ludmilla kingdom of heaven". It is less than five minutes long and well worth your time. Watch it!

Daily Offering Prayer

O Jesus, through the immaculate heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day in union with the holy sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of your sacred heart: the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, the reunion of all Christians.

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