

## THOUGHTS FROM YOUR PASTOR: Our Confirmation Teens Need Your Help! ‘Adopt’ One!

On May 22, our new bishop, Bishop Brennan, will be visiting Hardin County to confer the sacrament of Holy Confirmation on several of our local teens. It will be a **crucial moment** in their spiritual lives as they continue to grow up and deepen their walk with the Lord as disciples, all in the context of an increasingly secular culture which is conspiring to take them away from their Catholic faith and pursuit of holiness, a fate which has unfortunately been experienced by many young Catholics throughout our nation over the past few decades. As a pastor who cares deeply for the souls of our teens, I want to stem that tide. And this is why, this year, for their **“Confirmation Retreat”** (April 12-14), I want to expose our teens to experiencing the amazing and powerful retreat that is put on in our diocese by the **‘Damascus Catholic Mission Campus’** (home of the summertime’s ‘Catholic Youth Summer Camp’ that you may have heard about) – located just south of Mt. Vernon.

**Damascus** is a very faithful and exciting Catholic retreat center geared to teens, and they’ve been growing in leaps and bounds with their summer camps and Confirmation retreats, where they now bring together **over 2000 teens every year** from around Ohio to offer a powerful encounter with the Lord through the sacraments, Eucharistic Adoration, young adult speakers, praise and worship, small groups, and a variety of hands-on activities and challenges (they even have a climbing wall and a lake with jet skis!). I’ve been there many times myself to assist with their retreats and camps, and I’ve seen the **deep spiritual impact that Damascus retreats have on teens**. (It’s always amazing when I go there and see a hundred teens on their knees in Eucharistic Adoration with hands raised and singing praise and worship songs, giving themselves entirely to Jesus!) Many teens (and parents) share testimonials regarding how teens’ **lives are really changed** by their encounter with the Lord during their time at Damascus. Damascus was founded in 2001 precisely to begin to bring the Gospel to our youth, and to reduce the statistics in the research they cite, viz., that currently, **“63% of U.S. Catholic youth say that they have never experienced the love of Jesus...5 out of 6 young people confirmed in our parishes today will no longer be practicing their Catholic faith within 10 years of their Confirmation”**.

**I want to change that.** I do not want our Hardin County teens ending up “lost” in the confusion of our culture once they leave home at 18. I want our local teens to share in the Damascus experience as they prepare for Confirmation, so that they can have a powerful, transforming encounter with Jesus and feel the support of hundreds of other teens on fire for the same thing: an encounter of Jesus’ love that will stay with them for life!

**However, they need your help as their fellow disciples.** The Damascus Confirmation Retreat does cost some money, though for all that is provided for an entire weekend, it is very reasonable. The invoice per student is \$115. To make it affordable for families, I have only asked each family to donate \$20 of that cost. **The rest (\$95 per student) will have to be subsidized by our parishes.** This is where you come in: is the Lord calling you to help ‘adopt’ one or more of our teens and **contribute \$95 to cover the remainder of their retreat cost?** It’s a small donation to help make a powerful, life-changing encounter possible. If you feel moved to do so, please make your donation in an envelope marked “Confirmation Donation”; we will then give you the name of a teen for whom to pray, as he or she prepares for the Damascus retreat and also for Confirmation. Thanks!

Fr. Ferguson is available to help you with any questions or concerns you may have; please contact him at [hamilton.college@outlook.com](mailto:hamilton.college@outlook.com) or at 419-634-2626.

## THOUGHTS FOR OUR PARISH CHILDREN by “Jackie”, the Pastor’s Cat



Hi boys and girls! My name is “Jackie”, and as you know, I am Father Ferguson’s cat. Did you know that today is St. Patrick’s Day? That’s right! St. Patrick was a holy priest (and bishop) who lived in the land of Ireland many, many centuries ago. And he wanted to tell people how amazing God is, especially as the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They say he even used a single shamrock (with its three ‘leaves’) to show folks how God is both One and Three. My cat ancestors also tell the story that St. Patrick had to restart his lesson, because his cat ran outside and ate his first shamrock, along with some of the grass he was sitting on. We cats love eating plants. Oh well! Why not pray to St. Patrick and ask him for help to stay close to God! Have a “purr”-fect week!