

Principal's Letter September 25, 2009

Dear Parents,

The students meet in family groups; each family group consists of 18 students, two from each grade. The groups are led by the eighth graders, with help from the seventh graders. It's a great opportunity for the older students to mentor the younger ones, and it creates a bond among the grades.

This year, we are focusing on the **Gardens of Stewardship**. We are asking ourselves whether we are good stewards of ourselves, of others, of the environment, and of the world.

The Garden of Decisions-Do I bring God into my decision-making process? In my large decisions? In my small decisions? How does my faith affect the decisions I make in my work environment? Have I considered spiritual direction or counseling to help discern how God is leading my actions? Was there a moment today when God was challenging me to do something? Is there a significant decision I am being called to make in my life now? What part of my life do I try to keep God out of? How does this affect my decisions?

The Garden of Citizenship-we sometimes take for granted the fact that we live in a country in which we can speak our opinions. We have the opportunity to vote and we have people who represent us in our government. We have a tremendous amount of influence when we work together as a city, state or country. We also can have a surprising level of impact as individuals when we simply pick up a telephone. These are all gifts that we must use wisely.

The Garden of Money-Are we too attached to any possessions? What would I not be able to walk away from? Do I give 'from the top' of my material gifts, or from whatever is left over after I have spent on myself? Has God given me a particular item so that at some time and some place I can use it in the way He intended? How do I invest my material gifts for a greater return? Do I financially support local, national and world charities?

The Garden of Relationships-Are there any friends or family members I want to spend more time with? Is there someone that I need to tell that I love (or tell them more often?) Am I open to new friendships? Am I willing to take risks to reach out to others? Do I prioritize spending time with my family? Do I listen carefully when my friends or family are talking to me? Do I have any unresolved issues with a family member or friend that is getting in the way of loving them, or of them loving me? Are there any friends or relatives that I want to pray for?

The Garden of the Body-Do I nourish myself with a nutritious diet? Do I maintain a healthy body weight? Do I exercise regularly? Do I receive a healthy amount of sleep? Do I often find myself tired? Do I care for myself when I become ill? Do I make regular medical visits? Dental? Have I considered programs or practices for my body's health such as regular exercise?

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Continuation of Sheila's Bulletin

The Garden of Emotions-Do I take time off before I get to a point of burnout? Do I ask my friends for support when I need it? Do I let my emotions build up to an unhealthy level? Do I let myself have fun? Be happy? Often enough? Do I spend enough time alone? Is there a particular emotion I have that I want to understand or handle better?

The Garden of History-Do I stay informed about current events through media sources? Do I take advantage of books, documentaries, and other resources that give us perspective on history? Do I consider history and news critically, and how I can make a difference in the world? Do I share my personal stories with others? Do I regularly reflect on my own life and what I have learned from my personal experiences? Do I reflect on ways I have experienced Christ daily? Have I had an experience that I have a responsibility to act on?

The Garden of the Soul-Does God miss me? Do I regularly spend the time I want to with God? Do I go to retreats? Do I take advantage of liturgies, workshops, and other opportunities to grow in my spirituality? Do I pray regularly or as often as I would like to? Do I use prayer, fasting and almsgiving to cultivate my relationship with God? Do I spend time just listening to God?

The Garden of Creation-Do I reuse and recycle the items that I use? Do I allow concern for the world to influence my purchasing decisions? Do I educate myself about environmental issues? Is there a simple step I could take to reduce the impact I am having on the environment? Buying reusable grocery bags? Lowering the thermostat a little? Paying a little more for something recycled? Have I considered supporting organizations that protect land, animals, other wildlife, or the rest of environment?

The Garden of Technology and the Mind-When I use e-mail, do I do so in a way that enhance my relationships or detracts from them? Am I being called to learn more about some form of technology? Do I have access to tools that God might want me to use for a special project? A computer? A digital camera? Do I use technology in my life to become a fuller person?

The Garden of the Arts-Do I want to spend more time developing a particular artistic talent? Do I support art in my local community? Is there an artistic form that I've always wanted to try? Would I like to take a class to learn music, dance, or another art form? Do I take time to notice the art around me? Do I stop to listen to the words of a song that might speak to me?

This is a great deal to consider, and the challenge is to break it down to a level that the children can understand. Yesterday's family group dealt with The Garden of Decisions. Please ask your child what they remember about the family experience.

Meanwhile, I'm off to a Principal's Retreat...taking care of the Garden of the Soul.

Have a Great Weekend,

Sheila