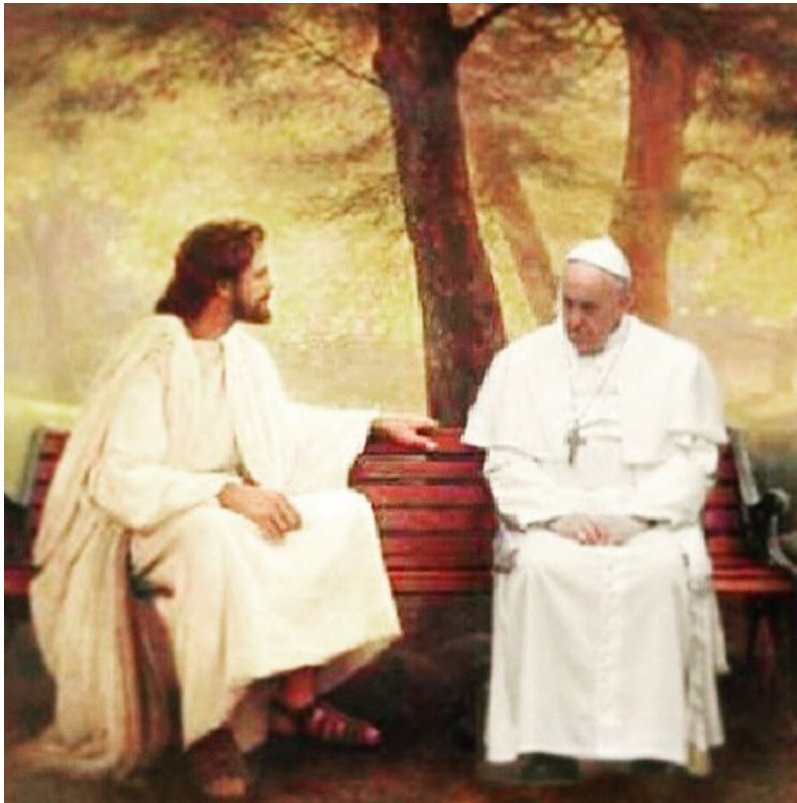


HOLY CROSS PARISH NEWS

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

VOL 20. NO. 3

February 2017



*Famous image of Jesus sitting on a bench photoshopped with Pope Francis
by Gary Kovacic! (Instagram.com)*

(Auschwitz July 29, 2016). The Pope's visit was a silent prayer. As soon as he entered (the camp) he sat down on a bench and prayed in silence for about fifteen minutes.

As you enter this Lenten Season, schedule a fifteen minute period each day, on your own chosen "bench", to LISTEN to your heart and to the Lord speaking to you! †



Lenten Penance



The Church traditionally encourages the faithful to spend Lent in penance, prayers, fasting, and corporal works that help draw them closer to God. Among these practices, penance is necessary not only to cleanse sins but also to invite us to participate in Christ's passion and death. Furthermore, penance helps us prepare for the joy of Easter. Therefore, it is helpful to see how our faith ancestors practiced penance and reconciled with God.

The early Christian community had no private and regular penitential practice. Baptism was the means for the remission of sins. But this was a one-time forgiveness. After Constantine the Great's recognition of Christianity in AD 313, the number of people baptized who committed sins after their baptism increased. What should the Church do for them? Penitential acts varied according to the gravity of sins. Those who committed serious sins like apostasy, adultery, idolatry, murder, and blasphemy were excommunicated from the Church. However, if they showed their intention to come back, the Church accepted them after they completed public penance.

Confessors decided whether public penance would benefit the souls of sinners. During the Lenten season, penitents made a declaration of their sins in the presence of the people. They were also excluded from communion starting on Ash Wednesday. Penitents had to show remorse for their sins, lie in sackcloth and ashes, wear rags, eat plain meat and drink, and nourish themselves with prayers in the weeks of Lent. This public penance concluded with a solemn reconciliation on Holy Thursday before Mass. Penitential psalms and litanies were recited, and penitents with lighted candles were led to the Church, and finally solemn absolution was given.

This process was harder than today's confidential and private penance. I think public penance has a glimpse of the communal aspect of the sacrament. Even though we now have a process of private penance, our individual penitential acts are communal. When we are sorry for our sins, the whole Church suffers with us, and when we confess and do penance, the whole Church rejoices with us. The sacrament reminds us we are one body, the Church, even though we personally reconcile with God. †

~ Father Andrew

Confirmation - December 17, 2016



Annabelle Austin
Samuel Bourdon
Brandon Garrouette
Abigail Jones
Ryan Lannen
Jenelle Lewis
Rhys Willaims †



Sacrament of Reconciliation - update

On Thursday, March 30, 2017, our Parish Lenten Service will begin at 7 p.m. Fr. Andrew and 2 other priests will be available for Confessions.

During Lent Saturday Confessions will remain 4:00-5:00 pm.

Exception: No Confessions on Holy Saturday. †

Lenten Fast and Abstinence Regulations

Everyone 14 years of age or over is bound to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent. Everyone 18 years of age and under 59 years of age is bound to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. (The obligation of fasting ceases with the celebration of one's 59th birthday.)

On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, only one full meatless meal is allowed. Two other smaller meatless meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken according to each one's needs, but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted on these two days, but liquids, including milk and fruit juices are allowed. When health or ability to work would be seriously affected, the law does not oblige.

Catholics should not lightly excuse themselves from these prescribed minimal penitential practices. †



RCIA - Holy Week & Easter



The Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu said, “A Journey of a Thousand Miles Begins with a Single Step”. Our faith journey is no different. Most of us came into our Catholic faith in one of two ways; we were baptized as infants or through an invitation through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults - commonly referred to as RCIA.

This has been a long journey for the RCIA participants. From first hearing the word of God to taking a leap of faith to inquire more about the Catholic faith. The catechumens and candidates then begin classes in September that culminate with Holy Week and the Easter Triduum.

Those in RCIA know this is indeed a very special week. They have endured hours of preparation and interviews. They have participated in Mass and understand the importance of coming to Mass each Sunday. They learn about prayer and the power of prayer in their lives and the change it will bring.

Holy Thursday is one of the oldest of the celebrations and this is the day Catholics commemorate the institution of the Eucharist, Priesthood and the Mass. Our catechumens and candidates are asked to participate in the washing of the feet by the priest. This is a humbling means to the start of the Triduum.

On Good Friday the group is invited to attend the faith walk downtown and participate in the veneration of the Cross on Friday night at Holy Cross. Then the Easter Vigil arrives.

This is the crown jewel of their faith journey when the catechumens are baptized and candidates baptized in recognized faiths make their profession of faith and are received fully into the church. Those on the journey as Catholics never confirmed are also confirmed.

But the journey is not over, it has just begun. Their Catholic journey is about continuing to learn more about their faith and to deepen it. We are all on a faith journey but for those seeking the truth, seeking to know more, it starts with an invitation. Do you know someone you can invite who is ready to begin their journey? †

~ Deacon Bill & Sherry Tunilla



The Rest Of My Life



I belong to a women's organization where a member is responsible for the program at each meeting. It could be a lecture on a particular topic, or a game, or just an introduction of oneself to the group. I am going to talk about my life because I think we find common ground in our lives in so many ways. However reflecting on my life is causing me some anxiety. Where do I begin? What do I find important? Who are the key players?

When you have lived almost three quarters of a century, as I have, there is a lot of information. I see myself in terms of relationships: daughter, sister, wife, mother, friend. However going back on my life, I think of things that I could have or should have done differently. This is like examining your conscience at the end of the day, but on a much larger scale. Often when I wake up in the middle of the night, the first thing I do is pray for all those who asked for prayer. Then I reflect on my whole life, trying to get back to sleep.

What does distinguish me from others is that I have a special needs daughter, Cindy, and I am married to a deacon. I have 3 other children and 8 grandchildren. I believe that Bill and I have always kept a united front in raising our children. We have had ups and downs and have come out stronger in the end. After 52 years, we can finish each other's sentences. We have lived in 5 states since we were married, and love our church communities. We stay close to dear old friends, and enjoy our new ones.

Now I find myself thinking about what I want to accomplish with the rest of my life. That is what I plan to reflect on this Lenten Season. Perhaps that would be a worthwhile reflection for all of us, young and old. What goals do I have at this point in my life? Where does God enter into my choices? †

~ Diane Finnegan

The Pope's Prayer Intentions for 2017:

March - Support for Persecuted Christians.

That persecuted Christians may be supported by the prayers and material help of the whole Church.

April - Young People.

That young people may respond generously to their vocations and seriously consider offering themselves to God in the priesthood or consecrated life. †



Lenten Reflection - Get Personal with Jesus



I would like to suggest a Lenten Reflection, but first a little background. As you know we are in Cycle A for the Sunday readings. That means that most of the Gospel readings are from the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Leading up to the Lenten Season, we have been hearing from Matthew, mostly from chapter 5. Thus Jesus' words to us during this period have been from His Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount is the crux of Jesus' teaching. It begins with the "Eight Beatitudes". When I teach the Beatitudes to an RCIA class I ask them to keep count, after all we all know there are 8 Beatitudes - 8 "Blessed Be" statements and 8 "Happy are the..." So imagine their surprise when we get to number 9! But it is in the 9th statement that Jesus gets personal with those on that mount, and with us. It reads:

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.

I underlined "you" and "your" to emphasize the personal nature of the statement. Following Jesus is not going to be easy, but the reward is great. Later on in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus continues the personal touch of his message. He says, "You are the salt of the earth." Salt is a preservative. Thus you and I are called upon to preserve the goodness of the earth. He then says, "You are the light of the world." Our good works, in living the Beatitudes, are to shine out on the world and, thereby, give Glory to God.

Jesus next tells his listeners, and us, that He "did not come to abolish [the law and the prophets] but to fulfill [them]". Interestingly, through a series of statements, He then appears to make things new. He repeatedly uses the phrase, "You have heard that it was said" and relates some rule or obligation. But that was the old way. He replaces it by saying, "But I say to you" with how he now wants it to be. Consider the following:

You have heard that it was said:
You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.

You shall not committ adultery.

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

You shall love your neighbor & hate your enemy.

But I say to you:
whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgement.

everyone who looks at a woman w/lust has already committee adultery.

offer no resistance to one who is evil.

love your enemies.

Matthew concludes Chapter 5 with Jesus' words of challenge to each one of us, "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." How's that for a challenge!

I believe that in order to answer this challenge, we must get personal with Jesus. Jesus and His message must become a part of our daily lives - especially during this Lenten Season. From Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday, there are actually 46 days on the calendar. In the Gospel according to St. Matthew, Chapter 5 there are 48 verses, just over a verse per day. Actually, if you begin with the first of the Beatitudes, Mt. 5:3, you can reflect on one verse per day and cover the remainder of the chapter.

Seeking perfection this Lenten Season is a lofty goal, and probably not attainable. But we can strive for holiness on our way to perfection, and that is attainable, as witnessed by all the books on the lives of the saints in the Holy Cross library. We are all called upon to be holy, but to do that we must enter into a personal relationship with Jesus. What better way than to reflect daily on His teachings, where he got personal with us. †

~ Deacon Bill Finnegan

The Editor's Bench

What can I say? God is truly an awesome God! As our writers send their articles and Ivy and I prepare for publication, as Sr. Loretta shared with me, it is always impressive how everything seems to "click" and a theme comes forward. This time there are many reflections to help us deepen our relationship with Jesus and hear God say, as reflected by Claudia Minden Weisz, "Ah, finally you have the idea!" May our time on our benches bring us to a deepening of LIVING GOD'S LOVE. †

~ Blessed Lent, JOY-full Easter. Sr. Joan



Lent With Little Ones



Family life is by nature chaotic. Kids are messy and sometimes moody. We love them, but they don't make life neat and tidy. For some of us, our perfect vision of Lent is very quiet, serene, contemplative, even monastic. Sometimes I feel that parents are left outside the gates during Lent, merely admiring the transformation going on inside where the "real" spiritual people are. Amidst the chaos of parenting, not only can parents fall more in love with Christ during Lent, but so can their children

To start, the primary purpose of Lent for us isn't suffering and sacrifice; it's growing in our love for God. Asked your kids "what is Lent" and most didn't know. The few who did recognize the word "Lent" described it as something like "oh, that's when we can't eat candy" or "that's when we have to give stuff away".

If we focus with our kids on sacrifice and suffering during Lent without leading them to a deeper knowledge of Christ's love, without a deeper knowledge of the blessings awaiting them in friendship with Christ, the sacrifices are pretty pointless. And if the sacrifices are too painful for children, they will develop a resentment for the faith. Lent is about responding to God's call for transformation, not seeing how tough we are and how long we can go without something. Our sacrifices can be incredible signs of commitment, but they're only holy if they are grounded in Love.

We can lead our kids through Lent so that their eyes are trained on the beauty of our Faith. Let's consider the 3 Pillars of Lent (fasting, prayer, and almsgiving) and how we can live them out with children in a way that draws us into closer relationship and kinship to Christ, our Savior. I love the framework that the 3 Pillars provides us, because it reminds us that we need to be open to Christ's love (prayer) and we need to be capable of mercy for others (almsgiving) and we need to give up something in order to remember what Jesus gave up for us (fasting). Then we can live fully the Easter message. If we live out the 3 Pillars with the goal of connecting with our children so that they can in turn connect with Christ, I think they will look forward to Lent every year!

A word about "fasting". Sacrificing food and things we find pleasurable so we can participate in Christ's sacrifice will help us understand him better and be a better friend to him. Explain to your kids that the Church isn't trying to punish us! Older

children comprehend this point, but younger kids will have a hard time with it. They still may not get it this year, but as we return to our family rituals and Lenten traditions each year, rituals & traditions that are grounded in love and joy, they will eventually get it.

As a family observing Lent, you can start with making a family sacrifice. Talk about which pleasure you'd like to give up and what good thing you will do with the time it gives you. Even if you make individual sacrifices you can still have one family sacrifice. This year my family is giving up all technology one day a week. Sharing a commitment that is challenging shapes the character of your whole family as a unit, not just the individual members. It's also a lot easier when you have a team supporting you!

If your children are old enough, you can begin helping them decide on a sacrifice for Jesus during Lent. Let your children decide what they want to sacrifice, and if they need help to plan what they are going to do, have some suggestions ready. For the youngest, this sacrifice business can be so hard. Really they're just practicing a bit at sacrifice, right? If they're too little to understand what it's all about they might fear their special toy will never return or that they'll never get to eat ice cream ever again. Having a Lenten calendar can be helpful at this age, because they can see clearly that there's an end to their sacrifice. †

~ Theresa Austin,
Dir. of Youth and Young Adult Ministry

Pope Francis has chosen a focus on Mary for the next *World Youth Day* celebrations, which will be held in dioceses in 2017 and 2018 and with an international gathering in Panama in 2019.

The themes “are intended to give a clear Marian tone to the spiritual journey” as well as to “give a picture of young people on a journey between the:

PAST (2017) “The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.” (Lk 1:49)

PRESENT (2018) “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.” (Lk 1:30)

FUTURE (2019) “I am the servant of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” (Lk 1:38)

~ inspired by the three theological virtues of faith, charity and hope.” †



Fun, faithful & FREE activities all through Lent -- just enter your email address to sign up!



KIDS ages 5-12 love this... so do parents. FREE family fun.

<http://www.holyheroes.com/Holy-Heroes-Lenten-Adventure-s/37.htm> †

Wishing you a prayerful Lenten Season!



Unscramble the word below to learn more about Lent!

___ ___ ___ Wednesday
S A H

___ ___ ___ ___ ___
T R E S A E

___ ___ ___ ___ Thursday
Y O H L

Good ___ ___ ___ ___
D Y R F A I

___ ___ ___ ___ ___
A T G S N F I



They Are Watching Us



We want our children to know the faith, to live the faith and be disciples of Christ. The most important thing is Mom, Dad, Family. It is up to parents to be thoroughly engaged with their children's activities, walk with them on their lives' journeys and lead by example. Parents need to model the faith for their children. We need to watch our children as they are watching us.

Parents need to instill good habits early in a child's life and parents need to participate in their life style. Parents should take opportunities to refresh and keep their own spiritual life alive and instill that in their children. Perhaps take an enrichment class on Faith Formation night instead of just dropping the children off. Interest and participation motivates children.

To grow up responsibly children need guidance from parents: good example, encouragement, communication with them. It is the parent's responsibility to show the way-not just expect the children to do it. Children need prayer and help to appreciate their Catholic Faith.

I recently read an article by David Luecking in the St. Louis Review: "Students Eager For Parents' Help In Growing In Faith" which was impressive, thought provoking, essential. Eighth graders at Our Lady School in Festus, Missouri had a simple question posed to them by their principal (who is also their religion teacher) to be answered anonymously. 'What do you need from your parents to help you prepare for Confirmation.'

"The Consensus...the students wanted their parents to:

- Take them to Mass every Sunday
- Pray as a family
- Share their faith
- Help guide them on this journey

In other words...want parents not only to give them a ride to Sunday Mass but to be an integral driver in their Faith."

A Final Thought: Remember, they are watching us. What are our children seeing to help them grow in Faith. ✚

Blessed Lent ~ Sister Loretta



And God Said No

by Claudia Minden Weisz



I asked God to take away my pride. And God said “No”.
He said it was not for Him to take away, but for me to give up.

I asked God to make my handicapped child whole. And God said “No”.
He said her spirit was whole, her body was only temporary.

I asked God to grant me patience. And God said “No”.
He said patience is a by-product of tribulations. It isn’t granted, it is earned.

I asked God to give me happiness. And God said “No”.
He said He gives me blessings, happiness is up to me.

I asked God to spare me pain. And God said “No”.
He said suffering draws me apart from worldly cares and brings me closer to Him.

I asked God to make my spirit grow. And God said “No”.
He said I must grow on my own. But He will prune me to make me fruitful.

I asked for all things that I might enjoy life. And God said “No”.
He said He will give me life, that I may enjoy all things.

I ask God to help me love others, as much as he loves me.
And God said “Ah, finally you have the idea!” †

Copyright © 1980 Claudia Minden Weisz (mother of a Rett Syndrome child)

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR LENT 2017

“The Word is a gift. Other persons are a gift” †

<https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/len/index.html>