

PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS
EIGHTH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME (C)

2 – 3 MARCH 2019



SUNDAY REFLECTION

Jesus, You are the leader.
May I follow You wherever You lead me.
May I listen to Your words – even the difficult ones.
May I obey Your invitations.

May I find the peace only You can give.
In my leading of others
keep me gentle and kind:
keep me humble of heart
and full of love.
And full of forgiveness
With a little bit of humor thrown in.

INTENTION FOR MARCH

Recognition of the Right of Christian Communities.

That Christian communities, especially those who are persecuted, feel that they are close to Christ and have their rights respected.

THEME FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH

March is the month of devotion to St. Joseph, whose feast falls on March 19th. The date of the solemnity of St. Joseph dates to the end of the 15th century; within the next few centuries, the entire month as a time for devotion to St. Joseph became part of tradition.

In a society which seems to discourage the importance of marriage and fatherhood, St. Joseph, the spouse of the Virgin and the man given the responsibility of raising Jesus, is an incredible model of an obedient, faithful, Christian father.

“This patronage must be invoked as ever necessary for the Church, not only as a defense against all dangers, but also, and indeed primarily, as an impetus for her renewed commitment to evangelization in the world and to re-evangelization,” wrote St. John Paul II in *Redemptoris Custos* (*Guardian of the Redeemer*).

John Paul II further said, “Because St. Joseph is the protector of the Church, he is the guardian of the Eucharist and the Christian family. Therefore, we must turn to St. Joseph today to ward off attacks upon the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and upon the family. We must plead with St. Joseph to guard the Eucharistic Lord and the Christian family during this time of peril.”

St. Joseph Table: this annual collection of bread will be conducted on the weekend of 16-17 March. More information on this celebration and its history will appear next wee.

LENTEN REFLECTION

Lent is a season for refocusing on the suffering and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we will be ready to embrace the good news of the Resurrection.

Why this emphasis on suffering? Because Christ saved us through an act of suffering. He bore in his own person the weight of our sin and died for us on the cross, where suffering and love coincided.

And the Church is the Body of Christ, which participates in Christ. Therefore, we shouldn't be surprised that we will be called upon to suffer out of love. In the economy of grace, God may

use our suffering to bear the burden of another member of the Body of Christ, just as one system can take up the work of another, or one organ can support another.

So as we begin with Ash Wednesday, let us resolve to focus on Christ's suffering, and to unite our own suffering—through fasting, prayer, almsgiving, and reflection on the Stations of the Cross—with the suffering members of the Church. It is not the destination but the journey that will ultimately transform us.

ASH WEDNESDAY READINGS:

6 MAR '19

Joel 2:12-18: In this extract from an Old Testament liturgy, there is a sense of urgency. There is no time to waste – the Lover seeks to be reconciled with the beloved in a whole-hearted way. God's response to this return is concern and compassion.

2 Cor. 5:20-6:2: Again, there is a distinct note of urgency. We hear Paul's pleading to the Corinthians to receive the grace being offered to them at this time. That grace is to accept being reconciled with God through Christ. 'Now' is the time, an acceptable time, this Lent, this Springtime in the 'eternal NOW of God'. The age-old message of reconciliation is to the fore in the reformed rite of the Sacrament of Penance.

Mt. 6:1-6, 16-18: In this meditation on the traditional acts of piety – almsgiving, prayer and fasting, - Jesus gives us the recipe for our Lenten program of renewal. The practices are the Father's inner way to salvation: part of an interior spiritual discipline, not for public display and recognition. God cannot be fooled by our ostentation or impressed by it. It is enough that the Father sees all of our actions.

MASS AND DISTRIBUTION SCHEDULE

6:30 A.M.

8:30 A.M.

12 NOON

7:00 A.M.

READINGS FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

10 MAR '19

Deut. 26:4-10: A creed to be proclaimed by the people of Israel, announcing who they are and how God has acted in their history, so as to lead them into 'a land where milk and honey flow'.

Rom. 10:8-13: A creed to be proclaimed by the Christian people, announcing salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Lk. 4:1-3: Journeying through the desert and on to Jerusalem, Jesus triumphs over Satan's goading temptations. Soon, He will travel to Jerusalem again, and triumph definitively over sin and death.

ASH WEDNESDAY WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT

The liturgical use of ashes originated in the Old Testament times. Ashes symbolized mourning, mortality, and penance. For instance, in the Book of Esther, Mordecai put on sackcloth and ashes when he heard of the decree of King Ahasuerus (or Xerxes, 485-464 B.C.) of Persia to kill all of the Jewish people in the Persian Empire (Esther 4:1). Job (whose story was written between the 7th and 5th centuries B.C.) repented in sackcloth and ashes (Job. 42:6).

Prophesying the Babylonian captivity of Jerusalem, Daniel (c. 550 B.C.) wrote, "I turned to the Lord God, pleading in earnest prayer, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes" (Daniel 9:3). In the 5th

century B.C., after Jonah's preaching of conversion and repentance, the town of Nineveh proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, and the king covered himself with sackcloth and sat in the ashes (Jonah 3:5-6). These Old Testament examples give evidence to both a recognized practice of using ashes and a common understanding of their symbolism.

Jesus Himself also made reference to ashes: Referring to towns that refused to repent of sin although they had witnessed the miracles and heard the gospel, our Lord said, "If the miracles worked in you had taken place in Tyre and Sidon, they would have reformed in sackcloth and ashes long ago" (Matthew 11:21).

The early Church continued the usage of ashes for the same symbolic reasons. In his book, *De Poenitentia*, Tertullian (c. 160-220) prescribed that the penitent must "live without joy in the roughness of sackcloth and the squalor of ashes." Eusebius (260-340), the famous early Church historian, recounted in his *The History of the Church* how an apostate named Natalis came to Pope Zephyrinus clothed in sackcloth and ashes begging forgiveness. Also during this time, for those who were required to do public penance, the priest sprinkled ashes on the head of the person leaving confession.

In the Middle Ages (at least by the time of the eighth century), those who were about to die were laid on the ground on top of sackcloth sprinkled with ashes. The priest would bless the dying person with holy water, saying, "Remember that thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return." After the sprinkling, the priest asked, "Art thou content with sackcloth and ashes in testimony of thy penance before the Lord in the day of judgment?" To which the dying person replied, "I am content." In all of these examples, the symbolism of mourning, mortality, and penance is clear.

Eventually, the use of ashes was adapted to mark the beginning of Lent, the 40-day preparation period (not including Sundays) for Easter. The ritual for the "Day of Ashes" is found in the earliest editions of the Gregorian Sacramentary which dates at least to the 8th century. About the year 1000, an Anglo-Saxon priest named Aelfric preached, "We read in the books both in the Old Law and in the New that the men who repented of their sins bestrewed themselves with ashes and clothed their bodies with sackcloth. Now let us do this little at the beginning of our Lent that we strew ashes upon our heads to signify that we ought to repent of our sins during the Lenten fast." As an aside, Aelfric reinforced his point by then telling of a man who refused to go to Church on Ash Wednesday and receive ashes; the man was killed a few days later in a boar hunt. Since the Middle Ages, the Church has used ashes to mark the beginning of the penitential season of Lent, when we remember our mortality and mourn for our sins.

In our present liturgy for Ash Wednesday, we use ashes made from the burned palm branches distributed on the Palm Sunday of the previous year. The priest blesses the ashes and imposes them on the foreheads of the faithful, making the sign of the cross and saying, "Remember, man you are dust and to dust you shall return," or "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel." When we begin the holy season of Lent in preparation for Easter, we must remember the significance of the ashes we have received: We mourn and do penance for our sins. We again convert our hearts to the Lord, who suffered, died, and rose for our salvation. We renew the promises made at our baptism, when we died to an old life and rose to a new life with Christ. Finally, mindful that the kingdom of this world passes away, we strive to live the kingdom of God now and look forward to its fulfillment in heaven.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS:

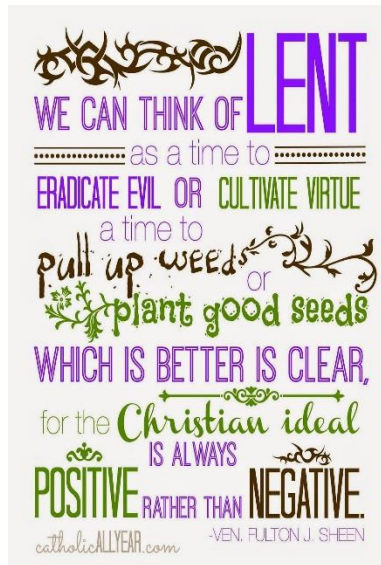
Stations and Benediction will be held every Friday evening at 7:00 p.m. This will be preceded by quiet time for Adoration of the Eucharist which will begin at 5:00 p.m.

Stations of the Cross, also called **Way of the Cross**, a series of 14 pictures or carvings portraying events in the Passion of Christ, from His condemnation by Pontius Pilate to His entombment. The series of stations is as follows: (1) Jesus is condemned to death, (2) He is made to bear His cross, (3) He falls the first time, (4) He meets His mother, (5) Simon of Cyrene is made to bear the cross, (6) Veronica wipes Jesus' face, (7) He falls the second time, (8) the women of Jerusalem weep over Jesus, (9) He falls the third time, (10) He is stripped of His garments, (11) He is nailed to the cross, (12) He dies on the cross, (13) He is taken down from the cross, and (14) He is placed in the sepulchre. The images are usually mounted on the inside walls of a church or chapel but may also be erected in such places as cemeteries, corridors of hospitals and religious houses, or on mountainsides.

The devotional exercise of visiting and praying in front of each of the 14 stations and meditating on the Passion of Christ stems from the practice of early Christian pilgrims who visited the scenes of the events in Jerusalem and walked the traditional route from the supposed location of Pilate's house to Calvary. Tradition holds that Mary, the mother of Jesus, set up stone markers at her home outside Jerusalem to prayerfully retrace the steps of her Son's Passion, but the origin of the devotion in its present form is not clear. The number of stations originally observed in Jerusalem was considerably smaller than 14. In the early 16th century, Ways of the Cross were established in Europe, and the tradition of 14 stations probably derived from the best known of them, that at Leuven (1505). The Franciscans long popularized the practice, and in the 18th century they bowed to Western Christian devotional feeling and provided 14 stations in Jerusalem. The traditional stations have been recently supplemented with the Via Lucis (the Way of Light), in which the meditations focus on the resurrected Christ.

Prayerful meditation through the Stations of the Cross is especially common during Lent and on Fridays throughout the year, in commemoration of Christ's Crucifixion on Good Friday. The devotion may be done individually or in a group and is particularly important in Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran traditions. Each station is commonly visited with some variation of the prayer "We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You. Because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world" and with a reading from a relevant passage of Scripture. Both St. Francis of Assisi and St. Alphonso Maria de' Liguori wrote devotional guides for the Stations of the Cross that remain popular.

More to follow



LENTEN WEEKDAY REFLECTIONS

Ash Wednesday Repentance and the spirit of Lent is above all else believing in the Gospel, believing in Jesus and His transforming presence in the Church and in the life of every one who believes in Him. Repentance is belief in the persistence of the dying state of Christ and in the power of His resurrection. The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe. Let our prayer for every day of this Lent be: Lord, help me to believe in You and in the power of Your Gospel

The prophet calls Israel to repentance, emphasizing that God is gracious and merciful. The epistle repeats the call to be reconciled to God. It is erroneous to say God must change and be reconciled to us. It is we who need to return to God, change our ways, repent. The Gospel demands evidence of repentance or right about-turn. There must be a change in our behavior – nothing flamboyant or showy, but good works done quietly and peacefully. A fourth century bishop wrote:

Lord Jesus, think on me
And purge away my sin;
From earth bound passions set me free
And make me pure within.

Thursday after Ash Wednesday The Old Testament reading presents us with a choice, life or death, good or evil. Those who choose aright are promised long life and security in the land. For the Christian this is not always so – often the following of God's ways leads to suffering, loneliness and exile. The Gospel reading helps – it speaks of taking up the cross and following Christ. The Christian life is one of sacrificial service. The follower of Christ may often have to abandon much which he holds dear if he is to serve Christ. To take up the cross daily is to live in the constant daily awareness of God and the needs of our fellow human beings.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small.

Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Friday after Ash Wednesday For the prophet fasting is most important, but not the outward display which so many of his fellow men were practicing. The fasting God requires is restraint of oneself, doing without things, so that we can help others, and he gives examples. The Gospel declares that to be with Jesus Christ is pure joy. A gloomy pessimistic Christian is a contradiction. For John Baptist's disciples the time of sorrow had come for them, because he was in prison. For Jesus' disciples a time of sorrow would come. Jesus is saying to us: Can you take both joy and sorrow – for that's life.

Saturday after Ash Wednesday The prophet declares that those who abstain from mockery, jeering and poking fun at others and instead do good to their fellow human beings, will have a spring in their step. They will feel good. The Gospel reminds us that every one of us has been called by God. As Levi was called and found happiness in responding to the call, so shall we. God loves us as we are. No need to have a wash and brush up first. God accepts us as we are, ready to change.

My song is love unknown,
My Savior's love to me,
Love to the loveless shown
That they might lovely be.

ALTAR:

The very purpose of a church building – The Altar

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the center of Catholic life and is our continuing source of sanctifying grace.

For this reason then, the altar is the very reason of the existence for the church. The altar in fact mystically represents Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Sacrificial Victim and our intercessor with God the Father. The most sacred object in the church is the Blessed Sacrament. The second, is the consecrated altar. In Apostolic times, the altar in the *domus ecclesiae* or house churches was often a wooden table as at the Last Supper. In fact, the cedar table that Our Lord used for the First Mass during the Last Supper in the Upper Room is believed to be preserved in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of St. Peter's Basilica.

In ancient times, altars were also constructed of metal, such as of gold and silver, though the use of stone eventually became the norm. The construction of a permanent altar out of stone was being legislated as early as the 6th century, though this was universal for the Roman Rite until 1596 per the *Pontificale Romanum*. Till about the 11th century, wooden altars were still being used and even consecrated with holy oils.

From the earliest time of Christianity, the bodies and memories of the martyrs were honored in the catacombs or cemeteries with the celebration of their *die nativitatis* or *heavenly birthday*. Once the Catholic religion was legalized in the Roman Empire, the practice of placing an altar over the remains of a martyred saint gradually developed. This is exemplified by the high altar in St. Peter's Basilica which is situated directly over the tomb of the First Pope. Later, it became more customary to place the relics of the martyrs within the altar itself, sometimes

behind a metal grate that allowed one to view or even access the holy remains. This intimate and physical connection of the martyrs with the altar, signifies the bond that exist between those who shed their very blood for Christ and their Crucified Savior. This also beautifully fulfills the vision of St. John the Apostle as he related in the book of the Apocalypse, “...*And I saw under the altar, those who were slain for the Word of God*”. Centuries later, a liturgical law was made in the Latin Church of the practice of enshrining the relics of a martyr within the altar or underneath it. This sepulcher, a type of sealed tomb, can be located either within the altar structure or on top of the *mensa* which is Latin for *table*, referring to the flat portion or top of the altar. Here at St. Stephen, Martyr the relics are contained in a locked wooden box on a shelf under the surface of the altar.

The traditional rite of consecrating an altar includes the ceremony of sealing the relics of the saints in the sepulcher but before this takes place, preparatory steps must be done by the bishop. The reliquary of the martyred saints is taken to a special place, usually a chapel, where a vigil of veneration is made to the enclosed saints throughout the night as a type of funeral wake. The next morning, when it is time to consecrate the altar, the relics are carried in procession on a bier by four deacons vested in red dalmatics. Red, for the blood the martyrs shed, and carried as if in a funerary procession, though with a tone of triumphant victory as the saints have received their eternal crown.

Ideally, along with the rest of the church building, the high altar should face east so the Holy Sacrifice may be offered in that direction, as has been done since ancient times. The altar should also be constructed so that it is freestanding and not fixed against a wall. Its prescription for the construction of an altar is implied in the *Pontifical Romanum* which directs the bishop to anoint the back side of the altar during its consecration. This could not happen if placed against a wall. A freestanding altar allows the celebrant to circle the altar while incensing it, thus venerating the entire structure of the altar, which represents the body of Christ. With this symbolism in mind, this form of the altar better corresponds with that of a tomb or sarcophagus. This position also permits the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to be celebrated on either side of the altar.

PRAYERS

Mardi Gras Prayer

Blessed are You, Lord God of all creation,
for it is from Your goodness that we have this day
to celebrate on the threshold of the Season of Lent.

Tomorrow we will fast and abstain from meat.

Today we feast.

We thank You for the abundance of gifts You shower upon us.

We thank You especially for one another.

As we give You thanks,

we are mindful of those who have so much less than we do.
As we share these wonderful gifts together,
we commit ourselves to greater generosity toward those
who need our support.

Prepare us for tomorrow.
Tasting the fullness of what we have today,
let us experience some hunger tomorrow.
May our fasting make us more alert
and may it heighten our consciousness
so that we might be ready to hear Your Word
and respond to Your call.

As our feasting fills us with gratitude
so may our fasting and abstinence hollow out in us
a place for deeper desires
and an attentiveness to hear the cry of the poor.
May our self-denial turn our hearts to You
and give us a new freedom for
generous service to others.

We ask You these graces
with our hearts full of delight
and stirring with readiness for the journey ahead.
We ask them with confidence
in the name of Jesus the Lord.

PASTOR'S UP-COMING SCHEDULE

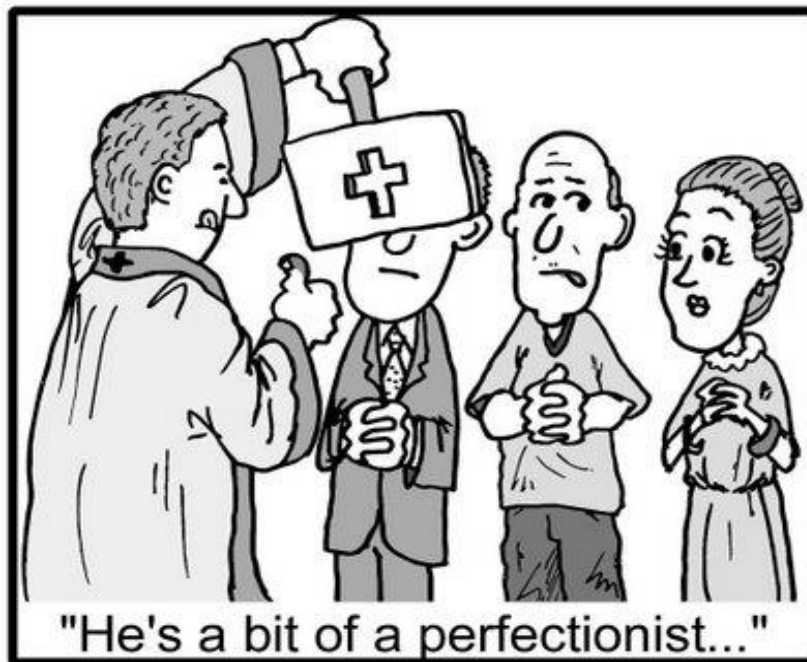
Saturday 2 Mar	Mass 8:30 a.m. Baptism 9:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Confessions 1:30 – 4:30 p.m. Vigil Mass for 8th Sunday Ordinary Time 5:00 p.m. Meeting
Sunday 3 Mar	Masses 7:00 a.m., 8:30 a.m. 11:30 a.m. 5:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m. Brig
Monday 4 Mar	Priest's Day Off Mass 8:30 a.m. Brig 7:40 p.m.
Tuesday 5 Mar	Mass 8:30 a.m. St. Brides Correctional Facility
Wednesday 6 Mar	Ash Wednesday Mass and Distribution of Ashes 6:30 a.m. 8:30 a.m. 12 Noon (2:00 p.m. away) 7:00 p.m.

Thursday 7 Mar Confessions 7:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.
Mass 6:30 a.m. 8:30 a.m.
Confessions 7:00 – 8:30 a.m.
Confessions 5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
Mass 6:30 p.m.
Lenten Lessons 7:00 p.m.

Friday 8 Mar Mass 6:30 a.m. 8:30 a.m.
Confessions 7:00 – 8:30 a.m.
Stations of the Cross and Benediction 7:00 p.m.

Saturday 9 Mar Mass 8:30 a.m.
Confessions 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Vigil Mass 1st Sunday of Lent 5:00 p.m.

Sunday 10 Mar 1st Sunday of Lent
Masses 7:00 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. 5:00 p.m. Brig 7:00 p.m.



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