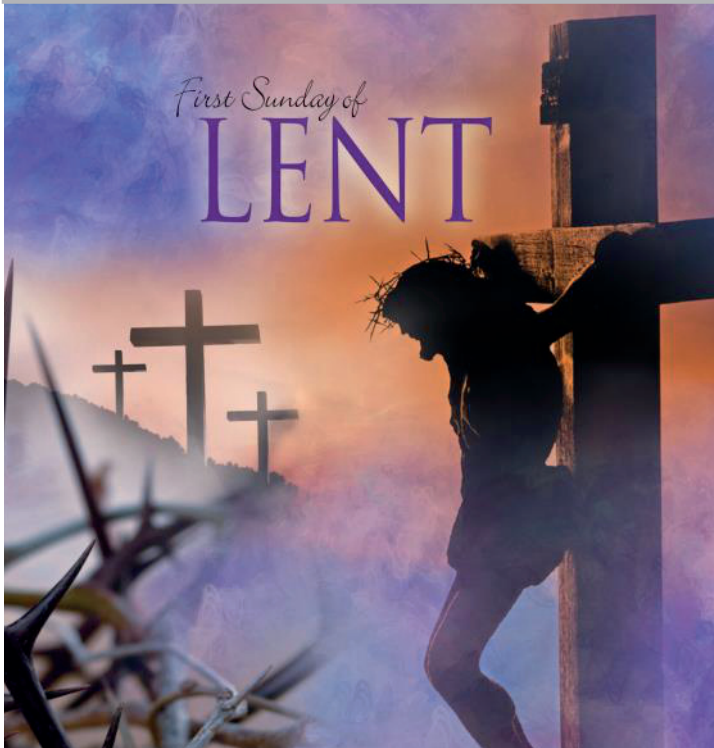


Saint Mary's Church

15164 Juniper Dr. Marne, MI 49435 / 616.677.3934 / www.saintmarysmarne.org

February 18, 2024 ~ The First Sunday of Lent



Weekend Mass Schedule:

Saturday 4:30PM St Mary

Sunday 8:30AM St Michael

Sunday 10:30AM St Mary

Sunday 4:30PM St Michael

Weekday Mass Schedule:

Tuesday 9AM St Mary

Adoration begins after Mass until 2:00 pm

Wednesday 9AM - St Michael

Adoration begins after Mass until 2:00 pm

Thursday 9:00 AM St Mary

Friday 9:00 AM St Michael

Sacrament of Reconciliation:

Tuesdays: 2:00PM to 3:00PM ~ St. Mary

Wednesdays 2:00PM to 3:00PM ~ St. Michael

Thursdays: 2:00PM to 3:00PM ~ St. Mary

Fridays: 12:00PM to 1:00PM St. Michael

Saturdays: 3:30PM to 4:15PM ~ St. Mary

Sundays 3:30PM to 4:15PM ~ St. Michael

(or anytime by appt. please call parish office)

St. Mary Parish Office

Monday - 8:00AM - 4:30PM

Tuesday - 8:00AM - 4:30PM

Wednesday - 8:00AM - 11:30AM

Thursday - 8:00AM to 4:30PM

St Mary's Mission Statement: *We, the Roman Catholic community of St. Mary's, by our baptism have become the People of God, dedicated to living and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are a community built on faith and the sharing of individual talents, abilities and skills for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Empowered by the Holy Spirit and strengthened by prayer and the sacraments, we continue the mission of Jesus to reveal God's presence in all of human life.*

Pastor:

Rev. Michael Hodges / frmhodes@grpriests.org
616.677.3934

For emergency please call: 616.745.1409

Deacon:

Deacon Tom Roberts / troberts@saintmarysmarne.org
616.677.3934

Business Manager:

Todd Kline / businessmanager@saintmarysmarne.org

Parish Secretary:

Cathie VanGessel / secretary@saintmarysmarne.org

Director of Religious Education:

dre@saintmarysmarne.org

Director of R.C.I.A: Jill Brown-616.677.3934

Adult Bible Study: Jill Brown-616.677.3934

Maintenance/Custodian: Jim & Marian Looks: 677.3934

Liturgical Minister:

Gary Karr / 616.677.3934 / gkarr@saintmarysmarne.org

Music Director:

Dr. Bernie Stanko 616.490.3836 /
berniestanko@hotmail.com

Pastoral Council:

Sharon Davis, Vito Dolci, Geary Farrell,
Doug Frantz, Becky Warners,

Finance Council:

Lisa Bradley, Jose Gomez, Scott Lampe,
Mel Northup, Brent Patterson

Martha League: Parish Office: 616.677.3934
(assistance with meals during illness or injury)

Prayer Line:

Parish Office 616.677.3934
or Linda at 677.3269 for evening requests
call Darlene 616.453.0157
or email: bfa1414@yahoo.com

Our Cluster Parish:

St Michael's - 17150 - 88th Avenue
Coopersville, MI 49404
616.384.4026
www.saintmichaels.us

Mass Intentions

Saturday February 17

4:30PM † D. James Stewart by M/M Rob Rander.....**MA**
Sacrament of Reconciliation: 3:30 PM—4:15 PM - St Mary

Sunday February 18

8:30AM † Paula Raczekiewicz-Kelly by Pam Raczekiewicz**MI**
10:30AM † Rhonda Grabinski by Knights of Columbus #11581 ..**MA**
4:30PM Our Parish Family**MI**
Sacrament of Reconciliation: 3:30 PM—4:15 PM - St Michael

Monday February 19 No Mass

Tuesday February 20

9:00AM Our Parish Family.....**MA**
Adoration begins after Mass until 2pm
Sacrament of Reconciliation: 2:00 PM—3:00 PM - St. Mary

Wednesday February 21

9:00AM † Winnie Spencer by Joe & Amy Armock**MI**
Adoration begins after Mass until 2pm
Sacrament of Reconciliation: 2:00 PM—3:00 PM - St. Michael

Thursday February 22

9:00AM † Betty Oziemkiewicz by Rachel Bowens **MA**

Friday February 23

9:00AM † Mary Klein by Patrick & Krista Messock **MI**

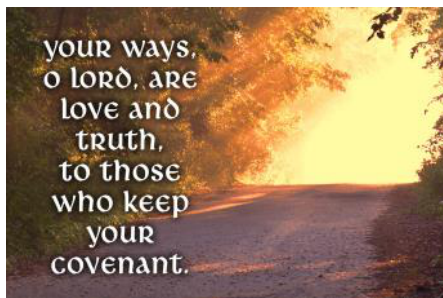
Saturday February 24

4:30PM † Mike Magnotta by M/M Rob Rander.....**MA**
Sacrament of Reconciliation: 3:30 PM—4:15 PM - St Mary

Sunday February 25

8:30AM † Chuck Albrecht by Chris Albrecht and Family**MI**
10:30AM † Agnes Schwartz by Knights of Columbus #11581**MA**
4:30PM Our Parish Family**MI**
Sacrament of Reconciliation: 3:30 PM—4:15 PM - St Michael

MA=St. Mary **MI**=St. Michael's



Scripture Readings For the Week of February 18, 2024

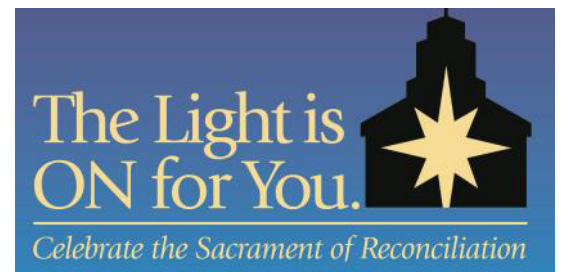
Sunday First Sunday of Lent
Gn 9:8-15; Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9; 1 Pt 3:18-22; Mk 1:12-15
Monday Lv 19:1-2, 11-18; Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 15; Mt 25:31-46
Tuesday Is 55:10-11; Ps 34:4-5, 6-7, 16-17, 18-19; Mt 6:7-15
Wednesday Jon 3:1-10; Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19; Jl 2:12-13; Lk 11:29-32
Thursday Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, Apostle
1 Pt 5:1-4; Ps 23:1-3a, 4, 5, 6; Mt 16:18; Mt 16:13-19
Friday Ez 18:21-28; Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-7a, 7bc-8; Mt 5:20-26
Saturday Dt 26:16-19; Ps 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8; Mt 5:43-48
Sunday Second Sunday of Lent
Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Ps 116:10, 15, 16-17, 18-19;
Rom 8:31b-34; Mk 9:2-10

St. Michael's Liturgical Ministers

| | Feb 25 / 8:30 AM | Feb 25 / 4:30 PM |
|-----------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Altar Servers | Lauren Meerman Alivia Kosten Hyde Kosten | NEED TWO |
| Eucharistic Ministers | Deacon Tom Jennifer DeMull Andrew Bonter Chris Albrecht Denise Nelson Mark Phillips Kenny Harker | Ken Schwallier NEED ONE |
| Lector | Kevin Schumaker | Carol Reens |
| Sacristan | Rosemary Weigel | NEED ONE |
| Ushers | Wade Lindberg Jim Ponshair Ed Irwin Curt DeVos | Mary Bueche NEED ONE |
| Music | Craig Bleckley | Craig Bleckley |

St. Mary's Liturgical Ministers

| | February 24 - 4:30PM | February 25- 10:30AM |
|----------------|---|---|
| Sacristan | Need One | Gary Karr |
| Altar Servers | MaKaelyn Britt Kassidy Britt | Casimir Lothschutz Calvin Davis |
| Precious Body | Angie Hanks Paul Madura Geary Farrell | Deacon Tom Bruce Kamp Becky Warners |
| Precious Blood | Keith Anderson Mary Kirkwood Need Two | Margie Jirous Christina Withers Need Two |
| Hospitality | Jeff Schneider Need Three | Anthony Leale Nettie Leale Leonard Horter Need One |
| Lector | Nicolette Looks | John Klein |
| Music | Bernie Stanko | Bernie Stanko |



As we begin the season of Lent, the Diocese of Grand Rapids will once again offer a special opportunity to receive the sacrament of reconciliation.

"The Light is ON for You: An Evening of Penance" Thursday, March 14 5 - 8 p.m. in almost every parish of the diocese
Visit GRdiocese.org/penance for details
Wed, March 13 at St Michael 2PM- 5PM
Thurs, March 14 at St Mary from 5PM-8PM

Additional Opportunities for Confessions during Lent.
Tuesdays - 2PM-4PM - St Mary
Wednesdays - 2PM-4PM - St Michael
Saturdays - 3:30PM-4:15 - St Mary
Sundays - 3:30PM-4:15PM - St Michael

Cluster News and Community News and Events

40 Days for Life ~ March 8, 2024

Would you be willing to pray for one hour?

40 Days for Life is a unique pro-life effort that consists of 40 days of prayer, fasting and peaceful vigil in front of abortion clinics. This will be the 29th campaign in Grand Rapids, and it will take place in front of Planned Parenthood- 425 Cherry Street SE Grand Rapids. This facility provides the abortion pill and refers for abortions. Dozens of area churches have adopted a day of prayer. **Our parish family has chosen Friday, March 8, 2024**. We need 2 prayer volunteers from 7 am till 7 pm throughout the day. This is a powerful and proven effective way to close abortion centers and show the Mother's that we are praying and thinking about them and their babies. Please consider a hour of your time~ If you are unable to attend that day you may go to the clinic and pray any time! Thank you for your commitment to LIFE! God bless!
www.40daysforlife.com/GrandRapids

PRAY TO END ABORTION

40 DAYS FOR LIFE
WWW.40DAYSFORLIFE.COM

Meal Train for Fr Mike

Scheduling now for 2024! It really is as easy as making an extra serving of whatever you are preparing your family for dinner. Put it in a microwavable container and drop it off at the Parish Office on your way to (or home) from work.. Or call the office to make special drop off arrangements. (Sign up online: or call the parish office) <https://www.mealtrain.com/trains/8vv97n>
Thank you to everyone that has dropped off a meal to Fr Mike. He appreciates your thoughtfulness and generosity.

Please Pray for our Engaged Couples

Julia Delaney & Logan Brouwer

.....April 13, 2024 (Cathedral of St Andrew)

Rachel Berg & Joseph Elenbaas

.....September 21, 2024 (St Mary)

Lord God, the source of all love, the wise plan of your providence has brought these young people together. As they prepare themselves for the sacrament of marriage and pray for your grace, grant that, strengthened by your blessing, they may grow in their respect for one another and cherish each other with a sincere love. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen



Fr Mike's Musings



In beginning this study of the modern relativism regarding the Old Testament I mentioned that some people unfortunately reject it outright. The outstanding example in history of rejecting the Old Testament is Marcion who was born in the latter half of the First Century AD. He rejected the Old Testament claiming that the God of the Old Testament who was vengeful at times could not be the same as the Father of Jesus who was loving. He rejected the Twelve Apostles and accepted only Paul as an Apostle. He accepted as his Bible only one Gospel, Luke, and the Epistles of Paul. Is it not ironic that the most famous doubter of the Old Testament also rejected a large part of the New Testament along with it? Although heretical, his followers, called Marcionites, nearly outnumbered faithful Christians during the 160's and 170's AD.

Many people agree that the Temple in the Old Testament has been replaced by Jesus in the New Testament and Israel in the Old Testament has been replaced by the Church in the New Testament. In that sense, we see the Jews as our spiritual ancestors. To understand the New Covenant made in Jesus we need to know the Mosaic Covenant of the Old Testament.

It is obviously erroneous to suggest that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are different. It is the same God in both Testaments. The Lord in the Old Testament is the Father of Jesus, whom Jesus calls 'Abba'. As well as God's justice in the Old Testament we also see His love. With Jesus' love in the Gospels we also see His righteous/angry justice in cleansing the Temple and in His debates with the Pharisees. If the depiction of God in the Old Testament is not to our liking that should arouse in us the virtue of humility, and not scorn, since God was working with the tools of the time--human authors with limited knowledge and influenced by the culture and customs of their age.

Being conscious of some distaste for the Old Testament should be a personal challenge since none of us is fully Christ yet and we are called to be another Christ, continuing His mission in our world along the lines of His example. Many people cannot accept that there are vengeance, curses and anger in the Psalms yet society around us is unfortunately tinged by these. If they are in the Psalms, they are there for a reason, that is, they reflect daily life. As individuals and society, we are called to grow from Old Testament-type thinking, which permitted battles, to the New Testament thinking of Jesus, which challenges us to love our enemies, pray for our persecutors, place the welfare of others before our own. With the knowledge and examples provided by both Testaments of scripture we not only grow in our understanding of God the Creator, but also that of ourselves and our God-given propensity for becoming evermore like God the Son, Jesus Christ.

Exploring Priesthood Discernment Meetings

Discernment is a time of obtaining spiritual guidance and understanding. If you are considering the priesthood, the Diocese of Grand Rapids invites you to meet with other young men (ages 16+) to gather and discern God's will for your life. Meetings will take place from 12:30-1:30 p.m. at St. Stephen Parish, 750 Gladstone Dr. S.E., East Grand Rapids and are offered on the **following Sundays in 2024: Feb. 18, March 10, and April 21**. Just show up or email Pattie Reynolds, preynolds@grdiocese.org, to RSVP. Questions? Contact Father Stephen Durkee, director of priestly vocations, sdurkee@grdiocese.org

Discerning the Diaconate Meetings

Is God calling you to discern a vocation to become a deacon? The Office of Diaconate Formation invites men with interest or questions about discernment and formation to an informational session. Pick a session that works best for you.

Meetings are from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

-March 11, 2024, at Christ the King Catholic Church, 9596 Reed Rd., Howard City

-May 6, 2024, at Cathedral Square Center, 360 Division Ave. S., Grand Rapids

To RSVP or learn more, contact Dcn. Jerry Roersma, director of diaconate formation, at 616-288-0913 or jroersma@GRdiocese.org

February 18, 2024 ~ The 1st Sunday of Lent

View this bulletin online at www.DiscoverMass.com

St. Mary's Parish News

St Mary Religious Education

Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLW) During 10:30AM Mass.

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. Lent is a season of prayer, reflection and renewal. Beginning with Ash Wednesday. Lent lasts for forty days. It ends before the liturgy of Holy Thursday, which begins the Sacred Paschal Triduum.



Religious Education Classes

1st-7th Grade

Wednesdays at Hall / 6:15- 7:30pm

Second grade parents have a First Holy Communion parent meeting on February 21 at 6:15 pm.

8th Grade -Confirmation Classes

Wednesdays at Hall / 6:15- 7:30pm

Please keep our eighth grade students in your prayers as they continue to prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Questions or comments:

Please contact the Parish Office. 616.677.3934
dre@saintmarysmarne.org

Knights of Columbus #11581 News

Knight Person of the Month for February - Mike Magnotta

Knight Family of the Month for February- Carl & Kelly Spence

The Knight Person / Family of the month is a way of recognizing someone who has gone above and beyond, or done something extra for the council or our church community. Congratulations and Thank you for service and commitment to our Parish Family!



February 4 Blood Drive Results

Goal: 25

Donors Scheduled: 20 / Donors Registered: 22

Successful Donations: 17 whole blood + 3 double red =

23 successful units!

Congratulations to our milestone achievers!

Jeffrey Elderkin - 1 gallon!

Julie Lothschutz - 2 gallons!!

Lives saved in our community: 57!!

Thank You to everyone that donated...

SAVE THE DATE! Next Blood Drive & Donuts - June 2, 2024



CALLING ALL ADULT MALE PARISHIONERS:

The **KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS** would like to have you as a member of their council. Do you think you're too busy to join?

Your time commitments includes church activities that you may already be supporting, such as Choir, Hospitality ministry, Eucharistic ministry, etc. Just keep doing the things you are already doing, nothing more. **Being a Knight should compliment your life, not complicate it.** Get involved only when you have time. If you are bust, that's OK. **Just being a member is helpful and shows your support.** Ask a Knight to sign up or do it online at KofC.org. / RobRander82@gmail.com / 616.283.7483

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A KNIGHT

We are Catholic men who lead, serve, protect and defend. We share a desire to be better husbands, fathers, sons, neighbors and role models and to put charity and community first. **To learn more** about the Knights of Columbus' activities and what they do to support our parish community, the surrounding area and the world, please contact Grand Knight: Rob Rander at: robrander82@gmail.com or come to a General Membership Meeting. Meetings are held the 1st Thursday of the month at 7:00pm in St Mary's Parish Hall.

Next Meeting - March 7 at 7PM at the Parish Hall.

LIVE STATIONS OF THE CROSS



Please join us for The Living Stations of the Cross Friday, February 23 at 7PM. The 7th Grade Religious Education students will be presenting LIVE stations. Come pray the stations as they re-enact Jesus's passion and death on the cross.

Stations of the Cross Fridays at 7PM During Lent

Feb 23 - LIVE Stations Led by Religious Ed Students

Mar 1 - Led by Our Lady of Fatima Guild

Mar 8 - Led by Gary Karr

Mar 15 - Led by Pastoral Council

Mar 22 - Led by Knights of Columbus Councils #1158 & #9909 at the Outdoor Meditation Path



We adore you O Christ, and we praise you, because by Your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Giving Back to God ~ Time, Talent & Treasure

| Attendance at Mass: | Feb 10/11 |
|--|------------------|
| Feb 10 4:30PM: 131 Feb 11 10:30AM: 158 | |
| Adult Contributions | \$4659.00 |
| Children Contributions | \$15.50 |
| Loose Contributions | \$294.00 |
| Capital Improvement | \$80.00 |
| Online Giving | \$380.00 |
| Total | \$5428.50 |
| Weekly Offertory Needed for Budget | n/a |
| Budget vs Actual to Date (since July 1) | n/a |

Thank you for your continued support and generosity!

St. Mary's Sponsor of the Week RIDGE HEATING & COOLING

Rinke Family Owned, Parishioners - 616.520.8505 ~ RidgeHeatandCool.com

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR BULLETIN!

Welcome to the Cluster Parishes of St. Mary and St. Michael

View this bulletin online at www.DiscoverMass.com

St. Michael's Parish News



Scrip News— Thank you to our 12 families that purchased Scrip this week. Our total profit was \$72.19.

CSA 2023 — Thank you for your gifts to 2023 Catholic Services Appeal! Your generous support funds essential diocesan ministries that strengthen us in Christ. Our parish goal for 2023 is \$59,280.00 and 100% participation, which means every parishioner should return their pledge card. To date, we have pledged \$44,875 (or 75.70%) toward our goal. We still have \$14,405.00 to go to reach this goal. If you haven't already contributed, please consider doing so soon. Any remaining balance at the end of the campaign will come out of our general operating funds. Please continue to pray for the success of this important effort.

St. Michael's Parish Family

Remembers in Their Prayers: Kevin Johnson, Anne Pols, Alexandria Gordon, George Langlois, Brooke Campbell, Linda Abel-Carroll, Jackie May, Dennis Goosen, Jean Mayse, Ken Heflin, Payton Patterson, the victims of abortion, & the men and women in the military.

Photo Directory — If you haven't already turned in your family photo for our directory, please do so ASAP. You may email a photo to: secretary@saintmichaels.us or call the office (616) 384.4026 to schedule a time to stop in and have a simple photo taken by Beki. It is not too late to take part, and we want all to be included!

St. Michael's Faith Formation

Children's Liturgy of the Word: program is offered on Sunday during 8:30 Mass. Children 3-9 years old are welcome to join us each week as we pray, read and explore the Sunday Gospel from a child's viewpoint. We include the Gospel Acclamation so children understand the importance of preparing our mind and heart for the Gospel reading. In today's Gospel we hear that Jesus when to prepare in the desert. We too must prepare with fasting, prayer and almsgiving.



Elementary Faith Formation: The elementary program is for students in grades 1-5. We meet on Wednesday from 6:15- 7:30 pm. **There is a First Communion parent meeting** for 2nd graders on Feb. 21 at 6:15 pm in the classroom . Please contact Debbie Venekase (616-384-4026) if you are unable to attend.

Middle School Faith Formation: Grades 6, 7 and 8 will meet on Sundays after the 8:30 am Mass from 9:45 to 11:15 in the Youth Room. Please pray for our Confirmation candidates as they continue to prepare for their Sacrament of Confirmation.

St. Michael's Sanctuary Lamp

for special intentions of St. Michael's Parishioners



Knights of Columbus News

Men of St. Michael! There are two excellent retreats available in our area:

Building a legacy. 2024 KEPHA Men's Conference. **March 9th, 2024**, at St. Robert of New Minister Catholic Church in Ada, Michigan. Featured speakers. Curtis Martin, Father Robert McTeigue, S.J., Michael Gormley John Yep, and Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak. Schedule: 7:00 a.m. Doors Open for breakfast and confession. 8:00 a.m. Conference Starts, 11:30 a.m. lunch 2:45 pm conclusion. The conference includes a hot breakfast, lunch, Mass, and times for confession. Early registration ends **February 23rd**. After that ticket prices increase. Tickets are \$38 for men, \$20 for students.

<https://www.buildingalegacy.org/2024-building-a-legacy-catholic-mens-conference.html>

The Grand Rapids Diocese Knights of Columbus is sponsoring a Men's Retreat on **Saturday March 16 2024**. It is a one-day retreat at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church Parish Hall at 520 Myrtle NW Grand Rapids, MI 49504, with Fr. Mark Bauer. It starts at 9:00 AM with Adoration and Confession at 3:00 and Mass at 4:00. Registration to Marty Brown by **March 7th. Contact m.brown@mikofc.org or 616-560-0479**. The cost is \$25 payable at the retreat. Checks to Saints Peter and Paul Parish. Both of these retreats should be excellent! Please pray on it.

Giving Back to God

February 11, 2024

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Adult Envelopes | \$3,703.00 |
| Loose Cash | \$218.00 |
| Children's Envelopes | \$14.00 |
| Total | \$3,935.00 |
| Building Fund | \$110.00 |

Thank you for your continued support!

St. Michael's Preschool

Have you considered St. Michael's Preschool for your child or grandchild? If not, you should! Come see what a great experience St.

Michael's Preschool can provide. Come meet our Director/Teacher, Cindy Lindberg! Preschool meets on MWF from 8:45—11:45 am. For more info, call the Parish Office at 616-384-4026.



February 18, 2024 ~ The First Sunday of Lent

View this bulletin online at www.DiscoverMass.com

Fulfillment, Reign, Reform

Before his public ministry, Jesus was led into the “desert,” where God had led his people before him to be formed for forty years. The “desert,” for all of us, is a period of formation which we must experience in order to pass from slavery (“Egypt”) into the true freedom of the promised land (the Kingdom of God).

To be free from slavery to sin we must “come out,” separate ourselves, from “Egypt”—that is, from the culture that enslaves us by conditioning us to think and act like everyone else. This is not just a counter-cultural stance that identifies us with some other particular group, some subculture, that conditions us in turn to think and act as that group does. The desert is separation—emancipation—from all the cultures of this world. To go to the “desert” is to let ourselves be formed by God himself.

God called the Jews into the desert to form them together as his chosen people. And Jesus calls us to come with him into the desert to be formed by him into a people, into a community of faith and differentness: his Church. To be a member of the Church is to accept that emancipation which consists in a certain radical “separation” from every human society, state and culture. Christians never see themselves primarily as citizens of any country. We are always in some sense “foreigners” within any nation because we are citizens of heaven. Our homeland is not here. We always feel like exiles and aliens, no matter what country we live in or what culture we belong to. Our allegiance to every government, and our identification with every race, culture, or ethnic group, is always secondary to our allegiance to God and our identification with the people, the children of God all over the earth (see Hebrews 11:13-16 and 13:13-14; 1 Peter 1:17 and 2:4-12; Philippians 3:20; Ephesians 2:11-22).

Christians give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God; that is, we contribute to the national interests of our country in every way which does not conflict with our undivided loyalty to God (see 1 Peter 2:11-17). But for us all, “national interests” are relatively unimportant, in the sense that they are radically secondary to our real interests as the People of God. How can we who have renounced all interest in money

FEBRUARY 18, 2024

1ST SUNDAY OF LENT

Genesis 9:8-15; 1 Peter 3:18-22;
Mark 1:12-15

and property as such (see Matthew 6:25-32 and 19:21; Luke 6:20-31) have the same concern about the economy that the government has, except insofar as it is directed toward helping the poor?

How can we who do not care about saving our own lives in this world (see Matthew 16:24-28) agree with the “kill or be killed” philosophy of the state?

We expect to question the attitudes, values and way of life taken for granted even in our own families. When Jesus said, “I came to bring sons into conflict with their fathers and daughters with their mothers”; and when he said, “Call no man ‘father’ on earth, because you have only one real Father, who is in heaven” (see Matthew 10:34-39, 23:9), he called us into that “desert” of emancipation from loyalty to our family’s attitudes and values which frees us in every generation to look at the Gospel with open minds, and see in it “new things as well as old” (see Matthew 13:52). This is what keeps the Church prophetic and alive. Prophets come out of the desert, and it is their voices crying in the wilderness that keep the people moving toward the Kingdom of God (see Matthew 3:1-4; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:2).

Lent is a time when we consciously go into the desert, that is, when we deliberately, explicitly try to reexamine and call into question those basic attitudes, values and assumptions on which we base our lives and our behavior. In the measure that we experience conversion during this time, and reshape and reform our lives, we will come more fully under the reign of God and into the fulfill-



ment he promises.

REFLECTING ON THIS WEEK'S GOSPELS

First Week of Lent

***Pray daily:** Lord, take me out into the desert with you this Lent. Give me the motivation to spend some time alone with you. Speak to my heart. Change my focus. Teach me to live life to the full—in love.*

Monday: Matthew 25:31-46. “Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me....’” Is helping others your first priority in life? Is it the guiding principle behind our national policies? (Reflect on the death penalty, our immigration policies, our motives for war).

Tuesday: Matthew 6:7-15. “Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” When you say the Our Father, are you consciously trying to make the order of priorities Jesus gives here your own?

Wednesday: “The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here!” What is the difference between what Solomon valued and what Jesus teaches us to value? Have you studied the wisdom of both? Where will you find it?

Thursday: Matthew 16:13-19 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” What do your actions say about who Jesus is for you?

Friday: Matthew 5:20-26. “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” How does your way of living go beyond the letter of God’s commandments?

Saturday: Matthew 5:43-48. “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Are you as concerned about doing favors for people who do not treat you well as you are about showing love for your friends? What was Jesus’ attitude?

LIVING THIS WEEK'S GOSPELS

As Christian: Write down your guiding goal in life. Is the fulfillment you seek the same as that proclaimed by Jesus?

As Disciple: Read chapter 5 of Matthew (the Sermon on the Mount). Compare what Jesus says here to your own value system.

As Prophet: Make a resolution to do something during Lent which expresses a different set of values or priorities than that of the culture. It could involve, for example, your use of time or money, the way you relate to people, the way you act at work, the way you recreate.

As Priest: Enter into the Lenten liturgy as fully as you can. Begin making plans now to attend all the services in Holy Week.


As King: Do something to make those choices in your life or home—or those policies at work over which you have some control—express the priorities of God rather than of the culture. Look at how money is spent or made, how people are rewarded or punished, how truth is expressed or distorted.

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