

ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON CHURCH



Father Mark Seiker
3301 Echo Drive
North Platte, Nebraska 69101

Rectory / Office [308-534-5461](tel:308-534-5461)
Parish Hall: 534-0511

Parish email: rectory-office@seas-np.org
Webpage: <http://www.seas-np.org>

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time *February 11, 2018*

Welcome to St. Elizabeth's: It is our hope that you feel at home and among friends here at St. Elizabeth. If you are a visitor for a day, we pray God's speed on your journey. If you are looking for a parish community, we would be delighted to welcome you into our parish family. Please introduce yourselves. Registration forms are available in the entry racks or contact us anytime at 308-534-5461.

Religious Services

Mass Schedule For Sunday Obligation:

Saturday 5:00 p.m.
Sunday 10:00 a.m.

Weekdays & Holy Days

As published in the Bulletin.

Rosary

Prayed **8:30 a.m.** Monday mornings, and
30 minutes before weekend Mass.

Sacrament of Confession

Offered 30 minutes before most all daily Masses
Saturday 4:00 p.m. – 4:55 p.m.
Sunday, 9:00 a.m. – 9:55 a.m., or by appointment.

Sacrament of Baptism

Parents are asked to attend a baptism preparation class. This is recommended, and easiest to do before the birth of the child, but must be done before the baptism.

Sacrament of Matrimony

To assist those who plan to marry, all couples will be required to fulfill the diocesan marriage preparation policy, which includes the FOCCUS & Engaged Encounter Programs. This requires a minimum of 4-6 months. The assessment process must be completed before a wedding date is set. Contact pastor early to begin the preparation.

Parish Information

Bulletin Deadline

All material is to be submitted to the parish office before noon Wednesday prior to the Sunday it is to appear. Email to: rectory-office@seas-np.org

New or Moving Parishioners

Please call the office to arrange an appointment with the Pastor to register in the Parish. Please call the office to notify us of any address change.

Your Will

Ask your attorney to include remembrance of your Church in your will.

Religious Vocations

Any young woman interested in religious life, or young man interested in a vocation to the priesthood should contact your pastor. Please pray for vocations!

Education

C.C.D. Programs

Sunday mornings (Sept-May) 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (R.C.I.A.)

For those interested in possibly joining the Catholic Church. Usually on Wednesdays (Sept-May), 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. in Parish Hall. Please contact the parish office for more information.

SCHEDULE OF MASSES

Monday Feb. 12 8:00 a.m.
 10:30 a.m.
 Tuesday Feb. 13 **7:00 a.m.**
 * * * * * **Ash Wednesday (Day of Fast and Abstinence)** * * * * *
Ash Wednesday Feb 14 7:00 a.m.
 12:10 p.m.
 7:00 p.m.
 * * * * *
 Thursday Feb. 15 8:00 a.m.
 Friday Feb. 16 **5:30 p.m.**
 6:00 p.m.
 Saturday Feb. 17 **5:00 p.m.**
 Sunday Feb. 18 **10:00 a.m.**

INTENTIONS

Rick Ryan
 Funeral for Martha Burbach
 Catherine Sullivan
 Anna Lee
 People of Our Parish
 For our Benefactors
 * * * * *
 Elizabeth (Liz) Haag
 Jack Matoole +
 * Exposition / Stations / Benediction *
 People of Our Parish
 Marinn Niesen

**Whether you eat
 or drink, or
 whatever you do,
 do everything for
 the glory of God.**
— 1 Corinthians 10:31

Stewardship: February 4, 2018

Adult Envelopes:\$2,320.87
Loose Plate:\$170.00
Children: \$0.00
Total: \$2,490.87

Joy of the Gospel Campaign
 Total Pledged:\$958,770.00
 Gifts last week:\$765.00
Total Gifts Received:.....\$668,561.05
 Original DIAL Loan:.....1,485,000.00
 Total Received (CTTF Camp):\$1,025,440.07
 Misc Donations Received:.....\$739,940.31
 Total Payments on Loan:.....\$1,489,360.04
 Balance on DIAL LOAN:..... \$262,215.88

Southern NE Register:\$67.00

Parish Calendar

Sunday Feb. 11 11:00am CCD Classes **11:00am - Knights of Columbus Breakfast in Parish Hall.**
 11:30am Daughters of Charity meeting in Rectory Conference Room.
 2:30pm MT Cursillo Ultreya (Imperial) 7:30pm=Vigil for Martha Burbach (10:30am Mon Funeral)
 Wednesday Feb. 14 **ASH WEDNESDAY ... NO RCIA Class**
 Sunday Feb. 18 11:00am CCD Classes **7:00pm – Theology on Tap (KC Hall).**

Catholic School News:

Thank You ... to all who joined us in celebrating CSW 2018. We enjoyed the Mayor's Proclamation, Career Day Events, Mass with Bishop Hanefeldt & Blessing of our Schools plus Bingo for Books! We are blessed to have great volunteers from our Catholic Parish & School Families! Thank You to all who helped at weekend Ministry Fairs!

Best of Luck ... to Ashley Dye and Allie Montgomery who will be competing at Poetry Out Loud Regional competition in Kearney on Sunday, February 11.

NCDA Swing Choir Competition ... will be on Monday, February 12. The IRISH Saintsations will compete at 1:30 MT at Chase County High School Auditorium.

Feb 14: **Ash Wednesday** 10:30am All School Mass (Holy Spirit).

The IRISH Speech Season ... is in full swing! There are some very talented students competing in various categories this year. *There is no admission fee to watch speech.* Be entertained and see them in action in *Ogallala-2/17; Southwest-2/24; NPHS-3/3; SPVA Conference-3/5 @ ChaseCo; Speech & Drama Night @ NPSP* will be held Tue, Mar 6 (watch bulletin for details) & *NSAA District Speech-3/12.*

Accompanist for Swing Choir ... St. Patrick's High School is currently looking for an accompanist for the Swing Choir. This competitive group will travel to two competitions this spring plus host a Spring Concert at home. The rehearsal schedule is Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 3:30-4pm. Please contact Taina Ward at the school 532-1874 or t.ward@npcschools.org if you have questions or would like to learn more.

North Platte Catholic School:

Faith and Knowledge for a Brighter Future

Daughters of Charity (Altar Society) Meeting:

will be **Sunday, Feb. 11, at 11:30am** in Rectory Conference Room. All women are invited & encouraged to attend.

Breakfast by Knights of Columbus ... Sunday, Feb. 11, in the Parish Hall after 10:00am Mass; serving pancakes, eggs, fixings, biscuits & gravy, coffee & juices. Free Will offering accepted ... Proceeds go to the purchase of Missalettes.

Knights of Columbus Meeting ... Mon, Feb. 12, 7:00pm, Parish Hall. All Knights are invited to attend.

Camp Kateri Dueling Pianos Benefit ...

Camp Kateri is hosting its annual benefit dinner on Friday, April 13, 2018 at Stone Creek Reception Hall in McCool Junction. The entertainment is The Fun Piano Show, by 176 Keys. Dinner begins at 6:30pm. The Dueling Piano Show starts at 8:00pm. Tickets are \$40 per person and \$350 for a reserved table of eight. To order tickets, please email CampKateriT@gmail.com or call 402-724-2596.

Holy Spirit Church starting a Youth Group! ...

All high school students grades 9-12 are invited for Fun, Food and Faith. Mark your calendars - Youth Group dates are April 11, August 9, November 14 and February 13, 2019 at 6:30pm. More details to come!

SKY Camp & Leadership Camp Registration

... **Online registration is open** for SKY Camp and Leadership Camp. To register your child, or learn more about these outdoor experiences, go to www.campkateri.org

Stress in Your Marriage? ... *There is less than a week left to sign up for Retrouvaille.* Retrouvaille is a program for married couples that feel bored, frustrated, or angry in their marriage. Some experience coldness and simply shut down. Others experience conflict and arguments in their relationship. Most don't know how to change the situation or even communicate with their spouse about it. This program has helped tens of thousands of couples experiencing marital difficulty at all levels including disillusionment and deep misery. For confidential information about or to register for the February program beginning with a weekend on Feb. 16-18, 2018, call 1-888-317-5654 or 308-986-2351 or www.HelpOurMarriage.org.

About Best Lent Ever 2018 ... Lent comes every year. It's meant to be a time when we invite God to help us become the-best-version-of-ourselves. But for many of us, Lent isn't a transformative experience. It's just a time when we give up chocolate or something else we enjoy, then go back to it at Easter.

This Lent, do something different. Join our parish for BEST LENT EVER, a free email program from Dynamic Catholic that is designed to help you have a life-changing Lent. Each day, you'll receive an email with ... Inspirational Videos, Practical Tips, Encouraging Stories. [Sign Up at DynamicCatholic.com/40Days](http://DynamicCatholic.com/40Days)

FREE Book: Perfectly Yourself ... This year's Best Lent Ever program is based on Matthew Kelly's book Perfectly Yourself. In this newly revised edition, you will discover 9 ways to embrace God's amazing dream for your life. Please pick up your copy in the Narthex and have it ready to read along with the Best Lent Ever Emails that you will receive during the season on Lent when you sign up.

Pope Benedict's Encyclical "God is Love" ... Pope Benedict XVI says the following words in his encyclical letter "God is Love": "In sacramental communion I become one with the Lord, like all the other communicants. As Saint Paul says, "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:17). Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own. ... Love of God and love of neighbour are now truly united: God incarnate draws us all to himself. ... Here the usual contraposition between worship and ethics simply falls apart. "Worship" itself, Eucharistic communion, includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn. A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented" (n. 14). These words remind us of our calling to love all our neighbors, born and unborn.

Catholics at the Capitol ... Join the Catholic Bishops of Nebraska and fellow Nebraska Catholics for a special advocacy day hosted by the Nebraska Catholic Conference, **Thursday, Feb. 15, 8:00am-3:00pm**. Learn about the important issues facing the Nebraska Legislature, get trained on talking to your senator, and make your voice heard!
8:00 a.m. Registration at Cornhusker Hotel in Downtown Lincoln
8:30 a.m. Prayer led by Bishop Conley
9:00 a.m. Speaker program starts
Fr. Justin Fulton and members of the Nebraska Catholic Conference
10:30 a.m. Head over to Capitol to meet senators
12:15 p.m. Optional Lunch with Senators at Capitol*

*The senator lunch is separate from the DCCW lunch held at the Cornhusker Hotel. Contact your local Diocesan Council of Catholic Women representative for information about that.

Bargain Bin ... New items are coming in daily! The next **Bargain Bin Evening Bag Sale** will be **Monday, Feb. 12** from **5:00pm-8:00pm** and the next **Day Time Bag Sale** will be **Thursday, Feb. 15** from **10:00am-3:00pm**. Thank you to all our generous donors! We are accepting donations of furniture.

Your Action Needed Now ... Our state legislature is considering an important legislative bill (LB295) that advances educational opportunity for Nebraska's low-income and working-class families. LB295 enacts a tax credit for private donations to nonprofits that would provide K-12 private-school scholarships for poor and working-class children. Take action now, visit www.necatholic.org for more information. God bless your faithful advocacy!

Day of Recollection ... What a great way to start Lent by attending one of the Days of Recollection **on Ash Wednesday, February 14**, in **Hastings** (Fr. Jeremy Hazuka) or **Waverly** (Msgr. Timothy Thorburn). Take the time to prepare your hearts for remembering the sacrifice Jesus made for us and to thank Him for the suffering so that we could be saved and enter heaven. Remember that a true Lenten sacrifice is not only giving something up for Lent but also doing something extra.

Christmas Poinsettias ... thank you to those who gave donations for our Christmas poinsettias: Charles & Toni Barron, in memory of all the Barron's deceased families; Beatrice Estrada, in memory of Juan B. Ortega family & Julian and Martin Estrada; Jim & Shirley Nisley, in memory of Otto, Virginia & Lynn Weskamp, and Robert & Anita Nisley; Alice Robinson, in memory of Al Robinson; Bernadine Torres, in memory of Jesse Torres and deceased Cabrera family.

Poinsettias ... have been removed from the Altar. Please take them (in Narthex) with you & give them a good home!

Put a Retreat into Your Schedule ... register at www.goodcounselretreat.com & receive immediate confirmation or call Good Counsel Retreat House at 402-786-2705 to register now.

February – March Schedule:
Feb 14..... LDCCW Women
Day of Reflection (10am–3pm) "Ash Wednesday"
Feb 16-18..... Fr. Sean Kilcawley Women
"Divine Daughterhood / Merciful Motherhood"
Feb 23-25..... Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz Men
"Lenten Outlooks on Pleasure, Power, and Possessions"
Mar 2-4..... Fr. Joseph Faulkner Men / Women
"The Bible lets you talk to God better"
Mar 16-18..... Magnificat with Susan Potvin Women
"Life in the Spirit Retreat"
Mar 19-22 Fr. Gary Coulter Men / Women
"Silent Directed Ignatian Retreat (Mon-Thur)"
Mar 23-25 Fr. Robert Young, O.F.M. Men / Women
"Finding Peace in the Will of God"
Mar 29-31 Marian Sisters..... Young Women
Triduum Retreat

FROM FR. MARK SEIKER:
2017 Individual Contribution Statements

... were mailed on Saturday, February 10, 2018.

From Other Adorers ...

- I don't understand when people say they can pray at home as well as in Church. I can't. My house has telephones, clocks, windows, etc. God's house does not have these distractions. God's house has the Blessed Sacrament. Only in His presence do I find peace and the ability to concentrate. Adoration hours are like a mini-retreat when I can truly rest in the Lord and feel His presence.

Liturgical Minister

	Sat., Feb. 17, 5:00pm	Sun., Feb. 18, 10:00am
Lector	Jerry Beckius	Shane Lowrey
Acolyte	Jerry Volesky	Duane Johnsen
Server	Volunteer	Lakeland Lowrey
	Volunteer	Harmon Johnsen
Music	Greg Vandenberg	Greg Vandenberg
Gifts	Jim & Shirley Nisley	Bob & Tracy Ryland
Ushers	Cindy Swanson	Volunteer
	Alice Robinson	Spencer Hampton

Readings for the Week

Monday:	Jas 1:1-11; Ps 119:67-68, 71-72, 75-76; Mk 8:11-13
Tuesday:	Jas 1:12-18; Ps 94:12-13a, 14-15, 18-19; Mk 8:14-21
Wednesday:	Jl 2:12-18; Ps 51:3-6ab, 12-14, 17; 2 Cor 5:20 — 6:2; Mt 6:1-6, 16-18
Thursday:	Dt 30:15-20; Ps 1:1-4, 6; Lk 9:22-25
Friday:	Is 58:1-9a; Ps 51:3-6ab, 18-19; Mt 9:14-15
Saturday:	Is 58:9b-14; Ps 86:1-6; Lk 5:27-32
Sunday:	Gn 9:8-15; Ps 25:4-9; 1 Pt 3:18-22; Mk 1:12-15

Prayers for the sick: Dolores Kosmicki, Peggy Fleecs, Gordon Swanson (Cindy Swanson's father), Patti Caudillo, Leona Clouatre, Renate Nordquist, Virginia Waechter (mother of Peggy Orr), Sharon Beckius, Frank Schneweis (Emily Krondak's father), John Kahl, Mike & Kim Paul, Margaret Schuckert, Eileen Boltz, Jim Beckius.

Prayers for the deceased: Martha Burbach, Bernie Pieper (Justin Pieper's grandfather), Jerry Kenny (Charles & Toni Barron's son-in-law), Bernadine Duryea (Ben Heskett's mother), Luke Ranck, Robert Inlow (Joanne Bollish's son), Mickey Kirwan (Teri Volesky's brother), Margaret Baxa, Loretta Pilakowski, Pat Sexton, Mary Portz, Phyllis Beckius.

Birthdays: 2/11 - Betty Steffes, 2/12 - Paul Nordquist, 2/13 - Ryce Troyer, 2/14 - Jerry Steffes, Peggy Orr, 2/15 - Molly Walz, 2/18 - William Krondak, Nora McCormick.

Congratulations: to Paul & Renate Nordquist who celebrate their 61st Wedding Anniversary Feb. 14.

TREASURES FROM OUR TRADITION ... Today's Gospel centers on the plight of a leper and Jesus' response of healing. In Hawaii, the bacterium that causes leprosy probably entered from China in the mid-1800s, and the native islanders were susceptible to the dreaded disease. In 1866, the government literally dumped the sufferers on a remote and virtually inaccessible island peninsula with towering cliffs. Thrown off ships into the sea, the sick people were told to swim for the beach and head for caves, and for seven years the only supplies were similarly cast into the sea to drift ashore. It was then, 1873, that a thirty-three-year-old Belgian priest, Damien de Veuster, went voluntarily to Kalaupapa. Before long, he cajoled the government into funding his mission and its hospital, built a village with proper homes and sanitation, and recruited Mother Marianne Cope to bring sisters from Syracuse, New York, to nurse the sick. Damien, who eventually died of leprosy, has been canonized, and Mother Marianne as well.

Although leprosy has been curable since the 1940s, today a few patients remain in their lifelong home, now a national historic site. The peninsula is still utterly isolated from the outside world, and the speed limit for the few cars there is 5 mph since there's nowhere to go! The hospital is still well-staffed and equipped, but access is regulated and visitors must take an official tour, often involving a descent down the cliffs by "Molakai mule." There are few places on earth that evoke the healing power of Jesus, or our call to follow the Healer, more than Damien's beloved island mission.

—Rev. James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

GIVE GOD THE GLORY ... A curious feature of the first half of Mark's Gospel is the pattern of Jesus working a miracle, then telling the recipient of the miracle to keep still about it. Many theories have been offered: Mark is setting the stage for the great "secret" revealed when Peter will proclaim Jesus the Messiah at Caesarea Philippi; more skeptical commentators offer that Jesus, fully aware of human nature, knew that the way to spread the news was to tell people to keep it secret. The insight into this secret-keeping that serves us well, however, is that Jesus was initiating his public ministry according to the pattern that Paul describes. He was doing it for the glory of God – not for his own benefit, but for that of all. Paul would later write in Philippians that Jesus "humbled" himself to become like us. And we see this humility at work in today's healing of the leper. Jesus is trying to reveal the presence of God's reign among the people, not so that he himself might receive the glory, but so that God would be glorified through him. Imitating this pattern, which Paul encourages the Jewish and Greek Christian factions in Corinth to do, still serves us well today.

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A BOOK TO READ ... There is a great difference between the eager person who wants to read a book and the tired person who wants a book to read. —G. K. Chesterton

Pray for our Seminarians: **Andrew Thomas Ojeda**, from St. Mary Parish, Denton. He entered the Seminary in 2016. He is in College 2 at St. Gregory the Great Seminary. **Allan Nguyen Phan**, from Sacred Heart Parish, Lincoln. He entered the Seminary in 2011. He is in Theology 4 at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary.

HOLY FATHER'S INTENTIONS

(February): Universal: Say "No" to Corruption - That those who have material, political or spiritual power may resist any lure of corruption.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, North Platte, NE

2018 Lenten Schedule

Lent Mass/Confession/Stations Schedule

Sundays: (as usual, Sat 5:00pm; Sun 10:00am)
Weekdays: check the Bulletin for Mass schedule
Fridays: 6:00pm Stations of Cross
Saturdays: 4:00pm-4:55pm Confessions
Sundays: 9:00am-9:55am Confessions

Lenten Regulations

Abstinence ... means eating no meat nor any soup or gravy made from meat. Abstinence obliges all Catholics over the age of 14. Days of abstinence are: Ash Wednesday and all of the Fridays of Lent.

Fasting ... means eating only one full meal with two smaller meals, which together do not equal the full meal. No snacks or eating between meals. The law of fasting obliges all Catholics between the ages of 18 & 59. Days of fasting are: Ash Wednesday / Good Friday.

Sickness, hard manual labor, pregnancy, etc. automatically excuse one from these obligations. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that these are serious obligations. In cases of doubt or question, the matter should be discussed with the priest who hears a person's confession.

Daily Lenten Prayer Reflection Options

Best Lent Ever 2018: Perfectly Yourself ... Lent comes every year. It's meant to be a time when we invite God to help us become the-best-version-of-ourselves. But for many of us, Lent isn't a transformative experience. It's just a time when we give up chocolate or something else we enjoy, then go back to it at Easter.

This Lent, do something different. Join our parish for BEST LENT EVER, a free email program from Dynamic Catholic that is designed to help you have a life-changing Lent. Each day, you'll receive an email with ... Inspirational Videos, Practical Tips, Encouraging Stories. Sign Up at DynamicCatholic.com/40Days

It's simple and free – the only cost is your commitment to live better each day this Lent. Each day, you'll receive spiritual coaching from Matthew Kelly; go to <http://dynamiccatholic.com/bestlentever/>

FREE Book: Perfectly Yourself ... This year's Best Lent Ever program is based on Matthew Kelly's book Perfectly Yourself. In this newly revised edition, you will discover 9 ways to embrace God's amazing dream for your life. Please pick up your copy in the Narthex & have it ready to read along with the Best Lent Ever Emails that you'll receive during the season on Lent when you sign up.

Bishop Robert Barron Lent Reflections ... *Each day from Ash Wednesday (Feb. 14) until Easter Sunday (April 1), Bishop Barron will send you a short email with an uplifting spiritual reflection. Sign up at <http://LentReflections.com>.*

Magnificat Lenten Companions ... available in Church Narthex for free. Pick one up to help in your spiritual growth!

5 Minutes With the Word ... available in Church Narthex for free. Pick one up to help in your spiritual growth!

Eucharistic Family Rosary Crusade

Saints Devoted To The Rosary Study ... As part of the Eucharistic Family Rosary Crusade encouraged by Bishop Conley, study sessions of six (6) saints with special devotion to the Rosary will be presented over the next six months. Sessions will be held in the Parish Hall after Weekend Masses one weekend each month. The weekend will vary based on other activities. The one hour and 15 minute session will include short videos describing the Saint's devotion as well as Gospel reading and discussion questions. We hope to announce additional study opportunities in the days / weeks to come.

These sessions are a way for parishioners to study the lives of saints in an informal setting, along with others from our parish. The goal of this part of the Crusade is to enjoy fellowship with others, while learning a thing or two along the way. We hope you enjoy it!

Saints to be studied are: St. Dominic, St. Pius V, St. Louis de Montfort, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Padre Pio, St. John Paul II.

Take an Hour of Adoration During Lent

During Lent, and always, you are encouraged to spend some extra time with our Eucharistic Lord ... either by taking an hour of Adoration each week, or maybe even each day ... or by joining in the prayer of the Mass during the week.

Spending time with Jesus is one of the best ways to deepen your spiritual life, and grow closer to God. Come and rest with the Lord for an hour each week. If you take time to pray, you find you have more time!

Forty Hours Eucharistic Adoration ...

Sunday, March 11 - Tuesday, March 13. There will be a talk each evening (Sunday 7:00pm, Monday 7:00pm, & Tuesday 7:00pm) given by **Fr. Michael Zimmer**. The Blessed Sacrament will be exposed in the Monstrance on the Altar after the 10:00am Mass on Sunday through the day and the night (except during Weekday Masses) until the closing at 7:00pm on Tuesday evening. After each evening's talk there will be cookies and refreshments in the Parish Hall. Fr. Michael Zimmer a Lincoln Diocese Priest and Pastor of St. Mary Church, Sutton.

Singles, couples and families; Catholics and other Christians are cordially invited. This is a tremendous opportunity to come to know the Lord, His Word, and our holy Catholic faith better, during the Season of Lent.

Operation Rice Bowl

On Ash Wednesday, our parish will begin Operation Rice Bowl. Sponsored by Catholic Relief Services, the six week Lenten program combines **Prayer, Fasting, Education, and Almsgiving**. Proceeds benefit the poor, both in our diocese and in the developing world. Please join this meaningful Lenten observance. "Rice Bowl" envelopes/information are available on a table in Narthex.

2018 marks the 43rd year of CRS Rice Bowl – the largest and oldest Lenten program practiced by Catholics in the United States. Use your CRS Rice Bowl & Lenten Calendar to guide your Lenten prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Visit crsricebowl.org to watch videos of people & communities whose lives your Lenten gifts are changing through CRS Rice Bowl.

A Reflection on Lent

From The Church's Year of Grace (Vol. II) by Dr. Pius Parsch (p.68-71)

“At the very outset we must take positive steps to acquire the spirit of Lent. Through the vestibule of Pre-Lent we enter the sanctuary of the sacred Easter season. What is the purpose of this portion of the Church year? What can it give us? It gives divine life, and in divine life we have the essence and the end of all Christian piety. Objectively, this life was won by Christ through a hard fight in His bitter passion; subjectively, it is now bestowed in baptism, and renewed in second baptism or penance. In briefest outline this gives the high purposes of Lent.

a) Christ's passion! Already during the Christmas octave and in the Sundays after Epiphany the Church introduced the passion motif; in Pre-Lent it received greater stress and now it becomes the major theme. Christ, the divine Warrior, enters into conflict with the Prince of darkness. During the first half of Lent the interior aspect of the conflict is accentuated, while during the second the motif of physical suffering comes into the foreground and reaches its climax in Holy Week.

Recall that in the Christmas cycle we were not merely interested spectators of the mighty struggle between light and darkness; then as now the mystery is re-enacted in each person's heart: in your soul Christ is wrestling with the devil; or better, by the very fact that you are a member of the mystical Christ you are involved in this fight. At Easter we want to be ready to sing Alleluia with our Leader, but the victory can only be gained by death and crucifixion to the natural man. Therefore we must re-live our Savior's passion in Lent; as catechumens we must die with Christ; as penitents we must die with Christ; as disciples we must die with Christ in order to rise with Him as new men on Easter. Christ's passion, accordingly, is not merely the highest motive for a spiritual renewal; rather it must be, in the sense of St. Paul; re-lived by us. We must share His sufferings and death.

b) Baptism. Lent is springtime in the ecclesiastical year. From the planted and dying kernels of divine wheat a wonderful harvest will come, souls ripe for baptism. Lent is the ideal season to prepare for baptism.

In the ancient Church baptism was ordinarily administered to adults. After preliminary preparation that often extended over a period of years, select catechumens were numbered among those who desired baptism and then, as postulants, given special instruction as they participated almost daily in the first part of the Mass. Furthermore, they undertook definite penitential exercises and were the object of repeated ecclesiastical exorcisms. The older Masses of Lent come from this time and frequently were designed with special reference to those preparing for baptism. This fact easily explains the confident and at times joyous tone of the Masses; the baptism motif often loses itself in the jubilant motif of Easter. Preparation for baptism had indeed a serious side, for example, the death of the "old" man; it likewise had joyful aspects, e.g., the maternal pride of the Church, internal transfiguration, the coming Easter celebration.

For understanding the liturgy of the season this is of great importance; not the sober and serious mood of penance but a joyful anticipation of baptism is the spirit proper to the older strata of Lenten texts.

c) Lent is also the period for a second baptism, the painful baptism of penance. It is the time *par excellence*

for interior purification. In the early centuries sinners were obliged to do public penance during Lent; in a solemn penitential service they received the mourners' garb on Ash Wednesday and thereupon were excluded from community services until Holy Thursday. By way of exception they were allowed to attend the Mass of the catechumens. This third and most recent motif in the Masses of Lent (especially on Thursday) gradually found its way into the liturgy after the catechuminate had ceased to exist. Century by century greater stress was placed on penance with the result that present day Christians who most often approach Christian life from the viewpoint of overcoming sin, regard Lent simply as a time for special penitential practices.

Let us then feel ourselves as true penitents, on Ash Wednesday let us receive the cross of ashes as a dedication to mortification and self-denial; let us try to submerge ourselves in the purifying stream of Lenten penance.

Whatever our status, whether it be catechumen, penitent, or faithful member of the Church, we must never forget that the main task of the liturgy is not to impart instruction but to bestow divine life. Certainly the Masses of Lent give us advice on spiritual renewal (after the manner of retreat conferences); but the purpose of missal readings is less instruction than a demonstration of the power of grace. This is why the ancient Roman liturgy loved to portray the effect of the sacred mysteries in the Lessons at Mass, choosing scenes from the Old and New Testament which typified the action of grace. The readings, indeed the whole variable text of the Mass, were regarded as parables on the graces of redemption coming to the members of the Church from Christ's death on the Cross.

These graces are granted principally in baptism (penance) and in the holy Eucharist, the two great wellsprings of salvation. The first makes a beginning, the second brings growth and perfection; but both have essentially the same effect. On this account not only the catechumen and the penitent, but also the believer, can observe Lent fruitfully in essentially the same manner. Lent brings the graces of redemption to all; some receive incipient, germinal grace, others the grace of growth or perfecting grace.

A typical example is the Gospel about the healing of the man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. Here baptism, penance, and the Eucharist are represented in symbolic form. The catechumen is healed in the water of baptism, the penitent in the laver of penance, and the believer in the blood of Christ. Christ performs this miracle now during Lent on a higher level of reality by baptism, penance, and the Eucharist. Thus the symbolic character of miracles in the Old and New Testaments is of great liturgical importance.

Lent, then, is the time of salvation *par excellence* not only for catechumens and penitents, but for the faithful as well. The catechumens attain their goal in baptism on Holy Saturday, the penitents theirs in the reconciliation of Holy Thursday. Lent is designed to aid them in preparing. And through daily Mass the faithful have the divine life within them enriched and perfected. By Holy Thursday they should be free from all sin and cleansed of guilt so as to appear in the full maturity and perfection of grace on Holy Saturday.”