

ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON CHURCH



Father Mark Seiker
3301 Echo Drive
North Platte, Nebraska 69101

Rectory / Office 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 14, 2021*

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

Family Formation Program

Sunday mornings (Sept-May) 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 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. 15 8:00 a.m.
 Tuesday Feb. 16 **7:00 a.m.**
 ** *** ** * **Ash Wednesday (Day of Fast and Abstinence)** * *** ** * **

Ash Wednesday Feb 17 7:00 a.m.
 12:10 p.m.
 7:00 p.m.

6:00pm 8:00pm -10:00pm Eucharistic Holy Hours => Spend time with Jesus
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Thursday Feb. 18 8:00 a.m.
 Friday Feb. 19 **12:10 p.m.**
5:30 p.m.
 6:00 p.m.
 Saturday Feb. 20 **5:00 p.m.**
 Sunday Feb. 21 **10:00 a.m.**

INTENTIONS

Elizabeth (Liz) Haag
 Special Intention (jls)
 Liv/Dec mem of Estrada & Ortega Fam.
 For Reparation & Healing
 People of our Parish
 MaKenna Ketter
 Martha Burbach +
 For our Benefactors
 * Exposition / Stations / Benediction *
 Jacqie Burn
 People of our Parish

**The way to be
 anxious about
 nothing is
 to be prayerful
 about everything.**

Stewardship: February 7, 2021

Adult Envelopes:\$1,970.00
Loose Plate:\$130.00
Children:\$0.00
Holy Day:\$0.00
Total:\$2,100.00

Joy of the Gospel Campaign

Total Pledged:\$958,770.00
 Gifts **last week:**\$0.00
Total Gifts Received:\$945,423.05
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:\$1,765,812.77
Balance on DIAL LOAN: **\$0.00**

Southern NE Register:\$175.00

2 ½ weeks ago, we were able to make our FINAL PAYMENT on our DIAL Loan for our New Church. As of January 28, 2021, our Parish has NO DEBT!

Parish Calendar

Wednesday Feb. 17 Ash Wednesday Masses (see Schedule above)
8:00pm – 10:00pm: Eucharistic Adoration; NO RCIA Classes this week
 Thursday Feb. 18 **1:00pm: Adult Bible Study (contact Teri Volesky)**
 Sunday Feb. 21 **6:30-9:00pm: Women at the Well Lenten Retreat at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church & Hall.**

Catholic School News:

Irish Fest 2021: Raffle tickets are now on sale! Please support this important fundraiser for the NPCCS. All proceeds directly benefit students and staff at St. Pat's High School, McDaid Elementary, and Little Leprechaun Preschool. Raffle tickets are \$2.00 each. They're available for purchase at the NPCCS Endowment Office (601 S. Tabor Ave) or from any McDaid or St. Pat's student. Don't miss a chance at these amazing prizes: \$1,000 Cash, \$500 Cash, \$250 Cash, \$1000 Tuition Voucher for NP Catholic Schools, \$500 Kwik Stop Gift Card, 55" Smart TV, YETI Rolling Cooler, PowerBeats Pro Headphones. Prize drawing will be held at 3:00pm on February 28th, live on the NPCCS Facebook page. Call or email the Endowment Office to order/purchase tickets: 308-534-5939, endowment@npcschools.org.

Enrollment: Enrollment is OPEN for all grade levels! Little Leprechaun Preschool through 12th Grade — ALL on one campus. Join us and become a part of the IRISH school family! Tours can be given throughout the year. Students & Parents are also welcome to come and observe in the classrooms. Contact Gwen Covey at 308-532-1874. This is an investment you won't regret! God is Here!

North Platte Catholic School: Faith & Knowledge for a Brighter Future

Women at the Well Lenten Retreat ... This Lenten Event, "Know Your Worth," will be Feb. 21 from 6:30pm-9:00pm at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. Virtual presenter Danielle Bean is a writer & speaker helping struggling moms to know their dignity and worth so they can find peace, balance, and joy in family living. She is the Brand Manager for CatholicMom.com & recently hosted the Catholic Moms Summit. RSVP to Fr. Seiker or Ashley Perlinger, or on Facebook. Event/book is \$5.00.

Healing Mass ... March 7, 2021, St. Patrick's Church, McCook. 3:30pm Divine Mercy Chaplet, 4:00pm Mass celebrated by Fr. Christopher Barak. All are welcome to receive physical, spiritual, and mental healing. Confession available before Mass.

K of C (February) Breakfast Burritos ... In lieu of our monthly pancake breakfast, during these times of social distancing the Knights of Columbus are offering homemade Breakfast Burritos to enjoy instead. Burritos are \$3.00 each, \$15.00 for 6, \$30.00 for 12, etc. They will be individually wrapped and can be eaten the day of the breakfast (warm) or picked up to go (warm or cold). Prepackaged salsa is available upon request. Payment is expected when picked up on day of K of C Breakfast which this month is **February 14**. Pre-orders are appreciated & accepted until noon, Friday, February 12. Help the Knights of Columbus plan accordingly. Order form available on SEAS webpage.

Thank You ... to all who wrote St. Valentine Day Cards last Saturday and Sunday. There were 28 adults and 6 children who wrote about 240 Saint Valentine Day Cards to persons who are either homebound or in the Nursing Homes or Assisted Living facilities. This was much appreciated by many!

Emmaus Institute Classes ... Looking for a way to boost your spiritual life during Lent and Easter? The Emmaus Institute for Biblical Studies is accepting registrations for its 10-week Online & In-Person Course starting March 8th. See www.emmausinstitute.net for info.

Spousal Hearts: Renewed in Love ... Marriage Encounter presenting **Virtual weekends 2021, Feb. 19-21, April 23-25**. Contact Pat/Janelle Benson, Pat 308-940-0670, Janelle 308-940-1105, pjbbsen@yahoo.com.

2021 Lenten Series ... An Introduction to Spiritual Life will be led by Matt Simmons, diocesan director of the Office of Evangelization and Spiritual Formation. The series will be in-person at Our Lady of Good Counsel Retreat House, or at-home, livestream, on-demand recordings. It will be held Tuesdays starting Feb. 16 – Mar. 30 from 7:00pm-9:00pm. Series is free; registration requested <https://lincolndiocese.regfox.com/len2021>. Any questions, call 402-473-0615 or email Annette-Wemhoff@cdolinc.net. Participants are welcome to attend even if they cannot come to each event in the series. Everyone is warmly invited to attend!

Good Counsel Retreat House Retreats Register for Online & in person Retreats sponsored by Good Counsel Retreat House www.goodcounselretreat.com, 402-786-2705, or goodcounsel@cdolinc.net.

February - March Schedule:

Feb. 17 Ash Wednesday Day of Reflection ... Men / Women
(\$10, in-person or online)

Feb. 20 (Sat) Fr. Benjamin Holdren Moms of Young People
"Holiness is for Everyone (Seriously)"

Feb. 26-28 Johnnette Benkovic Williams Men / Women
"Living His Life Abundantly in Today's World"

Mar. 4-7 Fr. Gary Coulter Men / Women
"4-day Directed Spiritual Exercises" (Thu-Sun)

Mar. 11-18 Fr. Chris Barak & Fr. Gary Coulter Men / Women
"8-day Private Directed Ignatian Retreat" (Thur-Thur)

Mar. 11-14 Fr. Gary Coulter Men / Women
"4-day Private Directed Ignatian Retreat" (Thur-Sun)

Mar. 15-18 Fr. Chris Barak Men / Women
"4-day Private Directed Ignatian Retreat" (Thur-Thur)

Mar. 19-21 Bishop Robert Finn Men
"Watch and Pray: Lenten Men's Retreat"

Mar. 26-28 Fr. John Anthony Boughton, CFR .. Men / Women
"Spiritual Workout: Getting in Shape for the Spiritual Combat"

Mar. 29 – Apr. 1 Fr. Chris Barak Men / Women
"4-day Private Directed Ignatian Retreat" (Mon-Thu; Holy Week)

Mar. 26-28 Fr. John Anthony Boughton, CFR .. Men / Women
"Spiritual Workout: Getting in Shape for the Spiritual Combat"

Mar. 29 – Apr. 1 Fr. Chris Barak Men / Women
"4-day Private Directed Ignatian Retreat" (Mon-Thu; Holy Week)

Apr 1-3 Marian Sisters /Fr. Jonathan Haschke Women
Holy Week Retreat for Young Women

Apr. 9-11 Fr. Benjamin Rynearson Men / Women
"Jesus, You Can Do All Things (Divine Mercy Weekend)"

Apr. 15-18 Matt Simms Men / Women
"4-day Private Directed Ignatian Retreat" (Thu-Sun)

Apr. 23-25 Fr. Jay Buhman Men / Women
"It is God Who Invites You: Come and See"

Apr. 29 - May 2 Fr. Gary Coulter Men / Women
"4-day Directed Spiritual Exercises" (Thu-Sun)

May 7-8 Janette Howe of Seven Sisters Apostolate .Women
"Real Women Wear Armor" (24 hour Retreat)

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 & love of neighbor 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.

Save the Date: Virtual Event With Jeff Cavins ...

Spirit Catholic Radio has enjoyed hosting a Celebration event for our listeners for 15 years! This year, we are excited to announce that we will get to join you virtually for this year's event – the Spirit Celebration Adventure! **Our guest speaker will be Jeff Cavins**, speaker, author, TV host, podcaster, and pilgrimage leader. Jeff's theme of "Overcoming the World – What is the Proclamation of the Gospel?" will break open seven truths everyone should know about boldly proclaiming the good news of the Gospel. This video event will begin at **7:00pm on March 15th** via a unique Zoom link that attendees will receive upon registration.

Healing Hearts Support Sessions ... Healing Hearts Support Sessions for those who have suffered the loss of a loved one are being offered to assist Catholics in the grief process. The sessions will be held on six weekly Tuesday evenings beginning February 16, 7:00pm-9:00pm, at John XXIII Diocesan Center, 37th & Sheridan Blvd. Suggested Donation: \$25. To register, please call 402-473-0620.

FROM FR. MARK SEIKER:

2020 Contribution Statements ... will be mailed this week.

The Search ... The Search from FORMED is an innovative video-based journey that tackles the key questions of every human heart. In seven beautifully filmed episodes, Chris Stefanick and experts from the fields of science, medicine, psychology, art, and religion examine our place in the larger story of existence. **Watch the trailer on SEAS webpage.** Please come to spend time sharing your faith with other Catholics and learn from the presenters & other parishioners. **The cost of each participate guide is \$10.00.**

	7:00pm – 8:15 or 8:30pm	7:00pm	7:00pm
#1	What Do You Seek?	Sunday Feb. 14	Friday Feb. 19
#2	Who Are You?	Thursday Feb. 25	Friday Feb. 26
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#6	Am I Saved?	Tuesday Mar. 23	Thursday Mar. 25
Will Not Meet in Holy Week (March 28 – April 3)			
#7	Why a Church?	Tuesday Apr. 6	Friday Apr. 9

Consecration to St. Joseph ... The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father. The Parish has ordered **50 books** written by Fr. Donald H. Calloway, MIC to assist you in participating in this Consecration to St. Joseph. **The cost of each book is \$10.00.** Please make checks payable to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church. Due to ordering & shipping delays, the books will NOT arrive by Monday, Feb. 15. **However, if you want to begin the consecration prayers on Monday, Feb. 15, contact Fr. Seiker. He will provide you a set of prayers way to use until the books arrive.**

Devotion to St. Joseph is one of the choicest graces that God can give to a soul, for it is tantamount to revealing the entire treasury of our Lord's graces. When God wishes to raise a soul to greater heights, he unites it to St. Joseph by giving it a strong love for the good saint. -St. Peter Julian Eymard

The first thing to do is decide which Day you want to choose to consecrate yourself to St. Joseph. Here is a chart to help you decide.

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November 24	Holy Family	December 26

Liturgical Ministers

Lector		
Acolyte		
Server		
Music		
Gifts		
Ushers		
Rosary		

Liturgical Calendar & Saints

Saturday:	Feb.13	Weekday in Ordinary Time (Wk.5)
Sunday:	Feb.14	6th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Monday:	Feb.15	Weekday in Ordinary Time (Wk.6)
Tuesday:	Feb.16	Weekday in Ordinary Time (Wk.6)
Wednesday:	Feb.17	Ash Wednesday
Thursday:	Feb.18	Thursday after Ash Wednesday
Friday:	Feb.19	Friday after Ash Wednesday
Saturday:	Feb.20	Saturday after Ash Wednesday
Sunday:	Feb.21	1st Sunday of Lent

Prayers for the sick: Jim Beckius, Kerry Heskett (Ben Heskett's sister), Rick Ryan, Becky Harold, Pat Wessell, Vinette Tenopir (Mickie Morlang's mother), Sheila Exner, Cathy Leathers, Tucker Smith, J.D. Troyer, Cindy Ryan, Dean & Janice Large, Jennifer Schmid, Sharon Beckius, Those affected with/by COVID-19, Theresa McCarthy-Garth, Peggy Lawler, Matt Reisen (Matt & Ashley Perlinger's friend), Special Intention, Carolyn Cohen, Tim Garth (Theresa McCarthy-Garth's son), Those struggling with Alcoholism, Renate Nordquist, Kim Paul.

Prayers for the deceased: Ginger Daigger Smith, Troy Tickle, Carolyn Cohen, Steve Haman (Matt Perlinger's uncle), Betty Conley (Bishop Conley's mother), Mike Paul, Sammy Medinger, Mary Lou Robles (Toni Barron's sister), Leo Walz, Ardis "Jo" Ginapp, Verna Kellogg, Bonnie Greco (Ashley Perlinger's grandmother), Shirley Lindekugel, Beatrice Estrada, Eloise Kramer (Monica Kramer's mother), Nellie Rodriguez (Toni Barron's sister), Reyes Robles (Toni Barron's brother-in-law), Margaret Ruskamp (Donna Bode's mother), Dolores Kosmicki, Patricia Zamora (Toni Barron's sister), Teresa Clouatre, Gordon Swanson (Cindy Swanson's father), Florena Schneweis (Emily Krondak's mother), Carlos Fleury (Steve/Janet Fear's son-in-law), Ruby Ramirez (Toni Barron's sister), JoAnn Bode Waters (John Bode's sister), Eileen Boltz, Leona Clouatre, Bernadine Torres, Martha Burbach, Luke Ranck.

Birthdays/Anniversaries: 2/13 - Ryce Troyer, 2/14 - Jerry Steffes, Peggy Orr, 2/18 - William Krondak.
Congratulations: to Paul & Renate Nordquist who celebrate their **64th Wedding Anniversary Feb. 14.**

Catechism of the Catholic Church (Second Edition) PART FOUR – CHRISTIAN PRAYER SECTION ONE – PRAYER IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE CHAPTER ONE – THE REVELATION OF PRAYER

Moses and the Prayer of the Mediator

2577 From this intimacy with the faithful God, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love,²³ Moses drew strength and determination for his intercession. He does not pray for himself but for the people whom God made his own. Moses already intercedes for them during the battle with the Amalekites and prays to obtain healing for Miriam.²⁴ But it is chiefly after their apostasy that Moses “stands in the breach” before God in order to save the people.²⁵ The arguments of his prayer – for intercession is also a mysterious battle – will inspire the boldness of the great intercessors among the Jewish people and in the Church: God is love; he is therefore righteous and faithful; he cannot contradict himself; he must remember his marvelous deeds, since his glory is at stake, and he cannot forsake this people that bears his name.

23 Cf. Ex. 34:6 ⁶Thus the Lord passes before him and cried out, “The Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity.”

24 Cf. Ex. 17:8-12 ⁸At Rephidim, Amalek came and waged war against Israel. ⁹Moses, therefore, said to Joshua, “Pick out certain men, and tomorrow go out and engage Amalek in battle. I will be standing on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.” ¹⁰So Joshua did as Moses told him: he engaged Amalek in battle after Moses had climbed to the top of the hill with Aaron and Hur. ¹¹As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight, but when he let his hands rest, Amalek had the better of the fight. ¹²Moses’ hands, however, grew tired; so they put a rock in place for him to sit on. Meanwhile Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other, so that his hands remained steady till sunset.

Cf. Num. 12:13-14 ¹³Then Moses cried to the Lord, “Please, not this! Pray, heal her!” ¹⁴But the Lord answered Moses, “Suppose her father had spit in her face, would she not hide in shame for seven days? Let her be confined outside the camp for seven days; only then may she be brought back.”

25 Ps. 106:23 ²³He would have decreed their destruction, had not Moses, his chosen one, Withstood him in the breach to turn back his destroying anger.

Pray for our Seminarians: Scott Nicholas Schieuer, from St. Joseph Parish in Lincoln. He entered the Seminary in 2018. He is in College 4 at St. Gregory the Great Seminary.

Pray for our Religious Sisters: School Sisters of Christ the King, Marian Sisters of the Diocese of Lincoln, Sisters at the Carmel of Jesus, Mary & Joseph, Pink Sisters, Sisters of Mary, Queen of Mercy.

HOLY FATHER’S INTENTIONS ...

(February) Universal Intention - Violence Against Women: We pray for women who are victims of violence, that they may be protected by society and have their sufferings considered and heeded.

IRISH FEST 2021

Raffle

A fundraiser for the North Platte Catholic Schools

IRISH FEST RAFFLE PRIZES:

♣\$1,000 CASH ♣\$500 CASH ♣\$250 CASH

♣\$1,000 Voucher for NPCCS Tuition

♣\$500 Kwik Stop Gas Card

♣55" LG Smart TV (\$500 value)

♣YETI Tundra Haul Cooler (\$400 value)

♣Powerbeats Pro Headphones (\$200 value)

TICKETS ARE \$2.00 EACH

For sale at the Endowment Office (601 S. Tabor),
from any McDaid or St. Patrick's student,
or by calling: 308-534-5939

♣Raffle drawing broadcast LIVE on the North Platte
Catholic Schools Facebook page

♣3:00 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 28th

♣You do NOT have to be present to win

♣ALL proceeds support the North Platte
Catholic Schools

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, North Platte, NE

2021 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

FORMED.org ... various studies ... Visit the FORMED.org webpage (if you are not already signed up, please do so on our webpage. It is FREE. There are many great resources for your faith growth: Bible Studies, Faith Formation; Current Topics, Youth Programs; many great Catholic Movies; Audio Books; ebooks; learn your Faith better, & then share your Faith with others.

Best Lent Ever 2021 ... Feed Your Soul with Prayer this Lent! Nothing will transform your life so completely, absolutely, and forever like really learning how to pray. That's why this year's BEST LENT EVER journeys through Matthew Kelly's latest book, I Heard God Laugh: A Practical Guide to Life's Essential Daily Habit.

Beginning on Ash Wednesday and continuing through all forty days of Lent, you will receive a daily email with a short video to help you reconnect with yourself and your God.

If you choose to throw yourself into this experience, we promise you that you will be surprised by what God can do in your life with just an email, a short video and an open heart. So this year, don't just sign up for BEST LENT EVER, have your best lent ever!

<https://www.dynamiccatholic.com/lent/best-lent-ever.html#form-signup>

Bishop Robert Barron Lent Reflections ... Each day 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!

Consecration to St. Joseph ... see information in Bulletin and in next column, during this year of St. Joseph, about the book & prayers to join in the consecration to St. Joseph.

The Search ... The Search from FORMED is an innovative video-based journey that tackles the key questions of every human heart. In seven beautifully filmed episodes, Chris Stefanick and experts from the fields of science, medicine, psychology, art, and religion examine our place in the larger story of existence. **Watch the trailer on SEAS webpage.** Please come to spend time sharing your faith with other Catholics and learn from the presenters & other parishioners.

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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!

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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 catechumens 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."