

Lancaster St Bernadette Parish Bremen St Mary Parish



Job's Tormentors

the scene of the first reading at today's Mass

February 4, 2018
the 5th Sunday

St Bernadette Parish.

1343 Wheeling Road NE (740) 654 • 1893
LANCASTER, OH 43130-8701

stbernadetteparish.net

St Mary Parish.

602 Marietta Street (740) 569 • 7738
BREMEN, OH 43107

cover picture: **Job's Tormentors**

from an engraving (1793) by William Blake (1757-1827) for *Illustrations for the Book of Job*

our parishes

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pastor

at St Bernadette Parish

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liturgical music

The St Bernadette Parish office is in the Mary Good Center,
across the back parking lot from the school.

Hours: 9 AM-1 PM, MWThF; 11 AM-1 PM, Tu.
1343 Wheeling Rd NE, Lancaster, OH 43130-8701

(740) 654 • 1893

<http://stbernadetteparish.net>

at Bremen St Mary Parish

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liturgical music

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The St Mary Parish office is at the church vestibule.

Hours: 9-11 AM, Tuesdays.

602 Marietta St, Bremen, OH 43107 (740) 569 • 7738

at both parishes

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Saint Bernadette School is located at

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stbernlan@cdeducation.org.

www.stbernadetteschool.com

Lancaster St Vincent de Paul www.svdplancasteroh.com

Bremen St Vincent de Paul (740) 569-7738

Diocese of Columbus www.columbuscatholic.org

Angels Nurture & Disciple (AND) www.angelsAND.org

sacramental life

Baptism

To have a child baptized, you must register and attend a class as a couple (unless attendance just isn't possible, in which case some discussion with Kathy Kehnast will be necessary). Sessions are held quarterly for both parishes. Try to attend before the child is born. The next session is scheduled for the Spring. If you are expecting or have a new born or somehow haven't gotten around to having an older child baptized, call Kathy to make plans now.

Please don't ask if you "have to go." This is an opportunity to meet with parents of children about the same age as your little one; those parents are in the same wonderful boat as you are.

At least one parent must be a practicing Catholic. Both godparents need to be practicing Catholics. If you don't attend Sunday Mass regularly (a major component of being a practicing Catholic!), there is something you can do about it: Start coming to Sunday Mass.

Penance

The priest is available for Penance

- at St Bernadette Saturdays at 3 PM and Thursdays at 5:30 PM, and
- at St Mary Bremen on Sunday at 8 AM.

Every Catholic priest is available whenever there is a need. There are Penance opportunities for parochial school children four times during the year so that they will learn the beauty of frequent confession. The Church's law requires us to receive the sacrament of Penance at least once a year.

Anointing and Care of the Sick

We receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick when dangerously ill, facing major surgery, or suffering from the ravages of old age. We celebrate the sacrament communally at a Sunday Mass before Advent and during the Easter season so that we can all pray with you for "health of mind and body."

We bring Penance, Anointing, and Holy Communion to the sick or shut in. It is very helpful to call the parish office to let us know before a hospitalization or when it has been too long since the sacraments were last available.

Holy Matrimony

Couples wishing to marry should contact the parish office six months before they wish to celebrate the sacrament. Why so long? Because **this sacrament, not just the ceremony, requires serious preparation.** And the Church needs to be involved in that preparation. Remember, Catholics who marry outside the Church have left the sacramental life and need to change that situation before receiving the other sacraments.

The Church wishes to support couples **through the years** of their married life. That's why our diocese offers programs to enhance married life. To learn about these programs, watch the weekly bulletin.

at Prayer with the Church

At Mass this Sunday the Church Prays

Keep your family safe, O Lord, with unflinching care, that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace, they may be defended always by your protection. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

In February, the Pope Asks Us to Pray

That those who have material, political or spiritual power may resist any lure of corruption.

Listen to God's Word and Honor His Saints

Sunday, Feb 4, 5 th Sunday		Job 7:1-7 Ps 147		1 Corinthians 9:16-23		Mark 1:29-39	
Mon,	Feb 5	1 Kings	8:1-13	Ps 132		Mark	6:53-56
<i>Saint Agatha, virgin & martyr</i>							
Tues,	Feb 6	1 Kings	8:22-30	Ps 84		Mark	7:1-13
<i>Saint Paul Miki & Companions, martyrs</i>							
Weds,	Feb 7	1 Kings	10:1-10	Ps 37		Mark	7:14-23
Thurs,	Feb 8	1 Kings	11:4-13		Ps 106	Mark	7:24-30
<i>St Jerome Emiliani; Saint Josephine Bakhita, virgin</i>							
Fri,	Feb 9	1 Kings	11:29-12:19	Ps 81		Mark	7:31-37
Sat,	Feb 10	1 Kings	12:26-13:34	Ps 106		Mark	8:1-10
<i>Saint Scholastica, virgin</i>							

Sunday, Feb 11, 6 th Sunday		Leviticus 13:1-46Ps 32		1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1		Mark 1:40-45	
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Mass Intentions This Week

Monday,	Feb 5	8:20 AM	at St Bernadette	Jerome Messerly
Tuesday,	Feb 6	8:20 AM	at Bremen St Mary	Marie Young
Wednesday,	Feb 7	8:20 AM	at St Bernadette	Charles Rutter
Thursday,	Feb 8	6 PM	at St Bernadette	Louise Mathias
Friday,	Feb 9	8:20 AM	at St Bernadette	Wilford & Loretta Beiter

at Both Parishes

Catholic Times

The *Catholic Times* weekly newspaper features insightful and informative news from a Catholic perspective around our diocese, our country and the world. Sign up today or renew your subscription to the *Catholic Times* by placing your *Catholic Times* envelope with a minimum donation of only \$17 (less than 39 cents per issue) into the regular Mass collection. This donation helps the parish provide the *Catholic Times* to you and many of our parishioners. Checks should be made payable to St Bernadette or St Mary parish. If you donate electronically, you can still receive *Catholic Times*. Simply place your donation in an envelope marked "*Catholic Times*" with your name and drop it into the Sunday collection basket during February. Bishop Campbell encourages every Catholic household to receive the *Catholic Times* as an evangelization tool. Sign up today.

Lancaster St Vincent de Paul

The Society has a new website. You can learn about the many activities of the Lancaster St Vincent de Paul Society at www.svdplancasteroh.com.

Representatives

The pastor is looking for two Bremen St Mary parishioners to serve on the

- Fairfield / Hocking / Pickaway County **deanery pastoral council (DPC)**

The DPC meets **bi-monthly** on a Monday evening for about an hour at a different parish each meeting. Parishioners with some experience on parish pastoral council make especially good representatives because they can share and work together on concerns common to all of the parish communities.

He is looking for St Bernadette parishioners to serve on the

- Lancaster **St Mary School Advisory Board** and
- Fisher **Catholic High School Advisory Board**.

The school boards each meet **monthly** in the evening during the school year. They serve to keep communications happening between their own parish and the Catholic schools.

Each rep is a volunteer appointed by the pastor for a fixed term. A school advisory board member need not be a parent or an alum of the school concerned. They help keep the pastor and the corresponding councils in our own parishes in the loop. Several of the positions are already staffed, but we always need a "strong bench" of people to help. Let Fr Kessler know of your interest.

at Bremen St Mary Parish

St Vincent de Paul

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Bremen takes up a collection on the first Sunday of each month. That would be today! St Vincent always needs members. Call Angi Skinner at (740) 438-0027 if you can help.

Ministry at Mass at St Mary

Feb 4-11	lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Communion	gifts	sacristan / usher
5th Sunday, Feb 4, at 8:30 AM	Jeanne Schmelzer	Spencer Conrad, Alex Schmelzer	Wyatt Borah, Dismas Schmelzer, Jim Schmelzer	Maurice Schmelzer family	Jim Schmelzer
6th Sunday, Feb 11, at 8:30 AM	Barb Van Fossen-Cook	Caden & Cody Fyffe	Neil Boch, Angi Skinner, Barb Van Fossen-Cook	Catherine Noll, April Schmelzer	Angi Skinner

You Can Feed the Hungry Here in Bremen

The Bremen Food Pantry needs margarine or butter (among other things!). Place your donation in the refrigerator in the kitchen at St Mary parish hall. This will help the **Pantry Open House** in Bremen, on Saturday, Feb 17, from 9-11 AM, when any family in need can stop by to receive food assistance, with no prior registration or sign up needed.

What You Gave in January

Bremen St Mary	Jan 7	Jan 14	Jan 21	Jan 28	Totals
weekly	4,354	1,352	1,169	1,570	8,445
holy day	20	15	0	0	35
Total to parish	4,374	1,367	1,169	1,570	8,480
Propagation of the Faith	50	55	55	10	170
St V d P	558	240	20	190	1,008
Total sent from parish	608	295	75	200	1,178

at St Bernadette Parish

St Bernadette Mardi Gras

Join us for our annual pre-Lenten celebration and fundraiser on Saturday, Feb 10, from 5-10 PM. This wonderful family night raises funds to support St Bernadette School. Festivities include games and movies for the kids, \$1,000 grand raffle, silent and live auctions, and music. The fabulous food will feature Fat Tuesday sliders, French Quarter French fries, cole slaw d' Carnival, mini-king cakes, pizza, and more. Bring your friends and family to have a good time and support our Catholic school. Grand prize raffle tickets are \$10 each and will be available after Masses today or through the school office at (740) 654-3137.

Sunday Mornings in Lent

You are invited to view the acclaimed film series "*Catholicism*" facilitated by Deacon Mark Scarpitti on the Sundays of Lent in the Mary Good Center. Each episode will last about an hour and conclude in time for 11 AM Mass. Journey with acclaimed author and theologian **Bishop Robert Barron** to more than 15 countries. Be illuminated by the spiritual and artistic treasures of this global culture that claims more than one billion of the earth's people.

Episode titles include:

Amazed and Afraid, Happy Are We, The Ineffable Mystery of God, Our Tainted Nature's Solitary Boast, The Indispensable Men, A Body Both Suffering and Glorious, Word Made Flesh-True Bread of Heaven, A Vast Company of Witnesses, The Fire of His Love, and World Without End.

The series will begin on Sunday, Feb 18, and continue through the Sundays of Lent, and on into the Easter season.

What You Gave in January

St Bernadette	Jan 7	Jan 14	Jan 21	Jan 28	Totals
weekly collection	6,479	5,091	7,793	5,504	24,867
EFT	2,664	176	176	176	3,192
ed support	660	90	776	45	1,571
holy day	824	80	20	25	949
gifts	1,050	90	0	0	1,140
total to parish	11,677	5,527	8,765	5,750	31,719
to Propagation of the Faith	25	10	316	50	401

Assistance with Tuition

... Think: the Ides of March

You want to send your children to a fine Catholic school like St Bernadette, St Mary's middle school, or Fisher Catholic High School, but you wonder about the cost? There is assistance available. To be considered for the Diocese of Columbus **tuition assistance program**, you must be registered in your parish and be a supportive member. And then you need to register in the school by Mar 15. The diocese can only accept online applications (www.facttuitionaid.com). The application must be submitted by Mar 15; supporting documentation must be postmarked by Mar 15.

Verification of application must be completed within 14 days from application submission. (Be sure to file early in case additional documentation is required.) Payment of the \$30 application fee must accompany the application, but only one application per family is required. Required documents are **current year W2** and **previous year federal tax return** or if you do not receive a W2 then previous year & current year Federal Tax Returns. There is help out there!

Ministry at Mass at St Bernadette

February 4-February 11	lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion
Saturday, Feb 3, at 4 PM Vigil of 5th Sunday	Bob Christy	Mallory, Mason & Mitchell Ortiz	Angie Christy Rosalie DeFillippo Marguerite Grimm Jim & Becky Kuhn Kathy Wagner
5th Sunday, Feb 4, at 11 AM	Tara Craaybeek	Clara & Susan Craaybeek, Eve Darfus	Pat Dreyer Pat Gins Nancy Griffith John & Teresa Hartig Jean Robertson
Monday, 8:20 AM	Mary Jane Vajen	Isabelle Lazar Hyde O'Rielley	Pat Dreyer Kathy Kehnast
Wednesday, 8:20 AM	Robin Sanders	Daschel Neighbor Olivia Reynolds	Angie Christy Mary Jane Vajen
Thursday, 6 PM	Kathy Kehnast	Morgan Cox Silus Hopkins	Lee Guinan Paul Lonergan
Friday, 8:20 AM	Jim Merk	Kyndra Nagle Amelia Robertson	Rita Merk Mary Jane Vajen
Saturday, Feb 10, at 4 PM Vigil of 6th Sunday	Patrick Gins	Jack Tencza, Diana & Sarah Woo	Susan Garrett Joyce Guenther Kathy Kehnast Sandy Landefeld Teresa Scarpitti Amy Woo
6th Sunday Feb 11, 11 AM	Dennis Forquer	Gunner Robertson, Avee & Drew Solt	Tara Craaybeek Jim & Rita Merk Ben Peters Larry Sanford Anna Sevigny

Here and There

Pilgrimage to Lourdes

On this 160th anniversary of the apparitions at Lourdes, Fr Michael Dosch op, from St Gertrude Parish in Cincinnati (until recently at St Patrick in Columbus), invites you to join him on the 64th US National Rosary Pilgrimage to Lourdes from July 2-11. This pilgrimage, which departs from Cincinnati, is open to all and is accompanied by a medical staff to meet the needs of the pilgrims. For information, contact Fr Michael at michael.dosch@juno.com or contact the Catholic Travel Office toll free at 1-877-276-7279 or lourdespilgrimageoffice@comcast.net. Their website is lourdes-pilgrimage.com. The reservation deadline is March 30.

The Difference Between Giving Birth and Giving Life

Angels Nurture and Disciple, AND (formerly known as The Guardian Angels Program, gaP), is a support program **servicing single women struggling with an unexpected pregnancy**. As an extension of pregnancy care services, **AND** provides the single mom with a loving network of women (angels) that will walk alongside her as she journeys through her pregnancy, birth, and infancy of her baby. Recognizing the numerous obstacles single parenthood presents, **AND** celebrates her courage in choosing life for her unborn baby, and hence strives to break down any educational, financial, and emotional barriers that are preventing her from becoming the Mother God intended her to be.

For information, contact Monica Flynn at (614) 353-6765 or monica@angelsAND.org

Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love. —Saint Mother Teresa

in the Diocese of Columbus

Called to Serve One Another

Sts Peter and Paul Retreat Center has launched a **capital campaign** to support updates and continued improvements of the retreat center. Funds raised will provide an efficient space to serve the faith communities which enter the doors. Learn more at [www . stspeterandpaulretreatcenter . com](http://www.stspeterandpaulretreatcenter.com) or (740) 928-4246.

Religious Freedom Lecture

The Theological Consortium of greater Columbus presents the 14th annual Lecture on World Religions and Interreligious Relations on Thursday, March 8, at 7 PM at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus. Dr Thomas Farr, president of the Religious Freedom Institute, speaks on *The Crisis of Religious Freedom in America and Abroad: How it Affects Us All*. Reservations not required; for information visit [pcj . edu](http://pcj.edu) or call (614) 985-2274.

World Marriage Day: The Vocation of Marriage, A Supernatural Calling

All married couples are invited to the Diocesan Celebration of World Marriage Day on Sunday, Feb 11, from 2-4 PM at Seton Parish in Pickerington. Dr. Perry Cahall of the Pontifical College Josephinum will share God's plan for marriage and how with God's grace couples can live out their vows and love their spouses as God loves them, concluding with a time of prayer. The event is free and child care is available through pre-registration. RSVP by Feb 8 to [www . columbuscatholic . org/marriage-enrichment](http://www.columbuscatholic.org/marriage-enrichment) or (614) 241-2560.

Men's Conference and Women's Conference

You won't want to miss the entertainment, displays, and fellowship with a thousand or two of the most interesting people in central Ohio. Bishop Campbell will celebrate Mass and many priests of the diocese will provide opportunities for Penance.

- Women of our diocese will gather on **Feb 17**.
 - Their theme: "*Ask Jesus What He Wants from You and Be Brave.*"
 - Speakers are Uju Ekeocha, Lisa Hendey, the Labodas, and Fr Mazanowski.
- Men will meet on **Feb 24**.
 - And their theme: "*Cast Your Nets... Become Fishers of Men*"
 - Speakers are Jeff Cavins, Dr Scott Hahn, and Chris Stefanick.

Put these days on your calendar now. Both events will be at the Ohio Expo Center at the Ohio fairgrounds in Columbus.

Marriage Encounter Weekend

Come to a Marriage Encounter Weekend and learn ways to use your marriage's ups and downs to deepen your love for each other and for God. The next weekend in central Ohio is Feb 16-18. For information or to register, contact Paul or Marilou Clouse at (614) 834-6880 or visit [www . wmmecolumbus . org](http://www.wmccolumbus.org).

Catholic Foundation Scholarships

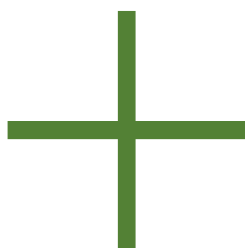
The Catholic Foundation's Applications for Scholarships will open on Jan 29 and close March 9. Scholarships support promising and deserving students by assisting them with the costs of their education. Donors often establish a scholarship to honor or memorialize friends, teachers, family members, or other loved ones. Since 2007, The Catholic Foundation has awarded over \$430,000 in scholarships empowering over 100 young people to continue their academic and vocational studies. For information and to apply, visit [www . catholic-foundation . org/scholarships](http://www.catholic-foundation.org/scholarships). If you are interested in opening a Scholarship Fund of your own, contact Scott Hartman at [shartman @ catholic-foundation . org](mailto:shartman@catholic-foundation.org) or (614) 443-8893.

Blue Jackets Catholic Night

Celebrate Catholic Night with the Columbus Blue Jackets on Saturday, Feb 10, when the Blue Jackets take on the New Jersey Devils. Tickets are \$38 in the Upper Bowl and \$65 in the Lower Bowl. For every ticket purchased, \$10-\$20 will be donated to the diocese of Columbus and you will receive a free CBJ Catholic Night t-shirt while supplies last. To order tickets visit [www . BlueJackets . com/catholic](http://www.BlueJackets.com/catholic); for information, contact Jacob Welter at (614) 246-7625 or [jwelter @ BlueJackets . com](mailto:jwelter@BlueJackets.com).

From the Chair

Bishop Campbell will take your questions on Tuesday, Feb 6, 5-6 PM, during this live call-in-show. Columbus St Andrew students will give their reflections on *What must you do to make this Lent a good one?* Call St Gabriel Catholic Radio at (614) 459-4820 to ask your questions about the Catholic faith and growing in holiness.



Weekly Confessions & Weekday Mass							
But these times sometimes change, so be sure to call ahead!							
parish	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Penance
Bremen St Mary		8:20 AM					8 AM Sun
Lancaster St Bernadette	8:20 AM		8:20 AM	6 PM	8:20 AM	9 on 1 st Sat	5:30 PM Thu, 3 PM Sat, 8:30 AM on 1 st Sat
<i>Lancaster St Mary</i>	7 AM	9 AM	7 AM	9 AM			4 PM Sat
<i>Lancaster St Mark</i>	8 AM	8 AM	6 PM	8 AM	8 AM		5:30 PM Sat
<i>Sugar Grove St Joseph</i>	VARIABLES	NOON	7 PM	NOON	NOON		½ hour before Mass
<i>Circleville St Joseph</i>	9 AM	7 AM	9 AM		9 AM		4 PM Sat
<i>Logan St John</i>	8 AM	8 AM	9 AM		8 AM	9 AM	4 PM Sat
<i>Fisher Catholic HS</i>					2:40 PM		2 PM on 1 st Fri

Lent Is Coming. But What's the Point?

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is Feb 14. It is the day after Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday), which is the conclusion of the Carnival (farewell to flesh) season—even if we do anticipate Mardi Gras itself at St Bernadette on the previous Saturday evening with a big Carnival party. This year a serious Catholic will also anticipate Saint Valentine's Day by moving that celebration to Fat Tuesday, the 13th. Ash Wednesday is not a time for chocolates or partying. On Ash Wednesday we will have the **Imposition of Ashes** (with the words “Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return”) at **three Masses**, at

- 8:20 AM at St Bernadette,
- 12 NOON at Bremen St Mary and
- 6:00 PM at St Bernadette.

But don't let one thumbprint of ashes substitute for a daily walk with the Lord during this season of renewed prayer, fasting and almsgiving in preparation for the renewal of our Baptismal life at Easter. Lent is a time to get back on track, but the important thing is to recall where the track leads. It is to the life of the Christian, who is a person born again in water and the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Baptism.

Prayer, Fasting, and Giving Alms

The Lenten practices are usually identified as prayer, fasting, and giving alms. On Ash Wednesday, the gospel at Mass is a little passage from the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus talks about them (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18).

When the Lord said some things in his Sermon on the Mount about how we should conduct ourselves when we pray, fast, and give alms, he was talking to Jews. His message wasn't “I want you Christians to do these three things.” It was more like “I know you Jews do these three things. When you do, do them right, so that they will be pleasing to God.” In fact, he was pointing out that these are the things that, if you are trying to do God's will, you will do. It is the attitude with which you do them that will make all the difference.

So, praying, fasting, and alms giving are not just Lenten activities. They aren't just Catholic activities either. They are things that people who want to please God do. What Jesus says about them is that we should do them in a way that is not just about getting the attention of other people who will then say, “Isn't she (or he) good! See how she pleases God by prayer/fasting/giving alms!” Jesus wants us to go ahead and do what we need to do to please God, but keep the right attitude when we do it.

But that not letting “the right hand know what the left hand is doing” (Matthew 6:3) is especially tricky for Catholics. We do things **communally**. And we do religious **things externally as well as internally**.

- We come together to have ashes imposed on our heads, leaving a mark that we are not ashamed for all the world to see.
- All together, we abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent, and we know it is alright to talk about how we are doing being temporary vegetarians.
- We go to special prayer and worship services during Lent—without any need to sneak in. Anyone who is attentive, can tell that we are doing something special for Lent.

What would Jesus say? I think his message to us for Lent is to remember why we do what we do, whether it is special Lenten things or year-round Christian things.

Prayer. Many Catholics make a point of **attending Mass more often** during Lent, picking a day or two each week when they can plan to be there. Some try to **pray the Stations of the Cross**; we do that together **each Friday in Lent** at 7 PM in each of our parishes, concluding with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament; some families make a point of bringing their kids. (That's how I learned the story of the Passion of Christ!)

Fasting. Think self-sacrifice. Catholics in the United States **abstain from meat** on Ash Wednesday and on all the Fridays of Lent. Catholics 14 and older are bound by this law of abstinence. And they **fast** on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday—which means **eating only one full meal on those days**. One or two smaller meals may be taken on those days, but they may not total one full meal, and no eating between meals. All adults are bound by the law of fast until they are 59. Pastors and parents are to see to it that minors who are not bound by the law of fast and abstinence are educated in an authentic sense of penance. This is where the idea of giving up candy for Lent comes from.

Almsgiving. That means doing works of charity. As part of our Lenten observance, many will participate in Catholic Relief Services' Lenten program, **Operation Rice Bowl**. This is a funny little cardboard box that has for 40 years inspired Catholics in the United States to **pray, fast, learn, and give** as we increase our understanding of the needs of the needy. It helps us connect with the principles of Catholic social teaching through Lent. Participate in Operation Rice Bowl at home with your family. **Take home the Rice Bowl** and **Home Calendar Guide** which is available in the vestibule. It will encourage you to alleviate suffering and combat injustice. Together, we can help them and ourselves: “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.”

What Are You Going to Do During Lent?

It's time now to make up your mind about Lent, which starts next week. Are you going to do anything about it? Like pray or fast or give alms? You could just get some ashes on Ash Wednesday and some palm on Palm Sunday and lie low in the meantime. Or you could ...

- decide what weekday(s) you'll attend Mass each week;
- come to stations on Fridays;
- read the Bible for fifteen minutes each day;

You could even think about doing several of the above!

— Father Kessler

Self-Giving Love: *Humanae Vitae*'s Paradoxical Wisdom

Part One

By Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted of the Diocese of Phoenix

“Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28).

Who could have guessed that these words of God at the beginning of the Bible would become the center of intense controversy during the second half of the 20th century? After millennia of children being considered a blessing of God and marriage a lifelong union between one man and one woman, the so-called sexual revolution of North America and western Europe called into question the wisdom of the ages, rejected the constant teaching of Christianity and contradicted key moral principles of natural law. This conflict about marriage, family and human life came to a climax when Pope Paul VI issued *Humanae Vitae* in July 1968.

Controversial but needed document

Humanae Vitae was, without a doubt, the most controversial encyclical of the 20th century. Issued during a tumultuous time within both society and the Church, it met immediate and sustained public opposition from some theologians within the Church and from prominent exponents of the popular culture. The reaction was so unprecedented that it caught off guard both bishops and priests, leading most to fall silent on these vital issues. Worse still, it planted seeds of doubt in their minds, especially as dissenting theologians raised the volume of their rhetoric and found ready amplification for their dissident ideas in key sectors of the popular media.

The result was a two-fold disaster: on the one hand, uncertainty and silence by the clergy about the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* and related matters; and on the other hand, indifference and ignorance among a large sector of lay Catholics, bombarded as they were on a daily basis by distorted messages about sex and marriage. For a while, doubt and dissent seemed to have the upper hand, spawning further confusion among even active Catholics. Many, hardly aware of what was happening, got caught up in the contraceptive mentality with all its destructive consequences.

With the election of John Paul II in 1978, however, a new confidence began to emerge about all the teachings of the Church. This energetic pope from behind the Iron Curtain assured us that we could trust the truth, and that the truth would set us free. And he began a vigorous defense and more persuasive presentation of the key teachings of *Humanae Vitae*.

Theology of the Body

Paul VI had touched off a firestorm of criticism when, at the apex of the sexual revolution, he dared to defend the constant teaching of the Church on birth regulation. But popular or not, whether convenient or not, he spoke with courage; he upheld the truth. In fact, the message of *Humanae Vitae* is not just true news; it is good news. Pope John Paul II understood this well and, while vigorously reaffirming what his predecessor had taught, he presented it in more convincing fashion. He called his formulation of the teaching “The Theology of the Body.”

This fresh formulation, so deeply rooted in the Church’s tradition yet so innovative and attractive in articulation, was first presented in the Holy Father’s Wednesday Audience talks of the early 1980s. Then, he elaborated it further in subsequent documents such as *Familiaris Consortio*, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and *Evangelium Vitae*. All these insightful papal teachings, together with major medical advances in methods of Natural Family Planning, have gone far to counteract the dissent that raged in the late 1960s and through most of the ’70s.

The voices of dissent began to ring hollow as well when the harmful consequences of the sexual revolution became all too evident. Since July 1968, when *Humanae Vitae* was released, America has witnessed catastrophic increases in venereal disease, out-of-wedlock births, hardcore pornography, marital breakdowns, and widespread confusion about what it means to be a man or a woman and about the true nature of love. Admittedly, other destructive factors have also been at work in society during this time but none with more damaging consequences for the happiness, health and dignity of human persons. When the first command of God is ignored, chaos and suffering follow. Man and woman, united in marriage, find meaning and true joy by heeding the words of the Lord, “Be fruitful and multiply.”

‘As the family goes, so goes the nation!’

In his January 1999 visit to St. Louis, Pope John Paul II reminded us that God’s plan for marriage impacts on the stability and well-being of the whole of society. He said, “As the family goes, so goes the nation!” Who could argue that things in our nation are going well when we consider the sad state of family life today? Yet there is great reason for hope. Signs of a new springtime for marriage and family life are sprouting all around us. It will not happen without valiant effort, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But it will happen when we listen to the Lord and embrace His plan for marriage and family life. We need to begin by rediscovering the wisdom of *Humanae Vitae*, in other words, by seeing the wrongness of contraception and appreciating the goodness of Natural Family Planning.

This (the first of a) five-part series from Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted originally appeared in The Catholic Sun, newspaper of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix, between July and September of 2005. Reprinted with permission. Visit catholicsun.org.

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