

## What Will You Give Up for Lent?

Lent starts this Wednesday, and as a practicing Christian, I know the question is inevitable: “What are you planning to give up?” It’s a tougher decision than it sounds; I look with awe at a woman who gave up sarcasm one Lent. Now, that would be a real hardship.

Lent is the penitential season in the Christian calendar that traditionally runs from Ash Wednesday to Easter. It is 40 days long, not counting Sundays because Sundays are feast days (that woman could indulge in sarcasm on Sundays), and it marks the 40 days and nights Jesus spent in the wilderness before he began his ministry.

Forty is one of those biblical numbers that means a long time and is linked to periods of trial, like the 40 days and nights that the torrential rains floated Noah’s ark, and the 40 years that the Israelites wandered in the desert after escaping the pharaoh’s clutches.

You can see why the idea of giving up stuff is linked to this period — “fasting” as Jesus did in the desert. Indeed, many people give up certain foods, going without chocolate or red wine or desserts. A little bit of self-imposed suffering to mark the season and a reason to kick up your heels with chocolate eggs and jelly beans when Easter finally rolls around. Even if you’re not a Christian, the idea of going without for 40 days is not so bad. Call it a diet.

But there’s something else in this Gospel story that I’d rather honor. What does it mean to wander in the wil-

derness for 40 days and nights and face your demons? How would I do that today? How do you give up all distractions and listen to that inner voice that tells you what you need to be doing but you can’t quite face yet? The idea fills me with a weird combination of joy and dread.

Years ago a wise friend — O.K., he happened to be an Episcopal priest — told me that when religious norms start excluding an essential practice, it pops up elsewhere, often in a secular garb. I feel like that’s one reason meditation has boomed recently, practiced by everybody from Silicon Valley executives to kindergartners. The church forgot how important a regular discipline of emptiness is, something so easy to do in prayer — but its flock didn’t.

I guess it’s not unlike something I do already. I started praying regularly on my morning commute on the subway. I discovered how the external stimuli of doors opening and closing and wheels creaking on the tracks could be channels for some of my own inner doors opening. As long as I kept my eyes closed (funny about that).

Then I took up the practice sitting on the sofa at home. When you get silent you hear a lot of the noise in your head. Sometimes it will masquerade as a fabulous idea that you have to pursue right now, or some item on your to-do list that if you don’t get up from that sofa and log on to your computer, you’ll forget.

*Continued on page 2*

## What Will You Give Up?

*Continued from page 1*

You won't. In fact, what I look to is the forgetting. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century an anonymous author wrote a wonderful book on contemplative prayer called "The Cloud of Unknowing." "Whatever you don't know and whatever you've forgotten are 'dark' to you," he says, "because you don't see them with your spiritual eyes." (My translation of the original Middle English is by Carmen Acevedo Butcher.) Emptiness is this process of unknowing.

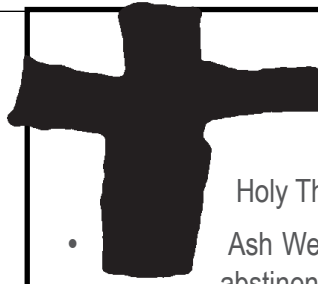
Not long ago, my twentysomething son stood on a New York City street corner with some of his church pals and marked anyone who asked with the traditional cross of ashes on their forehead one Ash Wednesday. He even did it to a bus driver who pulled over to the curb and called him inside, an extraordinary moment of spiritual intimacy on a busy day.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, we are forced to remember that our lives are short indeed. "Lent" has its origins in an Old English word for spring, but I sometimes like to think it's a reminder that our lives are not a right. They're a gift. In a way, they're "lent."

It would be a mark of false humility to tell you what I plan to give up or take on for Lent, if anything. But as I consider the options, I hold on to this idea of self-emptying, wilderness wandering.

Which brings me to one final comment. People will say, "If you're giving up something for Lent, isn't it something you should be giving up anyway?" Oh, come on. Enjoy the rhythms of life, savor the seasons, listen to what they ask. How wonderful that there is this time to not do more but to do less. Happy Lent.

*By Rick Hamlin, the executive editor of Guideposts magazine and the author of "Pray for Me" as appeared in the February 14, 2018 New York Times Opinion section on Facebook and Twitter (@NYTopinion).*



## Lenten Observances

- Lent is the liturgical season which runs from Ash Wednesday until the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday.
- Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of *total* fast and abstinence from meat.
- All the Fridays of Lent are days of Abstinence from meat.
- The **Law of Abstinence** from meat binds persons from the completion of their 14<sup>th</sup> year — from the day after their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, throughout life.
- The **Law of Abstinence** forbids the use of meat, but not eggs, milk or products or condiments made of animal fat. Permissible are soups flavored with meat, meat gravy and sauces.
- The **Law of Fasting** binds persons from the completion of their 18<sup>th</sup> year to the beginning of their 60<sup>th</sup> year, i.e., from the day after their 59<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- The **Law of Fasting** allows only one full meal a day, but does not prohibit taking some food in the morning and evening, observing as far as quantity and quality are concerned — approved local custom. The order of meals is optional; i.e. the full meal may be taken in the evening instead of at midday. Also: (1) the quantity of food taken at the two lighter meals should not exceed the quantity taken at the full meal. (2) the drinking of ordinary liquids does not break the fast.
- In keeping with the spirit and meaning of the Lenten fast, Catholics are encouraged to observe the Good Friday fast through Holy Saturday and until after the celebration of the Easter Vigil.

## ST. AMBROSE LENTEN BUFFET

Join us in the ARK at St. Ambrose for dinner every Friday in Lent, March 8<sup>th</sup> through April 18<sup>th</sup>, from 4 to 8 pm.

The menu includes a salad bar, soup du jour, fried or baked cod, tater tots, macaroni with cheese, a weekly special entrée, along with rolls, vegetable, coffee and tea. Desserts and drinks are available.

\$17.95 per adult  
 \$10 for children aged 6 to 10  
 Children 5 and under eat free.  
 Carry-out and delivery service:

(313) 423-6284.





# All Things Considered

It's that time of year again! Fat Tuesday, or as it is lovingly called in many parts of Metro Detroit, **Pączki Day**. This day is celebrated by indulging in the traditional Polish jelly-filled pastry. And please sound like a "native" by pronouncing it correctly PON-check. Also acceptable is a more commonly used name POONCH-kee, which is the plural pronunciation for this sweet treat.

Pączki are made from a rich yeast dough that won't collapse when you bite into it. Pączki are deep-fried and filled with fruit or cream – topped with a light sugar glaze. The traditional old-world fruit filling is prune, but other more popular fillings now include lemon, blueberry, raspberry and custard.

In larger cities in Poland, pączki are sold in numerous bakeries every day, but are much smaller than the ones made in America. Here Pączki are a giant-sized, specialty pastry reserved for once a year in honor of Fat Tuesday which is a day of celebration for Catholics as the precursor to the Lenten season, and the last day to indulge in sweet foods before the traditional 40-day period of fasting before Easter.

Polish immigrants brought this tradition with them to the United States, so places with strong Polish roots hold on to those important celebrations. But Detroit in particular seems to be the origin of Pączki Day stemming back to the vibrant community of 'Poletown' Hamtramck, which welcomed Polish immigrants as early as 1914. While there could be found other Polish-American enclaves in Chicago and New York whose bakeries produced Pączki for those longing for a taste of the old country, the tradition of Pączki in the USA seems most strongly rooted in Detroit. Where the pastry, as they say is.... "often imitated, never duplicated."

Here at St. Ambrose we have done our level best to keep the Pączki in

our parish. Over the years, your Pastor and his Polish heritage staff have done due diligence in many different Polish bakeries sampling these treats – each year trying to provide for you our pick of the best of Metro Detroit Polonia. This year, it's the Sweetheart Bakery that has merited our attention. So be prepared to indulge today [would that be *Dimanche Gras*?] in these ridiculously delicious, calorie-laden treats over coffee and hospitality in the ARK.

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The starting point of Lent this year is this Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>. More to my point, St. Ambrose's Lenten Dinners begin on March 8<sup>th</sup>.

After the opening of the ARK we brought to the parish the custom of community

Lenten meat-less dinners. At

that time, that was considered a little "low brow". Fish Fries, once

a staple of Catholic life, had become a "cliché." But I sensed that the old American Catholic custom of a parish Fish Fry still had merit. It turned out that contemporary Catholics were ready for this "good-old" Lenten custom. Our twist was to offer a Lenten meal that was border-line penitential. Yes, it would still be meatless, but it would provide a "taste of the kingdom" where abstinence is transformed into joy.

Our Lenten Fish Dinners have proven to be ways of enriching our parish – not financially, but spiritually. This year we will introduce the culinary talents of **Chef Reva Constantine** of the Great Lakes Culinary Center. In 2018, she was voted "Best Chef" in Hour Detroit's 2018 Best of Detroit Readers' Choice competition.

Advance tickets make a great introduction to our St. Ambrose Community. We'll begin selling those tickets this weekend. Be evangelical! Share a meal with those whom you can "softly" introduce to the faith and to our parish.

With a higher cost of food, we make zero profit on food sales from our Fish Dinners even at \$17.95. But like most restaurants, we depend on impulse

purchases including desserts and beverages. We also depend on a supply of free labor. That's where you come into the picture. If you can give us a Friday of your time this Lent working for the dinner, or driving home deliveries, call or sign up in the back of church.

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We are promoting three different missionary projects this Lent and ask that you might participate in the one that best suits your ability or interest.

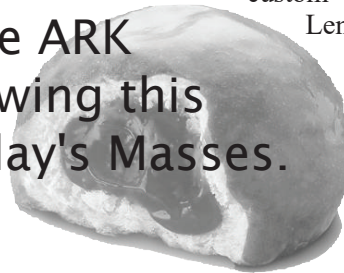
1. Our students in our Religious Education Program will be asked to fill Lenten Folders with a sacrifice of twenty-five cents a day. If you would like to join them in this, there are additional coin folders in the back of church. These contributions will go to the *Kay Lasante*, i.e. House of Health medical mission in Haiti supported by **Bishop Gumbleton**.

2. **Joe Looney**, an Attorney/Ambrosian who has spent decades working as a member of Maryknoll Lay Missioners since 1995, asks for hearing aids that could be refurbished and used for children with hearing losses in Bolivia. If you have an unused one of these medical devices, this is an excellent chance to repurpose it. Ask around, because I think there might be a lot of these pricy, older instruments languishing out there in drawers and medical offices. Drop off these hearing aides at the parish rectory. I've got one from my dad I've been holding onto which I'll donate to start the process. Could we assemble ten or more of these before Easter? This could be a life-changer for ten kids.

3. **Deacon Anthony Kote-Wita** asks that families whose children have out-grown books consider sending them to children in his native Nigeria. It's there that such items are still considered luxuries. Deacon Anthony has established a means of shipping these books to Africa, so all we need to do is for parents, schools and libraries to sort through those books that have outlived their shelf-life and put them in the hands of youngsters who will consider even a used book a treasure. We'll put up a donation basket for these books in the back of church.

TRP

PĄCZKI  
in the ARK  
following this  
Sunday's Masses.





Name

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Home Phone

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Work Phone

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Email Address

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- I would simply like to learn more about the Catholic Faith.
- I desire to prepare for my Baptism into Christianity.
- I've been Baptized as a Christian and now desire to join in Catholic Communion.
- I'm non-Catholic, but married to a Catholic, and now wish to join the Catholic Church.
- I'm Catholic and I would like to complete my initiation into the Catholic Church by celebrating Confirmation and/or Communion.
- I'm Baptized Catholic and would like to learn more about my faith and how to practice it.
- I want to propose someone for Catholic Church membership and offer to serve as their sponsor.
- I would be willing to help with an R.C.I.A. program.
- I have other needs, requests, and questions. Please contact me.

Return this to the Parish Rectory or place it in the Collection basket.

## The Buzz

Have you ever heard the expression “Once in a blue moon”? I think it is an expression that tries to describe how rare a thing or an experience might be. More exactly, I think a “blue moon” is the second full moon that might occur within the same month – rare, but such might happen a couple of times a year.

But the 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time of the Liturgical Year (Yr. C in the three-year cycle of Sundays) – today – is so much rarer! In my 23 years here at St. Ambrose I could find no previous occurrence. Usually Lent has begun by now. Only when Easter is as relatively late as it is this year (April 21) is there a chance . . . and then it has to happen in a Year-C!

So, with such a rare and special convergence in the history of salvation, what kind of Lent are you planning to begin this (Ash) Wednesday? Same-ol'-same-ol'? Something new and creative, historic, rare and special?

I hope by now that adults are beyond just giving up things for Lent, as if some self-imposed penance might hurt ourselves enough to help balance the divine scales of justice and lighten the waiting punishment we have merited by our sinful transgressions of God’s commandments. If you are ready for a new and challenging agenda for Lent, take the next three days and pour yourself into the rarely combined scriptures of this 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time of the Liturgical Year (Yr. C): Sirach 27, Psalm 92, I Corinthians 15, Philippians 2, and Luke 6. It’s all about visioning what your life should look like – living in communion with the Lord. Then start doing it more! A good early-Lent examination of conscience doesn’t best begin with a list of sins, but rather with a list of good deeds.

Sirach might say, ‘At the end of Lent – at Easter – if you were accused of being a member of the Body of Christ, would there be enough evidence to convict you?!’ I loved the line in the Psalm about bearing “fruit even in old age.” Paul challenges us to be “always fully devoted to the work of the Lord.” Even the Alleluia verse calls us to “shine like lights in the world.” And the Gospel Jesus in Luke confronts us with needing to be honest with ourselves – about ourselves, especially in relation to judging others. Then He wraps things up with “A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good . . .” Can you hear in this that to produce nothing good = doing evil?!

An adult Lent is about doing . . . good. I think this may be at the foundational heart of the major Archdiocesan UNLEASH THE GOSPEL theme that we need to convert from a maintenance mentality to one of mission. Mission is about doing! There is certainly a lot to be done in the Catholic Church right now. What is the “good” that is most needed to be done right now? Will you do it this Lent? Let’s make a pledge to try, to support one another in the attempt, and then come together this Wednesday to be marked in ashes with the sign of what it will cost to “do it”.

There are some special things to “do” this Lent at St. Ambrose that provide mutual support so we never feel we have to do it alone. Try out a Thursday evening mass here; plan on a private experience of the Sacrament of Reconciliation some Thursday evening before mass or on a Saturday afternoon beginning at 3:00 p.m. before the 4:00 mass. Try out a 7:00 Friday evening Stations of the Cross . . . just before or just after a delightful Lenten Dinner in the ARK.

And then after a whole Lent of doing good in the Body of Christ, try to plan any Eastertime travel only after you have celebrated the Paschal Triduum (April 18/19-21) with your faith family at St. Ambrose. I guarantee that if you put serious energy into your Lent here, something will be missing if you leave early. And we’ll miss you too.

Chuck Dropiewski

## Journey of Hope

Some key compassionate individuals from the Church's history inspire me. These individuals include Pope Clement VI, St. Peter Claver, and Pope Pius the XII. Why are these three people so important to me? The reason is that they draw my attention to my three years in the refugee exile camp in Africa, where sixteen interdenominational pastors and I organized ourselves to help the destitute among us.

Pope Clement VI used his pastoral capability to stand in faith, hope and in love for his suffering people who were victims of the epidemic Black Death in Europe. He refused to escape from the plague in order not to abandon the poor suffering people in the city. Rather, he planned for medical provisions and food to help and to be with the plague victims. Similarly, my colleagues and I took courage to assist the exile victims. We embraced them in faith and in the spirit of koinonia (i.e., communion), sharing food, our gifts and talents communally.

I can also attest to the pastoral truth of St. Peter Claver of Colombia, a Jesuit who was known as "the Apostle of the slave" due to his pastoral undertaking with the underprivileged. Like Peter Claver, my interdenominational companions and I became like Christ who advocated and laid down his life for his loved ones. We too have the obligation to emulate the virtues of these noble men. Pastorally, as Claver would say, "The one who will give the eternal water also will give eternal life." Moved with compassion, he took those slaves who were seriously ill to the hospital for medical attention and provided food for them. Likewise, God uses his poor servants like you and me to bless his people. For Mother Teresa once said, "I am only a pencil in the hand of God that he uses to write whatever he wishes." We are all invited on our journey of hope to become that same pencil.

Consequently, we are called as priestly people to bring God's community together. We are called to have a compassionate servant's heart in our various disciplines. In my little ways, I have joined the interdenominational companions to help for the survival of the marginalized Ogonis. I believe I have worked like Pope Clement VI, St. Peter Claver, and even Pope Pius XII who rescued thousands of Jews from Hitler's Nazi massacre in Europe. Convincingly, these have definitely sharpened my future ministry.

For most of us, we don't have to be in the refugee camp, in Columbia or in Europe in the midst of epidemic plague victims before we can help the destitute. I believe many of us might have experienced or taken part in similar activities by reaching out to the destitute. We are all called in the same way to emulate Christ like the Ogoni interdenominational companions and me in the refugee camp, and the three persons from history mentioned above. We are called to the prophetic ministry of sacrifice, breaking bread together and sharing our compassionate love and our God by giving gifts to one another. And so, to be both mature and effective on this journey of hope, we must love and serve.

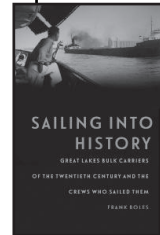
Dn. Anthony Kote-Witah, OFM Cap.

## Ash Wednesday

Lent begins this Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>. Ashes will be distributed at morning Mass at 8:30. There will be a Scripture Service at 12:00 noon and an Evening Mass at 7:00.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of total fast and abstinence from meat.

## Marcellina's Book Club



The Great Lakes create a vast transportation network that supports a massive shipping industry. In Sailing into History: Great Lakes Bulk Carriers of the Twentieth Century and the Crews Who Sailed Them, Frank Boles

relates seamanship, cargo, competition, cooperation, technology, engineering, business, unions, government decisions, and international agreements in a story of unrivaled interest.

We are in the process of connecting with the author to see when he can pay our book club a visit. That date will be announced here. In the meantime, pick up a copy of the book and get a headstart in reading this important work which was one of this year's twenty Notable Book Honorees by the State Library of Michigan.

## The Beehive

is the parish weekly bulletin of the St. Ambrose Catholic Community Detroit/Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan

**Pastor:** Rev. Timothy R. Pelc

**Assistant:** Dn. Anthony Kote-Witah, OFM, Cap

**Pastoral Minister:** Charles Dropiewski

**Religious Education:** Kelly Anne Woolons

**Minister of Music:** Dr. Norah Duncan IV

**Office Manager:** Peggy O'Connor

### Sacramental Celebrations

**Masses:** On the Lord's Day –

Saturday Vigil - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday - 8:30 and 11:15 a.m.

**Baptism:** Arrangements for both adults and

infants to be made by contacting the rectory.

**Penance:** As announced and by appointment.

**Marriage:** Couples should contact the rectory office a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed date to make arrangements.

**Funeral:** Normally celebrated within one week after the deceased's passing.

### Directory

**Parish Office:** 15020 Hampton

Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan 48230

**Tel:** (313) 822-2814 **Fax:** (313) 822-9838

**Email address:** stambrose@comcast.net

**Religious Education:** (313) 332-5633

**Pastoral Ministry:** (313) 332-5631

**Ark Scheduling:** (313) 822-2814

**Parish Website:** stambrosechurch.net



# Liturgy Schedule for the Coming Week

**Monday, March 4**

*St. Casimir*

8:30 a.m. - Morning prayer

**Tuesday, March 5**

8:30 a.m. - Mass - Rev. Daniel McGrath

Ray & Rosanna Tessmer

**Wednesday, March 6**

*Ash Wednesday*

8:30 a.m. - Mass & Distribution of Ashes

12:00 p.m. - Scripture Service

7:00 p.m. - Mass & Distribution of Ashes

**Thursday, March 7**

*Sts. Perpetua & Felicity, martyrs*

7:00 p.m. - Mass - Rev. John O'Neil

**Friday, March 8**

*St. John of God, religious*

8:30 a.m. - Mass - Geradase Engler

7:00 p.m. - Stations of the Cross

**Saturday, March 9**

*St. Frances of Rome, religious*

3:00 p.m. - Reconciliation

4:00 p.m. - For All People

**Sunday, March 3**

*First Sunday in Lent*

8:30 a.m. - For All People

11:15 a.m. - For All People



## Scriptures for the Beginning of Lent

**Monday, March 4**

- Sir 17: 20-24
- Ps 32: 1-2, 5-7
- Mk 10: 17-27

**Tuesday, March 5**

- Sir 35: 1-12
- Ps 50: 5-8, 14, 21
- Mk 10: 28-31

**Wednesday, March 6**

- Jl 2: 12-18
- 2 Cor 5: 20-6: 2
- Mt 6: 1-6, 16-18

**Thursday, March 7**

- Dt 30: 15-20
- Ps 1: 1-4, 6
- Lk 9: 22-25

**Friday, March 8**

- Is 58: 1-9a
- Ps 51: 3-6b, 18-19
- Mt 9: 14-15

**Saturday, March 9**

- Is 58: 9b-14
- Ps 86: 1-6
- Lk 5: 27-32

**Sunday, March 10**

- Dt 26: 4-10
- Rom 10: 8-13
- Lk 4: 1-13

# The First Sunday in Lent

March 9<sup>th</sup> and March 10<sup>th</sup>

**4:00 p.m. - Celebrant:** Fr. Pelc **Lector:** Pat Ticknor  
**Eucharistic Ministers:** Della Cimini, Matthew Strong, Mary Urbanski  
**Altar Servers:** Joseph & Andrew Strong

**8:30 a.m. - Sunday - Celebrant:** Fr. Bede **Lector:** Karlos Haynes  
**Eucharistic Ministers:** Colleen Drummond, Colleen Gatzke, Christopher Harrison, Bob Jogan, Steve Linne, Joellyn Valgoi, Chris Walsh  
**Altar Servers:** Nicholas Kurta, Alyssa Flores

**11:15 a.m. - Celebrant:** Bp Gumbleton **Lector:** Roger Playwin  
**Eucharistic Ministers:** Beverly Bennert, Joe Hugh, Sue Playwin, Janis Ramsey, Darryl Swiatkowski, Patty Yaden  
**Altar Servers:** Jack Hern, April Caballero

## Your Envelope Speaks . . . the Inside Story

To operate, each week our parish requires a *minimum* of..... \$10,100.00

**On Sunday, February 24, 2019**

in envelopes we received ..... \$7,995.00  
 in the loose collection ..... \$445.00  
 in other donations..... \$1,390.00  
 for a total of..... **\$9,836.00**

**Under** budget for the week..... **\$264.00**

Number of envelopes mailed ..... 900  
 Number of envelopes used..... 134

*"A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit."  
 (Luke 6:43)*

Are you using your God-given gifts in the way God intended? Do you compare yourself to others and complain about what you don't have instead of being thankful for what you do have? God gives each of us unique gifts and a unique plan. Listen to how God is calling you to use your gifts, to bear good fruit, for the glory of His name.

## Our Sick

Please pray for those who are seriously ill or who are hospitalized: Pat Blake, Karen Culver, Ann Sullivan Kay, Donald Miriani, Bonnie McKenna, Jeanne Noto, David Schumacker, Matthew Elias, George Bucec, Emilie Kasper, Anna Noto Billings, Vilma Rivers, Vilma Marone, Eileen O'Brien, Martha Luna, Dina Engels, Liz Linne, Donna Barnes, Betty Greenia, Alexandra Cullen, Charmaine Kaptur, Frank Gregory, Josephine DeCastris, Alex Billiu, Gladys Bogos, Lou Rondini and Wayne Wallrich.

## Our Dead

A funeral liturgy was celebrated on February 27<sup>th</sup> for **Daniel Boyce**, age 77.

Daniel was born and raised just a few blocks away from St. Ambrose on Ashland Street. He attended St. Ambrose High School and went on to the Lawrence Institute of Technology. He worked for Michigan Bell and AT&T as a support technician. Danny enlisted in the Army and was a member of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and with 100+ jumps, was awarded "Parachutist." He married Sandra Lee Hamilton in 1965 and together they raised their family.

Danny held a pilot's license, built model airplanes, bowled competitively, swam, power boated and was a fan of war movies.

Dan is survived by his wife of 53 years, Sandra and his children, Daniel, Rhonda and Janice. Also surviving are siblings, Charles and Patricia. He will be missed by his seven grandchildren and the rest of his family and friends.

## Christian Financial

St. Ambrose Parish, through Christian Financial Credit Union, is equipped to make electronic transfers from your checking account or credit card on our website. Your checking account or credit card may be used to make a single donation; or you may set up automatic weekly, monthly or quarterly contributions on a schedule. Go to [stambrosechurch.net](http://stambrosechurch.net) for information on electronic giving.

## Religion, Politics and Lent

I've been a "news junkie" since about the fourth grade. One day after reading the comics pages in the daily newspaper, I thumbed through the rest of the paper and stumbled upon the strange kind of comics on the editorial page. They were "comics" that didn't seem "funny" the way the others were and I was intrigued by wanting to figure them out. Thankfully my Dad was also the kind of encouraging sort of father who helped lead me into awareness of the world around me, so we would talk about those unusual, not-so-funny comics and what they pointed toward.

As a child I grew with my Dad's political perspective, but rebellious adolescence led me into becoming my own young person with different and usually conflicting views. Whereas he and I had once enjoyed political banter when I was younger, at this point we are so different that we cannot even talk about it anymore. I deeply miss being able to go back and forth with my Dad and working with our respective passions toward a common view.

Mom used to remind me that religion and politics are the two things that polite people shouldn't talk about. But those are my favorite things! I majored in political science, studied law, and got a graduate degree in social ethics. As a friar, I worked for Franciscans at the United Nations and fought for the poor in the inner city. I have been able to work out a kind of detente between my two loves, religion and politics. But today, these two worlds seem to be bound in permanent conflict. People are more polarized than I ever remember, when people can't disagree reasonably without questioning each other's intelligence or patriotism. This has seeped into religious life as well, where our religious differences lead us to question each other's faith and even doubt about each other's salvation.

Within this swirling conflict we have Pope Francis describing himself as a "political person." When he did this, he wasn't necessarily inserting himself into the narrow U.S. political mess. The Holy Father is a bit above that fray. Instead, he was simply passing along an insight as old as Aristotle and embraced by Church scholars from Augustine through Aquinas and into the modern age — human beings are made for community. The original meaning of the word "politics," before it got corrupted by contemporary usage, has to do with the public and shared pursuit of meaning done in the public sphere. It describes how we need each other to work toward understanding and then working toward the common good.<

Lent, then, is a kind of political experience. It is not the screaming and demeaning that describes the corruption of public life that we experience now. Instead, it is like my Dad and (the younger) me going back and forth together, out loud, until we come upon a shared grasp of what it means to be human and in community with each other. Lent challenges us to shed what divides us from one another (fasting), opens us to the perspective of the other (prayer), and beckons us to share the goodness that is given to us (almsgiving). Through our annual journey into the Paschal mystery, we come to know what it means to truly be human. We know viscerally and together that death is not the end, that good triumphs over evil, that light prevails over darkness, and that God has secured for us that victory that is unfolding already in our own time.

*This reflection was written by Capuchin Friar Michael Surufka, OFM,  
a member of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province.*

## Vincentian Reflection

In the Gospel today, Jesus uses images in speaking to his disciples: "Can a blind man act as a guide to a blind man?... Why look at the speck in your brother's eye when you miss the plank in your own?...? "A good tree does not produce decayed fruit"... Today, as in St. Vincent's day, the bread we offer must be seasoned well with condiments of justice and love for our neighbors in need.

## Missionary Disciples

A workshop on the spiritual and practical aspects of stewardship as a way of life will be held on Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at Sacred Heart Seminary from 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Our parish will be sending a delegation. Topics include Marketing your Parish; Helping Parishioners Identify and Unleash their Gifts; How to Improve eGiving Results; Leading with Mission; Engaging Youth and Young Adults in Stewardship; and Communicating through Social Media. If you would like to join our parish group attending, contact us at the rectory.

## Lenten Prayer at St. Ambrose

On the Thursdays of Lent, our morning Mass shifts to a 7 p.m. time slot in order to give more people an opportunity to attend the liturgy during the weekdays of Lent — leading up to Holy Thursday.

Preceding Thursday night Masses (at 6 p.m.), as well as preceding Saturday afternoon Masses (at 3 p.m.), confessions will be heard.

This year Lent once again includes Friday night Stations of the Cross at 7:00 p.m. and our popular Fish Dinners which run from 4 to 8 p.m. Try this at least once this Lent: come for an early dinner and stay for Stations of the Cross. Or, come to Stations of the Cross and then enjoy a later dinner.

Good food and grace abounds! Sample a serving of both.