

First Sunday of Lent

February 18, 2018

Mass Intentions

Saturday, February 24th

5 P.M. – Eddie Satsky

Sunday, February 25th

7 A.M. – M/M Louis Pekar &

Deceased Family Members

9 A.M. – Wilma Ebner

Sanctuary Candle Intention

The Sanctuary Candle will burn this week for our parish families.

This Sunday's Holy Scriptures

Gn 9:8-15; 1 Pt 3:18-22; Mk 1:12-15

Your Gift to God: February 11th

Sweet Home	\$1,264
Online Giving	\$320
Building Fund	\$10
Koerth	\$631
Building Fund	\$35
DSA	\$35

May God reward your generosity!

Celebrate the Lord's Abundant Mercy

Each Saturday the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance/Confession) is available from 4:00 P.M. to 4:40 P.M. in the Sweet Home confessional.

Operation Rice Bowl

During the season of Lent through Easter Sunday we will have the traditional almsgiving program, "Operation Rice Bowl" taken up as a second collection each weekend.

Baptismal Preparation Class

The next class of Baptismal Preparation will be next **Saturday, March 10th** at 9:00 A.M. at the St. Joseph Family Center Meeting Room.

Pausing...Focusing

Recently when some cellular service "went down" many of us didn't know how to function. We have become so "connected" to constant communication and information. To not be able to text, email, access internet or the simple act of a call with our cellphone frustrated and became a nuisance for the brief period of time that service was unavailable. Yet it wasn't that many years ago when these aspects of modern technological advances were unknown to the majority of us. How did we exist "back then" when the world wasn't at our fingertips nor did we have a small pocket-sized smartphone that can do what most very large tower computers used to be required to do? It's a challenge to pause from the ordinary routine most of us have become so accustomed to--and focus on the communication that matters most--our relationships, starting with the Lord. Lent is the annual "pause" our spiritual lives deserve and need. Don't take it for granted...take advantage of the many ways available to us to get our focus in perspective on what truly defines us. It's not gadgets, information, technology and constant social media...rather it is the challenge to quiet oneself, engage our faith, and listen to what we are being called to--a life more fulfilled, meaningful and hopeful because of our experience of the Lord's grace in our lives--through the Sacraments, Scriptures, Devotions and pious Lenten practices that are being offered through our parish life. Find the time this Lent to disengage from the noise and activity, and apply oneself to what we hold most dear--our journey of faith embraced by God's abundant mercy.

Catholic Relief Services App

For those looking for another "modern" help during Lent...Catholic Relief Services have designed an App for smartphones that is free and helps in better understanding the importance of almsgiving and the real needs in our world we easily take for granted. Search in the Apps for CRS Rice Bowl and download it.

Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving

The Way of the Cross

Each Friday at 6:00 P.M. we will observe Stations of the Cross followed by Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Easter Flowers

Those who would like to donate towards the Easter floral decorations are invited to use the envelopes in the church entrances. All memorial/donations will be listed in the bulletin after Easter.

Why I'm Catholic (and you should be too)

Has anyone ever asked you why you're Catholic? Have you ever wondered yourself? Would you like some good reasons? If so, you might enjoy this six part series presented by Fr. Jacob. Sessions will take place on the **Mondays of Lent from 6:30-7:30 p.m. in the St. Joseph Family Center beginning February 19th.**

You are Invited to: "Rediscover Jesus"

An invitation is extended to you to join a small group using the book "Rediscover Jesus" by Matthew Kelly beginning the week of **February 4, 2018 through March 23, 2018**. Small groups are being offered from 6:30 P.M. to 7:30 P.M. Sunday through Thursday. Please call the Parish Office, 293-3518, if you would like to join a small group for Lent and indicate the best day of the week. If you would like to host or form a small group in *your* home (or for more information), call Ashley Hermes, 293-0700, Sharon Janca, 293-8367 or Joyce Harper, 798-6325.



Lead Me Retreat by God's Embrace March 9-11, 2018

Registrations are open for a Lead Me Retreat by God's Embrace. Come from wherever you are to experience a deeper walk with Jesus. Retreat will be held March 9-11 at the High Hill Conference Center of God's Embrace located at 2911 FM 2672, Schulenburg, TX. Weekend begins Friday evening and concludes with Sunday Mass. Open to couples and singles. Cost is \$100 for retreat and food. Overnight lodging is not provided, but discounted rate is available at Holiday Inn in Schulenburg. Register online at www.godsembrace.org or call 979-561-8883.

Prayer for the Victims of the Florida School Shooting

Daniel Esparza & Tony Assaf

Dear Lord

*At the beginning of this blessed lent,
we raise our prayers to you.*

*Please, accept the souls of these
innocent students, these children of
yours, into Heaven.*

*On the day we mark our foreheads
with ashes, to remember that we are
mortals, these sons of yours have
returned to the dust they were made of.*

They died, yes,

*But, as St. Francis reminds us,
"it is in dying that we are born to
eternal life."*

Mary, our mother;

*you who saw Jesus on the Cross
Help the mothers and fathers of the
victims, strengthen them, give them
peace. Amen.*

**REPENT
AND BELIEVE
FOR THE
KINGDOM
IS AT HAND**

40 Days in 64 words

Tom Hoopes

This Sunday, we hear a "tweet of a Gospel," but one that's chock full of meaning.

I love the First Sunday of Lent — Jesus faces the devil in those three dramatic temptations: the bread, the temple, and “all the kingdoms of the world.”

If you're expecting all of that in 2018, though — on the First Sunday of Lent, Year B — you will be disappointed. Instead you get a 64-word Gospel, Mark at his Markan briefest — a Gospel of 288 characters, not counting spaces. A Gospel barely longer than a single tweet.

But when you think about everything that is packed into this tweet of a Gospel, it opens up vistas of meaning.

First: Lent is when the Church sends you into the desert.

“The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for 40 days, tempted by Satan,” says the first 20 words.

Jesus has just been baptized and declared God's “beloved Son” when the Spirit drives him out into 40 days alone in a bare, bleak place where he is exposed to the scary world, tempted by sin.

We, too, are driven into the desert of Lent by the Spirit — through the Church, without which, face it, we wouldn't observe Lent at all. Here in Lent we have to battle with temptation for 40 days.

The only way to win is to stay safe with Jesus Christ, the Victorious One. He is our ark.

“Christ suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous,” writes St. Peter in the first reading, “that he might lead you to God.”

Second: Lent reminds us that we are animals served by angels.

“He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him,” says the next 11 words.

The Gospel and the First Reading both give us stories of prophets who live with wild beasts.

In the story of Noah's ark, God doesn't just make a covenant with mankind. He makes a covenant with *animalkind*: “I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you: all the birds, and the various tame and wild animals that were with you and came out of the ark.”

Jesus Christ came to us, exiled from heaven, to spend time with beasts — the wild ones, the tame ones, and us.

And as Noah was “saved through water,” writes St. Peter in the first reading. “This prefigured baptism, which saves you now.”

Baptism gives us the grace to separate ourselves from the other animals even more. At Lent we do just that by denying the animal appetites of our bodies to strengthen what we have in common with the angels — our reason and will.

Third, Lent isn't about us.

Significantly, the Gospel on the First Sunday of Lent is not just about the 40 days of Jesus's fast. It fast-forwards (no pun intended) to what happens next:

“After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the Gospel of God: “This is the time of fulfillment,” say the next 20 words.

John lived with wild beasts to prepare the world for Christ; Jesus lived with wild beasts to prepare his heart for the world. John preached Christ; Jesus preaches “the Gospel.” When John got arrested, Jesus started a journey that would get him arrested, too.

The lesson? Lent isn't what our Christian life is about. Lent is just a preparation for what our Christian life is about. Lent is not a self-perfection program. It is a “therapy” program where we use fasting, prayer and almsgiving to make us more like Jesus so that we can better spread his Gospel.

The Gospel ends with a mission statement for Lent and beyond.

The Gospel passage concludes with 13 words: “The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel.”

That is the mission statement of Lent. Time is short. Life will end. Our life, like our Lent, will be over before we know it. There is no point in waiting. There is nothing to wait for. The kingdom of God is ready *now*. The time to grasp it is *now*.

The Gospel takes 64 words to say: Stop waiting. Begin.

Repentance
is a change of direction
in thought and behavior

*“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,
have mercy on me, a sinner.”*

REPENT
AND BELIEVE
FOR THE
KINGDOM
IS AT HAND

**PEOPLE
ON EARTH
HATE TO HEAR THE WORD
REPENT!
THOSE IN
HELL
WISH THEY COULD
HEAR IT
JUST ONCE MORE**

Nothing
ON
Earth
Is
Worth
Going
To
Hell
For



PRAY FAST GIVE