



More News

The Seasonal Newsletter of
St. Thomas More Catholic Parish
Scranton, Pennsylvania

Lent 2021



From the Pastor

Dear Members & Friends,

Last year, just before the Covid pandemic reached our shores, I wrote a letter describing the value of the celibate priesthood, promising that my next missive would discuss the gifts of the married men who have been ordained. While that letter had to be put off because of these most unusual contemporary circumstances, I have over the past month preached two homilies that will fulfill the promise I made. For those receiving this letter electronically, these homilies can be accessed [here](#) and [here](#), and I am happy to provide them by request for those who receive our correspondence by mail.

The occasion of these homilies was the confluence of the Sunday Mass lectionary with events in my family life. In case you have not yet heard, my unborn son, Damian Alfonso, due May 26th, has been diagnosed with a congenital disorder, (likely Trisomy 18), an educated guess determined by the ultrasound images we have seen of his malformed heart and brain. This pregnancy has been particularly difficult physically, as well, so Kristina's normal regimen has been considerably curtailed. In response to these challenges, ladies from the parish organized a meal train for us, a gift that has enabled me to continue to fulfill the requirements of my vocation. Please know how thankful we are to all those of you who have reached out to help us in this time of need. Thank you, also, for all your prayers for our son, whose life has already had a wonderfully positive impact on our community. He and we are being sustained by your intercessions on our behalf.

Damian's diagnosis on January 6th came just before my family's bout with Covid. While most of us had few symptoms, and I had none, my wife suffered. After a shut-down of about ten days, during which only two public Masses were celebrated by priest friends of the parish, we gave thanks for our recovery during the

brief reprieve and then reflected on how much things have changed over the past year. While we have not been able to hold normal events, such as coffee hour and fund raisers, our worship and educational ministries have actually expanded during the pandemic. Attendance at our Masses and operating income are both up, and I anticipate double or triple the number of baptisms as we had last year. The Easter Vigil will see three men received into the Church and a fourth person complete the Sacraments of Initiation. I have officiated at two weddings already, and we have three more to celebrate before the end of the year; we have never had five weddings in one calendar year. Enrollment in Maria Kaupas Academy continues to grow and attract new families, and we shall undertake a restructuring of this apostolate to adjust to the growth.

The increase in the number of our parishioners and students at our school has necessitated an increase in our staff. First, after the chancery in Houston required that we record all our sacramental information on a central, diocesan-wide database, we took on Sandy Campbell to complete this ongoing project. Many of you have heard from her already, and if you have not, you soon will. With the resumption of public Masses this past summer, we employed Hannah Kaczor to serve as our sacristan. Since that time, we have recognized the need to pay for part of our bookkeeping and accounting needs, as well as for help with the duties of a sexton. As these people are hired in the coming weeks, I will introduce them to you. Their work will not supplant that of the many generous volunteers who help St. Thomas More Parish to function, but rather will augment the effort to keep pace with our growing responsibilities.

One of those responsibilities is to finish projects we began but which have lain dormant over the past year of uncertainty. Very soon we will begin the campaign to solicit funds to complete the garden in memory of Jerry McGreevy, as well as the adjacent Our Lady of Providence Shrine, which will face the corner of

Church Avenue and Theodore Street. This Shrine, of which a rendering posted in the church narthex will shortly communicate our vision, will be raised as a memorial to our loved ones who have gone before us, to serve as a consolation to those still here, both within the Parish and without. We are grateful for your patience, as I know from many conversations that a good number of you look with eager anticipation to the improvement of those lots we have now owned for six years.

One project we have completed despite the year's upheavals – or perhaps because of them – is the acquisition of all the vestments we require for the celebration of every liturgy. With the ordering of the complete Marian set, given in memory of John Gregory Gardner, I thought we were finished. But I was reminded that we do not possess a white casket pall for use at a child's funeral. Since Damian's diagnosis, this, too, has been donated, along with an entire white set that complements the interior of St. Joseph Church. Even as we pray for a miracle, circumstances are grim, since typically Trisomy 18 babies have a mere ten percent chance of living very long outside the womb.

Here again, our parishioners have come through, sharing with us every burden and lightening our load. This meditation has consoled me: if the Lord promises that one will not lose his reward who gives even a cup of cold water to him who is a disciple of Christ (Matthew 10:42), how much more may we expect for you, Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21), who have hastened to your father's side, that he may have strength to carry the cross assigned to him. We marvel before the love you've poured out, assured by our faith that before the Throne of Grace it will indeed be required, even if, for now, we are too weak to do more than simply press on.

With unceasing gratitude, I am,

Your servant in Christ,

The Rev. Eric L. Bergman

Worship

The Sunday Obligation

As the pandemic continues, we reprint here Bishop Lopes' announcement that "Beginning October 1, 2020, I am modifying the commutation of the obligation to attend



Mass. The commutation applies only to those persons who are at higher risk for the Coronavirus (according to the CDC, those who are 60+ years of age*, those with underlying medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, COPD, kidney disease, or are immuno-compromised)."

Alternating pews continue to be roped off at the church, and spacing and sanitary measures are taken at the Altar Rail. Masking is welcome, but not mandated. The church is cleaned and sanitized by a faithful volunteer team before each weekend. For those still under the commutation, our Masses continue to be recorded and posted on our website every Sunday and Holy Day.

Attendance at the 10:00 a.m. Sunday Mass remains robust. For those concerned about crowding, the 5:00 p.m. Saturday Vigil Mass and the Sunday 7:00 p.m. Mass (the latter with ample music but without congregational singing) are options that enable far greater spacing, especially the Vigil Mass.

**A typo in a recent email to local Parishioners erroneously stated 65 as the age limit, which remains unchanged at 60.*

Daily Office Underway

With the church pews now stocked with the recently published Divine Worship: Daily Office and Ordinariate priests now mandated to pray the Office publicly every day, Morning and Evening Prayer are said daily at the Parish at 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., respectively.

Though the initial print run was bought up almost exclusively by Parishes, a second printing is planned that will enable members to purchase their own books for private use at home, joining in the Liturgy of the Hours with Christians all over the world.

True to our Anglican heritage, numerous opportunities are now offered each month to



offer *Evensong*, the moniker commonly used to indicate Evening Prayer being set to music. **Sung Evensong** is now offered **every Wednesday**, with the congregation joining in chanting the Psalms, Canticles, and Responses, led by our Cantor. **Choral Evensong** – in which the choir does the lion's share of the singing on behalf of all worshipers – continues its long-established presence on the **First Friday of each month** when our Academy is in session, sung by our Upper School choir.

Eucharistic Adoration

A reminder that the 4:30 p.m. First Friday Choral Evensong mentioned above – while of course not a Communion liturgy itself – takes on a highly Eucharistic focus. Evensong begins with Exposition of the Sacrament, and concludes with Benediction, whereby the people are blessed with the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance. Then proceeds 24 hours of Eucharistic Adoration until 4:30 p.m. the next



day, including Confession and 8:00 a.m. Mass on Saturday mornings. Adorers are asked to sign up for a time slot on the sheet at the back of the church; please join us for this monthly opportunity to worship and adore in our Lord's very presence.

Ash Wednesday Masses

Lent begins on **Ash Wednesday, February 17**. Said Mass with Imposition of Ashes will be offered at **11:15 a.m.**, and **Solemn Mass with Imposition of Ashes** at our normal



Wednesday Mass time, **5:30 p.m.** Please join us for this solemn commencement of the season of fasting and penitence.

Stations of the Cross

As always, we continue our Lenten practice of offering Stations of the Cross at **5:00 p.m. on Wednesdays** (between 4:30 Evensong and 5:30 p.m. Mass), and **Friday evenings at 6:00 p.m.** Please join us on for this quintessential Lenten devotion.

Masses for Chair of St. Peter, St. Joseph, & Annunciation

Given the respective patronage of our church building and our ecclesiastical jurisdiction, two Solemnities that feature prominently in our liturgical cycle at St. Thomas More are the Feasts of the **Chair of St. Peter**



(February 22) and **St. Joseph (March 19)**. Our observance of the former will include 7:00 a.m. (said) and 11:15 (solemn) Masses on **Monday, February 22**. **St. Joseph Day** will be observed with **Solemn Vigil Mass** on **Thursday, March 18 at 5:30 p.m.**, with said Masses on Friday at 7:00 a.m. and 11:15 a.m.



The Annunciation of the Lord is on **March 25**. Falling this year on a Thursday, **Said Vigil Mass** will be offered on **Wednesday evening the 24th at 5:30 p.m.** Said Mass will be offered on **Thursday the 25th at 7:00 a.m.**; **Solemn Mass** will be that evening at 5:30.

While all these occasions fall in Pre-Lent and Lent, parishioners may observe all these days as feast days, dispensing with Lenten disciplines

Holy Week / Easter Schedule



(In addition to these principal liturgies, all other Masses will be offered according to the usual schedule, unless noted.)

Palm Sunday, March 28, 10 a.m.

Maundy Thursday, April 1, 7 p.m.

Good Friday, April 2, 12 noon

Solemn Vigil of Easter, April 3, 8 p.m.

Easter Sunday, April 4, 10 a.m.

No 7:00 p.m. Mass on Easter Sunday.

Discipleship & Fellowship

Some Programs on Hold, Others Forge Ahead

As we continue to weather the pandemic, the Parish has focused its activities upon critical ministries enabling us to continue to impart and receive the grace of the Sacraments. Sadly (but prudentially), other programs and activi-



ties we would normally anticipate at this time of year are on hold until the pandemic subsides to safer levels. These include:

- Rummage Sales
- Monthly Neighbor Nights
- First Sunday Potluck Birthday Bashes
- Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
- Lent Adult Education
- St. Joseph Day Bake Sale
- Spring Family Pilgrimage
- Academy Dances & Fundraisers
- Wednesday Choir School rehearsals

Nevertheless, other critical ministries and programs continue to forge ahead. As witnessed by our "Worship" section, our **liturgical life** continues largely unabated, while observing

reasonable safety measures. **Sunday School** classes continue to prepare our children and youth to receive the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. Engaging in outdoor (and thus safer) activities even in winter, the **Youth Group** has enjoyed sledding and ice skating excursions. And, **Maria Kaupas Academy** continues to impart a wonderful classical Catholic education to our students.

Please continue to pray for the day when the pandemic is behind us and we can resume our full range of programs and ministries! In the mean time, we are deeply gratified by the continued support and engagement we have received throughout this difficult time, soon to reach the one-year mark.

Outreach & Evangelization

A New Front Sign

Though perched atop an imposing pile of stone steps, our church is blessed with a sturdy glass-and-steel sign case along North Main Avenue, reminding passers-by that the edifice high above them is home to a lively pattern of worship. The eye-grabbing insert therein must occasionally be redesigned to reflect adjustments to our schedule. With the recent addition of our Saturday Masses and the Daily Office, our sign has recently been updated to reflect these new opportunities.

St. Thomas More Parish
& **Maria Kaupas Academy**
Roman Catholic • Ordinate of the Chair of Saint Peter
The Rev. Eric Bergman, Pastor

MASSES
Sat • 8 AM, 5 PM
Sun • 10 AM, 7 PM
M/T/Th/F • 7 AM
Wed • 5:30 PM
stmscranton.org - mkacademy.org - 343-0634

CONFESSION
:30 prior to Masses
Morning Prayer
Daily • 8 AM
Evening Prayer
Daily • 4:30 PM

While not every activity can be displayed – there is a diminishing return in legibility as more information is squeezed in – we hope the redesign more fully reflects the range of opportunities for worship, prayer, and confession available in the building it attends.

Inquirers Class Going Strong

Tucked away from our Sunday morning hubbub, our weekly Inquirer's Class (Sunday evenings at 5:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall) is most likely "out-of-sight and out-of-mind" for most parishioners; yet it remains a critical means by which people each year find their way into our Parish, and thereby, into the Catholic Church.

Starting each Fall and continuing for 20 weeks toward the Easter Vigil, participants are served a light supper, view a video-based presentation of the Catholic faith aptly titled "Sycamore" (a reference to Zacchaeus' effort to get a closer look at Jesus), engage in lively discussion, and fill in answers in a booklet drawn from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

The class recently gained a new student, a good fit for the circumstances because she is a former Catholic – never confirmed – coming back to the Church who is not in need of the foundational material already presented prior to this point... a good reminder that any Catholic who has not completed the Sacraments of Initiation is "fair game" for re-evangelization and membership in Ordinate parishes.

If you know a non-Christian, a Protestant Christian, or a fallen-away Catholic who may be interested in the Catholic faith, please keep in mind the possibility of extending an invitation to next season's course in the Fall.

Sister Parish Engages Its Rank-and-File in Local Evangelization

One of the most commonly (yet wrongly) held beliefs among the Catholic laity is that Evangelization is a task which they pay their Pastor and staff to do. To the contrary, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that Evangelization "is not something optional, but the very vocation of the People of God, a duty that corresponds to it by the command of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The proclamation and witness of the Gospel are the first service that Christians can offer every person and the whole human race,

as they are called to communicate to all the love of God, who manifested himself fully in the only Redeemer of the world, Jesus Christ."

Our friends at St. John the Evangelist Parish to our south in Bridgeport, PA, are heeding the call with "Evangelization Days," [described by Jackson Perry](#):

"Things begin with the daily prayers, a rosary, and confession, followed by Mass and breakfast. The spiritual director then leads the recruited volunteers in training for the day, going over how to deal with different situations, and how to best reach others. Then divided into 2 person veteran-newbie teams, they go out on an organized route, knocking door by door, offering to talk and pray with those they met. They fill out a card after each meeting, describing anything that had come up. A small group of volunteers remain behind at the parish to pray for the success of the ministry that day. Once the teams are done, they meet and each report on the success they found on their routes. [Below is a sample]:

"In total, they knocked on 879 doors, talked with 336 people, and had 48 people request follow-up visits. The next day, a number of those they reached out to even showed up at Mass! This was repeated in the Fall, with similar success: 17 teams went out, knocking on 474 doors and having 181 conversations with 34 active Catholics, 33 inactive Catholics, 37 non-Catholic Christians, 9 members of other religions, and 21 unchurched individuals; 33 people requested follow-up visits. This ministry has produced fantastic results under difficult circumstances, and like Mount Calvary's breakfast ministry, is helping a personal parish invest also in the directly surrounding community."

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