

1st SUNDAY OF LENT

ST. NICHOLAS PARISH

From the Pastor's Desk

Today is the First Sunday in Lent. We have begun our penitential season as we prepare for the celebration of Easter in six weeks. This seems like a very long time. The length of the Lenten season can be rather daunting. Yet there is a purpose for this lengthy season. This season deals with the serious business of conversion. True conversion of the human heart is not something that is instantaneous. Christian conversion is a process and takes a great deal of time. In fact, it is a lifelong process.

Conversion is a lifelong process. However, this process must begin somewhere. The first movement or step for conversion is described as turning away from sin and turning to God. It can be as radical as "hitting the bottom of the barrel" or a simple awareness that things are not as they should be, and I need a change. We call this repentance. As a matter of faith this is expressed in the words... "Turn away from sin and believe in the Gospel."

Once we turn away from sin (knowing that this is self-destructive) with a firm purpose of amendment we begin to make some changes and travel along the way of holiness. For the change of heart these changes need to become a way of life. This is the ongoing conversion: living this new way of life. As we live this new life moving along the way of holiness, we must also expect moments of failure. It is bound to happen. Since we are living in a new way, we must make it a good habit and we are trying to shake off an old habit. Failure along the way is going to happen guaranteed. Although we may fail, we must remain faithful and not give up the path of holiness. This will be the first test or temptation.

We may have a profound conversion moment and have repented from our sins, but this does not exempt us from our human nature. We are still human which means that we are weak and imperfect: we are prone to fail in moments of weakness. We do not want to sin but there are times that the words of St. Paul ring true in our lives. "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." (Romans 7: 15) St. Paul is speaking of the Law of God and its guidance toward goodness. He realizes that at times he does not do that which he knows is good because of his human weakness. In other words, like St. Paul, we love the Lord and want to live in his holiness. But there are times we do not do what we love but we do the very thing we hate. In this world we are in a constant struggle with the temptations and seductions of sin. The devil is clever.

When someone has a conversion experience that person must now be prepared for a struggle. One must expect the battle with temptation and sin to begin. The Evil One hates the way of holiness. Therefore, all temptations will arise in order to undermine any conversion to holiness and faith. At first these temptations will present themselves as simple and subtle to test our resolve. They will present themselves with greater intensity if the conversion to faith is greater. There will always be some kind of "push back" to the life of holiness, virtue and Christian Faith. If one abandons the faith over a simple or silly little thing the battle is over, and the temptations have accomplished its goal: abandonment of the path of holiness and faith. As human beings we are composed of body, mind and spirit. Temptations can manifest themselves in the realm of the spiritual, psychological, intellectual or physical. Again, the devil is clever.

Many years ago, I recall reflections a priest gave on the sacraments. Sacraments are encounters with Christ and lead to

salvation. The one sacrament that hit home for me was his reflections on Holy Orders. He was presenting some very sobering thoughts. He reflected on the time of ordination. Once a man is ordained to the priesthood, he must expect a direct attack on his commitment. This now becomes the place where the battle will materialize. A priest must expect that his love for and his faithfulness to the Church will be challenged. This temptation will present itself spiritually, intellectually, psychologically and physically. The tempter will challenge the priest with simple and seemingly silly things in order to undermine his commitment. The battle is more than personal; it is about undermining the priesthood, the sacraments and the Church. With the growth in holiness the battles will intensify. The agenda is the same since sin is always destructive of all that is good and holy.

Another sacrament he focused on was Matrimony. Marriage is a great and holy sacrament because it is a sharing in the life-giving love of God. Marriage is a window into the inner life of God: faithful love from which all life flows. At the marriage ceremony husband and wife pledge their love and faith until death. The marriage vows are at the heart of marriage. This is exactly the place for married couples are to expect the battle to take place. There will inevitably be a challenge to their vow of love and faithfulness. The temptations are intended to undermine their love and faithfulness. It is also intended to undermine the Sacrament of Marriage. Love will be challenged. Faithfulness will be challenge. When this is challenged then the window into the inner life of God is attacked. The stakes are high.

All we must do is look at the current attacks on the Priesthood. Much criticism is justified because many have fallen to the worldly temptations to sin. We need to pray for our priests. In the same manner we are also aware of the attacks on marriage: the government redefining marriage, co-habitation and the high divorce rate. Just like the priesthood, at the center of all these failures is the presence of sin. These two sacraments, like all sacraments, are about holiness and salvation. This is where the battle with temptation and sin is taking place. All baptized Christians will be tempted to sin. It is precisely the Sacraments of Christian Vocation, the call to live the Christian life in a bold and holy way, that are hit particularly hard. Undermine these Christian Vocations is the agenda of sin because they are a holy way of life.

Sin is the worst thing. We do not often think about it in this way, but sin is the worst thing. It is the reason why God sent his only begotten Son into the world. Sin is serious business because God takes sin seriously. We need to be reminded about this truth.

Now that we are reminded about this truth, we also need to do something about it. We must take our ongoing conversion to Christ seriously. We are called to travel along the path of holiness. We do this because it is for our greater good. We know that at times we fail. We must be humble about this fact. We must be humble and pray with open hearts to the grace of God. We need help. During our Lenten season we know that we are called to do penance: living our conversion and travel along on the path of holiness. We make an extra effort in our prayer and reflection to confirm and strengthen our conversion.

Thus, during this Lenten Season we consciously renew our efforts and engage the penitential practices the Church places before us to help us along the way. The penitential practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, are not arbitrarily placed before us during this time of year. In fact, these very practices are common among the many religions of the world. They are practices that have deep biblical roots. They are also tried and true practices that

have the effect of reorienting the human heart. So, we trust the Church and the Christian Tradition during this Lenten Season as we engage in these penitential practices. We open our hearts to the grace of God and to a deeper conversion and commitment to the direction of our lives and make a renewed effort to seek the Lord and the life he promises us.

Have a good Lenten Season.
Fr. Ralko

NOTE WELL: Daylight Saving Time starts next Sunday March 8th. Just to be safe, let this serve as a reminder to set your clocks ahead one hour.



This week we pray Week I of the Liturgy of the hours.

Church Support

February 23, 2020	
OFFERTORY	\$10,562.00
Diocesan Tax	\$(770.00)
Fenwick Subsidy	\$(2,635.00)
Rosecrans subsidy	\$(485.00)
Available for Parish Operations	\$6,673.00
Parish Operating Expenses	\$(7,825.00)
Religious Education Expenses	\$(890.00)
Other Income	<u>\$1,855.00</u>
Weekly deficit	\$(187.00)

May God bless you for supporting your parish!

We pray for those who have died recently:

*F. Paul Nestor and
Lawrence W. Soller*

All are invited to join us for breakfast Sunday, February 9th following the 8:15 and 10:45 a.m. Masses.

St. Patrick's Day Dinner

Saturday, March 14th following the 5:15 p.m. Mass. Join us for Reubens, mashed potatoes & gravy and cookies for dessert. All are welcome! Donations are accepted for the support of future dinners.



The Daughters of Isabella will meet on **Tuesday, March 10** at 6:00 p.m. at the Parish Office. They will have a speaker from the Naomi House in Duncan Falls. Naomi House is a shelter for women who recently gave birth to addicted babies and are trying to get their life back on track. Please join us.



Lenten Fish Fries at Knights of Columbus Council 505

Knights of Columbus Council 505 at 275 Sunrise Center will have Fish Fries during lent every Friday throughout Lent, except Good Friday. Meals will be served from 4:00 – 9:00 p.m. **STATIONS OF THE CROSS:** After enjoying a delicious fish dinner at the K of C, join us for Stations of the Cross at St. Nicholas. Retrace the final journey of Jesus Christ to Calvary Fridays of Lent at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome!

LENTEN GREETING CARD PROJECT

Seasonal cards are sent throughout the year to all Catholics living in area nursing homes and to homebound parishioners. Birthday cards are sent to all senior parishioners. This year's we need cards for Easter (with a religious message), summer and fall, Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day. Volunteers will add appropriate greetings to blank cards. A basket has been placed in the church vestibule for your donations. Monetary donations may be placed in an envelope identified for Lenten Greeting Card Project and placed in the collection basket. Thank you for helping to keep those who cannot join us at Mass feel connected to our parish community. If a member of your family is homebound and you have not notified the parish office, please do so as soon as possible. If you have any questions about the project, please call Rosalyn Headington at 740-454-0274.

The Diocesan Catholic Youth Conference (DCYC) the official Catholic conference of the Diocese of Columbus for grades 9-12 is Sunday, March 8 from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. All high school aged youth from the Diocese are strongly encouraged to participate. Catholic youth may bring their non-Catholic friends to this gathering. The gathering includes keynote speakers and workshops geared towards high school students, lunch, and Sunday Mass. \$30 per participant. For more information, please call the parish office.

CONFIRMATION STUDENTS PLEASE REGISTER FOR THE BOSCO BASH the Diocese of Columbus' Middle School Youth Rally, for grades 6-8. Saturday, March 7 at Bishop Hartley. The bus leaves from Bishop Rosecrans parking lot at 12:30 p.m. and returns approximately 9:30 p.m. All students of appropriate age from all schools are invited. Register online at <https://columbuscatholic.org/bosco-bash> \$30 per person. Parents are invited. For more information please call the parish office.

Grief Support - Grief, by definition, is deep sorrow caused by loss. Grief can appear as sadness, pain, it can even make us physically ill. Grief can be indescribable. The St. Nicholas Grief Support Program provides monthly meetings which are offered twice in one day to afford the maximum number of participants. The next meeting is Thursday, March 12th. Please join us at 1:00 p.m. or 6:30 p.m. at the Parish Office. No registration is required.

"It is written: The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone you serve." MATTHEW 4:10

1st SUNDAY OF LENT

LITURGICAL MINISTERS SCHEDULE

It is your responsibility to find a substitute if needed.

March 8, 2020
2nd Sunday of Lent

Saturday, March 7 @ 5:15 p.m.

Cantor: Kevin McCarthy
Lectors: Nicole Hannahs, Diane Hoffer
Servers: Luke Pratt, Libby Pratt
Eucharistic Minister – Coord: Vicki Burns
Eucharistic Ministers - Wash Vessel: Charlotte Snider,
Dan Snider
Eucharistic Ministers: Alan Burns

Sunday, March 8 @ 8:15 a.m.

Cantor: Janet Moses
Lector: Patti Logan, Maggie Wright
Servers: Mason Harmon, J.D. Wilson
Eucharistic Minister- Coord: Laurie Harmon
Eucharistic Ministers - Wash Vessel: John Haswell, Kevin Jones
Eucharistic Ministers: Theresa Hogue

Sunday, March 8 @ 10:45 a.m.

Cantor: Sr. Bernadette Selinsky
Lectors: Wendy Hart, Sam Palleschi
Servers: Nathan Hart, Nathan Hustey
Eucharistic Minister - Coord: Carolyn Arnold
Eucharistic Ministers - Wash Vessel: Angie Hustey, Erin Roush
Eucharistic Ministers: Brenda Lepi

Our thoughts and prayers remain with those serving our country currently and with their loved ones at home. We pray for a safe homecoming and that the world may one day be at peace.

PLEASE REMEMBER ST. NICHOLAS PARISH IN YOUR WILL. CALL THE PARISH OFFICE AT 453-0597 FOR MORE DETAILS.

Praying the Rosary will resume in the St. Nicholas Parish Office Chapel at 2:00 p.m. sometime in March. The exact date will be published in the bulletin.

LOOKING FOR A GIFT?! - We have a collection of beautiful handcrafted rosaries and bracelets donated to the church for the benefit of the window project. The value of the rosary's ranges from \$20.00 to more than \$300.00 (Swarovski crystals). Bracelets start at \$10.00. They will be available for purchase at the parish office. Great gifts for First Communion, Confirmation, Anniversaries, etc.

What's Happening in Our Parish

MONDAY, March 2

8:00 a.m., Mass: Mary Lou Wagner, Church

TUESDAY, March 3, St. Katherine Drexel

8:00 a.m., Mass: Smalley Family, Church
9:30 a.m., Tuesday Morning Bible Study, Parish Office

WEDNESDAY, March 4, St. Casimir

8:10 a.m., School Mass: Deacon Gene Staker, Church
6:15 p.m., Rosary, Parish Chapel
7:00 p.m., R.C.I.A., Parish Office

THURSDAY, March 5

8:00 a.m., Mass: Pastor's Intention, Church

FRIDAY, March 6

Eucharistic Exposition and Adoration all day until 4:00 p.m.
8:00 a.m., Mass: Dan Rapol, Church
7:00 p.m., Stations of the Cross, Church

2nd Sunday of Lent

SATURDAY, March 7, SS. Perpetua and Felicity

4:15 p.m.-4:45 p.m., Confessions, Church
5:15 p.m., Mass: Bernard Barnes, Church

SUNDAY, March 8

8:15 a.m., Mass: St. Nicholas Parishioners, Church
9:15 a.m.-10:30 a.m., Religious Education, Bishop Fenwick
10:45 a.m., Mass: Ray Andrews, Church

Readings for Week of March 3

Mon.	Jas 3:13-18	Mk 9:14-29
Tues.	Jas 4:1-10	Mk 9:30-37
Wed	Jl 2:12-18	Mt 6:1-6, 16-18
Thurs.	Dl 30:15-20	Lk 9:22-25
Fri.	Is 58:1-9a	Mt 9:14-15
Sat.	Is 58:9b-14	Lk 5:27-32
Sun	Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7	Mt 4:1-11

INCOME TAX

If you would like to have a record of your donations to the Church for tax purposes, please fill in your envelope number, name and address or email and place it in the collection basket. A statement will be sent to you.

Envelope No. _____
Name _____
Address _____ or
Email address _____

Desire to spend time with Christ every day? The Church is open for private prayer and adoration of Christ in the Tabernacle; weekdays, Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m. until noon and Saturdays from noon until after the 5:15 p.m. Mass.