

# 20TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## ST. NICHOLAS PARISH

From the Pastor's Desk

The summer is quickly passing. Preparations for the upcoming school year have been underway for the last four months. I mean that; the last four months. There have been so many developments in dealing with the present pandemic. I am glad to say that we are on it for Bishop Fenwick and Bishop Rosecrans in our preparations. I realize that there have been frustrations on the part of many because over many weeks people wanted to know what is going to happen. Quite frankly, with the constant changes and shifting of guidelines no one really knew exactly in order to give accurate updates etc. I reassure you, the greater frustrations and anxiety happened behind the scenes with the administrators and staff. The good news is that we have a good plan for the opening of our Catholic Schools. Just the same, this will require a great deal of patience on the part of all: staff, parents and most of all our students. This is all new and it will be a little clumsy at first. Again, we can do this.

My thoughts are about our students. I am reminded in my reflections on the words of Jesus who referred to the children and childlike as the *Little Ones*. We must remember that all our schools are about our *Little Ones*.

I was particularly mindful of this at this morning's mass (Tuesday). Jesus referred to these Little Ones as the *greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven* because they are the example of being humble. "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven." The passage continues..." See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father." The welcoming of these Little Ones is a blessing. Our children are our blessing. Because their angels behold the face of God: they connect us to our Heavenly Father. They are conduits of God's grace and thus we are to be humble to see it, receive it and respond to it. Many times, our adult minds get in the way and prevent us from the necessary humility of the *Little Ones*.

As Matthew shares this teaching of Jesus, he follows it with a simple parable about one-hundred sheep with one wandering away. The shepherd will leave the ninety-nine and go in search of the one that wandered off. This short parable is often used in the context of sin and reconciliation. We automatically think that the one who wanders off is the sinner who needs to be brought back to the flock and Jesus, the Good Shepherd, goes out in search of the lost. Yes, this is a powerful reflection about God's love and mercy for the sinner. However, in this context Jesus is talking about the *Little Ones* and not sinners. It is one of these *Little Ones* who for some reason, possibly from neglect, wandered away from the flock and needs to be brought back.

There is a story often told by many parents of their children wandering away from the church and no longer practicing the faith. They have a hard time understanding why they would wander away from the Church. It is not something that just happened all at once. The seed for this to happen occurred long ago, when they were the Little Ones. It is something that happened in my generation. Our parents wanted us to have better. Our parents grew up in tough and trying times and wanted life to be better for their children. Many of the parents of my time had the means to make life easier for their children: to spare them from the tough times. Our parents weathered their tough times relying on their family and faith. These sustained them in the toughest of times. In my generation the times were not as tough; life was easier. Since parents could

afford it our religious education was left to the school. Then with an erroneous understanding of Vat II the *baby was thrown out with the bathwater*. Our religious education was watered down since the times were not so difficult. No longer was it necessary to make an extra effort to be and think with a Catholic mind and heart. Whatever sacrifices that we made were pious but were fabricated with no serious consequences: e.g. meatless Fridays did not imperil one's soul. These sacrifices did not match the unavoidable sufferings and real deprivations that happened on a daily basis in the lives of our parents and grandparents. For us it was easier to be a Catholic. We never had to really rely on our faith to get us through tough times. Thus, our religious education became more academic and became less influential than the practice of the faith in our daily lives. Since those days we have learned that if one generation is weak in the practice of the faith the next generation will be weaker.

Those who have eventually abandoned the faith still find themselves looking for something. In the light of those who have fallen away from the faith I am reminded of the words of St. Paul... "For a time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths." (2 Tim 4:3) The reality of being a Catholic in the world today is difficult, difficult in ways that our parents did not have to face, but difficult none the less. The difficulty is found in learning and living our Catholic Faith regarding morality, marriage, family and the life issues in ways that our parents have never had to face. For many secular folks are not difficult issues. There is a simple solution for the secular mind: do whatever you think is right for you. This is the world of relativism, liberty and tolerance.

I think back on my childhood which was on the cusp of this change. For the children in my neighborhood we identified with our families, parish and school. We were responsible for ourselves and need to give an answer to our elders. This was the center of our life. We had an identity rooted in our family, parish and school. Our Catholic roots were deep. (We can reflect on Matthew's parables of the seed, the sower, the weeds and the various kinds of soil.) As children we had an identity: we knew who we were and who we were answerable to. We found meaning in this environment. We also had purpose: one day we too will have a vocation in the Church: Marriage or Religious.

Nevertheless, Children are naturally humble and receptive for good things. They have a natural desire to know the world they live in. An essential part of that world is our Catholic Faith. Children have a natural hunger for divine and holy things. In their humble innocence they have a hunger for God. They hunger for the very attributes of God because they hunger and thirst for love, beauty and truth. They are open and need to receive these human goods from their most important community: their family and church. They learn the real virtues of faith, hope and love in the family. If they are not exposed to and furnished with them in the Catholic family, they will seek them elsewhere. Unfortunately, they will receive lesser or erroneous versions of these genuine goods. We cannot neglect the *Little Ones* in this matter.

We have a monumental task at hand, as families and as a parish. This task is the religious education of our children. Our faith is centered in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ we see God's primary desire for the salvation of all people. This plan is motivated by the absolute Love and Faithfulness of God. Jesus Christ is the perfect manifestation of the Love and Faithfulness of God. This is our great hope: Salvation. The lessons of faithfulness and love are taught, witnessed and experienced in the

Christian Family. Therefore, the family is so important. These essential virtues cannot be taught by society. This is the great danger of a socialistic society. Such a society overrides the rights and duties of parents and the family. Remember the words “it takes a village to raise a child”: nice words but only a half-truth and therefore a lie. Parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith, hope and love; not the state. A slight crack occurred in this great responsibility when parents sent their children to Catholic Schools and relinquished their primary duty for the religious education of their children to the school. At first this worked rather well because the parents were deeply involved. But after a period of time the school proved that it could not replace the parents’ primary responsibility. The school could not do in a day what families can do twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week: living the faith. True it is better than nothing and there are some wonderful success stories, however, religious education is not easy and takes dedication by all who are involved: parents first with the support of the parish and in many cases the school.

Children are always a blessing from God. They move parents to provide the most important things for their human development: faith, hope and love. When parents share these virtues, they grow in virtue along with their children. This is good. When it comes to accurately sharing the faith, they have the support and resources of the Church. Presently we are living in difficult times like no other. The faith of the family is essential during these days. During these difficult times our Little Ones could easily wander away. Thus, the words of Jesus at the conclusion of his lesson on the Little Ones come to mind...” *In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.*” Now is a very important time for all parents. Now is a time to put our faith into practice, reading the scriptures (follow the readings for daily mass is good) and prayer. It is important for parents to share their faith and provide the most important things to keep their children from the danger of wandering away. Keep your children close to Jesus.

With that in mind we are getting ourselves ready for the new school year. We have many challenges before us. We will forge ahead with faith, hope and love.

God bless you  
Father Ralko



## This week we pray Week IV of the Liturgy of the hours.

*We pray for those who have died recently:*  
*Jeff Smith*

## Church Support

August 9, 2020	
OFFERTORY	\$7,647.00
Diocesan Tax	\$(770.00)
Fenwick Subsidy	\$(2,635.00)
Rosecrans subsidy	\$(485.00)
Available for Parish Operations	\$3,758.00
Parish Operating Expenses	\$(7,825.00)
Religious Education Expenses	<u>\$(890.00)</u>
Other Income	<u>\$1,855.00</u>
Weekly deficit	\$(3,102.00)

**May God bless you for supporting your parish!**

## DID YOU KNOW?

August is National Make a Will Month!



Have you been put off creating or updating your will? Is life too busy and this important planning tool keeps getting put on the back burner? Now is the time to make sure that your final wishes are followed, after you leave this earthly life.

A will is a legal document which captures what you want to happen to your assets when you die. Having a will in place prevents the state from determining for you how and to whom your assets are distributed. A will can be simple and may not require a lot of time or money to establish.

The Catholic Foundation also has tools available to help you get started with creating your will and forming your estate plans. For a free informational planning guide to get you started go to <https://catholic-foundation.giftlegacy.com/?pageID=19>

Stop procrastinating and use this month as an opportunity to start your will or review an existing version if it's more than 5 years old. Your family and loved ones will thank you for taking the guess work out of how you would like your financial matters handled.

# 20TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## CHANGE IN OFFICE HOURS

Our new office hours are  
Monday-Thursday 8:00  
a.m.- 4:00 p.m. and Friday  
8:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.

### ELECTRONIC CONTRIBUTIONS

St. Nicholas Church has a convenient way to make your regular offerings. With our electronic giving program, you can easily set up a recurring giving schedule. It provides a much-needed consistency for our church. If you are currently giving on a weekly basis, you will no longer need to write out 52 checks a year or prepare 52 envelopes. Even when travel, illness or other circumstances prevent you from attending services, our church will continue to receive your contributions on an uninterrupted basis. To become an electronic giver, call or visit the church office or our website: [stnickparish.org](http://stnickparish.org).

### **BISHOP ROSECRANS HIGH SCHOOL/ BISHOP FENWICK SCHOOL SCRIP PROGRAM**

Gift cards in our SCRIP program at Bishop Rosecrans High School and Bishop Fenwick Schools can still be purchased. As of now, any special SCRIP orders will be ordered on Monday's. SCRIP is still being sold from inventory. If you would like to purchase SCRIP at any time or need information about our program, please email Julie Wagner or call the school office at (740) 452-7504. A time will be arranged for the gift cards to be picked up.



## *What's Happening in Our Parish*

### MONDAY, August 17

9:00 a.m., Mass: *Bertha Haren, birthday, Church*

### TUESDAY, August 18

9:00 a.m., Mass: *Florence Schoepner, Church*

### WEDNESDAY, August 19, St. John Eudes

9:00 a.m., Mass: *Mary Lou Staker, anniversary, Church*

### THURSDAY, August 20, St. Bernard

9:00 a.m., Mass: *Pastor's intention, Church*

### FRIDAY, August 21, St. Pius X, Pope

9:00 a.m., Mass: *Shirley Knox and Irene Dillon, Church*

## *21st Sunday of Ordinary Time*

### SATURDAY, August 22, The Flagship of the Blessed Virgin Mary

4:15 p.m.-4:45 p.m., *Confessions, Church*

5:15 p.m., Mass: *Shane Noll, birthday, Church*

### SUNDAY, August 23

8:15 a.m., Mass: *St. Nicholas Parishioners, Church*

10:45 a.m., Mass: *Ann Arnold, anniversary, Church*

## *Readings for Week of August 17*

Mon. . . . .	Ez 24:15-24	Mt 19:16-22
Tues. . . . .	Ez 28:1-10	Mt 19:23-30
Wed . . . . .	Ez 34:1-11	Mt 20:1-16
Thurs. . . . .	Ez 36:23-28	Mt 22:1-14
Fri. . . . .	Ez 37:1-14	Mt 22:34-40
Sat. . . . .	Ez 43:1-7ab	Mt 23:1-12
Sun . . . . .	Is 22:19-23	Mt 16:13-20

*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.**

*St. Nicholas Parish Office Chapel is open to pray the Rosary on Monday at 2:00 p.m. for anyone who would like to participate.*