

21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

From the Pastor's Desk

We live in cautious times, but the Good news is that we are starting our new school year. It has been a little complicated, but I think we are ready to go. Our students will be returning this week. By the end of this upcoming week and the beginning of next week I think all our local schools will be back in session in one way or another. May God bless our students as they get back to the important task of learning. Getting an education is hard work. It may be a bit more difficult to focus and get back in the routine since we have not been in session for the past five months. Along with our students we ask God's blessing on all our teachers, administrators and supporting staff as they provide a healthy and safe atmosphere for our children to engage in the goodness of learning.

With the beginning of the new school year our weekday mass schedule will change. I am looking at **Monday August 31st** to start the new times. We will return to **8:00 a.m. on Monday, Tuesday and Friday. Wednesday mass time will be at 9:00** to accommodate our students. Each Wednesday there will be a different yet smaller group of students. We must have smaller groups each Wednesday. The 9:00 a.m. start will give them time to check in at school considering the new guidelines for coming to school before they head down the hill to the church. Hopefully this will all work out and we achieve some sense of normal. As for Thursday morning mass, that will be a TBA. I plan on restarting my "day off" which has been traditionally Thursdays. I don't know how that will work, but I will give it a try.

There is richness about God's Word. One can never exhaust the insights and nourishment that flows from God's Holy Word: The Sacred Scriptures. Such was the case from last week's daily mass readings for both the Prophet Ezekiel and the Gospel of Matthew. At least for the first few days I found them to be complimentary and insightful while reflecting between the two. Then again, I primarily used the Gospel readings as the lens for forming the theme and will comment from them.

The Gospel readings were about... firstly a rich young man who asked Jesus what more he needed to do to gain eternal life; and secondly how hard it is for one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

These passages tend to be difficult when we reduce them to mere economics: wealth is bad, and poverty is good. This is overly simplistic and erroneous. But it does reveal something to us when we are tempted to think in this way. (I'll get back to this.) Such simplicity does not do justice to the gospel message. There are many poor people in the gospels and there are many wealthy people as well. When it came to people of means Jesus befriended them. Take for example Matthew the tax collector, or Zacchaeus, or Joseph of Arimathea, or many of the officials who invited Jesus to dine with them. There were never any condemnations of these people. Nor were any of these people written off as wicked in any way.

We have places in the gospels where Jesus was compassionate to the poor and lost the sick and the hungry. He taught, cured, healed and fed. All of this flowed from his loving heart. It should also be noted that these were not elevated to the status of goodness over the wealthy.

When we try to evaluate individuals according to economic, social, or hierarchal statuses we fall into a trap. The trap is that we are taking human categories as our standard of measure. We try to generalize based on mere human standards. Human in origin, these categories or standard of measures are necessarily flawed. Human standards can never be absolute in themselves. Using these categories is a trap because we are judging from worldly standards of economy, status and power.

These things will eventually pass away along with the people who embrace them. This is the point that I want to get back to as mentioned above.

In the story of the rich man who wanted to know what more he must do to gain eternal life, we come to a key insight. The first subtle insight is highlighted by the word "gain". The rich young man has gained much in this life. He was wealthy with many possessions and devoutly observed all the commandments. He has gained a lot. Now he wants to gain eternal life. It is as if entering eternal life is like everything else, he can earn his way into heaven. He is locked into a human way of measuring his life and accordingly deems himself "god".

Jesus tells him he has something missing. First, he must sell what he has, give to the poor and then follow Jesus. Jesus is asking him to make a great act of generosity. This is a generosity that becomes impossible since he "loves" all he has gained. As such there is not room for God in his heart whom he can't earn or gain. The generosity Jesus requests can only be accomplished when God's love is in his heart. It is a generosity that is based on the love of God. In his heart the one "good" that is necessary is missing: God. If God is not first in his life, in his heart, he will gain nothing that will last and lead to eternal life.

With God in his heart, the presence of the Holy Spirit, he will be able to see by a completely different standard: A Divine standard. Human beings without God can only live by human standards. It is only with the presence of God in our life that we can live by exceedingly higher standards: standards found only in God.

The young man was headed in the right direction. There was one thing that was missing in his life: God. Thus, he went away sad instead of giving up his gains and following Jesus.

This passage was followed by Jesus' teaching that it is difficult for the rich to get into heaven. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of heaven. It is stated as a difficulty and not a condemnation. The difficulty is created by placing one's security in one's possessions, accomplishments or status. We fall into the trap as noted above, of trying to enter the Kingdom on our own efforts or accomplishments.

After Jesus states how difficult it is for the rich, Peter speaks up and asks, "*Then who can be saved?*" The answer... "*For men this is impossible, but for God all things are possible.*" Here is the answer as before. It is all about God. With God at the center of our lives all things are possible. God makes it possible. Without God, all our human efforts are eventually futile. If God is at the center of our lives, we are living in the Kingdom of Heaven here and now. When God is the standard of measure for all we do in this life we are prepared to enter the Kingdom. Living by Divine standards today prepares us for the fullness of the Kingdom of God in the end.

Looking at the Prophet of Ezekiel through this lens is another story. Long story short, the oracles Ezekiel spoke firstly about the condemnation of Jerusalem and secondly about the fall of the kingdom of Tyre. Both were godless: God was not in their lives. Ezekiel prophesied that the Spirit of God left the Temple. Now that Jerusalem is "godless" they face their downfall. Ezekiel prophesied against the king of Tyre who thought himself a god. Again, all kingdoms without God are doomed to failure. If human standards, devoid of God, are used to measure and judge then they are futile. Human standards are used as an effort to form the perfect society without God. It is an effort to create Utopia. The Sacred Scriptures remind us that godless societies always fail. As such Ezekiel's oracles were fulfilled: these godless people and their societies were destroyed by the Babylonians.

What must we do to gain eternal life? The key is humble detachment to the things of this world and having a primary place for God in our hearts. It is with the presence of God (the Holy Spirit) we can love with the love of God; to know and understand with the wisdom of God; to rise above mere human standards embracing the standards of the Kingdom of God.

Have a great week
Father Ralko



Next weekend, August 29 & 30,
St. Vincent de Paul will be
“Holding the Hat” during all
Masses as a 2nd collection.



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

Church Support

August 16, 2020	
OFFERTORY	\$9,351.00
Diocesan Tax	\$(770.00)
Fenwick Subsidy	\$(2,635.00)
Rosecrans subsidy	\$(485.00)
Available for Parish Operations	\$5,462.00
Parish Operating Expenses	\$(7,825.00)
Religious Education Expenses	<u>\$(890.00)</u>
Other Income	<u>\$1,855.00</u>
Weekly deficit	\$(1,398.00)

May God bless you for supporting your parish!



“MUM” Is THE WORD!

Announcing the Eastside Community Ministry
5th Annual MUM Sale!

Mums provided by “McDonald’s Greenhouse”

(Orders & payment due to ECM by **Tuesday, Sept. 1 at Noon**)

Decorate your home and/or business for the upcoming
Fall Season & support the work of ECM!

Have a question, call Jamie or Melissa at ECM (740) 452-7519.

Order forms are available in the front pews in the church.



A virtue is a good habit. How do we develop these good habits? By taking concrete actions to bring about the good. It takes practice and sometimes we fail and need to start again. All too often we give up deeming the change of habit to be too

difficult. Do not quit! Persevere!!!! Here is one to try: This week practice the virtue of Prudence. This virtue helps us to make good decisions. Steps to take when making prudent decisions: Pray for guidance. Ask for advice from a trustworthy person. Spend some think thinking about the situation then make a decision and take action. Practicing Prudence helps us avoid making bad decisions we later regret.

A PRAYER FOR OUR STUDENTS

DEAR GOD,
THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF
EDUCATION IN EVERY FORM.
AS OUR CHILDREN PREPARE TO START A NEW YEAR
MAY CONFIDENCE BE THEIR FOUNDATION,
MAY GRACE BE THEIR GUIDE AND
MAY HOPE BE THEIR COMPASS TOWARD A BRIGHT FUTURE.
I PRAY THEY WOULD HAVE EYES TO SEE
THE NEEDS OF THOSE AROUND THEM
AND A HEART TO LOVE WELL.
MAY THEY FACE EACH DAY WITH POSITIVITY
KNOWING THAT NO MATTER
WHAT COMES THEIR WAY,
THEY DO NOT HAVE TO FACE IT ALONE.

AMEN

21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

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.

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 24, St. Bartolomew

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

TUESDAY, August 25, St. Louis

9:00 a.m., Mass: *Tam Nguelyn, birthday, Church*

WEDNESDAY, August 26

9:00 a.m., Mass: *Joan Shaffer, Church*

THURSDAY, August 27, St. Monica

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

FRIDAY, August 28, St. Augustine

9:00 a.m., Mass: *John & Dorothy Walker, Church*

22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

SATURDAY, August 29, The Passion of St. John the Baptist

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

5:15 p.m., Mass: *Mr. & Mrs. Fred Sullivan, Church*

SUNDAY, August 30

8:15 a.m., Mass: *Ann Arnold, Church*

10:45 a.m., Mass: *St. Nicholas Parishioners, Church*

Readings for Week of August 24

Mon.	Rv 21:9b-14	Jn 1:45-51
Tues.	2 Thes 2:1-3a, 14-17	Mt 22:23-26
Wed	2 Thes 3:6-10, 16-18	Mt 23:27-32
Thurs.	1 Cor 1:1-9	Mt 24:42-51
Fri.	1 Cor 1:17-25	Mt 25:1-13
Sat.	1 Cor 1:26-31	Mk 6:17-29
Sun	Jer 20:7-9	Mt 16:21-27

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.

