

5TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

From the Pastor's Desk

During our weekday masses since Christmas we have been reading from both the Letter to the Hebrews and the Gospel of St. Mark. Coincidentally we have also been reading from St. Mark for our Sunday liturgies this year. For the weekdays the bringing together of the Letter to the Hebrews and St. Mark causes various themes to come together. For myself there are themes that have been joined that have caused me to them consider in different ways. The Word of God is alive and continues to speak to us in new ways: in many ways that we don't expect.

There are two themes that have surfaced this time around that I have not considered together: the *High Priesthood of Jesus* and *Sabbath Rest* from the Letter to the Hebrews, then the beginning of Jesus' public ministry on the Sabbath from St. Mark.

In the Old Testament the High Priest was a mere human being from the Tribe of Levi. The High Priest continually offered up sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins; his own, since he is human, and for the people. In the Letter to the Hebrews Jesus is presented as the true High Priest. However, Jesus never offered up sacrifices during his public ministry. Jesus, who was sinless, became the *High Priest* with the one perfect sacrifice on the cross. This is the one perfect sacrifice; the sinless victim; the unblemished lamb, offered for the forgiveness of all sin. On the cross Jesus Christ is "ordained" as the eternal High Priest who offered the one eternal sacrifice. Today, Jesus' eternal sacrifice, which is not restricted by time and place since it is perfect and eternal, is made present when we come to celebrate the Eucharist in the Mass.

Reading from St. Mark, Jesus began his public ministry on the Sabbath in Capernaum. His first miracle was to cast out an unclean spirit that possessed a man in the synagogue. In this passage Jesus shows a "new authority", even over unclean spirits. He is thus presented as the *Lord of the Sabbath*, the one who has come to restore creation: starting with confronting the source of all disorder: Satan and sin. As Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus in commanding the unclean spirit to leave the man restores the meaning of *Sabbath Rest*, or God's Rest.

With this gospel passage in mind we look at the Letter to the Hebrews which is addressed to Jewish Christians. There are connections made to their Jewish roots in the Old Testament with familiar images: especially noted in Psalm 95. The author quotes from Psalm 95 with the words... "*Oh, that today you would hear his voice, 'Harden not your hearts as at the rebellion in the day of testing in the desert, where your ancestors tested and tried me and saw my works for forty years. Because of this I was provoked with that generation and I said, 'They have always been of erring heart, and they do not know my ways.' As I swore in my wrath, 'they shall not enter into my rest.'*" The reference in this Psalm is the Exodus event. The author is making a connection with the notion that those who hear the voice of God and keep His words are those who will enter His Rest. Those who do not hear the voice of God and obey his word is tantamount to disobedience and rebellion against God. This is also the cause of the hardness of their hearts. Their hardness of heart and rebellion, in other words their sin, is the cause of their not entering into God's Rest. In such hearts there is no peace: no rest.

The origin of God's Rest is referred to in the Letter to the Hebrews 4: 3-4 that pushes the point a little further. The author says..." *yet his works were accomplished at the foundation of the world... And God rested on the seventh day...*" *God's Rest* (Sabbath) is part of God's original plan for Creation. Original Sin disordered all creation including the Sabbath.

God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning. If we follow the "days" of creation the noteworthy point is that *God spoke, and it came to be*. We can say that creation was obedient to the Word of God. After God created all things concluding with the man and the woman at the end of the sixth day, God looked at all he created and said it was "very good." Then on the Seventh Day God Rested. This is not because creation was exhausting work and God was tired. (Remember this is before the Original Sin after which the humans will labor and be exhausted from work.) *God's Rest* on the Seventh Day was a matter of taking delight in all that he had created. God was satisfied with his creation. It was perfect! On the Seventh Day all of creation and most especially the Man and the Woman were invited to enter God's Rest: to be in Communion with God. It is to share in God's joy, satisfaction, and delight in all that God had created. This is truly refreshing. However, after the Original Sin, communion with God was severely damaged and the joy, satisfaction, and delight in creation disappeared from the man and woman. There was nothing refreshing found in this fallen state. Now all is very different and difficult. Original Sin was an act of "dis-obedience" and rebellion of which the result is no rest. *Oh, that today you would hear his voice*.

Psalm 95 speaks of the Israelites traveling through the desert on the way to the Promised Land. They were given the Ten Commandments, the Word of God, as the sign of the covenant. Obeying the Word of God will assist the people on their way to the Promised Land and strengthen their identity and relationship with God. However, they continued to disobey, rebelling against the Word of God by continually breaking the commandments, and therefore they were not able to enter his rest. There is no rest in disobedience and rebellion.

There is a direct connection to "Hearing his voice" "listening to his word" and "entering into his rest." In our sinful world we are overwhelmed and preoccupied with this passing material world. The world speaks to us; we listen, and we obey the world. We work and are exhausted. One result of sin was exhaustion. In this context we only consider rest as relief from exhaustion. We rarely consider "God's Rest" as an invitation to communion with God as God intended for the Seventh Day of creation: the Sabbath. Sin has blinded us to God's intention. As the world speaks to us and being blinded by sin, we continue our work on the Sabbath. We seldom stop working because we have so much to do. We don't think it is important to enter God's Rest; to seek communion with God and to delight in God's goodness. The problem is that we are sinners and live in a sinful world. We tend to see things from a sinful point of view.

In the first chapter of St. Mark we see the developing revelation of the identity of Jesus and his mission. Jesus, the Son of God is *High Priest, Lord of the Sabbath*. His mission is to conquer sin, cast out unclean spirits and restore creation. As he starts his ministry on the Sabbath, he is identified as the *Lord of the Sabbath*. He teaches and casts out unclean spirits with authority. In restoring the synagogue, he restores the Sabbath as God originally intended. Jesus, the Word of God, brings all creation into obedience to the Word of God.

As the Letter to the Hebrews identifies Jesus as the *High Priest*, we look to the end of the Gospel where Jesus is fully revealed as the *High Priest*. Jesus is not only the *Lord of the Sabbath* who speaks with authority; he is also the *High Priest* as he offers the one perfect sacrifice in obedience to the will of God defeating sin. Jesus the *High Priest* unites all humanity (our least common denominator: sin) to himself in that one perfect sacrifice on the cross. In so doing, the *High Priest* and *Lord of the Sabbath* leads us into God's Rest by defeating sin.

It is our tradition to gather as God's People every Sunday (Sabbath). We seek forgiveness for our sins, we listen to the Word of God and we find refreshment and rest in communion with God. Jesus Christ, the *Lord of the Sabbath*, and *High Priest* is present to us in Word and Sacrament. "Come to me all you who labor and are burdened, and you will find rest." We come so that our disobedient and rebellious hearts may be forgiven, converted, and restored. If we avoid the Lord or refuse to hear His voice and refuse to obey God's Word, we will never find rest. We will remain rebellious. We will have hardened hearts. We will avoid gathering as God's People, the Body of Christ.

In the beginning, creation obeyed the voice of God and entered God's Rest on the Seventh Day. There was a natural progression from creation to satisfaction and delight: God's Rest. With disobedience creation was damaged. Human hearts were rebellious and hardened. There was no satisfaction, delight, or rest. All was toil. The pattern is quite simple and makes abundant sense. So now let us change course and welcome the Word of God that is spoken with authority by the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Let the *High Priest*, Jesus Christ conquered the power of sin and death in our lives; and as the *Lord of the Sabbath* let him restore our Sabbath Rest. We can enter his rest as we *hear His voice and harden not our hearts*. This is especially important during these days when we are dispensed from our Sunday obligation because of the pandemic. Now we must make an extra effort to keep holy the Lord's Day.

Have a great week
Father Ralko

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

January 31, 2021	
OFFERTORY	\$7,400.00
Diocesan Tax	\$(770.00)
Fenwick Subsidy	\$(2,635.00)
Rosecrans subsidy	\$(485.00)
Available for Parish Operations	\$3,511.00
Parish Operating Expenses	\$(7,825.00)
Religious Education Expenses	\$(890.00)
Other Income	\$1,855.00
Weekly deficit	(\$3,349.00)

May God bless you for supporting your parish!

Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA) is a Twelve Step, Twelve Tradition program for men and women who experienced the trauma of being raised in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional home. It is a safe place to learn how alcoholism and other family dysfunction affected the past, how it influences the present, and how to heal the wounds for a better future. Meetings are held in the Saint Nicholas Church Social Hall (Church Basement). **MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THURSDAYS at 7:00 p.m.** Please use the Silliman Street door. Meetings are expected to last no more than one hour, and masks are required. Contact James Sullivan for more Information at (740) 670-2959.

Bishop Rosecrans Athletic Boosters

It's time again to purchase your Booster Mania tickets for the upcoming year. \$25 each or three tickets for \$60, January 1 is the first drawing, they make a good gift. Questions: Contact Marvin Paul at 740-819-3429

The Catholic Foundation's Applications for Scholarships will open on February 1 and close March 1. Since 2007, The Catholic Foundation has awarded over \$1,300,000 in scholarships empowering over 200 young people to continue their academic and vocational studies. For more information and to apply, please visit www.catholic-foundation.org/scholarships. If you have any questions about our scholarship process please feel free to contact Dan Kurth, VP of Grants, at 614-443-8893 or dkurth@catholic-foundation.org.

Lenten Bible Study – Join us for Fr. Mitch Pacwa's Bible study on Mercy, Mondays, beginning February 22nd at 7:00 p.m. in the Parish Office. \$10.00 per person. Pre-Registration Required. To help us with our book order, please register by February 15th. Call (740) 453-0597 or e-mail pboggs@stnickparish.org.

February 8th is World Day of Prayer, Reflection, and Action against Human Trafficking & The Feast Day of St. Josephine Bakhita - On this annual day of prayer we remember and pray for survivors and victims of modern-day slavery. We also celebrate the feast day of St. Bakhita who was sold into slavery as a child and through faith and the help of the Cannossian Sisters of Venice won her freedom after which she joined the Cannossian sisters and lived the remainder of her life sharing her empowering testimony of freedom and human dignity. St. Bakhita is the patron saint of those enslaved in human trafficking. To learn more about Human Trafficking and to learn how you can help visit <https://brycs.org/become-a-shepherd/>. Prayer cards for St. Bakhita are available in the vestibule.

Catholic Men's Conference: Called to Be Saints - February 27, 2021 from 9:00a.m. until 12:00 p.m. This year's Columbus Catholic Men's Conference will be both virtual/online and in-person. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, this year's event will be small group gatherings at various parishes throughout the diocese along with live streaming on the Catholic Men's Ministry website, Facebook, and YouTube. Speakers include Devin Schadt, Chris Stefanick, Fr. Donald Calloway, and Bishop Robert Brennan. To register go to www.cathollicmensministry.com.

THE CATHOLIC TIMES

This year we are doing things a little different. **Sign up online at columbuscatholic.org/catholic-times under the subscription payments tab. You may also use the envelope provided in your February packet, or simply write your name and *The Catholic Times* on a plain envelope, make your check payable to the *Diocese of Columbus – Catholic Times* and drop it into the collection basket. Another option is to mail your \$17 check payable to *Diocese of Columbus – Catholic Times* to our office at 197 E. Gay St., Columbus, OH 43215.**

JOB OPPORTUNITY

Mt. Olive Cemetery has a part time position available. Duties would include mowing, weed eating, helping to open and close graves, help pouring footers for headstones and snow removal. If interested, please call the Parish Office at 453-0597.

5TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Tips for Your Marriage!

Married couples, are you looking for a simple way to nurture your relationship? Sign up to receive practical prompts via a virtual "Marriage Tip Jar," delivered weekly to your inbox. These tips will help you to take small steps with your spouse to strengthen your love and grow in virtue together. Use them as conversation starters on a weekly date, or as a challenge to better love each other sacrificially throughout the week. Sign up today at columbuscatholic.org/marriageenrichment.

WOMEN'S MORNING OF PRAYER & REFLECTION with the Sacred Heart of Jesus – Saturday, Feb. 20, 2021, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at St. Paul The Apostle Catholic Church in the Klinger Activity Center. Holy Mass at 9:30 a.m. Speakers from Daughters of Holy Mary of the Heart of Jesus, Eucharistic Exposition & Benediction. **The Event is Free.** REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. *Will also be live streamed via St. Paul YouTube and Facebook pages. To register visit:* <https://stpaulcatholicchurch.weshareonline.org/ws/opportunities/WomensDayofPrayerReflection>

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. 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 something prevents 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.

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.

Please join us each Monday at The St. Nicholas Parish Office Chapel at 2:00 p.m. as we gather to pray the Rosary asking Our Lady's Intercession or the many needs of our nation, community, and parish.

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 _____

What's Happening in Our Parish

MONDAY, February 8, St. Jerome Emillani

8:00 a.m., Mass: *Hope Buchanan, Church*

2:00 p.m., Rosary, *Parish Office Chapel*

TUESDAY, February 9

9:00 a.m., Mass: *St. Thomas Intention, Church*

WEDNESDAY, February 10, St. Scholastica

9:00 a.m., School Mass: *Ray Andrews, Church*

THURSDAY, February 11, Our Lady of Lourdes

8:00 a.m., Mass: *St. Thomas Intention, Church*

7:00 p.m., Adult Children of Alcoholics Meeting, *Church Basement*

FRIDAY, February 12

8:00 a.m., Mass: *The Holy Face of Jesus, Church*

The 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

SATURDAY, February 13

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

5:15 p.m., Mass: *Richard W. Brown, birthday, Church*

SUNDAY, February 14

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

9:15 a.m., *Sunday School, Parish Office*

10:45 a.m., Mass: *Barb Mendelson, birthday, Church*

Readings for Week of February 8

Mon.	Gn 1:1-19	Mk 6:53-56
Tues.	Gn 1:20-2:4a	Mk 7:1-13
Wed	Gn 2:4b-9, 15-17	Mk 7:14-23
Thurs.	Gn 2:18-25	Mk 7:24-30
Fri.	Gn 3:1-8	Mk 7:31-37
Sat.	Gn 3:9-24	Mk 8:1-10
Sun	Lv 13:1-2, 44-46	Mk 1:40-45

Cantor Schedule

February 13 & 14

5:15 p.m. *Laura DeCoy*

8:15 a.m. *Kirby Staker*

10:45 a.m. *Lucille Morosco*