

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

From the Pastor's Desk

On making visits to Catholic Churches you will always notice that each church has the "Stations of the Cross". We are so used to seeing them in our own churches that we hardly notice them in other Catholic Churches. But if you think about it, they are a standard devotion. It is true for those who are not schooled in the "Stations" they might get the idea that the Stations of the Cross are too gruesome and unappealing for a church setting. Some modern thinkers try to hide the gruesome reality of the road to Calvary behind benign symbols for the stations. The truth about the road to Calvary was the manifestation of Roman cruelty and execution for all those who had travelled it, not to mention Jesus Christ. This reality cannot be sugar coated.

A number of years ago I was fortunate to be part of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. One of our destinations was an early morning walk on the way to Mt. Calvary. The road Jesus took to Calvary looks quite different today because of the development of shops and homes over the years. Just the same it was a cramped street to Calvary. Jesus walked along these very streets. That morning we walked along the way as we prayed the "Stations of the Cross". The various "stations" were indicated by markers along the way. I was instantly caught off guard with the realization that all this took place in a rather compact area, a marketplace. The road to Calvary itself was rather long especially when we consider the weakened condition of Jesus and the weight of the cross. To say the least it was long enough to be torturous and sorrowful. All in all, it was good to be there and to get a better sense of all that we read in the Gospels.

The road to Mt. Calvary is very important. We get this loud and clear when we recall the words of Jesus himself. *"If you wish to be my disciples, you must deny yourself, take up your cross every day and follow me."* Luke 9:23. In one sense, walking the road to Mt. Calvary in the Holy Land reveals the reality of Jesus' mission and his challenge for those who desire to be his disciples. It is something tangible and concrete. It is for the love of God we faithfully struggle with the burdens of this life. Faith and love is the weight of discipleship.

The original path of the Stations of the Cross finds its origin after the medieval Crusades. There was an effort to rebuild the holy sites in Jerusalem. Many of the crusaders devoted themselves to this rebuilding. The Franciscans Friars were also instrumental in restoring and encouraging this restoration. (The Franciscans are still there and they continue the maintaining of the Holy Sites. By the way, this is where the Good Friday Collection goes for this important work.) The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ is an important element in Franciscan Spirituality. Thus the order has continually encouraged pilgrims to come to the Holy Land and to walk this path to Mt. Calvary. It was a pious devotion which understandably spread throughout the Church. Eventually, with Papal approval and encouragement, the erecting the "Stations of the Cross" at pilgrimage sites and within churches became popular.

The Stations of the Cross are popular because of the reality of suffering in this world and in our lives. Faithful Christians are not exempt from suffering. In fact, faithful Christians expect suffering because we know that we live in a sinful world that does not welcome God. It is the sinful world that crucified Jesus. Jesus accepted his suffering out of love for sinful humanity. The way of the cross is the path of salvation.

Praying and meditating on the Stations of the Cross are intended to be an inspiration for us. While meditating on the passion and death of Jesus Christ we discover the key for enduring our sufferings in this world. We learn the purpose of our daily crosses that we carry. We are to endure like Jesus and carry

our crosses with love and offer up our suffering for others just as Jesus did: he did it for us. The Christian answer to how we deal with suffering is Love.

By praying and meditating on the Stations of the Cross we have a chance to enter into the experience of Christ. In our reflections we may also experience the relationship that others had with Jesus during his Passion. People like Pilate, his mother Mary, Simon, Veronica, the women of Jerusalem, and even the soldiers who brutalized and crucified Jesus. Just to take this into our minds and hearts is to realize that Jesus, without prejudice loved them all!

Our lives are filled with sorrows. The question remains as to how we deal with the sufferings and crosses that come our way in life. It is a reality that every human being must deal with. We can deal with suffering in a negative and destructive way or we can find a way to deal with suffering in a positive and constructive way. The answer can only be found in Jesus Christ.

We have heard it said before and we will hear it often, *"God so love the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."* (John 3:16.) God is love. Love is the source of all that is. Love is the source of life, the meaning of life and the final destination of life. The desire for earthly things and the comfort they may bring along with the horrible painful things that we at times so desperately try to avoid are all distractions from the true meaning of life: love. Why? It is for the reason that those worldly things, good and bad, make us turn our focus in on ourselves. They make us turn inward. We can easily become overly preoccupied with ourselves. Love, on the other hand, is always outward. It is preoccupied, if you will, with the other. God is absolutely altruistic: that is to say God is not self-preoccupied: God is totally and completely selfless. God is all for us. Therefore, He sent us His only-begotten son into the world because he loves us.

We are reminded of the selfless love of God in the parable of the Prodigal Son in the Gospel of Luke. The Father tells both of his sons that he holds nothing back when he says, *"All that I have is yours."* The Father holds nothing back for Himself. This is absolute selfless love.

Jesus Christ is the perfect manifestation of the Love of God. This love is perfectly revealed in His passion and death. This is also the way to the Resurrection: eternal life in perfect, loving communion with God.

St. Faustina, the patroness saint of Divine Mercy, once said: *"Suffering is a great grace; through suffering the soul becomes like the Savior; in suffering love becomes crystallized; the greater the suffering, the purer the love."* When we say that we are to join our suffering to the sufferings of Jesus Christ, we find a path to the meaning of our sufferings. We join our sufferings to his for the salvation of those who are lost; those who are without love; for those who have no hope. The single most loving intention of our Lord must be our single most loving intention: the salvation of souls. This enlarges our hearts in love as it were.

Granted, the secular world looks at this and says it's crazy. We live in a world that fears suffering. It is a world that fears the "Way of the Cross". Our world does everything it can to anesthetize or medicate suffering. In many places it even offers death as a viable solution to suffering. This is odd. It is death on our terms rather than accepting suffering as a form of loving self-sacrifice. It is filled with ego and not an emptying of self as Jesus did for us. It is counter-intuitive: the Christian path of discipleship is the strangest way. We accept our suffering in this life in union with Christ. We are willing to endure whatever comes our way that tries to tempt us away from living in the love

of God. The way of the cross is the way of love: selfless love is imitation of Christ. This is the eternal truth. It is the way Jesus traveled to find and save lost humanity. Out of love he travelled to the darkest end of Godlessness to seek out and redeem the most desperate. He faithfully did this out of love for God and for us.

Have a blessed Lenten week.

Father Ralko

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

February 14, 2021	
OFFERTORY	\$5,312.00
Diocesan Tax	\$(770.00)
Fenwick Subsidy	\$(2,635.00)
Rosecrans subsidy	\$(485.00)
Available for Parish Operations	\$1,423.00
Parish Operating Expenses	\$(7,825.00)
Religious Education Expenses	<u>\$(890.00)</u>
Other Income	<u>\$1,855.00</u>
Weekly deficit	(\$5,437.00)

May God bless you for supporting your parish!

Youth Ministry News!

Catalyst Nights – Students grades 7-12 are invited to a Catalyst Night at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in the activity center on Sunday, February 28th at 6:00 p.m. The evening is led by the National Evangelization Team (NET), college age missionaries. The night includes dinner, presentations, games, skits, prayer, friends, and fun. This is a joint, St. Thomas and St. Nicholas youth event and all teens grades 7-12 regardless of affiliation are invited. Parents are welcome!

Eucharistic Adoration: ‘Of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament [Jesus present in the consecrated Host] is the greatest after the sacraments, the one dearest to God and the one most helpful to us.’ Saint Alphonsus Liguori. This is a great devotion for families, marrieds, singles, young and old alike. All are encouraged to participate in Eucharistic Adoration on Friday, March 5th (First Friday), and again on Friday, March 19th (In honor of St. Joseph, guardian and faithful spouse of Mary, foster father of Jesus). Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will begin immediately after the 8:00 a.m. Mass. Faithful adorers are essential and needed as Christ exposed in the Monstrance must never be left alone. No less than two people per hour are needed to spend time before the Blessed Sacrament, in prayer and devotion. Please contact the parish office to sign up for your hour of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. (740) 453-0597 ext. 14. Or pboggs@stnickparish.org.

K of C Fish Fry

The K of C will be offering fish fries once again every Friday throughout Lent. The hall opens at 5:00 p.m. Wednesday- Friday and 11:00 a.m. Saturday. Stop in and enjoy a meal with your fellow members

Council 505 is forming a Golf League on Wednesday evenings at Jaycees Golf Course. It will be a 2-man scramble format and is open to men, women, and non-members. The total number of teams will be 22. The league will start in the last two weeks of April and run through September. If you would like more information, contact Mark Hill at 740-607-5477 or mapco60@gmail.com

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.catholicmensministry.com.

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 Disciple Maker Index! Saint Nicholas Parish is participating in a parish survey about discipleship conducted by the Catholic Leadership Institute! The information provided by the survey will be helpful to the parish. The Survey is LIVE and will be open until March 21, 2021. To take the survey, please visit <https://portal.catholicleaders.org/dmi/survey/kk68bk2685> . If you prefer a paper copy, you may pick it up after daily and Sunday Masses. The surveys will be located in the vestibule and on the front pews. To submit the completed paper survey, please drop it in the Sunday collection basket, hand deliver it to the parish office or mail it to the parish office at 955 E. Main Street, Zanesville Ohio 43701. To make special arrangements for getting a paper copy, please contact the parish office at (740) 453-0597. We really need your help in making this a success, please participate!

Sacramentals Did you know that the Palms are sacramentals? Rosaries, medals and anything blessed and used for prayer including crucifixes, statues and icons are also sacramentals. Sacramentals are sacred signs instituted by the Church to prepare us to receive the fruit of the sacraments and to sanctify different circumstances of our lives (Catholic Catechism no. 1677). They prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it (Catholic Catechism no. 1670). When sacramentals no longer serve a purpose or are broken and can no longer be used, they cannot be thrown in the trash, they must be disposed of reverently. The proper way is to burn them and bury the ashes, or simply bury them in the ground. To aid in the disposal of palms from year's past and other sacramentals, a collection station has been placed in the vestibule. Sacramentals may be placed in the box found on the table near the steps to the choir loft. After Easter, they will be buried at Mt. Olive Cemetery.

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.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

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 22, The Chair of St. Peter the Apostle

8:00 a.m., Mass: F. Paul Nestor, Church

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

7:00 p.m., Mercy Bible Study, Parish Office

TUESDAY, February 23, St. Polycarp

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

WEDNESDAY, February 24

9:00 a.m., School Mass: Jeff Armbrust, Church

THURSDAY, February 25

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

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

FRIDAY, February 26

8:00 a.m., Mass: William C. Kohler, Church

7:00 p.m., Stations of the Cross, Church.

Second Sunday of Lent

SATURDAY, February 27

11:00-Noon, Confessions, Church

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

5:15 p.m., Mass: Irene Dillon, Church

SUNDAY, February 28

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

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

10:45 a.m., Mass: Morris & Luella Hoffer, Church

Readings for Week of February 22

Mon.	Pt 5:1-4	Mt 16:13-19
Tues.	Is 55:10-11	Mt 6:7-15
Wed	Jon 3:1-10	Lk 11:29-32
Thurs.	Est C:12, 14-16, 23-25	Mt 7:7-12
Fri.	Ez 18:21-28	Mt 5:20-26
Sat.	Dt 26:16-19	Mt 5:43-48
Sun	Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18	Mk 9:2-10

Cantor Schedule

February 27 & 28

5:15 p.m. Laura DeCoy

8:15 a.m. Janet Moses

10:45 a.m. Kevin McCarthy