

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

From the Pastor's Desk

I was looking back over the last year when we were prevented from coming to church because of the lockdown. The lockdown started with two weeks to "flatten the curve" to prevent any spike in virus infections. That was the original idea. It has evolved into something else and I'm not too sure what that is all about. Nevertheless, the lockdown went longer than expected. To date many have received the vaccine, especially here in Muskingum County. Yet people are still hesitant as we receive ongoing cautions. There is no doubt that this has been a stressful time. However, if we look back, in many ways we are way better off today than a year ago. We can thank God. We can also thank God that we are in Zanesville.

A year ago (April 18, 2020) there was a story about a mass shooting in Nova Scotia that got some media attention. There were 22 victims who lost their lives (23 counting the perpetrator). Such a thing was unheard of in Nova Scotia. On the 1st anniversary there was a sorrowful memorial. There was a great deal of ongoing grief which was precipitated by very little information for family members of that small community. The memorial service was somber and peaceful although the people had heavy hearts. We live in sad times.

Last week we heard more news of a mass shooting at a Fed Ex facility in Indianapolis in which eight people lost their lives. Before the police could apprehend the perpetrator, he took his own life as well. Again, we have to hear of another act of senseless violence on innocent victims. Innocent people had horrible evil visited upon them.

I have no interest in discussing gun control or other political issues surrounding these events. My thoughts are about the reality of living in a sinful world that leads to these senseless acts of violence. Granted, our first response is sorrow for those victims and their families. That is grace and the true Christian response. We also ache for justice, healing and salvation. Our first response of compassion tells us something about the "why" behind these events. Our compassion points to the lack of compassion in hearts hardened by sin. There is one thing that is perceptible about these events; there are hurting individuals who insist on inflicting their pain on others. The selfish nature of sin in the human heart moves the one who is angry to make others know or feel their hurt and anger. They are hurting and so others need to share their hurt.

This is not about gun control or any political stand on these issues. It is about something that I have been considering over the past year since the Nova Scotia event happened. It was about a young man who was rejected by his girlfriend and set out to inflict his pain on others. This is also similar to the events last week at the Fed Ex terminal in Indianapolis where an once employee set out with evil intent. This theme seems to be recurring often.

Life is difficult. It is filled with disappointments, rejections, injustices and so much more. These are the negative things in life. It is also very easy for us to obsess over these negative things. This stirs up thoughts of vengeance, anger, hatred and even violence. In a society that is more and more ego-centric this is a very dangerous road to travel. This self-centered world that we live in is also exasperated with social media. A great deal of self-absorbed banter gets posted and at times reaffirmed. Many bad things happen. Then when a tragic event like a mass shooting hits the news there is a strange sense of fame.

The thing that I was thinking about over the year was a reflection on the writings of the spiritual writer Henri Nouwen. I'm not sure from which of Henri Nouwen's many works but this

is the passage that caught my attention about pain, anger and the path to healing. "*Healing means moving from your pain to the pain,*" writes Nouwen. "*When you keep focusing on the specific circumstances of your pain, you easily become angry, resentful, and even vindictive... But real healing comes from realizing that your own particular pain is a share of humanity's pain... Every time you can shift your attention away from the external situation that caused your pain and focus on the pain of humanity in which you participate, your suffering becomes easier to bear.*" He is correct, without negating real personal pain, in focusing on the circumstances of our pain many negative things will rise up, anger, resentment vengeance. In the case of Nova Scotia, it was the personal pain of a rejected young man. In Indianapolis there was a similar type of pain. However, when personal pain becomes the most important thing at the time it becomes destructive. Others need to know of and share in my pain, even if I must force it upon them. When recalling it over and over, hardens the heart. Everyone needs to know about my pain.

As I have often noted before, the root of all evil and sin is selfishness. Without making generalizations or negating legitimate personal pain, a continuous obsession over one's own pain is blinding. In some cases, it can be an act of selfishness. In such a state one cannot even look beyond oneself or even consider that others suffer and possibly more so. One's own pain is not seen as a sharing in the pain of humanity.

I remember a saying that has stuck with me for most of my life and has served me well in examining my conscience and observing human behaviors. It went something like this... "*Good people sacrifice themselves for the good of others, while bad people expect others to sacrifice for them.*" This is the Christian attitude that is modeled after Christ. This is the virtue of love put into practice. A heart that does not love expects others to sacrifice for them. Therefore, our first response to these mass shootings is compassion for the victims and their families.

We are in the Easter Season and our thoughts are about the Love of God revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The self-sacrificing death of Jesus reveals that his physical pain was a sharing in the overall pain of all humanity oppressed by sin. It also reveals the sinfulness of humanity that demands the sacrifice of another or a scapegoat: Jesus Christ.

I think that as we look to all those who are responsible for mass shootings and acts of terrorism have this self-centeredness that fuels their actions. I would venture to say this about senseless acts of terror that are based on so called religious motives. It says that you will die for my religious beliefs and the advancement of my religion. All of this is opposed and foreign to our Christian attitude toward the world: "There is not greater love then to lay down one's life for one's friends." Our faith says we are willing to sacrifice for the salvation of others.

We live in difficult times. The good news is that we also have the grace of God, which is ever present and most important during difficult times. The grace of God is so necessary in our personal lives especially when we are suffering. Life is filled with many bad things. What is most important: we cannot become all consumed in our disappointments and pain. They cannot define our lives. We must deal with life's pains because they are real and some are legitimate. However, they cannot become all consuming. Nothing good comes from allowing our personal pain and suffering to be the focus of our lives. When this happens, we are tempted to impose it on others because it is all that we have in our hearts to give. This is precisely why we need the grace of God to draw us out of ourselves. Model our lives on Jesus Christ in his sorrows. Grace is necessary for us to

be in union with God in our joys and sorrows. When we unite our lives with Jesus our sufferings can become redemptive and not deadly. This is a healing grace and leads to redemption in Christ.

Have a Blessed Week
Father Ralko

**This week we pray Week II of the
Liturgy of the hours.**

Church Support

April 18, 2021	
OFFERTORY	\$12,139.00
Diocesan Tax	\$(770.00)
Fenwick Subsidy	\$(2,635.00)
Rosecrans subsidy	\$(485.00)
Available for Parish Operations	\$8,250.00
Parish Operating Expenses	\$(7,825.00)
Religious Education Expenses	<u>\$(890.00)</u>
Other Income	<u>\$1,855.00</u>
Weekly surplus	\$1,390.00

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, April 25th 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!

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.

PRAY THE ROSARY!

“The Rosary is a powerful weapon to put the demons to flight and to keep oneself from sin...If you desire peace in your hearts, in your homes, and in your country, assemble each evening to recite the Rosary. Let not even one day pass without saying it, no matter how burdened you may be with many cares and labors.” ~Pope Pius XI

During the month of May, the Rosary will be prayed as a community before the Saturday 5:15 p.m. Mass and the Sunday 8:15 a.m. Mass and the 10:45 a.m. Please join us!

All are welcome to pray the Rosary on Monday’s in the Chapel in the Parish Office at 2:00 p.m.

Mother's Tribute

BEST MOM EVER!

A MOM IS NOT "JUST A MOM"

How much do you love your mom?
 What's your favorite thing to do with your mom?
 Why do you love your mom?
 What is the proudest thing about your mom?
 What can you do to help your mom around the house?

She is also a great, honest, listener, babysitter, best driver, comedian, therapist, nurse, cheerleader, judge, planner, friend, teacher, coach, seamstress, personal shopper, accountant, teacher, musician, bodyguard, best driver, confidante, confidant, housekeeper, director of research and development, doctor, etiquette advisor, fan, loyal, guide, historian, business, mentor, decorator, jury, landlord, lead singer, model, pianist, police officer, dentist, educator, story teller, study hall monitor, supervisor, travel agent, dog walker, pocket protector, food taster, CEO of house, award winner, lay repair expert, art director, land escaper, party planner, waitress, search and rescue (for lost items), caregiver, and a daycare provider all in one.

MOTHER'S DAY TRIBUTE

The Muskingum Valley Right to Life will once again, be sponsoring a full-page Mother's Day tribute ad in the Times Recorder on May 9. For this we will be collecting names, along with a \$3.00 donation, at all masses, April 24/25 and on May 1/2, from all who wish to honor mother(s), both living and deceased, on their special day.

Just because you don't always know and really do appreciate all of your hard work and endless love.
 Love.

PLEASE NOTE THE TIME CHANGE FOR CONFIRMATION PRACTICE

Confirmation Practice will now be at **9:00 a.m.** on Saturday, May 1st. Students are asked to gather in the church basement. **STUDENTS TO BE CONFIRMED ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND PRACTICE**

FIRST COMMUNION PRACTICE WILL BE HELD ON FRIDAY, MAY 7TH AT 6:00 P.M. IN THE CHURCH. STUDENTS MAKING THEIR FIRST COMMUNION ON SATURDAY, MAY 8TH ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND.

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, May 7th (First Friday). Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will begin immediately after the 8:00 a.m. Mass and will end at 4:00 p.m. 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.

WE NEED YOUR HELP FINDING OUR PEOPLE. There are rumors that the nursing homes will soon be open for visits and we hope to resume homebound visits soon. It has come to our attention that many people have moved in the past year. Please help us update our nursing home and homebound lists by notifying the parish office with the name and location of those who are either homebound or in nursing homes. We don't want to miss anyone! (740) 453-0597, ext. 14.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Real Presence, Real Future reflections:

The Good Shepherd

Stephanie Rapp, St. Paul Parish & RPRF Commission Member

In today's Gospel, Jesus describes Himself as a good shepherd, leading, caring for, and protecting His sheep. Knowing the flock intimately, a good shepherd claims them as his own just as Jesus does for us. A good shepherd is always present, never abandoning the flock, even in the midst of danger. He sacrifices out of love, just as Jesus sacrificed Himself for our salvation! Jesus is *the* Good Shepherd, always present in our lives, inviting us to trust in Him. As members of his flock, may we respond in faith, listening to and following Him as he guides us into the future.

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 _____
Email address _____

What's Happening in Our Parish

MONDAY, April 26

8:00 a.m., Mass: *Albert & Rita Crock anniversary, Church*
2:00 p.m., *Rosary: Parish Office*
7:00 p.m., *Mercy Bible Study, Parish Office*

TUESDAY, April 27

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

WEDNESDAY, April 28, St. Peter Chanel

9:00 a.m., School Mass: *William C. Kohler, Church*

THURSDAY, April 29, St. Catherine of Siena

8:00 a.m., Mass: *St. Thomas Intention, Church*
7:00 p.m., *Adult Children of Alcoholics Meeting, Church Basement*

FRIDAY, April 30, St. Pius V, Pope

8:00 a.m., Mass: *Sandy Young, Church*

5th Sunday of Easter

SATURDAY, May 1, St. Joseph

1:30 p.m., *Wedding- Zachary Hill and Ashley Sayre, Church*
4:15 p.m. p.m.-4:45 p.m., *Confessions, Church*
5:15 p.m., Mass: *Robert Wahl, Church*

SUNDAY, May 2

8:15 a.m., Mass: *Knights of Columbus Msgr. Dury Council 505, Church*
9:15 a.m., *Sunday School, Parish Office*
10:45 a.m., Mass: *St. Nicholas Parishioners, Church*

Readings for Week of April 26

Mon.	Acts 11:1-18	Jn 10:1-10
Tues.	Acts 11:19-26	Jn 10:22-30
Wed	Acts 12:24- 13:5a	Jn 15:1-8
Thurs.	Acts 13:13-25	Jn 13:16-20
Fri.	Acts 13:26-33	Jn 14:1-6
Sat.	Acts 13:44-52	Jn 14:7-14
Sun	Acts 9:26-31	Jn 15:1-8

Cantor Schedule

May 1 5:15 p.m. Kevin McCarthy
May 2 8:15 a.m. Sandy Black
10:45 a.m. Lucille Morosco
Confirmation Mass
May 2 1:00 p.m. Janet Moses