

## ***NOTES FROM FR. SEÁN***

**February 7, 2021**

### **In Today's Gospel**

The word had gotten out about the miraculous cures of Jesus. People flocked to Jesus wherever he was. He cured the sick and cast out demons. Jesus brought healing in both body and soul. Healing, however, was not an end in itself. Jesus did not come to establish a healing ministry but a ministry of salvation.

Jesus healed people to help them receive the good news of God's salvation. In today's gospel, we see Jesus go off to a deserted place to pray, to enter into communion with his Father. When Simon Peter found Jesus, I am sure that many more people were looking to be healed.

Instead of going back to continue healing, Jesus tells Simon Peter that they must go to the nearby villages to preach to those people as well. This is why Jesus came into the world. Not to heal our bodies, but to preach the good news of salvation, to bring us that salvation. Let us open our hearts to receive the good news of Jesus Christ and let us receive his salvation.

### **Holy Family**

During the last year, we have all seen a lot of bad news. Although St. Richard remained in a stable financial position, both of our parishes have seen our income dropped in the last year. Today, however, I have some good news to report.

Since we had to make the unfortunate decision to close Holy Family Parish in 2018, the property's care and maintenance have been a drain on St. Mary's resources. Recently, the property was becoming a target for vandals. In October, Pastor Rick Sykes of The Prevailing Church moved into the property while he worked to secure financing to purchase the property in a deal coordinated by the Archdiocese of Detroit real estate office. Last week, he completed his purchase of the property.

Although it is sad to see this chapter in our history come to an end, a new chapter is opening for this property. I ask for God's blessings upon Pastor Sykes and his congregation as they bring worship back to what was once Holy Family Church.

### **Preparing for Lent**

Ash Wednesday is a week and a half away. This begins our Lenten observance, a time of penance and purification. During Lent, we are called to reflect on our lives, ask for forgiveness for our sins, and seek to cast out all that keeps us from Christ. It is not enough, however, just to cast out sin from our lives. We must replace it with something.

In the parable of the Return of the Unclean Spirit, Jesus told the story of a man who had an unclean spirit cast out. That spirit goes out and wanders in the arid wasteland before returning to the home from which he was cast out. When the demon returns to that home, he finds it "empty, swept clean, and put in order." (Mt 12:44) It was good that the demon was cast out and that things were put in order; however, it was unfortunate that the space was left empty. When he found the empty space, the demon went out and found "seven other spirits more wicked than itself who moved in and dwelt there, and the last condition of that person was worse than the first." (Lk 11:26)

During Lent, we often focus more on purging the bad influences from our lives than we do on filling our lives with good. When we "give up" something for Lent, we are making a sacrifice. We are physically removing something from our lives as a penitential act. This helps us to master our flesh and overcome sin. But as we purge the evil from our lives, we must also fill that space with something good. If we do not, something else will fill it, and that something maybe worse than what was cast out.

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During Lent, we are called to spiritual practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Through these spiritual practices, especially through prayer, we invite God into our hearts to take the place of the evil we have cast out.

During the next week and a half, take some time to decide what you will give up for Lent this year. Then spend time deciding what you are going to do for Lent. How will you increase your prayer life during Lent? How will you better support those in need? Giving something up for Lent is important, but it is not enough. You must also *do* something.

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