

From the Pastor—February 18, 2018

Parents Night Out Our parish hall at St. Mary's was alive with activity last Sunday, as our mission trip youth and their adult sponsors held a "Parents Night Out" to coincide with Valentine's Day. The idea was that if parents wanted an evening for supper out (or in), like a date night, they could drop off their children at St. Mary's between 4:00 and 7:30 p.m. We had a goodly number of parents take us up on the offer! I went over to the hall twice during that time period, and it was really enjoyable to see the older high school youth interact with the younger students. A couple of parents who are not from our parish took the opportunity to use this service provided by our mission trip youth. I heard a couple of our high schoolers speak of the younger students as being quite a handful...lots of energy, these young ones have! It was precious to see a handful of infants as well, who were being held in a very motherly way by several of our expert parish moms. Thank you to everyone who made this event possible. We are making final arrangements for our mission trip in June. Please contact the parish office if you would like to help.

Ashes and Valentines The very odd coincidence of Ash Wednesday and St. Valentine's Day made everyone take pause. I mentioned in my Ash Wednesday homily that the coinciding of these two significant days last happened in 1945. Interestingly, it will happen again in the relatively near future, in the years 2024 and 2029. What are we to make of what God is saying by these liturgical days coinciding? I proclaimed in my homily that we are to think of Jesus as the Lover par excellence, especially from that moment when the Lord cried out from the Cross: "It is finished!" He had finished His great act of love, for us to receive if our hearts are open to it. I thank you for your beautiful turnouts for our three Ash Wednesday Masses.

Legion of Mary I would like to begin the Legion of Mary for our parishes, and so I need to gauge the interest. I will be providing some informational notes about this potential new undertaking. Mother Mary, the holy Virgin, leads us in battle array to win souls for her Son, Jesus. If you listened carefully to the Collect (Opening Prayer) for Ash Wednesday, you heard the themes of battle, weapons, and victory. This wording is no accident. The Legion primarily exists to sanctify its members in holiness. They are firstly concerned with the state of their soul before almighty God so as to be prepared to win other souls for the Kingdom of God. We would need just two or three people to begin the Legion of Mary. Could you be called to the Legion?

Your Response to the BAV In the Southern Nebraska Register of Feb. 9, our parishes' generosity to the Bishop's Appeal for Vocations were reported. St. Joseph, Giltner, with 43 families and a goal of \$900, pledged \$2,505. St. Mary's, Aurora, with 243 families and a goal of \$4,410, pledged \$25,672. Our parishes were a bit awkwardly listed according to the conventional alphabetical order, but look carefully...we are listed. The article graciously quoted me on some of my reaction to our parishes and our Diocese doing so well to support our seminarians. Please know that I am proud of all of you for your prayerful giving to the BAV!

Ask Someone to Mass I often hear on Catholic radio, "I would like to return to Mass, but no one has ever asked me to return." Do you know of someone who you could ask to Mass? Take a moment to pray to the Holy Spirit for the courage, and then ask that person!

Living Liturgically Many resources are available for your living out of the Lenten season. The bishops of the United States have a helpful document at their web site, listed below. Also, many are aware of Dynamic Catholic, with their tag lines of "Best Lent Ever!" and "Don't Give Up Chocolate this Lent!" See their web site below. Also, see the insert this week and the coming weeks from Our Sunday Visitor. Give it away to someone after you read it, as a great tool for evangelization!

<http://usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/lent/>

<https://dynamiccatholic.com/bestlentever/>

Directory on Popular Piety This is from a document from the Vatican, released under St. John Paul II in 2001: "*Lent precedes and prepares for Easter. It is a time to hear the Word of God, to convert, to prepare for and remember Baptism, to be reconciled with God and one's neighbor, and of more frequent recourse to the 'arms of Christian penance': prayer, fasting and good works (cf. Mt 6, 1-6. 16-18).*"

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Avoiding Meat at Tournaments [*re-printed from last week*] In the coming weeks of Lent, Catholics of age 14 and older live by the discipline of abstaining from meat on Fridays. This Catholic law can be made difficult when many upcoming Fridays are full of athletic and academic tournaments, meets, and conferences for our high school aged youth. I encourage you to think ahead of your Friday plans, and be sure to resist the urge to order a hot dog or hamburger in the concession stands provided at these events. I would hope that most of these events consider our Catholic faith and offer a meatless option. I love these events themselves, such as the State Basketball tournament, but we need to know that such events don't automatically excuse us from living out our Catholic faith.

Good Friday [*re-printed from last week*] I want to mention a word about Good Friday, which falls on March 30th this year. Good Friday is a great day to keep free on your calendar. Try to avoid extra activities, especially if you are in a position of organizing activities for people of any age. To me, almost everything as a social activity that would make us race around busily should take a backseat to families being quiet and prayerful, together, at home and at church. So, I want to encourage you now to do what you can to keep March 30th as a day to meditate and keep a quiet demeanor as we observe our Savior's death upon the Cross.

God Bless You!

Father Grell