

Mass Intentions ~ March 9-15, 2020

Mon @ 7:30 am —Lalande Harkins (RIP)

Tues @ 7:30 am —Fr. Eddie Balsler (RIP)

Wed @ 6:00 pm —Ben Ticknor & Cheryl Marsh (SpInt)

Thurs @ 7:30 am —Richard Viberg (RIP)

Fri @ 7:30 am —Danny Hossley (RIP)

Sat @ 5:30 pm —Mark Balmes (RIP)

Sun @ 8:00 am —Danny Hassin (RIP)

Sun @ 10:30 am —People of the Parish

New Prayer Requests

Special Intentions

Carolina Sweeney, mother of Matt Sweeney

Stevie Stephenson, friend of Sheri & Chad Watts

Sister Mary McDermott, friend of Monica Walton

Wayne Grantham, brother-in-law of Angela & Stephen Cohen

Repose of the Soul

Breana Nix, daughter of Paul & Ginger Thomas

See the website & prayer board for full prayer list.

Sacrament of Reconciliation: Saturday @ 4:30-5:00 pm (or by appointment — call the Church office)

Parish Reconciliation Service will be held Monday, March 16th @ 6:00 pm

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament this week: Monday — Friday, 8 am-12 pm

ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ EVENTS ~ INFORMATION

Baptism Preparation Class— March 8th @ 9:15 am in Room 110 of the Family Life Center All parents wishing to have a child baptized within the next few months will need to attend this class. Call the Church office to register.

Religious Ed Classes are on Spring Break! Sunday morning CGS will resume on March 22nd. Wednesday night Big Deal will resume on March 18th.

Parish Reconciliation Service — March 16th @ 6:00 pm Make plans to join us. We will have several priests here to help!

St. Paul Early Learning Center is holding a raffle for a Florida Beach Vacation. Tickets available now to win a May 21-25th vacation at an oceanfront condo in Perdido Key, Florida. Tickets are \$10. Call the Learning Center @ 601-992-2876 for tickets and details. **The winning ticket will be drawn March 17th** at the Learning Center's St. Patrick's Day Sing-A-Long.

Easter Egg Hunt — March 29th after 10:30 Mass sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. Children and parents, meet in the Early Learning Center cafeteria to join the fun!

40 Days for Life — February 26-April 5 We pray for an end to abortion. We pray for all who have suffered with an abortion, and for all who are considering abortion. May they find hope, help, and healing.

Catholic Service Appeal Update — We thank all those at St. Paul Parish who have generously responded to the annual Catholic Service Appeal. We ask those who have not sent in your pledge to please consider a gift. Each of us is called to respond in faith, knowing and trusting that God recognizes your willingness to live out the message of the Gospel.

To date, our Parish has raised \$36,074 of our \$66,189 goal.

Catholic Relief Services project — Join more than 14,000 Catholic communities across the United States in a life-changing Lenten journey with CRS Rice Bowl. Pick up your family's CRS Rice Bowl from the information table. During the 40 days of Lent, reflect on the challenge of global hunger and how it affects our human family. Pray for the hungry and give generously.

Crisis Humanitarian Relief for Families of ICE Raid — Sacred Heart Catholic Church has continued to facilitate a major Emergency and Support Ministry for the children and families of the workers who remain incarcerated and have been deported. Twice a month they provide food and money to pay rent, utilities, and legal fees for 70 families in Canton. They also have a homework ministry to help the children and provide them after school snacks. They are in need of volunteers and donations of rice, beans, canned meats, diapers, and more. Please contact cantonrapidresponse@gmail.com for more information.

Offertory Collection for February 29/March 1:

Regular collection \$29,375.29

Black & Indian Missions second collection \$788.00

2020 CONTRIBUTION ENVELOPES are expected to arrive soon!



March 8, 2020 Second Sunday of Lent

ST PAUL CATHOLIC CHURCH PH: 601-992-9547 www.saintpaulcatholicchurch.com

The Rhythm of Lent

We are entering the second week of Lent. Hopefully, everyone has made a plan to experience some type of change for the better during this Season. Hopefully, it's better than most New Year's Resolutions which are motivated in gaining something for ourselves, and usually fall by the way side quickly. Hopefully, we are accepting God's invitation to draw closer to Him during these weeks, to look more carefully at our purpose in life, to develop the rhythm of reflecting on our gifts, blessings, and faults in order to move us into being more loving, generous, and merciful — into being more like Him.

We have the three pillars of Lent, elements to set a beautiful rhythm for our experience.

- ◆ *Prayer — adding extra time for reading the Bible, praying, Eucharistic Adoration, Daily Mass.*
- ◆ *Fasting — giving up an indulgence or bad habit to leave us space and increased desire to be with God.*
- ◆ *Almsgiving — donating our money, resources, and time to help someone in need.*

How is it going so far? Have you gotten into a new pattern/rhythm that is more purposeful and focused? It's not too late. Make a plan. Change the course. Start a "Thankfulness Journal." Name a blessing every day. Even on our darkest days, we can find something to be thankful for — even if it's simply the fact that we woke up. This simple exercise can really change the us and our days. It is so easy to sink into the negatives of life and miss the positives. Making a habit of looking for the good does indeed help us see more good! Then, we naturally want to generate more good for others.

Max Lucado, the author of our Lenten Study Book 'He Chose the Nails,' describes the fruits of the Lenten Season like this: "Although it is traditionally a time devoted to self-examination, self-denial, and repentance, Lent sinks its deepest roots into the joyful expectation of new life through God's forgiveness and steadfast love. It is a time to take seriously the areas of our lives in which we fall short, feel defeated, or have grown cold. And we do so not to beat ourselves up but to prepare for God's gifts."



Continuing our Reflection on the Gospel of Matthew

We skip to Chapter 17 of the Gospel of Matthew this Sunday, and are blessed by the scene of The Transfiguration of Jesus. These 9 verses are rich in meaning and beauty as the identity of Jesus is revealed to His Disciples, Peter, James, and John. The symbolism is nearly in every line – Jesus has come to fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament and to show the world a new way.

“After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.” (Mt 17:1)

Right away, we get an Old Testament reference from Exodus 24: 13-16, where Moses went up a mountain, and after six days God revealed Himself. Mountain tops were seen as holy places. It’s where Abraham, Moses, and David went to receive Divine revelation. Jesus does the same here.

“And He was transfigured before them; His face shone like the sun and His clothes became white as light.” (Mt 17:2)

Jesus made this stop with His friends on the way to Jerusalem because they did not yet understand what was to come. He gifted them this revelation to give them strength for His suffering. The Lord literally shines the light that they may see past His humanity, and see His divinity through this glimpse of the beauty that awaits us in Heaven. The Gospels of Mark and Luke speak of the white clothing. Luke writes that Jesus’ face changed. But, Matthew emphasizes, “His face shone like the sun,” which transforms the physical nature of Jesus, not just His clothing.

“And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with Him.” (Mt 17:3)

This one sentence holds great significance in showing Jesus as fulfillment of the Old Testament. Moses represents the old Law. Elijah represents the Prophets of old. Having them appear and converse with Jesus fulfills the prophecy of old. God promised Salvation to His chosen people of Israel. The presence of Moses and Elijah acknowledges Jesus is the promised Messiah.

“Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, ‘Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’” (Mt 17:4)

Peter gets it and, in his usual fashion, jumps all in with the excitement. Why wouldn’t they want to just stay there? We all love a mountaintop experience! It’s the closest we come to being in Heaven while on Earth! Leaving the mountain where there is light and freedom is difficult. Descending into the valley means encountering darkness again. The three tents are a reference to the Festival of Booths in Leviticus, Chapter 23, where Moses obeyed the Lord’s call to lead the Israelites to dwell in booths and celebrate the Blessings God bestowed on them.

“While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.’” (Mt 17:5)

This passage seals the deal. The bright cloud and the voice from the cloud indicate the Divine Presence. God is with them. He speaks to them recalling the same message from Jesus’ Baptism:

“And a voice came from the Heavens, saying, ‘This is my Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’” (Mt 3:17)

This time, He adds, **“Listen to Him.”** God tells them, and us, it is not enough to know and believe in Jesus. We must listen to Him. He speaks to us. How might we hear His voice? — Through listening to His Word in Scripture, through prayer, through silence, through Adoration, through the Eucharist, through the insight of other believers, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

“When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, ‘Rise, and do not be afraid.’ And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, ‘Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.’” (Mt 17:6-9)

The Disciples weren’t afraid of the vision, but the voice and the command strike fear. It is much easier to believe something when we “see it with our own eyes.” But, when we hear something, it is easier to doubt. So, Jesus touches them. He’s saying, I am still here with you. I have come to show you the way. No need to be afraid. I will show you the way. He commands them to not tell anyone about the gift of this vision because the time has not yet come.

We must put in the work to reach a mature understanding of our faith. Peter, James, and John witnessed the beautiful Transfiguration. They quickly gained a better understanding. The others who hadn’t seen and heard couldn’t possibly understand on the same level. Only after the Death and Resurrection, would more be able to understand the divinity of Christ, Son of Man. We have that gift. We have access to the visions, teachings, and history through the Bible. It is much easier to grasp the process since we know the rest of the great story of Jesus Christ. Others witnessed the events and recorded them, so that we might believe without having seen.

Naturally, we struggle with it. We have been taught what to believe. We may easily be able to proclaim, “I believe.” Most of us continue to have some unbelief, some weak beliefs. We will not perfectly understand until we receive our Eternal Reward and we are with Jesus, Moses, Elijah, all the angels and saints, and all who have gone before us and are now in the presence of God.

Lent is a time for to be transfigured, in a sense. We become more beautiful and have a glow about us when we experience relationship with God in a deeper way. Let us go to the mountaintop! God is calling us to Him. Meet Him in the quiet moments. Meet Him in the noisy moments. Meet Him in the people we love. Meet Him in the ones we dislike. Meet Him in those we who are new to us. Meet Him in the mirror. Meet Him when you pray. Meet Him when you fast. Meet Him when you give.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Do I make an effort to hear God’s voice?

Can I feel the touch of Jesus in my life?

Am I willing to be transfigured this Lent, and receive God’s gifts?

What is God speaking to me in this Sunday’s Gospel?

What beliefs and teachings do I struggle with?

How might I strengthen the areas of weakness in my faith and let go of the doubts?

Note: The Sunday Gospels will be taken from John throughout the remainder of Lent. On Palm Sunday, we pick up with Matthew, Chapter 26 to enter into Holy Week, then return to John’s Gospel until the celebration of Ordinary Time resumes on June 21st.