

## CULTURE OF FORGIVENESS

Joshua 5:9a, 10-12; Psalm 34:2-7; 2Cor. 5:17-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things (a new beginning) have come! (2 Cor. 15:17).



Our God, as presented in the books of the Old Testament, has often been seen as a God Who is always filled with fury - a God of "brimstone and fire" Who is ready and willing to punish anyone who strays from His commandments. He is perceived as a non-forgiving God. This pseudo theology must have influenced a writer who once wrote: "Forgiveness is not the rule of our culture. We relish revenge, and we pray to get even or to inflict more pain than was delivered. Such is the culture of lawsuits."

In my opinion, such may well be the *culture of lawsuits*, but it is alien to Christian culture. Forgiveness is intrinsically God's design, thus, in the Book of Exodus 22: 20-23:9, the Lord God says, "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him...You shall not afflict any widow or orphan...You shall not join hands with a wicked man, to be a malicious witness. Neither shall you allege the example of the many as an excuse for doing wrong; nor shall you, when testifying in a lawsuit, side with the many in perverting justice..." Contrary to what the Scribes, the Pharisees, and sadly, many of us practice, the Lord further exhorts you and me, "When you come upon your enemy's ox or ass going astray, see to it that it is returned to him. When you notice the ass of one who hates you lying prostrate under its burden, by no means desert him; help him, rather, to raise it up." I believe that if the Pharisees and the Scribes were faithful to these commands by the Lord God, they would not have been upset that Jesus welcomed sinners and ate with them.

In the gospels, we read that the Scribes and the Pharisees always thought of themselves as righteous and saintly. They merely carried out religious obligations out of fear of punishment. The most obvious trait of the Pharisees was their calculation that they were righteous people, who diligently observed the laws of their religion, and expected God to give them salvation in return. They had no patience for those they perceived to be sinners. For them, forgiveness was a foreign concept, thus they did not understand why Jesus kept company with sinners and tax collectors. It was against this background that Jesus told them the "parable of the prodigal son" - a story about the unconditional love of God for sinners who repent from their sins and turn back to God. It is in the light of this that the Lord said through Prophet Ezekiel, "I do not want the death of a sinner, but let the sinner repent and live" (Ez. 18:32). Like the older son in Jesus' parable, the Pharisees and the Scribes, are not willing to share in the joy that exists when a sinner rejoins their fold. It is all about them and their self-centered interest.

On the contrary, for you and me, Lent should be a time of repentance - to acknowledge our sins and to confess them - a time of new beginnings - a time to rejoice in the love God has shown to us all. It is a time of contrition and true conversion. It is time for us to know that we do not and cannot live in a vacuum. The parable of the "prodigal son" teaches you and me that LOVE must be the only true reason behind our religious practices and sacrifices. We serve God, not because we expect Him to meet our needs, but because we love Him. We share our gifts, time and talents with others, not because we expect them to share with us in return, but because we love them. Mutual love and forgiveness is a Christian culture!

Rev. Anthony Ita Bassey, MSP

# PARISH NEWS

**MEETING:** This Monday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, the Holy Name Society will meet at 7:30 p.m. in the McManus Parish Center. All men of the Parish are welcome.



HOLY NAME SOCIETY



**THE ALTAR BREAD AND WINE** for this week has been donated in loving memory of Anthony DiPaolo by Josephine Smith.

The **ALTAR CANDLES** for this week will be lit for the living and deceased Parishioners of St. Bartholomew's Church.



**CHRISM MASS:** Mass of Chrism will be celebrated this year on **Tuesday, March 26<sup>th</sup>**, at 4 p.m. at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Every parishioner is encouraged to attend this beautiful ceremony, where we witness our priests renew their vow to serve God's people with the humility of a good shepherd. **Please**

**come support our own parish priests.** Due to the generosity of a friend of our parish, a motor coach will travel from our parking lot directly to St. Patrick's Cathedral at the **cost of \$12 per person.** Please arrive at the parking lot by 1:15 p.m.; we expect to be back in the lot around 6:30 p.m. Please call the Rectory on 965-0566, Monday to Friday, as soon as possible to reserve a seat.

Hopefully winter is behind us! Next Sunday we will take up our last collection for the year, to help with the bills we incurred for snow removal and salting of our sidewalks and parking lot in 2013. Thank you in advance for your help with this.



## OUR 2013 EASTER WISH-LIST

In the spirit of Lent and in anticipation of a joyous Easter feast, I am once again inviting you, our parish families or individuals, who can afford to assist the parish in purchasing the following liturgical items needed for the Holy Week and Easter ceremonies:



- 1 Paschal (Easter) Candle @ \$450
- 5 bundles of Palms for Palm Sunday @ \$60 each

Please, note that any of the above items can be donated in memory of your loved ones; and will be so noted in the Easter Bulletin.

Thank you for always responding whenever I call upon you to step forward and assist our parish in any way possible.

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

### THOUGHTS ON LENTEN FAST

#### Disciplines of True Fasting

*True Fasting can also be a time of Feasting:*

**Fasting can be a time when you could:**

**Fast** from judging others; **Feast** on Christ dwelling in them.

**Fast** from emphasis on differences; **Feast** on the unity of all life.

**Fast** from apparent darkness; **Feast** on the reality of all light.

**Fast** from thoughts of illness; **Feast** on the healing power of God.

**Fast** from words that pollute; **Feast** on phrases that purify.

**Fast** from discontent; **Feast** on gratitude.

**Fast** from anger; **Feast** on patience.

**Fast** from pessimism; **Feast** on optimism.

**Fast** from worry; **Feast** on God's providence.

**Fast** from complaining; **Feast** on appreciation.

**Fast** from negatives; **Feast** on affirmatives.

**Fast** from unrelenting pressures; **Feast** on unceasing prayer.

**Fast** from hostility; **Feast** on nonresistance.

**Fast** from bitterness; **Feast** on forgiveness.

**Fast** from self-concern; **Feast** on compassion for others.

#### CARDINAL'S ANNUAL APPEAL 2013

The 2013 *Cardinal Appeal* is almost in its final stages in our parish. Next weekend (March 16/17) is **Commitment Weekend** here in our parish. At all Masses, you will have an opportunity to make your commitment to the *Appeal*. This will provide a special opportunity to those who have not yet pledged to make their pledges to the *Appeal*. As children of Christ, we are called to serve others out of gratitude to our most generous God. Please consider a sacrificial pledge to the 2013 *Appeal*. Thank you! Below are the current stats of parish pledges so far:

Goal:	\$51,000
Pledged:	\$26,285
Paid:	\$12,235
Donors:	55
% of Goal:	51%

Please consider a sacrificial pledge to the 2013 *Appeal*. Thank you.

**MIRACULOUS MEDAL NOVENA:** Held after the 9 a.m. Mass on Mondays.

**EUCCHARISTIC DEVOTION:** Held the First Friday of every month at 1 p.m. Please join us when you are able.

**DIVINE MERCY DEVOTION:** Held the First Saturday of every month at 3 p.m. All are encouraged to participate.

**RECITATION OF THE ROSARY:** Join your fellow parishioners in

#### ✠ STEWARDSHIP ✉

What shall I render unto the Lord  
for all his benefits to me?

#### Tithing - God's Plan for Giving

March 4, 2012

Adults' Contribution	\$7636.10
Children's Contribution	\$146.40
<b>Last Year's Total</b>	<b>\$7782.50</b>

March 3, 2013

Adults' Contribution	\$6681.90
Children's Contribution	\$182.70
<b>This Year's Total</b>	<b>\$6864.60</b>

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Collection for the maintenance of our buildings and grounds totaled \$1960.10.

**"WHAT WE HAVE DONE FOR OURSELVES ALONE  
DIES WITH US; WHAT WE HAVE DONE FOR OTHERS  
AND THE WORLD REMAINS AND IS IMMORTAL."**

~ Albert Pike

#### REMEMBER YOUR BELOVED PARISH

Remember, **"We make a living by what we earn. We make a life by what we share."** Please remember our Parish in your *Will* as a lasting and loving gift to your parish family. Thank you!



Please pray for all the sick & the homebound members of our Parish, especially Ethel Thomas, Aldina Pereira, Rebecca Conroy, Andy DeFabritis, Maria Marte, Barbara Rup, Jule Yaskovic, Rosalie Heit, Florence B. Swetz, Clare Yaskovic, Neil Caruso, Raymond Fitzpatrick, Sr., Deacon James Byrnes, Andrea Objay, Carmen Torres, Frank Marra, Deacon Patrick Troy, Josephine Apuzzo, Edith Dugan, Gary Roth, Joyann Allan, Anna Rita Morgante, Lois Burton, Mary DeStefano, Mark Cianfaglione, Shawn Colon, Margaret Maccia, Nicole Ryan Betancourt, Anthony Spinner, Audrey & Alfred Falcone, Kathleen Hayes, Marge Muraik, Stan Buoninfante, Donna Vasconez, Gene DelBene, Nicole Pisani-Frame, Louis Petrulo, Cynthia Swiatkiewicz, Jimmy Maimone, Robert Mirsky, Roseanne Mercandetti, Louis Brusco, Josephine Daniele, Jennifer Dorsey, Valerie Riccardi, Fatima Panik, Joanne Moscarello, Marian Fletcher, Anna Bonacci, Minerva Hernandez, Paula Parente, Barbara Olivieri, Carol Swetz, Bridget O'Malley, Anna Brucculeri, Peggy Clevenberg, Gerald Mazzerese, Jr., Patricia Keane, Louis Milone, Joey Bastardi, Carol Stola, Amada Ortiz, Karen Aprea, Stephen Sarich, and Neil Cawley.

**STATIONS OF THE CROSS:** Every Friday evening during Lent, we have the devotion of the Stations of the Cross in the Church at 7p.m. On Good Friday, Stations will be at 2 p.m., just prior to the 3 p.m. Good Friday Service. Families are encouraged to participate together in preparation for Easter.



The **SANCTUARY LAMP** for this week will be lit in loving memory of Molly Harrington.

MARCH 10, 2013

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Mass  for the  
Intentions Week

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**Fourth Sunday of Lent**

**Saturday, March 9 (Anticipated Mass)**

5:00 PM Deceased Members of Pisacreta Family +

**Sunday, March 10**

8:30 AM Anthony DiPaolo +

10:00 AM For All the People of Our Parish

11:30 AM Joan Sepp +

5:00 PM Patricia Arcoleo +

**Monday, March 11**

**Lenten Weekday**

7:00 AM Catherine Moore +

9:00 AM Marcello Barcello +

**Tuesday, March 12**

**Lenten Weekday**

7:00 AM Leonard Revellese +

9:00 AM Anthony DiPaolo +

**Wednesday, March 13**

**Lenten Weekday**

7:00 AM God's Blessings on Charles Bassey, Jr. (living)

9:00 AM Jennifer Sacaradis +

**Thursday, March 14**

**Lenten Weekday**

7:00 AM Deceased Members of Bolduc & Savard Families

9:00 AM Joanne Moscarello (living)

**Friday, March 15**

**Lenten Weekday**

7:00 AM Molly Harrington +

9:00 AM Michael Sammon +

**Saturday, March 16**

**Lenten Weekday**

9:00 AM Thomas J. Biamonte +

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**Fifth Sunday of Lent**

**Saturday, March 16 (Anticipated Mass)**

5:00 PM Michael Castagnozzi +

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**Sunday, March 17**

8:30 AM Frank & Carmela Legio +

10:00 AM Benedetto & Nina DiChiara +

11:30 AM Frank & Carmela Legio +

5:00 PM For All the People of Our Parish

## SPRING: A TIME FOR NEW BEGINNINGS!

*(Excerpts from Stewardship in Motion)*



It's ten days to the first day of Spring, Wednesday, March 20, and already the days are growing longer. Early rays of sunlight shine ever more to the left on the wall as we read the newspaper and have our first cup of coffee (or tea) each morning. Flowers begin to bloom and myriad shades of green spread out over the lawn and

trees as sure signs that new beginnings are happening in a variety of ways. Traditionally, spring and the accompanying church season of Lent are a time we can also make new beginnings in a variety of ways.

Our income and tax obligations for the last year are settled and all that remains is settling up with the IRS and possibly our state and local tax boards before the middle of next month. When we complete the calculations, we may be surprised at how much we actually earned and how much our percentage of giving to God compared. Perhaps it is time to increase our offering to the parish to more closely approach a tithe. Think about that as you do your numbers.

At the beginning of January, many of us made resolutions we hoped to fulfill that would make our lives more fulfilled and help us better live in faithful service to others. Have we followed through with those new beginnings? Are we pleased with the results? Are there still other new beginnings for us to pursue? Probably so! We can never begin on those new or renewed challenges earlier than today.

This Lenten season don't confine your spring cleaning to merely sweeping the dust and cobwebs out of your house – clean them from your soul as well. As Easter approaches, this is a tremendous time of opportunity and expectation for personal renewal and change. Let Spring be a time for new beginnings in your life and faith.

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### THE CONFESSIONS OF SINS

*(Excerpts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church)*

# 1455: The confession (or disclosure) of sins, even from a simply human point of view, frees us and facilitates our reconciliation with others. Through such an admission man looks squarely at the sins he is guilty of, takes responsibility for them, and thereby opens himself again to God and to the communion of the Church in order to make a new future possible.

# 1456: Confession to a priest is an essential part of the sacrament of Penance: "All mortal sins of which penitents after a diligent self-examination are conscious must be recounted by them in confession, even if they are most secret and have been committed against the last two precepts of the Decalogue; for these sins sometimes wound the soul more grievously and are more dangerous than those which are committed openly.

