

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we step into the sacred season of Lent, we embark on a journey of renewal time set apart for reflection, repentance, and spiritual regeneration. With Ash Wednesday, we are reminded that we are dust and to dust we shall return, but your soul returns to God. We are also called to rise anew, strengthened by God's grace and mercy.



Lent is a season of coming home—to Christ, to His Church, and to the deep love He offers us through His sacrifice. If it has been some time since you last joined us, know that you are always welcome. No matter where you are in life, how long you've been away, or if your steps are slower than they once were, our doors remain open, and our parish is a place where all are embraced with love and understanding. We are a handicap-accessible and welcoming community, ready to walk with you on this journey of faith.

Through prayer, fasting, and acts of charity, we prepare our hearts for the greatest joy of all—the Resurrection of Our Lord. Easter morning shines with the promise of new life, not just for Christ, but for each of us who seek Him with sincerity and devotion. Let this Lent be a time of turning back, of drawing near to the One who never stops calling us home.

May this holy season bring you peace, renewal, and a deeper love for our Lord. I look forward to journeying with you as we prepare to celebrate the glory of His Resurrection!

In His service,

Father Jim

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Recognitions

- **Special Achievement:** Yuliia has been named the winner of the American Education Week Poster Contest for 5th grade from her elementary school. Her poster will be on display, and she will be honored at a award ceremony hosted by her School District School Board, administrators, teachers, and leadership team of the Education Association. Congratulations Yuliia! We are so proud of your great achievement.



- **New Youth**

President: Michael was recently sworn in as the President of the All Saints Youth Group and will be attending the Parish Committee Meetings for 2025. He is also a delegate on the youth committees of the Western Diocese United Youth Association (WDUYA) for 2023-2025 and the P.N.C.C. National United Youth

Association (NUYA) for 2024-2026. He is looking forward to working with his fellow parishioners in the volunteer projects, conventions, and other special events our youth will be supporting throughout the year. Make sure you check out his article in this newsletter on the NUYA project for veterans. Congratulations and best wishes to Michael as he starts his leadership journey in our parish.

- A special thank you to Olivia for her outstanding leadership as the previous youth president and willingness to be a mentor for Michael as he takes on this new role. What a great example for our parish's youth.

Youth Nights (January/February)

The children of the parish have really been enjoying these fellowship events. Special shout-outs to the F.O.S.S. hosts for all of these events as it couldn't have been done without you.

- In January, the group enjoyed ice skating at Dodge Park in Sterling Heights with some sandwiches, snacks, and good old fashioned hot chocolate to keep them warm. It was such a joy seeing them zoom around the ice rink. *Event Hosted by Andrea Pharris*



- In February, the group put on their strategy hats for a night full of games and prizes. The lighthearted competitiveness between the children during games of Uno, Jenga, Guess Who?, ping pong, and much more was full of excitement and suspense. *Event Hosted by Sharon Stachurski*

Upcoming Youth Events

Youth Nights

- **Who's Invited:** All Saints children and their family/friends are able to participate in these wonderful youth nights. Come join the fun!
- **When/Where:** 3rd Friday of each Month from 5:00pm - 8:00pm while F.O.S.S. is in session. The where is to be determined.
- **Details:** to be announced as we get closer to the March/April dates.

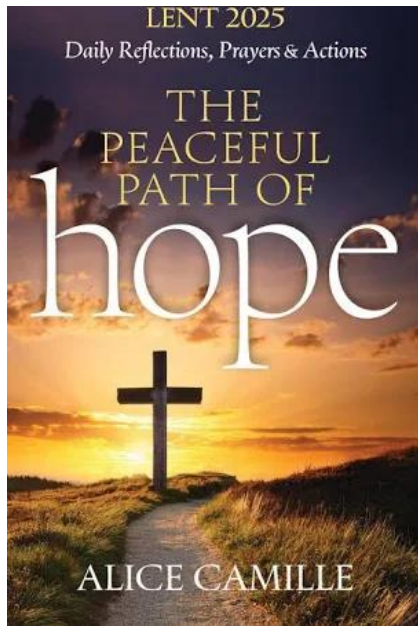
Operation Christmas Child "After the Box" Celebration of Appreciation

- **Who's invited:** Father Jim, Youth Group Leaders and Youth
- **When/Where:** 12:00pm - 2:00pm (Lunch Provided) There are two event locations to choose from
 - March 29, 2025, in Almont, MI
 - April 5, 2025, in Saginaw, MI
- **R.S.V.P. by:** March 14, 2025 to Olivia Kotelnicki as she will be responding to the invite for our parish.
- **Further Details:** See Flyer on the church bulletin board
- *Special Thank you again to Olivia for leading our parish in the Operation Christmas Child project.*

2025 Western Diocese United Youth Association (WDUYA) is hosting a gathering "God's Kingdom Builders"

- **Who's Invited:** Youth of the P.N.C.C. Western Diocese and Adults who'd like to volunteer
- **When/Where:** July 21-24, 2025 at the Walnut Ridge Retreat Center located in Morgantown, Indiana
- **Registration/Cost:** The Registration and Cost of \$150.00 is due by May 3, 2025 (F.O.S.S. will help with this fee)
- **Point of Contact:** Gloria Bawol (F.O.S.S. President) and/or Father Jim
- **For the inside scoop on the agenda and fun you will have:** *Michael Pharris as he is on the youth planning committee for this event and has attended this gathering in the past. He'd love to share his experiences with you.*

Thank you to all who support our F.O.S.S. program and showing how God's love and work shines through us all. Andrea Pharris



We are thrilled to share a special Lenten blessing with you! Thanks to the generosity of a loving parishioner, we are blessed to offer copies of *Lent 2025: The Peaceful Path of Hope* by Alice Camille to members of our Seniorate.

This thoughtful resource provides a meaningful way to deepen our faith, reflection, and spiritual journey during this sacred season. As we prepare our hearts for the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ, this book serves as a guide to hope and renewal.

If you would like a copy, please reach out to Father Jim, and he will gladly ensure you receive one.

A heartfelt thank you to our generous donor for this beautiful gift of faith, which will surely enrich our Lenten journey as a parish family.

The 2% Rule: The Power of a Faithful Few

Have you ever considered how a small group of committed people can transform an entire culture? Sociologist Robert Bellah, author of *Habits of the Heart* (1985), made a remarkable observation:

“We should not underestimate the significance of the small group of people who have a vision of a just and gentle world . . . The governing values of a whole culture may be changed when 2% of its people have a new vision.”

Think about just 2% of the population, with a clear mission and unwavering commitment, can change an entire society. If this is true in social movements, how much more is it true for the Body of Christ?

Jesus already set this principle in motion. He called His followers the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and the leaven in the dough (Matthew 5:13-16, Luke 13:20-21). Salt preserves and enhances, light reveals truth, and leaven transforms from within. A vital Church understands its mission—to impact the world, to bring transformation, to be a beacon of God’s love and justice.

So, the question is: Are we part of the 2%? Do we have a vision for the Kingdom of God that will inspire change in our communities, our culture, and our world? If we commit to being faithful disciples, we can be the catalyst for great spiritual regeneration.

The time is now. Will we be the salt, the light, and the leaven that changes the world?

2025 Lenten Western Diocese Word of God Study – Acts of the Apostles

The 2025 Lenten Western Diocese Word of God Study (WOGS) will run from March 4 to *April 8 on Tuesdays* at 7:00 p.m. (Central) / 8:00 p.m. (Eastern) via Zoom. This study will introduce the New Testament book Acts of the Apostles. This text is used throughout the Easter Season during the Liturgy of the Word of God on Weekdays and Sundays. The course will cover its authorship, historical context, dating, and structure. Participants will explore the mission and challenges of the early Church, learning how Luke portrays Jesus guiding the Church through the apostles and justifies including Gentiles without adhering to Jewish customs.

We encourage you to read from your Bible, the book of Acts prior to class. Also, please look at the presentation slides which can be found near the end of this email.

Lesson One and Two: Introduction to Acts and Acts 1–5 These lessons introduce the *Acts of the Apostles*, covering authorship, dating, sources, and structure. Participants will learn about Luke’s relationship with Paul and the significance of Pentecost for the early Church.

Lesson Three and Four: Acts of the Apostles: Chapters 6–12 These lessons focus on Christianity's spread beyond Israel, driven by divine intervention and persecution, which helped the Church grow.

Father Jim Ploskonka is inviting you to the WOG Study on Zoom.

When

Weekly from 8pm to 9pm Eastern Time (7pm to 8 pm Central Time) on Tuesday March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1 and 8, 2025

Join Zoom Meeting



<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82791061623?pwd=Ls7B8hwvDvlEiasAozPo1EaBCq3TjV.1>

Message from the Chairman of the Committee

Dear Parish Family,

I hope this message finds you all well and in good spirits. As we move through the season of Lent, we are looking forward to several exciting events and updates here at the parish.

First, a much-loved tradition is returning! We will be holding a **Pierogi Making Session on April 11th and 12th**. This event is always a wonderful time for fellowship, and we are calling on all volunteers to help with the preparation and assembly of these delicious pierogi. As the date gets closer, we will have a sign-up sheet available to sign up for various positions. Whether you are an experienced pierogi maker or a first timer, there’s a role for everyone, and we would love to have your help!

On a related note, I’d like to share an update on our kitchen freezer. Unfortunately, the chest freezer has finally given out after many years of service. However, we are in the process of

purchasing a new one, which will be delivered in time for our pierogi making session. This will ensure that we can continue our work efficiently and keep our parish activities running smoothly.

Speaking of maintenance, salt for the parking lot has seen a significant increase in price this winter. However, thanks to the arrangement we have with our snow removal company, we are still managing to save money compared to previous years. Father Jim and I have also been able to use our new parish snowblower to help keep the sidewalks clear this winter, which has been a huge help in keeping costs down. We are grateful for this new addition, which has saved us both time and money.

I want to thank all of you for your continued support and involvement in the parish. It is truly a joy to see everyone working together to keep our parish community vibrant and thriving. Please stay tuned for more details about the Pierogi Making Session and other upcoming events. We look forward to seeing you there!

Blessings,
Jeff Kotelnicki

Opportunities during the Great Lent

Wednesday	March 5 th	7:00 pm	Blessing and Distribution of Ashes
Friday	March 7 th	7:00 pm	Stations of the Cross
Sunday	March 9 th	10:00 am	Solemnity of the Institution of the PNCC
Sunday	March 16 th	10:00 am	Lent 2 Holy Mass
Saturday	March 22 nd	9:00 am	Seniorate Lenten Retreat
Sunday	March 23 rd	10:00 am	Lent 3 Holy Mass
Friday	March 28 th	7:00 pm	Bitter Lamentations
Saturday	March 29 th		Operation Christmas Child Luncheon
Sunday	March 30 th	10:00 am	Lent 4 Holy Mass
Sunday	April 6 th	10:00 am	Passion Sunday
Sunday	April 13 th	10:00 am	Palm Sunday
Tuesday	April 15 th	TBA	Blessing of Oils for the Western Diocese
Thursday	April 17 th	7:00 pm	Maundy Thursday
Friday	April 18 th	7:00 pm	Tenebrae for Good Friday
Saturday	April 19 th	10:00 am	Holy Saturday Blessing of Fire, Water and Pascal Candle
Sunday	April 20 th	8:00 am	Solemnity of the Resurrection of the Lord

Lenten Retreat 2025

"THE TRIDUUM"

Western Diocese Northeast Seniorate

Saturday, March 22, 2025- 10AM

Our Schedule

10am: Breakfast & Fellowship
Resurrection PNCC Hall

10:30am: Welcome & Intro to the Retreat
Very Rev. Jaroslaw Nowak

10:35am: Maundy Thursday
Very Rev. Jaroslaw Nowak

11:05am: Break

11:15am: Good Friday
Rev. Jim Ploskonka


11:50am: Break

Noon: Holy Saturday
Rev. Jason Soltysiak

12:45pm: Questions

1pm: Lenten Penitential Service
Rev. Greg Gronn


1:15pm: Lunch



Resurrection PNCC
Temperance, MI
1835 W. Temperance Rd
Temperance, MI 48182

A retreat that looks at the history, inspirations, evolutions, scripture, and hidden meanings behind the three powerful and meaningful liturgies that bring us from the solemnness of Lent to the joy of Resurrection.

TRIDUUM RETREAT



John 19:28-30: "Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."



“MAKE YOUR OWN TACO & GAMES” YOUTH NIGHT

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2025, Friends of Sunday School sponsored a “Taco Dinner & Games Night” for the youth of our parish. The evening began at 5:00 p.m. with the kids assembling their own tacos with all the trimmings and enjoying taco chips with salsa. For dessert there were double chocolate and oatmeal raisin cookies.

Following dinner the games began. Placed around the hall tables were various games such as Uno, Yahtzee, Aggravation, Pick-up Sticks, Jumbo Blocks Tumbler, Sorry, Guess Who, Ping Pong, Air hockey and more for them to choose from. Whoever won each game was allowed to choose from an array of sweet treats to take home as their prize.

The evening continued with lots of bantering, laughing and screams of joy at winning. It was a great night of fun and comradery with everyone leaving with a big smile and happy hearts. We thank God for blessing our parish with such a “great” group of young people.

Sharon Stachurski

“Friend” of Sunday School



A man had spent fruitless day fishing. He didn't want to go home empty-handed. He decided to stop at a local fish market. "I'd like three good sized fish," he said to the clerk. "But before you wrap them, toss them to me, one by one." The clerk looked puzzled at his request, "Sir? That's a strange thing to ask." Smiling the man said, "This way I'll be able to tell my wife truthfully that I caught them!"



Rich in Faith, Wise in Wealth: A Catholic Christian Financial Guide

Saturday, May 3rd
10: 00 am – 3:00 pm
Lunch provided



Are you looking for a way to manage your finances while staying true to your faith? This study will help you discover how to use God's wisdom to guide your financial decisions—whether it's budgeting, saving, giving, or planning. Together, we'll explore biblical principles of stewardship and practical steps to financial freedom, all through a Catholic lens. Join us for an enriching journey toward faith-filled financial peace!

Reverend Jim Ploskonka, PhD
All Saint Parish
Sterling Heights, MI

*Celebrating birthdays for the
month of January and Sophie too,
101 years young!!*



March Birthdays

21	Andrea Pharris
30	Tracey Hill

April Birthdays

11	Bill Konrad
12	Mary Chebaa
18	Pat Filips
19	Michael Pharris

April Anniversaries

11	Judy/Andrzej Zaczek
27	Pat/Bill Konrad

All Saints YMS of R: Among the Top Five Contributors

Church Name	Total Points	Total Items
Holy Mother of Sorrows-Dupont, Pa.	10,205	795
St. Mary's -Parma, OH	8,013	919
Holy Name of Jesus-Schnectady, NY	7,755	886
Holy Mother of the Rosary Lancaster NY	5,148	472
All Saints Sterling Heights MI	1,030	140

All Saints YMS of R has earned a distinguished position among the top five contributors in the annual YMS of R Community Clothing Drive. This notable

achievement highlights the organization's unwavering commitment to serving our community through generous clothing donations. Such contributions not only provide essential support to those in need but also exemplify the values of charity and community spirit that guide our work. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to both our YMS of R and the parish for their exemplary efforts and dedication to this worthy cause.

Help Us Stay Connected!

Do you have family members, friends, or loved ones who would like to stay informed about parish events, special services, and community updates? We invite you to share their email addresses with us!

By providing their email, they will receive important news, inspirational messages, and updates from our parish. It's a great way to stay connected and engaged with our faith community!

How to Participate:

Send their email addresses to jploskonka62@gmail.com

Drop a note with their email in the collection basket

Thank you for helping us grow and strengthen our parish family!

The parish has received information on the upcoming PNCC Bowling Outing, which is hosted by Holy Cross PNCC in Hamtramck, MI May 16-18.

We also received information on the Mission and Evangelism Conference & Workshop that is to be held at St. Francis of Assisi PNCC in Denver, CO May 30-June 1.

Parish Committee Installation on the Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord

On Sunday, January 12, 2025, during the Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord, the Parish Committee was formally installed prior to the start of the Sacrifice of Holy Mass. This sacred moment underscored the call to service and renewal in Christ, just as His baptism marked the beginning of His public ministry.

Through their installation, the committee members commit themselves to serving the parish faithfully, upholding its spiritual and administrative responsibilities, and fostering a deeper sense of unity and mission within the Church.

May the Holy Spirit guide them in their leadership, granting them wisdom, strength, and humility, so that their service reflects Christ's example of self-giving love. Let us keep them in our prayers, entrusting their ministry to God's grace for the good of our parish and the greater glory of His Kingdom.

"Brothers and Sisters, we are all baptized into the one Body of Christ and given gifts for a variety of ministries for the common good. Our purpose is to install these people in the Name of God and of All Saints Parish to the Parish Committee, a special ministry within the Parish to which they were called and elected by the faithful of this Parish."

You have been called to serve on the Parish Committee of All Saints Parish. Will you faithfully and reverently execute the duties of your office to the honor of God and to the benefit of the members of this congregation?"

All responded: **I will**
Officers:

- President: Jeff Kotelnicki
- Vice President: Dwight Berend
- Treasurer: Jennifer Kotelnicki
- Financial Secretary: Carol Szydlowski
- Recording Secretary: Sharon Stachurski

Directors:

- Marcia Berend
- Donald Wechselberger
- Pat Rabaut Konrad

Auditors:

- William Konrad
- Michael Szydlowski
- Marianne Markiewicz

Tribunal:

- Pat Kotelnicki
- Rody Yezman
- Larry Bawol

Theology of the Word of God as Sacrament

Reverend Dr. Jim Ploskonka

The sacred weeping of the soul bears witness to the unfathomable power of the Word of God—a



Word that does not merely instruct but awakens, wounds, and heals all at once. These tears, flowing from the depths of the heart, are more than sorrow; they are the soul's silent confession, the lament of one who sees, perhaps for the first time, the desolation wrought by estrangement from God. They speak of a past marked by obstinance, of squandered grace, of a love too often ignored.

Yet, in this weeping, there is also the stirring of regeneration. For the Word of God is not a stagnant echo of past wisdom, nor a collection of idle utterances, but a living, breathing force—sharper than any two-edged sword, cutting through the illusions of self-sufficiency, exposing the hidden recesses of the heart, and summoning the soul to rise from ruin into restoration. It does not allow the hearer to remain unchanged; it compels movement, drawing one from complacency to conversion, from grief to grace, from knowledge to mission.

Such is the mystery of divine revelation in the Sacrament of the Word of God: it does not merely inform but transforms, it does not simply speak but summons. It calls forth the weary and the wayward, confronting them with truth yet clothing them in mercy. It is the voice that shakes the heavens and whispers in the silence of the penitent heart, saying: *Return, be made whole, for you were never forsaken.*

The phrase "*Return, be made whole, for you were never forsaken.*" is not a direct quotation from Scripture but rather a theologically inspired synthesis of biblical themes. It echoes several scriptural passages that convey God's enduring love, mercy, and call to repentance.

1. **Return** – The call to repentance and restoration is a central theme in Scripture:
 - "*Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts.*" (Malachi 3:7)
 - "*Come, let us return to the Lord; for He has torn us, that He may heal us; He has struck us down, and He will bind us up.*" (Hosea 6:1)
2. **Be made whole** – A reference to the healing and restoration that God provides:
 - "*Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.*" (Mark 5:34)
 - "*I will restore you to health and heal your wounds, declares the Lord.*" (Jeremiah 30:17)
3. **For you were never forsaken** – A reminder of God's abiding presence and faithfulness:
 - "*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*" (Hebrews 13:5, Deuteronomy 31:6)
4. "*Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.*" (Isaiah 49:15)

This phrase captures the essence of God's mercy, calling His people to return to Him, experience healing, and rest in the assurance that He has never abandoned them.



Actor Wanted: Lead Role in Historical Play on Bishop Józef Padewski

I am seeking a dedicated and talented actor to portray **Bishop Józef Padewski (1894–1951)** in a compelling stage production that brings to life his legacy as a bishop, patriot, and martyr.

About the Role:

Bishop Padewski's life was one of faith, resilience, and sacrifice. This production will explore his leadership, struggles, and the profound impact he had on the Polish National Catholic Church. The actor must be able to convey **depth, strength, and sincerity**, capturing both his pastoral compassion and the challenges he faced.

Requirements:

- Male actor, preferably with **stage experience** in historical or biographical roles
- Strong **dramatic presence** and the ability to deliver compelling monologues
- Comfortable with **historical and religious themes**
- Ability to perform in **English** (Polish fluency a plus but not required)

Additional Information:

This production has the potential to become a **traveling stage play**, allowing audiences across different regions to engage with the inspiring story of Bishop Padewski. While this is a **non-paid role**, it offers an incredible opportunity to **perform a role of deep historical and spiritual significance**.

For more details, please contact **Father Jim Ploskonka**, 216.650.5596 or jplskonka62@gmail.com

Join us in bringing the story of **Bishop Józef Padewski** to life and honoring his enduring legacy!



Perfect Gift for Mother's Day!

Personalized Pierogi Cutter

A special gift for moms, grandmas, and everyone who loves making pierogi! This pierogi cutter is a must-have for every kitchen. And it makes the perfect Mother's Day gift! **Order today!**

Features:

- ✓ Personalize with up to 12 characters
- ✓ Available in 4 beautiful colors: Green, Pink, Blue, and Yellow
- ✓ Only \$14.95 each + \$5.00 shipping per order

How to Order:

1. Fill out the order form at the end of the Newsletter.
2. Make checks payable to: **All Saints PNCC**
3. Mail the order form and payment to:
All Saints PNCC
5555 17 Mile Rd., Sterling Heights, MI 48310.



Questions? Call (216) 650-5596

Pan-Fried Salmon with Creamy Lemon Orzo

From the Famous Kitchen of Ron Rogers

Pan-fried salmon, nestled in a bed of creamy orzo with lemon and parmesan. So quick to make and all cooked in one pan!

Prep Time: 10 minutes **Cook Time:** 20minutes **Total Time:** 30minutes **Servings:** 4



Salmon and spice rub Ingredients:

- 4 salmon fillets
- pinch salt
- pinch garlic salt
- ¼ tsp black pepper
- ⅛ tsp paprika
- ½ tsp dried parsley

- 60 ml (1/4 cup) double (heavy) cream
- 75 g (3/4 cup) grated parmesan
- zest and juice of 1/2 a lemon
- ¼ tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper

To Serve:

Orzo:

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter
- 2 cloves garlic peeled and minced
- 230 g (1 cup + 2 tbsp) dried orzo
- 480 ml (2 cups) chicken stock

- small bunch fresh parsley finely chopped
- lemon wedges
- black pepper

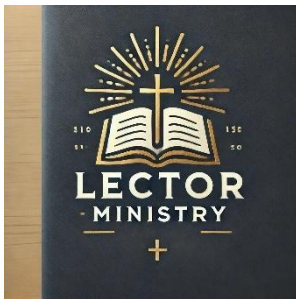
Instructions

- Place the salmon fillets on a plate. 4 salmon fillets
- Mix the salt, garlic salt, pepper, paprika, and dried parsley. Sprinkle onto the top of the salmon and pat it down, so it sticks.
- Heat the oil and butter in a large frying pan (skillet), over a medium-high heat.
- Add the salmon fillets, skin-side-up (so the part coated with the spice mix is in the oil). Cook for 3-4 minutes, until the salmon is golden brown, then remove the salmon from the pan and place on a plate, skin-side-down (we'll continue cooking it shortly).
- Turn the heat down to medium and add the garlic to the pan. Cook for 30 seconds, stirring constantly, so the garlic doesn't burn.
- Add the dried orzo to the pan, stir with the garlic, then add the chicken stock and stir again.
- Nestle the salmon fillets into the orzo, skin-side down.
- Turn the heat back up to medium-high and bring to the boil, then turn the heat down and simmer for 8-9 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the orzo is al dente (cooked, but with a little bite). You'll need to move the salmon with a set of tongs to stir the orzo underneath, so it doesn't stick to the pan.
- Add the cream, parmesan, lemon zest and juice, salt, and pepper to the orzo and stir together.
- Turn off the heat, sprinkle on the chopped parsley and a little black pepper. Arrange the lemon wedges in the pan, then serve.

Lenten Journey Word Search

R T N O I S R E V N O C K O L U V H L D
 E A M A K B K Z K V D G N I T S A F S E
 B F O R G I V E N E S S O G V Q P Z T C
 Y L F N F S S B G S H W O J O U N C A I
 Z F O E M O Y P E P D O P V H O G R T F
 E R R S K D W E A A D A O U I S Q U I I
 O O T N R X Q P Y L L E O S U T Y C O R
 J Q Y B A S Z S V M R J S R P C K I N C
 R F F V E X W G Y S E A U H Y W P F S A
 Y A D N U S B S Q G P X X O X F Y I O S
 R E S U R R E C T I O N E L U O T X A P
 T K S E H S A A D V H B H Y H I A G S C
 V F B A G A H L Y I E C N E N I T S B A
 L J H Z S E H I Q N A O M B X W Z T Q E
 U X F X B C P H F G B F I U Z M E B J H
 E C N A T N E P E R K J W H W A H E C N
 O S L R I A C C N O I T A V L A S Z K J
 X H R E X N E R P Y A D I R F L C G X V
 U V F V S E A Z Z I D T P R A Y E R B A
 S K F V L P R Q S D N S H O S A N N A X

<i>ALMSGIVING</i>	<i>ASHES</i>
<i>FORGIVENESS</i>	<i>PENANCE</i>
<i>STATIONS</i>	<i>HOSANNA</i>
<i>PALM</i>	<i>FRIDAY</i>
<i>FASTING</i>	<i>FORTY</i>
<i>CRUCIFIX</i>	<i>HOLY</i>
<i>REPENTANCE</i>	
<i>PRAYER</i>	<i>SUNDAY</i>
<i>CONVERSION</i>	<i>DAYS</i>
<i>PASSION</i>	<i>WEEK</i>
<i>GOOD</i>	<i>SALVATION</i>



Announcement: Calling All Lectors!

Do you feel called to proclaim the Word of God? Our parish is seeking dedicated individuals to serve as lectors during Mass. Lectors play a vital role in bringing Scripture to life, helping to inspire and guide our congregation. If you are interested in sharing your voice and faith in this meaningful ministry, we encourage you to reach out. Training will be provided to ensure you feel confident and prepared.

Please contact Father Jim for more information or to sign up. Together, let us share the Word of the Lord!

SERMON: Solemnity of the Holy Family

“Advancing In Wisdom and Age and Favor Before God and Man.”



On this Solemnity of the Holy Family, we are invited to reflect deeply on the sacredness of family life. Today, we offer our families to God, seeking His blessing and the guidance of the Holy Family. This celebration carries with it a powerful message: Jesus, the Son of God, chose to be part of an ordinary human family, showing us that God’s desire is for all of humanity to live in unity, as one holy family within the Church.

In today’s Gospel, we receive a brief yet profound glimpse into the life of Jesus in Nazareth, where He grew in wisdom, age, and favor before both God and humanity. In His obedient life, Jesus, together with Mary and Joseph, exemplified deep mutual love, steadfast faith, and a shared commitment to their divine calling. They worked together as a family, balancing their responsibilities while nurturing their relationship with God and each other.

This powerful example calls us to examine our own families. Are we, as spouses, parents, and children, living out the virtues of mutual respect, love, and faith? Are we creating an environment where spiritual growth can truly flourish? These are the essential questions for us today.

During the sacrament of marriage, couples are reminded that children are a precious gift from God. Parents are entrusted with the incredible responsibility not only to care for their children's physical and emotional well-being but also to guide their spiritual growth. This task is not one to be taken lightly. It requires prayer, dedication, and divine grace to help children become faithful followers of Christ, preparing them for their eternal home with God.

On this Solemnity, we are also reminded that our parish is an extension of our family. A family becomes holy when Christ is present among its members, just as He becomes present in the parish through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Holiness grows through love, mutual understanding, and sacrifice. Husbands and wives, by faithfully fulfilling their roles, praying together, and attending Mass, grow in holiness. Children, too, are called to honor their parents and grandparents, showing respect and love that continues even as they grow older and form families of their own. This enduring respect reflects the heart of Christian love and ensures that Christ’s presence remains at the center of our family life.

Today’s celebration challenges us to extend our understanding of family beyond those we are related to by blood. The homeless, the imprisoned, the lonely, and the marginalized are all members of God’s family, and therefore, ours as well. Each person is a child of God, with inherent dignity and value. The story of Beatrice, a woman who felt profound loneliness despite having her physical needs met, is a stark reminder that family life is about more than just meeting basic needs. True family life is about connection, and reaching out to those who feel isolated or forgotten is a vital part of our Christian calling.

As we begin this new year, let us reflect on how we can more faithfully follow the example of the Holy Family. Are we nurturing our relationships within our families and parish communities? Are we ready to live out the Gospel by extending love and care to those in need?

Let us embrace the challenge of growing together in love, wisdom, and faith. May this year be one in which we advance in favor before God and humanity, living as one holy family, united in Christ, and reflecting His love to all we encounter.

A Prayer for Families

Heavenly Father,
Bless our families with Your love and grace.
Guide us to follow the example of the Holy Family in our daily lives.
Help us to grow in faith, love, and wisdom,
and to extend our care and compassion to all Your children.
May we reflect Your light in the world,
bringing hope and healing wherever we go.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

May this Solemnity inspire us to live with Christ at the center of our families and to embrace the holiness that comes from love, sacrifice, and service. †

SERMON: Solemnity of the Lord's Epiphany

“They Were Overjoyed at Seeing the Star.”

St. Mary's Parish, Parma, Ohio

Reflection on the Solemnity of the Epiphany

The Greek word *Epiphany* means “appearance” or “manifestation,” celebrating the divine revelation of Jesus as God. In the Western Church, it commemorates Christ’s first appearance to the Gentiles through the visit of the Magi. In the Eastern Church, it highlights Christ’s Baptism, where His identity as the Son of God was revealed. Other revelations include Jesus proclaiming Himself as the Messiah in the synagogue at Nazareth and manifesting His Divinity at Cana by transforming water into wine. These events emphasize Jesus’ divine identity.



1. **Isaiah 60:1–6:** Nations follow a radiant light to worship God, bringing gifts, prefiguring the Magi’s adoration.
2. **Psalms 72:** Kings pay homage to a just ruler, fulfilled in Christ.
3. **Ephesians 3:2–6:** Paul reveals that through the Gospel, Gentiles are co-heirs with Jews in Christ.
4. **Matthew 2:1–12:** The Magi journey to adore Jesus, demonstrating faith and openness to divine grace. The Gospel also highlights three responses to Christ:

- **Herod's hostility** (opposition to God's plan).
- **The priests' indifference** (spiritual complacency).
- **The Shepherds and Magi's adoration** (faithful devotion).

1. Let's Follow the Shepherds and Magi's Example:

- Worship Jesus with the **gold** of love, the **myrrh** of humility, and the **frankincense** of adoration.
- Redirect your life by turning from sin and embracing virtue.
- Lead others to Christ through selfless service and compassion.

2. Offer Gratitude:

- Deepen your friendship with God through prayer, Scripture, and the Sacraments.
- Share His love through acts of charity and forgiveness.

The Epiphany reminds us that God invites all to salvation. May this feast inspire us to deepen our faith, reflect Christ's light, and share His love with the world. **+**

SERMON: Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord

"The People Were Filled with Expectation"



A Call to Renewal and Mission

The Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord marks the conclusion of the Christmas season and the beginning of Ordinary Time. During Christmas, we celebrated the Incarnation, God becoming one of us in Jesus. Today, we witness Christ taking the first step in His public ministry,

revealing Himself to the world and demonstrating solidarity with humanity.

The Baptism of the Lord is significant because it reveals the Holy Trinity for the first time. God the Father proclaims, "This is My beloved Son," while the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus in the form of a dove. This moment, recorded in all four Gospels, affirms Jesus' identity and mission as the Messiah and the suffering servant who will bring salvation.

John the Baptist's call to repentance through baptism prepared the way for the Messiah. His baptism symbolized a desire to turn away from sin and return to God. Though sinless, Jesus chose to be baptized, humbling Himself to stand with us and take on the burden of human sin. By immersing Himself in these waters, He sanctified baptism, transforming it into a sacrament that brings new life and unites us with God.

This event reveals four key moments: **Identification**, as Jesus stands with sinners in repentance; **Affirmation**, as the Father declares Him His beloved Son; **Empowerment**, as the Holy Spirit equips Him for His mission; and **Decision**, as Jesus begins His public ministry.

For us, the Baptism of the Lord is a reminder of our own baptism and its implications. Through baptism, we are made children of God, temples of the Holy Spirit, and members of Christ's Body. This identity calls us to live as faithful disciples.

Our baptism gives us a mission:

1. **Embrace Our Identity:** Live as God's beloved children, recognizing His presence in ourselves and others.
2. **Lead Holy Lives:** Avoid sin, pursue justice, and reflect Christ's love through our words and actions.
3. **Deepen Our Faith:** Strengthen our relationship with God through prayer, Scripture, and the Sacraments.
4. **Build God's Kingdom:** Share the Good News, serve others in love and humility, and be lights in the world.

Today, let us recommit to our baptismal promises: rejecting sin, affirming our faith in God, and living as His faithful witnesses. Let our lives proclaim, "We are God's beloved children, called to love and serve." ✝

SERMON: Ordinary 2C

"Do whatever He tells you."

Discovering the Extraordinary in Ordinary Time

Welcome to Ordinary Time, a season often overshadowed by the grandeur of Christmas and Easter but rich in its quiet potential. This is not a time for the mundane, as its name might suggest, but for encountering Christ in the everyday moments of life. Ordinary Time immerses us in Jesus' teachings, His parables, and His miracles, reminding us that the extraordinary often emerges in life's most unassuming rhythms.



This week's Gospel transports us to the wedding at Cana, where Jesus performs His first public miracle. The story begins with an all-too-human problem—a wedding celebration running out of wine. What could have been a moment of embarrassment becomes a moment of revelation. Jesus takes the ordinary—water—and transforms it into something extraordinary—wine of the highest quality. But this miracle is more than an act of compassion; it is a profound statement about God's abundance and His ability to bring grace into the most unexpected situations.

Mary, the quiet yet pivotal figure in this story, offers us one of Scripture's most powerful commands: "Do whatever He tells you." In these simple words, she teaches us the essence of discipleship—obedience, trust, and openness to God's will. Mary doesn't provide explanations or assurances; she simply points to her Son, inviting us to place our confidence in Him. Her

words challenge us to reflect: Are we willing to listen to Christ? Are we ready to act on what He asks, even if we don't fully understand His plan?

The wedding at Cana offers lessons that are as relevant today as they were then:

1. **Invite Christ fully into your life.**

At Cana, the hosts unknowingly made the most significant decision of their lives—they invited Jesus to the celebration. How often do we extend that same invitation? It's easy to let Christ into parts of our lives while keeping Him at arm's length in others. But when we invite Him completely—into our decisions, relationships, and struggles—He has the power to transform not only what we lack but who we are.

2. **Act in faith, even when you don't see the outcome.**

The servants at the wedding obeyed Jesus' instructions to fill jars with water, even though it seemed futile. Their simple act of trust became the catalyst for a miracle. Faith often requires us to act before we see results, trusting that God's plan is unfolding even when we don't yet understand.

3. **Recognize and share the abundance of God's grace.**

The wine Jesus provided wasn't just enough; it was more than anyone could have imagined. This abundance reflects the nature of God's grace—extravagant, generous, and transformative. In our lives, His blessings are not only for us to enjoy but to share, so others might see His love and power through our actions.

The wedding at Cana points us toward something greater: the eternal union of Christ and His Church, symbolized by the overflowing wine and the celebration of joy. Ordinary Time invites us to live with this same expectancy—to see each moment as an opportunity for transformation.

As we continue this season, let us carry Mary's words in our hearts: "Do whatever He tells you." By following her example and Christ's call, we can witness how God turns the ordinary into the extraordinary, filling our lives with His overflowing love, grace, and joy. ✝

SERMON: Ordinary 3C

"Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

The Transformative Power of God's Word: A Gospel Reflection

Today's Gospel marks a pivotal moment in Jesus' ministry, as He proclaims a theology of liberation with transformative power. The Word of God, presented as a living "Sacrament," brings God's presence into our midst, challenging us to embrace its liberating truth and live it boldly. This vision, first articulated by Prime Bishop Hodur, calls for a faith that is heard, preached, and practiced, transforming individuals and communities. Today, we are invited to renew our commitment to this vision with passion and purpose.



In the first reading from Nehemiah, Ezra reads the Torah to the Jewish people who remained in Judah during the exile. This moment reconnects them to their identity and covenant with God after years of separation. Ezra's six-hour reading is not merely a recitation of laws but a revelation of God's love and guidance. The people's reverent response to God's Word—standing, worshiping, and weeping—illustrates their deep engagement and the transformative power of Scripture.

Lessons from Nehemiah

1. **Hearing the Word of God:** Ezra's extended reading contrasts with modern impatience during sermons, reminding us to prioritize and engage deeply with God's Word.
2. **Reverence for the Word:** The people's worshipful posture—standing, lifting hands, and bowing—calls us to approach Scripture with awe and joy.
3. **Understanding the Word:** The Levites explain the Law's meaning, emphasizing the importance of communal learning and guidance from clergy.
4. **Response to the Word:** Genuine engagement with Scripture should provoke a heartfelt reaction, inspiring transformation and action.

The Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 19) echoes these themes, celebrating the transformative power of God's Law and concluding with the prayer: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to You, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer!" This prayer invites us to align our lives with God's will.

In the second reading, Paul emphasizes that every individual is a vital part of Christ's body, working together as a community. Building on the previous week's reflection on spiritual gifts, Paul reminds us that our unique gifts, while distinct, contribute to the greater whole. The Word of God unites and empowers the Christian community, offering mercy, healing, and unity to all.

Today's Gospel from Luke begins with an address to Theophilus, highlighting the importance of accurately conveying Jesus' life and teachings. Luke's Gospel is rooted in the testimony of those who walked with Jesus, assuring us of its truth and divine inspiration.

The narrative shifts to Nazareth, where Jesus begins His public ministry by reading from Isaiah in the synagogue. His proclamation—bringing good news to the poor, liberty to captives, and sight to the blind—is not merely a reading of ancient Scripture but a declaration of its fulfillment in Him. Empowered by the Spirit, Jesus embodies the liberating and healing power of God's Word.

This moment is extraordinary not only because of Jesus' proclamation but also because of its impact on His listeners. His message addresses material poverty, oppression, and blindness while challenging spiritual blindness, emotional struggles, and societal pressures. The Word of God becomes a source of freedom, healing, and renewal for all who embrace it.

The Word of God, alive and active, calls us to share our gifts and live out its transformative power within the community. Unlike the rigid proclamation of the Law in Nehemiah, Jesus

introduces compassion as the vital force animating the Word. Compassion transforms the Word into a living, active presence that heals, restores, and guides.

As Jesus proclaims, “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing,” we are invited to embrace the Word, allowing it to stir our hearts and empower us to become instruments of God’s liberating love. Let us respond with faith, humility, and a renewed commitment to live out the Gospel in our daily lives. ✝

SERMON: Solemnity of the presentation of the Lord

“A Light for Revelation to the Gentiles.”

Today’s Gospel recounts Joseph’s faithful obedience to God’s law, as he presents Mary and Jesus in the Temple for purification and redemption. This event, celebrated on February 2nd, marks Christ’s dedication to God and His revelation as the Light of the world. It is a significant moment in salvation history, fulfilling God’s promises and affirming His plan for the redemption of humanity.



This Solemnity is known by several names, each highlighting a different aspect of its meaning:

1. **The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord** – commemorating Jesus' presentation in the Temple, fulfilling the Mosaic Law.
2. **The Feast of the Purification of Mary** – recognizing the ritual purification of Mary after childbirth, as prescribed in Jewish tradition.
3. **The Feast of Encounter** – symbolizing the meeting of the Old and New Testaments. Jesus, the new Temple of God, enters the ancient temple, fulfilling the sacrificial Law and ushering in the new era of salvation through love.
4. **The Feast of Candlemas** – named for the blessing and distribution of candles, a tradition inspired by Simeon’s prophecy that the Christ Child would be “a light for revelation to the Gentiles.”

The Fulfillment of God’s Promises: Today’s first reading from the prophet Malachi speaks of God’s Covenant and the promised Envoy, understood as the Messiah and His herald, St. John the Baptist. The prophets had long proclaimed the coming of the Savior, reassuring God’s people of His promise. Malachi, one of the last prophets of the Old Testament, reminded the faithful to trust in the Lord’s divine plan, emphasizing the enduring hope of salvation.

In the second reading, St. Paul explains that Jesus became like us to be a faithful high priest and to atone for our sins. As members of the New Covenant, we are mystically united to Christ. If He took on our humanity to fulfill His mission, we, too, must strive to become like Him, uniting ourselves with His sacrifice for our redemption.

Paul also highlights the blessings of our incorporation into Christ, particularly victory over the devil, who once held power over death. Through Jesus' sacrifice, we are freed from the grip of sin and the fear of death. Simeon recognizes this truth when he proclaims Jesus as "a light of revelation to the Gentiles" and "the glory of Israel." Having been freed from darkness, we are now children of light, redeemed, purified, and pleasing to God. As bearers of Christ's Light, we are called to reflect His salvation in our lives.

The Role of Elders in Faith: The wisdom of the elderly Simeon and Anna reminds us of the beauty of old age of spiritual harvesting. Those who have lived long in faith have much to share with younger generations. Grandparents, parents, mentors, and elders serve as spiritual guides, helping to pass on faith to their families and communities. Their role is essential, as they provide wisdom and encouragement, guiding those who struggle to find their path to God.


The Light of Christ in Our Lives: Christmas celebrates the Lord's entry into the world, bringing salvation and hope. Epiphany marks His revelation to the nations through the Magi. Today's Feast of the Presentation commemorates His first appearance in the Temple, fulfilling God's promise to His chosen people. Though angels had revealed Jesus' birth to the shepherds, it was at His Presentation that He was formally introduced to Israel as their long-awaited Savior.

Candlemas honors Christ's Light, revealed to all nations. Through His Son, God's love and salvation are made manifest, illuminating our path in a darkened world. Christ's coming assures us that all of God's promises have been fulfilled, offering hope and strength in our struggles. His Light dwells among us, guiding us through trials and showing us the way to salvation.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, as we celebrate today's Solemnity, let us remember that the Light of Christ has been passed on to us. The blessing of candles today symbolizes the Light we received at baptism, a Light meant to shine in the world. We are called to be beacons of God's truth, love, and hope, reflecting His presence in our daily lives.

At last week's parish meeting, I emphasized: "It is now time to let our light shine."

Can we truly be worthy disciples and bearers of Christ's Light? To do so, we must be filled with righteousness, virtue, and justice. Our lives should inspire others, guiding them toward God's commandments and truth. Each of us plays a vital role in the Church's mission to evangelize, bringing the Good News to those who have yet to find the path to salvation.

May the Lord guide us in righteousness, strengthening our faith in our daily actions, even in the smallest deeds. May we strive to live fully, reflecting His Light in all we do. Let us walk in His presence, glorifying Him as beacons of truth, love, and justice. Empowered by His grace, may we shine as a light of revelation to the Gentiles, leading all to God's eternal salvation. 

SERMON: Ordinary 5C

“At Your Command I Will Lower the Nets.”

An Unexpected Encounter That Changes Everything

Imagine you’re going about your day—working, running errands, or scrolling on your phone—when something unexpected happens. Something that makes you stop, rethink, and ultimately changes your life. That’s what happened to Peter.

Peter, a fisherman, had no idea that lending his boat to a traveling preacher would alter his future. After teaching a crowd from Peter’s boat, Jesus told him to cast his nets again. Peter hesitated—he had fished all night with no success—but obeyed. What happened next was miraculous. His nets were filled with so many fish they nearly broke.

Overwhelmed, Peter suddenly saw Jesus as more than a teacher. He felt unworthy and pulled away, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” But Jesus didn’t turn away. Instead, He called Peter to something greater: “From now on, you will fish for people.”

This isn’t just Peter’s story, it’s ours too.



Have you ever had a moment where you saw things differently? Maybe you realized you were capable of more. Maybe you saw the consequences of the choice. Or maybe, for the first time, you felt something greater than yourself calling you forward.

Peter wasn’t the first to feel this way. The prophet Isaiah had a similar experience. He had a vision of God’s majesty—so overwhelming he thought he was doomed. “I’m not worthy,” he thought. But instead of being cast aside, he was transformed and given a mission. When God asked, “Whom shall I send?” Isaiah answered: “Here I am. Send me.”

Peter, Isaiah, and later Paul—one of the most influential figures in Christianity—all had moments where they felt completely inadequate. But in their weakness, God’s power was revealed.

Most of us don’t expect a life-changing moment. We’re too busy dealing with work, bills, and relationships. But sometimes, life presents us with something that forces us to stop and think. Maybe it’s a personal failure that humbles us. Maybe it’s an act of kindness that shakes us. Maybe it’s a moment of watching a sunrise or holding a newborn—that reminds us we are part of something bigger.

And when that moment comes, we have a choice.

- **We can pull away, feeling unworthy, like Peter.**
- **We can stand in fear, like Isaiah.**
- **Or we can step forward, despite our doubts, and say, “Here I am.”**

More Than Just Belief—A Call to Action

Faith isn’t just about believing—it’s about responding.

Peter could have stayed a fisherman. Isaiah could have kept quiet. Paul could have stayed on his old path. But when confronted with something greater, they stepped forward. They let themselves be changed.

The same is true for us. Encountering something bigger, whether faith, purpose, or a wake-up call—demands a response. It’s not just about thinking differently; it’s about living differently. So, what do we do when we feel that pull?

1. **We recognize that transformation starts with humility.** We all have doubts and flaws, but they don't disqualify us, they prepare us.
2. **We open ourselves to something greater.** Whether through faith, reflection, or simply awareness, we make space for transformation.
3. **We act. Velvet Blankets + Inspiration is meaningless without action.**

Peter's response to Jesus wasn't just words. It was action. He left behind everything familiar and stepped into the unknown.

Today, we might not be asked to leave our jobs or completely change our lives overnight. But we are all invited to something greater—to step beyond fear and embrace the possibilities that come when we say, **“At Your command, I will lower the nets.”** †

SERMON: Ordinary 6C 2025 (Septuagesima)

“Blessed are you, Woe to you.”

Walking in True Blessing: Preparing for Lent



My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we enter this pre-Lenten season, marked by rose—not pink—vestments, we prepare our hearts for Lent, a time of reconciliation and renewal. The Gospel today presents us with a fundamental question: What does it mean to be truly blessed? The world tells us happiness comes from wealth, status, and comfort. But Jesus turns this thinking upside down. He teaches that true happiness is not about what we have but who we are and how we live.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus proclaims the Beatitudes from the Mount; in Luke's Gospel, He speaks to them on the plain. The setting differs, but the message remains the same: God's blessing does not follow the world's logic. True joy comes from trusting Him, seeking His Kingdom, and serving others. The Beatitudes are not just words of comfort—they are a call to action. As we approach Lent, we must ask ourselves:

- Are we walking in the way of Christ's blessing?
- Are we inviting others to join us on this path?

The prophet Jeremiah presents us with two choices: Do we trust in human strength, or do we root ourselves in God? He compares those who rely on worldly power to a barren bush in the desert—dry and lifeless. But those who trust in God are like trees planted by a stream, drawing life from living water, able to withstand any drought.

Lent is a time to ask: Where are we rooted? Are we seeking security in fleeting things, or are we firmly planted in Christ? This question is not just personal, it extends to those around us. Many today feel weary and uncertain, searching for meaning. If we are rooted in Christ, we can offer life to others. Our faith, if strong, will overflow in our words, actions, and invitations, guiding others toward God's unfailing love.

St. Paul reminds us: “If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.” But because He has risen, we have a future. We have a promise. We have a reason to live differently. Too many people today live as if this world is all there is. They chase success, pleasure, and comfort, believing these will satisfy them. But we know the truth: our hope is not in this life alone but in the life to come.

The Beatitudes teach us to live with an eternal perspective. They remind us that whatever suffering we endure—poverty, grief, rejection—is temporary. The joy God has prepared for us is everlasting. Jesus presents a paradox: The poor, hungry, sorrowful, and persecuted are truly blessed because their suffering draws them closer to God.

- The poor learn to trust in His providence.
- The hungry turn to Him for nourishment.
- The sorrowful experience His comfort.
- The rejected find their identity in Him.

But Jesus also warns those who trust in worldly comfort:

- “Woe to you who are rich,” for their reward is already given.
- “Woe to you who are full,” for they will hunger.
- “Woe to you who laugh now,” for mourning will come.
- “Woe to you when all speak well of you.”

If we place our hope in worldly things, we will be left empty. Lent is a time to reflect: Are we living in God's blessing or chasing false security?

1. Invite Someone Back to Church

Many people in our lives need an invitation. Lent is a season of mercy, a time to return. Who will you invite?

2. Live the Beatitudes in Action

- Feed the hungry.
- Comfort the sorrowful.
- Stand with the rejected.
- Be a witness of God's love.

3. Walk the Way of Life

The early Church spoke of two paths: the way of life (Christ's way of humility and trust in God) and the way of death (self-interest and pride). Which path are we walking? More importantly, who are we leading?

There is another set of “beatitudes”—not from Jesus, but from the enemy:

- Blessed are those too tired, too busy, or too distracted to go to church—they are my best workers.

- Blessed are those who expect to be served rather than to serve; they will never discover real joy.
- Blessed are those who gossip, complain, and stir up trouble—they do my work for me.
- Blessed are those who have no time to pray—they are my prey.

Do these strike a chord? The enemy is happy to see us too tired, too busy, or too indifferent to answer God's call.

But Christ is calling us to something greater. This Lent, let us reject the enemy's beatitudes and embrace the Beatitudes of Christ.

- Let us walk in true blessing.
- Let us invite others to reconciliation and renewal.
- Let us lead people back to the joy of the Gospel.

Blessed are you when you do this—for great will be your reward in heaven! ✝

SERMON: Ordinary 7C 2025 (Sextagesima)

“Be Merciful, Just as Your Father Is Merciful.”



Life is full of choices, ranging from trivial ones, like preferring coffee over decaf, to profound decisions, such as choosing to forgive when someone deeply offends us. Today's readings center on Christian love, particularly through unconditional forgiveness, emphasizing that our choices either draw us closer to God or create distance from Him.

Forgiveness is never easy, and the right path is not always clear. This is evident in the story of David and King Saul. Despite being relentlessly pursued by Saul, David finds himself in a position to end the threat—Saul is asleep, completely vulnerable. His companion, Abishai, urges him to strike, but David refuses, choosing mercy over vengeance. His decision embodies God's law, prefiguring the radical forgiveness Jesus teaches. If David could show such mercy to his enemy, shouldn't we strive to do the same?

It's easy to choose wrongly, just like picking the fastest checkout line that inevitably moves the slowest. St. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, highlights two contrasting choices: the First Adam's disobedience, which brought sin into the world, and the Second Adam—Jesus—who, through obedience, redeemed humanity. Paul's message remains relevant today. The world often encourages anger, pride, and revenge, but as followers of Christ, we are called to rise above worldly instincts and embrace God's ways.

The Gospel of Luke paints Jesus as a compassionate Savior, prioritizing the marginalized and calling all to God's mercy. Unlike the world, which prizes power and status, Luke reveals a

Kingdom where the humble are lifted, and the lost are found. We are not just meant to admire Jesus but to imitate Him.

Yet, there is often a gap between what we believe and how we live. We preach mercy but struggle to offer it. When someone wrongs us, do we follow our faith or our emotions? Many see faith as belief, but what if true faith is reflected in our daily choices? Every day, we decide:

- To be small—holding grudges, seeking revenge, and making forgiveness conditional.
- Or to be large—offering grace, trusting in God’s justice, and making space for healing and transformation.

Are our choices leading us toward God or trapping us in resentment? Everyone carries hidden burdens, including those who hurt us. This may be why Jesus calls us to love, bless, and forgive. When we refuse to forgive, we suffer the most.

While we can’t erase the world’s pain, we can choose not to add to it. Our actions either heal or deepen wounds. Someone in our life, perhaps a family member, friend, or stranger—is struggling. Will we be the ones to break them further or extend the love they desperately need?

Jesus challenges us to live as He did: to choose love over bitterness, forgiveness over revenge, and generosity over judgment. Living large means embracing mercy, as He commands:

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”



SERMON: Ordinary 8C 2025 (Quinquagesima)

“Then You Will See Clearly.”

Then You Will See Clearly: The Power of Our Words and the Condition of Our Hearts

Brothers and sisters, how often do we find ourselves speaking before thinking, only to regret our words the moment they leave our lips? A careless comment, a moment of frustration, an unguarded remark—words have power, and sometimes they run ahead of our better judgment. In the age of instant communication, the temptation to speak or type without reflection is greater than ever. Yet, Scripture reminds us that our words are not just fleeting sounds or pixels on a screen; they carry weight. They reveal who we truly are.



Jesus never struggled with this problem. Every word He spoke had purpose—bringing healing, restoring dignity, and offering hope. He never wasted words on gossip, rash judgments, or thoughtless comments that wound others. Instead, He spoke truth and life, challenging us to do the same. The question we must ask ourselves is: do our words reflect Christ?

Our first reading from the Book of Sirach offers three vivid images to illustrate this truth: a sieve that separates grain from husks, a potter's kiln that tests the integrity of clay, and a tree whose fruit reveals the care it has received. Just as these external forces expose the quality of physical things, our speech exposes the inner reality of our hearts. A person may try to mask their flaws, but in time, their words will reveal what is truly inside.

Sirach—also known as Ecclesiasticus—was widely regarded as a book of wisdom in Jewish tradition and was often used in early Christian instruction. Though it was later excluded from the Hebrew canon, the Catholic Church has always recognized it as inspired Scripture. This passage holds timeless significance: our speech is the ultimate test of character. If we want our words to be life-giving, we must first allow God to transform our hearts.

In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul directs our gaze toward eternity. He reminds us that this life is not the end but the beginning of something far greater. God walks beside us, understanding our struggles and uncertainties, yet He does not leave us there. He lifts our vision beyond our personal concerns, calling us to live for the good of others, our families, our communities, our Church, and even those with whom we disagree. In a world that is often fractured by division, Paul reminds us that God's love is vast enough to encompass all people.

The Gospel of Luke presents a powerful lesson from Jesus that speaks directly to the condition of our souls. Jesus touches on five themes: blessings and hardship, love of enemies, integrity, hearing and doing, and the dangers of judgment. These are not comfortable teachings; they require self-examination, discipline, and humility. They urge us to pause before we speak, to pray before we act, and to recognize our own flaws before pointing out the faults of others.

The burden of hypocrisy is one that weighs heavily on individuals, communities, and even nations. It blinds us, deepens divisions, and fosters resentment. Jesus' words challenge us to remove the wooden beam from our own eye before attempting to remove the splinter from another's. This kind of introspection is difficult, but it is necessary if we desire a more just and compassionate world.

Throughout history, hypocrisy has been a stumbling block—fueling discord in society, creating division within the Church, and fostering distrust among nations. It is not a new problem, nor is it one that will disappear overnight. Yet, the Gospel offers a path forward. Jesus does not call us to condemnation but to transformation. True change begins not with pointing fingers, but with looking inward and seeking God's grace.

As we prepare for Lent, this is the perfect time to commit to a deep examination of our hearts. We are called to repentance, to mercy, and to embracing others with love and humility. Instead of allowing our words to tear down, let us use them to build up. Instead of rushing to judgment, let us choose understanding. Instead of pride, let us embrace humility.

When we do this, when we truly allow God to shape our hearts, then we will see clearly. †

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