



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

DEAR PARISH FAMILY

This weekend, we conclude Catholic Schools Week with Saturday Mass. Catholic Schools Week celebrates the sacrifices made by teachers and staff who serve at our Catholic Schools, often with compensation below that paid at the public schools.

Our school is particularly unique in that we are a "fair share" school – which means that parents who are members of the parish are asked to pledge an amount in place of tuition. We rely on parents' generosity and transparency to keep our school financially afloat in difficult economic times.

Finances aside, many hands make light work; and parents and parishioners also generously give of their time and talent at the school. Catholic Schools Week also celebrates their generous gift of time and talent by parents and parishioners in providing programs for our students and school.

And finally, Catholic Schools Week celebrates the Catholic Faith we pass down to our children through our Catholic School. Parents have related to me how open their children are about what they learn at the school, and how much they know about saints, prayer, the Bible, and all aspects of our Catholic Faith.

PRAYERS AND REMEMBRANCES

Please pray for Paul Chronowski, who's funeral was this past month. Please remember him in your prayers,

and please pray for the consolation of their families and loved ones as they mourn.

PLANS AND HOPES

You may have noticed the plans in the entries of the church. We're hoping to begin repairs and renovations on our front entrance area in the spring. Our hope is to not only repair the sidewalks, but also add handicapped parking and improved ramp access to the front entrance of the building. We hope to present our three quotes to the diocesan building committee soon.

If you would like to support this effort, you may make a contribution to the Building Fund. These are restricted funds that are used for facilities improvements, and are above and beyond our General Fund.

MEETINGS, MEETINGS, MEETINGS

This past month I have been to hours and hours of meetings within our cohort and implementation team, with diocesan officials, and other priests as we move forward to build up our parishes and diocese.

We have been fortunate in that, while we were partnered with St. Norbert's for so many years, we are now an independent parish. Our parish council has chosen 'community' as our focus for strengthening our parish.

I have commented over the past six months on the number of people I meet on any given weekend who are out and about looking for a parish

home. Let us work together to welcome those roaming Catholics, and bring them into our parish family. We sent out an Advent / Christmas mailing to the community, and will soon be doing this for Lent / Easter. Do your part, and invite folks who are in-between churches or who may not be affiliated with any particular church to come and join our family at St. Elizabeth.

RITE OF ACCEPTANCE

This weekend we welcome two catechumens, Tiffany Muylle and Jill Muylle; and Amy Goodrow, a candidate for full reception into the Church. The rites preceding adult baptism and full reception are distributed throughout Lent. All Catholics should join our candidate and catechumens in prayer and preparation for the Easter Sacraments.

LENT AND EASTER

Lent begins in a couple of weeks. February 18 is Ash Wednesday, and the first Sunday of April will be Easter Sunday. During Lent there will be opportunities for prayer and penance in addition to our usual daily Masses.

PLEASE PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Sports or travel aren't a reason to miss weekend Mass. Don't take a vacation from your vocation to worship God as a his beloved child.

Your prayers are the lifeblood of our community. Please pray for each other and for our parish and school during the week.

God bless you, *Fr. David*



A SEASON OF PENANCE, PRAYER, FASTING

The season of Lent is approaching. Lent is the forty-days from Ash Wednesday to Holy Week. During Lent, we are asked to abstain from meat on Fridays and to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, as well as abstain from meat.

The formal rule reads as follows:

Everyone 14 years of age or older is bound to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, all the Fridays of Lent and Good Friday.

Everyone 18 or older, and under 59 years of age, is bound to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, only one full meatless meal is allowed. Two other meatless meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken according to each one's needs, but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted. When health or ability to work would be seriously affected, the law does not oblige.

Catholics should not lightly excuse themselves from these prescribed minimal penitential practices.

Prior to Vatican II, Catholics were obliged to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesdays and on every Friday throughout the year. And, during Lent, every day of the week except Sunday was a day of fast (i.e. only one full meal a day, with two small meals.)

The current regulations are much lighter, and should be embraced with a spirit of penance and reparation.

Traditionally, this weekend was called *Septuagesima* and was the beginning of a pre-Lenten period of penance. In the liturgy, neither the Gloria or Alleluia were not sung and violet vestments were worn.

This commemorated the 70 year Babylonian Captivity of Judah in the sixth century BC. During that time, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed and a large number of its inhabitants were led into captivity in Babylon.

The remaining two Sundays were known as *Sexagesima* and *Quinquagesima* – counting down the days to Easter.

In many countries the weeks leading up to Ash Wednesday are marked as Carnival Season. The word *carnival* comes from Latin and means *farewell to meat*. Thus the celebrations of carnival originated in preparations for the penitential practices of Lent.

Lent is marked by fasting and penance. Traditionally during Lent, no parties or other celebrations were held, and people refrained from eating rich foods, such as meat, dairy, fats and sugar. In the days before Lent, all rich food and drink had to be disposed of. The consumption of this, in a giant party that involved the whole community, is thought to be the origin of Carnival.

Carnival is celebrated in most countries with a majority Catholic population.

The Carnival in Venice is first recorded in 1268. The subversive nature of the festival is reflected in Italy's many laws over the past several centuries attempting to restrict celebrations and the wearing of masks, a central feature of the Carnival. Carnival celebrations in Venice were halted for many years after the city fell under Austrian control in 1798, but were revived in the late 20th century.

The month-long Carnival of Viareggio is one of the most renowned in Europe, and is characterized mainly by its parade of floats and masks caricaturing popular figures. In 2001, the town built a new "Carnival citadel" dedicated to Carnival preparations and entertainment.

The Carnival of Ivrea is famous for its Battle of the Oranges fought with citruses between the people by foot and the troops of the tyrant on the carts, to remember the wars that really happened during the Middle Ages.

In the English language, the word carnival has come to be associated with any kind of traveling amusement show.

In the United States, carnival celebrations are usually referred to as Mardi Gras, and were first celebrated in the Gulf Coast area of the United States surrounding Louisiana, but now occur in many other areas across the country.