



## CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

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## MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH

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Dear Parish Family,

February 20, 2011

This past week, quite suddenly, Ron Fairchild passes away. Please pray for the repose of his soul and the consolation of his family. ETERNAL REST GRANT UNTO HIM O LORD, AND LET PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE UPON HIM. MAY HE REST IN PEACE. MAY HIS SOUL, AND THE SOULS OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED REST IN PEACE.

Thank you to everyone at St. Mary and St. Joseph parishes who do such a wonderful job preparing, setting up, serving, and cleaning up for the funeral luncheons. They work tirelessly behind the scenes, and I want to express my gratitude and the gratitude of the families who have been ministered to by their work. Thank you!

In this bulletin is a flyer for our Prayer Quilt Ministry. This has been a very successful program over the past several years, and efforts are underway to expand the ministry in many ways. Please consider joining and helping.

People driving through Alma may be hearing ringing in their ears. James Baysinger, from OrganTek, Inc. in Nashville, TN worked late into the night restoring the carillon system at St. Mary at an enormous savings to our church.

Next Saturday, February 26, is our parish Youth and Family Night at a Central Michigan University basketball game. If you want to participate through the discounted ticket price, please check at the parish office.

The video series *Boundaries* continues on Wednesdays at 6:45 pm in St. Mary Parish Center through March 2. Come and join the discussion.

Coming up next month on Thursday, March 24 at St. Mary Church, the Cowans will be returning for a Lenten evening of prayer and praise. This will be Jim and Mary's third visit to our parishes in the past twelve months.

As we move closer to Lent let us remember to pray for one another, for our parishes, and for our community. God bless you!

Fr. David

## *The Faith Explained*

### **WHAT IS SEPTUAGESIMA**

Septuagesima Sunday is the name for the ninth Sunday before Easter, the third before Ash Wednesday. The term is sometimes applied also to the period that begins on this day and ends on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday, when Lent begins. This period is also known as the pre-Lenten season or Shrovetide. The other two Sundays in this period of the liturgical year are called Sexagesima and Quinquagesima, the latter sometimes also called Shrove Sunday. The earliest date on which Septuagesima Sunday can occur is January 18 (Easter falling on March 22 in a non-leap year) and the latest is February 22 (Easter falling on April 25 in a leap year).

Septuagesima comes from the Latin word for "seventieth" with Sexagesima and Quinquagesima equalling "sixtieth" and "fiftieth" respectively. They are patterned after the Latin word for the season of Lent, Quadragesima, which means "fortieth", as Lent is forty days long excluding Sundays. Because every Sunday recalls the resurrection of Christ, they are considered "little Easters" and not treated as days of penance. Quinquagesima Sunday is indeed the fiftieth day before Easter (counting inclusively), but the numbers indicated by the names "Sexagesima" and "Septuagesima" do not correspond to the interval between these Sundays and Easter. Some would have the name indicate a period of seventy days made up of the nine weeks to Easter plus Easter Week, which would mystically represent the seventy-year Babylonian captivity.

Septuagesima was also the day on which one could begin a forty-day Lenten fast that excluded from its observance Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

The 17-day period beginning on Septuagesima Sunday was intended to be observed as a preparation for the season of Lent, which is itself a period of spiritual preparation (for Easter). In many countries, however, Septuagesima Sunday still marks the traditional start of the carnival season, culminating on Shrove Tuesday, sometimes known as Mardi Gras.

# SINS AND SINFULNESS

## Symptoms of a Soul-Sick World

On the level of society, the family and the individual, many signs tell us that something is not right with our world. War and crimes of violence, both far and near, continue to dominate our headlines. Misuse of the human body in a variety of forms has become widespread: drug and alcohol abuse, the use of the human body to sell goods, the ever expanding traffic in pornography. Suicide, divorce and abortion continue to be both cause and symptom of the disintegration of family life. These and many other realities of contemporary life are symptoms, signs of a soul-sickness that afflicts the world and each of us who are in it.

## Communion and Isolation

The eyes of faith discern a common pattern in these symptoms: alienation that results in the loneliness of isolation. The bonds of communion between persons are pulled apart; the bonds that unite society into one body are frayed and broken.

To the Christian believer this should come as no surprise. God, who is a communion of persons, has made us in his image and likeness. Our communion with each other is a sign of the communion of the Trinity, and a foretaste of our sharing that communion in Heaven. Knowing that sin pulls us away from the truth of our being, we might have guessed that all sin would draw us away from communion and into isolation. Every sin — not only those we think of as social, but also those we tend to think of as purely individual — pulls us away from our call to communion with God and each other, and pulls us into the loneliness of isolation.

Who among us has not tasted the peace that comes from living in communion with God and with our brothers and sisters? In a moment of contented stillness here and there, or in a day when everything has gone just right, we have all caught glimpses of the joy for which we were created. But who among us has not also tasted the anguish and recrimination that come from broken promises, selfishness and fear? There is a longing in the human heart for the joy, peace, and serenity of communion. There is a corresponding ache in the human heart when that communion is lacking.

## Inwardly Divided

And yet the irony is that it is our own attitudes and actions that lead to our heartache!

Consider a simple analogy: on the physical level we all say that we want good health. But how easily we find ourselves pulled away from the exercise and healthy eating that are needed to achieve and maintain good health! We want — and yet we do not really want — physical health. So, too, in the spiritual life: we say that we want the peace, joy, and serenity that come from communion with God and each other. Yet how easily we find ourselves pulled into attitudes and actions that destroy the possibility of genuine communion! We say that we want — and yet our actions show that we do not really want — spiritual health.

How well this situation was described by Saint Paul when he said: What I do, I do not understand. For I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate ... I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want ... I take delight in the law of God, in my inner self,

but I see in my members another principle at war with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. (Rom 7:15,19 22)

It is not, in the first place, a matter of chastising ourselves for acting badly. It is first a matter of admitting the fact that we are inwardly divided. In addition to the forgiveness of our sins this interior division needs healing if we are to be made wholly well. “[I]t is quite natural, when we start thinking about morality, to begin with the first thing, with social relations. For one thing, the results of bad morality in that sphere are so obvious and press on us every day: war and poverty and graft and lies and shoddy work ... But though it is natural to begin with all that, if our thinking about morality stops there, we might just as well have not thought at all. Unless we go on to the second thing — the tidying up inside each human being — we are only deceiving ourselves.”

## Getting to the roots of Sin

In order to move to this second level, and understand the soul-sickness that afflicts the world and ourselves more fully, we must grasp a crucial distinction. We must distinguish between the sinful actions that lead us to isolation and the attitudes of heart behind our actions; we must distinguish between the deeds that harm our relationship with God, others, and self, and the structures of unbelief that motivate our deeds. In a word, we must distinguish between our sins and our sinfulness, and then bring both into the sacrament of Penance. “What we tend to do when we go to confession is confess our sins — but not the root of the sin. So our sins are forgiven, but what caused us to sin has not been healed. We think that the sin is what the problem is. But it’s not. The problem is what’s been building up in us in terms of our attitudes, our habits, our weakness, our human condition, that needs regular infusions of God’s grace. We need to look deeper, asking the Holy Spirit, “Come in. Probe my heart. Reveal to me what the real problems are. What are the things that lead to sin? What are the attitudes? Where do I need mercy most? Where do I need healing? What are the things in me at a deep level that need to be healed?”

[B]y reason of her essential mission, the church feels an obligation to go to the roots of that original wound of sin in order to bring healing. (John Paul II, Reconciliation and Penance,#4)

## Misdirected Desires

As we probe more deeply into the roots of sin in our lives not only do we find that we are inwardly divided, we also find that we are tempted. In addition to the weakness inherited as part of our fallen human nature, there is a force of evil at work in the world and in our own hearts. Besides being interiorly divided we are under attack by this enemy of human nature, who is stronger than our human capacity. Every human person is susceptible to the wiles of the tempter, who wills our destruction and fears our surrender to God.

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*Excerpted from “Jesus Christ: The Divine Physician,”  
by Archbishop Robert J. Carlson*