



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

DEAR PARISH FAMILY

This weekend, we begin the Scrutinies of the Elect. Our Catechumens and Candidates who have been preparing for Baptism and the Easter Sacraments are brought forward and the entire congregation prays for them in silence. Then the priest prays over them, laying hands on them, and blesses them.

The Scrutinies are a time for us to reflect on how we are living our Christian calling, and during this time of Lent to repent of any obstacles that prevent us from a closer walk with Jesus Christ.

PRAYERS AND REMEMBRANCES

Please pray for Thomas Hernick, who's funeral was this past month. Please remember him in your prayers, and please pray for the consolation of his 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. We hope to not only repair the sidewalks, but also add handicapped parking and improved ramp access and lighting to the front entrance of the building.

This past month, we sent out three quotes to the Diocesan Building Committee, and are praying for a favorable response soon. We would like to begin work as soon as things warm up, pro-

vided we receive the authorization to proceed from the diocese.

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

VICARIATE

While most of us know about the parish realignments that have occurred over the past three years, you may not know that our Vicariate structure has also been realigned.

Vicariates are geographical regions within a diocese. The bishop appoints a vicar within these regions to assist pastors in various ways with administration. Our vicariate encompasses Bay City, Essexville, Reese, Frankenmuth, and Birch Run.

At a recent Vicariate meeting, we discussed upcoming directives on the liturgy from the diocese, as well as the implementation meetings and how we can best cooperate in our Cohorts within the Vicariate.

CONFESSION

Individual confession is available an hour before weekend Masses for roughly 30 minutes. Also, immediately after the School Mass on Wednesdays (~9:30 am) is an additional time for individual confession.

On March 26, at 7:00 pm, we will have a Penance service with several

priests available for individual confession.

Please take advantage of these opportunities to engage the infinite graces of the Sacrament of Reconciliation to assist you in your Lenten practices and prepare you to celebrate Easter and the Easter Season.

LENT AND EASTER

We are three weeks into Lent, and nearing the half-way point. Hopefully this will bring warmer weather (soon!) and Springtime.

Lent comes from the Old English word that means "Lengthen" which refers to the increasing hours of daylight. This weekend, we turn our clocks ahead one hour as we switch to Daylight Savings Time. If you're reading this on Sunday, hopefully you did that.

On Wednesdays at 7:00 pm, we have Evening Prayer or Stations, and on Thursdays at 1:00 pm, the students at our school pray the Stations of the Cross as well. Weekday Masses are 8:30 am on Tuesday-Thursday.

Please use these opportunities for prayer to allow God's grace to help you to grow closer to Jesus Christ as we progress through the Season of Lent. The first weekend of April will already be Easter Sunday.

PRAY, PRAY, PRAY

Please pray for each other and for our parish and school during the week. God bless you,

Fr. David



THE SCRUTINIES: CHANGE OUR HEARTS

EXAMINING OUR LIVES

The primary way that the Church assists the catechumens (now called the elect following the celebration of the Rite of Election on the First Sunday of Lent) in their conversion process during Lent is through the celebration of the rites called Scrutinies. These ritual celebrations on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent are communal prayers celebrated around the elect to strengthen them to overcome the power of sin in their lives and to grow in virtue. To scrutinize something means to examine it closely. The community does not scrutinize the catechumens; the catechumens scrutinize their own lives and allow God to scrutinize them and to heal them.

There is a danger in celebrating the Scrutinies if the community thinks of the elect as the only sinners in our midst who need conversion. All of us are called to continuing conversion throughout our lives, so we join with the elect in scrutinizing our own lives and praying to God for the grace to overcome the power of sin that still infects our hearts.

In our prayers, we not only address the issues that the elect need to confront; but we also extend this discernment process to the wider community so that all are called to name the ways that evil continues to prevent them from living the gospel fully. Outside of the weekend liturgies and organized prayer times, every Catholic should spend some time reflecting on what obstacles exist in their own life that prevent them from fully living out the Gospel daily. Then when the Scrutinies are celebrated, we will all know that the prayers are for us as well as for the elect.

Taking seriously this dynamic of scrutiny and conversion gives us a richer perspective on Lenten “giving up.” What we are to give up more than anything else is sin, which is to say we are to give up whatever keeps us from living out our baptismal promises fully. Along with the elect we all need to approach the season of Lent asking ourselves what needs to change in our lives if we are to live the gospel values that Jesus taught us. Our journey through these forty days should be a movement ever closer to Christ and to the way of life he has exemplified for us.

SCRUTINIES AND PENANCE

The elect deal with sin through the Scrutinies and through the waters of the Sacrament of Baptism. Those already baptized deal with sin through the Sacrament of Penance (or Reconciliation, or Confession). The same kind of reflection that enables all members of the community to share in the Scrutinies can lead the baptized to celebrate this Sacrament of Reconciliation to renew their baptismal commitment.

Lent is the primary time for celebrating the Sacrament of Confession, because Lent is the season for baptismal preparation and baptismal renewal. Early Christian writers called this sacrament “second Baptism,” because it is intended to enable us to start again to live the Baptismal life in its fullness. Those who experience the loving mercy of God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation should find themselves standing alongside the newly baptized at Easter filled with great joy at the new life God has given all of us.