

The Work of the People

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time/Commitment Sunday

On this Sunday we are asked to make a personal commitment to our Lenten preparation by deciding how we will enter into the Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (doing good). These practices are ancient and date back to the time of the Israelites. In the Hebrew Scriptures we see that the sprinkling of ashes, wearing of sackcloth, and the practices of fasting were the central gestures of sorrow and repentance for the chosen people. It so happens that we will use the sprinkling of ashes in this pandemic atmosphere on Ash Wednesday.

The use of ashes for all the faithful at the start of Lent began in the 10th century. In many ways it is ironic that on the day we hear Jesus speak of praying, fasting, and almsgiving being done in secret, we participate in what may be the year's most public physical statement of our belief in him. As we are signed by the sprinkling of ashes on our head, we are told to "Repent (turn away from sin and back to God) and believe in the Gospel."

In the reading from the Book of Leviticus, we hear of the leper: "he shall dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp." It was a terrible fate for people to be cast out from the community. Many today are driven from the community because of some perceived figurative leprosy. This story sets the scene for us to hear of Jesus' cure of the leper in the Gospel.

In today's second reading, Paul tells the Corinthians what kind of example they should be. They should do everything for the glory of God and avoid things that would cause offense.

Today's medical science has classified leprosy as a single skin condition, also known as Hansen's disease. In Jesus' time, though, leprosy was a term that referred to multiple skin disorders. The leper should not have been anywhere near Jesus nor close enough to speak with him. He broke the law. Yet Jesus did not shun the man. Instead, he listened when the man approached him. Then Jesus broke the law by touching the man. By breaking that law, Jesus showed his disciples and followers that God does not shun those whom society does. We are not to shut anyone out from the community of the people of God.

The reflection for this Sunday is from Mary Stommes who is an oblate of St. Benedict and Editor of *Give Us This Day*.

Raise your hand if somehow the Book of Leviticus seems less foreign to your ears than it did a year ago. Timeless the plight of the leper, isn't it?

He shall dwell apart.

If this were not resonance enough, notice what's missing between the beginning and end of today's Leviticus text. In these omitted verses, we discover that even in the ancient world there was a chance for false positives. What appeared to be a contagious skin infection ("leprosy" is a misleading translation) might be a harmless rash that would clear up on its own. So the afflicted person would undergo a seven-day *quarantine* or two. Only when the priest was certain there was no chance of healing would the unclean person have to dwell apart. Imagine the agony all around. Community meant *everything* to the People of God.

Imagine what they would have done were the contagion invisible and deadly. They, too, might have learned what it means for the whole community—the entire world as they knew it—to dwell apart. Raise your hand if you can relate to that.

And keep your hand up if over the course of the past year you begged and pleaded with God for healing—for yourself, a loved one, a stranger, a million strangers. If you got on your knees like the leper before Jesus: Please, please, *please*. But you did not get the answer, "I do will it. Be made clean." Maybe you began to wonder whether Jesus ever *dismissed someone at once* without answering their prayer. If so, you would be among a global community of like-hearted questioners. Why is God so utterly absent? Why doesn't God just fix this broken and sick world?

Maybe it is precisely in this despair and doubt that Christ reaches out and touches us, offers healing for an illness we fail to recognize or are reticent to admit being community only in name.

We liked to say over the past year that though apart, we remained together. But I wonder. I wonder if these painful months have lanced some festering wounds, revealing the ways we were apart when together: Polite smiles. Feigned friendliness. Thinly veiled acrimony. Avoiding conflict at all costs—or taking to social media to vent our grievances—because it hurts too much to be honest with and humble before one another.

Let there be no doubt: Christ wills that we live peaceably as one. And there is no wound of disunity too great for him to heal. Timeless—and timely—his touch. Whether we desire to be a part of that healing is the resonant question.

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Monday: Gen. 4:1-15/Mk. 8:11-13

Tuesday: Gen. 6:5-8/Mk. 8:14-21

Ash Wednesday: Jl. 2:12-18/2Cor. 5:20-6:2/Mt. 6:1-6,16-18

Thursday: Dt. 30:15-20/Lk. 9:22-25

Friday: Is. 58:1-9a/Mt. 9:14-15

Saturday: Is. 58:9b-14/Lk. 5:27-32

Sunday: Gen. 9:8-15/1Pt. 3:18-22/Mk. 1:12-15

SUPPORT THE CATHOLIC SERVICES APPEAL COMMITMENT WEEKEND IS FEBRUARY 13 & 14

Today is Commitment Sunday for the 2021 CSA appeal. Only by working together can we make it possible for parishes, Catholic schools, Catholic Charities, clergy and the Catholic faithful to live and share Christ's teachings.

Bishop Persico assures us that CSA donations are strictly designated to fund projects, ministries, and departments of the Diocese of Erie. No funds donated to the CSA have been or will be used to defray expenses related to sexual abuse cases.

Your gift is so important. Thank you for your generosity.

WORSHIP

Monday, February 15
 8:00 am + Johnny Servero (James Horton)
 Tuesday, February 16
 8:00 am + Wanda Pilarczyk (PNA Lodge 1540)
 Ash Wednesday, February 17
 5:00 pm + At St. Bernadette Mission
 Richard Baker (Dan & Karen Nowak)
 7:00 pm + At St. Anthony of Padua
 Alice Undereiner (Burdick Family & Pat Watson)
 Thursday, February 18
 8:00 am + Daniel Baker (Rita Baker & Family)
 Friday, February 19
 8:00 am + Janell Weidner (Ginger & Dick Kester)
 Saturday, February 20
 4:30 pm + For Deceased Due to Coronavirus
 (Dale & Carole Schoiack)
 Sunday, February 21
 8:00 am + AT ST. BERNADETTE MISSION
 Living and Deceased Parishioners
 9:30 am + AT ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA
 Walter Stanley Poodles (Gerard & Martha Adamczyk)

PARISH EVENTS CALENDAR

Tuesday, February 16
 After Mass - St. Anthony Novena
 Saturday, February 20 3:30 - 4:15 pm - Confession
 Sunday, February 21
 Before Mass - Confession - ST. BERNADETTE MISSION
 After Mass - Confession - ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA

SETON CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Seton Catholic School (Preschool—Grade 8) is holding an Open House on Tuesday, February 16, 2021 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. See the classrooms first-hand, meet the teachers, learn about scholarships and see how Seton helps students become active, life-long learners.

LENTEN FISH DINNER

The Knights of Columbus of Our Lady of the Lake Parish are again sponsoring fish dinners throughout Lent. Drive-through take out is the only option this year. Please enter through the Sunset Drive side.

ST. BERNADETTE MISSION STEWARDSHIP

Offertory	\$640.00
Maintenance	570.00
Ash Wednesday	30.00
Communication	10.00
Candles	27.00
TOTAL	\$1,277.00

6th ANNUAL 1:38 WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

On Saturday, March 20, 2021, the Women's 1:38 Conference will be held at Our Lady of Peace Parish. There is NO registration fee - but donations will be accepted. Due to CDC guidelines the conference is limited to 250 people. Registration materials for both locations: (1) Live - in person Our Lady of Peace and (2) via Zoom at home are available in the gathering space.

Check-in is at 8:40 am and the program begins at 9:00 am and ends at 12:00 Noon with Mass.

ASH WEDNESDAY

Distribution of Ashes on Ash Wednesday, (February 17, 2021)

Because it is impossible to sanitize the thumb of the person distributing ashes between each person receiving them, Bishop Persico directs that those who wish to receive the sacramental of blessed ashes receive them sing the practice common in many parts of the world of sprinkling ashes on the crown of the head.

ECUMENICAL PRAYER/LUNCHES

The first of the Lenten Lunches for this year will be held on Wednesday, February 17 at Noon at Cambridge Springs First Baptist Church. All are welcome to attend.

RICE BOWL

Each Lent, the Church calls us to conversation through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Many people in our Diocese choose to bring these three aspects of Lenten observance to life through Catholic Relief Services' (CRS) Rice Bowl. This program helps to provide families around the world with the tools they need to rise above poverty and provide for themselves. The Rice Bowls will be available at both entrances to the church through Lent.

A FAMILY PERSPECTIVE

Family life is about decisions. The leper in today's Gospel knew this when he said to Jesus. "If you will, you can make me clean." Jesus knew this when he said "I do will it." Love is not an emotion. It is a decision to be with and for another person in "good times and bad," even when we don't feel like it.

ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA STEWARDSHIP

Offertory	\$1,521.00
Maintenance	289.00
Candles	69.00
Donation Rectory Boiler Repair	500.00
TOTAL	\$2,379.00

CHURCH NAME: ST. ANTONY OF PADUA

CHURCH NO.:

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:
