

**February 22, 2009 Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

|                    |  |  |                          |
|--------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| Rev. Tom Kuffel    | St. Stephen Church   | 207 N. Union POB 57  | Exeter, NE 68351         |
| St. Patrick Church | 305 East M Street, McCool  | POB 57   | Exeter, NE 68351         |
| Church Phone       | 402-266-5581   | Personal 402-540-3124  | Parish Cell 402-540-8690 |
| Email Personal     | <a href="mailto:rkuffdoq@windstream.net">rkuffdoq@windstream.net</a> | Bulletin: <a href="mailto:st.stephen_bulletin@yahoo.com">st.stephen_bulletin@yahoo.com</a> |                          |

**Daily Mass Schedule**

| Date         | Time     | Place       | Intention   | By               | Feast Day     |
|--------------|----------|-------------|---|------------------|---------------|
| Mon. Feb.23  | 7:30AM   | Exeter      | Deceased Family & Friends of Bill Cudaback Family |                  | St. Polycarp  |
| Tue. Feb. 24 | 7:30AM   | Exeter      | Wally Neemann                                     | Ruth Ekeler      |               |
| Wed. Feb. 25 | 6:00PM   | Exeter      | Deceased Family and Friend of Gene Ruhl Family    |                  | Ash Wednesday |
| Wed. Feb.25  | 7:30 PM  | McCool      | Alan Lake   |                  | Ash Wednesday |
| Thu. Feb 26  | 10:30 AM | Care Center | Amy Dumpert                                       | Bob & Kate Harre |               |
| Fri. Feb. 27 | 7:30 AM  | McCool      | Bob Leif  | Bethine Leif     |               |
| Sat. Feb. 28 | 8:00 AM  | McCool      | Living & Deceased Members of the Masek Family     |                  |               |

**March 1, 2009 First Sunday of Lent**

|                |                 |                       |  |                                   |  |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Feb. 28</b> | <b>5:00 PM</b>  | <b>Exeter</b>         | <b>Nellie Winkler</b>                      | <b>Laura Reavis</b>               |  |
| Acolyte-Gerry  | Lector-Bob      | Servers-Kirby & Jack  | Usher/Collection-Bob Mueller               | Gifts-Becky Erdkamp Family        |  |
| <b>March 1</b> | <b>8:30 AM</b>  | <b>Exeter</b>         | <b>Tom Volkmer</b>                         | <b>Ed &amp; Donna Mark Family</b> |  |
| Acolyte-Rusty  | Lector-Doug     | Servers-Spencer & Sam | Usher/Collection/Gifts-Don & Elaine Krejci |                                   |  |
| <b>March 1</b> | <b>10:00 AM</b> | <b>McCool</b>         | <b>Carmen Beaver</b>                       | <b>Joan Clark</b>                 |  |
| Acolyte-John   | Lector-Bill     | Servers-Shane & Kirby | Usher/Collection/Gifts-Joe                 |                                   |  |

|                     |                                |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| St. Stephen         |                                |
| Church Support      | \$1019.00                      |
| Loose Plate         | 57.00                          |
| Children            | 4.00                           |
| Total Collected     | \$1080.00                      |
| Number of Envelopes | \$1-5(5) \$6-10(8) \$11-20(16) |
|                     | \$21-40 (12) \$41 + (4)        |

|                     |                               |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| St Patrick          |                               |
| Church Support      | \$545.00                      |
| Loose Plate         | 81.00                         |
| Total Collected     | \$626.00                      |
| Number of Envelopes | \$1-5(1) \$6-10(3) \$11-20(7) |
|                     | \$21-40 (5) \$41 + (3)        |

**Announcements Exeter**

**CYO: No CYO this week, Ash Wednesday. CCD:** Sunday at the Parish Hall.

**Parish Council:** We will have a meeting in April sometime after Easter.

**Altar Society:** March 7<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting, Mass @ 9:15 at Church with Meeting 10:00 @ Parish Hall

**Knights:** Meeting Monday March 2<sup>nd</sup> @ Parish Hall, 7:30 PM.

**Bible Study:** None this week.

**Happy Birthday:** Nick Nicholas and John Ruhl Thursday 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Gala Information:** If you would like a Tax Credit for anything you donated for the Gala please put a note in the collection to let us know.

**McCool**

**CYO: No CYO this week, Ash Wednesday.**

**Bible Study:** None this week.

**Altar Society:** We need a President. If you would like to be a leader of our parish, please contact Connie White or Fr. Kuffel. Thanks to all the ladies who helped with the Otoupal Funeral. We have several ladies who bake and help serve and our parish should be grateful we have such generous servants.

**Parish Council:** We have completed our painting of the Church and the electrical upgrade. Our parish will now pass inspection and our insurance will be kept. Our next project will be to redo the duct work in the Church. We will remove the duct work from the sacristy and put vents in the floors. The cost is \$700.

**Happy Birthday:** Noah Lambrecht Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Please Pray for Seminarian:** *Steven Allan Mills from Nebraska City, NE. He is in Pre-Theology 2 and is studying at St. Gregory the Great.*

*Please check out our website for bulletin information, calendars and more.  
<http://www.ststephensexeter.org/>*

**Prayer Intentions:** *Karen Pelz, Fr. Larry Gyhra, Susan Perkins, Frances Pracheil, Bruce Jeffs, Jerome Smith, Jenny Beekman, Tracy Harter, Jay Luzum, Lois Ann Kuska, Nancy Jo Galusha, Jim & Marilyn Bors, Greg Yound, Dorothy Schmidt, Judy Yeck, Wally (Gator) Neemann, Reposed of the soul of Gary Otoupal and Military -Sgt. Jason A. Hood Stationed in Iraq and Rob Coffey soon to be in Iraq.*

**Local Announcements:**

**Woman's Conference** @ Friend Christian Assembly Feb. 27-29th. See BB for more details.  
 March 6 - 8, 2009 **Retreat** at Villa Regina Motherhouse. \$20.00 call 477-5232 or sr.mary-michael@cdolinc.net  
 Marian Sisters Discernment **Retreat** Mar 13- Mar 14 Waverly Sr. Melissa at (402)786-2750.  
**Blood Drive in McCool** Feb 24 1-6 Photo id required, Call Bev, 724-2513 to make an appointment.  
**Feb. 22 Fr. Kosch Retreat** on Jesus of Nazareth in Waverly. Call 786-2705  
**Soup Supper**-Wed. Feb. 18 4:30p St. Joseph Hall, Geneva NE. Free Will Offering.  
**Fish Fry**-Fri. Feb. 20 through April 3--St. Joseph School Gym, York NE. \$7.00 Adults, \$4.00 Children  
**Benefit** for Scott & Niki Kosek Family—Sun. Feb. 22 9-1p. Utica-Pancake Feed, Silent Auction and Bake Sale.  
**Exeter Cemetery Board** wishes to ask for your help on the Trees for Nebraska project. They are trying to replace dying trees in the cemetery and have a grant for 10,000.00 but need to match the funds by donations or labor in order for them to receive the money. Any donations or questions contact JoDee Mika.  
**Annual Day of Recollection**, Ash Wednesday Feb. 25, In Hastings and Waverly. Cost \$5.00 and bring lunch. See your Register for more information.

| <b>St. Stephen monthly bill</b> | <b>[What we pay Diocese of Lincoln each month]</b>           | <b>St. Patrick's monthly bill</b> |
|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| \$851.42                        | Property Insurance Premium                                   | \$233.17                          |
| \$16.67                         | Workman's Compensation Insurance Premium                     | \$4.33                            |
| \$412.00                        | Clergy Health Insurance Premium                              | \$0.00                            |
| \$761.50                        | Parish Three-In-One Assessment & Clergy Retreat & Study Days | \$172.25                          |
| \$156.25                        | Southern Nebraska Register                                   | \$61.25                           |
| <b>\$2197.84</b>                | <b>Total</b>   | <b>\$471.00</b>                   |

**Pope Benedict:** Sin is what puts distance between the believer and God, and it's the sacrament of confession that brings the two back together. Today in our Gospel reflection on Mark's account of the healed leper, we see how the leper was delivered by praying for mercy. In the Gospel account, the leper "gets on his knees and says: 'If you wish, you can make me clean!' Jesus, moved, stretches out his hand, touches him and says: 'I do wish it. Be made clean!'" According to the ancient Jewish law, leprosy was not only considered a sickness but the gravest form of 'impurity. Leprosy thus constituted a kind of religious and civil death, and its healing was a kind of resurrection. We might see in leprosy a symbol of sin, which is the true impurity of heart, distancing us from God. It is not, in effect, physical malady that distances us from him, as the ancient norms supposed, but sin, the spiritual and moral evil. The sins we commit distance us from God, and, if they are not humbly confessed, trusting in the divine mercy, they will finally bring about the death of the soul. This miracle thus has powerful symbolic value. In the Sacrament of Penance Christ crucified and risen, through his ministers, purifies us with his infinite mercy, restores us to communion with the heavenly Father and our brothers, and makes a gift of his love, joy and peace to us. Dear brothers and sisters, let us invoke the Virgin Mary, whom God preserved from every stain of sin, that she help us to avoid sin and to have frequent recourse to the sacrament of confession, the sacrament of forgiveness, whose value and importance for our Christian life needs to be rediscovered today.

Stamps: When saving stamps for Altar Society please turn in the entire envelope. Stamp collectors would like the entire envelope. If you do not feel comfortable with giving the entire envelope, please cut off the addresses but not the cancelation mark. These can be left in the back of church for Ranell.

## *Financial Times*

Most people living in the U.S.A. would not consider themselves wealthy. Some people are very wealthy and many live very comfortably. Yet, in comparison to the rest of the world, we, who are middle class, are extremely wealthy. We have running water, indoor plumbing, heat and cooling, safe neighborhoods, and limitless opportunities for success and development. Much of the world cannot compare nor compete with the opportunities we have. In a sense, we have won the lottery when we were born in America.

Yet, we see many complain and criticize about our financial situation. We should be thankful for what we do have and honor our God by giving from the heart. However, as we know the rich have the greatest struggle in giving for they fear giving sacrificially.

But is this not exactly what Jesus gave to us? He gave sacrificially to us – not money but his blood!

As St. Paul points out that we have not given until we have given with blood. That is we need to give so that costs us something. This type of giving breaks the chains that money may have over us. Instead of loving money and focusing on money, they focus on the person and esteem that person. Too many people put money in front of people. They value money more than their spouse, kids, friends, and relatives. This truly is wickedness for as St. Paul tells us, "Love of money is the root of all evil!"

To combat greed, we have to treat money as a tool and dignify the person for they are whom we should truly love.

## *Marriage: A Catholic Perspective*

During a recent conference with B. Bruskewitz, he was concerned with the ignorance of Catholics concerning marriage. The secular world has drained marriage of its essence and importance. Many Catholics do not take the marital covenant as a serious commitment in which they vow to God for better or worse, rich or poor, till death and promise to raise their children Catholic. Many parents and children leave the faith because of poor marriages. In the next coming months I will be explaining the various aspects of marriage from a Catholic perspective. It is my goal that everyone have a holy marriage and family. To help you reach that goal we need to remove the ignorance that many Catholics have when it comes to this wonderful mystery called marriage.

### **The Essence of Marriage**

Over the years many Catholics and Christians discuss heatedly Jesus' teachings on Marriage, Divorce, Annulments, and Families. Much confusion exists about all four and the confusion creates discrepancy, division, and

dissension. What we know about all four comes directly from Scripture, yet, many still have misunderstanding of each one. In order for us to appreciate and comprehend these terms: Marriage, Divorce, Annulments, and Family. Scripture is the primary source. However, the proper understanding of Scripture is key. Private interpretation of these difficult passages leads to varied and most often incorrect interpretations (II Peter 1:20). We need a legitimate authority to help us understand and interpret properly the many scriptural passages concerning marriage. The Church is that authority.

"The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized person has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament" (CIC, can. #1055, par. 1).

## *Five Pillars: Spontaneous Prayer in Times of Suffering*

Spontaneous prayers are short, effective, easy to remember vehicles for grace to come into our daily lives. Grace can only come if we avail ourselves to it. To avail ourselves, we should have a variety of prayers, devotions, and acts of mercy that we do.

Prayers have different focal points. First, prayers are to help us in time of trial. Second, we have prayers for repentance and forgiveness. Next, we have prayers that help us to forgive those who have hurt us. Finally, we have prayers to do God's will.

Help! Is a powerful prayer. But before we will say this prayer, we need to recognize that we need help. Like the addict, we must admit our weaknesses and failures, struggles and battles asking God for help in these troubled times.

Our prayer has two focuses. One is to accept the problem. Many forget that in times of troubles it is not to give up the cross but to embrace the cross. This has to be an element of our prayer for we typically shun suffering and painful moments. Jesus tells us to embrace them knowing that God disciplines those whom He loves.

Next we pray for good to come out of the suffering. Only God can turn good out of evil and we turn to God for that goodness. Suffering can be debilitating and depressing if we do not see any good coming from it. If we recognize a good in suffering for ourselves, others, the culture, the community, and even the evil doers, suffering can become not only meaningful but invaluable companion in the life of grace, virtue, and salvation.

**"Real integrity is doing the right thing, knowing that nobody's going to know whether you did it or not." Oprah**

### Parenting: The Natural School

A school is not a natural organization: it is a man-made cultural organization. It has its own culture and it supports the parents in the training of their children. But parents, since they are the primary educators of their children and live with their children in a natural setting of family and friends, are responsible for the moral, behavioral, spiritual, and physical health of their children. This is ordained by the fourth commandment which states, "honor your father and mother" but the reverse is absolutely understood, "honor your children and raise them in the tradition of our faith! Parents then are held accountable for the development of the human virtues of justice, temperance, prudence, and fortitude. They are also responsible for the development of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Parents cannot make the mistake of letting society, schools, or even their children to determine their education, but parents involve themselves in the educating of their children in the sciences and languages of our Catholic Faith.

### **Yes and No Seventh Sunday Ordinary Time (Year B)**

In a world of turbulence and tumult, we waver back and forth with the tide of human persuasion. These tides push and pull us until we can no longer determine which direction we ought to be heading. As a ship without a compass, we, when without a firm Yes and No, are lost in the sea of enticements and allurements. To penetrate through the false arguments and persuasive speeches, our No has to mean No and our Yes has to mean Yes: "*Do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one* (Matt 5:36).

God has given us the authority to decide. We have the capacity and the obligation to determine what is truth. It is not a matter of opinion or persuasion, but a matter of conclusion and conviction. Once we know the truth our No will mean No and our Yes will be Yes, because we have a direction and bearing.

What directs us? Our decisions offer conviction and with conviction, we know when to bear left or right, up or down. Once our decisions are based upon a certain direction, they set us free when we stay on course. Truth is that direction for it has an authority all its own. It does not depend upon human expectation, anticipation, and calculation. It depends upon right and wrong. However, just as the Pharisees and Scribes had their perception of right and wrong, we, too, may develop a false morality. Our view when inspired by the hypocrisy of the Pharisees denies the truth. Without the truth, we deny Jesus. Our Yes is to follow our own will and our No is to reject God's will.

Jesus is not a mere miracle worker, but a man of his own authority. The Scribes relied upon the authority of others. They quoted and cited the experts of the law. Jesus, however, did not quote or cite anyone, except his Father. He was

his own authority and knew in his mind what the Scribes and Pharisees thought. "*Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth"-- he said to the paralytic, "I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home"* (Mk 2: 8-11). The Pharisees thought it easier to heal the soul than the body for they believed that the invisible was some how easier to heal. Jesus, however, perceives their thinking and destroys their opinions and their pre-conceptions. He cures both body and soul, which burst their notion of right and wrong and their perception of divine versus mere human power. He bursts their false authority, upon which many people rely, and lays bear not only their thinking, but also indeed their pre-conceived perceptions of God.

Exposed, they are jealous. Jesus' authority is pure, real, and godly. It destroys their impure, social authority. In return, they call his authority and power satanic. Like spoiled children who lost their toy, they retaliate, for they want to follow their pre-conceived ideas of truth, forgiveness, and authority. However, Jesus reveals Himself as someone with authority; and in so doing, He tests our thoughts too. We cannot rely upon our personal perception of right and wrong. We have to perceive the certain and moral truth in order to answer Yes or No to life's difficult questions.

The healing of our body depends greatly upon the healing of our souls for many illnesses are caused by the sickness of the soul. Spiritual, emotional, and personal well-being are a result of living in the truth taught by Jesus. We have a basic knowledge of what is right and wrong and when we forget to live by those very standards, which are summed up in the Ten Commandments, we waver in our moral strength. Vacillating between right and wrong causes tension, stress, and pain in our lives. We want to justify inherently immoral acts with our will and in so doing, we become sick. We become sick in mind, heart, body, and soul.

Although Christ has the ability to heal our soul, He does not have our permission. Our permission is necessary for Him to heal us. Our authority grants Him permission to act; yet God gives us that very same authority upon which He must act. We have the power to say Yes! Or No! to God and He is under our command. Such power exists in such simple words!

Empowered by the Creator, we have the ability to set forth our future. We can respond to Christ as the Pharisees did in which they no longer worshipped the God of their fathers, but as Pope John Paul II warns us, they worshipped their self-made gods. "Often, those contemporary "idols" are of their nature subtle, connected with progress of thought, the refinement of human inclinations, the style of civilization which extols a way of life which does without God, as if he did not exist" (John Paul II, March 6 1988 Homily). Idol worship swallows up the truth. The Scribes and Pharisees steeped in their self-made gods could no longer be objective in their judgment about the truth because they refined God's law to fit their perception. Their No, to God's ways became Yes to Satan. That is why they crucified Christ. They could not justify their immorality with the morality of Jesus. We can easily fall into the same trap and crucify Jesus because his teachings thwart our spirit. We cannot live a free-spirited life unless it is grounded in the natural and moral laws of God. Those laws, summed up in the Ten Commandments, free us from abusing others, falling into addictions, and from living in false relationships. The Ten Commandments protect us from the distortions of authority in which we are manipulated and seduced to say Yes to evil and No to good. Our Yes to sin and our No to grace also swallows up the divine within our soul. We devour the transcendent in us and rely completely upon our own human authority -- idolatry. Soon sin seems simple rather than sinful. Grace seems impossible rather than invaluable. The change slowly comes, eating away at the very core value of our being. Drip by drip, we lose sight of our beacon and without the beacon of a transcendent God illuminating our way, we lose our ability to say Yes to grace and No to sin. The beacon of the divine truth designed to lead us to a transcendent life dims. The here and now, the winds of today and tomorrow, become our guides. They blow us on their course of self-destruction and self-defeat.

**We should embrace God and make our Yes to his will a solemn oath as we did at our baptism.**