

March 8, 2009 Second Sunday of Lent

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
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Bulletin now on our website

Daily Mass Schedule

Date	Time	Place	Intention	By	Feast Day
Mon. March 9	7:30AM	Exeter	Geraldine Tieso	Stuhmer Family	St. Frances of Rome
Tue. March 10	7:30AM	Exeter	Hobart Springer	Ed & Donna Mark Family	
Wed. March 11	7:00 PM	McCool	Adeline Geiger	Gerry & Vicki Geiger Family	
Thu. March 12	10:30 AM	Care Center	Don Becker	Ruth Ekeler	
Fri. March 6	7:30 AM	McCool	Magdalene Geiger	Jim Hassler	
Sat. March 7	9:15 AM	Exeter	Martin Hoelsing		

March 15, 2009 Third Sunday of Lent

March 14	5:00 PM	Exeter	Karen Pelz	Bob & Pat Becker
Acolyte-Gerry	Lector-Rick	Servers-Alex & Evan	Usher/Collection/Gifts Ken & Cody Soukup	
March 15	8:30 AM	Exeter	Sophie Kosmicki	Joan Dumpert
Acolyte-Roger	Lector-Denice	Servers-John & Stephen	Usher/Collection/Gifts-Lin & Melanie Schlueter Family	
March 15	10:00 AM	McCool	The Parish	
Acolyte-John	Lector-Gary	Servers-Taylor & Jamison	Usher/Collection/Gifts-Tom	

St. Stephen	
Church Support	\$1247.00
Loose Plate	98.50
Children	3.00
Total Collected	\$1348.50
Number of Envelopes	\$1-5(1) \$6-10(10) \$11-20(16)
	\$21-40 (13) \$41 + (6)

St Patrick	
Church Support	\$785.00
Loose Plate	48.00
Total Collected	\$833.00
Number of Envelopes	\$1-5(0) \$6-10(3) \$11-20(7)
	\$21-40 (4) \$41 + (7)

Announcements

Exeter

Stations of the Cross-Sunday 7:00 pm Today, A-Mark and S-Elliot & Robert

CYO: this week at McCool at 7:00PM. CCD: Sunday at the Parish Hall.

Knights: Fish Fry March 20 @ Parish Hall from 5:00 – 7:30 PM. Posters were sent with the newsletter. Please distribute posters in public places.

Bible Study: None this week.

Happy Birthday: Jean Hoffman Sat. 7th and Ashley Benorden Wed. 11th.

The Mardi Gras Gala Committee would sincerely like to thank all of you who made our job much easier in organizing and successfully accomplishing the fundraiser for our parish. Your donations of all kinds, work before, during and after, attendance at the gala, encouragement, or just the simple pat on the back to thank us for our work during the last four months of planning was greatly appreciated. We all feel very lucky to have had the spirited participation from our parish as well as from our friends and relatives of the parish, community and surrounding areas to help us reach our goal. We still find the many contributions totally amazing! God bless all of you for your help!

McCool

Stations of the Cross Thursday 7:00 pm. CYO: CYO this week at McCool at 7:00 PM.

Bible Study: 6:00 PM at McCool.

Altar Society: We need a President. If you would like to be a leader of our parish, please contact Connie White or Fr. Kuffel.

Please Pray for Seminarian: *Denton Ross Morris from Gary, SD. He is in College 2 and is studying at St. Gregory the Great.*

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, Mary Wilms and Military -Sgt. Jason A. Hood Stationed in Iraq and Rob Coffey soon to be in Iraq. Newly Elected Archbishop Dolan of NY.*

Local Announcements:

Exeter-Milligan-Friend-McCool Trapshooting Soup Supper Sunday March 8 from 11-1 with Labor Auction @ 1:00. Please help support the boys and girls trapshooting team.

Marian Sisters Discernment **Retreat** Mar 13– Mar 14 Waverly Sr. Melissa at (402)786-2750.

Fish Fry-Fri. Feb. 20 through April 3--St. Joseph School Gym, York NE. \$7.00 Adults, \$4.00 Children.

March 15 McCool School Fundraiser at Stone Creek.

Sunday March 15-Girls Religious Awards ceremony-Cathedral of the Risen Christ 2:00 pm

Ham Loaf Dinner-Sunday March 15th 11-1 @ Friend United Church of Christ \$7.50 adults, \$3.50 children

Diocesan Canoe Trip for juniors and seniors in high school in July. www.lincolnyouthministry.blogspot.com

Utica Senior Center Potato Bake, Sun. March 8th 11-1

Healing Mass Sunday March 29 at Blessed John XXIII Diocesan Center 3700 Sheridan Blvd. 3 PM Chaplet of Divine Mercy: 3:30 pm Sunday Mass. Eucharistic Exposition after Mass.

Dwight Soup Dinner Sun March 15 @ Parish Hall from 10:30-2:30.

Pope Benedict: God's promise is clear, if the people listen to the invitation to be converted, God will make his mercy triumph and his friends will be filled with innumerable favors. In the Gospel, Jesus puts us on guard against the pangs of vanity, which lead to ostentation and hypocrisy, to superficiality and self-complacency, and stresses the need to nurture rectitude of heart." He added, "At the same time he shows us the means to grow in this purity of intention, by cultivating intimacy with the heavenly Father.

This year is dedicated to the Apostle to the Gentiles.: Paul experienced in an extraordinary way the power of the grace of God, the grace of the Paschal mystery which Lent itself lives. He presents himself to us as 'ambassador' of the Lord. Who then better than he can help us to advance in a fruitful way on this path of interior conversion?

The whole of his preaching, and even before, the whole of his missionary life, was sustained by an interior force that led back to the fundamental experience of grace.

It is a consciousness that emerges in all his writings that functioned as an interior 'leaven' on which God was able to act to push him forward, toward ever farther frontiers, not only geographical but also spiritual. St. Paul acknowledges that everything in him is the work of divine grace, but he does not forget that one must freely add the gift of new life received in baptism. St. Paul shows us how to live Lent: The disciple must make the victory of Christ his own, and

this occurs first of all with baptism, through which, united to Christ, we have become living beings, returned from the dead. However, if Christ is to reign fully in a baptized person, [that person] must follow the teachings faithfully: He must never lower his guard, so as not to permit the adversary to gain ground in some way. He underlined that prayer, almsgiving and fasting as the means to fulfill our baptismal vocation faced to the ongoing struggle between good and evil. Paul's example of prayer of perseverance and thanksgiving, almsgiving that puts priority on loving others, and fasting in watchful expectation of the Lord.

Character Building

Which virtues should parents cultivate for themselves and their children. St. Thomas lists over 250 virtues which we are to cultivate, but he divides them into four categories: Justice, Temperance, Prudence, Fortitude. However, the key to which virtues parents should cultivate are the ones that bring joy to the family.

If a family lacks cheerfulness, it means it is not cultivating the virtues that create joy. Some people think virtues are sheer discipline and correction. This regulatory outlook does not offer much joy. Children naturally are joyful. We should never break their spunk and spirit; yet, we need to corral their charisma as to direct and guide it.

Financial Times

Stewardship begins with spirituality. Unless we have a spiritual life, we will not understand stewardship responsibilities. As a young child who complains of bed-times, meal-times, and home-work, so will adults complain if they do not take responsibility for their lives beginning with the spiritual dimensions first.

“Stewardship starts with getting your spiritual house in order, recognizing that all you have ultimately belongs to God, learning to be generous with the tithe as your model, applying temperance to your lifestyle, and developing effective communication in your marriage.” A budget is a small part of

Five Pillars: Spontaneous Offer It

Prayer distractions come with worry. We worry and when we do we don't really pray. Our minds are so focused on our concerns that our thoughts cycle and we never break from our worry. That is why we remember the proverb, If you worry, don't pray. If you pray, don't worry. Sometimes all we can do with our prayer, is to give it to the Lord. Some problems are unsolvable. These problems are so huge that we give them to God. We must give up and let God take care of it. This is true prayer. So many times we are trying to force the hand of God to solve our problems rather than succumb to his will. The truth that many people never understand...is that the more you try to avoid suffering, the more you suffer....The one who does most to avoid suffering is, in the end, the one who suffers most.

Marriage Makers: Scripture's Definition.

“After the fall, marriage helps to overcome self-absorption, egoism, pursuit of one's own pleasure, and to open oneself to the other, to mutual aid and to self-giving” (CCC. #1609).

A Christian marriage cannot exclude God because as St. Paul instructs us, God designed marriage to symbolize his covenant with his people. . *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband” (Eph 5: 31 - 33 ff).* The exchange of two individual wills into one is a marriage. This exchange is a covenant: a binding, permanent, irrevocable union between two persons who are open to life and love. In this relationship St. Paul teaches unity through diversity. *“Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the*

your stewardship. Stewardship is a way of life in which you plan your life and live by your plan.

Once you have a general plan of the goals, values, and morals of your physical, social, personal, and spiritual life, then you can budget to support your lifestyle. Many people, however, choose a lifestyle without evaluating the cost of it. Most Americans do not have a budget. The easiest way to budget is to save 10% of your income placing 5% in savings and 5% in investment strategies. Take 10% of your income for charities, giving 5% to your local parish and 5% to your favorite charities. The rest of money, 80%, you have to live.

Once we submit to the Lord and give up on trying to force the will of God, we enter into a new spiritual awareness – Trust. God gives us problems and worries. He allows us to suffer and endure deep sorrow. He chastises us so as to break our will. Much of the suffering and sorrow we endure breaks us of our will to control. Instead of trying to dominate and control our lives, our problems force us to trust God. For some this breaks their faith in God and they abandon their belief. However, this is the turning point in our faith; for when we have some problem so complex, we allow the hand of God to take control. We see this with patients dying of terminal diseases, persons who have addictions, people living under persecution and discrimination, and those who suffer for their faith.

church, the body of which he is the Savior. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands (Eph. 5: 21 – 24). The curse of women is to be a slave; St. Paul, however, teaches submission. A wife willingly serves and loves her husband because she reciprocates the love given by the husband. In this most controversial passage, St. Paul recalls the annunciation when he says submit. Mary submitted to the Angel Gabriel and said, *“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).* So too women imitate Mary when they submit to their husbands. It is a free choice. The woman freely chooses to submit to her husband out of love for him. She is not forced to submit for she has the right not to marry, but once she agrees to marry she foregoes her freedom out of love. She understands the greater good that she will have united to her husband: she will be not only a spouse, but hopefully be a mother.

Test Second Sunday of Lent (Year B)

God tests us. He tests us just as a teacher tests his students. He, however, does not test our knowledge, our abilities, or our progress. He tests our character, conscience, and commitment. God tested Abraham to sacrifice his only son, God tests us many times to give up the only thing we truly love -- ourselves.

Character is what we are. Good characteristics: honest, reliable, confident, sincere, kind, and a host of other virtues, make us act as we do. Good character comes from good actions and good actions come from a clean and clear conscience. Our conscience is cleansed from sin as we pass the tests that God puts us through. Our character commits to those Christian principles, which free us from temptations and distractions. Freed from the seductions of life, we commit freely to the principles of our divine life.

To teach us these divine principles, God tests us. The tests that God demands of us are not cheap or cheesy. They are costly. God tested Abraham. God asked him to give up his only son -- the heir. God endured the very same trial: God the Father sent Jesus, his only Son, to die for us. Only through death can divine life be found.

We too are asked to die. We die to ourselves so we can receive the gift of God's Only Son -- Grace. *Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life..* (Rom 6:3-5).

As Abraham had to give up his son to be blessed abundantly, so we too have to give up our lives in order for us to be blessed by God. The paradox is striking: to live, we have to die. Our death is not merely a physical death, but is a spiritual death in which we have to die to the root of all death -- pride. Pride is the root of all sin, and when we die to sin. *"Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as (being) dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, sin must not reign over your mortal bodies so that you obey their desires. And do not present the parts of your bodies to sin as weapons for wickedness, but present yourselves to God as raised from the dead to life and the parts of your bodies to God as weapons for righteousness* (Rom 6: 11- 13).

God's tests examine our purity. As gold and silver refined seven times pure, so our hearts need to be refined to a degree of purity far beyond our expectations. *"But who will endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears? For he is like the refiner's fire, or like the fuller's lye. He will sit refining and purifying (silver), and he will purify the sons of Levi, Refining them like gold or like silver that they may offer due sacrifice to the LORD"* (Mal 3:2 - 3). Who can endure this cleansing fire? Only those filled with piety and passion. Piety is morality for it demands of us the righteousness of God. Passion is purity for with it we purge ourselves from all impurities.

Unlike the piety and passion of the world, which soils our souls with false and fakes expectations, God expects our piety and passion to be holy, innocent, and immaculate. These cleansing virtues are like fire for they purify our minds from all doubts and distrust of God. Pure in mind, we become clean in heart. Once cleansed, we see God as He is, not as we think He is. This is true wisdom. We are no longer limited by human frailties, but are imbued with a Divine Spirit that penetrates the divine mysteries.

The cleansing process begins with our consciences. God tests our way of thinking. These tests are not to fail us, but to challenge us to be better, do better, and ultimately live better. *"I, the LORD, alone probe the mind and test the heart, To reward everyone according to his ways, according to the merit of his deeds* (Jer 17: 10). Our acts reflect our thoughts. What we say and do is who and what we are. God probes our mind and heart to reveal to us what is hidden. Once exposed, we cleanse those impurities and strengthen those weaknesses. Exposed, we know our fault and failures, but we also know our vigor and focus. This is character. We become what we think. With tests, God corrects our thinking and ultimately our character. These tests do not destroy us, but strengthen us to shape, create, and construct our lives around his ways. We commit to Him our words, thoughts, deeds, and desires.

Yet, his ways seem so paradoxical. The sacrifice of a child seems harsh and cruel. Yet, it happens every day. Abortion is the ultimate sacrifice. It destroys the gift of life. Unlike the sacrifice of Abraham's son, which God demanded not only as an act of faith, but as an act of love, the human sacrifice of abortion is an act of selfishness and cynicism. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son out of obedience to God. Men and women who perform, counsel, and participate in abortion do not act out of love and obedience to God, but out of self-indulgence and self-worship. This is the paradox: true tests demand sacrifices, which increase our love and faith in God and diminish our self-love. While costing us time, energy, and effort, we learn to love others, which gives us divine light. This is the prophecy of the psalmist coming true: *"God's eyes keep careful watch; they test all peoples. The LORD tests the good and the bad, hates those who love violence, And rains upon the wicked fiery coals and brimstone, a scorching wind their allotted cup. The LORD is just and loves just deeds; the upright shall see his face* (Ps. 11:4 - 7).

Human tests demand sacrifices, which disobey, diminish, and demonize our very being. No longer can we pass the test of love when we disobey the command of God. Abraham acted out of love of God when he offered his son Isaac on the altar of sacrifice. Do we act out of love when God tests us to sacrifice ourselves for the love of God and our children? What seems to be completely incomprehensible becomes clear and concise. Only obedient love passes God's tests. Anything else, we fail.