

February 19, 2012 Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

St. Stephen's Church 402-266-5581 Email rkuffdog@windstream.net	Rev. Tom Kuffel 402-266-5581 st.stephen_bulletin@yahoo.com	207 N. Union Ave. Exeter, NE 68351 Cell: (402) 540-3124 Website: www.ststephensexeter.org
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Date	Time	Place	Intention	By	Feast Day
Mon. Feb 20	7:30 AM	Exeter	Frank & Virginia Sudrla	The Family	
Tues. Feb 21	7:30 AM	Exeter	All Souls	Marion Geiger	
Wed. Feb 22	5:30 PM	McCool			Ash Wednesday
Wed. Feb 22	7:00 PM	Exeter	Ekeler Family	Kathy Due	Ash Wednesday
Thu. Feb 23	10:30 AM	Care Center	Leo Ekeler	Dorothy Ekeler	
Fri. Feb 24	7:30 AM	McCool	All Souls	Gene & Rose Ruhl	
Sat. Feb 25	8:00 AM	McCool	Tom Wirth		
Sat. Feb 25	5:00 PM	Exeter	Benjamin Michael Webster	Father Kuffel	
Sun. Feb 26	8:30 AM	Exeter	Ollie & Millie Dumpert	Joan Dumpert	
Sun. Feb 26	10:00 AM	McCool	For the Parish		

February & March Ministers

Sat 25	A-Gerry	L-John B	S-Kirby & Jack	U – Ken & Lisa	G-Ken Soukup Family
Sun 26	A-Rusty	L-Doug	S-Stephen & James	U – Doug & Dacel	G – Doug Thomsen Family
Sat 3	A-Ron	L-Bob	S-Elliot & Mitchell	U – Don & Elaine	G-Don & Elaine Krejci
Sun 4	A-Brad	L-Denice	S-Cameron & Eli	U – Agnes	G-Adam Erdkamp Family
Sat 10	A-Mark	L-Children	S-Evan & Theron	U – Children	G-Children
Sun 11	A-Volunteer	L-Kathy	S-Spencer & Caleb	U – Doug A.	G-Brad White Family

Pray For: Murphy James Lierley from Our Lady of Sorrows, Grant, NE. He is in College 2 and is studying at St. Gregory the Great. He graduated HS in 2009 from Perkins County.

Prayer Intentions: Joe Hays, Claire White, Dick Snell, Dan Grant, Richard Perkins, Bill Hays, Jean Hoffman, Irene Petrucek, Dawn Welch, Kelley Champion, Bernard & Lorene Zeleny, J.J. Dinneen, Taylor Thomas, Steve Lawson, Tim Becker, Joe Huber Jr., Patrick Hoarty, Carol Smith, Cindy Hogman, Zach Johnson, Lauren Dick, Stephanie Salyer, Mark Thomsen, Noah Lambrecht, & Military Personnel Jason & Lacey Hood, Rob Coffey, Jacque Erks, Anthony & Alex Due.

St. Stephen's Church Support 02-12-2012 & Matt Talbot Collection = 50.00 & Register = \$15.00

Adult Envelopes	\$1164.00	Loose Plate	\$47.00	Children	\$2.00	Total	\$1213.00
Number of Envelopes	\$1 - \$5 [1]	\$6 – 10 [6]	\$11 - \$20 [14]	\$21 - \$40 [14]	\$41 & Up [8]		

** The actual budget for collections is \$85,305 for this fiscal year. It includes envelopes, loose plate, children, and special collections (i.e. Christmas, Easter, etc). On average, we need to collect \$1640 weekly in order to balance our budget. Check here weekly to see the actual collections compared to the budget. **Fiscal Year-to-Date we are at \$50,799 and we should be at \$54,120.**

Announcements

Birthdays: Bob Becker – Feb 19th, Quinton Behrens – Feb 19th, Adam Erdkamp – Feb 19th, T.J. Mueller – February 22nd, Nick Nicholas – Feb 26th, John Ruhl – Feb 26th **Anniversaries:** T.J. & Shelli Mueller – February 28th

CCD: Feb 19th – Regular Class. After Class – Rosary at church & confessions from 11-11:30. Pick students up at church.

Feb 26th – Regular Class. **Mar 4th** – Regular Class. Youth Choir Practice after class at church. **Mar 11th** – Regular Class.

CYO: Feb 22nd – There will be no CYO this week due to Ash Wednesday.

Altar Society: The Next meeting is on Wed. Feb 29th at 7PM. The February Basket is a \$100 gift certificate to Sweetwater donated by Mary Wince. 2012 Altar Society dues are \$10. Please pay these as soon as you can.

Stations of the Cross: Begin the first Sunday of Lent – Feb 26th at 5PM at St. Stephens & Feb 23rd at 7PM in McCool.

Lent Begins February 22nd: Ash Wednesday & Good Friday are days of fast & abstinence. All Fridays in Lent are days of abstinence. Fasting is for those who are 18-59. Fasting: One full meal & two smaller meals w/out snacks between meals. Abstinence: No meat. Abstinence if for all Catholics over the age of 14. Sickness, hard manual labor, pregnancy, etc. automatically excuse a person from these obligations. In cases of doubt or question consult a priest.

World Youth Day 2013 – Rio de Janeiro: The Diocese of Lincoln has organized a WYD trip for those who will be 16 by July 14, 2013. The cost is \$3,800 for a 16-day trip from July 14-29 that includes all lodging and travel to Sao Paulo, Mariana and Rio, as well as most meals. **Registration has been extended to February 29, 2012!** Forms available at: dioceseoflincoln.org (Youth Ministry). For more information, call Jeff or Sarah at the Family Life Office, 402-488-2040.

R.A.K. Random acts of kindness: are a means by which we make a deliberate attempt to brighten another person's day by doing something thoughtful. It is a way to help people know and share God's love in fresh, true, and inspiring ways. Anyone interested in joining our group, please contact **Pat Becker 402-266-4451** or drop your name in the R.A.K. box in the vestibule of the church. If you know of anyone in our parish who needs a little cheering up or assistance, please drop their name in the box. Or, if you have a special need, don't be afraid to ask! We want to help.

Character Building: Priests are sometimes challenged to explain why people come to them for the forgiveness of sin in our Church's Sacrament of Forgiveness. There are those who, claiming that God alone can forgive sins, accuse priests of usurping the prerogatives of God. In answer to their challenges I like to bring to their attention the Gospel passage we have in front of us today. In it we find access to Jesus blocked by the crowds of people who were jammed into the door of this house and into the room in which Jesus was preaching. Many things block us also. Four men in their mercy opened up the roof and lowered the paralyzed man to the feet of Jesus.

We need to stop and realize that they were men of faith. They believed that Jesus had within Him the power of God, and that He could cure the man of his paralysis. Jews at that time believed that physical maladies were the result of sin. Sin induces not only spiritual paralysis but physical as well.

St. Mark's Gospel is all about the question: "Who is Jesus Christ?" The answer is found in all of the healing, the authority of Christ's teaching, and His miracles, especially in and around Capernaum where Jesus began His public ministry. In today's Gospel passage Jesus forgives sin as only God can forgive. The response of those who witnessed it was: "Who does he think he is?"

The question moves us beyond the rhetorical. It prompts us to ask that very same question. "Why does this man speak that way? It's a reasonable question, one that we should ask along with them. The fact that only God can forgive sins is something everyone knows. So just who is this Christ? So, indeed, which is easier to say: "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Rise, pick up your mat and walk?" Which is easier to say and then prove that you have to power to back up those words? We, of course, know the answer, the answer Jesus gave when He instantly and on the spot cured the man of his paralysis and the man immediately walked. So too when we confess our sins, we walk away from our past into a new relationship with Jesus.

Prayer – Lord Jesus you are the only source of health and healing, your Holy Spirit calms all my fears. You are the source of peace and serenity despite the difficulties I face in life. Touch me and speak to me as you did the paralytic so that I may rise from the valley of tears. Grant me the indwelling of your presence so that whatever sufferings I endure you are at my side giving me health, strength, and peace, I ask this through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

Pope Benedict

After Peter's confession of faith in Caesarea Philippi, Jesus set out as a pilgrim towards Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. He was journeying towards the Temple in the Holy City, towards that place which for Israel ensured in a particular way God's closeness to his people. He was making his way towards the common feast of Passover, the memorial of Israel's liberation from Egypt and the sign of its hope of definitive liberation. He knew that what awaited him was a new Passover and that he himself would take the place of the sacrificial lambs by offering himself on the cross. He knew that in the mysterious gifts of bread and wine he would give himself; he would open to them the door to a new path of liberation, to experience the living God

Mankind has managed to accomplish so many things: we can fly! We can see, hear and speak to one another from the farthest ends of the earth. And yet the force of gravity which draws us down is powerful. With the increase of our abilities there has been an increase not only of good. Our possibilities for evil have increased and appear like menacing storms above history. Our limitations have remained: think of the disasters which have caused so much suffering for humanity in recent months.

The Fathers of the Church maintained that human beings stand at the point of intersection between two gravitational fields. First, there is the force of gravity which pulls us down – towards selfishness, falsehood and evil; the gravity which diminishes us and distances us from the heights of God.

On the other hand there is the gravitational force of God's love: the fact that we are loved by God and respond in love attracts us upwards. Man finds himself betwixt this twofold gravitational force; everything depends on our escaping the gravitational field of evil and becoming free to be attracted completely by the gravitational force of God, which makes us authentic, elevates us and grants us true freedom.

The Church invites us to lift up our hearts: "Sursum corda!" In the language of the Bible and the thinking of the Fathers, the heart is the centre of man, where understanding, will and feeling, body and soul, all come together. The centre where spirit becomes body and body becomes spirit, where will, feeling and understanding become one in the knowledge and love of God. This is the "heart" which must be lifted up.

But to repeat: we are too weak to lift up our hearts to the heights of God. We cannot do it. The very pride of thinking that we are able to do it on our own drags us down and estranges us from God. God himself must draw us up, and this is what Christ began to do on the cross. He descended to the depths of our human existence in order to draw us up to himself, to the living God. He humbled himself. Only in this way could our sinfulness be vanquished: God's humility is the extreme form of his love, and this humble love draws us upwards free from the paralyzing of our sinfulness.

Homily – Friendship (Chapter 11)

A True Friend brings the best out of his or her friends. You cannot convince me that someone who is not helping you become the best-version-of-yourself is a good friend" (Matthew Kelly, p. 125).

Everyone wants a best friend. Everyone thinks their friends are the best. But to ask yourself, Will spending time with this person make me a better person? So many people have friends who are really buddies. They are acquaintances. They are people you meet and hang out with. So many people have a stunted idea of friendship which is highschoolish. We think that having the best of this or that, we think that if I am popular and in all sorts of activities, if I am a party-person, if I hang out with people, or we think we are business partners, then I have true friends. Yet, true friends are not cronies; true friends are committed individuals who are striving to do something good or great. True friends are committed to support each other in good and bad times, sickness and in health, in death and salvation.

So many people divorce because they are not true friends. So many families are estranged because they did not develop friendships. So many communities are stricken with crime, violence, bitterness, and dissension because they do not know how to be a friend.

Friendship is not easy. Friendship is the most difficult virtue we will ever try to cultivate for it means we must expand ourselves to the point of sacrifice. Jesus tells us "No longer do I call you servants, because a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, because all that I have heard from the Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15).

The ultimate question is, "Is Jesus your Friend?" Jesus is a true friend because He does not allow you to wallow in your self-pity. He does not allow you to stay in bad relationships. He does not permit you to disown your promises and obligations, especially in marriage. He makes you do things that you don't like to do. In reality, He is a nightmare for anyone who does not understand friendship.

Friendship demands transformation. We have to be willing to change our way for a better way. We have to become the best person that we can become. We surround ourselves with people who support us in our transformation desire. We have to focus on transforming ourselves and the way we transform ourselves is uniting ourselves with others who are striving to be better themselves. We surround ourselves with people who want to be better and demand that we become better. They do not allow us to be second best.

Today our culture disowns Jesus and his hard teachings, especially the hardest teaching of all – forgiveness. So many people are angry, bitter, violent, and revengeful. People today believe that using another person is perfectly acceptable. We sell people like athletes and supermodels. We sell scams and cons. We think it is ok to trick or cheat, or gossip or meddle. These are our cultural virtues. Yet, when we here someone act with Christian virtues, we are amazed. Some are disgusted.

Until we have a vision of true friendship, we will never learn to be a true friend. So many people are starving for friendship and act out usually negatively, to get attention. Yet, as Christians we are to be the friend. We are the ones who are to reach out and touch others. We are the ones who are to expose ourselves and influence others. Christians have to stop living behind the veil of criticism, persecution, and corruption. We have to sell our way of living and the best way to sell our lifestyle is through friendship. We have to lay down our lives for others just as Jesus laid down his life for ours.

Quote: "Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish; Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal." --**Thomas Moore**
Humor: "Smile, it's free therapy." **There just may be something to this!**