

4th SUNDAY OF LENT

MARCH 14, 2021



Reading I: 2 Chronicles 36: 14-16, 19-23

The story of a collapsed Judah follows divine judgment. The chief evil of ignoring the prophets brings about a 70-year-long exile of the Israelites in Babylon. The unexpected decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, brings about a happy outcome.

Reading II: Ephesians 2: 4-10

God's love for the world is most evident when He sends His only Son into the world as His greatest gift.

The Gospel: John 3: 14-21

The Father's love for the world is manifest in His Son, Jesus. Jesus, in turn, tells His pupil Nicodemus that when "the Son of Man is lifted up" (on the cross), it will be a similar – but much more powerful – healing than that of the serpent lifted up in the desert.

MASS INTENTIONS

- 5 p.m.: Faleni Family, Richard Tolliver, Clare Costello and Eileen Exiner
10 a.m.: Nelson Family, Chris Pierce, William Conn, and Rosalina & Domingo Rodriguez

LAST WEEK'S MASS ATTENDANCE

5 p.m. Saturday, March 6: 42
10 a.m. Sunday, March 7: 51 in the church;
19 in the hall

TREASURER'S REPORT

March 1-7: Totaled \$ 7,630.63

Envelopes: \$ 3,372.00 – Online: \$ 4,258.63
Thank you!



From supporting needy parishes and religious education to charitable outreach and COVID-19 relief, your generosity makes a difference. As of March 5, \$21,375 toward our goal of \$43,000 has been received/pledged by 59 families. Thank you.

Visit www.cardinalsappeal.org/donate.

SEEK THE LIGHT OF LENT

Allow me to present some facts about an event coming next Saturday, March 20. At precisely 5:37 that morning, when most of us will probably be enjoying a Saturday sleep-in, the Vernal Equinox occurs. For one or two moments in the Northern Hemisphere, the sun will be exactly above the Equator, resulting in day and night of equal length.

More importantly, that will be the official arrival of spring 2021. "Vernal" is defined as "fresh or new" – just like spring. The days will grow noticeably longer than the nights. The new season will usher in all the joys of extended light after a long winter's darkness.

May I ask you now to make a spiritual application to Our Lord's teaching that we hear today? Nicodemus was a significant Jewish leader who was obviously drawn to Jesus and His teachings. Nicodemus wanted the opportunity to learn more in a private session. Yet he cowardly came at night, such was his fear that others might easily spot him in daytime.

In today's Gospel passage Jesus speaks of "the light that came into the world," without telling Nicodemus it is He. But He quickly adds the sad fact that "people preferred darkness to light because their works were evil." In all honesty, haven't we thought of ourselves as being in that

group, preferring the protection of darkness, even that of secrecy, rather than exposure of any kind?

Recall that infamous day just over two months ago when our nation's Capitol became a crime scene. On any given day, we agree that a brazen crime is made worse if it is committed in broad daylight. The boldness adds to the evil.

Lent is our opportunity to make reparation for all of our dark deeds. We want to straighten out our relationship with the Lord. We have the advantage of knowing from our Bible and from consistent Church teaching that God indeed loves us and was willing to die for our reconciliation with Him. The wisdom of our Church's lived experience is such that she knows we would have had to invent a Lent if she had not already done so – just like this Lent, now, in the year 2021.

Not to take advantage of this Lent here and now seems like the height of foolishness; does it not? Making a good confession is an essential part of the process, and we know that. Above all "be not afraid," as our great John Paul urged us at his installation as pope. Lenten reform is really not as complicated as the timing of the Vernal Equinox."

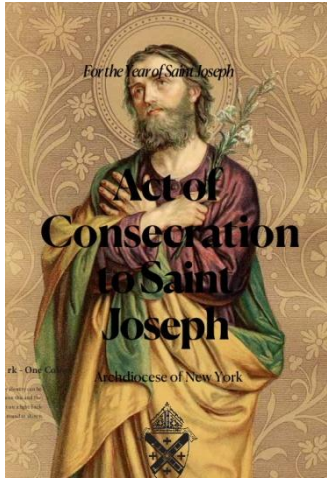
God is simple, holy and loving of you all the time. Take advantage of it and enjoy the sunshine.

God love you and give you His peace,
- Rev. Leonard N. Peterson



YOU CAN EAT MEAT ON MARCH 19

Fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday – along with abstinence from meat on Fridays – are important Lenten obligations for every Catholic bound by age and health.



Every few years, however, Lenten austerity is interrupted by one or two solemnities. This year, the Solemnity of St. Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary and patron saint of the universal Church, is March 19. And this year, also the Year of St. Joseph, that celebration falls on a Friday in Lent.

Timothy Cardinal Dolan is granting a dispensation from abstinence from meat as part of this observance. So along with a festive meal – perhaps concluding with a sweet Italian treat such as zeppole or sfingi – the cardinal says a donation to a food pantry would be appropriate. (St. Paul's pantry has been very busy!) People are also encouraged to choose another day to abstain from meat.

Additionally, Cardinal Dolan will offer the Consecration of the Archdiocese of New York to St. Joseph on Friday, March 19, following the 7 p.m. Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral. The Mass and consecration will be live-streamed and archived on its web page at www.saintpatrickscathedral.org

IN THE LOOP



In celebration of the **Year of St. Joseph**, a Preached Novena with a different theme as well as a different Carmelite friar will be featured at each Mass through March 19. Mass is at 11:30 a.m. weekdays, noon on Saturday and Sunday, at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Middletown. A complete schedule can be found at www.ourladyofmtcarmelshrine.com.



Between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Saturday, March 27, the Walkill East Rotary Club, in conjunction with the Town of Crawford and its Police Department, is sponsoring a **Food Drive**. Local food pantries – including St. Paul's – will benefit from the non-perishable items dropped off at the Crawford Senior & Community Center, 115 Route 302, Pine Bush. Questions? Call or text Peggy Lucido at 304-2728.



We are continuing to share resources for insight into the current issues of social justice from a Biblical/Church perspective. This week's reflection, "Panel: Social justice is essential to Black Catholics' faith" can be accessed via this link:

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/parish/panel-social-justice-essential-black-catholics-faith>



FIRST EUCHARIST RETREAT

Just as yeast is needed for flour to become bread, we need Jesus as the "yeast" in our lives to help us grow spiritually.

At the daylong retreat in preparation for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion, 11 youngsters received a hands-on lesson in this tenet of our faith. Under the guidance of Mr. Rick (Dzurilla) – and with the help of pre-measured ingredients to keep things tidy – bread-baking began with socially-distanced zeal.

And as with our personal growth, which takes time, so, too, was a smaller dose of patience required before the symbolic bread was ready. While it was rising, the children created banners with their names to be used in the pews at Our Lady of Mount Carmel during the First Eucharist Mass. Then they enthusiastically punched down the dough before shaping it for baking – but not before it had to rest and rise once again,

While waiting, they ate their brown-bag lunches and watched the video "Grandma's Bread." Then they sang and played games with Chris Worthington and Deb Harrison, the youth minister and his wife, who also helped prepare a song for them to perform for the parents, who returned after the loaves were out of the oven, golden brown.

"Oh my gosh, this is good," one parent exclaimed. No doubt!

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