

PASTOR'S NOTES

COVID 19 — Does Lent have anything to say?

As we live in these times of the coronavirus, does the world of faith, church or religion have anything to say or is this simply a disease and medical problem of great proportions?

As I was reflecting on this question, it came to mind that Lent began on Ash Wednesday with a reading from the prophet Joel. In Joel's time a great pestilence of locust was threatening the existence of the people of Israel. Joel's response was to summon an assembly of people to pray that God would raise his protective hand and stave off this imminent disaster. This story has some eerie semblance to our times with people having died, are dying, many infected, and daily life totally disrupted. It certainly seems prayer needs to be one of our responses along with heeding the best of medical advice.

On a theological level COVID 19 is an evil. Like all evil the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that it "cannot be understood apart from (its) connection to Adam's sin ..." [403]. God created all things with "its own goodness and proper perfection, but it did not spring forth complete from the hand of the Creator" [302]. The best of what God created (angels and mankind) were created in God's image and likeness and endowed with the power of the intellect to know the truth and the power of the will to choose the good. "Angels and men, as intelligent and free creatures, have to journey toward their ultimate destinies by their free choice and preferential love. They can therefore go astray." [311]

When Adam/Eve freely chose to disobey God, **moral evil entered the human condition** and has universally affected the world to this day. Adam/Eve's tempter continues unabated to this day. His hatred for God and God's moral authority (represented by the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden) is to seduce people to 'be like God' but "without God, before God, and not in accordance with God" [398]. This is the mark of all sin – venial or mortal! Perhaps this behavior is seen in recent wild beach parties all the while disregarding the call for small groups and social distancing.

The more we 'poo-hoo' sin as belonging to some unenlightened age, the more its effects gets imbedded into structures of living and becomes what the Catechism of the Catholic Church calls "structures of sin", which "are the expression and effect of personal sins. They lead their victims to do evil in their turn" [1869].

Where is God in all of this? In deepest respect for his order of creation (i.e., free choice and preferential love) by making us in his image and likeness (intellect and will) "God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil. He permits it ... and, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it" [311]. This is most deeply seen in the greatest moral evil - *the murder of his Son*. It brought the greatest of goods – *the redemption of the human race*.

COVID 19 is as much a religious issue as it is a medical crisis and human tragedy. What sinful choices and decisions gave rise to COVID 19 stand at the heart of this crisis. It could be a history of such choices and decisions (structures of sin) that simply came to a head in our times.

Lent is a time for prayer, almsgiving and fasting. Like the prophet Joel we need to gather and raise our voices in **prayer** that God's grace would lead us in a spirit of **almsgiving** to beat back the structures of sin that make us feel OK about being petty, polarized, arrogant and self-righteous. Those structures can be conquered when we seriously **fast** by examining our consciences and coming to grip with our disobedience to God's commandments, our search for cheap grace, our meager attempts at spiritual living, our half-hearted love of God and neighbor, our busyness with all the wrong things, our lack of adult faith, our failure to morally 'connect the dots', etc.

Sounds like a time for a good confession!



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347-4609

St. Thomas Catholic Church
401 Third St. North
PO Box 22
Buffalo ND
633-5150



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT March 22, 2020

Weekend Mass Schedule for St. Leo's and St. Thomas

1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays: 8:30 am St. Thomas, 10:30 am St. Leo's

2nd & 4th Sundays: 8:30 am St. Leo's, 10:30 am St. Thomas

Every Saturday: 5:00 pm at St. Leo's

Mass Intentions for the week of Mar 22:

Mon - Mar 23 - 9:00 am - **No Mass**

Tues - Mar 24 - 9:00 am - St. Thomas - **No Mass**

St. Leo's - NO MASS

Wed - Mar 25 - 9:00 am - **No Mass**

Thurs - Mar 26 - 9:00 am - **No Mass**

Fri - Mar 27 - 9:00 am - **No Mass**

Future Masses are pending and put on hold.

Parish Staff:

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Prayer Chain:

Bea Bachmeier: 347-5555

Kelsey Lako: 793-7088

Maintenance: Paul & Sherry Radermacher

Phone: 701-793-7740; 701-793-7798

St. Leo's Directors: Mark Rehovsky & Mark Wieland

St. Thomas Directors: Larry Zaun & Gary Milbrandt

Sacrament of Reconciliation

at St. Leo's

4:00 - 4:45 pm Saturday

at St. Thomas

8:00 - 8:15 am

before all 8:30 am Masses

~ Anytime by appointment

~ Communal Services during

Advent and Lent

New Members: If you are new to the area, we would love to have you as a registered member. To register as a new member of the parish, please visit with Fr. Ermer after Mass.

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Please join in praying the Rosary  
25 minutes before the Saturday evening  
and Sunday morning Mass times.

## PARISH EVENTS/MEETINGS

Sun., Mar 22 - 6:30 pm - Ecumenical Prayer Service at Canaan Norwegian Church, Supper at 6 pm  
 Wed., Mar 25 - 3:45 pm - RE classes at St. Thomas  
 Wed., Mar 25 - 6:00 pm - Stations of the Cross at St. Leo's  
 Wed., Mar 25 - 6:30 pm - RE classes at St. Leo's  
 Wed., Mar 25 - 6:15 pm - Offertory at St. Leo's  
 Wed., Mar 25 - 8:00 pm - Offertory at St. Leo's  
 Fri., Mar 27 - 5:00 pm - Fish Fry at St. Leo's  
 Fri., Mar 27 - 7:00 pm - Stations of the Cross at St. Leo's  
 Sat., Mar 28 - 1:00- 4:00 pm - Reconciliation Retreat for 2nd graders

**CANCELLED**

When we return to regular events you will be notified by email.

**Sunday Offertory:** Since all parish households have Sunday offertory envelopes, your Sunday offertory envelope can be either be mailed to the parish office or dropped off at the parish office.

If this is a time you would like to join others who are enrolled in the automatic cash withdrawal for your Sunday offertory collection, please call Delores (347-4609) for details.

|                                                                                    | <b>Saturday Mar 28</b><br>5:00 pm<br><i>St. Leo's</i><br>4th Sat of Month                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Sunday Mar 29</b><br>8:30 am<br><i>St. Thomas</i> | <b>Sunday Mar 29</b><br>10:30 am<br><i>St. Leo's</i><br>5th Sun of Month |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Tony Roth                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Jackie Vavra                                         | Darcey Chevovsky                                                         |
| <b>Lector</b>                                                                      | Tony Roth                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Jackie Vavra                                         | Darcey Chevovsky                                                         |
| <b>Eucharistic Ministers</b>                                                       | Due to concerns regarding the distribution of the Precious Blood (COVID-19) St. Leo's and St. Thomas will temporarily suspend the distribution of the Precious Blood. That change will be in effect for the next several weeks. One EMHC will be needed and that is at the Sunday Mass at St. Leo's. If you are normally scheduled for that date, please contact the parish office before Mass to see that it is covered. |                                                      |                                                                          |
| <b>Altar Servers</b>                                                               | Lillian Roth<br>Olivea Roth<br>Evelyn Roth                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Clay Hovelson<br>Meyer Wendel                        | Paris Mack<br>Parker Mack                                                |
| <b>Offertory Collectors</b>                                                        | Volunteer needed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Keith & Joni Biggers                                 | Volunteer needed                                                         |
| <b>Gift Bearers</b>                                                                | Tanner McDaniel Family                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Marvin & Minnie Ries                                 | Kelly Rexine Family                                                      |

**TENTATIVE Ministry Schedule**

## NEWS AND NOTES

**Special prayers and blessings** to the faithful couples that help us see the presence and faithfulness of God in our lives:

**Robert & Mary Lynne Snyder - 58 yrs on March 24**

**Prayers and Sympathy:** Our Parish communities extend our deepest sympathies to the family of Ray Killoran on his death; and to Vicki Houle and her family on the death of her mother, Donna Wilkie.

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. —Matthew 5:4*

**Lenten Canisters** – One recipient of our Lenten canisters is **Home on the Range**. Home on the Range is a working ranch located in Western ND that provides education, therapy, spiritual guidance and recreational and work activities for boys and girls ages 12-19. All of the children have experienced trauma most people can't image. The goal is to teach appropriate coping skills, heal trauma and do it in a matter of months. Once the children have completed their program at Home on The Range, they return to their communities and families. Please be generous in supporting our Lenten charities.

**Teams of Our Lady** is celebrating its 13<sup>th</sup> year and now has eleven teams of five to seven couples each and is inviting other Catholic couples to come and chick out Teams of Our Lady by attending one of our two information meeting to see if it might be something your marriage might be enriched by. Team Couple Matthew and Laura Devick will present a 45 minute information session with time for questions on the following date: Sunday, May 3 at Nativity Catholic Church, (1825 11th St S, Fargo) at 2 pm in the Bethlehem Room. Teams of Our Lady is an international marriage movement begun in 1940's in France and is a way for couple to grow in holiness in your marriage by meeting other like-minded Catholic couples.

### This week's Stewardship moment:

*"Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart." - 1 Samuel 16:7*

How often do we invest our time, talent and treasure in creating an appearance that does not matter at all to God? We strive to impress with our clothing, home, career, possessions, car and other marks of distinction. But none of these illusions of greatness will impress God. Instead, He will look into our hearts to see how much we loved Him, how much we loved others and how we showed that love by the way we used our time, talent and treasure here on earth.

**All KC events at St. Leo's are pending and put on hold until further notice.**

**Women's Redeemed Conference: Cancelled!** Plans are currently underway to reschedule the conference for early 2021.

**St. Leo's/St. Thomas Evangelization Tote:** The tote is still available for pick up at the church. Sign-up today to take a turn with the Tote for your household. In the Tote, there is something for everyone to help you grow in your Catholic faith. The sign-up sheet is in the church entry.