



Nativity Star

Lent/Easter 2015



My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Lent is that Holy Season of the Church year when we stop the pace, slow the routine and examine our spiritual growth. We all know the story of the Prodigal Son. My friend, Bishop Serratelli offers some great insights as to how the parable applies to our lives:

Mission Statement:
Nativity of Our Lord Catholic Community welcomes all searching for God while growing together in faith by God's grace through prayer, service and sharing.

When the younger son returns, the father lovingly forgives him. Just as the father lovingly greets his prodigal son, so does God treat us. He is pleased to reckon the forgiveness of our sins as his honor. When God forgives, it is not for anything in us. Rather as he says through the prophet Isaiah, "It is I, who wipe out, for my own sake, your offenses, your sins I remember no more: (Is 43:25). God forgives our sins in his great love for the sake of his own name (cf Is 48:11). We do not merit God's love. We accept it.

The law of Deuteronomy required the rebellious son to be stoned to death at the city gates. Thus, the father hastens to reach his son while he is still away from home. He holds on to him in love so that others are not able to carry out what the law demanded in justice. God's mercy always goes beyond what justice requires and grants forgiveness to the repentant. Our contrition may not always be perfect, but God's love is!

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The father embraces his son, holding him close to his heart, kissing him again and again as would a mother showering affection on her child. What a great image of God that Jesus gives us! God transcends our categories. He who is Father has within his bosom a mother's heart. Jesus knew well the words of the prophet Isaiah, "As a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you" (66:13). Lamenting Jerusalem and our sinful hearts, he said, "one of your hired workers" (Lk 15:18-19). His father's joyful embrace cuts short his well-prepared speech. He no longer asks to be treated like a hired servant. In God's eyes, we are more than servants (cf. Jn15:15)

Driven by an emptiness in his heart more painful than the gnawing hunger in his stomach, the prodigal returns home. He rehearses again and again his painful confession: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son: treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers" (Lk 15:18-19). His father's joyful embrace cuts short his well-prepared speech. He no longer asks to be treated like a hired servant. In God's eyes, we are more than servants (cf. Jn15:15). In Baptism, we put on Christ and truly become his children.

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When we tarnish our dignity as children of God by our sins, the Father is ready to clothe us again in his grace through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. However, just as the prodigal son, we need to confess our sins. We are body and spirit. We live by word and deed. We have the need to be seen and to be heard. We have the need to confess our sins out loud to the priest and to hear the words of forgiveness spoken by him in the name of Jesus. As St. Athanasius teaches, "Just as a man is enlightened by the Holy Spirit when he is baptized by a priest, so he who confesses his sins with a repentant heart obtains his remission from the priest."

It is not so much that God cannot forgive us without confession to a priest. Rather, he has given us this great sacrament precisely to meet us in our humanity. Whether we sin like the younger brother, grievously separating ourselves from God, or like the elder brother, separating ourselves from others, frequent confession opens us up to the love of God and helps us to appreciate that we are members of the family of God and not isolated individuals. The same love that the Father shows the younger son, he extends to the elder brother. To his selfish insistence on his own rights, the father tenderly gives a gentle reprimand. He invites him to be seated at table, celebrating the joy of being one family. He waits for his response. He waits for ours. Taking our place at the Lord's table! Being part of the family of God! This is where our observance of Lent leads us. During the forty days of Lent, we deepen our prayer, practice fasting and increase our works of charity (cf. Matt 6:1-18) to prepare for Easter. On that solemn Feast of feasts, we gather, with the newly baptized, to join with Jesus in his Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Through the Paschal Mystery, Jesus makes real in our lives the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

Jesus knows that his life on earth is about to end on the cross. Three times during his public ministry, he had predicted it (cf. Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34). At the Last Supper, he interprets the meaning of his impending death. He is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, who takes on himself the sins of others (cf. Is 53:8). As St. Paul says, "For our sake He made Him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus is all of us, the prodigal, empty, beaten, and stripped of dignity, because of our sins.

Recognizing what was ahead, Jesus enters the Garden of Gethsemane. He prays beneath its gnarled olive trees, even as the elders, with a twisted sense of justice, plot to put Him to death. The weight of our sins crushes him to the ground. But, he rises with purpose and courage.

Jesus goes to the Cross, taking upon himself our sins. He is the Son who knows the infinite mercy of the Father who says, "This son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found" (Lk 15:24). His road to Golgotha is the way to glory. And so Jesus "humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name" (Phil 2:8-9).

The Cross of Jesus is the return of the Prodigal Son, all of us, into the home of our Father. For, in the arms of the Crucified Christ, we encounter the Father who runs to meet us. He embraces us with his love, even as we try to utter our words of repentance. His love overwhelms us. He invites us to the Eucharist. Seated at our rightful place at the table of the Lord, we already share in the eternal banquet of the Lamb, slain and raised from the dead, where one day we will know a joy that never ends.

We are all called to lives that include repentance, if not for sins of commission, how about the omissions that we deliberately avoid?

May this Lent bring you growth and peace with yourself, others, and God!

In Christ,

F. Jack

My Nativity Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we prepare for our Lenten journey, consider finding a quiet place for just a moment. Get away from the T.V., turn off the smart phone, power down the computer, walk away from conversation around you.

Listen!... Do you hear it...? God is calling. Did you know that many of the Old Testament prophets also did not want to listen to God's call? They persisted to say 'no, not me Lord.'



Listen to;

Isaiah's excuse. I'm not the spiritual type, "I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:1-8) and I don't know what to say. *The Lord answers: I will put words in your mouth.*

Ezekiel said, "I'm a loud and explosive person. You don't want me, Lord." *The Lord answers, "I need you to speak to a king who is just like you."*

Hosea's excuse, "My family is in shambles, my wife is unfaithful. Surely I cannot speak to the people." *The Lord answers, "But you will understand my people who, at times, are also unfaithful".*

Jeremiah, "I'm too young, or we may say, I'm too old." *The Lord answers, "I need your energy and youth, or, I need your wisdom and dedication."*

Like the prophets of the Old Testament, we too have excuses. The Good News is that Jesus is the one that we are trying to emulate. It's a journey. God doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies the called. It's not too late to review your Lent commitment. A small commitment that says, "yes Lord," and allows you to grow in your faith and relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! We all have an opportunity to say "Yes Lord," through quiet prayer and conversation with God. Lent is a great time for Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving (anything given as charity).

Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry – St. Padre Pio.

The best is yet to come, God Bless – Kevin DeCleene, Deacon



Are you being called to be a Vincentian?

Since the St. Vincent de Paul Conference at Nativity was reorganized in June, 2014, it has been a busy year. There are twelve active members in the Nativity Conference who meet monthly to find ways to serve our community.

During 2014, 26 home visits were made, and 39 family members within our parish neighborhood were given assistance with housing, food, furniture, transportation, and scholarships. In addition, associate members of Nativity have volunteered at St. Vincent DePaul thrift stores, Paul's Pantry and our shelter for women with children, House of Hope.

New members are always welcome and donations of money, food, furniture, clothing, and household items are appreciated. An envelope for monetary donations will be at the church entrances. Your donations go directly to persons in need. As Pope Francis would say, "Love for others is a wonderful thing."

If interested, please call **Dorothy** at 632-7266 for more information.

Nativity is Hosting the Living Stations of the Cross

"We adore you, O Christ, and bless you. For by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world."
Lent is upon us, allowing us to pause, think about the gifts we are given, and identify ways to improve ourselves as a way of growing stronger in our faith and closer to God. As each of us enter into this Lenten season, what will you do to improve upon your faith? Jesus offered His life for us, what can you "offer up" for Him?

On April 1, 2015, the Nativity Parish Faith Formation Department will be hosting the Living Stations of the Cross. The 8th grade students from St. Bernard Catholic School, as part of GRACE, have been studying Jesus' Passion, Death, and Resurrection since early February. The students have taken their knowledge of what Jesus endured and created a dramatization of those events. The students are asked to write a script, a reflection, and infuse any music, dialogue, costumes, and props to help make these events come alive.

The Living Stations will begin in Church at [6:30 pm on Wednesday, April 1, 2015](#) and will last 45-60 minutes long. This event is open to all ages and there will be reflection questions for anyone who may want them. The event is FREE, so please consider joining us that evening. It will be a great way to lead into the Triduum.

Be sure to watch Nativity's bulletin for additional details. We look forward to seeing you there.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns in regards to this or any event that takes place with the youth, please feel free to contact the Faith Formation Department at (920) 499-6012.

Slow Down - 10 tips for making the Lenten season more meaningful:

1. Set aside 10 minutes a day for silent prayer or meditation. It will revitalize your body and your spirit.
2. Read a good book - You could choose the life of a saint, a spiritual how-to, an inspirational book or one of the Pope's new books.
3. Be kind - Go out of your way to do something nice for someone else every day.
4. Get involved - Attend a Lenten lecture or spiritual program.
5. Volunteer at your parish - Whether it's the parish fish fry, cleaning the church or helping with the food drive, it will give you a chance to help others.
6. Reach out - Invite an inactive Catholic to come with you to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday.
7. Pray - Especially for people you don't like and for people who don't like you.
8. Tune out - Turn off the television and spend quality time talking with family members or friends.
9. Clean out closets - Donate gently used items to the St. Vincent de Paul Society.
10. Donate — Google "Catholic Missions." Then pick one mission and decide how you can help by sending money, clothing or supplies.

From *Our Sunday Visitor*- Your Guide to a Catholic Lent –OSV.com

Make a Joyful Noise!!

We are in need of many helping hands to make our Parish shine.



Some of our current needs are:

- Locking and opening up the Church on weekends
- Eucharistic Ministers to bring Holy Communion to *nursing homes*
 - Altar Servers especially at 5:00 and 8:30 Masses
 - Electrician for the Picnic

Do you hear God calling you to help?

Please contact:

Deb Langenhuizen – Volunteer Coordinator
920-490-1352 ext. 211 or natdl@nativityparish.com

I'm trying to fit in and follow Christ!

My Church is composed of people like me

I help make it what it is.

It will be friendly, if I am.

Its pews will be filled, if I help fill them.

It will do great work, if I work.

It will make generous gifts to many causes,

if I am generous giver.

It will bring other people into its worship

and fellowship,

if I invite and bring them.

It will be a church of loyalty and love,

of fearlessness and of faith,

and a church with a noble spirit,

if I make it what it is,

am filled with these same things.

Therefore, with the help of God,

I shall dedicate myself to the task of being

all the things that I want my church to be.

Please join us for our Lenten “serving” of

SOUP AND SUBSTANCE

*---a light supper of homemade
soup, rolls and dessert,
followed by the
“substance”, an
inspirational
Lenten talk
by a favorite
speaker.*



The 2015 dates for Soup and Substance are:

- **March 12th**
- **March 19th**
- **March 26th**



Speakers will be announced at a later date. All evenings will take place in Bona Hall from 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Please call the Parish Office, 499-5156 to register. There is no charge.

Sponsored by the Family Life Commission of Nativity Parish

Message Board

— Like us on [Facebook](#) to keep up with church activities

EVENTS FOR ALL:

- February 15 — Wedding Anniversary Celebration
- February 22 — KCs Breakfast in Bona Hall
- March 13 — 2nd Fridays for Seniors — 9:00 AM (Church)
- April 1 — The Living Stations — 6:30 PM (Church)
- April 3 — Good Friday office open 8-12
- April 10 & 11 — Women's Guild Rummage Sale
- May 7 — Mother & Daughter Dinner
- May 10 — Mother's Day
- May 25 — Memorial Day office closed
- June 13 & 14 — Church Picnic Weekend
 - Entertainment - Saturday evening - Nashville Pipeline
 - Sunday afternoon - Blind Ambition
- Stop and Pick up Scrip to do weekly shopping
- Nativity Cookbooks are for sale in the office — Cost \$10

Thank you to Bernie Selk for her hard work on this newsletter.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Lent — Easter 2015

Masses & Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion

Saturday Evenings 5:00 PM (Not April 4 — Easter Vigil)

Sunday Mornings 8:30 AM & 10:15 AM

Weekday Masses

Tuesdays & Fridays 9:00 AM

Wednesdays 8:00 AM

Ash Wednesday — February 18

Service with Ashes 6:45 AM & Noon

Mass with Ashes 8:00 AM & 6:30 PM

Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion

Mondays & Thursdays 9:00 AM

Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Mondays 9:30 AM — 1:00 PM in the Chapel

Holy Hour Service

Second Monday of each month - 12:05-1:00 PM

(Benediction when a Deacon leads)

Taize Prayer — March 18 & April 15 - 6:30 PM (Chapel)

Anointing of the Sick — March 1 after 8:30 AM Mass

2nd Fridays for Seniors — March 13 - 9:00 AM (Church)

Sacrament of Reconciliation at Nativity

March 10 at 7:00 PM & March 11 at 7:00 PM

Saturdays — 4:00 - 4:40 PM (not on April 4) (Or by appointment)

At Westside Parishes

March 1 — 1:30 PM — St. Agnes

March 4 — 6:30 PM — St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

March 11 — 7:00 PM — St. John the Baptist

Stations of the Cross (Church) — Mondays 6:30 PM

Two Styles Offered—Traditional and Contemporary;

Traditional (scripture based) and Contemporary
(reflections by Sr. Joan Chittister's *Gateway to Resurrection*)

February 23, March 9 & March 23 (Contemporary)

March 2, March 16 & March 30 (Traditional)

Holy Week and Paschal Triduum

Palm Sunday Masses (Passion)

March 28 (Sat.) 5:00 PM & March 29 (Sun.) 8:30, 10:15 AM

Holy Thursday — April 2: Mass of the Lord's Supper 7:00 PM

Good Friday — April 3: The Lord's Passion 1:00 PM & 7:00 PM

Easter Vigil — April 4: 8:00 PM

Easter Sunday — April 5: The Resurrection of the Lord --
Church & Bona Hall 8:30 AM & 10:15 AM

DO NOT PRINT THIS PAGE!!!

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