



Stronica Proboszcza

The Pastor's Page

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First Sunday of Lent

Month of Saint Joseph

Rev. Mark A. Borkowski

FrmarkB@aol.com

Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!
Praised be Jesus Christ!

We have now officially begun the holy season of Lent as of last Wednesday. This is an intense time of year for all of us. The Lord expects spiritual growth from each one of us and that will require work! On the first day of this holy season, before receiving the blessed ashes, we were all instructed by the Lord Himself in the gospel as to what must be done: **PRAY! FAST! & GIVE ALMS!**

Your parish church is here to help you do these things! **PRAY** – In addition to the Sunday Mass, which of course is the greatest prayer known to humanity, why not consider coming to a daily Mass. The 6:30 AM Mass on Monday, Wednesday and Friday might be a bit much for most folks, but the Tuesday and Thursday night Masses at 7:00 PM and even the Saturday morning Mass at 8:00 AM surely are do-able for most people. The Tuesday night Mass is preceded by the novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, these devotions conclude with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, a perfect way to prepare for the Mass and Holy Communion that follow.

There will also be three full days of opportunity to pray and adore Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist during our annual Forty Hours Devotion in March. Or...you could work on fulfilling Our Lord's command to pray, in a beautiful way by attending the Stations of the Cross on Friday evenings at 7:00 PM.

The Stations of the Cross in our church are fine works of art. I hope you've taken a good look at them lately! Recently they were painstakingly and lovingly restored by two of our good parishioners. The stations are original to the church and date back to 1916. They are like big picture windows looking in on the Holy City of Jerusalem on that fateful day when our salvation was won. Consider coming to this devotion for the good of your soul! The devotion culminates with the distribution of Holy Communion for those who are unable to attend Mass that day.

FAST (& abstinence) once again your church is there to help you! On the Friday's of Lent your fellow parishioners will be conducting a Fish Fry in our parish hall. If you are over fourteen years of age you cannot eat meat on the Friday's of Lent. Our chefs will have delicious baked fish, deep fried fish, fried shrimp dinners, and Polish pierogi and placki kartoflane/potato pancakes ready to feed you. There will also be a fine salad bar available from which you could make an entire meal! I must point out however that the dear Lord had more in mind than food when he spoke of fasting in the gospel. It is even more important for us to fast or give up behaviors that do not exhibit Christian charity. Fasting is to be understood as doing penance for the sins we have committed. It is an

outward sign that we really are sorry for what we've done wrong.

GIVING ALMS – this means generously and joyfully sharing the material blessings we have received with others who are in need. Donating food for the poor and hungry is an excellent way of practicing almsgiving. Every Lent hundreds of Easter baskets for needy children are prepared in our parish. On Holy Saturday they are delivered by our volunteers. Please consider sponsoring a child and also please continue bringing your non perishable food items for the poor and hungry to the church or rectory. Special large wicker baskets have been provided in the vestibules of the church and gymnasium. Sharing our food with the poor and hungry is especially pleasing to the Lord Jesus who reminded us that we feed Him when we feed the hungry. We all can help the many people who are in need of something as basic as food with your generosity and commitment to almsgiving.

Just as in fasting however, giving alms is not just about money! It's about charity and care for others. And so we must examine the way we treat others. Being patient, kind, understanding and compassionate to others, especially those who just get on our nerves is a form of giving alms! During Lent a beautiful penance, pleasing to the Lord, would be to be kind to someone you just don't like. **WE ALL HAVE SUCH A PERSON IN OUR LIVES!** The person of whom we say, "*I just don't like that guy! I can't stand listening to him/her or being around him/her!*" Having a good Lent means hard work, even a little sweat and blood but we have all the spiritual strength we need available to us. So...let's roll up our sleeves and get to the task at hand! Have a great Lent!

The Parish Debt Revisited

Some time back I reported to you that the parish debt upon my arrival here in 2013 was \$1,268,783.11. Now five years have passed and payments have been made on that debt. At present the debt is **\$1,033,846.55**. This means that over the last five years we have managed to pay \$234,936.56. The money to make these payments has come from the rental of our school.

Let me dissect the debt here for our readers. We still owe \$43,497.88 to the Michigan Catholic Conference. This is our insurer. This is money owed on health insurance policies of former school employees. We are making all our current payments on health insurance for our current employees. We still owe \$202,057.24 on assessment payments not made over the years. This is the 7% "tax" on all parish collections. Again we are at present paying all our current assessment bills. We owe \$26,479.81 on back clergy pension bills, and \$14,096.00 on back clergy medical insurance bills. We have paid all our current clergy medical bills. This amount is pre-2013. We owe \$237,754.89 on CSA shortfalls in the past. Since 2013 we have paid all our CSA shortfalls. This is the money not collected from parishioners on our CSA goal. We have paid these shortfalls using Sunday collection money, which is quite painful.

Now, the parish still owes on loans it received from the archdiocese. This amount is \$509,978.73, and unfortunately this amount acquires interest at the rate of 5.5%. So, as you can see progress is slowly being made. Of course it would greatly help if we were allowed to sell the St. Stanislaus Kostka property but the Vatican courts are not helping in this matter with over five years of delay in making their decision. We are also contributing \$70,000.00 a year to the support of the St. John Paul School.

*The greater a person's sense of guilt,
the greater his need to cast blame on others.*

So Why Do Catholics Eat Fish on Friday?

It would seem as if from almost time immemorial Catholics have been known in this world as “those people, who eat fish on Friday!” Even though it is officially only our practice on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays of Lent, still that is the way many a non-Catholic would see us. Actually the real practice is called abstinence and it means abstaining from eating “flesh meat,” such as beef, pork, or poultry. There is a far-fetched theory that has circulated for quite some time that Friday abstinence was a medieval invention designed to help the fishing industry of the time.

According to Canon Law, this weekly act of abstinence is a sign of penance on the day of Our Lord’s crucifixion. From a theological perspective the idea is that we abstain from the meat of animals whose blood has been shed on the day in which the blood of the Godman was shed. Fish became the exception to this rule because the fish became the symbol of Christ and the Holy Eucharist.

In the days when abstaining from meat was mandatory for all Catholics every Friday of the year, restaurants were quick to offer appropriate menus for the day and even to this day the Friday specials of most restaurants feature fresh fish catches and clam chowder. Even McDonald’s added the Filet-O-Fish sandwich to its menus in 1962 after Louis Groen, owner of the chain’s Cincinnati franchises, noticed that his restaurants experienced a sharp drop in sales every Friday.

It is important to remember that the early church took many of its customs and practices from the Jewish Faith. The Jews have many days of fasting and abstaining from meat on their calendar. The early Christians chose both Wednesday and Friday as days of penance. Wednesday, because Our Lord was betrayed by Judas on a Wednesday and Friday of course because on this day of the week the Lord was put to death.

There is yet one other explanation for the eating of fish, especially during the season of Lent. The forty days of Lent are often compared to the forty days and nights Noah and his family spent on the ark when the world was flooded. During this time they of course ate no meat as the animals were on board so as to be saved from death. Rather fishing and the eating of fish became the norm for their time afloat.

Lent

The word Lent is from the Anglo-Saxon *Lencten* (spring). *Lenctentid* (springtide) was the Saxon name for the month of March because March is the month in which days begin to lengthen (also a root of “lent”). This penitential season, falling as it does largely in the month of March, adopted and adapted the term and so we call this season Lent. In Polish, Lent is called *Wielki Post* which means the great fast. There was a time in the life of the Church when every day of Lent (except Sunday) was considered a day of fast. Also during this period of Church history both Wednesdays and Fridays were days of abstinence. Even though the rules have now been greatly relaxed Lent continues to be for us a challenging season of self denial and a time for all of us to humbly attempt to atone for the many sins we have all committed in this life.

Stations of the Cross every Friday of Lent!
At 7 PM Come and walk this sorrowful road with Our Lord and Our Lady
And receive Holy Communion for the good of your immortal soul!

Gorzkie Żale – The Bitter Lamentations

Are you familiar with this 100% Polish Lenten Devotion. What is it you ask? Or better yet what are they? *Gorzkie Żale* translates literally as the Bitter Lamentations or Sorrows. It is a sung devotion that focuses on the passion and death of the Lord Jesus and the sorrows of His grieving mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The *Gorzkie Żale* devotion Polish people practice was first introduced in the city of Warsaw in 1707 at the church of the Holy Cross. This is a well known church in the city of Warsaw, staffed by the Vincentian fathers. Frederick Chopin was organist there at one time. In front of the church on *Nowy Świat* Street stands a famous statue of Christ carrying His Cross with one hand raised in a beckoning call. At the foot of the figure the Latin words *Sursum Corda/Lift up your hearts* are carved.

The missionary priests of St. Vincent de Paul who wrote the texts for this beloved devotion drew their inspiration from various *mystery plays* that dated back to the Middle Ages in Europe. The theme of course was the Passion of Christ, one so common on the Polish countryside which is dotted with roadside crosses, shrines and carved figures of the *Worrying Christ* or *Chrystus frasobliwy*. This folk carving common in the Polish village depicts Christ sitting with a scarlet cape on His shoulders and a crown of thorns on His head. For some strange reason our ancestors loved this Christ, maybe because He too was worried, maybe because He reminded them of a confessor, maybe because He too suffered.

It was this Jesus that was most human, who is Jesus sung of during the musical meditations of *Gorzkie Żale*. It was at Calvary that God became real, like one of us, even worse: *despised and scorned by men*. Here He truly *emptied Himself taking the form of a slave* and felt His humanity. This moving devotion helps all of us meditate with all creation on the death of the Savior of the world and the suffering of His sorrowful mother. The plaintive melodies set the tone for the soul to call out to Christ in the midst of our own trials and find meaning and peace of soul.

During Lent the *Gorzkie Żale* devotion will take place every Sunday afternoon at 3:00 PM. *Gorzkie Żale* is a wonderful continuation of the Lenten Mass prayers.

The devotion begins with this poetic meditation:

O bitter sorrows, come and pierce our dark, cold hearts. Cause tears to flow freely from my eyes in fountains of sadness. The sun and the stars seem to be fainting, as they drape themselves in mourning. Angels are weeping tenderly, O who can explain such sorrow as theirs? The face of the earth breaks itself open as the dead begin to rise up from their graves. What is this I ask, what could be happening? Now all of creation is trembling! The pain of Christ's Passion causes me overwhelming, unspoken repentance. Jesus, strike and break open, without hesitation, our hardened hearts. O my Jesus, cleanse my soul from its sin in the blood of Your wounds. Lord, inflame my cold heart, now as I enter once more into Your Sacred Passion.

Every Friday of Lent is a day of Abstinence.

***Everyone over 14 years of age must abstain from eating meat
Why not come to our Fish Fry and support your parish and save yourself the
trouble of cooking? In the school building from 3PM until 7PM***