

Reflection on the Gospel

Two years ago the Vatican announced that the number of Muslims in the world exceeded the number of Roman Catholics. However, in the United States, the number of Roman Catholics is larger than any other religious denomination. This statistic is accurate, but requires a footnote. The number of Roman Catholics here in the US continues to grow largely because of the immense number of Hispanics entering the country, most of whom are Roman Catholics. Actually, the number of non-Hispanics in the Roman Catholic Church has declined drastically. There are thirty million former Catholics in the US; this means that approximately one in ten Americans is a former Catholic. This is a staggering and sobering statistic.

There are probably thirty million reasons why these former Catholics have lost the religion of their childhood. I'm sure all of you know some of their stories. The French writer Bernanos offers one explanation: "We don't lose our faith. We simply stop shaping our lives by it." In other words, people gradually put their faith into a compartment, into a mental and moral closet, where it no longer influences any of their life's decisions. They are no longer numbered among the faithful because their lives are no longer full of faith.

Let me offer a simple, realistic pattern for relegating our faith to the closet. When we are beset with difficulties, trials, suffering, or disappointments, we give up on God. In other words, when we are in bad times, we question God's love for ourselves. We all know the story well, even if it doesn't hold true for us: How can God allow this to happen to me if God truly loves me? On the other hand, in times of prosperity, we fail to credit God for the gifts that we enjoy. In times of prosperity, if we forget the words of Saint Paul. "What do you have that you have not received?," then we follow a pattern towards disintegration of our faith.

In today's reading we are given the picture of two men of faith: Abraham and Jesus. Abraham was put to the ultimate test: the willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham was forced to make a decision that it seems no loving, trustworthy God could ever demand. Yet, it was the God of the covenant, the God who made all those glowing promises to Abraham, who was now asking for the ultimate sacrifice. As any parent knows, Abraham would have rather killed himself than kill his own son. But in the darkest hour, Abraham's faith proved strong enough to pass the test.

In the gospel, Jesus is glorified before the three chosen apostles. Jesus neither creates this spectacle on his own, nor for his own sake. Jesus recognized that the glory in which he basks is as the Son of God. After Peter ecstatically suggests that they put up three tents to mark the occasion, Jesus waits for the Father to mark the occasion with the divine approval of Jesus' authority. Jesus himself connects this transfiguration on Mount Tabor with the exaltation of Jesus on Mount Calvary. Waiting for divine approbation is surely part of the emptying process that is completed with the crucifixion. Furthermore, Jesus took Peter, James and John with him to strengthen them when their faith could be tested by his death. God's gifts are always given for the building up of the Body of Christ and not just for our own personal advantage or benefit.

Let me offer a pattern for building up and strengthening your faith. In times of trial, do not question God's love for you. In times of prosperity, remember that all the gifts we receive are from above and to be used for God's glory, not our own.

This pattern is easy to remember when we celebrate the Eucharist. It is essentially an act of thanksgiving for God's gifts and, at the same time, we express our willingness to join ourselves to the perfect victim.



Stewardship Report:



Revenue

March 1:	9,300.67
Faith Direct:	1,351.25
Total Offertory:	10,651.92
Last Year:	12,629.57
Poor Box:	152.48
Every Penny Counts Box:	273.97

Number of Adult Envelopes: 257
Number of Children's Envelopes: 15
Number of Faith Direct donors: 37
Number of Registered Households: 668



Our 2009 Lenten Schedule

Of Worship & Activities

Lenten Regulations for Catholics

In preparation for the paschal mysteries of Easter, Catholics are reminded of the following regulations for the forty days of Lent: **All Catholics over fourteen years of age must abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday (February 25th) and all Fridays of Lent, including Good Friday (April 10th). On both Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, Catholics between the ages of eighteen and fifty-nine should fast.** This means only one full meal that day. Other meals on those days should be of small portion. Snacking should be avoided. One is excused from the obligation if his/her health or work would be seriously affected by this fast or abstinence. The Lenten observance of our time places emphasis on prayer, the liturgy, good works, self-denial, and the giving of alms to the poor.

Lenten Coin Folders

These colorful and simple tools are available for those who wish to have a practical way to give alms to the poor during Lent. Add a quarter or fifty-cents a day to your coin folder and donate the proceeds during Holy Week to the Poor Box.

Lenten Spiritual Reading

Please use the attached envelope for the following titles and place in the Every Penny Counts box or collection basket:

- The Word Among Us (Daily Meditations for Lent 2009): \$4.00
- The Magnificat Lenten Companion (offered at a nominal fee)
- The following titles are available for \$1.00 each:
- Bring Lent Home
- God's Blessing for You
- Blessings of the Cross

**The following pamphlets are also available.
Please consider a free will gift to the Poor Box
for any materials you take.**

- How Catholics Worship— What We Do and Why We Do It
- The Rite of Penance: Guide to the Ritual of the Sacraments
- Seeds of Hope: The Way of the Cross, Minute Meditations

Faith Formation

Confirmation Parent/Candidate Meeting: A make-up meeting has been scheduled for Monday, **March 9 at 6:45 pm**. Due to the structure of the requirements laid out by Archbishop Donald Wuerl, we do have to make up for any session lost due to inclement weather. Please make it a point to attend this session, which will deal with the 3rd session in the booklet.

First Communion Parent Meeting: Parents of children in second grade (school and Faith Formation) who missed the Parent meeting scheduled for Monday, February 23 have another opportunity to attend this final meeting to be held on Monday, March 16, 2009 at 6:45 pm in Friendship Hall. Those parents whose children (2nd and 3rd graders only) are yet to be baptized must also attend this meeting. No other make-up meeting will be held and I will not be in a position to meet one on one with parents after this meeting, so do make it a point to be there.

Young Adults Ministry (Bible Study Group): Sister Theresa Marie will be giving a presentation to the on Monday, March 9 from 7:00 – 8:15 pm. Don't miss this opportunity to listen to Sister Theresa Marie who is such a great speaker and very knowledgeable in her field of Theology. We will meet in the faculty lounge in the school building.

Baptism Preparatory Seminar: The next seminar will be held in May since there will be no baptisms in Lent. Parents make sure that you are registered parishioners of St. Matthias before calling to make an appointment for Baptism.

RCIA/RCIC: Keep our catechumens and candidates in your prayers as they prepare to celebrate the first of many rites on this faith journey. On March 1, the catechumens and candidates celebrated the Rites of Sending and then later in the afternoon, the Rite of Election and Continuing Conversion with Archbishop Donald Wuerl at the Shrine of Immaculate Conception in Washington DC. Several other rites will be celebrated during the 9:30 am masses between now and Easter. Please continue to keep them in your prayers. GOD IS GREAT INDEED!

Youth Group

Black History Month Trip: Today, for the closing of National Black History Month, our teens will be traveling to Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Baltimore, Maryland. St. Francis is the oldest black church in the US, was founded in the 1700s and is now staffed by the Joesphites. Our youth will be joining the 11:00am Youth Mass at St. Francis, followed by a tour of the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum where they will see the first wax statues of President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. The trip will conclude with a return to St. Francis for fellowship, dialogue and games! Please look for an upcoming bulletin entry written by the teens on their experience. Please pray for a safe trip for our teens!



Don't forget: our upcoming 70s/80s Retro Talent Showcase on May 17th! For information, call Mrs. Donna Stewart Moore at 301-459-4814 ext 204 or email dmoore@stmatthias.org

Other Items of Note

Flower Bulb Sale: Think Spring! Now that winter's snows are melting away, plan your spring and summer garden and support our parish! With the help of van Bourgondien, seller of flower bulbs and perennials for more than 100 years, we will hold a spring fundraiser which will yield a profit of 50% of all sales made directly to our parish. Orders will be due by Palm Sunday and we anticipate delivery and distribution in early May, just in time for Mother's Day! We encourage everyone's participation to help soften a budget shortfall this fiscal year. Please watch for specific information which will be made available next week.



Mass Intentions for the Second Week of Lent

Monday, March 9: Francis of Rome, religious

8:30 am Reverend Paul E. Murray

Tuesday, March 10:

8:30 am Joshua Guevara (living, birthday)

Wednesday, March 11:

8:30 am Maria Torchia

Thursday, March 12:

8:30 am Jean Baptist Nguyen Maie

Friday, March 13: Lenten Day of Abstinence

8:30 am Eleanor Hanna

7:30 pm Stations of the Cross

Sat., March 14: Vigil– Third Sunday of Lent

3:30 pm to 4:30pm—Confessions

5:00 pm Father Jeff (8th Anniversary as Pastor)

Sunday, March 15: Third Sunday of Lent

8:00 am Mary O'Neill

9:30 am Betty Moriarty

11:30am The Long Sisters (living)

Please Pray for: †The Sick and Homebound In Our Parish:

Phil Ates; Virgie Azarcon; Carla Baez Gonzalez; Ann Benson; Leslie Berkey; Barbara Brink; Margaret Carr; Fidel dela Cuesta; Don and Muriel Delaney; Eleanor DeMarco; Lisa Farland; Dennis George; Cristin Green; Francis Greenfield; Leslie Hand; Joseph Harrison; Jim Hennessy; Charles Henry; Lena Jacobs; Father Keene; Robyn Kirby; Laura Elaine Kiessling; Ray Krok; Nancy Maimone; Joe Makowski; Mary McGrail; Willie (Bill) Moore; Rosemarie Nardozzi; Mary Nelson; David Obi; Peter O'Neill; Alice Parker; Dawn Pearson; Irma Perez; June Provini; Rohland Reich; Joe Sico; Concepcion Soberanis; Walter Stewart; Margaret Zanin; Ryan Zawada **†For the Deceased:** Kathleen Nolan; Oscar Ray Gaskin **†Names will be placed on our prayer list for three weeks. To add a name or to request continuing prayers, contact Tara Guevara by phone at 301-459-4814 or email tguevara@stmatthias.org.**

SCHOOL RAFFLE WINNER



**Congratulations to
Mr. & Mrs. Nero Winner (receiving \$300)
AND Seller (receiving \$50)
of this week's winning raffle ticket!**

**Longing for
Something?
Maybe it's God.**



Invite Someone back!: This Lent, people across the Archdiocese of Washington are extending a special invitation to those who may have drifted away from their faith to come back to church, prayer and Mass.

Faith is a shared experience and our family of faith feels incomplete when someone is missing! Many people have a hard time returning to church because they feel they have never been missed. Let them know they have been missed by extending to them an invitation to come back. Look for special invitation cards in the back of the church and be sure to visit the following website for details: www.maybe-its-God.org.