

ST. PIUS V CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Following is Part 4 of the Lenten message from our Holy Father, Pope Francis. In our current situation, his words, put into writing several months ago, seem prophetic. Pope Francis calls upon us to recognize and to revere the wounded Christ as he appears today in all those who are suffering. — Fr Paul

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Putting the paschal mystery at the center of our lives means feeling compassion towards the wounds of the crucified Christ present in the many innocent victims of wars, in attacks on life, from that of the unborn to that of the elderly, and various forms of violence. They are likewise present in environmental disasters, the unequal distribution of the earth's goods, human trafficking in all its forms, and the unbridled thirst for profit, which is a form of idolatry.

Today too, there is a need to appeal to men and women of good will to share, by almsgiving, their goods with those most in need, as a means of personally participating in the building of a better world. Charitable giving makes us more human, whereas hoarding risks making us less human, imprisoned by our own selfishness. We can and must go even further, and consider the structural aspects of our economic life. For this reason, in the midst of Lent this year, from 26 to 28 March, I have convened a meeting in Assisi with young economists, entrepreneurs and change-makers, with the aim of shaping a more just and inclusive economy. As the Church's magisterium has often repeated, political life represents an eminent form of charity (cf. Pius XI, *Address to the Italian Federation of Catholic University Students*, 18 December 1927). The same holds true for economic life, which can be approached in the same evangelical spirit, the spirit of the Beatitudes.

I ask Mary Most Holy to pray that our Lenten celebration will open our hearts to hear God's call to be reconciled to himself, to fix our gaze on the paschal mystery, and to be converted to an open and sincere dialogue with him. In this way, we will become what Christ asks his disciples to be: *the salt of the earth and the light of the world* (cf. Mt 5:13-14).

Francis

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Baptism of Children: The parents' **preparation session** is usually held on the **first Tuesday of the month at 7pm**. Please call the parish office for more information and to register for the session.

Anointing of the Sick: The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is available upon request, especially before surgery or hospitalization.

Marriage: St. Pius V Church is available for weddings of parishioners only. Engaged couples should contact the Pastor as soon as possible after engagement and at least six months prior to the wedding

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Parish Office: Phone: 772-1525 +
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Parish Office Hours:
Tue-Thurs 8:30—4pm

Bulletin Deadline: Monday at Noon

Individual Prayer and Sacrament of Reconciliation

We have also been advised by the Archdiocesan Office of Sacred Worship that "Communion services" may not replace Mass, as this could result in a gathering exceeding the prescribed number of persons.

At the same time, we wish to make our Chapel and Church available for **individual** prayer.

- Saturday, Church will be open from 4:00 to 5:00 pm.
- Sunday, Church will be open from 9:30 to 10:30 am.
- Monday – Friday, the Rectory Chapel will be open from 7:30 to 8:30 am.

Lent remains a time of prayer and penance. Everyone is encouraged to pray and sacrifice for all affected by illness.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available:

- Saturday, 4:30 pm
- Sunday, 9:30 am

Some thoughts for the Fourth Sunday of Lent, March 22, 2020

The Fourth Sunday of Lent has a special, personal meaning for me. Many of you know that I celebrated my 66th birthday a few weeks ago. It was on March 28, 1954, that I was baptized, which happened to be the Fourth Sunday of Lent. So I like to think of this day as my baptismal anniversary, or my “re-birthday.”

In the Latin liturgy, today is also called *Laetare* Sunday, from the first words of the Mass: *Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning...* (Isaiah 66:10). This is one of two days of the year when the priest may wear rose-colored vestments in place of the usual violet or purple. The Missal also says that we may decorate the altar with flowers.

In my youth, when the Lenten fast was much stricter, Laetare Sunday was a signal that Lent is now half-over. We didn't have to wait much longer for that Easter candy!

Later I learned that there is a different reason for joy, and why flowers were brought to Church. Centuries ago, Lent was only three weeks long in the Roman Church. Laetare Sunday was the last day for celebrating before any kind of fasting. I was told that the flowers were for the catechumens, those preparing for baptism. It was a gesture of support and solidarity. It was as though the already baptized were saying, soon you will join us in the celebration of the Eucharist.

This year we are in a sad time. We cannot be together for the Eucharist today. In a sense, all of us, our parish, our whole diocese, have become like catechumens, looking forward to the day when we can *come to the altar of God with joy*. Please know that, while we are apart, I am praying for you and for our parish. **Every day I celebrate a Mass for you and your families and your needs.** I asked our bulletin editor to use a different image than the one we had planned for this Sunday.

I'm sending you the flowers of prayer, asking God to increase in you the gifts of faith and hope and love.

Today's Gospel of a young man, born blind, but healed by Jesus' word and the waters of Siloam, is a beautiful story of faith. As I think about my own baptism, I think of the gift of God, that I was raised among faith-filled people. Many times I have reflected on and renewed the promises of my baptism. This Gospel encourages me, as we hear how the man grew in faith. He knew that a miracle had been done for him. He knew it was a man called Jesus. He came to revere Jesus as a prophet. Then, as he bears witness to the religious leaders, he comes to be one of Jesus' disciples. Finally, he makes a profession of faith and worships Jesus as Lord.

Wherever we may be in our “walk of faith” Jesus is walking with us, encouraging us to keep going and to keep growing. How we relate to Jesus will change as we grow. The New Testament assures us that he is constant and unchanging. I understand this as Jesus' faithfulness to us. He will never give up on us and never tires of forgiving us. We may change toward him, but he does not change when it comes to his love for us.

One last reflection to share with you. Some years ago I participated in a directed retreat, following the Ignatian tradition. Each day there was a Scripture reading to pray with, and we were encouraged to absorb as much of the story as we could. We could pay attention to the sights and sounds, as well as to our own thoughts and feelings. One day the Gospel reading was the Baptism of Jesus. During that time of prayer I received a beautiful gift of grace that I have never forgotten. To put it simply, I became aware of how Jesus saw me: he looks at me with great joy. That opened my eyes a little, to see myself in a different light. I realized that God was saying to me what he said to Jesus at his baptism: *you are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased.*

I hope that these thoughts will bring you some joy today.

May God grant that we will see one another again very soon.

Fr Paul

Mass will be offered each day for the Parish Family during the COVID-19 pandemic.

All scheduled Mass Offerings will be rescheduled.

MARCH

HAPPY BIRTHDAY and GOD'S BLESSINGS:

2nd Elizabeth Rieck; 3rd Gloria Deeken, Julie Mudd, Elizabeth Schmiedeke; 6th Molly Nunez; 7th Zachary Smiley, Jennifer Clennon; 8th Harold Duke, James Robben, Kathy Stone; 12th Fr. Paul Niemann; 14th Sally Eckhard; 15th David Sadasivam; 19th Betty Mues; 20th Tom Sanger; 22nd Joyce Casseau, Erica Perlow ; 24th Rita Martinez, Michael Sadasivam; 26th Tom Huelman

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY CONGRATULATIONS and GOD'S BLESSINGS: 31st Jef & Mary Faszholtz (42 yrs)
Thank you for your example of married fidelity!

If you would like to see your birthday and/or anniversary in the bulletin, please call the Rectory (772-1525, Ext. 200).

Pope Francis' Monthly Prayer Intention for March

We pray that the Church in China may persevere in its faithfulness to the Gospel and grow in unity.

DAILY SCRIPTURE READING is an important spiritual practice. *The Word Among Us* and *Magnificat* booklets are available each month on the tables in back of Church.

St. Pius will have our Spring Blood Drive on Sunday, March 29th from 8:00 a.m.-12:00 pm.
This drive is in honor of Shirley Tabaka.

Shirley is receiving blood transfusions as part of her ongoing treatment. Please consider donating blood as a way to say *Thank you* to Shirley for her years of service to St Pius. The Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center (MVRBC) RV will be parked on Grand in front of church. Thanks so much.

To sign up or if you have questions, call Mary Heidbreder at 314-369-6939

To schedule an appointment online:
www.bloodcenter.org sponsor code 9248



PLEASE PRAY FOR THOSE HOSPITALIZED AND FOR ALL THOSE IN NEED OF HEALING:

Happy Aboflan, Jeff Adkisson, Nancy Adkisson, Ruth Brooks, Debbie Cornelius, Laura Fazio, Maria Tran Thi Gioi, Arnie Heuvelman, Lili Huelman, Theresa Johnson, Sr. Dorothy Ann Katke, Carol King, Sr. Bea Klebba, Chuck Loeb, Michelle Mondello, Betty Mues, Debbie Perotta, Tom Roche, Teresita Sanchez, "Corky" Schultz, Shirley Tabaka, Tracy Unger, Ray Winkeler.

In your charity please pray for the repose of the soul of **GLORIA DEEKEN**

May she be with Our Lord in glory and may her family be consoled. Also pray for all of our parishioners mourning the deaths of their loved ones.

ARCHDIOCESAN LENTEN REGULATIONS

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

John 3:16-17

The Church has always helped us fulfill these words of Jesus by prescribing very definite penance for all Catholics, so that we too might have eternal life. Accordingly, the Pope and the American Bishops have outlined obligatory fast and abstinence as follows:

All Fridays of Lent and Good Friday (April 10, 2020) are days of **abstinence** (refraining from meat) for all Catholics **from age 14 onwards**. On Good Friday, **fast**, as well as **abstinence**, is also obligatory for those **from the ages of 18-59**.

Abstinence means refraining from meat. Fast means one full meal a day, with two smaller meals and nothing between meals (liquids are permitted). No Catholic will lightly excuse himself or herself from this obligation.

We should strive to make all days of Lent a time of prayer and penance.



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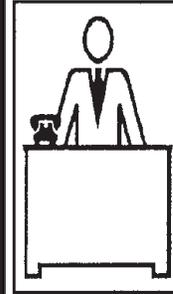
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Br. John Barker, OFM
Associate Professor of Old Testament
Studies Chair of Biblical Literature and Language
Catholic Theological Union

READINGS

First Reading: 1 Samuel 16: 1B, 6-7, 10-13
Responsorial Psalm 23: 1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6
Second Reading: Ephesians 5: 8-14
Gospel: John 9: 1-41

I recently read about a rare condition called Anton-Babinsky syndrome. There have been about twenty-cases of this syndrome reported since Montaigne first mentioned it back in the 16th century. It occurs in people who have become blind because of a stroke or head trauma. The strange thing about Anton-Babinsky syndrome is this: those who suffer from it are truly blind – they cannot see at all – but they adamantly affirm that they can, in fact, see. They behave and talk as if they are sighted, and they don't tell anyone that they cannot see, but it becomes evident that they are sightless when they run into furniture or otherwise have difficulty getting around. When asked if they are having trouble seeing, they deny it. They will often affirm they are sighted by describing people and objects around them, which are either not there at all or are described incorrectly. Those with this syndrome genuinely believe, or want to believe, that they can see, when in fact they cannot. It seems they cannot even admit to themselves that they are blind.

Anton-Babinsky syndrome is a rare instance of being literally blind and either not knowing it or refusing to acknowledge it. Spiritual blindness is much more common. We all suffer from it to one degree or another, now and again, and often for a very long time. Conversion means, among other things, recognizing this and allowing God's grace to overcome it. "I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see."

The readings this week are all about seeing. God sees what Samuel can't, because Samuel sees the appearance, but God sees the heart. Our passage from the Letter to the Ephesians mentions "light" six times, and contrasts this with the darkness that renders us blind to the ways of God. Jesus, "the light of the world," cures a blind man "so that the works of God might be made visible through him."

When the blind man regains his sight, those who are able to see what this means have their eyes further opened – they are able to recognize that God is at work in Jesus. But those who are not able to see, who are not willing to see, who just cannot bring themselves to see that Jesus cured the man, remain blind to the works of God made visible right before their eyes.

And why? Because they have already made up their minds about Jesus. "This man is not from God, because he does not keep the Sabbath." When others suggest they might be wrong about him after all ("How can a sinful man do such signs?"), they refuse to change their minds. Instead, they suggest that the man had not been blind in the first place. Faced with evidence that they are wrong, they refuse to consider the possibility. They are absolutely certain that they already see the truth about Jesus. And so he tells them that although they insist, "We see," they are in fact completely blind. They have spiritual Anton-Babinsky syndrome.

Well, it's Lent, so let's challenge ourselves on this point. How many times have we refused to see the good God does in others because of decisions we have already made about them? How often do we let appearances, our notions of who is "good" and who is "bad," who is "right" and who is "wrong," prevent us from being open to the possibility that God just might be working through them? How often do we go stumbling around, bumping into things, refusing to admit that we don't see as well as we think we do?

I do it. Maybe you do it too, at least from time to time?

How often might we catch ourselves ignoring the light of Christ shining right in front of us in the form of the liberal Catholic, the traditional Catholic, the atheist, the annoying-person-not-like-me in the room? Not that we don't "love" them (of course we do!), but we certainly aren't going to listen to anything they have to say. How could they possibly be right in this case, when they are so clearly wrong about everything else?

My name is John Barker, and I have spiritual Anton-Babinsky syndrome. This week we are presented once again with the opportunity to ask God to show us where we are blind. Blind to the surprising and often exceedingly challenging ways that God comes to us, speaks to us, corrects us, tries to push us back onto the right path. Blind to the truth that we see more by appearance than we would like to admit. Blind to the fact that we might be suffering from our own, not-so-rare form of Anton-Babinsky syndrome.

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see."