



CROSSROADS III

Bishop's Journey

ASH WEDNESDAY

February 20, 1985 noon Ontario County Jail
7:30 pm Sacred Heart Cathedral

FIRST WEEK OF LENT

February 24	11:00 am	St. John the Evangelist, Clyde	Visit
	3:00 pm	St. Alphonsus, Auburn	Rite of Election
25-27		Notre Dame Retreat House	Priests' Gathering
26	7:30 pm	St. Christopher's, N. Chili	Southwest Regional Lenten Prayer Service
27	7:30 pm	Sacred Heart Cathedral	Rite of Election
March 1	7:30 pm	Sacred Heart Cathedral	Rite of Election
2	noon	Our Lady of Lourdes, Elmira	Rite of Election

First Week of Lent

Sunday's Readings: Genesis 9:8-15; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15.

Genesis gives the "sign of hope" for the week. The rainbow, set in the sky was to be the beautiful sign of the covenant between God and the people. "When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, I will recall the covenant I have made between me and you and all living things." (Gen. 8:15) Strange, in the midst of the darkened sky was to shine forth a beautiful, colored arch of light signifying even in darkness, there is hope.

The Gospel picks up this contrast as Mark depicts Jesus in the desert wasteland. Angels were ministering to him. In the dark moments following John the Baptist's arrest, Jesus appears continuing John's mission. Once again, the "sign of hope" is depicted as light against darkness, presence against isolation.

The Lenten journey calls us to consider those who are isolated by society. People who are living with problems, age, disease, illness, hopelessness, it is to these that we are sent to be rainbows of hope.

Project:

1. pray for those living in darkness — darkness of sin, guilt, prejudice, ignorance;
2. recognize those who are in need of hope — be a living sign of hope by visiting, phoning, or somehow contacting them.
3. look at yourself, see if you are walking in darkness, searching for light.

Parish Observances

St. Pius X

"The Challenge of Peace" will be discussed at 7:30 p.m., all Wednesdays during Lent at St. Pius X Church. Among the topics to be discussed by guest speakers are "The Priorities of the Challenge of Peace" by Father Charles Mulligan, Feb. 27; "When God Speaks of Peace — The Bible and the Challenge of Peace" by Father Robert Ring, March 6; "How Do I Know I'm Doing Right?" by Ms. Denise Mack, March 13; "Lifestyle Implications of the Challenge of Peace" by Vic Bartolotta, March 20; "Parenting for Peace" by Deacon Daniel and Sheila Kinsky, March 27; and "Final Reflections" by Sister Pat Scholles, April 3. In conjunction with this series, the parish Human Development Committee will sponsor a soup supper from 5:30-7 p.m. on March 20. For further information, contact the religious education office, 247-3322.

St. Helen

Father William Graf will present a Lenten enrichment series every Thursday from 7:30-8:30 p.m. There will be a communion service also.

St. Margaret Mary

A six-part adult education series on Scripture is being offered from 7:30-9 p.m. in the parish school. Father Jack Zimmerman will give the first four presentations -- Feb. 21, March 1, 7 and 14 -- on the Church's beginnings and celebrations. Deacon Stan Kacprzak will give the last two -- March 20 and 27 -- on the biblical roots of the Mass. These are free and open to all. For further information, call 342-7114 or 342-2100.

St. Charles

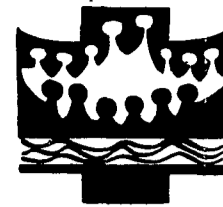
Elmira -- A parish retreat and family renewal is scheduled Feb. 24- March 1. Father Joseph Sedley of the Passionist Fathers will conduct the retreat. Daily celebration of the Eucharist will be at 10 a.m. and again at 7:30 p.m. Following each Mass, refreshments will be served in the church hall.

Cathedral

Evening prayer will be celebrated each Sunday in Lent at 4 p.m. at Sacred Heart Cathedral. The public is invited.

Insights In Liturgy

By Father Thomas P. Mull
Part 5



Called To Preach

When one looks at the life of the Church today, one cannot help but be awed by the variety of people who make up our one family. The Church is challenged to become more active, more involved, more integrated in the "everyday" lives of her people. To look at the Church is to look at Christ's continual activity in the world. This activity is proclaimed by word and action. As we celebrate another Ash Wednesday, we are called to reflect upon our human response to the divine command: "Turn away from sin and believe in the gospel."

But how are we to respond if that gospel is not preached? It seems that the development of our preaching mission must follow the development of our pastoral mission. In many parishes, sacramental preparations are directed by dedicated Catholics who are involved in many facets of the Church's life. It would seem appropriate that these people be given the opportunity some day to preach and witness the active sacramental presence of Jesus in their lives. Parishes today have active eucharistic ministers who faithfully care for the homebound and those living in nursing homes. Their reflections on scripture can be treasured moments for those who are sick. I remember one woman telling me that her whole Sunday was founded on the experience of receiving Jesus in the Eucharist and the time the

ministers would spend with her in prayer, reading the Bible and sharing thoughts on those readings. Sunday became Sunday because of this experience. Would that we who go regularly to church say the same!

The funeral experience is an area where the richness of human sensitivity combines with the need to celebrate the mystery of life after death. The one who preaches should be intimately affiliated with the family, aware of circumstances, open to the power of God's Spirit and able to draw joy out of sorrow. The prayer at the funeral home, as well as at the cemetery, offers fine opportunities for the treasured message of resurrection and eternal life to be communicated by all members of the Church. While not a time for new and radical experiments, the personal, human experience of death calls for an openness on the part of all parish ministers. The visible, conscious involvement of committed lay persons, as well as the clergy, reminds the bereaved that there is hope and ongoing support on many levels. A future for preaching in these areas offers great possibilities.

Many parish communities are deeply involved in the catechumenal process. The preaching and witness demands of an RCIA core team are vital and overwhelming (RCIA, #48). This rite focuses on the community's journey of faith joined with the faith journey of the catechumen. This necessarily obligates the Christian to exemplify

the Lord's living presence. Further, it calls forth the charism among catechists qualified to do so, to preach on occasions such as the presentations, minor exorcisms, weekly prayer experiences, and other times deemed appropriate (RCIA, #113-124). If the renewal of the parish is going to be experienced with all its ramifications through this process, preaching opportunities at Sunday Eucharist will have to be explored.

By way of conclusion, it should be clear that what I have written in the past five weeks is not saying anything new, it is simply meant to elucidate the possibilities for lay preaching that already exist; but, the work has only begun. Church directives and documentation are still undergoing development. Consultation takes place on the international, national and diocesan levels. This consultation needs prayer, discussion and action in the area of preaching. It must be remembered that pastoral judgment and educational preparation must form the foundation upon which decisions are made. The ministry of preaching (outside Eucharistic celebrations) should be shared, qualitative experience of evangelization. Eucharistic preaching must reflect continual prayer, study and living the gospel. Its future, with regard to the lay preaching, has to be explored.

As the sacred season of Lent begins, it is time to return to the Lord. The call of our liturgy today summons all believing people to step a little more deeply into the mystery of Jesus -- a mystery which calls for death to sin and rising to the newness of life. May these 40 days of Lent find us opening up to the Word of God and challenge us to preach it with renewed vigor and freshness.

Two Keys to Development of Prayer

1st in a 2-part series

By Brother Patrick T. Flanagan SJ

There are two ingredients that, I think, are important in the development of prayer. One is desire and the other is presence.

Prayer, as you know, is communication. It is the development of a relationship; the lifting of the mind and heart to God. Though prayer is unique to the individual, it can take certain forms, such as devotional prayer, meditation and contemplation. Our thoughts here will be devoted primarily to contemplative prayer.

Contemplation begins when a person lets another person, event or object take his attention. He lets himself be absorbed, for a moment at least and at some level, in the other person, or object or event.

Recall when you were courting your spouse, how attentive you were to him or to her. You let yourself be absorbed in what that person was like, what that person cared about and what that person did. You let the person, with his or her personality, concerns, etc., take your attention. We do not come close to anyone without knowing what that person likes and what their interests are.

Contemplative prayer means paying attention to and becoming at least slightly absorbed in the person of Jesus, in the Father, or in a biblical person such as Mary, Joseph, Peter or Zacchaeus. However, in any contemplation, prayerful or not, there is a difficulty. It is our tendency to look inward rather than outward; to be absorbed in our own concerns rather than in another person's. We, therefore, begin contemplation by looking at and listening to something other than ourselves. It may be looking at natural beauty, listening to music, or the sound of the surf or gazing at the moon; anything that will absorb us. Take any experience that helps a person to enjoy, to forget himself or herself and become absorbed in something else. I should not just see a tree, I should touch it and smell it as a tree. Few of us have ever looked long enough at a flower or plant to let God reveal Himself as the maker of that flower -- for me.

The key is to enjoy. The enjoyment of God should be the ultimate goal of spiritual technique. We are conscious of God, of belonging to God, and, therefore, we are not alone. We begin contemplation by enjoying natural beauty and then move to see that beauty as the garment with which the Almighty clothes Himself.

If you have ever been so intent in watching a game, reading

a book or listening to music that you have been surprised at how much time has passed, then you have the power of becoming absorbed in something, and you have an example of the contemplative attitude.

After you have spent a number of weeks enjoying some natural beauty, you might look at or even list a few of the gifts in your life. (Give personal examples; be specific, take an inventory.) Begin to enjoy them and notice that you do. That will develop into an appreciative dialogue with the Giver of your gifts Who loves you.

The essence of contemplation is a sense of wonder. Look at a flower, listen to the surf, to music, anything at all, and wonder. Say to yourself several times a day, "Isn't it wonderful that..." even if it is only when you put a key in your door and the door opens. And more important, the birth of a baby, the wonder of new life, the realization and beauty of life, the importance of the individual and the dignity and reverence of the human person.

So we begin by looking at and listening to something other than self. We let ourselves enjoy. We wonder. The next step then is to pay attention to Scripture in the same way. Read a passage, pick a word, a phrase, a sentence; listen to the words and ask the Lord to reveal Himself while you are listening. This is the way we come to know the living Lord, just as we come to know another person. Look at Jesus in gospel events and let yourself become absorbed in what He is like, what He cares about, what He is doing. Let Him, with His personality, concerns, activities, take your attention. Become absorbed, for a moment at least, in some level of His person. Struggle to take on the values of Jesus and care for what He cares for. To achieve this is to achieve companionship with Jesus, to give and to serve as Jesus gives and serves.

For example, in praying over Scripture, it may be helpful to be still in a comfortable place; to do no reading or reflecting until you feel quiet and at peace in the presence of the Divine Persons. Become aware of yourself and of being present to God. Let yourself be at ease while remaining alert and aware. Get in touch with your strongest, deepest desires and ask God to pull your scattered self together so that an attitude of reverence may develop during this very special and privileged time. Ask God that all your thoughts, intentions and efforts be directed purely to His praise and service.

NEXT WEEK: Being present to the Lord.