

CROSSROADS III

THIRD WEEK OF LENT

March			
10	6:30 pm	St. John Fisher College	<i>Visit and Eucharist</i>
11	pm	Economic Pastoral Seminar	
13	all day	Day of Recollection	<i>Pastoral Assistants</i>
15	pm	Seminar on Non-Violence	

Third Week of Lent

Sunday's Readings: Exodus 20:1-17, 1 Corinthians 1:22-25, John 2:13-25. Moses' reception of the Ten Commandments was a peak moment in Israelite history. With guidelines and directions, the chosen people could be molded and formed into a singular people. The hopefulness of this unity can be seen in the Judiac belief of the Law being the sign of the presence of God.


The Gospel reading provides insight (through John) into the sign theology of the first century. "Give us a sign," the Jews were often reported as saying. All Jesus could offer was the living sign of himself. His anger at making the temple a salesmarket was not aimed at the vendors themselves, but rather at the mockery they had made of the Jewish concept of sacrifice. Set your sights on things beyond this world, Jesus challenges.

The Lenten journey of this week challenges Christians to be living signs of hope. Christians are warned not to allow their faith to become a mockery. We cannot become an exclusive, closed Church. On the contrary, evangelization must be our constant duty. Christians become living signs when they lead others to new and renewed faith.

Project:

1. pray for those who hurt, are alienated, have "fallen away" from the Church-community;
2. reach out to a family member, neighbor or friend who is alienated. Don't push! Just reach out!
3. reflect on your own situation: are you really open? do you feel that God genuinely loves you? are willing to stand as a Christian and live Christian values?

Insights
In Liturgy



By Pam Schaeffer

Crossroads III: Signs of Hope

I'm a quiet, reserved, unassuming person ... most of the time ... but ask me, "What keeps you going?" and you're in for an outpouring of my enthusiasm and encouragements. Primarily, to know that I am unconditionally loved by my God is the most profound source of hope; that I (whom I view as so mortal and imperfect) am given strength and insight to be one with another's pain

Regional Evening Prayer Scheduled

Two regions have scheduled Evening Prayer services for the Crossroads III program.

The Northwest Region will hold its service 7:30 p.m., Sunday, March 11 at Most Precious Blood Church. Father David Bonin will preach. Father Robert Miller is coordinator of the region.

The Schuyler/Chemung region will also have an Evening Prayer service 7:30 p.m. March 11, but at St. Mary's Church in Elmira. Father James Boyle is regional coordinator. Deacon Stanley Douglas will preach.

Time for socializing will follow prayer in each region.

and joy. Certainly my wife Ellen and our children provide a crucial essence of a love relationship which gives me encouragement and support. Without that I could not function. My ministry as a deacon of the Church allows me the context to reach out to families who need to be upheld and affirmed as important, struggling and so very holy. My position as diocesan director of Parish Services brings me in contact with dozens of people in the many parishes when I work with their parish councils as they address current situations and look to the future.

But what "keeps me going" in all this? What drives me to continue the pace and not view it all as mere busy-ness? It is because in each of these relationships I see a dynamism at work which I feel to be a prompting and presence of the Spirit in our midst -- a life force -- a sign of hope. Let me share some examples from the context of diocesan director of Parish Services:

I see this sign of hope when I work on goalsetting with an individual parish, when persons are willing to listen to others' needs and work for the common good and not be locked in on their own pet projects, when so many parishes are willing to risk complacency and security

to study our U.S. bishops' pastoral on peace and their draft on the economy, letting the light of the gospel touch their hearts with an ever greater sensitivity and authenticity, when persons gather for an evening of recollection to share their life journey which impacts on the mission of Christ's Church.

I have been privileged to witness signs of hope over and over again -- in Seneca Falls and Watkins Glen where we gathered to discern the needs of those communities; in St. Francis of Assisi and an assembly of the Southwest Region where we paused to reflect upon dimensions of ministry; in St. Benedict's in Odessa and St. Ignatius in Hornell as we convened to discuss the responsibilities of parish councils; as we prayed with the Newman Community of Ithaca College and St. Margaret Mary's to reflect on the presence of God in our lives.

The signs of hope are you, the people of God, who come with an attitude that no one person holds all the "pie of wisdom" but that together we can make the best decisions for the good and growth of the community.

The signs of hope are you, who are compassionate, those who seek to share love, to extend forgiveness, to be connected, one with another.

The signs all demonstrate in an unspoken language the reality we try to live and remind each other of in our family each day: that we are so special to each other, that we love each other so much, that we need each other, that without each other we would feel incomplete.

Parish Lenten Programs

St. Stanislaus

St. Stanislaus Parish will follow the Crossroads III program of "Signs of Hope." Each week during the season a different sign of hope will be emphasized. The last weekend in February featured the beginning of Operation Breadbox. Father Thomas Mull will lead a Ministry Liturgical Renewal 7 p.m. today, ending with Night Prayer. The Polish community will have a retreat directed by Father Zbigniew Olbrys March 22 through 24. Father Robert O'Neil will direct the parish retreat, 7:30 p.m., March 28; 9 a.m., 7:30 p.m., March 29; and 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. March 30. The public has been invited to participate.

Lady of Lourdes

Elmira — Sister Nancy Burkin of the diocesan Liturgy Office will discuss the Liturgy of the Hours 8-9 p.m., Tuesday, March 12 at Our Lady of Lourdes Lenten Series, "Teach Us to Pray." The parish stated: "Liturgy of the Hours is the official prayer of the church said every day by priests, religious and lay persons throughout the world. Separated into different segments, each part is prayed at various times of the day to spread praise and worship of God throughout the day and night."

St. Vincent

Churchville — Brother Ray Powers CSC, dean of men at Cardinal Mooney High School, theology teacher, member of the diocesan Vocation Team, and vocation director for the eastern province of the Brothers of the Holy Cross, will speak 7:30 p.m., Friday, March 8 at St. Vincent de Paul Church. The event is part of the parish's Lenten Renewal program. The theme of the weekend is "Response — Our Personal Decision." The day following Father Thomas J. Valenti, diocesan director of Vocations, will preach at the worship and prayer service 5:15 p.m. In addition, Father Valenti will be homilist for the Saturday and Sunday scheduled Masses: 6 p.m., and 8, 9:30, and 11:30 a.m.

Nativity

Brockport — Father Joe Power and Sister Karen Allens from the Center of Renewal at Stella Niagara will present "Our Journey with Jesus at the Lenten Renewal of the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 7:30-9:30 p.m., March 17 through 19 in the school basement, on the corner of Holly and Utica streets. Each session will be prefaced with music and a prayer service. The Sunday session is entitled, "Getting in touch with the God within." Father Power will be available during the day on Monday and Tuesday at the rectory for private consultation. The Monday and Tuesday sessions center on the total Christian journey. "Every journey consists of three parts," Father Power said, "a starting point, a destination and a route. We must start with where we are today and find where the Lord might be calling us both personally and as a community." The public has been invited to participate in the event. Refreshments will be served following the evening sessions.

Ethiopian Famine Seen Challenge For Lent

By Jerry Filteau
NC News Service

"The terrible situation of the people in Ethiopia" highlights the challenge to Catholics to "examine our hearts" in Lent, said Bishop Odore Gendron of Manchester, N.H., in a Lenten message to his people.

"When we reach out to the poor... we touch the suffering Christ himself," wrote Archbishop John O'Connor of New York. "Indeed, I experienced this mystery vividly during my recent visit with the starving masses in Ethiopia."

Bishops in other parts of the country also cited Ethiopia or other situations of human need as a reason for Lenten penance and sacrifice. They asked their people not just to fulfill their minimum obligations of fast and abstinence, but to couple them with prayer and charity and to aim at that conversion or change of heart which is the purpose of the season.

"We must do more if Lent is to be a beneficial spiritual preparation," Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia wrote.

One road many Catholics are taking is Operation Rice Bowl, now in its 10th year. This Lent, as in past years, families in thousands of Catholic parishes across the United States began to skip meals or to eat a simple meal at least once a week. Three-fourths of the money saved is donated to Catholic Relief Services to fight hunger overseas, and the other one-fourth stays with the local parish or diocese to help feed the poor and hungry at home.

The theme of this year's campaign, "Shaping a Peaceful World Together," is general. But public attention has focused on CRS in recent months because of its massive efforts to halt starvation in Ethiopia.

Over the past nine years Operation Rice Bowl has raised more than \$23 million for CRS, including \$3.2 million last year.

In their Lenten messages, many bishops recommended using the season as a special time of prayer, spiritual reading, study and acts of charity as well as self-discipline through fast and abstinence.

In the United States abstinence from meat is a serious obligation on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays in Lent. It binds all those aged 14 and up.

Fasting -- eating only one full meal and two light meals during the day -- obliges from the 18th birthday up to the 59th birthday, but not on those aged 59 and up. Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are the only two days on which the fast law is binding, but many bishops strongly encouraged their people to fast at least on other Fridays and more often if they are able.

In many dioceses, this Lent marks the first time that those aged 18-20 are under obligation to fast.

Last Lent a new general law in the church had just recently taken effect which lowered the church's legal age of majority, or adulthood, from 21 to 18. But many bishops did not notice the impact of that law change on Lenten fast laws last year, or they decided not to enact the change right away, so the previous fasting rule of age 21 remained in effect in many dioceses. A spot check of diocesan regulations published around the country this year, however, indicated that all or nearly all have now changed the starting age for fasting to 18.

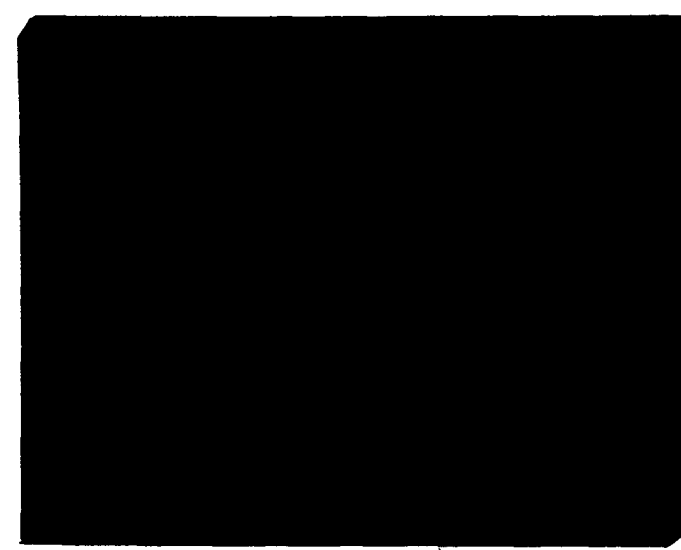
The calls for penance by bishops often emphasized that self-denial or self-discipline is a positive approach to life, not just a negative thing.

Penance is a "no" to ourselves" and a "no" to all that is displeasing to God," wrote Bishop Leo Maher of San Diego, Calif. But, he added, "even more important is that we should say 'yes' to God, 'yes' to the demands he makes on us... 'yes' to the love which he wants us to give."

"Without human growth and development, we die," wrote Bishop Anthony Pilla of Cleveland, Ohio.

"Penance without conversion is futile," he added. "Conversion without reconciliation is selfish. Reconciliation without love cannot lead us to God."

Among Lenten practices frequently recommended by bishops were daily Mass, special devotions such as the Way of the Cross or the rosary, and particular attention to confession.



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