

LENT 2016

THE ASCENT

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION



LENT



CALLING ALL ORIGINAL PARISHIONERS

Were you at Ascension in the “chair stacking” days at Aquinas? If so, we would love to hear from you! The next Ascent (May 2016) will celebrate our 25th Anniversary as a parish. We are looking for articles from parishioners who were part of the early days! Share your favorite stories and memories. Email your one-page article (500 words or less), to Liz Willman at: lwillman@kcascension.org by **March 10th**. Feel free to include a photo from the early days as well!

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LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

BY FR. TOM TANK



Lent 2016

Dear Parishioners,

Lent during the Year of Mercy! How can we best enter into this season of penance and reconciliation with hearts truly attuned to the Mercy of God? Mercy is a two way street, our receiving the mercy of God ourselves and ourselves being the conduit of God's mercy to others. Jesus said "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy." Matthew 5.

Sometimes we are the recipients of mercy and sometimes the agents. Being both is at the heart of our life in Christ.

This Lent there are several special ways for us to reflect upon this call of mercy. One is getting to know Christ Jesus better. The book Rediscovering Jesus is being made available to everyone for use during the Lenten journey. The 40 brief, very readable, chapters of the book offer a daily reflection for each of the 40 days of Lent. They invite us not just into a better knowledge of Jesus, but also into a deeper relationship with Him as Savior and Friend. Hopefully you will find this journey beneficial to your spiritual life and one that you will want to share with others by handing the book on to someone else at Easter. That's evangelization in action.

February 28-29 and March 1 will be special in our parish as we are joined by Father Bill Bruning who will lead us in a time of reflecting on the Divine Mercy of Jesus as a healing remedy for our weaknesses and brokenness. Father Bill through his own personal experience and his ministry to others in their daily struggles has great insights about how to allow God to bring healing to our lives and to our relationships. The final evening will also include our Lenten communal reconciliation service.

Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a must for each of us during this Year of Mercy. The mercy of Jesus revealed in his painful death for the forgiveness of our sins becomes personal to us as we open ourselves and our sins up to his spiritually healing presence and power in this sacrament. What tremendous graces are given to us as we experience God's forgiveness and receive the strength to avoid sin and to grow in our spiritual life. In addition to our communal service on March 1st, the opportunity for reconciliation will also be available each morning (M-F) from 11:30am to 11:55am and Tuesday from 6:15am-6:45am; Wednesday evening from 6:00pm until 7:00pm, Thursday evening from 7:00pm to 8:00pm; and Saturday afternoon from 3:15pm until 4:15pm.

The traditional practices of Lent enjoined by Jesus in the Gospel for Ash Wednesday are basic to our Lenten observance – prayer, fasting, almsgiving. A few minutes each day for personal prayer or a set time for Eucharistic adoration or participation in a weekday Mass will work wonders with our relationship with God. Fasting from hurtful words, a bad habit, bad language, spiritual laziness will help us become a better person, more the person that God wants us to be. Almsgiving calls us to do something positive for others. It is an expression of generosity offered through charitable giving, a warm smile, a word of encouragement, a genuine concern for others.

I sincerely pray that this Lent during the Year of Mercy will be a special time of grace for each of us. What a great gift and privilege we have of experiencing God's mercy and sharing that gift with others. May your Lent be filled with the mercy of God that will lead to an Easter of resurrected new life in Christ Jesus. All God's blessings!

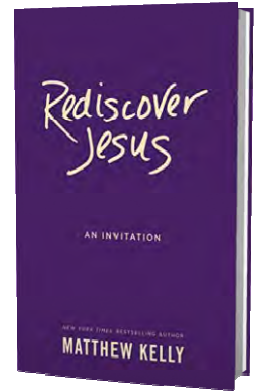
Father Tom

AFTER REDISCOVERING JESUS: ENCOUNTERING JESUS

BY FATHER NATHAN HAVERLAND

There are few books as succinct and poignant as Matthew Kelly's book Rediscover Jesus. Somehow over the span of forty short chapters he is able to explain the radicalness and relevance of Jesus of Nazareth. As Christians, our familiarity and nearness with Jesus can sometimes prevent us from seeing that it is a tremendous privilege to be so familiar and near to Him. If someone takes Matthew Kelly's book seriously and prayerfully, I do not doubt that their life will be forever changed by this rediscovering of Jesus.

But what comes after you Rediscover Jesus? The next step is to actually encounter Jesus. Jesus is truly present and living all around us, but how do we encounter Him? How do we meet Him and spend time with Him? To some the following may sound a little cliché, but maybe it is also time to rediscover Jesus truly living and present among us!



Eucharist. At the Last Supper, Jesus made it pretty clear that He would not abandon the Church. Instead of abandoning the Church, Jesus gave Himself to the Church in a completely new and unfathomable way. Jesus could not have been clearer that the blessed bread and wine truly do become His body (Mt 26:26) and blood (Mt 26:28), and so one of the easiest ways to truly encounter Jesus is by frequently attending Mass and spending time in adoration. I have never met a person whose life was not radically changed by spending more time with the Eucharist.

Confession. Immediately after the Resurrection, Jesus eagerly gave to the Apostles the power to forgive sins saying, "the sins you forgive are forgiven" (Jn 20:23). He did not have to do this, but He wanted to do this! He wanted all of humanity to encounter His mercy. The power to forgive sins has been handed on from the Apostles to the priests of our present age in the sacrament of Reconciliation. If we want to encounter Jesus, why not encounter that gift He was so eager to give on Easter and to do so frequently?

Scripture. The Scriptures are a priceless treasure of the Church. They are a collection of writings that span many centuries but reach a culmination in the life and teachings of Jesus. They are the sacred vessel in which we learn of God's love for humanity. An excellent way to encounter Jesus is to prayerfully read through the things He did and said. If you've never read an entire Gospel before, why not try?

The Forgotten. If you want to know someone, it is wise to spend time with the things they love. If we search through the Scriptures, we see Jesus had a tremendous love for the sick and outcasts of society, often to the dismay of others. Jesus even said that if we serve them, we serve Him (Mt 25:45). There is no doubt that Jesus is truly present in the suffering and so if you want to encounter Jesus, spend some time the forgotten.

His Mother. As Jesus died on the Cross, we only know of a few things that were going through His mind. We know He was thinking of our Father in heaven (Lk 23:34), of the Psalms (Mt 27:46), of the criminals crucified with Him (Lk 23:43), and especially of His mother (Jn 19:26). God showed a tremendous amount of trust in Mary in asking her, of all the women of the world, to be the mother of His Son. If you want to encounter Jesus, turn to His mother!

These are of course not the only ways to encounter Jesus, but if you truly want to grow in your relationship with Jesus, give these a try. No, I challenge you to try them! I do not doubt that if you do any of the above with regularity that your will rediscover Jesus truly living among us.

Join us for a
“Year of Mercy”
Mission



Fr. Bill Bruning

“God’s Loving Mercy and Healing Forgiveness”

7:00PM-8:00PM in the Church

Sunday, February 28

Monday, February 29, with Michael McGlinn

Tuesday, March 1, with

Communal Reconciliation

Following the Talk.

TIPS FOR LENT FROM POPE FRANCIS

What Should I Do For Lent? Follow Pope Francis' Tips

Every year Catholics try to answer the age old question: What should I do for Lent? Well, who better to pick as your Lenten spiritual director than Pope Francis? Here are some of his suggestions:



Ban Indifference

"Indifference to our neighbor and to God also represents a real temptation for us Christians." Describing this phenomenon he calls the globalization of indifference, Francis writes that "whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades." He continues that, "We end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else's responsibility and not our own."

Action: "During this Lent, then, brothers and sisters, let us all ask the Lord: *'Make our hearts like yours'*. In this way we will receive a heart which is firm and merciful, attentive and generous, a heart which is not closed, indifferent or prey to the globalization of indifference." – Lenten Message, 2015

Prioritize Prayer

"In the face of so many wounds that hurt us and could harden our hearts, we are called to dive into the sea of prayer, which is the sea of God's boundless love, to taste his tenderness. – Homily, March 5, 2014

Possible Actions: Wake 10 minutes early each day and spend it in prayer, Visit the Adoration chapel regularly, say the Rosary or Divine Mercy Chaplet.

Help the Poor

"In the poor and outcast we see Christ's face; by loving and helping the poor, we love and serve Christ...When power, luxury and money become idols, they take priority over the need for a fair distribution of wealth. Our consciences thus need to be converted to justice, equality, simplicity and sharing." – Lenten Message, 2014

Action: Sign up to help the poor, <http://kcascension.org/get-involved/service-opportunities/>

Evangelize

"The Lord asks us to be joyous heralds of this message of mercy and hope! It is thrilling to experience the joy of spreading this good news, sharing the treasure entrusted to us, consoling broken hearts and offering hope to our brothers and sisters experiencing darkness." – Lenten Message, 2014

Possible Actions: Invite someone to attend Mass, Stations or a Fish Fry
Share the Divine Mercy Prayer with someone who needs it: "Jesus, I trust in you."

"Do something that hurts. Let us not forget that real poverty hurts: no self-denial is real without this dimension of penance. I distrust a charity that costs nothing and does not hurt."
– Pope Francis

Adapted from "What Should I Do For Lent? Pope Francis' 10 Tips" by Kevin Cotter. Used here with the permission of Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), and is also available in its entirety at <https://focusoncampus.org/content/filter/blog?search=what+should+i+do+for+lent>

LENT: - GOING INTO THE DESERT

BY LIZ WILLMAN, DIRECTOR OF ADULT FAITH & RCIA

One of the common themes of Lent is to go “out into the desert”. We take this idea from scripture when Jesus himself headed out to the desert for 40 days after His baptism and before beginning his public ministry.

This past year, our eldest ventured “out into the desert”... literally! He graduated from K-State in May and took a job in Phoenix. He was thrilled with the situation as he had lived his whole life in Kansas. So to explore another part of the country was his dream. I wondered to myself, “will we ever see him again?” (Dramatic thought I know but this was a mother’s heart speaking!)

My son packed up his worldly possessions in a U-Haul and my husband and I drove with our son the 21 hours southwest. Jim and Andrew drove the U-haul and I followed in his car. Driving alone in a car, with no one to talk to, gives a person a lot of “thinking” time. As we drove through the expanse of open country I was struck by the thought of Jesus going out into the desert before he started his public ministry. Now my son was headed out to the desert as he made his way in the world. What thoughts were going through his head? Was he excited? Anxious? Did he know what the future would bring?



As I approach this Lent, I am reminded of that experience of going into the desert. I will use it as a focal point to remove the distractions around me and to focus on discovering my call in life. Our Catholic tradition encourages a three prong approach to Lent: praying, fasting and acts of charity. On Page 6 of this Ascent, you will find more ideas on how to incorporate these three areas. For me, I plan to carry this image of the desert with me in my prayer time, to try and remove the distractions of daily life, even for just a bit.



The Lenten Journey is the journey into our individual soul. We all are encouraged to spend quiet time with God asking Him where he wants us to grow, and become more Christ-like.

REFLECTIONS ON THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

BY DAVE REMPEL

During each decade of a rosary, I try to reflect on the corresponding mystery, and to facilitate and focus that reflection, I dwell on a particular aspect or theme of that mystery. Because Lent favors the Sorrowful Mysteries, I note here a few possible jumping-off points for contemplation while praying those mysteries during this season.



The Agony in the Garden

To me, this mystery IS Lent. Jesus realized that His death was imminent, and He went off to prepare. He prayed especially for the strength to face His destiny. At the same time, Jesus exhorted his companions to stay alert and to watch with Him. Thus, one might pray for the strength to remove oneself from the trivialities of the world, to stay alert to the meaning of the season, to prepare properly for Good Friday and Easter.

One might dwell on the importance and power of prayer. Even divine Jesus felt the need to pray. Moreover, He did not wait until that crucial moment to pray – to the contrary, Luke tells us that it was His custom to remove Himself to that mountain. Jesus prayed so intensely on this occasion that He sweated blood – THAT is how hard I should (try to) pray.

Jesus noted to his companions that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. That distinction applied to Jesus Himself, as He took human form and allowed its destruction through death in order to liberate our souls. Thus, one might focus on placing spiritual needs above fleshly desires.

The Scourging at the Pillar

One might think about the physical pain that Jesus endured for us, which began with this forceful tearing of flesh by barbed whips. It is too easy to forget the intensity of this suffering, as few of us have experienced that kind of torture. This slow destruction of Jesus's body reminds us of the immensity of Jesus's sacrifice in taking, for our sake, a form that could experience such pain.

One could use this decade to dwell on some of the events leading up to the crucifixion generally, and especially the players. He was betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, and the remainder ran away – these were the ones closest to Jesus. Annas, Caiaphas, and Herod all tried to pass the buck, and Pilate succumbed to the mob while absolving himself of blame. The high priests, who had stood by while Jesus taught in the temple, and the crowd, who had recently heralded His entrance into Jerusalem, screamed for His crucifixion. Meanwhile, Jesus, even while being wrongfully arrested, advocated peace and restored a severed ear. Who am I in these scenes? In tough times, do I turn away from God or walk beside Him?

The Crowning with Thorns

In contrast with the physical pain exemplified by the scourging, the crowning with thorns was one part of the mental and emotional torture to which Jesus was also subjected (along with betrayal and denial). The thorns were not necessarily intended to inflict pain; rather, the more likely goal was to mock Jesus by treating Him like a false reflection of a king (with the crown, the cloak, the kneeling, the reed for a staff, the hailing of the “King of the Jews”). The irony, of course, is that Jesus really WAS the King, the Messiah, the real thing (as Pilate seemingly recognized in refusing to edit the inscription on the cross). Do I treat Jesus like a king? Or do I sometimes only pay lip service to my faith, to Jesus’s primacy? Do I in effect deny the presence of the Messiah? People like to ask, “What would Jesus do?” Perhaps the better question might be, “What would I do if Jesus the King were standing right next to me?”

This mockery of Jesus, this degradation -- like the physical torture -- reminds us again that Jesus, who was divine, debased Himself by becoming man for our sake, and He then experienced the worst parts of humanity. Although the analogy falls well short, I might try to imagine what it would be like for me to become an animal -- and not a beloved pet, but an abused stray.

The Carrying of the Cross

The gospels do not provide much for this mystery. Thus, I divide the decade into sub-mysteries, with one bead for each of the first ten Stations of the Cross (with ideas for further reflection):

- Jesus is condemned to death (treated unfairly).
- Jesus takes up His cross (accepting the burden of our sins).
- Jesus falls the first time (physical pain, considering His open wounds).
- Jesus meets His blessed mother (unlike the others, Mary was there for Him, and she had no sin for Him to redeem; Mary’s own suffering for Him).
- Simon takes up the cross (not willingly -- am I there for Jesus?).
- Jesus comforts the women of Jerusalem (despite this torture, HE comforts THEM).
- Jesus falls the second time (one more occasion for mockery).
- Veronica wipes the face of Jesus (she tries to help Him, He gives her a gift).
- Jesus falls the third time (prevalence of 3 in the gospels; more physical torment).
- Jesus is stripped of His garments (degradation of Jesus; stripped to His essence for our salvation).

The Crucifixion

This is the ultimate human sacrifice by Jesus, and He did it to redeem our sins and to open the gates of Paradise. He did that for me; what should I be doing for Him?

There were many witnesses to the crucifixion; whom do I resemble? The soldiers and onlookers who mocked Jesus and who only realized His divinity after the fact? The criminal who taunted Jesus? The criminal who repented? The women who stayed with Jesus to the bitter end?

I like to think about the so-called “seven last words” of Jesus, which canvass many aspects of our faith (with ideas for further reflection):

- “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Jesus’s despair shows his true human nature).
- “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do” (forgiveness; concern for others first).
- “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (redemption).
- “Woman, behold your son; behold your mother” (Mary as Mother of the Church).
- “I thirst” (Jesus’s humanity; importance of Scripture, as this was said “in order that the scripture might be fulfilled”).
- “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (God’s will is paramount).
- “It is finished” (redemptive mission accomplished).

NEWLY MARRIEDS MINISTRY

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANGELA AND JAMES MOBURG

How did you two first become involved in the Newly Married ministry?

In August 2013, Fr. Tom approached us and a few other couples to consider leading this ministry. Our first few events were quite small in attendance, however the Lenten book series in 2014 really kick started new members.

What have you personally gained from being involved in this ministry?

Besides meeting new newly married couples, it's been rewarding when we hear that it's made a difference in someone's life. Hearing that couples look forward to events, or that a particular book helped a couple's marriage or faith, or seeing couples become friends with other couples, or get plugged into the parish is rewarding. Personally for us, it's the friendships, the relationships, and the shared spiritual and social experiences we have. A commonality between members is that they make their marriage a priority, and couples often freely share their tips and experiences of their own marriages with one another. The new love of a recently married couple is contagious for a couple who has been married many years, and those marriages with more experience can provide valuable advice to those just starting out. It's been a wonderful experience to further our love of our parish and opportunity to build a smaller community within the parish community.

What is the one thing about the Newly Married Group that others may not know?

It's a requirement for those in their 20s and 30s (just kidding). We do hope people take advantage of this community. You can attend as many or as few gatherings or events as you like.

What are some of the ingredients to the success of this ministry?

The supportive Parish is a core ingredient, first Fr. Tom recognizing the need, and both Fr. Tom & Father Nathan supporting the ministry by finding couples to help volunteer, suggesting couples to consider joining, as well as help attending events. When we promote Fr. Nathan will be attending an event, we seem to get a greater attendance.

Why is this particular ministry unique to our parish and even to the diocese?

Ascension is very aware of the unique needs of our parish community. Even though there are so many ministries at Ascension, Fr. Tom pointed out that newly married couples, prior to having school age children, may often not have as many relationships in the parish as other older parishioners. By providing this ministry, we hope that newly married couples can quickly and easily get to know others in similar life stages at Ascension.

Who is the invited to join, and how do we do so?

Newly Marrieds does not have a hard cut off, but it is typically for newly married couples (less than 7 years) in their 20s and 30s. Some of the couples have children. Some couples have even joined the group while they were engaged. The best way for a new newly married couple get updates on upcoming events, is to email us (jmoburg@gmail.com, angela233951@gmail.com). You can also find us on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/AscensionNewlyMarrieds.

When is your next event?

The Lenten Book ([Rediscover Jesus](#) by Matthew Kelly beginning February 10th) – New faces welcome! Please reach out to James (913-981-3906) or Angela (913-333-0591) for more information.



A LENTEN MEAL

BY CAROL AND TIM HALL

Although Church Tradition obliges it, nothing in the Bible absolutely requires us to fast, however, in Matthew 6:16, Jesus does not say, "If you happen to fast." He says, "When you fast."

Fasting for the original Christians included avoiding meat in the diet. Today when we think of Lent and fasting our thoughts go to eating fish on Fridays. Two thousand years ago meat was considered a luxury food and was expensive; hence, fasting was deemed a spiritual discipline. Fish was food for the poor and was available in lakes and streams and was considered acceptable fare for a fast.

Fast forward to present day. Having spent much of our life in South Louisiana, seafood was a preferred commodity. When Lent arrived, fish on Friday wasn't actually a sacrifice and, in truth, it almost felt as if we were cheating Jesus. We do, however, remember the days of having younger children when fish sticks, macaroni and cheese, or cheese pizza was the Lenten Friday food of choice. In some households the meal might have included everyone's favorite tuna casserole. These offerings generally worked with the younger crowd and were always present on the school lunch menu. We should note that some fish sticks did seem like penance.

Knowing that that the Midwest palate is partial to steak and barbecue, we thought it would be useful to include a Lenten seafood recipe that works well as a Lenten main dish and can be included later in a special steak dinner as an appetizer.

Mixed Seafood Sauté

During a visit to New Orleans we saw this offering on a menu as an appetizer. We have served it as such on numerous occasions. To offer it as an entrée simply expand the amounts to accommodate the number of people you intend to serve.

Prep time: 20 minutes
Cook time: 15 minutes
Yield: 4-6 appetizer servings

- 1/4 lb. peeled raw shrimp
- 1/4 lb. crawfish
- 1/4 lb. firm white fish cut into chunks
- 1/4 lb. scallops (preferably bay scallops, but quartered or halved sea scallops work)
- Butter, as needed for sautéing
- 4 Finely diced green onions for garnish
- Salt and pepper to taste



Prepare the seafood and the green onions and set aside. Heat the butter in the skillet, add the seafood and sauté lightly until the shrimp are pink and curled. Season to taste when seafood is almost done and garnish with green onions. Serve with a good French bread and green salad.

Bon Appétit!

LENTEN WORD SEARCH



Stayed - A Lenten Prayer by Sarah Streitwieser (Find underlined words)

In swaddling bands she wrapped Him;

The infinite God, in babe

She stayed.

In manger crib she laid Him,

The Lord ever-present,

Present made.

In grave clothes she bound Him;

The God of life, in death

She stayed.

In earthen tomb she placed Him,

The Lord immortal,

Mortal made.

In final triumph He transcended,

Though Mother's wraps

Did not un-stay.

God unfettered, Lord eternal,

Bound by love,

Mother made.