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Becoming

... A People of God



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St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Hello! Depending on when you read this, you may be near the end of Lent or the beginning of our weeks-long celebration of Easter. Regardless, I'm hoping you find this edition of "Becoming a People of God" a little refreshing and has you thinking about spending more time in prayer, in true worship of our Living God, and in thanksgiving for wonderful gifts.

On January 11, 2024, our very own, Fr. Kingsley Nwoko, gave a presentation in our Social Hall to the Stewardship Networking Group—a group of like-minded folks interested in spreading the principles of Stewardship within the diocese. Father's presentation was titled "Eucharistic and Inter-Personal Communication." Fr. Kingsley began his presentation by reminding us of the Eucharistic Revival soon to begin its third year. Using the analogy of the gospel story of the Road to Emmaus, we were taken on a journey ourselves, seeing the gospel story with a Stewardship perspective.

The story of the Road to Emmaus begins with the initial disappointment of the two disciples, who happened upon a stranger while traveling home from Jerusalem, where they celebrated the Feast of Passover. The two disciples explained to the stranger what had recently happened in Jerusalem—the conviction of treason and execution of their Rabbi, Jesus. The Stranger—Jesus then explained the Old Testament readings from the early patriarchs to the more recent prophets, all relating the

approaching New Covenant, and his eventual death on the cross. The gentlemen were so enraptured by his explanations, they asked him to stay with them for a meal. At the table, as Jesus blessed and broke the bread; their eyes were then opened as to the identity of this Stranger—Jesus Christ, Himself. At their recognition, Jesus vanished.

Fr. Kingsley expounded beautifully on the story and made these following, powerful points.

- ◆ During the Mass, we must meet Jesus at the Temple of the Word to challenge us to repentance. If we miss Jesus in the Liturgy of the Word—if we fail to prepare ourselves for God's Divine Liturgy by spending time with the readings for Sunday Mass—we will miss Jesus in the Eucharist.
- ◆ If we have had our hearts opened to the Word and God's love for us, we are ready to meet the Lord in the Temple of the Eucharist.
- ◆ Without open eyes, we cannot engage appropriately in the mission of Christ.
- ◆ We have been given so much, but we know so little about what has been given to us within our very rich Catholic faith.
- ◆ As Jesus led the two disciples to a Eucharistic Encounter, so must we lead others to Christ.
- ◆ People will follow you only if you are excited about your encounter with Christ. We must be *joyful* to attract others to us and the Eucharist.



As we bring the gifts of bread and wine to the altar at Mass, it is important to remember all that this beautiful ritual means. All of our...

"works, prayers, and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if they are accomplished in the Spirit—indeed, even the hardships of life if patiently born—all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. In the celebration of the Eucharist, these may most fittingly be offered to the Father along with the body of the Lord. . . . offering worship by the holiness of their lives."

- ◆ To attract others to the Eucharist, it is necessary to understand Christ's presence in the Eucharist.
- ◆ The Eucharistic Revival is about becoming more, not doing more. Christ is a gift! We must become a gift, reflecting the image of God.
- ◆ UNLESS WE BECOME A EUCHARISTIC PEOPLE, the world will not change.

Believe with me!
Alexis Couvillon, Editor

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

On Ash Wednesday many of us came to church, received ashes on our forehead and heard the words, **“Repent, and believe in the Gospel.”**

A few years ago one of our parishioners told me about an event in the neighborhood. He and his family live across from the church. On Ash Wednesday he noticed a car parking in front of his house, blocking the driveway. He politely asked the driver to move his car. The driver responded with cursing, telling him he was there to get ashes and would move the car when he was good and ready. That's not exactly the spirit of Lent, is it?

So, how fruitful has your Lent been? Have you grown in wisdom, age and grace, or have you just been about “business as usual?” Holy Saturday is 30 March, when we celebrate the transition of Lent into the Easter Season, when we celebrate Jesus conquering sin and death, so all who follow Him can live forever. Will you and I honestly be able to celebrate that, or will our lives just be “business as usual?”

If you haven't accomplished much in Lent yet, you still have time:

- ◇ Read Scripture (especially the New Testament) every day or every other day.
- ◇ Make a deliberate effort to practice random acts of kindness.
- ◇ Instead of spending money to treat yourself, donate that money to causes that assist the homeless, addicts, victims of abuse or neglect, etc.



- ◇ Pray that people who do evil, who are hateful and meanspirited, will repent--after all, what we pray for others God will give to us.
- ◇ Then, we can attend the great celebrations of Holy Week and Easter Week, honestly celebrating how Jesus led us to repent and believe.

Fr. Douglas Guthrie

“The soul of one who serves God always swims in joy,
always keeps holiday, and is always in the mood for singing.”

St. John of the Cross



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

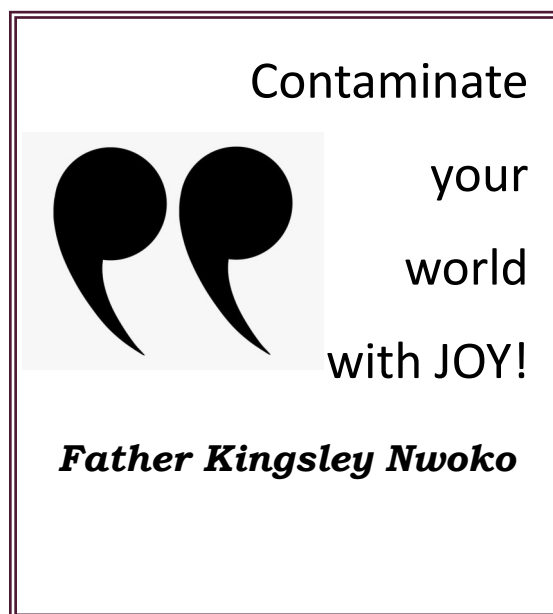
During the last year of attending Mass, I've taken a few notes during our weekend, and a few weekday, homilies and have garnered a few notable quotes that you might want to revisit. Please consider that these are not likely to be direct and completely accurate quotes, since I'm unable to write as fast as the word is spoken. So, let's call these reconstructed quotes, or as my high school geometry teacher would say when she drew a circle on the chalk board, "a reasonable facsimile thereof."

- ◇ Welcome and compassion leads to unity.
- ◇ The Word of God is unchanging, and it is not for sale! It is alive and relevant today as it ever was.
- ◇ Jesus calls us in ordinary moments.
- ◇ Today is a good day to walk with Christ.
- ◇ We destroy ourselves by ignoring what God wants of us.
- ◇ God is stronger than our fear. The power of God is greater than any obstacle.
- ◇ What we feed our minds controls us. We must be careful not to allow TV, email, cell phones, and any outside/secular influences to threaten our relationship with God. Choose wisely your forms of entertainment.
- ◇ A healthy, wholesome lifestyle is conducive to a healthy, wholesome, life-giving relationship with God.
- ◇ Lenten penances should not make other people miserable.
- ◇ The Holy Spirit is the Breath of Life, and without it, there would be no Church. The breath of God is in each one of us for the journey of salvation. The Spirit of God is active in us; we are children of God.
- ◇ The Spirit is ALIVE in us! We live for the glory

of God—to continue in his mission of building the Kingdom of God for the next generation.

- ◇ We cannot define God. We should not try to interpret God in psychological or sociological terms.
- ◇ The Holy Spirit will reveal God to us.
- ◇ "Humility" comes from the word for dirt! (Latin word humus literally "earth, the ground.")

I've only gotten through half of my little notebook, so stay tuned!



PSALM 22

In last year's Lenten Bible Study, we covered Christ's Passion—His journey into Jerusalem, the betrayal of those he loved, his trial, conviction, and death by crucifixion—the very part of Christ's life that I frequently have a tough time focusing on, and yet it's the part of his life, without which, there would be no salvation. The Bible Study presented the perspective of the four different gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Even as Jesus hangs on the cross, he continues to communicate his message of God's salvation for us: he speaks of forgiveness to the sinner and expresses his love to his disciple, John, and his Mother. In both Matthew and Mark's gospels, He speaks the well-known question, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" This is the first line of Psalm 22; the same psalm that is used in our Good Friday liturgy. But it doesn't sound like a salvation message, does it?

If I were to say, "In for a penny . . ." and stopped mid-sentence, you would know that I meant "In for a penny, in for a pound." When Jesus stated the first line of the psalm, it was understood to all around him, that he was not only stating the first line of the psalm, he was stating the entire psalm. Psalm 22 speaks of the isolation and dehumanization of Jesus: "I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people. All who see me mock at me . . ." NRSV, Catholic Edition

In verse 23, the psalm changes course and becomes one of praise! This praise that is spoken of in the psalm refers to a "todah" or thanksgiving sacrifice. When a thanksgiving sacrifice was offered in the Jewish Temple, it was to thank God for the blessings that God had bestowed, and the remainder of the psalm reflects this gratefulness to God:

Psalm 22: verses 23-24, NRSV-CE

You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.

When Jesus utters "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?," he is acknowledging that he is the sacrifice for our sin. Jesus is the Eucharistia, the thanksgiving sacrifice—our Eucharist that we celebrate each week at Mass. It is the only sacrifice that was prophesied to remain in the New Covenant. God is with us in the Eucharistic in the form of bread and wine—the Body and Blood of Jesus. Meet him as often as you can.

This understanding that Jesus' utterance on the Cross of the first line of Psalm 22 meant that he was proclaiming the entire psalm created my very own, personal Eucharistic Revival! I pray it does the same for all of you.

Believe in the
Eucharist with me!
Alexis



FASTING

We are most fortunate to live in these United States, where grocery shelves are stuffed with produce and product, vying for your attention and consumer dollar. Fasting is not a word that comes readily to mind amongst this abundance, where we are asked to spend more, buy more, consume more, have more, do more, and yes, eat more. It's usually more; it's seldom, if ever, less!

I don't like fasting, but it is spiritually beneficial when we pair it with prayer and almsgiving. We learn what is necessary; we learn what it is that we truly need, as opposed to what would fall into the "I WANT" category. I've learned so much about the spirituality of fasting now that I don't have to practice it because of my age! I fast anyway, especially during Lent. I still have so much to learn.

In 2006, there was an article in *The Catholic Herald*, about fasting. It was an editorial column by Deacon Leonard Lockett. The article was about half of a page, but what moved me the most was the last three paragraphs. I refer to it nearly each time I practice fasting. Anything published by the *Herald* before 2015, can be republished without permission, so I am sharing it with you.

But fasting can also put those of us who live in the affluence of America in solidarity with the far greater population of the world, where meals are meager, often unchanging, and seldom guaranteed. Those people who carry water up a riverbank, or who draw it from a well, and then balance their heavy load down a long road home, know not just the weight of water, but come to know how important it is.

We can use fasting as a way of putting things into perspective and counter a culture shaped by advertising and steeped in materialism. Fasting can teach us to make choices about our lives, about what is important in our lives. In the world of fast foods (our everyday world), we do not so much as choose, as we respond to given sets of stimuli. Like Ivar Pavlov's dogs, which salivated at the sound of a bell, we, too, react almost totally at the sensory level—to a color, a condition, the sound of a jingle, a familiar pathway.

We fast for all kinds of reasons; it is not because we need to be reminded that we are capable of ascetic

practices, but to be reminded that we are humans, , creatures which do not merely respond, but who make choices, and in choosing, escape the conditioning of culture and the tyranny of custom; fasting reminds us to be our own persons, to be in charge of our lives and to respond not to a stimulus, but to our destiny, to what and who we are called to be.

*Deacon Leonard Lockett
The Catholic Herald, 2006*

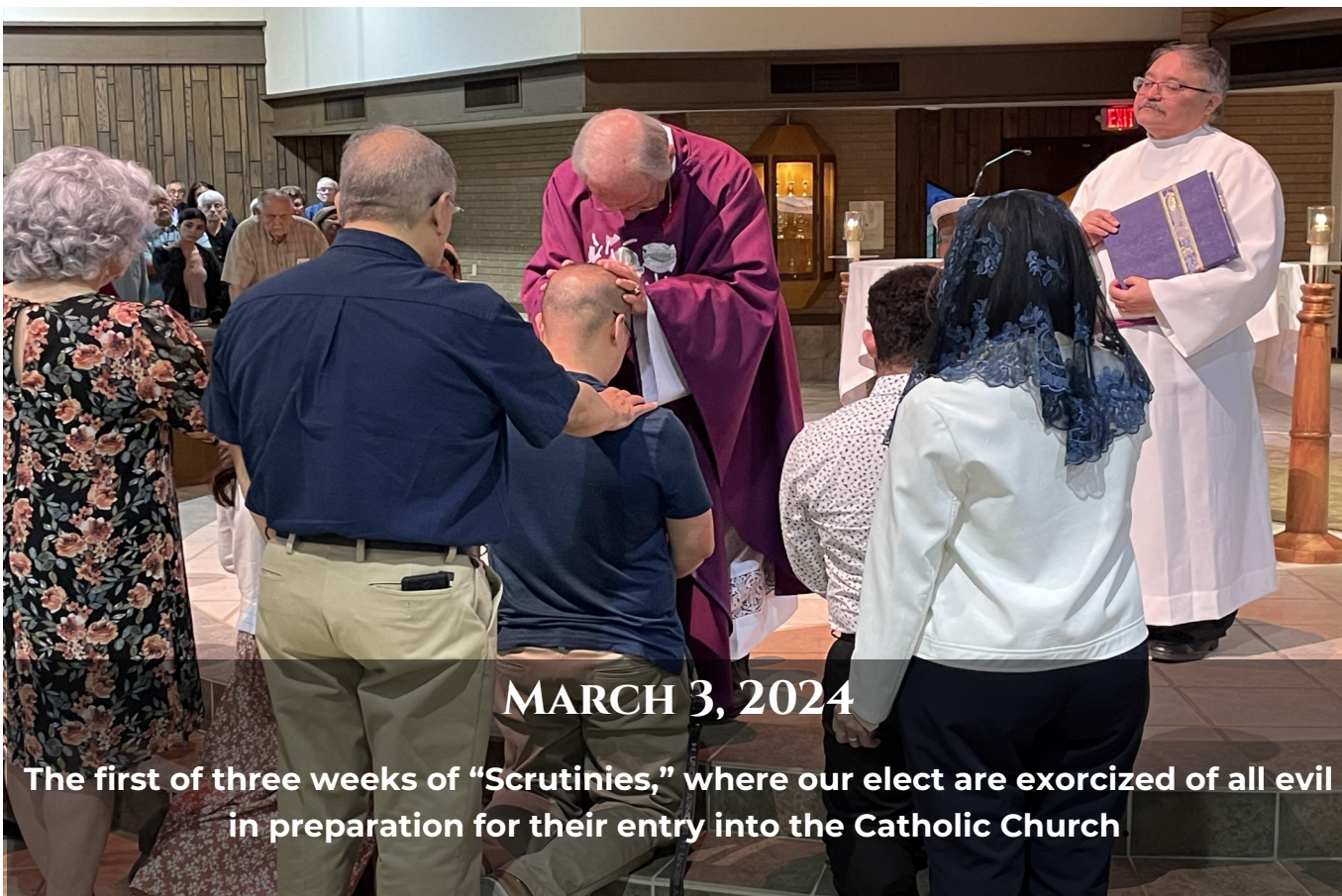
“Father, creator of unfailing light, give that same light to those who call on you. May our lips praise you; our lives proclaim your goodness; our works give you honor, and our voices celebrate you forever.”

*Liturgy of the Hours
Morning Prayer*



FEBRUARY 18, 2024

The Rite of Sending, where our catechumens sign their name in the Book of the Elect. That evening, the book was sent with them to Mary Queen, Catholic Church, where the Bishop read the names and signed the Book of the Elect, which was then returned to our parish for our permanent record.



MARCH 3, 2024

The first of three weeks of "Scrutinies," where our elect are exorcized of all evil in preparation for their entry into the Catholic Church

HAPPY EASTER



May the risen Lord breathe on our minds and
open our eyes that we may experience his
presence in our Easter Celebrations!

Wishing all of you a Happy Easter!