

TIDINGS

OF HOLY NAME OF JESUS NATIONAL CATHOLIC PARISH

A Monthly Newsletter of Information and Events

Vol. 22-- 2009

Month of February

No. 2

Ours is not to question why ... Why?

Nostrum is just a cool sounding word. Where it comes from is not certain, but linguists think it is derived from the Latin form of the word *ours*. It has a negative connotation associated with it. It implies personal exaggeration and even deception when it comes to what is ours. It claims results that are imagined, or fabricated well beyond the actual. The word may refer to quack medicine that is without any benefit, or it may overstate limited success as a panacea. *Nostrum* became a word because it was needed, not because someone thought it just sounded good. There is a human tendency to favour *our* thoughts and creations above those of others, thus the need for the word.

Over the years as my daughters have been growing up, I have moved from watching them play in the town rec program for various sports to now playing for Frontier Regional School. Sitting in the bleachers at Deerfield Elementary, the other teams from Conway, Sunderland and Whately were the rivals and opponents, the "other" to my "ours." Now that I sit in the bleachers at Frontier those other kids from other towns have become part of the same team at Frontier. They have become part of my "ours." This sort of thing happens all the time. "Ours" was the determining factor of my opinion. This tendency is the basis for the word *nostrum*, and it is equally the basis for why I favoured my daughters' sports teams regardless of all other factors.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of our declaration of the Word of God as a sacrament of our church. For this reason I will be emphasizing the importance of this theological creation on this page in 2009. When we accept the need for the creation of a word like *nostrum*, we also accept its etymology that our judgments can be coloured by what is already "ours." We have a built-in, hard-wired bias to favour what is ours even if that entails fudging the facts or even fabricating them, thus *nostrum*. Foreknown, however, is to be forewarned. The remedy for the bias of "ours" is a conscious and consistent emphasis upon critical thinking. We know of our bias so we must then

require ourselves to ask the question "Why?" If what is "ours" passes the critique, then we have a deeper appreciation for its worth and effect; if it does not, then we should change our minds.

For example, the Dalai Lama once asked Robert Livingston, an accomplished neuroscientist, to visit India and lecture on the origins of the human nervous system. He mentioned "how sperm reside in the fallopian tubes from a day to a few weeks prior to fertilization. A murmur went up among the monks. That's not possible, they said, since Tibetan culture teaches that the soul is transferred to an embryo during orgasm. Livingston politely persisted. To Livingston's amazement, the Dalai Lama conceded, 'All we can say is that our original concept must be wrong.'" (*Boston Globe Magazine*, 3/9/2008, p. 39-40) The monks murmured because they were not willing to challenge "ours." To his credit, the Dalai Lama recognized this normal human bias and listened more attentively to the convincing evidence provided against it when he came to his decision that it "must be wrong."

For this type of critical reasoning to be possible information cannot be processed passively. A person has to be engaged in the subject not just subjected to it. At MIT non-physics majors were having a great deal of difficulty with introductory physics. The class was traditionally taught in lecture halls to hundreds of students by a professor at the blackboard. As he wrote, they copied. The non-majors who were not willing to invest themselves in trying to understand what they were memorizing suffered. One of the professors explained: "Just as you can't become a marathon runner by watching marathons on TV, likewise for science, you have to go through the thought processes of doing science and not just watch your instructor do it." (*NYT*, 1/13/09, p. A12) Interactive and collaborative learning replaced the lecture hall, and understanding improved dramatically.

Can you see where this argument is going next month with the problem of preferential thought-processes, the concepts of critical and engaged thinking, and the sacrament of the Word of God?

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS
MONTH OF FEBRUARY**

- February 1, 2009 – *Souper Bowl Sunday*
collection for the Western Mass Food Bank.
Polish Mass will be recited at 7:45am.
Christmas Play at 10:00am by the younger students of our SOCL.
- February 2nd – Feast of the Presentation.
Mass and blessing of candles at 7:00pm.
- February 5th – Fr. Calvo will participate in the meeting of the Frontier Regional School's Accreditation Committee.
- February 6th – Monthly visitations to the sick and the shut-in of the parish.
- February 7th – Confession for the youth of the parish at 10:30am.
- February 8th – First Sunday of Pre-Lent.
- February 10th – Monthly meeting of the Parish Committee at 7:00pm.
- February 15th – Fr. Calvo will participate in the Installation Service of the new pastor at the Whately Congregational Church.
- February 16th – Requiem Mass on the anniversary of death of Bp. Francis Hodur, organizer of our church denomination, at 7:00pm.
- February 22nd – Monthly meeting of the Adoration Society at 10:00am.
- February 25th – **ASH WEDNESDAY**. Mass of the day at 7:00pm, with the blessing and imposition of ashes, homily offered by the Rev. Sherril Willis.
First of our weekly Ecumenical Lenten Discussion Groups, which our parish will host, and presented by Rev. Willis.
- February 27th – Bitter Lamentations will be sung at 7:00pm.
- February 28th – Meeting of the Diocesan Youth Commission at 11:00am at our parish

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SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY

As you hopefully know, we collect non-perishable food items for the Franklin County Survival Center throughout the year. As you probably also know, many more individuals and families are turning to the organization for help in these financially trying times. One of the charitable groups that helps supply the Survival Center is the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. They are participating in the 20th annual *Souper Bowl of*

Caring. It all started with one church's prayer in South Carolina: "Lord as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us to be mindful of those without even a bowl of soup to eat." From that one church this collection has expanded nationwide, and over \$50 million of monetary and food donations have been collected to date.

On February 1st, Super Bowl Sunday, our younger School of Christian Living students will put on a Christmas play as the church closes out the Christmas Season. The only cost for attending this big-budget theatrical production is a small (or large) donation of non-perishable food items or the ever appreciated cash. This will be our thank you to the children, our gift to the Christ Child, and our offering of Christian charity to those less fortunate than ourselves. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION

The 40th day after Christmas is February 2nd, and this marks the formal completion of the Christmas season in the church. According to tradition, Jesus was taken by Mary and Joseph to the Jerusalem Temple on this day and *presented* before God. As the Holy Family enters the Temple precincts, Simeon the prophet declares Jesus "the light to the gentiles." To symbolize this prophecy, the church blesses candles on this day for her use and for that of her parishioners. The faithful are encouraged to bring candles to Mass on this day, hence the feast's other name of Candlemas, for the blessing. These candles may then be used in your homes at religiously significant times. I hope you will join me at Mass on this day at 7:00pm.

SEASON OF PRE-LENT

The short, three-Sunday season of Pre-Lent offers a gentle transition from the joys of Christmas to the more somber notes of Lent. It also serves as the remote preparations for the sacred events of Holy Week and Easter. During this time, the Lenten themes are broached, but not yet completely embraced.

BP. HODUR REQUIEM MASS

Bp. Francis Hodur died on February 16, 1953. Until that day he served this church of ours that he had organized 55 years earlier. He was selfless in his commitment to God and to church. His inspiration and wisdom gave coherence and direction to our denomination as a progressive Catholic church. He faced almost constant persecution and

ridicule, not to mention the ordinary burdens of being a pastor and a bishop. And yet he was still able to pen church hymns, define our theology, shape our liturgy and pastor a church denomination that saw almost miraculous growth under his direction. In his memory and his honour, we are asked to gather together on the anniversary of his death for Mass. You are invited to join us in church out of our respect for the man who more than any other defined this church denomination.

ASH WEDNESDAY AND LENT

February 25th is Ash Wednesday. This day marks the beginning of the Lenten season in the church. This is the 40 day period that precedes the mystery of Easter (Lenten Sundays are not counted as part of the 40 days for Sundays always celebrate the resurrection and are not formally counted as days of Lenten penance). Ash Wednesday receives its name from the ashes that are placed upon the foreheads of the faithful. The ashes are the remnants of the burnt palms of previous years. The palms are a sign of honour as Jesus enters Jerusalem triumphantly. However, when the people of Jerusalem discover that Jesus is not going to be the Messiah that they demand, they turn on Jesus and their shouts of Hosanna quickly turn to "Crucify Him!" The burned palms symbolize this false worship, this idea that we can define God rather than letting God define us. Sin is simply the replacement of the will of God with our own will. The ashes placed on our foreheads are to remind all of us of this easy transition to sinfulness. The mark of the ashes defines us as having sinned before God, and such public statements are not easy to make when taken seriously. They call upon us to change our priorities and to turn more wholly toward God. This is the purpose of Lent, and this is why Lent begins with Ash Wednesday.

Once again this year we will join our Congregational neighbours as we gather for our Ecumenical Lenten Discussion series. The first of these meetings will be hosted by our church on Ash Wednesday. The Rev. Sherril Willis will preach at Mass and then continue her presentation in the church hall after Mass. As we invite others into our church home, we show them our hospitality, and with that in mind I ask our parishioners to bring a dessert, fruit, etc for our repast after the Discussion. If you can help in this way, please call the rectory.

During Lent we are called upon to fast. All Lenten Fridays are days when we are not to eat meat, and on which our meals are to be simple. For those who keep the Friday fast all year, Wednesday is added during Lent as a fast day. And please remember that Ash Wednesday is a fast day, as well.

We will conduct our Lenten Devotions on every Lenten Friday at 7:00pm. The *Bitter Lamentations* will be sung on February 27th, March 20th and April 8th. The *Stations of the Cross* will be recited March 6th, 13th, 27th and April 3rd. These devotions are designed to help us meditate upon the suffering and death of our Saviour. Very few of us take advantage of these special times of prayer in the church. I hope you will help us change that fact.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND

This year marks the 80th anniversary of our parish's organization. Your donations to this fund help us to maintain the properties we have inherited. The following have made recent donations to the CIF. They are: James & Rosalind Sledge, \$200; Richard & Miriam Puder, \$30 in memory of Ada Grybko; Mike & Pauline Polczwartek, \$20, in memory of Stella (Mularz) Kaminski Bachel; Sharon Calvo, \$300, in memory of Henry & Anita Wisniewski and Irene Calvo; \$560 in memory of Nellie Foster; and Stanley Chmiel \$25.

PARISH WEB SITE

If you have not done so recently, take a visit over to our parish website: www.holynamedeerfield.org. Lynnette Poe is the webmaster and she has created one of the best websites in our church denomination. I have received compliments from parishioners, other parishes, old friends and new. Share the site with others too. It is one of our most effective tools to reach beyond the walls of our church building.

FUEL FUND

During the month of February, the parish accepts your special donations for the Fuel Fund. These donations defray some of the costs of heating the church, hall and rectory. A special envelope is included in the boxed sets for those who use them. If you do not, donations may be mailed to the rectory or placed in a clearly marked envelope and placed in the Sunday collection basket. Thank you.

2009 - Twelfth Annual Ecumenical Lenten Lecture Series - 2009

Why would anyone want to be a Christian when nobody seems to care?

February 25th (Ash Wednesday)

Participants invited to Mass at Holy Name of Jesus Church at 7PM
Homily and first session offered by Rev. Sherril Willis at 8PM
Session Title: *I am the tax-collector*

March 4th

Second session offered by Rev. Candice Ashenden
At the Whately Congregational Church at 7PM
Session Title: *Never wrestle with a pig in mud (What happens when we play by two different sets of rules)*

March 11th

Third session offered by Fr. Randy Calvo
At the Sunderland Congregational Church at 7PM
Session Title: *Because we owe it to Him*

March 18th

Fourth session offered by Rev. Cynthia Crosson-Harrington
At the South Deerfield Congregational Church at 7PM
Session Title: *Mark Twain (No, not the author!)*

March 25th

Fifth session offered by Rev. Barbara Seamon
At Holy Name of Jesus Church at 7PM
Session Title: *Good things about bad times (Phil 2:5-11; Isa 40)*

April 1st

Sixth session offered by Rev. Richard Killough
At the Conway United Congregational Church at 7PM
Session Title: *What's true: Many find no God in modern Christianity, or many in Christianity have no God to share with modern seekers?*

Refreshment will be served after each gathering by the host parish. Since Holy Name of Jesus Church is hosting a second time on March 25th all parishes are asked to bring some refreshment at that time.