

TIDINGS
OF HOLY NAME OF JESUS NATIONAL CATHOLIC PARISH
A Monthly Newsletter of Information and Events

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Month of February

No. 2

Is There Something More to the Feast of the Presentation?

This liturgical observance is based on Luke 2:22-23. Luke is a Gentile author and his record of the Jewish rites associated with the birth of Jesus are somewhat muddled. These are not customs Luke is personally familiar with as he writes his Gospel. This is clear in the conflation of the presentation of Jesus account, which should have occurred one month after His birth (Numbers 18:16), with that of Mary's purification on the 40th day after giving birth to a male child (Leviticus 12:2-4), which is the basis of Luke 2:24, and which is also the basis of much of the confusion associated with this account. Even so, they are reported more for theological purpose than historical, and in this they become more profound in what they convey. We are not seeing what happened, but we glimpse why it happened.

For example, when the angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will be the mother of Jesus, "the Son of the Most High," (1:32) she is at first confused by the pronouncement, but then in faith responds, "Let it be with me according to your word." (1:38) Mary then gives beautiful expression to her feelings in what the church has come to refer to as the *Magnificat*. This passage is found in your Bibles at Luke 1:46-55. If you go to your Bibles, you may find there a footnote directing you to 1 Samuel 2:1-10. It is very possible that Mary gave expression to her wonderment and glorified God because of all the events we associate with the Annunciation, but that she expressed them in words so similar to those of Hannah in similar circumstance is more likely for theological purpose than for historical record.

Luke has reached back into the Holy Scriptures of his day to help give expression to the mystery of God's dramatic role in the birth of Jesus. Hannah was barren and her son Samuel was born only through the intervention of God. In response to Samuel's miraculous birth, Hannah offers her prayer of joyous praise. When Luke imitates unabashedly these words in the *Magnificat*, his intention is to connect the two events in the mind of the reader. Anyone familiar with the Holy

Scriptures would have realized immediately the connection between the two and that the actual words were not meant to be historically accurate. They were meant to be theologically profound.

Luke continues this theme from the Annunciation to that of Jesus' presentation at the Temple, which has its parallel when Hannah presents her son Samuel at the Lord's sanctuary at Shiloh (1 Sam. 1:21-28). Hannah fulfills her promise to God. The young child Samuel is presented at the sanctuary with the mother's words: "I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives, he is given to the Lord." (1 Sam. 1:28) This prepares Luke's readers to think of Jesus in the same way, as one whose life is given over completely to God.

Still with Jesus' presentation in mind, at Luke 2:23 the Evangelist refers to the Mosaic Law of the firstborn male child. According to Exodus 13:2, 15 and Numbers 18:15-16, such a child would be redeemed by a payment of five sanctuary shekels. Luke makes no mention of this payment. Instead, he tells the story of the presentation at the Temple, a custom about which absolutely nothing is mentioned in the Old Testament. Since Luke makes reference to the tradition of the redemption of the firstborn male at 2:23, he would also have know about the monetary equivalent. When Luke instead speaks of the presentation, it is because Jesus is already at birth "the Son of the Most High." Jesus need not be redeemed by the sanctuary shekels because He already belongs to God, He already is God.

Luke's account of Jesus' presentation speaks amply of Jesus' coming life of dedicated service to God and as God's Son. The historical record of this event is confounded in Luke's account, but its truth remains unambiguous. The story is not imaginary. It is most likely based on an actual remembrance that Jesus' family performed the standard Jewish rituals following the birth of a child, but neither is its purpose to merely record history. There is something more. Its truth is in its purpose and meaning. This is why it is gospel-proclamation, and this is its real literal truth.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS
MONTH OF FEBRUARY

- February 2, 2010 – **FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION.** Mass of the day at 7:00pm, with the blessing of candles.
- February 5th – Monthly visitations to the sick and the shut-in of the parish.
- February 6th – Confession for the youth of the parish at 10:30am.
- February 7th – Polish Mass will be recited at 7:45am.
- Super Bowl of Caring* food collection for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.
- February 9th – Monthly meeting of the Parish Committee at 7:00pm.
- February 16th – Bp. Hodur Requiem Mass at 9:00am on the 57th anniversary of his death.
- February 17th – **ASH WEDNESDAY.** Mass of the day at 7:00pm, with the imposition of the ashes.
- February 19th – Bitter Lamentations at 7:00pm.
- February 20th – Fr. Calvo will participate in the Diocesan Youth Commission meeting in Manchester, NH at 11:00am.
- February 24th – Ecumenical Lenten Discussion Series at 7:00pm
- February 26th – Stations of the Cross at 7:00pm.
- February 28th – Monthly meeting of the Adoration Society at 10:00am.

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“That’s what [the Bible] says; now I don’t know if that’s what it means.” - Rev. Dr. Peter Gomes.

CORRECTION

In last month’s newsletter article, I made mention that our church lists the Feast of Peter’s Chair at Rome on January 18th, which is the first day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. I was mistaken. The feast listed on that date is Peter’s Chair at Antioch. I have to admit that I am still confused by all of this. An ecumenical site that deals with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity mentions either the Chair at Rome for Roman Catholics or the Feast of the Confession of St. Peter for the liturgical Protestant churches as the first day of the observance. Also, the traditional date for Peter’s Chair at Antioch is the generally accepted date of February 22nd.

FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION

As mentioned in this month’s article, February 2nd is the 40th day of Christmas. On this day the church remembers the presentation of Jesus at the

Jerusalem Temple. The 40th day also commemorates the end of Mary’s confinement after giving birth to her firstborn son. This then marks the formal end of the Christmas observance.

As we gather for Mass on this day, the liturgy calls for the blessing of candles. Candles in the church represent the light of Christ in our world, and this tradition is reflected in the words of Simeon who upon seeing the baby Jesus exclaims of the child: “... a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” (Luke 2:32) The faithful are encouraged to bring their own candles to church for the blessing. These may then be used in the homes at the time of any religious observance or visitation.

BP. HODUR REQUIEM

The first priest and bishop of our church was Bp. Francis Hodur. It was his intellect, spirituality and vision that inspired and guided our church in her most formative years. Our church was born in 1897 when Fr. Hodur accepted the pastorate of an independent Catholic parish whose church was not yet even completed. At the time he was only 30 years of age. From that single, unfinished church building, Bp. Hodur built a denomination that included more than a hundred parishes and tens of thousands of people. He was consecrated a bishop by the Old Catholics at Utrecht, Holland in 1907. For ten years as a priest and for nearly 46 years as a bishop he faithfully and selflessly served the cause of our church. In this day and age when many of the founders of mega-churches lead very comfortable financial lives, our founder died with only enough money to cover his burial expenses. Everything else he gave back to our church. He died in his rectory in Scranton on February 16, 1953 at the age of 86. I hope you will join with me on the anniversary of his death as we offer Mass in his blessed memory.

ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the season of Lent, those 40 days that prepare us for the loving sacrifice of Christ on the cross and which anticipate the glory of His Easter resurrection. An ancient Jewish custom of repentance was to place ashes on one’s head as a symbol of our mortality and of humbleness and remorse before God. Our liturgy calls upon these same sentiments. We take the palms of previous years and burn them to ashes. The palms become a symbol of false praise

when the people of Jerusalem change their shouts from *Hosanna* to *Crucify Him*. By placing these ashes upon our heads, we are reminded how easy it is to fall away from Christ, to replace His way with ours. Admitting to this is the first step of our Lenten journey of penance and renewal. Everyone who will be at Mass on Easter Sunday should also be with us on Ash Wednesday.

SEASON OF LENT

During the season of Lent, we will conduct our **Lenten Devotions**. These will be held on all Lenten Fridays until Good Friday. The Bitter Lamentations are a three-part meditation upon the Passion and death of Jesus. As we sing this Lenten Devotion the faithful are able to ponder the ineffable sacrifice of the Son of God on our behalf. On alternate Fridays we will recite the Stations of the Cross. This Devotion takes us along the path that led from Pilate's condemnation to Jesus' burial in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. Each step allows us who gather the chance to think about Jesus' agony that He accepts because of His love for each of us. I hope more of our parishioners will choose to at least occasionally attend these Devotions because they help us to remember and to appreciate all that the cross means.

Our thirteenth annual **Ecumenical Lenten Discussion Series** will begin on February 24th. The theme of this year's series is *A New Look at Old Stories: Parables for Today's World*. As mentioned in the newsletter article, meaning and purpose are not always obvious in holy writ. This applies to Jesus' parables too.

The faithful are also reminded that Ash Wednesday and all Lenten Fridays are **fasting** days when we should abstain from meat and eat simpler meals. Some keep the practice of fasting on all Lenten Wednesdays as well.

ELECTED OFFICERS

Our annual congregational meeting will take place on March 14, 2010. A Nominations Committee has been appointed by the Parish Committee Chairman, Don Skroski. The members of the Nominating Committee are: Pat Blakeslee, Sue Dibrindisi and Shirley Mietlicki-Floyd. We had been actively seeking volunteers to serve as the Financial Secretary and Assistant Financial Secretary of the Parish Committee. I am pleased to announce that Mark Stahelski has agreed to accept nomination for the former office, and Sue

Dibrindisi for the latter. The Nominations Committee is still looking for a parishioner to serve as our Recording Secretary. If you would like more information about this position and what it entails, please speak to any member of the Nominations Committee. And thank you for considering this position and your church's need.

Also, we may choose not to elect General Synod delegates at our March meeting, but we do need to keep this important event in mind. The Synod will be held in Niagara Falls, Canada from October 4th – 8th. If you may be interested in attending as a delegate from the parish, mention your interest to the Nominations Committee.

ORGAN RESTORATION

Our church organ was crafted in 1868. Southfield Organ Builders has been contracted to refurbish the instrument. With their work completed, they believe "that this instrument can furnish many more years of service to the Church." This will cost \$9,000. Music adds an irreplaceable gift to our liturgies, and our organ has been the mainstay of our church's music program for all of our 80 years. This project is due to be completed by Ash Wednesday. If our church music is important to you, we ask you to make a donation to our organ restoration appeal. Please note "organ restoration" on your donations, and thank you.

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

This is a nationwide event that coincides with Super Bowl Sunday. It was born at one church in 1990 and by 2009 it raised \$60 million in donations and contributions. For more information, visit www.souperbowl.org. The Food Bank of Western Mass has asked for our help through this event. On the 7th we will accept your donations of non-perishable food items or your monetary donations. For every \$1 donated, the Food Bank distributes \$9 worth of food. As Super Bowl parties abound with food and drink, we ask you to also think of those who worry about their next meal. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

F.Y.I.

The Springfield Symphony Youth Orchestra will be presenting a concert at the Frontier Regional High School on February 7th at 3:30pm. Tickets are \$10 and \$5 for youth and seniors. I mention this because Lauren Sittard and Jacob Martinson of our Westfield parish play this orchestra. Tickets will be available at the door.

2010 - Thirteenth Annual Ecumenical Lenten Discussion Series - 2010

***A New Look at Old Stories:
Parables for Today's World***

February 17th

Ash Wednesday will be observed at our individual parishes. All are encouraged to attend their church or to visit another church on this first day of Lent.

February 24th

First session offered by Rev. Dr. Candice Ashenden
At the Whately Congregational Church at 7PM
Session Title: *Why did Jesus talk in parables?*

March 3rd

Second session offered by Fr. Randolph Calvo
At the South Deerfield Congregational Church at 7PM
Session Title: *Once More Astonished*

March 10th

Third session offered by Rev. Dr. Christine Fontaine
At the Sunderland Congregational Church at 7PM
Session Title: *Small Miracles in the Everyday*

March 17th

Fourth session offered by Rev. Barbara Seamon
At Holy Name of Jesus Church at 7PM
Session Title: *The Stories of Our Life and the Parable of the Sower*

March 24th

Fifth session offered by Rev. Dr. Cynthia Crosson-Harrington
At the Conway United Congregational Church at 7PM
Session Title: *"What We Find in Loss: Considering the Parable
of the Prodigal Son"*

Refreshments will be served after each gathering by the host parish.