

THEMES IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

This is the second in a series of three articles on the Gospel of Luke. If you missed the first theme last month, you can find it in the January "New Spirit" on our parish website.

The four Gospels in the Christian Scriptures all relate the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. But each Gospel has its own voice. In 2019, the Catholic Lectionary will draw its selections from the Gospel of Luke. I would like to offer three themes that flow from Luke's unique voice: world-affirmation, wealth and salvation for the poor. Attention to these emphases may assist us in our efforts to understand Luke's particular Gospel proclamation.

Wealth

The ministry of the historical Jesus was addressed to poor farmers and fishermen in Galilee. Most of his hearers lived a hand-to-mouth existence. Struggling to survive, discretionary wealth was not a part of their experience. Although Jesus' mission was among the poor, the spread of the Gospel in the first century was most successful in the cosmopolitan cities of the Roman Empire. It is likely that Luke's community was located in such an urban setting and that Luke's audience was of a high socio-economic status. In fact, it has been suggested that Luke's church was the wealthiest community of the Christian Scripture. This possibility explains why Luke speaks so frequently about wealth. He is addressing a church with excess income, and he firmly believes that Christian disciples should understand how that excess should be used. His message is simple: Whatever you do not need for yourself should be given to those who have not.

Two passages unique to Luke bring this message into focus. The parable of the rich fool (12:16-21) presents us with a rich man who decides to build larger barns to store

his excess harvest. He saves all of what he has harvested for himself and concludes that his future is secure. But the parable calls the man a fool, because his life ends that very day. Luke directs us to the meaning of the parable: "Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God" (12:21). What matters to God is that we share the wealth we have with the poor.

A second passage gives us insight into Luke's social setting providing directions for holding a lunch or dinner party. Poor peasants of Galilee did not have the resources for such gatherings. Luke's community did. It was common for them to arrange meals at which they could celebrate with their friends. Luke advises them: When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. (14:12-14) Wealth shared with the poor becomes the way to eternal life.

The economic status of Luke's community approximates the wealth experienced in first-world countries today. Luke's message concerning wealth, therefore, has special relevance for us. Of course, wealth is to be used to support our families and ourselves. But when we accrue more than we need for our lives, the Gospel calls us to share our possessions with those who have less. This pleases God and gains us eternal benefit. Luke puts it this way: Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy. (12:33)

George Sigma, Celebration Resources

PARISH LUNCHEONS

For the past two years, there have been Seniors' Luncheons once a month. While the idea of gathering for lunch was a great idea, there wasn't a lot of response for various reasons.

With that in mind, we are trying a new approach. Rather than having a "Seniors' Luncheon" we are now going to have Parish Luncheons. All members of the parish, regardless of age are invited to gather once a month for lunch and fellowship. Our hope is that with the focus on parishioners in general rather than one age demographic we will be able to respond more fully to the expressed desire in the Pastoral Planning Survey to have more opportunities for us to gather as members of the parish and share our lives with one another.

The luncheons will be held on the First Friday of each month after the Hour of Adoration. Parishioners of all ages are invited to join in the gatherings—stay for whatever time you are able. There will not be any formal programming or presentations—this is simply an opportunity to spend some time together and get to know one another better.

Mark your calendar for **MARCH 1 for lunch at the parish office.**

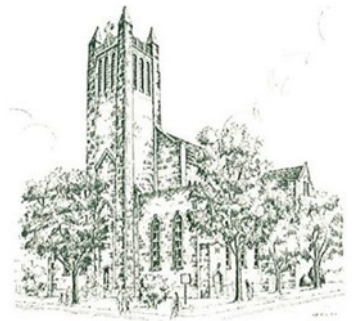
A new heart I will give you, and a

NEW SPIRIT

I will put within you. Ez. 36:26a

February 3, 2019

Volume 3, Issue 2



LET'S TALK

In the late fall, we had four gatherings to reflect on various topics using the sexual abuse crisis in the US church as a jumping off point. Those who participated during those gatherings expressed an interest in have ongoing opportunities to come together to discuss various issues around church, life, faith, etc. In response to that interest, we will have evenings to talk on:

February 28

March 21

from 7:00 pm—8:30 pm

Bring your questions, your topics for discussion, your ideas for our community and Let's Talk!

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Each year we celebrate the **World Day of the Sick** on February 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. The ministry of Jesus to the sick is central to the life of the Church. This Day of the Sick highlights the healing ministry of the Church. It reminds us that service to the sick and suffering cannot be neglected. It recognizes the great efforts of doctors, nurses, health care institutions and pastoral care givers to restore health to those afflicted with illness and disease.

To continue this ministry of healing, we will celebrate the **ANOINTING OF THE SICK** during the Saturday evening and Sunday morning liturgies on **February 16/17.**

All who are in need of healing—the sick, aged, those preparing for surgery or for hospitalization, suffering chronic conditions, emotional, mental or spiritual stress are invited to celebrate the Anointing of the Sick, which will be celebrated after the homily.

As we celebrate this sacrament, all members of the community are invited to pray for the sick in our community and our world.

LENT

This year, Ash Wednesday is **March 6.** Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of six weeks of preparation for the celebration of Easter. For most of us, Ash Wednesday seems to creep up on us and before we know it Lent is half done before we catch up and really begin to celebrate the season.

The article on page 2 invites us to plan ahead. There will be various events and celebrations in the parish for the Lenten Season. All will be published ahead of time in the bulletin as well as in the next issue of the *New Spirit.* Keep an eye out for the announcements and begin your Lenten planning early.

Inside this Issue:

Preparing for the Lenten Journey 2

Appreciating Each Other 3

Themes in the Gospel of Luke 4

Parish Luncheons 4



PREPARING FOR THE LENTEN JOURNEY

From time to time, I travel from home to lead retreats and parish missions or to give presentations to church ministers. My preparations for such trips include a lot of advance planning — making travel arrangements, preparing the presentations, coordinating mission details with the host parish — and prayer. Much prayer.

Closer to the date, I check the weather. The weather impacts what I choose to pack, what I choose to wear on the plane, and what jacket I'll throw into the suitcase "just in case." I always aim to travel light, trusting that I will have what I need for the journey.

One of my most memorable trips was to a diocese where I had been invited to give a workshop for diocesan musicians. I arrived safe and sound, but my carefully chosen and neatly packed clothes did not arrive with me. In fact, they did not arrive until the next evening, after the event ended, and just before I was scheduled to fly home. So I made the best of it, washed the clothes I had traveled in, and wore them — along with my tennis shoes — to give the presentation. I couldn't help but weave the tale of my travels into the work of the day. What church musician can't relate to the message of being prepared for anything and exhibiting grace and humor in every situation? We spent a marvelous day together singing, praying, laughing and dedicating ourselves anew to our shared ministry of song.

Just as we all have our rituals and ways of preparing for various travels, the days leading up to Ash Wednesday (March 6) are days we are meant to spend preparing for the Lenten journey. Now is the time to think about what you will need for this year's 40 days. More time for prayer? More quiet moments built into the day? A good devotional or spiritual book to challenge and inspire you? A saint to accompany you? Some time spent in conversation with a spiritual director or a spiritual companion? A retreat day or weekend? There are as many ways to prepare for this journey as there are people of God who together walk the 40 days to the celebrations of the Triduum and Easter.

As different as our Lenten journey plans may be, our beginning point is the same. When we gather on Ash Wednesday, we all hear the same call, the same invitation, proclaimed at the beginning of the first reading: Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart,

with fasting, and weeping, and mourning. Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God. (Joel 2:12,13)

And the Gospel defines for us the ways in which we are to answer that call to return to the Lord. ...[W]hen you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret" (Matthew 6:3-4) ... when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. (6:6) ... When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to others to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. (6:17,18) But why *this call* to return to the Lord? Why *these disciplines* of almsgiving, prayer and fasting? What does all of this lead us to? What is our destination? Certainly, we can take the long view and describe our destination as the heavenly kingdom; eternal life with God, Jesus, Mary and all the saints. Or like the prodigal son, we might describe our destination as home — and right relationships with our fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers. These are wonderful destinations!

However, the answer to the questions, "Why this call?" and "Why these disciplines?" lies in what we do on Easter Vigil night and Easter Sunday morning. For then, at the end of our Lenten journey, we stand at the font and answer three questions: Do you renounce sin, so as to live in the freedom of the children of God? — I do! Do you renounce the lure of evil, so that sin may have no mastery over you? — I do! Do you renounce Satan, the prince of sin? — I do!

This year, take extra care to prepare for the Lenten journey with the destination in mind. Spend some time leading up to Ash Wednesday praying about and thinking of ways you will honor the Lenten disciplines of almsgiving, prayer and fasting so that sin may be rooted out of your heart and out of your spirit, and so you will grow stronger in resisting the temptations of Satan.

And when we all gather at the font at Easter, don't come wearing yesterday's outfit and your tennis shoes. Have the white garment ready, and profess wholeheartedly your faith in the Holy Trinity, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen! Alleluia!

Mary Malloy—Celebration Publications

APPRECIATING EACH OTHER

In the book *Friday Black*, the main character, Emmanuel, describes "dialing down his blackness" when he leaves the sanctuary of his own home and enters the dominant white world.

On a scale from one to 10, Emmanuel tries to set his behavior, tone of voice and mannerisms as low as he can to become acceptable to so many he encounters each day.

Such "dialing down" can last only so long. There comes a breaking point when as low as you can dial down your behavior is still not enough for those in power. Then you stop. Depending on the circumstances, that stopping can have disastrous effects, as Emmanuel experiences.

That image — of dialing down one's identity to be able to fit in, or to be acceptable so as to find a job, or to achieve in our society — stayed with me.

I began to reflect on how so many people engage in such a practice to a greater or lesser degree throughout their lives. For example, women dial down being themselves to be acceptable to men, or persons with different sexual orientations dial down their own reality to be acceptable, sometimes even to themselves.

How many of us have felt that to really fit in, we had to be someone we are not? We experienced that the dominant culture, faith, political orientation or moral belief system perceived us as "the other" and not worthy of inclusion, to be called "one of us."

It is clear we, as a nation, are struggling with this in many ways. Our pluralism is bringing some to the breaking point on both ends of the spectrum. We hear: "Enough! We are no longer a country." Or: "Enough! We, too, are part of this country and we want, we need, respect." How do we do it? How do we begin to accept people for who they really are in order to belong?

Simply, we must walk in the other person's shoes. Probably a phrase you have heard umpteen times. But here are two examples that I'd invite you to reflect on.

One is the example of actors. Theater critic Chris Jones, in his book *Rise Up!*, traces the impact Broadway has had on American society, beginning in 1993 with the production of "Angels in America" to "Hamilton" in 2015. He discusses the role Anna Deavere Smith played in "Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992," her one-woman play. An African-American woman, she portrayed a Korean shopkeeper whose store was destroyed in the aftermath of the verdict on the Rodney King beating. Smith understood

that identity is always being negotiated. He quotes her as once telling an audience, "Acting places a physical and linguistic emphasis on the possibility of transformation."

Jones writes, "Her point was that if actors could transform themselves to play a role, could that not be a metaphor for our inherent ability to reach out across the great racial divides?"

If you've ever been in a play or imagined being someone else, you know that once you inhabit that role, you do begin to see differently. You may even start to take a long, loving look at that "other" whom you now know in a new way.

The second example is Jesus encountering the Samaritan woman. In the *Gospel of John 4:6-15*, we hear the amazing story of Jesus, a male Jew, asking a Samaritan woman for a drink of water. Samaria and Jerusalem were neighboring Israelite communities; however, they had not been friendly for centuries.

Samaritans and Jews did not talk with each other. Samaritan women and Jewish men certainly did not talk with each other. So how could this happen?

There was a need: Jesus wanted water. There was a way to fulfill it: The Samaritan woman had a bucket and there was a well. Yet, how did they come to actually engage each other?

I believe that both Jesus and the Samaritan woman were able to go beyond what their culture, politics and religion taught. They did not instinctively react to each other in ways that conveyed displeasure or animosity. Rather, they recognized in each other something deeper, a commonality rooted in spirit and in their essence as human beings. She could recognize his thirst and he could understand her quest to know God. Then they were able to enter the space between them and fulfill each other's needs.

Can I recognize within those whom I meet who are different from me the deeper wellspring of humanity that reveals itself in such diverse ways? How will it change the way I respond to who they are and what they need?

I do not have to say how crucial it is for us to become more skilled in walking in each other's shoes. It flows from contemplation and can become another practice. As we set the intention to be open to the Divine Mystery working within us, we begin to live it out in becoming more aware of each other and how we are united to each other in our diversity.

Sr. Nancy Sylvester