



RECKONING

The enduring possibility of God's Gracious Gash

It was a New Testament professor at Duke University who imagined God's "gracious gash," a phrase I've borrowed of late. "God has ripped the heavens irrevocably apart at Jesus' baptism, never to be shut again," Joel Marcus writes. "Through this gracious gash in the universe, he has poured forth the Spirit into the earthly realm."



In a recent homily as we commemorated that moment in the life of Jesus and of creation, I added a question: *What difference does it make?* Does it matter that God came to live among us? Does it matter that He's called us—not just to say we are Christians, but to *live* as if we are?

Upon asking the question, I indicated a rather necessary response: *It must!* God's Gracious Gash must matter. And I invited all of us into an accounting of how we honor the teaching of Jesus, living as if it does matter.

That Christian accounting, our reckoning, will be a significant element of our Lent. A series of Lenten Voices; group discussions of Pope Francis' teaching on gospel friendship; as always, Lord's Day worship; and our individual prayer will assist our assessment, deepen our resolve, and make it ever more apparent that God's Gracious Gash does matter, and that we must make it matter. **TL**

MARKED

BEGINNING LENT TOGETHER - IN PERSON AND ONLINE

The details of our Ash Wednesday ritual will be different this year – as if

we're surprised by that. Regardless of how it happens, whether we are in church or online, we are urged to begin Lent with the same intention. The pandemic doesn't modify what Lent is about.

While a minister making a cross of ashes on dozens of foreheads doesn't pass the Covid safety test, there will be a ritual of ashes, accompanied by the words that give meaning and substance to the ritual. "Getting ashes" is not an end in itself.

We'll all be asked a question: *Will you repent and be faithful to the gospel?* It's our answer, not the clarity of an ashen cross marked on our forehead, or a few flakes of ash sprinkled on our head, that matters.

This year we'll be asked that question collectively, not as individuals, which affords the opportunity to expand our intention. Each of us will make the commitment, but there will be a commu-

IT'S THE ONLY DAY LENT BEGINS - EVEN IN A PANDEMIC

We begin Lent and continue our Christian assessment with the proclamation of God's word, preaching and the repentant ritual of ashes - in person and online. Register for in-person participation at stanneswausau.org or call 849.3930.

- + 7A - Liturgy of the Word with Ashes
- + 12:15P - Liturgy of the Word with Ashes
- + 5P - Liturgy of the Word with Ashes

LIVESTREAM

- + 6:30P - Mass with Ashes **LIVESTREAM**

TO REGISTER FOR IN-PERSON PARTICIPATION, GO TO WWW.STANNESWAUSAU.ORG.

- >> Rice bowls, Little Black Books and Little Purple Books will be distributed. These can also be mailed.
- >> Forming Young Disciples families are urged to participate in-person or online.
- >> All Covid-19 precautions will be honored.

nal dimension as well. We repent independently and together.

A modified ritual is an opportunity to more deeply consider the question *and* our answer, which marks us for Lent, that gets us on track – whether we are in church or at home. – Fr. Tom

– Fr. Tom

TRADITIONS

THE PANDEMIC PREVENTS FISH FRIES & FEST FOR ANOTHER YEAR

The legendary St. Anne's Fish Fry had been served on two Fridays last spring – when the world changed. By Friday of the third week in Lent, such events were no longer possible.

A similar fate confronted St. Anne's Fest in June. While held outside, for the most part, the risks of transmitting the Covid-19 virus in a large gathering were too great.

Of course, most importantly, the celebration of Lord's Day Mass, as well as funerals, weddings and baptisms were also put on hold, or offered online.

Now, a year later, circumstances have improved dramatically. We are able to gather for Mass, although with limited numbers. The number of active cases in Marathon County is declining, and hundreds are being vaccinated by the day.

At the same time, too many factors remain problematic and so the leadership teams for both Fish Fry and Fest, in consultation with the Pastoral Council and the county Health Department, have determined it is not feasible to offer either event this year.

FISH FRY: While diners could be seated with appropriate distance, dozens of people still would be eating and talking for extended periods of time, while not wearing masks. Of greater concern is that parishioners work in close proximity for preparation and clean-up. In addition, many of the usual Fish Fry volunteers have understandably not chosen to return to Mass, so there could likely be a shortage of workers. Another significant consideration: As restaurants struggle to survive, including a couple that advertise in the parish bulletin, it doesn't seem appropriate for us to be in competition with them.

FEST: Scheduling bands, ordering food, procuring raffle licenses, etc. need to happen well in advance of the June event, but it was determined it's too soon to know whether people will feel safe gathering in large

groups, even outside, by early summer. Distancing and policing mask-wearing also would be challenging. In addition, much of the work for Fest occurs with volunteers



Hang on to these memories from last year, before Covid-19 brought an end to the St. Anne Fish Fry. Also, watch for a Quick Things & Conversation during Lent in which some Fish Fry stalwarts will reminisce about this long-time parish tradition.



working in close quarters.

However, the Fest leadership team and Pastoral Council discussed at a January meeting several possibilities for community-centered events in the summer and fall, such as a bike/walk/run event and Mass on the Grass with an outdoor lunch. Such potential activities will be pursued in the months ahead.

The other question that comes into play in terms of both traditions is that of finances, since these events brought in \$60,088 in 2019. The parish did receive a government grant of \$67,800 as part of the first round of Covid-19 relief last spring, and parishioner contributions to the recent Hope & Gratitude appeal are approaching \$50,000. Some expenses have declined because of the pandemic and there's been an ongoing effort of financial belt-tightening, all of which are helpful and hopeful considerations.

THE PARISH OFFICE remains closed, but the staff is on duty and available by phone and email.

FORMING YOUNG DISCIPLES has resumed in-person for all grades on Wednesdays, except kindergarten.

MASS continues to be celebrated at 4 p.m. Saturday and 9:30 a.m. Sunday, with registration at stanneswausau.org. Changes in the Mass schedule and precautions will depend on attendance and public health advisories.

EMAIL has proven to be a primary means of communication. If you are not getting our weekly emails, we do not have your email address. Send an email to mail@stanneswausau.org and we'll add you to the list.

LIVE IN LENT

Participate in either Lord's Day Mass as it happens

Beginning with the First Sunday of Lent, Feb. 20/21 both the 4 p.m. and 9:30 a.m. Sunday Masses will be offered as livestreams. This will allow participants to experience worship at the same time it is happening in church.

Links to the livestream will be provided at stanneswausau.org and in the email sent on Saturday.

Prayer is one of the primary disciplines of Lent and the discipline of praying the Mass at a set time might be a good discipline to pursue. Of course the links will still allow you to participate in Mass at a later time of your choosing.

Opportunities to celebrate Reconciliation

The sacrament of Reconciliation will be celebrated on all of the Saturdays of Lent at 9 a.m., as well as from 5-6 p.m. Wednesdays beginning Feb. 24. A guide to help prepare for the sacrament will be provided in emails and in the bulletin.

Your Guide to Lent at St. Anne



A series of Lenten Voices will encourage our individual and communal assessment of how we honor the gospel. These presentations will build upon Fr. Tom's recent homily regarding God's Gracious Gash, which is addressed in the column on Page 1, and in the homily which can be found at stanneswausau.org.

The presentations will be offered online at 6:30 p.m. Thursdays and can be watched anytime after that. Each presentation will be accompanied by questions to consider in prayer. The preachers will address fundamental passages of discipleship in scripture.

The series participants are introduced here, but specific dates have not yet been determined.

JESSIE BAZAN will preach about Mary's Magnificat, Luke 1.46-55

From Milwaukee and a graduate of Marquette University, Jessie has spent the last seven years with the Benedictine monks at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minn. Jessie has a master's degree in theology from St. John's, is a program associate for the Collegeville Institute and an instructor at St. John's University. She also writes for US Catholic. Fr. Tom met Jessie when he was on sabbatical at St. John's in 2017.



FR. JOHN HEAGLE will preach about The Beatitudes, Matthew 5.1-12

Ordained a priest for the Diocese of La Crosse in 1965, Fr. Heagle has a diverse background in ministry, including as a pastor, a university professor and chaplain, and director of the diocese's Office of Justice and Peace. He has preached many parish missions in our diocese, and is highly regarded nationally as a writer, preacher and presenter. He also is a licensed psychotherapist and lives in Oregon.

KRISTIN & SHAWN COLBERG want their topic to be a surprise

The Colbergs are theology professors at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn. Kristin teaches about the Church with expertise in Vatican Councils I and II. Shawn's expertise is early Church history. Kristin spent a year after college with Jesuit Volunteer Corps in Belize and Shawn worked in parish ministry prior to teaching. They have two daughters.

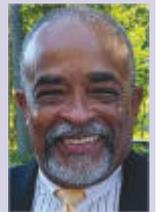


BISHOP GERALD KICANAS will preach on the Good Samaritan, Luke 10.25-37

Originally from Chicago, Bishop Kicanas retired in 2017 after 15 years as the bishop of the Diocese of Tucson, Ariz. Ordained a priest in 1967 and a bishop in 1995, Bishop Kicanas was rector of Mundelein Seminary near Chicago from 1984-95. His students included Fr. Tom. His national responsibilities as a bishop have included chairperson of the board of Catholic Relief Services.

DEACON ART MILLER will preach on Psalm 139

Having grown up on Chicago's south side in the 1940s and 50s, Deacon Miller brings a distinct perspective to his preaching. Retired as owner-president of an investment firm, his books include a historical reflection on the murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till in Mississippi. Retired director of the Office for Black Catholic Ministries for the Archdiocese of Hartford, Conn., where he lives, Deacon Miller is a husband, father and grandfather.



Discussions will delve into recent papal teaching

In the opening paragraph of his recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis recalls an encouragement of the saint from whom he took his name - "a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance, and declares blessed are those who love their brother and sister." He goes on to imagine a world in which "fraternity and social friendship" are a guiding principle.

Parishioners are invited during Lent to join discussion groups that will mine the depths of the wisdom of St. Francis and the Holy Father. Participants will use the original text and helpful study guide. Groups will meet on the Zoom internet



platform at various days and times:

- 11 a.m. Sunday, beginning Feb. 21;
- 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, beginning Feb. 23;
- Noon Thursday, beginning Feb. 25.

Registration is necessary so that books can be purchased and distributed in time for the first meetings. To register, send an email to mail@stanneswausau.org by Feb. 14.

LITTLE BLACK BOOKS

are already available. However, if you would like a copy, or multiple copies, mailed to you, please let us know as soon as possible. Call 715.849.3930 or send an email to mail@stanneswausau.org. **LITTLE PURPLE BOOKS** are available for children of grade school age. Daily reflections begin Feb. 14.

Watch for more Lenten opportunities in the weekly emails and at stanneswausau.org.

WELCOME: Parish has new finance director

With the start of the new year, Paul Hoffer began duties as



the parish finance director. Paul will be familiar to many parishioners as a liturgy coordinator on Sunday morning, a Fest volunteer and in other roles over many years.

Paul brings many years of administrative and financial management experience to this position. He was hired as a result of a search and interview process involving members of the Finance Council. He replaces Bobbi Gadke who left last month to take a position with Miron Construction. Bobbi has remained on a part-time basis to acclimate Paul.

"I believe it is true that God provides us that which we need," Paul said in reflecting on his new role. "A short month and a half ago, my previous job was coming to a conclusion and I was anxious about venturing back into the job market. It was then that I read in the bulletin that the parish was looking to fill this position and I thought maybe God was telling me to at least apply. I and my family are so grateful and excited for this opportunity. I look forward to working hard for the parish each day."

The family Paul mentions includes his wife, Brenda, and children Sarrianna, Annabella and Antony.

2020 GIVING STATEMENTS are available in the Gathering Space. If you would like your statement mailed to you, send an email or call Paul Hoffer at paulh@stanneswau-sau.org or (715) 849-3930, ext. 310.

ST. ANNE PARISH

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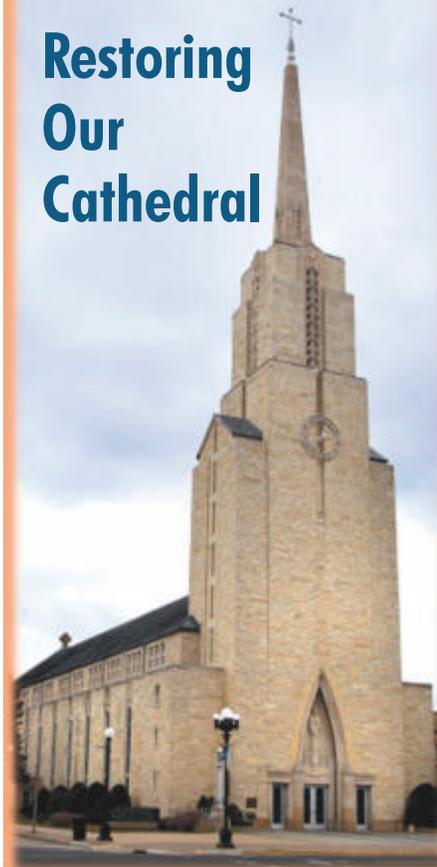
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Ash Wednesday - 17 Feb.

We will gather in person and online to mark the beginning of Lent. The worship schedule and registration information can be found on Page 1.

Restoring Our Cathedral



A campaign is under way to restore the steeple and facilitate other restorations to St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral in La Crosse.

The Cathedral stands as the iconic cornerstone of the faith in our diocese. This structure — our faith in stone — was gifted to us by the hard work and sacrifices of previous generations. It is now our time, our turn to honor our faithful patron St. Joseph the Worker and preserve this historic and magnificent Cathedral.

In an unprecedented act of generosity, St. Ambrose Financial Services has offered to match \$2 for every \$1 generously pledged to this initiative up to \$3 million. That doesn't just double your gift to the Cathedral, it triples it! Now is the time to act! All families within our Diocese are invited to participate. Please know that while one-time gifts are appreciated, we are encouraging everyone to consider making a pledge.

Pledges and contributions can be made through a link at stanneswau-sau.org, and pledge forms found in the brochures in church. A video addressing the history of the Cathedral and current needs also can be found at the parish web site.

Together we can restore our past for our future!