

**For The Bulletin of
February 28, 2016**

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

From Father Robert

From 1987 to 1989, I was given the great privilege to study at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. The greatest gift of those two years of study leading to a Masters Degree in Liturgy was meeting and being mentored by the foremost Liturgical Theologian in the world today, **Msgr. Kevin Irwin**. His classes were challenging, insightful, inspirational, and contributed greatly to the priest I am today. In addition to his teaching, Msgr. Irwin has authored a number of books addressing various issues concerning liturgy, especially the history and practice of the Liturgical Year. In my column today, I am sharing with you his insights regarding The Third Sunday of Lent and the “A” Cycle readings which we are using here at St. Ignatius of Antioch because we have catechumens who are preparing for the Easter Sacraments. With regard to the significance of today’s liturgy he writes as follows:

The Liturgical Context

By design, the liturgical texts and rites for the Sundays of lent have a definite shape and pattern. For the first two Sundays, all three cycles of the Lectionary explore two events in the life of Jesus, namely the temptation (First Sunday) and the transfiguration (Second Sunday). Beginning with this Sunday, and for the next two Sundays, the gospel readings for the “A” cycle deal with initiation.

On the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent, the “scrutinies” of the candidates for initiation were held in the early church. These scrutinies are once again celebrated after the Liturgy of the word and they depend on the readings of the “A” cycle for much of their content and inspiration. The notion of “scrutiny” is best understood as prayer interceding for the Elect and communal support for them rather than an examination of preparedness or moral fitness. It will become clear that the dominant gospel texts from John 4, 9, and 11, dealing with the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus, offer much rich material for reflection, including the emphases placed on the symbolism of water, light, and life. The scrutinies lead to the celebration of initiation at the Easter Vigil. The baptismal bath (water) takes place at night in the presence of the community holding lighted candles (light) and brings the newly baptized into the community of those who now experience the life of God in them through Christ (life).

In addition to the scrutinies, these Sundays were also occasions when the catechumens received the essentials of the faith into which they would be baptized: the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Gospels. The ceremony of “handing over” these central elements of the Christian life symbolizes the doctrines to be believed, the prayers to be prayed, and the Word to be pondered and lived. In the present reform of adult initiation, the rites of handing over and receiving back the Creed, the Our Father, and the Gospels may take place either during the week following these scrutinies or during the catechumenate, which may be begun well before Lent.

IN order to emphasize the initiation character of these Sundays, the Lectionary directs that the readings assigned to the “A” cycle on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays be used even on Sundays of the “B” or “C” cycles. The rite of adult initiation states:

“The scrutinies ought to take place during the Masses for the Scrutinies held on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent; the readings from Year A with their chants are used, as given in the Lectionary. If for pastoral reasons this cannot be done on the proper Sundays, other Lenten Sundays, or even suitable weekdays, may be chosen.” (No. 159)

The rite of adult initiation asserts that:

“The purpose of the scrutinies is mainly spiritual; they are concluded by exorcisms. The scrutinies are intended to purify the catechumens’ minds and hearts, to strengthen them against temptation, to purify their intentions, and to make firm their decision, so that they may become more closely united with Christ and make progress in their efforts to love God more deeply.” (No. 154)

While it is true that the notion of an exorcism can carry with it many negative connotations, it should be noted that the scrutiny prayers rely on scriptural imagery and liturgical tradition for their formulation. These same sources illumine our understanding of them. The readings for the first Sunday of Lent about the temptation of Jesus serve to emphasize the biblical understanding of doing battle with Satan and of the setting for that battle. The fact that Jesus was so tempted serves as a model and inspiration for facing evil and sin in our lives, aided by the same

Spirit Who strengthened Him in the desert. The scrutinies are meant to aid the candidate to engage in the lifelong struggle to “put aside the deeds of darkness” and to “put on the armor of light” (Romans 13: 11 – 12). Their purpose is twofold:

“To teach the catechumens gradually about the mystery of sin, from which the whole world and every person longs to be delivered and thus saved from its present and future consequences; to fill their spirit with an understanding of Christ the Redeemer, the living water (see the gospel about the Samaritan woman), the light of the world (see the gospel about the man born blind), the resurrection and the life (see the gospel about the raising of Lazarus). From the first to the final scrutiny there should be progress in the recognition of sin and the desire for salvation.” (No. 157)

The Scripture Readings for Cycle A

Today’s gospel was used in the Roman tradition when the Second Sunday of Lent evolved and had a Mass formula of its own. The gospel for this Third Sunday of Lent, from John 8: 12 – 59, speaks of Jesus as the light of the world who existed before Abraham and Who thus had priority in time and in significance for salvation history.

The dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman described in John 4:5 – 42 has elements that can be applied to the sacraments of initiation, to the renewal of the baptismal promises by the already initiated, and to an understanding of Jesus as the One Who is the living water for all who have faith. The verse before today’s gospel summarizes much of its content: “Lord, truly you are the Savior of the world;

give me living water, that I may never thirst again.”

It is significant that Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at “Jacob’s” well, for in the Old Testament, wells were prominent as meeting places where important events took place. For example, in Genesis 29: 1ff, Jacob meets Rachel at a well, an event that was to have great consequences for Israel. The “Jacob’s well” mentioned in John 4, is called “the well of Shechem” in the Old Testament. The woman was a Samaritan, and the Jews despised the Samaritans. So Jesus’ speaking with her was a sign that he was breaking down the barriers of prejudice. At the beginning of the dialogue Jesus makes a distinction between the water of everyday life and “living water” that will become a “fountain to provide eternal life” within the person who drinks it (vs.14).

The natural and customary use of water should not be forgotten when interpreting this passage, especially because the creative and life-giving properties of water are emphasized in the liturgy.

In the dialogue with Jesus, the woman’s immoral life (five husbands) comes into focus through Jesus’ questioning. Aware that this man is someone special, the woman digs deeper into the Samaritan-Jew split by stating that this mountain is special to Samaritans, whereas Jerusalem is for the Jews. Jesus responds that authentic worship will be “in spirit and in truth,” and not limited to specific geographical locations. Then Jesus astounds her by stating that the Messiah she knows is coming is present in Jesus. The text “I am he” refers back

to Moses receiving the revelation of the name of God in Exodus 3: 14 – 15.

After the woman goes into town to tell the others about the Messiah, Jesus’ disciples come and urge Him to eat. He, however, turns attention to His mission and ministry in Samaria, and it is this ministry that is the will of His Father. Many of the Samaritans come to believe “on the strength of the woman’s testimony;” they affirmed that He was “the savior of the world.”

Among the many meanings of this scripture passage an obvious one concerns initiation. The woman’s coming to faith, her turning from her immoral life, her telling others of Jesus, and their believing in Him because of her are all symbolic of the process of conversion and initiation into the church at baptism. The thirst for God that the catechumen experiences is slaked only through Jesus.

The first reading from Exodus recounts Israel’s sojourn in the desert and their need for water. The reason this text is used today is to establish a connection with the gospel of the day.

The responsorial psalm is also a text commonly used in the Liturgy of the Hours. The continual call to the chosen to “hear his voice” and to “harden not your hearts” is part of Psalm 95, the classic invitatory psalm to the Hours. The same responsorial psalm will be used on Thursday of the Third Week of Lent at the Eucharist, thus reiterating its special Lenten significance.

The second reading, from Romans, deals with our justification through faith. God’s love and grace are operative in us

and are in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. What made all this possible, however, was the death of Christ; “while we were still sinners Christ died for us.” This significant theological statement provides a frame of reference within which to view the message of the other two readings. All that was accomplished through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection is now operative in us through faith. We appropriate the paschal mystery through rites and liturgies that draw us into the very life of God. Today’s readings offer much to ponder in this Lenten Season regarding initiation, conversion, faith, justification, Jesus as Messiah and Savior, and our longing to be firmly and more fully one with Christ.

Congratulations!

This weekend we offer heartfelt congratulations to **Larry and Jeanine Ford** who are celebrating their Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Marriage. On behalf of all of us, I wish them continued happiness, the best of health, and the deepening of their love for many years to come.

Deanery Communal Penance Liturgies Begin This Week

As announced in the last several bulletins and my Insert, our Deanery Communal Penance Liturgies begin this week. The complete schedule is as follows:

Wednesday, March 2, 7:00 p.m.
St. Anthony, Oakley

Monday, March 7, 7:00 p.m.
Good Shepherd, Pittsburg

Thursday, March 10, 7:00 p.m.
St. Peter Martyr of Verona, Pittsburg

Monday, March 14
Holy Rosary, Antioch, 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 15
St. Anne, Byron, 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 17
**St. Ignatius of Antioch, Antioch
7:30 p.m.**

Monday, March 21
Our Lady, Queen of the World, Bay Point, 7:00 p.m.

Deanery Evening of Recollection for the Jubilee Year of Mercy, 24 Hours for the Lord

An Evening of Recollection for the Jubilee Year of Mercy will be held in our Deanery on Friday evening, March 4th, 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Brentwood. The evening will be facilitated by Msgr. Antonio Valdivia who will speak in both Spanish and English. There will be music and readings in both English and Spanish as well.

New Members Brunch

Next Sunday, our Pastoral Council will host the next New Members Brunch in the parish hall following the 10:00 a.m. Eucharist. We will also formally receive them into our parish during the liturgy.

The Chrism Mass

Each year, shortly before Holy Week, the Bishop blesses and consecrates the Holy Oils for the coming year. This liturgy is known as the Chrism Mass and this year it will be celebrated in the Cathedral on Wednesday, March 16th, at 6:30 p.m. The liturgy begins with a procession of representatives of the parishes and is followed by the Blessing

of the Holy Oils of Catechumens and of the Sick and the Consecration of the Sacred Chrism. The Holy Oils will be returned to the parish and presented solemnly at the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. All members of the Diocese are invited to attend this liturgy.

Palm Sunday Preparation

This year we will be preparing the palms for Palm Sunday on **Friday, March 18th, beginning at 9:00 a.m. in the kitchen.** Please bring gloves and scissors. The palm branches will be cut to create palms for the congregation as well as being washed, dried, and bundled. Please wear RED for the liturgies of March 19th and 20th to add to the festivity of the day.

St. Joseph Festival Dinner

On Saturday evening, March 19th, the Feast of St. Joseph, we will once again celebrate our annual St. Joseph Day Festival Dinner. Hosted by our Social Events Committee, this has been a SOLD OUT event and this year is no exception! We are deeply grateful to the Social Events Committee for organizing the evening's events as well as all those who are donating their services and food to make this event so special.

Lenten Friday Fish Fry

What a great job our Knights of Columbus and other parishioner volunteers have done each Friday for our Lenten Friday Fish Frys! The parish hall has been filled from beginning to end at each Friday's dinner and everyone has had such a wonderful time, enjoying the delicious fish, French fries, and coleslaw, as well as the beverages and desserts, not to mention BINGO!!! The Fish Fry continues through Friday,

March 18th, which is the last evening. You don't want to miss out on this traditional Friday Lenten event! The bulletin contains a coupon for money off the price. Bring your family, neighbors, and friends!

Holy Week, Triduum, and Easter Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

Saturday Vigil March 19, **5:00 p.m.**
Blessing and Distribution of Palms

Sunday, March 20, 8 and **10:30 a.m.**
Blessing and Distribution of Palms,
Procession (Incense at 10:30 a.m.)
Rite of Reception of Tina Costanza
through Profession of Faith,
Confirmation, and First Eucharist

Monday of Holy Week

March 21, 8:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist

Tuesday of Holy Week

March 22, 8:00 a.m.
Liturgy of the Word and Holy
Communion

Wednesday of Holy Week

March 23, 8:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist

Holy/Maundy Thursday

March 24, 8:00 a.m., Sung Morning
Prayer

The Great Paschal Triduum

Holy/Maundy Thursday, March 24, 7:30 p.m. *Reception of the Holy Oils, Liturgy of the Word, Washing of Feet, Liturgy of the Eucharist, Candle-light Procession to the Altar of Repose, Adoration until 10:30 p.m. (Incense)*

Good Friday, March 25

8:00 a.m. Sung Morning Prayer

3:00 p.m. Solemn Commemoration of the Lord's Passion and Death

Liturgy of the Word, Veneration of the Cross, Holy Communion (No Incense)

7:30 p.m. Tenebrae

Seven Scripture Passages, Extinguishing of Candles, Prayer and Veneration of the Cross

Holy Saturday, March 26

8:00 a.m. Sung Morning Prayer

7:30 p.m. The Great Paschal Vigil

Lighting of the New Fire of Easter, Lighting of the Paschal Candle, Candle-light Procession Into Church; Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of Initiation celebrating the Sacraments of Initiation for Xochi Perez; Renewal of Baptismal Promises with Newly-blessed Baptismal Water, Liturgy of the Eucharist (Incense)

Easter Day, The Solemnity of the Resurrection of the Lord

8:00 a.m. Procession, Liturgy of the Word, Renewal of Baptismal Promises and Sprinkling With Newly-blessed Baptismal Water, Liturgy of the Eucharist (No Incense)

10:30 a.m. Procession, Liturgy of the Word, Renewal of Baptismal Promises and Sprinkling Rite with Newly-blessed Baptismal Water, Liturgy of the Eucharist (Incense)

The Easter Environment

You are invited to be a part of a wonderful tradition here at St. Ignatius of Antioch by contributing to help the Art & Environment Committee create an environment that says "EASTER!" for

the entire 7 weeks of the Easter Season. Your generosity will help provide the panels of seasonal cloth at the Icons, the blooming plants and cut flower arrangements, the trees, and other special elements that will help us celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord for the entire 50 days. Your gifts may be given either in honor of OR in loving memory of family members and loved ones. Please make use of the envelopes provided with my Easter Letter or additional envelopes found on the credenza. Thank you!

You are also invited to join the members of the Art & Environment Committee in creating the Easter Environment on Holy Saturday, March 26th, beginning at 9:00 a.m. We hope to be finished with all the work between 2 and 3:00 p.m.

City of Antioch Neighborhood Clean-up

The next City of Antioch Neighborhood Clean Up takes place on Saturday, March 5th, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Please see the announcement in the bulletin indicating the neighborhood that has been targeted. I hope you will join me. The monthly clean-up is sponsored by our Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS).

Volunteers Needed For Parking Lot Security

For the past three weeks we have been inviting parishioners to step forward to provide security in our parking lot, not only for weekends, but also for funerals and weddings. We have experienced incidents of cars being broking into and burglarized and we want to make sure that our parishioners and guests vehicles are kept safe. We have also had several incidents of someone setting fires and last Monday, we discovered that

someone broke the exterior light fixtures which light the façade of the church throughout the night. Please offer yourself, both women and men, to serve in this capacity by speaking with **Don Benson or Steve Rojek.**

Thank You

...to our wonderful parishioner volunteers who come very early each Saturday to clean the church, parish hall, and kitchen: **Steve Rojek, Jun Bajet, Carole Miller, Rose Salamanca, and Mercy Osborne.**

...to our wonderful parishioner volunteers who clean and maintain our bathrooms in both the church and parish hall on the weekends and through the week: **Robert Goncalves, Mary Ewing, Steve Rojek, Patricia Britton, Gino Ramos, Geri Abaya, and Harlan Young.**

...to our **counting teams** who are here every week to count the weekly collections. Because of confidentiality, we do not disclose the names of the counting team members, but rest assured we are thankful for all that they do.

...to our volunteers who assisted in the parish office last week: **Mary Ng, Harlan Young, Karen Oliver, Barbara Jackson, Rowena Cayaban, Joe Fanfa and Bev Iacona.**

...to our St. Vincent de Paul and Mobile Mall volunteers who transported last week's donations: **Bob Carvalho and Barbara Jackson.**

...to our faithful weekly bulletin collating team: **Bob Carvalho, Carole Miller, Dave Costanza, Judy Quicho and Belen Farin.**

...to our facilities volunteers who assisted Rich Confetti: **Don Benson and Jose Palomino** (aka: RDJ).