Fish fries hook parishioners

FEBRUARY 26, 2021

Categories: News
Tags: Featured, Parish Life
Many parishioners phoned ahead, others ordered online and the rest just pulled up and rolled down their car windows. From Allegheny to Lawrence to Beaver and Washington counties, even if it was take-out only, folks were just happy to drop in at their parish fish fry.

Turnout varied for the first week, with some sites very busy while others had fewer customers.

Early on, two long lines of vehicles stretched from Perry Highway to Saint Teresa of Avila Church in Ross, part of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish. Volunteers served up nearly one-thousand meals in three hours. Cooks, prep cooks and dishwashers worked quickly. Others brought the food outside.

“Our kitchen has been described as organized chaos, but everybody know what to do,” said Dave Eifler, fish fry committee chair.
In Wexford, the Saint Aidan Fish Fry at Seelos Academy served record numbers, according to organizers. There were some traffic issues as drivers waited for curbside pick-up, but volunteers are making adjustments and asked for patience this week.

Farther north in the New Castle area, business was off a bit at Holy Spirit Parish’s two fish fries, according to spokesperson Jean Pascale. But advance orders for this week were rebounding nicely.

At Saint Cecilia Social Hall in Rochester, part of Our Lady of the Valley Parish, fish fry co-chair Marlene Kislock said last Friday’s kickoff “went fabulously, busier than dining in. We had dinners ready in about five minutes,” she said.

Marlene and husband Jerry have led the event for about 15 years.

“It’s an active church, and everyone is willing to pitch in,” she said. “I enjoy it. It keeps me busy.”

The fish fry at Saint Alphonsus Church in McDonald, part of Saint Isidore the Farmer Parish, was held twice—on Ash Wednesday and two days later.
“It went very well,” said chair Jack Rosati. “People were so happy that there was something going on.”

Father Harry Bielewicz, pastor of Saint Isidore, noted that younger parishioners served as runners at the fish fries held at Saint Columbkille Church in Imperial and Our Lady of Lourdes in Burgettstown.

“People were pleased to support the church and get a good meal,” he said.

In Washington County, Saint Oscar Romero Parish saw fewer patrons but they brought plenty of smiles, according to co-chair Greg Starcevic.

“People just really appreciate our fish fry,” he said.

Click here to view the Pittsburgh Catholic’s annual Lenten Fish Fry Guide.

Click here for Lenten events and spiritual resources.

Before their Lenten fish fry, Saint James the Apostle Church in Pulaski, part of Holy Spirit Parish, held a Mardi Gras take-out dinner on Feb. 13. (Susan Dexter photo)
Prepping for playoffs

FEBRUARY 26, 2021

Categories: News
Tags: Catholic Schools, Featured
A high school basketball season once surrounded in uncertainty now heads into the playoffs, with health and safety remaining a high priority as taking home a trophy.

Catholic school student-athletes will continue to wear face coverings during competition, but some school districts may not require their players to do so in the playoffs. In response, parents and guardians of Catholic school players have been asked to sign permission forms indicating they understand the risks associated with exposure to the coronavirus.

“All of our parents signed the waiver,” said Brian Miller, athletic director of North Catholic High School. “We’ve had to adapt to get games played safely. Our ultimate goal is to keep our kids playing and in school.”

“Our players are used to the masks by now,” said Bill Cleary, Serra Catholic’s longtime girls coach and athletic director. “It could be different going forward but we’re not foreseeing any real difficulties.”
Serra Catholic girls completed an undefeated season on February 25 (see video below).

Several other Catholic high school basketball teams among the favorites to win championships, including a North Catholic girls team that has only two losses.

North Catholic boys are top-seeded, along with the undefeated Our Lady of the Sacred Heart team, while Bishop Canevin has a bye into the second round.

For the first time since 1984, the WPIAL playoffs are open to all schools that decide to participate, no matter their team record, to allow for additional competition during a season in which a number of games were cancelled or rescheduled due to positive cases.

“We have done our best to keep our players safe and our schools open, and will continue to do so,” said Michelle Peduto, diocesan director of Catholic schools. “We want our student-athletes to be able to participate in the playoffs and give them solid experiences while also caring for their mental, physical and social well-being.”

Gary Roney, diocesan athletic director, said the season has gone well after an initial delay when the pandemic surged regionally and nationwide.
“We have to strike a balance,” he said. “We’re pleased that we’re playing and students are in school.”

**WPIAL 2021 BASKETBALL PLAYOFFS – Catholic high schools**

**BOYS**

**CLASS 6A**
First round- Tues. March 2- Central Catholic (12-9) at North Allegheny (13-6), 8 p.m.

**CLASS 4A**
First Round- Thurs. March 4- Hopewell-Mount Pleasant winner at North Catholic (15-4), 6 p.m.

**CLASS 3A**
First Round- Thurs. March 4- Seton LaSalle (9-8) at Brentwood (8-6), 6 p.m.

**CLASS 2A**
Preliminary Round- Sat. Feb. 27- Carmichaels (9-4) at Serra Catholic (2-11), noon
First Round- Wed. March 3- California-Chartiers-Houston winner at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (17-0), 6 p.m.

**CLASS 1A**
First Round- Tues. March 2- Avella (7-10) at St. Joseph (8-10), 6 p.m.; Nazareth Prep (3-14) vs. Imani Christian (10-2) at Peters Township, 6 p.m.; Aquinas Academy (7-7) at Union (6-4), 6 p.m.

Bye – Bishop Canevin (13-4)

**GIRLS**
CLASS 5A
Preliminary Round- Mon. March 1—Laurel Highlands (4-13) at Oakland Catholic (9-9), 6 p.m.

CLASS 3A
First Round- Wed. March 3—Steel Valley-Brownsville winner at North Catholic (15-2), 6 p.m.

CLASS 2A
Preliminary Round- Sat. Feb. 27—Jeannette (0-18) at Seton LaSalle (5-5), noon
First Round- Tues. March 2—South Side Beaver-Sto-Rox winner at Serra Catholic (13-0), 6 p.m.; Apollo-Ridge (6-4) at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (12-5), 6 p.m.

CLASS 1A
First Round- Thurs. March 4—St. Joseph (6-11) at Avella (9-8), 6 p.m.; Jefferson-Morgan (3-11) at Aquinas Academy (12-4), 6 p.m.; Riverview (5-6) at Bishop Canevin (5-6), 6 p.m.

*Serra Catholic photos courtesy of Premier Photo Works*
https://youtube.com/watch?v=OCDTlUrCcnU
Bishop David A. Zubik

Methinks I may be in a minority when it comes to an appreciation of TV commercials. While I don’t get the opportunity to watch that much television, I must confess that when I do, I really look forward to the commercials. As a matter of fact, it’s a highpoint of my watching each year’s Super Bowl. In most instances, I am not particularly interested to buy whatever is for sale (although sometimes the advertising changes my intent). What catches my attention is the creativity used to put forth the product’s message.

A commercial that recently caught my attention was for the new iPhone 12 Pro/iPhone 12 Pro Max. It listed the following litany of reasons to purchase that phone:

- Best in class performance;
- Improved triple camera system;
- Big and beautiful screen;
Telephoto camera lets you see all close-up detail without being next to your subject;

Smartest iPhone introduced since 2016.

That commercial almost tempted me to trade in my perfectly good smartphone for a 12 Pro Max.

That aside, in many ways the camera feature on a mobile phone has become more important than a cell phone’s original purpose—to connect with others verbally. The visual has superseded the verbal. With a smartphone comes the opportunity to take pictures anywhere and anytime of anybody.

To take a photograph is to freeze a moment in time forever. Snapshots provide an opportunity to see more in the photo than we saw at the “shoot.”

You and I have begun the journey of Lent. Might I suggest that there are at least two snapshots of Lent which we should reflect upon: (1) the snapshot of Jesus going into the desert for forty days and forty nights and (2) the snapshot of where you and I are at this present moment in life.

Each year as Lent begins, the Church invites us to journey with Jesus into the desert. The desert is where Jesus went before beginning His public ministry. And, I daresay, as I think about that moment in Jesus’ life, I wonder how much of what Jesus experienced in the desert escapes us. Jesus was in an environment with no protection from the elements. Jesus was in a space with little food. Jesus was in a terrain inhabited by bears and lions. And, in the end, Jesus was alone except for the presence of Satan.

This year’s recounting of the desert journey of Jesus, as portrayed in the Gospel of Mark, is unlike the same story that we read in Matthew and Luke. Whereas the
latter two Gospel writers focus on the three specific temptations that Jesus faced from the Devil, Mark focuses more on Jesus’ presence in the desert.

Every snapshot gives us the opportunity to focus on the details of that moment. In this case, as we “see” Jesus in the desert, we can ponder and meditate on how the desert experience might impact us in 2021 as it impacted Jesus two millennia ago.

On Ash Wednesday, we “heard” Jesus in the Gospels call us to be a people of prayer, fasting and good works. These are all part of a three-point plan in which Jesus hopes to bring us to a deeper holiness and ultimately get us to heaven.

As you and I think about our chosen Lenten discipline, there is a danger that we may view that choice as a focus only for the forty days of Lent—all too happily to end on Holy Saturday! And when the forty days are over, we can then resume our normal way of life! That certainly is not what Jesus hopes for in His three-point plan. And that certainly is not much of a response to the words which Jesus spoke when he came out of the desert: “Repent, and believe in the gospel.” (Mk.1:15)

Whatever our response is to the invitation of Jesus voiced again on Ash Wednesday, it cannot be exclusively for this holy season. Our prayer, fasting and good works are only the first steps in looking at the snapshot of where we are now and where we really need to change if we are serious about Lent and our relationship with Jesus.

As the Church in her wisdom takes us into the desert with Jesus at the beginning of Lent, this is an opportunity for us to enter into the sacred space of our own virtual desert where we have no place to hide; where there is no easy way out; where we can’t be too busy; where we can’t be too distracted from focusing on our life with God. Entering into this desert gives us the opportunity to be totally transparent with ourselves so that we can be totally open, honest and transparent with God.
No doubt this can be a scary place for us—for you and me. It is not easy for any of us to admit the things in our lives that really need to change.

As the Devil tempted Jesus in the desert, he tempts us to avoid an “honest to God” look at ourselves. It threatens the Devil when we do such a thing. But when we do some serious self-searching that leads to true conversion, the Devil receives from us what he received from Jesus in the desert—a firm and solid “no” to his antics.

So—Jesus invites us to go into the desert—to be honest with ourselves and with Him concerning what about us and within us needs to change.

And think. This all begins with a snapshot of where you and I are right here; right now.

Isn’t it true that when we pose for a photo, as we want to look our very best, a photographer will say “3 – 2 – 1”—making sure that we are ready for the snapshot moment.

Jesus invites us to do the same this Lent. “3 – 2 – 1!” Am I ready? Are you?

*Photo credit: Justin Merriman*
Views from the Pews: Creating room for Jesus

FEBRUARY 26, 2021

Categories: Columns
Tags: Featured, Views from the Pews

In “Views from the Pews,” we catch up with parishioners across the diocese and ask them a faith based questions. During live social media events, we ask faith-based questions that our followers can answer in the comments. We feature responses “Views from the Pews.”

Follow @DioceseofPittsburgh on Facebook and Instagram to participate in future “Views from the Pews.”

“I will be spending more time in prayer and reflection. I don’t often go to the Stations of the Cross, so this Lent I will be attending the Stations every Friday as my work permits. I will also be offering up prayers and...
saying the Rosary for an individual who is struggled. At the end of Lent I will be giving that rosary to that person.”

– Angela Toliver Romza, parishioner at St. Kilian Church

“I will spend time in a daily holy hour.”

-Dennis Vu (left), parishioner at Most Precious Blood of Jesus Parish, pictured with a seminarian friend

“I’m trying to go to morning Mass before work as often as my schedule allows.”
-Chrissie Fazio Yeschke, parishioner at Sts. Martha and Mary Parish, pictured with her granddaughter
Catholic at Home: On the road to Jesus

FEBRUARY 26, 2021

Categories: Columns
Tags: Catholic at Home, Featured

Catholic at Home

Jennifer Antkowiak

Spring cleaning with snow still outside is strange. That’s how we do it sometimes in western Pennsylvania, though. An old family picture that always makes us smile features my husband and his brother as young boys, all dressed for Easter Sunday Mass, standing in front of a snowbank as high as their waists.

Snow or not, freshening up our homes makes us feel good. I have friends who use the “cleaning” theme of the Lenten literally by participating in “40 Bags in 40 Days Challenges.” The idea is to de-clutter, one bag at a time, so that you can enjoy Easter in a home that feels light, bright, open and airy.

Choosing to gather up a bag a day for donation or the garbage takes commitment and focus. You’ve got to carve out time for the work. That may mean finding time by letting go of a TV show or curbing social media surfing. If the payoff of your commitment to clean feels worth it, you find a way to get it done.
Think of the “payoff of a commitment” to clearing our internal homes—our hearts and souls—to make room for Jesus. How much easier life is when we are focused on and confident in the fact that He walks with us, always.

The Lenten season is often referred to as a journey, and I’ve been taking to heart all of the “road trip” analogies that help us enter into this season.

In a moving Ash Wednesday homily, Bishop David Zubik spoke of Jesus’ three-point plan for helping us get to heaven—our map. Whenever we make a wrong turn and get lost, he said, we find our way back with GPS: G- Good works, P- Prayer, and S- Sacrifice.

And then, on the first Sunday of Lent, I was brought to tears by a homily from Father Daniel Aboagye Adjei at Saint Joseph the Worker Parish. He shared that no matter how many wrong turns we take, or how lost we feel, we can always make U-turn and come back home.

In fact, Father Daniel reminded us, when we feel the most lost, Jesus moves in closer. “Jesus is always waiting for you with arms wide open. He is waiting for you to come and drink from the ocean of His mercy,” he said.

Cleaning our hearts and clearing our minds of distractions allows us to wake up and focus our attention on Him and the comfort, peace, and love that come through Him. In a very practical way, after the year we’ve all been through, taking advantage of this time to clear our minds and hearts is needed for our physical health as well as our spiritual health.

I was eager to hear how people in our diocese are spring cleaning their lives to make room for Jesus on this journey to Easter Sunday. That was the focus for our
Views from the Pews question this week. We heard from many people in our Facebook and Instagram communities:

Angela said, “I am so happy to let Jesus direct all of my actions this Lent, starting by being kind to everyone I encounter.”

Mary commented, “I have gotten the Bible out and I am reading it every day. I am also reaching out to give positive help by phone to people who are hurting.”

“Carlow U. sends a daily reflection that I read and reflect upon,” Teresa said.

His arms are wide open, waiting for you to make a U-turn and come back home. Will you?
A vaccine for our soul

Categories: Columns
Tags: Featured, Guest Contributors

By Father Richard S. Jones
Chaplain, UPMC Mercy Hospital

A recently retired police chief, who spent decades answering the call to protect and serve, caught COVID-19 at a family wedding. He was rushed by ambulance to UPMC Mercy, but could not be saved.

As I did my best to console his distraught children, what struck me was that – despite the sudden shock of his death – they had room in their grieving hearts for gratitude.

They spoke of the example he had set of working holidays so others could be with their families. They were glad he had been able to spend time with his own family in retirement. They gave thanks their dad’s legacy of service, sacrifice and compassion.
Despite their sorrow, the faith and love that he taught them had inoculated them against bitterness.

Every morning, one of our hospital chaplains prays over the PA system. It reminds patients and staff that we are a Catholic, faith-based, healing organization. We believe firmly that prayer confers healing, help, and hope. Those are the vaccine against despair.

Hospital nights can be long, interrupted, and restless. Daily, I encounter patients who have lain awake longing for the first streaks of light marking the dawn. Knowingly or not, they embody the words of Psalm 30:5, “...weeping may last for a night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.” In scripture, and through the power of Jesus’ Resurrection, in the darkest of nights we can see joy in the morning.

The pandemic has been hard on all of us. As time wears on, some have referred to this as the spiritual desert, a ‘long- overextended’ period of Lent. An invisible enemy has claimed countless lives and altered our way of life forever. The virus soberly reminds us all that, like ashes, we are mortal, vulnerable, and fragile.

I have had the privilege to witness first-hand those on the front line – doctors, nurses, health care professionals – who continue to serve courageously, compassionately and unselfishly. At times in the hospital, I feel like I am walking through a war zone with death lurking at every corner. At other times, I feel like a conduit of hope as I administer the sacraments of the Church to those in isolation and exile.

Whether I sense I am in the darkest night or at the breaking dawn, I cling to Jesus’ call to charity, to love. “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.” (John 13:34) At times, I am deeply fortified by the resilience of the human spirit to grow, to learn and to thrive. I think
of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, who sacrificed his life for another inmate in Auschwitz, and who once said, “The cross is the school of love.”

The pandemic has introduced us to a new vocabulary and way of life such as social distancing, facial coverings, lock downs, self-isolation and quarantine. The word ‘quarantine’ comes from the Latin for “40,” referencing the number of days that ships carrying infected loads were required to stay off shore. But, “40 days” also takes us to the weeks that Jesus endured in the desert. Lent is our annual re-enactment of Jesus’ “quarantine.”

Like Jesus, may we come overcome temptations, trials and sufferings as we discover the merciful presence of God in prayer. We can emerge renewed from this pandemic as he was empowered departing the desert. Like the family of the police chief, we can experience gratitude despite grief, love despite sorrow.

Through the cross, we grow spiritually amidst hardship, suffering, pain and chaos. The cross of Jesus is the vaccine for every believer.