

Fr. Simon Sez

The people who read my column regularly know that I keep them well informed on what is going on in our parishes including the reasons why we are doing what we are doing. I do this periodically but also give spiritual reflections as space allows. This week is a list of explanations.

First, a warning about a recent text scam. We recently had two people who have their names and cell phone numbers listed in our parish bulletins who had attempted scams. This type of scam has been going on for several years. Their contact information is taken from the parish bulletin or website. The scammer uses this information to send a text message making it look like it is coming from their parish priest such as the following:

“(Name), I need a favor from you. Please text me back as soon as possible. Fr. Brian Simon”

The scammer then requests that the parishioner buy \$300 gift cards, etc. so that the priest can use them for somebody in need. There is no chance I or any other priest would ever do this because we have various ways of handling a request for help without involving an individual parishioner.

I am receiving requests for the Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers to use hand sanitizer before distributing Communion. For the most part, they are doing this. It should be used but not in the sanctuary if at all possible since is not an approved liturgical action and certainly not on the Altar which is not a table. In Sacred Heart Church we have it up front in the corners of the outside aisles where everybody could see it being used if they are concerned. In St. Pius X Church we have it on the credence table (Altar servers table) due to limited space.

I am providing our Holy Week and Easter Liturgy schedule in our parish bulletin columns. You may notice some changes from previous years. I am only making the changes as I understand are liturgically required. For instance, an individual priest is to celebrate only one Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. Also, the Easter Vigil fire is required to be outdoors at night fall if possible. I will do this weather permitting. We will also use congregational candles at the Easter Vigil.

The Mass attendance survey continues through March 27.

LENT REGULATIONS FOR CATHOLICS

All Fridays throughout the year, especially during Lent, are penitential days. Abstinence: All who have reached their 14th birthday are to abstain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday and on all Fridays of Lent. Fasting: All those who are 18 or older, until their 59th birthday, are to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting is one full meal and two lesser meals without eating between meals. Jesus said to the disciples of John and the Pharisees: “But the days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.” (Mark 2:20)

Fruits of the Fig: Scott Hahn Reflects on the Third Sunday of Lent



Exodus 3:1–8, 13–15
Psalm 103:1–4, 6–8, 11
1 Corinthians 10:1–6,
10–12
Luke 13:1–9

In the Church, we are made children of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob—the God who makes known His name and His ways to Moses in today's First Reading.

Mindful of His covenant with Abraham (see Exodus 2:24), God came down to rescue His people from the slave drivers of Egypt. Faithful to that same covenant (see Luke 1:54–55, 72–73), He sent Jesus to redeem all lives from destruction, as today's Psalm tells us.

Paul says in today's Epistle that God's saving deeds in the Exodus were written down for the Church, intended as a prelude and foreshadowing of our own Baptism by water, our liberation from sin, our feeding with spiritual food and drink.

Yet the events of the Exodus were also given as a “warning”—that being children of Abraham is no guarantee that we will reach the promised land of our salvation.

At any moment, Jesus warns in today's Gospel, we could perish, not as God's punishment for being “greater sinners” but because, like the Israelites in the wilderness, we stumble into evil desires, fall into grumbling, forget all His benefits.

Jesus calls us today to “repentance”—not a one-time change of heart, but an ongoing, daily transformation of our lives. We're called to live the life we sing about in today's Psalm, blessing His holy name, giving thanks for His kindness and mercy.

The fig tree in His parable is a familiar Old Testament symbol for Israel (see Jeremiah 8:3; 24:1–10). As the fig tree is given one last season to produce fruit before it is cut down, so too Jesus is giving Israel one final opportunity to bear good fruits as evidence of its repentance (see Luke 3:8).

Lent should be for us like the season of reprieve given to the fig tree, a grace period in which we let “the gardener,” Christ, cultivate our hearts, uprooting what chokes the divine life in us, strengthening us to bear fruits that will last into eternity.