A leper came to Jesus and begged him: “If you wish, you can make me clean.” Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, “I do will it. Be made clean.” The leprosy left him immediately.

Mark 1:40-42
FATHER COREY’S EPISTLE

♦ Happy Valentines’ Day and more importantly, Happy Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent. The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on sundown on Holy Thursday. It is tradition that if you give something up during Lent, you can have that treat on any of the Sundays during Lent. It is a tradition, but I think it would be great to follow your “fast” throughout all of Lent.

The rules for fasting and abstinence are as follows: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence for Catholics. In addition, Fridays during Lent are obligatory days of abstinence.

For members of the Latin Catholic Church, the norms on fasting are obligatory from age 18 until age 59. When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal. The norms concerning abstinence from meat are binding upon members of the Latin (that’s us) Catholic Church from age 14 onwards.

♦ How would you like to go on retreat during Lent? We are going to conduct a “STAY AT HOME RETREAT” every Wednesday during Lent. Each of the priests is going to take a topic appropriate for Lent and give a 5-7 minute retreat on video for you to hear and think about. This video will be on our Parish Website (www.stmarybethel.org) and on our Facebook page (StMaryChurchBethel). The priests are very excited to present this home retreat for you.

It is most beneficial to try to attend daily Mass during Lent. Check out the other local parishes to see if they have a Mass time that will be helpful for you.

♦ We also encourage you and your entire family to attend the Stations of the Cross on the Fridays of Lent at 7:00pm. The Stations of the Cross, also known as the Way of the Cross, or Via Dolorosa (Sorrowful Way), is a popular Lenten devotion.

The Way of the Cross has its origins with the Blessed Mother. It is said that she, who pondered all the mysteries of Christ in her heart, retraced the steps of her Son’s Passion and the significant events that happened along the way, keeping in her memory, and for the memory of the Church, the sacred path on which the Son of God trod to accomplish our redemption.

Later in her life, when she was no longer living near Jerusalem, it is said that Mary continued this devotional practice by creating a similar outdoor path near her home with stone markers, along which she would walk, pray, and meditate on those things that happened to her Son on his Sorrowful Way.

For centuries, pilgrims to the Holy Land have walked the steps of Our Lord’s Passion in Jerusalem, with “stops” along to way to pray and venerate near the places where a significant event is believed to have occurred (such as the place where Jesus met his Mother, where Jesus fell, and where Veronica handed Jesus her veil, etc.).

This devotional walk, known as the Stations of the Cross, became one of the most popular and useful ways for the devout to meditate on Christ’s Passion. The Franciscans, a religious order with special custody of the sacred places in the Holy Land since the Middle Ages, brought this tradition to their churches in Europe in much the same way that the Blessed Virgin erected an imitation of the Sorrowful Way near her home.

Pilgrims who could not travel to Jerusalem could experience a virtual way the Stations of the Cross by following a signposted path around the inside and/or outside of the church. Here the faithful would walk and pray and meditate on the sufferings of Jesus as if they were walking the real places in Jerusalem. Special indulgences were granted to those who made this virtual pilgrimage.

From the 18th century, by Papal decree, all Catholic churches were permitted to erect the Stations of the Cross in the sanctuary, with the number of Stations fixed to fourteen. A specific way of praying the Stations also developed, two of the most popular being the method of St. Francis of Assisi and the method of St. Alphonsus Liguori.

There are many ways to pray the Way of the Cross, especially by making use of the Stations of the Cross devotional tools mentioned on the next page.
FATHER COREY’S EPISTLE

1. Attend a guided Stations of the Cross with your parish on the Fridays of Lent.
2. Using the Stations of the Cross inside our parish, spend a few minutes prayerfully meditating on each station (usually there will be an image depicting each station to help guide your time of mental prayer – so you don’t necessarily need to carry a book with you).
3. Use a traditional prayer format (with a Catholic prayer book which includes the Stations, or with a separate Stations of the Cross booklet) to pray the Stations at home.
4. Pray the Stations virtually with the Via Dolorosa Experience DVD (video of the guided Stations tour in Jerusalem with the Franciscan Friars).
5. Pray the Stations with an audio CD at home or while commuting.
7. Design and erect your own Stations of the Cross for your home or garden. Get creative!

To use the old Spiritual hymn...... Were you there when the crucified my Lord?

Use the internet this Lent, there are many Catholic websites that can help with your meditations during Lent.

During this Lenten Season, take a special effort to increase your prayer life. Rosary every day, a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in Church as you go through your day, use the Little Black Book that we supply for the entire Parish, pick a book or two in the Bible and read a chapter each day. Pick a time in the car that you do not turn on the radio and use that time for prayer, (one time a day would be great), go to Confession, spend an extra few minutes each day at your home altar (which I described before) and place on that altar the needs of your family, our community, the sick, the unemployed, the dead, anyone or anything that needs your prayers.

The second pious practice that Catholics have used during Lent is “Fasting”. Skip a snack, a tv show, a movie, a treat...show yourself who is boss over the “things of your life. It will make you spiritually stronger and less dependent on the things of this world and give you the grace to grow closer to the Lord. For some of us, Lent is an opportunity to root out some of the evil in our lives. Maybe it’s time to give one (or a few) of these sins up:

- Drunkenness
- Gossip
- Pornography
- Complaining – try accepting the cross you’re given instead of objecting that you’d rather choose your own
- Smoking
- Negativity
- Being snarky or short or cold or whatever it is you do that makes talking to you an act of charity
- Laziness – try exercising for Lent
- Arguing
- Being picky – eat whatever is set before you
- Judging people
- Comparing yourself with others
- Anger
- Immodest clothing
- Impure books/television/movies/music
- Lying
- Cursing

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<tr>
<th>Thursday, 2/15</th>
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<tr>
<td>6:30am Mass</td>
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<td>8:35am Rosary</td>
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<td>9:00am Mass</td>
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<td>4:00pm Confessions</td>
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<td>7:00pm Adult Choir</td>
<td>5:30pm Knights Pasta Bar</td>
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<td>7:00pm Didache</td>
<td>7:00pm Stations of the Cross</td>
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Finally, there is almsgiving, giving to the poor, helping out our brothers and sisters. This year, like previous years, as a Parish, we shall be helping the Little Sisters of the Poor and their St. Joseph Residence in Enfield CT. This year the Sisters need the following items for their elderly residents: tissues, mouthwash, denture cleaner and body wash.

But, Almsgiving isn’t always as easy as giving money to the poor. Figure out how you need to love the people around you and do it.

- Donate the money you would have spent on whatever you’re fasting from
- Spend the time you would have spent watching TV with your family
- Visit a nursing home—and bring your little ones if you have them. Nothing takes the awkward out of talking to old people you don’t know like a baby
- Step up your tithing game from 10% to 15%
- Invite someone to dinner
- Do the loaves and fishes program
- Save up all your change (and maybe even your singles) and give them to charity
- Write letters to your grandparents
- Call your mother
- Volunteer once a week—soup kitchen, shoveling snow, the Office at the rectory
- Give someone a compliment every day
- Take someone to lunch every week—a lonely coworker, a neighbor you don’t always love, one of your children
- Perform an act of charity every day—do the dishes when it’s not your turn, take your kids to that awful playground they love so much, talk to your parents in multiple-word sentences, pick up litter
- Tell someone about Jesus

Almighty and Everlasting God,
You have given the human race
Jesus Christ our Savior as a model of humility.
He fulfilled Your Will by becoming Man
And giving His life on the Cross.
Help us to bear witness to You
By following His example of suffering
And make us worthy to share in His Resurrection.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son. Amen.

Our Father...

MARY, Mother of Jesus,
you were Jesus’ gift for us from the Cross.
He gave you to us as our mother.
Intercede for all our needs.
Hail Mary...
Glory Be...


**WEDNESDAY NIGHT PRAYER SERVICE** will not be held this week as there will be a 7pm Ash Wednesday Service in the Church.

Our next meeting of the St. Mary **MEN’S MINISTRY** group will be on **Saturday, Feb. 17** at 8:30am in the Parish Hall. For more information, email Craig DeFreese at acdefreese@snet.net or Eric Keener at stmarys06801@gmail.com.

**WOMEN OF FAITH** The Women of Faith meetings on February 20 and March 20 will be dedicated to Lenten topics. More information will follow. **Pray the Rosary!** "The power of the Rosary is beyond description." (Archbishop Fulton Sheen)

**Offertory for the weekend of February 3/4**
Collection: $11,526.00      On-Line Giving: $4,527.00

**REMINDER** When the Bethel School System cancels school, Religious Education is also cancelled. Please check on our website, our Facebook page, Channel 3 or Channel 6 for clarification.

**ASH WEDNESDAY IS FEBRUARY 14, 2018**
Masses are at 6:30am, 9am & 5:30pm.

**STAY AT HOME RETREAT** every Wednesday during Lent. Each of the priests is going to take a topic appropriate for Lent and give a 5 - 7 minute retreat on video for you to hear and think about. Go to our Parish Website (www.stmarybethel.org) or our Facebook page (StMaryChurchBethel) to access these videos.

We are having a **TISSUES, MOUTHWASH, DENTURE CLEANER & BODY WASH COLLECTION BEGINNING ASH WEDNESDAY** and continuing each Sunday through Lent benefitting “The Little Sisters of the Poor”.

**DAILY MASSES during LENT**: Mon. – Fri.: 6:30am and 9:00am; Saturday: 8am

**PENANCE**: Saturdays from 4-5pm

**STATIONS OF THE CROSS**: Fridays at 7:00pm

**Days of FAST and ABSTINENCE** (no eating between meals and no meat):  **Ash Wednesday & Good Friday**  **(The norms of fasting are obligatory from age 18 until age 59. When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal. Two smaller meals may also be taken, but not to equal a full meal. The norms concerning abstinence from meat are binding upon members from age 14 onwards.)**

**Days of ABSTINENCE** (no meat): Fridays of Lent

As you know, this cold and flu season has become very dangerous. In consultation with the Diocese of Bridgeport, we shall implement the following procedures until the end of the season:

- We are temporarily suspending offering the Precious Blood of Christ at Mass.
- We are asking all parishioners to utilize our Purell dispensers in the vestibule as you enter Church.
- Instead of shaking hands, please use some other gesture during the Sign of Peace (e.g., a nod of the head, a smile or a spoken greeting).
- The clergy will not shake hands at the end of the Mass but will verbally greet you.
- Please, if you are experiencing severe cold and flu symptoms, do not come to Church. There is no sin incurred if you are sick and do not come to Mass.

We will be following these procedures until the end of the flu season. Please use common sense in all these matters. Thank you for your cooperation and stay well!!!

REGISTRATION for the 2018-19 School Year is open. Once again, we anticipate strong interest and possible waitlists for some classes, so please register early. For information, please call the school at 203-744-2922 or email our Director of Enrollment, Linda Garvey at lgarvey@stmarybethelct.org. You can also visit our website at www.stmarybethelct.org for school and registration information.

St. Mary School is seeking an adult interested in forming a MOCK TRIAL team at the school. Please contact Mr. Viceroy at GViceroy@StMaryBethelCT.org for more information.

SAVE THE DATE: SMS Dinner & Auction Fundraiser 2018 “HOW SWEET IT IS!” March 24th at 6PM to 11PM. Grab your friends and come join us for a wonderful evening. Look for more information on this to follow soon.

EFFORTLESS FUNDRAISING Please take a look at some of our “effortless fundraising” programs that support our school. Programs like, The Amazon Smile foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to our school. Start here https://smile.amazon.com/ch/32-0445968 and the items you buy will also become a gift to SMS. SMS has also partnered with Shutterfly and every order placed here automatically generates a 13% (of purchase price) donation to SMS. Please visit sms.shutterflystorefront.com. More information and links to these and other programs can be found on our school website, www.stmarybethelct.org, click on Effortless Fundraising. Thank you for participating!

Please visit us on FACEBOOK at “St. Mary School, Bethel” to see photos and news of the latest happenings at SMS!

ST. MARY PARISH Theme: God’s Grace Join the Men of Saint Mary’s and Saint Patrick’s for a weekend of peace and reflection on the power of God’s Grace in our lives from Friday March 9 to Sunday March 11, 2018 at the Holy Family Retreat House in West Hartford. Discover anew how God’s Grace is our greatest source of strength and courage to meet the ever-present challenges in our lives. Together we will reflect on how living in God’s Grace guides us to make wise choices, leading to true happiness and peace. If you have any questions please feel free to contact our Chairperson Richard Schlemmer at 203-948-1820 rischlem@aol.com or co-chairs Richard Bruno 203-456-4340 bruno11955@gmail.com or Sean Payne 203-788-7675 seanpayne42@yahoo.com

ARE YOU OR DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO HAS EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT JESUS?

Perhaps you or they have not been baptized, come from another Christian tradition, or are baptized and have not received Religious Education nor First Communion and/or Confirmation. The RCIA program prepares candidates to be received as members of the Catholic Church. Potential candidates are often found among family members of our Parish Community.

Our RCIA program meets Sundays after the 8:30am Mass. If you or someone you know is interested and has not reached out, please contact the Parish Office at 203-744-5777
AROUND THE DIOCESE

DEFENDING OUR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY According to USCCB President Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, the Catholic Church teaches that religious freedom has to do with immunity from coercion. Immunity from government coercion is a right that all citizens in this country should enjoy. Let us pray that efforts to change the health care bill protect the Church’s First Amendment rights.

OFF THE STREETS needs many hands in this ministry to help homeless people transition to a place of their own. Please join us on Thurs., Feb. 15 at 6:30pm in the Congregational Church in Danbury. Park on the left side of the Church (across from City Hall) and upon entering the building behind the sanctuary, go to the Pilgrim Room. For more info, see the Off The Streets website at www.OffTheStreetsNow.com.

Another 40 DAYS FOR LIFE campaign will occur in Danbury beginning February 14th and continuing through March 25th from 7 AM to 7 PM daily. We will once again pray in public for mothers who are contemplating abortion and for their babies to try to help to save more lives. Will you join us? God sees our witness; He hears our prayers; He transforms our world. Prayer Vigil Location: On the Public sidewalk outside of Planned Parenthood at 44 Main Street in Danbury. For more information, contact: Matt Donatucci, 203-778-0622 or mattdonatucci@sbcglobal.net or Peg Rozzi at loveisthechoice@comcast.net or go to https://40daysforlife.com/local-campaigns/danbury/

Like us on Facebook at ‘StMaryChurchBethel’ and follow us on twitter ‘@StMaryBethel’

ST. MARY ANNUAL GIVING CAMPAIGN

We are very grateful for the generosity shown by so many to our Annual Collection. If you have not yet had the opportunity to return your pledge card, please do so as soon as possible. Every gift is welcomed and appreciated!

Thank You!

Thank you for your generosity!!!
READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Mon.:  Jas 1:1-11; Ps 119:67-68, 71-72, 75-76; Mk 8:11-13

Tues.: Jas 1:12-18; Ps 94:12-13; 14-15; 18-19; Mk 8:14-21

Wed.: Jl 2:12-18; Ps 51:3-6ab, 12-14, 17; 2 Cor 5:20 -- 6:2; Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

Thur.: Dt 30:15-20; Ps 1:1-4; Lk 9:22-25

Fri.:  Is 58:1-9a; Ps 51:3-6ab, 18-19; Mt 9:14-15

Sat.:  Is 58:9b-14; Ps 86:1-6; Lk 5:27-32

Sun.:  Gn 9:8-15; Ps 25:4-9; 1 Pt 3:18-22; Mk 1:12-15

MASS SCHEDULE
Monday – Friday:  6:30 & 9:00am
Saturday:  8:00am & 5:30pm (Vigil Mass)
Sunday:  7:00, 8:30, 10:00, 11:30am &  5:30pm

RECONCILIATION
Saturday:  4:00 – 5:00pm

STAFF
Father Corey V. Piccinino, Pastor
Father Robert Wolfe, Parochial Vicar
Father Philip Phan, Parochial Vicar
Deacon John DeRoin
Kate Fitzgerald, Parish Secretary & Bulletin Editor
Peggy Gavin, Parish Secretary
Julie Doerner, Business Manager
Paul Orsino, Property Manager

ST. MARY SCHOOL (744-2922)  Greg Viceroy, Principal
REOLIGIOUS EDUCATION  Mary Ferri, Director
(743-4557)
RCIA (203)744-5777:  Call if you are interested in becoming a Catholic or completing your initiation as a Catholic with Confirmation and/or Eucharist.

YOUTH MINISTRY  (203)744-5777

MUSIC MINISTRY
Michael Ferrari, Music Director
Elizabeth Barnes, Choir Director

FINANCE COMMITTEE (794-8512):  Bob Kozlowski, Chairman

BAPTISMS: Most Sundays at 12:45pm. Please call the Rectory at least six weeks in advance to schedule your Baptism and to sign up for the New Baptism Class that is required for both parents and Godparents. These classes are offered on the first Sunday of each month. Anyone requesting a Sponsorship form must be a currently registered and practicing Catholic, and they must attend one of the New Baptism Classes to receive it. There is a 3-month waiting period for a sponsorship form for the newly registered. The Catholic requirements for a Godparent/Sponsor are: you must be at least 16 years old; received the Sacraments of Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation in the Catholic Church; attend Mass regularly on Sundays and on Holy Days of Obligation; receive the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion regularly; sincerely try to follow the moral teaching of the Catholic Church; and if married, were married in the Catholic Church.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MARRIAGE: All couples must meet with a parish clergyman at least six (6) months before the marriage is to be celebrated.

PASTORAL CARE AT DANBURY HOSPITAL: Prior to Your Hospitalization: You or a family member should notify the Rectory.

HOLY COMMUNION FOR THE SICK: To any of those who are homebound or hospitalized and interested in having a visit by a priest, please contact the parish office. Anyone interested in serving in this ministry, please call Father Philip at 744-5777.

PRAYER LINE: If you or someone you know is in need of prayer, please call our Prayer Line. Our team leaders are Maggie Kent (203-731-4738) and Deana Chamberlin (203-482-7149).
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