

Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time



News You Can Use...from Fr. Steve

... is less really more?

From all the news reports and economic projections, it appears we are looking at a time of scarcity, a time when belt-tightening is going to be required. There is certainly nothing pleasant or positive about economic conditions where the needy are deprived even further, and jobs are lost, and families are at risk because of unemployment; but that doesn't mean we cannot find some personal grace for ourselves in all this. After all, at the heart of our Catholic spirituality, there is a strong and even mandated tradition of penance, where we consciously and deliberately choose to deprive ourselves because we understand that the right kind of self-denial and self-abnegation are spiritually fruitful. We even have a special season in the church, Lent, when we accentuate even more the need for less; the self-imposed penitential posture to go against our compulsions to acquire and possess and surfeit ourselves with material things and bodily and sensual pleasures.

So if society is imposing scarcity upon us, why not deflate its power by accepting this economically deflated situation purposefully and with heightened spiritual awareness to the positive effects it can reap in our souls. This depression time could be a time to reassess our priorities about what we need versus what we want. Are the material things we are being denied things we really need anyway? Could having less simplify our lives in fruitful ways? Could we substitute "doing" for "having?" Could we read more, spend more time sharing together, volunteering, listening, exercising, and praying? Could we see ourselves more clearly in solidarity with the real poor? Could we find ways to give more money to needy causes than we did when we were better off financially since we are told that charity in general drops significantly in difficult economic times, when charitable and non-profits are most in need of financial support. And how can buying less food and eating less food be a bad thing?

These thoughts are mere suggestions to get us thinking about how we can embrace more fully our spiritual tradition of "less is more."

Sad News: Death of a Transitional Deacon at St Charles Seminary

Please remember in your prayers, Rev. Mr. Adam Crowe, a transitional deacon for the Diocese of Ogdensburg, New York, in formation at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary. Deacon Crowe died suddenly on Tuesday, January 27, 2009, at the Seminary.

Deacon Crowe had been at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary for the past six years and had gotten to know many of the priests of the Archdiocese. As a deacon, he was assigned to Saint Katharine Drexel Parish, in Chester, Pennsylvania, for his diaconal internship. His funeral Mass was celebrated on Monday, February 2, 2009 at Saint Mary's Cathedral, Ogdensburg, New York.

Collections for Sunday 1/4/09

- 1st Collection: \$1310
- 2nd Collection: \$ 411 (Heritage of Faith – Vision of Hope)

Collections for Sunday 1/11/09

- 1st Collection: \$1822
- 2nd Collection: \$ 328 (Heritage of Faith – Vision of Hope)

This Week at St. AJ

Saturday, February 7

- 9:00AM Mass
- 4:00PM Confessions
- 5:30PM Vigil Mass *Gertrude and Thomas Noonan*

Sunday, February 8 Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time

- 10:00AM Mass *The Candeloro & Zagrosky Families*
- 11:30AM Mass *Rose Brady*
- 5:00PM Mass *Friends & Benefactors of St. AJ*
- 10:00PM Mass *Intentions of Students of our area Universities*

Wednesday, February 11

12:30 to 2:00 PM - Church open today for prayer and/or tours.

Saturday, February 7

- 5:30PM Vigil Mass *Gertrude and Thomas Noonan*

**PATRON SAINT OF ST. AJ -
ST. AGATHA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR**

St. Agatha is one of the Virgin martyrs mentioned in the Roman Canon. Evidence suggests that she was born in Sicily and dies there in Actinia as a Martyr, having suffered violently at the hands of persecutors, but could not be silenced easily. Torture proved insufficient to kill her, sustained as she was by Jesus Christ, a power that evil men could not understand. When Agatha, a supposedly "powerless woman" chose to oppose the manipulative, sexual advances of a Roman official, she not only defended her chastity and bodily inviolability, she also demonstrated a defiance of imposed and exploitive female conventions and expectations. Her opposition to imperial power was possible because of her belief in the spiritual power Jesus Christ. In so doing, Agatha undermined the foundations of Rome and sent shock waves throughout the empire.

While still a young girl, her faith imbued her feminine psyche with an inviolable sense of self and personal integrity. Faith in Jesus Christ made her a spiritual warrior, able to oppose and humble the greatest force in the known world. Thus, the early Christians quickly recognized that Agatha possessed spiritual strength to defeat the forces of evil and death. This is why Agatha is considered the protector against things like sexual assault and rape, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, and against fire and lightning – all examples of overwhelming forces of death and destruction against which we have little defense or protection. The early Christians made the connection that prayerful intercession to the virgin martyr Agatha was to an ally against all of the unstoppable and insurmountable evils that confronted them in their ordinary lives.

St. Agatha, female, vulnerable, and powerless, found the true power to combat the dark and evil forces of her day, which is why she is the patron and protector against breast cancer, which is one of the true scourges of our lives, a seemingly insurmountable force. Along with the healing arts of medical expertise and technology, we also need spiritual strength to become survivors of breast cancer and also intercessors for the continued health of all the women who at risk for this affliction; all our mothers, wives, sisters and nieces, grandchildren, and friends.