

St. Michael's & St. Mary's

FR. JOHN B. BIRKEL, PASTOR

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Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 26, 2015



St. Michael's and St. Mary's Parishes would like to extend a warm welcome to all who are visiting us or are new to the area. If you are not currently registered at St. Michael's or St. Mary's and consider this your Parish, please call the Rectory at 729-2058.

St. Michael's	PO Box 406, Fairbury, NE 68352	Phone: 729-2058
St. Mary's	5th & Amanda Streets, Alexandria, NE	
St. Michael's Prayer Chain	Carmen Juarez: 729-3623	
St. Michael's/St. Mary's Secretary	Carolyn Osborne: 729-5387	Mobile: 300-0148

St. Mary's Parish Council: Peggy Niederklein, Rhonda Burkhart, Donna Rut **Trustees:** Bob VanWesten and Bob Bachle

St. Mary's PCCW: Deb Vanwesten

St. Michael's Parish Council: Doug Kapke, LeAnn Krause, Dave Panko, Dave Banahan, Bruce Busing **Trustees:** Keith Mach and Randy Prellwitz

St. Michael's PCCW: Lorraine Borch

Knights of Columbus: Dan Arner

CCD Coordinator:

Parish News & Upcoming Events

- **BULLETIN:** If you have news for the bulletin, please call the Rectory 729-2058 or contact Carolyn 729-5387 or email carolyn@stmichaelsfairbury.org News must be in Thursday by 10:00 AM to be in the week's bulletin.
- **ADOPT A PRIEST:** Our Deanery is taking part in the "Adopt a Priest" program. St. Michael's has adopted **Fr. Leo Seiker**; please keep him in your prayers.
- **SISTERS OF THE WEEK:** Please keep our Sisters of the week, **Sr. Regina of the Holy Infant of Prague, Sr. Francisco of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and Sr. Caroline** in your prayers.

Ministers' Schedules for Next Weekend

	5:30 PM	8:00 AM	10:00 AM
Acolyte	Joe Busing	Bob VanWesten	James Huber
Lector	Randy Prellwitz	Scott DeWald	Lorraine Borch
Server	Aldo Ramos		RJ Suey
Server	Ryan Umland		Braden Suey
Organ/Piano	Carolyn Osborne	Lorrie Hofstetter	Allen Scheer
Gifts/Greeters		Mr. & Mrs. Ken Milius	
Collection	Doug Kapke & Carolyn Osborne		

Our Offering to God Last Weekend		Adult	Plate	Children
	St. Michael's	\$1295.00	\$101.00	\$5.00
	St. Mary's	\$700.00	\$22.00	
	St. Michael's Debt	Last Week	Total	
		\$100.00	\$5985.00	

THIS WEEK'S MASS SCHEDULE

Monday	July 27	NO MASS	St. Michael's	NO MASS
Tuesday	July 28	12:10 PM	St. Michael's	Walter & Dorrine Milius+
Wednesday	July 29	12:10 PM	St. Michael's	Living Members of Daniel Phelan Family
Thursday	July 30	5:30 PM	St. Michael's	Leslie & Mary Naiman+
Friday	July 31	12:10 PM	St. Michael's	Steve Wilson+
Saturday	August 1	5:30 PM	St. Michael's	Charles & Anna Margaret Steele+
Sunday	August 2	8:00 AM	St. Mary's	The People of the Parishes
Sunday	August 2	10:00 AM	St. Michael's	Deceased & Living Members of Bertha & Otis Smith Family

Confessions	St. Michael's	Saturday	4:45 PM to 5:15 PM
	St. Mary's	Sunday	7:45 AM

Daily Mass: Please check Mass schedule carefully for Mass times this week!!!

Please pray for: Betty (Morgan) Brackle, Bob Seigel, Iola Busing, Rose O'Keefe, Vonja Scheer, Lorraine Callison, Doug Wiedel, Leona Gaydusek, Norma Bernasek, Jim Cortney, Rozella Prellwitz, Zachary Rowe, Noelle Salazar, Bernie Boerner, Brad Eveleth, Kathy Blobaum, Bob McCord, Ed Lytle, Rita Stone, Graysen Snyder, Brandi Warnke, Darren Martinez, Marie Kosmacek, Tatum Broeders, Robert Keith Guillory, Military Personnel, all the unborn children & their parents, pro-life legislation, and anyone else who maybe ailing. *If you or someone you know would like our parish family to join you in prayer for their special needs, please contact the parish office.*

NEW ITEMS

- **Sole to Soul** will be held Saturday, August 15th from 9:00 a.m. to noon at 10th and Grant Street in Beatrice. Anyone who is in need of gently used shoes is welcome and encouraged to come to this giveaway.
- **PCCW Brunch:** The PCCW will be sponsoring their monthly brunch, Sunday, July 26th following the Sunday Mass in the parish center. A free will donation will be taken up.
- **Year for Consecrated Life:** All are invited to join Bishop Conley for a Sunday Mass in celebration of the Year for Consecrated Life, August 9th, 3 PM at St. Cecelia Church in Hastings. A 'Meet the Sisters' reception will follow the Mass.
- **Class on the Natural Law,** similar to the Saint Thomas Aquinas course. Each class consists of an approximately 30 minute video & discussion, ***Tuesday at 12:40*** in the center.
- **SAVE THE DATE:** Lincoln Diocesan Council of Catholic Women (LDCCW) Fall Full Board meeting at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish hall, North Platte, on Saturday, August 22, 2015, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. More details to follow.
- **Thought of the Week:** God's wisdom, not riches or treasure, is what good stewards seek above all.
- **Word Among Us:** We have FREE copies of the Word Among Us for the **month of August**. Please pick yours up today and take home for daily devotions.
- **Miniature Quilt Auction:** Sunday, August 23rd at 4-H building at Jefferson County Fairgrounds. 2:00 p.m. Quilt Preview & Treats; 2:30 p.m. Auction. Free Admission.
- **August Church Cleaning for St. Mary's:** Rhonda Burkhart
- **Mass times when you are traveling:** Traveling?? There are web-sites to find the time of Masses at different locations. <http://masstimes.org>

- **Please note:** Summer vacation continues but there is never a vacation from God. Make sure to include Him in your travel plans. Bills still need to be paid, however, please remember to consistently contribute your parish offering during the summer months.



- **St. Mary's Cemetery Fund:** The cemetery fund for St. Mary's Cemetery is in need of some new funds as the summer growing season draws near as does the need to pay for the mowing. If you would like to replenish the fund, please put your donations in your church support envelope that is marked "Cemetery Fund". Cemeteries require funds for maintenance purposes. Any help you can give will be greatly appreciated.
- **Guide to Planning a Catholic Funeral:** On the back table, are copies of "A Guide to Planning a Catholic Funeral". The booklets have Scripture readings, music selections and a planning guide to help you plan for funerals. **You may fill these out now, so your family will know what your wishes are, in the time of passing it will be something they will not have to worry about.** You may turn them in to the office or you may keep at your home.
- **Prayer for Rain:** O God, heavenly Father, who by the Son Jesus Christ hast promised to all those who seek thy kingdom and its righteousness all things necessary to sustain their life: Send us, we entreat thee, in this time of need, such moderate rain and showers, that we may receive the fruits of the earth, to our comfort and to thy honor; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Right and Wrong 101

By Mark Brumley

Whether stated explicitly or merely implied, many people today believe morality to be a matter of personal “choice.” On this view, we simply “adopt” a “value system” like you might adopt a style of dress or a particular hobby.

The idea that morality is more a matter of taste than truth is widespread today. What “works” for you might not “work” for me, we are told. And who are you to say I’m wrong?

“You can’t impose your morality on me.” Is how the adulterer puts it to his former Baptist pastor on this afternoon’s Donahue/Oprah/Geraldo. “I’m a Christian,” he insists. “I mean, the Bible says, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ right? That’s all I’ve done.”

The World of “Ought”

A thoughtful person will note a certain contradiction in such moral relativism. People routinely claim that we should not “impose our moral views on others,” without realizing that insisting others ought to adopt their relativistic view of morality is itself an “imposition” of a particular moral view on the rest of us.

Try as we might, we cannot find a morally value-free place from which to pronounce moral platitudes to others. It is like the man who argues we should never argue or someone who claims to have a proof invalidating all proofs. In less philosophical language, it is called “cutting off the limb you sit on”.

If pressed, most of us would probably admit to operating by certain moral “givens.” By a sense of right and wrong which is difficult, though not impossible, to ignore. Not that this moral sense is infallible (or that we always follow it). We make “moral” errors the way we might also make mathematical errors and-what is not the same thing-we also *sin*, by choosing to do what know is wrong or failing to do what we know is right. In both cases, we retain an awareness of some cosmic standard of rightness and wrongness against which our actions can be measured or judged.

This standard of right and wrong is what St. Paul writes about in Romans 2:14-15, when he refers to the Gentiles who lacked the Mosaic law but who nevertheless followed certain of its precepts: "When the Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves even though they have not the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts."

Christian thinkers and others have called this universal standard of right and wrong the Natural Law.

The Natural Law is not to be confused with "the laws of nature," in the scientific sense of that expression. The scientific "laws of nature" describe how physical entities do in fact act. Atoms have no choice in the matter of how they are to behave. The Natural Law, on the other hand, is concerned with how rational beings - beings with minds and wills - *ought* to act, and here choice is involved.

The key word in that last sentence is "ought." Natural Law concerns what is called *prescriptive* truth; truth about what should or should not be done by human beings. Of course, there are people who deny the category of prescriptive truth altogether. In doing so, they deny any real difference between good and evil. Most people, however, believe in the Natural Law in one form or another, even if they do not call it that or realize it.

St. Thomas Aquinas described the Natural Law as "the rational creature's participation of the Eternal Law" of God. As a computer designer makes a computer to operate in a certain way, so God has designed human beings, as rational creatures, to operate in a certain way, according to his plan. This "certain way" is the Natural Law, which we rational creatures can know and ought to obey. The Natural Law provides the legitimate basis for our human laws and for our judgments about right and wrong.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it:

The Natural Law, the Creator's very good work, provides the solid foundation on which man can build the structure of moral rules to guide his choices. It also provides the indispensable moral foundation for building the human community. Finally, it provides the necessary basis for the civil law with which it is connected ... (no. 1959).

Morality and Law

A popular slogan today is that "you can't legislate morality." In a sense, of course, that is true. Merely passing laws will not make people behave morally anymore than merely writing the number 1 followed by six 0s in your checkbook will make you a millionaire. Besides, as St. Thomas Aquinas also affirmed, not everything immoral can or should be made illegal.

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which we not only can but must "legislate morality." If morality is about what is right and wrong, then surely we want moral laws rather than immoral ones. We want laws which forbid what is wrong and command what is right, even if they cannot and do not forbid everything that is wrong or command everything that is right. The alternative is as obvious as it is nonsensical - to have laws forbidding what is right and commanding what is wrong.

In fact, we "legislate morality" every day. We pass laws to protect fundamental and inalienable human rights. If we mean by such rights what we claim we mean by them, then laws protecting such rights are really laws about morality, about right and wrong - and about justice. People who invoke the language of fundamental and inalienable rights are tacitly acknowledging, whether they like it or not, that there is a higher law than mere human law. And here is where the Natural Law comes in.

People of our time face a dilemma. On the one hand, they would rather not acknowledge a Natural Law binding on all human beings because they mistakenly believe this limits genuine freedom. They want to do certain things contrary to the Natural Law - contrary to real goodness itself. But they do not want to face up to it, so they try to deny the undeniable, the way an insane man who wants to fly might deny the law of gravity and jump out the window. The results are similar.

In reality, the Natural Law does not limit freedom, only license. Genuine freedom exists for something - for doing the *right* thing - for the real as opposed to the merely apparent good. We are free so that we can act as we should by choice, not by instinct or compulsion. And the fact that we all know, at some level, there is a "right thing" to do implies the existence of a Natural Law.

The Demands of Justice

On the other hand, to deny the Natural Law is not only as foolish as trying to deny gravity; it also undercuts any grounds for claiming a real "right" to freedom. To deny the Natural Law is really to deny justice itself and to deny justice is tantamount to denying the basis for any claim to a *right* of freedom.

Since a right is something due in justice, if there is really no such thing as justice - because there is no cosmic law or ultimate principle against which we can measure human actions, only changeable human laws - then we are not due *anything* in justice, including freedom. Freedom becomes a gift of the government, to be granted or taken away at the government's whim. And government, under such an arrangement, invariably is government by force, where "might makes right."

Of course, someone might argue that he will grant "rights" to others, provided he be accorded "rights" by them. He might, in other words, base human rights upon a social contract among people. His defense of such rights, then, would be a carefully concealed defense, not of universal justice and rights in general and certainly not of others' rights in particular, but of himself and his own interests. True, he might not violate the law, lest by doing so he encourage others to break the law to his own disadvantage. And he may well defend the rights of others so that he can expect them to defend his rights. But would you really feel safe living next door to such a man? Would you really *trust* him?

Consider: what if this man decides he can harm others and get away with it? Then his self-interest will no longer safeguard your rights or mine. We will be compelled to take matters into our own hands, to defend ourselves by force, if necessary. In other words, the rule of law will break down and we will be back to "might makes right."

Our society is not yet at this point, but we are rapidly approaching it. In the name of radical moral pluralism and multiculturalism, many people deny universal standards of right and wrong. Increasingly, in the interests of self-indulgence and personal license, some people refuse to acknowledge what they cannot reasonably deny - right and wrong apply to everyone, themselves included. The result of such denial can only be chaos, where "everyone does what seems right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). And, as with the Israelites of old, that can only bring ruin, disaster and death upon the land.

Mark Brumley is the Managing Editor of The Catholic Faith magazine. He holds a master of Theological Studies from the University of Dallas.