

# St. Michael's & St. Mary's

**FR. JOHN B. BIRKEL, PASTOR**

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Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 23, 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,<br>Fairbury, NE 68352       | Phone: 729-2058     |
| St. Mary's                            | 5th & Amanda Streets,<br>Alexandria, NE |                     |
| St. Michael's Prayer Chain            | Carmen Juarez:<br>729-3623              |                     |
| St. Michael's/St. Mary's<br>Secretary | Carolyn Osborne:<br>729-5387            | Mobile:<br>300-0148 |

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

**St. Mary's PCCW:** Deb Vanwesten

**St. Michael's Parish Council:** Mary Mach, Eddie Lytle, Devin Lovgren, Doug Kapke, LeAnn Krause, Dave Panko, Dave Banahan and 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](mailto: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.

## Ministers' Schedules for Next Weekend

|                       | 5:30 PM                      | 8:00 AM                      | 10:00 AM          |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Acolyte</b>        | Bruce Busing                 | Jim VanWesten                | Randy Prellwitz   |
| <b>Lector</b>         | Keith Mach                   | Rhonda Burkhart              | Charlie Barringer |
| <b>Server</b>         | Paul Mach                    |                              | RJ Suey           |
| <b>Server</b>         | Ryan Umland                  |                              | Braden Suey       |
| <b>Organ/Piano</b>    | Mary Prellwitz               | Lorrie Hofstetter            | Allen Scheer      |
| <b>Gifts/Greeters</b> | Mary Kay Bedlan              | Ritchie & Rhonda<br>Burkhart | Marge Gregory     |
| <b>Collection</b>     | Doug Kapke & Carolyn Osborne |                              |                   |

| <b>Our Offering<br/>to God Last<br/>Weekend</b> |                           | <b>Adult</b>     | <b>Plate</b> | <b>Children</b> |
|---|---------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
|   | <b>St. Michael's</b>      | \$1355.00        | \$66.00      | \$2.00          |
|   | <b>St. Mary's</b>         | \$360.00         | \$36.00      |                 |
|   |                           |                  |              |                 |
|   | <b>St. Michael's Debt</b> | <b>Last Week</b> | <b>Total</b> |                 |
|   |                           | \$1020.00        | \$7330.00    |                 |

## ***THIS WEEK'S MASS SCHEDULE***

|           |           |                |               |                            |
|-----------|-----------|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|
| Monday    | August 24 | <b>NO MASS</b> | St. Michael's | <b>NO MASS</b>             |
| Tuesday   | August 25 | <b>NO MASS</b> | St. Michael's | <b>NO MASS</b>             |
| Wednesday | August 26 | <b>NO MASS</b> | St. Michael's | <b>NO MASS</b>             |
| Thursday  | August 27 | 5:30 PM        | St. Michael's | Walter & Dorrine Milius+   |
| Friday    | August 28 | 12:10 PM       | St. Michael's | Bill & Arlene Wagner+      |
| Saturday  | August 29 | 5:30 PM        | St. Michael's | Paul Busing+               |
| Sunday    | August 30 | 8:00 AM        | St. Mary's    | The People of the Parishes |
| Sunday    | August 30 | 10:00 AM       | St. Michael's | Mary Mach                  |

|                    |               |          |                    |
|--------------------|---------------|----------|--------------------|
| <b>Confessions</b> | St. Michael's | Saturday | 4:45 PM to 5:15 PM |
|                    | St. Mary's    | Sunday   | 7:45 AM            |

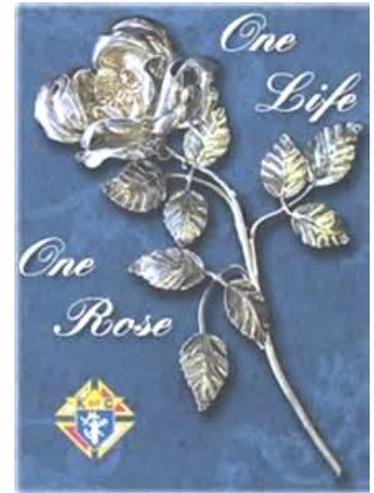
**Daily Mass: Please check Mass schedule carefully for Mass times this week!!!**

**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, Francis Nutsch, 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**

- **Fr. John will be out of the office** from August 17-26. If you need a priest please call St. Joseph's in Beatrice at 402-223-2923. The priests in Beatrice are, Fr. Robert Barnhill & Fr. Thomas McGuire.
- **Twenty-Eighth Annual Marian Mass, Rosary & Candlelight Procession!** The twenty-eighth annual Marian Mass, Rosary and Candlelight Procession will take place on Wednesday, September 9, at 7:00 p.m. on the grounds of the Waverly Marian Center. In case of inclement weather, the Mass will be held at St. Teresa's Church at 7:00 p.m. Bishop Conley will be the main celebrant and homilist. The S.T.A.G.E. Fatima Play will NOT be performed this year. The Rosary will be prayed in English, Czech, Spanish, Vietnamese and German. Limited seating and handicap accessible restrooms will be provided
- **Sexual Addiction & Betrayal Trauma Seminar**, September 4<sup>th</sup> at St. Thomas Aquinas (Newman Center)-Downtown Lincoln, 320 N. 16<sup>th</sup> St. from 8:30-4:00 p.m. The training is open to all mental Health Professionals in the State of Nebraska. For more information, call the Family Life Office at 402-488-2040.
- **Poland & Eastern Europe Pilgrimage:** Come along, April 11-22, 2016 to some of the most historical places in all of Europe. We'll see the home of John Paul II, visit the Shrine of Divine Mercy, walk through Auschwitz Concentrations Camp and so much more! We'll have Mass each day in great Churches and Cathedrals along the way. Cost is \$3,799 with departure from Omaha. For a brochure and more information, contact Fr. Dan Guenther, P.O. Box 658, Cherokee, Iowa 51012 or call 712-225-4606 or email [frdanquenther@gmail.com](mailto:frdanquenther@gmail.com)
- **PCCW Brunch:** The PCCW will be sponsoring their monthly brunch, Sunday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> following the Sunday Mass in the parish center. A free will donation will be taken up.
- **Thought of the Week:** Faithful stewards pursue the wisdom and riches of God instead of this world.

- **The Year of Consecrated Life** continues until February 2, 2016. Make a pilgrimage, adopt a community, and find out more ways to celebrate our Religious at [www.lincoln.diocese.org/ycl](http://www.lincoln.diocese.org/ycl). **September 12**, 8:30 a.m. Carmel Walk, 11:00 a.m. Mass at Carmelite Sisters at Carmel of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, 9300 Agnew Road, Valparaiso; **September 12**, 10:00-11:00 a.m. Open House at Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters (Pink Sisters) at Christ the King Convent, 1040 South Cotner Blvd, Lincoln.; **September 13**, 1:00-4:00 p.m., Open House at Marian Sisters at Marycrest Motherhouse, 6765 N. 112 St. , Waverly.
- **Silver Rose Prayer Service:** The Knights of Columbus invite all members of the parish to join the council on August 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. for rosary and prayer service at St. Michael's. 2015 marks the 55<sup>th</sup> year of the program which began in 1960 to honor the Blessed Virgin under her title of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas. Today, six Silver roses travel through North America exemplifying Knights of Columbus devotion of our lady and the commitment to the culture of Life. The 2015 Our Lady of Guadalupe Silver-Rose-One Life, One Rose Program will conclude on December 12, 2015 on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Monterrey, Mexico. The service will last 25-30 minutes. This is the first time the Silver Rose has been to Fairbury.
- **Theology on Tap:** On August 27th, at 7:00 p.m., Dr. Ian Murphy will be the invited speaker at the next St. Joseph's Catholic Church Theology on Tap in Beatrice. Dr. Murphy was featured on The Journey Home on EWTN, has presented at the Defending the Faith Conference with Dr. Scott Hahn and has written numerous publications. He will be sharing the lively story of how God brought this once agnostic child, into the Christian faith and finally through the doors of the Catholic Church.
- **National 54 Day Rosary Novena** begins, August 15<sup>th</sup> (Feast of the Assumption) and ends October 7<sup>th</sup> (Feast of the Holy Rosary). Join hundreds of thousands of people of all ages in prayer across America. Primary Intention: "For Family and Marriage" including for Peace, sanctity of Human Life & Religious Freedom.



- **Miniature Quilt Auction:** Sunday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> 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>
- **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.



## Walking in the Valley of Twofold Solitude

*The story of Helen Keller is a fitting analogy containing all sorts of clues about the nature of prayer. For we live in the midst of a world to which we are blind and deaf.*

Helen Keller was born in 1880, in Tuscumbia, Alabama. Most of us are familiar with her life story from having seen the movie *The Miracle Worker*. When Helen was just 19 months old, she almost died of an illness, the nature of which to this day remains a mystery. The illness left her blind and deaf. From that day on until she met her tutor, Ann Sullivan, Helen lived surrounded by silence and darkness,<sup>1</sup> forced to "walk in the valley of twofold solitude".

It is difficult to imagine what it would be like having to live permanently without the sense of sight and hearing. I have often closed my eyes and plugged my ears for a few seconds trying to come to some appreciation of her condition, but the difficulty of having to teach a language to a child unable to see and hear is almost impossible to fully appreciate.

Helen grasped universal concepts, and before meeting Ann Sullivan, she had developed her own way of communicating her ideas. She writes: "Soon I felt the need of some communication with others and began to make crude signs...If I wanted my mother to make ice-cream for dinner I made the sign for working the freezer and shivered, indicating cold."<sup>3</sup> But how does a child draw a connection between a gesture that has become an established sign, and the thing signified, thus apprehending its sign value, without being able to see or hear? That was the principal difficulty in trying to teach Helen language.

Her condition is useful in demonstrating to philosophy students the difference between intelligence and sensation (both internal and external). It is also useful in highlighting man's personal nature. A person (from the Latin *per sona*: 'through sound') is a communicator, an intelligent creature that longs to enter into communion with others through word or language. Feeling as if trapped within that twofold solitude, she writes:

*...the desire to express myself grew. The few signs I used became less and less adequate, and my failure to make myself understood were invariably followed by outbursts of passion. I felt as if invisible hands were holding me, and I made frantic efforts to free myself.*

Wordlessly, her soul cried out for light, and her cry reached fever pitch just before Ann Sullivan entered her life to bring her the freedom and light for which she longed.<sup>5</sup> The breakthrough came one day when Ann placed her hand under the spout of a well as someone was drawing water. Ann spelled the word water in the opposite hand as the cool stream gushed over the other.

Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten — a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

In time those barriers were indeed swept away, and when we read her writings, we are inevitably awestruck that the rich descriptions that practically lift and carry the beauty of creation to the reader's eyes and ears have come from a woman who was completely blind and deaf. And what is particularly notable is the tremendous joy that she was able to get out of life, a life that was so much less than that of others, at least in terms of her ability to take in all that the liturgy of creation has to offer. So many aspects of the beauty of the natural world were closed off to her, and yet she had a remarkably rich apprehension of nature's magnificence. She could not hear the charming sounds of crickets, birds, or the swaying leaves of fall, nor could she appreciate the colors of rose or honeysuckle. She could only touch and smell their splendor. But with the less she was given, it seems she could apprehend so much more than most of us who have more natural potential. She writes:

*The treasures of a new, beautiful world were laid at my feet, and I took in pleasure and information at every turn. I lived myself into all things. I was never still a moment; my life was as full of motion as those little insects that crowd a whole existence into one brief day....Here were great oaks and splendid evergreens with trunks like mossy pillars, from the branches of which hung garlands of ivy and mistletoe, and persimmon trees, the odor of which pervaded every nook and corner of the wood — an illusive, fragrant something that made the heart glad.*

### Blind and Deaf We Pray

The story of Helen Keller is not only useful for clarifying certain philosophical distinctions about knowledge and sensation; her life is a fitting analogy containing all sorts of clues about the nature of prayer. For we live in the midst of a world to which we are blind and deaf, that is, we live in the midst of a preternatural world. The veil that separates us from this world was momentarily lifted for John, in the book of *Revelation*. Caught up in ecstasy, he had a vision of heaven's liturgy in which he saw One seated on a throne, whose appearance had a gemlike sparkle as of Jasper and Carnelian. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones upon which were seated twenty-four elders, clothed in white and wearing gold crowns. Before the throne he saw seven flaming torches, who are the seven spirits of God. Flashes of lightning and peals of thunder were heard coming from the throne, and at the center, surrounding it, stood four living creatures covered with eyes front and back:

*Day and night, without pause, the creatures sang: 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, He who was, and who is, and who is to come!' Whenever these creatures give glory and honor and praise to the One seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before the One seated on the throne, and worship him who lives forever and ever. They throw down their crowns before the throne and sing: 'O Lord our God, you are worthy to receive*

*glory and honor and power! For you have created all things; by your will they came to be and were made!" (Rv 4, 8-11)*

There is no physical distance between God and ourselves; for it is in Him that we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17, 28). And there is no physical distance that separates us from the angels and the communion of saints, whom John beholds in this vision. They are present to us, all around us, but we cannot see or hear them. We are a bunch of Helen Kellers in relation to this preternatural world, this heavenly liturgy that is perpetual and full of sound and light. But we can become aware of the presence of this world outside (praeter) of us. Like Helen, we can explore it with the power that we have been given and come to an intimate knowledge of it. We explore it through the spiritual sense of touch and smell that are active when we pray. To pray is to enter into communication with that world. We cannot hear them or see them, but we can feel touches from heaven if we pray often, that is, if we acquire the habit of prayer. If we accept the blindness that is ours and pray in a spirit of faith and trust that there is a world separated from us by nothing other than a thin veil that is not so much outside of us as within us, we will eventually come to recognize the touches of God, as Elijah did on Mount Horeb:

Then the Lord said, "Go outside and stand on the mountain before the Lord; the Lord will be passing by." A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the Lord — but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake — but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was fire — but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went and stood at the entrance of the cave. (1 K 19, 11-13)

In prayer, the spiritual senses of touch and smell are as it were one sense; for the divine touches are fragrant. God sends the fragrance of his ointments, drawing the soul onwards and after him.<sup>8</sup> Eventually, though, these divine touches begin to heal and restore *the eye of the heart* whereby God may be seen, which, according to Augustine, is our whole business in this life. He writes: "For as there is an eye of the flesh, by means of which this light is seen, so there is an eye of the heart, by which that joy is perceived. Perhaps that eye is wounded, dimmed, disturbed by passion,...Believe, before thou seest: thou shalt be healed, and shalt see."<sup>9</sup> And the healing of the eye of the heart is at the same time a restoration of the ability to hear, in particular the "tiny whispering sound" that Elijah was able to discern, that is, "the sound of Yahweh God" (Gn 3, 8). The ability to hear the sound of the Lord symbolizes an intimate and infused knowledge of God, an intimacy that belonged to the first parents in the state of original justice, but which was lost through sin; for when we know a person intimately, we know his sound, for example, the sound of his approach, and the speed and tone of his steps. It is as if the more Helen explores the world and comes to know it more intimately, the more she begins to see and hear. And, of course, reading her words, who would guess that she was unable to see and hear?

Lacking a committed prayer life is comparable to someone like Helen living so much within her own mind that she refuses to acquire language and explore the world outside of her. Imagine her sitting on the floor, staring at nothing, unresponsive to outside communication, never making a move to enter into any kind of communication with others within her reach. She'd have the appearance of a catatonic schizophrenic. And she'd have missed out on all the joy of growing in the knowledge of the beautiful world outside of her. Such is the life of the person who does not pray, at least from the point of view of heaven.

The blind and deaf insertion into this other world that is prayer is, like Helen's life, a source of great joy, one much more intense and refined, and of an entirely different nature than the kind of joy that the world offers. In fact, the joy of heaven that is eventually channeled through prayer fills this life with a fullness that it otherwise lacks, a fullness of life-giving water that becomes in us a spring, welling up for eternal life (Jn 4, 14) and awakening us to the mystery of the Word that illuminates our soul and fills us with hope and sets us free, as the water gushing over Helen's hand revealed to her the mystery of words, awakening her soul and setting it free. Just another example of "anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 10, 39); for we lose our life when we leave it behind and aspire towards God in prayer.

*by Doug McManaman*

