

Faith In Focus

Dear regular Mass-goers: the seats at the end of the pew aren't for you!

My Jesuit confrere, Fr. Jack Bentz, SJ, shared his insightful observation published in the magazine, America. His ministry took him to different Catholic parishes in the fall of 2017. Almost at every parish, he had to climb over people to get into a pew. This happened often and in churches that were empty except for the ends of the pews firmly held against all newcomers.

Fr. Jack shared, "I was raised Catholic. I know the strategy. The first-class seats are at the end of the pew." Here at St Monica, it is easy for us to greet fellow parishioners, visitors and newcomers at the entrance and from the pulpit. Can we easily convince parishioners or early arrivals to sit in the middle of a pew?

The more parishes he attended, the more people he had to crawl over, the more time he had to think: What scares us about sitting in the center? The wooden pew is just as hard, the view is much the same and we won't suddenly hear an improvement in the music by sitting on the aisle. We want to be close to an exit, so we can make a quick get away. Ironically, we sit with one foot in the pew and the other in the parking lot.

Fr. Jack reminds us, do we forget that we are at Mass because it is here the community gathers? It is here that we become the people of God, drawn to each other by the work of the Spirit. And yet we try to sit where we can have as little contact with other people as possible. We do this without thinking about it, on a level that remains hidden to us, but it is obvious to newcomers. But here is the deal: *The end spots on a pew are for those who arrive after us.*

In his concluding paragraph, he made an emotional appeal and offered a helpful reflection. Can you imagine arriving at Mass and choosing to sit in the exact middle of a pew? If you sit there, you boldly state that you are expecting more people to join you. There is room on your right; there is room on your left. You sit in the middle because you are welcoming. You are ready to make the first offer to strangers, the offer of space, of community. You help them begin a first step toward a life with Christ where you are St. Paul, John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary rolled into one: an on-fire, evangelizing Catholic.

I would urge our regular parishioners to take the initiative to mover closer to the middle of the pews as much as possible when you arrive for Mass before others. Moreover, if you would stay until the end of the last hymn and when the presider, readers, extraordinary ministers and altar servers have exited, you are embracing your parish community even more by your full participation and presence. May the Lord bless our efforts in parish hospitality!

St. Monica, pray for us.



ST. MONICA PARISH

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Website: stmonicaparish.ca Email: parish.smon@rcav.org

PASTOR: **Rev. Robert Wong, SJ**

PARISH OFFICE HOURS

Monday – Friday

9:30 am – 1 pm / 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm

MASS SCHEDULES

WEEKDAYS: **9:00 am**

SATURDAYS: **9:30 am & 5:00 pm**

SUNDAYS: **9:00 am & 11:00 am**

CONFESSION SCHEDULE

SATURDAYS: **4:30 pm – 4:55 pm**

CONFESSIONS: 10 MINUTES BEFORE DAILY

MASS OR BY REQUEST AT OTHER TIMES

NOVENA TO

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP

WEDNESDAYS: **7:00 pm**

MASS FOLLOWED BY NOVENA

& BENEDICTION

BAPTISM COURSE

EVERY 2ND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH AT **6 pm**

BAPTISMS

4th SATURDAY AFTER 9:30 am MASS

HOUSE BLESSINGS

PLEASE CALL THE PARISH OFFICE

February 25, 2018

2nd Sunday of Lent

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In today's Gospel we meet Jesus on the mountaintop with Peter, James and John. The voice from heaven sounded, "This is my Son, the beloved; listen to Him." During the Lenten season, we dare to open our heads and our hearts to listen to Jesus. Almsgiving, fasting (self-denial) and prayer are marvellous ways of listening to Him.

**LITURGY OF THE WORD**

In the first reading, Abraham is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice of surrendering his son to the Lord. Saint Paul reminds the Romans that having God with them will allow them to face any challenge. In the Gospel, the disciples realize that Jesus is the fulfillment of the law and prophecy after he is transfigured before them.

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Today's Readings:

1st: Genesis 22.1-2, 9-13, 15-18

Psalm: 116

2nd: Romans 8.31b-35, 37

Gospel: Mark 9.2-10

PARISH UPDATES

Lenten Penitential Service – Tuesday, **March 20th**, 7pm is our parish’s Lenten Confession. At least 3 priests will be available. Please make this graceful time a priority in your spiritual life.

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**2017 Official Tax-Receipts** – Your tax receipts are ready for pick up, please make sure you collect yours promptly.

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Lenten Observance -- Fridays during Lent are days of abstinence from meat, but Catholics may substitute acts of charity or piety on this day.

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**Art Glass Windows update** – Sarah Hall and her assistant, Amy Kwan were in Germany last week working on our windows. Sarah wrote, “The windows are coming along great at the studio. I am totally confident they will be a beautiful set of windows.” She also sent along a few photos of the process. Thanks be to God!

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Windows Sponsorship – A few more inscriptions have been mounted on the “Tree of Gratitude.” A special recognition includes our Project Advance donors. The pledge form is available at the Parish Office when you decide to sponsor a leaf plaque. Thank YOU!

Lenten Meditations—Every Friday during Lent (**until March 23**), at 7 p.m., preceded with Holy Mass and closed with eucharistic exposition and benediction at Our Lady of Mercy Church, Burnaby. Organized by Our Lady of Mercy Parish, Burnaby, and Indonesian Catholic Society in BC.

Marriage Encounter Weekend at the John Paul II Pastoral Centre on Saturday and Sunday, **April 28 - 29, 2018**. This enrichment is for all married couples and for couples civilly married for more than 5 years, now preparing for marriage in the Church. Registration is online on RCAV website: <http://rcav.org/worldwide-marriage-encounter-non-residential-weekend/> Spaces are limited.

Men's Spiritual Exercises Retreat

The Spiritual Exercises are a silent retreat based on the well-proven method of St. Ignatius of Loyola. The Priests of Miles Christi, devoted to the preaching of these Ignatian retreats, frequently offer them in a weekend format. Throughout the centuries, the Spiritual Exercises have shown to be an excellent means of sanctification, highly praised by Popes and saints. This is open to any men. **March 16-18** at Westminster Abbey, Mission. <http://rcav.org/event/mens-spiritual-exercises-retreat>

A Lifeline for Marriages: Work on your relationship during a weekend at Barnabas Landing Retreat Centre, Keats Island Retrouvaille helps married couples get back to a loving relationship, providing the tools you need to get your marriage back on track. For confidential information or to register for the program at the beautiful Barnabas Landing on Keats Island on the weekend of **April 13 - 15, 2018**, call Marc and Candice at 604-530-6710, email us vancouverbc@retrouvaille.org or visit our website www.retrouvaillevancouver.com. For more information about the venue, please visit www.barnabasfm.org.

ARCHDIOCESAN EVENTS

Reformation and Communion

Last year we marked the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The Christian Churches in Richmond will host free seminars on Tuesdays, Jan. 23, Feb. 6, **March 6**, May 1, and June 5 at 7 p.m. There will be a special musical event on **April 10 at 7 p.m. at South Arm United Church**. All are welcome. Contact Pastor Christoph Reiners at 604-270-0085 for more information.

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**Cardinal Tagle in Vancouver: March 19** Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, the Archbishop of Manila, will celebrate Mass on Monday, March 19, at Holy Rosary Cathedral at 12:30 p.m. (in place of the usual 12:10 Mass.) That evening, he will give a public address at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Vancouver. Highlighting one of our Archdiocesan Priorities and Goals: Strengthening Marriages and Families, Cardinal Tagle will address the challenges of living the faith within family life. Family time, among today’s many distractions, continues to be an almost lost reality for many. Join us for his talk on Keeping Families in Faith: The Domestic Church in a Global Village. The evening begins with an opening performance at 6 p.m. followed by an opening address by Archbishop Miller and a talk by Cardinal Tagle. Tickets are now on sale! Visit <http://rcav.org/cardinal-tagle>

**Stewardship Reflection**

**Second Sunday of Lent**

Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. St. Paul reminds us that God Himself “did not spare His own Son.” Are my gifts to the Lord — of my resources, of my time, of myself — also sacrificial?

*Stewardship by the book – Sharon Hueckel*

**Mass Intentions**

**February 25-March 3, 2018**

- Sun, Feb 25—
- Mon, Feb 26— Salomao Gomes (RIP)
- Tue, Feb 27— Ramon Capitulo (RIP)
- Wed, Feb 28 — 9am, Virginia Academia (RIP)  
7pm, Cyril Saturnino Dias (RIP)
- Thu, Mar 1— Charlemagne Anuling (TG)
- Fri, Mar 2— Alma & Aida (TG)
- Sat, Mar 3— 9:30am, Jose 'Jojie' Catibog Jr. (RIP)  
5pm, Estrella Mendoza-Casino (RIP)

**Our new website, [stmonicaparish.ca](http://stmonicaparish.ca)**

**is now live. Also, visit and like us on Facebook: [‘Smon Monica’](#).**

**WAY OF THE CROSS**

**During Lent, we will make the Way of the Cross on FRIDAYS after the morning Mass.**

