

# PASTOR BONUS

TRUE STORIES FROM REAL PRIESTS

Interview by: Anna Timmerman



Anna Timmerman interviewed Fr. Mark Steffl about a hilarious, or in this case, slightly awkward moment of his priesthood. Fr. Steffl recounts the story:

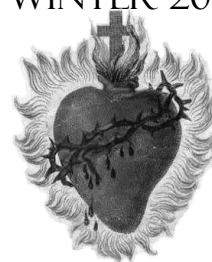
Sometimes as a priest you have to eat things you really don't like. For example, when I was a newly ordained priest, I went to a little town in Sicily to help hear Confessions for Holy Week. A family in the town invited the pastor of the parish and I over for supper. The other priest I was going with had asked me what I would like for supper. I said, "anything but octopus." We arrived at the family's house and to my displeasure I discovered that we were going to be having octopus for dinner. Octopus was a delicacy and it was served stuffed, like a turkey. The insides are taken out prepared and stuffed back in. The eyes and body looked up at me as it sat on the plate (the octopus was about the size of a baseball). I had eaten it before and did not at all enjoy it. I did not intend to eat it tonight so I ate everything around it.

The parish priest looked at me to see what I was going to do. The son of the family, about nine years old, was sitting next to me. He had already eaten two of the octopi and had noticed that I had not eaten my octopus. He said "Why aren't you eating it? My dad and I woke up early this morning to catch it especially for you." I knew that I was going to have to eat it. I grabbed my fork and picked part of it up. As I ate it I remembered why I hated this "delicacy." The octopus had the texture of a mixture of rubber and Jell-o. I didn't want to finish it but the little boy was so proud of his catch, so I pretended to enjoy it.

*Fr. Mark Steffl is currently the pastor of Holy Redeemer in Marshall.*

WINTER 2019

VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 2



*the*  
**PULSE**



A NEWSLETTER FOR THE YOUTH OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW ULM,  
BY THE YOUTH OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW ULM

## COULD YOU DO LENT IN 1873?

The Diocese of Newark (in New Jersey) published a list of Lenten fasting rules for their people in 1873. Some of the requirements were:

- **Fasting every day** except Sunday. Fasting meant one meal not taken before mid-day, with a snack allowed in the evening.
- Meat may be eaten at the main meals on Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. This was an exception for Newark, since normally a Catholic would have to **abstain from meat every day**.
- Anyone seven years old and above must abstain from eating meat, while everyone 21 years old and above must fast. Hard manual laborers, the sick, nursing or pregnant mothers, and the elderly were excused from these rules.

If all that sounds impossible, consider life in the 1800s: no running water, no electricity, transportation by walking or horse and carriage, no modern medicine, small, drafty homes with minimal heating, etc. Could you have done Lent in 1873!?



The answer is "yes," because God gives us the grace we need to do what He asks of us, even if it seems impossible.

In today's day in age, it might seem impossible just to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. But one could argue that it is harder to fast with a cupboard full of food to tempt us than when Pa comes home empty-handed after checking the traps in 1873. You can't be tempted by food that's not there!

Nonetheless, challenge yourself this Lent and learn the lesson that our forefathers knew so well: "with God all things are possible" (Mt. 19:26).

*Also in this issue...*

...A prayer to The "Little Flower" ...More random pope facts and more ways to prove God's existence...Priest vs. octopus...The importance of Confession...A Lutheran's conversion story...

# MORE Pope Facts!

By: Joseph Goedtke

A news journalist once asked Pope John XXIII how many people worked in the Vatican. He replied "About half of them."

During WWII, surviving college professors risked their lives to set up secret universities as Catholic seminaries. The future Pope St. John Paul II was trained and ordained through one such university and even narrowly escaped the dreaded Nazi Gestapo by hiding in his uncle's basement while the soldiers searched above.

Pope Pius XII set up a secret rescue operation during WWII that saved over 860,000 Jews from the Nazis, more than all international rescue agencies combined.

When President Lyndon B. Johnson made a Christmas visit to Pope Paul VI, they exchanged Christmas gifts. The U.S. President received a stunning 15<sup>th</sup> century painting while the Pope only received a 1-foot bronze bust of the president's head.

Jorge Bergoglio (now Pope Francis) was the runner-up in the papal election that gave us Pope Benedict XVI in 2005.

Popes are almost always linguists. Pope Francis can speak nine languages besides biblical Hebrew and Greek, Pope Benedict XVI spoke eight, and Pope St. John Paul II spoke over 12!



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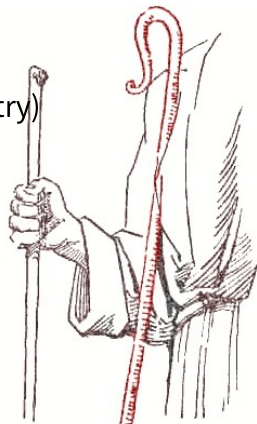
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# PRAYER TO ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX

By: Cecilia Rabaey

O Saint Therese, to you all life was a miracle! I pray to you, Powerful Intercessor, to lighten my burdens by asking the Lord for miraculous intervention. You have promised to let a "shower of roses fall from heaven."

Please pray with me for His love to wash over me and heal me - physically, emotionally, and spiritually. When I am alone, reach into my heart with peace and comfort, and when I am afraid, bring me new hope and strength in the Lord. With confidence, I place in your hands this special favor (state petition). Amen.

This novena to Saint Therese is one of my favorite prayers. The first time I read it, the first twenty or thirty times, in fact, I did not

understand it. It seemed to me like random thoughts strung together. It was not until I stopped reading it and started praying it that I fell in love with it.

It may seem like random thoughts strung together, but it is in fact a collection of simple little prayers strung together. Saint Therese is all about being simple and being small. This prayer does not waste time with big words or smooth transitions. There are no literary embellishments getting in the way of the prayer.

In John 15:7, Jesus makes us a promise: "Ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you." Through this novena, Saint Therese, who is indeed a powerful intercessor, reminds us of the power of this statement.



Painting by Henry Wingate, 2016

## NEW ADDRESS?

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## *Drinking from the wrong "well" - a conversion story*

By: Carter Currans

I had planned on interviewing my English teacher, because she converted to Catholicism, but she had a baby, and is not teaching right now. As usual God, had a plan and as it turns out her substitute is also a recent convert to Catholicism.

Mr. Koester used to be a Lutheran belonging to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). He loved his Lutheran foundation—being based solely on the bible— but he wanted more. He was introduced to the truths of Catholicism by his wife and after attending Mass with her for a while, began the process to enter the Church and became a member last spring!

Since becoming Catholic he has noticed a few differences between practicing Catholicism and practicing Lutheranism. One of those differences is that in his experience, the Lutheran Church and the Catholic Church answer questions differently. According to Mr. Koester, Lutherans tend to answer questions “black and white” which “dampers discussion,” but Catholics tend to give more open-ended or complex answers. By this he means that in not having a concrete answer for everything, we are left in awe that God is so far above us. “It’s a big world of mystery I get to explore,” he said, “I love mystery.”

His decision wasn’t necessarily an easy one, though; he still has some tension with his family. He still talks with them about most things, but the topic of religion can be a touchy one. “I feel like I’ve lost a connection with them, almost like they are no longer proud of me, and I think they feel they’ve lost me.” He also added, “At the same rate my goal is not to convert them but to be okay with my decision and eventually have them support me.”

When asked whether he is happy with his decision to convert, he replied, “Yes,” and “Catholicism is not about being happy, it’s about striving to become holy and in the process realizing, wow, this is true happiness.” He also stated, “Yes, it challenges me, and I’m grateful for that. It’s deeper than an emotion. I can explore what I believe and why I believe it, as well as build relationships: with God and with my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.” He feels that God is leading him at this time in his life. “I chose it because I believe it is the Truth.”

*Michael Koester grew up in South Bend, Indiana, just a few miles away from the Notre Dame campus. He graduated from Michigan Lutheran HS in St. Joseph, MI. He graduated from Martin Luther College in New Ulm in 2016 and was married in September of the same year. He now lives with his wife, Christina, in Sleepy Eye and teaches at St. Mary's HS*

## **WHY DO CATHOLICS GO TO CONFESSION?**

By: Abi Ries

One question many Catholics get asked over and over is “Why do Catholics confess their sins to a priest when they can just go directly to God?”

This question is also something even many Catholics struggle with. After all, God knows you and your sins better than the priest ever will, so why should you confess your sins to a stranger instead of just directly apologizing to God? The answer to this can be found in John 20:20-23: “Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that, he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’”

Here we see Jesus giving His Apostles - His first priests - the power to forgive sins. He did not give this power to His disciples in general, but only the ordained. Simply put, Catholics go to confession because that's how Christ wanted our sins to be forgiven. When a person goes to Confession, they are speaking with Christ *through* the priest. When a priest is in the confessional, he is *in persona Christi* (in the person of Christ). Christ is truly present in the Sacrament and is hearing your confession and forgiving you.



It is important that, as humans who experience everything through the material, we speak directly to a physical person. God created the Sacrament of Confession because He knows that, even on just a purely human level, we need to physically speak our confession and hear His words of forgiveness. He created us both spiritual and material, after all!

When we speak directly to the priest, we receive our penance and receive advice and guidance in a way that is human, and much more understandable to us than going directly to God. Of course, it is important to maintain a prayer life directly with God and even to ask for forgiveness from God after we commit sins, but when it comes to grave matters such as mortal sins, we *need* to go to Confession if we want to get to Heaven.

In summary, Catholics confess their sins to a priest because it is the structure that Christ established. By doing so, He gave us a tangible way to receive His forgiveness so that we may become closer to Him and one day, truly know Him face to face.

*You're invited...*

# *The 1st Annual DYC Paschal Party*

ST. ALOYSIUS | OLIVIA, MN | MAY 5, 2019

**6:15 PM – COR IESU**

ADORATION W/ BISHOP LEVOIR

**7:30 PM – FREE CONCERT**

**BY LUKE SPEHAR!**

LUKE IS A CATHOLIC SINGER/  
SONGWRITER FROM THE CITIES!



*Come celebrate Easter with us!*

## TRUTH BE TOLD... (PT. II)

By: Carter Currans

The lesson continues from our last issue as we look at St. Thomas Aquinas' "Five Proofs for the Existence of God."

The **Fourth Argument** is "The Argument from Gradation of Being." a.k.a. "Degrees of Perfection." This one is hard to explain, but the way I see it is every human says things like, "Oh, that is just beautiful." To what do we compare this beauty? By saying that something is beautiful, or more beautiful than other things we must understand the template to judge things as beautiful or not. This template or source of beauty is what is perfectly beautiful: God. The same goes for other "perfections:" goodness, truthfulness, loveliness. God is Goodness Itself, Truth Itself, and Love Itself.



The **Fifth Argument** is known as the, "Argument from Design." Unintelligent natural bodies (things that don't have a brain) work toward a goal. This is not simply through chance. For example, the earth rotates around the sun at the perfect distance to sustain life; however the earth itself doesn't think about this. Trees will grow

towards the sunshine in order to survive. Trees don't think about doing this, they just do it!

Who causes that to happen? Or rather, who designed these things this way? An object that is not intelligent cannot do something seemingly intelligent without an intelligent force guiding it. This intelligent force is God.

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St. Thomas Aquinas was a very brilliant saint, causing some of these arguments to be a little above our understanding at first. I hope this was beneficial in helping you understand that God's existence can be proven. So whether you struggle to believe in God or the next time you hear someone expressing the view of scientism or atheism, these proofs will help you!