

In Today's Gospel

Today, we begin the Third Week of Lent. In the first reading, we hear the people grumbling about the lack of water. "Why did you ever make us leave Egypt? Was it just to have us die here of thirst with our children and our livestock?" (Ex 17:3b) By now, the Children of Israel have passed through the Red Sea while the forces of Pharaoh drowned. When they complained of hunger, God provided them quail and manna to eat. Yet, despite all that they had seen, they still lacked faith.

God provides for his people. In today's gospel, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that he would give her "a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (Jn 5:14b) Those who do not put their complete faith in Jesus must continually go to the well to draw water. This water fulfills us for a time but runs dry. But, if we have faith, Jesus will give us the spiritual, living water that wells up within us, ensuring that our thirst for eternal life will be fulfilled.

Spring is On the Way

Spring is coming early this year. No, I'm not just talking about the warm weather. The actual start of spring will be the earliest that it has been in the last century. For the Detroit area, spring will begin on March 19 at approximately 11:11 PM. This is the point when the sun's path around the earth, called the ecliptic, crosses the equator. This day is called the vernal equinox. Vernal comes from the Latin for spring. Equinox comes from the Latin for "equal night," meaning that we will have 12 hours between sunrise and sunset, and 12 hours between sunset and sunrise. (I spent 15 years at sea, most of it as a navigator. I don't get many opportunities to use my celestial navigation training anymore, so I appreciate your indulging me.)

Spring, of course, does not just refer to the celestial phenomena and the changes in temperature. It is also a time for renewal; we begin to see new life spring up. Leaves start to grow on the trees, the grass turns green, and flowers blossom. Soon we will hear the chirping of baby birds and the laughter of children playing outside. For many, this spring renewal is also a time for spring cleaning.

At St. Mary, we will be hosting a Parish Spring Cleaning. This will be a time to clean up the debris that has blown around the church during the winter months. We will also have people working on cleaning up inside the church as well. How much work we do depends on how many people come out to volunteer. The date for our Parish Spring Cleaning is Saturday, March 28th. If the weather on that day is too bad to be working outside, our rain delay date will be Saturday, April 4th. Please come out and help us in cleaning our grounds and preparing for the celebration of Easter.

Census

Every ten years, the United States conducts a census of the population. The Census is mandated by Article 1, Section 2 of the United States Constitution (as amended by the 14th Amendment). The Constitution mandates a census to determine our congressional representatives. The numbers calculated by the US Census Bureau are also used to determine how federal funds are distributed, impacting local schools, hospitals, road construction and more.

Currently, Michigan has 14 seats in the House of Representatives; if the population of Michigan declines, or if the population of other states rise more quickly than the population in Michigan, we run the risk of

losing one of our seats in Congress. This would also have the consequence of losing a vote in the Electoral College, the 2024 presidential election.

The goal of the Census is to count all people living in the United States. That means old and young, citizens and non-citizens, both documented and undocumented. To get an accurate count, and to ensure that Michigan is fairly represented, it is important that you respond accurately to the Census. All your responses will be kept confidential. According to federal law, your answers can only be used for statistical purposes and cannot be used against you or shared with others, including law enforcement or other government offices.

The official date of the Census is April 1st, but Census Bureau workers are already hard at work. During March, census invitations will be mailed to homes. Only one person should respond for all those who live in the household. Each home is encouraged to respond online, by phone, or by mail, indicating their place of residence on April 1. In April, census workers will be making visits to colleges, senior centers, transitory housing facilities and to those are experiencing homelessness. From May through July, workers will be visiting homes that have not yet responded. The last day to respond is July 31.

It is critical that all Michigan residents be counted. The Census will decide if Michigan will have fair political representation in Congress. It will also impact whether the state's roads, hospitals, schools, and fire departments have the funding they need to support Michiganders' health and well-being for the next decade. When you receive your census form in the mail or visit from the Census Bureau worker, please respond, and be counted.

For additional information visit www.micatholic.org/2020Census and www.census.gov.