

# 2017 Lenten Retreat of the Northeast Seniorate of the Western Diocese of the PNCC

## *Commitment*

Saturday, March 25, 2017

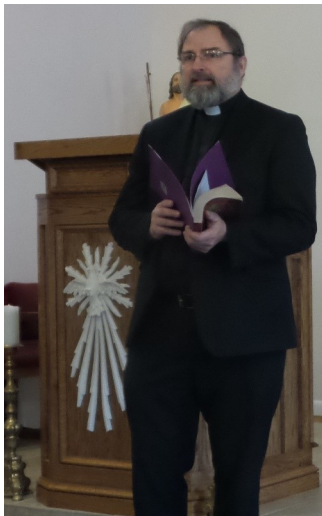
The Annual Lenten Retreat of the Northeast Seniorate of the Western Diocese of the Polish National Catholic Church took place at Resurrection Parish in Temperance, MI, beginning at 10am on a cool, damp March morning. Our theme this year was "Commitment."





Attendees were warmly welcomed at the door by parishioners of Resurrection Parish. A tantalizing array of breakfast items awaited: pastry, bagels, cream cheese, coffee, tea, juice, hard-boiled eggs...and the biggest bowl of fresh fruit seen in these parts of Michigan.

After gathering for breakfast, our assigned "bell-boy", Larry Chockley, jingled away to make sure we stayed on task. Fr. Sr. Jaroslaw Nowak, our fearless bearded leader of the Northeastern Seniorate, welcomed all to our retreat. We were especially honored that our Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Stanley Bilinski, would be spending the day with us as well.



Our time began with prayer. We prayed for the peaceful repose of the soul of our brother, Rev. Raymond Drada. Father Ray went home to be with his Lord on March 8, leaving a hole in our Church. He presented every year, when healthy, at this retreat and led All Saints Parish as pastor for a number of years. We also prayed for the strength and resolve of his wife Pennie, his children, and his entire family.



Our first session was presented by Father Senior Nowak. It was titled "Commitment to Whom: The trappings and obstacles in daily life." Father Senior brought up the first obstacles to hu-



mankind in the events of the 2nd Creation account in Genesis 3:1-6. He mentioned also how temptation has always and will always continue to keep pushing us away from God. He reminded those gathered that commitment to God is equal to service to God. He then dropped the bomb-



Lenten  
Retreat



shell that he uses his son Simon as a spy at school!

After a break, Father Jason Soltysiak took the podium. His topic was “Commitment to the Church.” His talk focused first on the four reasons that he thinks people join the Polish National Catholic Church: 1- Born into it; 2- Married into it; 3-Choosing to join; 4-Because one was disallowed to stay in another denomination.

He then spoke about commitment to THE Church, the church established by Jesus Christ. He gave scripture accounts of how humans took something great from God and ruined it (that Genesis 3:1-6 again) as well as Acts 4:31-5:11. The question asked was “How do we put our faith and trust into something that is perfectly-intended, divinely-crafted...but run by

buffoons like you and I?” He finished his talk speaking on how the Creed speaks of the truths of the Church that we, members of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, are to put our faith in.



Father John Cramer had our third session after another short break. His was titled “Commitment to Jesus.” Father John began with a question asked of him that really shook him at a young age while working at a *Things Remembered* store. The question was: “Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?”

Father John mentioned how immediately his answer was yes...but that the more he thought about it, the more work he realized he had to do. His talk centered around this—that people can be committed to Church without being committed to Jesus Christ. He mentioned 5 phases of growth towards this end: Initial trust phase, Spiritual Curiosity, Spiritual Openness, Spiritual Seeking, and Intentional Discipleship. The final phase reflects ordering one’s life to be a disciple of Jesus, a commitment of a life to Jesus Christ.

He then pointed out the handout he gave us that go through and flesh out each step. Father John asked us to use this as a guide point to see where we all are on our personal journeys with Jesus Christ.



The group took our next break and gathered for our group picture. Many thanks, as always, to renowned Northeastern Seniorate photographer Kathy Chockley. She even made it in one of the group shots!



Our final session was presented by our distinguished guest and the Bishop Ordinary of the Western Diocese, the Rt. Rev. Stanley Bilinski. Bishop Stanley made the trip from Chicago to grace us with his presence and present for us a session titled “My decisions between good and evil.”

Bishop Stanley made us think during his session! He made us ponder over these two phrases: 1-Every action that I make in this life adds to the total moral good in the world. 2- Every action that I make in this life adds to the total moral bad/moral evil in the world.

Since God is the Agent of moral good, or the moral absolute, or the barometer of morality, how do we compare? All of our moral acts are based on our relationship with God.

However, Bishop gave us some statistics on how the world is moving away from God, or, in this case, away from moral good. He mentioned that as nations, especially in Western Europe are denouncing Christianity and religion altogether, the separation from the original moral good (God) has already begun to bring undesirable effects.

In lieu of our next break, Fr. Sr. Nowak had the group gather into the media room of Resurrection Parish. There, he presented a video that was shown at last year’s Convo by Matthew Kelly entitled *The Epidemic*. This video (search for it on Youtube!) presented a situation that brought a parent to the most difficult decision he or she would ever have to make. It then turned it around on how God looks at a most similar situation. I think maybe Fr. Sr. has to take a cloth through that room, dust seemed to be getting in many people’s eyes!



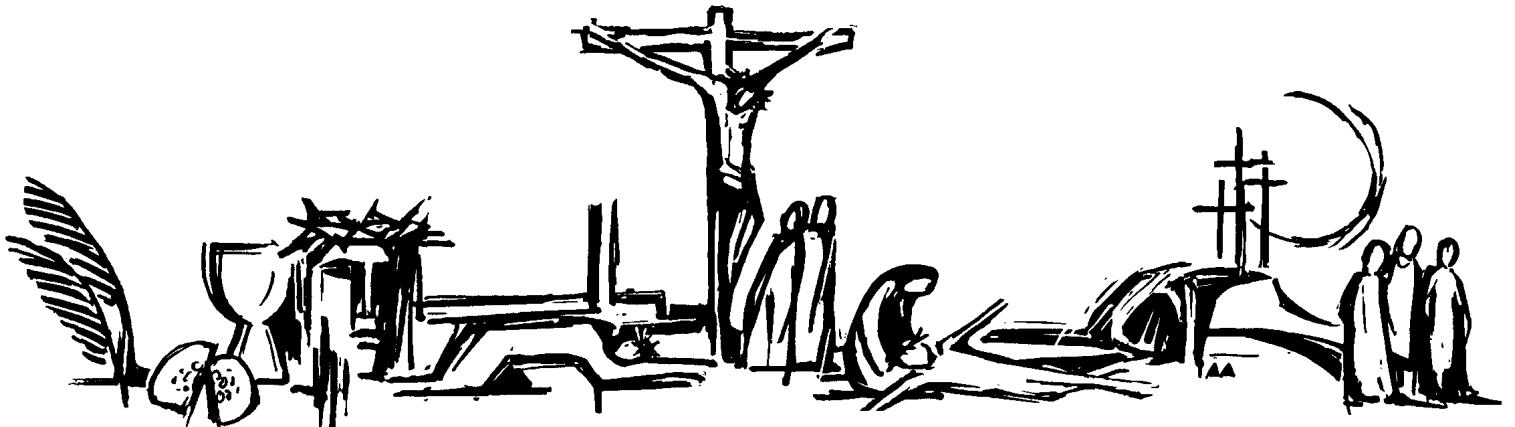
**HE  
WHO BEGAN  
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JESUS  
PHILIPPIANS 1:6**



After our video presentation, we were called back to the church for the Sacrament of Penance. Bishop Bilinski prepared this service for our retreat, making sure that we took our time to properly examine our consciences. His penance for us was to take something from each presentation today and think over it, pray over it, use it, and share it. To bring the wisdom passed along with us on our personal Lenten paths. He then commended the Seniorate on its receiving and enacting the call of the previous General Synod to make sure that each Seniorate provides its people with at least one Lenten Retreat.

After Penance, we addressed an even more pressing matter: our stomachs! Resurrection Parish is known for its culinary accomplishments, having dinners throughout the year that feed in excess of 200 people. We were lucky enough to enjoy the spoils of skilled hands and hearts. After Father Jason called upon God for a blessing and a safe journey home, we feasted on salad, pickles, mashed potatoes and gravy, kielbasa, stuffed peppers, cabbage, bigos, and desserts. Phew!

We all left for our homes with full bellies and fed souls. Many thanks once again to our hosts, Resurrection Parish, for their hospitality, our presenting clergy, our musical leaders, photographer, and all who took time on a Saturday to retreat from the world to follow the Cross of our Lord and Savior.



## Parishes of the Northeast Seniorate of the PNCC Western Diocese

Holy Cross Parish  
Hamtramck, MI  
Pastor– Very Rev. Jaroslaw Nowak, Administrative Senior

Resurrection of our Lord Parish  
Temperance, MI  
Administrator– Very Rev. Jaroslaw Nowak

All Saints Parish  
Sterling Heights, MI  
Pastor- vacant

Our Savior Parish  
Dearborn Heights, MI  
Pastor– Rev. John Cramer

St. Mary's Parish  
Parma, OH  
Pastor– Rev. Jason Soltysiak

Seniorate Clergy-

Rev. Gregory Gronn, Retired  
North Olmsted, OH

Rev. Mr. Richard Kasprzak, Deacon  
Assigned to Our Savior Parish

