

PALM SUNDAY
April 9, 2017



M & M

On occasion, these sacred pages are fresh off the printing presses....with ink possibly still wet. Keep this away from your toast... I start with last night.

BARAGA RADIO – DINNER: The tenth anniversary of Baraga Radio was celebrated in full regalia Thursday at ‘our parish neighbor’, Grand Traverse Resort. And many of you were there! Saluting the K of C who bought a table. Thank you! A keynote speaker, MC Deacon Kevin Endres Chairman of the Board, and new Executive Directory, Steve Gregorsky. The two, as parishioners of Christ the King, represent our parish well in the direction of these special airwaves. As a fundraiser, I doubled my contribution on the spot when I heard the testimony of a friend from Cursillo who detailed how Baraga Radio brought him back to the church. Powerful. Let’s talk up the radio. I engaged in a conversation with a Catholic lady about the radio....‘never heard of it’ ...now she is hooked on it! Bumper stickers a must!

MASS CHANGE: We learned a lot from our change two years back and now with confidence we are accepting the new one. We cannot adjust again till after Vatican III Council! Stability. Cards will be handed out again at Easter in the bulletins. Simple: Always a Sunday at 10:00 am. 8:00 am Mass added first weekend of May through October. Thanks for leadership of the Parish Council and the many who voted for this change. Lots of good people voted in all directions.

HOLY WEEK: You hear me say it every year as these days are not meant to be ‘simply squares on a calendar’. The bulletin lists all the details of rich and expressive liturgical gatherings. They are all special but come to represent their truth with YOU in the pew. The Easter Vigil is the climax of the week. I ask for your special consideration to attend this HIGHEST liturgy of the year and support welcoming new members into both baptism and our Catholic faith. Renewing our own vows, how can we not consider.

- Was that the largest Communal Penance service of recent years this past Monday at St. Francis?
- And let’s ADD an OBVIOUS special gathering at 5:30 on Good Friday at outside Stations of the Cross. North West parking lot extended...FIRST parish gathering of this gift.

CSA OF ‘16//’17: We have just begun getting back our \$20,000 that took us over last year’s target. As was given much detail in last year’s campaign, the overage monies are being used for the parish’s special needs...i.e. our new chairs in lower level, Rainbow Fund, some youth activities. We ask you to please finish off your pledges as we run so tight a budget. Money needs to be spent to both repair and eliminate further damage to exterior stucco on front of building by birds. The ‘17//’18 campaign that begins a month from now, will communicate a full report on the overage uses. Finance Council has surfaced two great co-chairs for this year’s campaign. THANK YOU is too limited in its expression.

SPECIAL MOMENTS: Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI turns 90 on Easter. Sr. Angelica of EWTN died last Easter. Christians are being persecuted with brutality across the globe. Catholic church sought it and now our government recognizes it with formal term of, GENOCIDE. Stay fervent with His Truth.

In that Truth

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Fr. Raymond Cotter'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Raymond Cotter

You are well aware of my past involvement in ministry at the Pugsley Correctional Facility, alongside of a few other area priests and volunteers. As you know, the prison closed last September. The only prison now in our Diocese is the Oaks outside of Manistee. I first started my prison experience there in '01 while assigned to St. Ann, Frankfort. The Divine Mercy parishes of Manistee have asked myself, Fr. Norm and Fr. Tony to come down to assist. I selfishly value going "inside" as I receive a value in my own special needs. And here is a very rich moment in that experience.

While at Pugsley, Robert, #A-207___, was somewhat the administrator of our humble congregation. The men looked up to him. He had been in for 30 years for a crime of violence and we are the same age. We began a close connection. I am able to do that with only a few who I see that I can easily work with. He is not a sex offender and that always makes it easier should he come out.

Robert was up for parole review in early '17. A fellow becomes very anxious about that. We cannot relate to any of that. He was truly remorseful and began a faith relationship after ten years in. He began a Catholic when confirmed by the late Bishop of Lansing, Most Carl Mengeling, on a visit to a prison near Adrian.

Hold on for the punch line.

Robert sends me a lot of letters from his current home near Jackson, Parnall Correctional Facility. He communicated to me in detail as the parole process moved forward and some of us wrote letters in support of his release. We found him a place to stay and a likely job (key to a release). Every letter always contained serious spiritual reflections on his relationship with Christ. Discouragement or a mediocre faith commitment are not words in his dictionary.

A few comments:

Christmas, '14: "Hello Father Cotter....from all of us Pugsley, we would like to wish you and your congregation a very Merry Christmas...hearts and home filled with Joy of Our Lord. We would also like to express gratitude for your people giving us the St. Joseph Sunday Missals..will last us a lifetime...something that came from love that we can pass along to family."

March 5, '17 (unknowingly my birthday): ... "no matter what decision the Parole Board makes, you need to know that my life has been so enriched, God has given me so much through all of you. I have more love, hope, and faith that I have ever had before in my life." (Parole Board had met in January)

March 20, '17: "Hello Fr. Ray...God granted me a parole! My projected release date is June 27, 2017...I truly believe that the power of all these prayers have prayed me out of prison, by the grace of God!! ...through the love and support that all of you have given me, it has carried me through some of the darkest days of my life. Now to ever flourish. Your friend and brother in Christ, with love, Robert."

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Need I say anything more of Christ's Easter Resurrection!