

# THE PASTOR'S DESK

## February 7, 2010 - Fallen World



### Dear Parishioners,

We all noted the death of J.D. Salinger. If you attended High School, you probably read "The Catcher in the Rye." I read it in English class at Good Counsel in the early '70s. I can't remember much about the story. What I do remember is the teacher asking us about the meaning of Holden Caulfield's name. He's holding onto something. What is it? Well, "his childhood" was the answer. This theme would resonate through our society for decades to come. Looking back now, we can see, beginning with the "60's generation", that we cling as tightly as we can to our childhood. Why do we do this? Why is the passage from childhood to adulthood so fraught with pitfalls and drama today?

At the same time that Salinger was writing "The Catcher in the Rye", a movie that came out in 1949 caught the public imagination. The movie was "The Third Man," with a screenplay by Graham Greene. I don't know if Salinger ever saw it, but the two are, I think, tied together. In "The Third Man", an American (named Holly Martins) comes to postwar Vienna to meet an old friend. He arrives to find that his friend, Harry Lime, is dead. But, as he hangs around town he discovers that Lime was involved in selling tainted penicillin and is wanted by the police. His friend turns out to be an evil criminal who cares nothing that his business has caused the death and suffering of hundreds of people. Holly also encounters a very-much alive Harry Lime in the streets one night. Holly sets up his friend so that he can be arrested by the police.

The movie shows postwar Vienna as a city damaged but not destroyed with a population living in fear and mutual suspicion, having to scratch and claw "by the sweat of their brows" in order to put food on the table. Vienna, in this movie, is very much an image of our fallen world. The evil of Nazism did not come from them, but they cooperated with it. In the victory over the Axis in World War II, it seemed as if evil had been defeated. But Greene reminds us that evil is never finally defeated in this world, it only goes underground. This theme runs through the twentieth century, a century of great technological and economic progress; that saw an end to colonialism and, in our country, an end to legalized racism. But which also saw tremendous evil and suffering. Perhaps never in human history had the promise of paradise been so starkly contrasted with our fallen nature.

In "The Third Man", Holly's willingness to stop

his friend halts at least the particular evil Lime was doing. But the movie reaffirms that evil is part of our fallen world and that victory against evil in the world and in ourselves can never be finally declared. The passage from an idealized childhood to an adult world where one has to face the harsh reality of a fallen world is what Salinger was, perhaps, writing about.

We as Christians can look at these artistic works and learn a lot about our times. What is missing from the fallen world is Divine Love. "See how the Cross of the Lord stands revealed as the Tree of Life." We hear these words with joy. But, do we realize that the tree of life is an instrument of torture and death? Even as Christians, with the remedy for Original Sin, we face the Cross as the revelation of Divine Love. There is no paradise in this life. But, we have the consolation of Faith, Hope, and Charity. We have the consolation of the revelation of Divine Love. As I mentioned last week, God meets us where we are. As sinners in a fallen world, we are on the Cross. As Lent draws near, we face the reality of sin and death knowing, though, that the revelation and communication of the very life of God will be given to us in Easter. The Resurrection of Christ is the only true hope we have.

Graham Greene, a Catholic convert, gave the post-war generation a true look at the fallen world. With the eyes of faith, we are not afraid to look at the world this way. Salinger gives no answer to the dilemma of coming-of-age in a fallen world. But, he does show that we cannot fool ourselves into thinking that we can construct a childlike paradise in this world. That is a lesson we all have to face.

**God bless,  
Fr. LaHood**

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**Change of time for Sunday Spanish Mass:** Please make a note that starting next Sunday, February 14, the Spanish Mass will now be celebrated at **1:30 pm.**

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (February 17). The Mass schedules are as follows: 6:30am, 9:00am, 5:00pm, 7:00pm and 8:30pm (Spanish). During Lent, we will offer a daily 6:30 am Mass from Monday to Friday. On Fridays we will have confessions at 6:00 pm, followed by Stations of the Cross at 7:00 pm and then celebration of the Mass at 7:30 pm. There is Spanish Stations of the Cross at 8:00 pm. Please mark your calendars now and we hope you will join our Liturgical celebrations.