

Spiritually Speaking
Father Thankachan Joseph



Has No One Condemned You?

On the fourth Sunday of Lent, we read and reflected on the parable of the Prodigal Son, wherein we experience the mercy and unconditional love of the Heavenly Father. Which of the two sons can we compare to Saul, who later became the Apostle Paul?

Many of us will quickly answer, “the younger son.” Paul lived a rebellious life and then experienced a total conversion to the ways of God, right? Wrong.

Paul never lived a wayward life. Right from his youth, he lived a strict religious life. He was like the elder son, who was always law-abiding and intent on doing his father’s will.

In this fifth Sunday of Lent we have the story of the woman caught in adultery, who encounters Christ and experiences his unconditional forgiveness and mercy, and turns into a new person.

We read in the Gospel of John (8: 1-11) the immortal words of Christ to the woman caught in adultery: “Has no one condemned you? Neither will I condemn you. Go in peace and sin no more.”

Therefore, we can see that we have no need to be afraid to let Christ see our sins. We have nothing to obtain from Christ except forgiveness. Let us pause to call to mind our sins, especially the harsh and unfair judgements we sometimes pass on others, like the crowd did in this parable of the woman caught in adultery.

We have an innate stone-throwers tendency. We cannot tolerate the sinner. Sin stinks when it is committed by others, and we want to clean it up.

But not so when it is committed by ourselves. We need to look at our own house before we start throwing mud at others. It is impossible to throw mud without some of it sticking to your hand. This means that the very act of condemning others involves a sin on our part.

The first letter of John says, “If we say we are without sin, we deceive ourselves.” If Jesus, the One without sin (Jn 8:7), can forgive sinners, how much more should we sinners forgive each other?

When the accusers had left, Jesus turned to the woman and asked, “Is it true what these men said?” She nodded her head. “That means you were in sin then,” He continued.

Once again, she nodded her head. “To be in sin is to be in darkness. You were not made for darkness but for light,” Jesus said and then paused for some time and asked, “Has no one condemned you?”

“No one, Sir,” she replied.

“Well then, neither will I condemn you. Go in peace, walk in the light, and do not enslave yourself again.”

A faint smile appeared on her tear-stained face. She was dismissed with infinite gentleness and the most delicate of reproofs. How differently it might have ended but for the compassion of Jesus. The empathy of Christ really made her turn over a new leaf. She left her sinful ways and became an ardent follower of Christ.

In the same way, He is waiting for all of us to return to Him with a repentant heart. Surely, He will encircle us with His love and affection, and knows that we all need His forgiveness. He will be there to rescue us from our stone throwers, and the same words will be repeated to us: “...well then, neither will I condemn you. Go in peace.”

The comforting words of Christ. According to the Law of Moses, Lev 20:10, an adulterer should be stoned to death. They used this occasion to trap Jesus.... If Jesus allowed her to be stoned to death, He could not be called the merciful teacher. If He forgave her, He would be accused of infringing on the Law.

The story is told of a young French soldier who deserted Napoleon’s army but whom, within a matter of hours, was caught by his own troops. The penalty for desertion was death.

The young soldier’s mother heard what had happened and went to plead with Napoleon to spare her son’s life. Napoleon heard her plea but pointed out that because of the serious nature of the crime, her son clearly did not deserve mercy.

“I know he doesn’t deserve mercy,” the mother answered. “It wouldn’t be mercy if he deserved it.”

That is the point of mercy; nobody deserves it. Everyone deserves true justice. Mercy, on the other hand, is a sheer gift. In the story, Jesus is asking us all to be like Him, to be compassionate and empathetic towards our fallen brothers and sisters.

Morrow County Public Transit

-Continued from PAGE ONE

ing in the Port of Morrow industrial area, providing transportation directly to work sites.

In addition to the fixed routes, Keely says MCPT will continue to operate a van service that prioritizes medical transportation within Morrow County and Hermiston, and for approved veterans’ services.

This service operates on a first-come, first-served basis, with medical trips receiving priority. Veterans requiring treatment at facilities in Walla Walla, Pendleton or the Tri-Cities will also be eligible for van service, provided the appointments are approved through Veterans Services.

Full route maps and schedules are available online at <https://www.co.morrow.or.us/theoop>. For more information, contact MCPT at 541-676-5667.

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Mosquito control more than spraying for vector control district



While Morrow County mosquito populations are under control, high water levels on the Columbia have been sending buzzing invaders across the river. -Contributed photo

By Andrea Di Salvo

Controlling mosquitoes is about far more than bug spray, North Morrow County Vector Control District (NMCVCD) Manager told the Morrow County Board of Commissioners March 19.

Barron reported a relatively mild mosquito season in 2024. He said the mosquito season was “fairly routine,” except for lower-than-usual cases of West Nile Virus.

“Maybe that was because we didn’t have a lot of moisture, we didn’t have a lot of standing water,” he said.

“We really didn’t have too much of a winter in 2023, so it didn’t have a real impact on the mosquitoes as far as any natural control.”

The season was marked by low temperatures, with only 12 days over 100° F, minimal rain and no significant wind, which helped prevent a major West Nile outbreak.

NMCVCD identified three West Nile positive mosquito pools during the 2024 season. Morrow County reported no human, horse or bird cases of WNV.

Barron said one of the main areas of concern is always the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge between Boardman and Irrigon. All three positive pools were on the wildlife refuge.

NMCVCD was allowed to go on the refuge and spray for adult mosquitoes. Barron said that was a huge step, since wildlife refuges usually only allow larvicide.

“Its just a really big deal for me to make sure we keep that line of communication, that relationship open,” he added.

In Oregon there were 15 positive mosquito pools and no positive cases in humans, horses, or birds across Malheur, Baker, Jackson, Morrow, and Umatilla counties.

While Barron said the district has disease-spreading mosquitoes in check, other biting mosquitoes can come from the Washington side of the river, where there is no mosquito control.

Last year, Corps of Engineers work caused the Columbia River water levels to rise in both May and September, which caused an influx of mosquitoes from Washington’s Paterson Slough and Whitcomb Island, especially affecting the Boardman area.

“These were Aedes mosquitoes, real biters,” said Barron.

He said people notice biting mosquitoes even though they’re not necessarily disease carriers.

“But mosquitoes in sheer numbers are a human health threat,” Barron added. “There’s no doubt about it.”

The fall mosquito infestation from Paterson Slough and Whitcomb Island led to attempts to use aerial spraying in the fall, but Hurricane Helene pulled the district’s aerial contractor, VDCI, to the east coast.

“And they were gone,

and we were on our own,” he said. “We’re talking hundreds of thousands of mosquitoes. They’re all hungry.”

The district had to resort to ground fogging for two weeks to manage the population.

“It’s not our preferred method of controlling mosquitoes, but we have that available to us,” said Barron.

The vector control district has three trucks outfitted with foggers but will soon add a fourth, so there will be two fogging trucks each in Boardman and Irrigon.

Morrow County Commissioner Gus Peterson asked if there was any way to approach Washington’s Benton County and encourage them to conduct more mosquito control.

“Based on your report and what you’re saying, you’re doing everything right and then it almost doesn’t seem to matter because it’s just coming over anyways,” said Peterson.

Barron agreed and told the commissioners that the vector control district had taken county health department workers to Washington to lay out a case for better control.

“Basically, we were told by the commissioners over in Benton County that the folks that live in and around on the Washington side have to want the mosquito control,” Barron said. “Well, there’s not very many people who live over there.”

He did say that he had been communicating with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Dept., which said they might allow Morrow County to cross the river and spray. Barron warned there would probably be no federal funding but said it might be worth the money anyway.

“If we could do one application over there, like in the fall, or one application over there in the spring, we possibly could control that situation a lot better,” Barron said. “Because right now there’s no control.”

“We’re protecting our citizens by going over there and doing that work,” he added.

He said he currently has mosquito management plans with both U.S. and Oregon departments of fish and wildlife, but he may need to send one to the Army Corp of Engineers.

“I don’t want to kick the sleeping dog,” he said, “but we need to make them aware of the situation for us.”

“In the meantime, we’re going to continue to do our work,” he added.

As far as identifying the threat, Barron said the vector control district routinely traps mosquitoes from both the Boardman and Irrigon areas. Seasonal lab techs then go to work identifying them.

“(They) will take those mosquitoes and they will ID them down to species, and they will count every single mosquito in those traps, and then they will package

those mosquitoes in pools of 10-50 and they will send those to Oregon State Veterinarian Diagnostic Lab for PCR testing,” Barron said.

A PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test is a lab technique that creates more copies of DNA. It is commonly used to test for infectious diseases.

Barron said turnaround for testing from the state lab is usually three days.

The vector control district uses information on density and species to determine where to conduct night-time fogging in the area.

“If we’re getting a high density of mosquitoes, that already triggers me to say, ‘We’re sending trucks out,’” he said, adding that they have specific threshold levels. “If we capture 10 of those mosquitoes in town, we’re fogging.”

That threshold isn’t as low outside of the cities, but Barron said it’s a different story when it comes to disease control, when control becomes more aggressive.

The vector control district also has plans to implement drones in spraying.

On the horizon, though not yet a huge concern, is an emerging new disease—Oropouche. Outbreaks of the virus have been reported since late 2023-2024 in several countries in South America and the Caribbean. The disease is usually spread by infected biting midges, but some mosqui-

toes can also carry the virus. Travel-related cases have been reported in U.S. residents, but so far no local transmission has been detected in the United States.

Barron said it is a concern because it is an emerging virus in the Americas, spreading outside the Amazon Basin into areas where it hasn’t been previously. It’s also potentially deadly, as well as associated with miscarriages and birth defects.

Also at the March 19 meeting, the Morrow County commissioners approved the appointment of two members, Jake Case and Smokey Joe Wightman, to the North Morrow County Vector Control District Board of Trustees.

The North Morrow Vector Control District Board of Trustees has an unexpected opening with the recent passing of Lenn Greer, who held position 5.

“He was a good board member. He always made my guys think,” said Barron.

Jake Case of Irrigon has been recommended to serve the remainder of the term, which expires July 12, 2025.

Position 2 expires May 31, 2025. Smokey Joe Wightman of Boardman currently serves in position 2 and would like to serve another four years on the board. He has been on the board since 2001.

The Gazette Puzzle Pop

Sharpen your mind with our Gazette Puzzle Pop! Weekly math, word, and local trivia from our five towns—no internet or phones allowed. Answers in next week’s edition—grab a pencil and show off!

Math Challenge: Operation Station Showdown!

All aboard, Gazette math fans!

Equations:

An easy ride to get your engine running!

1. $4 + 3 \times (5 - 2)$

A hard climb for your mental coal car!

2. $14 - 6 \div 2 + 5 \times (7 - 4)$

A really tough tunnel—can you make it through?

3. $20 \div 4 + 9 \times (12 - 3 \times 2) - 15 \div 3$

Wordplay Whiz

The Riddle:

I’m a sly, three-letter word that means a small number—just a smidge, really. But here’s the twist: tack on two more letters, and I morph into a five-letter word that means a number even smaller than before. What word am I?

Hint:

The word shrinks in meaning as it stretches in size!

Morrow County Trivia Challenge

The Question:

Lexington’s Political Star: What Lexington local climbed the Oregon political ladder to become Speaker of the House in 1929?

Lunch & Dinner Menu
 4/3 - 4/9

- Thursday** - Grilled Turkey and avocado sandwich with jojos
- Friday** - Tuna Melt with macaroni salad
- Saturday** - Flatbread breakfast sandwich with hashbrown patties
- Sunday** - closed
- Monday** - Reuben with potato salad
- Tuesday** - Italian Sausage pasta with salad
- Tuesday Night** - 6-9pm \$2 hard shell tacos
- Wednesday** - Buffalo chicken slider with side of apple sauce

ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:

MONDAY 5:00 P.M.