

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

During the Season of Lent we are called to reflect on where our daily choices are leading us. We need to think about who we are listening to in making our choices. Is it the Lord or that other guy who is looking for comfort in his misery? The talk we had this past Thursday in our Sons & Daughters series addressed this issue. The talk was based on the text below which was adapted from the **Unbound Ministry Guidebook** by Neal Lozano.

With my prayers,

Fr. Conley

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RECOGNIZING THE ENEMY AND LEARNING TO LISTEN TO GOD

We want to deal first with recognizing the enemy, because if we can't recognize the enemy we could make wrong choices that could keep us from hearing clearly what the Lord wants to say. Do we have an enemy? What's his name? SATAN, which means "opponent, accuser, adversary, attacker – the arch-enemy of God. How did Jesus deal with him? He said, "Away with you, Satan!" Matt.4:10 (temptation in wilderness). "Get behind Me, Satan! You are not mindful of the things of God, but of the things of men." That was to Peter, when Jesus was telling His disciples what was going to happen to Him, and Peter began to rebuke Him! At the Last Supper, when Jesus told them He would be betrayed by one sitting at the table with them, they began disputing among themselves as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And then Jesus says to Peter, "Simon, Simon, indeed Satan has asked for you, that He may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, and when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren." Calling him Simon instead of Peter (Rock) is a clue that he would soon act according to his old nature, but Jesus gave encouragement that he would be able to turn (repent) and strengthen his brethren. There was another disciple there named Judas, who would not turn (repent), but give in to his greed and avarice and be unable to truly repent and receive forgiveness. That's a major lie that Satan uses – that you're so bad it's hopeless. Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of purpose and action.

Satan is a defeated foe – he preys upon our human weaknesses – any part of us still in darkness. But we are in another kingdom now – the Kingdom of Light. John12:46- "I have come to the world as its light, to keep anyone who believes in Me from remaining in the dark."

Does this mean we don't have to be concerned about temptations, deceptions, human failings, etc.? No – we're not perfect yet, but – we are in a war zone, part of the army. There are battles to be fought and won. The enemy has names like anger, resentment, jealousy,

hatred, pride, arrogance, depression – which if unresolved, can lead to bitterness, revenge, hatred, violence, and on and on. He makes openings for all kinds of little (and big) demonic spirits, who feed on lies we may have believed. Renouncing the lies breaks the power of that spirit. It is important to renounce any vows you have made in an effort to protect yourself. "I'll never love again, I'll never trust again, I'll never make myself vulnerable again." Those vows become like prison bars, keeping us locked in. To break those vows, we say, "In the name of Jesus, I renounce the vow I made when I said _____ and I break its power over me".

Learning to recognize the voice of the enemy also means learning to recognize the voice of the Lord, learning to listen to Him. How? As Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

A quote from St. John Vianney: "When it's God speaking, the proper way to behave is to imitate someone who has an irresistible curiosity and who listens at keyholes. You must listen to everything God says at the keyhole of your heart."

Listening is a challenge – Our own desires can deceive us, our hearts can deceive us. St. Paul, considering the sin that dwells within says, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Romans 7:24-25

Jesus has delivered us. We have God's Spirit within us. Not just our own thoughts, but what God has to say to us by the Holy Spirit. We can hear God through the keyhole of our hearts as we are being transformed. Jesus has not left us orphans. This is what He has to say about it: "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." John14:16-18

We can rely on that promise of the Holy Spirit to be our comforter, counselor, wisdom, and guide. Jesus said that "when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will tell you of things to come." John16:13 . Call on the Holy Spirit and trust Him to guide us. If we call, we will learn to recognize His voice. Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me." (John 10:27) When Jesus was baptized, the voice of the Father was heard, saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him."(Matt.17:5)

So how do we learn to listen? There are some things we can do to prepare our hearts. 1. Believe that you can hear from God. 2. Ask Him to speak to you. 3. Ask in humility, being willing to line up your thoughts with His Word. 4. Ask that your life bring honor to His name and further His will for you and others. 5. Daily surrender. **The more you listen, the more you will be able to discern his voice.**

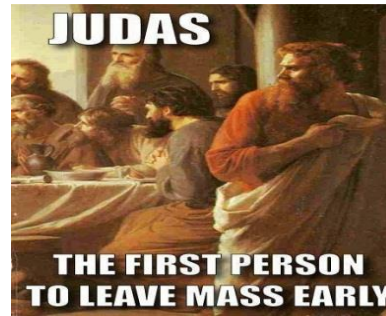
At times, we may need a spiritual breakthrough in the atmosphere over our family, our work, our church. The prophet Daniel needed a breakthrough for his people – he prayed for 21 days and the angel of the Lord appeared to him and told of the spiritual battle going on in the heavens. It was not that his prayer wasn't being heard – there was a war going on! That can happen to us, too!

Sometimes we need a personal breakthrough out of stubbornness, willfulness, anger, self-seeking. The answer is repentance and confession. There may be times when you have to go to a person and ask for forgiveness –

It says in Romans that we are not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. How does that happen? Repent and believe in Jesus! He's bigger than all our sins, bigger than all our faults. Then we come before Him in prayer, to listen for His voice - through reading His Word, praising Him, telling the Lord your troubles and translating them into praise, worshiping Him, singing to Him, dancing before Him, praying in the Spirit, prostrating ourselves before Him, whatever is welling up within us that gives Him glory, that gets self out of the way. If we are faithful to that, we will begin to hear His voice. It's Jesus' promise to us: "My sheep hear My voice".

OUR PENANCE SERVICE FOR LENT IS WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14TH AT 7PM. Those who don't drive at night are welcome to come to our school penance service on Tuesday, March 20 at 10:15 am.

PILGRIMAGE TO MOTHER SETON SHRINE IN EMMITSBURG, SATURDAY, April 28. We will leave at 8am and be back by 7pm. Fr. Conley will be leading this pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton where we will offer Mass, have a tour and eat lunch. While in Emmitsburg we will also visit the Lourdes Grotto. On the way back from Emmitsburg we will stop at the Springfield Manor Winery in Thurmont for a wine and cheese tasting. Thanks to the generosity of a benefactor and the Keller Bus Company, the cost of the trip is just \$35 per person and includes lunch and the winery visit. For more information and to register contact Lauren Balderson at 301-870-2220 ext 11 or smbassist@comcast.net. Payment is due at registration. Checks should be made out to St. Mary's Church.



We all know how that turned out!

2018 ANNUAL JUBILARIAN MASS

The annual Jubilarian Celebration of marriage honoring couples married 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50 and 51+ years will be held Sunday, June 17, 2018 at 2:00pm at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Cardinal Wuerl will preside at the Mass. Please use the forms in the back of Church to register and then return the form to the rectory. Names of jubilarians need to be turned in to the parish office by Monday, April 16.

LENT SCHEDULE:

Fridays during Lent - Confessions are at 6:30pm, Mass is at 7:00pm and Stations are at 7:30pm. We are to abstain from eating meat during these times.

KNOW OF PARISHIONERS WHO ARE

HOMEBOUND? Please contact Fr. Conley or Sister Theresa at the rectory so we can minister to their spiritual needs.

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Mary A. Bell, 10am Frank Hawkins, 12N: Parishioners, **MON:** 8:00am Mary A Bell, **TUES:** 8am Patricia Ann Thompson, **WED:** 8am Joseph F. Coates, **THURS:** 8am Gladys Brown, **FRI:** 9:30am Joseph L. Plater, **SAT:** 9am Gladys Brown, 4pm Leo & Dorothy Istvan.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY

PRAYERS: Mary Bowes, Frances Card, Joe Cross, Kendall Farrell, George Fassel, Arlene Gandolfi, Martha Gehring, Judy Istvan-Windsor, Irma Johnson, Regina Kjesky, Marie Knobel, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, Maurice Long, Jim Middleton, Mary Emma Middleton, Larry Miller, Joseph Mona, Wayne Mullings, Ryan Myers, Lenora Proctor, Joseph Quade, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Beth Weise, Tim Welch, Brice Zimmer.

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND,

\$9,918.00. The unidentified donations totaled \$710.00. We received \$90.00 for our School Support.