

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

I would like to wish you all a very happy new year! You see, according to the Church's calendar, this Sunday, when we begin the Season of Advent, we begin a new liturgical year. The Church year begins with the four weeks of Advent during which we remember how the Israelites waited longingly for the coming of the Messiah. We use the color purple in church to mark this season as a sign of sadness for the darkness of the world without Christ.

On December 24th, with the first Mass of Christmas Eve, we enter the joyous Christmas Season. The festive colors of gold and white mark this season in the decor of the church as we reflect on the birth of Christ and the events which followed. The Christmas Season, according to the Church's calendar, lasts this year until Monday, January 8th, with the feast day honoring the Baptism of the Lord.

The following day, Tuesday, January 9th, we begin Ordinary Time. The color for Ordinary time, which is sort of a season between seasons, is green. The color green has traditionally been understood as a sign of hope and life. During Ordinary time the Gospel readings each Sunday follow the chronology of our Lord's life and mission. This liturgical year our Sunday Gospel readings will come primarily from the Gospel of St. Mark. The chronological reading of the Gospel is interrupted for the Seasons of Lent and Easter so that our celebration of Christ's death and resurrection will correspond with the Jewish Passover which of course was the historical context of His Passion.

The Season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, which this year falls on February 14th. ***Happy Valentine's Day!*** During the forty days of Lent we remember our Lord's forty days of fasting in the desert before He began His public mission and the forty years the Israelites wandered from their slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. The color purple is used in Lent as a sign of sorrow for sin. Lent is followed by Palm Sunday and then the Easter Triduum—Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter - the three days on which we celebrate the passion, death and resurrection of Christ.

Easter Sunday falls on April 1st. Jesus is Alive! No fooling! The Easter Season is the longest season of the Church calendar. It is a season for reflecting on the wonder of Christ's resurrection from the dead and His promise that we too, if we are faithful, will rise again after we pass from this life. The colors we use in Church for the Easter season are white and gold. The Easter Season extends for 50 days and concludes with the third most important feast of the Church, after Easter and Christmas, the feast of Pentecost. The color for Pentecost is red to remind us of the tongues of fire that glowed above the Apostles on the day they received the Holy Spirit. Red vestments are also used on Palm Sunday and Good Friday in remembrance of the blood of Jesus that He shed for our salvation.

After the feast of Pentecost, we return to Ordinary time which continues until its culmination on the Solemnity

of Christ the King. In addition to these seasons, throughout the year the Church celebrates holy days and feasts in honor of our Lord, the Blessed Mother and the saints. On these feasts the color used for the vestments is white, except on the feasts of martyrs when red is used.

The Church has its own calendar to remind us of the great events in the life of Jesus Christ which brought about our salvation. The fact that the Church's calendar is different from the secular one should also remind us that our days really should belong to God and not to the world. We can give each of our days to the Lord by remembering in the morning to offer all that we will do in His name and, in the evening, thanking Him for His blessings. And we can give our years to the Lord by celebrating faithfully His seasons of grace. *Happy New Year!*

With my prayers,
Father Conley

CATHOLIC QUOTES

“Life is uncertain and, in fact may be brief. If we compare it with eternity, we will clearly realize that it cannot be more than an instant.

Of all the things of life, a happy death is our principal concern. For if we attain that, it matters little if we lose all the rest. But if we don't attain that, nothing else will be of any value.”

St. Junipero Serra

ADVENT DAY OF PRAYER - “LOVE COMES DOWN” ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 4TH AT LOYOLA ON THE POTOMAC – A Jesuit Retreat House in Faulkner, MD. Our Day of Prayer begins at 9:00am with coffee, fruit, juice and pastries and includes lunch. During the day our retreatants are invited to spend time in quiet meditation reflecting on the theme. Confessions are offered and there is a celebration of the Mass. Retreat Fee: \$40. For further information, email reservations@loyolaretreast.org.

OUR PRAYER GROUP MEETS this Thursday, December 7, from 6:30 to 8:30. Everyone is invited to come. Dinner is at 6:30. Our prayer time will begin at 7pm and conclude at 8:30pm. The cost is \$2 for dinner. **Please come and join us for Spirit-filled praise and worship of our Lord!** If you have questions, please contact Fr. Conley at 301-870-2220, ext. 13 or frconley@comcast.net.

THANK-YOU, THANK-YOU!!

The Social Concerns Committee would like to report that our Thanksgiving Basket Project was a great success again this year. We were able to help 42 families. We wanted to thank all in our parish that donated food and money at our special collection and throughout the

season. Thank you to the children from St. Mary's and T.C. Martin Schools. They collected food, money, and helped sort and organize the boxes.

The students from the St. Mary's Youth Group, Ignite, and the Confirmation Group also came in to help sort and prepare the baskets, and prepare beautiful Thanksgiving cards for all the families. So much energy from all the kids helped the older folks get through all the work. Deacon Henry Middleton supplied us with wonderful fresh produce for all the recipients. The Boy Scout Troop #908, and Troop #2421 along with Cub Scout Pack# 900 collected food from the neighborhoods and in front of the local grocery stores. What a big help they were! We had a record number of volunteers to help this year which made us a great success. Catholic Charities donated nine turkey dinners that we were able to help out our larger families. Together as a parish, schools and community, we once again served those in need just as the Lord is asking us to do every day.

ADVICE TO SENIORS ON TAX DEDUCTION FOR CHARITABLE GIVING

If you are 70 ½ years old or older, you are required to make withdrawals from your IRA account each year. If you take a standard deduction for your federal taxes, you lose the option to deduct your donations to the church or any other qualified charity. However, by making a donation from your IRA using a QCD (Qualified Charitable Distribution), your donation will not be taxed and will count toward your required withdrawal. This will reduce your taxable income. (See Pub. 590-B [<http://www.irs.gov/publications/p590b/index/html>], Distributions from Individual Retirement Arrangements (IRAs) for additional information).

Example: If you are required to withdraw \$10,000 for the year from your IRA, it normally would all be taxed. However, if you donate \$500 with a QCD to the church only \$9,500 would be taxed, but you would still meet the required withdrawal of \$10,000.

LEONARD WATHEN, LOCAL AUTHOR will be at Heavenly Presents on Saturday, December 9th, from 12 noon to 3 PM to share his latest book, "Remain in Me: Scriptural Reflections on Growing as a Disciple of Jesus". This great new book offer thirty-one short daily readings and meditations from the Gospel of John's Last Supper Discourses. Discover the relationship with God that you were created for, from the words of Jesus himself! Be sure to stop by to get your signed copy! For more information call us at (301) 475-9770.

BEAR HUGS FOR HEALING is a program that delivers stuffed bears to hospitalized children during the holidays. To give a sick child a bear hug this Christmas, please drop off your donated bears by December 12 at Heavenly Presents, 22697 Washington Street (on the Square), Leonardtown, Maryland. Store hours are Tuesday through Saturday, or use the afterhours drop box outside the store front door. Your tax-deductible monetary donations will be used to purchase bears at a

discounted price! Please make checks payable to the Bread of Life Center for Peace and mail them to: PO Box 338, Leonardtown, MD 20650. You may also purchase a bear or make donations through our website at www.breadoflifecenterforpeace.org -- click on Bear Hugs Project. Due to health and safety concerns, donated bears must be newly purchased and delivered in their original packing with store tags attached. Sorry, used stuffed bears are not accepted by the hospitals. Bear Hugs was an inspiration received in thanksgiving for favors granted through the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima and St. Jude. Please contact Patricia Disandro at (240) 681-3606 for more details about how you can participate in this special outreach. Thank you for your continued generous support of Bear Hugs!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE \$1,000 WINNERS. NAMES WERE DRAWN ON GRANDPARENTS

DAY: Rev. Rory Conley & Glenn Buckler, Jr. The next drawing will be on December 9th.

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Deacon Dan & Marie Ford, 10am Deacon Dan & Marie Ford, 12n Don Pobst, **MON:** 8am Anna Stonestreet, **TUES:** 8am Don Pobst, **WED:** 8am Donald Lawson, **THURS:** 8am Mary Ann Higgs, **FRI:** 9:30am Mary June Zamrok, **SAT:** 9am Donald Lawson, 4pm Paul Istvan.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY

PRAYERS: Mary Bowes, Roy Allen Butler, Frances Card, Joseph Chapman, Joe Cross, Kendall Farrell, George Fassel, Arlene Gandolfi, Martha Gehring, Judy Istvan-Windsor, Angie Kalnasy, Regina Kijesky, Marie Knobel, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, Maurice Long, Mary Emma Middleton, Larry Miller, Joseph Mona, Wayne Mullings, Lenora Proctor, Joseph Quade, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Lisa Thompson, Beth Weise, Tim Welch, Brice Zimmer.

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND, \$10,095.15. Of the 770 registered households in the parish, we received donations from 252 identifiable contributors (55% of the parish) using envelopes or checks. The unidentified donations totaled \$797.15.