

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

My visit to St. Aloysius parish in Leonardtown last weekend to speak about the Life in the Spirit Seminar went very well. They now have over one hundred people signed up.

This weekend I will be speaking at Holy Ghost parish in Issue while the pastor there, Fr. Bob Golas, will be here with you. Meanwhile our own sign up is also going well. I hope you can join us if you haven't participated in the Seminar yet. Also, remember that you can sign up for either the Thursday evening or Sunday morning sessions.

Come Holy Spirit!
Father Conley

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Recently Pope Francis gave a series of talks on the importance of the Mass. Below the Holy Father explains why it is so important that we come to Mass.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

Taking up the series of catecheses on the Mass, today we ask ourselves: Why go to Mass on Sunday?

The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is at the center of the life of the Church. We Christians go to Mass on Sunday to encounter the Risen Lord, or, better, to let ourselves be encountered by Him, to listen to His word, to eat at His table, and thus become Church, that is, His living Mystical Body in the world today.

This was understood, from the first moment, by Jesus' disciples, who celebrated the Eucharistic encounter with the Lord in the day of the week that the Jews called "the first of the week" and the Romans "day of the sun," because *on that day Jesus rose from the dead* and He appeared to His disciples, speaking with them, eating with them, giving them the Holy Spirit (Cf. *Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:9.14; Luke 24:1.13; John 20:1.19*), as we heard in the biblical Reading. The great effusion of the Holy Spirit also happened on Sunday, the fiftieth day after Jesus' Resurrection. For these reasons, Sunday is a holy day for us, sanctified by the Eucharistic celebration, the Lord's living presence among us and for us. Hence, it is the Mass that *m eakes* Sunday Christian! The Christian Sunday revolves around the Mass. For a Christian, what sort of Sunday is it that lacks the encounter with the Lord?

Some secularized societies have lost the Christian sense of Sunday illumined by the Eucharist. This is sin! In these contexts, it's necessary to revive this awareness, to recover the meaning of the celebration, of the joy of the parish community, of solidarity, of the rest that restores the soul and the body. The Eucharist is the teacher of all these values, Sunday after Sunday.

Therefore, Vatican Council II wanted to confirm that "Sunday is the primordial day of celebration which must be proposed and inculcated in the piety of the faithful, so that it also becomes a day of joy and of abstention from work."

Sunday's abstention from work didn't exist in the first centuries: it's a specific contribution of Christianity. By biblical tradition the Jews rest on Saturday, while in Roman society a weekday of abstention from servile works was not foreseen. It was the Christian sense of living as children and not as slaves, animated by the Eucharist, which made Sunday – almost universally – the day of rest. Without Christ we are condemned to be dominated by tiredness of the every day, with its preoccupations and the fear of tomorrow. The Sunday encounter with the Lord gives us strength to live today with trust and courage and to go on with hope. This is why we Christians go to encounter the Lord on Sunday in the Eucharistic celebration.

Eucharistic Communion with Jesus, Risen and Living forever, anticipates the Sunday without sunset, when there will no longer be fatigue, or pain, or mourning, or tears, but only the joy of living fully and forever with the Lord. Sunday Mass also speaks of this blessed rest, teaching us, in the flow of the week, to entrust ourselves to the hands of the Father who is in Heaven.

What can we answer one who says there is no need to go to Mass, not even on Sunday, because what is important is to live well, to love one's neighbor? It's true that the quality of a Christian life is measured by the capacity to love, as Jesus said: "By this all men will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another" (John 13:35); but how can we practice the Gospel without drawing the necessary energy to do so, Sunday after Sunday, from the inexhaustible source of the Eucharist? ***We don't go to Mass to give God something, but to receive from Him what we truly need.***

In conclusion, why go to Mass on Sunday? It's not enough to answer that it's a precept of the Church; this helps to keep its value, but it's not enough on its own. We Christians need to take part in Sunday Mass because only with Jesus' grace, with His living presence in us and among us, can we put into practice His commandment, and thus be His credible witnesses.

LENT STARTS THIS WEDNESDAY,

Ash Wednesday. Masses will be at 8am, 9:30 am & 7:30pm. On Ash Wednesday & Good Friday we are obliged to fast by eating only one normal size meal and two smaller ones. On Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent we are to abstain from eating meat.

THERE WILL NOT BE A MORNING MASS THIS MONDAY, FEB 12th.

SUPPORT OUR "VOCATIONS TREE"

What's a "Vocations Tree"? There is a "tree" near the cry room covered with cards that each feature a seminarian of the Archdiocese of Washington. We invite you to choose a card (or more than one!) and commit to praying a short prayer for that seminarian each day during Lent as part of your Lenten activities.

THIS LENT, HOW ABOUT GETTING A GIFT RATHER THAN GIVING SOMETHING UP?

So we are inviting you to mark your calendars now to receive **The GIFT: A Life in the Spirit Course**. Over 200 people participated in this six-session and for many of them it was a life-changing experience. In fact, it was such a great experience for so many, that ten other parishes in Southern Maryland have asked us to help them present the program this year. This is an inspiring and practical series, aimed at people of all ages, to help them encounter the Holy Spirit and empower them to share their faith. **THE SIX SESSIONS WILL MEET ON THURSDAYS FROM 6:30-8:30PM** and will include dinner.

There will also be a **Sunday morning session** which meets from 11:15-1pm which will include lunch. **The GIFT series begins on THURSDAY, February 22nd. The cost of the series is \$10. You can sign up in the foyer or by contacting Fr. Conley at 301-870-2220 ext 13 or at frconley@comcast.net.**

PLEASE REMOVE FROM THE CEMETERY BY THIS MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, ANY CHRISTMAS ITEMS YOU WANT TO KEEP.

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

CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS FOR 2017 HAVE BEEN PRINTED & MAILED OUT.

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2ND ANNUAL HOLY FAMILY CELEBRATION

Join fellow Catholic couples and families for the 2nd Annual Holy Family Celebration on Saturday, February 17 from 1:30-6:30pm at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, DC (3900 Harewood Rd., NE). This half-day celebration will feature an inspiring talk for couples by nationally-recognized writer and speaker Msgr. Charles Pope, Mass and Consecration to the Holy Family, and fun catechesis for children and teens. The

day will conclude with a family-style meal and entertainment. The cost of attendance is \$15 per couple and \$30 for a family of three or more, which includes a meal after Mass. To register, please visit www.holyfamilycelebration.eventbrite.com. This event is sponsored by the Archdiocese of Washington, the DC State Council of the Knights of Columbus, and the Saint John Paul II National Shrine.

PARISH SHROVE TUESDAY "PANCAKE"

SUPPER is going to be held on Tuesday, February 13th from 5-7 pm in the parish hall. The menu includes: pancakes, bacon, sausage, home fries, orange juice, coffee and tea. Cost is \$ 7 per adult, \$5 children ages 6-12, and children under 6 eat free.

CONGRATULATIONS!! The winners of the raffle are: Nikki Fluhart \$1000, Shana Sullivan \$4500, and The Brillantes Family & Bret & Jessica Middleton were the last \$1000 winners.

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Joe Ippolito, 10am Peter Conrad, 12N: Parishioners, **MON:** 8:00am NO MASS, **TUES:** 8am Thomas Mulvihill, **WED:** 8am Mary A. Bell, **THURS:** 8am Darlene Jenifer, **FRI:** 9:30am John F. Coates, **SAT:** 9am Mary June Zamrok, 4pm Deacon Richard Fisher.

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 Kijesky, Marie Knobel, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, Maurice Long, Jim Middleton, Mary Emma Middleton, Larry Miller, Joseph Mona, Wayne Mullings, Brian Myers, Lenora Proctor, Joseph Quade, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Ben Stark, Edna Sweeney, Lisa Thompson, Beth Weise, Tim Welch, Brice Zimmer.

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST

WEEKEND, \$11,614.51. The unidentified donations totaled \$642.01. We received \$937.72 for our School Support.



“VOCATIONS TREE” COMING SOON!

What’s a “Vocations Tree”? Shortly before Ash Wednesday, you’ll find a “tree” in the church foyer covered with cards that each feature a seminarian of the Archdiocese of Washington. We invite you to choose a card (or more than one!) and commit to praying a short prayer for that seminarian each day during Lent as part of your Lenten activities.



SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

The Social Concerns Committee collects food 52 weeks per year. Please help address the needs of our community with food donations. Bins are located in the back of the church. We are grateful for your continuing support.

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