

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

As followers of the Risen Lord Jesus, we are called to be people of joy. Christian joy is founded on knowing the Lord's unconditional and unending love for each one of us. Joy is much more profound than happiness and is present even when life is hard. Indeed, it is precisely when life is hard that we should remember to be people of joy. The following essay offers some good insights as to how to do this.

With my prayers,
Fr. Conley

THE WAY OF PEACE
Finding Rest in an Anxious World

By Samuel Guzman

The world is in turmoil. Everywhere, people cry, "peace, peace." Our hearts are filled with anger, envy, violence, and anxiety. Every day, a tumultuous and passion-filled torrent of words and emotions gushes forth on the Internet and across cable news networks.

We long for rest, for tranquility, but cannot find it anywhere. In their desperation, some would even impose peace by force, by beating their ideological enemies into submission—a bitter paradox if there ever was one.

The upheavals of the world are not random. They are simply a reflection of the emptiness and futile strivings of our own hearts. Saint James the Apostle diagnoses the ills of our time: What causes wars, and what causes fighting among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war (James 4:1,2).

Our passions are running wild, and they are killing us.

Saint Paul's Prescription

The way of the word is the war of anxiety and death, but the way of the Lord is the way of peace and life. The enemy of our souls is the one who sows enmity and hate and striving against one another. The only solution to the peace of the world is to find peace in our own hearts.

We have a natural tendency to think our own times are the worst that have ever existed. Yet, Saint Paul lived in times that were more painful than our own. His whole world was in turmoil, with the Jewish authorities persecuting the burgeoning Church, heresies invading from all sides, and wayward Christians bickering and forming factions. In these trying circumstances, Saint Paul labored tirelessly to preach the Gospel, a seemingly impossible task.

Wherever he went, he met adversity. He was relentlessly persecuted, beaten, stoned and left for dead, starved, shipwrecked, imprisoned, and maligned. If anyone had a right to be anxious and discouraged, it was Saint Paul.

But that was not his answer. Despite the literal and figurative stormy seas that he encountered, Saint Paul was always at peace. In his letter to the Philippians, Saint Paul outlines his prescription for soul peace in troubled times.

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, put into practice. And the God of peace will be with you." Phil 4:4-9

Rejoice Always

The very first thing Saint Paul encourages is rejoicing. Be joyful. Let your joy shine from your face. Do not be discouraged or disheartened.

But how, you might ask, can one be joyful when there is so much pain and suffering in the world? It is often easier said than done. The answer is simply because we serve a good God who loves mankind, and He has trampled down death by his own death on the Cross. We rejoice because we know that while we are daily surrounded by defeat, we serve Jesus Christ, who defeated defeat by being defeated, and rose victorious to die no more. It is in encountering the Risen Christ, most especially in the Eucharist, that we experience the joy of His victory.

Rejoicing is not optional for the Christian. In another letter, Saint Paul tells us to "give thanks in all circumstances. Not by finding something positive to be happy about in the mess, though there is nothing wrong with this, but rather by giving thanks for the tribulations themselves. This is the sure way to joy and the highest form of thanksgiving. It is only possible by grace. Yet rejoicing, even in trials, is the path to peace.

Second, we are told to be gentle. Gentleness is not much valued in today's world of swagger and machismo. Violence, both literal and rhetorical, rules the day. But it should never characterize the followers of the Crucified, who should be known for their meekness, humility, and gentleness towards all, especially those who hate us or despise us, our enemies. Do not return cursing for cursing, no matter how tempting it may be, but rather bless those who malign and persecute you and pray for them, so that you may be truly the children of God, not in word only, but in reality. Peace starts with hearts full of peace, not vengeance and tribulation.

The third thing Saint Paul exhorts us to is prayer. Only in opening our hearts to the Lord God will we find peace. Looking for peace in external circumstances is foolish. The only peaceful place on earth is the heart when the Lord is there. It is only in communion with the Prince of Peace in our deepest heart that we will find the peace we so desperately crave.

And how do we come to know Christ? How do we abide in Him as the branch abides in the vine? We do this by prayer. "Pray without ceasing," Saint Paul tells us. Prayer is the tuning of the heart to God. The more we grow in the awareness of His presence, the more our hearts will be at peace.

Finally, we are told to fill our minds with what is good and true. So often, we think entertainment is harmless. We believe all the "right" things, so we imagine we can consume whatever we want. This simply is not true. In a very real sense, we commune with what we consume. It becomes part of us. Watching endless violence and debauchery on TV is not harmless. Likewise, watching a 24-hour news cycle intent with all the worst humanity has to offer a quick recipe for anxiety.

Saint Paul is clear: Do not dwell on what is evil. You are taking this knowledge into yourself and it is becoming part of you. Neither can you ever expect to find peace by filling your mind with the horrendous acts that stream across the Internet and cable news networks incessantly. Dwell on what is good and holy. Read and watch and consume what will elevate your mind and fill your heart with peace, for you will become what you gaze upon.

The way of the Lord is the way of peace. Rejoice. Be gentle. Pray. Think on what is good. And the God of peace will be with you always.

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. **DEADLINE IS APRIL 13TH.** 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 sembassist@comcast.net. Payment is due at registration. **Checks should be made out to St. Mary's Church. You may put an envelope marked Pilgrimage and put in offertory basket.**

RELIGIOUS GOODS STORE NEEDS HELP

We need some help to work after the 4 & 12 PM Mass. Please call Ellen Walls at 301- 579-2557 or Fay Adriani at 301-645-3531.

INDIVIDUAL UNBOUND MINISTRY PRAYER

Do you long for freedom but feel unable to receive it? Do past sins, hurts, or memories weigh you down? On **Saturday April 21st, 2018** there will be trained teams available to provide individual prayer using the Unbound Model of prayer at **The Church of the Resurrection's school** in Ellicott City. If you would like to schedule an appointment or want more information, please contact Dan Gahagan by **April 16th, 2018** at unboundministrymaryland@gmail.com. We ask that you read at least the first seven chapters of the book *Unbound*, by Neal Lozano prior to receiving prayer.

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 Mary at the rectory by Monday, April 16.

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.

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Betty Ann Moreland, 10am Parishioners, **12N:** Mary Helen Tippet, **MON:** 8am Mary T. Edelen, **TUES:** 8am Doris Gross, **WED:** 8am Carol Ann Chagnon, **THURS:** 8am Louis L. Plater, **FRI:** 9:30am Lucille Tolson, **SAT:** 9am Mary Helen Tippet, 4pm Janine Burch.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY

PRAYERS: Mary Bowes, Frances Card, Joe Cross, Chuck Davis, 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, Ryan Myers, Joseph Quade, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Beth Weise, Tim Welch, Brice Zimmer.

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND,

\$7,247.87. The unidentified donations totaled \$1,484.87. We received \$801.87 for our School Support.