

Saint Bernadette Parish

Saint Mary Parish

1343 Wheeling Road NE (740) 654 • 1893
LANCASTER, OH 43130-8701

602 Marietta Street (740) 569 • 7929
BREMEN, OH 43107

stbernadetteparish.net



John the Baptist Preaching

saying words about the king's adultery that King Herod doesn't want to hear

a reflection on the feast of the passion of St John the Baptist, celebrated this Monday

Painted (1732-1733) by the rococo Venetian master Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1719-1768)
3.5 x 3 meters, in the Cappella Colleoni in Bergamo, Italy

the 22nd Sunday in the Year

August 28, 2016

Our Parishes

AT BOTH PARISHES

Fr Thomas Kessler	pastor	(614) wnthomaskessler 634-0499 @icloud.com
Kathy Kehnast	pastoral coordinator	(740) stbernaparish 654-1893 @yahoo.com
Angie & Kent Kerns	religious education	(740) kwkerns 654-2588 @gmail.com
Julie & Chase Stalford	youth ministry	(740) maristellaspirt 808-7294 @gmail.com
Nikki Schmelzer	bookkeeper	(740) businessstbparish 654-1893 @yahoo.com

AT BREMEN ST MARY PARISH

Ben Factor	liturgical music	b_factor @lancaster.kl2.oh.us
Jim Schmelzer	maintenance chair	
Tyna Fox-Schmelzer	religious education	(614) schmelifox 371-7702 @earthlink.net
Bremen St Vincent de Paul		(740) 569-3710

The St Mary Parish office is at the church vestibule.
Hours are 9-11 AM, Tu.
602 Marietta St, Bremen, OH 43107

(740)
569-7929

AT ST BERNADETTE PARISH

Deacon Mark Scarpitti		(740) dcn.mark 438-3970 @frontier.com
Deacon Jeff Carpenter		(740) 681-9918 carpenter.277@osu.edu
Ann Essman	pastoral minister	(740) aessman001 653-9347 @att.net
Steve Huber	facilities coordinator	(740) shuber57 654-3137 @yahoo.com
Liz Latorre	liturgical music	(740) lizlatorre 243-1872 @gmail.com

The St Bernadette Parish office is in the Mary Good Center, across the back parking lot from the school.
Hours are: 9 AM-1 PM, MWThF; 11 AM-1 PM, Tu.
1343 Wheeling Rd NE, Lancaster, OH 43130

AT ST BERNADETTE SCHOOL

Pam Eltringham	principal	(740) peltring 6543137 @cducation.org
Barb Huber	secretary	(740) bhuber 6543137 @cducation.org

Saint Bernadette School is at
1325 Wheeling Rd, Lancaster, OH 43130-8701 stberlan
www.stbernadetteschool.com @cducation.org

Sacramental Life

BAPTISM

To have a child baptized, you must register and attend a class as a couple (unless attendance just isn't possible, in which case some discussion with Kathy Kehnast will be necessary). Sessions are held quarterly for both parishes. The next session will be in September. **Take the class before the child is born.** If you are expecting, call Kathy to register for the class. Please don't ask if you "have to go." This is an opportunity to meet with parents of children about the same age as your little one; they are in the same wonderful boat as you are.

At least one parent must be a practicing Catholic. **Both godparents need to be practicing Christians, at least one a practicing Catholic.** If you don't attend Sunday Mass regularly, there is something you can do about it: Start coming to Sunday Mass. If you can't come (health, severe weather, employment requirements, etc.), speak to your confessor. He will help you.

PENANCE

The priest is available for Penance

1. at St Bernadette Saturdays at 3 PM and Thursdays at 5:30 PM, and
2. at St Mary Bremen on Sunday at 8 AM.

In addition to Advent and Lenten Penance Services, every Catholic priest is available whenever there is a need. There are Penance opportunities for parochial school children **four times during the year so that they will learn the beauty of frequent confession.** The Church's law requires us to receive the sacrament of Penance at least once a year.

ANOINTING AND CARE OF THE SICK

The Sick receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick **when dangerously ill, facing major surgery, or suffering from the ravages of old age.**

We celebrate the sacrament communally at a Sunday Mass before Advent and during the Easter season so that we can all pray with you for "health of mind and body."

And, we are happy to bring Penance, Anointing, and Holy Communion to the homes or hospitals of the sick or shut in. It is very helpful to **call the parish office to let us know before a hospitalization or when it has been too long** since the sacraments were last available.

HOLY MATRIMONY

Couples wishing to marry sacramentally should contact the parish office six months before they wish to celebrate the sacrament. Why so long? Because **this sacrament, not just the ceremony, requires serious preparation.** And the Church needs to be involved in that preparation. She tries to support couples through the years of their married life. For this reason our diocese offers programs to enhance married life. To learn how, watch the weekly bulletin.

let us pray

FOR THE 21ST SUNDAY

God of might, giver of every good gift, put into our hearts the love of your name, so that, by deepening our sense of reverence, and, by your watchful care, keep safe what you have nurtured.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

AND WITH POPE FRANCIS IN AUGUST

His universal intention is about sports:
That sports may be an opportunity for friendly encounters between peoples and may contribute to peace in the world.

His evangelization intention is about living the Gospel:
That Christians may live the Gospel, giving witness to faith, honesty, and love of neighbor.

AND IN SEPTEMBER

His universal intention is about the centrality of the human person:
That each may contribute to the common good and to the building of a society that places the human person at the center.

His evangelization intention is about the mission to evangelize:
That by participating in the Sacraments and meditating on Scripture, Christians may become more aware of their mission to evangelize.

in both our parishes

rcia — who is this month of Sundays for?

Please recruit now! Extend the annual invitation to come to the Catholic Church! Or to come home. Or to find out what it is that Catholic Christians actually believe — even for those who are already Catholics. You could come to help those others who are interested. Or you could postpone it for another year. Perhaps you have postponed it in the past. When do you suppose you will quit postponing and come?

The first RCIA (**Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults**) session was Aug 21. But it's not too late to join. We'll make a place for you!

The Catholic Faith has **beautiful and true answers to the questions people ask about the meaning of our lives**. Are you or is your husband or wife or a friend searching for that meaning? Do you want to find deeper unity for your marriage and family? You or someone you know may want to learn what this Faith has to offer. Not the cartoon image of Catholicism that a hostile society presents, but the Faith of the Church herself. Sometimes a person already Catholic wants to find out what it is really all about. It can be anyone, in any circumstance of life.

The RCIA helps such folks to find what they are looking for. Many people don't know of this vital resource—unless we tell them. It is not a matter for insistence or pressure. It is a sharing, an invitation that is respectful. **The invitation** will be much more attractive when extended by **someone willing to accompany the quester** along the way.

People who have benefitted personally from the RCIA experience are urged to gather with the inquirers, serving as sponsors and mentors of various kinds, to help them, if it is God's will, to become grafted onto the life of the Catholic Christian Church.

RCIA in our parishes will meet each **Sunday evening for about a month of Sundays**.

Call Kathy at 654-1893 on Tuesday morning at Bremen St Mary or any other weekday morning at St Bernadette for information.

may they rest in peace

In your charity please pray for the repose of the souls of **Tom Stover** of St Bernadette Parish and of the sister of Richard Boch, Mary Johnson, who died last week.

get ready for Mass

If it is something special, we get ready for it. That goes for Sunday Mass. The most important way to get ready is to be in—or get into—the **state of grace** so that we can receive Holy Communion worthily. Then we need to **fast** (a tough word for a very easy task) for at least an hour before we receive Communion. And we could try to prime the pump, as it were, for hearing the Word of God as it will be read that day by **reading and pondering that little portion of the Word of God**. Those are matters of spiritual readiness.

But to go to Mass is to approach the great sacramental mysteries, **approaching physically as well as spiritually**. Old-fashioned rural Protestants were on to something when they spoke of wearing their "**Sunday-go-to-meetin' clothes**." We could all **dress up** a little bit, not to show off our fancy wardrobe but to "do something beautiful for God."

And think of what we say to our kids before a trip or before a film or a concert or a ride on the ferris wheel: We tell them to **go to the**

bathroom ahead of time. Emergencies can happen to just about everybody. And each of us has the health she/he has been blessed with. But with a little extra precaution we could be (and help others to be) even more single-minded about worship and to avoid the procession to and from the rest rooms. Thanks for thinking about all these things.

Mass times and intentions

at St Bernadette		at St Mary	
4 PM	for the people	Saturday, Aug 27	
		Sunday, Aug 28	8:30 AM for the people
11 AM	for the people	Sunday, Aug 28	
8:20 AM	Juanita Keyes	Monday, Aug 29	
		Tuesday, Aug 30	8:20 AM Marie Young
8:20 AM	Hugh Messerly	Wednesday, Aug 31	
6 PM	Patrick Bingham	Thursday, Sept 1	
8:20 AM	Rose R Messerly	Friday, Sept 2	
9 AM	Elizabeth Arter	Saturday, Sept 3	
4 PM	for the people	Saturday, Sept 3	
		Sunday, Sept 4	8:30 AM for the people
11 AM	for the people	Sunday, Sept 4	

pray in church

You can come to church to adore Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament **any day, during daylight hours** at either St Bernadette or Bremen St Mary. The front doors of both churches are unlocked during the day. People praying in church are welcome to **turn a light on** when needed. They are urged to **turn off lights** when they aren't necessary.

st bernadette

welcome to st bernadette catholic school

Our goal at St. Bernadette School is to nurture and encourage, in each child, academic, spiritual, emotional, and physical development; to guide them in their choices and appreciation of the cultural arts. Our students are active participants in their education.

from the school website

PSR Classes at st bernadette

St Bernadette PSR begins Sunday, Sept 11, at 9:45 am. Parents are invited to this first session for a meeting while their children attend class. Call the office for information.

a new hymnal !

Sometime in the next few weeks, **St Michael Hymnal**, fourth edition, will be arriving at St Bernadette.

The St Michael Hymnal is the one that St Mary Bremen acquired a few years ago. It has served that parish very well. It is blue like our old hymnal, but with a different repertoire. It takes into account **the translation changes** which were implemented five years ago this Fall. It contains a lot of Spanish and Latin texts which won't have much impact on us. But it also has **the original wording of many classic hymns** without change for political correctness.

This hymnal was developed by a parish in suburban Lafayette, Indiana. It is used at St Patrick Cathedral in New York among many other parishes. We hope it will be welcome at St Bernadette.

The cost of this new resource has been borne by generous parishioners who wish to remain anonymous. So you can't say "thank you" personally, but you can indeed pray for them and their intentions.

st vincent de paul

Today the **St Vincent de Paul Society** truck will in the St Bernadette Church parking lot to accept donations of clean, usable clothing and household items. Thank you for your continued support.

ministers at Mass at st bernadette

	lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion		
Saturday, Aug 27 4 PM	Brad Rider	Isabelle Gentile, Gus & Olivia Spiegel	Tara Craaybeek Jim Kuhn Becky Kuhn	Craig Shaw Mary Steyaert Kathy Wagner	
Sunday, Aug 28 11 AM	John Hartig	Anna Hartig, Logan & Tori Loy	Lee Guinan Jim Merk Rita Merk	Larry Sanford Valerie Shaw Becky Wickham	
Monday, Aug 29 8:20 AM	Mary Jane Vajen	Jack Gentile, Carley Matson	Pat Dreyer	Kathy Kehnast	
Wednesday Aug 31 8:20 AM	Bob Christy	Brianna Hilyard, Joey Mannella	Mary Guinan	Mary Jane Vajen	
Thursday, Sept 1 6 PM	Kathy Kehnast	Becca Fuller, Mitchell Ortiz	Lee Guinan	Paul Lonergan	
Friday, Sept 2 8:20 AM	Jim Merk	Gunner Robertson, Lexi Utz		Jim & Rita Merk	
Saturday, Sept 3 9 AM	Kara Tencza	Jack Tencza		Jim & Rita Merk	
Saturday, Sept 4 4 PM	Tara Craaybeek	Kendall Cox, Clara & Susan Craaybeek	Teresa Carpenter Rose DeFillippo Lee Guinan	Marguerite Grimm Joyce Guenther Kathy Kehnast	
Sunday, Sept 4 11 AM	David Shonk	Brooke, Bryson & Zachary Vogel	Pat Dreyer Nancy Griffith Ben Peters	Teresa Scarpitti Mary Jane Vajen Amy Woo	

eucharistic adoration

St Bernadette Parish has **solemn exposition** of the Blessed Sacrament at 9 AM on **Wednesdays**. We have commitments for people to keep watch for the time from 9 AM until 1 PM. We could **extend exposition further into each Wednesday**. If you can commit to a regular presence for adoration for an hour from 1-2 or from 2-3, call Kathy at the parish office.

You can come to church to adore Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament **any day during the daylight hours**.

parish contributions

The **St Bernadette offertory collection** for Aug 21 came to \$9,706.

bremen st mary

parish contributions

The **St Mary offertory collection** for Aug 21 came to \$ 1,538.

st vincent de paul

St Vincent de Paul members will be collecting donations after Mass next Sunday. Your generosity is appreciated.

news about the parish school of religion

Thank you all for supporting our Parish School of Religion (PSR) Program. The children are filled with the joy and love of Christ and we appreciate the opportunity to be your partner in teaching them more about their faith. Please watch for **registration** forms in the parish hall and return them ASAP.

We are excited for this upcoming PSR year with Sarah Borah as a new voice for the weekly group faith discussion. We are happy to announce **this year's teachers**:

Pre-school, K & 1st grade Angi Skinner
2nd grade Wyatt Borah
3rd & 4th grade Shawna Kunkler & Cody Schmelzer
6th & 7th grade Jerry & Tyna Schmelzer

The parish is grateful to **our teachers from last year** for their dedication and time:

Sarah Borah Shawna Kunkler Angi Skinner
Cody Schmelzer Nikki Schmelzer Jerry & Tyna Schmelzer

And others who have **assisted our program**,

Wyatt Borah Cody Fyffe Abby Skinner
Sydney Rogers Tony Schmelzer Pam Redding
Angel Springer Angie & Kent Kerns
Dismas & Jodie Schmelzer

ministers at mass at bremen st mary

	lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Communion	gifts	sacristan / usher
Sunday, Aug 28 8:30 AM	Barb VanFossen-Cook	Abaigeal Bell Reagan Conrad	Irene Kunkler, Jim Schmelzer, Barb VanFossen-Cook	Catherine Noll, April Schmelzer	Jim Schmelzer
Sunday, Sept 4 8:30 AM	Karen Wolfe	Sydney Rogers Nicole Terry	Damian & Deborah Schmelzer, Karen Wolfe	Nick Schmelzer family	Damian Schmelzer

in the diocese of columbus

breakfast with the bishop

Catholic Social Services hosts **Breakfast with the Bishop** on Tuesday, Oct 4, at 7:30 AM at the Renaissance Columbus Downtown Hotel. Guest speaker is Robert Lupton, author of *Toxic Charity*. For registration and sponsorship information call (614) 221-5891 or visit www.colscss.org.

catholic men's luncheon club

The Catholic Men's Luncheon Club on Friday, Sept 2, features Don Brey who will speak at St Patrick Church on *Faith and Politics*. Holy Mass begins at 11:45 AM followed by lunch and Don's talk until about 1 PM. No reservations necessary. \$10 covers the lunch and meeting. Bring a friend. For information, contact Tim Merkle, CMLC President at htm@ejhlaw.com.

the beauty of the feminine

The 5th annual Beauty of the Feminine **Catholic Women's Conference** will happen on Saturday, Oct 8, from 8 AM to 3 PM at St Thomas Aquinas Parish in Zanesville. It is a day of fellowship, prayer and faith formation. This year's theme is "**Witness to Mercy.**" Registration is accepted until Sept 30 by calling St Thomas at (740) 453-3309 or by emailing thebeautyofthefeminine@gmail.com. Registration fee of \$20 includes breakfast and lunch. Registration on the day of the event is \$25. Contact Susan with questions or visit www.thebeautyofthefeminine.weebly.com and Facebook @ TheBeautyOfTheFeminine for information.

Sacred Heart congress

The 5th annual Sacred Heart Congress will be Saturday, Oct 15, at St Matthew Church in Columbus from 7 AM to 1 PM. It features Timothy O'Donnell, president of Christendom College; Fr Stash Dailey, spiritual director of Sacred Heart Columbus and administrator of Holy Family Parish; and Fr Ted Sill, pastor of St Matthew Parish. A free-will offering will be taken. For information and registration visit www.sacredheartcolumbus.org.

retrouvaille

If your marriage is troubled and stressed, unloving or uncaring; if you have grown cold and distant; if you are separated, or are thinking about it, don't give up. **Retrouvaille** (a French word that means "rediscovery") is a **program to help heal and support** married couples experiencing difficulties, loneliness or pain. It is also for separated or divorced couples wanting to try again. For information call (614) 296-9704 or visit www.retrouvaille.org.

help needed

The Sisters of Children of Mary just excavated 4 acres of land and they need help **clearing trees and building permanent pastures** for their cows at their convent in Newark. Any day is fine. Call (740) 323-1977. Find information at www.childrenofmary.net.

men's retreat at the shrine

The Catholic Laymen's Fall silent retreat happens at St Therese Retreat Center from 6 PM on Friday, Sept 9, through noon Mass on Sunday, Sept 11. In reflection sessions, **Fr Stephen Hayes OP** will help men to appreciate the value of the medieval crusades by developing his theme "**Taking up the Cross: Becoming Modern Crusaders for the New Jerusalem of Christ.**" Cost is \$130. For information and registration contact Charles Kielkopf at (614) 268-0175 or kielkopf.1@osu.edu.

happily ever after ... despite the rough spots

Join us for a Marriage Encounter weekend and learn ways to use your marriage's ups and downs to deepen your love for each other and for God. Why not **try a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend?** The next weekend in central Ohio is Nov 11-13. For information or to register, contact Paul or Marilou Clouse at (614) 834-6880 or visit www.wmcecolumbus.org.

courage

Do you have a same-sex attraction and desire to live a life of authentic friendship, rooted in chastity? You are not alone. **Courage** provides spiritual support for **Catholic men and women with a same-sex attraction, who strive to live chaste lives in accordance with the teachings of Christ and his Catholic Church.** Visit www.couragerc.net.

living mercy in a jubilee year

mercy: beating heart of the gospel

It is a year of mercy. That's about seeking and enjoying God's mercy to us and extending that very same mercy to other people.

Have you been to Confession, to receive God's merciful forgiveness? Have you been in recent years. Pope Francis writes that "**Mercy is the beating heart of the Gospel.**" **We seek God's mercy** because we know he is **full of mercy** and is overflowing **generous with his mercy.** Now is the time to turn to him.

God's only **requirement is that we, in our turn, be merciful.** Have you been practicing mercy? You know in what need of his mercy you are. When we stop to think about it we can discover lots of folks in need of the mercy we could offer.

The Church helps us to discover the people we need to be helpful to by teaching us the works of mercy. To live mercy, we must (re)discover both

the **spiritual works of mercy,**

- counsel the doubtful
- admonish sinners
- forgive offences
- instruct the ignorant
- comfort the afflicted
- bear patiently those who do us ill
- pray for the living and the dead,

and the **corporal works of mercy,**

- feed the hungry
- clothe the naked
- heal the sick
- bury the dead.
- give drink to the thirsty
- welcome the stranger
- visit the imprisoned

canonization of mother teresa on EWTN

Tune in to EWTN Global Catholic Network for extensive television coverage of the canonization of Mother Teresa **live from Rome on Sunday, Sept 4.** Go to ewtn.com for information and find EWTN on a channel near you by going to www.ewtn.com/channelfinder.

visit our lady of consolation

There will be a **Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation** in Carey on Wednesday, Oct 5. Cost is \$25 (lunch can be purchased at the cafeteria). Make checks payable and send reservations by Sept 7 to Margaret Kronenbitter, 2700 Wayne Ridge Rd., Zanesville, Ohio 43701. For information, call Ann Messerly at (740) 654-3447 or Rita Merk at (740) 654-3255.

in the deanery

fisher catholic high school: advisory board

The pastor must appoint **two new members to the FCHS advisory board to advise the administration of the school.** A person does not need to be a Fisher parent or alum. The main requirement is that an adult parishioner be a practicing Catholic member of St Bernadette Parish who is concerned about how Fisher can continue in support of the high school's purpose: to help parents educate their young to be faithful Catholic Christians, good citizens, and good husbands or wives, good fathers or mothers. The term of service is two years. Interested applicants should contact Fr Kessler during August.

fisher fall festival

The Fisher Fall Festival happens Friday, Sept 9, from 5-10 PM and Saturday, Sept 10, from 5-11 PM. Enjoy inflatables, children's games, adult games of skill, K of C Fish Fry, Bob's Backyard Barbeque, a beer garden, and other entertainment. Contact Eileen Gundelfinger at (740) 277-7063 with questions.

on the web

the national catholic register

It is **the best Catholic newspaper in the United States**. Like all newspapers in this new era of electronics, they were on hard times a few years ago. EWTN, Mother Angelica's broadcasting arm, bought the struggling paper, but kept it a first rate source of information about the Catholic Church and about the Catholic point of view on modern life. The pastor subscribes to the hard copy. He looks at their website before the paper arrives by snail mail. St Bernadette Parish provides it for members of parish council. But the app is not to be missed. It is a really great convenient way to keep in touch.

Our Sunday Visitor

Another good Catholic newspaper has another good web resource. Our Sunday Visitor calls its app **365 Days of Mercy**.

the word on fire

Remember **Catholicism**? That was the TV series written and hosted on PBS and EWTN TV a few years back by **Father Robert Barron** a very smart and very engaging priest from Chicago. Recordings were presented and discussed in lots of parishes, including St Bernadette. If you liked **Catholicism**, you will probably like now-Bishop Barron's (auxillary Bishop of Los Angeles for about a year now) **Sunday homily podcast**. It is a really good weekly source of reflection on the Scripture readings of the week. It takes fifteen minutes each week, and is easily listened to during one trip between Bremen and Lancaster. Podcasts are great that way. By following Bp Barron you can do something about the quality of the sermons you hear on Sunday. (When polled some Catholics complain about that.) You won't be

able to say that you aren't being nourished by the Word of God. The bishop's production organization is called **Word on Fire**. That says it pretty well. Subscribe. You will be grateful for this recommendation.

EWTN has its own app

It is called, not surprisingly, **EWTN**.

saint bernadette parish has a website !

The address is stbernadetteparish.net. And it hosts the **bulletin and information about St Mary Bremen as well as St Bernadette**. Maybe we should have called it by both parish names. But that would have made it more difficult to google. The important thing is that it has information and bulletins, etc, for parishioners of both parishes. And for people who want to keep in touch with our parishes.

and so does the vatican

You probably already knew about it, but it can be a problem to google, because some fakes put up anti-Catholic websites with Vatican in their name. **Home for the real thing is Vatican.va**. One very helpful place to turn to find out what the Church really teaches is **the Catechism (book length) page** at http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM

confessions & weekday Mass nearby

These times sometimes change, though, so call ahead

parish	confessions	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Bremen St Mary	8 am Sunday		8:20 AM				
Lancaster St Bernadette	5:30 Thursday 3 PM Saturday; 8:30 AM on 1 st Sat	8:20 AM		8:20 AM	6 PM	8:20 AM	1 st Sat 9 AM
Lancaster St Mary	4 PM Saturday	7 AM	9 AM	7 AM	9 AM		
Lancaster St Mark	5:30 PM Saturday	8 AM	8 AM	6 PM	8 AM	8 AM	
Sugar Grove St Joseph	½ hour before Mass	8 AM	NOON	8 AM	NOON	8 AM	
Circleville St Joseph	4 PM Saturday	9 AM	7 PM	9 AM		9 AM	10 AM
Logan St John	4 PM Saturday	8 AM	8 AM	9 AM		8 AM	9 AM

the Church's plan for reading God's word this week

Sat Sun	Aug 27 Aug 28	22 nd Sunday	Sirach	3:17-29	Hebrews 12:18-24	Psalm 68	Luke	14:1-14
Mon	Aug 29	Passion of St John the Baptist	1 Corinthians	2:1-5		Psalm 119	Mark	6:17-29
Tues	Aug 30		1 Corinthians	2:10-16		Psalm 145	Luke	4:31-37
Weds	Aug 31		1 Corinthians	3:1-9		Psalm 33	Luke	4:38-44
Thurs	Sept 1		1 Corinthians	3:18-23		Psalm 24	Luke	5:1-11
Fri	Sept 2		1 Corinthians	4:1-5		Psalm 37	Luke	5:33-39
Sat	Sept 3	St Gregory the Great	1 Corinthians	4:6-15		Psalm 145	Luke	6:1-5
Sun	Sept 4	23 rd Sunday	Wisdom	9:13-18	Philemon 9-17	Psalm 90	Luke	14:25-33

When Someone Leaves the Church

Families hurt when a member leaves the Church. They should. If they don't care, they are shrugging off **something awfully important**.

Sometimes it is a matter of adolescent rebellion against the ways of the previous generation. Then it usually is not a lasting departure. Sometimes it is the rejection of the Faith by someone who just doesn't want to go to the trouble that fidelity requires. But for people who treasure their Catholic Faith, who went to some trouble to pass it on as their most precious heritage to the ones they love most, it is traumatic to see a younger generation or dear friends just chuck it.

Many of us have **ancestors who did indeed go to a lot of trouble to keep the Faith**. If you are of Irish descent, for instance, you probably have had Catholic ancestors who suffered economic persecution, often crippling their resources with confiscatory fines, for not attending the assembly of the established Protestant denomination that was imposed from outside. If your people are from Western Europe, your ancestors may have been victims of the brutal and murderous persecution that was unleashed on many counties by the French revolution. If your people come from Eastern Europe, you might be aware of the persecution your cousins underwent from communists or Nazis or the Third Reich. And such persecution has extended to Catholic countries, to nearby places, and into our own times. In Mexico and in Spain, within living memory, people were often put to death for their adherence to the Catholic Faith. This has been a permanently recurring aspect of the life of serious Catholics. And **our Catholic Faith is a faith worth dying for**. This explains the hymn most of us grew up knowing

Faith of our fathers, living still,
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword;
O how our hearts beat high with joy
Whenever we hear that glorious Word!
Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

Faith of our fathers, we will strive
To win all nations unto Thee;
And through the truth that comes from God,
We all shall then be truly free.
Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

Faith of our fathers, we will love
Both friend and foe in all our strife;
And preach Thee, too, as love knows how
By kindly words and virtuous life.
Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

The sense of the phrase "We will be true to thee till death" is not merely "for all the rest of our lives"; it also means "**even to the point of dying for it**."

The claims of our Catholic Faith are true or they are not true. The demands of the Church oblige us or they do not oblige us. It is worth staking your life on or it is not worth staking your life on. I believe it is the True Faith. I believe that **the Church's demands oblige us**. I believe it is worth staking my life on. A "Catholic Lite" which waters all that down is just not worth the bother.

In our era, for lots of different reasons, many young (and not so young) people drop out of the Faith. They quit going to Mass; they marry out of the Church; they don't have their children baptized in the Faith; they don't bring their children to church or to religious education; they allow adolescents to opt out of attendance; they even chose other Faiths to raise their children in. These are **behaviors that are sinful**.

I wish I could water down that last sentence, say something like "These behaviors aren't nice," "aren't the best we can do." I'd like to say something less offensive, something that doesn't make me sound judgmental. But we must make a judgment. God does. And he tells us the judgment that he makes. We must decide for the truth. "Jesus said to them, 'Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.'" (John 6:53).

So, if we determine to follow the ways Jesus taught the Church in determining that some behaviors are sinful, what are we saying? That a person, our loved one, is damned? No, but rather, that **behaviors by which a person abandons the Faith are seriously, mortally sinful**. The person who commits these acts — or, more typically drifts into them, has done the wrong thing. Is that person guilty of the sin? That judgment is for God to make. We know that **a person is guilty only if three things apply**: 1) it is **serious matter** (and this is serious matter); 2) **the person knows that it is serious matter** (they should know this; why don't they?); 3) the person gives **full consent of the will**. All three of these must apply for the person to be guilty of the mortal sin of leaving the Church.

You might say, isn't this awfully inconsistent? After all, there are many fine, indeed saintly, members of other Christian ecclesial communities. These are people we love—people we should love. And when a non-Catholic person, Christian or otherwise, becomes a Catholic, we welcome that person as a convert or as an entrant into the full communion of the Catholic Church. But here we are discussing a serious sin in the case of a Catholic who seems to be taking the same trip in the other direction. Isn't that hypocritical?

If it really were the same trip, it would be. If there were lots of truth out there and we each could pick and choose the truths we like best, then it would be making too much of a small matter. But there is a difference, if the Catholic Church is teaching the truth — and **Catholics are people who joyfully stake their lives on this truth. The Truth isn't up to me to determine**. The Catholic is the fellow who accepts that **Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that he has built his Church on the apostle Peter** (notice that it is not just "the church of your choice" which you can construct or deconstruct as you see fit), **that this Church of his can be relied on in her teaching because Jesus promised to be with her and gave Peter and his successors the keys of the kingdom of heaven, gave him the job of tending the flock. Through this Church of Jesus', we have membership in the very Body of Christ, we have access to all seven of the sacraments**. To enter this, from wherever we come, is a fine thing; to drop out is, at best, a disturbing thing; it cannot be neutral. When it is our loved ones who are involved, we cannot be neutral.

I have loved ones who have left the Faith, you say; how should I deal with them? Just lightening up and saying it's no big deal, different strokes, and all that, is not **an option for someone who takes Jesus seriously**. Nor is rejection and resentment. **Prayer and support of the loved one, without ever stopping loving them, is the real need**. And so is **the gentle but firm insistence on the truth and on the humble invitation to return** to the way of the Lord Jesus.

—Father Kessler

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