

Dear Parishioners

Last Sunday in my homily, I mentioned that just as we know we can always go to Jesus the Lamb of God to receive mercy, we should also pray to the Holy Spirit for “free re-fills” of His fire and grace. The article below from the *Word Among Us* explains how the Holy Spirit re-fills us through the sacraments.

With my prayers,
Fr. Conley

How the Holy Spirit Brings the Sacraments to Life

When a mother hugs her son, that embrace is a visible, tangible sign of her love for him. It tells her son, “I love you.” When a student graduates from medical school, the diploma she receives is a visible, tangible sign that conveys an invisible truth. That diploma tells everyone, “This person now has enough training and experience to begin to practice medicine.”

This is one way to understand the sacraments and the Holy Spirit’s work in them. All seven sacraments use visible realities: water, oil, and salt at Baptism, bread and wine for Communion, the laying on of hands and chrism at Confirmation. These are all visible signs that speak of an interior work of the Spirit in our lives. But by the power of the Spirit, these signs are transformed and actually bring about the work of God they signify: the water actually cleanses us from sin. The bread and wine actually become Jesus’ Body and Blood. And the chrism actually seals us with the gift of the Spirit.

Now, let’s suppose that the boy receiving his mother’s hug has just come off of a temper tantrum and is still upset with his mother. Does that make her hug any less real? Does it mean less because her son is not open to receiving the love she is offering? No. The mother’s love is clearly there; it just isn’t changing her son all that much.

Similarly, St Augustine taught that the grace of each sacrament is always poured out on us when we receive them. So even if an infant child is asleep during her Baptism, she is still made into a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). And, even if the priest who hears our Confession is mired in his own sin, we are still truly forgiven when he pronounces the words of absolution. And even if we are completely distracted during Mass, we still receive Jesus himself, Body and Blood, soul and divinity, in Communion.

Bound and Unbound Sacramental Grace. Clearly, there is a correlation between the effects that the sacraments have on our lives and the level of our openness and receptivity to the Lord. As many Fathers of the Church have said, sacraments can be “bound up” by the condition of the person receiving the sacrament.

This means that the effect of God’s grace is limited. It means that we are not experiencing the grace that is always present in that sacrament. Whether it’s indifference, hardness of heart, active sin, or unbelief, our attitudes and dispositions make a crucial difference.

It’s a simple formula, really. If we come to Confession knowing how much we need God’s mercy, we are more likely to experience that mercy in a way that helps us change. If we come to Communion filled with gratitude for Jesus’ death and resurrection, our hearts will be lifted up by his love as we receive him.

By contrast, if we make little time for Jesus, if we choose to remain in sin, or if we approach with dullness and lack of expectation, we’ll feel as if we didn’t get anything out of the sacrament. Think about Judas Iscariot. He received the Bread of Life at the Last Supper, but it had no real effect on his mind or his decision.

Sacraments are not magical. They’re not like an aspirin we can take to get rid of our pain. The sacraments are filled with God’s grace, but the effectiveness of that grace depends on our yielding to God and saying yes to him. God will never impose himself on us. He looks for us to open our hearts and say, “Jesus, I need your grace and I want your grace.”

The Spirit and the Sacraments. The Holy Spirit is intimately involved in each of the sacraments. This truth was emphasized in a special way around the time of the Second Vatican Council. Scripture urges us to be “filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18; Acts 6:3). It describes God’s promise to “pour out” his Spirit (Acts 2:17, 18) and about our need to be “clothed” with the power of the Spirit (Luke 24:49).

All of these images, as well as the words of countless theologians, convey the idea of something different – the Holy Spirit – coming upon us and becoming a part of us. They all talk about how the Spirit wants to change us through the sacraments so that we can become more and more like Jesus. They all describe the action of the Holy Spirit, whom we received at our Baptism, as he releases more of his grace and love into our lives. This filling, this pouring out, this clothing us, this is the heart of each sacrament and at the heart of the effect that sacrament has upon us.

So every time you participate in a sacrament, be as open to the Spirit as you can. Remember that he is always there, ready to work in you. Ask the Holy Spirit to “open totally new horizons” and “make a deep impression” on you with each and every sacrament you receive. Ask him to “transform” you “over a long period of time,” so that you can know the warm embrace of your heavenly Father.

MASS this Wednesday, the Fourth of July will be at 9:30am. Come and pray for our nation!

PRAYER GROUP MEETING THIS THURSDAY

Our Prayer group meets this Thursday from 6:30 to 8:30 and dinner will be served. Everyone is invited to come and join us for Spirit-filled praise and worship of our Lord. Please contact Fr. Conley to sign up frconley@comcast.net.

AMAZING OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR PARISH!

An anonymous parishioner has pledged to match donations to our Well Fund up to the amount of \$61,250, which is half of the cost of the project. As of this week we have raised \$40, 277.00.

So, if we can raise just \$20,000 more, the entire cost of the well project will be covered without us having to deplete our savings. Please, if you haven't contributed to the fund yet or can contribute a bit more, your donation will be doubled in value. As our generous donor put it, "Let's get this project done!"

PILGRIMAGE TO ITALY! OCTOBER 2019

Come join Fr. Conley and many for your fellow parishioners on a pilgrimage to Rome, Sorrento, Naples, Assisi and more. See firsthand the major shrines and basilicas of Rome, visit the Sistine Chapel, the Vatican museums, Padre Pio's church where he received the stigmata, the Eucharistic miracle of Lanciano, and much, much more. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included and accommodations are first class. Dates are 10/13/19-10-23/19 with a possible extension to Florence. For more detailed information visit our website at www.pilgrimages.cpm/frconley or contact Sam Oliver at Samuel_oliver@comcast.net or at 301-848-3206.

MOVIE "SEXUAL REVOLUTION"

Join us for dinner and a movie at St. Joseph Church, Pomfret on Friday, July 27. Food and fellowship begins at 6:30pm and the film begins at 7:30pm. Celebrating the beauty of the Church's teaching on married love, join us for a viewing of "Sexual Revolution: 50 Years Since Humanae Vitae", a brand new film that examines the effects of the free-love experiment on the Hippie Generation and the prophetic encyclical Humanae Vitae. Food, film and childcare are all FREE (donations gratefully accepted). RSVP to: <https://tinyurl.com/StJoesMovie>.

THE WILD GOOSE: Discovering a Deeper Relationship with the Holy Spirit Twice a month on Thursday evenings from 6:30-8:45 in the hall. Dinner included. Cost is \$10. Join fellow parishioners for learning, discussion, prayer & praise about the Holy Spirit! Sessions continue on 7/12, 7/26, 8/9, 8/23. It doesn't matter if you can't attend every session. Each night will have its own graces. You can sign up in the foyer or by contacting Fr. Conley at 301-870-2220 ext 13 or frconley@comcast.net

EVANGELIZATION WORKSHOP SATURDAY, AUGUST 4 AT SACRED HEART CHURCH

The workshop will be presented by Adam Janke from St. Paul Street Evangelization. This organization specializes in training people in learning how to introduce others to Jesus Christ in a non-confrontational, joyful way. The workshop begins at 9 AM with Mass and will be over by 3 PM. Lunch will be supplied. There is no charge for the workshop. If you would like to attend please contact Fr. Conley frconley@comcast.net

WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

Don't take a vacation from your marriage! Come learn a technique of loving communication that you can use for the rest of your lives. It is a chance to look deeply into your relationship with each other and with God. Fill your marriage with joy! Sign up today to attend one of the upcoming Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekends on August 3-5, 2018 in Hanover, MD, or November 2-4, 2018 in Gaithersburg, MD. Go to moments4marriage.org to sign-up or call 301-541-7007.

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MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Glendon E. Heiston, 10am Maurice Long, Sr., **12N:** Parishioners, **MON:** 8am Msgr. James Beattie, **TUES:** 8am Betty Sasso, **WED:** 8am James Gibson, **THURS:** 8am Joseph L. Jones, **FRI:** 9:30am Maurice Long, Sr., **SAT:** 9am Tom Keelan, 4pm Paul Istvan.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY

PRAYERS: Stephen Balenger, Mary Bowes, Bill Branick, Deacon Gene Burroughs, Brenda Callahan, Frances Card, Joe Cross, Agnes Curtis, Chuck Davis, James S. Dorsey, Kendall Farrell, George Fassel, Arlene Gandolfi, Martha Gehring, James Gibson, Judy Istvan-Windsor, Irma Johnson, Regina Kijesky, Marie Knobel, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, Jim Middleton, Mary Emma Middleton, Larry Miller, Joseph Mona, Wayne Mullings, Ryan Myers, Joseph Quade, Mary Reeves, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Eva Washington, Beth Weise, Tim Welch, Brice Zimmer.

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND:

\$7,621.51. The unidentified donations totaled \$645.26. We received \$15.00 for our school support.