

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

As human beings, made in God's image and likeness, we all share some fundamental desires which shape our lives. These include the desires for love, beauty, goodness and life itself. Another desire we all have is for justice or fairness. The fact that our desires for love, life and justice are never fully satisfied in this life is an indication that we are made for more than what this life is able to offer. We are made for life after this life where, in the presence of our Creator, we will experience the fulfillment of all the desires He has given us. However, until that time we need to learn how to live with our unfulfilled desires for love, beauty, goodness, life and justice. The essay below offers some suggestions on how we can go about this.

With my prayers,
Fr. Conley

When Life Isn't Fair

By Abby Kowitz from *Mind & Spirit* online Magazine July 24, 2018

Have you ever heard the saying, "Comparison is the devil's poison"? I've found it to be true. If I judge myself better than the other, I run the risk of pride, yet if I judge myself to be worse off, I run the risk of self-pity and jealousy. Lose-lose. However, there are some things that are so in-your-face that you can't help but compare, the stark contrast between your life and another's can be so intense that one can't help but to think, "What if I were in their shoes?"

Clear Injustice

As a counselor at a transitional homeless shelter, I find myself in this predicament on a daily basis. The good news is that it has cultivated a deep gratitude within my heart, for though my suffering is real and I can't deny the existence of my own problems, I can look at my life objectively, see the safety and comfort within it, not to mention the amazing people and experiences, and thank God for all he has given me. Rather than this recognition that I am far better off than basically all of my clients pointing me towards pride, it's fostered within me a questioning spirit, and even a slight anger, at the clear injustice of it all. Though all that I have is a gift, why didn't others get the same?

Though we are all human, created by God innately good with a blueprint stamped within our souls of what leads to happiness and flourishing, it seems that we don't all get the same chance to pursue this goodness and live a happy life. We don't all begin at the same starting gate, and even if we do, it seems that some get time in the penalty box along the way.

Some people are born with two parents eagerly anticipating their arrival with a freshly painted nursery and a savings accounting already accumulating interest.

Others are a "mistake" that are begrudgingly looked after. Some people's visions are veiled by trauma, others are relatively sheltered.

Searching for Fairness

The only way that some have learned to cope is through addiction and substance abuse, others have never even found themselves in the situation where drugs were an option. As hard as it is for me to walk into the environment of the homeless shelter day after day, at the end of the day, I also get to walk out...and blast the music in my car (and maybe even swing by Starbucks) on the way to my safe and comfortable home, while for my clients, that shelter is their home. To use a classic line from my childhood that I'd often blurt out when my older sisters got to do something I didn't—"it's just not fair."

Scaling the situation back, I think that search for fairness is applicable to all of our lives. Even though we know we probably shouldn't, we *do* compare. We look at one another's lives, see where others are excelling vs. where we are lacking, and bemoan the injustice of it all. Whether it's a relationship status, number or gender of children, job promotions, you name it! We each have an area of life that seems to be deficient, regardless of whether that deficiency is merely perceived or actual.

We want life to be fair, but it just isn't. A practical response to that reality is to suck it up, be thankful for what you do have, accept what you don't, and work hard for the things in the middle. But what about the bigger picture? What about morality? If we are all to be judged on the lives we lived, how does fairness, or lack thereof, play into our salvation?

We All Make Choices

Questioning the unfairness of life and how it pertains to our redemption is a thought that keeps me awake most nights. Though I'm only a lowly-counselor and by no means in a position to judge the morality of other's lives, I'm struck by the fact that it is simply easier for some people to adhere to truth than it is for others. Yes, we all make choices and are accountable for those choices, but some people objectively have the odds stacked in their favor while others don't. With that in mind, what's the appropriate response?

When I have clients confide in me that they like to get high and hook up, I know from the truths of my faith and common sense that such a lifestyle does not lead towards their happiness. But I can also look at their life situation and think, "yeah, I'd might do that too." Simultaneous to that thought, I fear that I am developing a relativistic attitude, in which case, why adhere to my faith at all? Why not just do what provides some much-needed relief? Surely God understands?

Navigating Understanding and Condoning

I have come across two distinctions to help me navigate these murky waters of life. The first is between understanding and condoning. While it's true that in

many cases aberrant human behavior is understandable (again, if in similar situations, I'd probably do that too, whatever "that" is), I can still recognize that it isn't good or healthy. For the person to truly heal that behavior, while so understandable, needs to change. Secondly, and more importantly, is the reminder that I'm not the judge. God is. And the amazing part is, he looks at us holistically and takes *everything* into account—our temperament and personality, our God-given level of resilience, where we were at when we made the choices we did, all of our life-experiences, and which gate we started off at.

As St. Therese of Lisieux says, "God's justice is his mercy." Our God is a God of understanding—understanding our lives and our circumstances even better than we do, and his justice, he will show each of us his mercy. Now if that's not fair, I don't know what is.

THIS WEDNESDAY IS THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AND A HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION. Masses will be offered at 8am & 7:30pm. Come and honor the Mother of our Lord Jesus!

MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE FUND TO REPLACE OUR WELL SYSTEM. We are especially grateful to the parishioner who pledged \$61,250 to cover half of the total cost.

PRAISE & WORSHIP GATHERING this Thursday, Aug 16, from 7 to 8:30pm in the hall. Our gathering will be preceded by dinner at 6:30pm. PLEASE contact Fr. Conley to sign up: frconley@comcast.net

UNBOUND FREEDOM IN CHRIST CONFERENCE PRESENTED BY FOUNDERS, NEAL & JANET LOZANO

September 14th-15th, 2018 @ St. Philip Neri 6405 Orchard Road, Linthicum, MD 21090. Unbound is a ministry of freedom & healing which releases the power of the Gospel into our lives. We all have areas in our lives where we don't experience freedom. These can be wounds from our past, patterns of habitual sin, addictions, negative thoughts, resentments, and other forms of spiritual difficulty. Jesus came to set us free by breaking the power of evil and revealing the Love of God. At an Unbound conference, you will learn how to gain greater freedom from these influences by using the Five Spiritual Keys taught in the Unbound Model. This conference will equip you to cooperate with God as he sets you free. For more information and to register please go to www.UnboundMinistryMaryland.com.

IGNITE MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP – 6th, 7th and 8th grade - We'll have our 2nd Annual trip to River Valley Ranch in Manchester, MD, for their Fall Youth Retreat.

The trip was a huge success last year, and we're looking forward to another great experience in nature, in Christ and in each other.

We'll leave SMB on Friday, September 7th at 4:30, and return to SMB on Sunday afternoon, September 9th.

We'll attend mass Sunday morning at St. Bartholomew in Manchester.

Cost is \$150 per camper, which includes programs, meals, activities, and housing accommodations. We'll need a \$50 deposit by August 20th.

Please contact Karen Krechman at karen.krechman@gmail.com or 301- 751- 3200 for more information.

RELIGIOUS GOODS STORE NEEDS HELP

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

Please support our advertising sponsors. This week we recognize Hooper & Associates

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Russell Makle, 10am Parishioners,

12N: Paul Therres, **MON:** 8am Clarence Davis,

TUES: 8am Jessie Chlysta, **WED:** 8am Donald Pobst,

THURS: 8am Jessie Chlysta, **FRI:** 9:30am Betty Sasso,

SAT: 9am Joanne Weingarden, 4pm Janine Burch.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY

PRAYERS: Stephen Balenger, Mary Bowes, Deacon Gene Burroughs, Brenda Callahan, Frances Card, Joe Cross, Agnes Curtis, Chuck Davis, Kendall Farrell, George Fassel, Arlene Gandolfi, Martha Gehring, James Gibson, Zynae Green, 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: \$10,193.51. The unidentified donations totaled \$611.51. We received \$735.00 for our School Support.