

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

Many of the teachings of Jesus challenge us to reconsider our ways of thinking and acting. In our gospel reading two Sundays ago, He told us that if those who rank first in His eyes are those who choose to be the servants of everyone else. Last Sunday, we heard that it would be better for us to cut off our hands and feet and gouge out our eyes rather than commit serious sin. Then we have His teaching in today's Gospel. When Jesus is asked about the practice of divorce he responds by saying, *Whoever divorces his wife and marries commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.*

In spite of this very clear teaching of Jesus, the sad fact is that in the last fifty years Christians have been practicing divorce at an alarming rate. It is painful to everyone involved and it is hurting our society as a whole.

Our readings today tell about the Lord's institution of matrimony and the wonderful life of unity to which husbands and wives are called. I think that if people made more of an effort to understand, accept and live-by what Jesus teaches us about the nature of marriage, we wouldn't have so many Christians getting divorced. These readings from Genesis and the Gospel of St. Mark present to us the fundamental necessities for a happy and enduring marriage.

First of all, the readings make it clear that it is God's plan that marriage is the union of one man and one woman for life. Marriage is not merely a social custom which can be redefined as people like. According to God's plan the complementarity of male and female is essential for a true marriage. The complementarity of a man and a woman is essential for procreation but it goes way beyond the simply physical. Men and women called to marriage complement, that is complete each other intellectually, emotionally and even spiritually. Under the Mosaic law that the Pharisees were asking Jesus about a man was allowed to divorce his wife but she had no such right. In His teaching on marriage Jesus was reminding the Pharisees that by God's design not only is marriage for life but it is a partnership, a partnership that is so close that "the two become one flesh."

Secondly, since the marriage of a man and a woman is part of the Lord's plan, it's foundation goes way beyond mere feelings or emotions. Loving another person requires that we make an act of our will to love. It is the response to a call, a vocation, a divine calling that the spouses have received. In response to the Lord's call they promise to God and to each other to give themselves to each other for life. This presents a challenge for those thinking about marriage. They need to ask: "does my desire, our desire to be married come from God?" And they should pray for His guidance before making this most serious and lifelong commitment. Because no one will ever be truly happy by simply asking themselves "what do I want to do?" or "what do we want to do?" The real question to ask is "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Parents and grandparents should urge their children & grandchildren to think in these terms. Teach your children to pray for guidance about important decisions by doing so as a family.

The fact that marriage is a vocation should bring great encouragement to those of you who have received the call to the sacrament of marriage. If a couple has freely entered a sacramental marriage and has been honest about their

intentions to be faithful to each other for life, and open to accepting the gift of children, then, no matter what happens, no matter how difficult things can be, you can be sure of one thing -the Lord will be there for you at every moment. The Lord has called you together so that you may help each other and your children along the road to salvation. In short, you have received the sacrament of marriage so that you may become saints together. The Lord will be there for you every step of the way if you let Him into your lives.

A third necessity for a happy marriage that the readings bring out is the need for a mature, self-sacrificing love. This is what the Bible means when it says that the man must leave his father and mother and cling to his wife. In leaving their parents the new spouses are also called to move beyond their dependent love for their parents for a new, sacrificial love for their spouse. This is a big challenge I think more people especially in our time. Our society encourages all of us to act like selfish teenagers regardless of our ages. Married couples mature from always being children who are mostly on the receiving end of love to become adults who are looking for ways to give themselves in love. They are also to leave behind all selfishness and self-seeking and anything that is an obstacle to their unity. They are to give up their fear of love and embrace self-surrender because marriage means giving not just a part of yourself but rather giving everything that love requires.

A fourth essential component for a happy marriage is gratitude. In the Genesis story, when God presents the woman to the man he exclaims, "this one at last". This is reflected in our first reading when God presents the first woman to the first man. We can hear his delight in his words "this one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." You can see this same delight in men and women who are happily married. They are delighted by the partnership and companionship they share with each other. Just as I as a priest need to thank the Lord each day for the gift of my calling, you who have been called to be husbands and wives must remember not to take the gift of your spouse for granted. You should pray each day in thankfulness for your husband or wife for being God's gift to you, what an amazing miracle it is that God created another person who actually wants to spend their entire life with you! Your spouse is the one God chose to be your companion on the road to heaven. This applies also to those of you whose spouses have gone before you to their reward. You may for the present not be able to see them, and talk to them and hold them as you did before, but they haven't ceased being the Lord's gift to you. From heaven, with their prayers, they are loving you still.

So these are the three dispositions that are essential for a happy and holy marriage then -understanding marriage as God's plan, a divine calling that couples answer, which requires self-sacrificing love, and which is strengthened by practicing gratitude.

Of course not all marriages are happy or holy. I encourage those of you who are not happy with the state of your marriage to look into counseling with someone who believes in what Jesus teaches about marriage.

Then, too, there are those who have experienced a broken marriage and divorce. Catholics who have gone through this should explore the possibility of obtaining an annulment. An annulment is essentially a decision by the Church's marriage court that even though a couple went through the marriage

ceremony, the “two in one flesh” unity that Jesus speaks about never happened. Therefore it was not a sacramental marriage. Should the marriage court reach this decision, the persons involved could be married in the Catholic Church. If any of you would like more information about this please contact me. “From the beginning of creation, God made them male and female...and the two shall become one flesh.” The Lord offers a wonderful life plan for those called to sacramental marriage. It can be a challenge at times but it also brings so many joys and blessings. The sacrament of matrimony is God’s gift to you.

With my prayers,
Fr. Conley

PRAY THE ROSARY! This Sunday is the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary and the month of October is dedicated to her. Please remember to pray the Rosary for yourselves, our Church and our country.

Our Blessed Mother is delighted to intercede for us! Rosaries and instructions on how to pray the Rosary are available at our religious goods store.

WORLD MISSION SUNDAY

During the weekend of October 13-14, the Archdiocese of Washington will celebrate World Mission Sunday.

Through the work of these churches, and their witness to Christ, the poor receive practical help and experience God’s love and mercy that renews hope and peace. Thank you for your generosity!

ST. MARY’S SCHOOL IS HAVING THEIR ANNUAL \$60,000 RAFFLE STARTING. You may purchase a ticket on your own for \$100 or consider purchasing a ticket with your friends, family or co-workers. Split the ticket cost and the winnings. There are 20 opportunities to win cash prizes adding up to \$60,000. Your ticket enters you in all 20 drawings. Our first drawing for \$1,000 will be held on October 19th at the school’s Annual Fall Festival. The Grand Prize Drawing of \$20,000 will be held on March 1, 2019.

GRIEVING WITH GREAT HOPE

Have you recently lost a loved one and are looking for help in grieving? Immaculate Conception, Mechanicsville, MD will have *Grieving with Great Hope*, a Catholic based program. Deacon Bill will begin a five week program on **Wednesday, October 10th** at 7:00 pm in the Parish Center. For more information, contact Deacon Bill (240-230-3167).

THE FINAL DINNERFEST PLANNING MEETING will be held on October 24th, in the School at 6:30 pm.

We Need Help!! Please consider attending and volunteering. For more information, please contact Ellen Bowles: 301-472-4247 or heresellen@hotmail.com

GOLDEN ANGELS NOTICE

There will not be a Golden Angels Get Together for the month of October. The next activity will be during the Christmas holidays.

THERE WILL NOT BE A MORNING MASS THIS WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 10TH.

ST. MARY’S WILL HAVE BREAKFAST AFTER THE 8:00 AM & 10:00 AM MASSES ON OCTOBER 21.

ST. MARY’S HEALING PRAYER MINISTRY

The mission of our healing prayer ministry is to help people to have a personal encounter with the Lord and experience his healing love. We do this by praying with people who are seeking physical, emotional and spiritual healing. Our healing prayer ministry is founded on our confidence in God the Father, who has given us every spiritual blessing in the heavens; Jesus Christ the Son who has redeemed us by his blood; And the Holy Spirit who fills us with the fire of his love. Persons seeking prayer from the healing prayer ministry will be given the opportunity to make an appointment with a prayer team for one or two confidential prayer sessions. To make an appointment to meet with one of our healing prayer teams, please contact Kaye Oliver at 240-682-0646 or Sam Oliver at 301-848-3206. Email can be sent to Samuel_Oliver@comcast.net If you have any questions about this new ministry in our parish, Father Conley would be happy to speak to you about it. You may call him at 301-870-2220, ext 13 or email at frconley@comcast.net

THE SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE is asking for your help with the parish annual Thanksgiving Food Basket Program. The program supports our local families who are in need by providing them with a food basket. There will be containers in the rear of the church for your donations of non-perishable food items. Once the Thanksgiving Program has ended, we will resume taking all food donations to our local food pantries. The second collection on October 27th and 28th will be used to purchase supermarket gift cards, which will be included in the food baskets. As always, thank you for your support!

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Parishioners, 10am Frank Kerns,
12N: Lillian V. Krasnansky, **MON:** 8am Rose DiCanna,
TUES: 8am Kathleen Conway, **WED:** 8am **NO MASS**,
THURS: 8am Laurence Gregory, **FRI:** 9:30am Don Pobst, **SAT:** 9am Ernest J, Keller, Jr., 4pm Jeannette & Ivan Schedel.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS:

Stephen Balenger, Mary Bowes, Brenda Callahan, Joe Cross, Agnes Curtis, Chuck Davis, Susan Welch Day, Kendall Farrell, Keith Van Gadson, Arlene Gandolfi, Martha Gehring, James Gibson, Zynae Green, Judy Istvan-Windsor, Irma Johnson, Regina Kijesky, Marie Knobel, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, Larry Miller, Joseph Mona, Wayne Mullings, Ryan Myers, Mary Reeves, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Eva Washington, Beth Weise, Pat Werner, Gary Williams, Brice Zimmer.

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND:

\$10,290.77. The unidentified donations totaled \$496.27. We received \$70.00 for our School Support.