

**FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK**

Dear Parishioners,

Jesus Christ, our Lord wants to come into our hearts.

But He does not force Himself upon us. During this time of preparation for Christmas we should ask the Holy Spirit to show us if there are areas of our lives that we have closed off to Jesus. Coming to Confession at our Penance Service this week is His invitation to open all the doors in our hearts.

With my prayers,  
Fr. Conley

**Spirituality of Advent by Fr. David Merconi, S.J.**

edited and adapted

Advent is a time of preparation. It has many parallels to Lent: we don the purple, we suppress the *Gloria* (awaiting the angels to sing it again for the first time at Midnight Mass), and we are given weeks to allow the Holy Spirit to prepare our hearts to receive the Son of God. While Lent prepares us to receive him resurrected and glorified, we prepare now to meet him humble and needy. This is an invitation that goes out to all the world year after year. The liturgical seasons call us all back yet again. The sacred events which these days celebrate may have occurred in history only once, but we mercurial mortals need to revisit them again and again in order to appropriate what we can of these infinite mysteries. We are the Church on pilgrimage and until we "get it right." This Church will never tire of calling us back to continue to live out the mysteries of Christ in our own life.

Every action that Christ instituted for our salvation is transmitted to us liturgically so as to be appropriated by each of us mystically. Think of the "overshadowing" of the Holy Spirit when Our Lady began to give human life to the Christ Child. That same action is continued in the Epiclesis of the Mass when the priest's hands "overshadow" the bread and the wine, which are then beginning to be transformed from that which was once natural and impersonal into a supernatural person. That Eucharistic action is performed solely for the sake of the sanctification of Christ's Church — consecrated not simply to be adored but to be assimilated into the lives of each present. Again, this is key to understanding what we do Sunday after Sunday, season after season: the historical is transmitted by the liturgical for the sake of the mystical.

This is why Saint John Paul the Great saw in Advent a sign of the Church in any season. He pointed us to the two great sacraments of Christ's incessant Presence: Reconciliation and the Most Holy Eucharist. Is this not what Bethlehem is all about? For here the enfleshed Lord reconciles sinful man to perfect God, becoming our living bridge between heaven and earth, between divinity and humanity.

As God's chosen ones "on the way," we must insist on the quiet of Advent. As a pilgrim people, it is too easy to get caught up in the stresses and demands of these days, as lovely as purchasing presents and decorating the house is. Can we use these four weeks of Advent to make four holy hours, to get to Confession at least once, daily Mass when possible? We must show the world that Christmas starts at Christmas and that the Lord himself asks us to use this time to purify our ears so we can hear him and to sit peacefully before a God who comes to us so humbly and quietly.

The Lord enters the world as courteously and as politely as he can; he will enter our souls as gentlemanly as he can: without force and without demands, but simply with a gift to be received only when we are ready.

To be ready, the Church offers us these days, days that every human heart has longed for, the time every created soul awaits God in the flesh.

To truly prepare ourselves, we should consider if there are places of our lives in which do not want to receive the Christ Child. From which areas of our existence do we prefer to keep the Lord away? To truly receive Jesus means to allow those selfish tendencies and disordered affections to be transformed as the Lord of all Life draws near.

**OUR ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE WILL BE THIS WEDNESDAY, DEC 19<sup>TH</sup> AT 7PM. IF YOU DON'T DRIVE AT NIGHT, YOU ARE WELCOME TO COME TO OUR SCHOOL PENANCE SERVICE AT 10AM THIS TUESDAY, DEC 18.**

**PRAISE & WORSHIP** - We will have a praise and worship gathering this Thursday from 6:30 to 8:30 PM and dinner will be served. Everyone is invited to come and join us for Spirit-filled praise of our Lord. For more information contact Fr. Conley.

**JOY IS A FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Divine joy is the logical result of faithfully living the life of Christ. It blossoms, like a fruit. That is why St. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, calls joy a fruit of the Holy Spirit.... Joy comes about as a result of having the Holy Spirit within you and living in harmony with God's will. This involves a very purposeful, very personal "yes" from you to the Lord, every day, and every single minute of every day.... Joy is what happens as a result of choosing God, being baptized and confirmed in the Holy Spirit, following the commandments of Jesus Christ and serving Him, training every day with the gifts of the Spirit and putting them into action. From *Choosing Joy* by Dan Lord

**REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS**

from the book *Inner Healing* by Fr. Michael Scanlan

Rejoice in the Lord always – again I say “Rejoice”.

Let all see how unselfish you are. The Lord is near. Let all see how unselfish you are. The Lord is near. Dismiss all anxiety from your minds. Present your needs to God in every form of prayer and in petitions full of gratitude. Then God’s peace, which is beyond all understanding, will stand guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” St. Paul to the Philippians 4:4-7

1. **Rejoice** – because of the life of Jesus within us – a joy not dependent on outside events, but springing from the reality of His indwelling Spirit that has overcome the world.

2. **Unselfishness**- Because our true security is in the gift of His Presence within us.

3. **Anxiety dismissed** – We are at rest within, knowing His peace that passes understanding.

4. **Presenting our needs to God** - in confidence and without fear, in every form of prayer.

5. **Gratitude** - That the God of peace is with us.

For St. Paul, peace is a rhythm of being and a way of living and relating that brings forth the fruits of the Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, - because "those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." Gal.5:22-24

**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.

**ST. MARY’S SCHOOL RAFFLE WINNERS:**

December 1- \$1000 Michelle Sylver of Temple Hills, MD & \$4500 George & Chris Conley of Charlotte Hall, MD. December 8- \$1000 Charlie & Martha Haynes of Mechanicsville, MD & \$4500 Michelle Stinson of Hughesville, MD. **CONGRATULATIONS!** The next drawing is December 17. The Grand Prize Drawing of \$20,000 will be held on March 1, 2019.

**COMING IN 4 WEEKS – THE JOY OF HOPE: HOW TO LIVE JOYFULLY IN THE HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE**

This four-part will be the topic of our next **Following Jesus series** which meets on the second and fourth Thursday evenings of the month, from 6:30 PM until 8:30 PM. The Joy of Hope will meet on January 10 and 24th and February 14 and 28th. The cost of the series is \$10 and includes dinner. Everyone is encouraged to come. You can sign up by contacting Fr. Conley at [frconley@comcast.net](mailto:frconley@comcast.net) or 301-870-2220 ext. 13

**HELP WANTED: CLEANING & DECORATING THE CHURCH FOR CHRISTMAS ON SUNDAY, DEC. 23 AT 1:30 PM.** If interested, please call Sue Wolfe at 301-274-3800 or show up on Sunday the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**SAVE THE DATE:** On Saturday, January 12, 2019 from 10 AM to 2 PM, Catholic Daughters will sponsor a Red Cross Blood Drive in the school hall.

**KNOW OF PARISHIONERS WHO ARE HOMEBOUND?** Please contact Fr. Conley or Sister Theresa at the rectory so we can minister to their spiritual needs.

**MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:**

**SUN:** 8am *Mittie Forbes Simmons & Parishioners, 10am Patricia Jean Padgett, 12N: Charles Merz,*  
**MON:** 8am *Jane E. Swann, TUES:* 8am *Jennifer Long,*  
**WED:** 8am *Edna Wills, THURS:* 8am *Gary Edward Williams, FRI:* 9:30am *Msgr. Tom Duffy, SAT:* 9am *Donald Pobst, 4pm Nancy & Gene Baker.*

**PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY**

**PRAYERS:** Stephen Balenger, Anna Bankins, Mary Bowes, Deacon Gene Burroughs, Quint Burroughs, Brenda Callahan, Joe Cross, Agnes Curtis, Chuck Davis, Kendall Farrell, George Fassel, Arlene Gandolfi, Kevin Gardiner, Martha Gehring, James Gibson, Zynae Green, Irma Johnson, Angie Kalnasy, Regina Kijesky, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, Larry Miller, Joseph Mona, Wayne Mullings, Mary Reeves, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Jean Turner, Eva Washington, Beth Weise, Pat Werner, Brice Zimmer.

**OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND:** \$8,321.75. The unidentified donations totaled \$742.00. We received \$125.00 for our School Support.