

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

Today's Gospel recounts the visitation of the Blessed Mother to Elizabeth who rejoiced that the Mother of the Lord would come to her. Below is a reflection from St. Anselm about the glorious role of Mary in God's plan of salvation.

With my prayers,
Fr. Conley

Second Reading from a sermon by **St. Anselm, Bishop**

Virgin Mary, all nature is blessed in you.

Blessed Lady, sky and stars, earth and rivers, day and night – everything that is subject to the power or use of man – rejoice that through you they are in some sense restored to their lost beauty and are endowed with inexpressible new grace. All creatures were dead, as it were, useless for men or for the praise of God, who made them. The world, contrary to its true destiny, was corrupted and tainted by the acts of men who served idols. Now all creation has been restored to life and rejoices that it is controlled and given splendor by men who believe in God.

The universe rejoices with new and indefinable loveliness. Not only does it feel the unseen presence of God himself, its Creator, but also it sees him openly, working and making it holy. These great blessings spring from the blessed fruit of Mary's womb.

Through the fullness of the grace that was given you, dead things rejoice in their freedom, and those in heaven are glad to be made new. Through the Son who was the glorious fruit of your virgin womb, just souls who died before his life-giving death rejoice as they are freed from captivity, and the angels are glad at the restoration of their shattered domain.

Lady, full and overflowing with grace, all creation receives new life from your abundance. Virgin, blessed above all creatures, through your blessing all creation is blessed, not only creation from its Creator, but the Creator himself has been blessed by creation.

To Mary God gave his only-begotten Son, whom he loved as himself. Through Mary, God made himself a Son, not different but the same, by nature Son of God and Son of Mary. The whole universe was created by God, and God was born to Mary.

God created all things, and Mary gave birth to God. The God who made all things gave himself form through Mary, and thus he made his own creation. He who could create all things from nothing would not remake his ruined creation without Mary.

God, then, is the Father of the created world and Mary the mother of the re-created world. God is the Father by whom all things were given life, and Mary the mother through whom all things were given new life. For God begot the Son, through whom all things were made, and Mary gave birth to him as the Savior of the world. Without God's Son, nothing could exist; without Mary's Son, nothing could be redeemed.

Truly the Lord is with you, to whom the Lord granted that all nature should owe as much to you as to himself.

HOPE: A THEOLOGICAL VIRTUE

Meditating on the coming of Christ should stir up hope within us. I am not thinking so much of the hope that is simply wishful thinking: I hope I do well on that test. I hope it does not rain on my fishing trip. I hope my sick Mother gets better. I hope I get an iPhone for Christmas. No, the hope we are invited to grow in during Advent is the theological virtue of hope. The "Catechism of the Catholic Church" defines hope this way:

"Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire and await from God eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit to merit it and to persevere to the end of our earthly life."

Hope is a virtue, which means it is a habit of disposition. It is the habit of trusting in God and having confidence in God and His promises no matter what we see with our physical sight. As a theological virtue it concerns our relationship with God. Our relationship with God is founded in, lived in and expressed in hope. We relate to God in hope. Why? Because we cannot see God. We cannot see eternal life and we do not YET experience the fulfillment and happiness that awaits us with God.

St. Paul says, "Though we do not see Him, we believe in Him, we trust in Him, and we are confident-hopeful-that He will guard what we have entrusted in Him until that day."

Christian hope concerns our longing for and expectation of fulfillment. We can all relate to the experience of feeling unfulfilled. In our personal lives we are not the people we hope to be. We wish

we were more patient, more disciplined, more pure, more self-controlled, more disciplined, more faithful, more generous, and more bold and courageous. In our relationships we long for more. We experience disappointment in our relationships, we feel let down, we wish there was more unity, less strife. We wish our relationships were more selfless, less competitive. We long to be known completely and loved unconditionally.

Hope is the steadfast turning toward our true fulfillment, which is supernatural happiness in God. Hearts are restless until they rest in thee.” If we set our hope on anyone or anything other than God – even the best things in life, i.e., family, marriage, friendship -we will be disappointed, unsatisfied and unfulfilled. We will never in this life, on this side of death, on this side of heaven, find the fulfillment for which we long. This is why we need hope. If we understand that only in union with God will we find the happiness and fulfillment for which we were made and that we long for, we will pray even more earnestly in this Advent season: “Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus.”

COMING IN 2 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 or 301-870-2220 ext. 13

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.

A CHRISTMAS THANK YOU

The Social Concerns Committee would like to thank all of our parishioners who participated in the Christmas Adopt-A-Family Program. Your overwhelming generosity was greatly appreciated by the families who were adopted. May God continue to bless each of you.

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.

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Wilfred Costello & Mittie Forbes Simmons, 10am Parishioners, 12N: Mary Kay & Jimmy Estep, **MON:** 8am **NO MASS**, 4pm Janine Burch, 8pm Eleanor Kalamar-Haupt, **TUES:** 8am Maurice Long, Sr., 10am Paul Therres, **WED:** 8am Edna Wills, **THURS:** 8am Gary Edward Williams, **FRI:** 9:30am Jane E. Swann, **SAT:** 9am Bonnie Kennealy, 4pm William Clements, Jr.

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: \$8,849.25. The unidentified donations totaled \$712.75. We received \$30.00 for our School Support.