

The Year of Consecrated Life

The Light

of
St. Michael
the Archangel
Roman Catholic
Church
Lake Jackson,
Texas

Jesus said, "I am the
light of the world.
Whoever follows me will
never walk in darkness,
but will have the light of
life."

John 8:12



Adult Faith Formation

Spring 2015

(March — May 2015)



The Spiritual Light

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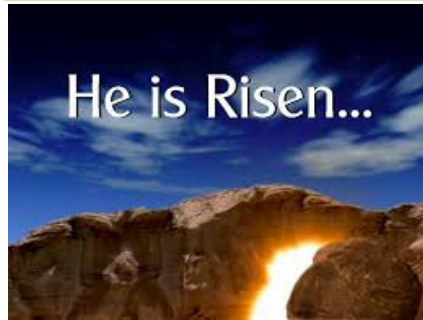
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Happy Easter! There is something special about the liturgical seasons. They are meant to be year-round reminders of the fundamental mysteries of our faith, and an inspiration to put into practice what we believe. Lent is no exception! Humanly speaking we may look forward to the end of Lent and the daybreak of Easter Sunday. But supernaturally the spirit of Lent should fill the whole year.

It's our hope that this issue will reach deep into your hearts and make your Lent and Easter seasons a rich and rewarding experience. In *Clergy's Corner*, Fr. Giovanni talks about how "*We are the light of world*" and Deacon Gary comments on the incredible experience of his ordination as Permanent Deacon. In *A Vocation Story*, Joseph White writes about how he decided to go to the seminary to become a priest. In *Did You Know?* Richard Keistler comments on one of the most famous Catholics in the world: Thomas Merton.

This *Liturgical Season* takes us in our spiritual journey from Lent through the Passion and death of the Lord to the glorious Easter season. The writings of Pope Francis, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Blessed John Henry Newman, and St. Alphonsus Liguori are inspiring and encouraging. We also feature two contributor reflections- Jet Booth on the Solemnity of Pentecost and Elizabeth Betczynski on the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity.

In *News from the Vatican*, we present an excerpt from Pope Francis' Reflections on the Family given during the General Audiences from December 17, 2014 to February 18, 2015. In *The Saints* you will find three refreshing reflections written by young adults in our Youth program – Jackson Wedelich, Victor Hernandez and Taylor Schroll. We have also included a list of *Bible studies* and *Prayer groups* that you can consider joining.

Your comments are welcome. Please do not hesitate to contact the editors or any of the team members. On behalf of the entire Adult Faith Formation Team, we wish you a very **HAPPY EASTER**. May the good Lord continue to shower this parish with abundant blessings.

Margarita Prinz



Happy 50th Anniversary of Ordination Fr. Leo!

On May 27, Fr. Leo will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of his Ordination. Fr. Leo from the bottom of our hearts we wish you a very happy and blessed day. May God continue to bless you with abundant health so our wonderful parish may flourish more under your wise guidance. We love you!

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About Us

The Adult Faith Formation ministry came into being as a result of the Envision program held in the parish in 2006. From the meetings of the Envision committee came a vision statement for the parish: "A Eucharistic community in continual transformation, surrendering ourselves to God to be His instruments for world change."

The objective of Adult Faith Formation ministry is to seek to foster life long learning, Catholic education and faith development of adult parishioners. It is the primary educational ministry for adults of our parish.

Adult Faith Formation ministry uses several different facets of learning in the presentation of programs. There have been well-known speakers who lectured in his/her specialty, small group discussions (Study of the Catechism for Catholic adults), movies, and a play.

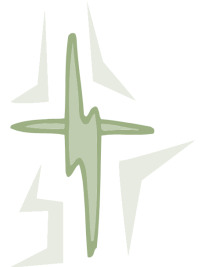
We look for topics in which our parishioners say they are interested. This knowledge came from a survey done in the infancy of this ministry and we search for speakers well known for the topics they present. Agreement on topics and speakers are reached by consensus rather than majority and our annual educational year started in 2007.

In order to continue with these programs we need to almost continually add new members to the ministry. Whether you are new to the parish or have been here for several years, you can bring in fresh and different ideas. Your presence and knowledge will generate fresh energy. While the ministry has made great progress, it still has a long way to go.

Our meetings are held once a month in the evening in the Educational Building. Please come and see the team in action. After a visit we are certain you will want to join us.

If you are interested in finding more about this rewarding ministry, please contact us. We will be happy to visit with you.

Adult
Faith
Formation



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Clergy's Corner



We are light of the world.

Mt 5: 13-16

Do you think that people can watch violence on TV without being affected by it? It seems unlikely, doesn't it? Leading authorities worldwide have confirmed that there is a link between viewing violence on TV and violent behavior. They do also eliminate bad content of the internet.

Lent is about to begin. Why not make a decision to watch only healthy and uplifting material for Lent? I heard someone say our minds are like sponges. They can pick up dirt from all sorts of places. We can wash our minds as we wash sponges by filling our minds with what is positive and uplifting. At the same time we need also to receive the sacrament of the penance to purify our hearts and reconciliation with our brothers and sisters. And then we sign up for Lenten Longings program as sharing groups where individuals seek to grow in faith and in their relationship with God and one another.

Jesus said we are the light of the world and we are to put our light on the lamp stand so that everyone in the house can see it. So Jesus is saying not only does he want us to preserve the world from deteriorating but he wants us to influence the world positively, to shed light on the darkness of the world. The darkness caused by all the violence and sin on TV and internet certainly needs the light of Christ. You are the best person to shed light on those you meet. What we say and what we do allows the light of Jesus to shine or hides the light of Jesus. We can allow the light of Jesus to shine on those with whom we live, to shine on those with whom we work, and to shine on our parish community.

Every parish or family has many examples of very good people who allow the light of Jesus to shine, people who have put their lamp on the lamp stand so that it shines for everyone in the house. There are many unknown charitable acts which allow the light of Jesus to shine, neighbors helping neighbors, family members helping family members.

When people are seeing our good works they will praise our Father in heaven for us. Let be Light of the world through the life of each of us.

Fr. Giovanni Nguyen

From the Deacon's Desk



There really is no way to adequately express in words the incredible experience I enjoyed Saturday, January 31, at the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. I had the great honor of joining thirty other men to receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders to the Permanent Diaconate. This was the culmination of six years of academic and spiritual formation for me and for some of my brothers, even longer.

For those of you who were unable to attend, I pray that someday you will have the blessing of being ordained yourself or experience the celebration of a friend or loved one to the



From the Deacon's Desk

Sacrament of Holy Orders. I have to put the experience right up there with my wedding day, and the birth of my children. The Holy Spirit was truly at work in me and all those who made the celebration special.

For those who did not hear me preach my first homily, I would like to share a portion of it with you in this reflection:

What an incredible day (weekend)! What an amazing journey! The last six years I have dreamed about how I would begin my first homily. For the longest time I thought I would begin by saying "I have been preparing this homily for the last six years...so I hope you don't have anywhere you need to be anytime soon". But then it hit me, God has been preparing me for **this** day and **this** time for my whole life...all the experiences, all the people he has placed in my life have come together. And many of you have played a very important role in who I am and why I stand before you today as a Permanent Deacon in the Catholic Church. Your prayers, your encouragement, the financial support of this parish, the Catholic Daughters, Women of St. Michaels, Knights of Columbus and many individuals; Masses have been said, and people have fasted. Camille and I cannot thank you enough. Please know you are prayed for and loved.

Part of my responsibility as a deacon is to proclaim the Gospel at Mass and hopefully proclaim the Gospel through my life. There have been many opportunities to share my story with those in ministry, in bible study, at work and certainly on retreats. Through the Lenten Longings process there will be opportunities to both share our personal faith stories and listen to others.

Some of you may be like me when I attended my first retreat and was asked to share. I listened to story after story of people's struggles with their faith. Some growing up in faithless families; abusive situations; alcoholism; addictions. People who spent much of their lives not believing in God and not attending church. People who were bitter over losing children or spouses or jobs.

I was almost embarrassed to tell my story: You see, I grew up in a great family with wonderful parents; I grew up in the church and stayed close to my faith *even in college*. I have a wonderful wife. I mean a really wonderful wife (bet you haven't heard that in a homily recently, have you). I have a good job. I was and continue to be really blessed.

Maybe you feel that your story is not important. That's what I thought. Maybe you are not comfortable sharing. Guess what? That's ok. Just being in a small faith community this Lent will allow you to hear other's faith stories. We are each encouraged and strengthened by others and their walk with God.

And of course we also learn of God's infinite love and mercy through the Scriptures. What do you remember about today's readings? What caught your ear? Part of the Lenten Longing process is listening and discussing the readings **before** you come to Mass on the weekend. Many of you already do this... either on your own or in Bible study groups. Now, instead of hearing the readings for the first time on the weekend, the readings are with you through the week. Words and context help you to better understand what the author intended and therefore, focus more clearly on how God is speaking to you.

Hopefully, by now you have been enjoying your Lenten Longing small group and God is allowing you to touch others with your faith story and be touched by the stories of others. I look forward to serving the St. Michael parish family and thank you once again for your prayers and support.

God Bless You! Deacon Gary



A Vocation Story



By Joseph White:

My name is Joseph White, and I am a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. I have been a parishioner at St. Michaels my whole life, and I have been involved in: altar serving, Eucharistic ministering, and religious education. I would like to share my story on how I decided to enter seminary after graduating from high school.

I never thought much about becoming a Priest as a child because I always had a strong desire to get married and have a family, but God began to move in my heart once I entered high school. During high school, I constantly thought of homilies and

sermons in my head and said them to myself in the shower. I did not begin to associate these ideas for homilies or sermons with the calling of priesthood until I went on the Steubenville conference, a Catholic youth retreat. On the last day, the bishop asked anybody who thinks they might be called to the priesthood, diaconate, or religious life to come up to the stage and stand with him. When he asked this, a burning sensation came into my heart and I felt that God might be telling me to become a priest. I stood up and walked to the front with the other men and women my age. However, after the conference, I thought little about priesthood and if God was truly calling me to serve him in this way.

The thought of priesthood came back into my mind as a senior when I was having trouble deciding what college to attend after high school. I decided to start going to the Adoration Chapel to pray and discern where to go to college. One day, while I was thinking about what I wanted to do with my life and where I wanted to go to college, I realized that I was not asking God what He wanted me to do. This question changed my discernment. The sensation I felt on the Steubenville conference came back, and I began to think sincerely about priesthood as a potential option for my future. I began to pray about it and seek the counsel of Father Leo and other priests in the area. After much prayer and talking to the priests, I felt a deep peace about becoming a priest and going to the seminary the very next fall, which led me to start the application process of entering seminary. I am very blessed to now be a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, and I am constantly discerning how God wants me to serve him in this life. I still feel a tremendous peace about pursuing my vocation as a priest, and I am excited to see what God has in store for the rest of my life.

Joey

Did You Know?

By Richard Keistler

When we think of the great philosophers and thinkers, and also artists, of our Church we tend to think in terms of hundreds of years ago. Did you know that one of the greatest lived within the lifetime of most of us? Yes, I'm speaking of Thomas Merton, who became the world's most famous Roman Catholic except for the popes in office.

Merton had an unusual life as a child, to say the least. His father was a New Zealand-born painter of some repute. His mother was also an artist, and a Quaker. Therefore, Thomas was baptized into the



Did You Know?



Church of England. For most of his upbringing, his father was absent. Unfortunately, his mother died of stomach cancer when Thomas was only six. Though he longed for his father, Owen Merton sent him to stay with relatives. At the age of eleven, he entered a French boarding school where, after an initial and understandable feeling of loneliness, he became accustomed to the atmosphere and actually wrote two novels there! Catholic Mass was held there on Sundays, and also a Protestant preacher came for the students who weren't Catholic, but Thomas had very little interest in religion.

At the age of thirteen, Thomas and his father moved to England where Thomas was enrolled in another boarding school. Here, he was happier, and on Sundays, along with the rest of the students, he attended Church of England services. However, at the age of fourteen, after a pleasant vacation with his father, Owen Merton

became ill. The illness turned out to be a brain tumor; again, the world of Thomas Merton was shaken. His father died when Thomas was fifteen and he was placed under the care of a guardian. As might be expected, Thomas had been forced to be quite independent, and he traveled to the continent to see relatives and also to the United States to see his mother's family. He considered himself an agnostic, declaring he believed in "nothing".

The world of the Christian faith opened to Thomas when he was eighteen, in Rome. Seeing the ancient churches, the Byzantine side of the Christian faith, caused him to purchase a copy of the Vulgate and to read the New Testament for the first time. Also, for the first time, he truly prayed to God for guidance. It was on this trip that he visited a Trappist monastery and decided he wished to become a Trappist monk.

Returning to England, Thomas attended Cambridge University, where his concentration was often on drink and women. After a crisis involving a possible illegitimate child, he moved to America and enrolled in Columbia University. For the next few years, he studied and obtained bachelor's and master's degrees, and lived in Greenwich Village. At the time, his interest in religion and Catholicism deepened, ending with his confirmation.

The path to priesthood, and certainly the Trappists, was not direct. Thomas was advised that he would be better suited to become a diocesan priest. He seriously inquired into the Franciscans. However, he had never forgotten the Trappist monastery in Rome, and in 1941 he entered the monastery in Gethsemani as a postulate. From this point until 1947, when he took his solemn vows, he continued writing personal poetry and a journal. In 1949 THE SEVEN STORY MOUNTAIN, his autobiography was published to worldwide acclaim. Merton continued to write poetry and other small volumes, while teaching mystical theology at Gethsemani. He was also ordained as a priest.

Over the final twenty years of his life, Merton's reputation blossomed into worldwide repute and acclaim for his talent in bringing Catholic mysticism in a form understandable to all. He was awarded a hermitage on the grounds of Gethsemani, and at times there was friction between his Trappist superiors and his desire for more freedom. The 1960's were a time of questioning so many things in the world, including the birth of ecology, the awakening of civil rights in dozens of countries, and Merton's writings and his support for ecumenism dovetailed into that atmosphere.

In 1968 while attending a conference of Christian and non-Christian monks in Thailand, Merton was accidentally electrocuted by a defective fan in his hotel room, thereby ending a most influential faith journey far too soon. He was buried in Gethsemani, and is recognized today as the greatest Catholic writer of the last century. His support for, and belief in ecumenism between Western and Eastern religions was prescient, a path that is still in progress in our time.

Merton wrote over 70 books; many of them are in our fine library. It is best to begin with The Seven Story Mountain, but all are worth reading and study.



The Liturgical Season

St. Joseph, Husband of Mary

Solemnity March 19



Everything we know about Saint Joseph, the husband of Mary and the foster father of Jesus, comes from Scripture. We know he was a carpenter, a working man, for the skeptical Nazarenes ask about Jesus, "Is this not the carpenter's son?" (Matthew 13:55). He wasn't rich for when he took Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised and Mary to be purified he offered the sacrifice of two turtledoves or a pair of pigeons, allowed only for those who could not afford a lamb (Luke 2:24).

Despite his humble work and means, Joseph came from a royal lineage. Luke and Matthew disagree some about the details of Joseph's genealogy but they both mark his descent from David, the greatest king of Israel (Matthew 1:1-16 and Luke 3:23-38). Indeed the angel who first tells

Joseph about Jesus greets him as "son of David," a royal title used also for Jesus.

We also know he was a compassionate, caring man. When he discovered Mary was pregnant after they had been betrothed, he knew the child was not his but was as yet unaware that she was carrying the Son of God. He planned to divorce Mary according to the law but he was concerned for her suffering and safety. He knew that women accused to adultery could be stoned to death, so he decided to divorce her quietly and not expose her to shame or cruelty (Matthew 1:19-25).

And he was man of faith, obedient to whatever God asked of him without knowing the outcome. When the angel came to him in a dream and told him the truth about the child Mary was carrying, he immediately and without question or concern for gossip, took Mary as his wife. When the angel came again to tell him that his family was in danger, he immediately left everything he owned, all his family and friends, and fled to a strange country with his young wife and the baby. He waited in Egypt without question until the angel told him it was safe to go back (Matthew 2:13-23).

Joseph loved Jesus. His one concern was for the safety of this child entrusted to him. Not only did he leave his home to protect Jesus, but upon his return settled in the obscure town of Nazareth out of fear for his life. When Jesus stayed in the Temple, we are told Joseph (along with Mary) searched with great anxiety for three days for him (Luke 2:48). We also know that Joseph treated Jesus as his own son for over and over the people of Nazareth say of Jesus, "Is this not the son of Joseph?" (Luke 4:22)

Joseph respected God. He followed God's commands in handling the situation with Mary and going to Jerusalem to have Jesus circumcised and Mary purified after Jesus' birth. We are told that he took his family to Jerusalem every year for Passover, something that could not have been easy for a working man.

Since Joseph does not appear in Jesus' public life, at his death, or resurrection, many historians believe Joseph probably had died before Jesus entered public ministry. Saint Joseph is the patron of the dying because, assuming he died before Jesus' public life, he died with Jesus and Mary close to him, the way we all would like to leave this earth. He is also patron of the universal Church, fathers, carpenters, and social justice.



The Annunciation

Solemnity March 25



An excerpt from Magnificat April 2013:

Now consider that God would be born of this holy Virgin in three ways, in her spirit, in her soul, and in her body. And she was not so blessed by the birth in her body as by that in her spirit, as St. Augustine says; and as our Lord in the Gospel answered the woman who said: "Blessed is the womb that bore you". ..But he said: "Yes, rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it" (Lk 11:27-28). Therefore had she first conceived and brought forth God in her spirit. By her

purity she pleased God well; by her humility she prepared him a fit dwelling place; by her love did she constrain God to descend into the depths of her spirit, a place all restful in the quiet silence of perfect detachment from created things. There did God unite her spirit to his, there did he utter to her hidden Word, begetting his only begotten with unspeakable joy and love. This is the eternal generation in Mary; this is the obscure night of the spirit wherein the darkness of the human intelligence receives the dawning of the uncreated brightness. Because where the divine light shines, no created light can remain, for the night is changed into day. That means that the created light of the soul is changed into the uncreated light of eternity. Thus it happened that Mary gave over her spirit into the uncreated being of the Godhead, and her soul sank away into the depths of humility.

And now she drew down into her soul the all-lovely sweet streams of the light of eternal wisdom; for as the Father brought forth his only begotten Son in her soul, he in turn new-formed her in himself. The Father willed that she should consent that his Only Begotten Son should assume human nature, and should be born of her in bodily form by the act of the Holy Spirit...

Instantly she was encircled and enshrined in the light of the Holy Trinity, and penetrated through and through with the divine glory; the arrows of divine love pierced her soul to its inmost depths; and thus was she made willing to be the Mother of God.

Father John Tauler, O.P. (†1361) was a German Dominican priest.



From Spiritual Life in the Modern World by Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.

There is something special about the liturgical seasons. They are, in a true sense, meant to be year-round reminders of the cardinal mysteries of our faith, and a daily inspiration to put into practice what we believe.

The season of Lent is no exception. Humanly speaking we may look forward to the end of Lent and the dawn of Easter Sunday. But supernaturally the spirit of Lent should pervade the whole year. So we ask ourselves: What does the season of Lent mean?

The season of Lent means many things: It is a season of penance, during which we are to perform extra mortification and self-denial to expiate our sins. It is a season of preparation for the coming of Easter and the commemoration of Christ's Resurrection from the dead. But Lent is especially a period during which we are to be more than ordinarily conscious of our Lord's suffering and death. Lent is the season of Christ's



St. Michael the Archangel Roman Catholic Church Lake Jackson, TX

passion. Meditating on the passion of Christ is more than reflecting on a past memory.

The agony in the Garden, the betrayal by Judas, the scourging and crowning with thorns, the mockery by Herod, the unjust condemnation by Pilate and the bloody crucifixion on Calvary were all real. They did take place. And Lent is that time in the liturgical year when believing Christians try to be more aware of these facts, and make them a vivid object of their prayerful meditation and prayer.

All this is true. But it is not the whole story. Our faith tells us that the Savior really suffered on the Way to the Cross and died in His physical body, and that He can personally die no more. But faith also tells us that Christ is still alive in His Mystical Body on earth, and this Mystical Body can suffer even now. It can suffer indeed.

Palm Sunday

Solemnity March 29



Palm Sunday is the great doorway leading into Holy Week, the week when the Lord Jesus makes his way towards the culmination of his earthly existence. He goes up to Jerusalem in order to fulfill the Scriptures and to be nailed to the wood of the Cross, the throne from which he will reign for ever, drawing to himself humanity of every age and offering to all the gift of redemption...

Here we find the first great message that today's feast brings us: the invitation to adopt a proper outlook upon all humanity, on the peoples who make up the world, on its different cultures and civilizations... This is the heart of today's feast... Who is Jesus of Nazareth

for us? What idea do we have of the Messiah, what idea do we have of God? It is a crucial question, one we cannot avoid, not least because during this very week we are called to follow our King who chooses the Cross as his throne. We are called to follow a Messiah who promises us, not a facile earthly happiness, but the happiness of heaven, divine beatitude. So we must ask ourselves: what are our true expectations? What are our deepest desires, with which we have come here today to celebrate Palm Sunday and to begin our celebration of Holy Week?

May Palm Sunday be a day of decision for you, the decision to say yes to the Lord and to follow him all the way, the decision to make his Passover, his death and resurrection, the very focus of your Christian lives. It is the decision that leads to true joy... so let us spread ourselves like coats under his feet ... let us offer not palm branches but the prizes of victory to the conqueror of death. Today let us give voice with the children to that sacred chant, as we wave the spiritual branches of our soul: 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel'" (PG 97, 994). Amen!

Pope Benedict's Palm Sunday 2012 Homily

Holy Thursday

Solemnity March 25

From Share the Word from Paulist National Catholic Evangelization Association-

Holy Thursday is the beginning of the Triduum, the most sacred three days of the year, when we commemorate the Passion and Death of the Lord. Today we remember the moment when Jesus transforms the Last Supper with his disciples in a



memorial of his self giving in the cross. The Eucharist that Jesus institutes in the Last Supper is a commemoration of His sacrifice in the cross. From then on, every time the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the offering of Jesus' sacrifice in the cross is represented so we can participate in the mystery of our own salvation. Jesus washes the feet of his disciples to show them that true love is always surrender. The Eucharist makes present to us the gift of Jesus himself on the cross. And the Eucharist challenges us to imitate Jesus by offering our life to the service of others.

† Lord Jesus, your love has no boundaries.
Show us how to imitate your love serving others.

Good Friday

Solemnity April 3

From "Into Your Hands – Meditation and Prayer on the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ" excerpts from the writings of St. Alphonsus Liguori and edited by Norman J. Muckerman, C.Ss.R.

The Death of Jesus
Jesus Dies and Triumphs over
Death

St. John says that Jesus, before breathing his last, bowed his head. He did this as a sign

that he, voluntarily and in total humility, accepted death from the hands of his Father. As St. Paul wrote: "He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8).

When Jesus was on the cross, with his hands and feet nailed to his instrument of death, he could not move any part of his body except his head. St. Athanasius remarks that death did not dare to approach to take life away from the author of life itself; what was needed was his consent, which he gave by bowing his head. St. Ambrose, commenting on the phrase from St. Matthew's gospel, "Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last" (or as some versions have it "gave up his spirit") (Mt 27:50). States this proves Jesus was not forced to die, nor did he die because of the violence of his executioners, but because he chose to die to save us from eternal death.

St. Paul, echoing the words of the prophet Hosea, calls Jesus' death a victory: "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin" (1 Cor 15:54 -56). Jesus, the Lamb of God, destroyed sin which was the cause of our death. This was Jesus' victory because, by his death, he banished sin and delivered us from eternal death.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews states: "He, Jesus, likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death" (Heb 2:14 -15). This was the victory of the cross, on which Jesus, the author of life, died and, by his death, won life for us.

It was for this reason that St. Francis de Sales wrote: "Let us look upon our divine Savior starchy upon the cross, as upon the altar of his love, and let us cast ourselves in spirit upon the same cross, that we may die with him who has been willing to die for us."





An excerpt from Manificat Holy Week 2014,

It is over now, O Lord, as with your sufferings, so with our humiliations. We have followed you from your fasting in the wilderness till your death on the cross. For forty

days we have professed to do penance. The time has been long and it has been short; but whether long or short, it is now over. It is over, and we feel a pleasure that it is over; it is a relief and a release. We thank you that it is over. We thank you for the time of sorrow, but we thank you more as we look forward to the time of festival. Pardon our shortcomings in Lent and reward us in Easter.

We have, indeed, done very little for you, O Lord. We recollect well our listlessness and weariness; our indisposition to mortify ourselves when we had no plea of health to stand in the way; our indisposition to pray and to meditate – our disorder of mind – our discontent, our peevishness. Yet some of us, perhaps, have done something for you. Look on us as a whole, O Lord, look on us as a community, and let what some have done well plead for us all.

O Lord, the end is come. We are conscious of our languor and lukewarmness; we do not deserve to rejoice in Easter, yet we cannot help doing so. We feel more of pleasure, we rejoice in you more than our past humiliation warrants us in doing; yet may that very joy be its own warrant. O be indulgent to us, for the merits of your own all-powerful Passion, and for the merits of your saints. Accept us as your little flock, in the day of small things, in a fallen country, in a age when faith and love are scarce. Pity us and spare us and give us peace.

O my own Savior, now in the tomb but soon to arise, you have paid the price; it is done. It is secured. O fulfill your Resurrection in us, and as you have purchased us, claim us, take possession of us, make us yours.

Blessed John Henry Newman (†1890)

Easter

Solemnity April 5



An excerpt from Pope Francis' Easter Vigil Homily on March 30, 2013:

The women (who go to the tomb of Jesus with spices to anoint Jesus' body) continued to feel love, the love for Jesus which now let them to his tomb. But at this point, something completely new and unexpected happens, something which upsets their hearts and their plans, something which will upset their whole life...Doesn't the same thing also happens

to us when something completely new occurs in our everyday life? We stop short, we don't understand, we don't know what to do. Newness often makes us fearful, including the newness which God brings us, the newness which God asks of us.

We are like the Apostles in the Gospel: often we would prefer to hold on to our own security, to stand in front of a tomb, to think about someone who has died, someone who ultimately lives on only as a memory, like the great historical figures from the past. We are afraid of God's surprises...He always surprises us.

Let us not to be closed to the newness that God wants to bring into our lives! Are we often



weary, disheartened and sad? Do we feel weighed down by our sins? Do we think that we won't be able to cope? Let us not close our hearts, let us not lose confidence, let us never give up: there are no situations which God cannot change, there is no sin which he cannot forgive if only we open ourselves to him.

How often does Love have to tell us: Why do you look for the living among the dead? Our daily problems worries can wrap us up in ourselves, in sadness and bitterness...and that is where dead is. That is not the place to look for the One who is alive! Let the risen Jesus enter your life, welcome him as a friend, with trust: he is life! If up till now you have kept him at a distance, step forward. He will receive you with open arms. If you have been indifferent, take a risk you won't be disappointed. If following him seems difficult, don't be afraid, trust him, be confident that he is close to you, he is with you and he will give you the peace you are looking for and the strength to live as he would have you do.

To remember what God has done and continues to do for me, for us, to remember the road we have traveled; this is what opens our hearts to hope for the future. May we learn to remember everything that God has done in our lives.

Pope Francis

Divine Mercy Sunday

Solemnity April 12



The feast of Divine Mercy Sunday was instituted by Pope John Paul II on April 30, 2000, and is celebrated the Sunday after Easter on the General Roman Calendar.

From the diary of a young Polish nun, a special devotion began spreading throughout the world in the 1930s. The message is nothing new, but is a reminder of what the Church has always taught through scripture and tradition: that God is merciful and forgiving and that we, too, must show mercy and forgiveness. But in the Divine Mercy devotion, the message takes on a powerful new focus, calling people to a deeper understanding that God's love is unlimited and available to everyone — especially the greatest sinners.

The message and devotion to Jesus as **The Divine Mercy** is based on the writings of **Saint Faustina Kowalska**, an uneducated Polish nun who, in obedience to her spiritual director, wrote a diary of about 600 pages recording the revelations she received about God's mercy. Even before her death in 1938, the devotion to The Divine Mercy had begun to spread.

The message of mercy is that God loves us — all of us — no matter how great our sins. He wants us to recognize that His mercy is greater than our sins, so that we will call upon Him with trust, receive His mercy, and let it flow through us to others. Thus, all will come to share His joy. It is a message we can call to mind simply by remembering ABC.

A — Ask for His Mercy. God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly, repenting of our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and upon the whole world.

B — Be merciful. God wants us to receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others. He wants us to extend love and forgiveness to others just as He does to us.

C — Completely trust in Jesus. God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent upon our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive.

Read more: <http://www.ewtn.com/Devotionals/mercy/backgr.htm#ixzz3SyrLPXIL>



St. Mark, Evangelist

Feast April 25



The introduction to the Gospel of Mark in The New American Bible Saint Joseph edition states: "This shortest of all New Testament gospels is likely the first to have been written, yet it often tells of Jesus' ministry in more details than either Matthew or Luke. It recounts what Jesus did in a vivid style, where one incident follows directly upon another. Mark stresses Jesus' message about the kingdom of God now breaking into human life as good news. Jesus is the Son whom God has sent to rescue humanity by serving and by sacrificing his life..."

Although the book is anonymous, apart from the ancient heading "According to Mark" in manuscripts, it has traditionally been assigned to John Mark, in whose mother's house (at Jerusalem) Christians assembled (Acts 12, 12). He was a cousin of Barnabas and accompanied Saint Paul and Barnabas on a missionary journey. He appears in Pauline letters (Phlm 24; 2 Tm 4, 11) and with Peter (1 Pt 5, 13). Papias, Bishop of Hieropolis in Asia Minor at the beginning of the second century, describes Mark as Peter's *interpreter*, a view found in other patristic writers."

From Catholic Online: Tradition tells us that St. Mark was requested by the Romans to set down the teachings of St. Peter. This seems to be confirmed by the position that which St. Peter has in this Gospel. In this way the second Gospel is a record of the life of Jesus as seen through the eyes of the Prince of the Apostles.

He is the Patron of notaries and his feast day is April 25.

The Ascension of the Lord

Solemnity May 14



The book of the Acts of the Apostles recounts that Jesus, after his Resurrection, appeared to the disciples for 40 days and then "was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight" (Acts 1: 9). It is the Ascension, the feast we will celebrate on Thursday, May 14.

The meaning of this final gesture of Jesus is twofold. In the first place, ascending on high, he clearly reveals his divinity: he returns to where he came from, that is, to God, after having fulfilled his mission on earth. Moreover, Christ ascends into heaven with the humanity he has assumed and which he has resurrected from the dead: that humanity is ours, transfigured, divinized, made eternal.

Therefore, the Ascension reveals the "most high calling" of every human person, called to eternal life in the Kingdom of God, kingdom of love, light and peace.

Pope Benedict XVI



Pentecost

Solemnity May 24



by Jet Booth,

Happy Birthday, y'all! This is the birthday of the church!
It is a big day! Pow!

Pentecost was the most dramatic, the numero uno manifestation of the Holy Spirit 2000 plus years ago. Look into Acts 2: 2-8. Jesus had ascended into heaven. The apostles and some women disciples were in the upper room in Jerusalem. They were commanded to stay put and wait – wait for something BIG from Jesus. What? They only knew they were lost, broken and afraid for their lives. Rumor had it that the Romans were looking for these followers and death seemed pretty certain.

Suddenly there is a violent wind that blows through the house and deposits strange tongues of fire above the heads of everyone in that room. Something wonderful happened. “All of them were

filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.” Meanwhile, outside the town is packed with all types of people there to celebrate the Jewish festival. When the folks outside hear this commotion of wind they are bewildered and gather outside the apostles house.

Something powerful has happened to those frightened followers of Jesus. Picture them throwing open the windows and doors and rushing into the street. They are locked away no more. They are totally unafraid. They boldly went where (cue the Star Wars theme music. Can you hear it?) They boldly began preaching the message of Jesus Christ. They shouted the good news to these local and foreign Jewish folks. Something BIG happened alright. The Spirit gave them the gifts to preach in the language of the different hearers and infused their hearts with the fire to touch other hearts. They witnessed the impossible. Those poor listeners didn't know what hit them but they listened and over 3000 persons were baptized that day. Wow! What a scene that must have been. These people then gave themselves over to Jesus and became followers *on the spot* “and devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers.”

Pretty dramatic, right? But who is this Holy Spirit? We talk a lot about the Father and Son but we still can't quite put a handle on this elusive third person of the Trinity. I have a hard time relating to two guys and a bird idea of God. Maybe you long to put a feminine face on God. Why not? She is there at creation brooding over the waters to bring forth creation. Her “ruah”, breath, moves the prophets to speak and the writers to pen the Jewish history and scripture. In the fire of Pentecost she literally ignites this church Jesus longed to see. This versatile lady makes herself evident as the times require.

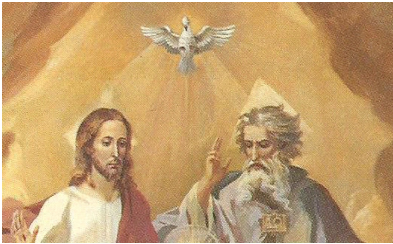
Listen to this story and see if it helps understand the Spirit. The best times for me in college were in the ceramics studio. Our mentor, Mrs. Taylor, sat at her potter's wheel right along with us struggling newbies in clay. Often I was mesmerized watching her shape her masterpieces. She loved to make teapots. She would straddle the wheel and work until she had narrowed the tops of her pots. Then, with a huge smile, she would bend over, put her mouth on them and gently blow into them to have them puff up into these perfectly spherical teapots. This beautiful experience has stayed with me all these years.

The Spirit is that potter bending over to breathe life. The Spirit is that gardener coaxing life from seeds. The Spirit is that mama or grandma reaching down to pick up that baby and plant kisses and hugs. See her as Mother. See her close, earthy, giving life. Sit a while in prayer and get to know the Spirit in your own way. How do you see her?



The Holy Trinity

Solemnity May 31



By Elizabeth Betczynski:

The feast of the most Holy Trinity is celebrated the Sunday after Pentecost and this year it is May 31st. The unity between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit points to one of the greatest mysteries of the Christian faith: that there is only one God in three persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We call this mystery the Trinity.

The Church teaches that, each person of the Trinity, is fully divine in and of themselves. Also that each person of the Trinity is truly distinct from the others and each person's true distinction lies in the relationship among all three as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, meaning they are not just a way to name the different ways God acts in the world. Because of their unity, each person of the Trinity is entirely in the other two and all work together. For example, when we follow the Son, we are doing so because the Father invited us and the Holy Spirit moved us to do so.

When we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we enter into the life and mystery of the Trinity. Every time we make the sign of the cross, we are reminded of the Trinity. As believers in the Triune God, we are called to reflect God's unity in our relationships with one another by working together to help all people find salvation in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The mystery of the Trinity is the human capacity to love and hope. The mystery of the Trinity is about relationship. The Trinity is the ideal family having total love for each other.

We see the family image carried out in the creation of man and woman – Adam and Eve. Then carried forward to Jesus' birth and being cared for by Mary and Joseph.

This is the lesson of the Holy Family. The will of God must count for everything in our daily lives. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were human, intensely human in the best sense of the word. They show us how our lives, too, should be human--truly warm and Godlike. By this means we can be sanctifying ourselves more and more. The method is simple. Perhaps we have been following it all along without realizing the fact. The leaders are set before us. All we need do is follow.

What can we learn from the Trinity:

We see they listen with love and understanding. They are compassionate, forgiving. We should be a blessing and grace to others; be patient. Remember we all have a free will.

We should encourage one another; try prayer. Love supports others in practical ways. It is loyal, firm, and positive. Such real, caring, and practical love is a reflection of God's love for us. We are God's family. We see such love in the family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

The sacrament of marriage is a public sign to everyone of God's grace among us. What helps families stay together is being good friends, interesting, and being interested, feeling joy and laughing together. (Yes God does laugh – look at the ducks, penguins, and dolphins to put a smile on your face!)

We reconnect with God at Sunday Mass, which is a time to pray together, a time of restoration and renewal, a time to be together with God and with each other. Praying together is the best way to keep a family focused on the most important guest in the home: God. While school, work, and errands, can make a family feel disconnected, prayer can unify.

We are not perfect but we can strive to imitate God and His love for all and be love to others!

References: gospel of John 17:20-26, Catechism, # 232-267



Bible Studies

"Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ" St. Jerome

The Lectionary

Day	Sunday
Time	9:30 am
Location	Room 149
Leader	Joe Lesnau
Tel.	979-265-6221



Adult Faith Sharing

Day	Sunday
Time	10:45 am
Location	Room 149
Leader	Gary Forse
Tel.	979-299-3145

Day	Wednesday
Time	6:00 am
Location	Angelina Room
Leader	Duane Williams
Tel.	979-297-5564



Day	Wednesday
Time	9:30 am
Location	Room 149
Leader	Bettie Carmody
Tel.	979-265-6509

Day	Thursday
Time	9:15 am
Location	"F" Wing
Leader	Jeanne Schroll
Tel.	979-297-5860



Day	Friday
Time	9:15 am
Location	Room 149
Leader	Pam Walker
Tel.	979-297-9746

The Year of Consecrated Life

Pope Francis proclaimed 2015 a year of Consecrated Life, starting on the First Sunday of Advent, the weekend of November 29, 2014, and ending on February 2, 2016, the World Day of Consecrated Life. The year also marks the 50th anniversary of *Perfectae Caritatis* (Complete Charity), a decree on religious life, and *Lumen Gentium* (Light of Nations), the Second Vatican Council's constitution on the Church. Its purpose as stated by the Vatican is to "make a grateful remembrance of the recent past" while embracing "the future with hope."

For more information, prayers intentions, prayer cards, a video on consecrated life and other resources visit: www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/



Prayer Groups

“Hear my prayer, O God. Give ear to the words of my mouth” Psalm 54:2

Day	Time	Focus	Location
Monday	7:00 pm	Rosary	Church
1 st Monday	7:00 pm	Patriotic Rosary	Church
2 nd Monday	7:00 pm	Lay Apostle Meeting Luminous Mysteries	Church
Tuesday	5:00 pm 6:00 pm	Rosary Divine Mercy Chaplet	Church
Wednesday	8:00 am 9:00 am	Rosary Divine Mercy Chaplet	Church
Thursday	5:00 pm 6:00 pm	Rosary Divine Mercy Chaplet	Church
Friday	8:00 am 9:00 am	Rosary Divine Mercy Chaplet	Church
Saturday	6:30 am	Men's Prayer Group	“F” Wing
Saturday	8:00 am	Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet	Chapel
1 st Saturday	8:00 am	Pro-Life Rosary	Chapel

Prayer for the Year of Consecrated Life

O God, throughout the ages you have called women and men to pursue lives of perfect charity through the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. During this the Year of Consecrated Life, we give you thanks for these courageous witnesses of Faith and models of inspiration. Their pursuit of holy lives teaches us to make a more perfect offering of ourselves to you. Continue to enrich your Church by calling forth sons and daughters who, having found the pearl of great price, treasure the Kingdom of Heaven above all things. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen



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The Holidays



President Harry S. Truman led the effort to establish a single holiday for citizens to come together and thank our military members for their patriotic service in support of our country. On August 31, 1949, Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson announced the creation of an Armed Forces Day to replace separate Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force Days. The single day celebration stemmed from the unification of the Armed Forces under the Department of Defense and this year is celebrated on **May 16**.

Prayer for the Armed Forces

Anonymous

Almighty God, we commend to your gracious care and keeping all the men and women of our armed forces at home and abroad. Defend them day by day with your heavenly grace, strengthen them in their trials and temptations, give them courage to face the perils which beset them, and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they may be, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Memorial Day, which is observed on the last Monday of May, commemorates the men and women who died while in the military service. In observance of the holiday, many people visit cemeteries and memorials, and volunteers often place American flags on each grave site at national cemeteries. A national moment of remembrance takes place at 3:00 p.m. local time.

Bivouac Of The Dead

By Theodore O'Hara

(Written in memory of the Kentucky troops killed in the Mexican War - 1847) Portions of this haunting poem are inscribed on placards throughout Arlington, as

The muffled drum's sad roll has beat
The soldier's last tattoo;
No more on Life's parade shall meet
That brave and fallen few.
On fame's eternal camping ground
Their silent tents to spread,
And glory guards, with solemn round
The bivouac of the dead.

No rumor of the foe's advance
Now swells upon the wind;
Nor troubled thought at midnight haunts
Of loved ones left behind;
No vision of the morrow's strife
The warrior's dreams alarms;
No braying horn or screaming fife
At dawn shall call to arms.



THE HOLY SEE

Pope Francis' Catechesis



The following is an excerpt from Pope Francis' Reflections on the Family given during the General Audiences from December 17, 2014 to February 18, 2015.

The family - 1. Nazareth

Dear Brothers and sisters, the *Synod of Bishops on the Family*, recently celebrated, was the first stage of a journey, which will conclude next *October* with the celebration of another Assembly on the theme: "*The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and [Contemporary] World*"...I have therefore decided to reflect with you, this year, precisely on the family, on this great gift that the Lord has made to the world from the very beginning, when he entrusted Adam and

Eve with the mission to multiply and fill the earth (cf. Gen 1:28); that gift that Jesus confirmed and sealed in his Gospel... The Incarnation of the Son of God opens a new beginning in the universal history of man and woman. And this new beginning happens within a family, in Nazareth. Jesus was born in a family. He could have come in a spectacular way, or as a warrior, an emperor.... No, no: he is born in a family, in a family...

God chose to come into the world in a human family, which He himself formed. He formed it in a remote village on the outskirts of the Roman Empire... The Gospels also recall this, almost as an expression: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (Jn 1:46)... Jesus dwelt on that periphery for 30 years. The Evangelist Luke summarizes this period like this: Jesus "was obedient to them"; — that is, to Mary and Joseph. And someone might say: "But did this God, who comes to save us, waste 30 years there, in that suburban slum?" He wasted 30 years! He wanted this. Jesus' path was in that family — "and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man" (Lk 2:51-52). It does not recount miracles or healing, or preaching — He did none in that period — or of crowds flocking; in Nazareth everything seemed to happen "normally", according to the customs of a pious and hardworking Israelite family: they worked, the mother cooked, she did all the housework, ironed shirts... all the things mothers do. The father, a carpenter, worked, taught his son the trade. Thirty years. "But what a waste, Father!" God works in mysterious ways. But what was important there was the family! And this was not a waste!..

We are certainly moved by the story of how the adolescent Jesus followed the religious calendar of the community and the social duties; in knowing how, as a young worker, He worked with Joseph; and then how He attended the reading of the Scriptures, in praying the Psalms and in so many other customs of daily life. The Gospels, in their sobriety, make no reference to Jesus' adolescence and leave this task to our loving meditation... In those 30 years, Jesus cultivated his vocation, for which the Father had sent him. And in that time, Jesus never became discouraged, but increased in courage in order to carry his mission forward.

Each Christian family can first of all — as Mary and Joseph did — welcome Jesus, listen to Him, speak with Him, guard Him, protect Him, grow with Him; and in this way improve the world... The family of Nazareth urges us to rediscover the vocation and mission of the family, of every family. And, what happened in those 30 years in Nazareth can thus happen to us too... It is no coincidence, then, that "Nazareth" means "She who keeps", as Mary, who — as the Gospel states — "kept all these things in her heart" (cf. Lk 2:19, 51). Since then, each time there is a family that keeps this mystery, even if it were on the periphery of the world, the mystery of the Son of God, the mystery of Jesus who comes to save us, the mystery is at work. He comes to save the world. And this is the great mission of the family: to make room for Jesus who is coming, to welcome Jesus in the family, in each member: children, husband, wife, grandparents.... Jesus is there. Welcome him there, in order that He grows spiritually in the family.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20141217_udienza-generale.html



The family - 2. The mother

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning... Let us continue with the catecheses on the family, and in the family there is *the mother*. Every human person owes his or her life to a mother, and almost always owes much of what follows in life, both human and spiritual formation, to her. Yet, despite being highly lauded from a symbolic point of view — many poems, many beautiful things said poetically of her — the mother is rarely listened to or helped in daily life, rarely considered central to society in her role...

It also happens that in Christian communities the mother is not always held in the right regard, she is barely heard. Yet the center of the life of the Church is the Mother of Jesus. Perhaps mothers, ready to sacrifice so much for their children and often for others as well, ought to be listened to more. We should understand more about their

daily struggle to be efficient at work and attentive and affectionate in the family; we should better grasp what they aspire to in order to express the best and most authentic fruits of their emancipation... I remember there were five of us children at home, and while one was doing one thing, the other wanted to do another, and our poor mama went back and forth from one's side to another, but she was happy. She gave us so much.

Mothers are the strongest antidote to the spread of self-centered individualism. "Individual" means "what cannot be divided". Mothers, instead, "divide" themselves, from the moment they bear a child to give him to the world and help him grow. It is they, mothers, who most hate war, which kills their children. Many times I have thought of those mothers who receive the letter: "I inform you that your son has fallen in defense of his homeland..." The poor women! How a mother suffers! It is they who testify to the beauty of life. Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero said that mothers experience a "martyrdom of motherhood". In the homily for the funeral of a priest assassinated by death squads, he said, recalling the Second Vatican Council: "We must be ready to die for our faith, even if the Lord does not grant us this honor.... Giving one's life does not only mean being killed; giving one's life, having the spirit of a martyr, it is in giving in duty, in silence, in prayer, in honest fulfillment of his duty; in that silence of daily life; giving one's life little by little. Yes, like it is given by a mother, who without fear and with the simplicity of the martyrdom of motherhood, conceives a child in her womb, gives birth to him, nurses him, helps them grow and cares for them with affection. She gives her life. That's martyrdom". Yes, being a mother doesn't only mean bringing a child to the world, but it is also a life choice. What does a mother choose, what is the life choice of a mother? The life choice of a mother is the choice to give life...

A society without mothers would be a dehumanized society, for mothers are always, even in the worst moments, witnesses of tenderness, dedication and moral strength. Mothers often pass on the deepest sense of religious practice: in a human being's life, the value of faith is inscribed in the first prayers, the first acts of devotion that a child learns. It is a message that believing mothers are able to pass on without much explanation: these come later, but the seed of faith is those early precious moments. Without mothers, not only would there be no new faithful, but the faith would lose a good part of its simple and profound warmth. And the Church is mother, with all of this, she is our mother! We are not orphans, we have a mother! Our Lady, mother Church, is our mom. We are not orphans, we are children of the Church, we are children of Our Lady, and we are children of our mothers.

Dearest mothers, thank you, thank you for what you are in your family and for what you give to the Church and the world. And to you, beloved Church, thank you, thank you for being mother. And to you, Mary, Mother of God, thank you for letting us see Jesus.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150107_udienza-generale.html



The family - 3. The father (First part)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning! Let us resume the series of catecheses on the family. Today we shall take the word “father” as our guide. It is a term dearer than any other to us Christians because it is the name by which Jesus taught us to call God: Father. The meaning of this name took on new depth from the very way Jesus used it to turn to God and to manifest his special relationship with Him. The blessed mystery of God’s intimacy, Father, Son and Spirit revealed by Jesus, is the heart of our Christian faith.

“Father” is a term familiar to everyone, a universal word. It indicates a fundamental relationship, the reality of which is as old as human history. Today, however, one has reached the point of claiming that our society is a “society without fathers”. In other words, particularly in Western culture, the father figure would be symbolically absent, faded, removed. At first, this was perceived as liberation: liberation from the father-master, from the father as the representative of the law that is

imposed from without, from the father as the censor of his children’s happiness and the obstacle to the emancipation and autonomy of young people. At times in some homes authoritarianism reigned in the past, in some cases even oppression: parents who treated their children like servants, not respecting their individual needs for growth... fathers who did not help them assume their own responsibilities to build their future and that of society. This, certainly, is not a good approach; but, as often happens; one goes from one extreme to the other.

In our day, the problem no longer seems to be the invasive presence of the father so much as his absence, his inaction. Fathers are sometimes so concentrated on themselves and on their work and at times on their career that they even forget about the family... As Bishop of Buenos Aires I sensed the feeling of orphan-hood that children are experiencing today, and I often asked fathers if they played with their children, if they had the courage and love to spend time with their kids. And the answer was negative in most cases... And the father was absent from the little child growing up, he did not play with him, no, he did not waste time with him.

Now, on this common journey of reflection on the family, I would like to say to all Christian communities that we must be more attentive: the absent father figure in the life of little ones and young people causes gaps and wounds that may even be very serious. And, in effect, delinquency among children and adolescents can be largely attributed to this lack, to the shortage of examples and authoritative guidance in their everyday life, a shortage of closeness, a shortage of love from the father. And the feeling of orphan-hood that so many young people live with is more profound than we think.

They are orphaned in the family, because the father is often absent, also physically, from the home, but above all because, when they are present, they do not behave like fathers. They do not converse with their children. They do not fulfill their role as educators. They do not set their children a good example with their words, principles, values, those rules of life which they need like bread. The educative quality of the time the father spends raising the child is all the more necessary when he is forced to stay away from home because of work. Sometimes it seems that fathers don’t know what their role in the family is or how to raise their children. So, in doubt, they abstain, they retreat and neglect their responsibilities, perhaps taking refuge in the unlikely relationship as “equals” with their children. It’s true that you have to be a “companion” to your child, but without forgetting that you are the father! If you behave only as a peer to your child, it will do him/her no good.

And so it would do everyone good, fathers and children, to listen again to the promise that Jesus made to his disciples: “I will not leave you orphans” (cf. Jn 14:18). He is, indeed, the Way to follow, the Teacher to listen to, the Hope that the world can change, that love conquers hatred, that there can be a future of brotherhood and peace for all. One of you might say to me: “But Father, today you were too negative. You only spoke about the absent father, what happens when fathers are not close to their children....” “It’s true; I wanted to stress this, because next Wednesday I am going to continue this catechesis by highlighting the beauty of fatherhood. That is why I chose to start from the darkness, in order to reach the light. May the Lord help us understand these things better.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150128_udienza-generale.html



The family - 3. The father (Second part)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today I would like to develop the second part of my reflection on the figure of the father in the family. Last time I spoke about the danger of “absent” fathers, today I would like to look instead at the positive aspect. Even St Joseph was tempted to leave Mary, when he discovered that she was pregnant; but the Angel of the Lord intervened and revealed to him God’s plan and his mission as foster father; and Joseph, a just man, “took his wife” (Mt 1:24) and became the father of the family of Nazareth.

Every family needs a father. Today we shall reflect on the value of his role, and I would like to begin with a few expressions that we find in the Book of Proverbs, words that a father addresses to his own son, and it reads like this: “My son, if your heart is wise, my heart too will be glad. My soul will rejoice when your lips speak what is right” (Pr 23:15-16). Nothing could better express the pride and emotion a father feels when he understands that he has handed down to his child what really matters in life, that is, a wise heart. This father does not say: “I am proud of you because you are the same as me, because you repeat the things I say and do”. No, he does not say anything so simple to him. He says something much more important, which we can understand in this way: “I will be happy every time I see you act with wisdom, and I will be moved every time that I hear you speak with rectitude. This is what I wanted to leave to you that this one thing becomes yours: the attitude to feel and act, to speak and judge with wisdom and rectitude. And that you might be like this, I taught you the things you didn’t know, I corrected the errors you didn’t see. I made you feel a profound and at the same time discrete affection, which maybe you did not fully recognize when you were young and unsure. I gave you a testimony of rigor and steadfastness that perhaps you didn’t understand when you would have liked only complicity and protection. I had first to test myself in the wisdom of my heart, be vigilant of my excesses of sentiment and resentment, in order to carry the weight of the inevitable misunderstandings, to find the right words to make myself understood.” Now, continues the father, “I see that you strive to be this way with your own children, and with everyone, and it moves me. I am happy to be your father”. This is what a wise father, a mature father, says. A father knows all too well what it costs to hand down this heritage: how close, how gentle and how firm to be. But what consolation and what recompense he receives when the children honor this legacy! It is a joy that rewards all the toil that overcomes every misunderstanding and heals every wound.

The first need, then, is precisely this: that a father be *present* in the family. That he be close to his wife to share everything: joy and sorrow, hope and hardship. And that he be close to his children as they grow... To say “present” is not to say “controlling”! Fathers who are too controlling cancel out their children, they don’t let them develop.

The Gospel speaks to us about the exemplarity of the Father who is in Heaven — who alone, Jesus says, can be truly called the “good Father” (cf. Mk 10:18). Everyone knows that extraordinary parable of the “*prodigal son*”, or better yet of the “*merciful father*”, which we find in the Gospel of Luke in chapter 15 (cf. 15:11-32). What dignity and what tenderness there is in the expectation of that father, who stands at the door of the house waiting for his son to return! Fathers must be patient. Often there is nothing else to do but wait; pray and wait with patience, gentleness, magnanimity and mercy.

A good father *knows how to wait and knows how to forgive* from the depths of his heart. Certainly, he also knows how to correct with firmness. The father who *knows how to correct without humiliating* is the one who knows how to protect without sparing himself. Once I heard a father at a meeting on marriage say: “Sometimes I have to strike the children lightly... but never in the face so as not to humiliate them”. How beautiful! He has a sense of dignity. He must punish, but he does it in a just way, and moves on.

If then, there is someone who can fully explain the prayer of the “Our Father”, taught by Jesus; it is the one who lives out paternity in the first person. Without the grace that comes from the Father who is in Heaven, fathers lose courage, and abandon camp. But children need to find a father waiting for them when they come home after failing. They will do everything not to admit it, not to show it, but they need it; and not to find it opens wounds in them that are difficult to heal.

The Church, our mother, is committed to supporting with all her strength the good and generous presence of fathers in families, for they are the irreplaceable guardians and mediators of faith in goodness, of faith in justice and in God’s protection, like St Joseph.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150204_udienza-generale.html



The family - 4. The children

Dear Brother and Sisters, Good morning,

After reflecting on the figures of the mother and father, in this catechesis on the family I would like to talk about the child, or even better, about children. I shall use a beautiful image from Isaiah. The Prophet writes: “they all gather and come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried in the arms of their nurses. Then, you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and rejoice,” (60:4-5). It is a splendid

image, an image of happiness which is fulfilled in the reunion of parents and children, who journey together toward a future of freedom and peace, after a long period of deprivation and separation, when the Hebrew people were far from their homeland.

In essence, there is a close link between the hope of a people and the harmony among generations. The joy of children causes the parents' hearts to beat and reopens the future. Children are the joy of the family and of society. They are not a question of reproductive biology, nor one of the many ways to fulfill oneself, much less a possession of their parents.... No. Children are a gift. Each one is unique and irreplaceable; and at the same time unmistakably linked to his/her roots... And for parents each child is original, different, and diverse. Allow me to share a family memory. I remember what my mother said about us: “I have five children”. When they asked her: “Which one is your favorite”, she answered: “I have five children, like five fingers. [He displays his fingers] Should they strike this one, it hurts me; should they strike that one, it hurts me. All five hurt me. All are my children and all are different like the fingers of a hand”. And this is how a family is!

A child is loved because he is one's child: not because he is beautiful or because he is like this or like that; no, because he is a child! Not because he thinks as I do, or embodies my dreams. A child is a child: a life generated by us but intended for him, for his good, for the good of the family, of society, of mankind as a whole.

From this also derives the depth of the human experience of being son or daughter, which allows us to discover the most gratuitous dimension of love, which never ceases to astonish us. It is the beauty of being loved first: children are loved before they arrive. ... like the love of God who always loves us first...

Today it seems more difficult for children to imagine their future. Fathers have perhaps taken a step backward and children have become more uncertain in taking their steps forward. We can learn the good relationship between generations from our Heavenly Father, who leaves each of us free but never leaves us on our own. And if we err, He continues to follow us with patience, without abating his love for us...

The children, for their part, must not be afraid of the task of building a new world: it is right for them to want to improve on what they have received! But this must be done without arrogance, without presumption. One must know how to recognize a child's virtue, and parents always deserve honor.

The fourth Commandment asks children — we are all children! — To honor our father and mother (cf. Ex 20:12). This Commandment comes immediately after those regarding God Himself. Indeed, it contains something sacred, something divine, and something which lies at the root of every other type of respect among men. And to the biblical formulation of the fourth Commandment is added: “that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you”. The virtuous bond between generations is the guarantee of the future, and is the guarantee of a truly human history. A society with children who do not honor parents is a society without honor; when one does not honor one's parents one loses one's own honor! It is a society destined to be filled with arid and avid young people. However, even a society with a paucity of generations, which does not love being surrounded by children, which considers them above all a worry, a weight, a risk, is a depressed society. ...

May the Lord bless our parents and bless your children. May Jesus, the eternal Son, who in the fullness of time became a child, help us find the path of a new radiation of this so great and so simple human experience of being children. In the multiplication of generations there is a mystery of enrichment of the life of all, which comes from God Himself. We must rediscover it, challenging prejudice; and live it, in the faith, in perfect happiness.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150211_udienza-generale.html



The family - 5. Siblings

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

In our continuing catechesis on the family, after having considered the roles of the mother, the father, the children, today we shall reflect on *siblings*. “Brother” and “sister” are words that Christianity really loves. And, thanks to the family experience, they are words that all cultures and all times comprehend.

The fraternal bond holds a special place *in the history of the People of God*, who received his revelation at the core of the human experience. The Psalmist sings of the beauty of the fraternal bond: “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when

brothers dwell in unity!” (Ps 133:1). And this is true, brotherhood is beautiful! Jesus Christ also brought to its fullness this human experience of being brothers and sisters, embracing it in Trinitarian love and thereby empowering it to go well beyond the ties of kinship and enabling it to surmount every barrier of extraneousness.

We know that *when the fraternal relationship is destroyed*, when the relationship between siblings is destroyed, the road is open to painful experiences of conflict, of betrayal, of hate. The biblical account of *Cain and Abel* is an example of this negative outcome. After the killing of Abel, God asks Cain: “Where is Abel your brother?” (Gen 4:9a). It is a question that the Lord continues to repeat to every generation. And unfortunately, in every generation, Cain’s dramatic answer never fails to be repeated: “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” (*ibid.*, 4:9b)...Brotherhood is a great thing, when we consider that all our brothers and sisters lived in the womb of the same mother for nine months, came from the mother’s flesh! Brotherhood cannot be broken...

Should the bond of *fraternity* which *forms in the family between children* arise in an educational atmosphere of openness to others, it is the great school of freedom and peace. In the family, among siblings, human coexistence is learned, how one must live in society. Perhaps we are not always aware of it, but the family itself introduces fraternity into the world! Beginning with this first experience of fraternity, nourished by affection and education at home, the style of fraternity radiates like a promise upon the whole of society and on its relations among peoples.

The blessing that God, *in Jesus Christ*, pours out on this bond of fraternity *expands* in an unimaginable way. He renders it capable of overcoming all differences of nationality, language, culture and even religion.

Consider what becomes of the bond between men and women, even when completely different from each other, when they are able to say of another: “He is truly like a brother; she is just like a sister to me!” This is beautiful! History has shown well enough, after all, that even freedom and equality, without brotherhood, can be full of individualism and conformism, and even personal interests.

Familial fraternity shines in a special way when we see the care, the patience, the affection that envelop *the weakest little brother or sister*, sick or physically challenged. There are countless brothers and sisters who do this, throughout the world, and perhaps we do not appreciate their generosity enough. And when there are many siblings in a family the eldest boy or girl helps the dad, the mom, to take care of the younger children...

Having a brother, a sister, who loves you, is a deep, precious, irreplaceable experience. *Christian fraternity* happens in the same way. The smallest, the weakest, the poorest soften us: they have the “right” to take our heart and soul. Yes, they are our brothers and sisters and as such we must love and care for them. When this happens, when the poor are like family members, our own Christian fraternity comes to life again. This is the principle of God’s love and of all justice among men.

Today more than ever it is necessary to place fraternity back at the center of our technocratic and bureaucratic society: then even freedom and equality will find the correct balance. Therefore, let us not thoughtlessly deprive our families, out of criticism or fear, of the beauty of a bountiful fraternal experience of sons and daughters. And let us not lose our trust in the broad horizon faith is able to draw from this experience, enlightened by God’s blessing.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150218_udienza-generale.html



The Saints

*O Jesus, Son of the Virgin Mary, infuse into me grace,
wisdom, charity, chastity and humility.*

St. Thomas Aquinas

Feast: January 28

By Jackson Wedelich:



St. Thomas Aquinas, the patron saint of students and universities, was born circa 1226 in Roccasecca, Italy. At an early age, St. Thomas Aquinas was taught by the Benedictines, but later made the decision to enter into the Order of St. Dominic, which was contrary to the wishes of his family. They conveyed these feelings by doing everything in their power to stop him, including sending a woman to tempt him. These efforts proved to be unfruitful for the family as St. Thomas Aquinas remained faithful to God and his vocation. From this event, St. Thomas Aquinas was given the title of the “Angelic Doctor.”

He went on to study in Naples and then in Cologne, where he excelled greatly in his studies. After teaching in

Cologne, he went to Paris, where he became a priest and later earned his doctorate. In Paris, he wrote some of his renowned literary works. He was called to Rome in 1261, where he also taught, preached, and did most of his writings. While en route to the second Council of Lyons, St. Thomas Aquinas fell sick and died in 1274.

I personally find the story of the life of St. Thomas Aquinas very inspirational and impactful. His life and the way it was lived gives me hope and strength. The example that he gives me is one where temptation can and will be overcome. He is a friend that will pray for me when I have stresses in school. The excellent scholarship that he had drives me to strive for excellence as well. His works, especially in philosophy, psychology, and theology, inspire me to study the same fields and help me to understand how to live in this world. St. Thomas Aquinas, patron saint of students, pray for us!

A Student's Prayer (by St. Thomas Aquinas)

Come, Holy Spirit, Divine Creator, true source of light and fountain of wisdom! Pour forth your brilliance upon my dense intellect, dissipate the darkness which covers me, that of sin and of ignorance. Grant me a penetrating mind to understand, a retentive memory, method and ease learning, the lucidity to comprehend, and abundant grace in expressing myself. Guide the beginning of my work, direct its progress, and bring it to successful completion. This I ask through Jesus Christ, true God and true man, living and reigning with You and the Father, forever and ever.

Amen

Ref: www.catholic.org



The Saints

St. John Bosco

Feast: January 31



By Taylor Schroll,

St John Bosco was born in Turin, Italy in 1815. His love for the faith and sharing it began at a young age. When only five, he was already teaching catechism to his friends! He was also a man of great physical strength. Throughout his life, he would gain the attention of those around him through feats of strength, sleight of hand tricks, speed, jumping, juggling and a host of other tricks. Once he gained their attention, he would strike up conversation with the crowd and talk to them about the thing of God.

Not only was he physically strong, but his mind was quite gifted as well. He was a voracious reader, who placed great importance on training the memory. He could quote whole chapters of manuscripts verbatim and applied this not only to his learning but also to his teaching philosophy. He would tell his students, "It's no use learning if

you can't retain what you learned through the training of your memory."

His desire to teach grew through childhood; he entered the seminary and was ordained to the priesthood in 1841. As a young priest, he knew he wanted to work with young boys. His first plans for the education of poor abandoned boys came to him in dreams. (The collections of these dreams have become a popular spiritual read.) He had a deep love for young people and taught them how to live their faith, prepared them for their Christian walk through prayer, Scripture and learning, and also encouraged them to live balanced lives of work, play, study and faith.

St. John Bosco has been a favorite of mine since grad school. He is an inspiration and model for me to follow in working with young people. His methods of teaching, nurturing and loving young people have guided me through the course of my ministry. His example of leading by example, being himself, and trying to instill a love for desiring to learn more about our faith are things that I try to emulate.

I ask that you join me in asking for the intercession of St. John Bosco for the conversion of the hearts of young people and for guidance for all those who desire to lead them closer to Christ.

St. John Bosco, patron saint of young people, pray for us.

Novena in Honor of

St. John Bosco

Father and Teacher of the Young

In need of special help, I appeal with confidence to you, Saint John Bosco, for I require not only spiritual graces, but also temporal ones, and particularly...

(add your personal intentions here)

May you, who on earth had such great devotion to

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Help of Christians, and who always had compassion for those who were suffering, obtain from Jesus and His Heavenly Mother the grace I now request, and also a sincere resignation to the Will of God.

(Recite the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be)

Ref. www.ewtn.com



The Saints

St. John Paul II

Feast: October 22



By Victor Hernandez,

He was born Karol Józef Wojtyła in Poland on May 18, 1920. Saint John Paul II was a Roman Catholic priest, bishop, and Cardinal who eventually was elected to become Pope in 1978. He was the second longest-serving pope in modern history after Pope Pius IX, who served for nearly 27 years from 1978 to 2005. John Paul II is recognized as helping to end Communist rule in his native Poland and eventually all of Europe. John Paul II significantly improved the Catholic Church's relations with Judaism, Islam, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Anglican Communion. He was one of the most traveled world leaders in history, visiting 129 countries during his pontificate. A key goal of

his papacy was to transform and reposition the Catholic Church. His wish was "to place his Church at the heart of a new religious alliance that would bring together Jews, Muslims and Christians in a great religious armada." John Paul II was canonized on April 27, 2014, together with Pope John XXIII.

He has inspired me to continually seek Jesus through the good times and the bad. "Be not afraid" were words of Jesus Christ that echoed through John Paul II to the young Church, at World Youth Day. His collection of homilies known as the "Theology of the Body" has encouraged a true reverence for the gift of our sexuality and challenges us to live it in a way worthy of our great dignity as men and women. His theology is not only for young adults or married couples, but for all ages and vocations.

Patron saint of World Youth Day, young Catholics, and families.

St. John Paul II Quotes

"We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures:
We are the sum of the Father's love for us and our real
capacity to become the image of his son."

"Darkness can only be scattered by Light,
Hatred can only be conquered with love."

"Do not be afraid to take a chance on peace,
To teach peace, to live peace,...
Peace will be the last word of history."



For Your Information



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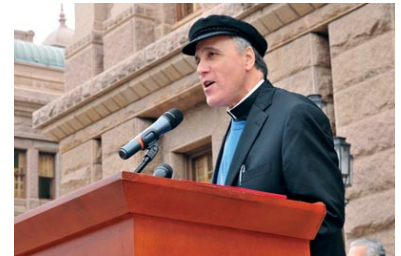
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Texas Catholic Faith In Action Advocacy Day

An excerpt from the Texas Catholic Herald February 24, 2015,

AUSTIN - ON TUESDAY, MARCH 24, Catholics from across the Lone Star State will unite for the Texas Catholic Conference (TCC) 2015 Texas Catholic Faith In Action Advocacy Day. This bi-annual rally is hosted by the Texas bishops, including Galveston-Houston's Daniel Cardinal DiNardo and Auxiliary Bishop George A. Sheltz, to promote the Church's values of life, justice, charity and religious freedom to members of the 84th Texas Legislature.



The bishops and event participants will address a broad range of diverse issues including advance directives reform, school choice tax credit scholarships, payday lending, Medicaid expansion and abortion facilities regulation.

The centerpiece of the day is when Texas bishops and participants join together in a massive rally at 11:30 a.m. on the south steps of the historic Texas State Capitol. In addition, a chicken lunch will be served on the great lawn of the Capitol grounds. Throughout the day, participants will make visits to their state senators and representatives. Media from across Texas will also be on hand to chronicle this historic event.

For more details or to be a part of the 2015 Texas Catholic Faith in Action Advocacy Day, visit www.txcatholic.org or contact Alicia M. Vinklarek at the Office of Justice and Peace at avinklarek@archgh.org or 713-741-8769.

Happy Mothers Day

Dear Heavenly Father,

We thank You for our mothers to whom You had entrusted the care of every precious human life from its very beginning in the womb. Thank you for filling their hearts with love. Thank you for giving them the gift of nurturing their children, of teaching them, of comforting them, for feeding them and making a safe place for them. Fill every mother with love, wisdom and endurance, with strength, patience and joy. Enable her to rely on You and call upon you on her time of need. In Your name we pray. Amen



Important Dates In This Trimester

Date	Celebration	Date	Celebration
March 3	St. Katharine Drexel	April 29	St. Catherine of Siena
March 7	Sts. Perpetua and Felicity	April 30	St. Pius V
March 17	St. Patrick, Bishop	May 1	St. Joseph the Worker
March 19	St. Joseph, Husband of Mary	May 2	St. Athanasius
March 25	The Annunciation of the Lord	May 10	Mother's Day
March 29	Palm Sunday	May 13	Our Lady of Fatima
April 2	Holy Thursday	May 14	The Ascension of the Lord
April 3	Good Friday	May 16	Armed Forces Day
April 4	Holy Saturday	May 22	St. Rita of Cascia
April 5	Easter Sunday	May 24	Pentecost Sunday
April 12	Divine Mercy Sunday	May 25	Memorial Day
April 21	St. Anselm	May 27	St. Augustine of Canterbury
April 25	St. Mark, Evangelist	May 30	Blessed Virgin Mary
April 28	St. Peter Chanel	May 31	The Most Holy Trinity

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