

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

I think we all know that being a member of a family means learning to make allowances for the weaknesses of others. We also need to make allowances for the needs of our friends, otherwise we won't have any. Because of our love and affection for them we overlook their faults and we respond when they need our help.

I believe these experiences help illustrate the point our Lord Jesus is making in the Gospel reading. The reading begins with Jesus saying that if we want to have eternal life then we must keep the two Great Commandments by loving God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind and by loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. Then Jesus explains who our neighbors are through the parable of the Good Samaritan. In the parable the priest and the Levite as devout Jews are well aware of the commandment *love thy neighbor*. However, their definition of *neighbor* is very limited. When they see the injured man on the side of the road, they not only don't help him they actually avoid him. The reason they do this is because according to Jewish customs of the time if you came into contact with blood you would be ritually impure. Someone who is ritually impure couldn't worship in the temple until they had gone through a lot of ceremonial washings. Therefore, touching the injured man would involve work and would be very inconvenient. They evidently didn't think that the injured man was worth all this trouble. For them the term *neighbor*, meaning someone they had to care for, did not include strangers.

We too set limits on whom we care about and usually our limits don't include those who are different from us or those we find hard to deal with. With such limits in place, the world is neatly divided, with our family and friends on one side and everybody else on the other. Those we choose to love we find worthy of our concern and we help them when they need it and we are even willing to overlook their faults. All the other people we mostly just tolerate and we don't go out of our way to help them.

Our Lord is asking us to rethink our ways of acting and loving. Through the parable Jesus is challenging us to extend our limits and to broaden our circle of concern. In His way of thinking, everyone is our *neighbor* and deserving of our care. And we are to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Now what does it mean to love our neighbors as we love ourselves? Well, when you think about it, love of self is instinctive. We quite naturally want what is best for ourselves. We want to be happy and pursue those things we think will make us happy. And if we are suffering or in trouble in some way, we don't wonder if we are worth helping. We expect people to help us. Jesus tells us that as His followers this is how we are to

think and act toward all our fellow human beings. We are to love them instinctively, wanting what is best for them and without wondering whether they are worth helping.

Of course, accepting everyone as our neighbor and loving them as we love ourselves is not easy. However, it is one of the two great commandments and so we must take it seriously. Jesus really does expect us to go out of our way to love others. As Jesus says in another place in the Gospel, *If you love only those who love you, what merit is there in that? Even non-believers do as much.*

Confronted with the difficulty of loving others outside his circle of family and friends, St. Augustine used to pray to the Lord "Give what You command." In doing so Augustine was taking the Commandments to love seriously at the same time recognizing that it is only with the Lord's grace that we are capable of loving this way.

Deepening our love for God and for others should be a regular petition in our prayers. Also, when we examine our consciences each day and before coming to Confession, we should ask ourselves how well we have kept the Lord's two Great Commandments of love. We should be making the effort to widen our circle of concern. The joys and sorrows of our fellow parishioners, fellow Christians, the people who live next door and our co-workers should be of special concern to us.

Additionally, our Lord says we, like the Good Samaritan, should have a special concern for the poor, the vulnerable and the suffering. We have to try to extend to all these neighbors of ours the same patience, understanding and compassion we have for our family and friends.

What our Lord is asking of us in the parable of the Good Samaritan is, with His Grace, to extend our compassion to include all of those He calls our neighbors.

With my prayers,
Fr. Conley

Be Good Samaritans-Help Our VISITING MISSIONARY THIS WEEKEND

As part of our commitment as Catholics to support the missionary work of the Church, our parish will have a collection for the Diocese of Marthandam, in South India the weekend of July 13/14. Fr. Pathrose Panuvel, a missionary, will tell us about the experiences of the important mission work. You may make your checks out to St. Mary's Church and we will see that your donations go to the missions. Thank you.

HEALING PRAYER TEAMS WILL BE ON HAND TO PRAY FOR YOU AND YOUR INTENTIONS AFTER EACH MASS NEXT WEEKEND.

SOUND MINDS/ GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

Starts this Tuesday! (Really) Good mental health is an important factor in having a happy life. This 4 session series will give insight into what mental wellness is and how to maintain it. Included in this, we will discuss helpful strategies for facing and helping our loved ones to face depression, anxiety, addiction, and grief. The presentations will be given by Caitlin Langreich. Caitlin has a M.A. clinical mental health counseling and is certified clinical trauma professional. You don't have to come to each presentation to benefit from this series and there will be time for Q&A. If you, or someone you know, is interested in learning more about how to achieve and maintain mental wellness, please join us! Tuesdays 7-8:30pm July 16 & 23; August 6 & 20. For more information about this series, contact Fr. Conley frconley@comcast.net

PRAISE & WORSHIP GATHERING this THURSDAY, July 18, at 6:30p.m., and dinner will be served. Everyone is invited to come and join us for Spirit-filled praise of Our Lord. For more information contact Fr. Conley.

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING WORTH WHILE TO WATCH? Check out FORMED. We are happy to offer you a great new free resource for entertainment and faith formation. Through the generosity of a donor, every parishioner can now enjoy movies and spiritual resources on your own computer. For free access to FORMED just type in our custom URL stmarysbryantown.formed.org into the search box on your web browser. Then click on the register tab and begin to enjoy **FORMED** while growing in your understanding of our faith.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

"Father, God, how do we thank Thee as we ought for Thy goodness to us? We slept in comfortable beds last night, between clean sheets. Millions of people in our cities and in other parts of the world slept on the streets. We awakened to a good breakfast this morning, with promise of more than enough to eat for lunch and dinner. Millions had no breakfast this morning, nor yesterday, nor the day before, and they have no prospect of lunch or dinner in the foreseeable future. We live in comfortable homes while millions are homeless in refugee camps or worse.

"Dear God, forgive us for complaining, for never thanking Thee, for behaving as though we deserve these benefits in contrast to those who are without. Don't let us have to lose these blessings to appreciate them. We pray in the name of Him whose heart was with the hungry, the homeless, the naked and the oppressed. Amen."

NEW HVAC FUND DRIVE UPDATE

We need to replace the heating & air conditioning system in the hall. The cost will be approximately \$100,000. We are having a special collection this summer to raise these funds. A donor has pledged to match our donations up to \$50,000. The deadline for receiving these matching donations is August 15. So far, we have received \$35,705.00 in additional donations and pledges. Please make your donation or pledge as soon as possible. We appreciate your generous support.

SUNDAY, JULY 28TH AT 1:00 P.M. we will be having an Ignite Youth Group Road Side Safety Presentation, in the lower lot of St Mary's School - 13735 Notre Dame Pl, Bryantown, MD 20617. After demonstrations, a discussion around "God at the center of our wheel, and Is God just your Spare Tire."

THREE TO GET MARRIED MARRIAGE PREPARATION WEEKEND

Upcoming weekends: **7- 25-28, 8-22-25, 9-12-15**
Are You Ready?! You're not just planning a wedding; you're preparing for a lifetime! Convenient one-weekend schedule. FOCCUS Inventory included and we are a partner of the Witness to Love program! Registration required. Find more information on our website www.ourladyofbethesda.org or call 301-365-0612. These weekends fill up quickly, so reserve your spot today!

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Kyle Capps, 10am Maurice I. Long Sr., 12N Parishioners, **MON:** 8am John W. Langley, Jr., **TUES:** 8am Joseph Tolarski, Jr., **WED:** 8am Mary Nelson, **THURS:** 8am Ernest J. Keller, Jr., **FRI:** 9:30am Joseph Zaradzki, **SAT:** 9am Elise Dent, 4pm Helen Matthews.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS:

Stephen Balenger, Mary Bowes, Deacon Gene Burroughs, Quint Burroughs, Brenda Callahan, Joe Cross, Agnes Curtis, Chuck Davis, Kendall Farrell, George Fassel, John Fassel, Arlene Gandolfi, Kevin Gardiner, Lee Gardiner, James Gibson, Zynae Green, Carol Johnson, Irma Johnson, Angie Kalnasy, Regina Kijesky, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, Florence Middleton, Eda Moon, John Nichols, Johnny Norman, Mary Reeves, Melissa Rollins, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Beth Weise, Brice Zimmer.

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND:

\$11,798.00. \$1,975.50 of that was received from people who contribute through online banking. The unidentified donations totaled \$330.00. We received \$697.00 for our School Support.