

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

This month is the month of All Saints and All Souls. During this month we are reminded to pray for those who have gone before us in faith so that they will be purified of anything that keeps them from entering fully into the presence of the All Holy God. The experience of final purification before entering the throne room of God is what we mean by "purgatory." Some of our fellow Christians question the existence of purgatory. But I believe the following essay by a former Protestant minister who became a priest clarifies the confusion regarding this teaching.

With my prayers,
Father Conley

Whatever Happened to Purgatory?

by Fr. Dwight Longenecker

National Catholic Register

The author is a convert from Protestantism.

Have you noticed how many Catholics seem to have forgotten purgatory? When a loved one dies they say, "Aunt Hilda has gone to be with the Lord" or "Daddy is in heaven now." or they comfort the bereaved by saying, "George is with his beloved Gladys now." Or at Catholic funerals the preacher consoles the loved ones with talk about the departed being in heaven now. This isn't Catholic. It's Protestant.

Most Protestants believe in the Calvinist doctrine of eternal security and think that as soon as a person dies they go straight to heaven. They quote the beautiful Bible verse, "to be absent in the body and be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). But St Paul is expressing his hope here, not a certainty. In context his words are, "We have confidence and would prefer to be absent from the body and present with the Lord."

However, there is more going on here than just the influence of Bible-believing Calvinists. The real influence in this Catholic theological drift is universalism and semi-universalism.

Universalism is the heresy that everyone will be saved and semi-universalism is the wishy-washy halfway house in which people know they can't hold to universalism so they say, "It is our hope that no one is in hell and that eventually everyone will be saved."

I should point out that universalism and semi-universalism is usually held by nice, upper-middle-class educated people who don't really know anyone who is not equally nice, educated, polite and middle class. They don't know any really awful, sinful, nasty people so they can't imagine that God would send anyone as nice and polite as them and their friends to hell.

What are the consequences of this universalism and semi-universalism? It's just the kind of complacent, sentimental, feel-good religion we see in contemporary American Catholicism.

Since everyone will be saved, we smoothly and sweetly assure people that "Uncle George is in heaven now" and "Be happy. Jimmy is with Jesus."

One of the main reasons we've fallen into this trap is because we have forgotten purgatory. The prevailing Protestant culture (which denied purgatory long ago) teaches that if the loved one isn't in heaven immediately, then he or she is in hell immediately and we sure don't want to say THAT at the funeral or the bereavement counseling session. So we go the way of being nice. Even when we know Jimmy and Uncle George were not exactly ready to be ushered into the presence of the Almighty, we say so anyway.

Heaven has therefore become a kind of all-inclusive home park where everyone gets in and everyone has a happy time, world without end-AMEN. Another symptom of this "Grandpa went straight to heaven" heresy is the declining number of requests for requiem Masses to be said. Of course, if people think Grandpa went straight to heaven they see no need to have Masses said for the repose of his soul.

The Catholic belief is that most Christians, when they die — if they are not in a state of mortal sin — go to purgatory. Purgatory is not a third place, but a kind of ante-chamber of heaven. It's where you go to finish your homework. It's where you go to wash up before dinner.

Belief in purgatory is both compassionate and common sense. It is compassionate because it allows for a place for us to go to finish the work of becoming "perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect." It is compassionate because it takes human responsibility seriously and allows us to continue to cooperate with God's grace for our soul's purification.

Purgatory is common sense because all of us realize that very few of us are saints ready to enter directly into God's presence, but also, we know that (hopefully) not many of us are so desperately evil as to reject God forever and go to hell.

Therefore, what do we say at funerals? We can be consistent with Catholic beliefs and also be compassionate. We can say, "Thank God for George's life. What a terrific man he was. We'll all miss him, and you can bet I will continue to pray that God will complete his work of grace in George's life." We can say, "Thank God for Jimmy. May God continue to lead him into his life, light and happiness." Purgatory is therefore a doctrine not only full of compassion and common sense, but also full of confidence, joy and eternal hope.

FOLLOWING THE CALL OF CHRIST by Bishop Barron meets again this Thursday from 6:30-8:30 in the hall. All are invited & dinner is included. For more information contact Fr. Conley.

ADORATION & PRAISE OF CHRIST OUR KING

On Sunday, November 24, Feast of Christ the King, we will have exposition of the Blessed Sacrament with adoration and praise immediately following the 1 PM Mass. Our praise and worship of our Lord will end at approximately 2:15 PM with Benediction. Come join us as we rejoice before Christ our King.

HOW DO PARISHIONERS REGISTER FOR A FORMED ACCOUNT?

Go to: formed.org/signup. Select the tab that says I am with a Parish or Organization. Select your parish (Type in St. Mary and select the one with our address). Register with your name and email address. Check that email account for a link to begin using FORMED. It is that easy! Sign up today to enjoy the many movies, books and spiritual resources offered to you through our generous donor from your phone, TV, or computer!

ST. MARY'S ANNUAL \$60,000 RAFFLE ! You may purchase a ticket on your own for \$100 or consider purchasing a ticket with your friends, family or co-workers. Split the ticket cost and the winnings. There are 20 opportunities to win cash prizes adding up to \$60,000. Your ticket enters you into all 20 drawings. The Grand Prize Drawing of \$20,000 will be held on March 6, 2020. **Congratulations** to the winner that was drawn at the Dinnerfest last Sunday, Nov. 3, Nick Hatzel for \$1000.

Please support our advertising sponsors. This week we recognize Dennis Anderson Construction Co.

Do you have feelings of guilt, shame, remorse or sadness after an abortion? Do you feel that God can never forgive you? Women who have experienced abortion are invited to a **Day of Prayer and Healing: "Entering Canaan" on Saturday, November 23, 2019**. An atmosphere of peace and confidence can help you heal from shame and other negative emotions that come after an induced abortion. When you register, you will be given the confidential location. For more information, call Project Rachel Ministry 301-982-2008. Ask for Sister Priscilla. Remember that all of our contacts are strictly confidential. hope@adw.org

MARY'S HELPING HANDS will be selling raffle tickets for a small Christmas money tree (\$250.00), after all Masses the weekend of November 23 & 24th. \$1 each or 6 for \$5.00. Thanking you in advance for your support!

Come Hear and Sing Christmas Music at SMB!

Our SMB musicians along with St Mary's Newport will present a *Christmas Cantata and Sing-along* on **Sunday, December 15 at 3 PM**. Bring your families and celebrate the birth of our Lord together with the music that makes our season so beautiful and worshipful! Dessert will be served in the church hall following the program.

HELP OUR MARRIAGE - Do you feel alone? Are you frustrated or angry with each other? Do you argue, or have you just stopped talking to each other? Does talking about it only make it worse? Retrouvaille (pronounced retro-vi with a long i) helps couples through difficult times in their marriages. This program has helped 10's of 1,000's of couples experiencing difficulties in their marriage. For confidential information or to register for the upcoming program beginning with a weekend on January 24-26, 2020, please visit: www.HelpOurMarriage.com, call (443) 400-7017, or email: 3015@retrouvaille.org

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Gary Williams, 10am Sonny Jameson, 12N Charles Merz, **MON:** 8am ALL SOULS, **TUES:** 8am Ernest J. Keller, Jr., **WED:** 8am Renzo Vanni, **THURS:** 8am ALL SOULS, **FRI:** 9:30am Maurice I. Long, Sr., **SAT:** 9am ALL SOULS, 4pm Michael & Jessie Chlysta.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY

PRAYERS: Michael, Stephen & Tony Balenger, Mary Bowes, Bill Branick, Anne & Deacon Gene Burroughs, Quint Burroughs, Brenda Callahan, Dottie Chick, Joe Cross, Agnes Curtis, Chuck Davis, Kendall Farrell, George & John Fassel, Arlene Gandolfi, Kevin Gardiner, Lee Gardiner, James Gibson, Wilson (Sonny) Goldsmith, Charles Graham, Zynae Green, Irma Johnson, Angie Kalnasy, Regina Kijesky, Marie Knobel, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, Eda Moon, Terry Morris, John Nichols, Johnny Norman, Mary Reeves, Melissa Rollins, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Thomas Stewart, Edna Sweeney, Beth Weise, Billie Whittington, Michael Whittington, Jr., Brice Zimmer.

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND:

\$11,433.55. \$ 1,950.00 of that was received from people who contributed through online banking. The unidentified donations totaled \$637.80. We received \$397.00 for our School Support.