

**FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK**

Dear Parishioners,

Normally, on December 8, the Church celebrates the Solemn Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This year, since it falls on the Second Sunday of Advent, the feast is moved to Monday and is not a holy day of obligation. However, it is still an important feast. The essay below explains the importance of the feast and how we can learn that Mary shows us, by her example, how we can carry her son, Jesus Christ to others.

With my prayers,  
Fr. Conley

**Chosen and Set Apart**

by Andi Oney

A significant event takes place in the Garden of Eden just after the fall. God, speaking to Eve and the serpent, reveals the first prophecy of our redemption. When God asks Eve why she took the fruit from the forbidden tree, she confesses that the serpent tricked her into eating it. Then God addresses the serpent: I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel. (Genesis 3:15, NRSV-CE).

This Scripture, known as the *Protoevangelium*, "the first gospel," shows that as quickly as sin entered the world, God was ready to redeem it. And so it is in the garden that we first glimpse Mary. She is the "woman" of this prophecy, not Eve, because it will be Mary's offspring who will crush the head of the enemy. This is the first seed of hope that God planned, planted, and prophesied: we will receive redemption and rise above the fall through the "New Eve," Mary, and by her son Jesus, the "New Adam" (see 1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

God chose to create Mary sinless. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

Through the centuries the Church has become even more aware that Mary, "full of grace" through God [Luke 1:28], was redeemed from the moment of her conception. This is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854: "The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merit of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin."

I was a bit embarrassed because I didn't know precisely what the Church teaches about Mary. I

couldn't have given these four truths from memory or with clarity, and I had been Catholic all my life. At the same time, I was perplexed. Instead of this recital of facts, I was expecting to hear of a personal epiphany regarding Mary or how he came to know her.

This question posed to my friend marked a moment of truth for me. I felt challenged to study and understand the dogmas of the Church regarding Mary. I felt an urgency to defend my own personal devotion and dependence on her. I wanted to build a case, so to speak, for my lived experience through the authority of the Church. The Church proclaims Mary as an essential part of the salvific plan of God. The truth is important for all Catholics, because part of our identity lies in the person of Mary.

As revealed to us in God's plan of salvation, Mary is mysterious, pure, and holy, but that doesn't mean we are unable to relate to her. She is more than a dogma of the Church. Mary is human: she experienced joys and sorrows, and she felt human feelings and emotions. Mary experienced the reality of daily life. She was let down by others. She went to public events. She practiced her faith. She had friends and relatives. She praised God. She had compassion. She had a personality. She wanted others to know her Son.

God planned and knew Mary, as he planned and knew us, before she was in her mother's womb. He knew her culture, her family dynamic, and all of the trials and triumphs of her life. She too was knit in her mother's womb and given the *ruah*, the breath of God, the breath of life.

**VISITING PRIESTS WILL BE HEARING CONFESSIONS THIS TUESDAY, DEC 10 AT 10AM following the School Penance Service. Don't be afraid. The kids can show you how it is done!**

**CATHOLIC QUOTES**

"Keep in the company of Mary and Joseph who are seeking lodging for Him in Bethlehem; and offer Him your whole heart as a place of rest and welcome." Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton

**FOLLOWING CHRIST with Bishop Barron.**

The last session in this series will be held this Thursday evening from 6:30 to 8:30 in the hall. All are welcome and dinner is included.

**CHRISTMAS CONCERT** We will have a Christmas concert by our choirs next Sunday, December 15, from 3 to 5 PM followed by light refreshments in the hall.

**OUR ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE** will be on Tuesday, December 17 at 7 PM. Come and receive the gift of the Lord's forgiveness in preparation for Christmas.

### **CATHOLIC COUNSELING AVAILABLE**

Caitlin Langreich, who presented the series on mental wellness here this past summer, is now taking appointments. Caitlin is a licensed professional counselor (LGPC) and her counseling work is sponsored by the Archdiocese of Washington. Caitlin is available for appointments at Sacred Heart Parish in LaPlata as well as at St. Jerome's in Hyattsville. She specializes in working with both children and adults suffering with mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, trauma, and other forms of mental health issues. To book an appointment or if you have any additional questions, please contact the administrative coordinator at: [counselingadmin@stjeromes.org](mailto:counselingadmin@stjeromes.org) or call (301) 541-3740.

### **SACRED HEART IS HIRING HIGH SCHOOL TEENS FOR THE 2020 SACRED HEART SUMMER CAMP!**

All high schoolers who will be 16 years old by summer 2020 are eligible to apply for a full-time staff position. An interview panel will meet with interested applicants over Christmas break: Dec 27, 30, and 31. Contact Anna Albrittain at [aalbrittain@sacredheartlaplata.org](mailto:aalbrittain@sacredheartlaplata.org) or 301-934-2261 ext. 105 to ask for an interview! (If you will be out of town during the interview dates, please let us know and other arrangements can be made.)

### **OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST**

**WEEKEND:** \$9,512.83. \$2,040.00 of that was received from people who contributed through online banking. The unidentified donations totaled \$489.83. We received \$1,000.30 for our school support.

**ST. MARY' CHURCH NEWPORT " BASKET OF PLENTY" FUNDRAISER** - Three Beautiful Seasonal Christmas Gift Baskets to Win! Each basket is filled with a variety of holiday seasonal items. These would be a great gift to win for yourself, or they would also make a great gift to give to a family member or friend! Tickets are available to purchase through Saturday, December 14. All three winning tickets will be drawn December 15, 2019, following the 10:30 a.m. Mass (no need to be present to win). This parish fundraiser will benefit the Social Ministry. Cost of tickets: one ticket for \$1.00/6 tickets for \$5.00. For information, please contact Parish Office @ 301-934-8825.

*Please support our advertising sponsors. This week we recognize Gateway Florist, Inc.*

**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. The Grand Prize Drawing of \$20,000 will be held on March 6, 2020.

### **MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:**

**SUN:** 8am Mary Nelson, 10am Sonny Jameson, 12N Clarissa M. Williams, **MON:** 8am Carol Johnson, **TUES:** 8am Ernest J. Keller, Jr., **WED:** 8am Henry Jones, Jr., **THURS:** 8am Ed Padgett, **FRI:** 9:30am John F. Merz, Sr., & Helen Mangone, **SAT:** 9am Joseph McPherson, 4pm Michael & Jessie Chlysta.

### **PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY**

**PRAYERS:** Michael, Stephen & Tony Balenger, Mary Bowes, Deacon Gene & Anne Burroughs, Quint Burroughs, Brenda Callahan, Dottie Chick, Joe Cross, Agnes Curtis, Kendall Farrell, Arlene Gandolfi, Lee Gardiner, James Gibson, Wilson (Sonny) Goldsmith, Nick Hurysh, Sr., Regina Kijesky, Marie Knobel, Lillian Komar, A. Matthews, Eda Moon, Terry Morris, John Nichols, Johnny Norman, Mary Reeves, Melissa Rollins, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Beth Weise, Billie Whittington, Michael Whittington, Jr., Brice Zimmer.