

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church

210 South Wellwood Avenue + Lindenhurst, New York 11757 +

Telephone: 631-226-7725 + Fax: 631-225-9597 +

www.olphlindenhurst.com + Facebook: Our Lady of Perpetual Help 



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Daily Readings - Parish Updates - Weekly Bulletin & more!

Download instructions on page 2

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*Not as man sees does God see,
because man sees the appearance
but the Lord looks into the heart.*

1 Samuel 16:7

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
March 22, 2020

PASTORAL STAFF

Pastor: Reverend Monsignor Joseph DeGrocco

Parochial Vicars: Reverend Fidelis Ezeani, Reverend Frank Zero

Deacons: Deacon William Crosby, Deacon Douglas G. Smith, Deacon Robert A. Becker

Business Manager: Mr. Thomas Crennan

Director of Faith Formation: Mrs. April Kleinlaut

Music Director: Mr. Christopher Ferraro

Deacon Frank Odin, Retired

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

By mandate of the Bishop of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, all Masses, weekday and weekend, and all other liturgies, devotions, meetings and activities of the parish are suspended through Tuesday, April 14, 2020. This includes all Holy Week and Sacred Paschal Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday) liturgies. All scheduled Confession times are also suspended for that time period.

Mass intentions that have been booked and paid for through April 14 will be prayed for and fulfilled in private Masses said by the priests.

DURING THESE DIFFICULT TIMES, WE ESPECIALLY NEED TO COME IN AND PRAY...

Our church will continue to be open
6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. seven days a week.
Come in and spend some time in prayer.

SPECIAL PARISH OFFICE HOURS DURING THIS TIME

Monday through Friday: 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Saturday: 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Sunday: Closed

STAY CONNECTED TO OLPH

Be sure to keep checking our website
www.olphlindenhurst.com
for up-to-date links and postings with
opportunities for prayer
and messages from your priests

DOWNLOAD THE OLPH APP

Catholic Life Every Day

with the Our Lady of Perpetual Help App

Step 1: Open App Store or Google Play

Step 2: Search "myParish app" & press download 

Step 3: Open up the myParish app and type in "Our Lady of Perpetual Help Roman Catholic Church"

Step 4: Set OLPH as your main parish

Step 5: Explore the great features in our parish app!



FORMED[®] PICK OF THE WEEK



Symbolon The Story of Salvation

The story of salvation began with Creation itself—and a decision that affects all of us to this present day. How did the events of an ancient past set into motion God's rescue operation to save us from eternal death?

**SIGN UP FOR FREE AT
[FORMED.ORG/SIGNUP](https://formed.org/signup)**

POWERED BY THE  AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE[®]

Q: How do new parishioners register for an account?

A: Registering for FORMED is easier than ever:

Go to formed.org/signup

Select your parish

Register with your name and email address

Check that email account for a link to begin using FORMED

Q: Do parishioners still need to use our parish code or custom registration URL?

A: Registering has become a lot easier and parish codes and custom registration urls are no longer needed for your parishioners to register for FORMED through your parish! Now, parishioners simply need to go to formed.org/signup and find your parish to register.

Q: Will parishioners user emails and passwords still work?

A: Passwords are being phased out. Parishioner emails will still work. Parishioners do not need to re-register to sign in.

PASTOR'S COLUMN

“These are the times that try men’s souls”

Those famous words were written by Thomas Paine in the first volume of his *The American Crisis* during the American Revolutionary War. Paine was writing to provide inspiration to his fellow colonists in support of the revolutionary cause. Certainly, current events, as our world seems to be turned upside down (and, at times, off the rails) are leading all of us to feel that our souls are being tested.

On Monday of this past week we all received the news that was inconceivable: public Masses would be suspended, along with all other liturgies, devotions and meetings and gatherings of the faithful. I cannot describe for you how I was overwhelmed by the news, and how I felt a drop in the pit of my stomach. For a time, we will have to do without that which we hold most dear and that which gives us our very identity as human beings — gathering together to celebrate the Eucharist. Even more incredibly, this includes Holy Week and the Sacred Paschal Triduum!

Everybody I have talked to is shell-shocked. It’s a little bit surreal. Everybody is a little on edge, and rightly so. Anxiety, confusion, uncertainty, outright fear, and major inconveniences seem to be the order of the day. How will we get through this?

First and foremost, **WE WILL GET THROUGH THIS. How? With faith and solidarity, through the grace of God.** I would suggest that this is a great spiritual opportunity for us. Let’s approach these days with faith, hope, charity, a spirit of sacrifice, and, maybe most importantly, good humor. NOW is the time to put our faith into practice!

More than anything else, Jesus assured His followers, “Do not be afraid.” He’s still assuring us of this because He continues to be with us. We all need to do our best to make sure that fear, and this time of heightened emotions, do not lead us down the path of selfishness and

being unkind toward one another in thought, word and deed (including social media postings).

When we go shopping, we can avoid hoarding and buy only what we need, so that those who truly need them the most will have those items available. We can look out for the vulnerable among us — the sick, the homebound, the elderly, the at-risk people who have underlying or chronic health issues — by keeping in contact with them and even by doing chores for them. People will be financially affected by this, and we may be able to help them. We can have a spirit of charity and sacrifice in terms of all the inconveniences that are being experienced. It’s a great act of charity and sacrifice to cooperate with what the civil authorities are asking us to do and with what they are asking us not to do (for example, avoiding gathering together). We should be especially charitable toward our leaders and those in positions of decision-making; there is no road map for this, and many factors go into making decisions that are not always clear-cut. Many times there are competing priorities. Let’s not be so quick to judge, and let’s be prudent in our speech and in our social media postings.

Finally, this should be a time of great prayer. The lesson to be learned is how little we really are in control of things, despite all the wonderful advances in technology and in society which we have available to us. God alone is in charge, and it is in God alone in whom we can depend.

The words of Sacred Scripture can take on new meaning and new depth for us. I have found great solace in returning to some of my favorite Scriptural words as found in Psalm 42: “Why are you cast down, my soul, why groan within me? Hope in God, I will praise him still, my Savior and my God!”

In a way, there’s a certain appropriateness that we are experiencing this during Lent. After all, isn’t Lent all about going into the desert with Jesus? We are certainly in the desert. Another

way of looking at it is that this period is a long Holy Saturday — a long period of silence, stillness, and waiting for the Lord. Lent calls us to fasting. Yes, this is not the fasting we are used to, but we can embrace it in solidarity with those who are suffering here and around the world, who in this crisis lack even basic necessities, and those who are afraid. This is not the Lent we expected when ashes were smeared on our foreheads in what seems forever ago, and in a different world. But it is the Lent in which we find ourselves. We are choosing to isolate ourselves from each other this Lent as an act of love.

In Lent, we remember how Christ gave his life for us. To love is to die. So we are being called to die to what is familiar, comfortable, even precious. We are being called to do so for the sake of, for the love of, others: those who are most susceptible to this infection, and for those who will suffer as health care and other resources become scarce, and as this pandemic takes its toll financially and socially. But our faith tells us that Easter follows Lent. To love is to die, but to die is to live. That's the message of the Cross, which we—all of us, together—are being called to embrace in a profoundly deep way this Lent.

We priests are struggling with this because it goes against the very reason we became priests. The heart of who we are is to be with our people, to minister to you, and to gather with you, but now, like everyone else, we are called to be distanced from you for a time, for a greater good.

We will get through this; “this too shall pass.” I hope we emerge from this with deeper faith, deeper humility, and a deeper sense of connectedness to one another. I pray too that we emerge from this with a deeper need for God in our life.

Collections

Many people will be negatively impacted in terms of their income as a result of all of the interruptions in normal life. We must pray for

them and help them. I would simply ask you to remember that the parish is going to experience a very difficult time, too, with collections down. For several weekends we will not be taking in any collections at Masses. We too have bills to pay and salaries that must be paid.

I ask that you keep up with your weekly monetary offering, either by mailing in your offering, or by dropping it off at the rectory. Please don't forget about this. I understand that you may be having your own difficulties, but we need to count on those who can to continue their financial offerings. Thank you for your support.

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Even in the midst of this coronavirus pandemic, we are still journeying through our liturgical year. Even though we are not gathering for public Masses, we can still stay connected to a Eucharistic spirituality as much as possible by reflecting on the liturgy for the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

We get a little break from the ultra-seriousness of Lent on this Fourth Sunday of Lent, which is referred to as Laetare Sunday. The name comes from the Entrance Antiphon for this Mass, from Isaiah 66:10-11: “Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.” Rose-colored vestments may be worn today, although the Glory to God in the highest is still omitted.

The Collect (Opening Prayer) for Mass for this Sunday recalls how God has reconciled the human race to Himself through His Word; salvation was accomplished through the Paschal Mystery (death and resurrection) of the Word-made-flesh, Jesus. It is because of God reconciling us to Himself (something we could never have accomplished ourselves) that we can make the petition asked in the second part of the Collect: that “...the Christian people may hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come.” We get a certain sense that the Easter feasts are coming closer, and this is the source of our rejoicing. Thus does the prayer continue to

orient us toward Easter, which is drawing ever nearer.

The Prayer over the Offerings for Mass mentions the joy that characterizes today as it notes that we place our offerings before God “with joy.” We are also reminded of the inherently missionary nature of the Eucharist — how it is not something just for ourselves, but rather how it impels us to look outward to serve the world. We are reminded of this as the prayer expresses that we present the offerings “for the salvation of all the world.”

Once again our Mass prayers offer us much occasion for further spiritual reflection on the meaning of Lent. Let this Laetare Sunday be for you a turning point in your own Lenten journey, and experience the joy of Easter coming soon! If you have not been serious about Lent so far, it’s not too late to get started, so that the remaining days before Easter will truly be days of purification, enlightenment and renewal.

OLPH Parish Lenten Mission

We’re thrilled that we can still offer our Parish Lenten Mission — it will be given on line! Fr. Paul Colloton has recorded his reflections and we will be posting them on our website. You can “attend” the Parish Lenten Mission any time (or multiple times!) from the convenience of your home! Be sure to do this to deepen your Lenten spirituality, and thank you, Fr. Paul, for agreeing to do this for us.

Stations of the Cross

Also, so that you can continue to pray with the OLPH community, you can pray the Stations of the Cross on line. We have posted a video of all of the parish priests, along with Deacon Robert, praying the Stations of the Cross in the church. It’s the next best thing to being there! Pray the Stations of the Cross with us by going to the parish website and finding the link for the Stations of the Cross.

Watering flowers during Easter Time

You’ll see an ad we’re running in this bulletin looking for help in watering the flowers during Easter Time, a period of approximately seven weeks. We hope to be up and running again for most if not all of Easter Time since this

initial period of suspending gatherings is, as of now, until April 14.

Assisting with this task would not involve a large time commitment on anyone’s part, especially with many people pitching in. Look for the announcement in this bulletin, and please consider helping out.

150th Anniversary Sub-Committees are at work

On a positive, hope-filled and forward-looking note, you should know that several committees have been meeting (before meetings were suspended) and are already hard at work putting together all the aspects of our 150th Anniversary Year, which will be celebrated November 2020 through November 2021. Special liturgies, an Anniversary Year Dinner Dance, fun events, a commemorative journal, some renovation projects, and many other things are being planned. Generous people have already been doing a great deal of work. Look for more details to be coming out in the months ahead. Imagine — “The Place to Be” will be 150 years old in 2021!

Stay connected to OLPH through our website

As you can see, we are doing our best to stay spiritually connected to you. Your priests have not abandoned you! We are praying for you and with you. Take advantage of the blessing of technology and keep checking our website for updated links and postings, for prayer and for other opportunities. We are looking to post a video of a Sunday Mass from OLPH as well.

In conclusion...

Together, let’s aim high in Christ. Together, let’s bring out the best in each other. Together, let’s be the best we can be in Christ.

And let’s always remember: LOVE IS A GIFT.

Sincerely,



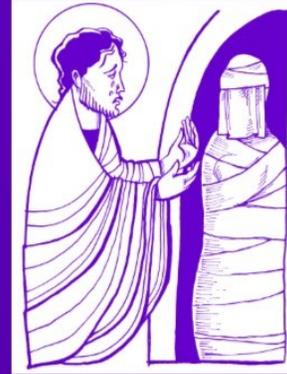
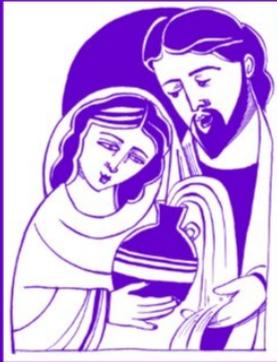
OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP PARISH
DURING THE DIOCESAN-MANDATED COVID-19 SHUTDOWN

In an effort to promote the health and safety of everyone, and to ensure that every precaution is taken, Our Lady of Perpetual Help is cooperating fully with all of the directives and guidelines issued by the Diocese of Rockville Centre during these days of public health concern due to COVID-19. These are the measures that have been put in place:

1. Public celebration of all Masses, weekday and weekend, and all other liturgies and devotions, are suspended through Tuesday, April 14, 2020. This includes all Holy Week and Triduum liturgies (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday). All Mass intentions already booked and paid for will be prayed for and fulfilled at private Masses celebrated by the parish priests.
2. All other meetings, gatherings, and non-essential activities are also suspended or postponed. For all intents and purposes, all parish facilities, except for the church (see #7 below) and the rectory reception desk (see #5 below) should be considered as being completely closed. Unfortunately, due to staffing issues, this includes our St. Vincent de Paul Office.
3. Funeral Masses and Weddings Without Mass will be celebrated, but must be limited to immediate family members and must remain under the number of attendees as mandated by the Centers for Disease Control.
4. Baptisms will be postponed unless absolutely necessary, and should observe the same attendance limits as for Funerals and Weddings in #3 above.
5. The Rectory office and reception desk will be open limited hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The Rectory will be closed on Sundays.
6. Our Religious Education Office will be open only Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. All Religious Education classes and activities are cancelled for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. All Religious Education classes and activities will resume in the fall.
7. Our church will remain open during the day, approximately 6:00 a.m. through 6:30 p.m. seven days a week. Parishioners are encouraged to come into the church and spend time in prayer and in private devotion before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.
8. In addition, the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed in the Monstrance on the altar Monday through Friday from 12:00 Noon through 2:00 p.m.

9. All scheduled Confessions are suspended for the time being — Confessions will **not** be heard on Saturdays, 4:00-4:45 p.m. and **not** on Mondays. The extended period of Confessions from 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Monday of Holy Week, April 6, also will **not** take place.
10. During this time of shutdown, a Sunday Mass celebrated by your parish priests will be recorded and posted on various media platforms—the parish website, our Facebook page, *etc.* Parishioners are invited to join in spiritual solidarity by praying along at home with this Mass.
11. In addition, plans call for recording certain other spiritual events and posting them on media platforms. In addition to the Sunday Mass mentioned above, we hope to be able to provide virtual (online) presentations of the Stations of the Cross and our Parish Mission with Fr. Paul Colloton. Continue to check the parish website for updated information.
12. The Catholic Faith Network (CFN) will also provide televised and online daily Masses, including Holy Week and Triduum liturgies, as well as other devotional and spiritual programs. CFN may be found at Optimum channel 29/137, Verizon FiOS TV channel 296, and Spectrum channel 162/471. CFN is also available on selected cable and satellite systems and through 24/7 live stream at CFNtv.org. CFN can also be found on Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Android, or by downloading the CFB iOS mobile app at the app store by searching “Catholic Faith Network” or “CFN.”
13. The weekly bulletin will be posted online on our website, as it always is.
14. Enhanced cleaning and sanitizing practices will continue on a frequent basis for all parish facilities. Holy water fonts have been emptied of holy water to prevent the spread of disease.
15. Most importantly, all parishioners are encouraged to devote themselves to fervent prayer during these difficult days, as we pray for one another, for those who are affected by this virus, and for those working to find a vaccine. We should pray especially for all health care workers, and for all who serve the public in a variety of ways.

PARISH LENTEN MISSION



**Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church
Lindenhurst, New York**

Lenten Mission 2020 Virtual Presentation

**Check our website olphlindenhurst.com
or our You Tube Channel: OLPH Church Lindenhurst
beginning Monday, March 23**

**Renewing Our Baptism:
See! Rise! Proclaim Jesus Christ!**

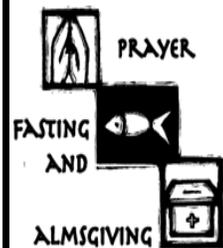
- ♦ Jesus invites deeper relationship when we least expect: The Woman at the Well
- ♦ Jesus gives sight to our blindness: The Man Born Blind
- ♦ Jesus frees us for new life: The Raising of Lazarus

Led by Fr. Paul H. Colloton, OSFS



Fr. Paul H. Colloton, OSFS, D.Min. is a member of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, Wilmington-Philadelphia Province and an Associate of the Dominican Sisters of Peace. Paul is the Priest Chaplain and Director of Campus Ministry for Ohio Dominican University in Columbus, OH. He served as the Director of Continuing Education for the National Association of Pastoral Musicians for a little over thirteen years. Fr. Paul holds a D.Min. with a concentration in Word and Worship from Catholic Theological Union, Chicago. He has over 40 years experience in pastoral ministry as preacher, presider, liturgist, musician, educator, spiritual director, workshop presenter, retreat director, and author.

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

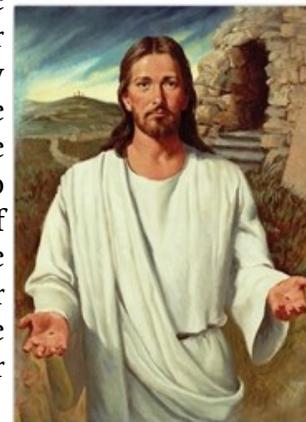


ABSTINENCE AND FASTING

All Catholics who have reached their fourteenth (14th) year are bound to abstain entirely from meat on all the Fridays of Lent. All Catholics between the ages of eighteen (18) and fifty-nine (59) inclusive are also bound to observe the law of fast on Good Friday. This means limiting oneself to a single full meal and avoiding food between meals. Two other light meals, which together do not equal a full meal, may be taken during the day. Those whose work or health would be impaired are excused from fast and abstinence. Individual conscience should decide proper cause for excuse. A more serious reason is required to excuse oneself from the Good Friday fast and abstinence.

EASTER SPIRITUAL BOUQUET CARDS

Easter Spiritual Bouquet cards are now available throughout the church. These cards are a meaningful way for you to have your intentions prayed for in the Masses of Easter Sunday. Take an envelope, fill out your prayer intention, and return the envelope with your donation. Envelopes may be returned either in the collection basket or at the rectory. Keep the card to send as an expression of your prayer. All the Masses offered on Easter Sunday will be for the intentions of the Easter Spiritual Bouquet.



HELP KEEP OUR EASTER FLOWERS WATERED AND LOOKING GREAT!



Eventually, public Masses will resume, and our worship will return to normal. When that happens, it will be Easter Time, and the church will be decorated with Easter lilies and other beautiful flowers in celebration. We need offerers to help water the flowers and keep everything lovely for the entire 50 days of Easter Time. They must be watered twice a week, so we would need at least four or five people each watering time. We can use adults as well as 7th and 8th graders (you can earn Confirmation service hours each day you help water). If interested, please email Denise Martinez at countrydee02@gmail.com to add your name to the schedule. Schedules will be emailed to all offerers, and a sign-in sheet will be in the sacristy. Thank you!

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

*Pray the Stations of the Cross on line
with your OLPH priests!
Go to the website: olphlindenhurst.com
and find the link for Stations of the Cross
or find us on our new You Tube Page:
OLPH Church Lindenhurst*



OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION

Located in the Rectory
 Phone # 631.226.7725 x. 253
 Email: religioused@oloph.org
 Director: Mrs. April Kleinlaut
 (akleinlaut@oloph.org)

OFFICE HOURS

Monday: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
 Tuesday: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
 Wednesday: 12:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
 Thursday: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
 Friday: CLOSED
 Saturday: By Appointment

All Levels:

Classes are cancelled for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year. There are no finals or make-up classes being held.

We are still accepting registrations for the 2020-2021 Academic Year through June 15, 2020. After this date there will be a \$25 late fee added onto the original price.

Save the Date

**Vacation Bible Camp
 July 13th-July 17th**

Register with us online for a *special discount!*
 Now until 3/27/2020
 Register online and get the special discount!



Follow the link below to register:
<https://forms.gle/x9skup2cA8nKzJzr9>

FREE BINGO SPACE!

Meet our last Saint of the Year!

Come get a prize for bingo!

Happy Saint of the Day!

St. Ignatius of Loyola

Levels 6, 7, and Service Corps:
 Our Lenten Service Series has been cancelled for the remainder of Lent. We hope to bring you more projects during Easter Time. In the meantime, if you would like to write a letter to a pen pal in Haiti or draw them a picture you can get one hour of community service. Mail or email the letter to us for one hour worth of service. Please consider praying a Rosary at home as there is nothing stronger in our time of need than the power of prayer!

St. Ignatius was born in Spain and became a soldier at a very young age. He was very skilled with a sword and he was known for not getting injured. In his last battle he wasn't so lucky. He was hit by a cannon ball which broke his legs. He had many surgeries, but they needed to amputate one leg. He then turned to books and God. He dedicated the rest of his life to learning about God, teaching others about God, and trying to convert people to Christianity.



PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

- † Bereavement Ministry: Linda Arpino—631.592.1062—forubabe77@gmail.com
- † Blue Door Thrift Boutique: Tricia Buckley—631.561.5790—thebluedoor@oloph.org
- † Catholics for the Freedom of Religion: Kathy Feldman—631 225-9864—cdefeldman@optonline.net
- † Community Meal: Mary Leon—mleon719@yahoo.com
- † Homeless Ministry: Regina Muir—631.226.2709—rmuir11@aol.com—Peggy Pannullo—631. 921.5994—justin97@aol.com
- † Hospital Visitors: Peter O'Neill—631-226-6340—oneillp@optonline.net
- † Middle Ages: Gail Tonnessen—631.957.1449—gtonness@optonline.net
- † Nursing Ministry: Regina Muir—631.226.2709—rmuir11@aol.com
- † Respect Life Committee: Louise Perrotta—631.412.3831—louiseperrotta@optonline.net
- † St. Vincent de Paul Society: Deborah Deasy—631.226.7725, x. 234
- † Senior Moments/Spirituality: Virginia Beyrer—631-226-6635
- † Special Needs Ministry: Jessica Becker Paolo—631.226.6175—jbecker@oloph.org

Food Pantry List!

CANNED TUNA
CANNED FRUIT
COFFEE
SHELF STABLE MILK
FRUIT JUICES
JELLY OR JAM
BAKED BEANS
WATER
PAPER PRODUCTS
TOILETRIES

Thank you
 for your continued generosity.

Cut out this list and bring it
 with you when you go shopping!

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Located in the “New” School Building
 Use the parking lot located on the corner of
 Gates & High Streets

631.226.7725 x. 234

The office is open:

Monday, Wednesday and Friday
 9:00 a.m.—12 Noon

1st & 3rd Saturdays 1:30 p.m.—3:00 p.m.

In today's Gospel, as Jesus gives sight to the blind man. Through grace we are also transformed from not seeing to seeing and then Jesus sends us to help others see and to believe.

Your gift to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul brings joy, peace, forgiveness, mercy and kindness to the hurting hearts of the poor.

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!

**TO OUR ANONYMOUS SUPPORTERS WHO LEAVE FOOD ON THE
 SANCTUARY STEPS AND MONEY IN THE POOR BOXES...THANK YOU!**

...when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing
(Matthew 6:3)

This teaching of Jesus is lived and practiced by so many of our fellow parishioners at OLPH. We are blessed by secret benefactors who anonymously make regular donations of food and other necessities, leaving them on the steps of the sanctuary, or dropping off at the Pantry during office hours. Also, take a look in the Sunday bulletin weekly collection breakdown. The contributions put into the poor boxes as you leave church add up and are the major source of our funding. You know who you are, but we're not sure that you realize how much your quiet acts of charity mean to the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul at OLPH, and to those whom we strive to serve. Thank you and may God bless you!!!

PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

**A PRAYER
FOR PREGNANT MOTHERS**

O Blessed Mother, you received the good news of the incarnation of Christ, your Son, with faith and trust. Grant your protection to all pregnant mothers facing difficulties.

Guide us as we strive to make our parish communities places of welcome and assistance for mothers in need. Help us become instruments of God's love and compassion.

Mary, Mother of the Church, graciously help us build a culture of life and a civilization of love, together with all people of good will, to the praise and glory of God, the Creator and lover of life. Amen.

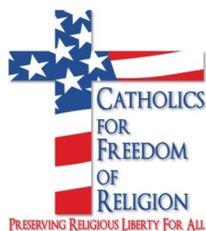
**COMMUNITY MEAL
MINISTRY**

OLPH's **Community Meal Ministry** has served hundreds of meals to members of our parish community. Generally held on one Sunday each month, the Community Meal seeks to provide a place of good food, good fellowship and good times for all who come!

**Our next Community Meal is
Sunday, April 19
Come pray at the 12:00 p.m. Mass
then join us for a
"Fiesta Celebration" at 1:00 p.m.**



CATHOLICS FOR THE FREEDOM OF RELIGION



FOCUS ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

www.cffor.org

The Health of American Democracy Requires the Centrality of Religion

In a recent interview with Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Attorney General William Barr said, "The reason the [Founding Fathers] felt they could grant so much freedom in the Constitution and only provide for limited government was because religion would be the force that guided people so they could largely govern themselves. Alexis de Tocqueville observed that the centrality of religion was [the cause] of the health of American democracy."⁽¹⁾

Barr defended a person's natural right to obey one's conscience above one's government. He is concerned that the rule of law, fair play, and due process are threatened by "militant secularists" trying to "impose their values" on others."⁽²⁾

**Maine and Maryland Barring Religious Schools from Tuition Support Programs —
Accused of Anti-Religious Hostility**

More than 100 small towns in Maine don't have their own high school, so families choose a high school and the town pays the bill up to the rate allowed by the state. Three families are now suing the state for religious discrimination, since, while the state will pay tuition for a private school, it refuses to pay tuition for a religious-affiliated school.

"When a state decides to empower parents to choose the school that is best for their child, to then say, 'but we are going to exclude religious schools'...just strikes at the very core of our religious freedom..." said an attorney for Institute for Justice.⁽³⁾

Maryland revoked the Baltimore-area Bethel Christian Academy from participation in a voucher program benefitting low-income students and demanded the school repay more than \$100,000 for their previous participation.

"The government may not discriminate against religious schools simply because it dislikes their religious beliefs. Bethel offers an academically rigorous and caring Christian education in a diverse environment...Maryland's families deserve better and that's why we're grateful Bethel's lawsuit can move forward," said an Alliance Defending Freedom attorney.⁽⁴⁾

(thefederalist.com, 1/30/20(1)(2); csmonitor.com, 1/21/20(3); adflegal.org, 11/14/19(4); washingtonpost.com, 1/2/20; ij.org/maine)

Parents who have the primary and inalienable right and duty to educate their children must enjoy true liberty in their choice of schools.

—Gravissimum Educationis, 1965

SPIRITUAL ADOPTION PROGRAM -- PRAY FOR AN UNBORN BABY

With assaults on human life increasing at an alarming rate, we are asking you today to make a personal commitment to pray daily for one unborn child who is in danger of being aborted. Unfortunately, since the Roe vs. Wade decision in 1973, the number of abortions has increased to 1.4 million annually. Each of us is being asked to "spiritually adopt" one unknown baby for the next nine months. We will pray for this child, that he or she will be carried to term and experience the fullness of life, as God intended. All our prayers can make a difference between whether a baby will be born or aborted. Our prayers can also be a form of spiritual support for both of the baby's parents.

NAME OF PARISH _____

SPIRITUAL ADOPTION

Jesus, Mary and Joseph
I love you very much.
I beg you to spare the life
of the unborn child that I
have spiritually adopted who is
in danger of abortion.



-- Bishop Fulton J. Sheen

Baby's Name: _____
(choose a name)

Due Date: _____
(9 months from today)

NAME OF PARISH _____

SPIRITUAL ADOPTION

I, _____
(your name)

promise to spiritually adopt an unborn baby,

(name of baby)

in danger of abortion by praying daily for
the life of this child.

(return this portion)



One Family in Mission
Called to Evangelize

2020 CATHOLIC MINISTRIES APPEAL

DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

2020 OLPH GOAL:
\$110,400



Make checks payable to:
Catholic Ministries Appeal

Parish _____

Pledge: \$ _____

Name _____

Down payment: \$ _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

SERVING AND SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Parish Phone: (631) 226-7725 Parish Fax: (631) 225-9597

Directory of Phone Extensions

Name	Ext	Email
Carmel Becker, Bulletin	246	cbecker@oloph.org
Carole Carrano, Parish Secretary	212	ccarrano@oloph.org
Linda Coppola, Business Office Assistant	214	lcoppola@oloph.org
Thomas Crennan, Business Manager	204	tcrennan@oloph.org
Msgr. Joseph DeGrocco, Pastor	206	msgrjoe@oloph.org
Fr. Fidelis Ezeani, Associate Pastor	226	fadaprince4christ@yahoo.com
Faith Formation Office	253	religioused@oloph.org
Christopher Ferraro, Director of Music	210	cferraro@oloph.org
April Kleinlaut, Director of Faith Formation	257	akleinlaut@oloph.org
Rectory Reception Desk	200	
St. Vincent de Paul	234	stvincentdepaul@oloph.org
Josephine Vagelatos, Administrative Assistant to the Pastor	206	jvagelatos@oloph.org
Fr. Frank Zero, Associate Pastor	203	fzero@oloph.org

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Baptism ceremonies are held on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. Parents wishing to have a child baptized must attend a baptism preparation session before the baptism; these sessions are held on the first and third Thursdays of the month excluding holidays. Contact the Parish Office to begin the process of having your child baptized.

PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK & ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Those who are seriously ill or facing surgery, as well as those in danger of death, should receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Please call the Parish Office and ask for one of our priests.

CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

Adults who wish to be baptized, or who have been baptized in another Christian faith and wish to become Catholic, or who have been baptized Catholic and wish to be confirmed and receive Holy Communion, are invited to join the process of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Please contact Jeffrey Gaab at (631) 965-0076 or e-mail at jsg375@gmail.com to begin the process.

ADULT CONFIRMATION

Adults who have been baptized Catholic and who have received Holy Communion but who still need the Sacrament of Confirmation should enroll in our Adult Confirmation Classes. Please contact Deacon Robert Becker at 631-226-6175 or e-mail to DeaconRobert@oloph.org.

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

Please contact the Parish Office at least SIX MONTHS before the desired date of your wedding.

YOUR PASTORAL COUNCIL

Vincent Boccanfuso
Eileen Corticchia (Chair)
Msgr. Joe DeGrocco
Jeffrey Gaab
Joselyn Kalt
Mary Leon
Rachelle Louis-Jacques
Carlton Mitchell
Kevin Sabella, Jr.
Kevin Sabella, Sr.
Adele Venezia

Please feel free to speak to any member of the Pastoral Council with any questions you might have.

YOUR PARISH TRUSTEES

Gerry Chille
John Reynolds

YOUR PARISH FINANCE COMMITTEE

David Barrett
Bill Bendernagel
Gerry Chille (Chair)
Thomas Crennan
Meg Danaher, CFP®, CLU®
Msgr. Joe DeGrocco
Christine Donovan
Marie Gagneron
Kenneth Hale
Bob Meade
Bob Mehm
John Reynolds
Kevin Sabella, Sr.

Please feel free to speak to any member of the Finance Committee with any questions you might have.

YOUR PARISH LITURGY COMMITTEE

Fauvette Auguste
Deacon Robert Becker
Mark Costantino
Msgr. Joe DeGrocco
Chris Ferraro
MaryAnn Haas
Jenine Jimenez-Spina
Denise Martinez
Barbara McPhail
Deacon Doug Smith
Mike Williams

Please feel free to speak to any member of the Liturgy Committee with any questions you might have.

PRAYING FOR AND SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER

WE BELIEVE

We pray for the sick of our parish...

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Beatrice Stysiack</i> | <i>Florence Shea</i> |
| <i>Emily Pizzirusso</i> | <i>Dora Mirabal</i> |
| <i>Theresa Ann Henry</i> | <i>Loretto Dinardo</i> |
| <i>Anna Niebrzydowska</i> | <i>Teddy Zimms</i> |
| <i>Dolores Otten</i> | <i>Cindy Van Dorn</i> |
| <i>Nora McMahon</i> | <i>Irene Cannetelli</i> |
| <i>Patricia Kleczkowski</i> | <i>Karin Kienle</i> |
| <i>Richard Kleczkowski</i> | <i>Joanne & Randall Press</i> |
| <i>Mary Hawkins</i> | <i>Florence R. Nerich</i> |
| | <i>Laura Janczewski</i> |

If a family member or close friend is ill, please let us know so our community can pray for them. To have your name or the name of a loved one listed in our parish bulletin, please call the Parish Office. **Please make sure the person is aware the request has been made and that they are agreeable with their name printed in the bulletin.** The name will remain on the list for about four weeks.

WE REMEMBER

We remember those who have died in our parish community this week:

*Florence Zezima
Helen Cytryszewski*

“O God, who through the ending of present things open up the beginning of things to come, grant, we pray, that the soul of your servant may be led to you to attain the inheritance of eternal redemption.”



WELCOME NEW OLPH PARISHIONERS



TO OUR NEW OLPH PARISHIONERS March 2020

- Vicenzo & Francine Bucaro*
Nicholas Holdener & Eileen Rivera
Joseph, Jessica & Tyla Gambino
Joseph, Claudia & Ava Schultz
Noreen & Robert Armstrong
Gerald & Emily Perich
Mary Rozmus
Craig & Francesca Orlando
Janine & Shawn Morgenbesser
Peter Waskewicz

*“Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.”* Matthew 5:4

If you are mourning the loss of a loved one, the support of your Catholic faith community should be a source of comfort and strength. A bereavement group run by trained facilitators helps grieving people learn skills for navigating their loss and opportunities to share their stories of loss. The **Bereavement Support Group** is a parish-based ministry responding to the needs of the recently bereaved by offering emotional, and sometimes practical, support as they learn to cope with their loss.

If you have suffered the loss of a loved one and would like to know more about the **OLPH Support Group Program**, please contact Linda Arpino at 631-592-1062 or Marige Reyes at 631-608-3658. You may also leave your name and contact information with the receptionist in the rectory.



MASSES FOR THE WEEK
BY DIRECTIVE OF THE BISHOP,
NO PUBLIC MASSES MAY BE CELEBRATED.
THESE MASS INTENTIONS WILL BE FULFILLED
BY PARISH PRIESTS CELEBRATING PRIVATE MASSES.

MONDAY, March 23— LENTEN WEEKDAY <i>(Saint Turibius of Mogrovejo, Bishop)</i>	
6:30	Mildred Sredniawski
12:15	Thomas DeRosa
TUESDAY, March 24— LENTEN WEEKDAY <i>(Saint Oscar Romero, Bishop and Martyr)</i>	
6:30	William Redlich
12:15	Marlene Rief (Living)
WEDNESDAY, March 25— THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD	
6:30	Claus Rust
12:15	Mary Clare Roy-McCarthy
THURSDAY, March 26—LENTEN WEEKDAY	
6:30	Jose Julio Cevallos
12:15	Soul of Paul Breitfeller and Children - Living & Deceased
FRIDAY, March 27— LENTEN WEEKDAY	
6:30	Msgr. Daniel S. Hamilton
12:15	For the Repose of the Souls of the McCarthy Family
SATURDAY, March 28— LENTEN WEEKDAY	
8:00	The Breitfeller Family Living & Deceased
Saturday Afternoon (Sunday Anticipated): FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT	
5:00	Dominick M. Barone
Sunday, March 29— FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT	
8:00	Living & Deceased Members of the OLPH Council #794 Knights of Columbus
10:00	Thomas G. Burns, Jr.
12:00	Peggy McCloud
5:00	For the People of the Parish

EL MINISTERIO HISPANO

EL MINISTERIO HISPANO DE NUESTRA SEÑORA DEL PERPETUO SOCORRO,

El grupo de oración “Jesús es el camino la verdad y la vida” le invita a alabar y glorificar al PADRE, al HIJO, y al ESPIRITU SANTO, todos los jueves de 7:00 p.m. en adelante en un ambiente familiar. Comenzando con el Santo Rosario. Le ofrecemos el cuidado de los niños, también les enseñamos la doctrina de la iglesia.

Todos los martes llevamos el Santo Rosario a los hogares para orar en familia. Familias interesadas favor llamar a Virginia Constantinou al (631) 957-1149.

Para información sobre los sacramentos de El bautizo, Matrimonio y servicios pastorales, tales como llevarle la Eucaristía los enfermos, la última unción de los enfermos.

Las charlas de bautizo se llevan a cabo cada segundo y cuarto domingo del mes, los padres interesados en bautizar a sus hijos deben atender a una serie de charlas. Estas charlas son cada primer y tercer lunes del mes

Para más información llamar a la rectoría (631) 226-7725. En español a Alejandro Campos teléfono (631) 671-9257 correo electrónico saitjoseph98@gmail.com.

Lecturas del 5º Domingo de Cuaresma - Ciclo A 3/29/20

Lea las lecturas en su Biblia y luego reflexione con nosotros

Que el Espíritu que resucitó a Jesús de entre los muertos esté vivo en nosotros. Que vivamos ahora en plenitud la vida de Jesús, para que podamos resucitar en el último día. Que Jesús, el Señor de la vida, esté siempre con ustedes.

Primera Lectura (Ezequiel 37,12-14): Dios es la Vida de su Pueblo A su pueblo desalentado, exiliado en un país extranjero, Dios le anuncia por medio del profeta: “Quiero que ustedes vivan. Les llevaré de vuelta a la tierra de la promesa y les daré mi espíritu de vida y fortaleza.

Segunda Lectura (Romanos 8,8-11): El Espíritu Santo Nos Da la Vida de Dios Los cristianos no se escapan de la realidad de su naturaleza humana, del mal y del sufrimiento. Sin embargo, no capitulan ni se rinden a la muerte del pecado. Por medio del Espíritu Santo que vive en ellos, son llamados a participar de la vida eterna de Dios.

Evangelio (Juan 11,1-45). Llegamos al último domingo de Cuaresma. El evangelista Juan nos narra el último milagro de Jesús. Jesús recibe la llamada de las hermanas de Lázaro: «Jesús, tu amigo, está enfermo». Jesús dice: «Ésta enfermedad no acabará en la muerte, sino que servirá para que el Hijo de Dios sea glorificado». Pasan dos días y Jesús se pone en camino, cuando llega, Lázaro lleva muerto cuatro días. Jesús ve la tristeza y el dolor de las hermanas de Lázaro y comparte con ellas el dolor, y también el llanto. La hermana que sale a recibirlo, sabe que todo lo que Jesús le pida a Dios le será concedido, tiene esa certeza. Jesús le dijo: «tu hermano resucitará».

Jesús, como todos nosotros no quiere la muerte, quiere la vida, pero sabe que para vivir en plenitud de Dios todos debemos pasar por ella. Pero nadie, absolutamente nadie, quiere morir, nos angustia pensar en ella, incluso hay personas que a cierta edad o ante la enfermedad sufren ansiedad o depresión. Pero si realmente creemos, debemos tener la certeza de que Jesús nos trae la esperanza y la resurrección; sin embargo dudamos, no nos dejamos acoger en los brazos misericordiosos de Dios.

Durante estos cinco domingos se nos ha invitado a la conversión, a volver nuestra vida a Dios. Que nuestra fe sea firme, como fue la de las hermanas de Lázaro.

Jesús nos dice que la muerte no es el final, sino el camino hacia la luz, hacia la vida. No se puede razonar, sólo podemos creer en ella desde la fe y Ésta tenemos que cultivarla, cuidarla para que cada día aumente.



"Padre, te doy gracias porque me has escuchado; yo sé que siempre me escuchas". El Padre de Jesús es el mismo Dios que lo resucitó de entre los muertos.

Ya sanados de nuestra ceguera espiritual veremos más claro los misterios del evangelio del domingo que sigue. Que la Santísima Trinidad les bendiga. Atraves del corazón inmaculado de María seguimos con Jesús en el desierto hasta crucificarnos con él para tener parte en la resurrección.

**OFFERING UPDATE
March 14/15, 2020**

Mass Time	Attendance	# of Envelopes	Weekly Collection
5:00 p.m.	158	70	\$1,869.00
8:00 a.m.	110		1,804.00
10:00 a.m.	178	62	2,461.00
12:00 p.m.	180	43	1,394.00
5:00 p.m.	71	17	386.00
Coin			14.03
Children's Env.		2	8.00
Faith Direct			2,221.00
TOTAL	697	194	\$10,157.03
2019 total	1,739	582	\$17,583.46
Candles			\$754.79
Poor Box			\$215.74

**SUPER 72 RAFFLE
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR
MARCH 2020 WINNERS**

- \$1000** - Mr. & Mrs. Frank Trotta
- \$250** - Joann Zerbo
- \$100** - James Dejana
- \$100** - V. & A. Sortino
- \$100** - John Zandfardino
- \$100** - Donna Prose



This week, our parish will take up *The Catholic Relief Services Collection* (CRSC). Funds from this collection provide food to the hungry, support displaced refugees, and bring Christ's love and mercy to all people here and abroad. Next week, please give generously to the CRSC and **help Jesus in disguise**. Learn more about the collection at www.usccb.org/catholic-relief.

**2019 OLPH
CONTRIBUTION TAX LETTERS**

Tax letters for the 2019 tax year will be prepared upon request only. Requests can be made by calling the Rectory: 631-226-7725 X 200. The Secretary will take your name, address & envelope number. The letters will be sent out *only upon request*. Thank you for your cooperation.

DEADLINES FOR BULLETIN

All requests for items printed in the bulletin must first have approval from Msgr. DeGrocco or ministry moderator. *All material must be submitted as a Word document* no later than the dates listed below to Carmel Becker at cbecker@oloph.org. *Editing and sizes are at the discretion of the editor.*

- March 29—March 20
- April 5—March 25*
- April 12—April 1*
- *Early printer deadlines*

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PREPARING FOR Sunday, March 29, 2020**FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT**

*I am the resurrection and the life;
whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live.*

John 11:25

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Ezekiel was a priest of the Temple in Jerusalem who was taken into captivity in Babylon along with many of the Jewish people around 597 B.C. by King Nebuchadnezzar. Within a few years, God called him to prophecy to his fellow Jews in exile. God uses Ezekiel to tell them that the reason for such a calamity was their repeated refusal to hear and obey his Law. But today we hear another part of the message and it's a message of hope and a cause for joy: God will release them from captivity and bring them back home. He tells them that God will raise them from their graves and bring them back to life. It's an important message for us to hear today that even if we turn away from God he will never abandon us.

Romans 8:8-11

Paul also speaks about the dead being raised to new life. He says that those who live in the flesh, that is, according to the ways of this world, are dead in their sin but that God will give them his Spirit to raise them from the dead if they accept Christ. Just as God raised Jesus from the dead literally God will bring us back from being spiritually dead, that is, living in darkness, by giving us his Holy Spirit. That's Good News, indeed!

John 11:1-45

The Gospel reading continues today's theme of being raised from the dead with a story of someone actually dying and then being brought back to life. Lazarus, a good friend of Jesus and brother to Martha and Mary, dies after an illness. Although Jesus knows he is dying and is asked to come to help, he waits until his friend has died before he visits. Why would Jesus let him die? Surely he could have cured his friend as he had so many other sick people. Jesus himself tells us the reason. It is for the glory of God so that others may come to believe in him when they see the miracle of Lazarus being brought back to life. This sign is not just meant for the people who were there at the time but for all of us through the ages who hear it. Its meaning is clear: Jesus has power even over death. This is the last miracle Jesus performed before he himself was executed and rose again from the dead. He is Lord over everything, including what we're most afraid of — death itself. We will rise with him, too, if we just believe in him. Jesus asks Martha and us today, "Do you believe this?"

Readings for the Week

Take time each day to read the daily readings of the Church.

Monday, March 23, 2020:

Isaiah 65:17-21 + John 4:43-54

Tuesday, March 24, 2020:

Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12 + John 5:1-16

Wednesday, March 25, 2020:Isaiah 7:10-14, 8:10 + Hebrews 10:4-10
+ Luke 1:26-38**Thursday, March 26, 2020**

Ezekiel 32:7-14 + John 5:31-47

Friday, March 27, 2020Wisdom 2:1a, 12-22
+ John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30**Saturday, March 28, 2020:**

Jeremiah 11:18-20 + John 7:40-53

Sunday, March 29, 2020:Ezekiel 37:12-14
+ Romans 8:8-11
+ John 11:1-45**Gospel Reflection Questions....**

After reading next Sunday's readings and Gospel, take some time to pray on them before you come to Mass. Use the questions below to aid your reflection.

1. How do all the elements in the story of the raising of Lazarus point to Jesus' words, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live"? Compare Jesus' statement, "Untie him and let him go," with Moses' statement to the Pharaoh, "Let my people go."

2. How does Pope Francis describe the beginning of our resurrection in this Angelus talk about the raising of Lazarus?

"Jesus calls to us as he called to Lazarus in his tomb: 'Come forth!' This call is addressed to every human person because we are all marked by death. Christ is not resigned to the sepulchers that we have constructed with our choices of evil and death, with our mistakes, our sins. [Jesus] invites us, almost orders us, to come out of the tombs into which our sins have plunged us. This is where our resurrection begins: when we decide to obey the command of Jesus to come into the light, to life; when the masks fall from our faces, ... and we rediscover the courage of our original faces, created in the image and likeness of God.

... The raising of Lazarus shows us that there is no limit to the divine mercy, which is offered to everyone. ... The Lord is always ready to roll away the tombstone of our sins, which separate us from him, the light of the living."

*Pope Francis: There is no limit
to the divine mercy.
June 4, 2014*

Lent and the Call to Conversion

In spring, it seems that all of creation awakens, with birds singing, flowers blooming, and brides and grooms preparing to say “I do,” promising a lifetime of love and commitment.

During Lent, those whom the Church calls the “elect” await the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. They are preparing to say “I do” to a lifetime of discipleship. Along with them, the entire community prepares to say “I do,” to recommit to the promises made at Baptism.

Lent is a forty-day retreat that prepares Christians to renew their baptismal covenant in which they promised to live in the new covenant in Christ.

The focus on Baptism goes back to the early Church. For the earliest Christians, Lent was a time to concentrate on penance and to prepare for Baptism. Public penitents returned to be reconciled with the Church, and adult catechumens made their final preparation for Baptism. In later centuries, infant Baptism replaced the Baptism of adults. Because of this, the baptismal nature of Lent was diminished and overshadowed by a singular focus on penance. With the renewal of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the focus of Lent once again became both penitential and baptismal. The first document to come from the Council, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* notes, “The baptismal and penitential aspects of Lent are to be given greater prominence in both the liturgy and liturgical catechesis” (109).

In the *Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, the Church states that the Lenten liturgy “prepares for the celebration of the Paschal Mystery both catechumens, by the various stages of Christian Initiation, and the faithful, who recall their own Baptism and do penance” (27).

Catechumens are expected to have “undergone a conversion in mind and in action and to have developed a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching as well as a spirit of faith and charity,” and they “must have the intention to receive the sacraments of the Church” (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 120).



During Lent, the faithful do penance but also ponder the promises made at Baptism.

Those who are already Catholic are called to a similar conversion as they prepare to recommit themselves to what was promised at Baptism. At the Easter Vigil and on Easter Sunday, the priest will ask the faithful the same questions that were asked at Baptism: “Do you renounce Satan? And all his works? And all his empty show?” The response “I do” is given just as it was at Baptism.

As any married couple knows, it takes a lifetime to realize the meaning of the words “I do.” These words have to be lived out and rediscovered day by day. Each Lent the Church asks us to ponder fully the promises behind these words so that our “I do” at Easter may be sincere and wholehearted. As we prepare to renew our baptismal covenant may we, like creation, awaken to new life, that we may sing the melody of God’s love to all the world.

Lent: Cleaning and Prioritizing

Every year at this time my mother would rearrange the furniture in the living room and family room and change the drapes. Then she would open the cupboards and drawers in the kitchen, remove all the dishes, glasses, cups, goblets, plates, pitchers, platters, bowls, casseroles, china, and silverware to clean them.

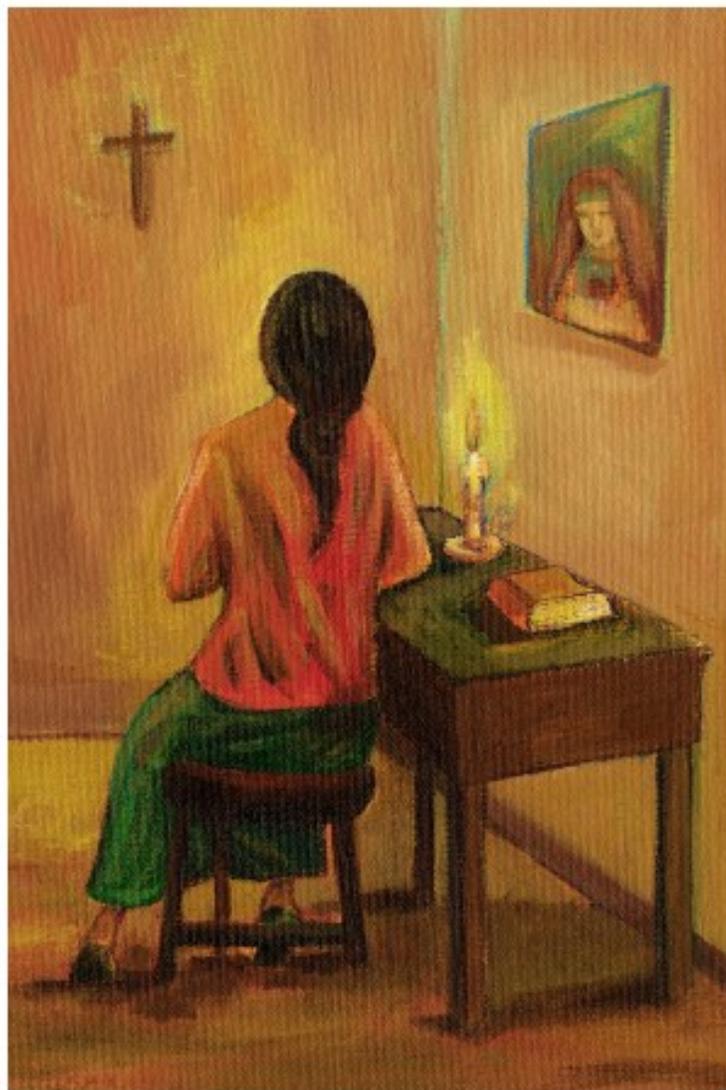
It was as if we were preparing for the biggest banquet of the year. She called this cleansing fury “spring cleaning.”

Every year at this time the Church provides the opportunity to do some inner spring cleaning. In fact, the word *Lent* is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word meaning “spring.” Lent is a prime time to rearrange our priorities and to open the cupboards of our hearts and hold our egos to the light to see those areas that need to be cleaned and polished.

This idea of inner cleansing or conversion has always been at the heart of Lent. In the early Church, Lent was the final leg of the journey for the catechumens preparing for Baptism. It was also a time when already-baptized penitents, isolated from the assembly because of their sins, would prepare to be reconciled to God and the community.

The journeys of the catechumen and the penitent were related in that both embraced a significant conversion. As the catechumen looked forward to Baptism, the penitent looked forward to reconciliation with the Church. To this day, the focus of Lent remains both baptismal and penitential.

It is easy to rearrange chairs and to clean dishes. Inner change, though, is a challenge. Christians do not, however, seek transformation alone. God calls us to conversion, and God’s grace accompanies us on the



God’s grace accompanies all who make an interior journey during Lent to conversion and transformation.

journey of conversion. On our part, we pray for the courage to be open to this grace that we might come to Easter, the high point of the liturgical year, with hearts cleansed and spirits renewed.

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