

MARCH 7, 2010

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

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FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

During the season of Lent we have been looking at how our Sunday Gospel readings instruct us to walk in the ways of spiritual freedom that Jesus Christ has won for us. Below are my remarks from last Sunday.

With my prayers,
Fr. Conley

Without a doubt there is nothing we Americans value more than our freedom. It was why our country was founded. It is written into our Constitution and we fought a Civil War over it. We also believe that freedom is our most important export. Literally thousands of Americans have died, and many are risking their lives now, to bring the gift of freedom to other people in the world. The freedom we enjoy in this country is something that we should always be grateful for. However, we need to recognize that all the laws and all the military might in the world are useless if our spirits are not free, if we do not have spiritual freedom. This is so because freedom doesn't mean simply being able to do whatever we want. It isn't just "the right to choose." Freedom means the right to choose those things that are right and just. Freedom means being able to be faithful to God. True freedom means being spiritually free. As our national history and some of our ancestors have shown, freedom of spirit is so powerful that even people who are physically enslaved can be strong when they have spiritual freedom. But the opposite is also true. We may enjoy political and economic freedom but if our hearts are not free then we have become slaves.

The greatest threat to our spiritual freedom is sin. When we do things that are contrary to the wonderful plans God has for each of us, we limit our potential and can enslave ourselves in the process. Jesus Christ came into this world to win back for us the spiritual freedom that was lost when sin entered the world with the Fall of Adam & Eve. Faith in Jesus and the grace He brings provide us with the strength to maintain our spiritual freedom. And following the example of Christ shows us how to use the strength He provides.

By His own experience of being tempted showed us that we can overcome the temptations to live merely for pleasure, power and popularity. We do this by remembering who we are as the children of God. The Gospel passage describing Christ's transfiguration points us to another lesson in spiritual freedom. At the end of this passage which describes how Jesus was transfigured before His Apostles, God the Father says to Peter, James & John "This is my chosen Son. Listen to Him."

Now imagine if you will that we were there with Peter, James & John when they heard the voice of God say "Listen to My Son." I think we, like them, would start paying closer attention to what Jesus has to say. And when we pay close attention to what Jesus has to say in the Gospel we would notice that Jesus has different things to say to different people in His audience. Jesus did this because the people who heard Him didn't all have the same relationship with Him. When speaking to the crowds in general Jesus calls them to repentance and faith. When confronted by those who were opposed to Him, the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus challenges them to turn away from their hypocrisy and hardness of heart. Then there are the things that

Jesus says to those who were already His followers. And what does Jesus have to say to them and to us?

"The one who is least among all of you is the one who is the greatest." "Go on your way; behold I am sending you like sheep among wolves." "Rejoice because your names are written in heaven." "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see." "When you pray, say 'Our Father...'" "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you" "Fear not...even the hairs on your head have been counted." "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life and what you will eat..." "Do not be afraid any longer for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom." "Where your treasure is there also will your heart be." "You cannot serve both God and mammon." "If your brother sins against you seven times a day and seven times says 'I repent' you must forgive him." "You should pray always and never lose heart." "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them." "Take and eat, this is my Body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." Pray that you may not enter into temptation." "Peace be with you. Why are you troubled? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself."

These are just some of the things that Jesus says to His disciples. But one of our Lord's most frequent commands to His followers is "Do not be afraid."

In telling us not to be afraid Jesus identifies the second greatest threat to our spiritual freedom after sin and that is fear. Some of us have fears about our financial situations. Others fear for their health. Then there is the state of the world in which we live, war, crime & the environment. And all of us I suppose have fears regarding death. Our fear of suffering, and the consequences that follow—anxiety, hopelessness and depression—can limit our spiritual freedom. Once we are gripped by fear all the armies of the world cannot set us free from its oppression. When fear chains our spirits we need spiritual tools to break free. And that is why Jesus keeps telling us to pray and how to pray. Jesus says, when you pray, say "Our Father..." He is saying "every time you pray remember your identity as the beloved children of your heavenly Father." And when we pray we should bring before the Lord our fears and anxieties for ourselves, our families and our world. We should also pray for greater faith for the stronger our faith in the Lord is the less we will be oppressed by fear.

Yes we are fortunate to live in the land of the free. But there can be no real freedom without a sense of one's true dignity as a loved child of God who has been called to rise above sin and fear.

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CATHOLIC QUOTES

When we see ourselves from God's eyes, we experience tremendous freedom....Under God's gaze, we are delivered from the constraint of having to be "the best" or perpetually having to be "winners." We have a deep sense of release, because we don't have to make constant efforts to show ourselves in a favorable light or waste energy pretending to be what we are not. We can quite simply be what we are. There is no better form of "relaxation" than to rest like little children in the tenderness of a Father who loves us just as we are."

From the book: "Interior Freedom" Fr. Jacques Philippe. Copies of this wonderful book are available from our religious goods store for \$10.

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR CANDIDATES FOR THE EASTER SACRAMENTS: Christina DePhillip, Paul Handwork, Rachel Shumaker, Danielle Foss, John & Melissa Fort, Samantha Carter, Rachel Gill and Andrew James.

Lord Jesus , Show your elect the way of salvation in the Holy Spirit, that they may come to worship the Father in truth, for you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

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This week St. Mary's recognizes **Dennis Anderson Construction Corp.** Please support our bulletin advertising sponsors who support St. Mary's bulletin.

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FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT ON NEEDED MAINTENANCE OF OUR BUILDINGS The following list of needs was compiled and submitted to the Parish Council in November 2009. Some of these needs are more urgent than others. However, all of them should be addressed within the next three to five years.

Replace *carpet* throughout school-\$40,000 Replace *locks* on church (this est. can change based on quantity & quality)-\$6,000 Replace aging *outdoor* unit of a.c. in multi-purpose room. Outdoor unit needs to be replaced before next AC season (this doesn't include the indoor unit-which more than likely will need to be repl. soon also)-\$32,000 Replace aging *indoor* unit of air conditioning in multi-purpose room-which more than likely will need to be repl. soon-\$30,000 Fix *asphalt road & parking area & resurface*(2008 est.)-\$87,500 Replace *2,000 gallon underground fuel oil storage tank*-\$38,000 Replace *all interior door locks* throughout school-\$3,200 Replace *individual air conditioning units* in main school-\$48,000 Re-caulk *windows* in school, Notre Dame Center & Rectory-\$2,200 Replace *boiler w/controller* in main school(should save approx. 30% on fuel oil)-\$29,000 Replace *boiler w/controller* in Notre Dame Center(should save approx. 30% on fuel oil)-\$25,000 Upgrade *electrical system* in school-\$18,000 Replace *ceiling tiles* throughout school(Mat. Only)-\$10,000 Replace *baseboard* throughout school-\$4,000 **OTHER ITEMS WE NEED TO CONSIDER:** be prepared to replace aging well system (2008 estimate from Frank's Well Drilling)-\$73,776.65

~ **PARISH AND SCHOOL NEWS** *

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Offertory Collection from Last Weekend: \$10,069.61. Identifiable contributors using envelopes or checks were 364 (approximately 27% of the parish) gave \$9,396.00 (93% of the total collection). The unidentified loose collection was \$673.61. School Support collection was \$211.00.

REST IN PEACE ~

Give *Anne C. Wood* and *Vincent Antonio Boswell* eternal rest, O Lord, & may perpetual light shine on them forever.

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8 am *Mary Jean Henderson*, 10am *Will Byrne*, 12 noon **PARISHIONERS** **MON:** *Donald Goldsmith* **TUES:** *David Burroughs* **WEDS:** *John H. Wills* **THURS:** *James A. Neale* **FRI:** 11:30 am *Helen Stubits*, 7 pm *James Canter, Jr.* **SAT:** 9 am *Betty Locks*, 4pm *Tracy Dallenbach*

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS: Will Byrne, Dan Escolopio, John A. Ford, Mary Lou Gough, Bill Hardesty, Nick Hurrysh, Robby Pirhalla, Melanie Upright, Davisha Wade, and pray for all the sick of the parish. Please pray also for those serving in religious vocations.

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SHOPPING CARDS PROFIT THE PARISH ~

Last week parishioners earned \$371.50, simply by buying Shopping Cards through St. Mary's. Thank you.

RELIGIOUS GOODS STORE has Mass Intention cards for those that are sick and also for family/friends of a deceased loved one. The cards are available after Mass.

ST. MARY'S NOTRE DAME ALUMNI ASSOCIATION invites ALL alumni to attend their annual spring "pot luck" dinner on Sat., March 20, at 5pm in the parish hall. Bring a dish & rekindle the St. Mary's spirit. For further info call Valerie Potter Simpson: (301) 274 3992.

BEGINNING MARCH 6 & 7, the Religious Goods Store will have a raffle of a large frame picture of the "Last Supper". The picture will be displayed in the rear of the church after all Masses. Chances are \$1.00 each. The drawing will be Palm Sunday. Thank you for your support.

PARISHIONERS USING a 4 (four) digit envelope number, please contact the Rectory Office.

ROSARIES made by the Catholic Daughters are available on the Religious Goods Store wall. (no charge, except Pray the Rosary).

CATHOLIC DAUGHTERS MEETING will be held on Tuesday 9 March, at the Hughesville Fire House at 10:00 am.

WHO KNOWS?

We are seeking information about the statue of the Blessed Mother in the cemetery. The base of the statue says it was dedicated on May 13, 1944. That is the feast of Our Lady of Fatima. However, there is no information as to whether an individual, a family or group was responsible for donating the statue. If anyone knows anything about the statue, please contact Fr. Conley. Thank you.

ST. MARY'S is hosting a Child Protection Workshop-Monday, March 15th in the Parish Hall, starts at 6pm to 9pm. This workshop is one of the steps *required* to be in compliance for those *parents, grandparents, guardians* or *those who wish to volunteer* at St. Mary's School, take field trips with their children or help with CCD. Please register for this workshop online at www.virtus.org If you have questions, call the school (301) 932-6883.