

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

There is a war on for your soul. This war has been raging since the days of Adam and Eve in the Garden. The war, of course, is between Almighty God and Satan. The devil won the first skirmish when he succeeded in getting Adam and Eve to disobey God through original sin, Jesus Christ, whose coming as our Savior, we will soon be celebrating, has won the victory through His obedience unto death, death on the cross. Yes, Jesus has won the victory!

However, if we are going to share in our Lord's victory over sin and death, each one of us must also fight our own spiritual battles and the Lord has given us many weapons with which to do this. These weapons include His Word in the Bible, the sacraments, prayer, and works of charity. Another weapon we have, which is described below, is the practice of gratitude. As the essay describes, the weapon of gratitude is very easy to use and it is very effective in defending us against all evil.

With my prayers,
Fr. Conley

Spiritual Warfare Weapon: Gratitude by Kathleen Beckham *This article appeared on the website **Catholic Exchange**.*

“It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Father most holy.” This text of the second Eucharistic prayer of the Mass not only states the primacy of gratitude, but also reveals a powerful defense against the evil one. Lucifer, once a magnificent angel of light, fell from heaven due to pride. Rebellion and ingratitude are cousins of pride. Now, one third of the fallen angels tempt humanity into pride, rebellion and ingratitude to God.

A person who has cultivated an attitude of gratitude to God in all things has formed a powerful weapon against evil spirits....St. Paul helps us understand this, “Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So, we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed

day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:15-16). When we lose heart (faith in God), we are more prone to fall into temptation or cooperate with evil.

Jesus Christ taught St. Faustina, “But, child, you are not yet in your homeland; so go, fortified by My grace, and fight for My kingdom in human souls; fight as a king's child would; and remember the days of your exile will pass quickly, and with them the possibility of earning merit for heaven. I expect from you, my child, a great number of souls who will glorify My mercy for all eternity.” (St. Faustina, *Diary*, no. 1489 quoted by Beckman, *God's Healing Mercy*, p.113)

This applies to all believers. A greater number of souls will eternally glorify The Divine Mercy because they received mercy in the way that David did in the defeat of Goliath (cf. 1 Sam. 17). If, for a time we are tested by diabolical vexation, in faith we trust that God is about a great work in and through us. We believe that God will bring greater good out of the evil trials. For this we give thanks—even before the day of liberation. Like Job, during diabolical oppression, we bless the name of the Lord; we thank Him for the liberation and restoration that is sure to come through perseverance.

The Church encourages believers to cultivate an attitude of gratitude. There is profound wisdom here, distinct from something shallower such as secular positive thinking or optimism. For Catholics, gratitude is foundational to living a fully human life. Why? Because when we give thanks to God in all things, we walk humbly as Eucharistic disciples.

The source and summit of our faith is the Eucharist which means thanks-giving, thanks-saying, thanks-doing. Eucharistic life produces the fruit of gratitude, graciousness, goodness.

An enormous gratitude deficit exists in the world, personally and collectively. Unhappiness, rage, and violence are evidence of a gratitude deficit... Perhaps ingratitude also contributes to empty seats at Mass on Sunday. An ingrate is not very likable. Sometimes the problem is we don't like ourselves very much. A solution could be to thank God for creating you; for loving you into existence, for

accompanying you always, for gazing upon you with holy love.

Be grateful for the gift of life, faith, family, friends, education, job and everything else that is yours as gift of God. Gratitude keeps our spiritual armor well-oiled so that we can “fight like a knight” against the devil and his minions. Prayers of gratitude are repugnant to evil spirits.

ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE THIS WEDNESDAY AT 7 PM

Prepare the way for a joyful celebration of Christmas by coming to confession. Four priests will be available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Those who do not like to drive at night are welcome to come to the School Penance Service on Tuesday, December 12. Please come at 10:15 AM as most of the students will have come to the sacrament by that time. Of course, confessions are heard in our parish every day of the week. There will also be a penance service at Sacred Heart parish in La Plata on both December 13 and December 20 at 7 PM. (*Evidently, they need two penance services in their parish because there are a lot more sinners in La Plata!*)

THERE WILL BE NO MORNING MASS NEXT SATURDAY, DEC. 16TH.

CONFERENCE ON HEALING PRAYER AND PRAYER SERVICE ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16 AT THE ST. JOHN PAUL CENTER IN WASHINGTON BEGINNING AT 8:30AM.

The cost is \$15. The Prayer Service, which is free, begins at 2:30pm and will be followed at 5pm by a Vigil Mass for Sunday. The conference talks will be given by Dr. Mary Healy. She is a wonderful speaker who teaches Sacred Scripture at Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit. She has written a book on healing prayer and has been involved in many healing missions throughout the world. We will be organizing carpools from SMB leaving at 6:45am. If you would like to go, please let me know by this Wednesday, December 13.

Let me know also if you can drive.

Thanks, Father Conley.

COME CELEBRATE THE TRUE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS – THE HOLY SPIRIT-WHO MADE IT ALL POSSIBLE!

We will have a celebration on Thursday, December 28 from 6:30- 9 PM of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit we have received in our parish this year. A special invitation is extended to all of those who participated in our Life in the Spirit series as well as those who continue to come to our Thursday night gatherings. If you can join us, please let Father Conley know at fconley@comcast.net or 301-870-2220, extension 13. Come Holy Spirit, bring us Jesus!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE RAFFLE

WINNERS: Marian Hoepfl from Mechanicsville won \$4500, and Ron & Sue Farren from Comer, Georgia won \$1000. The next drawings will be on December 18.

ST. MARY'S NEWPORT - GOOD SHEPHERD

FOOD PANTRY - In need of food? We are here to help. Come visit our Good Shepherd Food Pantry and one of our food pantry volunteers will assist you in gathering food for you and your family. We are open the 3rd Saturday of each month from 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. For more information, you may contact the parish office at 301-934-8825.

NATIVITIES OF THE WORLD

Nativities of the World, a collection of more than 150 mostly-handcrafted crèches from around the globe, will be on exhibit at the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land from now until January 7, 2018 (daily 9am-5 pm). Many are folk art, created of local materials, such as nuts, tin foil, straw, and felt. See the universality of the Catholic faith through the way different cultures express the birth of Christ. The Monastery is at 1400 Quincy St. NE, Washington, DC 20017. Free parking near Brookland-CUA Metro/H6 bus toward Ft. Lincoln. Information: myfranciscan.org and 202-526-6800.

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Don Pobst, 10am Olivia Wieczorek,
12N: Parishioners, **MON:** 8am Nelly R. Tecson, **TUES:** 8am Mark DeMartini, **WED:** 8am Julio C. Tecson,
THURS: 8am Rizalina R. Ramilo, **FRI:** 9:30am Mary Ann Higgs, **SAT:** 9am Donald Lawson, 4pm Paul Istvan.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY

PRAYERS: Mary Bowes, Roy Allen Butler, Frances Card, Joseph Chapman, Joe Cross, Kendall Farrell, George Fassel, Arlene Gandolfi, Martha Gehring, Judy Istvan-Windsor, Angie Kalnasy, Regina Kijesky, Marie Knobel, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, Maurice Long, Liz Marcus, Mary Emma Middleton, Larry Miller, Joseph Mona, Wayne Mullings, Lenora Proctor, Joseph Quade,

Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney,
Lisa Thompson, Beth Weise, Tim Welch, Brice Zimmer.

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND,
\$9703.80. Of the 770 registered households in the
parish, we received donations from 252 identifiable
contributors (55% of the parish) using envelopes or
checks. The unidentified donations totaled \$559.30.
We received \$822.00 for our School Support.