

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

This past Saturday, January 4th is the feast day of one of my favorite saints, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. In honor of her feast day I would like to share with you her reflections on how we are always in the presence of our loving God.

With my prayers,
Fr. Conley

The Presence of God by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

You know the general principle-that God is every where-on the throne of his glory among the blessed indeed, but also throughout the whole Universe which he fills, governs and preserves, ruling it by his wisdom and power . . . this we learn in our infancy, learn it as an act of memory in childhood yet in the practice of life, we live along as if we scarcely remembered that God sees us.

God is so infinitely present to us that he is in every part of our life and being-nothing can separate us from him, he is more intimately present to us than we are to ourselves, and whatever we do is done in him... -Let us humbly beg with the poor man in the gospel "Lord grant that I may see" ... for though we see not yet where can we go from his Spirit, where can we hide from his presence as the Psalmist expresses'-neither heaven or hell or the uttermost parts of the sea can cover us from him . . as birds in changing their places find the air wherever they fly, and fish who live in the water are surrounded by their element wherever they swim, so wherever we go we must find God everywhere, he is more within us, than we are in ourselves.

God in his continual presence with us is our Father . . a Father infinitely more tender than any earthly Father can be, a Father rich in mercies, ever ready to forget our faults when we detest them, and to be present at all our wants . . . he fills us with his mercies which are new every morning, he covers us with his wings carries us on his shoulders, and cherishes us as a mother nurses the child of her bosom, our names says the prophet are written in his hand . . the hairs of our head he has even numbered'.

How happy should we be if our eyes were open to this truth, if we saw by Faith, with the eyes of our Soul everywhere within and without us the 3 persons of the adorable Trinity with their divine attributes-What would be the dangers and events of this life to us, in his presence to whom earth and hell are subjected . . . we know that when anything most excellent and admirable attracts our sight, the mind is lost in it and the attention so absorbed that it is difficult for us to draw them away, every feeling and thought being taken up by the object so admirable . . . thus it is with happy souls in heaven. But we are here buried in flesh, our God is forgotten and the eyes of our Soul quite dim; . . .We are only clear

sighted to the things of this earth while so blind to those of Faith, we know everything but our God, and think of him so little that it would seem we have no want of him, and no dependence on him.

Truly blind indeed is the soul who sees not God in everything-wretched they who are enslaved by sensible objects, over-ruled by their animal nature, and reduced to subjection by their passions, becoming more contemptible than the very brutes . . . and whence proceeds this blindness so deplorable? The mind becomes sluggish and heavy by its attachment to the things of the earth. The eyes of the Soul are obscured by sin, and incapable of discerning spiritual objects. Oh then Blessed are the pure of heart. They see God. He manifests himself to them with inconceivable love, it is easy to see that purity of heart must be the best disposition to obtain this precious gift. For although it is certain that those who seek God sincerely will find him and those who apply their attention to this adorable presence will with his help acquire a holy habit of it,... Such Souls receive his most precious favors, and walk in his presence continually and securely.

We may learn from our Divine Savior what respect we owe to the presence of the Divine Majesty he who is all, made himself as a worm of the earth before his Father. How then shall we who are nothing find it difficult to abase ourselves. Therefore they lived in the Spirit of daily Sacrifice before the majesty of God offering themselves as living Victims by the destruction of their passions-refusing themselves every power over the esteem, mind, or affections of their fellow beings unless what was wholly for his glory, they would have thought it a crime to have divided their own heart, or to cause the division of any heart with God who should alone fill every thought and mind, while their desire was to be as nothing before him.

How can we if we truly believe the presence of God everywhere, forget that he sees our every action, knows our least intention, and has his eye ever open on our interior and exterior. If this was well considered how many of our actions now mixed with multiplied faults would be exempt from them. A person ever mindful of God's presence, does nothing when alone which they would not do in the presence of a friend. A soul in this happy practice, remembers God hears them if they speak, and even takes their liveliest recreation as in presence of the tenderest of Fathers who never takes his eyes from them. .

-Oh may he be blest for enabling us to understand this with the prophet king who said "the Lord is always before me therefore my heart rejoices, my tongue sings for Joy, my flesh itself rests in hope" Then he calls this blessed presence the path of life . . fullness of Joy-and says triumphant that in it he will enjoy delights without end!!! (and why should not we?)

MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO HELPED TO MAKE OUR CHRISTMAS MASSES SO BEAUTIFUL! YOUR SERVICE TO OUR PARISH IS MUCH APPRECIATED!

OUR NEXT ADULT FORMATION SERIES WILL BE RESTORED- STORIES OF DIVINE LOVE. Our faith is strengthened and moved to action by the great "cloud of witnesses" around us. This new docu-series features contemporary people who have profoundly encountered Jesus Christ and are now living like Him. This program starts on Thursday, January 9, and continues on Jan 23, Feb 13, & 27, from 6:30-8:30 PM. Dinner included. Cost for series is \$10. Sign-Up in Foyer.

UPDATE ON HIRING A NEW PRINCIPAL

As you know, Mrs. Caniglia will be retiring as principal of our school in June 2020. The process of hiring a new principal has begun under the guidance of the Schools Office of the Archdiocese. A ten-member Search Committee, comprised of school parents, faculty members and school staff members has been formed. Their first meeting will be on Tuesday, January 7 at 7 PM. At this meeting they will be instructed on their role as advisors in the hiring process. Persons interested in applying for the position of principal at St. Mary's School should contact the Schools Office of the Archdiocese of Washington at ADW.org 301-853-3800.

PRAISE & WORSHIP GATHERING THIS THURSDAY 6:30PM in the hall. All are welcome and dinner is included.

FIRST FRIDAY THIS WEEK

We will have adoration of the Blessed Sacrament following the 9:30 AM Mass and concluding with benediction at 6 PM. Volunteers are needed to sign up for adoration for the hours between 3 and 6 PM. The sign-up sheet is in the foyer.

CHARLES COUNTY LITERACY COUNCIL

is sponsoring an Adult Spelling Bee on Saturday, January 11, 2020 from 6 – 10 PM here at St. Mary's Bryantown. \$30 Admission. Includes heavy hors d'oeuvres, complimentary beverages, entertainment & cheering! For more information, call 301-934-6488 or email: Charlescountyliteracy@comcast.net.

IF YOU ARE NOT CURRENTLY GETTING EMAILS FROM THE PARISH, please provide us with your address by contacting Lauren Balderson at smbassist@comcast.net. You should also contact Lauren if you wish to opt out of this communication network.

MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO GAVE TO OUR CHRISTMAS COLLECTION. This is a very important annual collection as every penny of it stays in the parish. It is also part of our budget. **To date we have received \$39, 612.50.** We are grateful to all who has contributed. If you haven't given yet to the Christmas collection, we ask that you do so. If you no longer have a Christmas envelope, just write "Christmas collection" on your check. Thank you for your support of our parish!

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 many couples experiencing difficulties in their marriage. For confidential information or to register for the upcoming program beginning with a weekend on January 24th - January 26th, 2020, please visit: www.HelpOurMarriage.org, call (443) 400-7017, or email: 3015@retrouvaille.org

Please support our advertising sponsors. This week we recognize Alarm Smith

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Parishioners, 10am Sonny Jameson, 12N Carol Johnson, **MON:** 8am Ed Padgett, **TUES:** 8am Christine Burch, **WED:** 8am Ed Kenney, **THURS:** 8am James Toye, **FRI:** 9:30am Ernest J. Keller, Jr., **SAT:** 9am Joseph McPherson, 4pm June Farrell.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY

PRAYERS: Michael, Stephen & Tony Balenger, Mary Bowes, Deacon Gene & Anne Burroughs, Quint Burroughs, Brenda Callahan, Dottie Chick, Joe Cross, 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, John Reeves, Mary Reeves, Melissa Rollins, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Beth Weise, Billie Whittington, Michael Whittington, Jr., Brice Zimmer.

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND:

\$8,120.50. \$1,976.00 of that was received from people who contributed through online banking. The unidentified donations totaled \$378.00.