

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

In this issue of the bulletin, I want to share with you two articles I read recently. One is from a Christian magazine and is about how, by God's design, we are creatures who look forward to things. Being able to look forward helps us to have hope and to face daily challenges. The second article is from the *Washington Post* and is about the increasing numbers of suicides in our society. It details how people who don't have hope and something to look forward to are much more likely to take their own lives than people who have hope. As Pope Benedict put it a few years ago, as the followers of Jesus Christ we are people of hope and "people with hope live differently."

If there is someone in your life who is in one of the vulnerable categories mentioned in the article, please reach out to them today. Your loving concern may give them the hope that they need in a difficult time.

With my prayers,
Fr. Conley

LOOKING FORWARD AND OUR MAKER WANTS IT THAT WAY

by Andree Seu Peterson in *World Magazine*

My father and I have a steady date at the diner on Saturday mornings. One thing I have observed from our booth week after week is that people always look happy when they walk into a restaurant, whereas they look just regular when walking out. I am sure it is the same with me.

The reason is not hard to guess. It is the power of anticipation, in this case, of the enjoyment of the visualized meal and the ceremony of being served by an affable waitress and of conversation with a person whose company one likes. Built into human nature is a need to have something to look forward to. (Our Creator made us this way. We look forward to many things -like our daily meals to alleviate the tedium of work, to the seven-day rhythm of the Sabbath rest, to the longer-term anticipation of a child returning home from college on Christmas break, to the long-long-term anticipation of bouncing a grandchild on your knee.

I have worked in several factories and textile mills, and I can vouch for the fact that the dominant topic in those places is the 15-minute break and lunch break. "Twenty more minutes till break!" "Can't help you now, I'm going on break."

A young man I know always seems to have a trip he's looking forward to. Last year it was Iceland, Scotland, the Dominican Republic, and skiing in Colorado. It is obvious to me that he lives for these travels, and that he needs them like a drug to make his life, without a Christian focus, bearable between them.

I have learned a thing or two about the secret of aging well. I know two elderly men, one of whom wakes up in the morning excited about his plans for the day, and the

other who has no interests. The former is thriving while the latter is not. We are hard-wired for goals, and the absence of them mitigates shalom.

Marriage counselors will tell you how important it is for spouses to go out on dates, ideally once a week. Nothing to look forward to on the weekend may make for a grumpy Mommy on the weekdays. And I feel certain that the poorest woman in the poorest place has contrived some little mental game to make her daily drudgery fly by: perhaps a secret garden of her favorite flowers that she goes to after work.

It is the Master who has made us all this way. He has no interest in our changing this peculiarity about us. He only wishes that anticipation would be fixed on things above, not things below that pass away. Anna and Simeon, by all outward appearances, had nothing going for them. But they ventured daily to the Temple in anticipation of Messiah's coming, and were not disappointed.

What about us? "Christ...will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Hebrews 9:28). Say with me, "I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watch men for the morning" (Psalm 130:5-6).

SUICIDE IS NOT SOMEONE ELSE'S PROBLEM by Arthur C. Brooks

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 47,173 Americans killed themselves during 2017, which is higher in both number and percentage of the population than at any time since the CDC's earliest published statistics in 1950. Today, there are two suicides for every homicide death, and 17 percent more suicide deaths per year than deaths from motor-vehicle incidents.

We are largely silent on this subject as a nation; it isn't something we discuss in polite society. It is shrouded in shame and fear. Meanwhile, the suicide rate quietly climbs, year after year.

Suicide affects all ages and demographic groups, but three particularly stand out. The first is women and girls between the ages of 15 and 24, who have seen the largest percentage increase - nearly double - in suicide deaths since 2000. What is the cause of this spike? A leading scholar trying to answer the question is Jean Twenge, a social psychologist at San Diego State University. She does not mince words: "All signs point to the screen." As she wrote in *The Post* in 2017, teens who spend five or more hours per day online were 71 percent more likely than those spending just one hour per day to have at least one suicide risk factor.

The second group couldn't be more demographically different: men between the ages of 45 and 64, who make up the biggest number of suicides - 12,371 in 2017. The

group represents about 6 percent of the population but accounts for more than a quarter of the suicides: the rate is up 45 percent since 1999. Most of the suicides in this middle-aged group involved guns, a method that is almost always lethal.

The third group is made up of older men, age 75 and over.... They have the highest likelihood of suicide. There is growing awareness of the despair induced by economic trends rendering many men economically superfluous, the loneliness in a generation marked by divorce and non-marriage, and the declines in religiosity among baby boomers and Gen X.

But there are other possible culprits worth considering as well. Deadly combination of rampant untreated depression and drug use. And not just illicit drugs; this includes prescription sleep aids - the use of which is increasingly common - which research shows dramatically increases the likelihood of intentional self-harm.

Yet another factor, which is a growing social acceptance of suicide especially among those who are male, white, highly educated, nonreligious and politically liberal.... Increasing acceptance, especially when reflected in the media and on the Internet, can affect the decision of a person in crisis.

To turn the tide on this crisis, in addition to better identification and treatment of suicidality, we urgently need to raise public awareness and shift the direction of public opinion on suicide in the United States. It is especially important to remember that, unlike so many other issues, suicide is not someone else's problem. The epidemic is remarkably democratic. Your family is not safe. There is no gated community or police force to protect us; wealth and education are no defense. The threat is already inside our homes. We are all in this together. Will we act before more lives are needlessly lost?

THIS THURSDAY - PRAISE & WORSHIP. We will have a praise and worship gathering this Thursday from 6:30 to 8:30 and dinner will be served. Everyone is invited to come and join us for Spirit-filled praise of our Lord. For more information contact Fr. Conley.

THIS FRIDAY IS THE FIRST FRIDAY of the month. 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 between the hours of three and 6PM. The sign-up sheet is in the foyer.

CEMETERY CLEARING – ALL CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS IN THE CEMETERY MUST BE REMOVED, TOMORROW, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3.

MORNING OF RECOLLECTION – HEALING OUR WOUNDS, SATURDAY, FEB. 8.

God heals us in many ways, emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. Be sure to join us on Saturday, February 8 at Immaculate Conception Church. The morning will include Mass, Breakfast, Confessions, Talks and Healing Service with laying on of hands! You can also call Bread of Life Center for Peace at (301) 475-7139 to reserve your seat or if you need more information.

DIVINE MERCY PILGRIMAGE OF PRAYER TO ALABAMA -- APRIL 18 TO 22, 2020

Don't miss this opportunity to visit the beautiful Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) founded by Mother Angelica! Fr. Rory Conley, Pastor, St. Mary's Church Bryantown, will accompany us as Chaplain. The cost of this trip based on double occupancy is only \$925.00, which includes: airfare, bus transportation, hotels, breakfast and lunch, along with entry fees and stipends. Please contact Bread of Life Center for Peace for the full itinerary and trip details at (301) 475-7139 or visit our website: www.breadoflifecenterforpeace.org !

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am June Farrell, 10am Maurice I. Long, Sr., 12N Pope Francis in honor of his 84th Birthday and his 50th year of his Ordination, **MON:** 8am Marilyn McNulty, **TUES:** 8am James L. Toye, **WED:** 8am Sylvene Savoy, **THURS:** 8am Thomas Stewart, **FRI:** 9:30am Kyle Capps, **SAT:** 9am Edward Kenney, 4pm Kathie Mace.

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, Deacon Dan Ford, Arlene Gandolfi, Lee Gardiner, James Gibson, Wilson (Sonny) Goldsmith, Nick Hurrysh, 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:

\$10,060.64. \$1,530.00 of that was received from people who contributed through online banking. The unidentified donations totaled \$858.54. We received \$27.00 for our School Support.