

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

Our Scripture readings today describe the temptation of our first parents, Adam and Eve, and the temptation of our Lord Jesus. In both situations Satan's line of attack was to appeal to their bodily hunger. As the passage below explains, "the body lies at the center of the spiritual life." So, for our spiritual life to be transformed, we have to learn how to control our bodily appetites. That is why fasting and abstaining from meat have been traditional practices for the Lenten season. The passage is taken from the book *Renovation of the Heart* by the late Dallas Willard who was a Christian writer and head of the philosophy department at the University of Southern California.

With my prayers,
Fr. Conley

From *Renovation of the Heart* by Dallas Willard

Are you unaware that your body is a shrine to the Holy Spirit from God, Who is within you? And that you are not your own property? A price has been paid for you. So make your body a showplace of God's greatness.
1 Corinthians 6:19-20 paraphrased

Spiritual transformation into Christlikeness, is the process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it takes on the character of the inner being of Jesus himself. The result is that the "outer" life of the individual increasingly becomes a natural expression of the inner reality of Jesus and of his teachings. Doing what he said and did increasingly becomes a part of who we are.

But for this to happen, *our body* must increasingly be poised to do what is good and to refrain from what is evil. *The inclinations to wrongdoing that literally inhabit its parts must be eliminated.* The body must come to serve us as a primary ally in Christlikeness.

For good or for evil, *the body lies right at the center of the spiritual life.* One can immediately see all around us that the human body is a primary barrier to conformity to Christ. But this certainly was not God's intent for the body. It is not in the nature of the body as such. The body is not inherently evil. Nor is it even caused by the body. But still it is a fact that the body usually hinders people in doing what they know to be good and right. Being formed in evil it, in turn, fosters evil and constantly runs ahead of our good intentions – but in the opposite direction.

Still our body is a good thing. God made it for good. The body *should* be cherished and properly cared for, not as our master, however, but *as a servant* of God. For most people, on the other hand, their body *governs* their life. And *that* is the problem. Even professing Christians, by and large, devote to their spiritual growth and well-being a tiny fraction of the time they devote to

their body, and it is an even tinier fraction if we include what they worry about.

Can our body truly become our ally in Christlikeness? It can and it must, but its essential role in spirituality is the one thing most likely to be overlooked in understanding and practicing growth in grace.

Human ruin comes from placing oneself at the center of one's universe, in place of God. This naturally, if not inevitably, leads to worship of the body and to the life of sensuality that results. The body becomes our primary source of gratification. That is a perversion of the role of the body in life as God intended it; and it results in "death," in alienation from God and the loss of all we will have invested our lives in (Galatians 6:8).

Therefore, Paul tells us that those who live in terms of the "flesh" – the merely natural powers of the human being, based in the human body – have their minds set on (or are totally preoccupied with) the flesh (or what they can manage on their own). He continues onto say that to have the mind "set on" the flesh in this way is "death" (Romans 8:5-6). Such a mind is naturally hostile toward God because God threatens *its* god. And it is unable to live in accordance with what God says because it is working against God (Romans 8:7).

Once we are clear about the centrality of the body to our identity and the normal course of life, the profundity of Paul's teachings about the body will strongly impress us.

For example, in Colossians, Chapter 3 he tells the "holy ones (saints) and faithful brothers" (Colossians 1:2) to whom he is writing, to "kill off" ("mortify") their "members (mela) which are upon the earth" (Colossians 3:5). And as such "members" he lists "fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desires, and covetousness, which" he says. "is idolatry."

What does this mean, "members which are upon the earth"? It means those parts of a life lived *entirely in terms of the natural powers of the embodied self.* You need no help from supernatural sources to engage in fornication, the many sexual pollutions – indulgences in passions and desires for what is evil, or greed to possess what belongs to others. Just follow the inclinations now built into your bodily existence and they will all happen. Just let the demands of your "members" guide your life. These are the "parts" of our life that are "upon the earth," in the sense that they do not come "from heaven" or God. Because of them, human beings become "children of disobedience." Their basic nature becomes disobedience or rebellion. They are inherently at war with God and therefore subject to God's wrath (Colossians 3:6-7).

Paul lays out the alternative open to the one *already* born from above, and therefore experiencing a life that is not of the flesh. Such a one is given the option of *walking* in the new, different life that is already "doing things" in them. "Just as Christ was raised from the

dead by the glory of the Father,” Paul said, “*so we too might walk in in newness of life*” (Romans 6:4). Walk in it, as a steadily moving force, not just feel it in spurts and starts!

Because we *are* in the grip of grace, sin does not exercise control over us except insofar as we allow it. And, with divine assistance provided, we can break whatever strict control remains to it in every aspect of our life. So, just as once – while “dead in ...trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1) – we surrendered our body parts to be servants of impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now we are to “present our body parts to be servants of righteousness leading to sanctification” (Romans 6:19).

Now, these words of Paul refer precisely to the process and outcome of *spiritual formation*, of which we have spoken. “Now that you have been released from slavery to sin and enslaved to God by your dependence on him for your new kind of life”, the benefit you get is sanctification, and the outcome is eternal life “the life that really is life” (1 Timothy 6:19). The parts of our death-bound body are not mere physical things, but now *carry in* them a life that is not *of them*. He who raised Jesus from the dead now dwells in us and “will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you” (Romans 8:11).

FRIDAY LENT SCHEDULE:

Morning – 9:00 AM Confessions,
9:30 AM Mass & Stations of the Cross
Evening – 6:30 Confessions, and
7:00 PM Mass & Stations.

**PRAISE & WORSHIP GATHERING
THIS THURSDAY AT 6:30PM. All are invited and
dinner is included.**

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. Fr. Conley 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

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND:
\$11,878.98. \$2,941.00 of that was from online banking.
The unidentified donations totaled \$705.68. We
received \$40.00 for our School Support.

SPRING EVENT -- A NIGHT AT THE RACES

Please join the SMB Community for a night of dancing, dinner, derby games, 50/50, & more on Friday, March 6, 2020, 6:30 - 11:30 p.m. at The Greater Waldorf Jaycees. Derby Attire is encouraged but not required. Please see the attached flyer or call the school at 301- 932- 6883 for details.

SPRING IS COMING! And, that means Mulch!

Get ready for your gardening and support St. Mary's Bryantown School by ordering mulch for your gardens. Please see the enclosed flyer or call the school at 301- 932-6883 for details. *Happy Spring!*

IGNITE YOUTH GROUP: GET UP & GO GET

IT! - Wednesday, March 11, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. Location: St Mary's School Hall - 8th Grade, High School and College Students - Get Up & Go Get It! We are happy to have Paul Facchina as a guest speaker. Mr. Facchina will speak on financial responsibility, God and Success. Please join us. Parents are invited to attend as well - please let Karen Krechman know if you'd like to attend at: karen.krechman@gmail.com

FLEA MARKET - Mary Branick needs volunteers to help set up on Friday, March 13th, after 5 p.m. Students would be especially helpful in sorting and hanging clothing, unpacking treasures, etc. We also need energetic volunteers on Saturday, March 14th, from 12:30 to 3 p.m. to help pack up the leftover treasures and put the School hall back in order for Sunday. Please contact Karen Krechman if your child is interested at: karen.krechman@gmail.com

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Parishioners, 10am Melvin Savoy, 12N Logan Courtillet, **MON:** 8am Loretta Norris, **TUES:** 8am Thomas Stewart, **WED:** 8am Agnes Curtis, **THURS:** 8am Romaine Simmons, **FRI:** 9:30am Sylvene Savoy, **SAT:** 9am Carol Johnson, 4pm John Fassel.

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, Charles Graham, 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., Silas Williamson, Brice Zimmer.