

## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

During this season of Lent we are called to fast and practice abstinence from meat in imitation of our Lord Jesus himself who fasted and recommended fasting to his followers. The purpose of our fasting is to remind ourselves, and particularly our bodies, that we "don't live by bread alone." Learning to practice self-control over physical appetites is essential to our spiritual growth. Below is the second excerpt from the book *Renovation of the Heart* by Dallas Willard. It follows up on the material from his book that we excerpted last week. The late Dallas Willard was a well-known Christian author and professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California. I hope that you find his reflections here thought-provoking. I certainly did.

With my prayers,  
Fr. Conley

From *Renovation of the Heart* by Dallas Willard

Now, the Human Body is betrayed in its own nature when it is thus made central to human life. It is created for spiritual life in the kingdom of God and to be honored-indeed, glorified – in that context. But when taken out of that context and made the central focus of human experience and endeavor, it is betrayed – robbed of the spiritual resources meant to sustain its life and proper functioning – and in turn it then betrays those who center their life on it.

The sense of this betrayal is what lies at the heart of youth worship in Western societies. It also is the source of the fear, shame, disgust, and even the anger directed at fat, old age (or just aging), and death and dying that dominate our culture. An outlook focused entirely on the body finds the body's failure and cessation to be, of course, the ultimate insult from which there is no recovery. You have to understand this if you want to understand Western life and culture.

The same mis-location of the body explains many other intractable problems now facing much of our world: the sexualization of practically everything, abortion, eating disorders, and racial and other discriminations. All of these are rooted in taking the body – our own or that of others – to be the person and thereby depriving ourselves of the spiritual perspective on the person, which alone can enable us to cherish the body and its central role in our life. Body hatred also comes from disappointment about our future with it, even from outright fear of the body of what it is going to do to us. Not accepting God as God puts us in this place, I have noted, and leaves us with nothing to trust and worship but our body and its natural powers.

The frenzy over physical attractiveness that we see all around us today and the despair over its loss in aging and death, for everyone are the main characteristics of

the contemporary climate of life. But that only illustrates, once more, that to be carnally minded, – that is, obsessed with the merely natural – is death indeed. We should be able to see the truth of this in everything we view or read in today's world. But, by contrast, to be spiritually minded – that is, to be focused on our nature as spiritual beings and on our place in God's eternal life and kingdom – "is life and peace" (Romans 8:6).

Nowhere does the modern frenzy or self-assertion and the "me" god come more clearly into view than in the claim now often made that "my body is my own." This is taken to mean that I alone have the right to say what is done in and with it. Now, there is an important truth here – especially in a world where there are so many ways of getting at you through your body. But it is a truth misstated and misunderstood. Our only safety lies in a proper solidarity with others, not in isolation and pretending to go it alone.

Because we are essentially social beings and what is done with our body strongly affects others around us, I do not have exclusive say over what happens in and with my body. It is not mine to do with as I will. No man is an island, nor any woman either. I did not produce my body. I could not care for it for many years. It is not self-sufficient now. (Ask yourself where your food and water come from.) There will probably come a time when I cannot care for it again. I did not determine its basic properties, and there is very little about my body of any great importance that is due to me.

As a mature and competent individual, I am responsible for the care of my body, and it is the center of all the other responsibilities I have. But that does not apply that I and I alone have the right to say what is to be done with it, or in short, that I own my body.

And this is all the more true for an apprentice (disciple) of Jesus, whose body and whose being has literally been brought back from evil by God through the death of his Son. It is therefore God's to do with as he pleases, and he pleases that our body should be "a showplace of God's greatness." (1 Corinthians 6:20) Christians are the last people on earth who could say "My body is my own, and I shall do with it what I please."

Accordingly, the only thing that makes any sense for a human being who trusts Christ, is to "present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, very pleasing to God" (Romans 12:1-2). This total yielding of every part of our body to God breaks all conformity with worldly life in this age and transforms us into conformity with the age to come. Presenting our bodies to the Lord as temples of the Holy Spirit contributes to the renewal of our minds – our powers of thought and imagination and judgment, deeply rooted in our bodies. Don't even think it," we sometimes say. And the mark of the renewed mind is what it will "not even think" evil things. This freedom from even the thought of evil requires that the

automatic responses toward evil are no longer running the body and its parts.

For many of us today, our body is in a constant state of agitation and discomfort. That is the contemporary condition and explains our astonishing degree of dependence on prescription and other drugs. In some cases, of course, this may be due to strictly physical conditions. But more often it is not so, but is due to tendencies of the self that have settled into our body's parts and put it at war with itself. Wounds, fears, unsatisfied desires, shames, losses, and unhealthy ambitions and images of the self, sink beneath the horizon of our awareness. We may even deny them. But they continue to disrupt our body and can even take over our life through the body's "automatic" responses.

What we must be sure about is that God has made every provision for the body we actually have to serve us and him well for his purposes in putting us here on earth. There may be severe problems with our bodies, at least from the human point of view. We do not mean to deny or disregard that. But, as Peter said to the apprentices (disciples) of his day, the real power of life lies in who we are as redeemed people and how our behavior reflects this truth.

So we should "not let (our) adornment be merely external....but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God" (1 Peter 3:3-4). This reveals where genuine beauty, health, and strength of the body come from and the incredible grace that flows from the spiritual transformation of the body.

**WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN LENT TO STRENGTHEN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST? COME TO OUR LENTEN SERIES, "METANOIA."** Even if you missed the first session you can still join us, as each Metanoia presentation stands alone. The sessions are offered on Thursday evenings from 6:30-8:30 (with dinner) and Sundays from 11:15-1pm with lunch. The Thursday evening sessions will be this Thursday March 12 & 26 and April 2. The Sunday sessions will be this Sunday March 8, 15 & 22. The cost of the series is just \$10 and includes meals. You may sign up in the foyer or by contacting Fr. Conley.

**THE SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE** would like to thank all those who contributed to the Catherine Foundation Fundraiser. It was a huge success with many diapers, wipes, baby food, clothes and toiletries received. Your generosity and caring about meeting the basic needs of the mothers and children of our community is truly a blessing. Thank you!

## **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](http://www.breadoflifecenterforpeace.org)

## **ANNUAL SPRING OYSTER FEST AT SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES HALL IN BENEDICT ON SATURDAY, MARCH 28 FROM 12 TO 3 PM .**

Tickets are \$25 at the door. All you can eat. Oysters fried, scalded and raw at our outdoor bar, shrimp, ham. Homemade side dishes. Cake sale, silent auction. Reserve a table for six and one person eats free. Tickets available at the door. More info 301-274-3416 or email [cusickk@adw.org](mailto:cusickk@adw.org).

## **MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:**

**SUN:** 8am Donald Goldsmith, 10am Parishioners, 12N Clarissa Williams., **MON:** 8am Josephine Venezzio, **TUES:** 8am Vicki Hayden, **WED:** 8am Jamie Hayden, **THURS:** 8am Maurice I. Long, Sr., **FRI:** 9:30am Ernest J. Keller, Jr., **SAT:** 9am Mary T. Edelen, 4pm Rev. Francis Chodnicki.

## **PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY**

**PRAYERS:** Michael, Stephen & Tony Balenger, Mary Bowes, Deacon Gene & Anne Burroughs, Quint Burroughs, Brenda Callahan, Dottie Chick, Joe Cross, Lisa Edelen, Kendall Farrell, Arlene Gandolfi, Lee Gardiner, James Gibson, Wilson (Sonny) Goldsmith, Charles Graham, Regina Kijesky, Marie Knobel, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, 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.

## **OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST**

**WEEKEND:** \$12,200.50. \$1,970.00 of that was received from people who contributed through online banking. The unidentified donations totaled \$841.50. We received \$690.00 for our School Support.