

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

Great news! Assuming that the Charles County Commissioners allow us to enter phase one of the State's re-opening plan on May 29, we will resume offering Mass publicly next weekend, May 30 & 31, which is also the Feast of Pentecost. Since we missed Easter, it is truly wonderful that after all these weeks of being shut down, we will be able to worship again as a community on this wonderful feast.

Note well, If you are concerned about your safety, you are not obliged to come to Mass. Seniors and others who are especially vulnerable to the virus, should stay home. That being said, if you would like to receive Holy Communion but are concerned about sitting in the church or hall please do not hesitate to contact me at 301-274-3187 ext 13 or by sending me an email at frconley@comcast.net It is of paramount importance to me that if you wish to receive Holy Communion, you will be able to do so. We will take the necessary steps to see that this happens safely.

Under the guidelines issued by the state we will only be able to accommodate about 100 people in the church for each Mass. However, we will "live stream" the Mass to the hall where we have "overflow" seating in the hall for approximately 100 more. To accommodate more of you, we will have two Masses on Saturday evening. The first one will be at 4 PM and the second at 6 PM.

Please follow the directions of our Ushers and - the Knights of Columbus who have volunteered to assist us with our Masses.

Each Mass will last approximately 30 minutes.

You must wear masks in the church.

We will be ministering **Holy Communion** in a way to minimize risk of transmitting the virus.

Baskets will be stationed at the exits for your donations.

I look forward to seeing you all soon!

This Sunday we celebrate the feast of the Ascension of our Lord, when Jesus Christ returned to the Father. Below is a reflection on the Ascension by noted Scripture scholar N.T Wright. I find it very enlightening and inspiring. I hope that you will too. With my prayers,
Fr. Conley

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**From *Acts of the Apostles for Everyone*
by N.T. Wright adapted**

Though many hymns and prayers (mostly from the nineteenth and early twentieth century) speak of heaven as our home, that isn't how the Bible normally puts it. In the Bible, heaven and earth are the two halves of God's created world. Talking about 'heaven and earth' is a way, in the Bible, of talking about the fact, as many people and many cultures have perceived it to be, that everything in our world has another dimension, another sort of reality, that goes with it as well. Time and matter sometimes seems to exclude.

The reality is this: 'heaven' in the Bible is God's space, and 'earth' is our space. 'Heaven' isn't just 'the happy place where God's people go when they die', and it certainly isn't our 'home' if by that you mean that our eventual destiny is to leave 'earth' altogether and go to 'heaven' instead. God's plan, as we see again and again in the Bible, is for 'new heavens and new earth', and for them to be joined together in that renewal once and for all. 'Heaven' may well be our temporary home, after this present life; but the whole new world, united and transformed, is our eventual destination.

Part of the point about Jesus' resurrection is that it was the beginning of precisely that astonishing and world-shattering renewal. It wasn't just that he happened to be alive again. It was, rather, that because on the cross he had indeed dealt with the main force of evil, decay and death itself, the creative power of God, no longer thwarted as it had been by human rebellion, could at last burst forth and produce the beginning, the pilot project, of that joined-up heaven-and-earth reality which is God's plan for the whole world. This is part at least of the explanation of the sheer strangeness of Jesus' risen body, which hits us in all the Easter stories.

Once we grasp what the expression 'heaven and earth' means in the Bible, and that 'heaven' is not a location within our own cosmos of space, time and matter, then we are ready, or as ready as we are

likely to be, to understand the ascension, described here quite simply and briefly by Luke. Neither Luke nor the other early Christians thought Jesus had suddenly become a primitive spaceman, heading off into orbit or beyond so that if you searched throughout the far reaches of what we call ‘space’ you would eventually find him. They believed that ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ are the two interlocking spheres of God’s reality, and that the risen body of Jesus is the first object which is fully at home in both and hence in either, anticipating the time when everything will be renewed and joined together.

That is point of the event of our Lord’s Ascension and its explanation that Jesus is ‘lifted up’. This means that he was going into ‘God’s space’, God’s dimension. The cloud, as so often in the Bible, is the sign of God’s presence. Jesus has gone into God’s dimension of reality. The Bible also says that he will be back on the day when that dimension and our present one are brought together once and for all. This promise hangs in the air over the whole of Christian history from that day to this. This is what we mean by the ‘second coming’ of Christ.

The Ascension of Jesus was prophesied in the Book of Daniel chapter 7, which describes how ‘one like a son of man’ is brought up, on the clouds of heaven, to the ‘Ancient of Days’, and is presented before him and given kingly power over the nations, and particularly over the ‘beasts’, the monsters representing the forces of evil and chaos. The story of Jesus’ ascension would indicate that Daniel 7 had been fulfilled in a dramatic and unexpected way, with the human figure who had suffered at the hands of the evil powers of the world now being exalted into the very presence of God himself, there to receive kingly power.

The first and most important response to this extraordinary, unprecedented and still hard-to-describe event is of course worship. Luke often tells us about the early Christians devoting themselves to prayer. All those who name the name of Jesus, who worship him, who study his word, are called to be people of worship and prayer. Why? Well, it’s obvious, isn’t it? It is precisely in worship and prayer that we, while still on ‘earth’ find ourselves sharing in the life of ‘heaven’, which is where Jesus is. As we in our own day try to follow Jesus and witness to his Lordship over the world, it is through prayer and worship that we, too,

can know now, enjoy and be energized by the life of heaven, right here on earth.

Healing Prayer Ministry by Phone or Zoom

The volunteers are in our healing prayer ministry will be happy to pray with people by phone or on Zoom. If you would like a prayer team to pray with you please send me your email address and I will forward to them. They will then contact you. You can request prayer by phone or by zoom which would allow you to see each other.

JOIN US FOR COMMUNITY PRAYERS via
Phone or internet using Zoom. On Sundays at 9am we pray from the Psalms using the Church’s morning prayer. At 11 AM on Sunday we pray the Rosary. We also pray the Psalms on Wednesdays at 6:30 PM using the Church is evening prayer. In addition, we have praise and worship each Thursday at 6:30 PM. Don’t isolate yourselves spiritually! Join your fellow parishioners in prayer.

Our Bible study on the Acts of the Apostles

continues this week via Zoom on Tuesday from 6:30-7:30pm and on Thursday from 10 to 11 AM. This week will be discussing chapters 18-21

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY

PRAYERS: Eunice Amey, 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, Jeffrey Whittington Billie Whittington, Michael Whittington, Jr., Silas Williamson, Brice Zimmer.

MASS INTENTIONS THIS WEEK May 25-30

8AM Monday Jackie Chapman, Tuesday Wilson Goldsmith, Wed. Louis Diver Thurs, James Smash Stewart. Friday 9:30AM Mary Crawford Saturday 9:00AM Louise Diver