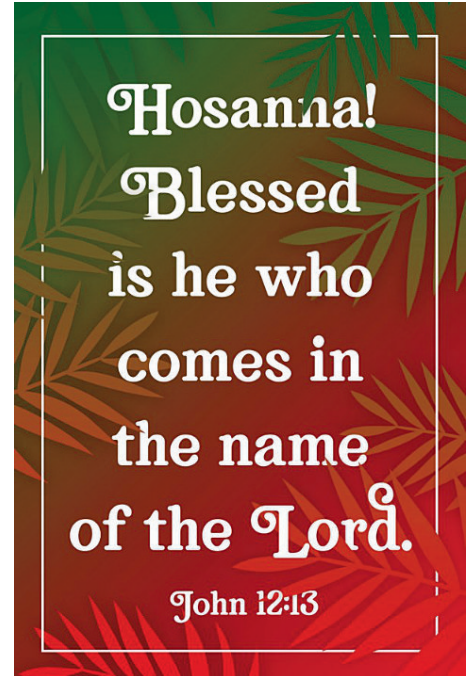


St. Raphael Catholic Church



1513 Dunster Road Rockville, Maryland 20854

April 2, 2023

Please mail correspondence to the Parish Office
1592 Kimblewick Road, Rockville, MD 20854

Parish Phone 301-762-2143
Parish Fax 301-762-0719
Website www.straphaels.org

Rev. Michael Salah, Pastor, ext. 112
Rev. Christian Huebner, Parochial Vicar, 301-762-2143, ext. 150
Email: huebnerc@adw.org
Rev. Thomas Morrow, Retired, ext. 128

Deacon Jose Carbonell, ext. 187
Deacon Richard Meyer, 202-365-0913
Deacon Jim O'Brien, obrien3@verizon.net
Deacon Frank Salatto, ext. 149

Mary J. Beaudoin, Dir. Of Religious Education, ext. 124
Gerri Stoner, St. Raphael School Secretary, ext. 122
Teri Dwyer, Principal, Baptism Coordinator, ext. 121
Eileen Kutchak, Dir. of Parish Programming, ext. 110
Luisa Duarte, Spanish Coordinator, 240-864-2565
Pietro Lojacono, Assistant for Religious Education, ext. 123
Annalee McHugh, Youth Minister, 240-864-2519
Vince Natali, Dir. Of Music Ministries, 240-864-2532
Krys Psurek, RCIA Coordinator, 240-864-2542
Elaine Salatto, Publications, Welcoming, 240-864-2513

New Parishioners: A warm welcome to St. Raphael's Catholic Church. Blue registration cards are available on the wall rack in the main entrance of the church or you may register online at: <https://straphaels.org/parish-registration-form>

The Parish Wide Ministry Resource List can be found on our website on the Welcome tab or under Ministries, Social Responsibility, and Documents.

For Life Affirming Resources:

<https://adw.org/about-us/resources/pregnant-need-help/>
Healing after abortion? Project Rachel 301-853-4565

Abuse isn't love. Help is available 24/7 on the National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

Weekend Masses: Saturday: 5:00 PM
Sunday: 7:00, 8:30, 10:00, (children), 11:30AM,
1:00PM (español), 6:00PM (youth)

Weekday Masses: Monday thru Friday: 6:30 and 9:00AM
Saturday: 9:00 AM

Penance : Tuesday: 6:30 PM and
Saturday: 3:45 - 4:30 PM

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: Tuesday: 6:45 PM
Thursday: 9:30 AM

Benediction: Tuesday, following novena 7:45 PM
Thursday, 7:15PM

Miraculous Medal Novena: Tuesday, 7:30PM
Divine Mercy Chaplet: Tuesday, following Novena
Thursday, 7:00PM

Sacrament of Baptism: Parish Registration and a Baptism class is required. Please contact Teri Dwyer to register and plan to attend the class while awaiting the birth or adoption of your child.

Sacrament of Matrimony: In accord with the regulations of the Archdiocese of Washington, couples must contact a priest and begin preparation at least six months prior to the wedding. Parish registration and active participation for the minimum of three months is required before preparation may begin. Living together before marriage is sinful and harmful to the future marriage. Couples who are living together will be asked to live separately during the preparation time.

What does it mean to be an active Catholic? Frequently, those seeking to celebrate Marriage, have children baptized, or serve as sponsors for Confirmation or Baptism request a letter stating they are parishioners and active, practicing Catholics. To receive such a letter, one must be registered in the parish, attend Mass regularly, and be committed to a stewardship of time, talent, and treasure. We encourage all parishioners to become active in one of the parish organizations. In a community as large as St. Raphael, one means of verifying participation is through the regular use of parish offertory envelopes. If you choose not to participate in the support of the parish, or are unable to contribute at this time, please at least note your prayerful support on your envelope and place it in the weekly offertory. We will then be aware of your continued participation, and you will not be noted as "inactive" on our parish roster.



**Parish Penance
Tuesday, April 4
at 6:30PM**



This gold earring was found in the church a few weeks ago. If yours, come by parish office.

GATHER
with us

**For COFFEE AND DONUTS
Today, Sunday, April 2
after the
8:30, 10, 11:30am
and 1:00pm Masses
See you there!**

Adult Confirmation

For adults who have not received the Sacrament of Confirmation and would like to prepare to receive on Pentecost Sunday, May 28, at St. Matthew's Cathedral.

Preparation sessions will be on Saturdays starting with 9AM Mass and meeting after Mass until 11AM. There will be six meetings starting April 15th until May 20th.

Please call Krys Psurek at the RCIA number, 240-864-2542 and leave a message or by email RCIA@straphaels.org for more details and to sign up.

**If you would like to go on
Father Mike's Holy Land Pilgrimage
in October
Please register by Email:
rtemmaus@gmail.com**

Mass Schedule and Intentions for Holy Week

Monday, April 3

6:30AM Hazel Martha Johns (d)
9:00AM Edward Dimmock (d)

Tuesday, April 4

6:30AM Mario & Victoria Rustia
9:00AM Ann Cherry Hatten (d)
6:30PM Parish Penance

Wednesday, April 5

6:30AM Sam Sanders (d)
9:00AM Enrique Castro (d)
7:00PM* Tenebrae

Holy Thursday, April 6

9:00AM Morning Prayer
7:00PM* Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper Nancy Pecar (d)

Good Friday, April 7

9:00AM Morning Prayer
12 Noon Stations of the Cross (Spanish)
3:00PM Stations of the Cross (English)
4:00PM Passion of the Lord (Spanish)
7:00PM* Passion of the Lord (English)

Holy Saturday, April 8

9:00AM Morning Prayer
Easter Vigil
8:00PM * Fr. Christian Members of the Parish

Easter Sunday, April 9

7:00AM Fr. Christian Elizabeth & Alexander Aino (d)
8:30AM Fr. Tom Verme & Fulbright Families (d)
10:00AM Fr. Mike Costa & Beaty Families (d)
11:30AM Fr. Mike Abel Gerpe (d)
1:00PM Fr. Christian Ana Ruiz (d)

No 6:00PM

*new time

The priest schedule is subject to change.

Live-streamed Masses:

Daily, 6:30AM and Saturday, 9:00AM,
Saturday, Vigil Mass, 5:00PM, and
Sunday, 1:00PM, Spanish

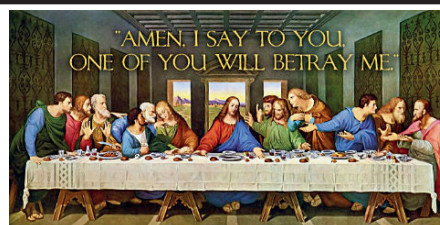
Go to website:

www.straphaels.org and link to YouTube.

Baptism

Lieven Anick Adelphonse-Francois

March 23



Scripture Readings for the Week of April 2, 2023

Sunday Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

Procession: Mt 21:1-11

At Mass: Is 50:4-7; Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24; Phil 2:6-11; Mt 26:14-27:66

Monday Monday of Holy Week

Is 42:1-7; Ps 27:1, 2, 3, 13-14; Jn 12:1-11

Tuesday Tuesday of Holy Week

Is 49:1-6; Ps 71:1-2, 3-4a, 5ab-6ab, 15 & 17; Jn 13:21-33, 36-38

Wednesday Wednesday of Holy Week

Is 50:4-9a; Ps 69:8-10, 21-22, 31 & 33-34; Mt 26:14-25

Thursday Holy Thursday of the Lord's Passion

Chrism Mass: Is 61: 1-3a, 6a, 8b-9; Ps 89:21-22, 25, 27; Rv 1:5-8; Lk 4:16-21

Evening Mass: Ex 12:1-8, 11-14; Ps 116:12-13, 15-16bc, 17-18; 1 Cor 11:23-26; Jn 13:1-15

Friday Good Friday of the Lord's Passion


Is 52:13-53:12; Ps 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25; Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9; Jn 18:1-19:42

Saturday Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter

Gn 1:1-2:2 or Gn 1:1, 26-31a; Ps 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 13-14, 24, 35 or Ps 33:4-5, 6-7, 12-13, 20-22; Gn 22:1-18 or Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Ps 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11; Ex 14:15-15:1; Ex 15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18; Is 54:5-14; Ps 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13; Is 55:1-11; Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6; Bar 3:9-15, 32-4:4; Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 11; Ez 36:16-17a, 18-28; Ps 42:3, 5; 43:3, 4 or Is 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6 or Ps 51:12-13, 14-15, 18-19; Rom 6:3-11; Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Mt 28:1-10

Sunday The Resurrection of the Lord

Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Col 3:1-4 or 1 Cor 5:6b-8; Jn 20:1-9 or Mt 28:1-10 or Lk 24:13-35



PONTIFICAL GOOD FRIDAY COLLECTION


Serving those in need in the Holy Land

- 250 friars 11 countries
- 65 sanctuaries and 23 parishes
- 6 guest houses for pilgrims
- 30 youth served by Bethlehem Boys' Home
- 63 apartments restored for families in need
- 1,020 employees in Israel and Palestine
- 17 schools with more than 10,000 students
- 509 university scholarships
- 56 Friars preparing for the priesthood
- 700 refugees aided on the island of Rhodes
- 8,000+ Syrian families aided
- 650+ families in Lebanon assisted
- Construction of a Catholic school in Cans of Galilee

Help us continue to serve!


GOOD FRIDAY 2023 · Friday, April 7th
Be generous!

Commissariat of the Holy Land
1400 Quincy St. NE, Washington, DC 20017
www.MyFranciscan.org



Tenebrae Wednesday, April 5, 7:00PM

The Office of Tenebrae, meaning darkness or shadows, has for centuries been a Holy Week devotion. Following the opening prayer, the service is divided into three Nocturns, each with Psalms and each preceded and concluded by an appropriate antiphon. After the Psalm reading, the Lord's Prayer is prayed by the congregation. Then follows the reading of three Lessons, each with versicles and congregational responses. One of the distinguishing features of the service is the extinguishing of the candles and other lights in the church until only a single candle (Christ Candle) symbolizing the Lord's death and burial remains. After the third Nocturn, the service concludes with Psalm 51 and the removal of the Christ Candle for a time. The strepticus is heard (loud noise). The Christ candle is then returned in anticipation of Our Lord's resurrection. At the conclusion of the service, all depart in silence.




LENTEN FASTING & ABSTINENCE

Fasting	Abstinence
Ash Wednesday Good Friday	Every Friday during Lent
Ages 18-59	Ages 14+

How do we fast?

When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal.

Am I excused from fasting and abstinence?

Those that are excused from fast and abstinence outside the age limits include the physically or mentally ill including individuals suffering from chronic illnesses such as diabetes. Also excluded are pregnant or nursing women.

For more information on fasting and abstinence, visit uscbb.org.

THE POPE'S INTENTION FOR APRIL

For a culture of peace and non-violence

We pray for the spread of peace and non-violence, by decreasing the use of weapons by States and citizens.

CONTACTING THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council serves the St. Raphael community by advising the Pastor on matters of concern to parishioners. If you would like the Council to consider a particular issue, please feel free to send an email message to: parishcouncil@straphaels.org.



2023 Holy Week Schedule



Tuesday, April 4
Parish Penance, 6:30PM

Wednesday, April 5
Tenebrae, 7:00PM*



Holy Thursday, April 6
Morning Prayer, 9:00AM in Church
Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, bilingual, 7:00PM*
followed by Adoration in the Church

Good Friday, April 7
Morning Prayer 9:00AM in Church
Stations of the Cross
12:00PM in Spanish, 3:00PM in English
Passion of Our Lord-Spanish in Church, 4:00PM
Passion of Our Lord-English in Church, 7:00PM*



Holy Saturday, April 8
Morning Prayer 9:00AM in Church
Confessions: 10:00-11:00AM and 3:45-4:30PM

Easter Vigil, Saturday, April 8, 8:00 PM*



Easter Sunday Masses – April 9

7:00 AM, 8:30 AM

10:00AM, 11:30AM

1:00 PM Spanish Mass

No 6PM



For more information go to our website: www.straphaels.org

*new Mass time

Easter Masses 2023

Saturday, April 8

Easter Vigil at 8:00PM*

Easter Sunday, April 9

7:00 AM

8:30 AM

10:00 AM

11:30 AM

1:00 PM Spanish Mass

No 6:00 PM Mass

He is Risen

***New time this year.**

www.straphaels.org

School News



A peek behind our classroom doors

April 2, 2023



All smiles on St. Patrick's Day.
Not one student let that silly
leprechaun ruin their day. 🍀



www.straphaelschoolmd.org | www.srnsmd.org |    @SRSrockville

Seventeen Students were inducted into the National Junior Honor Society!




These students, at a minimum, must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- have a cumulative GPA of 3.75 on a 4.0 scale
- provide voluntary service contributions to St. Raphael School
- show leadership qualities that reflect being resourceful, good problem solvers, and idea contributors
- have qualities that are cooperative; demonstrate high standards of honesty and reliability; as well as show courtesy, concern, and respect for others
- they must understand the importance of civic engagement; have a high regard for freedom and justice; respect the U.S. form of government and the law for all citizens




FIND THE RIGHT CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL FOR YOU



**The Archdiocese of Washington
CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL FAIR**

Designed for rising 7th and 8th grade students and their parents, the fair includes exhibits from each Catholic high school, information on financial aid and the admissions process.

LOCATION: The Catholic University of America
DATE: Saturday, April 22, 2023
TIME: 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.



To register, please visit the 2023 Catholic High School Fair section at adwcatholichighschools.org after April 1, 2023.

St. Raphael Honor Roll

Please pray for those serving in our armed forces, those wounded in body and spirit, and for those families who have suffered loss.

Daniel Bertrand Del Bianco, USN (d) and family
LT Victor H. Esch, III, USA
CPT Paul D Galvin
E-3/HN Colleen Gardella
Robert Garret, US Army MP
Taylor Hardy, AE USN
Ens. Andrew Hayes, USN
Captain Julia Timm Intili, USAF
Jake Klosowski, USNA
LT COL Todd Lennon, USAF
Captain Frank Lowery, USN
Commander Mike McNally, USN
Charles McTavish, USA
Ens Zachary Poindexter, USN
2LT Dan Quackenbush
1LT Will Quackenbush, USA
2LT Benedict Ray, USMC
LT Paul Schauppner, USN
LT James Sheets (USN)
2nd LT Andrew Valentine USMA
LT Kenneth Yale, USAF

Changes: e-mail esalatto@straphaels.org

THIS WEEK ON FORMED

Week of April 02, 2023



Triduum: A Spiritual Pilgrimage

Triduum: A Spiritual Pilgrimage, cinematically walks through the locations of the Holy Week story, representing the most important days of human history. Immersed in the real and sacred places of the Holy Land, the pilgrim faithful is brought tangibly nearer to the story, the landscape, and the reality of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Faithful Departed | Eternal Rest | Episode 4

What is left for the living to do after someone dies? In this session, we talk about the final ways in which those still living on earth care for the body and soul of the dead. We discuss the work that remains for the living to do as we grieve for the deceased and as we turn to the work of preparing for our own death, and the hope in which we live and die as Christians.



Holy Week by Dr. Brant Pitre

Join Dr. Brant Pitre, author and Scripture scholar, as he walks us through the events of Holy Week. Pitre's insights and clarity allow the listener to enter into a deeper appreciation of the most important events of Christ's earthly ministry.

Our parish has a FORMED subscription.
Visit signup.formed.org and select our parish name.

No offering from the Archdiocese of Washington and the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

chosen

A VOCATIONS RETREAT FOR YOUNG WOMEN

"IT WAS NOT YOU WHO CHOSE ME, BUT I WHO CHOSE YOU AND APPOINTED YOU TO GO AND BEAR FRUIT THAT WILL REMAIN."

JOHN 15:16

WHO?

all high school
young women

WHAT?

a vocations retreat for women; we will have talks, games, adoration, Mass, time for reflection, snacks, lunch (chick-fil-a), and more!

COST

-\$15 per person
-scholarships are available if necessary

CONTACT

YOUTH@STMARYOFTHEMILLS.ORG
WITH QUESTIONS!
REGISTER USING QR CODE!
WWW.STMARYSLAUREL.ORG/YWRETREAT
REGISTRATION CLOSING APRIL 18TH

WHERE/WHEN?

-Saturday, April 29, 2023
from 8:30am-4:00pm
-Saint Mary of the Mills Catholic Church, Laurel MD

limited spaces! register today!



Having unresolved feelings about your abortion experience?
You don't feel forgiven?
Feelings of guilt, shame, regret, and sadness return?

Healing is Possible
PROJECT RACHEL MINISTRY

Come to an Entering Canaan Day of Prayer and Healing

April 22, 2023
9:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. ET
Suggested donation: \$40.00 (financial assistance available)

For more information, contact Project Rachel Ministry at 301-982-2005 or hope@pqr.org.



The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington

Location and participation are confidential due to the personal nature of this experience.

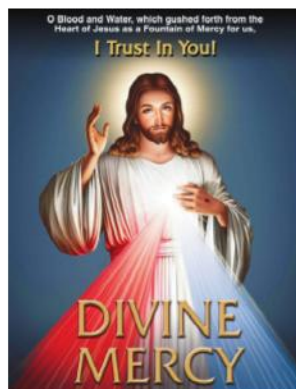


Divine Mercy Sunday April 16, 2023

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
(following the 1:00 PM Mass)

3:00 PM - Chaplet of Divine Mercy
Followed by Reposition.

Image and Relic will be available for veneration.



The next
Holy Mass
followed by Healing Prayers

First Tuesday, May 2
7:00 PM



Confessions will continue during Mass.

Religious Education

Mary Beaudoin, 202-294-7697

CRS Rice Bowl – Alleviating the Scourge of Hunger



Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week, one of the most significant moments of the Church year. During this week, we journey with Christ from his triumphant entry into Jerusalem to his final meal with his closest friends and ultimately to his death on the cross.

As we walk with Jesus through Holy Week, we call to mind the countless men, women and children who even today carry heavy crosses: crosses of hunger, of homelessness, of a lack of resources or security. In these brothers and sisters we encounter Christ, as he walks that long road to Calvary. In these encounters, it's important not to forget an essential pillar of Lenten spirituality—[almsgiving](#)—which allows us to help those who are most in need.

This final week of Lent is also a time to reflect on those words of Saint Paul to the Philippians. Jesus emptied himself for us; how might we empty ourselves for others? Our Lenten prayers, fasting and almsgiving have prepared us to wrestle with this question.

We must always remember that Holy Week gives way to Easter—the fast turns into a feast. God wins the day. As we prepare to celebrate Easter with joy, it is our responsibility as members of God's one human family to share that joy with everyone, near and far.

Donations of your Lenten alms can be made on line. Go to www.crsricebowl.org and click on Donate.

Who Would Jesus Execute?



During this Holy Week, when we recall the Crucifixion of Jesus, it is good to remember the current teaching in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

2267. . . . the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person," and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide.

Learn ways to abolition the death penalty and defend life at www.catholicismobilizing.org

Obedience and Humility

On this Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, remember to make time to reflect on the Scripture readings with your family. Readings:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/040223.cfm>

Key Passage: Jesus emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:7–8)

. . . and then have a family sharing time on the questions below:

- Adults: We are called to die to ourselves in love for others. How do you live that in your own life?
- Kids: How do you allow Jesus to live in your heart?



Faith Formation Religious Education

St. Raphael Religious Education (SRRE) offers ongoing faith formation for all children and teens, as well as preparation for sacraments. Each year of faith formation is designed to deepen relationships with Jesus and his Church through focus on what we believe, why we celebrate the sacraments, how we pray, and how we live. Find the SRRE Calendar at our webpage:

<https://www.straphaels.org/religious-education> (scroll down)

No classes on April 2-3 or on April 9-10 (break during Holy Week and Easter Week)

End-of-the-Year Social on May 15

June – registration for 2023-2024 opens

First Eucharist

This week children complete chapter 7 of *God's Gift Eucharist* or chapter 7 of *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* workbooks. Older children are continuing in their *God's Gift Reconciliation and Eucharist* books (chapter 13) and completing the worksheet for each chapter.

First Communion Masses will be celebrated on Saturday, May 6, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Rehearsals will be on Wednesday, May 3 (5:00 for morning First Eucharist, and 6:00 for afternoon First Eucharist).



Confirmation Year 2

We are pleased that Bishop Jerome Feudjio will be coming to St. Raphael for Confirmation on Saturday, May 13, at 10:30 AM and 1:00 PM. Mass time assignments are being made now. Be sure to contact the SRRE office if you are requesting one Mass or the other.



Confirmation Year 1

Confirmation Year 1 students are working on their Confirmation Service Projects. Focusing on the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, young people complete ten or more hours of service in their parish, neighborhood, and/or broader community. They then write a reflection paper describing how this service is rooted in their baptismal call to follow Jesus. The completed Confirmation Service Project is due September 1, 2023.



Year 1 students will be given a copy of *57 Saints* to read in preparation for choosing a Confirmation saint.

A Prayer for Refugees and Victims of War

Lord God,
No one is a stranger to you
And no one is ever far from your loving care.
In your kindness, watch over refugees and victims of war,
Those separated from their loved ones,
Young people who are lost,
And those who have left home or who have run away from home.
Bring them back safely to the place where they long to be,
And help us always to show your kindness to strangers and to all in need.

- Author Unknown



Marriage Moments

From the ecstasy of Palm Sunday to the crucifixion on Good Friday; it all seems so foolish and surreal. Is your life ever like this roller coaster? How do you calm each other in the midst of joy and tragedy?

Parenting Pointers

As we remember Jesus' sorrow and pain on Good Friday, parents also have days of regret and pain while raising a child. Forgive yourself. Forgive your child. A better day will come. Sorrow is a necessary part of growing up for both your child and yourself. Don't give up.

Living *Laudato Si'* - Eco-Tips

Planet Earth supports our lives. We must take care of it. In Pope Francis' encyclical, LAUDATO SI', he calls not only on Catholics, but all humanity to care more vigorously for creation. Here are 2 ways:

SPIRITUAL

EASY: During this Holy Week reflect on scriptures related to humility (Phil. 2: 6-8). Examine how you may think of yourself as better than other humans, animals, and nature.

CHALLENGING: During this Holy Week reflect on scriptures related to suffering (John 18-1 – 19:42). 2: 6-8) Examine how your desire to live comfortably may contribute to the suffering of others who don't have as much money, health, or education.

Also, be sure to see the documentary of Pope Francis' meeting with activists from the Brazilian Amazon, India, Senegal and the U.S. "The Letter: A Message For Our Earth" is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rps9bs85BI>

*Marriage Moments, Parenting Pointers, and Eco-Tips by Susan Vogt, www.SusanVogt.net

Christus Vivit

To Young People and to the Entire People of God



Christus vivit (Christ is alive) is a post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, written in response to the Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, on young people, faith, and vocational discernment. That synod was held in October 2018. This week we continue Chapter Three: You Are the Now of God.

The digital environment

86. "The digital environment is characteristic of the contemporary world. Broad swathes of humanity are immersed in it in an ordinary and continuous manner. It is no longer merely a question of 'using' instruments of communication, but of living in a highly digitalized culture that has had a profound impact on ideas of time and space, on our self-understanding, our understanding of others and the world, and our ability to communicate, learn, be informed and enter into relationship with others. An approach to reality that privileges images over listening and reading has influenced the way people learn and the development of their critical sense."

87. The web and social networks have created a new way to communicate and bond. They are "a public square where the young spend much of their time and meet one another easily, even though not all have equal access to it, particularly in some regions of the world. They provide an extraordinary opportunity for dialogue, encounter and exchange between persons, as well as access to information and knowledge. Moreover, the digital world is one of social and political engagement and active citizenship, and it can facilitate the circulation of independent information providing effective protection for the most vulnerable and publicizing violations of their rights. In many countries, the internet and social networks already represent a firmly established forum for reaching and involving young people, not least in pastoral initiatives and activities."

88. Yet to understand this phenomenon as a whole, we need to realize that, like every human reality, it has its share of limitations and deficiencies. It is not healthy to confuse communication with mere virtual contact. Indeed, "the digital environment is also one of loneliness, manipulation, exploitation and violence, even to the extreme case of the 'dark web.' Digital media can expose people to the risk of addiction, isolation and gradual loss of contact with concrete reality, blocking the development of authentic interpersonal relationships. New forms of violence are spreading through social media, for example cyberbullying. The internet is also a channel for spreading pornography and the exploitation of persons for sexual purposes or through gambling."

89. It should not be forgotten that "there are huge economic interests operating in the digital world, capable of exercising forms of control as subtle as they are invasive, creating mechanisms for the manipulation of consciences and of the democratic process. The way many platforms work often ends up favoring encounter between persons who think alike, shielding them from debate. These closed circuits facilitate the spread of fake news and false information, fomenting prejudice and hate. The proliferation of fake news is the expression of a culture that has lost its sense of truth and bends the facts to suit particular interests. The reputation of individuals is put in jeopardy through summary trials conducted online. The Church and her pastors are not exempt from this phenomenon."

90. A document prepared on the eve of the Synod by three hundred young people worldwide pointed out that "online relationships can become inhuman. Digital spaces blind us to the vulnerability of another human being and prevent us from our own self-reflection. Problems like pornography distort a young person's perception of human sexuality. Technology used in this way creates a delusional parallel reality that ignores human dignity." For many people, immersion in the virtual world has brought about a kind of "digital migration," involving withdrawal from their families and their cultural and religious values, and entrance into a world of loneliness and of self invention, with the result that they feel rootless even while remaining physically in one place. The fresh and exuberant lives of young people who want to affirm their personality today confront a new challenge: that of interacting with a real and virtual world that they enter alone, as if setting foot on an undiscovered global continent. Young people today are the first to have to effect this synthesis between what is personal, what is distinctive to their respective cultures, and what is global. This means that they must find ways to pass from virtual contact to good and healthy communication.



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