



JANUARY 1, 2023 | MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

HOLY FAMILY PARISH

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Tazewell, VA 24651

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Pocahontas, VA 24635

ST. MARY'S
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Richlands, VA 24641

ST. JOSEPH'S
1007 Independence Rd.
Grundy, VA 24614

The Face of God Revealed in the Son of Mary

TODAY we begin a new year. While we rejoice in the arrival of a new year, we are filled again with the sense of loss and perhaps confusion looking back at the past year and some uncertainty looking to the future. The Church dedicates this day to Mary the mother of God. On this same day also, the Church calls us to pray for peace in the world. Christ is the Prince of Peace, and we pray for peace in our homes, our nation and our world.

In the first reading (Numb 6:22-27), we find one of the beautiful blessings in the Bible. God spoke to Moses and asked that Aaron and his sons pronounce blessings on his people with a formula. When they use these words, the Lord promised, “So shall they put my name upon the sons of Israel, And I will bless them.”

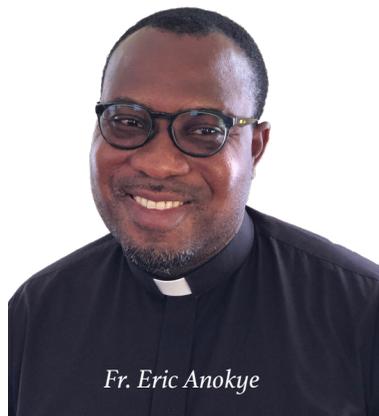
It is a threefold blessing, with the triple mention of the name of the

Lord (YHWH): “The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord let his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.” In Jesus, the face of the Father is seen. The prayer of blessing comes alive as he lifts his countenance on us. This blessing promises divine intimacy, protection, and wholeness.

I am very fond of that blessing of Aaron. I often find myself praying it for someone who needs prayers. It is a lovely prayer of intercession. The last line of the prayer is “May the Lord uncover his face to you and bring you peace.” It strikes me that this prayer has been fulfilled in a wonderful way through the birth of Jesus, Mary’s son. In and through this child, God was uncovering his face to us, and bringing us peace. When we look upon the face of Mary’s child, we are looking upon the face of God. Therefore, we can venerate Mary not only as the mother of Jesus but also as the mother of God. Mary was proclaimed Mother of God at the Council of Ephesus in modern day Turkey in the year 431 AD. The Council was expressing its conviction that Mary’s son was not only fully human but was also fully divine. In the frailty and vulnerability of this new-born child, God was uncovering his face. God was being revealed in a way that was profoundly new. Jesus was not only Mary’s son but God’s Son. In the words of Saint

Paul in today’s second reading (Gal 4:4-7), “When the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman.” There was so much more to this newborn child than met the eye. The rich identity of this baby had been revealed to the shepherds by an angel as a “Savior, who is Christ, the Lord.” According to the gospel reading (Lk 2:16-21), the shepherds repeated to Mary what the angel had said to them about her child. We are told that Mary treasured the words of the shepherds and pondered them in her heart. It was as if Mary was trying to come to terms with who her child really was.

The feast of Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus, gives us all much to treasure and much to ponder in our hearts. God is uncovering his face to us through Jesus; God is drawing near to us through Jesus, the same Jesus who is now the risen Lord in our midst. We are invited to go on treasuring and pondering this good news, like Mary, and to continue glorifying and praising God for it, like the shepherds. We are led like the shepherds to behold the newborn child. On the eighth day, he was circumcised, a ceremony that marked entry into the covenant community of Israel, a ritual that came down from the covenant with Abraham—the ancestor of not only Israel, but of many nations. Jesus will expand the scope of salvation to all nations.



Fr. Eric Anokye

The title Mother of God is a shock to many. God is eternal, yet when he began to exist in time and in human flesh, he was born of a woman. Beyond Mary, this title is an affirmation of the full humanity of Jesus. Mary leads us to her Son. When the Shepherds found her, they found the baby, too and she continues to play that role even today. She leads us to discover the true nature of Jesus, who is both God and Man. Mary's fruitful virginity, marks a

new beginning in the world order, and opens the door of salvation to all. In this New Year, we ask Mary to guide us to a more perfect union with God

Let us pray: "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord let his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace." Amen.

Happy New Year!



PASTOR

Fr. Eric Anokye
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(276) 385-7312

OFFICE MANAGER/ BOOKKEEPER

Lydia St. Peter

OFFICE HOURS

Mon–Fri 9:30AM – 2:30PM

Please call the parish office to make arrangements for the **Sacraments of Baptism, Anointing of the Sick or Holy Matrimony** as well as funerals. **Reconciliation** is available from 30 minutes before a scheduled Mass.

MASS TIMES

SATURDAY

4PM – St. Joseph's
6PM – St. Mary's

SUNDAY

9AM – St. Elizabeth's
11:30AM – St. Theresa's

TUESDAY & FRIDAY

10AM – St. Theresa's

Cover image:

William Adolphe Bouguereau,
Queen of the Angels, 1900

Penitential revival, anyone?

By Msgr. Robert J. Batule, thecatholicthing.com

We can't say what fruitfulness will come of the Eucharistic Revival underway in the United States. What we do know is that it's urgently needed and long overdue. And we'll see if our bishops' three-year emphasis on Eucharistic dogma and practice will renew the faith in America, or not. At least now we've recognized the enormous gap between what the Church teaches about the Eucharist and how Catholics live out that teaching in our nation.

But I'm wondering if a Penitential Revival is equally urgent. The troubling signs that prompted the Eucharistic Revival are even more apparent when it comes to the Sacrament of Penance. And it's notable that we haven't been talking much about it.

I began my priestly ministry twenty years after the close of the Second Vatican Council, and there was already grave concern about the diminishing number of Catholics using the Sacrament of Penance. In *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (1984), Pope Saint John Paul II referred to the Sacrament of Penance as in a crisis. As crises go, we would have to say that this one has not leveled off; it has only worsened.

It's not just the precipitous decline in the number of Catholics who go to the sacrament; it's that and more. When I was a grade school student in the 1960s, Catholic children often went to sacramental confession on their own in places like Brooklyn, New York. As a confessor today, I never see or hear children coming on their own on a Saturday afternoon.

It's not just that the kids need parents to provide a ride; it's that they are inadequately catechized. They don't know, for instance, how to do a proper examination of conscience; they don't know the act of contrition; and they don't know what a penance is. If they are lucky enough to have been introduced to these aspects of the sacrament, there certainly is no reinforcement by their parents—except, of course, with homeschooling parents.

By far though, the most unsettling aspect of the decline has been the near total evisceration of a sense of sin. This too is noted in *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*. Pope Saint John Paul II starts by invoking a predecessor, Pius XI (pope between 1922-1939), who observed that “the sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin.” From there, the pontiff gives an account of the eclipse of sin. He cites the influence of secularism, the over-reliance on psychology and sociology for evaluations of personal responsibility, and a relativistic understanding of ethics.

Actually, it was not a churchman who first sounded the alarm in the culture at large about the loss of a sense of sin in the U.S. It was, of all people, a psychiatrist—one coming from a field that often denies the reality of sin. It was Karl Menninger, the author of a work entitled *Whatever Became of Sin?* Menninger published his volume in 1973, more than a decade before *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*.

After working with troubled patients in a clinical practice, Menninger concluded that he was at a loss to help these same persons unless and until sin was addressed realistically, and not treated as some sort of outdated “archetype.” To understand sin intellectually and identify it existentially can be far more medicinal than a fifty-minute session plumbing the deepest and darkest regions of memories associated with family breakdown, especially fatherlessness.

A poor or non-existent relationship with a father is an oft-used headliner in a psychiatrist's professional notes on his patients. What if, though, the problem is not in living up to a father's expectations but in not wanting to live in the Father's house? (cf. Lk 15:12) What if, though, the problem is not in making something of yourself but in believing that there is still sonship after a life of dissipation? (cf. Lk 15:13)

In the parable of Saint Luke's Gospel called the Prodigal Son (also referred to as the Merciful

Father), the younger son bolts from his father's house. It's a willful and uncoerced act. Our sins are typically just that—willful and uncoerced. As ugly as our sins are, however, we can still go back home. And when we do, we are met by a gracious Father Who does not lock the door against our re-entry. Rather, He calls for a celebration. That celebration of fatherly mercy is resisted, however, by the older brother in this parable. He is the one this time who refuses to have anything to do with the house. (cf. Lk 15:28)

And the father goes out for this son, too – just as he did for the younger son first. (cf. Lk 15:20) How is that for fatherhood? A fatherhood for all seasons. No matter what the transgression is, the father is there for both sons. How frequently is this pardon and peace of Our Heavenly Father ignored when it comes to the Sacrament of Penance for larger

and larger numbers of Catholics in our own time now! There are still many Catholics who have not given up on the sacrament, but many more have. The abandonment is much, much greater than the faithful adherence.

We must do all we can—including perhaps starting a Penitential Revival—to preach, teach, and receive the Lord's mercy sacramentally. The night, Saint Paul tells us, is far spent, the day is at hand. (cf. Rom 13:12) Let us walk in the light of day given to us by Christ in his death and Resurrection. In the design of the Risen Christ, the Church has the authority to bind and loose. (cf. Jn 20:23) May the Church's work of extending the Lord's mercy find more and more receptive ears.

But those same ears also need to hear these words: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt 3:2)



mass intentions

Date	Intention
12/31 SATURDAY	
4PM	St. Joseph parishioners
6PM	St. Mary parishioners
1/1 SUNDAY	
9AM	Pete Danko ☩
11:30AM	Jim St. Peter ☩

stewardship of treasure

Donations Received as of December 18 (Week 25)		
CHURCH	ATTENDANCE	OFFERINGS
St. Joseph's	18	\$320
St. Elizabeth's		
St. Mary's	17	\$460
St. Theresa's	32	\$777
Total	99	\$1,557
Outside Donations		
Year to Date Received		\$73,875
Goal		\$70,000
Ahead/Behind Goal		+ \$3,875

OTHER OFFERTORY:

Christmas—\$115
 Catholic Charities—\$85

please pray for

Louise Serreno*	Tina Rocchetti
Gerry Hankins	Alice Godin
Clarence Moore	Randy Snyder
Lexi Cox	Andrew Bird
Sarah Wall	Bryan Gunter
Tammy Bennett	Michael Beavers
Margaret Wasilewski	Linda Smith
Nic Ulate	Natalie Dodge
Elizabeth Gregory	Roger Empson
Frannie & Rayburn Minton	Dreama Ritter
Sue Bailey	Christy Martin
Christian Lambert	Joe Petro
Shane Neal	Joseph Magee
Tiffany Hladek	Marco Warner
Archbishop John Kwofie	Chris Lambert
Carolyn Wade	Alyssa Stout
Stacy Hall	Virginia Dy
Pete Belcher	Mary Muncy
Rick Hall	Cindy Lambert
Lucas Boyd	Jean St. Clair
Ralph Heldreth	Helen Petro
Elizabeth Managan	Clinard Coleman
Chris Jessie	Joan Harrison
Leo Brown	Joe & Yvonne Blevins
Carolina Ferrare	Kyle Brown
Junior Aiken	Tom Farrell
Jeanne Hash	Bobby Cole
Lara Marshall	Jeffrey Parkhurst
Virginia Shumate	Fr. Dan Brady
Carol & Jim Shumate	Elfie Forrest
Doug Vance	Sarah Walters
Andrew Satmary	Everly Duns
Lori Hale	Fr. Gaudencio Pugat
Glenn Harrison	Amelia Proffit
Chris Lester	Maurice Law
Donna Petro	Debbie Parkhurst
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council members

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Tonya Hylton, Frannie Minton, Ralph Shawver, Barbara Jones, Donna Lambert, Maria Farris, Debbie Parkhurst

FINANCE COUNCIL:

Kathy & Bob Buchanan, Randy Bolling, Doug Vance, Anne Danko, Jim Talbert, Jackie Shawver, Lydia St. Peter

parish news & events

There will no daily Mass until February 14 when Fr. Eric returns from vacation.

The parish office will be closed through January 3.

In the past *God* spoke to our ancestors through the prophets;
in these last days, he has spoken to us through the *Son*. - Heb 1:1-2

birthdays & anniversaries:

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

2: Larry Whited | **3:** Gene Parkhurst, Travis Jones | **5:** Erica Lavender
6: Ellen Guanlao | **7:** Alvin Angcanan, Della Sarver

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