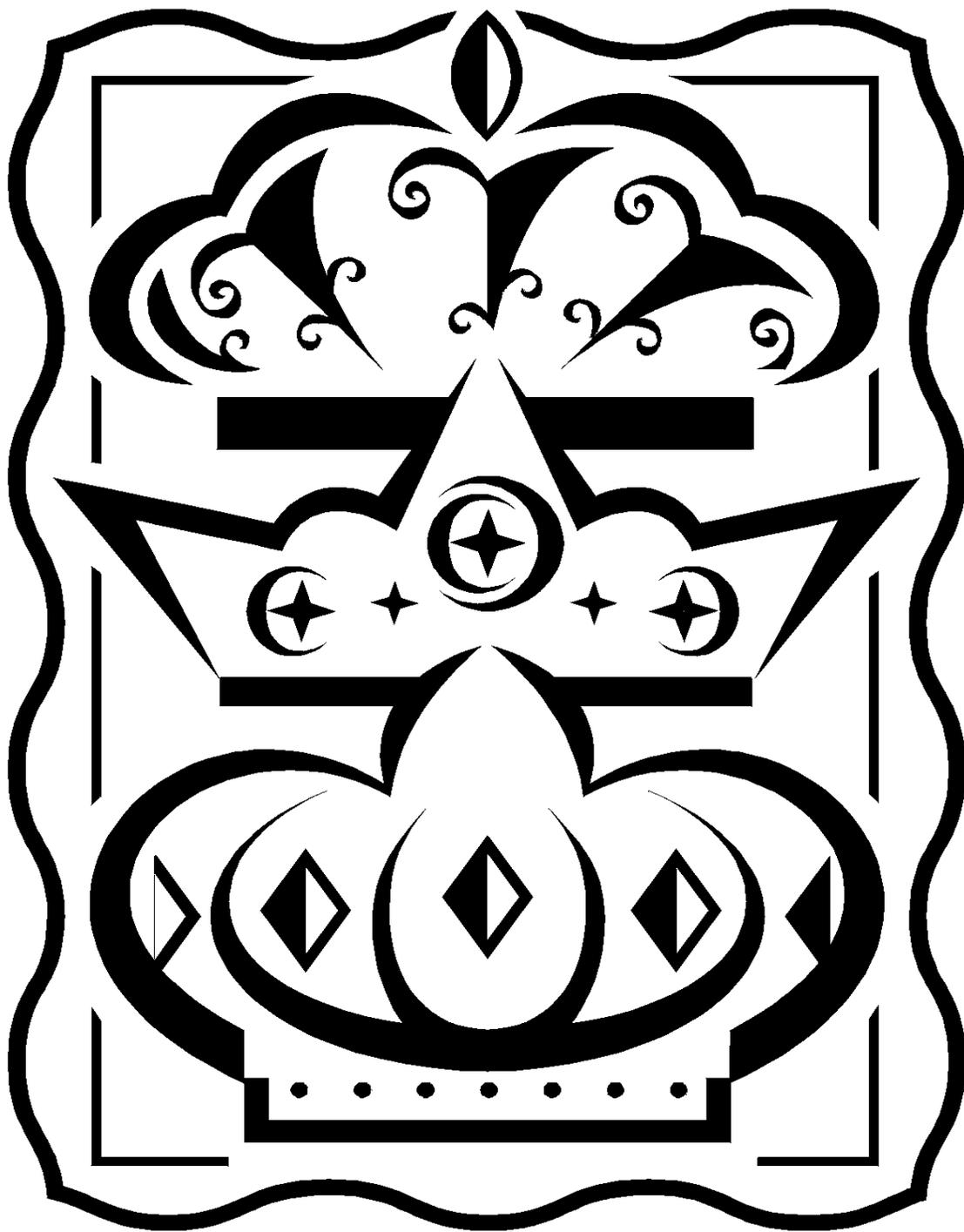


■ DURING THE TIME OF KING HEROD, MAGI FROM THE EAST

■ CAME TO JERUSALEM AND ASKED, "WHERE



■ IS THE ONE WHO HAS BEEN BORN KING OF THE JEWS?"

■ M A T T H E W 2 : 1 - 2 ■

OUR LADY OF LOURDES

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD • JANUARY 7, 2007



Welcome to our Parish Family! New Parishioners are cordially invited to register as members of our parish family. Please call or visit our Parish Office.

Pastoral Team

Rev. Michael A. Vetrano

Pastor

Rev. Stanislaus Chukwube

Associate Pastor

Rev. Robert Scheckenback

Associate Pastor

Deacon John DeGuardi

Deacon Jack Meehan

Coordinator of Stewardship

Deacon John Teufel

Sr. Margaret Bickar

Senior Ministry-SAGE

Sr. Nancy Campkin

Director of Religious Education

Regina Ann Cioffi

School Principal

Jennifer Gallagher

Director of Youth Services

Carol M. Goetz

Parish Music Director

Sr. Diane Liona

Director of Religious Education

Vita Scorgia

Ministry Spiritual Director

John Sureau

Coordinator of Worship

Sr. Betty Toohig

Senior Ministry-SAGE

Anthony Trombino

Business Manager

Pastoral Council

Michael Abbruscato

Salomon Acosta

Regina Ann Cioffi

Jane Desthers

Stephen Frodell

Jen Gallagher

Anne Kerrigan

Maria Lucie (*co-chair*)

Mary McMahan

Doreen Spiller

Mary Steck

Fr. Mike Vetrano

Marie Yuliano (*co-chair*)

Parish Staff

Barbara Catusco

Religious Education Office

Mary Anne Lettieri

Parish Office

Debbie Meyer

Bulletin/Parish Office

Rosemary Multer

School Office

Rex Muro

Organist

Rita Spera

Religious Education Office

Lori Walsh

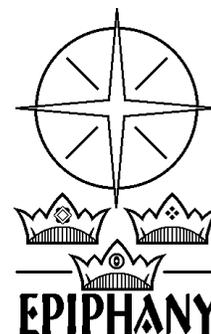
Parish Office

*Our Lady
of Lourdes*

455 Hunter Avenue
West Islip, New York 11795

Mission Statement

As stewards of all that God has given us, the Parish Family of Our Lady of Lourdes serves and ministers to all who come to this place. Regardless of a person's history, ethnicity, gender, orientation, age or race, we commit ourselves to open wide the doors of our Parish to provide a place of welcome and hospitality.



Vision...

so that all may know that they are a vital part of the Body of Christ, we further recommit and challenge ourselves to:

- **Live** out our Baptismal call passionately by caring for all of God's people with justice.
- **Grow** in an understanding of God's role in each of our lives.
- **Respond** to the Gospel in a radical way, inviting and inspiring all to form the Kingdom of God in every moment of life.
- **Acknowledge** we are not complete without the willingness to grow, discern and discover the Spirit who moves and guides us.

Parish Office

661-3224

Monday-Friday: 9 AM - 7:30 PM

Saturday: 9 AM - 3 PM

Sunday: 9 AM - 2 PM

email: ParishOffice@ollchurch.org

fax: 661-7143

website: www.ollchurch.org

Our Lady of Lourdes School

587-7200

Monday-Friday: 9 AM - 3 PM

email: rcioffi@ollschool.org

Religious Education Office

661-5440

Monday-Friday: 9 AM - Noon

1 PM - 5 PM

7 PM - 9 PM

email: ReligiousEd@ollchurch.org

S.A.G.E.

661-3224

(Senior Advocates for Growth and Enrichment)

email: Sage@ollchurch.org

Adult Faith Formation

Preparing for life ending decisions...

Reasons to hope...

Tuesdays, January 9, 16, 23, 30, and February 6, 2007

7:30-9:30 PM

Parish Center

Presenters include *S. Diane Liona, Barbara Redmond,*

Deacon John and Anne DeGuardi... and more

As we journey through the seasons of life, we must move with them and become aware of these life ending decisions... challenges... sorrows...

How do I face walking with someone who is seriously ill?

How do I prepare for the loss of a loved one-as a spouse, an adult, daughter/son, a friend, a sibling?

Through the support of others, these evenings will guide us as we walk this journey.

Together we will discuss, reflect, share and pray. Please join us – don't miss it!

...Upcoming Courses

American Mystics: Thomas Merton and Jessica Powers

One Night Only!

Tuesday, March 6, 2007 from 7:30 PM until 9:30 PM in the Parish Center.

Our presenter is Kathleen Reid, MA, Director of Religious Education, St. Philip Neri R.C. Church.

We all need good role models! Here we will explore the life, legacy, and writings of these two 20th century Catholics and Mystics. Through presentation, discussion, and reflection... we will see what wisdom we can receive from these fascinating, creative, and gifted people.

The Eucharist: Gift and Call

One Night Only!

Tuesday, March 27, 2007 from 7:30 PM until 9:30 PM in the Parish Center.

Our presenter is S. Barbara Regan r.c. MA in Theology, Staff of Cenacle Retreat Center.

Each week, thousands come to receive the Eucharist at Our Lady of Lourdes...but are we going through the motions or do we really understand the awesome gift God gives us and how it can change our lives? As we look at the history of the Eucharist and understand it's role in our lives, let's find out!

Pre-Registration is necessary and helpful. This will enable us to have enough reading material and refreshments for all those attending. Please call the Religious Education Office, Monday-Friday, between 9AM – 5 PM and 7PM – 9PM, at 661.5440 x3, or e-mail to: religiously@ollchurch.org. Fee: \$25 [No fee is required for those who have paid the Religious Education Family Fee or Our Lady of Lourdes School Tuition. Fees may vary appropriately.]

Living Liturgy



Lent....already?

Yes – believe it or not our parish Liturgy Committee is going to meet tomorrow night –

Monday, January 8 at 7 PM in the Library to begin planning out Lent and Holy Week.

It sounds unusual as we are still in the Christmas season. Yet the work of all of these special seasons requires some significant prayer and reflection.

Are you interested in helping to plan out our Ash Wednesday services, Holy Week, our Parish Mission and other activities in the Lenten season? If so, let us know at 661.3224, x. 135 or e-mail to jsureau@ollchurch.org.

And Merry Christmas, still!

The Christmas season in the life of the Church ends this Monday, January 8 with the Baptism of the Lord (in many years, this feast is celebrated on a Sunday).

Beginning on Tuesday, January 9, we celebrate Ordinary Time - the period between the Christmas season and the Lenten season which begins on February 21.



Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults

What's it all about?

IF you are an adult **AND**

... you were never Baptized

... you were Baptized in another faith and would like to become a baptized Catholic

... you never received Holy Communion (Eucharist)

... you never received your Confirmation

IF you are an adult **and** one or all of the circumstances above apply to you

IF you feel you would like to become a Baptized Catholic or become more fully initiated into your Catholic faith,

Already, over fifteen people from our parish community have expressed an interest in becoming full members of the Catholic Church! What a great statement about our parish community.

We are in the process of planning out an extensive program that includes Baptism and full reception in the Church at the Great Vigil and Confirmation at our Pentecost liturgies in May.

Of course we still have room for you. If you or someone you care about is interested in learning more about the Catholic faith, please contact Sister Nancy Campkin, Jennifer Gallagher, Fr. Stan or John Sureau at 661.3224. If you have already contacted us, look in the mail for upcoming information about meetings and gatherings!

Holy Name Society

Our Holy Name Society meets on the second Sunday of each month. The next meeting will be on **Sunday, January 14, 2007**. We will begin with the **Rosary at 7:40 AM in the Church** and the **meeting will follow the 8 AM Mass at 9 AM in Room 16**. Come and join us!

Senior Circle

The Senior Circle meets on the last Monday of each month. The next meeting will be held on **Monday, January 29, 2007** at **12:30 PM in the Parish Center**.

Rosary Christian Mothers

The Rosary Christian Mothers meet on the first Monday evening of each month. The next meeting will be **Monday, January 8, 2007**. (*second Monday for the month of January*) We will begin with **Rosary at 7:45 PM** followed by **meeting at 8 PM in the Parish Center**.

Jesus, King of All Nations Prayer Group

The Jesus, King of All Nations Prayer Group meets each **Thursday afternoon** in the **Church**. The meeting is from **3 PM until 4 PM** in **front of the Blessed Sacrament**.

Good Samaritan Prayer Group of L.I.

The Good Samaritan Prayer Group of Long Island holds their **meetings every Friday** (*except the first Friday of the month*) **at OLL School in Room 16 from 8 PM until 10 PM**.

All are welcome to experience singing, praying and fellowship each evening.

School News



Support Catholic Education and Become a Classroom Angel

A gift of \$1000 to Our Lady of Lourdes School will support programs of science, technology, and the arts in our award winning Catholic School. Your name will be engraved on a plaque over the door to the classroom of your choice for a whole year!

The School Mass for the month of January will be celebrated on **Friday, January 12, at 9 AM.**
All are invited and welcome!

Proclaiming God's Word

We welcome some new members to our Ministry of Lectors: *Marc Cantalino, Brian Hannigan, Alana Malloy, Michael Prate and David Rivera.*

We are always looking for new ministers – from third grade to any age - to proclaim God's Word each Sunday. If you're interested, please contact John Sureau at 661.3224, x. 135 or e-mail to jsureau@ollchurch.org



What is a Pilgrimage?

Come and experience a special opportunity to travel on a parish pilgrimage with family and friends from the community of Our Lady of Lourdes Church...

...a pilgrimage is a travel experience that is fueled by a desire to move closer to the sacred, to encounter Christ or Our Blessed Mother, or a particular saint. This can be found in a special place such as Saint Anne de Beaupre' located in Quebec City and Saint Joseph's Oratory overlooking the city of Montreal –all wrapped up in a peaceful place with rolling hills and picturesque villages in Canada.

Departure date is set for Monday July 9 returning on Monday July 16, 2007. Come to a brief meeting on **Thursday, January 25 in Room 16 at 7:30 PM** and meet other interested travelers. Isn't this a great way to celebrate fifty-one years of our parish? For additional information call Deacon John in the Parish Office at 661.3224.

Daily Mass

8 AM

Weekend Masses

Saturday: 5 PM

Sunday: 8 AM, 9:30 AM,
11 AM, 12:30 PM and 6 PM

Reconciliation

Saturday: 4 PM - 4:45 PM



Rest In Peace

Rosina Paladino

Louis Montanino

Richard J. Jorgensen

Anton Cully

Veronica M. Graf

Rosary/Novena

Rosary:

Daily after 8 AM Mass

Miraculous Medal Novena:

Monday after 8 AM Mass

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults(RCIA):

A process to be embraced by the Catholic Church. For non-Catholics and for Catholics who have never received formal religious education. If interested, please call the Parish Office.

Anointing of the Sick

Throughout the liturgical year. If needed sooner, please call the Parish Office.

Baptism

Please contact the Parish Office to schedule an appointment.

Marriage

Arranged at least six months in advance, please call the Parish Office.

Support Groups

Alcoholics Anonymous

Monday and Tuesday at
8 PM and Saturday at
7 PM in Lourdes Hall-
convent lower level.

ALANON

Each Wednesday at
10 AM in Lourdes Hall-
convent lower level.

Remembering...

Monday, January 8

Baptism of the Lord

8:00 AM LaRocca & Sweeney Family

Tuesday, January 9

8:00 AM Madeline Hopper

Wednesday, January 10

8:00 AM Rosalie Mazzarone

Thursday, January 11

8:00 AM Hector Girgenti

Friday, January 12

8:00 AM Robert Salvio

Saturday, January 13

8:00 AM Edith Napoli, William Burke, George Bukowski, William Small,
Vincent Tamburello, Fred Ruggio, Roy Acquista, Dolores Betsch,
Stanley Labecki, William Brodtman

5:00 PM John Lovari

Fr. Mike Vetrano

Sunday, January 14

8:00 AM Joseph & Christina Kollmer

Fr. John Asomugha

9:30 AM Fortunato & Carmela Maggi

Fr. Bob Scheckenback

11:00 AM Helen Tryon

Fr. Mike Vetrano

12:30 PM Nicola & Anna SantaAndriola

Fr. Bob Scheckenback

6:00 PM People of the Parish, Liberta Brusca, Alfred Monaco,
Dennis R. Prichinello, Joseph Mezzacapo, Pat Curry, Marie Mirabelli,
Anne Werbinski, William Small, Pauline Leon, Geraldine Tyrie

Fr. John Asomugha

A Day with Fr. Carl Arico

Contemplative Outreach of Long Island/Queens
presents

“A Day with Fr. Carl Arico.”

Fr. Carl will speak about the four superstars of our tradition-
Julian of Norwich, Teresa of Avila, Jean DeCaussade, and John Cassian.

The presentation will be on **Saturday, January 13, 2007**
from 9:30 AM until 3:30 PM at
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Center.

We will gather at 9:30 AM for coffee and fellowship.
Please bring a bag lunch. Donation is \$30. For registration and further information,
please call Betty Teufel at 631.586.6608.

Christmas Flower Offerings

Walter P. Sokol

Dec'd mbrs of Lauria/Feliney Family

William Connaughton, Jr.

Elizabeth J. Golden

Edward C. Knapp

The Prolo Family

Frank Cafaro

Nanny & Poppy

William Winberry

Jerry Rooney

Joseph Aguanno

Joseph & Anna Mundy

M/M William King

Michael Davis

M/M Clifford Hunter

M/M Theodore Smith

Oma Irene Gries

K. Conroy

Wayne & Roland

M/M Kevin Cusack

Daniel O'Connor

M/M Millard Sellars

M/M Henry A. Kollmer

Daniel Kollmer

Rose Barbuzza

Mom & Pop Nonnon

Mom & Pop Clasen

Andrew List

M/M Theodore Horyczun

Parents & Grandparents



- canned fruit
- canned vegetables
- jelly
- peanut butter
- pudding/jello
- soup

Parish Outreach

Outreach Office Hours

Monday through Friday from 9:30 AM until 3:30 PM.
For information/assistance call 661.9262.

Religion & Rock

Tune into "Religion & Rock" with Fr. Jim Vlaun on Sunday from 7 AM to 8 AM on WBAB 102.3 FM or 95.3 on the East End of Long Island.

Next Sunday's theme is: **"Starting Over."**

Don't forget to tune in!

Visit "Religion & Rock" on the web, www.religionandrock.com.

Also watch "Good News with Father Jim" on TELE CARE, channel 29, on Mondays and Fridays at 9:45 AM; Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays at 7:45 PM; Sundays at 8 PM.

Financial Summary

December 31, 2006

Weekly Collection	\$ 18,614.50
Weekly Budget	-\$ 21,000.00
+/- for the week	\$ (2,385.50)

January 1, 2007-Solemnity of Mary

Collected Amount	\$ 3,829.00
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The estimated weekly collection needed to maintain and operate our parish buildings, ministries, programs and salaries is \$21,000.



Feast of the Epiphany

Matthew 2:1-12

What are you searching for? Many of us believe we spend our lives searching — searching for the truth, peace, and just about anything that will bring us happiness. How unfortunate it is, though, that so many seem to search for these things by way of material gains. If I could only get that promotion at work, then I'll be able to afford the bigger house and the nicer car. But in truth, we know that this searching is endless — and fruitless.

In today's reading from Matthew, we are introduced to the magi, three foreigners announcing to King Herod and to all of Jerusalem that they had come to find the newborn king of the Jews. Herod, deeply disturbed that his reign as king could be coming to an end, sent the three visitors to find Jesus so that he could pay him homage as well. The magi, however, upon finding Jesus, were so overcome with joy and filled with the Holy Spirit that they knew in their hearts of Herod's ulterior motives.

The significance of the Epiphany for us today is that even those who have practiced other faiths or no particular religion at all can come to Jesus Christ (CCC 528). By following a special star, they were intent on giving respect to the new king of their neighbors, the Israelites. But even as an innocent child in humble surroundings, he was able to bring their hearts to God, and God into their hearts. Their search had ended.

Readings for the Week of January 7, 2007

Sunday:	Is 60:1-6/Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6/Mt 2:1-12
Monday:	Is 42:1-4, 6-7 <i>or</i> Is 40:1-5, 9-11 <i>or</i> Acts 10:34-38 <i>or</i> Ti 2:11-14; 3:4-7/Lk 3:15-16, 21-22
Tuesday:	Heb 2:5-12/Mk 1:21-28
Wednesday:	Heb 2:14-18/Mk 1:29-39
Thursday:	Heb 3:7-14/Mk 1:40-45
Friday:	Heb 4:1-5, 11/Mk 2:1-12
Saturday:	Heb 4:12-16/Mk 2:13-17
Next Sunday:	Is 62:1-5/1 Cor 12:4-11/Jn 2:1-11

Altar Society

Altar linens this week will be cared for by *Rose Grant*.
If you would like to help care for our altar needs, please call the
Parish Office at 661.3224.

Communion Calls

Communion brought to those who are homebound.
Contact the Parish Office at 661.3224.



Pastoral Care of the Sick

Please call the Parish Office at 661.3224 to leave the names
of parishioners who:

- are homebound and would like to receive the Eucharist
- are in Good Samaritan Hospital and would like to be visited
by a member of our Pastoral Care Ministry.

Pray for Our Sick

Please remember to keep in your thoughts and prayers ...

*Pat Bonavita, Thomas Brennan, Elise Brenner, Jo Brogan, Sr. Nancy Campkin,
Regina Cranor, Joseph Cristallo, Nicholas Curella, Irene D'Auria, John Eifler,
Joseph Fiore, Jason Fisher, Patricia Funk, Barbara Guarino, Adam Ippolito,
Peggy Keegan, Kathleen Kerrigan, Anthony Lombardo, Michael Lombardo,
Millie Lombardo, Mike Lorento, Diego Marino, Michele McCann, Peter McCann, Sr.,
Bryan Monahan, Freida Perry, Gene Perry, Robert Petersen, Joe Radosti,
Dan Rodriguez, Rose Serragano, Dorothy Sullivan, Loretta Vitale*

Members in the Military

We ask that you pray especially for those in our parish that are on active duty in the
Middle East conflict.

They are:

Daniel D'Arienzo-US Army
Frederick Wm. Ellis-US Army
John Finn-US Army
Michael Mallimo-US Army
Peter Provenzano-US Army
James Stultz- US Army

...and remember those of our parish family that are in the armed services, listed in our
Parish Book of Intentions.

Our whole parish family rejoices with the McEvoy family in gratitude for the safe return of their
son from active duty. **Paul McEvoy-US Army** has returned to the United States safe and sound.
Thank you, Paul, for your generous service to our country!

The McEvoy family would like to thank Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Family for all of their prayers.

Social Action Alert

Interfaith Outreach

One of our parish's goals for the Jubilee Year was to increase our efforts at interfaith and ecumenical outreach. On Saturday, December 15, 2006, over fifteen members of our community joined with our Jewish sisters and brothers at Congregation Beth Shalom in Babylon for the lighting of the menorah and the celebration of Chanukah.

Our parish's Social Action Group and Liturgy Committee are working to become part of the Babylon Clergy Cluster, where we will be able to participate and even offer additional opportunities for interfaith and ecumenical prayer and reflection.

Social Action Meeting

Our next Social Action Meeting is **Thursday, January 18, at 7 PM in the Library**. Come and be part of this group that works to raise awareness and involvement in local, national and international issues of peace and justice. We are always looking for new members. Come and bring a friend!

March for Life

Our Lady of Lourdes' Social Action Group invites anyone interested in going to the March for Life to join with the Peace and Justice Group of St. John the Baptist Diocesan High School! The March for Life will take place on Monday, January 22. The bus will leave at approximately 4:30 AM from St. John the Baptist Diocesan High School and return at approximately 9 PM. To reserve a space, please contact John Sureau at 661.3224, x. 135 or e-mail to jsureau@ollchurch.org.

Living God's Call for Charity and Justice in Political Life

An excerpt from *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love), the first Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI
...to the Bishops, priests, and deacons, men and women, religious and
all the lay faithful on Christian love.

The Roles of Church and Laity in Politics

We have seen that the formation of just structures is not directly the duty of the Church, but belongs to the world of politics, the sphere of the autonomous use of reason. The Church has an indirect duty here, in that she is called to contribute to the purification of reason and to the reawakening of those moral forces without which just structures are neither established nor prove effective in the long run. The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society, on the other hand, is proper to the lay faithful.

As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation "in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the *common good*. . . . Charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and therefore also their political activity, lived as "social charity".

Diocese of Rockville Centre Turns 50!

Our parish has just celebrated its Jubilee and now it's our turn to join with our Diocese as it turns 50 this year!

Bishop Murphy, who prayed with us at the Closing of our Jubilee Year in November, will open the Diocesan Jubilee Mass with a special Mass at 11 AM at St. Agnes Cathedral. On this weekend, all parishes in the Diocese will celebrate the Feast of St. Agnes the patroness of our Diocese.

Look for more information in the weeks to come in our bulletin, on the Diocesan web site and in the pages of *The Long Island Catholic*.



Charismatic Day of Renewal

Charismatic Prayer groups will sponsor an evening of Prayer and Praise on Monday, January 8 beginning at 8 PM in the St. Barnabus Holy Family Chapel, Bellmore.

After a period of Praise and Worship a presentation shall be given on "The Occult." Giving this presentation shall be Joe DelGiorno, a long time teacher and counselor in the Charismatic Renewal. For further information call Charismatic Prayer Group at 516.785.0054.

Long Island/Metro Retrouvaille

*Do you feel alone? Are you frustrated or angry with each other?
Do you argue or have you stopped talking?*

Retrouvaille helps couples through difficult times in their marriages. This program has helped couples experiencing all types of marital difficulties. For confidential information about the Retrouvaille Program, or to register for the upcoming weekend beginning Friday, January 12, please call 1.800.470.2230.

Reading and Math Tutoring Program

Our parish, along with many other parishes in the Diocese, will host the Children's Learning Services Spring Reading and Math Tutoring Program for 12 Saturdays from February 4 through May 19. There will be five or fewer children in a group with one NY State Certified Teacher. There are two programs-one for children with learning disabilities and one for children without. To register or for further information please call 631.243.2503.

Facing Otherness and Differences

Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

David Tracy, the eminent intellectual, submits that perhaps the biggest challenge confronting us today is that of facing our differences, of accepting, truly accepting, otherness. This challenge confronts us at every level: social, political, cultural, moral, religious.

Here are his own words: *“For anyone in this troubled, quarrelling center of privilege and power (and as a white, male, middle-class, American, Catholic, professor and priest I cannot pretend to be elsewhere) our deepest need, as philosophy and theology in our period show, is the drive to face otherness and difference. Those others must include all the subjugated others within Western European and North American culture, the others outside that culture, especially the poor and the oppressed now speaking clearly and forcefully, the terrifying otherness lurking in our own psyches and cultures, the other great religions and civilizations, the differences disseminating in all the words and structures of our own Indo-European languages.”* (On Naming the Present, Maryknoll, 1994, p.4)

But that’s not easy, despite a lot of glib rhetoric to the contrary. Most of us claim to accept otherness and difference, but, as Thomas Aquinas might say, we’re there in desire more than in actuality.

We burn lots of politically-correct incense in front of the shrines of multi-culturalism, ethnic diversity, global community, gender equality, wide religious tolerance, alternative lifestyles, and befriending our shadow; but, as we’ll all admit when we’re honest, the reality isn’t as easy as the rhetoric. The simple fact is that otherness frightens us and often brings out the worst in us. It’s not easy to be comfortable, at home, welcoming, to what’s other, different, seemingly deviant. More often than not we try to put up walls against it.

We see that today in the rise of fundamentalism and paranoia of every kind. Everywhere, and not just on the right of the ideological and political spectrum, there seems to be an excessive itch to circumscribe, to reign-in, to exclude, to punish anyone or anything that doesn’t fit our mold (all of which are simply other phrases for “circling the wagons”). For all our talk of global community, wide tolerance, and acceptance of differences, there is, almost everywhere, a growing obsession with boundaries and with protecting one’s own kind in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, religion, gender, ideology, lifestyle.

Not that all of this is bad. True community can only be predicated on the strong self-identity of those who enter it and

true ecumenism can never be rooted in people abandoning their own cherished values and beliefs. True acceptance of otherness and difference only means something if someone first has a strong identity, complete with real boundaries and cherished borders to protect. Fundamentalism, which is not going to go away any time soon, arises precisely when human beings feel adrift, cut off from their own roots, without clear boundaries. We need to protect what we cherish.

But protecting cherished values and defending necessary boundaries are a good place to start from. Ultimately we must move on to face and accept otherness, strangeness, difference, the foreign. Our survival depends upon it. We can no longer live just among our own. Sooner or later, given that the planet is both limited and round, we’ll find it impossible to avoid what’s foreign to us. What’s strange to us will soon enough be part of our neighbourhood, our home, our church, and our perspective on things.

Moreover, welcoming what’s other and different is, in fact, a key biblical challenge. In the scriptures of all the great religions, Christianity no exception, we see that God is defined precisely as “Other”, as what’s beyond imagination, as outside the realm of the familiar. This is what scripture means when it calls God “Holy”; “Holy”, first of all, not because of some moral quality but because of some ontological quality, namely, otherness and difference from us.

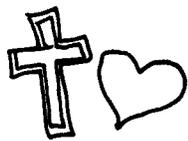
Thus, biblically, we have the great tradition within which revelation from God is understood to come mostly through the stranger, the foreigner, the unexpected, the unfamiliar, in what’s different, in the surprise. For this reason the scriptures insist on the importance of welcoming strangers. Since God is Other, strangers, among all others, are the most likely to be carrying God’s revelation.

There’s a Chinese greeting that works as both a blessing and a curse. You say to someone: *May you live in interesting times!* We live in such times and, indeed, it’s both a blessing and a curse. We’re being overwhelmed by otherness. Nothing’s safe for long. More than any previous generation, we’re being stretched beyond what’s familiar. Sometimes that’s both painful and disorienting. It’s not easy to have our boundaries, values, and ideas under constant redefinition, especially when we believe in eternal truths.

But we’ve never grasped those truths deeply enough. We have them in part, in small pieces. That’s why we call them mysteries. Moreover, and this is the point, a lot of the pieces we still need to fill out those mysteries lie precisely in what’s foreign to us, in what’s other, strange, different.

Sharing the Gospel

Isn't God amazing? He made all the stars and planets to move, so every night the sky looks a little different. When God created the world, he planned exactly when the wise men would see the star. He wanted them to find Jesus.



Mission for the Week

Visit a planetarium to learn more about the star of Bethlehem.



Puzzle

Unscramble these words from today's Gospel:

wise men

king

Mary

child

star

gifts

born

worship

dream

wsie mne W i s e m e n

brno _____

knig _____

derma _____

cildh _____

wrsohpi _____

Mrya _____

gfsti _____

srtat _____

©LPI



Dear God,

thank you
for making the
planets and
stars so the
wise men could
find Jesus.

Amen