

**While he was praying
his face changed in appearance and
his clothing became dazzling white.**

Luke 9:29



Our Lady of Lourdes

Second Sunday of Lent • March 4, 2007



Pastoral Team

Rev. Michael A. Vetrano
Pastor

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.

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

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

Mary McMahan

Director of Parish Social Ministry

Vita Scorcia

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

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.

Second Sunday
in
Lent

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.

*Our Lady
of Lourdes*

455 Hunter Avenue
West Islip, New York 11795

Lent 2007

Stations of the Cross

We remember the road to Jesus' death and link his journey to our own as our parish's deacons lead us through this beautiful devotion. Come and pray with us...

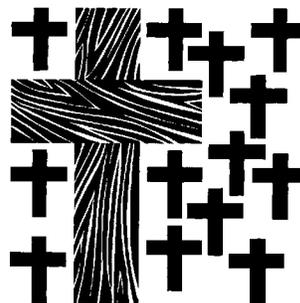
Each Friday during Lent
1 PM and 7:00 PM

Living Stations of the Cross

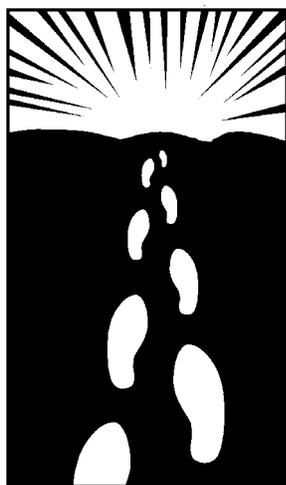
Good Friday, April 6 at 7:30 PM in the Church

This is a must for your Lenten and Holy Week journey!

Our parish community comes together – led by our young people, our Music Ministries and members of our parish community – who share their own personal experiences on this most holy and solemn night. The celebration includes the Veneration of the Cross.



Children's Liturgy of the Word



Following the Footsteps of Jesus

This Lent, our children are making use of the Little Purple Book – a day by day book for them to walk through the Lenten season. Each week we're going to look at the ways we can "*follow in the footsteps*" of Jesus by listening to His Word and being more like Him each day!

Please note that during our **Parish Lenten Mission 2007** –

“We Are God's Work of Art”

– we will offer Children's Liturgy of the Word each night.
This will allow our children to have a little retreat of their own!

We love our children and families here at OLL and want you to be a part of our parish community!
Save the following dates for Holy Week 2007...

Monday, April 2

Family Reconciliation Service – 7:30 PM – Parish Center

Thursday, April 5

Children's and Family Holy Thursday Service – 4 PM – Church

Friday, April 6

Children's Good Friday Service – 12 Noon – Church

Saturday, April 7

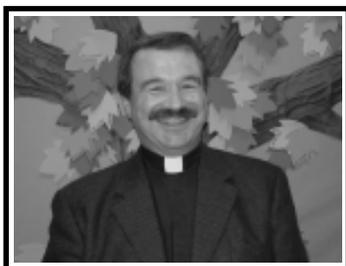
Easter Egg Hunt – 11:30 AM – Great Lawn

Parish Lenten Mission 2007

Do you feel overworked, rushed, stressed out, like there's never enough time for what's important? Give yourself a gift this Lent, and come to our Parish Mission: four nights of peaceful prayer and renewal, time to really refresh yourself and put God back in the center. Each night will feature special musical and artistic reflections to help us remember that "We Are God's Work of Art!"

We Are God's Work of Art!

preached by our own Fr. Mike Vetrano



Monday, March 5 - Thursday, March 8

7:30 PM - 8:30 PM

in the Church

*Mini-Mission homily at 8 AM Mass each morning
for those who cannot come at night.*

Nightly Themes:

Living Life in God's Friendship

Monday, March 5

Where is God in my life? How can I be closer to God and closer to the people I care about?

How is God's love present in my life? How can I be a sign of God's love?

Overcoming Obstacles and Finding Our Way Back to God

Tuesday, March 6

Life's difficulties can sometimes make it so hard to see God.

How can we find our way back, and how can we help others to do the same?

Why I Need the Church, Why the Church Needs Me!

Wednesday, March 7

All are welcome and all are needed! How can we really be a community of believers?

Closing Mass-

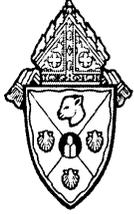
A Celebration of Anointing and Healing

Thursday, March 8

Come for a closing Mass and celebration of healing in our community.

Each night there will be:

- Special Children's Liturgy of the Word
- Teen Fellowship following the Mission
- Hospitality for all in the All-Purpose Room
- Something for everyone—from age 4 to 94!



2007 Catholic Ministries Appeal

The Hands of Christ-Supporting the Community Around Us

Education

Supporting our educational programs is an investment in our young people and in their futures. When we speak about their educations, we are speaking about the future of our Church and of our communities. It is critical to our Church's Mission to help nurture our children in the Catholic faith and to help them grow into compassionate and caring adults who will become tomorrow's leaders.

Funds from the Catholic Ministries Appeal support programs for the over 25,800 students enrolled in our 53 elementary schools and 3 Diocesan high schools. Last year we were able to provide these students with a wide range of critical enhancements such as, smart boards for computers, enhanced computer technology, the development and support of extracurricular programs, the support of academic scholarships and funds for student emergencies.

Our Parishes

The heart of our Church rests in our local parishes. This is where our faith is developed and nurtured. Last year within our 133 parishes, we celebrated more than 19,000 Baptisms, 19,400 children received their First Communion and 18,177 youngsters were confirmed, and our parish priests performed more than 4,500 marriages.

Because of your generosity, the Catholic Ministries Appeal is able to return 20 percent of the funds raised backed to our parishes.

For More Information,
please call 516-379-5210, Ext. 2
or e-mail us at www.drvc.org/cma.html

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Catholic Charities

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Rockville Centre provides a wide range of services to approximately 60,000 Long Islanders each year, as it strives to bring God's healing love to the poor and vulnerable among us.

These services are designed to help people with many of their most critical needs, such as helping a senior citizen find safe and affordable housing, or providing a disadvantaged family with access to nutritious food and health care, or by developing residential services for children and adolescents who suffer from serious emotional difficulties, or helping a young, frightened, teenaged mother-to-be become prepared and equipped to be a loving and effective parent.

Catholic Charities operates 14 programs of service including more than 60 sites from Elmont to the East End and works closely with more than 100 of our parishes' social ministries, helping them develop their own local programs of service. The Catholic Ministries Appeal provides 22 percent of all dollars raised to ensure the continuation and expansion of these vital services and programs.

Pastoral Outreach

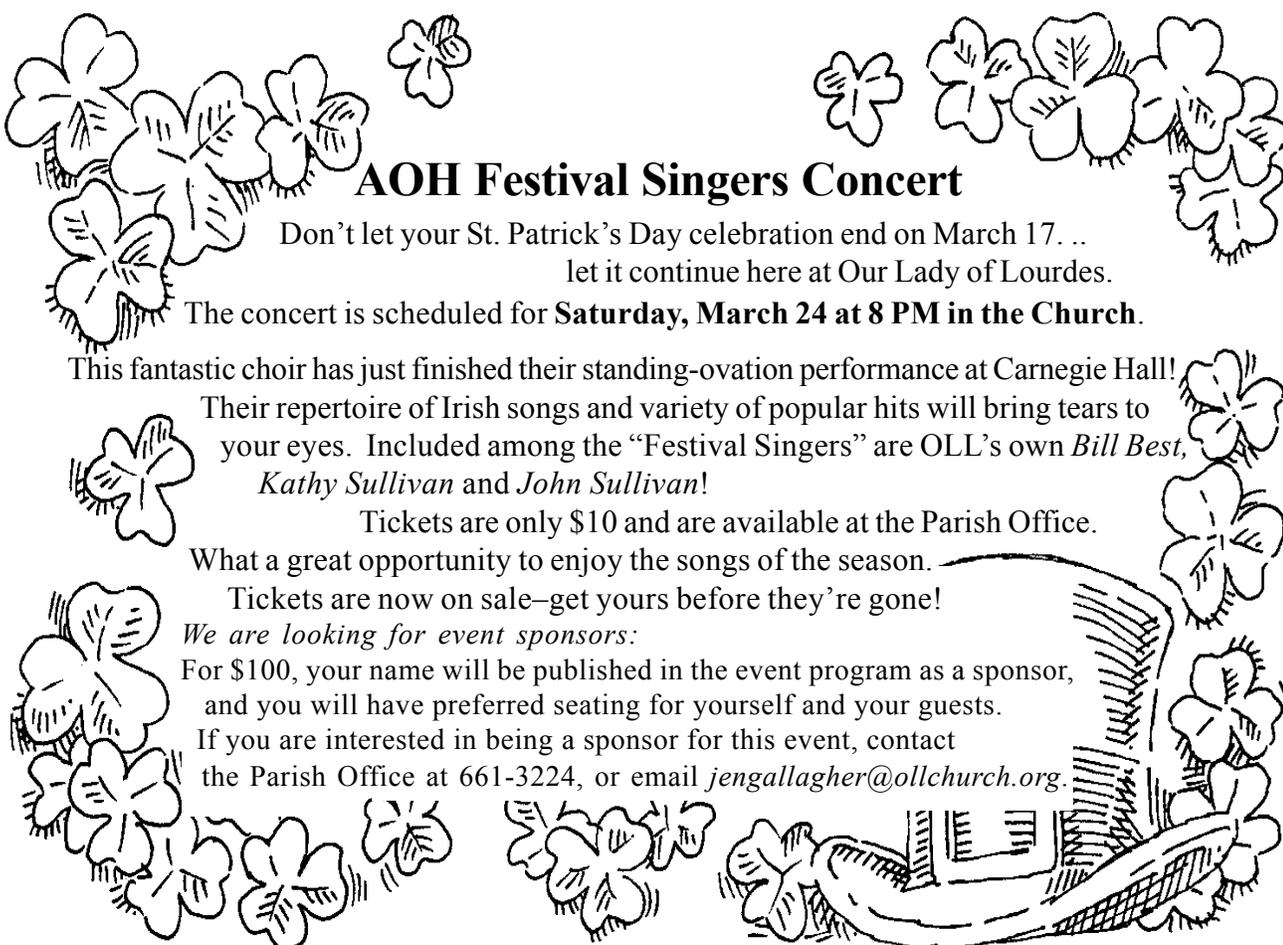
Pastoral Outreach helps connect the Church on Long Island to thousands of people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. It helps bring together our youth and young adults, and ministers to those who are suffering and alone.

These programs include the Office of Hospital Ministry, where more than 300,000 people are served in our local hospitals every year, as well as the Office of Worship, the Respect Life Office and Prison Ministry. It also encompasses the Office of New Evangelization, whose ministries are designed to welcome, support and help evangelize people from many different backgrounds to our faith. In addition, it supports our young people through campus ministries and supports our adults through Renewal Services with local prayer groups and Healing Masses. New Evangelization also supports our Mission in the Dominican Republic, which serves the religious, spiritual and health needs of more than 45,000 people. Pastoral Outreach receives 20 percent of all of the funds raised from the Catholic Ministries Appeal.

Formation

Formation encompasses those ministries, which are dedicated to the critical faith formation of our children and our adults. It includes the Office of Faith Formation, the Office of Deacons and the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception.

The Office of Faith Formation works closely with our parishes to help support all of their formation programs. As an example, last year 117,000 students from local public schools participated in our religious education programs. The 17,000 catechists who work directly with these youngsters are trained and supported by our Office of Faith Formation. Within our Seminary, this year there are 42 men in formation to become priest for our Diocese or for the Diocese of Brooklyn. The Seminary also provides programs for the over 50 men enrolled in our deaconate formation program and for the laypersons and priests studying for Masters Degrees in Theology or Pastoral Studies.



AOH Festival Singers Concert

Don't let your St. Patrick's Day celebration end on March 17. ...
let it continue here at Our Lady of Lourdes.

The concert is scheduled for **Saturday, March 24 at 8 PM in the Church.**

This fantastic choir has just finished their standing-ovation performance at Carnegie Hall!

Their repertoire of Irish songs and variety of popular hits will bring tears to your eyes. Included among the "Festival Singers" are OLL's own *Bill Best, Kathy Sullivan* and *John Sullivan!*

Tickets are only \$10 and are available at the Parish Office.

What a great opportunity to enjoy the songs of the season.

Tickets are now on sale—get yours before they're gone!

We are looking for event sponsors:

For \$100, your name will be published in the event program as a sponsor, and you will have preferred seating for yourself and your guests.

If you are interested in being a sponsor for this event, contact the Parish Office at 661-3224, or email jengallagher@ollchurch.org.

Adult Faith Formation

American Mystics: Thomas Merton and Jessica Powers

One night only...

Tuesday, March 20, 2007

7:30 PM until 9:30 PM

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.

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.]

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

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.



While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud.

Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him."

- Lk 9:34-35

Rosary/Novena**Rosary:**

Daily after 8 AM Mass

Miraculous Medal Novena:

Monday after 8 AM Mass

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.

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.

Remembering...



Monday, March 5

8:00 AM Carmine Isola

Tuesday, March 6

8:00 AM Ann Donofrio

Wednesday, March 7

8:00 AM Rose Monroe

Thursday, March 8

8:00 AM Molly Sweeney

Friday, March 9

8:00 AM Carmela Stumpo

Saturday, March 10

8:00 AM John Celiberti, William Raimo, Lily Turano,
Jo Brogan, Dennis Hartman, Lee Ianne,
Josephine Ramono, Ann Fallon,
Douglas Killane, Samuel Dixon Hunter

5:00 PM Steven Perone

Sunday, March 11

8:00 AM John Celiberti

9:30 AM Nancy Bencivenni

11:00 AM Vincent Weller

12:30 PM Nicola & Anna Santa Andriola

6:00 PM People of the Parish, Lillian Markowski,
John Celiberti, Lindsey Sangiorgio, Anne Massaro,
Teresa Wright, Joseph DeMartino, Mafalda Vincenzi,
Alfred Stropoli, Michael Walsh, John Gervasio

Rest In Peace

John Gervasio

Douglas Killane

Mary A. Bamberger

Michael Walsh

Dennis J. Delio

Celebrating Sacraments



Outreach Office Hours

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

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



Daytime Eucharistic Devotion

The afternoon adoration for the month of March will be on **Wednesday, March 7 from 1- 3 PM**. All are invited and welcome!

We will be praying for the Pope's intentions and religious vocations.

Holy Name Society

The Holy Name Society meets on the second Sunday of each month. The next meeting will be on **Sunday, March 11**. 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**.

Rosary Christian Mothers

The Rosary Christian Mothers meet on the first Monday evening of each month. The next meeting will be **Monday, March 5**. We will begin with **Rosary at 7:45 PM in the Church** followed by **meeting at 8 PM in the Parish Center**.

Financial Summary

February 25, 2007

Weekly Collection	\$ 20,317.66
Weekly Budget	-\$ 21,000.00
+/- for the week	\$ (682.34)

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

Altar Society

Altar linens this week will be cared for by *Carol Grillo*.
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 ...

*Gabrielle Azzarelli, Pat Bonavita, Thomas Brennan, Christian Bullock, Lynn Castellano,
Regina Cranor, Joseph Cristallo, Millie Durkin-Barrera, Jason Fisher, Jimmy Grillo,
Samantha Hil, Adam Ippolito, Douglas Killane, Brigid Kinney, Anthony Lombardo,
Mike Loreto, Diego Marino, Michele McCann, Peter McCann, Sr., Bryan Monahan,
Anna Nieroda, Jackie Paeggel, Adelaide Panzarella, Frieda Perry, Gene Perry,
Joe Radosti, Dorothy Schiavone, Rose Serragano, Dorothy Sullivan, Loretta Vitale*

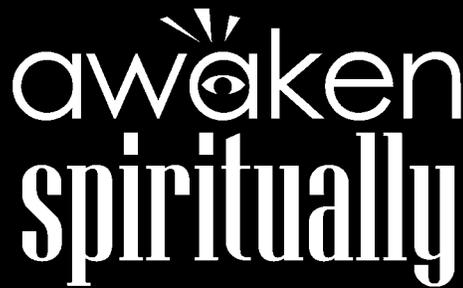
Good Samaritan Prayer Group of L.I.

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.

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.


 The logo features the word "awaken" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, with a stylized eye icon where the letter 'a' is. Below it, the word "spiritually" is written in a larger, white, lowercase, serif font. The entire logo is set against a solid black rectangular background.

©LPI

Second Sunday of Lent

How do you greet the day? For most of us, the alarm sounds well before the sun is even a hint on the horizon. Perhaps after hitting the snooze button a time or two, we begin the morning rituals and routines without so much as a thought of the day to come. But what if we knew all of the wonderful things that would happen to us during the day? Would we leap out of bed without need of an alarm, anxious to take part in these events?

In today's Gospel reading from Luke, Peter, James and John are sleeping after Jesus has taken them up the mountain to pray. Upon their awakening, they find a Jesus whose face has become radiant and his clothes a brilliant white. A cloud surrounds them, and the voice of God tells them to listen to his Son, the chosen one. These men were awakened spiritually.

God wants to reveal his glory to all of us, to awaken spiritually. In order to do this we must immerse ourselves in vocal, meditative, and contemplative prayer. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that if the feelings of our heart are present in our prayers, we will be heard and we will awaken spiritually (CCC 2700). Have you been hitting a snooze button in your relationship with God? Today, rise and speak to God with your heart and allow the glory of heaven to be shown to you.

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Readings for the Week of March 4, 2007

Sunday:	Gn 15:5-12, 17-18/Phil 3:17-4:1 <i>or</i> 3:20-4:1/Lk 9:28b-36
Monday:	Dn 9:4b-10/Lk 6:36-38
Tuesday:	Is 1:10, 16-20/Mt 23:1-12
Wednesday:	Jer 18:18-20/Mt 20:17-28
Thursday:	Jer 17:5-10/Lk 16:19-31
Friday:	Gn 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a/Mt 21:33-43, 45-46
Saturday:	Mi 7:14-15, 18-20/Lk 15:1-3, 11-32
Next Sunday:	Ex 3:1-8a, 13-15/1 Cor 10:1-6, 10-12/Lk 13:1-9

Senior Circle

OLL Senior Circle is sponsoring a day trip to the **National Center for Padre Pio in Barto, Pennsylvania. The trip is scheduled for Wednesday, April 18.**

The cost of the trip is \$40 and includes a video, a tour of the museum, prayer time, a visit to the gift shop, and a late lunch.

The bus will leave the OLL parking lot at 8 AM.

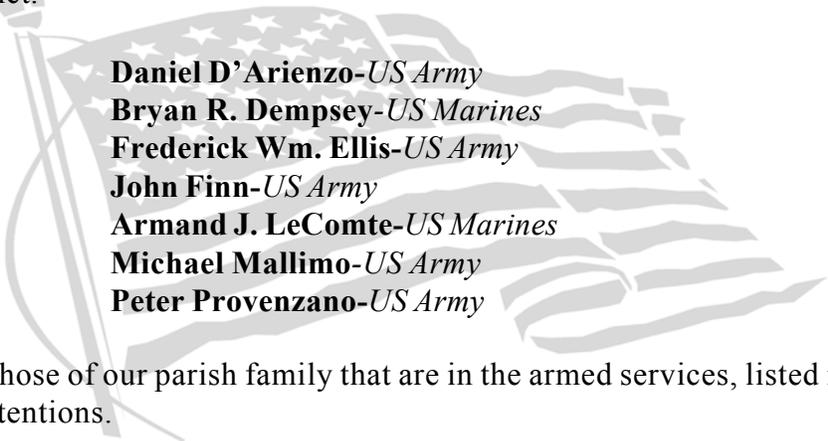
For further information and reservations, please call Vera at 587.1553.

Reservations are on a first come, first served basis.

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*
Bryan R. Dempsey-*US Marines*
Frederick Wm. Ellis-*US Army*
John Finn-*US Army*
Armand J. LeComte-*US Marines*
Michael Mallimo-*US Army*
Peter Provenzano-*US Army*

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

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:

"Sacrifice."

Don't forget to tune in!

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

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

Social Action Alert

The Mercy INN

The Mercy INN Soup Kitchen of Wyandanch needs volunteers to help prepare and serve food one day a week, Monday-Friday. The hours are 10 AM until 2 PM. Also, they are in need of two volunteers to pick up produce one Monday a month. If you can help, please call Kathy at 631.422.1420.

Here Politics and Faith Meet: Long Islanders Seeking Justice

How Catholic citizens “work for a just ordering of society” as called for in Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love)

Singular Suffering, Circular Support

In the Catholic Church ...new forms of charitable activity have arisen... We all have ...the same goal: a true humanism, which acknowledges that man is made in the image of God and wants to help him live ... with that dignity.

—Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*.

“Juan,” a 35-year-old undocumented Honduran immigrant in Oyster Bay, moved the belongings of an American-born neighbor, Patricia Burke, from her house to a nearby apartment on a warm September afternoon. Patricia was very kind to him, offering Juan bottled water when he was thirsty. As Juan finished his work, he said to Patricia, “Thank you for making me feel like a human being.” Juan is one of thousands of undocumented immigrants who do jobs that American-born workers usually will not do. Juan lives in Long Island’s shadows where he is easily exploited.

Nancy DeMontreux, who works at Catholic Charities, has a passion for helping immigrants like Juan. She helped to form an organization in her community of Oyster Bay called the Community Integration Time Exchange, CITE, which brings neighbors together to exchange their time and talent, to help each other without exchanging any money. Cite has received funding from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

Patricia, who heard about CITE at St. Dominic’s parish, became a member and was asked to tutor. This is how Patricia logged the CITE hours to get help from Juan. Juan, in return for helping Patricia, was tutored in computer skills by another CITE member. Nancy DeMontreux said about CITE, “You walk along with the person who needs help, not behind them, not ahead of them. Everyone is a giver; everyone is a receiver. This is good because sometimes the givers don’t want to receive. We are all equals.” Nancy described CITE as “circular,” because “it forces the giver to receive, and the receiver to give” and everyone is treated “with dignity.”

Source: *Pathway to the Holy*, by Richard Koubek and Connie Loos, published by Catholic Charities, Diocese of Rockville Centre, Lent, 2004

Do you want to work for justice? Contact Dr. Richard Koubek at Catholic Charities’ Public Policy Education Network, 516.733.7077 or by e-mail: Koubek.richard@catholiccharities.cc

Bereaved Support Group

St. Brigid's Church in Westbury will be starting its spring support groups for the newly bereaved. A group for newly widowed and a second group for individuals who have lost a family member other than a spouse will be starting on Wednesday, March 21. Each group will meet for 10 sessions from 7:15 until 8:30 PM. The cost of registration is \$20. Please contact Adriana at 516.334.0021 for additional information.

Chinese Auction

Our Lady of Grace Columbiettes will be hosting a **Chinese Auction on Saturday, March 10 at Our Lady of Grace Church, West Babylon**. Admission is \$5 plus 15 tickets, coffee and cake included. The auction will be from 12 PM until 4 PM in the Father Shanahan Hall. For ticket information, please call 631.888.7938.

Retrouvaille

You can help your marriage now. Do you feel alone? Do you argue? Have you stopped talking to each other? Retrouvaille helps couples through difficult time in their marriages. For confidential information about the Retrouvaille program, or to register for the next upcoming weekend, please call 1.800.470.2230.

Diocesan Pilgrimage to Rome

As part of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of our diocese, Bishop William Murphy invites you to join him on a pilgrimage to Rome November 4-12, 2007. He has asked Msgr. Jim McNamara, the pastor of Holy Cross Parish, Nesconset, to be the spiritual leader. If you wish further information or to book online, please visit www.pilgrimages.com/rvcd or call toll free 1.800.206.8687 for a brochure.

Maria Regina Residence

Maria Regina Residence is a skilled long term care facility located on the property of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Brentwood. It provides Adult Day Health Services offering a wonderful day program including transportation and meals, as well as a loving atmosphere provided by an inclusive staff. If interested, or for further information, please contact Veronica Anderson, Director at 631.299.3045.

Help Wanted

A position is open for a Rectory Cook for five priests at Ss. Cyril & Methodius Rectory for Saturday nights. Possible coverage of vacations and sick times. Please call business manager at 631.667.4044, extension 110.

Part time secretary position available at Mary Immaculate Church, Bellport. Duties include office work, telephones, and weekly bulletin-three days per week. Must be computer literate. Please call 286.0154 if interested.

The Cross as Revealing God's Unconditional Love

Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

A number of years ago, a young man came to me because he was in crisis: He had been having an affair with his girlfriend and she had become pregnant. For a variety of reasons, marriage was impossible. The pregnancy would have an irrevocable impact on a series of lives, his girlfriend's, his own, their families', not to mention the child that would be born.

He was a sensitive person and knew that he had been irresponsible. He made no attempt to rationalize or to deflect blame from himself. He recognized that he had done wrong and that through his irresponsibility a certain innocence had been lost, trust had been betrayed, various lives had been permanently disrupted, and he would now live in a certain brokenness. This troubled him deeply.

He ended his story on a note of despair: "I was irresponsible and this has, forever, hurt some people because even God can't unscramble an egg!" For him, it now seemed, there would always be a certain skeleton in the closet, a past ghost to haunt his happiness.

Even God can't unscramble an egg! What a statement! And how true, except for one thing: The cross of Jesus reveals that we can live, and live happily and healthily, beyond any egg we have ever scrambled. That is the central message of the cross. How does the cross tell us this?

Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychology, used to say that we understand the make-up of things best when we see them lying in pieces, shattered. In the brokenness we see the underlying structure. That is also true of love and faith. We see how they are made up when we see them fractured. Jesus' death shows us this. At the second he died, scripture says, the "curtain veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom." The curtain veil, as we know, separated the people in the temple from seeing what went on in the holy of holies, it represented the veil between God and ourselves. The cross of Jesus tears apart that veil and lets us see inside the holy of holies, the heart of God. And what do we see there? Unfathomable love, unfathomable forgiveness, a compassion and tenderness beyond understanding. In the cross, God tells us: "You can do this to me - and I will still love you!"

I remember another young man who shared with me how he once so badly betrayed all that he

believed in that he decided to commit suicide. Setting out to kill himself, he decided, first, to stop in a church and say some final prayers. He entered a church and sat down. The only thing lit up in that darkened church was a crucifix on the front wall. He looked at the cross and, in a second of sheer grace, understood what it meant.

Here are his words: "I looked at the cross and I understood: I was in hell and God hadn't stopped loving me for one second. I saw that God loves me, no matter what. I'm not proud of what I did and it will always be part of me, but I can live beyond it, and be happy, knowing God's love and strength are always with me, even when I betray them." Unaware that he was doing it, he was tenderly fingering a cross he was wearing around his neck as he shared this.

An elderly nun, whom I much love and respect, is fond of saying: "I'm a loved sinner!" The secret to spiritual health is to acknowledge, in the roots of our souls, both parts of that equation: We are sinners without any need to rationalize or excuse ourselves, even as we have the sure knowledge that God loves us, deeply and irrevocably, in our weakness. The cross gives us that assurance by telling us, precisely, that God doesn't stop loving us, even for one second, irrespective of weakness.

The cross of Christ is rich reality. Among other things, it tells us how God loves and redeems us even when we are unfaithful and our lives are broken.

It is not surprising that hundreds of millions of people, young and old, wear a cross in some form. These crosses, like the meaning of the cross itself, have an infinite variety of shapes and sparkles. From delicately cut, golden ear-rings, chosen to match an expensive evening dress, to rough, crude wooden crosses slung casually over a denim shirt, the cross of Jesus is everywhere evident. We see it on hillsides, on church spires, in cemeteries, and most everywhere where anything special, love or tragedy, has happened. Rightly so. The cross is the ultimate symbol of love. It shows what love is, what love costs, and what love does for us.

Most important of all, it shows us that God never stops loving us even for a second, no matter what we do, and that we can live, and live happily, beyond any egg we have ever scrambled.

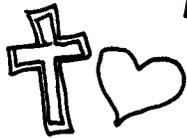
Used with permission of the author, Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser. Father Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author and is currently the President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com.

Sharing the Gospel

One night when Jesus prayed, Jesus showed Peter, James and John what he would look like in heaven. Jesus' face changed and his clothes glowed brightly. Jesus even talked to Moses and Elijah, who had gone to heaven many years earlier. Jesus was different. He was from God!



Mission for the Week



Find something that glows in the dark. As you see it in a dark room, imagine how brightly Jesus must have glowed.

Puzzle

Help Jesus find the way to his tent.



Prayer



Dear Jesus,
I can hardly
wait to see
what you really
look like in
heaven.

Something to Draw



Draw a picture of
Jesus with bright,
glowing clothes.