



I TELL YOU,

there is rejoicing
in the presence
of the angels
of God over one
sinner who repents.

Luke 15:10

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Our Lady of Lourdes • September 16, 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: info@ollschool.org

Religious Education Office

661-5440
Monday-Friday: 9 AM - Noon
1 PM - 5 PM
7 PM - 9 PM
email: ReligiousEd@ollchurch.org

Parish Outreach Office

661-9262
Monday-Friday: 9:30 AM - 3:30 PM

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

Jennifer Gallagher

Director of Youth Services

Carol M. Goetz

Parish Music Director

Louise Jane Krol

School Principal

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

Salomon Acosta
Stacie Baltrusitis
Jane Desthers
Stephen Frodell
William Hurley
Anne Kerrigan
Maria Lucie (*co-chair*)
Jack Meehan
Vita Scorcia
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.

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

Living Liturgy

Our liturgies and prayer services are definitely missing something these days – YOU! To keep the liturgy alive, we need you. There are so many ways for you to get involved. Take a look and discover a ministry that is calling you and/or your family to get involved. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask by stopping by in Church, sending an e-mail to jsureau@ollchurch.org or calling 661.3224, x.135.



Mary Steck has been a member of OLL for over 45 years. She is married with five children. Mary has been very involved in OLL over the years. She spent a great deal of time involved in Religious Education while her family was growing up. Mary is currently involved in the Ministry of Consolation, Parish Outreach, and RCIA. Mary is also a Eucharistic Minister, which she feels is a “highlight” in her life.

Why I am involved...

“The ministries of OLL are filled with people willing to be a messenger of their faith to others. Being an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and serving at all our masses is a way to partake in the most important celebration of the Eucharist. To serve and be part of the receiving of the Body and Blood of our Lord is so rewarding and a privilege to partake in. Serving once or twice a month is not demanding of those who serve.”

Children’s Liturgy of the Word/Family Liturgy Committee

Our Lady of Lourdes wants young people and their families to know they are a vital and active member of the Church community! These two exciting ministries work closely together to help that happen.

Children’s Liturgy of the Word: Each Sunday at the 9:30 AM Mass, we invite young people from age four to about fourth grade to share God’s Word in a special way. Children leave Mass and process to the Parish Center to hear the Sunday readings in a way designed for them. Teams of adults and teenagers work together to plan out each Sunday to include unique homilies, creative activities, music and ideas for parents. We are always looking for new Team members for each of our teams. Each team presents approximately once a month. For more information, contact Mrs. Joanne Maher at 661.5478 or e-mail to jsureau@ollchurch.org.

Family Liturgy: This group meets monthly, along with the members of Children’s Liturgy of the Word teams, to create events and opportunities for families to come together for social, spiritual and fun activities. This group helps to plan events like the Blessing of the Animals, Children’s Liturgy services, and much, much more! This group meets only about eight times a year after the 9:30 AM Mass.

Adult Faith Formation

....coming in September

Stepping Stones

Tuesdays - September 18, 25 October 2, 9, 16
7:30 PM until 9 :30 PM
Parish Center



Building Family Communication

A five-week workshop designed for parents, grandparents, catechists with pre-school and early elementary school aged children. Our time together will promote Catholic family identity through ritual, traditions, prayer, media resources and small group sharing. Participants will gain resources and learn how to share the holy in the ordinary lived experiences with their families and in the classroom.

Celebrating Family Faith

If you have any questions or to register, please call Corinne Lok of the Office of Faith Formation at 516.678.5800, extension 508.

...coming in October



Gospel of Matthew

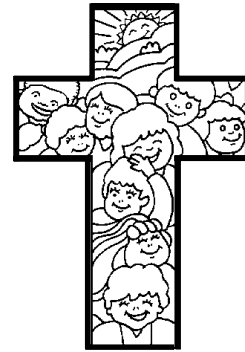
Tuesdays - October 23 November 6, 13, 20, 27
with Fr. Bob
7:30 PM until 9 :30 PM
Parish Center

Invitation to trust in God's presence...challenge to live as true disciples

Matthew's Gospel excites us with the news that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel. During these five weeks, we will explore the Jesus of Matthew's Gospel from the perspective of this year's Sunday readings...our Liturgical Cycle.

Religious Education

Registration for children in public school **entering Grade 1 in September 2007** to be part of Our Lady of Lourdes Religious Education P.E.P. Program...



Family Names A – L	Monday, September 24	10 AM or 7:30 PM
Family Names M – Z	Wednesday, September 26	10 AM or 7:30 PM

Meetings will be held in the Parish Center (*room opposite the playground*) and will begin promptly at the times designated. Please bring the child's Baptismal Certificate. There is a "Family Fee" of \$115 for families new to the program.

SAGE

For the past several months, the SAGE Group, urged on by member Joan Ardito, has been collecting items for our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Lions Club has sent these items overseas to the troops. Members have heard from individual service men and women who have expressed gratitude for the gifts collected and sent to them.

Here are some quotes from the thank –you letters received:

"The guys and I really enjoyed the packages and appreciate your thoughtfulness... The stuffed animals we handed out to the local children and they were really happy and thankful..."

"I'd just like to say Thank You for the lovely package... The items were great and I shared them with my fellow nurses. There was something for everyone...."

"We gave some of the candies to school children in Western Iraq... don't worry, we saved plenty for ourselves..."

"Thank you for sending the box of tapes, paperback books, playing cards and stationery. The items were made available to all hands in our facility in Fallujah."

If any parishioner would like to send items to the troops, please leave them at the Parish Office for SAGE.

Upcoming Events

Single Senior Socials

Are you a single Senior?

If you are, then you know that Saturday nights can be difficult.



Join us on **Saturday, September 22** for “**Hang - Out Night**” for Seniors following the **5 PM Mass in the Parish Center**. This will be the first meeting to determine if there is a need in our Parish for a Single Senior Social Group—a place to plan trips, events, outings and be with others. So, please come and bring a friend!

For more information, call Pat Wallace at 587.4342 or Outreach at 661.9262, option 4.

Parish Reading Circle

Social Action is forming a Parish Reading Circle in the Fall.

Our first book selection is “*Left To Tell*” by Immaculee Ilibagiza and will be available for purchase starting in September.

...look in future bulletins for more details.

It's not too early to save the date...

Saturday, November 10

Fabulous Fifties Football Wedding Reception!

Parish Outreach invites you to the Fabulous Fifties Football Wedding Reception at 7:30 PM. Tickets will be \$25 per person and proceeds will benefit the efforts of Outreach.

More details to follow in upcoming bulletins.

Members Welcome

If you would like to become a member of the Social Action Committee, please phone Mary in Outreach at 661.9262 x.4



Green Alert: Green Friday

October 5 Social Action will be hosting “*An Inconvenient Truth*” for adults. “*An Inconvenient Truth*” offers a passionate and inspirational look at one man's fervent crusade to halt global warming's deadly progress in its tracks by exposing the myths and misconceptions that surround it. That man is former Vice President Al Gore.

...and there will be “Happy Feet” and popcorn for the children.

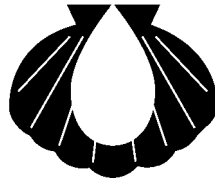
Support Groups

Alcoholics Anonymous:

Monday and Tuesday at
8 PM and Saturday at 2PM
and 7 PM in Lourdes Hall-
convent lower level.

ALANON:

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



Baptisms

Alexandria Angela Dobson
James and Danielle
Isabella Monalisa Vollaro
Nicholas and AnnMarie
Julianna Erin Vollaro
Jeff and Tracy
Kyle Joseph Berardino
John and Kristen
Kelly Jean Fortune
Brian and Jennifer
Kyle Benjamin Greenspan
Harris and Amalia
Nadia Jean Nizen
David and Jeanmarie
Emily Sage Peck
Kevin and Sheryl
Aaron Alexander Zwiebel
Kevin and Jill
Ava Lucy Perakakis
Michael and Suzanne
Danielle Elisabeth Angelica Artese
Francesco and Maria
Justin Thomas Pasquale Artese
Francesco and Maria
Mason Aleister Frederick
Joseph and Selina
Isabella Marie Meza
Juan and Rebecca
Connor Gerard O'Brien
Kenneth and Gina
James Page Petrillo
Scott and Marla

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

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.

Mass Schedule

Monday, September 17

St. Robert Bellamine, bishop, doctor

8:00 AM Margaret Homann

Tuesday, September 18

8:00 AM Baby Shaddock

Wednesday, September 19

St. Januarius, bishop, martyr

8:00 AM LaRocca & Sweeney Family

Thursday, September 20

8:00 AM JoAnne Wolffe

Friday, September 21

St. Matthew, apostle, evangelist

8:00 AM Rose Petrone

Saturday, September 22

8:00 AM Lily Turano & Whitney Russo,
William Davies, In Thanks to Blessed Virgin Mary,
Ellis, Agnes & Frank Slade, Carol Schied

5:00 PM Peter & Dan Mancuso
Fr. Bob Scheckenback

Sunday, September 23

8:00 AM James Loretz, Sr.
Fr. Mike Vetrano

9:30 AM Elsie Winkelman
Fr. Ambrose Cabildo

11:00 AM John J. , Sr. & Joan Goode
Fr. Stan Chukwube

12:30 PM Thomas Coletto
Fr. Ed Dowling

6:00 PM People of the Parish, Peter Santoro,
Felix John Marchelewski, Carol Karniewicz, James
Loretz, Sr., Barbara Dalton, Savina Rebecca,
Kenneth Warren, Anna Marie Cracolici, Eileen
Smith, Angela Kinney & Baby Lucas John Kinney
Fr. Mike Vetrano

Rest In Peace

Kenneth Warren,
died on September 5 and celebration of the
Mass of Christian Burial was September 8.
We extend our prayers to his father, Walter and
family.

Jean C. Mercado,
died on September 6 and celebration of the
Mass of Christian Burial was September 10.
We extend our prayers to her daughter, Debra
and family.

Frederick J. Gray,
died on September 9 and celebration of the
Mass of Christian Burial was September 12.
We extend our prayers to his wife, Dorothy
and family.

Richard M. Devlin, Sr.,
died on September 9 and celebration of the
Mass of Christian Burial was September 14.
We extend our prayers to his wife, Lillian
and family.

Rose Gagliardo,
died on September 9 and celebration of the
Mass of Christian Burial was September 13.
We extend our prayers to her husband, John
and family.



Celebrating Sacraments



24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Perhaps you've heard this story, but it fits well with today's readings: An older gentleman out for a stroll along the beach comes upon a little boy throwing beached starfish back in the water. He explains he is saving their lives. The man exclaims that there are thousands of starfish along the shore; he can't possibly save them all. The boy picks up another, says "No, but I can save this one," and throws it into the ocean.

Jesus' lesson from today's reading from the Gospel of Luke is to ask us to sometimes not look at "the big picture." All too often, we find ourselves upset at a particular social problem such as homelessness or bigotry, but never actually get around to doing anything to help improve the problem. If we can show the love of Jesus Christ to just one person today, who knows where it could lead?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches a great deal on the subject of respect for the human person. In God's eyes, we are all equal neighbors and should look to each neighbor as 'another self.' In doing so, we must keep in mind our neighbors' right to live life in dignity and do what we can to help them live that way. (CCC 1931) We may not be able to save a neighborhood, but we can surely turn to a neighbor in need.

©2007 Liturgical Publications Inc

Readings for the Week of September 16, 2007

Sunday:	Ex 32:7-11, 13-14/1 Tm 1:12-17/Lk 15:1-32 <i>or</i> 15:1-10
Monday:	1 Tm 2:1-8/Lk 7:1-10
Tuesday:	1 Tm 3:1-13/Lk 7:11-17
Wednesday:	1 Tm 3:14-16/Lk 7:31-35
Thursday:	1 Tm 4:12-16/Lk 7:36-50
Friday:	Eph 4:1-7, 11-13/Mt 9:9-13
Saturday:	1 Tm 6:13-16/Lk 8:4-15
Next Sunday:	Am 8:4-7/1 Tm 2:1-8/Lk 16:1-13 <i>or</i> 16:10-13

Financial Summary

September 9, 2007

Weekly Collection \$ 18,547.00
 Weekly Budget -\$ 21,000.00
 +/- for the week \$ (2,453.00)

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

Catholic Ministries Appeal

The key ingredient to the success of our appeal is participation. In order to reach our goal, we need to have every family participate in the appeal to the best of their ability.

If you have not had an opportunity to make a gift to the appeal or have been waiting to make a pledge, please complete the pledge card below and place it in the collection basket.

**88%
to goal!**

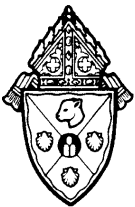


CATHOLIC MINISTRIES APPEAL • DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
 PO Box 4000 • ROCKVILLE CENTRE, NEW YORK 11571-4000 • 516-379-5210 EXT 2 • www.drvc.org/cma.html

2007 CATHOLIC MINISTRIES APPEAL *Supporting the Community Around Us*

TO PROVIDE FUNDS I/WE AGREE TO MAKE A GIFT OF:

PLEDGE \$ _____ INITIAL PAYMENT \$ _____ BALANCE \$ _____



NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PARISH OF DONOR _____

SIGNATURE OF DONOR _____

A GUIDE TO GIVING

PLEDGE	10 PAYMENTS
\$5,000	\$500
2,500	250
1,500	150
1,000	100
500	50
300	30
150	15
OTHER \$ _____	

EVERY GIFT COUNTS!

Please make checks payable to:
 Catholic Ministries Appeal
Thank you for your support

For more information, please call 516.379.5210, extension 2 or email to www.drvc.org/cma.html.

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**.

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:



Brian Barthel-*US Air Force*
Bryan R. Dempsey-*US Marines*
Frederick Wm. Ellis-*US Army*
James J. Ferrara-*US Marines*
John Finn-*US Army*
Armand J. LeComte-*US Marines*
Michael Mallimo-*US Army*
Nathan Provast-*US Marines*
Peter Provenzano-*US Army*

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

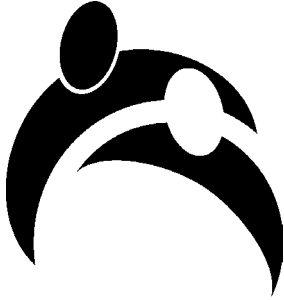
Religion & Rock

Tune into "Religion & Rock" with Msgr. 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: "**Knowing the Issues.**" 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.

Altar Society

Altar linens this week will be cared for by *Marie Cirone*.

If you would like to help care for our altar needs, please call the Parish Office at 661.3224.



Pastoral Care of Our 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.
- would like to receive the sacred anointing.

Pray for Our Sick

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

Pat Bonavita, Carol Brander, Thomas Brennan, Baby Drew Brust, Howard Campkin, Lynn Castellano, Thomas Courtney, Regina Cranor, Joseph Cristallo, TJ Devlin, Josephine DiBenedetto, Anthony Ferrante, Jason Fisher, John Green, Marie Harris, Samantha Hil, Ed Hill, Adam Ippolito, Wade Kromhout, Evelyn Lang, Richard Lang, Nancy Letsch, Anthony Lombardo, Mike Lorento, Diego Marino, Michele McCann, Peter McCann, Sr., Bryan Monahan, Jimmy Murphy, Joseph Ortiz, Arthur Petrino, Baby Conner Pietras, Joe Radosti, Delphine Reynolds, Dorothy Schiavone, Joe Shields, Dorothy Sullivan, Loretta Vitale

Cell Phones and more...

Please remember to turn off your cell phones, pagers, beepers etc. when coming to pray here at OLL! These are wonderful creations...but they can easily interfere with our prayer and the prayer of others! Rather than telling your friends and family to call you – tell them to come with you to our parish here at Our Lady of Lourdes!

Catholic Daughters of the Americas

All are welcome to join us for Military Bridge on Thursday, September 20. Doors open at 6:30 PM and games begin at 7:30 PM. We will be located in the O'Connell Room at St. Joseph's, Babylon. Tickets are \$6 and include coffee, tea and dessert. Wine and soda will be available for purchase.

Military Bridge is not bridge! If you ever played war card games as a child then you know how much fun military bridge is. Come have some laughs with us. There will be plenty of raffle prizes, too! Call Karen at 321.2944 for reservations.

Gennesaret Retreat

A retreat especially designed for persons who live with a serious illness is planned for **September 21 - 23 at the Montfort Spiritual Center in Bay Shore**. This retreat offers a respite, a quiet time, an oasis to enable one to continue their journey. The retreat focuses on God's love, forgiveness and faithfulness. To register or receive more information about this weekend, please call Sister Sally Ryan or Colette Fanelli at 631.665.7052.

Country Fair

West Islip Country Fair is coming! This year the fair will be held on **Sunday, September 23** on the grounds of the West Islip Public Library. For your convenience there will be a jitney service along Udall Rd./Higbie Lane.

There will be a jitney stop here at Our Lady of Lourdes on Hunter Avenue. Look for the signs for pick-up locations.

Extend Your Sunday Worship

Stand up for Life

October is Respect Life Month

Sunday, October 7 from 2 PM until 3:30 PM (rain or shine) on Route 110 and Route 25 in Huntington. Signs will be distributed at the site. You will be participating in one of 1200 similar events in the United States and Canada.

Dominican Commercial High School

The former students and staff of Dominican Commercial High School are invited to attend a special celebration at the Queen of the Rosary Motherhouse in Amityville on **Sunday, September 23**. Please call Benincasa Family Services at 631.842.6000, ext. 351 if you would like to receive an invitation.

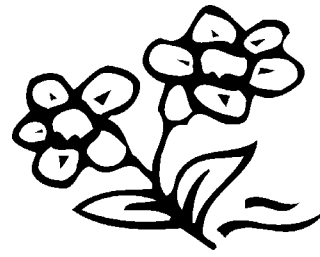
Cornerstone Conference 2007

“living lives that are true”

Saturday, September 22

8:30 AM until 4:30 pm

St. John the Baptist High School, West Islip



Cornerstone Conference 2007 will address the far reaching and complex issues of Family Ministry. It is designed as an enrichment day for parish staff members, parish volunteers and all those interested in examining the multifaceted question, “What is Family Ministry?”

The day will begin with the celebration of Mass with Bishop Murphy followed by a keynote address by Dr. John Grabowski on “The Spirituality of the Family in the 21st Century.” There will be the opportunity to attend workshops on a variety of topics that affect families in the ages and stages of family life.

For further information, please contact the Religious Education Office at 661.5440, option 3 or email to religioused@ollchurch.org.

Bereavement Support Groups

Church of St. Joseph, Babylon will host an eight week Bereavement Support Group for widows and widowers starting **September 18 at 8 PM** in the Parish Center. For information call Valerie at 631.236.2222.

St. Mary’s Parish, East Islip is offering a free eight week support group for adults who are struggling with the death of a loved one. The group begins **Wednesday, September 19 from 7 PM until 9 PM**.

For information and/or registration, please call the Parish Rectory at 631.581.4266, extension 100.

Education of a Lifetime

A Catholic High School education offers young people a challenging, value-centered liberal arts education. It also affords each student and opportunity to test abilities, add skills, build confidence and develop an understanding of faith, while preparing for college and for life. Learn more about each school by attending its Open House. For more information, contact the individual High School or the Catholic Secondary School Administration at 516.739.5030.

Open House Schedule

Sunday, September 16	10 AM - 1 PM	St. Anthony’s High School
Saturday, September 22	11 AM - 1:30 PM	Our Lady of Mercy Academy
Sunday, September 23	1 PM - 4 PM	St. Dominic High School
Sunday, September 30	12 PM - 2:30 PM	Holy Trinity High School
	2 PM - 4:30 PM	St. Mary’s College Prep. High School

Offering Sanctuary for Sadness

Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

The church today, at least in the West, it is not a very happy place. Gone are the wonder and the joy of being young, the innocent laughter that so characterizes us when we're still pre-neurotic. There's a middle-aged heaviness to the church today, a certain sadness. We're grieving a lot of things:

What are we grieving?

In essence, four things: i) a lost innocence, ii) a lost unity, iii) a lost child, and iv) a lost wholeness among the people.

At a more obvious level, we are grieving a certain lost innocence. We feel this as we experience the recent scandals within the church, sexual misconduct by some clergy, financial impropriety and abuse of power by some church leaders, and other things that have helped shatter the image of the church as the unsullied bride of Christ that can do no wrong and has done no wrong. Recent studies in church history have also helped highlight this by showing that the church's long history of grace is coloured too by a long history of sin.

But, painful as this is, this is not what's most dampening the soul of the church. Less visible, less expressed, but more wounding, is the sense of having lost a certain security, namely, the security of knowing that we were the moral high ground, that we were the cognitive and moral majority, that our virtues were real, and that our ethical beliefs and cherished ways of doing things really did separate right from wrong. Until recently we didn't have to ask ourselves if we were racist, imperialist, sexist, narrow, bigoted. Today we're a lot less sure of those things. Maybe it isn't a bad thing to lose all of that certainty, but it's hardly a joyful thing. We've lost our innocence, our moral virginity. That doesn't come without sadness.

Beyond this, we are grieving a painful division within the church and society. I doubt there has ever been a time since the reformation that the Church has been so painfully polarized and emotionally divided. In many places, in fact, we have two emotional communities, so divided are we by ecclesiology, theology, ideology, and spirituality. We live in an emotional apartheid, separated by ideology and ecclesiology just as surely and rigidly as if this was mandated by law. Such is the church today and such too is society today. We are a deeply divided community.

Division of course is not new. Christ said that he would bring fire to the earth and that this would divide people from each other. His promise has held true, except that today that the division is not between the sincere and the insincere, the good and the bad, the committed and the non-committed. Today, too often, the sincere are divided from the sincere, the good from the good, the committed from the committed. When good people can no longer be in community with each other and can no longer even speak respectfully with each other, the result is always sadness and anger (and anger is just another form of sadness). Small wonder that our churches and communities are not always happy places.

Beyond our internal divisions, we are too grieving a lost child, our child, secularity. Perhaps this can best be explained in an image: Western culture is to us, the church, much like an adolescent child is to its parents. We gave it birth, helped raise it, and now, with a fierceness and anger that do not seem justifiable, it is asserting its independence from us, accusing us of being bad parents, and claiming it can find life only by moving away from us (all without acknowledging its debt to us). Like parents too we fear for its safety even as we envy its youth, confidence, power, and daring and resent its independence. Like parents too, we feel a certain sadness. The child has left home, rejecting many of our cherished values in that leave-taking. It is slipping away from us, daily becoming more post-ecclesial. To not feel a sadness about this is to lack in sensitivity and love.

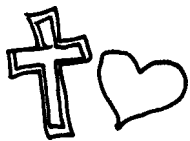
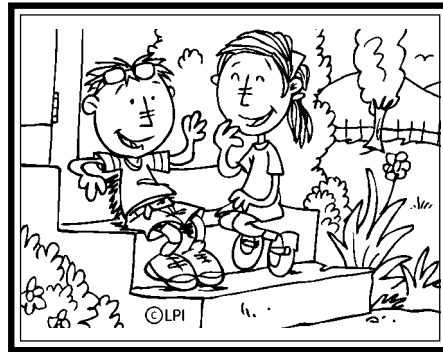
Finally, we are grieving as well the grief of our people, our world. Western society is, in large measure, despondent and suffering from every kind of brokenness. Wholeness, it seems, is no longer the rule. More and more it's the exception for someone to not come from a broken home, a broken marriage, a series of broken relationships, and an abusive background of some sort. We're a society of the wounded, we bring this to our churches, and this colours church life. The tensions and sadness inside the church reflect the tensions and sadness inside society as a whole.

And so we are a grieving church, though that is not necessarily a bad thing. Tears can save us from bitterness and hardness of heart. So perhaps one of the important forms of sanctuary that the church can offer the world today is that of being a safe place where you can come and be sad.

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

Jesus was kind to people who were lonely. Jesus forgave people who were sorry for their mistakes. Jesus ate dinner with people who needed God's love. They sinned. Everybody knew it. But Jesus knew that God's love could turn their frowns into smiles. If there are kids in your class who don't have many friends, be kind to them like Jesus. When other kids make mistakes, forgive them like Jesus. You'll make Jesus smile.

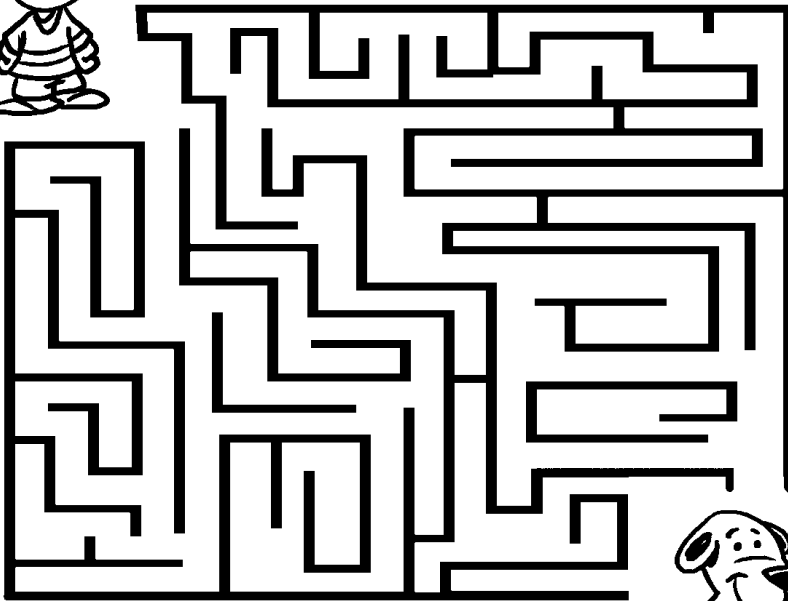


Mission for the Week

When you go outside to play at school, look for someone who is alone. Offer to be a friend and play together.

Puzzle

Help the boy get to his dog.



©LPI

Prayer



Dear God,
help me to
show kindness
like Jesus did.

Something to Draw



Draw a picture
of yourself
playing with a
child who's lonely.