

OUR LADY OF LOURDES SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER MAY 16, 2010

**I AM THE
ALPHA**



REVELATION 22:13

**AND THE
OMEGA**



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.

Our Lady of Lourdes

*455 Hunter Avenue
West Islip, New York 11795*

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

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.

Pastoral Team

Rev. Michael A. Vetrano

Pastor

Rev. Patsy Amabile

Associate Pastor

Rev. Robert Scheckenback

Associate Pastor

Rev. Ambrose Cabildo

In Residence

Deacon John DeGuardi

Deacon Tom Lucie

Deacon Jack Meehan

Coordinator of Stewardship

Deacon John Teufel

Sr. Margaret Bickar

Senior Ministry-SAGE

Sr. Nancy Campkin

Director of Religious Education

Allegra D'Alo

Youth Minister/Social Action

Jennifer Gallagher

Childrens' Choir/Women's Chorale

Summer Program Director

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

Robin Reynolds-Brennan

Coordinator of Worship

Vita Scorcio

Ministry Spiritual Director

Sr. Betty Toohig

Senior Ministry-SAGE

Anthony Trombino

Business Manager

Pastoral Council

Stacie Baltrusitis

Lisa Cantalino

Sonia DaSilva

Nilo DeLeon

Jane Desthers

Jerry Esposito

Deacon Jack Meehan

John Muldoon

Bob Natale

Eileen Rega

Vita Scorcio

Mary Steck

Fr. Mike Vetrano

Christine Volk

Parish Staff

Barbara Catusco

Religious Education Office

Mary Anne Lettieri

Parish Office

Debbie Meyer

Bulletin Editor/Parish Office

Rosemary Multer

School Office

Rex Muro

Organist

Rita Spera

Religious Education Office

Lori Walsh

Parish Office

Parish Office

661.3224 (option 1)

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 (option 2)

Monday-Friday: 9 AM - 3 PM

email: lkrol@ollschoo.org

Religious Education Office

661.5440 (option 3)

Monday-Friday: 9 AM - Noon

1 PM - 5 PM

7 PM - 9 PM

email: ReligiousEd@ollchurch.org

Parish Outreach Office

661.9262 (option 4)

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday:

9:30 AM - 3 PM

S.A.G.E.

661.3224

(Senior Advocates for Growth
and Enrichment)

email: Sage@ollchurch.org

Welcome...

to Our Lady of Lourdes!

We are so happy to welcome everyone who has come to worship with us today! Whether you have come a long distance or you live locally, we are glad that you have decided to spend some time with us as we worship our Lord together. Please know that your presence today is a blessing to our parish family.

Would you like to know more about our parish family?

All are welcome at Our Lady of Lourdes and we do our best to reach out to everyone.

If you would like more information about our parish or if you would like one of our team to be in touch with you, please contact the Parish Office at 661.3224, option 1, or send an email to parishoffice@ollchurch.org



Veterans and Patriots Wanted

This year, the parish family of Our Lady of Lourdes has been invited to take part in the West Islip Memorial Day Parade.

It would be wonderful for us to be represented on this important patriotic day honoring our troops and veterans. If your group or ministry is interested in helping us organize parish participation, please contact Fr. Mike, pastor@ollchurch.org or call 631.661.3224.

The Great Ministry Event

Come and See...



Our Lady of Lourdes has so many wonderful and caring Ministries. Every day our parishioners "Make a Difference" by offering gifts of loving service in support of our community. Each of these gifts offered in Christ's name provides a glimpse of our God's love for His people.

On Pentecost Weekend (May 22/23) at and after each of our Masses, we will celebrate by highlighting our many Ministries. This will be an opportunity for each of us to see the breadth and depth of all that happens at OLL.

*You are invited to "Come and See"
-is there a ministry here that calls to you?
Spend some time with us and celebrate
the great works done in our Parish!*

Around Our Parish

OLL Pilgrimage to the Holy Land Walking in Jesus' Footsteps

April 25 - May 4, 2011

Come and walk in the footsteps of Jesus along with our Pastor Fr. Mike Vetrano.

Consider being with family and friends on a trip of a lifetime!

Walk the streets of Jerusalem and be in the place of our Christian heritage. Come to Bethlehem, visit the Basilica of the Nativity. Be at the Baptism site of Jesus on the Jordan River, sail on the Sea of Galilee and walk in the Garden of Gethsemane. You will visit the room of the Last Supper, walk on the Via Dolorosa "The Way of the Cross", and drive through the wilderness of Judea and the mountains of Jerusalem. All this on your trip of a lifetime. For more information, come to our meeting on **Monday, May 24 at 7:30 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**.



There's a new...

A new *evening* men's prayer group is starting up! It will be held once a month, on the third Wednesday of each month from **7:30 PM until 8:30 PM in the Spiritual Life Center**.

The first meeting will be **Wednesday night, June 16**. Come with your ideas. We'll read and discuss the Liturgy for the following Sunday Mass.

For more information, call Jack Fitzgerald at 587.5548 or Tim Keegan at 926.4900.

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.

Men's Group

An Invitation to all men from OLL and beyond...

We invite all men of the parish to meet for prayer and reflection after 8 AM Mass on **Thursday, May 20, in the Parish Center**. We meet once a month to read and discuss the Scriptures for the following Sunday. Come with your ideas and suggestions. We'll gather for conversation and fellowship. Join us in this pioneering experience for men. Call Jack Fitzgerald at 587.5548 for more information.

Mark your calendars...

Upcoming Youth Ministry Events

Monday, May 17th:

Middle School Youth Group starts at 6:30 PM in Room 16.

Monday, May 24th:

High School Youth Group starts at 7 p.m. in Room 16.



Youth Group Meeting Schedule

Middle School

May 17

June 7, 21

High School

May 24

June 14, 21

**All meetings will be in Room 16 of the school*



Youth Group

High School students! Youth Group for grades 9-12 has moved from Thursdays to Mondays at OLL! We will still meet at 7 PM in Room 16. For a full list of dates please go to ollchurch.org/youth, email Allegra@ollchurch.org or check the bulletin board in the All Purpose Room!

“The 6 Committee” is getting a make-over!

We all love *The 6* and its laid-back atmosphere and now it’s going teen! If you’re a student in grades 6-12, join “The 6 Committee”! We need your help to keep “The Six” comfortable and to make it even better! To become a member of the 6 Committee speak with Allegra or email Allegra@ollchurch.org.



CHILDREN

LOVED
ONES

DREAMS

YOUTH

Good Grief...

We are sure that when you think of that phrase, you immediately think of “Good Grief, Charlie Brown.” Not exactly what we had in mind.

So, what’s so good about grief? Come together as we share the many losses in our lives. Together, with Jesus, we can mend broken hearts. The Ministry of Family Healing invites you to a night of prayer on **Thursday, May 20 at 7:30 PM in the Parish Center**. Call the Religious Education Office at 661.5440, option 3, to register. Please, bring a friend and, as always, food and fellowship to follow.

HOMES

HEALTH

FINANCIAL

FAITH

LOSSES

JOBS

FRIENDSHIPS

Where is the RCIA?

Their journey continues...

Listen as they share their stories with us each week.

Following the Road to the RCIA Exerience

My decision to participate in the RCIA program this year was one I had been contemplating for quite some time now.

I had returned to the Church three years ago, when my youngest grandson began Religious Education at OLL. I became involved in the process of his education and realized that it was time for ME to continue mine. It wasn’t enough just going to the 9:30 AM Mass with Ryan, I needed more. I craved more. I believed there was more for me in this place that I felt most comfortable, serene and loved. I was void of something and I was determined to seek it out. I knew I was being guided down a new road.

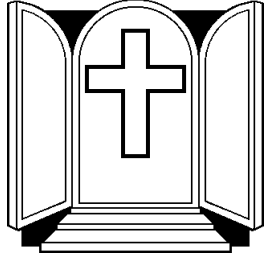
I had a feeling of peace and belonging in Church, but I had not completed the sacraments. I knew the prayers. I sang the songs. I said the Rosary, but, I knew I was missing something. I realized that the RCIA program was where I needed to be to continue to learn and grow within myself and to complete those sacraments. I had witnessed the Saturday Night Easter Vigil before, and became more determined to complete my journey. I knew what I wanted to do and I signed on.

The support from Fr. Bob, S. Nancy, Jerry and all the wonderful guides on this team was all I needed.

We (my fellow RCIA candidates, including my son, Tim), learned and spoke of Christianity, community, spirituality, sharing, love, friendship, ministries and GOD. Always GOD.

We received the Eucharist and Confirmation. Sharing these sacraments with one another, our sponsors, and our fellow parishioners, will forever remain special. It was the culmination of our Holy Week journey. I feel more fulfilled because of this opportunity given to me as an adult. I look forward to becoming a part of next year’s RCIA Team to help and guide those who wish to partake of this journey. My journey has just begun. The road is never ending, and those we meet and what we feel and learn and share is only the beginning. Look for me... I will be there...

–Carole Civile



Open Wide the Door!

Let the Spirit In!

A Spiritual Evening for Women

Presenter: Sister Joy Castiglione, OP

Tuesday, May 18

8 - 9:30 PM

Parish Center

**TIME
CHANGE!**

As women, we are always great with hospitality. Did you ever wonder what it would be like to welcome Jesus into your heart and entertain him there?

During our evening of prayer we will reflect on “opening the door” of our heart to have Jesus feel “at home” and how can we grow in a more intimate relationship with him.

As part of the evening, we will have group discussion, sharing, and a guided meditation.

There is a \$5 fee for each session. No fee is required for those who have paid the Religious Education Family Fee or Our Lady of Lourdes School tuition. Registration is necessary and helpful. This will enable us to have enough reading material and refreshments for all those attending. To register, please call the Religious Education Office at 661.5440, option 3 or email to religiously@ollchurch.org.

Around Our Parish

A Night in the Garden

An Evening of Prayer and Reflection

Tuesday, May 18

7 – 8 PM

Spiritual Life Center




What does Christ’s experience in the Garden mean for all of us as we try to understand:

- The importance of prayer
- The role of friends and angels in our lives
- The connection between our suffering and the suffering of Jesus
- Our struggle to live and accept the words– “Thy Will Be Done”

Presented by: Students of the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception - Seminarian John Sureau (remember him ?!), Donna Spoto, John Mc Mahon and Deacon Tom Reilly. This presentation is part of a final group project for an elective class entitled, Passion Narratives. Help John Sureau and his classmates get an A!

Hospitality will follow the presentation. So we can make sure that we have enough food for fellowship, please RSVP to this event by calling 631.423.0483, x. 528 or by e-mailing to jsureau@optonline.net.

Discovery Camp



Sponsored by
Our Lady of Lourdes 44 Toomey Road, West Islip

Registration Now Being Accepted*

June 28th – August 6th
9am – 5pm, Monday - Friday

A full time day camp program for students entering grades K – 7 beginning with an academic based morning and a fun-filled afternoon of sports provided by F.A.S.T. Athletics.

Program choices include:
K – 1 "Under the Sea" or "Bugs Galore"
2 – 4 "Rain Forest" or "Space Camp"
5 – 7 "Mind Games" or "Teen Spirit"

Before / After Care and School Provided Lunch Available for an Additional Fee. For More Information Contact:

Lisa Kennedy, Director
lkennedy@ollschool.org 631.587.7200 ext.100

*non-refundable/non-transferable

Religious Education

at Our Lady of Lourdes during the Easter Season...

For all in Grades 6/7/8 in our parish family...

Hang Out Nites continue...

Friday May 21	7:30 PM - 9:30 PM	Parish Center
Friday June 18	7:30 PM - 9:30 PM	Parish Center

Don't forget...there's something for everyone!

All 6th / 7th / 8th graders of our Parish Family- come play volleyball, basketball.

We have Guitar Hero 2, free raffles, music and more. **DON'T MISS IT!**

also...

Grades 9/10/11/12

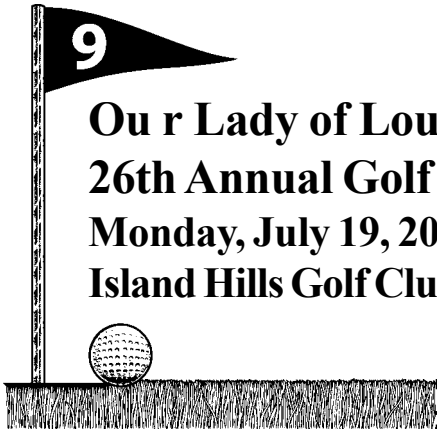
ALL ARE WELCOME! Be a part of the Team. High School leaders help with set-up, participating in activities, refreshments, clean-up, etc... and assist Adult Chaperones.

For more information, call 661.5440, option 3 or email religioused@ollchurch.org.

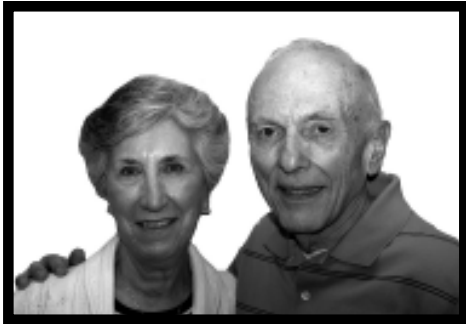
Did you know?

You can go to "eChalk" at www.ollreled.org to link and follow your "own" grade to find new and exciting activities, important parent info, and view our OLL Religious Education Calendar.

9
Our Lady of Lourdes
26th Annual Golf Classic
Monday, July 19, 2010
Island Hills Golf Club, Sayville



This year we will be honoring:
Deacon John and Anne DeGuardi
Paul and Diane Munch



Deacon John and Anne DeGuardi



Paul and Diane Munch

Golfing Package includes green fees, golf cart, driving range, lunch and dinner, all for \$250 per golfer.
Discounts for seniors 60+ and college students, \$200.



If you would like to join us for dinner only, \$75 per person.

Outing includes cocktails, raffles, roving beverage cart, Hole-in-one contest for a new Car, contests- longest drive, most accurate, closest to pin.

Registration and BBQ is at 11 AM with a 12:30 PM shotgun tee off. Cocktail hour is 5:30 - 6:30 PM with dinner at 6:30 PM.



Journal Ads:

Full page \$ 100
 Half page \$ 75
 Quarter page \$ 50

Sponsorships:

Dinner \$1,500
 Lunch \$ 750
 Driving Range \$ 500
 Individual Hole \$ 100

*For more information please contact Golf Committee member Rich at 661.5478.
 All proceeds will benefit Our Lady of Lourdes.*

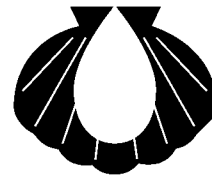
Support Groups

Alcoholics Anonymous:

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

ALANON:

Each Wednesday at
10 AM in Lourdes Hall-
9:30 AM beginners meeting
convent lower level.
(Free babysitting available.)



Baptisms

Kristian Francis Burnett

Richard and Susan

Olivia Mary Burnett

Richard and Susan

Justin Tyler Tanasy

Alexander and Michelle

Derek Michael Turcios

Salvador and Lisa

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, May 17

8:00 AM Lorelie Jandley

Tuesday, May 18

Saint John I, pope and martyr

8:00 AM Richard Gordon

Wednesday, May 19

8:00 AM Bill Mace

Thursday, May 20

Saint Bernardine of Siena, priest

8:00 AM Patrick Leonard Vigna

Friday, May 21

Saint Christopher Magallanes, priest and martyr

8:00 AM Molly Sweeney

Saturday, May 22

8:00 AM Catherine Colabella, Rita Lyons, James McMahon,
Amelia Ryan, Thomas Courtney, Henry R. Gleckler, Jr.,
Linda Kelly (*living*)

5:00 PM Al Bianco

Fr. Pat Amabile

Sunday, May 23

8:00 AM Catherine M. Peterson
Fr. Bob Scheckenback

9:30 AM Elizabeth Hawkins
Fr. Mike Vetrano

11:00 AM Nicholas Spinelli
Fr. Pat Amabile

12:30 PM John Accardi
Fr. Ambrose Cabildo

6:00 PM People of the Parish, Joseph Senia, Diana Zotto, Ross Goldin,
Frank Ojeda, John McAllister, Lois Ann Wieber, Jennie Quigley,
Eileen Pelkofsky, Bryan Monahan, James Winthrop,
Margaret Tinervia, Joe Malkasian
Fr. Bob Scheckenback



Rest In Peace

Grace Tavella died on May 2 and celebration of the Mass of Christian Burial was May 6. We extend our prayers to her husband, Salvatore, and entire family.

Celebrating Sacraments



7th Sunday of Easter

The final words of Revelation that form today's second reading are rich in symbolism and filled with hope. The Easter candle, which has been burning in our midst, and will do so for another week, incorporates some of the symbols alluded to in the reading. When the candle was blessed at the Easter Vigil, the letters alpha and omega—the first and last of the Greek alphabet—were traced on the candle, a reminder that through his resurrection Jesus is the beginning and the end of all who believe in him. Our life has its origin in him, and he is our final destiny, as is expressed in the selection from Revelation today.

In the hymn sung immediately after the Easter candle is lit, the Exsultet, the deacon sings, "May the Morning Star which never sets find this flame still burning: Christ, that Morning Star, who came back from the dead, and shed his peaceful light on all [hu]mankind." The biblical reference for that are these final words of Revelation.

And the gift of life-giving water that is promised in today's reading to any who thirst is the baptism that we have been celebrating in these fifty days of Easter, from the newly baptized at the Easter Vigil, to those who have completed their initiation through confirmation and Eucharist, to those of us who have renewed our baptismal vows during this Easter season. We who are baptized in Christ have the right to the tree of life and to enter the city through its gates, as the reading proclaims.

With the author of Revelation, with the saints and elders who gather around the throne, with all those who have washed their robes and made them white, with all living creatures, we can joyfully make the final words of Revelation our own: "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!" (22:20).

2010 Liturgical Publications Inc

Readings for the Week of May 16, 2010

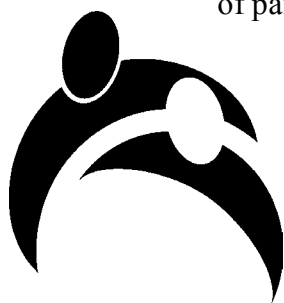
Sunday:	Acts 7:55-60/Rv 22:12-14, 16-17, 20/Jn 17:20-26
Monday:	Acts 19:1-8/Jn 16:29-33
Tuesday:	Acts 20:17-27/Jn 17:1-11a
Wednesday:	Acts 20:28-38/Jn 17:11b-19
Thursday:	Acts 22:30; 23:6-11/Jn 17:20-26
Friday:	Acts 25:13b-21/Jn 21:15-19
Saturday:	Acts 28:16-20, 30-31/Jn 21:20-25
Next Sunday:	<i>Vigil:</i> Gn 11:1-9 or Ex 19:3-8a, 16-20b or Ez 37:1-14 or Jl 3:1-5/Rom 8:22-27/Jn 7:37-39 <i>Day:</i> Acts 2:1-11/1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13 or Rom 8:8-17/Jn 20:19-23 or 14:15-16, 23b-26

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.

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 Sacrament of the Sick.

Pray for Our Sick

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

Roy Anderson, Alicia Atteniese, Susan Aviza, Deacon Dick Barry, Ben Bellotti, Antoinette Bongiorno, Theresa Buffa, Nicholas Buscemi, Jr., Michael Ciotkosz, Donald L. Coffey, Anthony Colitti, Regina Cranor, Jeanne DellaRagione, Ann Donlon, Tony Drexler, Debbie Eichen, Vivian Gordon, Jack Hartz, Edward Herger, Brian Hinkelman, Lili Hinkelman, Max Illiano, Herb Jaggi, Diana Kaehne, Mary Kaval, Kathleen Kerrigan, Josephine Kosiczky, Charles LaSala, Joseph Lehmann, S. Diane Liona, Kara Lobasso, Charlie Maccio, Louise Malcuit, Vicky Massaro, Michele McCann, Peter McCann, Sr., Dorothy Meloni, Rick Mirabella, Rae Morris, Brenden Muldoon, Ruth Murray, Evelyn Nonnon, John O'Brien, Joyce Petersen, Arthur Petrino, Joanne Popper, Laura Prichard, Joe Radosti, Carol Randazzo-Hopkins, Baby Skyler Rene, Michael Savino, Ann Marie Schiraldi, Jayna Schmidt, Dorothy Shiavone, Derek Stahl, Mary Clair Stephen, Stephen Straub, Sr., John Tramazzo, Nancy Turano, Vera Vieni, Pat Wallace, Kyle Williams, Geraldine Wloszczyna, Joe Yezek

Financial Summary

May 9, 2010

Weekly Collection	\$ 18,036.00
Weekly Budget	-\$ 19,000.00
+/- for the week	\$ (964.00)

The estimated weekly collection needed to maintain and operate our parish buildings, ministries, programs and salaries is \$19,000.

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:

Bryan R. Dempsey-US Marines

Christopher Florca-US Marines

Michael Mallimo- US Army

Anthony Mannino-US Marines

JD Montefusco-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.

Pantry Needs



peanut butter
jelly
canned pork and beans
spaghetti sauce
hand soap
hot cocoa
cookies
crackers

Donations to Outreach

Parish Outreach has received many donations in memory of loved ones.

If you would like to make a donation to Parish Outreach in memory of a loved one, please call Mary McMahon, Director of Parish Social Ministry at 661.3224, option 4.

Public Service Announcement

Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Outreach Program

Free:

Physical Exam and Medical Screening at Good Samaritan Hospital.
100 Montauk Highway, West Islip, New York 11795

Includes:

History, Physical, Chest X-Ray, Breast Exam, EKG,
Blood & Urine Test, Pap Smear.

Eligibility:

18 yrs. or older without funds or medical insurance,
those who have Medicaid only and are not regularly
seen by a physician or clinic.
This is non-denominational and open to all who qualify.

For an appointment or more information call: 631.376. 3182.
Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday from 10 AM-2 PM.

The Anatomy of Sacrifice

by Ron Rolheiser, OMI

What do we mean when we say that we make a sacrifice? I have sacrificed my career for my children! I sacrifice a lot for my job! Love demands that we make many sacrifices! Sometimes we must sacrifice life itself for the sake of integrity! Christ sacrificed himself for our sins! The Eucharist is a sacrifice!

From what is common in all these expressions we can extract Webster's definition of a sacrifice: The surrender of something of value for the sake of something else.

That is a good definition, but it contains more than first meets the eye, as is evident when we look at the concept of sacrifice in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Take, for example, the famous story where Abraham is asked to sacrifice his son, Isaac. What is ultimately behind God's invitation to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac on an altar?

These are the outer elements of the story: Abraham has longed for a son for many years. Finally, after the situation was humanly hopeless, Sarah conceives and he is given a son, Isaac, who is described as Abraham's "only one", his "precious one". But then God invites Abraham to take Isaac and offer him in sacrifice. Abraham, with a heavy heart, agrees to the request and sets off with Isaac, carrying wood, fire, and a knife, all the while having to answer his son's curiosity about why they were not bringing a victim for the sacrifice.

When they arrive at the place of sacrifice, Abraham gathers the wood, lights the fire, binds Isaac, and then raises the knife to kill him. But God intervenes, stops the sacrifice, and gives Abraham a ram instead to offer. The story ends with Abraham walking back to his own land together with Isaac. What is the deep lesson inside this story?

At one level, the lesson is that God does not want human sacrifice, but there is a deeper, more intimate, inner lesson that teaches us something about the innate need inside of us to offer sacrifice. Simply put, the lesson is this: In order for something to be received as a gift it must be received twice. What is implied here?

A gift, by definition, is something that is not deserved but given freely. What is our first impulse when we are given a gift? Our instinctual response is: "I can't take this! I don't deserve this!" In essence, that gesture, that healthy instinctual response, is an attempt to give the

gift back to its giver. But, of course, the giver refuses to take the gift back and re-gives it to us with the assurance: "But I want you to have this!" When we receive it the second time, it is now more properly ours because, by trying to give it back, we healthily recognized that it was a gift, unmerited, undeserved.

That is the exact set of dynamics within the story of Abraham offering to sacrifice Isaac. Isaac comes to him as the greatest, most-undeserved, gift of his life. His willingness to sacrifice him parallels the instinctual gesture: "I don't deserve this! I cannot accept this!" He offers the gift back to its giver. But the giver, Love itself, stops the gesture and gives the gift the second time. Now Abraham can receive Isaac, without guilt, as gift. When they are walking back home, Isaac is now Abraham's son in a way that he never was before. Abraham had to receive the gift twice by sacrificing it the first time.

That is the essence of sacrifice: To properly receive anything, including life itself, requires that we recognize it precisely as gift, as something undeserved. And to do that requires sacrifice, a willingness to give some or the entire gift back to its giver.

We see this as the dynamic underlying the ritual of ancient sacrifice. For example: A farmer would harvest a crop. But, before he or his family would eat a even mouthful of it, he would take some of it (the "first-fruits") and offer it back to God in the form of a sacrifice, usually by burning it so that the smoke rising up to the heavens would take some of the crop back to God whom the farmer saw as the real giver of that crop. After sacrificing some of it in this way, the farmer and his family could now enjoy the rest of it without guilt because, by trying to give it back to its author, they made themselves more aware that it was gift. They can now enjoy it without guilt precisely because, through sacrifice, they have acknowledged it as gift.

That's the inner essence of all sacrifice, whether the sacrificing of a career for the sake of our children or Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Sacrifice recognizes gift as gift. Like Abraham, it tries to give the gift back to the giver, but the giver stops the sacrifice and gives it back in even a deeper way.

We would enjoy our lives considerably more if we understood that.


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.

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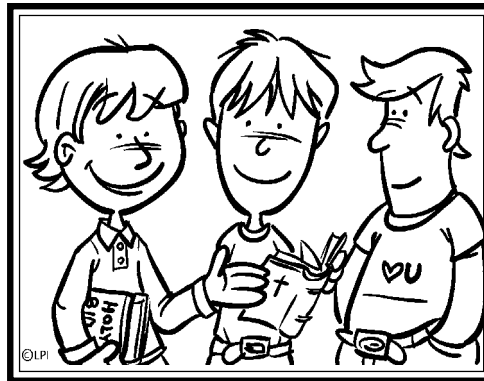
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If pieces are missing from a jigsaw puzzle, you cannot see the whole picture. If keys are missing from a piano, you cannot hear a whole song. When Christians do not work well together, the world cannot see how great and loving God is. Jesus prayed that all of us would stay close to God and to one another. Do your part. Encourage other Christians.



Mission for the Week



Plan a service project with children from another Christian church in your area. Collect food for a food pantry, or sing songs to the grandmas and grandpas in a nursing home.



Puzzle

Fit this Gospel message into the empty squares:

My followers know that you sent me.

K				
				T
	S			

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Prayer



God, I want the world to see how good you are. Help me to be good and loving to all Christians.

Something to Draw



Draw a picture of you and other children from your church collecting food for the poor.