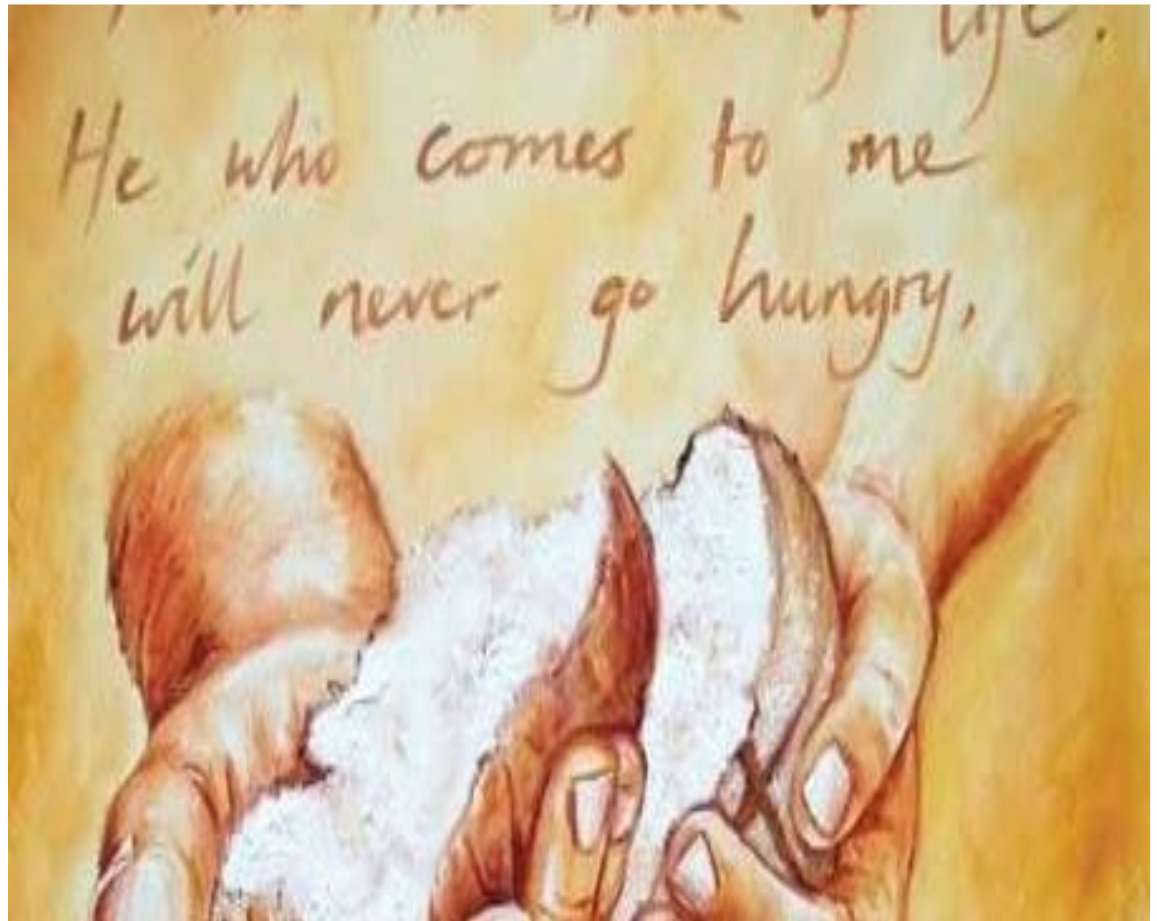




The Parish of Saints Philip and James
1 Carow Place, St. James, NY 11780

631-584-5454

August 1st, 2021
The Eighteenth Sunday
In Ordinary Time



"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger,
and whoever believes in me will never thirst."

John 6:35

"With Philip & James we pray to live lives worthy of the call to be
Apostles of Hope"

Daily Mass: 7:30am and 9:15 am
Saturday 5pm Sunday: 8am 10 am 12noon

STS. PHILIP & JAMES PASTORAL STAFF

Parish Center Phone: 631-584-5454 Parish Fax: 631-862-9675

Website—www.sspj.org

PARISH CENTER OFFICE HOURS

Open Monday, Tuesday Wednesday 9am-6pm

Open Thursday 9am-6pm

Closed Friday, Saturday and Sunday

CLERGY

Father Tom Haggerty, Pastor
Father Joe Lobo-Associate Pastor
Deacon Ronald Blasius
Deacon John Keenan

PASTORAL ASSOCIATE

Sister Theresita Donach, CSFN

BUSINESS MANAGER

Virginia Portanova

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COORDINATOR Grades 1-3

Charlotte Czujko

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COORDINATOR Grades 4-6

Barbara Luna

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COORDINATOR Grades 7-8

Dominick Avento

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Margaret Adams

COORDINATOR OF PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

Lynn Sisti

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY

Dominick Avento

DIRECTOR OF FACILITIES

John Cordes

SSPJ SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Diane M. Anderson

School Phone-631-584-7896 School Fax: 631-584-3258

TRUSTEES

Brendan McGovern ~ Tina Cafaro

PASTORAL COUNCIL

Michael Sharkey, Lou Guerra, Cynthia Lombardi, Paul Damato
Martin Marut, Maureen Burke, Erin Nicastro

Sacraments

Baptism— Celebrated twice per month. Parents are asked to register at the Pastoral Center for Pre-Baptism Program.

Marriage—Couples are asked to contact the Pastoral Center before visiting the reception hall. The Marriage Preparation process is nine months before your proposed wedding date.

Confirmation—Seventh and Eighth grade students are prepared to celebrate through Religious Ed or SSPJ School. Adults prepare through RCIA.

Reconciliation— Available Saturdays from 4:00pm-5:00pm in the Church or by contacting the Parish Center for an appointment.

Anointing of the Sick— In case of serious, unexpected illness, please contact the Parish Center office to arrange for a Priest to pray with the person who is ill. Anointing of the Sick is held on the first Sunday of the month following the 8:00am mass please see the Sacristan before mass.

R.C.I.A.— Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (non-Catholic adults desiring to become Catholic) are asked to contact the Parish Center Office.

Eucharistic Adoration In The Church— Monday 1:30pm -7pm

PLEASE REMEMBER THOSE WHO SERVE FOR US IN YOUR PRAYERS



LCDR. MEGAN M. SHUTKA-VIK, USN

CAPT. WILSON MARKS- USN

CAPTAIN MICHAEL DOLAN- JR.

LT. COL. JOHN KAIRES

SPC. NICOLE A. CANNON

SGM. MICHAEL P. BORRELLI-US ARMY

CAPT. JOHN TULLY- USN

LT. COL. JAMES TULLY-US ARMY

JOSEPH SAGGIO- USNC

CAPTAIN PAUL WILLMS

STAFF SGT. MICHAEL LONGHENRY

LT. COL. PAUL T. JACKSON-

STAFF SGT ALEXANDER PARRELLA-USAF

RICHARD SOTOMAYER- USAF

SGT. CONNOR F. SCOTT- USMC

SGT. CORY O'HARA -USMC

CDR. ROBERT J. MARSH-USN

PFC. CHARLES CHRISTOPHER HOWELL

STEVEN CAVA-USN

ERIC SEELIN- USMC

CW2 CHRIS MUNZ

CW2 NATASHA WORTMAN

CORPORAL JAMES T. CASEY-USMC

SGT. JOSHUA MAHONEY- US ARMY

KEVIN JONES-USCG

PRIVATE JOSHUA OLSEN-USARNG

GLEN CRIMA-US ARMY

STAFF SGT. ANTHONY SCIAMETTA— US ARMY

MARIO CATANIA-USMC

RYAN ANTHONY NASCIMENTO-USMC

KYLE ANTHONY NASCIMENTO-US ARMY

ENS. RYAN M. SHOWS -USN

STAFF SGT. RYAN REXRODE-USMC

DR. KARA VANDEKIEFT, COL.-USAF

SGT. STEPHEN D. OUTCAULT-USMC

PAUL MUMOLO-USN

VICTORIA ZEMAN, USCG

KYLE J. GRUNER—US ARMY

MARK GIORDANO—US COASTGUARD

KELLI MCLAUGHLIN— LT. US ARMY NATL.GUARD

STAFF SGT MICHAEL J BANG SPECIAL FORCES US ARMY

MATTHEW PATRICK GALLAGHER US ARMY

MIDN ERIN NICASTRO, USN.

Financial Support Needed weekly to meet Parish budget: \$17,890

Weekly Collection: Sunday July 25th, 2021 : \$ 9,487.

Faith Direct : (126Participants) 3,253.

Total Collections: \$ 12,740.

**FAITH DIRECT: VISIT SSPJ.ORG CLICK ON FAITH DIRECT ICON:
USING SSPJ PARISH CODE: NY232**

As you probably know, the Diocese of Rockville Centre has declared Bankruptcy under Chapter 11 of the Federal Bankruptcy Law.

In order to be as helpful as possible to the parties that may be affected by this bankruptcy, we will be publishing the following note regarding “proof of claim forms” for the next few months:

Information regarding the deadlines for filing proofs of claim in the Diocese’s chapter 11 case and the forms to use can be found by clicking on the following link to the Diocese’s bankruptcy website and scrolling down the page <https://dm.epiq11.com/drvc>

Father Tom's Letter

Dear Friends,

In last week's gospel, Jesus provided food for thousands - perishable food. In this week's gospel, Jesus again speaks of bread, telling us he is the Bread of Life. Fr. John Kavanaugh, SJ, reflects:

Jesus in the fourth Gospel is portrayed as warning us not to work for perishable food. There is another kind of bread, the bread of our destiny, a "food that remains unto life eternal." The people asked Jesus to perform a sign that they might believe in him. The eternal bread would be his sign-the new manna, the new bountiful gift of God. Jesus himself is to be our sustenance, and that is the work of God. "I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me shall ever be hungry; no one who believes in me shall thirst again."

This is not easy to believe, to say the least. It demands a great effort for us to let go of the illusion that we can ultimately feed or save ourselves. But this faith is precisely what Christ requires of us.

Bishop Barres is lifting the dispensation from attending Sunday Mass on the weekend of August 14–15. Needless to say, we can't wait to welcome everyone home to worship together in our beautiful parish church. Next weekend you'll hear our plans to invite everyone who attends the weekend prior to join in signing our **"welcome back home"** sign which will be hung above our church doors. We plan on cutting the ribbon on the weekend of the 14/15 as we reinstitute the Offertory Procession. This bringing forward of the gifts of bread and wine signifies our desire to place ourselves in new ways in the gifts presented. We are offering ourselves for consecration and in prayerfully learning new ways to receive Christ who comes to us in one another.

And please be sure to consider coming to our upcoming movie night! This will be held on Tuesday, August 10th. (rain date - Wednesday, August 11th) See the invite and "car making challenge" further on in the bulletin

Finally, I'm heading out this weekend and will be catching up with family and friends. Fr. Kevin will join Fr. Joe at SSPJ during August. So as the song goes, "see you in September"!

But first, a few more "interesting" signs!

Notice in health food shop window: CLOSED DUE TO ILLNESS.

Spotted in a safari park: ELEPHANTS, PLEASE STAY IN YOUR CAR.

Seen during a conference: FOR ANYONE WHO HAS CHILDREN AND DOESN'T KNOW IT, THERE IS DAY CARE ON THE 1ST FLOOR.

Notice in a farmer's field: THE FARMER ALLOWS WALKERS TO CROSS THE FIELD FOR FREE, BUT THE BULL CHARGES.

On a repair shop door: WE CAN REPAIR ANYTHING. (PLEASE KNOCK HARD ON THE DOOR - THE BELL DOESN'T WORK.)

Peace,

Father Tom

Apostles: We Who Are Sent...Hope: God's constant gift of new possibilities

Mass Intentions, For the week of August 1st, 2021

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION



Monday's in the church: 1:30-7:00pm

Dear Lord, You sent Your Son as the living bread that came down out of heaven. You promised that if anyone eats of this bread, they will live forever. The bread which You gave for the life of the world was Your flesh. Father, I am eternally grateful for the sacrifice that You made. You gave Yourself for the world, and You would do it all over again even if it was only to save me! I love You, Lord, Amen.

Remember in our hearts and prayers

Angie Mingione	Joseph H
Angela Amoroso	Joseph S.
Anna Ormsby	Luis Anthony
Avery Akhogba	Antonette Sabatino
Arthur Gureck	James Macchiano
Baby Ben	John Harney
Barbara Bombace	Judy Rampola
Barbara Ruland	Joseph Mazelis
Mattia Rose Lubrano	Joseph Costa
Belinda Groneman	Kenneth Cook
Brendan O'Connor	Kathleen N.
Belinda Vega	Kitty Cronin
Brianna Florio	Kim Olofson
Bob Keenan	Leon Donach
Carol	Lynn McDonnell
Carolyn Nehl	Mark Geld
Charles Figliosi	Mark Hildreth
Claudia Chandler	Mary Fresi
Deacon Ron Blasius	Maryann Kevlin
Deirdre W.	Maria Clark
Dermot O'Connor	Marie del Cielo
Dolores North	Marilyn Suli
Donna Patrissi	Matthew Parrella
Dorothy Mitchell	Marie & Frank Fiecco
Dylan Beach	Michael Fisher
Ella	Mike Lofaro
Ellie Walsh	Monsignor Iocavacci
Esther Styles	Pasquale Savarese
Grace Bertolone	Paul Bertrand
Ginny & John Rief	Peter Donach
Gladys Blake	P.I.
Gregory Parker	Ricardo Buffit
Helen	Riordan Cavoaris
Heidi Ray	Sara Jean Andersen
Joanna	Stephen Dolce
Jackie Harvey	Tara Cesarski
Jack Donohue	Vivien Cordes
John Cronin	Vicki Archdeacon
John DeStefano	Veronica Broderick
John Soscia	Wayne Hendricks
John Scomillio	

Saturday	July 31st, 2021 Presider: Father Ciya Lector: J Auletta/Smith EM: Mantia/Martin/Rapp	9:15am 5:00pm	Jason Scott Monte Leonard Dabalsky
Sunday	August 1st, 2021 Presider: Father Kevin Lector: A Willman/Kanuika EM: Kanuika/Sehne/Sica	8am	For the People of SSPJ
	Presider: Father Joe Lector: Wos/Koke EM: Consenz/Anderson/ Amen	10:00am	Efrain Olivo
	Collective Mass Presider: Father Joe Lector: Cashman/Just EM: Napolitano/Luna/ Parish	12:00pm	Lawrence M. Kenney Andrea Sciarretta Steven Gnyp Jerome Castronova Eugene Patrick Souther
Monday St. Eusebius St. Peter Julian	August 2nd, 2021	7:30am 9:15am	Sister Marie Gerard Hoffman Anne O'Neill
Tuesday	August 3rd, 2021	7:30am 9:15am	Vincent & Georgia Priebe Living-Father Tom Haggerty
Wednesday St. John Vianney	August 4th, 2021	7:30am 9:15am	Cynthia Menez William Olsen
Thursday Dedication of Basilica of St. Mary Major	August 5th, 2021	7:30am 9:15am	Robert M. Keenan <u>Collective Mass:</u> Vincent Noto Gail Pascalli & John Schlee
Friday Transfiguration of the Lord	August 6th, 2021	7:30am 9:15am	Bob Keenan Terry A. Hobbes
Saturday Sts. Sixtus and St. Cajetan	August 7th, 2021 Presider: Father Joe Lectors: Tobin/Dreschler EM: Mantia/Martin/Rapp	9:15am 5:00pm	Bob Keenan Patricia McNulty
Sunday	August 8th, 2021 Presider: Father Kevin Lectors: Luna/Sehne EM: Portanova/Ramos/Sica	8:00am	For the People of SSPJ
	Presider: Father Joe Lectors: Koke/Rubano EM: Anderson/Lombardi/ Sisti	10:00am	Teresa Orlik
	Collective Mass Presider: Father Joe Lector: Kenton/M. Hoonhout EM: Luna/Klee/ Napolitano	12:00pm	Richard & Lois Chopik Marie Csorny Bob (Red) Keenan Charles A. Jones, Jr. Steven Gnyp

SSPJ FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

Main parking lot across from church



TUESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2021 8:00 PM

(rain date Wed. AUG. 11)

MOVIE: YES DAY rated PG

Always feeling like they have to say "no" to their kids, Allison and Carlos decide to give their three kids a "Yes Day", during which the kids have 24 hours to make the rules.

Create and Bring Your Own Car CONTEST

starting at 7:00PM

Be as creative as you like!

You can sit in your car to watch the movie!

Prizes will be awarded at 7:45 PM

POPCORN will be provided!

Feel free to bring your own non-alcoholic drinks/coolers!

Don't forget to bring your outdoor chair and/or blanket!

****ALL CHILDREN 18 AND UNDER MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT****

Enrolling Now!

SSPJ Nursery School Program

A strong FAITH-filled foundation is a Gift that will last FOREVER!

2021 -2022



A safe, fun loving program, (taught by certified teachers) where children will engage in age-appropriate activities designed to help them learn and grow socially, academically and spiritually.

Half Day Program 8:30 am - 12:30 pm

2 Days - Tuesday/Thursday

3 Days - Monday/Wednesday/Friday

5 Days - Monday - Friday

Full Day Program 8:30 am - 2:50 pm

2 Days - Tuesday/Thursday

3 Days - Monday/Wednesday/Friday

5 Days - Monday - Friday

Before Care available Monday - Friday from 7:30 am - 8:30 am

After Care available Monday - Friday from 2:50 pm - 5:30 pm

Children must turn 3 on or before Dec. 1st 2021 and be totally potty trained to participate in the Nursery Program

For more information or to schedule a tour Email Ms. Anderson

danderson@sspjschool.net

Religious Ed Registration

1. FIND THE RELIGIOUS ED REGISTRATION FORM FOR THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR AT:

SSPJ.ORG UNDER THE RELIGIOUS ED TAB

2. PLEASE NOTE: PERMISSION TO PUBLISH PHOTOS IN OUR BULLETIN, ON OUR WEBSITE, PARISH FACEBOOK PAGE AND GABRIEL.

3. GRADES 1 & 2 WILL BE INVITED BACK TO PARISH CAMPUS FOR THEIR RELIGIOUS ED CLASSES. THE DAYS AND TIMES ARE BEING FINALIZED. ALL CDC GUIDELINES WILL BE FOLLOWED.

4. GRADES 3-8 WILL CONTINUE THEIR LESSONS USING GOOGLE CLASSROOM

5. GRADE LEVEL MASSES TO FOSTER COMMUNITY WILL BE SCHEDULED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

6. IF YOU SHOULD HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, KINDLY CONTACT THE RELIGIOUS ED OFFICE AT 631-584-3204.

ALWAYS LOOKING FORWARD



Bronze Award Service Project

GIRLSCOUT TROOP 2111

Our 4th and 5th grade Juniors Troop is from Sts Philip and James school in St. James, New York. Our 5th graders are Rosalia, Melinda, Erin, Gabby, Sarah, Clarissa, Reilly and Maggie. Our 4th graders are Francesca and Reegan.

We are hoping to gift a birthday celebration to those in need. Can YOU help us with the following supplies?

*A Medium Shoe Box. *Birthday Wrapping Paper. *Cake Mix. *Icing. Candles.

*Birthday Napkins. *Birthday Plates. *Balloons. **And A Small Item Such As:

(has to be able to fit in the box)

Play Doh, an Activity Book, a Small Book,

Mini Puzzle, Toy Car, Fidget Spinner,

Key Chain, Jump Rope, Etc.

Thank you for contributing to Troop 2111's Bronze Award Project. Items and donations will be collected on an ongoing basis starting with 1/31 and 3/1 and continuing with every 1st of the month.

Contact information for the drop off sites are as follows:

Prew	Kieran	Radosta
201-240-6414	516-319-9336	631-495-0171
1 Park View Lane, Lake Grove	19 Weatherstone Way, Smithtown	17 Curlin Lane, St. James.

Music Ministry

August is here! I can't believe it!!

I will be taking vacation days throughout the month. Say hi to Meghan Williams who will be covering for me.

I thank you for helping.

Today's readings have us falling into a rut so deep we need Divine intervention to get us back on track. I know something you could do that is new. Join the Music Ministry!. We are scheduled to return in September and its like starting new after the COVID break.

So, think about it you never know. It might become the best thing you have ever done.

Happy August!!

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow"

A WORTHY PRAYER

Just a reminder.

A prayer said in anger is still a worthy prayer.

A prayer said in frustration is still a worthy prayer.

A prayer said in exhaustion is still a worthy prayer.

A prayer said in overwhelm is still a worthy prayer.

A prayer said in sadness is still a worthy prayer.

A prayer said in confusion is still a worthy prayer.

A prayer said in defeat is still a worthy prayer.

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
Amen.*

*—Adapted from Lauren Winters,
@brickhouseinthecity*

A Reflection from Sister T

Dear Friends,

During this time of summer, we are fortunate to hear the story of Moses and the Exodus. We also had the great feast of St. Mary Magdalene on July 22. I mention these two together because I heard something interesting recently about the Exodus, and I just love celebrating the feast of Mary Magdalene. I'm also reminded of my good friend Fr. Conrad Pecevich who would always come up with a creative and faith-filled way to celebrate Mary Magdalene and the role of women in the Church.

Now back on track! The piece I heard about Exodus spoke of the Israelites' freedom from the slavery of Pharaoh. The point being, once they were free and lead out of Egypt, they had only experienced an external freedom, not an internal freedom. Thus, there was grumbling and complaining to Moses and God! Their external freedom was complete, but they did not experience an internal freedom which would have helped them trust in God's care and concern for them. They couldn't see how God's gifts were with them while in the desert.

I couldn't help but think of Mary Magdalene who also was freed. The difference with her, perhaps, was the fact that her external freedom led to a gratitude that continually changed her heart. That change helped her internal freedom continue to grow. Growth is part and parcel of change. Without change, we become bound, and our freedom is lost. We become a slave to our misperceptions and negative attitudes, as were the Israelites.

Have you ever had freedom from an external situation but failed to recognize its gifts? Were you eventually able to develop the inner freedom necessary for total conversion and growth? Internal growth can be a challenge but so worth the effort. True freedom requires more than just externally moving from one place to another; it also requires the soil of a grateful heart. As Gail Sheehy has said "If we don't change, we don't grow. If we don't grow, we aren't really living." And I would add: If we don't change and grow, we are not really free!

So, we can be like the partially free Israelites or the full of life Mary Magdalene. The choice is ours. The object is not to be discouraged but to continue to grow each day and accept the changes that may come our way leading us to total freedom.

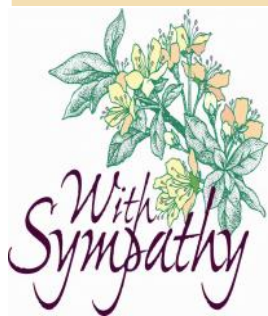
Have a great week,

Sister Theresita

I AM A CHILD OF GOD



Parish Social Ministry



Remembering in Our Prayers

Kathryn A. Hofmann

Vincent D. Donato

Philip Joseph Marsh

Dorothea Engelhardt

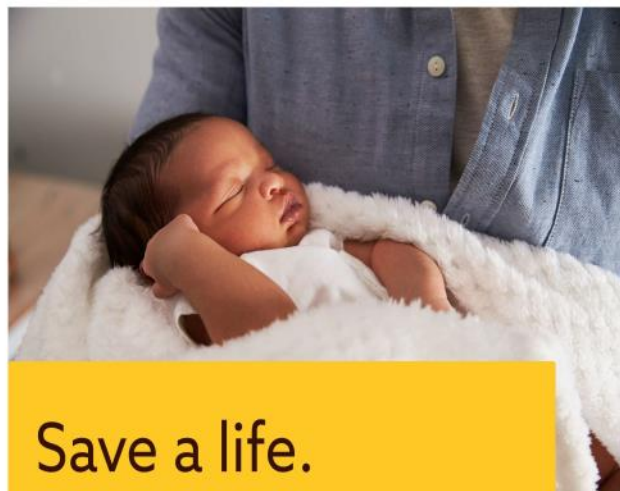
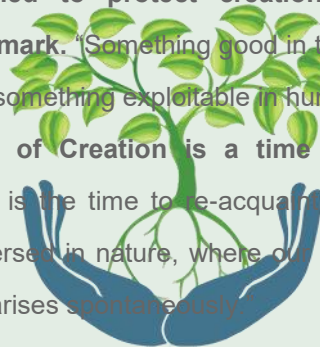
Safely home in the arms of Jesus

BACK TO SCHOOL

There are local children in our community in need of teacher mandated school items. If you would like to help, please take a card from the baskets in the back of the church. You may return unwrapped supplies with the color-coded card attached. The color of the card determines the grade level. Donations can be brought to the rectory office during the week or be placed in the boxes marked "Back to School" as you enter Church for weekend Masses. As always, thank you for your help.

We are called to protect creation—and we are missing the mark. "Something good in the eyes of God has become something exploitable in human hands."

The Season of Creation is a time for prayer in nature. "This is the time to re-acquaint ourselves with praying immersed in nature, where our gratitude to the creator God arises spontaneously."



Save a life. Contact Congress.

WHAT

Congress is trying to force Americans to pay for abortion.

HOW

The Hyde Amendment and similar laws have protected taxpayers from funding elective abortion for 45 years. Now, powerful members of Congress want to take away these laws that both Democrats and Republicans have supported for nearly half a century.

WHAT HAPPENS WITHOUT THESE PROTECTIONS?

Billions of taxpayer dollars could be used to pay for abortion.

TAKE ACTION

Sign the petition to Congress at NoTaxpayerAbortion.com!

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Need to talk?

855

818

HOPE(4673)

projecthope@nhcc.us

www.nhcc.us



NY Project Hope
Coping with COVID

Feeling uncertain, overwhelmed, anxious during COVID?

Here to talk | Here to listen | Here to support

NY Project Hope Crisis Counselors understand what you are going through. Talking with a crisis counselor is always free, confidential, and anonymous, allowing you to talk freely about the issues that are affecting you. We will help you navigate these unusual times and take some of the burden off of your shoulders.

Project Hope Crisis Counselors will help you with anything from economic hardships to behavioral health issues. We understand there are a whole range of emotions you might be feeling and we will work through it. A Crisis Counselor will give you self-help tips and come up with a plan for you to be your own advocate. We have a multitude of resources available to you and would love to be the shoulder you lean on. After all, New Yorkers are in this together.

NY Project Hope is a program of the NYS Office of Mental Health
Funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency
Administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Free, anonymous & confidential

A program of the NYS Office of Mental Health
Funded by FEMA

Food Pantry Needs

Paper Towels Small Packages of Napkins Tide Detergent

Your kindness and generosity are appreciated!



Good News

INSPIRATION FOR DAILY LIFE

19th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1 Kings 19:4-8
Ps 34:2-9
Ephesians 4:30-5:2
John 6:41-51

Monday August 9
Deuteronomy 10:12-22
Ps 147:12-15, 19-20
Matthew 17:22-27

Tuesday August 10
St. Lawrence
2 Corinthians 9:6-10
Ps 112:1-2, 5-9
John 12:24-28

Wednesday August 11
St. Clare
Deuteronomy 34:1-12
Ps 66:1-3a, 5, 8, 16-17
Matthew 18:15-20

Thursday August 12
Joshua 3:7-10a, 11, 13-17
Ps 114:1-6
Matthew 18:21-19:1

Friday August 13
Joshua 24:1-13
Ps 136:1-3, 16-18, 21-22, 24
Matthew 19:3-12

Saturday August 14
St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe
Joshua 24:14-29
Ps 16:1-2a, 5, 7-8, 11
Matthew 19:13-15

This Sunday we hear Christ's explanation of the Eucharist: "Whoever believes has eternal life; I am the bread of life."

Why does he call the Eucharist "the bread of life"? How does it give us life?

He answers: "Whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." In other words, he gave himself to us – he gave his life for us – on the cross.

Our sinfulness put us on the path of death, but he who was sinless and divine substituted himself for us, taking our deaths upon himself so that we could have the eternal life of God.

The resurrection of his body defeated this death. Therefore, his body, crucified and risen, is the source of our life. This is what we celebrate in Mass. We are not re-enacting his death during the sacrifice of the altar, as some mistakenly assume; we are uniting ourselves to his life.

The "sacrifice of the altar" is our participation in the entirety of Christ – his life, his ministry, his crucifixion for our sins, his resurrection, and his ascension to heaven.

We unite with him by offering our lives to him so that he ministers to the world through us, sacrificing our will where it interferes with his, which results in being raised up to new life as we follow Christ to heaven.



Every Catholic Mass accomplishes this by providing us with our Savior's body and blood, here and now, in the form of edible food: the bread of life. This holy communion comes to us from Christ's Last Supper, through generation after generation of the apostolic priesthood, beginning with the very first Apostles.

Christ is as fully present and as truly real here as he was when he sat among the Apostles and said, "This is my Body, this is my Blood." Thus anyone who adores and honors Jesus in the Eucharist, believing that he is their Savior, is feasting on the source of their eternal life.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. How do you know that the Eucharist is truly the high point and center of *your* life?
2. What's missing from your current experience of meeting Jesus in person in the miracle that takes place on the altar?
3. How is the Eucharist life-giving for you? Share how Jesus has revealed himself to you through the Blessed Sacrament.
4. How did it change you?

CAN WE PROVE THAT GOD EXISTS?

I wrote my doctoral thesis on the value of various philosophical arguments that try to prove the existence of God. Can there be such a proof? Brilliant philosophers, from Anselm, through Aquinas, through Descartes, through contemporary intellectuals like Charles Hartshorne, submit that the existence of God can be proven through rational argument. Except, except, a lot depends upon what exactly we mean by the word “prove”. How do we prove something?

There’s a legend about St. Christopher that’s pertinent here: Christopher was a man gifted in every way, except faith. He was physically strong, powerful, goodhearted, mellow, and well liked. He was also generous, using his physical strength to help others, but he found it hard to believe in God, even though he wanted to. For him, the physical was what was real and everything else seemed unreal. And so, as the legend goes, he lived his life in a certain honest agnosticism, unable to really believe in anything beyond what he could physically see, feel, and touch.

However, this did not prevent him from using his gifts, especially his physical strength, to serve others. This was his refuge, generosity and service. He became a ferryboat operator, spending his life helping to carry people across a dangerous river. One night, as the legend goes, during a storm, the ferryboat capsized and Christopher dove into the dark waters to rescue a young child. Carrying that child to the shore, he looked into its face and saw there the face of Christ. After that, he believed for he had seen the face of Christ.

For all its piety, this legend contains a profound lesson. It changes the perspective on the question of how one tries to “prove” God’s existence. Our attempt to prove God’s existence has to be practical, existential, and incarnate rather than mainly intellectual. How do we move from believing only in the physical, from believing only in the reality of what we can see, feel, touch, taste, and smell, to believing in the existence of deeper, spiritual realities?

There’s lesson in the Christopher story: Live as honestly and respectfully as you can and use your gifts to help others. God will appear. God is not found at the conclusion of a philosophical syllogism but as the result of a certain way of living. Moreover, faith is not so much a question of feeling as of selfless service.

There’s a further lesson in the biblical account of the apostle, Thomas, and his doubt about the resurrection of Jesus. Remember his protest: “Unless I can (physically) place my finger in the wounds of his hands and stick my finger into the wound of his side, I will not believe.” Note that Jesus offers no resistance or rebuke in the face of Thomas’ skepticism. Instead, he takes Thomas at his word: “Come and (physically) place your finger in the wounds of my hand and the wound in my side; see for yourself that I am real and not a ghost.”

That’s the open challenge for us: “Come and see for yourselves that God is real and not a ghost!” That challenge, however, is not so much an intellectual one as a moral one, a challenge to be honest and generous.

Skepticism and agnosticism, even atheism, are not a problem as long as one is honest, non-rationalizing, non-lying, ready to efface oneself before reality as it appears, and generous in giving his or her life away in service. If these conditions are met, God, the author and source of all reality, eventually becomes sufficiently real, even to those who need physical proof. The stories of Christopher and Thomas teach us this and assure us that God is neither angered nor threatened by an honest agnosticism.

Faith is never certainty. Neither is it a sure feeling that God exists. Conversely, unbelief is not to be confused with the absence of the felt assurance that God exists. For everyone, there will be dark nights of the soul, silences of God, cold lonely seasons, skeptical times when God’s reality cannot be consciously grasped or recognized. The history of faith, as witnessed by the life of Jesus and the lives of the saints, shows us that God often seems dead and, at those times, the reality of the empirical world can so overpower us that nothing seems real except what we can see and feel right now, not least our own pain.

Whenever this happens, like Christopher and Thomas, we need to become honest agnostics who use our goodness and God-given strengths to help carry others across the burdensome rivers of life. God does not ask us to have a faith that is certain, but a service that is generous and sustained. We have the assurance that should we faithfully help carry others, we will one day find ourselves before the reality of God who will gently say to us: “See for yourself, that I am real, and not a ghost.”

Can we prove that God exists? In theory, no; in life, yes.