Twentieth Sunday In Ordinary Time

August 20, 2017

"O Woman, great is your faith!

Let It be done for you as you wish"

Matthew 15:28

"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

The Parish of Saints Philip and James

One Carow Place, St. James, NY 11780

631-584-5454

Parish Center Office Hours: Sunday :10am-2pm ,Monday 9 am to 8 pm,
Tuesday & Wednesday: 9am-5pm, Thursday: 9am-8pm,Friday: 9am-12pm Saturday: 10am-12pm
Phone: 631-584-5454 Fax: 631-862-9675

Pastoral Team

Father Tom Haggerty	Pastor
Father Patrick Osei-Poku	Associate Pastor
Deacon Ronald Blasius	Deacon
Deacon John Keenan	Deacon
Deacon Ken Maher	Deacon
Margaret Adams	Director of Music
Virginia Portanova	Business Manager
John Cordes	Director of Facilities
Charlotte Czujko	Religious Education Coordinator Grades1-2
Barbara Luna	Religious Education Coordinator Grades 3-6
Dominick Avento	Religious Education Coordinator Grades 7-8
Suzanne Fitzgibbon	Religious Education Administrator
Frank Brancaccio	Youth Minister

Pastoral Council

Rita Byrne, Claire DiCarlo, Chris Donnelly, Ryan Doyle, Richard Frazita, Lou Guerra, Cynthia Lombardi, Martin Marut, Ann Mondrone, Mary Ann Pose, Noel Rannazzisi, Tom Sica, Robert Thompson

Trustees

Jerry Linder * Tina Cafaro

SSPJ School—Principal Ruth E. Testa

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

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 12:00mass 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*– Thursday 2-4pm Friday 8-9pm*

VIRTUS TRAINING AT SSPJ THIS WEEK

A Virtus training session will be held at Sts. Philip & James on:

Tuesday, August 22, 2017
At: 7:00-pm
In the Auditorium

If you are in need of attending this training session on behalf of your ministry participation, ***YOU MUST KINDLY register on-line PRIOR TO ATTENDING THIS SESSION at:***

virtusonline.org/virtus/reg

YOU CANNOT RECEIVE CREDIT FOR THE COURSE UNLESS YOU ARE REGISTERED ON LINE PRIOR TO THE COURSE.

Registration is on a first come first serve basis, as classes fill up quickly.

Please be certain to register with the Diocese.

If you should have any questions, please contact the

Parish center at 631-584-5454

Again, we thank you for understanding and for offering of time, talent and treasure to our Parish family.

CATHOLIC DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAS

COURT ANNA THERESA #1074
STS. PHILIP AND JAMES PARISH

50/50 LABOR DAY RAFFLE
TO BENEFIT OUR SCHOLARSHIP FUND

COST $2.00 Each **Book of 6 for $10.00**

Tickets will be sold after weekend Masses -
August 12 & 13, 19 &20 and 26 & 27
September 2 & 3

For more information and/or to purchase tickets, please call:
Phyllis Long at 631-584-8434

12
9 3
CHURCH
OFFICE HOURS

SUNDAY 10AM-2PM

MONDAY 9AM-8PM

TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY 9AM-5PM

THURSDAY 9AM-8PM

FRIDAY 9AM-12PM

SATURDAY 10AM-2PM

If you have a meeting scheduled on an evening when the office closes early please make arrangements to get a key before the close of the day.

We Have To Be In It To Win It!!

Sts. Philip & James Parish 2017 Summer Raffle

SHARE - THE - POT RAFFLE

Grand Prize: 25% of Proceeds

2nd Prize: 15% of Proceeds

3rd Prize: 10% of Proceeds

Raffle Tickets are $20 each or 6 for $100

Drawing to be held in the SSPJ Church Auditorium
1:00 pm, Sunday, September 10th
All parishioners are welcome to join us for refreshments!
Winner need not be present to win!

Raffles may be dropped off at the rectory or placed in the collection basket on the weekends.

Additional tickets will be available at the Parish Center Office

Religious Education

Religious Education Office Hours:
Monday—Thursday
9am thru 5pm
Closed on Fridays

Catechists Are Needed!!

We are seeking Catechists In:
Grades 4 & 5
&
Our Special Needs Program –which meets on Saturday mornings from 9am-10am

If you are interested in learning more about the role of a Catechist, kindly contact Suzanne Fitzgibbon in the Religious Ed Office: 631-584-3204, to arrange a meet and greet!

We welcome you to become a part of our Religious Education Team!

Religious Education Classes
will Begin
The Week of:
September 25, 2017

All families that have registered their children for Religious education classes should have received their classroom assignments.
If you have any questions, kindly contact Suzanne in the Religious education office: 631-584-3204
Registration closed on July 31st, 2017
If you missed registration please contact the Religious Education Office immediately.
Class assignment cannot be guaranteed, however, we will do our best to place your child if room is available.

Upcoming Catechist Workshops:Begin This Week!

COMMUNION II: (2ND GRADE)

Tuesday August 22nd, 2017: 7:00 PM
Sts. Philip & James room

Or:

Thursday August 24th, 2017:10:00 AM
Sts. Philip & James room

GRADES 3 &4:

Monday August 21st, 2017: :

1:30pm or 7:00 PM

Sts. Philip & James room

GRADES 5 &6:

Wednesday August 23rd, 2017:

10:00 AM or 7:00 PM

Sts. Philip & James room

CONFIRMATION I & II (GRADES 7 & 8)

August 23rd 2017 @ 6:30pm – 8:00pm

In the Auditorium

November 9th 2017 @ 6:30pm to 8:00pm

Assumption of Mary

On August 15th, we celebrated the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At the appointed time, Mary was given a special duty to usher in the New Order for Jesus to bring into fullness the realization of this mission. Mary then has become a major player to God for this project of salvation.

The cooperation of Mary to the grace of God is an essential attribute to the obedience of Christ to achieve salvation by his death and resurrection. So, just as the resurrection of Christ justifies his obedience to God, the assumption of Mary reveals the essence of her collaboration to the grace of God. Assumption then, like the resurrection of Christ, underpins the significance to cooperate with the grace of God in obedience and trust to promote His will. *Father Patrick*

Music Ministry

Take part in the Christmas Concert, become a hand bell ringer, join the Music Ministry. We have a great time. Hot chocolate and cookies a must after the Concert. Come experience the fun for yourself.

join the Music ministry.

Sing a hymn to Him.

We have been blessed by the generosity of all who contributed to our Back To School Supply Drive.

If you are in need of back to school supply assistance, or know of any family that we can be of assistance to regarding preparation for the upcoming school year, kindly circle the items from the list below and bring it to the Parish Center Office.
We will do our best to prepare a package of back to school items for you.

Child's First Names & Grades:_____

Sharpeners	Marble Notebook	Pencils
Glue	Spiral Notebook	Pens
Erasers	Binders	Markers
Scissors	Filler Paper	Pencil Cases
Backpack	Folders	Crayons
Lunchbox		

Miscellaneous Items: _____ _____

Liturgical Ministry Training

Dear SSPJ Apostles of Hope,

If you are interested in becoming an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, or a Lector, kindly contact the Parish Center Office at 631-584-5454.

Liturgical Ministry Training

*** PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF LOCATION IN NASSAU AND SUFFOLK***

1. TRAINING FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION: required for all those who are beginning as Ministers. Session "A" is required of ALL Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Those who minister in hospitals, nursing homes and to homebound persons are required to attend Session "B" in addition to Session "A". SESSION "A" MUST BE ATTENDED PRIOR TO SESSION "B".

TO REGISTER FOR EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER TRAINING: the pastor must send a letter to Bishop Barres *at least 5 days in advance* requesting the training for each person attending.

DO NOT USE THE TEAR-OFF BELOW.

This letter must mention the date and place of the training session the person(s) will attend.

2. TRAINING FOR LECTORS: PLEASE USE THE TEAR-OFF BELOW.

TIMES AND PLACES FOR MINISTRY TRAINING:

In Nassau: EM "A" Session and Lectors
October 14, 2017; 9 AM—1 PM
St. Agnes Parish Center, Rockville Centre

In Suffolk: EM "A" Session and Lectors
October 21, 2017; 9 AM—1 PM
St. Rosalie, Hampton Bays

"B" session for Extraordinary Ministers
November 4, 2017; 9 AM—1 PM
St. Agnes Parish Center, Rockville Centre

"B" Session for Extraordinary Ministers
October 28, 2017; 9 AM—1 PM
St. Rosalie, Hampton Bays

EVENING SESSIONS for Extraordinary Ministers and Lectors at St. Elizabeth, Melville
Session "A" - Wednesday, October 4, 2017; 7:00—10 PM
Session "B" - Wednesday, October 18, 2017; 7:00—10 PM

WORKSHOP FEES:
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: $30 per person
Lectors: $20 per person

REGISTRATION FORM FOR LECTOR TRAINING ONLY

Mail this registration to the Office of Worship, PO Box 9023, Rockville Centre, NY 11571-9023, e-mail to worship@drvc.org, or fax to 516-764-3316.

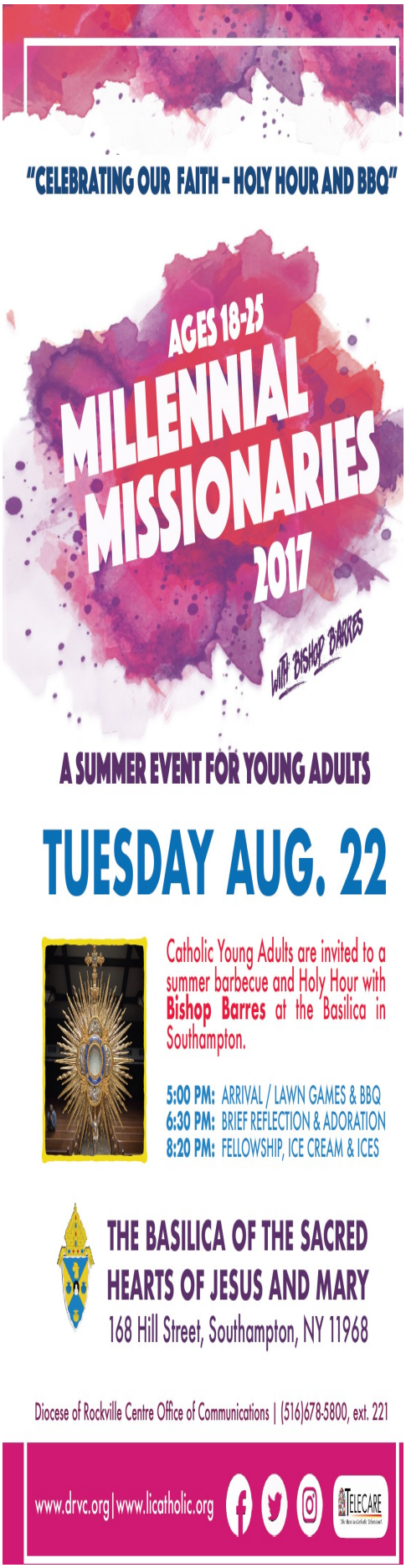
I wish to register for Lector Training

☐ St. Agnes Parish Center, Rockville Centre (Saturday, October 14, 2017)
☐ St. Rosalie, Hampton Bays (Saturday, October 21, 2017)
☐ St. Elizabeth, Melville (Wednesday, October 4, 2017)

Name ..... Phone .....

Parish ..... Town .....

Summer Youth Event



THE APOSTLE OF HOPE CHALLENGE

The past few weeks we have been highlighting various areas where you could offer bite size pieces of your time and talent, to help in our Religious Education Program. Many thanks to those of you who have completed and returned the sign up request.

We are still seeking "Apostles of Hope" to join this endeavor.
Professor Maria Harris, a prolific writer and speaker from Fordham University once said,

"Catechesis is the whole church teaching the whole church.
Being in it together will enliven our community and make Jesus present."

Signup sheets are available in the back of the church and in the parish center office. These slips can be placed in the collection basket or be returned to the Parish Center office.

We ask that you prayerfully consider sharing your gifts with our parish family.

APOSTLE OF HOPE CHALLENGE CONTINUES

First Grade Children and Parents Program

We as a faith community want to invite and welcome all to become part of the Body of Christ. We plan to have people meet with first grade families and their children as they begin their entry into our revised and revamped Faith Formation program. The following are just a few areas where you as an Apostle of Hope could give a bite-size piece of your time to help this Program for First Grade Parents.

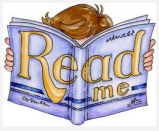
- Would you be willing to make phone calls to facilitate the meetings?
- Would you be willing to type lists/letters as needed?
- Would you be willing to meet with first grade parents on a one-to-one basis?

Training will be provided.

The Apostle of Hope Challenge Continues! Week 3

Activities for Major Celebrations

- Do you have an idea/theme for a major church celebration?
- Can you help decorate for a celebration?
- Do you have an idea for a craft/activity for children for a celebration?



APOSTLE OF HOPE CHALLENGE Week 2…

Collecting, Sorting or Reading Mass Reflections by Students

or

Students will be required to bring to Mass their scripture reading assignment each week.

Helping with the Blessing and Distribution of 1st Grade Books at class masses, along with welcoming students and greeting families.

Are you willing to accept the Apostle of Hope Challenge?

APOSTLE OF HOPE CHALLENGE…Week One….

Helping at Class Masses, as a greeter, serving refreshments, decorating, baking, or assisting with clean up.

Can We Count You In?

SSPJ Parish Calendar For The Week of August 20th, 2017

Sunday, August 20th, 2017

8:00am	CDA Labor Day Raffle	School Lobby/ Outside
10:00am	Children's Liturgy of the Word	Church
1:00pm	Stained Glass Club	Stained Glass Wkshp
7:00pm	AA Meeting	Philip & James Room

Monday , August 21st, 2017

1:30pm	**REO 3rd & 4th Gr. Catechist Workshop**	**Philip & James Room**
7:00pm	Summer Stained Glass Club	Stained Glass Wkshp.
7:00pm	**REO 3rd & 4th Gr. Catechist Workshop**	**Philip & James Room**

Tuesday, August 22nd, 2017:

1:30pm	Spirit of Love Prayer Group	Prayer Room of Church
5:00pm	SSPJ School New Students Ice Cream Social	Playground/Aud.
7:00pm	REO Communion II Catechist Wkshp	Philip & James Room
7:00pm	VIRTUS TRAINING	School Multi-purpose Rm

Wednesday, August 23rd, 2017:

10:00am	**REO 5th & 6th Grade Catechist Workshop**	**Philip & James Rm.**
6:30pm	**REO Confirmation I&II Catechist Wksp.**	**Auditorium**
7:00pm	**REO 5th & 6th Grade Catechist Workshop**	**Philip & James Rm**

Thursday, August 24th, 2017:

10:00am	REO Communion II Workshop	Philip & James Rm
2:00pm	Eucharistic Adoration	Church
7:00pm	Summer Stained Glass Club	Stained Glass Wkshp

Friday, August 25th, 2017:

7:00pm	AA Meeting	Philip &James Room
8:00pm	Eucharistic Adoration	Church

Saturday, August 26th, 2017:

10:00am	Stained Glass Club	Stained Glass Wkshop
5:00pm	CDA Labor Day Raffle	School Lobby/Outside

Save the Date: Please Support the Blood Drive of SSPJ Parishioner:

Cassidy Shankar

She is holding a Blood Drive at The Smithtown Library Main Branch

August 31, 2017

1pm-7pm

Raffles and Giveaways!!

Banns of Marriage

First

Christopher Miles
Maria Regina, Massapequa

To

Christina Lohan
SSPJ

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,
SR AIRMAN E4 ALEXANDER PARRELLA
RICHARD SOTOMAYER, USAF
SGT. CONNOR F. SCOTT, USMC
LCPL. DANIEL P. STEELE, USMC
SGT. CORY O'HARA USMC
CDR. ROBERT J. MARSH, USN
PFC. CHARLES CHRISTOPHER HOWELL
JOHN VINCENT KNOBLOCH, USMC
STEVEN CAVA, USN
ERIC SEELIN, USMC
CW2 CHRIS MUNZ
CW2 NATASHA WORTMAN
LANCE CORPORAL JAMES T. CASEY, USMC
GREGORY DEVANEY, USMC
SGT. JOSHUA MAHONEY, US ARMY
KEVIN JONES, U.S.C.G.
RICHARD MAIER, U.S.M.C.
PRIVATE JOSHUA OLSEN, USARNG
GLEN CRIMA-U.S. ARMY
PFC. ANTHONY SCIAMETTA
MARIO CATANIA, USMC
RYAN ANTHONY NASCIMENTO, U.S.M.C.
ENS. RYAN M. SHOWS U.S.N.

Weekly Collection:

Sunday, August 13th, 2017

Sunday Collection: $13,738.
Faith Direct: $3,823.
Children's Jug: $ 23.
Total Collection: $17,584.

Many thanks for your generous support of Sts. Philip & James Parish

Mass Intentions, For Week of August 20th, 2017

Saturday, August 19th, 2017

5:00pm	Peter Joseph Loughlin

Sunday August 20th, 2017

8:00am	David McCulloch
10:00am	Frank Cafaro, Jr.
12:00noon	Collective Mass & For The Parishioners of SSPJ
	Chief Warrant Officer Adolphus David-Nava
	Eillen Schaffer
	Joseph Beninati
	Emma Eveleno
	Gil Viojan

Monday, August 21st, 2017

7:30am	James Ficht
9:15am	Barbara Bellocchio

Tuesday, August 22nd, 2017

7:30am	Gil L. Viojan
9:15am	Mary & Gilbert Bates

Wednesday, August 23rd, 2017

7:30am	Mary Lynne Mygland
9:15am	Cheryl Lamare

Thursday, August 24th, 2017

7:30am	Frank Margiotta
9:15am	Collective Mass
	Bernadette Renahan
	Blanche Carguillo

Friday, August 25th, 2017

7:30am	No Intention
9:15am	Joseph (Chickie) Martin

Saturday, August 26th, 2017

9:15am	Joseph (Chickie) Martin
5:00pm	Martin D'Amico

Sunday, August 27th, 2017

8:00am	Carmine LaCava
10:00am	Frank Cafaro, Jr.
12:00noon	Collective Mass & For The Parishioners of SSPJ
	Ralph M. Duhning Jr.
	Peter Joseph Loughlin
	Alicia Ruiz
	William Burney
	Anthony Lombardo

Keeping You In Our Prayers....

For those who are ill...

Carol Walz, Daniel Radice,, Eva Alaimo, Kitty Cronin, Vivien Cordes Raymond Fox, Joe Alberigo, Eileen Zink, Louis Giordano, Grace Giordano, AnnMarie Cortina, Laura Andrucki & Juli Anne, Pasquale Santoro,Lorraine Cashman,Elinor Glasser, Kathleen N. , Marie Loughlin,Deanna Rubino Monzon, Christopher Gerver, Baby Mattia Lubrano, Anna Capizzio Catherine Burseind,Brennan Steinorth, Marie DelCiello, Suzanne McCue, Christopher Tallarico, Josephine Scorca

Together, we mourn the passing of,

Paul L. Adamo

Celebrating the Liturgy- With Grateful Hearts We Serve

PRESIDER SCHEDULE–FOR August 26th & 27th, 2017

Saturday, August 26, 2017 5:00 PM	Sunday, August 27, 2017 8:00 AM MASS	Sunday, August 27, 2017 10:00 AM MASS	Sunday August 27, 2017 12:00 MASS
Father Patrick Osei-Poku	**Father Patrick Osei-Poku**	**Father Leo Praveen**	**Father Leo Praveen**

EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS SCHEDULE -FOR August 26th & 27th, 2017

Saturday, August 26, 2017	Sunday, August 27, 2017	Sunday, August 27, 2017	Sunday, August 27, 2017
5:00 PM MASS	**8:00 AM MASS**	**10:OO AM MASS**	**12:00 NOON MASS**
P. Schfilliti	M. Koke	T. Boboris	M. Laub
D. Earl	S. McKie	B. Gill	P. Rizzo
E. Kaleita, Jr.	M. Morbillo	A. Giordano	B. Carey
P. Kaleita	D. Mulhall	A. Henchel	E. Sotomayer
A. Keenan	M. Sehne	L. Keane	M. Hoonhout
R. Piazza	G. Beisel	J. Kirdahy	P. Roman
G. Priebe	L. Beisel	J. Lavan	C. Rubano
L. Taurassi	E. Sica	C. Napolitano	V. Rubano
L. Tepedino	T. Sica	G. Patalano	B. Chandler
D. Toto	P. Kanuika	L. Patalano	A. Santo

ALTAR SERVERS SCHEDULE -FOR August 26th & 27th, 2017

Saturday, August 26, 2017	Sunday, August 27, 2017	Sunday, August 27, 2017	Sunday, August 27, 2017
5:00PM MASS	**8:00AM MASS**	**10:00 AM MASS**	**12:00 NOON MASS**
P. Bisel	K. Dobkowski	A. Nocera	J. Hoonhout
S. McCalvin	S. Dobkowski	J. Ricupero	N. Hoonhout
C. Williams	K. Illari/T. Illari	J. Schultz	I. Cole
M. Papas	G. Morbillo	K. Tomasic	A. Peykar
J. Leber	M. Russo	M. Tomasic	

LECTOR SCHEDULE -FOR August 26th, & 27th, 2017

Saturday, August 26, 2017	Sunday, August 27, 2017	Sunday, August 27, 2017	Sunday, August 27, 2017
5:00 PM MASS	**8:00 AM MASS**	**10:00AM MASS**	**12:00 NOON MASS**
K. Smith	E. Wittish	G. Law	L. Just
M. Dreschler	B. Luna	A. Mondrone	P. Geier

SSPJ School Registration Continues for September!

Sts. Philip and James School

Pre-K through Grade 8

Value-Centered Education

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service

Full-Day Pre-K program * Full-Day Kindergarten * Before and After School Care *
Weekly attendance at Mass * iPad Classrooms * Spanish and Mandarin * Band program
including violin * NYSSMA Member * Drama Club/Broadway Jr. * Choral Club *
Member of Catholic Middle Schools Athletic Association * Variety of After School Clubs *
Accomplished New York State Assessment Scores *
History of success on Catholic High School Entrance Exam *
Much more!!

Call 631-584-7896 for further information!

Sts. Philip and James School is currently seeking an experienced/certified Spanish Teacher 3 days/week - Pre-K through Grade 8. If interested, please call 631-584-7896

HOLA! spanish!

Getting Ready for Next Sunday

August 27th - 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time —Cycle A

Scripture Readings ONLINE
The website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops provides the text of the Scripture Readings. Go to: **www.usccb.org** . Click on the date.

Reflections on Next Sunday's Scripture Readings

Isaiah 22:19-23 *Psalm 138*
Romans 11:33-36 *Matthew 16:13-20*

Today's readings remind us that power exists for the good of the powerless.

The first reading contrasts the use and abuse of power. In the eighth century B.C., Isaiah is sent to inform Shebna, the prime minister, of his removal from office. Shebna has been a "disgrace to [his] master's house" (Isaiah 22:18). The prophet also speaks of Eliakim, one truly worthy of authority. Eliakim will discharge the duties of office as a "father" and will support King Hezekiah and his kingdom by paternal service.

Psalm 138 praises God for living up to God's name and covenant loyalty. "On the day I called, you answered me" (Psalm 138:3) captures this divine commitment. The most high Yahweh responds to the needs of the lowly.

Matthew combines the scene of Peter's confession with a post-Resurrection appearance of Jesus to Peter. The Lord calls Peter blessed because he perceives that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Because this faith comes from God, Jesus confers the grace of leadership on Peter. This impetuous disciple will be "Rock", an unshakable foundation for the Church (see Matthew 7:24-27). The keys (as in Isaiah) suggest power, the power of one who will focus not on self but on community.

All of us exercise some kind of power. Are we more Shebna or Eliakim? Are we intent upon making our power felt or making our power a service? Isaiah, the psalmist, and Matthew agree that to be in charge means to protect our charges.

- John Craghan, Th.D., S.S.L.
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For reflection…

Jesus hears who "other people" say he is, but he wants to know who his disciples think he is. How would you answer his question, "Who do you say that I am?"

"And upon this rock I will build my church." Who is building the church, Christ or Peter? How do you help "build" the church?

Besides being supportive and having a solid faith, what other qualities or virtues do you look for in Church leadership? In situations where you are called on to lead, what qualities do you exhibit?

Paul praises the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How have you experienced God's riches, wisdom and knowledge? In looking into your rear-view mirror down the highway of life can you see where God was on the road with you? Where might God lead you in the future?

Our Ability to Serve...

Spiritual Reflection by Ron Rolheiser, OMI

God Needs Better Press

The word "Protestant" is generally misunderstood. Martin Luther's protest that led to the Protestant reformation was not, in fact, a protest against the Roman Catholic Church; properly understood, it was a protest for God. God, in Luther's view, was being manipulated to serve human and ecclesial self-interest. His protest was a plea to respect God's transcendence.

We need a new protest today, a new plea, a strong one, to not connect God and our churches to intolerance, injustice, bigotry, violence, terrorism, racism, sexism, rigidity, dogmatism, anti-eroticism, homophobia, self-serving power, institutional self-protection, security for the rich, ideology of all kinds, and just plain stupidity. God is getting a lot of bad press!

A simple example can be illustrative here: In a recent book that documents an extraordinary fifty-year friendship with his former coach, basketball legend (and present-day exceptional writer), Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, shares why he became a Muslim. Raised a Roman Catholic, a graduate of Catholic schools, he eventually left Christianity to become a Muslim. Why?

In his own words: Because "the white people who were bombing churches and killing little girls, who were shooting unarmed black boys, who were beating black protestors with clubs loudly declared themselves to be proud Christians. The Ku Klux Klan were proud Christians. I felt no allegiance to a religion with so many evil followers. Yes, I was also aware that the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was also a proud Christian, as were many of the civil rights leaders. Coach Wooden was a devout Christian. The civil rights movement was supported by many brave white Christians who marched side by side with blacks. When the KKK attacked, they often delivered even worse beatings to the whites, whom they considered to be race traitors. I didn't condemn the religion, but I definitely felt removed from it."

His story is only one story and by his own admission has another side to it, but it's highly illustrative. It's easy to connect God to the wrong things. Christianity, of course, isn't the only culprit. Today, for instance, we see perhaps the worst examples of tying God to evil in the violence of *ISIS* and other such terrorist groups who are killing, randomly and brutally, in the name of God. You can be sure that the last words uttered, just as a suicide bomber randomly kills innocent people, is: *God is great!* What horrible thing to say as one is committing an act of murder! Doing the ungodly in the name of God!

And yet we so often do the same thing in subtler forms, namely, we justify the ungodly (violence, injustice, inequality, poverty, intolerance, bigotry, racism, sexism, the abuse of power, and rich privilege) by appealing to our religion. Silently, unconsciously, blind to ourselves, grounded in a sense of right and wrong that's colored by self-interest, we give ourselves divine permission to live and act in ways that are antithetical to most everything Jesus taught.

We can protest, saying that we're sincere, but sincerity by itself is not a moral or religious criterion. Sincerity can, and often does, tie God to the ungodly and justifies what's evil in the name of God: The people conducting the Inquisition were sincere; the slave traitors were sincere; those who protected pedophile priests were sincere, racists are sincere; sexists are sincere; bigots are sincere; the rich defending their privilege are sincere; church offices making hurtful, gospel-defying pastoral decisions that deprive people of ecclesial access are very sincere and gospel-motivated; and all of us, as we make the kind of judgments of others that Jesus told us time and again not to make, are sincere. But we think that we're doing this all for the good, for God.

However in so many of our actions we are connecting God and church to narrowness, intolerance, rigidity, racism, sexism, favoritism, legalism, dogmatism, and stupidity. And we wonder why so many of our own children no longer go to church and struggle with religion.

The God whom Jesus reveals is the antithesis of much of religion, sad but true. The God whom Jesus reveals is a prodigal God, a God who isn't stingy; a God who wills the salvation of everyone, who loves all races and all peoples equally; a God with a preferential love for the poor; a God who creates both genders equally; a God who strongly opposes worldly power and privilege. The God of Jesus Christ is a God of compassion, empathy, and forgiveness, a God who demands that spirit take precedence over law, love over dogma, and forgiveness over juridical justice. And very importantly, the God whom Jesus incarnates isn't stupid, but is a God whose intelligence isn't threatened by science, and a God who doesn't condemn and send people to hell according to our limited human judgments.

Sadly, too often that's not the God of religion, of our churches, of our spirituality, or of our private consciences.

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Let Us Love and Be Accepting of All As God Does...