



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

631-584-5454

May 3rd, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Easter



*"When he has driven out all his own,
he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him,
because they recognize his voice.
But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him,
because they do not recognize the voice of strangers."
John 10:4-5*

"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-8pm

Open Thursday 9am-5pm

Open Saturday 10am-2pm

Closed Friday and Sunday

CLERGY

Father Tom Haggerty, Pastor

Father Patrick Osei-Poku-Associate Pastor

Deacon Ronald Blasius

Deacon John Keenan

Deacon Ken Maher

PASTORAL ASSOCIATE

Sister Theresita Donach, CSFN

BUSINESS MANAGER

Virginia Portanova

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ADMINISTRATOR

Catherine Darrow

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COORDINATOR Grades 1-2

Charlotte Czujko

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COORDINATOR Grades 3-6

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

Jerry Linder ~ 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— Thursday 2-4pm
Friday 8-9pm

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

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STAFF SGT. MICHAEL LONGHENRY

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STAFF SGT ALEXANDER PARRELLA-USAF

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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

GREGORY DEVANEY- 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— 2ND LT. US ARMY NATL. GUARD

STAFF SGT MICHAEL J BANG SPECIAL FORCES US ARMY

Financial Support Needed weekly to meet Parish budget:

Weekly Collection: Sunday, April 26th, 2020

Mother's Day:

Support for Parish Social Ministry Needs:

Faith Direct :

\$ 8,427.

425.

1,615.

\$ 2,902

\$17,800.

Total Weekly Collection:

\$13,369.

Father Tom's Letter

Dear Friends,

Shepherd, calls each of us as a shepherd calls his sheep. Fr. John Foley, SJ, reflects:

The shepherd calls us by name, which means that the magnificent God of the universe pays attention to us. He knows each and every one of us better than we know ourselves. The name he confirms for each of us finds its way down to the deepest interior of our souls. Christ calls each of us by name to be most truly who we are.

Like the shepherd with his sheep, and in spite of wolves and wildness all around, this call is safe. Christ's call lets our fear drop away; it turns us right side up. It lets us follow our master and friend, around rocks and even through dark valleys....Sometimes the phrase, "people are sheep," is deemed an insult. This Sunday it is the greatest compliment we could get.

As we continue to journey together through this pandemic, let's be attentive to the voice of the Good Shepherd.

Looking for a good suggestion to help you through these challenging times? Sister Therisita has a few words of greeting and a specific suggestion!

Dear Friends,

Sister T. here, coming to you from the East End of the Island. Oh how I miss seeing all of you at Mass and around the parish. Know that in our daily prayer, the sisters are keeping all of you and your families in prayer. You are not forgotten. We are all well here and pray that you are all staying safe and doing your best to rise to the challenges of these days.

I have been busy learning a lot about technology and have mastered, Zoom, video calls, Facebook messages, etc. and of course there is always the phone. Wow what a discovery. I even learned how to video myself to share a message with our SSPJ Students. Enough technology!

One of the best things I have done for myself is to avail myself of the courses and talks being given by different groups. I have been enjoying a course on Mercy given by Fr. Ron Rolheiser of the Oblate School of Theology. Excellent resource.

I have also had a chance to clean up some files and letters and in doing so found this quote I would like to share with you. **"Gather the wisdom and weave the dream powerful enough...to awaken a community's soul, to bring forth deep and radical change, to enable new life to emerge, to create, articulate and activate a prophetic vision for the future."**

I found it rather powerful as we began to think about what the 'new normal' will look like when we come back together as a parish. In talking with Fr. Tom I shared with him an idea I had about a book I had used for my retreat and am now 'Zoom sharing' with several friends. The title of the book is **The Song of the Seed** by Macrina Wiederkehr. Using the theme of the **Sower and the Seed**, the author helps us through Scripture and reflection questions and stories to revive a deep yearning for God in our soul. We get to reflect on the Good Seed that is deep within our soul and ready to grow.

I know that so many of you are busy working from home, doing school work with your children and just trying to get by. My suggestion is that if any of you who wish to purchase the book do so and then together we can form small groups (by Zoom of course, or your favorite technology) and share the richness of your faith life journey. It is simple just do the following:

Let Sister T know you are interested in this project (**by May 8th**) and whether you want to form a group or be a member of one. She can be reached at srtheresita@sspj.org or call her at 508-873-6404

Sister T is willing to help you begin and form a group if necessary.

Purchase the book (Available through Amazon)

Begin to 'awaken a community's soul...to deep and radical change.

My dear friends, I truly believe that as we continue to learn more about our relationship with God and share that journey with others, that when we do get to come back together as a parish family we will meet the 'new normal' ready to reimagine, recreate re-enliven our parish life. Longing to be with you through this project.

Sending you germ free hugs,
Sister Theresita

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

A Note to Our Parish Family

Our parish office is receiving a few inquiries we would like to address.

The office is continuing to operate as "normal" as possible. While some programs are "on hold" until further notice others are continuing to be available to those in need. While we are NOT open to the general public, a staff member IS in the office daily to answer all calls and questions.

Mass Intentions and Altar Memorials are available. You may request via phone message, e-mail, or drop your request in the mail slot at the side of our office entrance door. You will receive a call back verifying dates and times requested. Mass Cards may be picked-up - you will be notified when it is ready. You may also leave a message to have a name added to our prayer list.

Our Food Pantry, under Parish Social Ministry, is operating. We are meeting the needs of those in our parish. You can find a list of pantry items needed in our bulletin as well as on our facebook page. Donated items can be left in the prayer room in church. Supermarket and Gas Gift Cards should be dropped through the mail slot at the office.

If you know a family who is in need of support, please have them contact us and we will be happy to assist in any way we are able.

*Our church is open daily - Monday - Friday from 7 am - 7 pm
Saturday and Sunday from 7 am - 3 pm.*

We are closed for one hour each day while we are livestreaming Mass 9 – 10 am daily.

Perhaps you would like to stop in to a light a candle, say a prayer or find some quiet peace....

We ask you to maintain acceptable personal distance in church for the safety of all. Our maintenance staff is on site daily to clean and sanitize our church.

We are livestreaming Mass daily at 9:15....click on the Facebook link (Sts. Philip & James Roman Catholic Church) on the opening page of our website: sspj.org.

On the Prayers and Reflection page of our website – Father Tom has been posting reading material, reflections, links to Mass reading, prayers, videos, etc...throughout the Easter season and to help us through this time of uncertainty....as we prepare ourselves to transform into a new world...a new people of hope and faith.

If you are in need of a priest you may call the office and select the option for Emergency After Hours.

Please note that the Easter Gabriel went to print prior to the Corona Virus Pandemic, therefore some articles may not be timely in the current situation. Our bulletin is going to print weekly. There are limited hard copies available in the rear of the church weeklythe publications can be found on our website.

Office phone 631-584-5454 x 202

Office phone press 9 to leave a message

Office phone press 0 for emergency assistance and follow the prompts

Email questions and inquiries to vportanova@sspj.org
info@sspj.org

As you know our parish runs on donations, contributions and offerings made through the generosity of our parishioners. If you are able to continue financial support, offerings may be mailed to SSPJ - 1 Carow Place. They may also be dropped into the mail slot at the side of the office entrance door. You may choose to sign-up with Faith Direct, there is a link on our opening webpage. The Diocese of Rockville Centre has established a Text-to-Give program as an alternative way to financially support your parish. You may choose this option for a one-time payment or set a schedule.

TEXT TO GIVE PROGRAM:
ONLINE OFFERTORY GIVING
TEXT: 148parishssphilipandjames
TO: 516-271-3338



Online Offertory Giving

Text: 148parishssphilipandjames
To: 516-271-3338

FAITH DIRECT:
GO TO SSPJ.ORG

CLICK ON THE FAITH DIRECT ICON

FAITH DIRECT®
inspiring secure giving™

Creating a Faith Direct account is easy, just click on the Faith Direct logo, and use Parish of Saints Philip and James account code NY232 when signing up

We remain grateful for your generosity and support

Dear Parishioners,

Heartfelt thanks to all who are reaching out feeding our extended family...our hearts are filled with gratitude.

FOOD PANTRY NEEDS THE FOLLOWING:

**HONEY NUT CHEERIOS
BOXED JUICE DRINKS
HEALTHY SNACKS FOR CHILDREN:
CANNED RAVIOLI
CANNED SPAGHETTI & MEATBALLS
CANNED TUNA**

**GAS GIFT CARDS
KING KULLEN AND STOP & SHOP GIFT CARDS**

Any donations may be left in the Church Prayer Room or the St. Anthony's Bread Closet.

As always, thank you and God bless you for your generous response.

Turn off and unplug items when they're not in use. The socket draws electricity even when items are "turned off." Some items that are often plugged-in when not in use are blow-dryers, phone chargers, electric kettles, and coffee pots. Other items that are often left in the "on" position when not in use are televisions, computers, and video game consuls. Using the battery-saving function on smart phones and computers helps them last longer, as well as saves energy. Perhaps you have a spare refrigerator you only need to run when you're preparing to entertain guests. Look around your house and find what can be unplugged. You might be surprised by your energy savings .

“WHEN THIS IS OVER” BY LAURA KELLY FANUCCI

“When this is over,

may we never again take for granted;

A handshake with a stranger, Full shelves at the store,

Conversations with neighbors,

A crowded theater, Friday night out,

The taste of communion, A routine checkup,

The school rush each morning, Coffee with a friend,

The stadium roaring, Each deep breath! A boring Tuesday. Life itself.

When this ends, may we find that we have become more like the people we wanted to be,

we were called to be,

we hope to be,

and may we stay that way — better for each other because of the worst.”

Mass Intentions, For the week of May 3rd, 2020

<u>Saturday, May 2nd, 2020~ St. Athanasius, Bishop</u>		<u>Thursday, May 7th, 2020</u>	
5:00pm	Dr. Natalie Assalone-Nizza	7:30am	
		9:15am	<u>Collective Mass:</u> Frank Randazzo
<u>Sunday, May 3rd, 2020</u>		<u>Friday, May 8th, 2020</u>	
8:00am	For the People of SSPJ	7:30am	Joan Purcell
10:00am	Rose Marie Sherow	9:15am	James Regan
12:00Noon	<u>Collective Mass:</u> Rev. Richard Hendel Msgr. Charles Guarino Delores O'Brien Ralph Pepe	<u>Saturday, May 9th, 2020</u>	
<u>Monday, May 4th, 2020</u>		9:15am	Gregoria Diaz
7:30am		5:00pm	No Intentions
9:15am	Agnes Watson	<u>Sunday, May 10th, 2020</u>	
<u>Tuesday, Wednesday, May 5th, 2020</u>		8:00am	Mother's Day Novena
7:30am	Patricia DeWeerd	10:00am	For the People of SSPJ
9:15am	Robert Sugameli	12:00Noon	<u>Collective Mass:</u> No Intentions
<u>Wednesday, May 6th, 2020</u>			
7:30am	Antoinette Rita Schifilliti		
9:15am	Marion Peter		

Remembering in Our Prayers~



We remember...

Robert Duda
Jean Heaney
Delores Weisenreider
Jo Ann Boccia

Safely Home...

An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus,

I believe that You

are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things,

and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment

receive You sacramentally,

come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself

wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.

Adrian Erias
Angela Amoroso
Arthur Gureck
Anna Capizzio
Barbara Bombace
Baby Mattia Rose Lubrano
Belinda Groneman
Belinda Vega
Bob Keenan
Claudia Chandler
Daniel Radice
Deirdre W.
Diana C.
Dorothy E. Mitchell
Donalea Donach
Ellie Walsh
Frank Cotoia
Gladys Blake
Gregory Parker
Joan Kranz
Jim McLean
John DeStefano
J.C.

And for all the prayers
intentions in our hearts

Joseph S.
Joseph G.
Joyce Wiggins
Judy Contrino
Kathleen N.
Kitty Cronin
Leon Donach
Maria Clark
Matthew Parrella
Melissa C.
Michael Fisher
Mike Lofaro
Patricia Acker
Peter Donach
P.I.
Philip G
Ricardo Buffit
Richard Cembrale
Sara Jean Andersen
Steve Rannazzisi
Tim Cavooris
Vivien Cordes
Vicki Archdeacon
William Quinn

For our Nation in time of
crisis

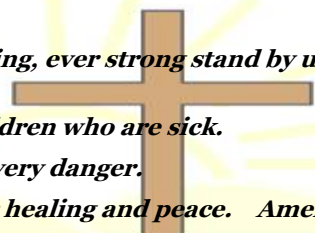
Prayer for the Sick

God of love, ever caring, ever strong stand by us in our
time of need.

Watch over your children who are sick.

Look after them in every danger.

And grant them your healing and peace. Amen



Welcome to the Fourth Sunday of Easter
Today's Gospel comes from John 10:1-10
The Good Shepherd

"Jesus said: 'Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber.

But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.

The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him,

because they recognize his voice.

But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers."

Although Jesus used this figure of speech, the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate.

Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy;

I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

The Shepherd and His Sheep

His sheep follow him because they know his voice.
 John 10:4b (NIV)

The puzzle is based on John 10:1-10 (NIV).



John 10:1-10

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F C N L V E S A N F T C W M H
U J Q I M D Z H N A D R S A L
R O I Y S Z W G E K M N U F U
G U D D G F S A G P T E T T N
H L A L T D O M T C H D K B H
N E R R P H T L D C R E A E R
L A J O E V I B L E H I R S G
I Z V S N E X E G O H M U D R
D U G V H P T N F V W N A F O
X E V A S E A T K O I F J N B
S O S C T R E L G I D X U B B
N T N T T E W P H C O O O A E
G Z E S R V W B Q E A G E Y R
O S E A E O J S Y T G O W P Z
S C J R L Y Y H B X L L T L L
    
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LEADS	ROBBER	PEN	WATCHMAN	TRUTH
FOLLOW	DESTROY	THIEF	STRANGER	GATE
VOICE	STEAL	SHEPHERD	NAME	SHEEP

In our Gospel today, Jesus compared himself to a shepherd. He said that He was the gateway. He is the way to life, and anyone else that might try to stake such a claim is tricking us. We are like sheep, wandering around and needing guidance. We can trust in Jesus to provide for us and to protect us. He said that a good shepherd would even lay down his life for the sheep, and that's exactly what Jesus did!

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for always guiding me in the right direction. Please help me each and every day to see you and follow you, especially when it is much easier to walk the other way.

Your ways are always the best for me. Thank you Jesus for always picking me up and carrying me in the direction home.

I love you Jesus.

Amen

The Good News at SSPJ School!

Apostles of Hope

April 27, 2020

Nursery A

Kallista Baialardo is an Apostle of Hope. Kallista has been doing a wonderful job staying on top of her work and attends Circle Time every morning. She loves to inquire how everyone is doing and shares great stories on the different activities she does to pass the time. Kallista continues to be a wonderful student and friend to her classmates.

Nursery B

Taylor Shubert is an Apostle of Hope. Taylor has been doing an amazing job during home learning. She is very active on Google Classroom and loves to upload pictures of her completing her work. She even drew her teacher some pictures and had her mom send them to her. She misses being in school with her friends and teachers but is loving all the activities for learning at home!

Pre-Kindergarten

Mackenzie Stevenson is an Apostle of Hope. Mackenzie has been handing in every assignment and working hard on all at home learning activities. She has even been working on the extra activities and her hard work shows. All of Mackenzie's diligence and efforts have made her a wonderful disciple of Jesus. Keep up the great work Mackenzie!

Kindergarten

Sarah Bazile-Regis is an Apostle of Hope. Sarah has been working very hard each day completing her assignments in Google Classroom. She has been working especially hard on her reading and it shows! She is a very kind girl who loves to help her family, friends, and neighbors just like Jesus would.

Grade 1

Matthew Colon is an Apostle of Hope. Matthew has adjusted to virtual learning and has been working very hard. Matthew is very active during Google Meet sessions, and enjoys seeing his friends and teacher. Matthew has been working very hard on his math skills and continues to advance in his reading and writing skills. Keep working hard each and every day.

Grade 2

Mikaela Grimaldi is an Apostle of Hope. Mikaela is working very hard each day and returning all her work promptly. Mikaela goes above and beyond when completing her assignments. She does her class work and all the special projects that are requested during the week. Mikaela shows her love for Jesus by doing activities that make others smile and is a true friend of Jesus.

Grade 3

Raizel Silvestre is an Apostle of Hope. Each day, Raizel signs on to Google Classroom ready to take on the day's assignments. She is ready to start very early each morning and has completed all posted assignments. During the Easter recess, Raizel continued her learning by signing on to Google Classroom to complete optional enrichment activities. She has also joined in the Meet sessions and shared conversation with her classmates. She is truly an Apostle of Hope.

Grade 4

Harmony Hyatt is an Apostle of Hope. Harmony has been working very hard to submit and complete her assignments on Google Classroom. She expresses that she spends much of her time at home praying for everyone to be safe and healthy during the CoronaVirus pandemic. Harmony is a loving, kind, hard-working student who has been a wonderful addition to our SSPJ school!



Grade 5

Nicholas Piliero is an Apostle of Hope. Nicholas was putting forth his best efforts in the classroom and continues to do so with distance learning. Nicholas attends Google Meets, asks questions, submits his assignments, and provides feedback to classmates when they need it. In these challenging times he continues to say Yes My Lord!

Grade 6

Brendan Kieran is an Apostle of Hope. Brendan is a hard-working student who always tries his best in Google Classroom. He is kind and helpful and he is missed by his teacher and Nursery Buddy. Brendan is looking forward to serving again at Mass as soon as he can.

Grade 7

Craig Williams is an Apostle of Hope. While remote learning has been a challenge in itself, Craig has found a way to prevail. Craig completes each assignment posted in a timely manner and with accuracy. Craig attends Google Meets not only to ask questions but to make his teachers and classmates laugh. In a time when we all need to smile, it has been a blessing to have Craig as a student.

Grade 8

Kate Nicastro is an Apostle of Hope. Kate is a hard worker and has easily transitioned to "distance learning". Kate always hands in her work and participates in "Google Meets". In addition Kate is extremely self-motivated and takes it upon herself to find other resources to help her learn while not "face to face". While at school Kate participated in Student Council, Stained Glass, Drama, and CMSAA sports. She is a good role model and I am sure she will be successful as she continues her Catholic Education at Our Lady of Mercy.

Faculty

Mrs. Siragusa is an Apostle of Hope. Mrs. Siragusa has created a Google Classroom where she is present not only on her Tuesday/Thursday scheduled days but all 5 days of the week! Students, parents and faculty are all thankful for the daily mindfulness activities. Thank you for your care and compassion.

Preparing for the Fifth Sunday of Easter (next week)

May 10, 2020 • 5th Sunday of Easter • Year A

Introducing the Trinity

This Week's Readings at Mass

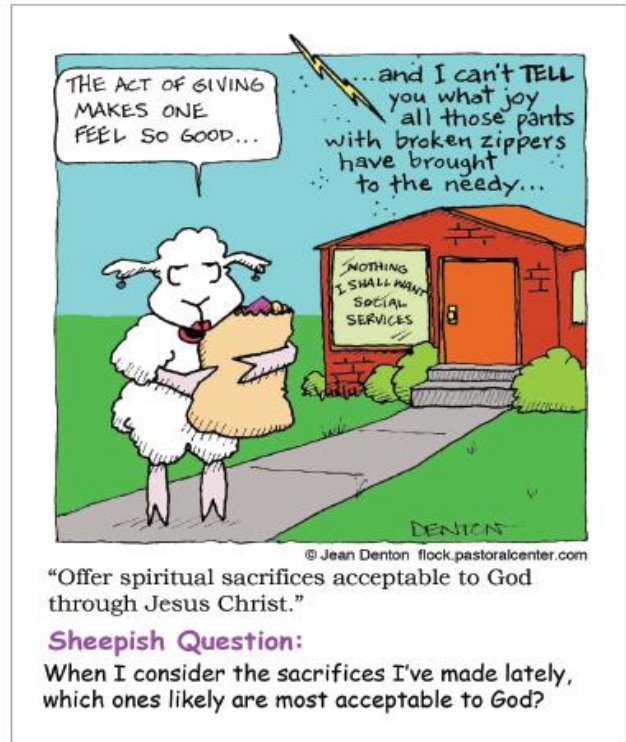
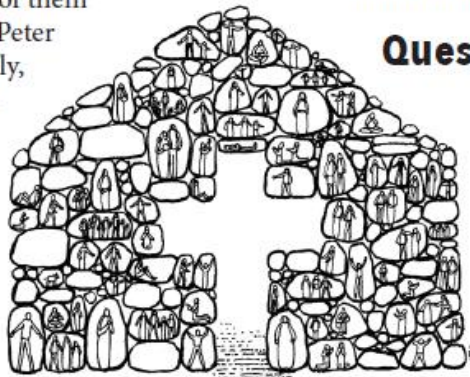
- ▶ Acts 6:1-7 - The need of assistants
- ▶ 1 Peter 2:4-9 - Living stones
- ▶ John 14:1-12 - Last discourse: the way, the truth, and the life

The first reading from Acts of the Apostles gives us another glimpse into the very early life and growth of Christianity. At some point, the number of Christians (many of whom still practiced the Jewish faith) became too large for the 12 apostles to minister to adequately. The apostles realized they needed help, so the community of believers identified seven more well-respected men who were "filled with the Spirit and wisdom." In an early form of ordination, the apostles prayed and "laid hands on them," officially making them leaders as well. The church has preserved this early tradition; when deacons and priests are ordained today, the central part of the ritual is the bishop laying hands on the candidate and praying over him.

Today's Gospel passage can be boiled down to two main points, but they may be hard to grasp because Jesus seems speak in circles. First, don't let your hearts be troubled. Second, if you know Jesus, you know God. If you didn't get those upon first reading, take heart; neither did the apostle Philip.

Jesus' speech here takes place the night before he dies. Sitting with his friends, the apostles, after he washed their feet, Jesus is aware that they are troubled. Jesus had just predicted that one of them would betray him and that Peter would disown him. Naturally, they are confused and worried. As he does at other points in the gospels, Jesus offers them peace and reassurance and encourages them to trust him, even though things are not looking good.

Philip wants even more reassurance, and he wants to understand just exactly what Jesus is



saying with his talk of dwelling places in his Father's house. In a very roundabout way, Jesus tries to explain that if Philip believes in him, he can trust in the Father, too. This exchange is part of the origin of the Christian understanding of the Trinity. Jesus and the Father are somehow "one," yet not the same. A few verses after this reading, Jesus talks about the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's connection to himself and the Father. The description is something that we might not be able to grasp with our rational minds. If this is the case, we find ourselves back in Philip's position, being asked by Jesus to "believe in me." What is faith, after all, if there is no need for belief or trust?

Questions of the Week

- 1 Have you ever felt an invitation to trust and to "not let your heart be troubled," even though you sensed there was something troubling on the horizon?
- 2 Which person of the Trinity is it easiest for you to relate to: the Father, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit? Why?

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God and the Principle of Non-Contradiction

It is funny where the lessons of our classrooms are sometimes understood.

I studied philosophy when I was still a bit too young for it, a nineteen year-old studying the metaphysics of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. But something from a metaphysics course remains indelibly stamped in my mind. We learned that there are four “transcendental” properties to God: Scholastic metaphysics tells us that *God is One, True, Good, and Beautiful*. My young mind then had some grasp of what is meant by *True, Good, and Beautiful* since we have some common sense notions of what these are; but what is *Oneness*? What is divine about being undivided?

The answer to that didn’t come to me in a classroom or in an academic discussion, even though I have often tried to explain its meaning to students in a classroom. It came to me in a grocery store.

I had been buying groceries in the same store for twelve years when a trivial incident helped explain God’s Oneness and its importance to me. The store, a large supermarket, has a fruit isle where you pick up apples, oranges, grapefruits, bananas, and the like and then bag them yourself in plastic bags the store supplies. Alongside the plastic bag dispensers there are small containers holding metal twistors you use to tie up the top of your bag. One day, I picked up some fruit, put it into a bag, but all the containers containing the twistors were empty, every one of them. As I checked out my groceries, suspecting that possibly someone had taken them as a prank, I mentioned to the cashier that all the twistors were gone. Her answer took me aback: “But, Sir, we have never had them in this store!” Thinking she might be new on the job, I said: “I’ve been coming here for more than 10 years and you’ve always had them! You can even see their containers from here!” With an assurance that comes from absolute certitude, she replied: “I’ve been working here for a long time, and I can assure you we’ve never had them!”

I pushed things no further, but, walking out of the store I thought this to myself: “If she’s right, then I’m certifiably insane! If she’s right then I’m completely out of touch with reality, have been for a long time, and I have no idea what sanity is!” I was certain that I had seen the twistors for ten years! Well, they had reappeared by the next time I entered the store and they are there today, but that little episodic challenge to my sanity taught me something. I now know what it means that *God is One* and why that is important.

That God is One (and not divided) is the very foundation for all rationality and sanity. That God is undivided and consistent within assures you that two plus two will always be four – and that you can anchor your sanity on that. That God is undivided assures you that if you saw package twistors in a store for twelve years, they were there ... and you are not insane. That God is One is the basis for our sanity. It undergirds the *Principle of Non-contradiction*: Something is or it is not, it cannot be both; and two plus two can never be five – and that allows us to live rational, sane lives. Because God is undivided, we can trust our sanity.

The truth of this was never jeopardized by the great epistemological debates in history. Doubts about rationality and sanity do not come from Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Locke, Hume, Wittgenstein, or Jacques Derrida; these philosophers merely argued about the structure of rationality, never about its existence. What jeopardizes our sanity (and is, no doubt, the greatest moral threat in our world today) is lying, the denial of facts, the changing of facts, and the creation of fake facts. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is as dangerous and pernicious as lying, dishonesty. It is no accident that Christianity names Satan the *Prince of Lies* and teaches that lying is at the root of the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit. When facts are no longer facts, then our very sanity is under siege because lying corrupts the basis for rationality.

God is One! That means that there is no internal contradiction within God and that assures us that there is no internal contradiction possible within the structure of reality and within a sane mind. What has happened, has forever happened, and cannot be denied. Two plus two will forever be four and because of that we can remain sane and trust reality enough to live coherent lives.

The single most dangerous thing in the whole world is lying, dishonesty, denying facts. To deny a fact is not only to play fast and loose with your own sanity and the very foundations of rationality; it is also to play fast and loose with God whose consistency undergirds all sanity and all meaning. God is one, undivided, consistent.