

St. Mary of the Visitation Catholic Church NEWSLETTER

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Fr. Steve Witt

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PASTOR'S LETTER

Article By Fr. Steve Witt

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Spring is coming and by the time you read this, it may have hit full force. I can't wait for a little break from all that is troubling the world. As much as I wish to avoid what troubles us, I can't seem to escape the reality of a world set to divide itself over almost every issue. The teachings of the Christian religion, Catholicism in particular, call us to love and honor our neighbors and ourselves and to love our God above all. That said, it seems that our cultures and societies in general have abandoned the notion that the underpinnings of all moral ethics are rooted in this kind of cosmological understanding. Not only that but, even those who espouse a system of moral conduct, seem to focus on issues that are so narrow in scope that they forget the underlying principles of the Golden Rule. Believe

in society. This attitude is not just found in the elite, but in every faction of almost every culture on the face of the earth. My friends, we can't exist with that attitude toward life.

I know that we hear all this in church, but it is high time that we actually take a look outside ourselves. It is my contention that each and every one of us who claim to be of religious persuasion and have allegiances to organizations like the Church must make it our daily task to change our own orientation; to reorient ourselves to a life of caring for others as well as ourselves, before the time comes when such a reorientation is impossible where societies and cultures are reduced to nothing.

Bless you all in Christ.

Fr. Steve

IT IS HIGH TIME THAT WE ACTUALLY TAKE A LOOK OUTSIDE OURSELVES AND REORIENT OURSELVES TO A LIFE OF CARING FOR OTHERS AS WELL AS OURSELVES.

it or not, the idea of do unto others as you would have them do unto you is found in almost every religion existing in the world.

Obviously there are many problems in the world without easy solutions, but one thing that is appearing more and more true, is that we as a people (meaning of the world) have taken an alternative approach to life in society that hangs its hat on the idea that self-serving power and personal well-being outweigh the welfare of everyone else

Your Input Requested

If you have any comments, concerns, suggestions, ideas, or if you would like to write for the St. Mary's quarterly newsletter, please contact Jeanette Roush-Krafka at jeanette.roush@gmail.com

How a Stephen Minister Can Help Us with Life's Challenges



Article By: Julia Blke and Bill Doucette

Stephen Ministers provide one-on-one Christian care for people experiencing difficulties in their lives, such as grief, illness or financial problems. They accompany us as we work through such challenges. St. Mary's Parish has a new group of Stephen Ministers who will soon be available to provide care to their fellow parishioners. These people are completing the 50-hour training program and will be commissioned as Stephen Ministers. They have learned techniques for active listening, affirming feelings and showing empathy.

So, how does Stephen Ministry work? The starting point is identifying a person in need, let's call her Ruth, who could benefit from the care of a Stephen Minister. Ruth could be identified by the pastor or parish staff through usual interactions. Also, Stephen Ministry Leaders could receive Ruth's name from a concerned family member or friend. At this point Ruth will be given the contact information of a Stephen Leader. Once contacted by the prospective care receiver (Ruth), a Stephen Leader would talk to her to discern whether Stephen Ministry was a good choice for her. If Stephen Ministry is agreed upon by Ruth and the Stephen Leader, then a female Stephen Minister will be identified to begin to provide care to Ruth.

In their caring relationship, the Stephen Minister and Ruth decide when and where they will meet. Sometimes this is at the care receiver's (Ruth's) house, while it also could be a meeting room at the church or at a park. At the care meetings, Ruth can tell the Stephen Minister about her situation. The Stephen Minister would listen to Ruth's concerns to identify the feelings she is expressing. The Stephen Minister would validate Ruth's feelings, letting her know it is OK to feel anger or sadness. This care is entirely confidential. Care receivers can receive care from a Stephen Minister until they feel they have gotten through their difficulty. This might take a few months to more than a year, depending on the situation.

To briefly illustrate how care receivers experience their Stephen Ministers, let's share some real life examples from Stephen Ministries' website. The first one is a man who was grieving the recent death of his wife. The care receiver met with his Stephen Minister, who listened and asked some questions. After the question, "Can you tell me how you really feel?" The care receiver spoke quickly in a rush of grief and other emotions about his wife's death. He said that being able to let that out was "such a burden off my shoulders." This was helpful to the man's healing from his loss. He said that the questions being asked tenderly by his Stephen Minister helped him break through the wall he had built to contain his grief.

Another case is a woman with the recurrence of ovarian cancer. She feels blessed to have a Stephen Minister who is willing to go with her wherever she needs to go to process what happens to her with the cancer, treatments and emotions. The care receiver says her Stephen Minister "doesn't try to fix me" or "talk me out of my feelings." The care receiver went on to say, "She is so with me. I know I can trust her." She also

said she feels blessed to know her Stephen Minister is always praying for her. She sees her relationship with her Stephen Minister as experiencing the love of Christ. She says, "My Stephen Minister is truly a gift."

A third case is a man going through a divorce who felt alone and asked for a Stephen Minister. The Stephen Minister helped him by being there consistently and walking with him through a painful separation. The care receiver said about his Stephen Minister, "He didn't give up on me." He felt God's presence when he met with his Stephen Minister as they discussed his trials and feelings. He said, "My Stephen Minister and the Stephen Ministry program have changed my life."

Another man was caring for his wife who had serious health issues, and a friend suggested getting a Stephen Minister. The care receiver said that his Stephen Minister is "not there to tell me what to do, but he's there to get me to talk and discover what is necessary." He stated, "I can tell him anything. I give thanks every day." The care receiver tells how he now gives as much as he can to God and others, since he received so much through Stephen Ministry.

All of us in St. Mary's Parish are encouraged to consider asking about a Stephen Minister when we find ourselves in need – physically, emotionally or spiritually. We can talk with Father Steve or one of the Stephen Leaders (Julia Blake or Bill Doucette) about receiving care from a Stephen Minister. May we all have someone to walk with us when in need, showing us the love of Christ. [Stephen Leaders at St. Mary's currently are Julia Blake (phone: 319-541-1906) and Bill Doucette (phone: 319-541-9814)].

Exploring the Examen Prayer

This world can be a big rush. Hurry to our next event. Can we check our social media even as we are watching the TV or something streaming? How do I juggle all of the things I want to do? How can I see God when my life goes past in a blur? Is going to Mass once a week enough to really know God in my life? How can I better listen to God and respond to what He is saying to me?

THE EXAMEN IS A TECHNIQUE OF PRAYERFUL REFLECTION ON THE EVENTS OF OUR DAY TO DETECT GOD'S PRESENCE AND DISCERN HIS DIRECTION FOR US.

It is challenging to block out the noise and distractions around us to get close to God. Daily prayer is a key to connecting to Him. St. Paul wrote, "Pray without ceasing." [1 Thes 5:17] While there are a lot of ways to pray, the Examen is one prayer that we can use to improve our relationship with God. St. Ignatius of Loyola, a founder of the Jesuits, developed the Daily Examen as one of his Spiritual Exercises about 500 years ago.

The Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of our day to detect God's presence and discern His direction for us. The Examen is a prayer that focuses on God's presence in the real world. It looks to God who is near, present in our world, and active in our life. It approaches prayer with gratitude. It helps us find God in our lives as we live them, not in some heavenly realm beyond space and time.

There's nothing complicated about making the Examen part of our life. The subject matter of the Examen is our life — specifically the day we have just lived through. The Examen looks for signs of God's presence in the events of the day — breakfast with a loved one, a walk in the park, a kind word from a co-worker or a task completed. While God is present in transcendent "spiritual" moments, He also is there when we cook dinner, read the news, answer emails and run errands.

The Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day to detect God's presence and to discern his direction for us. Here is one version of St. Ignatius's prayer, from Ignatianspirituality.com, that can take 10-15 minutes.

1. BECOME AWARE OF GOD'S PRESENCE.

Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit.

The day may seem confusing to you — a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

2. REVIEW THE DAY WITH GRATITUDE.

Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? What did you give them?

3. PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR EMOTIONS.

One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Compassion? Anger? What is God saying through these feelings?

God will most likely show you some ways that you fell short. Make note of these sins and faults. But look deeply for other implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants you to consider a new direction in some area of your life? Are you concerned about a friend or family member? Perhaps you should reach out to him or her in some way.

4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.

Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God

Article By: Bill Doucette

thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

5. Look toward tomorrow. Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask him for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

There are many ways to learn more about the Examen prayer. See the resources listed in this article. We are called to live our lives close to God. Regularly praying the Examen can help us see Him in our everyday life activities and learn to better do His will for us. Give the Examen a try.

RESOURCES FOR THE EXAMEN

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/>: a web site focused on Ignatian prayer

Pray-as-you-go: a mobile app that includes the Examen.

The Jesuit Post on YouTube: Search YouTube for The Jesuit Post or Pray the Ignatian Examen.

Gallagher, Fr. Timothy M. *The Examen Prayer – Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today*, The Crossroad Publishing Co., Pearly River, NY: 2006.

BAPTISMS

KENZEE DAWN HARNEY

AZELIE JOSEPHINE NESSLER

CLARKE CATHERINE
BOLENBAUGH

LUKA QUINN CAVANAUGH

NAETOCUKWU WILSON
OKEYCHARLOTTE RUTH
CHAMBERLAINISABELLA MARIANNE
HOEGER-PINTOEILEEN FRANCES
HEPWORTH

LIV KNIGHT ROUSH-KRAFKA

PRECIEUX STEVENS LEMON

CHRISTIANA LYDIE HOPE
DITOJOSIANA MONTIGEA
MINGOMBA

SINONIA NGELI MINGOMBA

MIRACLE MBOLI MABOSO
MINGOMBAURIEL STONY BISSONO
MINGOMBA

GERMAIN NGBELI SAMBUMA

GRACE YAMBISI SAMBUMA

ISABELLA ARZU-CHAPARRO

CHARLEY SHARON
SORENSEN

EVA RAQUEL MONTANO

MARRIAGES

SARAH PRATT AND PATRICK
NALLY, JR.

Confirmation at St. Mary's

Article By: Patti McTaggart



On Sunday, February 20, 2022, thirty-four young people from our parish received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Bishop Thomas Zinkula.

The Roman Catholic Church views Confirmation as a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ. It confers the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge, Counsel, Fortitude, Piety, and Fear of the Lord) upon the recipient, who must be a baptized person at least seven years old. A bishop normally performs the rite, which includes the laying on of hands and anointing the forehead with Chrism (holy oil).

Preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation at St. Mary's Parish begins in October each year and extends through February or March when the candidates are confirmed and become confirmands. Youth in grades 9-12 who are registered members of St. Mary's Parish and who freely choose to be confirmed prepare as a group to receive this sacrament.

Our emphasis in the Confirmation process at St. Mary's is to help our young people grow in faith as committed members of the Catholic Church. It is by integrating our faith experiences with life that we make the transition from "head knowledge" to a "personal relationship with Jesus" as members of His Body, the Church. While emphasizing the experiential, the process also seeks to provide solid teaching on Christian discipleship within the framework of Catholic theology.

Youth seeking to become candidates for Confirmation will register in September. The registration asks for information regarding baptism, name of sponsor, etc. Confirmation classes begin the second weekend in October and the Rite of Admission to Candidacy for Confirmation takes place at all the Masses on that following weekend.

Prayer/worship experiences as well as service opportunities are scheduled accordingly throughout the calendar year. Service privileges are designed to enhance the ability of the candidates to serve as part of the larger faith community. These service experiences are an excellent opportunity for each person to recognize his/her own gifts and blessings as he/she offers assistance to people in need. It is our hope that the candidates will be guided to a lifetime of service to others as fully initiated members of the Church.

Time is also taken for a Confirmation "Advance" (previously known as a retreat – they are ADVANCING in their faith, not retreating). This "Advance", led by a National Evangelization Team (NET) based out of Minneapolis, provides the candidates an opportunity to reflect on their personal faith experiences and to look forward to the approaching Confirmation celebration. "I greatly enjoyed my Confirmation experience", said freshman Elena Garcia. "It gave me a moment to realize how important God is in the foundation of my life. I truly noticed this during the Advance. I felt a deep connection with Him and my faith. I will forever remember my Confirmation and how important it was to my connection with God."

Parental involvement is always the key to the prayer, worship, catechesis, and service opportunities. The catechists, volunteers, and Confirmation coordinator may serve as role models, but it is important to stress that parental involvement shows interest and commitment from the entire family. Ultimately, Confirmation is about our faith, commitment, and community. Each person – from coordinators, catechists, candidates, sponsors, parents, and the entire faith community of St. Mary's – should grow in openness to and awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit during the Confirmation preparation and throughout their journey of faith.



Pentecost Sunday

and the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church



"The Holy Spirit came to those gathered. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire"

Article By: Dan Teets

said, scoffing, 'They have had too much new wine.'" (Acts 2:12-13). Perhaps it was leftover from the Wedding Feast at Cana! (see John 2:1-11).

Then Peter stood up and said, "These people are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning."

Peter goes on to explain that it was the Spirit of God spoken of in the prophet Joel. When the people heard all that Peter had to say they asked, "What are we to do?" Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day.' (Acts 2:37-38,41). What a great harvest!!! This was (and still is) the Birthday of the Church!!!

So, on Pentecost Sunday we can say, "Happy Birthday!!!" to our fellow parishioners.

Happy Easter!!! As I write this article it is Holy Thursday and we are entering the shortest liturgical season of the year, the Triduum (Three Days) between the season of Lent (40 days of fasting, prayer and almsgiving) and the season of Easter (50 days of feasting). But I want to share with you about the final day of the Easter Season (Pentecost Sunday, June 5th this year) and the new celebration that happens the next day, on June 6th (Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church)!

Imagine being with the disciples and Mary and the other women who followed Jesus "when the time of Pentecost was fulfilled" (Acts 2:1 NABRE). It was "a joyous time of giving thanks and presenting offerings for the new grain of the summer wheat harvest in Israel" (from an article by Mary Fairchild at: <https://www.learnreligions.com/feast-of-pentecost-700186>). But a new harvest was about to begin!

The Holy Spirit came to those gathered: "And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each of them." (Acts 2:2-3). Then things got really interesting!

As the ones who had received the Holy Spirit spoke, all of the visitors "devout Jews from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) heard them each speaking in their own language "of the mighty acts of God" (Acts 2:11). "They were all astounded and bewildered, and said to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others

A New Feast! In 2018 our Holy Father Pope Francis established a new celebration, the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, to be celebrated each year on the Monday after Pentecost Sunday. By celebrating this feast, according to Father David Fons, "the Church specifically recalls Mary's reception of the Holy Spirit with the Apostles at Pentecost, as well as her desire to protect all who come to her Son in His Holy Church." (article found at: <https://www.dioceseflansing.org/news/feast-blessed-virgin-mary-mother-church>). Pope Francis said he wished to "encourage the growth of the maternal sense of the Church in the pastors, religious and faithful, as well as a growth of genuine Marian piety." We can consecrate ourselves to Jesus through Mary and we can ask Mary each day to be our spiritual Mother and to be the Mother of the Church.

So, let's keep the feasting going! And be sure to have at least a few of the things you gave up for Lent! Bring on the coffee!!!

CONFIRMATIONS

MICHAEL SCOTT BENDER
JENSON MARTIN BERG
JONATHAN ROBERT BERRY
EMMETT ROBERT
BOTTORFF
CLAIRE PATRICIA BOYLE
LACI LEA CHAMBLISS
GWYNETH ROSE
CHARLTON
MATTHEW KELLNER
COLONY
CHRISTOPHER GUILLANE
DITO
ELENA RHYS GARCIA
ELSIE LU GAVIN
JACK CHRISTIAN INGALLS
ADDISON MARIE JOHNSON
OLIVIA JOAN KIRK
REESE MAE LITTON
CAITLIN ANNE MARTIN
NOLAN JOHN MCDONALD
KATHRYN ELIZABETH MEIS
ZACHARY JOHN MENTZ
MORGAN ANN MILLER
CONNOR JAMES NICPON
TIEN QUOC PHAM
ADDISON MARIE PUCCIO
MADELYN MAE REED
KIERA PEYTON ROGERS
LEO ISAAC THOMAS
CARLO NIZHONI TRAN
PHILLIP L TRAN
QUINTON HUNG TRAN
BRADY VAN VANG
CLAUDIA MELISSA
WAMBUI WANJIRA
SAMUEL EDWARD WELTER
SPENCER JAMISON
WINDER
ELI ERIC WHITAKER
EMMY KRISTYNA
MCCOMAS
PRECIEUX STEVENS
LEMON
PATRICK EDWARD BRADY
HANNAH ROSE DEHNER
KODY KYLE FITZJERRELS
ISABELLA MARIANNE
PINTO-HOEGER
DIANA WON JU LEE-WEST
AMARI KIJANA NASAFI
EVA RAQUEL MONTANO

FIRST COMMUNIONS

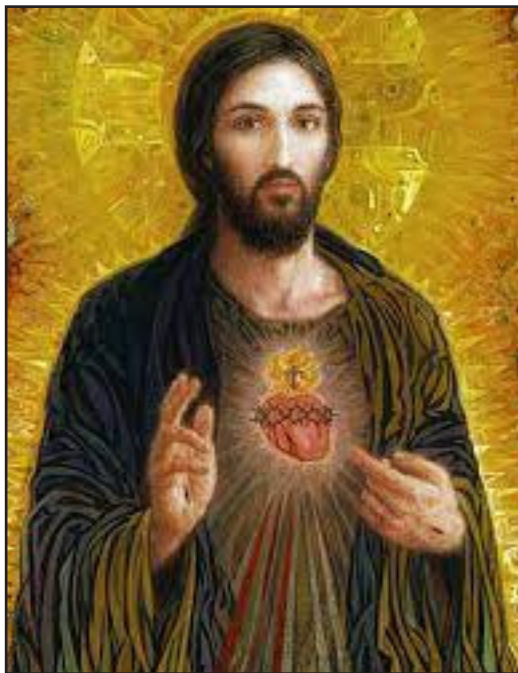
PRECIEUX STEVENS
LEMONPATRICK EDWARD
BRADYKODY KYLE
FITZJERRELSDIANA WON JU LEE
WESTAMARI KIJANA
NASAFIEVA RAQUEL
MONTANOPROFESSIONS OF
FAITHDEBORAH
ANDERSON EVENKODY KYLE
FITZJERRELSAMARI KIJANA
NASAFI

FUNERALS

PATRICIA ANN
FISHERROBERT A.
SQUIRESJEANETTE MAE
WATERSROBERT E.
EDWARDSPATRICIA ELLEN
SPEVACEKSHARON ANN
OWENSCLEOLA THERESA
DUWA SCHNEIDER

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Article By: Isaac Doucette



My Brothers and Sisters in Christ's Sacred Heart:
Imagine the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Picture its soft flesh that is like ours and the

secure refuge in that last hour."

This gives us a glimpse into how much Jesus loves us in a personal way. It also gives us a way to show our love back to Him. I encourage the first Friday devotion of receiving Communion in reparation for the sins committed against the Sacred Heart on the first Friday of the month for nine consecutive months. This devotion promotes frequent reception of Communion and a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, but how did it come about?

The Sacred Heart was largely a response to Jansenism, which is the denial of the role of free will to accept and apply God's grace in our lives. In other words, the teaching of the Catholic Church is because we have free will, we can choose to reject God's grace or act with God's grace. For example, choosing to sin or choosing to overcome temptation with God's grace. This is denied by Jansenism which leads to the view of a helpless humanity and a vengeful God rather than a loving God and the ability to abide in God's grace.

THE USUAL DEPICTION OF THESE THREE DIVINE CHARACTERISTICS ARE THE FLAMES OF CHARITY, THE THORNS OF HUMILITY, AND THE BLOOD OF MERCY. THESE THREE CHARACTERISTICS DEVELOPED OVER TIME THROUGH THE WRITINGS OF THE SAINTS.

Divine aspects of it that are not like ours. The usual depiction of these three Divine characteristics are the flames of charity, the thorns of humility, and the blood of mercy. These three characteristics developed over time through the writings of the Saints. The Sacred Heart of Jesus can be found in the writings of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Gertrude, St. John Eudes, and most explicitly St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. Over the centuries more and more explicit insights and revelations occurred. This culminated in Jesus' revelations to St. Margaret Mary in the 1600s. These revelations give us insight into Jesus' Sacred Heart. They are also the foundation of the first Friday devotion.

In these revelations we gain insight into the depth of God's love for us. Notably, Jesus said to St. Margaret Mary, "In the excess of the mercy of My Heart, I promise you that My all-powerful love will grant to all those who will receive Communion on the First Fridays, for nine consecutive months, the grace of final repentance: they will not die in My displeasure, nor without receiving the sacraments; and My Heart will be their

Understanding God's love for us has continued to unfold. There is a question of how exactly the Divine Mercy revelation to St. Faustina and the Sacred Heart Revelation to St. Margaret Mary are related. There is certainly overlap seen in the emphasis of love and mercy that is Jesus' Heart. How exactly the two relate is a matter of theological opinion at this point, but they both allow us to better understand God's love and mercy.

In our own piety, how do we live out God's love and mercy for us? Some ways to live out the devotion to the Sacred Heart are doing the first Friday devotion, praying the litany of the Sacred Heart, praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet, and making a pilgrimage to Sacred Heart Cathedral in Davenport. The Cathedral is the Mother Church of the Diocese of Davenport. It is well worth the drive to see the beautiful stained glass of St. Margaret Mary receiving the revelation of the Sacred Heart from Jesus. When we continue to strive to receive God's love and love others through the Sacred Heart, we in turn become more Christ-like. Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us.

Era of Conversions and Councils (313-499 AD):

Establishing Catholic Orthodoxy

The first century AD, called “Mustard Seed,” marks the beginning of the Catholic Church, when the Holy Spirit filled the little “band of brothers” on the day of Pentecost and Christ commissioned the twelve to go into the world spreading the Gospel. This century was followed by two centuries of persecution, characterized by heresies and martyrdom of many defenders of the faith, including 10 of 12 Popes who reigned during this time. During the next era Christianity was legalized when Constantine brought an end to the Roman persecutions of Christians and later was baptized. The new freedom of Christians opened the door for clarification of the faith, as evidenced by the fact that 13 of the 40 Doctors of the Church lived between 313 and 499 AD, and four Ecumenical Councils were held. Moreover, Monasticism began as a means of living a “white martyrdom – dying to self and the world for God.”

SOME KEY SAINTS OF THIS PERIOD

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), recognized as the greatest theologian of his time, wrote against the heresy of denial of original sin. The fight against Arianism (denial of Christ's divinity, i.e., that He is consubstantial with the Father) was a heresy that persisted for a long time, but was denounced by the Church's theologians, including St. Athanasius, a Coptic priest and Doctor of the Church, as well as Pope St. Leo the Great. The latter is known for defending orthodox teaching and for promoting unity in the Church. Another key contribution was that of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, a Doctor of the Church and scripture scholar, who developed the “Catechesis” – 18 instructional addresses for baptismal candidates. These saints and others from this period, like St. Ambrose, St. Jerome and St. Basil the Great, are said to have “cast their shadows a thousand years into the future.”



Nicaea Icon

FOUR ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

COUNCIL OF NICAEA (325), the first Ecumenical Council, was ordered by Constantine and focused foremost on twenty Canons regarding the practices of the Church including the creed, liturgy, ordination and the last rites. A major impetus for the council was to condemn Arius, who denied that Christ was equal in the Trinity and always existed. Arius was condemned and the council expressed Christ's divinity in the Creed by noting that Christ was “consubstantial” with the Father.

COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (381) confirmed the Nicene Creed and condemned two heresies: 1) Macedonianism, an erroneous teaching that the Holy Spirit is not equal to the Father and Son in the Trinity, and 2) Arianism (as did the first council). This council affirmed Christ's divinity by stating that He is the second person of the Trinity.

COUNCIL OF EPHESUS (431) was attended by Catholic, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox and Anglican clergy. One major

Article By: Robert Tomanek

focus of this council was the condemnation of another heresy, taught by Archbishop Nestorius of Constantinople, that Christ had two loosely united natures, i.e., divine and human, and that His incarnation was God made man, rather than God becoming man. Another important doctrine of the council was the affirmation that Mary is the Mother of God, because she is a “God bearer.” Once again, the council affirmed the original Nicene Creed, which clearly stated Christ's divinity and equality in the Holy Trinity.

COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON (451) was the best documented of the four councils and affirmed the work of the previous councils. These affirmations included earlier canons, the two natures of Christ and the definition of faith. The council also addressed ecclesiastic disciplines and authority, and the roles of monks, priests and parish life.

THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THIS HISTORICAL PERIOD

Recalling that the previous era was one of persecution, which prohibited a visible church, the 313-499 period opened the door for the formation of the Church as we now know it. The rejection of theological heresies enabled our understanding of 1) the nature of Christ (as consubstantial with the Father), 2) the Trinity, 3) Mary as the Mother of God and 4) our Creed. Moreover, the canons of Church doctrines were stated, our liturgy, the roles of clergy (bishops, priests, deacons) and monks were defined. Our church would not be united if the saints of this period had not defined Christology and the role of the Church in salvation. These works are the basis of our faith.

St. Mary of the Visitation Catholic Church

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ST. MARY'S NEWSLETTER VOL. 19

Saint Mary, Woman of Faith

Excerpts from DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH LUMEN GENTIUM Ch. 8

Article By: Julia Blake



The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and The Church

53. The Virgin Mary, who at the message of the angel received the Word of God in her heart and in her body and gave Life to the world, is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and Mother of the Redeemer. ... At the same time, however, because she belongs to the offspring of Adam she is one with all those

who are to be saved. She is "the mother of the members of Christ, who are members of that Head." Wherefore she is hailed as a pre-eminent and singular member of the Church, and as its type and excellent exemplar in faith and charity.

...

56. Adorned from the first instant of her conception with ... an entirely unique holiness, the Virgin of Nazareth is greeted ... by an angel messenger as "full of grace ...", and she replies: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word". (Lk. 1:38) ... Embracing God's salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord.... Rightly therefore the holy Fathers see her as ... freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. ...

58. In the course of her Son's preaching she received the words whereby in extolling a kingdom beyond the bonds of flesh and blood, He declared blessed those who heard and kept the word of God, as she was faithfully doing. (Lk. 2:19, 51) After this manner the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and

faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross. (Cf. Jn. 19:26-27) ...

59. But since it has pleased God not to manifest ... the mystery of the salvation of the human race before He would pour forth the Spirit promised by Christ, we see the apostles before the day of Pentecost "persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with His brethren", (Acts 1:14) and Mary by her prayers imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation. ...

62. This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, and lasts until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this salvific duty, but by her constant intercession continued to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. ...

63. By reason of the gift and role of divine maternity, ... and by her belief and obedience, ... she brought forth on earth the very Son of the Father, showing an undefiled faith ... in that of God's messenger. The Son whom she brought forth is He whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, (Rom. 8:29) namely the faithful, in whose birth and education she cooperates with a maternal love. ...

65. But ... the followers of Christ still strive to increase in holiness by conquering sin, (Cf. Eph 5:27) and so they turn their eyes to Mary, who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as the model of virtues. ... For Mary ... calls the faithful to her Son and His sacrifice and to the love of the Father. ... The Church ... continually progresses in faith, hope and charity, seeking and doing the will of God in all things, ... that through the Church He ... may increase in the hearts of the faithful also. ...