

My Dear Parishioners,

One of the curious facts of modern life is the growing number of cults or sects which compete for our attention alongside major religions. Perhaps that is not so curious when we appreciate the genuine longing of many people for something to believe in, hold onto, or trust in. When people speak of cults or sects they usually refer to unorthodox religion or to the excessive admiration of an individual person. Most cults or sects are movements which have broken away from mainstream religions. They often arise from the supposed failure of those religions to address the personal needs of their followers. Because of this phenomenon cults or sects usually stand as a critical challenge to institutional religion.

It is worth noting that when the Christian movement began it was regarded in the Roman Empire as an eccentric cult or sect focusing on a person named Jesus of Nazareth. One of the problems the early Church had to face and deal with was another cult (the Baptist sect) who believed that John the Baptist was the true Messiah. The Baptist sect argued that their master (John) was far more superior to Jesus for two main reasons: firstly, John came before Jesus and that priority gave him superiority; secondly, Jesus submitted to John's baptism of repentance making Him inferior to John. Faced with these arguments, the early Church had to respond and clarify its own position in regard to John the Baptist. Today's Scripture readings help clarify the roles of Jesus and John the Baptist.

In today's Gospel passage we see how the Evangelist John faces these charges and faces the dilemma surrounding John the Baptist and Jesus. John the Baptist has only one function in John's Gospel. He is a **witness** to Jesus, revealing the presence of the Messiah. Today's Gospel passage shows John the Baptist as fulfilling his role of testifying to Jesus.

In St. John's Gospel John the Baptist is portrayed as a **truthful witness** for Jesus. John the Baptist gives **witness** to numerous titles that can be given **only** to Jesus. These titles show and prove that Jesus **is** superior to him in all ways. The first title might be called "The Greater One". John takes the point that priority does indeed mean superiority and shows that Jesus is superior to the Baptist because

Jesus existed before him. John the Baptist declares: "A man is coming after me who ranks before me **because He existed before me.**" Jesus **is** the Word who existed from the beginning. Unfortunately for John that was hindsight, and it always troubled him that he did not immediately recognize Jesus. John certainly knew that Jesus was his cousin but not what Jesus was destined to be.

A second title under which John the Baptist saw Jesus may be termed "The Vehicle of the Spirit". John recounted that, even before Jesus' baptism, God had told him that one upon whom the Spirit would descend would himself be baptizing with the Holy Spirit. John in speaking of the Spirit meant the Jewish **ruach** meaning wind or breath, and by extension power, life and God. At Jesus' baptism John saw the Spirit descend like a dove hovering over Jesus and remaining with Him. This made Jesus unique and distinguished His Baptism from John's. John baptized with water, meaning his baptism was purely symbolic with no intrinsic efficacy of its own to restore a person to grace. Jesus, however, baptized with water and the Spirit. His Baptism is efficacious because through the merits of His Passion and Death He has the power to forgive sin, restore us to grace, and make us children of God again.

A third title that John the Baptists applies to Jesus is "God's Chosen One". This is an allusion to Isaiah (42:1), recognizing that Jesus is the special Son of God-the Chosen One in whom God delights.

The most precious of all the titles John the Baptist poignantly ascribed to the loving Jesus is "Lamb of God" –the vulnerable Lamb of God, who dies that we might live. This image (which immediately captured the imagination of early Christians) is very suggestive. Jesus the Lamb of God surrenders His life to nourish us in love, in innocence, and at His own cost. The Baptist's testimony that Jesus **is** the Lamb of God brings to mind several images: the apocalyptic lamb of Rv. 5: 6-13 (the person/lamb who would destroy evil in the world and be the conqueror who would bring about God's judgment); the paschal lamb of Ex. 12: 7-14 (the blood of the slain paschal lamb smeared on the door posts identifying the Jewish families and protecting their firstborn on the night when God's avenging angel struck down the firstborn

of the Egyptians); the temple lamb of Ex.29:28(every day two one year old lambs were sacrificed on the altar of the Temple) and the suffering lamb (Servant of God) led to the slaughter as described in Isaiah 53: 5-7, 10. All these images form the foundation upon which John makes his declaration about Jesus who is the Lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world. Sin here is collective and refers to the world's alienation both from God and from one another.

We can see how the Evangelist John defends the truth of the Christian faith against the Baptist sect (those who believe that the Baptist was the Messiah.) John the Baptist is only a **witness** to the light; he is **not** the light. He is the first of many witnesses to Jesus-a host of people who give testimony to the truth about Jesus. Later in the Gospel Jesus tells His own disciples that when they receive the Spirit of truth, "you too will be my witnesses" (John 15:27).

Today's passage from Isaiah (first reading), which is closely connected with our Gospel, presents the mysterious Servant of God. Today's passage is the second of four hymns called the Songs of the Servant of the Lord. All these hymns taken together give a composite picture of the servant. The servant has a mission from God. He sums up great figures from the past but his mission lies in the future. He is at the same time a real figure and an ideal. The Suffering Servant of Isaiah **is** God-with-Us, a beautiful person suffused with the intense caring passion of God for the world. He lovingly returns good for evil wherever he is and brings out in everyone all the good that they are capable of.

Today and everyday God calls us again to the high caliber of John the Baptist in **witnessing** to Jesus. We are not to render John's beautiful symbol "Lamb of God" meaningless. We all have been baptized in the Spirit so we are called to **witness** to Jesus. We are challenged to lead others to the person of Jesus. The best way to do that is through our own genuine attachment to Him. Many people need help to come to Jesus. None of us comes to Him alone. If only we had the courage to speak about Jesus to each other. Most people are moved when others share with them what **really matters** in their lives. Perhaps we have lost the courage to say any more what matters to us. Perhaps we doubt if anyone will care. But we **should** take

courage to share what we believe. We know that what we believe because we love. In the power of that love, let us share our belief with each other. Have a blessed week.

Love & prayers,
Fr. John

REDEMPTORIST CHAPTER MEETING

Please note that The Redemptorists will be attending a meeting at San Alfonso Retreat House in New Jersey, January 16-20th. Therefore daily mass this week will **only** be celebrated at **7 A.M.** There will be **no** Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on Wednesday, January 18th.

Thanks, Fr. John



**O.M.P.H.
Church and School Website
Our new Website for our
Parish and School is up and
running. Our new website is:
www.omph.org**

SCHOOL BUS DRIVER NEEDED



OMPH needs a School Bus driver to transport parish students from OMPH to Lancaster Catholic High School mornings and afternoons. Prefer a certified school bus driver or we may consider training new driver.

MARCH FOR LIFE 2017



The 44th annual March for life will be held in Washington D.C., on Friday, January 27 to protest the evil of legalized abortion in our nation. Members of the Catholics

THE POWER OF ONE Defending Life of Lancaster PA (CDL) are sponsoring four buses to the March for Life, leaving on that date for D.C. at 8:15 AM, and returning to Lancaster at 9:30 PM, using St. Leo the Great Church as the home-base.

Mass will be celebrated, before departure, at 7 AM at St. Leo's. Suggested bus fare is \$10 per individual and \$25 per family of three or more persons, with reduced-fare and free seats available for the mere asking. If you are unable to go to the March, consider sponsoring an individual or a family, willing to go but short-on-cash, by donating their bus fare. If you can go to the March, please call Rosie Gross at 397-6966 to reserve a seat aboard one of the busses.

RALLY FOR LIFE

January 22, 2017 marks the 44th anniversary of Roe vs. Wade, the Supreme Court decision making abortion legal for all 9 months of a woman's pregnancy.



This January 22 there will be a peaceful, prayerful **rally in front of the Lancaster County Courthouse**, 50 N. Duke St., from 3 to 5 pm to declare the sanctity of life within the womb. Please join us

in defending the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters!! Pray to end abortion.

If you have any questions, you are welcome to contact me via email or call 293-0236. If I am not home, leave a message.

Blessings, Julie English
Sacred Heart Parish
Pro-life Committee

FAITH FORMATION OPPORTUNITIES

The Diocesan Institute schedule of Winter/Spring adult education offerings is now available, at www.hbgdiocese.org/institute to access the schedule and registration information. Numerous courses and sessions are also available via webinar, allowing you to participate from home. Contact Ryan Bolster at rbolster@hbgdiocese.org or 657- 4804, ext. 225 for information.

WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER



This Valentine's Day why not give your spouse a gift that lasts, one that you can both enjoy day after day?

Worldwide Marriage Encounter is returning to the Diocese of Harrisburg on Valentine's Day weekend, February 10 – 12, 2017. Thousands of couples from across the country can attest that a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend will enrich both you and your spouse, giving you a happier, more fulfilling marriage. The weekend gives you both the time and tools to revitalize your romance, deepen your communication, and nourish the spirituality of your marriage.

Time: Friday evening, February 10th to Sunday, February 12th.

Location: Hampton Inn, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055.

Early registration is advisable as space is limited. There is a \$100 application fee to reserve your spot.

MASS INTENTION

Monday, January 16

7:00 †Margaret Gensemer

Tuesday, January 17, St. Anthony Abbot

7:00 †Margaret Gensemer

Wednesday, January 18

7:00 †D & J Killen

Thursday, January 19

7:00 †Jeff Montgomery

Friday, January 20

7:00 †Salvatore Scribani

Saturday, January 21, St. Agnes Virgin & Martyr

9:00 †Patrick & Agnes Cassidy

5:00 †Max Kessler

Sunday, January 22 Third Sunday in Ordinary

Time

7:30 For the Parishioners

9:00 †Michael Maye

11:00 †Max Kessler

IN OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

We will be publishing the names of your dear loved ones who are seriously ill or injured. We will keep them in the bulletin for one month. After the period of one month their names will be removed. *For example, names announced in the bulletin the third week of the month will be removed the third week of the following month.* If at that time prayers are still needed, please feel free to contact the parish office, and we will be more than happy to re-publish your loved one's name.

January 15: Alec Masluk

December: 18: Teri Dougherty, Anna B. Karen & Frank Wank, Anthony Tassa, Jean Givler, Russell Kurtz, Abigail Lowe-Critchfield. Lou Leone, Julie Leone, Carolyn Wolverton, Patricia Jeffrey, John Griffis.

January 1: Anthony Tassa, John Mento.

CHURCH SUPPORT

Date	Amount	Needed	Difference
1-1-16	\$ 15,135.00	\$14,326.00	\$809.00
YTD	Amount	YTD Needed	Difference
1-1-16	\$375,524.22	\$386,802.00	(\$11,277.78)

Date	Amount	Needed	Difference
1-8-16	\$13,512.58	\$14,326.00	(\$813.42)
YTD	Amount	YTD Needed	Difference
1-8-16	\$389,036.80	\$401,128.00	(\$12,091.20)

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

Every Sunday, just before we receive the Eucharist, the priest invites us to **“Behold the Lamb of God; behold him who takes away the sin of the world.”** He invites us to fix our eyes, our hearts, and our whole selves on Jesus. He invites us to say, “This Jesus died for every sin that has been committed or will be committed—he died for every sin that I or anyone else will commit.” A similar thing can happen to us at Mass today. Jesus wants to open our eyes at the “breaking of the bread” so that we might know him more deeply. When you receive Communion today, make it a point to behold Jesus. Then ask him to reveal himself to you. *“Jesus, you are the Lamb of God. Come, Lord, and open my eyes!”*



SANCTUARY LAMP

You may have the Sanctuary Lamp burn for a sick or deceased loved one for a donation of \$5 to defray the cost of the candles. This week the candle

burns for Helen Phillips.

DAILY MASS



In the event of bad weather during the week, **if school is cancelled, know that Mass also is cancelled.** If school is delayed, then we will only have a 9 o'clock Mass, but please use your judgment whether or not to attempt to attend.



PRO-LIFE

88 Babies Die Each Day by Abortion in PA As you drove into church, you saw 88 white crosses, representing the 88 babies that die by abortion each day in Pennsylvania alone. Did it seem like less than other years? It is! There has been a significant drop from more than 100 abortions a day down to 88 (according to the 2012 statistics, the most recent available.) Yet 88 babies are still far too many precious lives! These crosses bear silent witness to the hidden lives snuffed out too early. Their deaths are invisible to society, as these babies have no graves, no wreaths, no funerals. The parents grieve in silence, because society says the abortion was just another "choice," as if it was no big deal to brutally kill a child. Yet we plant these crosses every year to proclaim that each of those little lives was precious in the eyes of God. Each baby was deserving of dignity. We honor their memory and vow to bring to light the horror of abortion, so that it might end. We pray for the day when no mother or father sees abortion as an "answer." We pray to speak up always for the dignity of all babies, because silence is consent. If we ignore the 58 million deaths by abortion in our country since 1973, we will be held responsible at our judgement.

Pray each day for the babies scheduled to die by abortion. Beg God to save them. Participate in the March for Life, by attending or doing your part to overcome the media blackout around the event. Post on Facebook, talk about it in your workplace, or with friends. Watch it on EWTN. Pray a rosary, offer up a sacrifice. Say a special prayer each time you see these crosses. Here's a great resource to check out: <http://www.abort73.com>

Here's a great prayer from Blessed Fulton J Sheen: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I love you very much. I beg you to spare the life of the unborn baby whom I have spiritually adopted, who is danger of abortion

Andrea Ostrowski

CUPCAKE SALE

After all masses, on the weekend of **Jan 21 and 22**, we will hold our annual cupcake sale. Cupcake bakers needed! Contact Laura Kauffman 717 575-8221. Please support our fundraiser which allows us to provide free educational material to the parish and helps fund our December pro-life billboard across from Redners. Thank you!

OMPH COMMUNITY MEALS FOR 2017

As we start another new year, we would like to thank all of our Community Meal Volunteers for saying yes and making a commitment to lend a hand for our 2016 meals. You all did a magnificent job. We welcomed and served a lot of hungry people and it couldn't have been done without your commitment and support.

Please save these dates for our Community Meals for 2017. They are as follows:

1. **March 16, 2017** at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 167 East Main Street in Ephrata.
2. **July 20, 2017** at Bethany United Church of Christ 140 East Main Street, Ephrata, PA.
3. **October 26, 2017** at Bethany United Church of Christ 140 East Main Street, Ephrata, PA.

It was a blessing and a privilege to have worked with such a great group of people. We are look forward to working with you again this year. Thank you for serving our God, our church and our community. Until we see each other again; May God bless you and give you peace.

SAVE THE DATE

Calling all OMPH alumni! Join us **on Saturday, September 16**. All classes welcome to celebrate the schools **60th year!** For more info- find us on Facebook under OMPH reunion. Thank you! Lauren DePaul Caramenico.

BABY SHOWER - WOMENS CONCERN

Court Queen of Peace #1023, Catholic Daughters of the Americas will host a Baby Shower for A Women's Concern on Sunday, **January 22** at 1 PM at St. Philip, the Apostle Church, Parish Activity Center, 2111 Millersville Pike, Lancaster, PA 17603. All Catholic women are invited to attend and may bring baby items if they wish. There will be light refreshments and games. This event will provide the opportunity to learn more about Catholic Daughters of the Americas and support A Women's Concern, a Pro-Life organization. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Rita Smith-Wade-El at 203-3441.



Religious Education Corner:

**Our RE Class Schedule For The
Remainder of January Is As Follows:**

**Sunday, January 15th – NO RE Classes
Monday, January 16th – NO RE Classes**

**Sunday, January 22nd – RE Classes Resume
Monday, January 23rd – RE Classes Resume**

**Sunday, January 29th – RE Classes In Session
Monday, January 30th – RE Classes In Session**

Kelly Lawrence

UPCOMING BAPTISMS

For parents thinking about their child receiving the Sacrament of Baptism please know:

- If you choose a godparent who is a practicing Catholic from OMPH parish, no sponsor certificate is needed.
- If you choose a godparent who is a practicing Catholic at another Catholic Church they will need to obtain a sponsor certificate from their Pastor before scheduling the Baptism at OMPH.
- We schedule the Baptism as part of the celebration of Mass during the 1st & 3rd weekends of the month: Saturday- 5pm, Sunday- 9 AM & 11AM.
- There are 3 steps in OMPH's Baptisms: Welcoming (a Baptism Companion makes a visit to the family), Gathering (Baptism class given by our priest) and the Baptism.

Ben & Pat Dangelo schedule the Baptisms as guided by Fr. John. Please call Ben & Pat at 738-0272.

HORSE RACING, FUN AND FOOD

Join the Knights of Columbus for their **K of C Derby**, Saturday, **January 28**. The evening will consist of 11 exciting horse races with pari-mutuel betting, door prizes, food and beverages. Tickets are \$20 and include a chance to win \$50 in one race and a chance to win up to \$1000 in Race 11. **Doors open at 6 PM** and post time for the first race will be 7 PM. For tickets or further information contact **Ben Hoover** at **808-1115** or **email** at **hooverben4@gmail.com**. (Preferred)



BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

We saw 33 families one week this month and 3 of those families were new. Two of those families stated that their situation had changed and were now in desperate need of food. It is a constant struggle for some in our community particularly during the winter months. The Benevolent Society's Food Bank is there for those people and others in dire situations trying to figure a way to buy their medications and pay their rent and keep food on their tables.



But now the food bank has some empty shelves! We need canned fruit, boxes of mashed potatoes, and tuna fish. Please drop off your donations in the food bank crate in the narthex of the church. We are grateful and humbled by your continued generosity.

VILLAMARIA HOUSE OF STUDIES

Discernment Retreat: January 20 to January 22 from Friday (6PM) to Sunday (1PM) Young women (18-35) are invited to join us for this retreat which focuses on the IHM Charism and the importance of listening to God's call and discovering the many ways that God speaks to us. Time will be included for personal and communal prayer as well as the opportunity to interact with the sisters in Formation. (Contact: ihmvoc@aol.com or 610-889-1553)

Sister Helen Miriam, IHM
Administrative Assistant
IHM Vocation Office
1140 King Road
Immaculata, PA 19345-0200
(w) 610-889-1553 ext. 1974
ihmvoc@gmail.com

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK AT LCHS

Join Lancaster Catholic High School during Catholic School's Week January 30th - February 3rd for the following events:

- Thursday, February 2 from 6:30-8 pm - drop ins are always welcome pre-registration is preferred at www.lchsyas.org/admissions/open_house
- Friday, February 3- Basketball Fun Night triple-header at Lancaster Catholic High School. Schedule will be girls junior varsity at 4 pm, girls Varsity at 6 pm, and boys varsity at 8 pm.

All students in 8th -11th grade in public schools or other private schools are invited to join us for a Group Shadow day on Thursday, February 9th. Come see what Lancaster Catholic is all about - a free lunch is provided for all prospective students when they visit! Register for a shadow day by visiting www.lchsyas.org/admissions and clicking on "Admissions Events" on the left hand side.