

Reflections on the Gospel

Decisions, decisions! Once again we are faced with decisions. Will we choose to believe? Will we choose to follow Jesus' example? Will we be his partner?

Jeremiah just told us about the covenant God made with the people, writing God's Law on their hearts and promising to be their God. It sounds so simple. They won't even have to teach their friends and relatives how to know God, because God has taken care of all that by writing in their hearts. But they do have to choose to accept God.

Then Hebrews reminds us that Christ Jesus learned obedience from what he suffered and so he became the source of eternal salvation. First came the covenant and then came salvation. It sounds like we have it made in the shade. But then comes the Gospel reading, and once again John has the ability to point out complexity, to make things look less simple. The grain of wheat must die to bear fruit. The one who loves life will lose it. We are called to follow and serve Christ, and the Father will honor those who serve. Jesus asks if he should be saved from the coming suffering yet he came for that suffering. Complications and decisions. Jesus definitely never promised us a rose garden. He promised so much more!

When the Greeks came to see Jesus, it would seem he didn't welcome them but instead began to talk about what he was facing in his own life. He was talking about his passion. This would certainly test the hearts of those who were curious about him. It would also puzzle and test the hearts of his disciples. One thing Jesus is demonstrating to his disciples is his relationship with the Father. Remember that Jesus' Father is the one who made the covenant, the one who wrote on the hearts of people so that they would always know him. And wrote on our hearts. Jesus' relationship with the Father is the beginning of our relationship with God.

When Jesus says he can't avoid what he came for, he immediately relates this to the Father and prays, "Father, glorify your name." And then the voice comes from heaven, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again." Jesus' coming death is a remarkable expression of his relationship to God and also to the people, to us. First, there is the response from the voice from heaven, and then Jesus says, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself." This is the fulfillment of all of God's promises, of God's covenant, of Jesus' reason for coming: to draw us all to himself and to the Father.

And then we come to the decision: will we believe? Will we believe that Jesus died for us, for me, for all the people in the world? Will we believe? This is the challenge. And if we do choose to believe, there follows something that is another challenge: the decision to believe is a commitment to be a member of a community. The decision to believe binds us to God, to Jesus. The decision to believe binds us to each other. We aren't ever alone. We are in covenant with God. God's writing is on our hearts. We are partners/disciples with Jesus. We are members of a community together. This is the fulfillment of God's great promise to be with us always.

How are we to live in this partnership? A good first response is awe and gratitude. God wants us in relationship. How can we be so blessed? We are! And then there follow the demands of this relationship. To be disciples of Christ, sons and daughters of the Father, means that we follow Jesus and we do what he did. It means that we also live and work as he did. We are a community of disciples. We watch out for and care for each other. We know that, like Jesus, we too will suffer at times. We too pray to the Father and honor God. We too accept all people as God's sons and daughters. It isn't always easy, but this is what our relationship with God is all about, and God is an all-generous Father. Jesus will draw every everyone, all of us, to himself. And so we choose to believe.



Stewardship Report:



Revenue

March 22:	9,564.29
Faith Direct:	1,712.50
Total Offertory:	11,276.79
Last Year:	1,704.11
Poor Box:	145.00
Every Penny Counts Box:	71.08

Number of Adult Envelopes: 248
Number of Children's Envelopes: 7
Number of Faith Direct donors: 38
Number of Registered Households: 668

Building and Maintenance Fund: Our **second** collection **next** weekend is for our regular **Building Fund**. This monthly collection enables us to make continuing repairs, upkeep and improvements to our parish and school buildings as well as our parish grounds. May we suggest a minimum of \$20 per household. As always, we thank you for your continuing generosity!

Lenten Coin Folders: These colorful and simple tools are available for those who wish to have a practical way to give alms to the poor during Lent. Add a quarter or fifty-cents a day to your coin folder and donate the proceeds during Holy Week to the Poor Box.

Recycling Makes a Difference: Please remember to help beautify the environment and save a tree or two along the way by recycling the paper products from your home. You double your contribution, because this effort yields a little extra money for the school as well. The dumpster for waste paper is located in the rear parking lot next to the storage sheds. It is bright yellow and green and marked clearly "**for paper only!**" You may drop off your paper recycling products anytime...**we accept newspapers, scrap paper and mail; magazines, small catalogs, junk mail, and the like.** We **DO NOT accept the following: NO CARDBOARD; NO PHONE BOOKS, NO PLASTIC BAGS OR DEBRIS (use a PAPER bag to place your waste paper in for drop off!)**. Amazingly between the rectory and school alone, we collected nearly 25 tons of waste each year. Join us in being faithful stewards of creation by recycling instead of throwing things away. It's easy and it helps save the planet for our children and it helps us to educate them right now. Make a difference by pitching in! Start your own home recycling bin today!



Box Tops for Education: Keep saving those "**Box Tops for Education**" too. You can turn in your collected box tops to the school office where they can redeemed for school supplies and materials!



Every Penny Counts: Donate your loose change to the "Every Penny Counts" Box which provides funding for the annual Father E. Albert Hughes Scholarship awards. We also have "home editions" in the form of small coin cans that you can take home and fill with loose change and return to the church or rectory when filled. These scholarship awards are given in the form of tuition assistance to deserving children and youth from our parish enrolled at St. Matthias School or a Catholic High School in the Archdiocese of Washington. Together our pennies, nickels, and dimes can make a difference by assisting someone in need with a Catholic education!



Other Items of Note

Flower Bulb Fundraiser Report: Our first week of sales has yielded 7 orders totaling \$500, one-half of which is income for the parish. We are very grateful for such an enthusiastic early response and encourage more participation in our interim effort to bridge the gap between revenue and expenses for the school and parish. Our goal for this first effort is \$3000. (net income). Ordering information is located in the back of church, and all orders must be received by Monday, April 5, 2009. Please call the parish office if you have any questions. Thank you for your continuing generosity!



Papal Visit Books Available: Relive the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the Archdiocese of Washington in April 2008, through a special anniversary edition of the book, *Pope Benedict XVI in Washington: Herald of Christ's Hope*. More than 170 full color photos on 104 pages, this keepsake volume chronicles the events leading up to the Pope's arrival, and includes a special introduction by Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl. Forty pages highlight the papal Mass at Nationals' Park. This special volume costs only \$24.95 plus \$6 shipping/handling. An order form and more details can be found in the Catholic Standard.

Faith Formation

Important Information for Confirmation Candidates: Note that classes will be held for **Confirmation Candidates and Parents only** on Monday, April 6, 2009 at the usual time, 6:45 p.m. All other grade levels will be off for the Easter Break. This meeting is mandatory for Confirmation candidates, please mark your calendar, as no make-up meeting will be offered before our last session in May. Make sure to complete your Service Hours and hand in the forms as soon as you can. Remember the parish is praying for you! Keep up the good work!

Faith Formation: Classes will be held on Monday, March 30 as usual. All grade levels except for Confirmation will take a two-week Easter Break. We will resume classes on Monday, April 20.

First Communion: The retreat is scheduled for Saturday, April 25, 2009 from 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon. There is plenty of time to make alternate arrangements for any other events. If you and your child are absent from this retreat that will be an indication that you have made a decision to postpone the celebration of this sacrament to next year. Please make sure to drop off the permission slips and photo forms by the due date. It gets more costly when photos and DVDs are ordered after the event. Remember the most important event of that day is encountering Jesus in a very special way-by receiving him Body and Soul.

Young Adult Ministry: Do you know of any parishioners who are sick and therefore homebound? Members of the Young Adults Ministry would like to be of assistance to any such parishioner. Please call the Faith Formation Office (x205) for more information or simply to give us some information to assist you. The assistance will be in the form of home visitation and/or running errands. Of course, there will be time for prayer, the most effective balm for the sick.

RCIA: We are almost there! Please continue to pray for those preparing to be fully initiated into the Catholic Faith during the Easter vigil. They have come a long way and continue to be in need of our prayers during these last few weeks. Join us during the Easter Vigil on Saturday, April 11 at 8:00 p.m. for one of the most beautiful liturgies of the Church year.

School Raffle Winner

Congratulations to
Vivian Mason (winner of \$300)
And Hector Perez (seller, winning \$50)
 of this week's winning raffle ticket!



Mass Intentions for the Fifth Week of Lent

Monday, March 30:

8:30 am Reverend Augustine Kizito Abizi

Tuesday, March 31:

8:30 am Marlene Watkins

Wednesday, April 1:

8:30 am Father Pierre Nguyen Q. Bong

Thursday, April 2: Francis of Paola, hermit

8:30 am Reverend Paul E. Murray

Friday, April 3: Lenten Day of Abstinence

8:30 am Bill Schermerhorn

First Friday– Litany to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

7:30 pm Stations of the Cross

Sat., April 4: Vigil– Palm Sunday

3:30 pm to 4:30pm—Confessions

5:00 pm Marian Huber

Sunday, April 5: Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

8:00 am Charles Dziduch

9:30 am Dorothy Mensah-Aggrey (living, birthday)

11:30am Benjamin Udeji for

Please Pray for: †The Sick and Homebound In Our Parish:

Phil Ates; Virgie Azarcon; Ann Benson; Leslie Berkey; Barbara Brink; Margaret Carr; Sherry Cash; Fidel dela Cuesta; Don and Muriel Delaney; Eleanor DeMarco; Lisa Farland; Dennis George; Cristin Green; Francis Greenfield; Leslie Hand; Joseph Harrison; Jim Hennessy; Charles Henry; Lena Jacobs; Bud Jones; Father Keene; Robyn Kirby; Laura Elaine Kiessling; Ray Krok; Harry Len; Nancy Maimone; Joe Makowski; Mary McGrail; Kevin Mincey; Willie (Bill) Moore; Rosemarie Nardozi; Mary Nelson; David Obi; Peter O'Neill; Alice Parker; Dawn Pearson; Irma Perez; Bill Pinchback; June Provini; Rohland Reich; Joe Sico; Concepcion Soberanis; Walter Stewart; Margaret Zanin; Ryan Zawada **†For the Deceased:** Father Jerome Hall **†Names will be placed on our prayer list for three weeks. To add a name or to request continuing prayers, contact Tara Guevara by phone at 301-459-4814 or email tguevara@stmathias.org.**

Youth Group

Showcase of Talent Rehearsals Begin: Rehearsals will be held as follows:

- **Singing Acts**– 1st, 3rd and 4th **Fridays** of the month
- **All Other Performing Acts:** 1st, 3rd and 4th **Wednesday** of the month

Easter Items

Easter Decorators: We are looking for volunteers to assist in decorating the church for Easter. Decorating will take place on Holy Thursday , April 9th from 9:00am until 11:30am AND on Holy Saturday, April 11th from 9:00am to noon. Teen and adult parishioners are welcome! Please, no small children! Please contact the rectory office to volunteer.

SCHOOL & RECTORY CLOSINGS: The School will be CLOSED beginning on Thursday, April 9th and reopen on Monday, April 20th. The Rectory will close at noon on Thursday, April 9th and reopen at 8am on Tuesday, April 14th.