

FROM COMFORT ZONE TO THE UNKNOWN*(Gen. 12:1-4a; Ps. 33:4-5, 18-22; 2Tim. 1:8-10; Matt. 17:1-9)*

Brothers and sisters, during this season of Lent, in the Holy Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I exhort you to "Bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God."

As a young girl, Maggie had everything she wanted. Life was comfortable at home. She could go and come, as she pleased. Her parents lovingly provided for most of the things she wanted in life. They helped her secure a scholarship and an admission into one of the best colleges in the country. Unfortunately, the college situated out of State, requiring Maggie to leave home and reside on the college campus. It was never going to be an easy transition. It was difficult for her to get out of her *comfort zone* to the *unknown*. She spent many days trying to convince her parents why she should not leave home. She cried and became very depressed. Her parents encouraged her and assured her that everything would be just fine. She should give it a try, and if after a few weeks she did not like her new environment she could come back home. She was afraid to take the challenge!

In today's first reading, the Lord called Abram to leave behind his *comfort zone* and to "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you...I will bless you...make your name great..." Abram did not hesitate; he went as the Lord had commanded him. In the same vein, during this season of Lent, the Lord calls you and me to leave behind our *comfort zones* of sinfulness and pride. We are to take a long and painful walk with Him to a *new and unknown land of peace, joy and happiness*. God is requesting you and me to leave our sinful ways behind and turn back to Him. He is asking us to leave behind any vices that may prevent us from serving Him faithfully. You and I must be detached from those habits and actions that conflict with our Christian values. Whenever we do this, like Abram, we shall experience the power of God's love and forgiveness.

It is often very difficult and challenging to leave behind our *land of laziness* – our *household of sin* – our *comfort zone* to go to an *unknown land*. Like Maggie, we hate to venture out of our comfort zones. As the old proverb goes, "Bad habits die hard." On the contrary, like Abram, you and I should trust in God's promises. In today's second reading, St. Paul exhorts you and me to "Bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God" who is calling you to take the *leap of faith* into an *unknown land*. Surely, it is difficult for you and I to kick the old habit of sinfulness, but that is the challenge and the hardship Saint Paul wants us to "bear for the sake of the gospel" which you and I profess. Most often when God challenges us to change our ways, we are stricken with awe and uncertainty. Sometimes we become overwhelmed by the demands He makes of us. As a result, we fear to abandon our *old ways* and kick the bad habits that we have depended upon for so long. In moment like this, Jesus exhorts you to "Rise, and do not be afraid." Do not be afraid because Jesus is there with you as you struggle with temptations during these forty days of Fast.

As Christ was transfigured on the mountain, during this season of Lent God invites you and me to make a trip to the mountain of His love (the Sacraments), to be transformed by the presence of His light and thus experience His mercy. Let us ask God to transform us and to enable us to see "no one else but Jesus alone" in times of temptations and trials.

Rev. Anthony Ita Bassey, MSP


PARISH NEWS

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL: The Parish Pastoral Council will meet this Monday, March 21st, at 7:00 p.m. in the school. All members are encouraged to attend this meeting.

PARISH FINANCE COMMITTEE: Meeting of the Committee will take place this Thursday, March 24, in the Rectory at 6:30 p.m. All members of the Committee are encouraged to attend.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS: Every Friday evening during Lent, the devotion of the Stations of the Cross is held in the Church at 7 p.m. Families are encouraged to participate together. We will also have the Stations of the Cross at 2 p.m. on Good Friday, just prior to the 3 p.m. Good Friday Service.



CHILDREN'S MASS: Please make it a point to bring your child to our Children's Mass next Sunday, March 27th. The 10 a.m. Mass will focus on our children. The Parish Children's Choir will sing the Mass. The children are encouraged to sit with other children at a designated place during the Mass.

OUR PARISH R.C.I.A. PROGRAM

If you or someone you know needs information on the Catholic Faith or have not been confirmed, please call the Religious Education Office for information on the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (R.C.I.A.) in our parish.



WELCOME TO OUR FAITH COMMUNITY! Last Sunday, in a combined Rite of Welcoming and Acceptance, Keyani Singletary and Derek Mamudoski declared before this community their intent to become Catholic. Remember to keep them, their families and their sponsors in your prayers as they make this journey of faith.

THE 2012 MASS BOOK IS OPEN



The Mass Book for 2012 opened on Ash Wednesday and there are still many dates open in this year's Mass Book, as well. Consider giving a loved one or someone (living or deceased) who has a special place in your life the graces associated with having a Mass offered on their behalf. You may have a thanksgiving Mass offered for your loved ones or for yourself on such occasions as birthdays, wedding anniversaries, etc. Also, you may consider offering the altar flowers, altar bread and wine, altar candles, or sanctuary lamp for your intention. Come to the Rectory Office, **Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.** to make arrangements or to inquire about the availability of a particular date.



Please pray for the repose of the souls of all the faithful departed, especially Paul Lacey and Robert Josephson

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT



By now, you all know that our Parish school will close at the end of this school year. Owing to this reality there have been some genuine concerns as to what will happen to the school building. Whether the parish activities will continue to take place in school building? First and foremost, I want you to know that the school building is the property of the parish. Therefore, it is the prerogative of the parish to determine how the building is going to be used and by whom in accordance with the Archdiocesan norms.

Although it will be difficult for the parish to maintain the property without a tenant, we will only lease the building on the condition and the understanding that the parish reserves the right to use it for our parish activities such as, *Religious Education Program, Societies meetings, Parish functions/meetings and other extracurricular activities/programs that benefit our community, such as Boy / Cub scout, Girl scout, Summer / Bible Camp, etc.*

I want to assure you that anything you have heard or been told to the contrary, is false. Our parish primary mission is to serve the community and we are not going to renege on that pledge. What we need you to do is to contact me if you know any group or corporation that is interested in leasing part or whole of the building after the current school year. Thank you!

Father Anthony

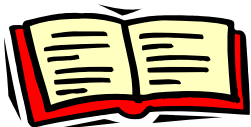
MIRACULOUS MEDAL NOVENA: Held after the 9 a.m. Mass on Mondays.

EUCHARISTIC DEVOTION: Held the First Friday of every month at 1 p.m. Please join us when you are able.

DIVINE MERCY DEVOTION: Held the First Saturday of every month at 3 p.m. All are encouraged to participate.

RECITATION OF THE ROSARY: Join your fellow parishioners in praying the Rosary after the 9 a.m. Mass on weekdays and Saturdays

Bible Study



Join Father Anthony and your fellow parishioners in discovering more about the Bible this Friday and every Friday at 7:30 p.m. in the School. Bring a friend! Come and have fun exploring both Old and New Testaments.

SAVE THE DATE!

ANNUAL RETREAT: St. Bartholomew's **Rosary Altar Society** is organizing the annual one-day Retreat for ladies within and outside the parish on Saturday April 2nd, starting with Mass at 9 a.m. and concluding with the Exposition of the Eucharist and benediction at 2 p.m. Fee is \$20 for breakfast and lunch. All women within and outside the parish are welcome! Please call Joan Liddell at 914-476-6860 to make reservations.



LAST WEEK'S COLLECTIONS

- The **budgeted** Collection for last Sunday was \$6000.00.
- The **actual** Collection for last Sunday was \$5300.95
- Collection for Ash Wednesday totaled \$1965.50
- Collection for Peter's Pence totaled \$1691.90

We thank everyone for their generosity to St. Bartholomew's Church. May God bless and reward all your sacrifices for the Parish!

2011 ARCHDIOCESAN STEWARDSHIP APPEAL

The *2011 Archdiocesan Stewardship Appeal* is almost in its final stages in our parish. Next weekend (3/26-3/27) is **Commitment Weekend** here in our parish. At all Masses, you will have an opportunity to make your commitment to the Appeal. This will provide a special opportunity to those who have not yet pledged to make their pledges to the Appeal. As children of Christ, we are called to serve others out of gratitude to our most generous God. Please consider a sacrificial pledge to the 2011 Appeal. Thank you! Below are the current stats of parish pledges so far:

Goal: ----- \$50,200

Pledge: ----- \$14,690

Paid: ----- \$8,950

Donors: ----- 53 families

% of Goal: ----- 29.26%

Also, it is my pleasure to inform you that last weekend our parish received a check in the amount of \$2811 as a rebate from the Archdiocese because we went over our Goal in the 2010 *Archdiocesan Stewardship Appeal*.



LORD
give strength
to your people

Please pray for all the sick & the homebound members of our Parish, especially Ethel Thomas, Aldina Pereira, Rebecca Conroy, Alejandra Santander, Amadeu Amorim, Gloria Flanagan, Grace Raguso, Andy DeFabritis, Maryann Tolli, Maria Marte, Julieann Moroch, Ed Carpenter, Barbara Rup, Jule Yaskovic, Rosalie Heit, Dolores Santamarena, Florence B. Swetz, Clare Yaskovic, Neil Caruso, Raymond Fitzpatrick, Sr., Deacon James Byrnes, Andrea Objay, Carmen Torres, John Esposito, Francis Farrell, Mark Baum, Christine Bellino, Deacon Patrick Troy, Josephine Apuzzo, Mildred Moscarello, Edith Dugan, John & Gary Roth, Lena Castaldo, Joyann Allan, Anna Rita Morgante, Carmela Massaroni, Lois Burton, Mary DeStefano, Carmella DelBene, Ann Ceriale, Dan Seratto, Mark Cianfaglione and Shawn Colon.

Couples celebrating their **50th Wedding Anniversary** anytime during 2011 are invited to attend the **Annual Golden Wedding Jubilee Mass** with Archbishop Dolan at St. Patrick Cathedral, **Sunday, May 22nd**, at 2 p.m. Pre-registration is required. Please contact our Rectory Office for more information. The deadline for registrations for the Mass is Thursday, May 5th. This event is sponsored by the Family Life/Respect Life Office of the Archdiocese of New York.

MARCH 20, 2011

Mass  *for the*
Intentions *Week*

Second Sunday of Lent

Saturday, March 19 (Vigil Mass)

5:00 PM Michael Castagnozzi +

Sunday, March 20

8:30 AM Frances Nanoia +

10:00 AM Patricia Dimitro +

11:30 AM Vincent DiBatista +

5:00 PM For All the People of Our Parish

Monday, March 21

Lenten Weekday

7:00 AM Denis & Kim Jacobi (living)

9:00 AM Juan Rosa Vazquez +

Tuesday, March 22

Lenten Weekday

7:00 AM Shawn Colon (Iving)

9:00 AM Luigi Campana +

Wednesday, March 23

Lenten Weekday

7:00 AM No Intention

9:00 AM Joseph Mangione +

Thursday, March 24

Lenten Weekday

7:00 AM Concetta Darretta +

9:00 AM Stephen Hickey +

Friday, March 25

The Annunciation of the Lord (Solemnity)

7:00 AM Anna & Henry B. Kassik +

9:00 AM George Goresen +

Saturday, March 26

Lenten Weekday

9:00 AM Nicholas Marcello +

Saturday, March 26 (Vigil Mass)

5:00 PM For All the People of Our Parish

Sunday, March 27

Third Sunday of Lent

8:30 AM Peter DeMattia +

10:00 AM Frank & Carmela Legio +

11:30 AM Katherine Azzari +

5:00 PM Virgilio Brizido +

MARCH 20, 2011

**THE ANNUNCIATION OF
THE LORD
MARCH 25 (SOLEMNITY)**

The feast of the Annunciation goes back to the fourth or fifth century. Its central focus is the Incarnation: God has become one of us. From all eternity God had decided that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity should become human. Now, as Luke 1:26-38 tells us, the decision is being realized. The God-Man embraces all humanity, indeed all creation, to bring it to God in one great act of love. Because human beings have rejected God, Jesus will accept a life of suffering and an agonizing death: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

Mary had an important role to play in God's plan. From all eternity God destined her to be the mother of Jesus and closely related to Him in the creation and redemption of the world. We could say that God's decrees of creation and redemption are joined in the decree of Incarnation. As Mary is God's instrument in the Incarnation, she has a role to play with Jesus in creation and redemption. It is a God-given role. It is God's grace from beginning to end. Mary becomes the eminent figure she is only by God's grace. She is the empty space where God could act. Everything she is she owes to the Trinity.

She is the virgin-mother who fulfills Isaiah 7:14 in a way that Isaiah could not have imagined. She is united with her Son in carrying out the will of God (Psalm 40:8-9; Hebrews 10:7-9; Luke 1:38).

Together with Jesus, the privileged and graced Mary is the link between heaven and earth. She is the human being who best, after Jesus, exemplifies the possibilities of human existence. She received into her lowliness the infinite love of God. She shows how an ordinary human being can reflect God in the ordinary circumstances of life. She exemplifies what the Church and every member of the Church are meant to become. She is the ultimate product of the creative and redemptive power of God. She manifests what the Incarnation is meant to accomplish for all of us.

COMMENT: Sometime spiritual writers are accused of putting Mary on a pedestal and thereby discouraging ordinary humans from imitating her. Perhaps such an observation is misguided. God did put Mary on a pedestal and has put all human beings on a pedestal. We have scarcely begun to realize the magnificence of divine grace, the wonder of God's freely given love. The marvel of Mary - even in the midst of her very ordinary life - is God's shout to us to wake up to the marvelous creatures that we all are by divine design.

From *Saint of the Day*, edited by Leonard Foley, O.F.M., & Pat McCloskey, O.F.M.

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MAKE A SACRIFICE THIS LENT!

"A sacrifice is a gift of the essence or the product of our lives. It may be a gift of our time, a gift of our talent, or a gift of our treasure. Whatever shape it takes, it is a sacrifice given with no regard for a return on the investment."

- John Garmo