



The Pastor's Corner



from the pastor

Retirement of Sandy Williams



This week Sandy gave me a letter to inform me of her decision to retire as of July 19. She has served as our office manager and bookkeeper for more than twenty-four years!

(Working closely with priests for that length of time surely qualifies her for an instant good seat in heaven!) She recently returned to work after a prolonged absence for medical reasons but feels it will be best for her and her family to lay down this professional obligation soon. I will miss Sandy and I know many of our parishioners will too. She has been a listening ear to many and has helped hundreds of people in countless ways. I'm very grateful that she will help to train her replacement and will be a phone call away when we will need to ask her about lots of details! Sandy has made it very clear to me that she does not want any special retirement celebration and I will respect that preference. I leave it to each parishioner to express their personal gratitude and good wishes in whatever way they prefer.

The Ascension of Jesus into Heaven

On many Catholic calendars you will find that the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord Jesus into Heaven is identified on the fortieth day after Easter, always a Thursday. This date reflects the time span mentioned in Acts of the Apostles 1:1-5:

In the first book, Theophilus, I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught until the day he was taken up, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during **forty days** and speaking about the kingdom of God. While meeting with them, he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for "the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

That passage then goes on to describe the actual event of the ascension.

It is interesting to notice that the event of the ascension is also narrated in Luke 24 with no mention of any time lapse after the resurrection. In fact it appears to happen on the very day of the resurrection! This is all the more surprising because Bible scholars are quite sure that the Acts of the Apostles was written by the same author as the Gospel of Luke!

The footnote for Acts 1:1-3 in the New American Bible gives us some valuable information. ("Luke" here refers to the author of both books.)

Luke considered especially sacred the interval in which the appearances and instructions of the risen Jesus occurred and expressed it therefore in terms of the sacred number forty. In his gospel, however, Luke connects the ascension of Jesus with the resurrection by describing the ascension on Easter Sunday evening. What should probably be understood as one event (resurrection, glorification, ascension, sending of the Spirit—the paschal mystery) has been historicized by Luke when he writes of a visible ascension of Jesus after forty days and the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost. For Luke, the ascension marks the end of the appearances of Jesus except for the extraordinary appearance to Paul. With regard to Luke's understanding of salvation history, the ascension also marks the end of the time of Jesus and signals the beginning of the time of the church.

We remember that the number forty comes up many, many times in the Bible, so it clearly has taken on a symbolic meaning of a time of fulfillment.

The liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church still puts the celebration of the Solemnity of the Ascension on the fortieth day after Easter. However the Canon Law of the Church gives national conferences of bishops the right to make adjustments.

Can. [1246 §1](#). [Sunday](#), on which by [apostolic tradition](#) the [paschal mystery](#) is [celebrated](#), must be [observed](#) in the [universal Church](#) as the primordial [holy day of obligation](#). The [following days](#) must also be [observed](#): the Nativity of our [Lord Jesus Christ](#), the Epiphany, the Ascension, the [Body](#) and [Blood](#) of [Christ](#), [Holy Mary](#)

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the [Mother of God](#), her Immaculate Conception, her [Assumption](#), [Saint Joseph](#), [Saint Peter](#) and [Saint Paul](#) the [Apostles](#), and All [Saints](#).

§2. With the [prior approval](#) of the [Apostolic See](#), however, the [conference](#) of [bishops](#) can [suppress](#) some of the [holy days](#) of [obligation](#) or [transfer](#) them to a [Sunday](#).

The bishops of the United States received permission to let each province determine the best day to celebrate the Ascension in 1997-98.

In the Catholic Church, a province is a cluster of dioceses and their bishops who are grouped together around an archdiocese and its archbishop.

We in WV belong to the Province of Baltimore which decided to move the observance of the Ascension to the following Sunday.

So all this means that Thursday of this week is NOT a holyday of obligation. We will celebrate the Ascension next Sunday, May 17.

Social Ministries Conference

The Catholic Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston and Catholic Charities will hold a conference from Friday May 29 at 6:00pm through Saturday May 30 until 3:00pm at John XXIII Pastoral Center for all who have an interest in the social mission of the Church. The theme is: **Faith, Hope, Love: from Exclusion to Encounter**. Parishioners who volunteer in any outreach ministry, persons who have received any outreach ministry, pastoral council members, catechists and those who minister to the sick and homebound are especially invited.

I hope that several folks from our parish can attend. (It's okay even if you can only get to some part of the conference). To register, please contact Jeanne Haas at haasjeanne@hotmail.com. Our parish will pay all fees and will provide transportation if needed. For information please call Christy Ramsey at 304-380-0155. The full schedule and speaker information are available at: <http://www.dwc.org/register-for-the-social-ministries-conference-on-poverty.html> but please register here at Blessed Sacrament through Jeanne Haas at 304-744-5523 or haasjeanne@hotmail.com.

Natural Family Planning Course

All married and engaged couples are invited to learn a method of family planning which is safe, effective and consistent with good moral practice according to Church teachings. When used properly, Natural Family Planning is as effective as “the pill”, but without the dangerous side effects. (This is NOT your mother’s “Rhythm Method!!!”) NFP is also low-cost, healthy, and it encourages good communication between spouses. People may not realize that NFP also helps couples to achieve pregnancy when it is desired. It can help to space pregnancies while breastfeeding. The specially trained and certified instructor couple make themselves available for questions and coaching apart from the group sessions also. A three-session course will be offered on Sundays – May 17, June 14, and July 19 at 1:30pm at St. Joseph Parish, 1304 – 6th Avenue, Huntington. Cost for the course is \$75.00 per couple. Scholarships are available if the cost is an obstacle. To register, please visit the website at <http://wvmarriage.org/registernfp/> or contact Jeanne McKeets, (304) 233-0880 x374 or jmckeets@dwc.org.

Mass in Spanish

We will have Mass in Spanish on Sunday, May 24 at 11:30am. Everyone is welcome, whether they speak Spanish or not! The worship aid will include the readings in English as well as Spanish. In God’s Providence, this also happens to be the Mass at which Felix Quintana will receive his First Holy Communion.

We are still working on a monthly Mass in Spanish. We’ve learned that Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Huntington has Mass in Spanish every second Sunday of the month and will soon add another on the fourth Sunday. We don’t want to compete with them so we’re looking at the first or the third Sunday of the month.

Pope’s Holy Year Prayer

for the Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy to open December 8, 2015

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.

Show us your face and we will be saved.

Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things;

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made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.
Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us,
the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: "If you knew the gift of God!"
You are the visible face of the invisible Father,
of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy:
let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.
You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness
in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error:
let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.
Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing,
so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord,
and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor,
proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.
We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy,
you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.
Amen.

from the pope

Marriage: Image of Indissoluble Love of Christ for His Church

excerpts from an article at: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Pope:-Christian-marriage,-image-of-indissoluble-love-of-Christ-for-his-Church-34168.html>

Continuing his catechesis dedicated to the family, Pope Francis centered his May 6 reflection on the "beauty of Christian marriage", in which the Church is "fully involved": "it is edified by its successes and suffers from its failures".

The Pope said that Christian marriage "is not merely a ceremony that takes place in the church, with flowers, the dress, the photos Christian marriage is a sacrament that takes place in the Church, and that also makes the Church, by giving rise to a new family community".

The pope continued, "St. Paul, speaking of the new life in Christ, says Christians – all of us - are called to love one another as Christ loved us, that is 'subject to one another', which means at the service of one another. Here he introduces the analogy between the husband and wife and Christ and his Church. It is clear that this is an imperfect analogy, but we have to grasp its elevated and revolutionary spiritual meaning, which is, at the same time, simple and accessible to every man and woman who entrust themselves to God's grace. The husband, says Paul, must love his wife 'as his own body'; love her as Christ 'loved the Church and gave Himself for her.' But you husbands who are here today, do you understand this? Love your wife as Christ loves the Church. This is no joking matter, it's serious! The effect of this radicalism of devotion asked of man, for the love and the dignity of woman, following the example of Christ, must have been enormous, in the Christian community itself. This seed of the new Gospel, which restored the original reciprocity of dedication and respect, has matured slowly in history, but in the end prevailed. The sacrament of marriage is a great act of faith and love: it witnesses to the courage it takes to believe in the beauty of the creative act of God and live that love which pushes us to always go further, beyond ourselves and beyond our own family. The Christian vocation to love unconditionally and without limit is what, with the grace of Christ, is also the basis of free consent which constitutes marriage. "

The pope continued, "The Church herself is fully involved in the history of every Christian marriage: is edified in its successes and suffers in its failures. We must seriously ask ourselves: Do we, as believers and pastors really accept this unbreakable bond of the history of Christ and the Church with the history of marriage and of the human family? Are we prepared to take this responsibility seriously, that being that every marriage travel the path of love that Christ has for the Church? And this is a great love! ".

"In the depths of this creatural mystery, recognized and restored in its purity, a second major horizon opens up that characterizes the sacrament of marriage. The decision to 'marry in the Lord' also contains a missionary dimension, which means having at heart the willingness to act as a steward of God's blessing and grace of God for all. In fact, Christian couples share as spouses in the mission of the Church. It takes courage for this, eh? So when I greet the newlyweds, I say: 'Here are the brave!', because it takes courage to love each other as Christ loves the Church!".

"The celebration of the sacrament cannot leave out this co-responsibility of family life in the great mission of love of the Church. And so each time the life of the Church is enriched by the beauty of this spousal covenant,

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just as it is impoverished whenever it is disfigured. In order to offer everyone the gifts of faith, love and hope, the Church also needs the courageous fidelity of spouses and the grace of their sacrament! God's people need their daily journey in faith, love and hope, with all the joys and hardships that this path brings with it in a marriage and a family".

"The route is thus marked forever, it is the route of love: love as God loves you, forever. Christ does not cease to care for the Church: He loves her always, He safeguards Her always, as Himself. Christ never ceases to remove stains and wrinkles of all kinds from the human face. It is so moving and so beautiful this irradiation strength and tenderness of God which is transmitted from couple to couple, from family to family. St. Paul is right: this is a 'great mystery'! Men and women brave enough to carry this treasure in the 'earthen vessels' of our humanity, are - these men and women, who are so brave - are an essential resource for the Church, for the whole world! God bless you a thousand times for this! "