

The Cathedral of St. Joseph

Parish Mission Statement:

Saint Joseph Cathedral Parish is called to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a community. We are committed: to our urban neighborhoods, to being the Cathedral of the diocese, and to fellowship, formation, sacrament, and prayer.

Saint Joseph, pray for our parish.

Parish Office: 1218 Eoff Street, Wheeling, WV 26003; (304) 233-4121

www.SaintJosephCathedral.com Like us on Facebook!

Central Catholic High School: (304) 233-1660

Parish Staff:

Most Rev. Michael J. Bransfield, Pastor

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Mr. Tim Bishop, Editor (tbishop@dwc.org)

Lay Parish Leaders:

Mrs. Judy Miller, Parish Council President

Mr. James Carroll, Finance Council President

Mr. John Petrella, Liturgical Ministers Schedule

Schedule

Sunday Masses: 6:00 p.m. Saturday; 8:00 and 10:30 a.m. Sunday.

Weekday Mass: 12:05 p.m. Monday through Friday; 9:00 a.m. Saturday.

Sacrament of Reconciliation: 11:15-11:50 a.m. Friday; 5-5:45 p.m. Saturday.

Sacrament of the Sick and Communion to Homebound: Call the parish office anytime to make arrangements.

Initiation/Baptism: Rites of Initiation for Adults can be arranged by contacting Debbie at the office. The Sacrament of Baptism is celebrated on the second Sunday of each month during the 10:30 a.m. Mass. Call Debbie to make arrangements.

Marriage: Engaged couples should contact Debbie at the office at least six months in advance for pre-marriage preparations.

Anyone needing a ride to Mass or a parish event, please call Laurale Hetzel at (304) 232-2915 or Diane Fredericks at (304) 233-8574..

Il Corriere del Duomo

Weekly Journal for the Cathedral of St. Joseph

Lent Begins This Week

It seems hard to believe, but this Wednesday signals the start of the Lenten Season. Below is more on the significance of Ash Wednesday.

Ash Wednesday is a day of repentance and it marks the beginning of Lent. It is a season of penance, reflection and fasting, which prepares us for Christ's Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

On this day, our foreheads are marked with ashes to humble our hearts and remind us that life passes away on Earth. We remember this when we are told, "Remember that thou art dust, and to dust thou shalt return." (Genesis 3:19)

Ashes were used in ancient times, according to the Bible, to express mourning. Dusting oneself with ashes was the penitent's way of expressing sorrow for sins and faults. An ancient example of one ex-



pressing one's penitence is found in Job 42:3-6. Job says to God: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. The other eye wandereth of its own accord. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust

and ashes."

The ashes are made from the blessed palms used in the Palm Sunday celebration of the previous year.

While the ashes symbolize penance and contrition, they are also a re-

minder that God is gracious and merciful to those who call on Him with repentant hearts. His Divine mercy is of utmost importance during the season of Lent, and the Church calls on us to seek that mercy during the entire Lenten season with reflection, prayer and penance.

Ash Wednesday is observed by fasting, abstinence from meat and repentance.

On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, Catholics between the ages of 18 and 59 (whose health enables them to do so) are permitted to consume only one full meal, which may be supplemented by two smaller meals, which together should not equal the full meal.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are also days of abstinence from meat, as are all Fridays during Lent.

Cardinal Wuerl's Homily for the Red Mass at the Cathedral of St. Joseph

As I begin these reflections, I want to express my gratitude to Bishop Michael Bransfield for his gracious invitation to join you in this celebration of the annual Red Mass. It is an honor and joy for me to be with you.

One of the most memorable events of the past year was the visit of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, to our country and particularly his address to a Joint Meeting of Congress. I was told that a

place at that meeting was the most sought after ticket in the memory of those responsible for organizing such Joint Meetings of Congress. Everyone wanted to hear what Pope Francis had to say and so many felt that it touched them whatever their own political or religious conviction might be. One of the things that our Holy Father reminded us is our rootedness in our own history that provides us our iden-

tity and frame of reference for actions today.

I thought it was particularly instructive that when our Holy Father began to quote the Golden Rule, to do unto others as we would have them do to us, the members in Congress began to stand, applaud and complete the quotation with our Holy Father. It is something we all know, it is a part of

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Christian Awareness

By Alex Nagem

One of our faithful parishioners, John Moses, told me he can imagine me and God sitting at my dining room table sipping espresso and enjoying a piece of baklava and talking about our relationship (mine and God). John further said most might be tempted to believe my writing about a conversation with God is a work in fiction. But he believes he visits me often. He later said it all comes about with the simple phrase, "What's love got to do with it." When one has thoughts in the realm of spirituality is this of self creation or one provided by the breath of the Holy Spirit? I can only imagine my friend.

Many of us have been blessed to be taught by Sisters of St. Joseph or another religious order at a young age. Our thinking was formed to experience God around us and to imagine God walking with us. The Sisters attempted to bring a discipline in our life that had an origin with Christian principles. As an elementary school student in a Catholic school, when we were in church, we were told to make room for Jesus to sit beside us. Being a young boy filled with questions, I asked Sr. Vivian how Jesus could sit beside all of us at one time. Her response was, "How could He not?" This just provided more fuel for my imagination. There were times I felt like a fish being lured by bait on a hook. I could either see the bait and walk away, or take the bait and

be hooked. I have fought with this hook in my mouth for many years. But I am always lured back to God and the Christian principles that were taught to me and learned at an early age.

I have always looked upon myself as a student wanting to learn. I learn from what I write and research, from listening and observing. As a student, I have realized that there are many things that cannot be changed. There will be suffering, death, pain and discomfort in our days to come. But there is also, joy, friendship, love, caring and a need for helping others. My conversations with God provide an understanding to each experience. My not so imaginary conversations allow me to see that there is a wanting in life that needs satisfied. I look upon us all as children of God. Children want to please someone they admire, respect and want to emulate. As children in the eyes of God, we want to please God by our actions, thoughts and words spoken. We all have a purpose in life to be with God forever. Though when reading or listening to the news each day, my last statement could be considered a figment of my imagination. Even in the darkest times, the sun will still provide light and warmth each day, birds will still sing and fly free in the sky, and there will always be someone with an open hand to help you rise to your feet. I hope that did not sound a little cheesy, looking for the silver lining and all. That was not my intention. What I

I Can Only Imagine

want to say can be found in 1 John 1:5-9, "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

My conversations with God allow me time to listen. Most times the answers for which I search are already known to me if I only take time to reflect on the answers. Distractions of the day overwhelm us all. I yearn for the days when I was a child lying in the grass near the river bank watching the clouds in the blue sky pass by. My imagination was uninhibited. In adult years, concentrating thought in one direction has become difficult. 24 hour news and movies distract us from time with our thoughts. We need time alone to take a critical look at ourselves and search for answer to questions that plague our mind. We need time to be thankful for the gifts we have received from God and not displacing God by these gifts. How would you imagine your life if all you owned were the clothes you wore and what you could carry in a gunny sack? There would be no distraction from

computers, television, cell phones or the desire for the newest car. Entertainment would be all that we could see in nature and people who we talk to face to face. Ah, but now I speak of Jacob who I have used in stories. There is a Jacob in all of us looking for the simpler times. This is the Jacob who carries all his belongings with him in a small sack, spending time enjoying the gifts from God, and praying. I can only imagine a life like this.

There was an older gentleman I met in Wheeling in my younger years. We enjoyed a couple cups of coffee and a long conversation together. He carried all his belongings in a knapsack on his back. He survived on his social security check and earnings from small jobs. Most of these earnings were in the form of a meal and a place to spend the night. He could always find a place for a hot shower at a YMCA or a soup kitchen. Sometimes he would splurge and stay at a motel or he would be involved with a church group that would provide housing and food for workers on a project. He would walk or catch a ride with someone to a warmer part of the country in the winter, and head back north in the summer. He was intelligent, well read and articulate. He said he woke one morning and decided to give up all that was an unpleasant distraction. He now spends his days traveling, meeting people, reading the bible and other books for enjoyment. He

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Mass Intentions and Readings

Sunday—February 7th—FIFTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

Sat 6:00p Mass for Andrew DiRemigio
8:00a Mass for Fontaine Hooff
9:15a RCIA, Rectory
10:30a Mass for the Parishioners
RDGS: Is 6:1-2a, 3-8 Ps 138:1-5, 7-8
1 Cor 15:1-11 or 15:3-8, 11 Lk 5:1-11

Monday—February 8th—Saint Jerome Emiliani, priest, Saint Josephine Bakhita, virgin

12:05p Mass for John Sheets
RDGS: 1 Kgs 8:1-7, 9-13 Ps 132:6-7, 8-10
Mk 6:53-56

Jerome Emiliani, died 1537 of the plague; Venetian soldier whose conversion led to the founding of the Clerks Regular of Somascha, today numbering about 485 members; dedicated to the poor and the education of youth; patron of orphans and abandoned children.

Josephine was born around 1869 in Sudan. She was kidnapped around the age seven by slave traders and sold to a number of owners until she was purchased by the Italian Consul Callisto Legnani. He brought her to Italy and was sent to live with the Canossian Sisters in Venice. There she was formally introduced to the faith, baptized Giuseppia, and eventually granted her freedom. In 1896 she joined the Canossian Daughters of Charity. She was especially loved by her students for her sweet nature and musical voice. After a long and painful illness, she died in 1947. Pope John Paul II canonized this first Sudanese saint 1 October 2000 as a witness to evangelical reconciliation and a model of freedom.

Tuesday—February 9th—4th Week in Ordinary Time

12:05p Mass for Jerry Fabian
RDGS: 1 Kgs 8:22-23, 27-30 Ps 84:3-5, 10-11
Mk 7:1-13

Wednesday—February 10th—ASH WEDNESDAY

12:05p Mass for the Parishioners
6:00p Mass for the Parishioners
RDGS: Jl 2:12-18 Ps 51:3-6b, 12-14, 17
2 Cor 5:20—6:2 Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday—February 11th—Our Lady of Lourdes

12:05p Mass for William Campbell
RDGS: Dt 30:15-20 Ps 1:1-4, 6 Lk 9:22-25

According to St. Bernadette Soubirous, the visionary at Lourdes in 1858, the Virgin Mary proclaimed herself "The Immaculate Conception"; patroness of Portugal and of the Philippines.

Friday—February 12th—Friday after Ash Wednesday

11:15a Confession
12:05p Mass for Daniel Schlosser
6:00p Stations of the Cross
RDGS: Is 58:1-9a Ps 51:3-6b, 18-19 Mt 9:14-15

Saturday—February 13th—Saturday after Ash Wednesday

9:00a Mass for Phil Tedesco
Rosary
11:00a Kilpatrick Baptism
5:00p Confessions
6:00p Mass for the Parishioners
RDGS: Is 58:9b-14 Ps 86:1-6 Lk 5:27-32

Sunday—February 14th—FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

8:00a Mass for Dolores Perri
9:15a RCIA, Rectory
10:30a Mass for Rev. Fr. Cesidio Federico
Rite of Sending
RDGS: Dt 26:4-10 Ps 91:1-2, 10-15 Rom 10:8-13
Lk 4:1-13

Lent and Holy Week Schedule

Ash Wednesday—Feb. 10

12:00p Mass with distribution of ashes
6:00p Mass with distribution of ashes

All Fridays during Lent

6:00p Stations of the Cross

Feast of Saint Joseph—March 19

9:00a Mass

Palm Sunday—March 20

10:30 a.m. Palm Sunday Procession

Monday of Holy Week—March 21

12:05 p.m. Mass

Tuesday of Holy Week—March 22

12:05 p.m. Mass
4:00 p.m. Chrism Mass

Wednesday of Holy Week—March 23

12:05 p.m. Mass
6:00p Tenebrae Service

Holy Thursday—March 24

6:30 p.m. Mass of the Lord's Supper

Good Friday—March 25

12:00 p.m. Stations of the Cross
3:00 p.m. Celebration of the Lord's Passion

Holy Saturday—March 26

9:00 a.m. Decorating Cathedral for Easter
8:00 p.m. Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord—March 27

8:00 a.m. Mass
10:30 a.m. Mass
Easter Egg Hunt following Mass

Diocesan Lenten Pilgrimages to Reflect Year of Mercy

With the theme “Celebrating the Jubilee Year of Mercy,” the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston’s Lenten pilgrimage will be held once again in our Cathedral March 9.

Organized by the diocesan Office of Worship and Sacraments, the pilgrimages will present the opportunity for Catholics to come together in prayer during the season of Lent. Each of the pilgrimages will begin with the opportunity to receive the sacrament of penance at 6 p.m. with various priests in the area available to hear confessions. Mass will follow at 7 p.m.

This year’s homilist will be Jesuit Father James Fleming, president of

Wheeling Jesuit University.

Father Fleming began his service as the 10th president at Wheeling Jesuit University July 1, 2013. Prior to his appointment as president, Father Fleming served as the executive vice president of Wheeling Jesuit from 2010-13, overseeing the university’s operations and providing strategic leadership for program development, implementation and assessment.

Father Fleming previously worked at Boston College as a faculty member in the Lynch School of Education and as director of Mission Assessment and Planning, where he led a national research project related to

the spiritual development of college students through the design and administration of the Boston College Questionnaire about the Undergraduate Experience (BCQ).

Additionally, Father Fleming has served as a lecturer at the University of San Francisco, as the director of the University Academy, a university-school-community partnership in San Francisco, Calif., and as an instructor of urban education at Santa Clara University. He is the author of numerous articles and publications, and holds a doctorate in educational policy, organization, measurement and evaluation from the University of California, Berkeley.

Homily ...

Cont’d from Page 5

what way is the Spirit present to us? The answer to that question is why we are here and why we come every year to the Red Mass. We know that we need, and so we ask for, the gifts of insight, inspiration, of right judgment, of wisdom—gifts of the Holy Spirit.

One of these gifts is knowledge. Here we ask to be able to reflect on what we apprehend so that we can come to know more than just what we can hear or taste or touch. We pray for the ability to discern the right path—the ability to reflect so that we can learn from what we have experienced. As my little interlocutor exclaimed with new appreciation and awareness of fresh insight, “I didn’t know that!”

We also pray for the Spirit of understanding—discernment—the sweet gift of the awareness of enlightenment. This is the gift that helps us decide our future steps. The Spirit of dis-

cernment is that quiet voice within us that helps us sort out the various options and claims on our heart and on our actions.

We invoke as well the Spirit of piety—of a sense of wonder and awe, an awareness of God’s closeness. This is the silent assurance that prompts us to have confidence that we stand on sacred ground when we open our hearts to the Spirit in prayer. For some this is the reason for the so called “Francis effect”. The Pope’s ability to mirror God’s love for all people seems to call forth a positive reaction in so many people. His confidence in the Gospel message brings forth the best in people of all faiths.

Courage or fortitude is another of the gifts of the Spirit. It is the blessing we seek in times of trial, of travail, of difficulty. It allows us to recognize what we should do if we are to be faithful to the Spirit within us. This is the claim of conscience on us to do what we ought to do, not just what we can do. It seems all the

more appropriate to note and pray for the gift of counsel at a Red Mass. This is the gift that enables us to see and choose correctly what will redound to the glory of God and our own salvation.

Then there is the magnificent gift of wisdom. In fact, Holy Wisdom, Sancta Sophia, Hagia Sofia is the very personification of God’s presence and providential guidance of all creation. Of all the gifts we invoke, we look to wisdom to be able to be at peace with ourselves, our choices, our life. It is the wisdom of God that fills up what is lacking in our limited understanding. It is wisdom that allows us to “savor” the things of God.

Again we turn to Pope Francis who tells us that this is the first gift—in the traditional listing of these blessings of the Holy Spirit. It is the gift Solomon said he wished to receive beyond wealth, success, fame or even a long and happy life. He pleaded for “the grace to see everything with the eyes

of God.”

In concluding these few thoughts on the Holy Spirit, it is important to note that probably the most significant cumulative effect of all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the power to change, to transform, to make new, to heal—or as we pray, “to renew the face of the Earth.”

Unlike the youngster who excitedly exclaimed, “I didn’t know that,” we are here because we stand in both the conviction and expectation that it is possible to make a better world.

Today then all of our invocation is directed to that power of God, that presence of the Spirit, those gifts of God working within us, that inner light that illumines our pathway together as we make sense of the human condition. No wonder then we pray—with confidence—“Come Holy Spirit and fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love.” And renewed and encouraged in the Holy Spirit we continue “And we shall renew the face of the earth.”

Let’s Play the Name Game!!!



No one has come forward with the name of our last “Name that Parishioner” contestant, so here he is again! At left, you’ll see an “OLD” photo of our contestant. Think you know who it is? If you’re the first person to tell Msgr. Quirk who is pictured **(IN PERSON)**, you’ll win a prize. I’m running low on baby pictures of you all! If you’d like to share a picture with me, email me at tbishop@dwc.org!

Calling all Cookie Craftsmen & Confectionary Champions!

Feb. 21, 2016 the Cathedral is hosting the **Rite of Election** at **3:00 pm**

Following the Rite is a reception in Central’s Great Hall and you guessed it, we need cookies. So many willing parishioners generously gave their time and baking talent last year. We call upon you again. Please bake, or buy, your secret is safe with us, some cookies and drop off to the Sacristy no later than Saturday, Feb. 20. As always Thank You.

“Stir into flame the gift (flour, sugar, & all the yummy baking goodness) you have received.”

Attention Rite of Election Luncheon Hospitality Volunteers

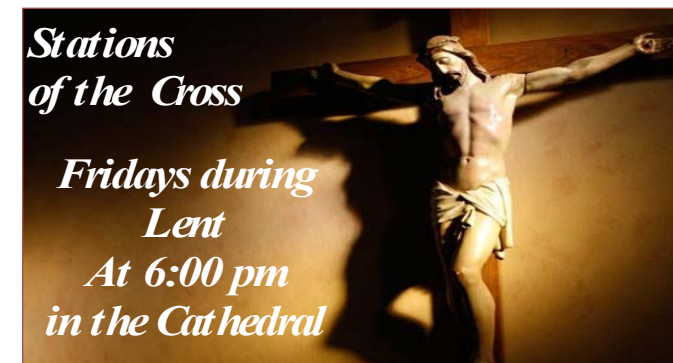
If you would like to assist with the Rite of Election Luncheon, and we need all the help we can get, please meet on the first floor of Central Catholic High School in the main hallway at 1 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 21. Someone will be there to provide directions.

Thank you for your wonderful ministry of service.

Sr. Mary Bowman

Stations of the Cross

*Fridays during Lent
At 6:00 pm
in the Cathedral*



Wheeling Central Catholic Boosters 32nd Annual Reverse Raffle

Date: Thursday, February 18, 2016 at 5:30PM

Wheeling Park White Palace Ballroom

Cost: \$50 per Raffle Ticket and \$25 PP – Dinner and Cocktails

Grand Prize \$5000 – Every 25th ticket pulled wins a prize! All non-winners will be entered to win \$500 cash!! Basket Raffles, 50/50, and chances to “Win Your Way Back In”. We are giving away MORE cash and PRIZES than EVER before with more ways to win. For tickets and more information: call Dawn Zelewicz at 304-280-8896 or email dawnrenee@comcast.net, Michelle Kelly at 304-312-8153 or email kellymich@comcast.net, or call CCHS at 304-233-1660. See you there!!

Join the Knights of Columbus



The Knights of Columbus Council 504 of Wheeling will be holding an Admission Ceremony on February 9th. If you are interested in joining, we must receive your application by February 5th so that we have time to process the application. Please call Brian Gordon at (304) 243-5677 to obtain an application or for more information.

Christian ...

Cont'd from Page 2

told me he talks to God each day. I commented that I prayed each day too. He corrected my thinking and said again that he talks to God each day. He imagines God walking with him, providing answers to his questions. Sometimes the answers came by a thought of reason, others by verses read in the Bible. For someone who

carried all his belongings in a knapsack, did not own a house or car and had limited income, he was pretty happy and content with his life. I haven't given up my home, car or job, though retirement in a few years would be nice. But I do have conversations with God in addition to traditional prayer. As for the answers to my questions, some do come from thought of reason, others by verses in the Bible. As

Stewardship Thought

President Lincoln was once asked; Mr. President, if you win what will be your first priority? Lincoln said, "That is an easy question to answer. In fact, I have spent many hours in prayerful consideration of my response. The first morning after all the hostilities cease, I will greet the day with a forgiving spirit." Forgiveness allows me to be an effective husband, father, friend and leader of this country.

Pope Francis said, "Let the Year of Mercy be the time to end all family feuds, to forgive each other and let bygones be bygones. This Year of Mercy is a good occasion to meet up again, to embrace each other, to leave bad things behind."

During this Year of Mercy remember the words of Pope Francis and Abraham Lincoln. Also remember what Jesus said, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your father in Heaven may forgive you your sins." Mark 11:25 (NIV)

Lincoln's comments are from the fictional book "The Travelers Gift" by Andy Andrews.

The Stewardship Committee

Intercessions

Please keep in your prayers: David A. Kress, Jr., Edward Fanning, Helen Kouski, Rosalie Davis, Kathy Cooley, Barb Mazzocca, Rick South, Eva Wood, Mary Alice Florio, James Midcap, Lukie Brown, Hines Rotriga, Patricia Kalisz, Janie, Jim and Dee, Judy Pack, Milissa Rose, Michael DeBlasis, Liam Manning, Virginia Joseph, Dolores Joseph, Mary Ann Fowler, Henry Vogler, Dustin Ronevich, Bob Jones, Frank Davis, Jimmy Hocking, Susan Graff, Brogan Gallentine, Janet Cupp, Richard Simon, Mark Davis, James Benner, Susan Schulte, Margaret Stocke, Thomas Griffith, Julia Sheets, William Schultz, Jean and Chuck Schultz, R. J. Stocke, Jane Rudari, Marlene Martin, Milly Burke, Norma Bosold, Stephanie Bugaj, Arthur Danehart, Jon-Michael Lasher, Shawn Thomas, Thelma Pearson, Kermit Klosterman, Mary K. Schlosser, Jr., Anne Sobota, Susan Mize, Rick Burgy, Betty Teater, Sarah Sargent, Sr., Sally Jochum, Martha Yocum, Father Joseph Wilhelm, Mary Walicki, George Kirchner, Shirley DeCaria, Haley Carter, Caleb Hlebiczki, Bob Armstrong, Austin Cook, Ron Hickman, Stanley Kyr, Annie Midcap, Charles Heizer, Gail Koch, Pete Mack, Nancy Witzberger, Fred Herink, the Children of the Youth Services System, Chuck Fair, Darleen Williams and Mona Wurtzbacher

for the elimination of distractions in my life, I can only imagine.

"They who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night." Edgar Allan Poe, "Eleonora"

I continue my prayers and conversations with God with you in mind, as I hope you do the same for me.

"Vocatus Atque non Vocatus, Deus Aderit"
Alex J. Nagem

Lenten Guidelines

Bishop Michael J. Bransfield has released the following Lenten regulations to be observed in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston beginning on Ash Wednesday, February 10, 2016.

Fast and Abstinence

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence. All Catholics ages 18 to 59 are bound to fast on these two days. They may take only one full meal. Two smaller meals are permitted, if necessary, to maintain strength according to each one's needs, but eating solid food between meals is not permitted.

All Catholics ages 14 and over are bound to refrain from eating the meat and organs of mammals and fowl on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays of Lent.

In addition, to continue the diocesan custom, all those of appropriate age are encouraged to fast and abstain on all the Wednesdays and Fridays of Lent as a voluntary practice and as a sign of repentance and renewal.

The Paschal Fast

The paschal fast is observed on Good Friday in preparation for and in anticipation of the Easter event. This is an obligatory fast for those of appropriate age, and all are encouraged to continue the fast through Holy Saturday in solidarity with those elect and candidates who will be welcomed into the Church at the Easter Vigil.

Homily...

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our heritage and it forms a frame of reference for how we see ourselves and relate to one another.

Embedded in the consciousness of the American experience is that frame of reference that draws its inspiration from our scriptural heritage and religiously inspired moral and social values.

Once standing at the back of Church greeting people as they came out, I was approached by a family, a mother, father and three children. The youngest, who I took to be about four, said to me,

"Why do you call us brothers and sisters? You are not my brother."

I responded that there is a sense in which we are all brothers and sisters because we are all children of God and part of one great human family. After he looked back at his mother who nodded affirmatively, he turned back to me and said, "I didn't know that. That's cool!"

A part of who we are, a part of our way of responding to the issues of life, reflect those profound experiences of our identity. We cannot afford to lose connectedness with our history and still be able to sustain the continuity of wisdom and experience that results in our self-identification today. As our Holy Father said in his address to Congress, "In this land, the various religious denominations have greatly contributed to building and strengthening society. It is important that today, as in the past, the voice of faith continue to be heard, for it is a voice of fraternity and love, which tries to bring out the best in each person and in society. Such cooperation is a

powerful resource in the battle to eliminate new global forms of slavery, born of grave injustices which can be overcome only through new policies and new forms of social concern."

The remarks of our Holy Father in their own way echo those of President George Washington in his Farewell Address. Then he spoke of the necessary and vital part religion must play in the wellbeing of the nation: "Religion and morality are indispensable supports...Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained with religion...Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in the exclusion of religious principles."

Our Holy Father went on to say, "Here I think of the political history of the United States, where democracy is deeply rooted in the mind of the American people. All political activity must serve and promote the good of the human person and be based on respect for his or her dignity. 'We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among them are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' (Declaration of Independence, 4 July 1776)."

Not only did Thomas Jefferson subscribe to the proposition that all are created equal, but his writings indicate that he extended the logic of that statement. All people are obliged to a code of morality that rests on the very human nature that is foundation of our human dignity and equality. Jefferson recognizes no distinction between public and private morality. In a letter to James Madison, dated Au-

gust 28, 1789, he wrote: "I know but one code of morality for all, whether acting singly or collectively."

Coupled with and growing out of our understanding of who we are is a sense of compassion and forgiveness as we face the complexities of the human condition. How appropriate that our reflections today would take place in this Jubilee Year of Mercy when our Holy Father calls us to be mindful that none of us are perfect and all of us are entitled to look to the future always with a fresh start.

It is precisely because of our need for mercy and our obligation to be compassionate with one another that we recognize that nothing remains static, that there is always space for the movement of God's Spirit to direct our attention to the issues of our day.

No one has accomplished that task of facing pressing human issues today seen through the lens of both our history and the Gospel than your own bishop, Bishop Michael Bransfield.

In a series of pastoral letters he has taken the perennial wisdom of our national experience and the emphasis of the Gospels and applied them.

First was his pastoral letter, A Church that Heals: A Pastoral Letter on Health and Well-being in West Virginia. Then came the letter, Hearts Made Whole: Pastoral Response to Behavioral Health in West Virginia, then On My Holy Mountain, addressing the urgent need of West Virginia's coal miners for a healthy workplace, and Setting Children Free: Loosening the Bonds of Poverty in West Virginia.

Most recently last year in My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation: A Pastoral Letter on

Ministry within and among the Elderly in West Virginia.

We come together this evening so that we might invoke the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we can always walk in the continuity of our collective wisdom and with that compassion that characterizes God's Mercy at work among us.

The scriptures are ripe with stories of those whose lives were completely transformed by the working of the Spirit within them. The response of Abram to the voice of God that called him to set out to a new land and become the father of a great nation was the movement of the Spirit.

Moses recognizes, as he stands on hallowed ground before the burning bush, that it is the Spirit of God touching him. When Samuel anointed David as the future ruler of Israel, we read in Sacred Scripture that, "The Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David" (1 Samuel 16:13).

Of the figures who bridge the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament, none is more prominent than John the Baptist. His very coming is recognized through the power of the Spirit. He is nurtured in the Spirit and retreats into the desert led by the Spirit so that he might be completely transformed in the power of the Spirit.

Clearly the most dramatic example of being enveloped by the Spirit—being anointed in the Holy Spirit—is Jesus stepping into the Jordan as the heavens opened and the Spirit in the form of a dove comes over him with the voice announcing, "This is my beloved Son, hear him" (Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:22).

How do we experience that same outpouring? In

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